First Persian invasion of Greece =

The first Persian invasion of Greece , during the Persian Wars , began in 492 BC , and ended with the decisive Athenian victory at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC . The invasion , consisting of two distinct campaigns , was ordered by the Persian king Darius I primarily in order to punish the city @-@ states of Athens and Eretria . These cities had supported the cities of Ionia during their revolt against Persian rule , thus incurring the wrath of Darius . Darius also saw the opportunity to extend his empire into Europe , and to secure its western frontier .

The first campaign in 492 BC , led by Mardonius , re @-@ subjugated Thrace and forced Macedon to become a fully subordinate client kingdom part of Persia , after being a vassal to Persia as early as the late 6th century BC . However , further progress was prevented when Mardonius 's fleet was wrecked in a storm off the coast of Mount Athos . The following year , having demonstrated his intentions , Darius sent ambassadors to all parts of Greece , demanding their submission . He received it from almost all of them , except Athens and Sparta , both of whom executed the ambassadors . With Athens still defiant , and Sparta now effectively at war with him , Darius ordered a further military campaign for the following year .

The second Persian campaign , in 490 BC , was under the command of Datis and Artaphernes . The expedition headed first to the island Naxos , which it captured and burnt . It then island @-@ hopped between the rest of the Cycladic Islands , annexing each into the Persian empire . Reaching Greece , the expedition landed at Eretria , which it besieged , and after a brief time , captured . Eretria was razed and its citizens enslaved . Finally , the task force headed to Attica , landing at Marathon , en route for Athens . There , it was met by a smaller Athenian army , which nevertheless proceeded to win a remarkable victory at the Battle of Marathon .

This defeat prevented the successful conclusion of the campaign , and the task force returned to Asia . Nevertheless , the expedition had fulfilled most of its aims , punishing Naxos and Eretria , and bringing much of the Aegean under Persian rule , as well as the full inclusion of Macedon . The unfinished business from this campaign led Darius to prepare for a much larger invasion of Greece , to firmly subjugate it , and to punish Athens and Sparta . However , internal strife within the empire delayed this expedition , and Darius then died of old age . It was thus left to his son Xerxes I to lead the second Persian invasion of Greece , beginning in 480 BC .

= = Background = =

The first Persian invasion of Greece had its immediate roots in the Ionian Revolt , the earliest phase of the Greco @-@ Persian Wars . However , it was also the result of the longer @-@ term interaction between the Greeks and Persians . In 500 BC the Persian Empire was still relatively young and highly expansionist , but prone to revolts amongst its subject peoples . Moreover , the Persian king Darius was a usurper , and had spent considerable time extinguishing revolts against his rule . Even before the Ionian Revolt , Darius had begun to expand the Empire into Europe , subjugating Thrace , expanding past the Danube river , conquering Paeonia , and forcing Macedon to become a client kingdom to Persia ; though the latter retaining an amount of autonomy up to 492 BC . Attempts at further expansion into the politically fractious world of Ancient Greece may have been inevitable . However , the Ionian Revolt had directly threatened the integrity of the Persian empire , and the states of mainland Greece remained a potential menace to its future stability . Darius thus resolved to subjugate and pacify Greece and the Aegean , and to punish those involved in the Ionian Revolt .

The Ionian revolt had begun with an unsuccessful expedition against Naxos , a joint venture between the Persian satrap Artaphernes and the Miletus tyrant Aristagoras . In the aftermath , Artaphernes decided to remove Aristagoras from power , but before he could do so , Aristagoras abdicated , and declared Miletus a democracy . The other Ionian cities , ripe for rebellion , followed suit , ejecting their Persian @-@ appointed tyrants , and declaring themselves democracies . Artistagoras then appealed to the states of Mainland Greece for support , but only Athens and Eretria offered to send troops .

The involvement of Athens in the Ionian Revolt arose from a complex set of circumstances , beginning with the establishment of the Athenian Democracy in the late 6th century BC In 510 BC , with the aid of Cleomenes I , King of Sparta , the Athenian people had expelled Hippias , the tyrant ruler of Athens . With Hippias 's father Peisistratus , the family had ruled for 36 out of the previous 50 years and fully intended to continue Hippias 's rule . Hippias fled to Sardis to the court of the Persian satrap , Artaphernes and promised control of Athens to the Persians if they were to help restore him . In the meantime , Cleomenes helped install a pro @-@ Spartan tyranny under Isagoras in Athens , in opposition to Cleisthenes , the leader of the traditionally powerful Alcmaeonidae family , who considered themselves the natural heirs to the rule of Athens . In a daring response , Cleisthenes proposed to the Athenian people that he would establish a ' democracy ' in Athens , much to the horror of the rest of the aristocracy . Cleisthenes 's reasons for suggesting such a radical course of action , which would remove much of his own family 's power , are unclear ; perhaps he perceived that days of aristocratic rule were coming to an end anyway ; certainly he wished to prevent Athens becoming a puppet of Sparta by whatever means necessary . However , as a result of this proposal , Cleisthenes and his family were exiled from Athens , in addition to other dissenting elements , by Isagoras . Having been promised democracy however , the Athenian people seized the moment and revolted , expelling Cleomenes and Isagoras . Cleisthenes was thus restored to Athens (507 BC) , and at breakneck speed began to establish democratic government . The establishment of democracy revolutionised Athens , which henceforth became one of the leading cities in Greece . The new @-@ found freedom and self @-@ governance of the Athenians meant that they were thereafter exceptionally hostile to the return of the tyranny of Hippias , or any form of outside subjugation ; by Sparta , Persia or anyone else .

Cleomenes , unsurprisingly , was not pleased with events , and marched on Athens with the Spartan army . Cleomenes 's attempts to restore Isagoras to Athens ended in a debacle , but fearing the worst , the Athenians had by this point already sent an embassy to Artaphernes in Sardis , to request aid from the Persian Empire . Artaphernes requested that the Athenians give him a ' earth and water ' , a traditional token of submission , which the Athenian ambassadors acquiesced to . However , they were severely censured for this when they returned to Athens . At some point later Cleomenes instigated a plot to restore Hippias to the rule of Athens . This failed and Hippias again fled to Sardis and tried to persuade the Persians to subjugate Athens . The Athenians dispatched ambassadors to Artaphernes to dissuade him from taking action , but Artaphernes merely instructed the Athenians to take Hippias back as tyrant . Needless to say , the Athenians balked at this , and resolved instead to be openly at war with Persia . Having thus become the enemy of Persia , Athens was already in a position to support the Ionian cities when they began their revolt . The fact that the Ionian democracies were inspired by the example of Athens no doubt further persuaded the Athenians to support the Ionian Revolt ; especially since the cities of Ionia were (supposedly) originally Athenian colonies .

The city of Eretria also sent assistance to the Ionians for reasons that are not completely clear . Possibly commercial reasons were a factor ; Eretria was a mercantile city , whose trade was threatened by Persian dominance of the Aegean . Herodotus suggests that the Eretrians supported the revolt in order to repay the support the Milesians had given Eretria in a past war against Chalcis .

The Athenians and Eretrians sent a task force of 25 triremes to Asia Minor . Whilst there , the Greek army surprised and outmaneuvered Artaphernes , marching to Sardis and there burning the lower city . However , this was as much as the Greeks achieved , and they were then pursued back to the coast by Persian horsemen , losing many men in the process . Despite the fact their actions were ultimately fruitless , the Eretrians and in particular the Athenians had earned Darius 's lasting enmity , and he vowed to punish both cities . The Persian naval victory at the Battle of Lade (494 BC) all but ended the Ionian Revolt , and by 493 BC , the last hold @-@ outs were vanquished by the Persian fleet . The revolt was used as an opportunity by Darius to extend the empire 's border to the islands of the East Aegean and the Propontis , which had not been part of the Persian dominions before . The completion of the pacification of Ionia allowed the Persians to begin planning their next moves ; to extinguish the threat to the empire from Greece , and to punish Athens and Eretria .

492 BC : Mardonius 's campaign

In the spring of 492 BC an expeditionary force , to be commanded by Darius 's son @-@ in @-@ law Mardonius was assembled , consisting of a fleet and a land army . Whilst the ultimate aim was to punish Athens and Eretria , the expedition also aimed to subdue as many of the Greek cities as possible . Departing from Cilicia , Mardonius sent the army to march to the Hellespont , whilst he travelled with the fleet . He sailed round the coast of Asia Minor to Ionia , where he spent a short time abolishing the tyrannies that ruled the cities of Ionia . Ironically , since the establishment of democracies had been a key factor in the Ionian Revolt , he replaced the tyrannies with democracies .

From thence the fleet continued on to the Hellespont , and when all was ready , shipped the land forces across to Europe . The army then marched through Thrace , re @-@ subjugating it , since these lands had already been added to the Persian empire in 512 BC , during Darius 's campaign against the Scythians . Upon reaching Macedon , the Persians forced Macedonia to become a fully subordinate part of the Persians ; they had been vassals of the Persians since the late 6th century BC , but retained their general autonomy .

Meanwhile , the fleet crossed to Thassos , resulting in the Thasians submitting to the Persians . The fleet then rounded the coastline as far as Acanthus in Chalcidice , before attempting to round the headland of Mount Athos . However , they were caught in a violent storm , which drove them against the coastline of Athos , wrecking (according to Herodotus) 300 ships , with the loss of 20 @,@ 000 men .

Then , whilst the army was camped in Macedon , the Brygians , a local Thracian tribe , launched a night raid against the Persian camp , killing many of the Persians , and wounding Mardonius . Despite his injury , Mardonius made sure that the Brygians were defeated and subjugated , before leading his army back to the Hellespont ; the remnants of the navy also retreated to Asia . Although this campaign ended ingloriously , the land approaches to Greece had been secured , and the Greeks had no doubt been made aware of Darius 's intentions for them .

491 BC : Diplomacy

Perhaps reasoning that the expedition of the previous year may have made his plans for Greece obvious , and weakened the resolve of the Greek cities , Darius turned to diplomacy in 491 BC . He sent ambassadors to all the Greek city states , asking for " earth and water " , a traditional token of submission . The vast majority of cities did as asked , fearing the wrath of Darius . In Athens , however , the ambassadors were put on trial and then executed ; in Sparta , they were simply thrown down a well . This firmly and finally drew the battle @-@ lines for the coming conflict ; Sparta and Athens , despite their recent enmity , would together fight the Persians .

However , Sparta was then thrown into disarray by internal machinations . The citizens of Aegina had submitted to the Persian ambassadors , and the Athenians , troubled by the possibility of Persia using Aegina as a naval base , asked Sparta to intervene . Cleomenes travelled to Aegina to confront the Aeginetans personally , but they appealed to Cleomenes 's fellow king Demaratus , who supported their stance . Cleomenes responded by having Demaratus declared illegitimate , with the help of the priests at Delphi (whom he bribed) ; Demaratus was replaced by his cousin Leotychides . Now faced with two Spartan kings , the Aeginetans capitulated , and handed over hostages to the Athenians as a guarantee of their good behaviour . However , in Sparta news emerged of the bribes Cleomenes had given at Delphi , and he was expelled from the city . He then sought to rally the northern Peloponnesus to his cause , at which the Spartans relented , and invited him back to the city . By 491 BC though , Cleomenes was widely considered insane and was sentenced to prison where he was found dead the following day . Cleomenes was succeeded by his half @-@ brother Leonidas I.

490 BC : Datis and Artaphernes ' campaign

Taking advantage of the chaos in Sparta , which effectively left Athens isolated , Darius decided to launch an amphibious expedition to finally punish Athens and Eretria . An army was assembled in Susa , and marched into Cilicia , where a fleet had been gathered . Command of the expedition was given to Datis the Mede and Artaphernes , son of the satrap Artaphernes .

= = = Size of the Persian force = = =

According to Herodotus , the fleet sent by Darius consisted of 600 triremes . There is no indication in the historical sources of how many transport ships accompanied them , if any . Herodotus claimed that 3 @,@ 000 transport ships accompanied 1 @,@ 207 triremes during Xerxes 's invasion in 480 BC . Amongst modern historians , some have accepted this number of ships as reasonable ; it has been suggested either that the number 600 represents the combined number of triremes and transport ships , or that there were horse transports in addition to 600 triremes .

Herodotus does not estimate the size of the Persian army , only saying that they formed a " large infantry that was well packed " . Among other ancient sources , the poet Simonides , a near @-@ contemporary , says the campaign force numbered 200 @,@ 000 , while a later writer , the Roman Cornelius Nepos estimates 200 @,@ 000 infantry and 10 @,@ 000 cavalry . Plutarch and Pausanias both independently give 300 @,@ 000 , as does the Suda dictionary ; Plato and Lysias assert 500 @,@ 000 ; and Justin 600 @,@ 000 .

Modern historians generally dismiss these numbers as exaggerations . One approach to estimate the number of troops is to calculate the number of marines carried by 600 triremes . Herodotus tells us that each trireme in the second invasion of Greece carried 30 extra marines , in addition to a probable 14 standard marines . Thus , 600 triremes could easily have carried 18 @,@ 000 ? 26 @,@ 000 infantry . Numbers proposed for the Persian infantry are in the range 18 @,@ 000 ? 100 @,@ 000 . However , the consensus is around 25 @,@ 000 .

The Persian infantry used in the invasion was probably a heterogeneous group drawn from across the empire . However , according to Herodotus , there was at least a general conformity in the type of armour and style of fighting . The troops were , generally speaking , armed with a bow , ' short spear ' and sword , carried a wicker shield , and wore at most a leather jerkin . The one exception to this may have been the ethnic Persian troops , who may have worn a corslet of scaled armour . Some of contingents would have been armed somewhat differently ; for instance , the Saka were renowned axemen . The ' elite ' contingents of the Persian infantry seem to have been the ethnic Persians , Medians , Cissians and the Saka ; Herodotus specifically mentions the presence of Persians and Saka at Marathon . The style of fighting used by the Persians was probably to stand off from an enemy , using their bows (or equivalent) to wear down the enemy before closing in to deliver the coup de grace with spear and sword .

Estimates for the cavalry are usually in the 1 @,@ 000 ? 3 @,@ 000 range . The Persian cavalry was usually provided by the ethnic Persians , Bactrians , Medes , Cissians , and Saka ; most of these probably fought as lightly armed missile cavalry . The fleet must have had at least some proportion of transport ships , since the cavalry was carried by ship ; whilst Herodotus claims the cavalry was carried in the triremes , this is improbable . Lazenby estimates 30 ? 40 transport ships would be required to carry 1 @,@ 000 cavalry .

= = = Lindos = = =

Once assembled , the Persian force sailed from Cilicia firstly to the island of Rhodes . A Lindian Temple Chronicle records that Datis besieged the city of Lindos , but was unsuccessful .

= = = Naxos = = =

The fleet then moved north along the Ionian coast towards Samos , before abruptly turning west into the Aegean Sea . The fleet sailed next to Naxos , in order to punish the Naxians for their

resistance to the failed expedition that the Persians had mounted there a decade earlier . Many of the inhabitants fled to the mountains ; those that the Persians caught were enslaved . The Persians then burnt the city and temples of the Naxians .

The Cyclades

Moving on , the Persian fleet approached Delos , whereupon the Delians also fled from their homes . Having demonstrated Persian power at Naxos , Datis now intended to show clemency to the other islands , if they submitted to him . He sent a herald to the Delians , proclaiming :
" Holy men , why have you fled away , and so misjudged my intent ? It is my own desire , and the king 's command to me , to do no harm to the land where the two gods were born , neither to the land itself nor to its inhabitants . So return now to your homes and dwell on your island . "
Datis then burned 300 talents of frankincense on the altar of Apollo on Delos , to show his respect for one of the gods of the island . The fleet then proceeded to island @-@ hop across the rest of Aegean on its way to Eretria , taking hostages and troops from each island .

Karystos

The Persians finally arrived off the southern tip of Euboea , at Karystos . The citizens of Karystos refused to give hostages to the Persians , so they were besieged , and their land ravaged , until they submitted to the Persians .

Siege of Eretria

The task force then sailed around Euboea to the first major target , Eretria . According to Herodotus , the Eretrians were divided amongst themselves as to the best course of action ; whether to flee to the highlands , or undergo a siege , or to submit to the Persians . In the event , the majority decision was to remain in the city . The Eretrians made no attempt to stop the Persians landing , or advancing , and thus allowed themselves to be besieged . For six days the Persians attacked the walls , with losses on both sides ; however , on the seventh day two reputable Eretrians opened the gates and betrayed the city to the Persians . The city was razed , and temples and shrines were looted and burned . Furthermore , according to Darius 's commands , the Persians enslaved all the remaining townspeople .

Battle of Marathon

The Persian fleet next headed south down the coast of Attica , landing at the bay of Marathon , roughly 25 miles (40 km) from Athens , on the advice of Hippias , son of the former tyrant of Athens , Peisistratus . The Athenians , joined by a small force from Plataea , marched to Marathon , and succeeded in blocking the two exits from the plain of Marathon . At the same time , Athens ' greatest runner , Pheidippides (or Philippides) was sent to Sparta to request that the Spartan army march to Athens ' aid . Pheidippides arrived during the festival of Carneia , a sacrosanct period of peace , and was informed that the Spartan army could not march to war until the full moon rose ; Athens could not expect reinforcement for at least ten days . They decided to hold out at Marathon for the time being , and they were reinforced by a contingent of hoplites from Plataea .
Stalemate ensued for five days , before the Athenians (for reasons that are not completely clear) decided to attack the Persians . Despite the numerical advantage of the Persians , the hoplites proved devastatingly effective , routing the Persians wings before turning in on the centre of the Persian line ; the remnants of the Persian army left the battle and fled to their ships . Herodotus records that 6 @,@ 400 Persian bodies were counted on the battlefield ; the Athenians lost just 192 men and the Plataeans 11 .
In the immediate aftermath of the battle , Herodotus says that the Persian fleet sailed around Cape Sunium to attack Athens directly , although some modern historians place this attempt just before

the battle . Either way , the Athenians evidently realised that their city was still under threat , and marched as quickly as possible back to Athens . The Athenians arrived in time to prevent the Persians from securing a landing , and seeing that the opportunity was lost , the Persians turned about and returned to Asia . On the next day , the Spartan army arrived , having covered the 220 kilometers (140 mi) in only three days . The Spartans toured the battlefield at Marathon , and agreed that the Athenians had won a great victory .

= = Aftermath = =

The defeat at Marathon ended for the time being the Persian invasion of Greece . However , Thrace and the Cycladic islands had been resubjugated into the Persian empire , and Macedon reduced to a subordinate kingdom part of the empire ; since the late 6th century BC they had been vassals of the Persians , but remained having a broad scope of autonomy . Darius was still fully intent on conquering Greece , to secure the western part of his empire . Moreover , Athens remained unpunished for its role in the Ionian Revolt , and both Athens and Sparta were unpunished for their treatment of the Persian ambassadors .
Darius therefore began raising a huge new army with which he meant to completely subjugate Greece ; however , in 486 BC , his Egyptian subjects revolted , indefinitely postponing any Greek expedition . Darius then died whilst preparing to march on Egypt , and the throne of Persia passed to his son Xerxes I. Xerxes crushed the Egyptian revolt , and very quickly restarted the preparations for the invasion of Greece . This expedition was finally ready by 480 BC , and the second Persian invasion of Greece thereby began , under the command of Xerxes himself .

= = Significance = =

For the Persians , the two expeditions to Greece had been largely successful ; new territories had been added to their empire and Eretria had been punished . It was only a minor setback that the invasion had met defeat at Marathon ; that defeat barely dented the enormous resources of the Persian empire . Yet , for the Greeks , it was an enormously significant victory . It was the first time that Greeks had beaten the Persians , and showed them that the Persians were not invincible , and that resistance , rather than subjugation , was possible .
The victory at Marathon was a defining moment for the young Athenian democracy , showing what might be achieved through unity and self @-@ belief ; indeed , the battle effectively marks the start of a ' golden age ' for Athens . This was also applicable to Greece as a whole ; " their victory endowed the Greeks with a faith in their destiny that was to endure for three centuries , during which western culture was born " . John Stuart Mill 's famous opinion was that " the Battle of Marathon , even as an event in British history , is more important than the Battle of Hastings " .
Militarily , a major lesson for the Greeks was the potential of the hoplite phalanx . This style had developed during internecine warfare amongst the Greeks ; since each city @-@ state fought in the same way , the advantages and disadvantages of the hoplite phalanx had not been obvious . Marathon was the first time a phalanx faced more lightly armed troops , and revealed how devastating the hoplites could be in battle . The phalanx formation was still vulnerable to cavalry (the cause of much caution by the Greek forces at the Battle of Plataea) , but used in the right circumstances , it was now shown to be a potentially devastating weapon . The Persians seem to have more @-@ or @-@ less disregarded the military lessons of Marathon . The composition of infantry for the second invasion seems to have been the same as during the first , despite the availability of hoplites and other heavy infantry in Persian @-@ ruled lands . Having won battles against hoplites previously , the Persians may simply have regarded Marathon as an aberration .

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