**Herodotus, *Histories* (Penguin Classics) (ISBN-13: 978-0140449082)**

* 6.42–49; 6.94–117; 6.120–124
* 7.1; 7.5–10h; 7.49–50; 7.102; 7.131–133; 7.138–139; 7.141–145; 7.151–152; 7.174–175; 7.207; 7.219–222; 7.228.2
* 8.1–3; 8.49–50; 8.56–63; 8.74; 8.94; 8.100–103; 8.143–144
* 9.1–3; 9.6–8; 9.16–18; 9.40; 9.62–64; 9.71; 9.98–99; 9.105–106

**Herodotus, 6.42-49 (p.374-376)**

During the course of this year no further hostile measures were undertaken by the Persians against Ionia; on the contrary, something was done greatly to its advantage. Artaphernes, governor of Sardis, sent for representatives from all the Ionian states and forced them to bind themselves by oath to settle their differences by arbitration, instead of raiding. In addition to this, he had their territories surveyed and measured in parasangs (the Persian equivalent of 30 furlongs), and settled the tax which each state was to pay at a figure, which has remained unaltered down to my time. The amount was, moreover, much the same as it had previously been.

These measures were conducive to peace. Then in the following spring, Darius superseded all his other generals and sent Mardonius, the son of Gobryas, down to the coast in command of a very large force, both military and naval. Mardonius was still a young man and had recently married Darius’ daughter Artozostra. Reaching Cilicia with his army, he took ship and continued along the coast in company with the fleet, leaving other officers to conduct the troops to the Hellespont. When in the course of this voyage along the Asiatic coast he reached Ionia, he did something that will come as a great marvel to those Greeks who cannot believe Otanes declared to the seven conspirators that Persia should have a democratic government: he suppressed the tyrants in all of the Ionian states and set up democratic institutions in their place. He then hurried on towards the Hellespont. Having got together a formidable fleet and army, he ferried the troops across the strait and began his march through Europe, with Eretria and Athens as his main objectives. At any rate, the two places were the professed object of the expedition, though in fact the Persians intended to subjugate as many Greek towns as they could. Their fleet subdued Thasos without resistance, and the troops on land added the Macedonians to the list of Darius’ subjects. All the people on the hither side of Macedonia were subjects already.

From Thasos the fleet stood across to the mainland and proceeded along the coast to Acanthus, and from there attempted to double Athos; but before they were round this promontory, they were caught by a violent northern gale, which proved too much for the ships to cope with. A great many of them were driven ashore and wrecked on Athos – indeed, report says that something like three hundred were lost with over twenty thousand men. The sea in the neighbourhood of Athos is full of monsters, so that those of the ships’ companies who were not dashed to pieces on the rocks were seized and devoured. Others, unable to swim, were drowned; others, again, died of cold.

While this disaster was overtaking the fleet, on land Mardonius and his army in Macedonia were attached in camp one night by the Brygi, a Thracian tribe. The Persian losses were heavy, and Mardonius himself was wounded. But even so the Brygi did not escape subjection; for Mardonius did not leave their country until he had subdued them.

However, the casualties his army had suffered by the attack of the Brygi, and the fearful losses of the fleet at Athos, now induced Mardonius to begin his retreat. The whole force, therefore, returned to Asia in disgrace.

Next year Darius, on the strength of a tale put about by their neighbours that the people of Thasos were planning a revolt, sent them an order to dismantle their defences and bring their fleet across to Abdera. The islanders of Thasos after they had been blockaded by Histiaeus of Miletus had determined to apply their ample resources to building warships and stronger fortifications. The island’s income was derived partly from property on the mainland and partly from mines: the gold mines at Scapte Hyle yielded in all eighty talents a year, those in the island itself rather less, but a good sum all the same, so that the islanders, without raising any tax on their own produce, enjoyed, from the mines and the mainland, a revenue of two hundred talents – and, in a particularly good year, of as much as three hundred. I have seen these mines myself; much the most remarkable are those discovered by the Phoenicians who came with Thasos the son of Phoenix to colonize the island, which has since borne his name. These Phoenician mines lie between Coenyra and a palace called Aenyra on the south-eastern side of Thasos, facing Samothrace. A whole mountain has been turned upside down in the search for gold. In spite of all this, however, the islanders obeyed Darius’ order, pulled down their fortifications and sent their whole fleet over to Abdera.

Darius now began to test the attitude of the Greeks, and to find out whether they were likely to resist or surrender. He sent heralds to the various Greek states demand earth and water for the king, and at the same time he sent orders to the Asiatic coast towns, which were already tributary, for the provision of warships and transport vessels to carry cavalry. While these were being prepared, the heralds in Greece obtained what they asked from many of the towns on the mainland and from all the islanders whom they visited with their request. Amongst the islanders, moreover, who gave the sign of submission, were the Aeginetans.

This act on the part of Aegina produced an immediate reaction from the Athenians, who supposed that the Aeginetans had submitted out of enmity to themselves and intended to join the Persian attack upon them; at once, therefore (and they were not sorry to have the excuse), they entered into correspondence with Sparta and accused the Aeginetans of being traitors to Greece.

*Persian War, Greek Rivalry, Persian tactics*

**Herodotus, 6.94–117 (p. 394-403)**

While Athens and Aegina were at each other’s throats, the King of Persia continued to mature his plans. His servants never failed to repeat to him the words ‘Remember Athens’; the Pisistratidae, with their slanderous attacks upon the Athenians, were still with him, and besides, he himself was anxious to have an excuse to conquer all the Greek communities which refused to give earth and water. In consequence of the ill success of his previous expedition, he relieved Mardonius of his command, and appointed other generals, whom he proposed to send against Eretria and Athens, Datis, a Mede, and his own nephew, Artaphernes, son of the other Artaphernes, and their orders were to reduce Athens and Eretria to slavery and to bring the slaves before the king.

The new commanders left the court and with a powerful and well-equipped force made for the Aleian plain in Cilicia. Here they halted and were joined by the naval contingent - all the ships and men which the various subject communities had been ordered to supply - including the horse transports which Darius had requisitioned from his tributary states the year before. The horses were embarked in the transports, the troops in the ships of war, and, six hundred triremes strong, they sailed to Ionia. From there they did not follow the coast to the Hellespont and Thrace, but started from Samos and sailed across the Icarian Sea and through the islands, presumably because the commanders dreaded the passage round Athos, which in the previous year had been the cause of so terrible a disaster. Another reason which constrained them to take this course was their previous failure to capture Naxos, which was now the first objective in the war. On their arrival, at the island from the sea of Icaria, Persians caught some of them, carried them off to slavery, and burnt the city, temples and all. They then put to sea again, to attack the other islands.

While the Persians were thus employed, the inhabitants of Delos left their island and fled to Telos; and as the Persian fleet was coming in from seaward, Datis sailed on in advance and issued an order to the ships to come to anchor not at Delos, but at Rhenaea, opposite. He then ascertained where the Delians were, and sent them a message in the following words: ‘Reverend sirs, what strange opinion have you conceived of me, thus to disappear? I surely have sense enough – even without the king’s orders – to spare the island in which Apollo and Artemis were born, and to do no harm either to its soil or to its people. I beg you, therefore, to return to your homes, in the island which belongs to you.’ Datis followed the message by piling three hundred talents-weight of frankincense upon the altar, and burning it as an offering. He then left Delos and sailed with his army for Eretria, taking with him both Ionians and Aeolians.

The Delians declared that after his departure the islands was shaken by an earthquake – the first and the last shock ever experienced there up to my time. It may well be that the shock was an act of God to warn men of the troubles that were on the way; for indeed, during the three generations comprising the reigns of Darius the son of Hystaspes, and of his son Xerxes and his grandson Artaxerxes, Greece suffered more evils than in the twenty generations before Darius was born – partly from the Persian wars, partly from her own internal struggles for supremacy. IN view of this, it is not surprising that there should have been an earthquake in Delos, where there had never been an earthquake before. Besides, there was an oracle, which contained the words,

Delos too I will shake, though it has never been shaken

Darius is equivalent to ‘Worker’ in Greek; Xerxes means ‘Warrior’, and Artaxerxes means ‘Great Warrior’.

Sailing from Delos the Persians proceeded to make the rounds of the other island, touching at each, pressing troops for service, and taking the islanders’ children as hostages. They also visited Carystus and, when the people of the place refused to give hostages or supply men to fight against neighbours – by which they meant Athens and Eretria - they laid siege to the town and destroyed the crops in the surrounding country, until they Carystians were forced to do what the Persians demanded.

In Eretria at the news of the Persian approach the people at once called to Athens for help and the call was not refused, for the Athenians sent to their assistance the four thousand men whom they had previously settled on the estates of the wealthier Chalcideans. Nevertheless, in spite of appeals to Athens, things at Eretria were not in a healthy state, there was no firm resolve, and counsels were divided; one party proposed abandoning the town and taking refuge in the Euboean hills, another - having an eye to some gain from the Persians – was one of the leading men of Eretria, came to know of what was afoot, he at once proceeded to act; he disclosed the whole situation to those of the Athenians who had already arrived, and urged them to go home again before they were involved in the catastrophe which was bound to come. They took Aeschines’ advice, and got safe away by crossing to Oropus.

Meanwhile the Persian fleet brought up at Tamytnae, Choereae, and Aegilia – all three places in Eretrian territory. The horses were immediately put ashore, and preparations for an assault began. The Eretrians had no intention of leaving their defences to meet the coming attack in the open; their one concern (the proposal not to abandon the town having been carried away) was to defend their walls – if they could.

The assault soon came, and there was weight behind it. For six days fighting continued with many killed on both sides; then, on the seventh, two well-known Eretrians, Euphorbus the son of Alcimachus and Philagrus the son of Cyneas, betrayed the town to the enemy. The Persians entered, and stripped the temples bare and burnt them in revenge for the nurnt temples of Sardis, and, in accordance with Darius’ orders, carried off all the inhabitants as slaves.

Having mastered Eretria the Persians waited a few days and then sailed for Attica, flushed with victory and confident that they would treat Athens in the same way.

The part of Attic territory nearest Eretria – an also the best ground for cavalry to manoeuvre in – was at Marathon. To Marathon, therefore, Hippias the son of Pisistratus directed the invading army, and the Athenians, as soon as the news arrived, hurried to meet it.

The Athenian troops were commanded by ten generals, of whom the tenth Miltiades. Miltiades’ father, Cimon the son of Stesagoras, had been banished from Athens by Pisistratus, the son of Hippocrates. While in exile he had the good fortune to win the chariot race at Olympia, thereby gaining the same distinction as his half-brother Miltiades. At the next games he won the prize again with the same team of mares, but this time waived his victory in favour of Pisistratus, and for allowing that latter to be proclaimed the winner was given leave to return to Athens. At a later Olympic festival he won a third time, still with the same four mares. Soon after, Pisistratus having died, he was murdered by Pisistratus’ sons, who sent some men to waylay him one night near the Council House. He was buried outside Athens, beyond what is called the Sunk Road, and opposite his grave were buried the mares which had thrice won the chariot race. This triple victory had once before been achieved by a single team, that of Euagoras the Laconian; but there are no other instances of it. At the time of Cimon’s death, Stesagoras, the elder of his two sons, was living in the Chersonese with Miltiades after the founder of the settlement in the Chersonese, was with his father in Athens.

It was this Miltiades who was now an Athenian general. He had recently escaped from the Chersonese and twice nearly lost his life – once when the Phoenicians chased him as far as Imbrosin their anxiety to catch him and take him to Darius, and again when, after escaping that danger and getting home to what looked like safety, he found his enemies waiting for him and was prosecuted in the courts for his tyranny in the Chersonese. But he escaped this too, and after the trial was elected a general by the people.

Before they left the city, the Athenian generals sent off a message to Sparta. The Messenger was an Athenian name Pheidippides, a professional long-distance runner. According to the account he gave the Athenians on his return, Pheidippides met the god Pan on Mt Parthenium above Tegea. Pan, he said, called him by name and told him to ask the Athenians why they paid him no attention, in spite of his friendliness towards them and the fact that he had often be useful to them in the past, and would be so again in the future. The Athenians believed Pheidippides’ story, and when their affairs were once more in a prosperous state, they built a shrine to Pan under the Acropolis and from the time his message was received they have held an annual ceremony, with a torch-race and sacrifices, to court his protection.

On the occasion of which I speak – when Pheidippides, that is, was sent on his mission by the Athenian commanders and said that he saw Pan – he reached Sparta the day after he left Athens and delivered his message to the Spartan government. ‘Men of Sparta’ (the message ran), ‘the Athenians ask you to help them, and not to stand by while the most ancient city of Greece is crushed and enslaved by a foreign invader; for even now Eretria, has been enslaved, and Greece is the weaker by the loss of one fine city.’ The Spartans, though moved by the appeal, and willing to send help to Athens, were unable to send it promptly because they did not wish to break their law. It was the ninth day of the month and they said they could not take the field until the moon was full. So they waited for the full moon, and meanwhile Hippias, the son of Pisistratus, guided the Persians to Marathon.

The previous night Hippias had dreamed that he was sleeping with his mother, and he supposed that the dream meant that he would return to Athens, recover his power, and die peacefully at home in old age. So much for his interpretation. On the following day when he was acting as a guide to the invaders, he put the prisoners from Eretria ashore in Aegilia, an island belonging to the town of Styra, led the fleet to its anchorage at Marathon, and got the troops into positon when they had disembarked. While he was busy with all this, he happened to be seized by an unusually violent fit of sneezing and coughing, and, as he was an oldish man, and most of his teeth were loose, he coughed one of them right out of his mouth. It fell somewhere in the sand, and though he searched and searched in his efforts to find it, it was nowhere to be seen. Hippias, then turned to his companions, and said with a deep groan: ‘This land is not ours; we shall never be able to conquer it. The only part I ever had in it my tooth now possesses.’ So the meaning of the dream was now clear to him.

The Athenian troops were drawn up on a piece of ground sacred to Heracles, when they were joined by the Plataeans, who came to support them with every available man. Some time before this the Plataeans had surrendered their independence to the Athenians, who had, in turn, already rendered services to the Plataea on many occasions and in difficult circumstances. The way it happened was this: Plataea was being hard pressed by Thebes, and as Cleomenes the son of Anaxandrides happened to be in the neighbourhood with a Spartan army, the Plataeans first thought of putting themselves into Spartan hands. The Spartans, however, refused the offer: ‘We live too far apart and an alliance with us would be cold comfort to you; you might be carried off into slavery several times over before any of us even heard of it. Our advice is that you make your surrender to Athens – Athens is your neighbour, and Athenian help is by no means to be despised.’ The advice did not proceed from goodwill towards Plataea, but merely from the Spartan’s desire to embroil Athens in quarrels with the Boeotians. Nevertheless the advice was taken: representatives from Plataea, while the Athenians were engaged in offering sacrifice to the Twelve Gods, came and sat by the altar, to make their solemn request, and the act of surrender was completed.

When the Thebans heard what the Plataeans had done, they at once sent an army against them. The Athenians hurried to their defence, and a fight was on the point of beginning when the Corinthians intervened. They came up, and as both sides submitted their dispute to their arbitration, they fixed the boundary between the countries, with the condition that there should be no interference from Thebes with any Boeotians who might not wish to belong to the Boeotian state. The Corinthians after making this decision left for home, and the Athenians had also started on their return march, when they were set upon by the Boeotians. In the fight which ensued the Athenians were victorious, and they followed up their victory by crossing the borderline which the Corinthians had fixed for Plataea, and making the river Asopus the frontier between the territory of Thebes on the one side, and of Plataea and Hysiae on the other. These were the circumstances under which the people of Plataea put themselves into Athenian hands, and which led to their coming to the support of Athens at Marathon.

Amongst the Athenian commanders opinion was divided: some were against risking battle, on the ground that the Athenian force was too small to stand a chance of success; others – and amongst them Miltiades – urged it. It seemed for a time as if the more faint-hearted policy would be adopted – and so it would have been but for the action of Miltiades. In addition to the ten generals, there was another person entitled to a vote, namely the polemarch, or War Archon, appointed by lot. This office (which formerly carried an equal vote in military decisions with the generals) was held at this time by Callimachus of the deme Aphidnae. To Callimachus, therefore, Miltiades turned. ‘It is now in your hands, Callimachus,’ he said ‘either to enslave Athens, or to make her free and to leave behind you for all future generations a memory more glorious than even Harmodius and Aristogeiton left. Never in our history have we Athenians been in such peril as now. If we submit to the Persians, Hippias will be restored to power – and there is little doubt what misery must then ensure: but if we fight and win, then this city of ours may well grow to pre-eminence amongst all the cities of Greece. If you ask me how this can be, and how the decision rests with you, I will tell you: we commanders are ten in number, and we are not agreed upon what action to take; half of us are for a battle, half against it. If we refuse to fight, I have little doubt that the result will be bitter dissension; our purpose will be shaken, and we shall submit to Persia. But if we fight before the rot can show itself in any of us, then, if God gives us fair play, we can not only fight but win. Yours is the decision; all hangs upon your vote on my side, and our country will be free – yes, and the first city of Greece. But if you support those who have voted against fighting, that happiness will be denied you – you will get the opposite.’

Miltiades’ words prevailed and by the vote of Callimachus the War Archon the decision to fight was made.

The generals held the presiding position in succession, each for a day; and those of them that had voted with Miltiades, offered, when their turn for duty came, to surrender it to him. Miltiades accepted the offer, but would not fight until the day came when he would in any case have presided. When it did come, the Athenian army moved into position for the coming struggle. The right wing was commanded by Callimachus – for it was the regular practice at the time that the War Archon should lead the right wing; then followed the tribes, in their regular order; and finally, on the left wing, were the Plataeans. Ever since the battle of Marathon, when the Athenians offer sacrifice at their quadrennial festival, the herald links the names of Athens and Plataea in the prayer for God’s blessing.

One result of the disposition of Athenian troops before the battel was the weakening of their centre by the effort to extend the line sufficiently to cover the whole Persian front; the two wings were strong, but the line in the centre was only a few ranks deep. The disposition made, and the preliminary sacrifice promising success, the word was given to move, and the Athenians advanced at a run towards the enemy, not less than a mile away. The Persians, seeing the attack developing at the double, prepared to meet it, thinking it suicidal madness for the Athenians to risk an assault with so small a force – rushing in with no support from either cavalry or archers. Well that was what they imagined; nevertheless, the Athenians came on, closed with the enemy all along the line, and fought in a way not to be forgotten; they were the first Greeks, so far as we know, to charge at a run, and the first who dared to look without flinching at Persian dress and the men who wore it: for until that day came, no Greek could hear even the word Persian without terror.

The struggle at Marathon was long drawn out. In the centre, held by the Persians themselves and the Sacae, the advantage was with the foreigners, who were so far successful as to break the Greek line and pursue the fugitives inland from the sea; but the Athenians on one wing and the Plataeans on the other were both victorious. Having got the upper hand, they left the defeated enemy to make their escape, and then, drawing the two wings together into a single unit, they turned their attention to the Persians who had broken through in the centre. Here again they were triumphant, chasing the routed enemy, cutting them down until they came to the sea. It was in this phase of the struggle that the War Archon Callimachus was killed, fighting bravely, and also Stesilaus, the son of Thrasylaus, one of the generals; Cynegirus, too, the son of Euphorion, had his hand cut off with an axe as he was getting hold of a ship’s stern, and so lost his life, together with many other well-known Athenians. The Athenians in this way secured seven ships, but the rest got off, and the Persians aboard them, after picking up the Eretrian prisoners whom they had left on Aegilia, laid a course round Sunium for Athens, which they hoped to reach in advance of the Athenian army. IN Athens the Alcmaeonidae were accused of suggesting this move; they had, it was said, an understanding with the Persians, and raised a shield as a signal to them when they were already on board.

While the Persian fleet was on its way round Sunium, the Athenians hurried back with all possible speed to save their city, and succeeded in reaching it before the arrival of the Persians. Just as at Marathon the Athenian camp had been a plot of ground sacred to Heracles, so now they fixed their camp on another, also sacred to the same god, at Cynosarges. When the Persian fleet appeared, it lay anchor for a while off Phalerum (at the time the chief harbour of Athens) and then sailed back to Asia.

In the battle of Marathon some 6400 Persians were killed; the losses of the Athenians were 192. During the action a marvellous thing happened: Epizelus, the son of Cuphagoras, an Athenian soldier, was fighting bravely when he suddenly lost the sight of both eyes, though nothing had touched him anywhere – neither sword, spear, nor missile. From that moment he continued blind as long as he lived. I have heard that in speaking about what happened to him he used to say that he thought he was opposed by a man of great stature in heavy armour, whose beard overshadowed his shield ; but the phantom passed him by, and killed the man at his side.

*Persian War, Greek cooperation, Athens, Battle of Marathon*

**Herodotus, 6.120 – 124 (p.403-404)**

After the full moon, two thousands Spartans set off for Athens. They were so anxious not to be late that they were in Attica on the third day after leaving Sparta. They had, of course, missed the battle; but such was their passion to see the Persians, that they went to Marathon to have a look at the bodies. That done, they praised the Athenians on their good work, and returned home.

The tale of the Alcmaeonidae treacherously signalling to the Persians with a shield is, to me, quite extraordinary, and I cannot accept it. Is it likely that these men, who were obviously greater tyrant-haters even than Callias the son of Phaenippus and father of Hipponicus, should have wished to see Athens ruled by Hippias under foreign control? Callias was the only man in Athens who at the expulsion of Pisistratus dared to buy any of his property when it was put up for public sale, besides showing the most violent hostility towards him in other ways. Not even Callias, I repeat, could surpass the Alcmaeonidae in hatred of absolute government, so the charge that they could have been guilty of the treacherous signal is mere slander, and I confess it surprises me. They were men who remained in exile throughout the period of absolute government in Athens – and it was they who thought of the plan which deprived the Pisistratidae of their power. Indeed, in my judgement it was the Alcmaeonidae much more than Harmodius and Aristogeiton who liberated Athens; for the two latter by the murder of Hipparchus merely exasperated the remaining members of the clan, without in anyway checking their despotism, while the Alcmaeonidae did, in plain fact, actually bring about the liberation – provided that what I said further back is true, namely that it was the Alcmaeonidae who bribed the Delphic priestess to keep on telling the Spartans that they must set Athens free. Perhaps it might be argued that they betrayed their country because of some grudge they bore the Athenian commons; but they were better thought of and more respected than anybody else in Athens. It is unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that they gave the signal for any reason of that sort. A shield *was* held up: that is a fact and cannot be denied; but as to who did it, I can add nothing to what I have already said.

*Persian War, Liberation of Athens from tyranny, Spartan Liberation*

**Herodotus, 7.1 (p.411)**

When the news of the battle of Marathon reached Darius, son of Hystaspes and king of Persia, his anger against Athens, already great enough on account of the assault on Sardis, was even greater, and he was more determined to make war on Greece. Without loss of time he dispatched couriers to the various states under his dominion with orders to raise an army much larger than before; and also warships, transports, horses, and grain. So the royal command went round; and all Asia was in uproar for three years, with the best men being enrolled in the army for the invasion of Greece, and with the preparations. In the year after that, a rebellion in Egypt, which had been conquered by Cambyses, served only to harden Darius’ resolve to go to war , not only against Greece but against Egypt too.

*Persia, Darius, Preparations for war.*

**Herodotus, 7.5-10h (p.414-420)**

Xerxes was at first not at all interested in invading Greece but began his reign by building up an army for a campaign in Egypt. But Mardonius – the son of Gobryas and Darius’ sister and thus cousin to the king – who was present in court and had more influence with Xerxes than anyone else in the country, used constantly to talk to him on the subject. ‘Master,’ he would say, ‘the Athenians have done us great injury, and it is only right that they be punished for their crimes. By all means finish the task you already have in hand; but when you have tamed the arrogance of Egypt, then lead an army against Athens. Do that, and your name will be held in honour all over the world, and people will think twice in future before they invade your country.’ And to the argument for revenge he would add that Europe was a very beautiful place; it produced every kind of garden tree; the land there was everything that land should be – it was, in short, too good for any mortal except the Persian king. Mardonius’ motive for urging the campaign was love of mischief and adventure and the hope of becoming governor of Greece himself; and after much persistence he persuaded Xerxes to make the attempt. Certain other occurrences came to his aid. In the first place, messengers arrived from the Aleuadae in Thessaly (the Aleuadae were the Thessalian reigning family) with an invitation to Xerxes, promising zealous assistance; at the same time the Pisistratidae in Susa spoke to the same purpose and worked upon him even more strongly through the agency of an Athenian named Onomacritus, a collector of oracles, who had arranged and edited the oracles of Musaeus. The Pisistratidae had made up their quarrel with him before coming to Susa. He had been expelled from Athens by Hipparchus for inserting the verses of Musaeus that the islands off Lemnos would disappear under water - Lasus of Hermione had caught him at the very act of the forgery. Before his banishment he had been a close friend of Hipparchus. Anyway, he went to Susa; and now, whenever he found himself in the King’s presence, The Pisistratidae would talk big about his wonderful powers and he would recite selections from his oracles. Any prophecy which implied a setback to the Persian cause he would carefully omit, choosing for quotation only those which promised the brightest triumphs, describing to Xerxes how it was fore-ordained that the Hellespont should be bridged by a Persian, and how the army would march from Asia into Greece. Subjected, therefore, to this double pressure, from Onomacritus’ oracles on the one side, and the advice of the Pisistratidae and Aleuadae on the other, Xerxes gave in and allowed himself to be persuaded to undertake the invasion of Greece.

First, however, in the year after Darius’ death, he sent an army against the Egyptian rebels and decisively crushed them; then, having reduced the country to a condition of worse servitude than it had ever been in in the previous reign, he turned it over to his brother Achaemenes, who long afterwards, while he was still Governor, was killed by Inarus, the son of Psammetichus, a Libyan.

After the conquest of Egypt, when he was on the point of taking I hand the expedition against Athens, Xerxes called a conference of the leading men in the country, to find out their attitude towards the war and explain to them his own wishes. When they met, he addressed them as follows: ‘Do not suppose, men of Persia, that I am departing from precedent in the course of action I intend to undertake. We Persians have a way of living, which I have inherited from my predecessors and propose to follow. I have learned from my elders that ever since Cyrus deposed Astyages and we took over from the Medes the sovereign power we now possess, we have never yet remained inactive. This is God’s guidance, and it is by following it that we have gained our great prosperity. Of our past history you need no reminder; for you know well enough the famous deeds to Cyrus, Cambyses, and my father Darius, and their additions to our empire. Now I myself, ever since my accession, have been thinking how not to fall short of the kings who have sat upon this throne before me, and how to add as much power as they did to the Persian empire. And now at last I have found a way to win for Persia not glory only but a country as large and as rich as our own – indeed richer than our own – and at the same time to get satisfaction and revenge. That, then, is the object of this meeting – that I may disclose to you what it is that I intend to do. I will bridge the Hellespont and march an army through Europe into Greece, and punish the Athenians for the outrage they committed upon my father and upon us. As you saw, Darius himself was making his preparations for war against these men; but death prevented him carrying out his purpose. I therefore on his behalf, and for the benefit of all my subjects, will not rest until I have taken Athens and bunt it to the ground. In revenge for the injury which the Athenians without provocation once did to me and my father. These men, you remember, came to Sardis with Aristagoras the Milesian, a slave or fours, and burnt the temples and sacred groves; and you know all too well how they treated out troops under Datis and Artaphernes, when they landed upon Greek soil. For these reasons I have now prepared to make war upon them, and, which I consider the matter, I find several advantages in the venture; if we crush the Athenians and their neighbours who dwell in the land of Pelops the Phrygian, we shall do extend the empire of Persia that its boundaries will be God’s own sky, so that the sun will not look down upon any land beyond the boundaries of what is ours. With your help I shall pass through Europe from end to end and make it all one country. For if what I am told is true, there is not a city or nation in the world which will be able to withstand us, once these are out of the way. Thus the guilty and the innocent alike shall bear the yoke of servitude.

‘If, then, you wish to gain my favour, each one of you must present himself willingly and in good heart on the day which I shall name; whoever brings with him the best equipped body of troops I will reward with those marks of distinction held in greatest value by our countrymen. This is what you must do; but so that I shall not appear to consult only my own whim, I will throw the whole matter into open debate, and ask any of you who may wish to do so, to express his views.’

The first to speak after the king was Mardonius. ‘Of all Persians who have ever lived,’ he began, ‘and of all who are yet to be born, you, my lord, are the greatest. Every word you have spoken is true and excellent, and, you will not allow the wretched Ionians in Europe to make fools of us. It would indeed be a fearsome thing if we who have defeated and enslaved the Sacae, Indians, Ethiopians, Assyrians, and many other great nations who did us no injury, but merely to extend the boundaries of our empire, should fail now to punish the Greeks who have been guilty of injuring us without provocation. Have we anything to fear from them? The size of their army? Their wealth? The question is absurd; we know how they fight, we know how slender their resources are. People of their race we have already reduced to subjection - I mean the Greeks of Asia, Ionians, Aeolians, and Dorians. I myself before now have had some experience of these men, when under orders from your father I invaded their country; and I got as far as Macedonia – indeed almost to Athens itself – without a single soldier daring to oppose me. Yet, from what I hear, the Greeks are pugnacious enough, and start fights on the spur of the moment without sense or judgement to justify them. When they declare war on each other, they go off together to the smoothest and levellest bit of ground they can find, and have their battle on it – with the result that even the victors never get off without heavy losses, and as for the losers – well they’re wiped out. Now surely as they all talk the same language, they ought to be able to find a better way of settling their differences: by negotiation, for instance, or an interchange of views - indeed by anything rather than fighting. Or if it really impossible to avoid coming to blows, they might at least employ the elements of strategy and look for a strong position to fight from. In any case, the Greeks, with their absurd notions of warfare, never even thought of opposing me when I led my army to Macedonian.

‘Well then, my lord, who is likely to resist you when you march against them with the millions of Asia at your back, and the whole Persian fleet? Believe me, it is not in the Greek character to take so desperate a risk. But should I be wrong and they be so foolish as to do battle with us, then they will learn that we are the best soldiers in the world. Nevertheless, let us take this business seriously and spare no pains; success is never automatic in this world – nothing is achieved without trying.’

Xerxes’ proposals were made to seem plausible by these words of Mardonius, and when he stopped speaking there was a silence. For a while nobody dared to put forward the opposite view, until Artabanus, taking courage from the fact of his relationship to the king – he was a son of Hystaspes and therefore Xerxes’ uncle – rose to speak. ‘My lord,’ he said, ‘without a debate in which both sides of a question are expressed, it is not possible to choose the better course. All one can do is to accept whatever it is that has been proposed. But grant a debate and there is a fair choice to be made. We cannot assess the purity of gold merely by looking at it: we test it by rubbing it on another gold – then we can tell which is purer. I warned your father – Darius my own brother – not to attack the Scythians, those wanderers who live in a cityless land. But he would not listen to me. Confident in his power to subdue them he invaded their country, and before he came home again many fine soldiers who marched with him were dead. But you, my lord, mean to attack a nation greatly superior to the Scythians: a nation with the highest reputation for valour both on land and at sea. It is my duty to tell you what you have to fear from them: you have said that you mean to bridge the Hellespont and march through Europe to Greece. Now suppose – and it is not impossible - that you were to suffer a revers by sea or land, or even both. These Greeks are said to be great fighters – and indeed one might well judge as much from the fact that the Athenians alone destroyed the great army we sent to attack them under Datis and Artaphernes. Or, if you will, suppose they were to succeed upon one element only – suppose they fell upon our fleet and defeated it, and then sailed to the Hellespont and destroyed the bridge: then, my lord, you would indeed be in peril. It is no special wisdom of my own that makes me argue as I do; but just such a disaster as I have suggested did, in fact, very nearly overtake us when your father bridged the Thracian Bosphorus and the Danube to take his army into Scythia. You will remember how on that occasion the Scythians went to all lengths in their efforts to induce the Ionian guard to break the Danube bridge, and how Histiaeus, the tyrant of Miletus, merely by following the advice of the other Ionian tyrants instead of rejecting it, as he did, had it in his power to ruin Persia. Surely it is a dreadful thing even to hear said, that the fortunes of the king once wholly depended upon a single man.

‘I urge you, therefore, to abandon this plan; take my advice and do not run any such terrible risk when there is no necessity to do so. Break up this conference; turn the matter over quietly by yourself, and then, when you think fit, announce your decision. Nothing is more valuable to a man than to lay his plans carefully and well; even if things go against him, and forces he cannot control bring his enterprise to nothing, he still has the satisfaction of knowing that he was defeated by chance – the plans were all laid; if, on the other hand, he leaps headlong into danger and succeeds by luck – well that’s a bit of luck indeed, but he still has the shame of knowing that he was ill prepared.

‘You know, my lord, that amongst living creatures it is the great ones that God smites with his thunder, nor does he allow them to show off. The little ones do not vex him. It is always the great buildings and the tall trees which are struck by lightning. It is God’s way to bring the lofty low. Often a great army is destroyed by a little one, when God in his envy puts fear into the men’s hearts, or sends a thunderstorm, and they are cut to pieces in a way they do not deserve. For God tolerates pride in none but himself. Haste is the mother of failure – and for failure we always pay a heavy price; it is in delay our profit lies – perhaps it may not immediately be apparent, but we shall find it, sure enough, as time goes on.

‘This, my lord, is the advice I offer you and as for you, Mardonius son of Gobryas, I warn you that the Greeks in no way deserve disparagement; so say no more silly things about them. By slandering the Greeks you increase the king’s eagerness to make war on them, and, as far as I can see, this is the very thing you yourself most passionately desire. Heaven forbid it should happen! Slander is a wicked thing: in a case of slander two parties do wrong and one suffers by it. The slanderer is guilty in that he speaks ill of a man behind his back; and the man who listens to him is guilty in that he takes his word without troubling to find out the truth. The Slandered person suffers doubly – from the disparaging words of the one and from the belief of the other that he deserves the disparagement.

‘Nevertheless, if there is no avoiding this campaign in Greece, I have one final proposal to make. Let the king stay here in Persia; and you and I will then stake our children on the issue, and you can start the venture with the men you want and as big an army as you please. And if the king prospers, as you say he will, then I consent that my sons should be killed, and myself with them; if my own prediction is fulfilled, let *your* sons forfeit their lives - and you too – if you ever get home.

‘Maybe you will refuse this wager, and still persist in leading an army into Greece. IN that case I venture a prophecy: the day will come when many a man left at home will hear the news that Mardonius has brought disaster upon Persia, and that his body lies a prey to dogs and birds somewhere in the country of the Athenians or the Spartans – if not upon the road thither. For that is the way you will find out the quality of the people against whom you are urging the king to make war.’

*Persia, Xerxes, Preparations for war, Second Persian War, Persian aims*

**Herodotus, 7.49-50 (p.414-420)**

‘No man of sense, my lord,’ Artabanus answered, ‘could find any fault with the size of your army or the number of your ships. If you increase your forces, the two powers I have in mind will be even worse enemies to you than they are now. I will tell you what they are – the land and the sea. So far as I know there is not a harbour anywhere big enough to receive this fleet of ours and give it protection in the event of storms: and indeed there would have to be not merely one such harbour, but many – all along the coast by which you will sail. But there is not a single one; so I would have you realize, my lord, that men are at the mercy of circumstance, and not their master.

‘Now let me tell you of your other great enemy, the land. If you meet with no opposition, the land itself will become more and more hostile to you the further you advance, drawn on and on; for men are never satisfied by success. What I mean is this – if nobody stops your advance, the land itself - the mere distance growing greater and greater as the days go by – will ultimately starve you. No: the best man, in my belief, is he who lays his plans wearily, with an eye for every disaster which might occur, and then, when time comes, acts boldly.’

‘There is good sense,’ Xerxes answered, ‘in everything you have said; nevertheless you ought not to be so timid always, or to think of every accident which might possibly overtake us. If upon the proposal of a plan you were always to weigh equally all possible chances, you would never do anything. I would much rather take a risk and run into trouble half the time than keep out of trouble through being afraid of everything.

‘If you dispute whatever is said to you, but can never prove your objections, you are as likely to be wrong as the other man – indeed there is nothing to choose between you. And as for proof – how can a man ever be certain? Certainly, surely, is beyond human grasp. But however that may be, the usual thing is that profit comes to those who are willing to act, not to be overcautious and hesitant. Just think how the power of Persia has grown: if my predecessors had felt as you do – or even if they had not, but taken the advice of men who did – you would never have seen our country in its present glory. No indeed: it was by taking risks that my predecessors brought us to where we stand today. Only by great risks can great results be achieved. We, therefore, are following in the footsteps of our fathers; we are marching to war at the best season of the year; we shall conquer all Europe, and – without being starved to death anywhere or having any other unpleasant experience – we shall return home in triumph. For one thing we are carrying ample stores with us; for another, we will have the grain belonging to any country we may enter, no matter who lives there. Our enemies, remember, are not nomad tribes – they are agricultural peoples.’

*Persia, Xerxes, Preparations for war, Second Persian War, Persian aims, Division*

**Herodotus, 7.102 (p.448-449)**

Encouraged by this Demaratus continued: ‘My lord, you bid me speak nothing but the truth, to say nothing which might later be proved a lie. Very well then; this is my answer: poverty is Greece’s inheritance from of old, but valour she won for herself by wisdom and the strength of law. By her valour Greece now keeps both poverty and despotism at bay.

‘I think highly of all Greeks of the Dorian lands, but what I am about to say will apply not to all Dorians, but to the Spartans only. First then, they will not under any circumstances accept terms from you which would mean slavery for Greece; secondly ‘they will fight you even if the rest of Greece submits. Moreover, there is no use in asking if their numbers are adequate to enable them to do this; suppose a thousand of them take the field – then that thousand will fight you; and so will any number, greater than this or less.’

*Second Persian War, Sparta, commitment to fighting*

**Herodotus, 7.131–133 (p.458)**

His stay in Pieria lasted a number of days, during which one third of his army was felling the forest through the mountains of Macedonia, making a route for his troops to follow into Perrhaebia. Meanwhile the representatives who had been sent to Greece to demand submission rejoined the army – some empty-handed, others bringing the earth and water. Those who gave the tokens of submission were the following: the Thessalians, Dolopes, Aenianes, Perrhaebi, Locrians, Magnetes, Malians, Achaeans of Phthiotis, Thebans, and all the other Boeotians except the people of Plataea and Thespiae. Against these the Greeks determined to resist the invader swore an oath to the effect that, once the war was fought to a successful conclusion, they would punish all men of Greek blood, who without compulsion yielded to the Persians, and dedicate a tenth part of their property to the got at Delphi.

To Athens and Sparta Xerxes sent no demand for submission because of what happened to the messengers whom Darius had sent on a previous occasion: at Athens they were thrown into the pit like criminals, at Sparta they were pushed into a well and told that if they wanted earth and water for the king, to get it from there. This time, therefore, Xerxes refrained from sending a request. Just what disagreeable consequences were suffered by the Athenians for this treatment of the king’s messengers, I am unable to say; perhaps it was the destruction of their city and the countryside around it – though I do not myself believe that this happened as a direct result of their crime.

*Second Persian War, division among Greek states supporting/resisting Persia*

**Herodotus, 7.138–139 (p.460-461)**

The purpose of Xerxes’ expedition, which was directed nominally against Athens, was in fact the conquest of the whole of Greece. The various Greek communities had long been aware of this, but they viewed the coming danger with very different eyes. Some had already made their submission, and were consequently in good spirits, because they were sure of getting off lightly at the invaders’ hands; others who had refused to submit, were thrown into panic partly because there were not enough ships in Greece to meet the Persians with any chance of success, and partly because most of the Greeks were unwilling to fight and all too ready to accept Persian dominion. At this point I find myself compelled to express an opinion which I know most people will object to; nevertheless, as I believe it to be true, I will not suppress it. If the Athenians, through fear of the approaching danger, had abandoned their country, or if they had stayed there and submitted to Xerxes, there would have been no attempt to resist the Persians by sea; and in the absence of a Greek fleet, it is easy to see what would have been the course of events on land. However many line of fortification the Spartans had built across the Isthmus, they would have been deserted by their confederates; not that their allies would have willingly deserted them, but they could not have helped doing so, because one by one they would have fallen victims to the Persian naval power. Thus the Spartans would have been left alone - to perform great deeds and to die nobly. Or, on the other hand, it is possible that before things came to the ultimate test, the sight of the rest of Greece submitting to Persia might have driven them to make terms with Xerxes. In either case the Persian conquest of Greece would have been assured; for I cannot myself see what possible use there could have been in fortifying the Isthmus, if the Persians had command of the sea. In view of this, therefore, one is surely right in saying that Greece was saved by the Athenians. It was the Athenians who held the balance: whichever side they joined was sure to prevail. It was the Athenians, too, who, having chosen that Greece should live and preserve her freedom, roused to battle the other Greek states which had not yet submitted. It was the Athenians who – after the gods – drove back the Persian king. Not even the terrifying warning s of the oracle at Delphi could persuade them to abandon Greece; they stood firm and had the courage to meet the invader.

*Second Persian War, importance of Athens to Greek victory*

**Herodotus, 7.141–145 (p.462-464)**

The Athenian envoys heard these words with dismay; indeed they were about to abandon themselves to despair at the dreadful fate which was prophesised, when Timon, the son of Androbulus and one of the most distinguished men in Delphi, suggested that they should take branches of olive in their hands and, in the guise of suppliants, approach the oracle a second time. The Athenians acted upon this suggestion. ‘Lord Apollo,’ they said, ‘can you not, in considerations of these olive boughs which we have brought you, give us some better prophecy about our country? Otherwise we will never leave the holy place but stay here till we die.’

Thereupon the Prophetess uttered a second prophecy, which ran as follows:

Not wholly can Pallas win the heart of Olympian Zeus, though she prays him with many prayers and all her subtlety; Yet will I speak to you this other word, as firm as adamant: though all else shall be taken within the bound of Cecrops and the fastness of the holy mountain of Cithaeron, yet Zeus the all-seeing grants to Athene’s prayer that the wooden wall only shall not fall, but help you and your children

But await not the host of horse and foot coming from Asia, not be still, but turn your back and withdraw from the foe. Truly a day will come when you meet him face to face. Divine Salamis, you will bring death to women’s sons when the corn is scattered, or the harvest gathered in.

This second answer seemed to be, as indeed it was, less menacing than the first; so the envoys wrote it down and returned to Athens. When it was made public upon their arrival in the city, and the attempt to explain it began, amongst the various opinions which were expressed there were two mutually exclusive interpretations. Some of the older men supposed that the prophecy meant that the Acropolis would escape destruction, on the grounds that the Acropolis was fenced in the old days with a thorn-hedge, and that this was the ‘wooden wall’ of the oracle; but others thought that by this expression the gods indicated the ships, and they urged in consequence that everything should be abandoned in favour of the immediate preparation of a fleet. There was, however, for those who believed ‘wooden wall’ to mean ships, one disturbing thing – namely, the last two lines of the Priestesses prophecy:

Divine Salamis, you will bring death to women’s sons when the corn is scattered, or the harvest gathered in.

This was a very awkward statement and caused profound disturbance amongst all who took the wooden wall to signify ships; for the professional interpreters understood the lines to mean that they would be beaten at Salamis in a fight at sea. There was, however, a man in Athens who had recently come into prominence – Themistocles called Neocles’s son; he now came forward and declared that there was an important point in which the professional interpreters were mistaken. If, he maintained, the disaster referred to was to strike the Athenians, it would not have been expressed in such mild language. ‘Hateful Salamis’ would surely have been a more likely phrase than ‘divine Salamis’, if the inhabitants of the country were doomed to destruction there. On the contrary, the true interpretation was that the oracle referred not to the Athenians but to their enemies. The ‘wooden wall’ did, indeed, mean the ships; so he advised his countrymen to prepare at once to meet the invader at sea.

The Athenians found Themistocles’ explanation of the oracle preferable to that of the professional interpreters, who had not only tried to dissuade them from preparing to fight at sea but had been against offering opposition of any sort. The only thing to do was, according to them, to abandon Attica altogether and seek a home elsewhere.

Once on a previous occasion Themistocles had succeeded in getting his views accepted, to the great benefit of his country. The Athenians had amassed a large sum of money from the produce of the mines at Laurium, which they proposed to share out amongst themselves at a rate of ten drachmas a man; Themistocles, however, persuaded them to give up this idea and, instead of distributing the money, to spend it on the construction of two hundred warships for use in the war with Aegina. The outbreak of this war at that moment saved Greece by forcing Athens to become a maritime power. In point of fact the two hundred ships were not employed for the purpose for which they were built, but were available for Greece in her hour of need. The Athenians also found it necessary to expand this existing fleet by laying down news ships, and they determined in debate after the discussion on then oracle, to take the god’s advice and meet the invader at sea with all the force they possessed, and with any other Greeks who were willing to join them.

At a conference of the Greek states who were loyal to the general cause guarantees were exchanged, and the decision was reached that the first thing to be done was to patch up their own quarrels and stop any fighting which happened to be going on amongst members of the confederacy. There were a number of such disputes at the time, the most serious being the quarrel between Athens and Aegina. Having learnt that Xerxes and his army had reached Sardis, they next resolved to send spies into Asia to get information about the Persian forces; at the same time, in the hope of uniting, if it were possible, the whole Greek world and of bringing all the various communities to undertake joint action in the face of common danger, they decided to send an embassy to Argos to conclude an alliance, another to Gelon, the son of Deinomenes, in Sicily, and others, again, to Corcyra and Crete. Gelon was said to be very powerful – far more powerful than anyone else of Greek nationality.

*Second Persian War, Delphic Oracle, role of Athens at sea, building Greek confederacy*

**Herodotus, 7.151-152 (p.467-468)**

There are people in Greece who say that this account is borne out by a remark made long afterwards by Artaxerxes. Callias, the son of Hipponicus, and a number of other Athenians were in Susa, the city of Memnon, on different business, and it so happened that their visit coincided with that of some representatives from Argos, who had been sent to ask Xerxes’ son Artaxerxes if the friendly relations, which the Argives had established with his father, still held good, or if they were now considered by Persia as enemies. ‘They do indeed hold good,’ Artaxerxes is said to have replied; ‘there is no city which I believe to be a better friend to me than Argos.’

For my own part I cannot positively state that Xerxes either did, or did not, send the messenger to Argos; nor can I guarantee the story of the Argives going to Susa and asking Artaxerxes about their relationship with Persia. I express no opinion on this matter other than that of the Argives themselves. One thing, however, I am very sure of: and that is, that if all mankind agreed to meet, and everyone brought his own sufferings along with him for the purpose of exchanging them for somebody else’s, there is not a man who, after taking a good look at his neighbour’s sufferings, would not be only too happy to return home with his own. So the Argives were not the worst offenders. My business is to record what people say, but I am by no means bound to believe it – and that may be taken to apply to this book as a whole. There is yet another story about the Argives: it was they, according to some, who invited the Persians to invade Greece, because their war with Sparta was going badly and they felt that anything would be better than their present plight.

*Second Persian War, Greeks supporting Persia - Argives*

**Herodotus, 7.174-175 (p.477-478)**

The Greeks, then re-embarked and returned to the Isthmus. Such were the circumstances of the expedition to Thessaly – it took place while Xerxes was at Abydos, just before he crossed the strait from Asia into Europe. The result of it was that the Thessalians, finding themselves without support, no longer hesitated but whole-heartedly worked in the Persian interest, so that in the course of the war they proved of the greatest use to Xerxes.

The Greeks on their return to the Isthmus then discussed, in consideration of the warning they had received from Alexander, where they should make a stand. The proposal which found most favour was to guard the pass of Thermopylae, on the grounds that it was narrower than the pass into Thessaly and at the same time nearer home. They knew nothing as yet about the mountain track by means of which the men who fell at Thermopylae were taken in the rear, and only learnt of its existence from the people of Trachis after their arrival.

The decision, then, was to hold the pass in order to prevent the Persians from entering Greece, and at the same time to send the fleet to Artemisium on the coast of Histiaea: for these two places being close together, communication would be easy.

*Second Persian War, Thermopylae*

**Herodotus, 7.207 (p.488)**

The Persian army was now close to the pass, and the Greeks, suddenly doubting their power to resist, held a conference to consider the desirability of retreat. It was proposed by the Peloponnesians generally that the army should fall back upon the Peloponnese and hold the Isthmus; but when the Phocians and Locrians expressed their indignation at this suggestion, Leonidas gave his vote for staying where they were and sending, at the same time, an appeal for reinforcements to the various states of the confederacy, as their numbers were inadequate to cope with the Persians.

*Second Persian War, Thermopylae, Leonidas*

**Herodotus, 7.219-222 (p.492-493)**

The Greeks at Thermopylae had their first warning of the death that was coming with the dawn from the seer Megistias, who read their doom in the victims of sacrifice; deserters, too, came in during the night with news of the Persian flank movement, and lastly, just as day was breaking, the look-out men came running from the hills. In council of war their opinions were divided, some urging that they must not abandon their post, others the opposite. The result was that the army split: some dispersed, contingents returning to their various cities, while others made ready to stand by Leonidas. It is said that Leonidas himself dismissed them, to spare their lives, but thought it unbecoming for the Spartans under his commands to desert the post which they had originally come to guard. I myself am inclined to think that he dismissed them when he realized that they had no heart for the fight and were unwilling to take their share of the danger; at the same time honour forbade that he himself should go. And indeed by remaining at his post he left great glory behind him, and Sparta did not lose her prosperity, as might otherwise have happened; for right at the outset of the war the Spartans had been told by the Delphic oracle that either their city must be laid waste by the foreigner or a Spartan king be killed. The prophecy was in hexameter verse and ran as follows:

Hear your fate, O dwellers in Sparta of the wide Spaces;

Either your famed, great town must be sacked by Perseus’ sons,

Or, if that be not, the whole land of Lacedaemon

Shall mourn the death of a king of the house of Heracles,

For not the strength of lions or of bulls shall hold him,

Strength against strength; for he has the power of Zeus,

And will not be checked till one of these two he has consumed.

I believe that it was thought of this oracle, combined with his wish to lay up for the Spartans a treasure of fame in which no other city shall share, that made Leonidas dismiss those troops; I do not think that they deserted, or went off without orders, because of a difference of opinion. Moreover, I am strongly supported in this view by the case of the seer Megistias, who was with the army – an Acarnanian, said to be of the clan of Melampus – who foretold the coming doom from his inspection of the sacrificial victims. He quite plainly received orders from Leonidas to quit Thermopylae, to save him from sharing the army’s fate. He refused to go, but he sent his only son, who was serving with the forces.

Thus it was that the confederate troops, by Leonidas’ orders, abandoned their posts and left the pass, all except the Thespians and the Thebans who remained with the Spartans. The Thebans were detained by Leonidas as hostages very much against their will; but the Thespians of their own accord refused to desert Leonidas and his men, and stayed, and died with them. They were under the command of Demophilus the son of Diadromes.

*Second Persian War, Thermopylae, Leonidas*

**Herodotus, 7.228.2 (p.495)**

The dead were buried where they fell, and with them the men who had been killed before those dismissed by Leonidas left the pass. Over them is this inscription, in honour of the whole force:

Four thousand here from Pelops’ land

Against three million once did stand.

The Spartans have a special epitaph: it runs:

Go tell the Spartans, you who read:

We took their orders, and here lie dead.

For the Seer Megistias there is the following:

Here lies Megistias, who died

When the Mede passed Spercheius’ tide

A prophet; yet he scorned to save

Himself, but shared the Spartans’ grave.

The columns with the epitaphs inscribed on them were erected in honour of the dead by the Amphictyons – though the epitaph upon the seer Megistias was the work of Simonides, the son of Leoprepes, who put it there for friendships’ sake.

*Second Persian War, Thermopylae, Leonidas*

**Herodotus, 8.1-3 (p.501-502)**

The following is the roll of the Greek naval force: 127 ships from Athens – partly manned by the Plataeans, whose courage and patriotism led them to undertake this service in spite of their ignorance of nautical matters; 40 from Corinth, 20 from Megara, 20 more from Athens manned by crews from Chalcis, 18 from Aegina, 12 from Sicyon, 10 from Sparta, 8 from Epidaurus, 7 from Eretria, 5 from Troezen, 2 from Styra, and 2 – together with two penteconters – from Ceos. Lastly the Locrians of Opus joined with seven penteconters.

These, then, were the states that sent ships to Artemisium, and I have given the number which each contributed. The total strength of the fleet, excluding the penteconters, was thus 271 ships of war. The general officer in command, Eurybiades, the son of Eurycleides, was provided by Sparta; for the other members of the confederacy had stipulated for a Lacedaemonian commander, declaring that rather than serve under an Athenian they would break up the intended expedition altogether. From the first, even before Sicily was asked to join the alliance, there had been talk of the advisability of giving Athens command of the fleet; but the proposal had not been well received by the allied states, and the Athenians waived their claim in the interest of national survival, knowing that a quarrel about the command would certainly mean the destruction of Greece. They were, indeed, perfectly right; for the evil of internal strife is worse than united war in the same proportion as war itself is worse than peace. It was their realization of the danger attendant upon lack of unity which made them waive their claim, and they continued to do so as long as Greece desperately needed their help. This was made plain enough by their subsequent action; for when the Persians had been driven from Greece and the war had been carried to Persian territory, the Athenians made the insufferable behaviour of Pausanias their excuse for depriving the Lacedaemonians of the command.

*Second Persian War, Naval war, role of Athens and relationship with other Greek states*

**Herodotus, 8.49-50 (p.516)**

All the contingents consisted of triremes, except the Melian, Siphnian, and Seriphian, which were penteconters. The Melians, who are of Lacedaemonian bllod, sent two, the Siphnians and Seriphians, who are Ionians from Athens, one each. The total number of warships (excluding the penteconters) was 378.

When the commanders of the various contingents I have mentioned met at Salamis, a council of war was held, and Eurybiades called for suggestions, from anyone who wished to speak, on the most suitable place for engaging the enemy fleet in the territory still under their control – Attica was excluded, as it had already been given up. The general feeling of the council was in favour of sailing to the Isthmus and fighting in defence of the Peloponnese, on the grounds that if they were beaten at Salamis they would find themselves blocked up in an island, where no help could reach them, whereas if disaster overtook them at the Isthmus, they could find refuge amongst their own people. This was the view of the Peloponnesian officers. While the discussion was still going on, a man arrived from Athens with the news that the Persians had entered Attica and were firing the whole country. This was the work of the division of the army under Xerxes which had taken the route through Boeotia; they had burnt Thespia after the inhabitants had escaped to the Peloponnese, and Plataea too, and then entered Attica, where they were causing wholesale devastation. The Thebans had told them that Thespia and Plataea had refused to submit to Persian domination: hence their destruction.

*Second Persian War, Salamis, Persian tactics*

**Herodotus, 8.56-63 (p.518-520)**

Meanwhile at Salamis the effect of the news of what had happened to the Acropolis at Athens was so disturbing, that some of the naval commanders did not even wait for the subject under discussion to be decided, but hurried on board and began hoisting sail for immediate flight. Some, however, stayed.; and by these a resolution was passed to fight in defence of the Isthmus.

During the night, when the various commanders had returned to their ships after the break-up of the conference, an Athenian named Mnesiphilus made his way to Themistocles’ ship and asked him what plan it had been decided to adopt. On learning that they had resolved to sail to the Isthmus and to fight there in defence of Peloponnese, ‘No, no,’ he exclaimed; ‘once the fleet leaves Salamis, it will no longer be one country that you’ll be fighting for. Everyone will go home, and neither Eurybiades nor anybody else will be able to prevent to the total dissolution of our forces. The plan is absurd and will be the ruin of Greece. Now listen to me: try, if you possibly can, to upset the decision of the conference – it may be that you will be able to persuade Eurybiades to change his mind and remain at Salamis.

Themistocles highly approved of this suggestion, and without saying a word he went to the ship of the commander-in-chief and told him that he had something of public importance to discuss. Eurybiades invited him aboard and gave him permission to speak his mind, whereupon Themistocles, taking a seat beside him, repeated Mnesiphilus’ arguments as if they were his own, with plenty of new ones added, until he convinced him, by the sheer urgency of his appeal, that the only thing to do was to go ashore and call the officers to another conference. The conference met, and then, before Eurybiades even had time to announce its purpose, Themistocles, unable to restrain his eagerness, broke into a passionate speech. He was interrupted by Adeimantus, the son of Ocytus, commander of the Corinthian contingent. ‘Themistocles,’ he observed, ‘in the races, the man who starts before the signal is whipped.’ ‘Yes,’ was Themistocles’ retort, ‘but those who start too late win no prizes.’ It was a mild retort – for the moment. To Eurybiades he used none of his previous arguments about the danger of the force breaking up if they left Salamis; for it would have been unbecoming to accuse any of the confederates actually to their faces. The line he took this time was quite different. ‘It is now in your power’, he said, ‘to save Greece, if you take my advice and engage the enemy’s fleet here in Salamis, instead of withdrawing to the Isthmus as these other people suggest. Let me put the two plans before you, and you can weigh them up and see which is the better. Take the Isthmus first: if you fight there, it will have to be in the open sea, and that will be greatly to our disadvantage, with our smaller numbers and slower ships. Moreover, even if everything else goes well, you will lose Salamis, Megara, and Aegina. Again, if the enemy fleet comes south, the army will follow it; so you will yourself be responsible for drawing it to the Peloponnese, thus putting the whole of Greece in peril.

‘Now for my plan: it will bring, if you adopt it, the following advantages: first, we shall be fighting in narrow waters, and there, with our inferior numbers, we shall win, provided things go as we may reasonably expect. Fighting in a confined space favours us but the open sea favours the enemy. Secondly, Salamis, where we have put our women and children, will be preserved; and thirdly – for you the most important point pf all – you will be fighting in defence of the Peloponnese by remaining here just as much as by withdrawing to the Isthmus – nor, if you have the sense to follow my advice, will you draw the Persian army to the Peloponnese. If we beat them at sea, as I expect we shall, they will not advance to attack you on the Isthmus, or come any further than Attica; they will retreat in disorder, and we shall gain by the preservation of Megara, Aegina, and Salamis – where an oracle has already foretold our victory. Let a man lay his plans with due regard to common sense, and he will usually succeed; otherwise he will find that God is unlikely to favour human designs.’

During his speech Themistocles was again attacked by the Corinthian Adeimantus, who told him to hold his tongue because he was a man without a country, and tried to prevent Eurybiades from putting any question to the vote at the instance of a mere refugee. Let Themistocles, he cried, provide himself with a country before he offered his advice. The point of the jibe was, of course, the fact that Athens had fallen and was in Persian hands. This time Themistocles’ retort was by no means mild; he heartily abused both Adeimantus and the Corinthians, and made it quite plain that so long as Athens had two hundred warships in commission, she had both a city and a country much stronger than theirs – for their as not a single Greek state capable of repelling them, should they choose to attack.

With this he returned to Eurybiades again, and, speaking more vehemently than ever, ‘As for you,’ he cried, ‘if you stay here and play the man - well and good; go, and you’ll be the ruin of Greece. In this war everything depends on the fleet. I beg you to take my advice; if you refuse, we will immediately put our families aboard and sail for Siris in Italy – it has long been ours, and the oracles have foretold that Athenians must live there some day. Where will you be without the Athenian fleet? When you have lost it you will remember my words.’

This was enough to make Eurybiades change his mind; and I think that his chief motive was apprehension of losing Athenian support, if he withdrew to the Isthmus; for without the Athenian contingent his strength would not have been adequate to offer battle. So he took the decision to stay where they were and fight it out at Salamis.

*Second Persian War, Salamis, Themistocles, division within Greek contingent*

**Herodotus, 8.74 (p.525)**

The Greeks at the Isthmus, convinced that all they possessed was now at stake and not expecting and notable success at sea, continued to grapple with their task of fortification. The news of how they were employed nevertheless caused great concern at Salamis; for it brought home to everyone there not so much his own peril as the imminent threat to the Peloponnese. At first there was whispered criticism of the incredible folly of Eurybiades; then the smothered feeling broke out into open resentment, and another meeting was held. All the old ground was gone over again, one side urging that it was useless to stay and fight for a country which was already in enemy hands, and that the fleet should sail and risk an action in defence of the Peloponnese, while the Athenians, Aeginetans, and Megarians still maintained that they should stay and fight at Salamis.

*Second Persian War, Salamis, division within Greek contingent*

**Herodotus, 8.94 (p.532)**

The Athenians say that right at the beginning of the action the Corinthian commander Adeimantus got sail on his ship and fled in panic. Seeing the commander making off, the rest of the squadron followed; but when they were off that part of the coast of Salamis where the temple of Athene Sciras stands, they were met by a strange boat. It was all very mysterious, because nobody, apparently, had sent it, and the Corinthians, when it met them, knew nothing of how things were going with the rest of the fleet. From what happened next they were forced to the conclusion that the hand of God was in the matter; for when the boat was close to them, the people on board called out: ‘Adeimantus, while you are playing the traitor by running away with your squadron, the prayers of Greece are being answered, and she is victorious over her enemies.’ Adeimantus would not believe what they said, so they told him that he might take them with him as hostages, and kill them if the Greeks were not found to have won the battle. On this, he and the rest of the squadron put about, and rejoined the fleet after the action was over. This, as I said, is an Athenian story, and the Corinthians do not admit the truth of it: on the contrary, they believe that their ships played a most distinguished part in the battle – and the rest of Greece gives evidence in their favour.

*Second Persian War, Salamis, division within Greek contingent (Athens and Corinth)*

**Herodotus, 8.100-103 (p.534-536)**

The demonstrations, moreover, continued without a break until Xerxes himself came home.

Mardonius could see that Xerxes took the defeat at Salamis very hard, and guessed that he had determined to get out of Athens. In these circumstances, reckoning that he was sure to be punished for having persuaded the king to undertake the expedition, he felt it would be better to renew the struggle in order either to bring Greece into subjection or, failing that, to die nobly in a great cause – though he expected the former alternative. Accordingly, he approached Xerxes with a proposal. ‘My lord,’ he said, ‘I beg you not to take recent events too deeply to heart. What are a few planks and timers? The decisive struggle will not depend on them, but upon men and horses. Not one of all these people who now imagine that their work is done, will dare leave his ship in order to oppose you, nor will the mainland Greeks – those who have done so already have paid the price. I suggest, therefore, an immediate attack upon the Peloponnese. Or wait a while, if you prefer. In any case do not lose heart; for the Greeks cannot possibly escape ultimate subjection. They will be brought to account for the injuries they have done you, now and in the past. That is your best policy; nevertheless I have another plan to offer, should you be determined to withdraw the army from Greece. My lord, do not give the Greeks the chance to laugh at us. None of the reverses we have suffered have been due to us – you cannot say that we Persians have on any occasion fought like cowards. Why should we care if the Egyptians and Phoenicians and Cyprians and Cilicians have disgraced themselves? Persia is not involved in their disgrace. No; it is not we who are responsible for what has occurred. Listen, then, to what I have to propose; if you have made up your mind not to stay here, then go home together with the greater part of the army, and I will make it my duty, with 300,000 picked troops, to deliver Greece to you in chains.

The proposal was welcome to Xerxes in his dejection; he was highly delighted, and told Mardonius that he would consider the two alternatives and let him know which he preferred to adopt. Accordingly he summoned a conference, and during the debate it occurred to him that it would be just as well to send for Artemisia to take part in the discussion, as she on a previous occasion had been the only one to give him sound advice. When she presented herself, Xerxes dismissed his Persian advisers, and all the guards, and addressed her in these words:

‘Mardonius urges me to stay in Greece and attack the Peloponnese. According to him, my army and my Persian troops, who have not been responsible for any of our recent disasters, are anxious to prove their worth. His advice, therefore, is, either that I should undertake this campaign, or allow him to choose 300,000 men from the army and lead the expedition himself, while I return home with the remainder of my troops. With that force he promises to deliver Greece into my hands. You gave me good advice when you tried to dissuade me from risking the battle we have just fought at sea; so I would ask you to advise me know. Which of these two courses should I be wise to follow?’

‘My lord,’ Artemisia answered, ‘it is not easy to give you the best advice; nevertheless, circumstances being as they are, I think that you yourself should quit this country and leave Mardonius behind with the force he asks for, if that is what he wants, and if he has really undertaken to do as he said. If his design prospers and success attends his arms, it will be *your* work, master – for your slaves performed it. And even if things go wrong with him, it will be no great matter, so long as you yourself are safe and no danger threatens anything that concerns your house. While you and yours survive, the Greeks will have to run many a painful race for their lives and land; but who cares if Mardonius comes to grief? He is only your slave, and the Greeks will have a but a poor triumph if they kill him. As for yourself, you will be going home with the object of your campaign accomplished – for you have burnt Athens.’

Artemisia’s advice was most agreeable to Xerxes, for it was the expression of his own thoughts. Personally, I do not think he would have stayed in Greece, had all his counsellors, men and women alike, urged him to do so - he was much too badly frightened. As it was, he complimented Artemisia and sent her off to Ephesus with his sons – some of his bastards which had accompanied him on the expedition.

*Second Persian War, Reaction to defeat at Salamis, Xerxes Persian strategy*

**Herodotus, 8.143-144 (p.552-553)**

The Athenians then gave Alexander their answer. ‘We know’, it ran, ‘as well as you do that the Persian strength is many times greater than our own: that, at least, is a fact which you need not rub in. Nevertheless, such is our love of freedom, that we will defend ourselves in whatever way we can. As for making terms with Persia, it is useless to try to persuade us; for we shall never consent. And now tell Mardonius, that so long as the sun keeps his present course in the sky, we Athenians will never make peace with Xerxes. On the contrary, we shall oppose him unremittingly, putting our trust in the help of the gods and heroes whom he despises, whose temples and statues he destroyed with fire. Never come to us again with a proposal like this, and think you are doing us good service when you urge us to a course which is outrageous – for it would be a pity if you were to suffer some hurt at the hands of the Athenians, when you are our friends and benefactor.

So much for the Athenians’ answer to Alexander. To the Spartan envoys they said: ‘No doubt it was natural that the Lacedaemonians should dread the possibility of our making terms with Persia; none the less it shows a poor estimate of the spirit of Athens. There is not so much gold in the world nor land so fair that we would take it to pay to join the common enemy and bring Greece into subjection. There are many compelling reasons against our doing so, even if we wished: the first and greatest is the burning of the temples and images of our gods – now ashes and rubble. It is our bounden duty to avenge that desecration with all our might – not to clasp the hand that wrought it. Again, there is the Greek nation – the community of blood and language, temples and ritual, and our common customs; if Athens were to betray all this, it would not be well done. We would have you know, therefore, if you did not know it already, that so long as a single Athenian remains alive we will make no peace with Xerxes. We are deeply moved, however, by your kindness and thoughtfulness, and the offer you made to provide for our families in this time of distress. Nothing could be more generous; nevertheless we prefer to carry on as best we can, without being a burden to you. That being our resolve, get your army into the field with the least possible delay; for unless we are much mistaken, it will not be long before the enemy invades Attica – he will do it the instant he gets the news that we refuse his requests. Now, therefore, before he can appear in Attica, it is time for us to meet him in Boeotia.’

Athens had given her answer, and the Spartan envoys left for home.

*Second Persian War, Role of Athens and Sparta*

**Herodotus, 9.1-3 (p.554)**

When Alexander returned with the Athenians’ answer, Mardonius left Thessaly and marched with all speed for Athens, levying troops on the way from all the places through which he passed. The leading families of Thessaly continued to maintain their previous attitude; indeed they urged the Persians to the attack more vigorously than ever. Thorax of Larissa even escorted Xerxes in his retreat, and now openly encouraged Mardonius in his assault upon Greece.

In Boeotia an attempt was made by the Thebans to persuade him to halt. There was no better place, they said, to encamp, and their advice was that he should proceed no further, but, with Boeotia as his base, take measures for the conquest of Greece without striking a blow. If the former confederacy of Greek states continued to hold together, the whole world would have a hard task to defeat them; ‘But if’, the Thebans added, ‘you do as we suggest, you will put an end to all their schemes with no trouble at all. Send money to the leading men in the various towns – by doing that you will destroy the unity of the country, after which you will easily be able, with the help of those who take your part, to crush those who still oppose you.’

Mardonius did not act upon this suggestion. His whole heart was set upon taking Athens again – partly, no doubt, through mere obstinacy, and partly because he wished to signal his capture of the town to the king in Sardis by a chain of beacons through the island. When he reached Attica, once again there were no Athenians to be found; for nearly all of them, as he learnt, were either with the fleet or at Salamis. So he captured a deserted town – ten months after its previous capture by Xerxes.

*Second Persian War, Thebes, second Capture of Athens*

**Herodotus, 9.6-8 (p.555-557)**

The circumstances in which the Athenians had crossed into Salamis were these: so long as they expected an army from the Peloponnese to come to their assistance, they remained in Attica; but when they found that their Peloponnesian allies kept hanging about and were unwilling to move, and word came that the Persians were advancing and had actually got as far as Boeotia, they waited no longer, but crossed to Salamis with all their movable property, and at the same time sent a message to Lacedaemon to reproach the Spartans for allowing the enemy to invade Attica instead of marching with them to meet him in Boeotia, and to remind them, besides, of the offers they had received from Persia in the event of their deserting the Greek confederacy – not to mention the obvious fact that, if they got no help from Sparta, they would have to find some means of helping themselves.

Just then it was the time of the Hyacinthia in Sparta; the people thought it most important to give the god his due. It also happened that the wall they were building across the Isthmus was almost finished and about to have the battlements put on.

The Athenian messengers, accompanied by representatives from Megara and Plataea, reached Sparta and came before the Ephors. This is what they said: ‘The Athenians have sent us to tell you that the Persian king has offered both to restore our country to us, and at the same time, not only to make an alliance with us on fair and equal terms, openly and honestly, but also to give us any other territory we like to annex. We, however, from our reverence of Zeus whom all of Greece worships, and our revulsion from the very thought of treachery, peremptorily refused the offer, in spite of the fact that we ourselves have been treated unjustly and basely betrayed by our own confederates, and are well aware that we should gain more by an agreement with Persia than by prolonging the war. Nonetheless, we shall never willingly make terms with the enemy. Thus we, at any rate, pay our debts to Greece with no counterfeit coin; but you, who were in terror lest we should make peace with Persia – now that you know our spirit without doubt, and that we shall never be traitors to Greece – and now, too, that your fortification of the Isthmus is almost complete - take no account of Athens. You agreed with us to oppose the invade in Boeotia, but you broke your word and allowed him to invade Attica. This conduct on your part has roused the anger of Athens; it was unworthy of the hour and of yourselves. However, your immediate duty is to accede to our present request: put your army in the field, that you and we together may meet Mardonius in Attica. Now that Boeotia is lost to us, the best place to engage him, within our own territory, is the plain of Thria.’

The Ephors undertook to give their answer on the following day; but when it came, they made a further postponement till the day after, and then till the day after that; in fact they kept putting off from one day to the next for nearly a fortnight. Meanwhile the Peloponnesians in a body were working hard at the wall across the Isthmus, which was now nearing completion. Why was it that, when Alexander visited Athens, the Spartans were desperately anxious lest the Athenians should go over to Persia, whereas now they did not seem to care a jot? The only explanation I can give is, that the fortifications of the Isthmus were now complete, and they therefore felt that Athenian help was no longer necessary. At the time of Alexander’s visit, the wall was not complete – they were still working at it, in great fear of the Persians.

*Second Persian War, Tension between Athens and Sparta, Spartan tactics*

**Herodotus, 9.16-18 (p.559-561)**

What I am about to relate, I heard from Thersander, a man greatly respected in his native town Orchomenus. Thersander told me that he himself had an invitation from Attaginus, and that there were, besides the Persians, fifty Thebans. At table, the two nationalities, Greek and Persian, were not kept separate, but on each couch there sat a Persian and a Theban, side by side. During the drinking which followed the banquet, the Persian who shared Thersander’s couch asked him, in Greek, what town he came from. ‘Orchomenus,’ was the answer. ‘Since you and I’, the Persian said, ‘have eaten together at the same table and poured a libation from the same cup, I should like to leave you something by which you may remember the soundness of my judgement: thus you will be forewarned and be able to take proper measures for your own safety. You see these Persians at their dinner – and the army we left in camp over there by the river? In a short time from now you will see but a few of all these men left alive.’ The Persian spoke, as he spoke, wept copiously, and Thersander, greatly marvelling at what he had said, answered: ‘Are not Mardonius and the other high Persian officers under him the proper people to be told a thing like that?’ ‘My friend,’ rejoined the other, ‘what God has ordained no man can by any means prevent. Many of us know that what I have said is true; yet, because we are constrained by necessity, we continue to take orders from our commander. No one would believe us, however true our warning. This is the worst pain a man can have: to know much and have no power to act.’

This tale, as I have said, I heard from Thersander of Orchomenus; he also told me that he repeated it soon after to various people before the battel of Plataea.

While Mardonius was in Boeotia, all the Greeks in that part of the country who had gone over to Persia sent troops to join his army, and also took part in his attack on Athens – all, that is, except the Phocians. The Phocians had, indeed, warmly embraced the Persian interest, but under compulsion and not of their free choice. A few days after Mardonius’ arrival at Thebes, he was joined by a force of Phocian infantry, a thousand strong, under the command of Harmocydes, one of their most distinguished men. On their arrival, Mardonius sent them an order to take up a position in open ground, apart from the rest of the army. The order was no sooner obeyed than the Persian cavalry made their appearance in full force. On this, a rumour went round the Greek contingents serving with the Persians that Mardonius meant to attack the Phocians and shoot them down. The same idea ran through the Phocians too. Their commander Harmocydes then urged them to fight. ‘Fellow-countrymen,’ he cried, ‘you can’t fail to see that these fellows have deliberately planned to murder us – I suppose because of some lie the Thessalians have told about us. Come then; show what you are made of, every one of you. It is better to die actively defending ourselves than just to give up and be butchered – that disgrace, at least, we can avoid. Let us show them that the men they have plotted to murder are Greeks – and they themselves are barbarians.’

The Persian cavalry then surrounded them, and began to close in with weapons poised, as though to make an end of them. A few spears were actually let fly; but the Phocians stood firm, drawing close together and packing their ranks tights, where upon the Persians wheeled about and retired. Possibly the Thessalians had asked them to commit this crime, but, on seeing their victims prepared to defend themselves, they were afraid of being roughly handled and withdrew, according to Mardonius’ orders; it may be, on the other hand, that Mardonius merely wanted to test their courage. I cannot say for certain which explanation is the true one. In any case, after the cavalry had retired, Mardonius sent a message to the Phocians, telling them not to be alarmed: ‘You have proved yourselves brave men,’ he said, ‘quite contrary to the report I had of you. Your duty now is to play a zealous part in the war. As for benefits, you will not outdo either me or the king.’ That was the end of this incident.

*Second Persian War, Greek who supported Persia*

**Herodotus, 9.40 (p.571)**

Two more days went by, and no further action took place. Neither side was willing to begin the general engagement. The Persians provoked the Greek forces to attack by advancing right up to the river, but neither of them ventured actually to cross. Nevertheless Mardonius’ cavalry harassed the Greeks continually: this was due to the Thebans – Persia’s firm friends; their hearts were in the war, and again and again they led the cavalry to within striking distance, when the Persians and Medes took over, and proceeded to show what stuff they were made of.

*Second Persian War, Battle of Plataea, Theban support for Persia*

**Herodotus, 9.62-64 (p.580-581)**

Then, while the words were still upon his lips, the Tegeans sprang forward to lead the attack, and a moment later the sacrificial victims promised success. At this, the Spartans too, at last moved forward against the enemy, who stopped shooting their arrows and prepared to meet them face to face.

First there was a struggle at the barricade of shields; then, the barricade down, there was a bitter and protracted fight, hand to hand, close by the temple of Demeter, for the Persians would lay hold of the Spartan spears and break them; in courage and strength they were as good as their adversaries, but they were deficient in armour, untrained, and greatly inferior in skill. Sometimes singly, sometimes in groups of ten men - perhaps fewer, perhaps more – they fell upon the Spartan line and were cut down. They pressed hardest at the point where Mardonius fought in person – riding his white charger, and surrounded by his thousand Persian troops, the flower of the army. While Mardonius was alive, they continued to resist and to defend themselves, and struck down many of the Lacedaemonians; but after his death, and the destruction of his personal guard – the finest of the Persian troops – the remainder yielded to the Lacedaemonians and took to flight. The chief cause of their discomfiture was their lack of armour, fighting without it against hoplites. Thus the prophecy of the oracle was fulfilled, and Mardonius rendered satisfaction to the Spartans for the killing of Leonidas; and thus, too, Pausanias, son of Cleombrotus and grandson of Anaxandrides, won the most splendid victory of all those we know. (I have given Pausanias’ ancestors before Anaxandrides where I gave the genealogy of Leonidas.) Mardonius was killed by Aeimnestus, a distinguished Spartan, who some time after the Persian wars met his own death, together with the three hundred men under his command, at Stenyclerus fighting against the entire forces of the Messenians.

*Second Persian War, Battle of Plataea, Role of Sparta, reasons for Persian defeat*

**Herodotus, 9.71 (p.583)**

Of the enemy’s infantry, the Persian contingent fought best; of the cavalry, the Sacae; and of individuals Mardonius himself is said to have been as good as any. On the Greek side, the troops from Tegea and Athens were conspicuous in the fighting, but both were surpassed by the Lacedaemonians: the only evidence I can offer to support this statement (for all three were victorious in their own section of the line) is the fact that the Lacedaemonians had the hardest task. They were matched against the best troops of the enemy – and beat them. Much the greatest courage was shown, in my opinion, by Aristodemus – the man who had suffered the disgrace of being the sole survivor of the Three Hundred at Thermopylae. After him, the greatest personal distinction was won by three Spartans, Posidonius, Philocyon, and Amompharetus. However, when, after the battle, the question of who had most distinguished himself was discussed, the Spartans present decided that Aristodemus had, indeed, performed great deeds, but that he had done so merely to retrieve his lost honour, rushing forward with the fury of a madman in his desire to be killed before his comrades’ eyes; Posidonius, on the contrary, without any wish to be killed, had fought bravely, and was on that account the better man. It may, of course, have been envy which made them say this; in any case, the men I mentioned all received public honours except Aristodemus – Aristodemus got nothing, because he deliberately courted death for the reason already explained.

*Second Persian War, Battle of Plataea, Role of Sparta*

**Herodotus, 9.98-99 (p.593-594)**

The Greeks were much vexed when they discovered that the Persians had given them the slip and cleared out for the mainland, and could not at once decide whether to return home or sail for the Hellespont. Finally, however, they decided to do neither, but to make for the Asiatic coast. All gear – boarding-gangways and so on – necessary for a naval engagement was put in readiness, and the fleet sailed for Mycale. No enemy vessel was to be seen coming out to meet them as they approached Persian position; on the contrary, they saw that all his ships had been hauled ashore within the protection of the palisade, and that a strong infantry force was drawn up along the beach. In these circumstances Leotychides took his ship as close in-shore as he could, and, as he passed along, got a crier to shout the following appeal to the Ionians who were serving with the enemy: ‘Men of Ionia, listen, if you can hear me, to what I have to say. The Persians, in any case, won’t understand a word of it. When the battle begins, let each man of you first remember Freedom – and secondly our password, *Hebe*. Anyone who can’t hear me should be told what I say by those who can.’ In this he had the same intention as Themistocles had at Artemisium. Either the Persians would not know what he had said and the Ionians would be persuaded to leave them, or if his words were reported to the Persians they would mistrust their Greek subjects.

Immediately after this appeal the Greeks ran their ships ashore and the troops took up positions on the beach. The first act of the Persians, when they saw the Greeks preparing to fight, was to disarm the Samians, whom they suspected of sympathy with the Greek cause; for it was a fact that when certain Athenians, caught in Attica by Xerxes’ men, had been brought over in Persian ships as prisoner, the Samians had released them and sent them back to Athens with provisions for the journey. This – the fact of their having rescued five hundred of Xerxes’ enemies - was the chief cause of their being suspect. Next, the Persian command ordered the Milesians to guard the passes which led up to the heights of Mycale – ostensibly because the Milesians were familiar with that part of the country, but actually to get them well out of the way. Then, having taken precautions against the Ionians who they thought might cause trouble if they got the chance, they proceeded to make their own dispositions – a defensive line protected by a barrier of interlocking shields.

*Second Persian War, Greeks who supported Persia*

**Herodotus, 9.105-106 (p.596-597)**

The Athenian troops distinguished themselves more than any others in the battle, and the most conspicuous amongst them was Hermolycus, the son of Euthynus, a champion all-in wrestler. Some years later, when Athens was at war with Carystus, he was killed in action at Cyrnus, in Carystian territory, and buried on Geraestus. After the Athenians, the greatest distinction was one by the men of Corinth, Troezen, and Sicyon.

When most of the enemy forces had been cut to pieces, either in the battel or during the rout, the Greeks burnt the Persian ships and the fort, having first removed everything of value, including a number of money-chests, to a place of safety on the beach. They then sailed for Samos, and on their arrival there held a council upon the future of Ionia. The idea was to remove the Ionians and resettle them in some part of Greece which was under their own control, and to abandon Ionia itself to the Persians. They did not think it was possible to be for ever on the watch in order to protect Ionia, and at the same time there was little hope, failing such perpetual vigilance, of the Ionians escaping Persian vengeance for their revolt. It was accordingly proposed by the Peloponnesian leaders to turn out the Greeks who had supported Persia and settle the Ionians in their commercial centres; the Athenians, however, strongly disapproved; for they had no wish to see Ionia depopulated, quite apart from their feeling that Peloponnesians had no right to discuss the future of Athenian colonists. They expressed their disapproval with great vigour and the Peloponnesians gave way. Thus they brought into the confederacy the Samians, Chians, Lesbians, and other island peoples who had fought for Greece against the foreigners; oaths were sworn, and all these communities bound themselves to be loyal to the common cause. This don, the fleet sailed for the Hellespont with the purpose of destroying the bridges, which, it was supposed, were still in position.

*Second Persian War, Greek Confederacy, Ionian and Peloponnesian Greeks.*