

# The use of religion to legitimize politics



## Athens in the Delian League

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## Introduction

Like for most civilisations throughout history, religion played an important role in Greek Antiquity. This is best expressed in the mythical stories we still have of these times, like the epics of Homer. Yet somehow, religion seems to have an underappreciated role in modern histories of classical times. While many textbooks on the medieval period constantly fixate on the importance of Christianity, general textbooks on Greek history seem to place the entire era in a nearly atheistic setting. This can be attributed to the fact that many of our written sources on ancient Greece, such as the works of Thucydides, tend to neglect the role of religion.<sup>1</sup> Many historians have nevertheless been able to convincingly stress the political importance of religion, for instance in the Delian League.

In 478 BC the Delian League was founded. After the Persian attacks around 490 BC, many Greeks felt the need to form an alliance in order to defend themselves against potential new attacks. The creation of this bond and its development are both great examples of constructs that have to be seen within a religious context. The fact that it was not a democratic alliance of egalitarian states is already commonly accepted by experts. But even looking at the structure as it was, many scholars tend to focus on the military imbalance within the league, claiming that the dominance of Athens was an inevitable result of its military might. Although the role of military might should not be underestimated, the underlying religious connections were just as important. At the very least, the great effort Athens put into it to establish those connections is worth studying. Christy Constantakopoulou, a renowned historian specialized in Antiquity, even stated:

*“...detached from the archaic religious network of Delos in the Aegean , the Delian League makes little sense.”<sup>2</sup>*

The days of simple reconstruction are over. Historians are expected to analyse underlying structures, to explain *why* or *how* something happened. When I first learned about the Delian League in high school, I was confused about the passive role of the other poleis, of their seeming ignorance of Athens' imperialistic wishes. The idea of military dominance is just not a satisfying answer to why this happened. Why would these poleis allow a foreign power (Athens) to rule over through a league, when that league was created for the sole purpose of stopping Persia to do the same? Yet somehow, the idea of a league that is based solely on military might is still widely supported. Throughout this paper, I will try to illustrate how Athens used religion in order to support her claims. The central question of this essay is therefore: *How has Athens made use of the shared religion to expand and consolidate her power in the age of the Delian League?* I use the phrase 'age of the Delian League' rather than 'Delian League' and this is for good reason. Firstly, nothing happens with a vacuum. Though much of Athens' strategy to gain power happened within the Delian League itself -like the moving of the treasury to Athens-, this will have affected their position in a much broader scape. Putting Athens in charge of the treasury meant that the city could use the money on aesthetically improving the city, which in turn had favourable consequences for their economy and their role as a cultural centre of the Mediterranean. Secondly, Athens will not always have mentioned the Delian League in particular when conjuring up reasons for their imperialist actions. It would generally be very hard to confine an essay only to the Delian League. To put it concretely, this essay will focus mainly on the Delian League, but is not limited to it. I will first give some context by explaining Greek religion and by giving a short history of the Delian League. Afterwards, I will look at the role that ancestry has played in legitimizing the imperialist actions of Athens. I will then look at a more drastic and concrete case in which Athens took over sovereign rule of the island Delos using religion as an excuse. Next, the most important aspect of

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<sup>1</sup>Simon Hornblower (1992), 169.

<sup>2</sup>Christy Constantakopoulou (2010), 25.

religious tradition will be discussed: the festivals. Lastly, I will look at the use of architecture to spread religion. This structure is slightly problematic, because many of the events have a tendency to overlap. Nevertheless, I will try to provide a clear argument on the importance of religion in 5<sup>th</sup> century Greece.

### **Greek religion**

Politically speaking, Greece –if you could speak of such a thing as ‘Greece’- was a congregation of individual city-states, all with their own political system. In retrospect, it is easy to see the similarities between the different Greek states. At the time, this was a little bit harder. In spite of the cultural and political differences among the poleis, it was particularly their language and religion which they had in common. It was often through this religion that poleis made agreements. One historian, Catherine Morgan, has theorized that the lack of a single-state control over Greece made inter-state sanctuaries the perfect context for political relations, keeping things in check through sacred fines.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to modern religions like Christianity and Islam, the Greek religion is a polytheistic one. Rather than actual religious texts, epics like those of Homer spread throughout the Greek world and were generally accepted as doctrine.<sup>4</sup> Most poleis would choose a specific god(dess) as their guardian, for instance Athena Polias for Athens and Apollo Delios for Delos. The god(dess) they chose as a patron would often gain a close connection with the polis; Athena was seen as every bit as Athenian as Pericles.

Rather than through sacred texts, Greek religion was ritualistic in nature, meaning they practiced their religion through offerings and festivals. Great festivals like the Panathenaia and Dionysia could also be considered the ‘bread and games’ of Athenian life, meaning that everyone got a day off from their labour and all the citizens were treated to lavish feasts. This kept the lower classes satisfied and thus obedient. In short, Greek religion had a veiled but clear political side to it.

### **General History of the Delian League**

In 492 and 490 BC, the Persians had attacked the Greek poleis in an attempt to expand their empire. With good reason, many feared that the Persian would come back and try again a third time. The most logical defence strategy was to control the Aegean Sea, which counted as a barrier between them and the Persians. For this reason, the Delian League was created in 478, over which Athens took control as the central and strongest polis. Because of their influential position, the Athenians were soon also in charge of the treasury on Delos and the naval command. After about a decade, the League had successfully accomplished its goal to stop the Persian invasion.<sup>5</sup> Though the League had no official task left, it continued to exist. Athens’ showed its true colours in 465 B.C., when Thasos tried to leave the League. Athens wholeheartedly disagreed, which would lead to a siege that would last two years. In spite of its strength, Thasos lost and was put in its place by Athens, with Athens demanding its fleet and a large sum of money. From that moment on, most poleis were afraid to step out of the league. In fact, through coercion, Athens got even more poleis to join. In 454 the treasury was officially moved from Delos to Athens, which is often seen as the switch from the Delian League to an Athenian empire.<sup>6</sup> Around 440, Samos also revolted against Athens and it took the entire league to knock it down. In 431, Sparta had finally had enough with Athens’ expansion, which led to the Peloponnesian War. The war was won by Sparta in 404, dissolving the Delian League in the process.<sup>7</sup>

There has been a great discussion about the intentions of Athens at the conception of the Delian League. Most lean towards the idea that Athens did have the intention to put itself at the top of a Panhellenic empire. Moses Finley bases this on the fact that the speed in which Athens obtained the

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<sup>3</sup>C. Morgan (1990), 137.

<sup>4</sup> Julia Kindt (1990), 130.

<sup>5</sup>The actual date is not clear, but scholars place it no later than 466, see Moses Finley, 16.

<sup>6</sup>Moses Finley, *The Fifth Century Athenian Empire: A Balance Sheet*, 16-17.

<sup>7</sup>P.J. Rhodes, *A History of the classical world*, 153.

sole right to most of the decision-making within the league went so quickly, it is hard to believe it was coincidental.<sup>8</sup> To look at a perspective from that period, Thucydides also believed that Athens had the intention to expand its power from the very beginning of the League, though perhaps not in the way of an empire as it later turned out to be.<sup>9</sup>

### **Ancestry**

From its very founding, the Delian League has been marked by its religious aspects. Delos is a very small island in the middle of the Aegean Sea. It is true that its central position and small stature already make a good argument for its central role in the League, much like Brussels in the contemporary European Union. However, Delos was also chosen as the headquarters because of its religious importance in the Greek world. Though little of it can be seen today, Delos used to be a centre of religious practice for a large Pan-Ionian cult, evidenced by its relatively large amount of temples.<sup>10</sup> Many Dorian islanders also considered Delos to be an important part of their religious life.<sup>11</sup> This interest in Delos was mainly the case because, according to myth, it was the birthplace of the twin gods Apollo and Artemis.<sup>12</sup>

To successfully use Delos in Athens' favour, Athens used the guise of ancestry.<sup>13</sup> The genealogical relationship between the Athenians and Ionians dates back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, where it was already present in the Iliad of Homer. Solon, an important statesman in the sixth century, even calls Athens the eldest land of Ionia.<sup>14</sup> The idea of their common roots is based on the myth that Apollo Patroos was their shared forefather. By placing the headquarters on an island known for its strong connections to Apollo, Athens symbolically put emphasis on their genealogical bond through Apollo Patroos.<sup>15</sup> Whilst not truly assessing the 'problem' of Athens' rule, it did make it easier to accept for the poleis, seeing how they were now ruled by an equal rather than by a foreign enemy. The idea that they were all one people also promoted the idea of a united Ionia. The Athenians saw themselves as the natural centre of this Ionia, again due to their might and the fact that they were the 'oldest land'.

It wasn't until Samos' proposal to move the Delian treasury to Athens in 454, that the Athenians saw an opportunity to loosen this particular religious link. In present day literature, the name *Delian League* is kept even after moving the treasury, which can be confusing. In reality, the name Delian League is actually a modern invention that perhaps puts too much emphasis on Delos. Though we know that Athens did still see Delos as an important peon in its imperialist game, the practical option of having the treasury at home was more attractive. When it came to legitimizing their rule, the Athenians had learned that the Gods were good allies to have. Athens therefore legitimized the displacement by using Athena Polias' patronage and Theseus' heroism. Where Apollo Patroos was the theological ancestor of the Ionians, Theseus could be seen as the human (albeit still mythical) ancestor.<sup>16</sup> The Athenians had a special bond with Theseus, for he was seen as the founder-king of Athens itself. Regarding the gods, Athens had shifted the emphasis from the Ionian gods Apollo and Poseidon to the much more Athenian god, Athena. This was a bold move and many people had trouble

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<sup>8</sup>Moses Finley, *The Fifth Century Athenian Empire: A Balance Sheet*, 17.

<sup>9</sup>Hunter R. Rawlings III, *Thucydides on the Purpose of the Delian League*, 6.

<sup>10</sup>Seperatism and Anti-seperatism, p.32

<sup>11</sup>Simon Hornblower, 182.

<sup>12</sup>Ian Rutherford, "Pindar on the Birth of Apollo", *The Classical Quarterly* no 1, vol 38 (1988), 65

<sup>13</sup> Carl A. Anderson & T. Keith Dix, "Politics and State Religion in the Delian League: Athena and Apollo in the Eteocarpethian Decree," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 117 (1997), 130-132.

<sup>14</sup> J Bremmer, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Carl A. Anderson & T. Keith Dix, "Politics and State Religion in the Delian League: Athena and Apollo in the Eteocarpethian Decree," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 117 (1997), 130

<sup>16</sup>Seperatism and Anti-seperatism, p.33.

accepting the change.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the Athenian character of Athena had initially been too great for many people. This idea of Athena as an Athenian goddess is reinforced by the fact that Athena Polis was also the guardian goddess of Sparta, though no one seems to remember that.<sup>18</sup>

Using Theseus also posed some problems. Theseus had been active in a much broader region than just Attica. For this reason, he was not strictly Athenian. His pan-Ionian character had advantages as well as disadvantages for Athens. On the one hand, it legitimized the idea of imperial rule, because it again emphasized their shared cultures. For instance, with the purification of Delos in 426, one important myth was that the Delia festival had been founded by Theseus himself. On the other hand, its 'global' character made it hard for Athens to express his Athenian features.<sup>19</sup>

Though originally Peloponnese, Theseus came to represent the very definition of Athenian culture for the Athenians. Quite a few festivals had been attributed to his name, claiming that he had personally founded them. Though we now know most of these festivals date back to the age of Solon, Theseus was immensely important from a cultural perspective.<sup>20</sup> The use of the festivals will be discussed later. Athens also used different tactics in their conquest for power.

A direct example of this was with the takeover of Skyros, a Persian island in the northern Aegean Sea. Athens took over control of the island, sold its inhabitants into slavery and distributed the land among Athenian settlers. Cimon, an important Athenian politician at the time, defended this imperialistic seizure by recalling the advice of an Oracle to restore the body of Theseus and re-bury it in their midst, so they could protect it. According to legend, Skyros had been the place where Theseus met his demise centuries earlier.<sup>21</sup> Bringing Theseus' bones to Athens was in itself a clever move, because Athens was now the one protecting Theseus, enhancing the city's prestige among all cities that labelled Theseus a hero.<sup>22</sup>

### **Changing people's perspectives**

I have already discussed how Athens tried to use propaganda for their imperialist ideas, such as the use of Theseus as an Athenian hero. But this is in itself quite vague, because it does not explain how they did this. For this reason, I will try to clarify this using Theseus as an example. In the 'deification'<sup>23</sup> of Theseus, Pisistratus had played the most significant role. Pisistratus had ruled Athens as a tyrant from 561 to 527 BC, who had also been the one to institute the reformed Panathenaic festival. Many of Pisistratus' achievements have been attributed to Theseus in his name, because he felt that Athens also needed a strong mythological hero, like Heracles. In fact, this was also the time in which many myths were invented to support the idea of his heroism to create an "Athenian Heracles".<sup>24</sup> He removed any bad things written about him in hymns and plays and replaced them with passages that placed him in a more favourable light. He even encouraged poets to write songs about him and made the richer Athenians pay the expenses of the large events dedicated to him, in exchange for a favourable position within those events.<sup>25</sup> The idea behind this was to create social unity, especially among the tyrant

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<sup>17</sup> The Religious Dimension to the Peloponnesian War, 183.

<sup>18</sup> Hornblower, Religious Dimension 185.

<sup>19</sup> Hornblower, 185.

<sup>20</sup> Erika Simon, "Theseus and Athenian Festivals," in *Worshipping Athena: Panathenaia and Parthenon*, ed Jenifer Neils (University of Wisconsin Press 1996), 9.

<sup>21</sup> W.M Blake Tyrell & Frieda S. Brown, *Athenian Myths and Institutions: Words in Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 167-168.

<sup>22</sup> Lee E. Patterson (2010), 39.

<sup>23</sup> He was not seen as a God, but his role within Greek mythology became much more prominent.

<sup>24</sup> W.M. Blake Tyrell & Frieda S. Brown, *Athenian Myths and Institutions: Words in action*, New York, Oxford University press (1991), 161.

<sup>25</sup> W.M. Blake Tyrell & Frieda S. Brown, *Athenian Myths and Institutions: Words in action*, New York, Oxford University press (1991), 163-165.

Pisistratus himself and his subjects.<sup>26</sup> This is actually very much like the process of the Athenian empire, but on a much smaller scale.

### **Purification of Delos**

Two paragraphs ago, I mentioned how the Oracle had sent Athens on a sacred mission to Skyros. The use of Oracles for justification was actually a recurring practice. This is for instance also the case with the purification of Delos in 426. The purification again shows the continuing importance of Delos as a religious symbol. Even though the treasury was moved some thirty years earlier, Athens clearly had not forgotten about the role of Delos in contemporary religious practice. The reason for the purification was the plague that had catastrophically hit Greece just a few years before.<sup>27</sup>

When talking about the reasoning behind the purification, Thucydides speaks sarcastically of "...according to some Oracle..."<sup>28</sup> or in an alternative translation, "...in accordance with an Oracle."<sup>29</sup> With these he meant that the Athenians had received a sacred duty to do so. It is unclear which Oracle is meant, though his phrasing would suggest it to be some other than the Oracle of Delphi, which is often named as *the* Oracle. The reason for using an Oracle as a point of legitimization is quite understandable. In Greek mythology, Apollo has always been the god of foresight, as well as of purification.<sup>30</sup> By working in service of an Oracle, they were indirectly acting in the name of Apollo. This in itself gave them great prestige. But by purifying Delos herself, Athens had ignored the Delian sovereignty. By doing so, they demonstrated their might and further increased their grasp over the island.

This was further illustrated by the extensive changes the Athenians made when present. Firstly, they issued a law which prohibited anyone from dying or giving birth on the island itself. Instead, all the burials and births would have to take place on the neighbouring island of Rheneia, which was dedicated to Delos a century before.<sup>31</sup> Imagine having to move a woman that is about to give birth to a different island. Death also tends to be somewhat unpredictable. It is unclear in how far these rules were actually followed, but the great impracticality of them already shows what considerable power the Athenians had over Delos.

Partly in response to the creation of the Heraklaia festival by Sparta, Athens also reinstated the Delian festival, or *Delia*. This had been an important Ionian festival in the past, but had lost its importance a long time ago. Because of its Ionian scale, the Delia was again an attempt to spread the idea of one great Ionia. Additionally, Theseus' important role in the festival increased the importance of this hero, which further increased the prestige of the city who could claim the closest bond to him, Athens.<sup>32</sup>

### **Religious Festivals: The Panathenaia**

As we have already discussed, Greek religion differed from the 'modern' religions in its ritualistic nature. Rather than a sacred text, it was based on actions. One of the most important aspects on religious life in Greece was the religious festival. These were often used to unburden the lower class

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<sup>26</sup>WM. Blake Tyrell & Frieda S. Brown, *Athenian Myths and Institutions: Words in action*, New York, Oxford University press (1991), 160.

<sup>27</sup>Roisman (2011), WEB69, .

<sup>28</sup>Hornblower, 193.

<sup>29</sup>Roisman (2011), WEB69, .

<sup>30</sup>Hornblower, 193.

<sup>31</sup>Roisman (2011), WEB69, .

<sup>32</sup>Simon Hornblower (2011), *The Greek World 479-323 BC*, 164.

citizens of Athens, giving them a day off from work and keeping the strong ties within the polis.<sup>33</sup> It was not so much the religious part of the festival that had such a large impact, but it was the religious context which made it possible to express cultural and political actions. This was especially the case for some of the larger festivals that went beyond the boundaries of the polis. These were often used to increase the prestige of a city and to strengthen inter-polis relations. One of these larger festivals is the Great Panathenaia.<sup>34</sup>

The Panathenaia was a festival celebrated in the summer, when the temperatures reached their peak. It was used to celebrate the defeating of the Giants and particularly what role Athena had played in that war. It had been quite a small festival, being celebrated yearly. This changed drastically in the year 566 BC. Every year, the Panathenaia would be held, already in a larger scale but still relatively small. Every four years from 566 onwards, Athens would hold a Great Panathenaia which was celebrated on a Panhellenic scale. Though its name, meaning ‘Rites of All Athenians’, clearly shows the Athenian character of the festival, it drew visitors from all over.<sup>35</sup> The central role of the goddess Athena in the festival also had favourable consequences for the image of Athens.<sup>36</sup>

The festival itself lasted nine days and consisted of several different activities, including chariot races, boat races, athletic contests, tribal contests, singing competitions, and much more. The victors often received handsome prizes; the best singer of men would get a golden crown worth 1000 drachmas and 500 silver drachmas in cash.<sup>37</sup> The Panhellenic character was further strengthened by these large prizes, because those received widespread attention. Additionally, the prizes and the overall splendour gave Athens the opportunity to boast its wealth, to the Athenians as well as the other poleis.<sup>38</sup> It was also another way to exercise power for Athens. Athens decided which countries were allowed to join in the games, which had two distinct advantages. Denying access to a polis would be bad for that polis’ image. This meant that poleis would try to secure a spot and would thus be willing to provide gifts.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, it was a great way to discredit poleis that were being a nuisance to Athens. This even happened among the friendliest of allies.

Because of this power, Athens could ask quite a lot of the participants. Within the Delian League, allies were even required to send delegations. All participating poleis were also required to send cattle and a suit of armour as a sacrifice to Athena. The obvious consequence was that this helped finance the feast. Though the cattle were offered to Athena, it was quite common to still eat a large portion of it. Indirectly, it also meant that all the cities were joined in the offering to Athena, bringing them closer to this goddess.<sup>40</sup> The concept of mandatory offerings was a recurring theme within Athenian imperialism. Much in the same way, Athens demanded of its allies to send ‘first fruits’<sup>41</sup> to Eleusis. According to myth, Eleusis had granted the Greeks the gift of corn to the Greeks. This was probably a long-standing tradition in Athens, but their imperial power now made it possible to push other poleis to do the same.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Jennifer Neils, The Panathenaia: an introduction, in *Goddess and Polis: The Panathenaic Festival in Ancient Athens*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Roy van Wijk, *Religie en Politiek in het Athene van de vijfde eeuw*, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Robertson, *Athena’s shrines and festivals, in Worshipping Athena*, 56.

<sup>36</sup> The Panatheneia, in *Polytheism*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Jennifer Neils, The Panathenaia: an introduction, in *Goddess and Polis: The Panathenaic Festival in Ancient Athens*, 15-16.

<sup>38</sup> Roy van Wijk, *Religie en Politiek in het Athene van de vijfde eeuw*, 27.

<sup>39</sup> Roy van Wijk, *Religie en Politiek in het Athene van de vijfde eeuw*, 25.

<sup>40</sup> Parker, *Polytheism*, 254.

<sup>41</sup> Agricultural produce like corn and barley.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Parker, *Religion and the Athenian Empire*, 147.

It has been generally accepted that the Greater Panathenaia served the purpose broadening Athens' influence, especially after the war against Persia around 490 BC. Within this discourse however, historians often differ in their judgment of this tactic. Some historians observe it as a negative aspect of the Athenian empire, deeming it hypocritical of Athens to preach democracy whilst simultaneously boasting its glory and power over the allied states in festivals like this one. They argue that the imperial aspect of the festival is easily seen in the form of mandatory offerings. Others have placed it in a more positive light, speaking of increasing the solidarity through the use of festivals. In their opinion, Athens was still trying to expand its empire, but did so by advertising brotherhood and cultural similarities among the poleis.<sup>43</sup>

Lastly, the Panathenaia had a longer lasting impact. Other than money and expensive crowns, many of the event handed out olive oil as the main prize. For instance, the victor of the two-horse chariot race would win 40 amphoras of olive oil. Even the person that came in second received 8 amphoras of olive oil. Especially interesting are the containers: the amphora. These amphoras were different from regular vases. For one, they always had the inscription "TON ATHENETHEN ATHLON", translated as "from the games at Athens."<sup>44</sup> Secondly, the extraordinary shape and decorations made the Panathenaic amphora a category of its own for many historians. For many of the owners of such an amphora it was quite a special belonging. Because these victors could come from far and wide, these amphoras could be found in many places and thus the spirit of the Panathenaia would spread all over the Greek world.<sup>45</sup>

I have attempted to reconstruct how far the Panathenaia actually reached by looking at the location of the amphoras that archaeologists have uncovered. Despite the large amount of amphoras that have been distributed in the past, there is little left of it today. From the amphoras we do have, the origin is often lost. The authors describing the pieces often claim they stumbled upon them at black markets or in small shops, with little clue to where it actually came from. Nevertheless, I have been able to find the (probable) provenances of 28 amphoras, which are displayed below.<sup>46</sup>

Origin	Number of Amphoras found
Anatolia (Mersin)	1
Athens	3
Attika	1
Benghazi, Libya	3
Caere	1
Capua	2
Chiusi	1
Cyrene	1
Delos	1
Eretria	1
Gela	2
Italy	1
Naples	1
Nola	1
Pergamon	1
Pompeii	1
Rhodes	3
Thessaloniki	1

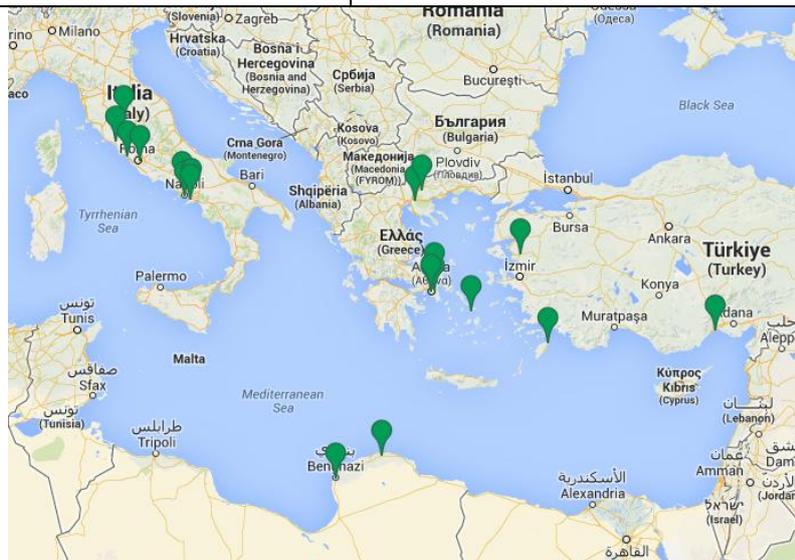
<sup>43</sup> Roy van Wijk, *Religie en Politiek in het Athene van de vijfde eeuw*, 28.

<sup>44</sup> Jenifer Neils: *Panathenaic Amphoras: Their Meaning, Makers and Markets*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> Jenifer Neils: *Panathenaic Amphoras: Their Meaning, Makers and Markets*, 25.

<sup>46</sup> A List of the sources used can be found in the bibliography.

Vari	1
Vulci	1



**Locations of the amphoras portrayed on a map**

This shows how far these Athenian amphoras could actually reach, all richly decorated with images relating to the Panathenaia. The problem with this is of course that the items could have been passed on for generations, ending up somewhere completely different than where they were originally brought in the times of the Athenian empire. The large amount of amphoras in Italy could suggest some of the amphora were moved to Rome in the time of the Roman Empire. The importance of this detail is debatable. Ultimately, it does show the popularity of these amphoras and that they could indeed reach quite far.

### **Splendour through architecture**

With the large festivals like the Panathenaia, countless people came to Athens. Although the festivals may have been marvellous, the city itself was more of an eyesore. In 480, the Persians had sacked Athens, leaving many public buildings burning and destroyed. Many buildings were left like this for a long time, to commemorate their victory over Persia and the Oath of Plataia ‘prohibited’ them from rebuilding until the Persians were defeated. It was in the time of Pericles that the city underwent a massive make-over.<sup>47</sup> By building beautiful religious buildings, like the Parthenon, Pericles further stimulated the idea of Athens as a major player in their shared Greek religion. He also had the belief that a city that was to rule a Panhellenic empire had to look the part, too.

One of the problems of Athens had been that it did not actually possess any Panhellenic sanctuary of its own, like the sanctuary of Apollo on Delos. With the renewal of Athena’s temples, together with the Greater Panathenaia, this began to change. The Parthenon was one of the most splendid buildings constructed by the Athenians. In size, it was the biggest temple in Athens and its style was unique in its mix of Dorian and Ionian architecture.<sup>48</sup> Its use of these two styles is actually quite clever; the Ionian style shows their connection with other Ionian poleis, whilst the Dorian style tried to extend its reach even further by showing its connections to the mainland. The entire structure was covered in images. One frieze shows the battle against the Persians, in which it becomes clear that Athens had a leading role in the battle. The Parthenon also showed the procession of the Panathenaic festival,

<sup>47</sup> [http://davidrifkind.org/fiu/library\\_files/Hurwit.pericles-athens-building.lib-iss.pdf](http://davidrifkind.org/fiu/library_files/Hurwit.pericles-athens-building.lib-iss.pdf) , 89.

<sup>48</sup> Gruben, *Griechische Tempel und Heiligtümer* 174.

connecting this magnificent structure to the Panhellenic festival.<sup>49</sup> The statue of Athena that is situated inside the Parthenon can be linked back to the moving of the treasury to Delos. As I have already mentioned, this shifted the focus from Apollo Delios to Athena Polias. In Delos there was a statue of Apollo, also made of gold and ivory. By building a larger and even more impressive statue in Athens, the Athenians tried to symbolize Athena's superiority over Apollo. This idea is strengthened by the fact that the statue was funded by the treasury of the Delian League, essentially underlining the importance of Athena to all the members.<sup>50</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In this essay, I have tried to illustrate in which ways Athens has used the tool of religion to gain political power. Delos has been a major factor due to its sanctuary of Delos. Athens gained from this by first emphasising its role in Ionian Greece, followed by its takeover with the purification in 426. The Panathenaia has played a significant role due to its sheer size, which can be derived from the locations of the amphoras that were found. The Panathenaia promoted the importance of Athena, while simultaneously advertising Athens' vast wealth and splendour. Athena's growing importance in Greek religion partially made up for the fact that Athens had distanced itself from Delos by moving the treasury. Lastly, building beautiful buildings made the Panathenaia even more impressive and generally improved the image of the polis.

Though it is hard to calculate the extent to which the tactics have actually worked, I dare to estimate they were rather successful. This can be seen from the fact that the Delian League rapidly grew out to become a large Athenian empire. Additionally, the fact that Pisistratus techniques of glorifying Theseus were so successful within Athens, it is hard to believe that this had no effect on the rest of the Hellenic world.

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<sup>49</sup> Roy van Wijk, *Religie en Politiek in het Athene van de vijfde eeuw*, 13-14.

<sup>50</sup> Roy van Wijk, *Religie en Politiek in het Athene van de vijfde eeuw*, 15.

**Front Page Picture:**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Athenian\\_empire\\_atheight\\_450\\_shepherd1923.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Athenian_empire_atheight_450_shepherd1923.png)

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