Although some scholars still refer to the period from 400 to 371 as the Spartan Hegemony, ascendancy is the more accurate term for it. At the end of the Peloponnesian War Sparta could still be reasonably considered a hegemon; but as already seen, during the ensuing years Thebes largely disavowed Spartan leadership, and Corinth conveniently ignored it. Rather than obey Sparta, Argos steadfastly opposed its traditional enemy. In some cases, states like those in Thessaly pursued their policies independent of Spartan wishes. The closest that Sparta subsequently again came to a position of hegemony was in the nine-year period between 386 and 377, when Thebes was prostrate and Athens on the defensive. Even then Sparta was not technically a hegemon, for many Greek states were independent of its leadership. For all these reasons, ascendancy is the proper term; for no one doubted Spartan might, nor did any lightly defy it.¹

A. THE SPARTAN WAR IN ASIA MINOR (400–394 BC)

Tissaphernes cared little about Sparta’s nominal status in Greece. In 400 he returned to Asia Minor armed with Artaxerxes’ charge to assume control of the entire coast. Although the Ionian cities had originally belonged to his jurisdiction, Cyrus had wrested them from him and instead installed Greek garrisons under his own command. Tissaphernes’ new orders reaffirmed his authority in Ionia and increased it to include command over those who mustered in the

Kastolos Plain. He was in fact and perhaps in title the new karanos. Inasmuch as both the Spartans and the Ionians had supported Cyrus, they could expect neither patience nor sympathy from him. He immediately demanded that Ionia be returned to him. In effect he called for the dissolution of Spartan garrisons and harmosts in Asia. All of the local satraps vowed allegiance to him. The Spartans then holding Ionia for Cyrus now had no paymaster and no idea of what response the home government would make to the crisis. They stood isolated in the midst of considerable hostile forces who intended to drive them out of Asia. Tissaphernes’ proclamation and the news of his increased power spread instant alarm through the region. Matters worsened for the Spartans, when they learned that Tamos, the only satrap who refused to obey Tissaphernes, had fled to Egypt with his fleet. This desertion left them without local naval support. Tamos’ fate was unpleasant and swift but of no comfort to the Spartans. The Egyptian king Psammetikos had no intention of harboring a traitor to the King of Persia. He executed Tamos and his family, and then appropriated his fleet and possessions. He thus showed himself friendly to the King, while strengthening his own naval power.²

The Greeks of Asia responded immediately to Tissaphernes’ arrival by sending ambassadors direct to Sparta to ask for protection. The Spartans agreed to champion their cause, and sent an official warning to Tissaphernes admonishing him not to wage war against the Greeks. Tissaphernes rejected this ultimatum. His position was clear and lawful. Ionia belonged to Persia, and he had his orders from the King himself. To obey the Spartan demand would amount to treason. Furthermore, the Persians simply demanded that Sparta honor the pledges that it had voluntarily given during the war. In 412–411 Tissaphernes, acting as the official and recognized agent of the King, had negotiated an alliance with the Spartans in which the principal terms pertaining to Asia Minor were that all of the territory

² Xen. Hell. 3.1.3; Anab. 1.1.6, 18; Diod. 14.35.2–5. H.W. Parke, jHSt 50 (1930) 37–97. J. Miller, RE 4A (1932) 2149; H. Schaefer, RE Sup. 7 (1940) 1579–1599. Karanos: Tissaphernes: Thuc. 8.5.4; Xen. Hell. 3.1.3; Cyrus: Xen. Hell. 1.4.3; Anab. 1.9.7; Pharmabazos subordinate to Tissaphernes: Xen. Hell. 3.2.12; 4.1.37; Tithraustes: Xen. Hell. 3.4.25; see also Gomme et al., HCT V.13–16. In general, see C. Haebler in Serta Indogermanica (Innsbruck 1982) 81–90; T. Petit, Les Études Classiques 51 (1983) 35–45; N. Sekunda, AMIran 21 (1988) 74.