= Siege of Eretria =

The Siege of Eretria took place in 490 BC , during the first Persian invasion of Greece . The city of Eretria , on Euboea , was besieged by a strong Persian force under the command of Datis and Artaphernes .

The first Persian invasion was a response to Greek involvement in the Ionian Revolt , when the Eretrians and Athenians had sent a force to support the cities of Ionia in their attempt to overthrow Persian rule . The Eretrian and Athenian force had succeeded in capturing and burning Sardis (the regional capital of Persia) , but was then forced to retreat with heavy losses . In response to this raid , the Persian king Darius I swore to have revenge on Athens and Eretria .

Once the Ionian revolt was finally crushed by the Persian victory at the Battle of Lade , Darius began to plan to subjugate Greece . In 490 BC , he sent a naval task force under Datis and Artaphernes across the Aegean to subjugate the Cyclades , and then to make punitive attacks on Athens and Eretria . Reaching Euboea in mid @-@ summer after a successful campaign in the Aegean , the Persians proceeded to put Eretria under siege . The siege lasted six days before a fifth column of Eretrian nobles betrayed the city to the Persians . The city was plundered , and the population enslaved on Darius 's orders . The Eretrian prisoners were eventually taken to Persia and settled as colonists in Cissia .

After Eretria , the Persian force sailed for Athens , landing at the bay of Marathon . An Athenian army marched to meet them , and won a famous victory at the Battle of Marathon , thereby ending the first Persian invasion .

= = 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 expansionistic , 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 , and forcing Macedon to become a vassal of Persia . 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 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 reasons that Eretria sent assistance to the Ionians 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 to aid the revolt . 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 .

In 492 BC , once the Ionian Revolt had finally been crushed , Darius dispatched an expedition to Greece under the command of his son @-@ in @-@ law , Mardonius . Mardonius re @-@ conquered Thrace and compelled Alexander I of Macedon to make Macedon a client kingdom to Persia , before the wrecking of his fleet brought a premature end to the campaign . However , in 490 BC , following up the successes of the previous campaign , Darius decided to send a maritime expedition led by Artaphernes , (son of the satrap to whom Hippias had fled) and Datis , a Median admiral . Mardonius had been injured in the prior campaign and had fallen out of favor . The expedition was intended to bring the Cyclades into the Persian empire , to punish Naxos (which had resisted a Persian assault in 499 BC) and then to head to Greece to force Eretria and Athens to submit to Darius or be destroyed . After island hopping across the Aegean , including successfully attacking Naxos , the Persian task force arrived off Euboea in mid summer , ready to fulfil their second major objective - to punish Eretria .

= = Prelude = =

When the Eretrians had discovered that the Persian task force was heading to attack them , they had appealed to the Athenians to send reinforcements . The Athenians agreed to this , and instructed the 4 @,@ 000 Athenian colonists from the nearby Euboean city of Chalcis to aid the Eretrians . These colonists had been planted on Chalcidian land after Athens had defeated Chalcis some 20 years previously . However , when these Athenians arrived at Eretria , they were told by a leading citizen , Aeschines , of the divisions amongst the Eretrians , and he advised them to leave and save themselves . The Athenians followed Aeschines ' advice and sailed to Oropus , thus avoiding the fate of the Eretrians .

The Eretrians failed to come to a clear plan of action ; in Herodotus 's words " it seems that all the plans of the Eretrians were unsound ; they sent to the Athenians for aid , but their counsels were divided " . There were three competing plans - one group wanted to surrender to the Persians , seeking to profit thereby , others wanted to flee to the hills above Eretria , whilst others wanted to fight . However , when the Persians landed in their territory the Eretrians , some consensus was obviously reached not to leave the city , but to try to withstand a siege , if possible .

= = Opposing forces = =

= = = Eretrians = = =

Herodotus does not estimate numbers for the Eretrians . Presumably , the majority of the citizen body would have been involved in the defence of the city , but the population of Eretria at the time cannot be clearly established .

= = = Persians = = =

According to Herodotus , the fleet sent by Darius consisted of 600 triremes . Herodotus does not estimate the size of the Persian army , only saying that they were a " large infantry that was well packed " . Among ancient sources , the poet Simonides , another 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 , of which only 100 @,@ 000 fought in the battle , while the rest were loaded into the fleet that was rounding Cape Sounion ; Plutarch and Pausanias both independently give 300 @,@ 000 , as does the Suda dictionary . Plato and Lysias

assert 500 @,@ 000 ; and Justinus 600 @,@ 000 .
 Modern historians have proposed wide ranging numbers for the infantry , from 20 @,@ 000 ? 100 @,@ 000 with a consensus of perhaps 25 @,@ 000 ; estimates for the cavalry are in the range of 1 @,@ 000

= = Siege = =

 The Eretrian strategy was to defend their walls , and undergo a siege . Possibly this was the only plan that could be agreed on , or became the default option when no plan was agreed . At any rate , since the Persian army had only suffered two defeats in the last century , and since a Greek army had never successfully fought the Persians , this was probably a sensible strategy . Since the Persians arrived by ship , it is probable they had little siege equipment , and indeed , they had already been foiled in the siege of Lindos earlier in the expedition .
 The Persians landed their army at three separate locations , disembarked , and made straight for Eretria . The Persians then began besieging the city . Rather than passively besieging the city , the Persians seem to have vigorously attacked the walls . Herodotus reports that the fighting was fierce and both sides suffered heavy losses . However , after six days of fighting , two eminent Eretrians , Euphorbus and Philagrus , opened the gates for the Persians . Once inside the city , the Persians plundered the city , burning the temples and sanctuaries in revenge for the burning of Sardis . Those citizens who were captured were enslaved , as Darius had ordered .

= = Aftermath = =

 After staying at Eretria for a few days , the Persians made their way down the coast towards Attica . The Persians dropped the captured Eretrians off on the island of Aegilia , before landing at the bay of Marathon in Attica . The Persians ' next target was Athens . However , the Athenians had marched out from Athens to meet the Persians , and blocked the exits from the plains of Marathon . After several days of stalemate , the Athenians finally resolved to attack the Persians , winning a famous victory at the ensuing Battle of Marathon . After the battle , the remaining Persians fled to their ships , picked up the Eretrians from Aegilia , and then sailed back to Asia Minor , thereby ending the campaign , and the first Persian invasion of Greece .
 When the Persian fleet arrived in Asia Minor , Datis and Artaphernes took the Eretrians before Darius in Susa . The Eretrians were not harmed by Darius who decided to settle them in the town of Ardericca in Cissia . They were still there , using their own language and customs , when Herodotus wrote his history , and were encountered by Alexander the Great during his conquest of Persia a further century later .
 In the meanwhile , Darius 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 . The epic second Persian invasion of Greece finally began in 480 BC , and the Persians met with initial success at the battles of Thermopylae and Artemisium . However , defeat at the Battle of Salamis would be the turning point in the campaign , and the next year the expedition was ended by the decisive Greek victory at the Battle of Plataea .

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