

The Effect of Natural Resources on the Development  
Of the Athenian Empire in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE:  
A Case Study of Athens and Thasos

At the beginning of the pentekontaetia (479-431 BCE), Athens assumed power over a loose alliance of Greek *poleis*, known as the Delian League. By the end of it, she was a hegemon over an empire of subject states, and the Delian League was a thin veil for what was really an Athenian empire. Athens manifested its power in many ways throughout this period, leaving behind abundant evidence of its effect on the Greek world. It is not possible to point to a single event that marked the change of the Delian League to the Athenian empire, and it is likewise not possible to point to a single factor behind the change. However, natural resources can be seen as a significant factor in many of the events of the pentekontaetia, and undoubtedly played a role in the change of the Delian League from defensive alliance to Athenian empire. Using epigraphic, literary and material evidence, this paper examines the role of natural resources in the creation of the Athenian empire, using the relationship between Athens and Thasos in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE as a case study. The evidence shows that the power of the Athenian empire can be seen in its economic control of other *poleis*, as there is a correlation between Thasian economic prosperity and Athenian control of Thasian natural resources.