



## CONON OF ATHENS

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**CONON OF ATHENS** (b. Athens before 444 b.c.e., d. Cyprus after 392 b.c.e.), son of Timotheus (Pausanias, 3.9.2, 8.52.4), a leading Athenian admiral during the Peloponnesian and Corinthian wars and one of twenty commanders considered worthy of biographies by the notoriously unreliable Roman author Cornelius Nepos (1st century b.c.e.). In 414-13 he was appointed *stratēgós* “commander-in-chief” in Athens (Thucydides, 7.31.4), in which capacity he experienced both victories and defeats. In 405, when the Athenian navy was destroyed in the decisive battle of Aegospotami, he escaped with eight ships to Cyprus, where he was warmly received by King Evagoras of Salamis (r. ca. 410-374; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.1.28-29; Isocrates, 9.52; Diodorus, 13.106.6, 14.39.1). He remained there for several years, awaiting an opportunity to assist his native city (Isocrates, 5.62ff., 9.53ff.; Diodorus, 14.39.3).

The occasion arose in 400 b.c.e., when Sparta and Persia, formerly allies, went to war over the Greek cities of Asia Minor. Conon established relations with both Pharnabazus, Persian satrap of [Dascylium](#), and with the Persian king [Artaxerxes II](#) (r. 405/4-359/8 b.c.e.) in [Babylon](#) (Diodorus, 14.39.1; Ctesias, in Jacoby, *Fragmente* III/C, pp. 483-84 frag. 30; Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 21). Pharnabazus personally obtained the king’s support for assembling a fleet of a hundred ships in Cyprus, to be placed under Conon’s command (Diodorus, 14.39.1-2; Justin, 6.1.4-9). With the assistance of Evagoras, the work was rapidly completed, and some time in 397 Athens sent weapons and men to outfit the fleet (Isocrates, 9.56; *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 2.1).

Conon began military operations in 397/6, before the fleet was entirely ready;



he sailed with forty ships to Cilicia, then to Caunus on the Carian coast (Diodorus, 14.39.4, 14.79.5), where he was blockaded by the more numerous forces of the Spartan admiral Pharax. Pharnabazus and his general Artaphernes (for the etymology of this name, see [artaphrenēs](#)) came to his aid and forced the lifting of the siege (Diodorus, 14.79.4-5). Conon then sailed with eighty or ninety triremes for Rhodes, where the population was in revolt against Sparta and received him into the city (Diodorus, 14.79.5-6; Pausanias, 6.7.6).

Although he had been reinforced by Phoenicia and Cilicia (Diodorus, 14.79.8), he was hampered by lack of funds and was unable to pay his troops. In the autumn of 395 he therefore traveled by way of Caunus to solicit funds from Pharnabazus and Tithraustes, who had displaced Tissaphernes (see [ciθrafarnah](#)) as satrap of Lydia; Conon received, however, only 220 talents from Tissaphernes' confiscated properties (*Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 14.1.3), far from enough. He then went to the Persian court, having left the Athenians Hieronymus and Nicodemus in charge of the fleet. In the winter of 395-94 he sailed to Cilicia, then traveled by land to Thapsacus and down the Euphrates to Babylon, where he was received with honor and was granted unlimited funds (Diodorus, 14.81.4-6; Justin, 6.2.12-16). The king also gave him authority to choose his associate naval commander, and he selected Pharnabazus (Diodorus, 14.81.6).

Major naval operations seem to have been resumed only in August 394, when the newly appointed Spartan admiral Peisander, commanding eighty-five ships, suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Conon and Pharnabazus off Cnidus (Diodorus, 14.83.5-7; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.3.10-12). Peisander was killed, and the Athenians captured fifty triremes and 500 crewmen. Spartan naval supremacy in the Aegean Sea had thus been shattered at one blow, and many subject cities were encouraged to proclaim their autonomy (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.8.1-3; Diodorus, 14.84.3-4). Conon and Pharnabazus then turned against the Spartan garrisons on the Ionian coast and the Aegean islands; having failed to take the strategically important cities of Abydus and Sestus on the Hellespont, they cruised through the Cyclades and attacked Melus, the Laconian coast, and the isthmus of Corinth.

Pharnabazus then returned to Asia, while Conon, with the greater part of the Persian naval forces (eighty triremes), continued to cruise Greek waters (Diodorus, 14.84.4-5; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.8.7-8), entering Athens in the summer of 393 (Diodorus, 14.85.2). He completed the rebuilding of the so-



called Long Walls and the fortifications of Piraeus, with Persian funds and the assistance of crewmen from the fleet (Diodorus, 14.85.2; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.8.9-12; Demosthenes, 20.68; *Inscriptiones Graecae* II-III<sup>2</sup>, nos. 1656-64). Obviously Conon's principal goal was to ensure the independent position of Athens and to restore the city's former hegemony over the islands, though his activities are not fully described in the sources.

As a result of these activities, the Lacedaemonians renewed their alliance with Persia and sent the shrewd diplomat Antalcidas at the head of an embassy to the new Sardinian satrap, Tiribazus; they hoped for a peace treaty based on clearly delimited spheres of influence in which all Greek cities in Asia Minor would be ceded to the Persian king in exchange for recognition of the independence of the cities of the Greek mainland and islands (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.8.12-15). Conon joined with the official envoys of the anti-Spartan coalition to thwart the negotiations, even daring to visit Sardis sometime in 392. His support of the coalition's refusal to agree to the proposed terms was, however, viewed as treachery by the Persians, and he was arrested and imprisoned by Tiribazus (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.8.16; Diodorus, 14.85.4). He seems subsequently to have escaped to Cyprus, where he died soon afterward (Lysias, 19.39-41).

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