Build the Wall!: Walls, Cultural Contact, and Athenian Democratic Ideology in the Globalizing

Achaemenid Mediterranean

Scholarship on the Athenian Long Walls has been dominated by the Periclean War Strategy in the Peloponnesian War. However, this situation is a bit of putting the cart before the horse – the Long Walls were built before the Peloponnesian War, so we should be interested in what ideological justification made the building of the Long Walls possible. This paper uses research on backlashes to globalization to understand the Long Walls' justification, specifically to argue that they provided a psychological need for a sense of a closed community in the context of intensifying intercultural contact.

In the wake of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, there has been renewed scholarly interest in backlashes to globalization. While globalization tends to increase net wealth, it does not distribute new wealth equitably across different groups unless it is managed well by national governments (Stiglitz 2018). This inequality leads to extreme left-wing and right-wing politicians who propose solutions that protect the in-group often at the expense of perceived out-group members (e.g., foreigners) (Steger 2020). Border walls are frequently called for as a physical implementation of a psychological need to protect the in-group against supposed depredations from globalization and (foreign) out-groups (Brown 2010). A "psychological" need because border walls cannot actually keep out globalization in the way that communities often hope that they can.

The late 5th century BCE was a period of intense intercultural contact (cf. Thucydides' reference to the Peloponnesian War as the greatest *kinesis* ("movement") of people), and scholars have begun to study ancient intercultural contact as a form of regional globalization (e.g., Hodos 2020; Vlassopoulos 2013). I suggest that the Athenian Long Walls partly helped meet a

psychological need for the Athenians to preserve the Athenian in-group and to try to keep at bay a wider-world that was creeping into Athenian life. We can see such fears in contemporary discourses. As Thucydides tells it (Book 1), the Athenian debate about building the Long Walls falls into a discussion about whether the Athenians are becoming too much like the Persians (cf. Connor 1981). Moreover, the Old Oligarch worries that Athens' native culture is becoming mixed with outsiders, and he refers to Athens as, ideally, an "island." Moreover, Pericles' citizenship law – which required two native born Athenian citizen parents to be a citizen – shows a great fear of contamination by outsiders.

Indeed, these citizenship laws show remarkable similarities to contemporary legal changes in Judah as shown in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, suggesting parallel responses to similar situations (Swartz 2001, 2009). Moreover, an important part of Nehemiah's program is the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls (Burt 2014).

In short, I argue that the Athenians and the Judeans were both reacting to the increasing pressures of globalization on their local cultures. Consequently, they responded in similar ways to shore up local identities and power that mirror phenomena we see in our own modern world. Walls were an important way for both to try to delimit their local identities against encroachment from outsiders.

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