become involved (Thuc. 2.62, cf. 6.17). Leaving Persia out of account was probably the most fatal mistake the Athenians made in their preparations for war.

**The first Spartan invasion, 431 BC**

Archidamos marched up through the Isthmus, unsuccessfully besieging the Athenian fortress Oenoe on the border with Boeotia. He was criticised, however, for making slow progress on the march from the Isthmus to Oenoe, and then for the lack of success there, which was taken as an indication that he did not really want to wage war on Attica and still held out hopes for peace. He then moved into Attica itself, in mid-summer when the grain was ready for harvest, devastating the area around Eleusis and Acharnai (the largest Athenian deme). This occurred eighty days after the Thebans attacked Plataea. Many Athenians, especially the young hoplites, were anxious to march out to meet the invaders, but Perikles was able to enforce his advice, which was not to offer battle. While the Athenians allowed the Spartans to take the initiative, they then launched a significant counter-offensive, sending a fleet of 100 triremes to the Peloponnese, plus an additional fifty ships later from their new ally Corcyra, and pillaged the coastline. Brasidas, who makes his first appearance in the war at this stage, saved the city of Methone from an Athenian siege (Thuc. 2.18–25). At the end of the first campaigning season, in 431 BC, Perikles delivered his famous ‘Funeral Oration’, emphasizing the greatness of Athens and the fact that it was worth dying for, and reiterating the democratic ideology that every citizen had a part to play in running the state (Thuc. 2.37.1–40.2: doc. 1.17).

Another Spartan invasion of Attica followed in 430 BC, and again the Athenians did not go out to meet them. This Spartan strategy was therefore of limited success, for they were unable to entice the Athenians into a land battle from which they could emerge victorious and end the war quickly. The Spartans obviously put limited planning into the war, apparently envisaging, despite Archidamos’ advice, that an annual invasion of Attica, and destruction of some of its crops, would bring Athens to its knees. Athens was secure, as long as the Athenians could be persuaded to refrain from meeting the Spartan army on land. Sparta lacked the skill to besiege a huge city like Athens (as they themselves admitted), and Athens’ system of walls and fortifications meant that it was essentially impregnable to siege, as it was able to import its food through the Piraeus as long as the fleet was operational.

**The plague strikes Athens, 430 BC**

Sparta and its allies invaded Attica in 430, again with limited success, only a few days before a plague broke out in Athens. It was already prevalent in other places in the Greek world, such as on the island of Lemnos, but it was at Athens that it was to prove particularly virulent; the plague was said to have originated in Ethiopia. Thucydides gives a graphic and detailed description of it, and modern scholars have speculated endlessly on what it was, without success. Suffice to say the plague was extremely infectious, and very few survived once they came in contact with it: Perikles was himself to die of it in 429 BC. Its greatest impact and severity was on those who came in from the countryside and were living in temporary huts and shanty-type dwellings: corpses lay on top of corpses, and the half-dead staggered around, possessed by an unquenchable, raging thirst.

A burning sensation in the head was followed by red and inflamed eyes, bleeding from the throat, and difficulty in breathing, after which the pain spread to the chest accompanied by coughing. Painful vomiting or dry retching from the throat with violent spasms then
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occurred, and the skin turned a livid red with pustules, which ulcerated. If the victims lived to the seventh or eighth day, the disease spread to the bowels, and the constant diarrhoea became the cause of death. Thucydides was interested not so much in the symptoms, but in the breakdown in custom that the plague gave rise to in Athens: many people died neglected, corpses were thrown onto unlit funerary pyres that were meant for others, or if lit, piled on top of other corpses, and many Athenians lived riotously as if it was their last day (Thuc. 2.47.2–3, 52.1–53.4: doc. 13.6). With his usual careful attention to religious matters as they pertained to his narrative, Thucydides notes that many recalled the oracle that death would come when there was war with the Dorians. While the Athenians were preoccupied with their problems within the city, the Spartans laid waste to the Attic plain and then moved down to the silver mines at Laureion and ravaged the area.

The financial decrees of Kallias

Either just prior to the Peloponnesian War in 434/3, or perhaps as late as 422/1, an individual named Kallias proposed two decrees to the Athenian demos relating to Athens’ finances, specifically as they concerned the money of the gods, and in particular that belonging to Athena. His first decree is generally considered to have provided for the moving of the treasures of the gods from their shrines throughout Attica to the acropolis for safekeeping. The second decree concerns building works on the acropolis and the use of Athena’s money, with penalties for those proposing a decree to this effect without a prior decree ratifying that such a decree could be proposed. The Athenians were making doubly certain that expenditure of Athena’s money should not be decided upon lightly. What is important in both decrees is the scrutiny paid to the money belonging to the gods. Permanent records of these amounts were made so that the gods could be repaid, along with a provision that the record of the treasurers must be checked by auditors (IG P 52: doc. 13.7).

Kolophon swears loyalty to Athens, 427 bc

Athens had problems in its relationships with one of its allies in 427 bc. Kolophon was seized by a pro-Persian group, and the pro-Athenians in the city fled to Kolophon’s port Notion, where there was a further split, with one side aided by the pro-Persian group from Kolophon. The pro-Athenian group then called on the assistance of the Athenian strategos Paches, who was in the area. He captured Notion through treachery with the assistance of the leader of the Arkadian mercenaries who were in the employ of the pro-Persian group. Paches handed Notion over to the Kolophonians, with the exception of the pro-Persian group, and the Athenians sent out additional settlers and encouraged Kolophonians who were resident elsewhere to join the settlement. An inscription deals with arrangements for a democratic constitution to be put in place, with the provision that Kolophon not rebel from Athens and “not desert to the enemy”, a clear reference to the pro-Persian group. Thucydides records all the events as taking place in 427 bc (Thuc. 3.34) and this inscription can only belong to this year, when there were historically attested troubles at Kolophon (IG P 37: doc. 13.8).

Dating Athenian decrees

Traditionally, however, this decree concerning Kolophon has been dated by scholars to 447/6 bc, although no historical evidence supports this. The reason for this judgement is based on