

Week 7: The Persians Wars

Lecture 12, **Marathon**, Key Words

Aryans
Media
Babylonia
Lydia
Persia
Cyrus
Achaemenid
Armenia
Syria
Cappadocia
Croesus
Cambyses
Egypt
India
Sudan
Persian Gulf
Darius
Samos
Polycrates
Scythia
Macedon
Miltiades
Danube
Earth and Water
Boeotia
Chalcis
Corinth
Demaratus
Cleruchs
Aegina
Ionian Rebellion
Aristagoras
Miletus
Naxos
Sardis
Eretria
Lade
Hipparchus archon 496/5
Phrynicus
Chersonnesus
Piraeus
Themistocles

Mardonias
Thrace
Mt. Athos
Rapprochement
Datis
Artaphernes
Delos
Carystus
Pheidippides
Pan
Carneia
Arête
Beach head
Cavalry
Archers
Plataeans
Herakleion
Marshes
Charadra
Soros
Cynosura
Phaleron
Dromoi
Grundy
Stoa Poikile
Aeschylus
Hastings
Spanish Armada
Neville Chamberlain
Bertrand Russell
Churchill
Marlborough
Holocaust
Sophocles
Euripides
Aristophanes
Socrates
Plato
Aristotle
Phidias
Parthenon
Pericles
Scientific Revolution
Western Civilization
Marathonomachoi

Open Yale courses

Chronological Table for Persian History and the Persian Wars

2000-1000 Indo-Iranians migrate from the Eurasian plains of south Russia, across the Caucasus Mountains and into upper-Mesopotamia; others move east of the Caspian Sea and into the Indus river valley (founders of the Aryan Sanskrit civilization).

1150-1000 Phrygians migrate from the Balkans into central Anatolia; spread of iron technology: early Iron Age (1150-550).

950 Phrygian kings establish capital at Gordium and unite Anatolian plateau.

900-612 Assyria dominates the Near East.

844 Assyrian records refer to the Iranian tribes, the Persians.

836 Assyrian records mention the Medes.

705-690 Phrygian power shattered by Cimmerians (Iranian or Thracian nomads, who swept over Asia Minor and Syria at the end of the 8th /early 7th century); Lydia becomes independent of Phrygia.

700-675 Medes coalesce into a united kingdom under the initiative of the Mede Deioces (Hdt. 1.96-106); organization falls to Deioces' successors, Phraortes and Cyaxares; Ecbatana becomes the capital.

680 Gyges overthrows the Lydian Candaules (Hdt. 1.8-14; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 2.359d) and becomes the first king of the Mermnad dynasty.

680-645 Gyges rules Lydia; sets the pattern of trying to control the Greek cities of the coast for tribute and access to the sea; fails in attacks Miletus and Smyrna; captures Colophon and becomes the first foreigner after the Phrygian king Midas to send gifts to Delphi.

650 Lydians mint the first electrum coins.

639 Assyrians destroy the kingdom of Elam and reduce the Persians to subject status.

614 Medes march against Assyria and destroy the religious capital Assur; Cyaxares makes an alliance with the neo-Babylonian kingdom, sealed by marriage of a Median princess to Nebuchadnezzar, for whom he builds the "Hanging Gardens".

612 the Medes, aided by the Babylonians, capture and destroy the Assyrian capital Nineveh; following the fall of Assyria a balance of power exists among the four chief nations of the area: Egypt, the neo-Babylonian kingdom, the kingdom of the Medes and that of the Lydians; the Persians, now under the suzerainty of the Medes, incorporate the old kingdom of Elam.

610-560 Alyattes king of Lydia subjects the Greek cities of Asia Minor except Miletus.

586 Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and leads the Jews into the Babylonian captivity.

585 Thales of Miletus predicts an eclipse of the sun, which ends a battle in Cappadocia between the Medes led by Cyaxares and the Lydians under Alyattes; the Halys River established as the boundary between Lydia and Media.

560-546 Croesus, the last and most famous Lydian king, succeeds Alyattes; takes Ephesus but treats temple of Artemis with great respect; subdues the rest of the Ionian, Aeolian and Dorian cities of Asia Minor and compels them to pay tribute; Lydia (Miletus spared) achieves its greatest prosperity and widest territorial expansion, subjects all peoples west of the Halys River except the Cilicians and Lycians (Hdt. 1.28).

559-530 King Cyrus of Persia establishes the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire.

550/49 Cyrus overthrows Astyages, the Median king, and becomes ruler of the Median kingdom; change in dynasty, rather than formation of new, destruction of old kingdom, since Medes and Persians so closely related; Croesus told by Apollo at Delphi that if he marches against Persia, he will destroy a great empire.

546 Cyrus defeats Croesus at Sardis (Hdt. 1.46-85); conquers Lydia and the Ionian cities; subjugates the Carians and Lycians; honors native customs and religious beliefs.

539 Cyrus conquers Babylonia and the neo-Babylonian empire.

530 Cyrus killed in a campaign against the Massagetai.

530-522 Cambyses is King of Persia.

525 Cambyses conquers Egypt; Ionian and Aeolian Greeks fight under Persians; Greeks and Carians serve as mercenaries in Egyptian army.

522 Darius becomes King of Persia following death of Cambyses; establishes custom that kingship is the prerogative of the Achaemenid family; reorganizes the empire, dividing it into 20 or more satrapies; Lydians and Ionians assigned to a satrap in Sardis, Greeks in the Hellespont and Propontis subject to the satrap in Dascylium; Greeks cities ruled by tyrants favorable to Persia, free of satrapal interference if meet requirements of tribute and military service; King's Law based on the famous code of Hammurabi which had dominated legal procedure in Babylon and elsewhere since the eighteenth century; inaugurates the first Persian coinage, the gold Daric. Polycrates, tyrant of Samos dies.

516 Hippias dispatches Miltiades to control Chersonese peninsula.

513 Darius crosses to Europe for Scythian expedition; forces include Miltiades, tyrant of the Thracian Chersonese; Histiaeus of Miletus opposes plan to break up bridge of boats; Darius leaves Megabazus with a large force (80,000) as commander in Europe, who subdues Perinthus and then Thrace; appoints Artaphernes satrap headquartered at Susa.

506 Aeginetans make various raids on Phaleron and other Attic maritime communities in the "unheralded war" (Hdt. 5.80-89); Athenians appeal to Spartan king Cleomenes for help.

(?) **501** Spartans attempt to restore Hippias as tyrant in Athens; according to Herodotus (5.90-96), the Corinthians block the proposal in a meeting of the Peloponnesian League (the earliest extant reference to the league); Athenians refuse the Persian demand to restore Hippias.

500 Naxos in a state of internal strife (*stasis*), in which the *demos* seizes power and the aristocrats flee to Miletus where they are on friendly terms with the tyrant Histiaeus; with Histiaeus in Susa with Darius, the governor Aristagoras enlists the support of Artaphernes, the Persian satrap in Sardis, to conquer Naxos, Cyclades and Euboea; his force of 200 ships fails to take Naxos after a four month siege.

499 Ionian Revolt fomented by Aristagoras, who advocates the establishment of democratic institutions (*isonomia*) throughout the eastern Greek cities; Cleomenes of Sparta turns down Aristagoras' appeal for an alliance, but the Athenian assembly agrees to send twenty ships to help the Ionians and the Eretrians send an additional five ships (Herodotus in 5.97 remarks that "these ships were the beginning of evils both for Hellenes and Barbarians").

498 the squadron of twenty-five ships from Athens and Eretria sets sail for Miletus, burns Sardis by accident, including the temple of the native goddess Cybele, and is defeated at Ephesus by the Persians; the Athenians sail home.

497/6 Cyprus and Caria brought back into Persian control.

496 Aristagoras, having fled to Myrcinus on the Strymon, is killed fighting Thracians; Miltiades returns to the Chersonese and captures the islands of Lemnos and Imbros, which are later colonized by poor Athenians.

496/5 Hipparchus, son of Charmos, friend to Peisistratus and Persia, elected archon; Cleisthenes had him in mind when he proposed Ostracism (Aristotle, *A.P.*, 22); signifies ascendancy of peace faction in Athens.

494 Battle of Lade Persians besiege Miletus by land and sea, confronted by Ionian fleet of 350 ships (majority of ships from Chios, Miletus, Lesbos and Samos); treachery of large sections of the Samian and Lesbian ships leads to Persian victory; Sparta under Cleomenes defeats Argos in the Battle of Spea; greatly strengthens Sparta's control over the Peloponnesian League and stabilizes the league's organization.

493 Miletus taken by storm; temple with oracle of Apollo at Didyma plundered and burned; city not destroyed by prosperity ends; spring: Persian fleet takes islands of Chios, Lesbos, Tenedos and Ionian towns on the mainland; summer: Phoenician fleet, campaigning in the Hellespont, reestablishes Persian control over the European coast of the Hellespont, the Propontis and Bosphorus areas, which had joined the revolt; Miltiades flees Chersonese, escapes Phoenicians and arrives in Athens; after crushing the revolt, Persians compel the Ionian cities to make treaties with one another and reassess their tribute; Phrynichus fined for his play, *Capture of Miletus*; Miltiades and Themistocles become prominent in Athens.

493/2 Themistocles elected eponymous archon.

492 Mardonius, brother-in-law of Darius, appointed general, establishes democracies in Ionian cities in place of former tyrannies; sets out on land and sea campaign; recovers Thrace, which had broken from Persia during the Ionian revolt; Macedonia once again recognizes the Great King as overlord; the wreck of many ships in a violent storm as Persian fleet tries to round Mt. Athos necessitates return to Asia; however, Thrace and Macedonia under control; Persian suzerainty extends to the northern border of Thessaly, the most northerly Greek states.

492/1 Miltiades put on trial for having ruled as a tyrant in the Chersonese.

491 Athens appeals to Sparta over suspected *medism* of Aegina; Cleomenes forces Aegina, a Peloponnesian ally, to furnish hostages to rival Athens.

490 Darius determined to punish Athens and Eretria for aiding the Ionian revolt and take vengeance for the burning of Sardis ("Remember the Athenians!"); summer: Persian expedition sets out from Cilicia in southern Asia Minor under Datis and Artaphernes with orders to enslave Athens and Eretria; Persians take city of Naxos and burn temple; Delos spared and honored, other islands forced to give troops and hostages; armada sails to Euboea, forces Carystus to capitulate and proceeds to Eretria; Athens orders 4,000 Athenian cleruchs to Eretria, but return home on suggestion of Eretrians; Persians pillage and burn temples in Eretria in revenge for temples at Sardis and enslave population; arrive with Hippias at northern end of plain of Marathon (area of strong Peisistratid influence); Athens sends Pheidippides to Sparta for help, who covers 140 miles in one day; Spartans cannot send forces till after the full moon; Plato (*Laws*, 3.692, 698) mentions difficulties caused by a Messenian war delayed Spartan arrival at Marathon; Miltiades passes motion to meet Persians wherever they land; Athenians go to Marathon, joined by 600 Plataeans; polemarch Callimachus follows battle strategy of Miltiades; Persians defeated: 6400 Persian dead, 192 Athenian dead, including Callimachus and Aeschylus' brother; possible shield signal flashed to alert Spartan fleet (Alcmaeonids?); Athenians rush back to Athens to prevent landing of Persian fleet; Datis returns to Asia; sends Eretrian prisoners to Susa; 2,000 Spartans arrive at Marathon on third day; inspect Persian dead and congratulate Athenians.

489 Miltiades undertakes expedition to force the Aegean islands to renounce their allegiance to the Great King; despite initial successes, injured and fails at Paros; tried by Xanthippus for deceiving the people; fined fifty talents; Miltiades dies of wound; son Cimon pays father's fine. Cleomenes first flees to Thessaly, and then attempts to organize the Arcadians and helots against Sparta, possibly seeking to overthrow Spartan oligarchy; invited back to Sparta where he dies;

Spartans send Leotychides with Aeginetan envoys to Athens for the 10 Aeginetan hostages; Athens refuses; Aegina captures a number of leading Athenians; war between Athens and Aegina results.

488/7 Hipparchus ostracized and condemned to death *in absentia*.

487/6 Megacles the Alcmaeonid ostracized; friend of the tyrants (Aristotle, *A.P.* 22).

486 Egypt revolts from Persia; Darius dies after 36 year reign; Xerxes becomes King.

485 Xerxes suppresses Egyptian revolt in person, removes Egypt's special privileges and reduces it to satrapy status; Aleuadae of Thessaly send envoys to Susa urging Xerxes to invade Greece (Hdt. 7.6).

485/4 Xanthippus is ostracized.

483-480 Xerxes prepares to invade Greece: undertakes a three-year project to dig a canal through the isthmus of the Athos promontory, puts bridge over Strymon River and food deposits for route through Thrace, and builds a double bridge of boats across the Hellespont from Abydos on Asia Minor coast to Sestos on the European side (destroyed by violent storm).

483/2 Athenians discover an unusually rich vein of silver in the silver mines of the Laurium region in the Sunium promontory with profits of 100 talents a year to the state; instead of distributing 10 drachma to each citizen, Themistocles passes a decree to build a large fleet of triremes for the war with Aegina, but was aware of Persian preparations and their construction of a canal through the Athos promontory; 100 of the richest men in Athens made responsible for building and equipping one trireme (first reference to what becomes the trierarchic system; timber from Macedon where Alexander was *proxenos* of Athens; Athenians have 200 triremes in 480 following three-year building program).

482 Aristides, who wanted to concentrate on hoplites over naval power, is ostracized; Babylon revolts from Persia and is subdued; merged with Assyria as a satrapy.

Persian War

481 spring: Xerxes, having assembled army contingents in Cappadocia and having sent heralds to all states except Athens and Sparta for earth and water, proceeds to Susa.

Fall: Greeks hold a conference at Sparta; end quarrels and stop fighting (e.g., war between Athens and Aegina ceases); create the Hellenic League with Sparta as hegemon; first union of Greek states since the mythical times of the Trojan war; Sparta presides over meetings, which are usually held at Corinth, and has supreme command over both land and sea forces; 31 Greek states agree to fight to the death to preserve Greek liberty; send envoys to Argos, Corcyra, Crete and Syracuse; Argos and Crete remain neutral as Delphi advises; Syracuse refuses alliance.

March 480 Xerxes sets out from Sardis; heads for Abydos where his fleet is gathering; joins with fleet at mouth of Hebrus; probably 200,000 troops from 46 nations; Herodotus claims that the crews and marines of the 1207 triremes and the 3000 penteconters with the infantry and cavalry numbered 2,641,610.

April: Congress of Hellenic League at Corinth to determine where to meet Persians; decide to send 10,000 hoplites to Tempe to stop Xerxes.

10 May: Xerxes crosses the Hellespont.

May 480 Hellenic is force in Tempe.

Mid-June: Xerxes' preparations are complete.

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Late June: Hellenic League abandons Tempe when informed by Alexander of Macedonia that their position could be turned by Persians; Thessalians and their *perioikoi* medize when Xerxes enters Macedonia.

June 480 (?) In need of a new plan, after withdrawal from Tempe, the Greeks consult Delphi: first Delphic oracle (Hdt 140): “Wretches, why sit ye here? Fly; fly to the ends of the earth . . . ; prominent Delphian urges Hellenic league to approach Apollo a second time, this time as suppliants: second Delphic oracle (Hdt. 141): “Safe shall the wooden wall continue for thee and thy children. . . . O divine Salamis, but thou shalt destroy the children of women.” Athenians debate whether the “wooden wall” indicates the acropolis or alludes to the ships; Themistocles persuades assembly to trust in ships and that by “divine” Apollo indicates victory at Salamis. Hellenic League decides to hold the narrow pass at Thermopylae and to send the fleet to Artemesium; land and sea forces can cooperate in stopping the advance of Xerxes, whose strategy depend on close communication between land and naval forces.

(?) Oath of Plataea: Hellenic League swears to “tithē” to the god at Delphi all willing medizers and not to rebuild a single one of the shrines the barbarians have burned and razed.

24 July: Xerxes arrives at Therma in Macedonia; army marches out three days ahead of the fleet.

Late July/early August: Greek fleet of 271 ships (147 Athenian) stationed at Artemesium, Eurybiades held chief command, but Themistocles predominant influence; Leonidas puts his advance force of 4,000 hoplites (6,000-7,000?), including 300 Spartiates, in position at Thermopylae; reinforcement to come, if navy is successful.

12 August: Themistocles makes contact with the Persian navy; withdraws fleet to Chalcis.

13 August: three-day storm wrecks one third of Xerxes’ fleet (400 ships?) off coast of Magnesia.

16-17 August: Xerxes sends detachment of 200 ships around Euboea to encircle Greek fleet.

17 August: diver Scyllias warns Greeks of Persian trap.

18 August: Themistocles engages Persian fleet in minor skirmish; earlier the same day, Xerxes, having delayed 3 days, launches frontal assault on Leonidas' position at Thermopylae; storm completely destroys Xerxes' fleet around Euboea.

19 August: 53 reserve ships sail north from Athens and inform Themistocles of the fate of the Xerxes fleet sailing round Euboea; Xerxes makes second assault on Thermopylae; Malian Ephialtes mentions Anopaea path to Xerxes, who sends Hydarnes down path near Alpeni with 10,000 "Immortals" to attack Leonidas from rear; only Thebans and Thespians remain with Leonidas, whose army was reduced to about 2000 men.

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20 August: Battle at Artemesium and Thermopylae: Leonidas and Spartan army annihilated (Hdt. 228): "Go, stranger, and to Lacedaemon tell that here, obeying her behests, we fell." Fleet withdraws south after indecisive engagement with Persian fleet and news about Thermopylae; Greek ships put in at Salamis; Peloponnesians fortifying Isthmus; Athenians evacuate women and children to Troezen, old men and possessions to Salamis.

23 August: Xerxes moves south with army, devastates Phocis and destroys Thespieae and Plataea for their loyalty to the Greek cause.

26 August: Persian fleet sets out and reaches Phaleron; Persians burn and loot Attica, now abandoned except for those few on the acropolis; Greek fleet of 378 ships (180 Athenian) at Salamis; Peloponnesians anxious to retire to Isthmus and wall being built; Themistocles, with support of Aegina and Megara, threatens to sail with Athenians to Italy, if Peloponnesians withdraw (Hdt. 8.56-96).

20 September: Battle at Salamis; Themistocles sends slave Sicinnus with message to Xerxes, tricking the Great King into fighting in the narrows between Attica and Salamis; stunning Greek victory vindicates the naval strategy of Themistocles.

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24 September: Persian fleet flees at night to Hellespont to guard bridges and watch Ionian Greeks; Greeks allow Xerxes' escape to Asia with army; Mardonius left in Thessaly with a force for expedition against Peloponnesians next spring.

Spring 479 Greek fleet of 110 ships assembles at Aegina under Leotychides; Persian fleet at Samos to watch Ionia.

June 479 Mardonius occupies Attica; Athenians withdraw to Salamis; refuse King's peace offer; Lycides stoned to death for suggesting assembly consider King's terms.

July: Athenians threaten to come to terms unless Sparta sends army to Boeotia; 5,000 Spartiates joined by Peloponnesians at Isthmus march to Boeotia; Mardonius destroys what is left in Athens,

burns temple of Demeter in Eleusis and retires to Thebes in Boeotia, after hearing of army at Isthmus.

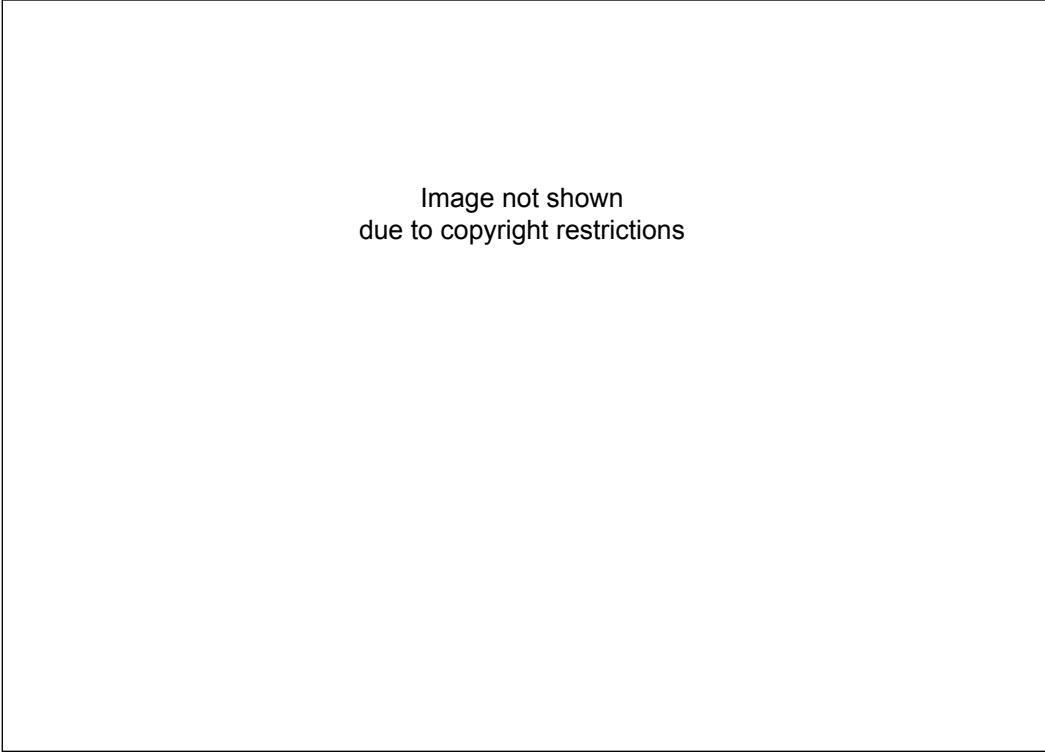


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August 479 Battle of Plataea: 38,700 Greek hoplites (8,000 Athenian) and 70,000 light-armed troops meet Mardonius' force of roughly same size, though vastly superior in cavalry; Persians attack first; battle decided on right: Spartans and Tegeans sustain Persian assault, and then overwhelm them in turn and kill Mardonius; Persian army annihilated in flight from Greeks, except troops under Artabazus which escape through Thessaly and Thrace to Asia Minor; Hdt. 9.64, "the finest victory in all history known to me was won by Pausanias." Greeks bury dead, divide spoils, fulfill vows to gods and execute Theban leaders for medizing; dedicate bronze column with names of 31 loyal members of Hellenic League.

Battle of Mycale: Greek fleet under command of Leotychides at Delos heeds envoys from Samos and sails to Asia Minor to liberate Ionia; Persians sail from Samos to Mycale, promontory opposite Samos, disembark, beach ships and wait attack with army; Greeks land at Mycale and assault Persian positions; achieve total victory for Greeks, as many Ionians and Aeolians turn on Persians and join with them— "Ionia revolted the second time from the Persians" (Hdt. 9.104); Greeks slaughter Persians and burn their ships. Athenians enroll in the Hellenic League the Samians, Chians, Lesbians and other islanders who campaigned with them.

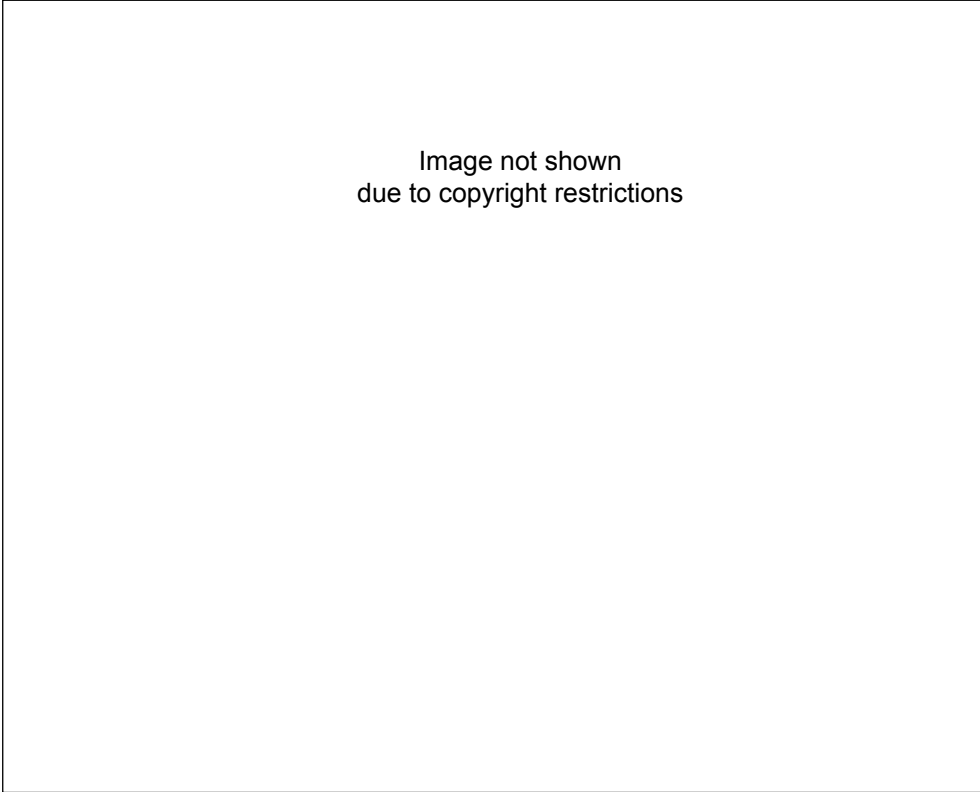


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479/8 Greeks sail to Hellespont to destroy Xerxes' bridge but find it no longer in place; Leotychides leaves with Peloponnesian contingents; Xanthippus and the Athenians make an attempt on the Chersonese; lay siege to Sestos, held by a strong force of Persians; Athenians capture fortress and sail home.

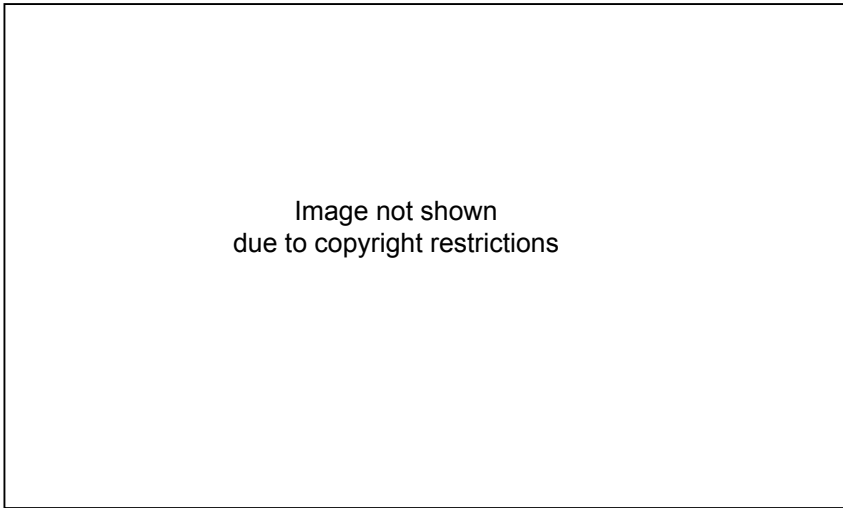


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Greek Strategy in the Persian Wars

BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY:

Aristagoras, Histiaeus, Themistocles, Aristides, Eurybiades, Leonidas, Leotychides, Miltiades, Darius, Mardonius, Dares, Pausanias, Xerxes, Hellenic League, Themistocles Decree, Eretria, Marathon (490), Artemesium (480), Thermopylae (480), Salamis (480), Plataea (479), Cape Mycale (479)

CONSIDER:

1. How reliable is Herodotus' account? Where do biases interfere with his historical accuracy?
2. What was the strategy of the Persians? Why did they use this strategy? What would they have to accomplish in order to win the war?
3. How did the Hellenic League hope to stop the Persians? Did it rely principally upon naval or upon land forces? What would it have to accomplish in order to win the war?
4. Why would the Greeks make a stand at Thermopylae? Could they have stopped the Persians' land forces? Were they trying merely to force a decisive sea battle at Artemesium? Was Thermopylae a holding action to give the Greeks time to withdraw into the Peloponnesus and build defensive fortifications across the Isthmus of Corinth? Was Thermopylae a holding action until the Persian forces exhausted their supplies?
5. What is the value of the Themistocles Decree? When did the first evidence of a decree on this subject occur? Of what date is this copy? Does it agree with the account of Herodotus? Is Herodotus' narrative coherent and internally consistent? What picture of Athenian strategy does the decree give? Is it authentic, that is, is the stone we have a copy of a decree passed by the Ekklesia immediately before the battle of Thermopylae?
6. Assuming that the decree is valid in essence (if not in detail), how would you explain the close interrelation between the second oracle sent to Athens by Delphi (Hdt. 7.141) and the details of the decree? Did the Athenians plan well ahead of time to fight a battle at Salamis and ask the god whether they would win there? Was this the basis of Themistocles' arguments in maintaining that the Athenians should evacuate their homeland? Why Salamis?
7. Did the Athenians expect the Acropolis to hold out? Was there in actuality a garrison upon it?
8. What was the most decisive battle of the war? Why did the Greeks win the war? What does Herodotus think? Which polis deserves the most credit for the victory?