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PERSIAN PROPAGANDA — A NEGLECTED FACTOR IN XERXES' INVASION OF GREECE AND HERODOTUS[1]

BY

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Although modern warfare is waged with a seemingly endless array of sophisticated lethal weaponry, not all weapons in the arsenal of a modern state are of the detonating variety. Psychological operations against the enemy have assumed so vital a role in the conduct of recent wars that the term psychological warfare is now in common usage. The ultimate aim of psychological warfare is to achieve military gains without the use of military force and it has been defined as "the planned use of *propaganda* and *other actions* designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes and behavior of enemy, neutral and friendly foreign groups in such a way as to support the accomplishment of national aims and objectives."[2] While contemporary treatments of the subject acknowledge the importance of "other actions" such as economic pressure, military threats, duplicitous diplomacy and the like, they all stress the importance of propaganda, now easily and instantly disseminated globally in stereophonic sound complete with pictures in living color.

Although the terms psychological warfare and propaganda are relatively new, the concepts are very old indeed. Both have a lengthy history in the ancient Near East where they were practiced for thousands of years before the Persians arrived on the scene. Some of their predecessors, as for example the Assyrians, advanced the use of propaganda and psychological warfare to an art form[3] and there is every reason to believe that the Persians took

[1] I would like to dedicate this article to the memories of two dear friends, Chester G. and Gretchen Starr. I would also like to thank my colleague John K. Evans for reading an earlier draft. Citations in parenthesis without attribution are to book and chapter of Herodotus. Translations are from the Loeb Classical Library edition of A.D. Godley, unless they are my own.

[2] Daugherty & Janowitz, 1958, 2; see also Linebarger, 1954, 37-47.

[3] On the antiquity of psychological warfare and propaganda see Laswell, 1958, 21-24, and Finklestein, 1979, 50-100. On the Assyrian use of propaganda and psychological warfare see Oppenheim, 1979, 110-144 and Saggs, 1984, 248-250.

up right where the Assyrians left off. The propagandistic nature of such Persian documents as the Cyrus cylinder and the Behistun inscription has long been recognized[4], and studies of such texts as well as Persian Imperial art and coinage have revealed general themes of the messages kings sought to convey. These studies leave no doubt that the Persians were absolute masters at creating and disseminating propaganda in both words and pictures[5].

This important information about the Persians is all the more significant because, unlike most of what we know about them, it is derived exclusively from oriental sources, but for some reason this has not much interested students of either the Persian Wars or Herodotus[6]. Individual acts such as the route taken by Xerxes through Anatolia, the unoccupied chariot of Zeus drawn by eight white horses that accompanied his entourage (7.40), his visit to Troy and sacrifice to Athena there and his claim to be descended from Perseus (7.150) have all been labeled propaganda ploys[7], but each has been viewed in isolation with no attempt to examine the larger picture[8].

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[4] On the Cyrus cylinder see Olmstead, 1948, 51-56; von Soden, 1983, 61-81; Briant, 1996, 51-55. On the Behistun Inscription see Olmstead, 1948, 107-118; Briant, 1996, 135-140; Dandamaev, 1976, 85-90 and most recently Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1993, 145-163 and 1999, 91-112; the earlier literature is cited by Rollinger, 1998, 155-176.

[5] On art, Root, 1979, is a seminal and magisterial study; see also Nylander, 1979, 345-359; Jamzadeh, 1992, 125-147 and 1993, 137-140 and Boardman, 2000, 140-149. On coinage see Carradice, 1987, 73-108; Root, 1989, 33-50 and Stronach, 1989, 255-279.

[6] Three recent works illustrate this point. In the index of Briant, 1996, there are 42 entries under the word "propagande." Only one of these is found in the chapter on Xerxes (p.584) and that occurs in the context of his death and the accession of Artaxerxes I. In the index of Green, 1996, there are 24 entries under the word propaganda, most of these are either generic or refer to Athenian, Spartan or Greek propaganda generally, though a few do pertain to Persian propaganda. Balcer, 1995, has no index, but by my count the words propaganda/propagandistic are used about a dozen times (pp. 43, 52, 75, 109, 111, 119, 175 n. 6, 273 and four times on p. 291), but not at all in the context under discussion here. None of the many articles in the volumes on propaganda in the ancient world edited by Sordi, 1974, 1975, 1976, even considers the Persians. Huber, 1968, 317-325 argues that Herodotus could recognize propaganda when he encountered it but his concern is with Greek, not Persian propaganda.

[7] On the route through Anatolia see Müller, 1994, 17-38; on the chariot of Zeus see Kienast, 1996, 285-313; on Troy and the Athena Temple see Georges, 1994, 59-62. On Xerxes' descent from Perseus see Georges, 1994, 66-71 and Green, 1996, 68. Tuplin, 1991, 242-255 has argued that Darius' Suez canal was built primarily for propagandistic purposes.

[8] Georges, 1994, 72-74 does proclaim that the Persian image of invincibility evident in Herodotus and Aeschylus was fostered by Persian propaganda and elsewhere (116) maintains that Persian preparations "were as much psychological as material," but offers little in the way of specific example. Green, 1996, 53, believes that "Psychological warfare — primitive, but nonetheless effective — was a Persian specialty." But he too offers little in the way of concrete example.

It is no exaggeration to say, however, that if ever in the history of Greek-Persian relations there was a moment for the Persians to utilize all of their accomplished skills as propagandists and able practitioners of psychological warfare, the months leading up to Xerxes' invasion of Europe in 480 B.C. was that moment. If one reads Herodotus with this in mind, there is plenty of information in his work to demonstrate that this is precisely what the Persians did. Two reports are of seminal importance. In the first we are told that in 483 B.C., when Themistocles sought to induce his fellow Athenians to begin construction of a navy, he did not appeal to their fear of the Persians, but to the unresolved differences between Athens and Aegina[9]. Clearly, there could have been no great fear of the Persians rampant at Athens at that time. In the second report we learn that just two years later, in the fall of 481 B.C., fear of Persia was so intense that the Athenians and Aeginetans, as well as other Greek states, agreed to forego their differences so that they might cooperate against the Persians (7.172).

Both this dramatic reversal of concern about the Persians and the realization that the Athenians were disinterested in their eastern neighbor as late as 483 B.C. merit far greater attention than either has received. The latter proposition, particularly, has been virtually disregarded by students of both the Persian Wars and Athenian history. It is, rather, an underlying assumption of their works that the Greeks, and especially the Athenians, were terrified of the Persians, if not from the instant that the two peoples initially came into contact with one another, then certainly from the Ionian revolt onward. Facts and presumed facts are interpreted in light of this assumption while a substantial body of evidence to the contrary is ignored. But a dispassionate examination of this evidence will show that the assumption is erroneous and must be jettisoned; there is, in fact, little reason to believe that the Greeks stood in awe of Persian power anytime before the late summer or fall of 481 B.C. Since this is such a radical departure from the views expressed in the existing literature, it will be necessary to undertake a wholesale reassessment of Greek-Persian relations prior to 481 B.C. and a reexamination of Athenian domestic politics in the years after Marathon.

[9] Herodotus 7.144. In describing the same incident Plutarch, *Themistocles,* 4.2 remarks that the Persians "were too far away and inspired no very serious fear of their coming," but it is not likely that he had any better evidence than Herodotus. The same is true of Thucydides, who at 1.14.3 rationalizes that the Athenians were at war with the Aeginetans but also expecting the barbarians when they built their fleet; see also the discussion of Wallinga, 1993, 158-161.

Only then will we be able to appreciate fully just how precipitously Greek fear of an impending Persian invasion of overwhelming force came into existence and only then will we be able to comprehend properly the role that Persian propaganda played in generating this fear.

Although Herodotus (6.112) assures us that prior to the battle of Marathon the very sight of the Medes threw fear and panic into the Greeks, the facts he presents do not support this contention. The evidence suggests, rather, that early on in the relations between the two peoples the mainland Greeks knew very little about the Persians and their empire[10] and had, consequently, little reason to fear them. If we can believe Herodotus, the Spartans readily entered into an alliance with Croesus as he was about to go to war with Cyrus. Although Croesus' forces were overwhelmed before the Spartans could provide any assistance, they showed no hesitation in joining an alliance against the king (1.69-70). A short time later the Ionian and Aeolian Greeks appealed to the Spartans for assistance against Cyrus (1.141). The Spartans refused the request, but, if we can believe Herodotus, they did send envoys to Sardis threatening to punish Cyrus if he should harm any Greek city (1.152). While reports of these early contacts may be suspect, even as we get down to the time of the Ionian revolt, the Spartans seem totally unimpressed by Persian power. When Aristagoras came to Sparta seeking assistance against Darius, the Spartans rejected his plea, but it is important to note that they did so not because of any great fear of the Persians but, according to Herodotus, because of the vast distance separating Ionia from the Persian heartland[11]. If the Spartans only now learned that the journey from Sardis to Susa required three months, it would be necessary to conclude that as late as 500 B.C. they knew very little about the size and might of the Persian kingdom.

Although the Peisistratid takeover of Sigeum in the Troad (5.94) put the Athenians in a better position than the normally xenophobic Spartans to

[10] Grundy, 1901, 534-535 rightly recognizes that even as late as 480 B.C. the Greeks and Persians really knew little about the other militarily. Georges, 1994, 115 asserts that in 480 the Greeks defeated a people "who were almost strangers to them..." This would seem to be borne out by the archaeological evidence, or the absence thereof; see Miller, 1997, 29, who notes that there are no Persian objects in Greece earlier than the time of the invasions of 490 and 480 B.C. On pp. 63-88 she surveys Athenian objects found in the east and concludes that the quantity does begin to increase in the closing decades of the sixth century B.C.

[11] Herodotus 5.49-54 discusses these events.

acquire knowledge about the Persians, they too seem to have been ignorant of the empire and showed the king no great respect. In 507 B.C., fearing war with Sparta and her allies, the Athenians dispatched ambassadors to Sardis seeking an alliance with the king. The Persians were willing, but demanded earth and water in return. The envoys complied, but on their return to Athens they were "greatly blamed for what they had done" (5.73). While there is no indication that the Athenians formally renounced the agreement, they certainly never behaved as though they were subjects who had entered into a sacred relationship with the king of Persia[12]. In any case, Herodotus seems to imply that the Athenians did not expect to be required to grant earth and water in return for an alliance and were caught off guard when it was demanded. This is further indication of just how little they really knew about their eastern neighbor. A few years later, when ordered by the Persians to return Hippias to power, the Athenians not only refused, but rashly declared war on the king as well (5.96). At the outbreak of the Ionian revolt Aristagoras, unable to secure assistance at Sparta (5.49-51), made his way to Athens. There, according to Herodotus (5.97), he spoke of the great wealth of the empire and opined that the lightly armed Persians could easily be overcome on the field of battle. Whether he used these arguments or others, the Athenians were easily won over and showed no fear of the Persians when, disregarding their pledge of earth and water, they readily voted to dispatch 20 ships to Asia (5.97). Nor did the Eretrians show any concern for Persian power when they decided to honor an old debt to the Milesians by sending five ships to their assistance[13]. Both decisions were made with the knowlédge that the Persians had recently been humiliated when their attempt to subdue tiny Naxos

[12] This incident continues to be ignored, as for example by Young, 1988, 66-71. On the earlier literature see Orlin, 1976, 255-266 who argues that in promising earth and water the Athenians had entered into a sacred relationship with the king, which they subsequently broke by assisting the Ionians. The same arguments and the meaning of earth and water are set out by Kuhrt, 1988, 86-99. Badian, 1994, 107-130, especially 125-126 suggests that it was Alexander I of Macedon who gave the Athenians the idea of appealing to the Persians in the first place.

[13] Herodotus 5.99. Bosworth, 1994, 15-27 has argued on the basis of a fragment of Heracleides of Pontus' dialogue *On Pleasure,* preserved in Athenaeus (536f-537c), that part of the Persian fleet sent against Naxos in 499 B.C. sailed to Euboea, where it encountered "unexpectedly strong opposition and [sustained] heavy Persian casualties." (25). This would, he argues, help explain why Eretria agreed to assist the Ionians in their revolt. I do not find his argument convincing, but if he is correct, then the Greeks had additional evidence that the Persians were not invincible.

ended in failure (5.30-34), and this was undoubtedly the most pertinent information then available.

There is, in short, nothing to indicate that prior to the outbreak of the Ionian revolt the mainland Greeks stood in awe of Persian power, and, by extension, that they were even vaguely familiar with the central tenets of Persian imperial propaganda. That propaganda stressed, among other things, the exalted position of the king and his close association with the gods. The primacy of the monarch is immediately apparent from the many grandiose and ostentatious titles borne by him. In the Cyrus cylinder alone we find the following titles: "king of the world, great king, legitimate king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four rims (of the earth)." In the very first line of the Behistun Inscription Darius calls himself "great king, king of kings, king in Persia, king of countries" (DB I.1-2) and elsewhere we find "king of countries containing all kinds of men, king in this great earth far and wide" (DNa)."[14] Such titles paint a graphic picture of a monarch who is much larger than life and that is how he is depicted in Persian imperial art. An equally important theme in imperial propaganda is the inseparable connection between the king and the gods, especially but not exclusively Ahuru Mazda. Thus, in the Old Persian version of the Behistun inscription the name of Ahuru Mazda is invoked sixty-nine times, and only slightly fewer, sixty-one times, in the Akkadian version[15]. It is this god who is credited with everything from the mundane task of assisting Darius in crossing the swollen Tigris River (DB I 87-90) to bestowing the kingship on him and granting him rule over all of Asia. There is no distinction between the fortunes of Ahuru Mazda and the fortunes of Darius himself and opposition to the king is tantamount to opposition to the gods, for Darius, and other Persian monarchs, claim to have the support not only of Ahura Mazda, but of other gods as well (DB IV 59-61)[16]. If the Greeks were even

[14] On the Cyrus cylinder see Pritchard, 1950, 316; for the other titles I have relied on Kent, 1953; see also Badian, 1994, 110.

[15] These figures are derived from the English translation of the Old Persian text by Kent, 1953, and the English translation of the Akkadian version by von Voigtlander, 1978; on the importance of religion to Persian monarchs see Ahn, 1992.

[16] In the Cyrus cylinder, Cyrus attributes his victory over Nabonidus to the favor of Marduk, the chief god of Babylon for centuries; on this and on his praise of Sin Nannar at Ur see Kuhrt, 1983, 83-97. In the Old Testament (*2 Chronicles,* 36.22; *Ezra,* 1.1-2; *Isaiah,* 44-28-45.1-4) Cyrus' rule is attributed to the favor of the God of the Hebrews. In Egypt, Cambyses, (Posener, 1936, 36 # 4) and Xerxes (Posener, 1936, 124 # 30) were each hailed as the son of Ra, while Darius is specifically said to have been placed on the throne by Ra (Posener, 1936, 59 #8).

vaguely familiar with this imperial propaganda which depicted an all powerful king who received his authority to rule over the whole world directly from the gods and who enjoyed the favor of the gods in his every undertaking, it is not discernable from their actions. The evidence indicates, rather, that they lacked information about the size, wealth and might of the Persian Empire. Indeed, nescience would seem to be the only explanation for such foolhardy acts as Sparta's threat to punish Cyrus if he should harm any Greek city, if such a warning was actually delivered, and Athens' declaration of war against the king.

Such ignorance of the Persians, who even before the Ionian revolt had demonstrated their ability to move an army into Europe against the Scythians[17] and had established their presence in Thrace and very possibly in Macedonia as well[18], is difficult to comprehend, but there is a body of evidence which, cumulatively, reinforces this conclusion. First is the report of Herodotus (8.132) that in the spring of 479 B.C., after Xerxes had been defeated at Salamis, envoys arrived in Greece from Ionia and implored the Greeks to sail to that region. The Greeks did sail as far as Delos, but since they had no knowledge of anything beyond that island, fear of the unknown prevented them from sailing farther. At Delos, according to Herodotus (8.132), "they supposed that Samos was no nearer to them than the Pillars of Heracles." There is undoubtedly some exaggeration here, but before dismissing the report completely, as do How and Wells in their commentary, it would be well to recall Thucydides' assertion (6.1.1) that in 415 B.C. many Athenians were ignorant of the size and population of Sicily. It has been shown, moreover, that Aeschylus' knowledge of Persian names, beyond those of royalty, was limited and superficial[19] and even Herodotus, a native of Asia Minor who had traveled through parts of the empire[20],

[17] Herodotus 4.118-142 on the Scythian campaign and see Georges, 1987, 97-147 and Fol & Hammond, 1988, 234-243.

[18] It is not entirely clear when Macedonia became a vassal kingdom of the Persians. Hammond, 1989, 44 believes the Macedonians submitted about 510 B.C. Errington, 1990, 10 and Borza, 1990, 100-104 favor 492 B.C. on the basis of Herodotus 6.44. Badian, 1994, 107-130, argues that the Macedonians initially submitted to Persian control about 513 B.C., broke away during the Ionian revolt, and were brought back into the fold by Mardonius in 492 B.C.

[19] Schmitt, 1978.

[20] Herodotus himself frequently speaks of places and things he has personally seen (for example, 2.44; 2.99; 2.150; 3.12) but this has frequently been questioned, most persistently by Armayor, 1978, 45-62, 1980, 59-71 and 1980a, 51-74, who maintains that

while remarkably well informed on some things seems poorly informed on others[21].

Athenian and Eretrian participation in the Ionian revolt marks the first occasion of a face to face hostile encounter between the Persians and the Greeks of the mainland. The experience was limited in time and the number of men involved. If each ship carried a crew of roughly 200 men then no more than 4000 Athenians and 1000 Eretrians took part in the expedition, and these could not have been in Asia any longer than a few months at most. On their arrival, the mainlanders joined with the Ionians and marched on the satrapal capital at Sardis, where the Persian garrison was caught by surprise. The city, except for the heavily defended acropolis, was easily taken (5.100) and either intentionally or accidently set ablaze. As the fire raged, the Persians regained their composure and prepared to make a stand. When the Greeks learned that reinforcements were on the way, they withdrew "out of fear" (5.101). Before they could reach the safety of their ships near Ephesus, they were overtaken by the Persians and thoroughly routed in the battle that followed (5.102). This marks the end of Athenian and Eretrian participation in the revolt (5.103). Herodotus gives no reasons for their decision to withdraw from the fray and return home, but the Persian victory in the land battle, where the Eretrian commander was killed in the fighting (5.102), must surely have influenced that decision[22].

What are we to make of this limited contact between the Greeks of the mainland and the Persians during the Ionian Revolt? Some of the most egregious ignorance of the Greeks may have been allayed, but in the end the experience can only have offered a mixed message. True, the Persians were ultimately victorious and the revolt was suppressed, but even without

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Herodotus was not widely traveled. Rollinger, 1993, 167-187, after careful analysis of Herodotus and the physical remains, does not believe that Herodotus ever got to Babylon.

[21] Lewis, 1985, 101-117 provides a good overview. As indicated in the previous note, Herodotus' knowledge of Babylon, once thought secure, has recently been called into question by Rollinger, 1993, in a provocative treatment of the subject. de Jong, 1997, 76-120 after a thorough examination of Herodotus 1.131-132, a passage generally acknowledged as a description of contemporary Persian religion, concludes that Herodotus knowledge of the subject was really quite meager. Vogelsang, 1992, 210 remarks that Herodotus knew little about eastern Iran and the eastern portion of the empire generally, for which he should be forgiven; see also Tuplin, 1996, 136-138.

[22] On the Ionian revolt see Tozzi, 1978, Wallinga, 1984, 401-437 and Murray, 1988, 461-490, whose views have recently been challenged by Georges, 2000, 1-39.

assistance from their mainland brethren, the Ionian Greeks did manage to withstand Persian power for five years (6.19-20). It would be easy to conclude that the Persian Empire was hardly the most powerful kingdom on earth, but as noted above, it is commonly assumed that from this point onward the Athenians, particularly, were utterly terrified of the Persians. This assumption seems to rest, consciously or unconsciously, on no more secure foundation than an anecdote related by Herodotus (5.105). This anecdote has Darius, on learning that Sardis had been burnt by the Athenians and Ionians, praying to god that he be granted vengeance on the Athenians and charging a servant with repeating three times every day at dinner the exhortation "Master, Remember the Athenians." As historical evidence this far-fetched tale is worthless, and so too, it now appears, is the only bit of evidence ever adduced to support the contention that the Athenians were terrified of the Persians in the aftermath of the Ionian revolt: their reaction to Phrynichus' play, *The Fall of Miletus*, which is usually assigned to the year 493 B.C. According to Herodotus, the Athenians fined Phrynichus 1000 drachmae and forbid the further staging of the play "for bringing to mind a calamity that touched them so nearly" (6.21). This would indeed imply that there was deep concern over the fate of Miletus and its inhabitants and perhaps genuine fear of Persia's next move. But a careful reading of the text has enabled Badian to argue convincingly that the calamity the Athenians had in mind was not the destruction of Miletus at all but the destruction of Athens[23]. The play, in other words, must have been staged shortly after the sack of Athens in 480 and again in 479 B.C. Consequently, it tells us nothing about Athenian attitudes in 493 B.C. and, as their subsequent behavior also suggests, there is no evidence to indicate that the Athenians or the Eretrians were thrown into paroxysms of fear of the Persians as a result of their experiences in Ionia.

We do not know when the Athenians and Eretrians first learned that Darius was determined to punish them for their participation in the revolt,

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[23] Badian, 1996a, 55-60. Georges, 1994, 71-72 accepts the traditional dating of 493 B.C. and offers a good example of the way in which the incident has been generally interpreted."Dread of the Persians in the aftermath of the burning of Ionia had cost the tragedian Phrynichus a silver mina for reminding the Athenians of their *oikkeia kaka* (Hdt. 6.21.2), "their own troubles," by staging a bathetic *Fall of Miletus* for an audience who knew they were the Persian's next target." Similar statements can be found at random in the literature.

but we hear of no attempt to coordinate their defensive efforts as Mardonius advanced on Greece in 492 B.C[24]. Moreover, if as Herodotus believed, Darius' intent was to subdue as much of Greece as possible (6.44), then Mardonius' campaign posed a potential threat to all mainland Greek states, but the record is also silent on any concern these states might have had. The Thasians were cowed into submission and gave up without a fight and Persian control over Macedonia was either established or reaffirmed, but the Thracian Byrgi resisted. They were eventually subdued, but not before many Persians were killed in the fighting and Mardonius himself was wounded (6.45). These losses coupled with the loss of men and ships in a storm off Mt. Athos (6.44) induced Mardonius to call off the invasion and return to Asia. This is a decision he must have dreaded making, for it would surely incur the displeasure of the king. Even if Mardonius could claim limited success in bringing Thasos, Macedonia and the Byrgi under Persian control, his decision to call off the invasion was tantamount to a public admission that, for the moment at least, the Persians were incapable of accomplishing their stated objective of punishing Athens and Eretria for their role in the Ionian revolt. This could only build Greek confidence and further dispel fear, especially as Mardonius' failure was underlined when he was relieved of his command on his return to Asia[25].

Soon after this aborted invasion Darius began preparations for another campaign against the Greeks and dispatched heralds to Greece demanding earth and water (6.48-49). Herodotus assures us that "many of the dwellers of the mainland and all the islanders to whom they [the heralds] came with the demand" gave earth and water (6.49). Although this sweeping general statement has often been taken literally[26], it is clearly

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[24] Herodotus 6.44-45 and see Zahrnt, 1992, 237-279.

[25] Herodotus 6.94. It is difficult to know what to make of Herodotus 6.46, where he says that in 491 B.C. Darius ordered the Thasians to destroy their walls and bring their ships to Abdera because it was reported that they were planning rebellion. Herodotus says flatly that the accusation was false and it may have been, but a Thasian rebellion in the aftermath of Mardonius' failure certainly seems possible.

[26] Balcer, 1995, 205-206 offers a good example: "The Greek response to surrender was overwhelming. From all the Aegean islands the heralds visited, they received their demands; from many mainland poleis also....very few Greek poleis resisted." Darius then planned to attack "the few mainland Greek poleis still at war with him." The words of Hammond, 1988, 496, Grote, 1899, 4, 315, and Green, 1996, 29 are equally sweeping. Conversely, Hignett, 1963, 87 doubts that envoys were even sent to Greece in 491 B.C.

an exaggeration, for as we shall see, Herodotus himself provides sufficient information to undermine its accuracy. We need to note first, however, how Darius' heralds were received at Athens and Sparta. In Athens they were thrown into the Barathron, that area behind the Acropolis where condemned criminals were routinely consigned (7.133), while at Sparta they were cast into a well (7.133-135). Given the traditional inviolability of heralds in antiquity[27], these were deliberately provocative, heinous, even sacrilegious acts, and were certain to be viewed as such by the Persians. Since neither the Athenians nor Spartans were the least bit reluctant to antagonize intentionally the most powerful monarch on earth, we can only conclude that they were not overcome by fear on this occasion.

Although, as just noted, Herodotus says that all of the islands visited by Darius' heralds gave earth and water, he mentions only Aegina by name (6.49), and this leads him into a lengthy series of digressions on the dual kingship at Sparta and the privileges of Spartan kings (6.51-60), the careers of Demaratus (6.61-70), and Cleomenes (6.74-78) as well as a chronologically confused account of the warfare between Athens and Aegina (6.87-93). The relevant information that can be gleaned from this account is that the Athenians were convinced that the Aeginetans had given earth and water as a way of enlisting Persian assistance in their ongoing struggle with Athens. They labeled the Aeginetans traitors (6.49), and were apparently able to convince Cleomenes and his supporters at Sparta that the charge was valid (6.50). Cleomenes invaded Aegina, took hostages and handed them over to the Athenians (6.73), who steadfastly refused to return them (6.86)[28], thereby precipitating a renewal of active hostilities. For our purposes two points are important: first, if the Athenian charge was accurate then we must conclude that the Aeginetans gave earth and water not out of any great fear of the Persians but for their

[27] On the inviolability of heralds see Mosley, 1973, 84-87. Burn, 1985, 315 regards the report of the Athenians casting the heralds into the Barathron as suspicious, but notes there can be no doubt about their treatment at Sparta. Hignett, 1963, 87, would date these events to the time of Xerxes' invasion; it was, he believes, the heralds dispatched by Xerxes from Sardis who were so rudely treated.

[28] The chronological problems with Herodotus' account of warfare between Athens and Aegina are notorious. Most commentators would agree that the actions related here occurred between Darius' dispatch of heralds to Greece in 491 B.C. and the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C.; see most recently Figueira, 1993, 113-149 who cites the earlier literature.

own selfish reasons[29]; second, the Spartan decision to invade Aegina and the Athenian determination to stir up trouble with a state that had recently given earth and water to the king reiterates how utterly uninhibited the Athenians and Spartans were when it came to acting in a manner that the king could only interpret as hostile.

While some of the mainlanders and islanders may have submitted to Darius' demands, events of 490 B.C. suggest that there is little to support Herodotus' contention, quoted above, that all the islanders approached by Darius' heralds gave earth and water. At best only the weakest possible case can be made for Paros, whose inhabitants were later accused of Medism (6.133), and Rhenea[30] being safely in the Persian fold as the invasion force of Datis moved across the Aegean. Most of the inhabitants of Naxos fled before the arrival of the Persians (6.96) and there would have been no need to do so if they had given earth and water a year earlier. That they had not done so seems clear from the report (6.96) that those Naxians who had not fled were enslaved and the city was burnt. The Delians also fled before the arrival of the Persians (6.97) and their destination is instructive. They fled to Tenos (6.97) and if they were seeking safety in flight, they would hardly move to an island that had already surrendered to the Persians. From the departure of the Persian fleet from Delos to its arrival at Carystos (6.97-99) Herodotus provides no specific geographical points. He says only that the fleet put in at various, unnamed islands and enrolled some of the islanders into their army and took hostages (6.99). Minimally these unnamed islands must include, in addition to Tenos, Syros and Andros, which are on a direct sail from Delos to Carystos. Since the Persians deemed it necessary to take hostages, it does not seem likely that these islands had earlier given earth and water either[31]. All of this suggests that if heralds were dispatched to demand earth and water in 491

[29] I know of no evidence to support the contention of Balcer, 1995, 205 that Aegina gave earth and water "because it benefitted from Persian trade." Jefferey, 1988, 366, also sees a connection between Aeginetan trade and the granting of earth and water,

[30] Herodotus 6.133 states explicitly that the charge of Medism against Paros was a pretext (πρόφασις) for Miltiades' attack. Herodotus 6.97 notes that Datis anchored off Rhenea, whose inhabitants had not fled, and it was they who told him where the Delians had gone.

[31] Briant, 1996, 170-171 argues that one of Datis' charges in 490 B.C. was to subdue the islands and bring them under Persian control. Burn, 1962, 226 says that in 491 B.C. Aegina "like other island states" gave earth and water but then implausibly believes, 236, that Datis' objective in 490 B.C. was to secure control of the Cyclades.

B.C., they seem to have had little success, apart from Aegina, among the islanders. Only in the face of overwhelming force did they capitulate a year later. It may be worth noting in this regard that the Lindian Temple Chronicle (*FGrH* 532, Section D lines 1-12) informs us that during Darius' expedition the inhabitants of Rhodes took refuge behind their fortification walls, particularly at Lindos, where they were besieged and surrendered only when they ran out of water. If we can trust this report then it would be necessary to conclude that Rhodes, one of the largest Greek islands, must not have given earth and water to the king in 491 B.C. either.

Despite the successful Persian campaign across the Aegean in 490 B.C., there is no evidence of fear and panic in the only mainland states — Carystos, Eretria, Athens, Plataea, and Sparta — that we know anything about in this year. Without assistance from any quarter the Carystians refused to give hostages, and the Persians had to take the city by force (6.99). Presumably the Eretrians were aware of this, but they were not ready to succumb either. Opinion was divided there. Some Eretrians did want to surrender without a fight, but they were motivated by a desire to gain Persian assistance in securing control of the city (6.100) and not by any fear of Persian power. In the end the Eretrians decided to resist and without assistance from any other Greek state managed to hold out for six days (6.101), and undoubtedly would have held out longer had the city not been betrayed from within.

The Athenians were well informed about the factional strife at Eretria (6.100), and if they did not know for certain that the city had been delivered into the hands of the enemy, they must surely have suspected it. Nonetheless, the fall of Eretria did nothing to diminish Athenian resolve, even in the face of their own domestic problems. The exiled tyrant Hippias accompanied the invaders, and he had plenty of support in the city[32]. Indeed, it seems likely that Persian sympathizers had already been in contact with the enemy. As Schachermeyr astutely observed, the timing of the Persian advance into Attica was carefully calculated, as Datis waited a few days after the fall of Eretria before making his move. Most likely the Persians expected their sympathizers to betray the city as their sympathizers had done at Eretria, but this was not to be the case. Support for the

[32] Herodotus 6.107 and Thucydides 6.59.4. The treatment of these events by Schachermeyr, 1951, 1-35 remains fundamental, and see also Briant, 1996, 171-172, who is in general agreement.

Persians was apparently not as strong as Datis had been led to believe, and as soon as the Athenians learned that the Persians had landed in Attica they marched straight away to Marathon to engage them (6.103). They also dispatched a herald to Sparta seeking assistance (6.105). The Spartans readily agreed to come to their aid (6.106), and no ulterior motive should be read into their claim that they were forbidden by law from undertaking a campaign until the moon was full[33]. This must have been a practice of long standing at Sparta, and when the full moon did arrive and they could legally set out, they did so promptly (6.120). So anxious were they to assist against the Persians that they made the arduous trek from Sparta to Athens in just three days (6.120).

In the meantime, without the slightest hesitation the Plataeans willingly joined the Athenians at Marathon (6.108), where the generals debated whether to attack immediately or await the arrival of the Spartans. Five of the ten strategoi feared their forces were inferior and favored waiting for the Spartans (6.109), while the other five, led by Miltiades, preferred an immediate attack. When the archon Callimachus was won over to the latter position, the army moved against the Persians at once (6.109-110). Schachermeyr believes that Miltiades was of the opinion that any delay would play into the hands of Persian sympathizers in the city and this may well have been a concern. In any case, the decision to attack immediately without waiting for the arrival of the Spartans indicates that there was no paralyzing fear of the Persians as they were about to come face to face with them, despite Herodotus' contention (6.112) that prior to Marathon the very sight of the Medes threw fear and panic into the Greeks.

Although the Persians and Sakae fought gallantly and forced the Athenian center to retreat (6.111-112), the enemy was routed on both wings and fled in disarray to their beached ships, seven of which were captured before they could put to sea[34]. Herodotus' figures of 6400 Persian dead

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[33] Herodotus 6.106. Plutarch, *Moralia* 861d — 862a calls Herodotus' report an outright lie. Pritchett, 1971, 116-121 has assembled the evidence for delay in setting out for battle until the proper phase of the moon.

[34] Herodotus 6.108-116 describes the battle. The most recent discussion is that of Doenges, 1998, 1-17. Petrakos, 1996, has assembled all of the literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence for the site and the battle but must be used with caution. He still maintains (25-26), for example, that an Athenian coin with a waning moon left of the head of the owl commemorated the battle, but this is most unlikely; see Starr, 1970, 11-12 and Kraay, 1976, 61-62.

and 192 Athenians (6.117) may not be accurate[35], but there is no reason to believe that the lighter armed Persians did not suffer heavier losses. The final embarrassment for the Persians came as Miltiades made a hasty march back from Marathon (6.116) to prevent a Persian landing at Phaleron and an attack on the undefended city. Although the Persians had carried out their threat to punish the Eretrians, once again the king's effort to punish the Athenians had ended in failure. The Athenians, assisted only by the Plataeans, had met and soundly defeated an army of the mighty Persian king and they had done so even though there was dissension in their ranks as the shield signal flashed after the battle indicates (6.115, 121-24).

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of the Battle of Marathon in shaping Athenian attitudes toward the Persians[36]. If there had been any fear of them before the battle, it must quickly have given way to unbridled self confidence in its aftermath. The Athenians were, understandably, proud of their achievement and quick to publicize it. In a break with tradition they buried the dead on the battle field[37], under a mound of earth still visible today. An inscribed Ionic column honoring the archon Callimachus, who was killed in the fighting, was erected on the acropolis[38]. An inscription celebrating the victory was engraved on the Athenian treasury at Delphi[39], and numerous Persian objects, including many arrow heads and two inscribed Assyrian style helmets, one dedicated by the Athenians the other by Miltiades[40], were placed in the sanctuary at

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[35] Avery, 1973, 757 observes that 192 multiplied by 33.33 equals 6400 but see Wyatt, 1976, 483-484. Pausanias, 1.32.3 saw inscriptions at the site listing the Athenian dead by tribe.

[36] On this see the discussion of Loraux, 1986, 155-171.

[37] Thucydides 2.34.5 remarks that the burial of the dead at Marathon rather than in the public burial ground just outside the Dipylon Gate was a break with tradition; on the tumulus see Petrakos, 1996, 18-23; Pritchett, 1985, 94-259, is an exhaustive treatment of the burial of Greek war dead.

[38] Meiggs & Lewis, 1988, 33-34 #18, whose discussion shows that there are many problems with both the monument and the inscription; it has even been argued that the monument had nothing to do with Callimachus; see Raubitschek, 1940, 53-59; Harrison, 1971, 5-24; Hansen, 1988, 482-483, and Petrakos, 1996, 47-49, who offers six different versions of the text of the inscription,

[39] Meiggs & Lewis, 1988, 35 # 19, who note that the date of the inscription is not entirely certain.

[40] The Persian material from Olympia has recently been reexamined by Baitinger, 1999, 125-139, who argues forcefully that many of the Persian objects found there were dedicated after Marathon; see also Miller, 1997, 29-41. On dedications of armor generally see Pritchett, 1979, 240-276.

Olympia. Simonides may have written epigrams commemorating the triumph[41] and in the decades following the battle a trophy was erected at the site of the victory[42] a painting of the battle decorated the Stoa Poikile in the agora[43] and Aeschylus allegedly composed his epitaph in which he boasts of participating in the fighting[44].

Equally important in shaping Greek thinking about the Persians was a series of events that led the Athenians to the firm belief that the gods had come to their assistance. According to Xenophon *(Anabasis*, 3.2 12) and Plutarch *(Moralia,* 862b-c) the Athenians, prior to the battle, had promised to sacrifice to Artemis a goat for every Persian killed in the engagement. When there were more enemy dead than goats available, the Athenians offered instead 500 goats and promised to repeat this sacrifice annually. They were still doing so in Xenophon's day, nearly a century later. Nor was Artemis the only deity to provide succor. As Phidippides, the Athenian herald dispatched to Sparta, was in the hills above Tegea the god Pan, hitherto ignored by the Athenians, appeared before him and promised assistance. After the battle a temple of Pan was built beneath the Acropolis, where annual sacrifices and a torch race were observed. He was also worshiped at a cave not far from the battle field at Marathon[45]. Finally, a thanksgiving festival for the victory was instituted which, if Plutarch *(Moralia*, 349e and 862a) is correct, was still being celebrated in his day more than half a millennium later. Clearly, the Athenians believed that they owed their victory, in part at least, to divine assistance and this must have been a comfort not just to them but to all Greeks.

This must be kept firmly in mind as we move on to a consideration of Athenian domestic politics in the decade after Marathon, for virtually all treatments of this subject in recent years rest on the underlying assumption

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[41] Page, 1981, 218-231 discusses a number of epigrams attributed to Simonides, but it is not always clear whether they should be assigned to 490 B.C. or 480 B.C.; see also Meiggs & Lewis, 1988, 54-57 # 26. Barron, 1990, 133-141 argues that they all concern the Battle of Salamis, not Marathon.

[42] Vanderpool, 1966, 93-106.

[43] Pausanias 1.15.3; Shear, 1984, 5-24 dates the remains to the second quarter of the fifth century B.C.; see also Francis & Vickers, 1985, 99-113.

[44] On the epigram see Page, 1981, 131-132 who doubts that it is genuine.

[45] Herodotus recounts these events at 6.105. On the cave see Pausanias 1.32.7 and Papademetriou, 1958, 15-22. Page, 1981, 194-195 gives the text of an inscription that once graced a statue of Pan dedicated by Miltiades, but it may or may not be genuine. On the cult of Pan at Athens see Borgeaud, 1988, 133-138.

that concern for the Persians was an important, if not the dominant force driving politics at Athens in this period.[46] Facts and presumed facts are interpreted in the light of this assumption and any evidence to the contrary is simply ignored. The most important pieces of evidence invariably disregarded are, first of all, the divinely assisted defeat of the Persians on the field of battle at Marathon in 490 B.C., a victory which even the Spartans regarded as praiseworthy (6.120), and secondly, the report that in 483 B.C. when Themistocles wanted to build up the Athenian navy he had to appeal not to concern about Persia but about Aegina. The Persians, nonetheless, dominate virtually all recent treatments of the intervening years.

An illustrative case in point is the discussion surrounding the first three Athenians to be ostracised in the years between 488 and 486 B.C. Our primary sources of information are *Ath. Pol.* 22 and the still unpublished hoard of 8,653 ostraca discovered in the Kerameikos more than three decades ago.[47] According to *Ath. Pol.* 22, Hipparchus, a relative of Peisistratus and leader of his supporters was ostracized in 488 B.C., in the first of three successive ostracophoria in which friends of the tyrants were sent packing. The Alcmaeonid Megacles, son of Hippocrates, was the victim in 487 B.C., while in the following year a third, unnamed friend of the tyrants was also ostracized. On the surface this surely looks as if the Athenians were attempting to rid themselves of those suspected of Persian sympathies, for the Peisistratids did have the backing of the Persians and the Alcmaeonids had allegedly flashed a signal after Marathon (6.115).[48] The Kerameikos ostraca are then invoked to support this interpretation. Although there was only one single ostracon calling for the ostracism of Hipparchus, many ostraca, 4145 or some 48% of the total, bore the name of Megacles and were promptly assigned to the year of his ostracism, 487

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[46] I cite only general treatments of the period here, more specialized studies will be referred to in notes that follow: see Hammond, 1988, 518-526; Ostwald, 1988, 336-342; Osborne, 1996, 330-332.

[47] Although discovered in 1966, the first published notices of these ostraca seems to be those of Daux, 1968, 732-733 and Willemsen, 1968, 24-29. A few ostraca were found in the previous year and published by Willemsen, 1965, 100-126. The final reckoning is given by Willemsen & Brenne, 1991, 147-156 whose figures I employ throughout.

[48] Murray, 1983, 264 speaking not just of these three ostracisms but of all those that occurred in the 480s states it succinctly: "The most obvious factors behind these ostracisms are mistrust of the Peisistratid and Alkmeonid families and allegations of connections with Persia."

B.C. From this it was simply assumed that most of the shards in the cache should be dated to the 480s[49].

With this approximate date for the ostraca seemingly secure the next step was to identify the third, unnamed friend of the tyrants ostracized, according to *Ath. Pol.,* in 486 B.C. From the beginning there was virtual unanimity that the primary candidate for that dubious distinction was Callias, son of Cratias, whose name occurs on 718 of the Kerameikos ostraca[50]. He is otherwise unknown but may well have been an Alcmaeonid[51]. Although there is no evidence that he was ever ostracized much less that he was ostracized in 486 B.C., as an Alcmaeonid it was natural to suspect that he was sympathetic to the Persians. This suspicion was then apparently confirmed by sixteen ostraca bearing his name. On fifteen of these ostraca Callias is called ὁ Μῆδος, the Mede, or is said to be from the Medes, ἐκ Μηδων. On the sixteenth his name occurs on one side while on the other a male, presumably Callias, is depicted in the garb of a Persian archer[52]. If these ostraca were actually cast in 486 B.C., it would be reasonable to conclude that there was indeed concern for the Persians at that time, and for three decades the view prevailed that if Callias was not ostracized in 486 B.C. then certainly the shards linking him to the Persians were to be dated to the 480s[53]. Unfortunately for its many proponents, most of the ostraca in this hoard have now been redated to the 470s[54], and three

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[49] See, for example, the articles of Daux and Willemsen cited above in n.47 and also Vanderpool, 1973, 231-238 and Ghinatti, 1970, 132-144. The most complete early discussion is that of Thomsen, 1972, 61-108.

[50] On the number of ostraca see Willemsen & Brenne, 1991, 152; only Megacles, son of Hippocrates, with 4145 and Themistocles with 1592 had a greater total. So far as I can determine Daux, 1968, 732, was the first to suggest that Callias was ostracized in this year. Among those who accept that see Bicknell, 1972, 65; Balcer, 1979, 40; Mattingly, 1971, 282; Williams, 1978, 103-113; Thomsen, 1972, 97-100; Vanderpool, 1973, 235-236. Numerous others regard his ostracism in this year as probable or highly likely. From the beginning Lewis, 1974, 1-4 was a lonely voice urging caution because of the mixed nature of the find.

[51] Bicknell, 1972, 64-71 argues that he was an Alcmaeonid and see also Shapiro, 1982, 69-73.

[52] Brenne, 1992, 173-177 and Brenne, 1994, 21-22.

[53] Among the attempts to understand Athenian history in this decade on the basis of this reconstruction see Bicknell, 1972, 64-76; Karavites, 1977, 129-147; Podlecki, 1975,185-194; Balcer, 1979, 27-49; Williams, 1982, 521-544, and the works cited in n. 46.

[54] Willemsen, 1991, 137-145, and Brenne, 1994, 13-24 notes that some ostraca for Callias form joins with ostraca for Megacles, and hence the two men must have received votes in the same ostracaphoria not in the 480s but in the 470s; Lewis, 1993, 51-52 was able to see his early call for caution vindicated.

decades of scholarly ingenuity based on their misdating must be dismissed. It can now be stated with some confidence that Callias, son of Cratias, was not ostracized in 486 B.C., and the shards identifying him as the Mede or from the Medes tell us nothing about Athenian politics in that year or at anytime in the 480s.

Consideration of the ostraca for one other individual, Callixenus, a known Alcmaeonid, is obligatory here for they too have been dated to the decade of the 480s and are thought to indicate Athenian concern for the Persians. Some 280 ostraca bearing his name have been found, mostly in the agora[55]. Only two of these ostraca are pertinent to the present discussion; on one of these the family name Alcmaeonid can be restored with reasonable certainty. On the other there is enough of Callixenus' name so that restoration is quite certain and beneath that are the words [ὁ πρ]οδότες, the traitor[56]. Apart from these 280 ostraca Callixenus is unknown and it was apparently those ostraca confirming his Alcmaeonid lineage and labeling him a traitor that led to the dating all of the ostraca naming him to the 480s. That date, in other words, has nothing substantial to recommend it and it may be significant, in this regard, that two ostraca with his name were included in the Kerameikos find now dated to the 470s[57]. Indeed, the entire group of Callixenus ostraca may well date from that decade. Even if they should date from the 480s, however, this is hardly justification for the sweeping statement of Lazenby who asserts "that the Alkmaionidai as a whole were regarded as traitors is suggested by the *ostraka* bearing the name 'Kallixenos,' one of which describes him as 'of the Alkmaionidai,' another as 'traitor' (προδότης)."[58]

The ostracism of the Alcmaeonid Megacles in 487 B.C., the presumptive ostracism of Callias son of Cratias in the following year and a single ostracon labeling the Alcmaeonid Callixenus a traitor have all been seen, consciously or otherwise, as proof that the Alcmaeonids were willing to

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[55] These ostraca are published by Lang, 1990, 66-88; see also Stamires &Vanderpool, 1950, 376-390.

[56] Lang, 1990, 83 and 88, numbers 524 and 589.

[57] Willemsen & Brenne, 1991, 152; Thomsen, 1972, 9, 96, 106 notes that Callexinus' ostraca are frequently found in association with those for Aristeides, Hippocrates son of Alcmaeonides and Themistocles. Perhaps he was a candidate for ostracism toward the very end of the decade of the 480s, when concern for the Persians was a lively issue at Athens.

[58] Lazenby, 1993, 81-82 who accepts a dating in the middle of the 480s. Similar sentiments are expressed in a number of the works cited in the previous notes.

collaborate with the Persians and by implication that they must have been guilty of flashing the shield signal after Marathon. Herodotus does report that a shield signal was flashed and that the Alcmaeonids were the prime suspects (6.115), but he goes out of his way to exculpate them (6.121-124). His defense is far from convincing[59], but the bottom line, surely, is that no charges were ever brought against them. Had there been even a scintilla of evidence, formal charges of high treason would inevitably have been brought forth, if not by some well meaning patriotic fellow citizen then certainly by one of their numerous political enemies. That no such charges were ever laid upon them is too significant to be ignored, and so too is the report of *Ath. Pol.* (22.8) that in 480 B.C. all those Athenian citizens previously ostracized were allowed to return home. It hardly seems likely that the Athenians would willingly allow men who had recently been ostracized for pro-Persian sympathies to return to the city at perhaps the darkest moment in its history. With Xerxes' invasion looming on the horizon, they had problems enough without inviting enemy sympathizers into their midst[60].

In the final analysis *Ath. Pol.* clearly implies that the ostracisms of the years 488-486 B.C. resulted not from any fear of the Persians but from a genuine fear of tyranny, and not a shred of credible evidence has been advanced to controvert that implication. Indeed in the years between 490-483 B.C. the Athenians seem to have been preoccupied with protecting the new democracy against would be tyrants, implementing constitutional change and carrying on the war with Aegina. Here too in connection with the latter is further indication that Persia was not an overriding concern. Although chronology is difficult to establish, apparently not too long after Marathon warfare between Athens and Aegina was renewed[61]. This conflict, which initially did not go well for the Athenians, highlighted their deficiency in naval power for they were forced to lease ships from the Corinthians (6.89). This undoubtedly enabled Themistocles to invoke

[59] Plutarch, *Moralia* 862c-863b notes the many inconsistencies in Herodotus' defense of the Alcmaeonids; see also How & Wells, 1912, 2. 115-116, 359-360, and Hart, 1982, 12-16.

[60] Stockton, 1990, 36-38 rightly recognizes that such behavior would be illogical and calls the whole story of the shield signal "a canard."

[61] Herodotus 6.88-94. Most scholars would date the war after Marathon; see Figueira, 1993, 113-149 who cites the earlier literature. Hammond, 1955, 406-411 prefers a date before Marathon.

Athenian fear of Aegina when he introduced his motion to build a navy with the newly found revenue from Laurium in 483 B.C. Clearly, if the Athenians were so ill prepared militarily that they did not have sufficient ships to wage war successfully against tiny Aegina, and were seemingly unconcerned about this until 483 B.C., then we can only conclude, as did Victor Ehrenberg long ago[62], that in the years after Marathon they were not expecting the Persians to return anytime soon.

What little we know about Persian history in these years reinforces this conclusion[63]. In June of 486 B.C., the Egyptians revolted from Persian control, and there was apparently trouble in Palestine as well. Before the Egyptian revolt could be suppressed, Darius died in November of that year. Contrary to Herodotus' report (7.2-3), the succession of Xerxes apparently went off without incident[64], but he had no time to worry about the Greeks until order was restored throughout the kingdom. Egyptian records indicate that only in January 484 B.C. was the revolt fully suppressed there. But this was not the end of Xerxes' problems with rebellious subjects. In August 484 B.C. Bel-Shimani led a revolt in Babylon and in September or October 482 B.C. another attempt to cast off the Persian yoke was led by Shamash-eriba. How much the Greeks knew about the king's domestic problems is not easy to determine, but even if they were completely ignorant of them they would have known that for some time now all had been quiet on the eastern front. It is in this context that Themistocles' appeal to Athenian enmity with Aegina and not to any overwhelming fear of the Persians when he called for the building of a fleet of triremes in 483 B.C. must be viewed.

This report seems to be in sharp conflict with the information Herodotus provides on Xerxes' preparations for the invasion of Greece.

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[62] Ehrenberg, 1968, 141: "Apart from him [Themistocles] (and perhaps Cleomenes), the Greeks were acting in these years (about 488-484) as if there was no possible threat of a new Persian attack." This is contrary to Plato, *Laws* 698c- 699c who later rationalizes that the Athenians were terrified after the fall of Eretria and that after Marathon endless threats and stories of the king's preparations for another attack circulated. I seriously doubt that either Themistocles or Cleomenes was blessed with the prescience awarded them by Ehrenberg.

[63] On the events described in this paragraph see Olmstead, 1948, 234-237; Cook, 1983, 99-100; Balcer, 1995, 224-230 and Briant, 1996, 173. Rollinger, 1993, 218-226 and Horowitz, 1995, 61-67 discuss the evidence for the Babylonian rebels.

[64] Both Olmstead, 1948, 215-218 and Briant, 1996, 535-537 argue that the matter of succession had been settled much earlier.

These preparations, which included the building of ships, the stockpiling of grain at five locations in Europe, the construction of bridges across the Hellespont, the Strymon and other rivers and the digging of the canal across the isthmus where Mt. Athos is situated, went on for four full years (7.20-25). Although this figure is readily accepted without question[65], there is, as we shall see, little reason to believe that it is accurate. Certainly, none of the preparations readily visible to the Greeks, such as the bridging of the Hellespont or the digging of the canal across the peninsula at Athos, which Herodotus says took about three years to complete (7.22), could have been underway in 483 B.C. If they had been, Themistocles would surely have brought it up in his appeal to the Athenians to build a navy.

Moreover, most of the preparations Herodotus talks about were not time consuming. We know, for example, that the Athenians built a fleet of 200 triremes and trained crews to man them in three years or less[66]. If a single Greek polis could do that, it should not have taken the vast Persian Empire, with a coastline including both sides of the Bosphorus and Hellespont and extending from the Black Sea to Cyrene just in the Mediterranean, four years to construct the necessary triremes and horse transports. Evidence from Rome would seem to bear this out. In 261 B.C. the Romans, without a navy, decided to build 20 triremes and 100 quinqueremes, a significantly larger ship than the triremes employed by the Persians (Polybius 1.20.9). By the very next year they had built the ships, trained crews (Polybius 1.21.2-3), developed the boarding bridge (Polybius 1.22.3-9) and defeated the Carthaginians in a naval battle off Mylae (Polybius 1.23.6-10). A few years later, after much of the fleet had been destroyed in a storm, the Romans built 220 warships in just three months (Polybius 1.38.5-6), and at a later date, Caesar's forces in Gaul constructed about 600 cargo and pack animal bearing ships as well as 28 warships over the winter months of 55-54 B.C[67].

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[65] The figure is frequently repeated and passed over in silence as for example by How & Wells, 1912, 2, 133, 369, Hignett, 1963, 95, and Briant, 1996, 544, or is wholly or largely accepted, as for example, by Green, 1996, 52-53, Wallinga, 1993, 160-161 and Burn, 1962, 318. Lazenby, 1993, 97 believes preparations can only have gone on for three years.

[66] On the absence of an Athenian navy before Themistocles see Haas, 1985, 29-46 and de Souza, 1998, 271-293; on Themistocles' building program see Wallinga, 1993, 148-157 who surveys the earlier literature.

[67] Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum* 5.1-2, and see Morrison, 1996, 123-124 and also 43-55, where he discusses the First Punic War.

Stockpiling grain at five locations in Europe (7.24-5), bridging the Hellespont and building a canal across the promontory at Mt. Athos were not tasks of lengthy undertaking either. Herodotus' report (7.22) that the digging of the canal went on for about three years is almost surely in error. Isserlin, who has examined the site carefully and extensively, concludes that the canal could have been constructed in 60 to 80 days[68]. Nor was the construction of bridges a time consuming task. Caesar needed but ten days, after all the necessary materials had been gathered, to construct his first bridge across the Rhine (*BG* 4.18) and with the experience gained on that project the second bridge was erected "within a few days" *(BG* 6.19). There is also important evidence from the brief reign of the Emperor Caligula. In a project viewed by some Romans as a deliberate effort to outdo the bridge building feats of Xerxes, Caligula had constructed what was most likely the longest bridge of ships ever constructed in the ancient world (Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula 19:* Dio 50.17.1-11). It consisted of a double line of merchant vessels extending from Baiae to Puteoli, a distance of more than three miles. On top of the ships an earthen roadway was laid and lodging areas complete with running water were constructed along its course. Nonetheless, this elaborate project was completed, according to Dio, before ships could be brought to the site from the far corners of the empire.

To return to Herodotus and the Persians, there is nothing to suggest that Darius needed any great length of time to bridge either the Bosphorus or the Danube (4.83-89) during his Scythian campaign, and that Xerxes' bridges required no lengthy period of construction seems clear from the rapidity with which replacements were ready after the original bridges collapsed in a storm[69]. According to Herodotus (7.33) the bridging of the Hellespont was in progress while Xerxes was at Sardis; and in all likelihood construction on it, as well as on the canal, began only after the king's arrival at the satrapal capital. This would explain why we hear of no great concern for the Persians among the Greeks until the fall of 481 B.C. when

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[68] Isserlin, 1991, 83-91, and with others, 1994, 277-284 and, 1996, 329-340.

[69] Herodotus 7.34-36 describes the bridges, one of 360 fifty-oared ships and triremes and the other of 314, bound together with flaxen and papyrus cables. The best modern discussions are Hammond, 1988, 527-532 and Hammond & Roseman, 1996, 88-107. Stronk, 1998/1999, 59-65 believes that Herodotus' account is not entirely accurate. Beloch, 1911, 90-91 calculates that Herodotus' ship figures are likely to be accurate, but he believes that they were cargo ships not warships. On the ease of constructing bridges of ships see Arrian 5.7.3-4.

they met, presumably at the Isthmus, to consider a common defense (7.145), or rather slightly earlier than that when the Argives (7.148) and the Athenians twice (7.140, 142) consulted the oracle of Delphi. For what it may be worth, Diodorus Siculus says (11.2.4), that when Xerxes arrived at Sardis he divided his army and sent a sufficient number of men ahead to bridge the Hellespont and dig the canal; in other words, that construction on both projects began only after Xerxes got to Sardis.

If Persian preparations did not go on four years as Herodotus asserts, it is legitimate to ask where he got the notion that they had. I do believe that Herodotus was an honest fellow, who went to great lengths to get information and, true to his pronouncement (7.152), simply reported what he learned whether he believed it or not. If that belief is sound, then we must conclude that Herodotus heard somewhere that Xerxes' preparations went on for four full years, that he was, in short, simply misinformed. The most likely source of this misinformation were the Persians themselves and we shall return to this matter shortly.

Herodotus, unfortunately, provides no clear and unequivocal data on how and when the Greeks first learned of Xerxes' intentions. He tells us at one point (7.239) that the Spartans were the first to know when Demaratus sent a coded message from Susa informing them of Xerxes' plans, and they, in turn, informed the other Greeks. Elsewhere (7.148-152) he tells us that the Argives were the first to know, but he had heard three different versions as to how they came by that information[70]. None of this inspires much confidence, and we can only conjecture. We do know that Xerxes spent the winter of 481/480 B.C. with his army at Sardis (7.37) and Herodotus implies that the Greeks learned of his arrival there only while they were meeting to plan their general defense in the fall of 481B.C. (7.145)[71]. This is possible but seems rather unlikely. It is

[70] In the course of relating the information about the Argives, Herodotus (7.152) informs us that it is his job to record what is said, but it is not his job to believe it The information about Demaratus informing the Spartans (7.220, 7.239), suspect in itself, is related in the context of the Spartans consulting the Delphic oracle and being told that either they will lose a king or their city will fall, which most commentators regard as *post eventum*; see Hignett, 1963, 439-440 and Fontenrose, 1978, 77-78. Balcer, 1995, 232 nonetheless accepts it as genuine.

[71] Hignett, 1963, 95 places Xerxes arrival at Sardis in the fall of 481 B.C. and the meeting of the Greeks in the late summer (p. 98); How & Wells, 1912, 2, 187 seem to place both probably in the fall of 481 B.C., as does Lazenby, 1993, 104-105; I would agree with Hammond, 1988, 540 that Xerxes was already at Sardis when the meeting took place.

much more plausible that there is a direct cause/effect relationship between these two events, that the meeting of the Greeks was prompted by the information that Xerxes was at Sardis with gigantic forces at his disposal and intent upon invading Greece. It appears, moreover, that this news took the Greeks by surprise, for at the very moment of their meeting in the fall of 481 B.C. not only were Athens and Aegina at war with one another, but other, unspecified wars were underway as well (7.145). Had there been even the slightest inkling of Xerxes' intentions earlier some effort likely would have been made to resolve these differences in a more timely manner, for the actions they now took at this meeting clearly indicate that the Greeks recognized the gravity of the situation facing them and were willing to do whatever the occasion demanded. They took the momentous decision to forego any differences separating individual states, they resolved to seek assistance from Argos, Crete, Corcyra and Syracuse, and they dispatched spies to Asia (7.145). By the fall of 481 B.C. accordingly, fear of the Persians was genuine and widespread throughout mainland Greece, and there is plenty of evidence in Herodotus to indicate that there is a direct cause/effect relationship between this fear and Persian propaganda.

One of Xerxes' first acts after his arrival at Sardis was the dispatch of heralds to Greece (7.32). Too little attention has been paid to these heralds, whose charge was two-fold: first, they were to demand earth and water and secondly, they ordered the various Greek communities to prepare meals for the king (7.32) and his army (7.119) as it advanced toward Athens[72]. As a result of this second charge the Greeks now had important intelligence. From this point on there could be no doubt about the king's intentions, which, according to Herodotus (7.138), were to punish Athens and in the process bring all of Greece under Persian domination. They knew precisely the route Xerxes planned to take and, since the cities along this route were ordered to provide sustenance for the army, they had to know something about the size of the force they were expected to feed. In other words, the ultimate source of such information as the Greeks had about the size of Xerxes' forces can only have been these Persian heralds

[72] Herodotus 7.119 says that the necessary preparations, gathering the required amounts of wheat and barley and grinding it into flour, raising livestock as well as land and water fowl and manufacturing gold and silver bowls, cups and assorted tableware, took many months.

sent out from Sardis after Xerxes' arrival there to demand earth and water from the Greeks. It may also have been from these heralds that the Greeks learned that Xerxes intended to bridge the Hellespont and cut a canal across the promontory at Mt. Athos.

Herodotus reports (7.32) that when Xerxes dispatched these heralds he expected that the Greeks, out of fear, would readily pledge earth and water, and indeed a number of them including the Thessalians, Dolopians, Enienes, Perrihabians, Locrians, Magnesians, Melians, Achaeans of Phthia and all the Boeotians save those of Thespiae and Plataea did so (7.132). Since two earlier attempts to punish the Athenians had ended in failure, and all Greeks knew this, why was Xerxes convinced that they would now be so terrified that they would instantly grant earth and water? Moreover, what was it that so terrified the nine Greek peoples mentioned above that they did instantly surrender without a fight?

The answer to both questions, I would suggest, can only be Persian propaganda, a topic which leads inevitably to a consideration of numbers in Herodotus' *History,* especially those concerning the size of Xerxes' forces, which have always been one of the thorniest problems in that work. Although some are willing to accept the numbers that he gives for the fleet, 1207 ships[73], no one accepts his guess that the army numbered 1,700,000 men (7.59-60). This figure is universally dismissed and modern estimates run from 60,000 to 300,000[74]. The usual explanation for Herodotus' inflated figures is that either he or some compatriot exaggerated the size of the Persian forces to make the Greek

[73] Herodotus 7.89 says the navy consisted of 1207 triremes. This is the same figure given by Aeschylus, *Persae,* 341-343, where it had to fit the metrical pattern of three lines. The figure is nonetheless accepted by Lazenby, 1993, 92-94; Olmstead, 1948, 243; Grundy, 1901, 219-220; Wallinga, 1993, 161-162, 184-185. Hammond, 532-533 thinks the fleet was even larger than that, 1407 ships. At the other extreme, Beloch, 1911, 67-70 believes the fleet was no larger than 500 ships.

[74] Sallares, 1991, 47-48 argues that since the Persians failed to assimilate the peoples they conquered, they probably could not rely on many of them for military service. Beloch, 1911, 70-74 argues for a force of 60,000; Delbrück, 1908, 95-96, estimates 60-70,000 while Young, 1980, 213-239 argues that the logistics for an army of 60-70,000 men would be staggering. Barkworth, 1992, 162-167 believes that the army was a good deal less than 100,000 men. On the other extreme Cook, 1983, 113-115 argues for 300,000; Hammond, 1988, 533-534 suggests an army of 220,000 and a combined army, navy and supply service of 650,000. Maurice, 1930, 210-235, believed that the available water supply would have restricted Xerxes' forces to 210,000 men. The discussion of Lazenby, 1993, 90-96 is useful.

victory appear the more spectacular[75]. The Greeks may well have magnified the size of the enemy army and navy, but can we really believe that Xerxes' heralds did not intentionally and deliberately exaggerate beyond all reason the size of the king's forces — and the length of time he spent making his advance preparations — when they came demanding earth and water? This is precisely what we should expect of them. To believe that they gave the Greeks an honest count on either matter flies in the face of logic and everything we know about the Persians as accomplished propagandists and skilled practitioners of psychological warfare[76].

In this connection there is some important information in Persian sources which demonstrates that Persian kings were perfectly capable of manipulating the size of their forces for their own self-serving purposes. Not once in the Behistun inscription does Darius boast that he ever commanded a large army, but twice he claims[77] that his small army enjoyed success against an enemy force. This is certainly possible, of course, but playing down the size of his own forces once the revolts had been suppressed carried no military danger, but it did serve to enhance Darius' claim that he had the assistance of Ahura Mazda in his rise to power, a constantly recurring theme throughout this lengthy inscription. A more important document in many ways is the Cyrus cylinder, composed not long after the Persian capture of Babylon in 539 B.C. At one point in the text Cyrus boasts that he had so many troops that "their numbers, like that

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[75] This point is so universally assumed that citation hardly seems necessary, but see, for example, How & Wells, 1912, 2 364-366; Hignett, 1963, 350; Lazenby, 1993, 90; Grundy, 1901, 210; Balcer, 1995, 237-241; Hammond, 1988, 532 calls Herodotus' grand total "this absurd exaggeration of Herodotus."

[76] Green, 1996, 61-63 is on the right track in recognizing that "Xerxes would inflate his strength in the interests of psychological warfare" (62), but believes that the Greeks learned of these inflated numbers from the three spies dispatched to Sardis from Corinth.

[77] Kent, 1953, DB I 55-58, where Darius boasts that with just a few men he slew Gumata. In the Akkadian version, von Voigtlander, 1978, 55 translates the pertinent phrase "accompanied by a few nobles." This passage is not preserved in the Aramaic version. At DB II 18-21 Darius says that when Phraortes revolted in Media he (Darius) had only a small army with him. From this small force he apparently placed some men under the command of Hydarnes, who defeated the rebels. In that engagement, according to the Akkadian version, 4329 prisoners were taken while the number of dead could not be read with certainty. von Voigtlander, 1978, 56-57 suggested that 3827 were killed. The number of dead is not certain in the Aramaic version either, but Greenfield & Porten, 1982, 6 suggest 5827; on the Akkadian version see also Malbran-Labat, 1999, 61-74.

of the water of a river could not be established"[78] This is magnificent hyperbole and it is remarkably akin to Herodotus' pronouncement that Xerxes' army was so huge that it drank whole rivers dry as it moved along[79]. Definitive proof is not at hand, of course, but it is difficult to believe that the heralds dispatched from Sardis in 481 B.C. were not the bearers, most likely even the procreators, of this equally magnificent hyperbole. In any case, it seems likely that these heralds were the ultimate source of such information as the Greeks had about the length of time Xerxes' preparations went on and the size of Persian forces, and if Xerxes really did believe that the Greeks could be terrified into submission, then exaggerating the extent of his preparations and the size of his army and navy was the most logical way of bringing this about. This is particularly true since, at the time, no Greek state possessed anything resembling even the most primitive intelligence gathering machinery[80]. The Greeks, in short, did not have the ability to verify or refute easily any Persian claim as to the size of their forces.

The initial success of this Persian propaganda is reflected not only in the states that actually gave earth and water, and the decision of the Greeks meeting at the Isthmus to forgo their differences, but also in the attitude of the oracle of Delphi. It seems reasonable to suppose that one of the first acts upon learning that Xerxes was at Sardis preparing to invade would be to consult the oracle. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Herodotus either quotes verbatim or paraphrases five oracles that were allegedly delivered prior to the outbreak of hostilities. Three of these five oracles are regarded by Hignett[81], following Macan, as discouraging to the

[78] Pritchard, 1950, 315.

[79] Herodotus, as Burn, 1962, 328 reminds us, never said in so many words that the army drank whole rivers dry, but he did say (7.21) that only the great rivers did not fall short of the army's need and he firmly believed it (7.187). Specifically, he mentions the Scamander (7.43), the Black (7.58), the Lisus (7.108), the Cheidorus at Therma (7.172), the Onochonmus in Thessaly (7.196), and a salt lake in Thessaly that was drained by the beasts of burden (7.109). Even the greatest river of Achaea, the Apidanus, was barely able to provide a sufficient supply (7.196).

[80] Starr, 1974, has assembled the evidence for Greek intelligence and reached this conclusion. Russell, 1999, notes the paucity of evidence for the early period, but also remarks (8-9) that intelligence "was not desired for its own sake." Only when there was an immediate threat on the horizon did the Greeks concern themselves with it.

[81] Hignett, 1963, 439-447; on the role of the oracle in Herodotus see Elayi, 1978, 93-118 and 1979, 94-151.

Greeks, one as ambivalent and the fifth as encouraging. But this sole encouraging oracle, which Herodotus says was delivered before the war began, is highly suspect. It advises the Spartans that either their city will be destroyed or one of their kings will die (7.220). This would seem to be an obvious *post eventum* response created after the death of Leonidas at Thermopylae[82]. If so, it tells us nothing about the real attitude of Delphi before Xerxes arrived in Europe. All three of the oracles regarded as discouraging and that labeled ambivalent were delivered while the king was still in Asia; in fact, three of them were delivered prior to the first meeting of the Greeks in the fall of 481 B.C. Early on the Argives consulted the oracle and were advised to remain neutral (7.148). On first consulting the oracle the Athenians were advised to flee to the ends of the earth (7.140), and while this advice was never specifically rescinded it was tempered somewhat in a subsequent ambivalent oracle that advised them to place their trust in wooden walls (7.142). Finally, the Cretans consulted the oracle after the meeting of the Greeks at the Isthmus and were advised to remain neutral (7.169). Delphi could have had no sources of information on the size of the Persian forces not available to the Greeks as a whole, that is to say the propaganda being disseminated by the enemy, and these pessimistic responses can only be the direct result of that propaganda.

Since neither the Athenians nor Spartans were given an opportunity to pledge earth and water, for no heralds were sent to either city, they had no choice but to resist. A number of other Greek states agreed to join with them in a coalition against the invader. The first task of those Greeks determined to resist was to gather intelligence. By the fall of 481 B.C. there must have been rumors aplenty about the unimaginable size of the Persian forces about to descend on Greece. Those Greeks who had given earth and water apparently believed what the Persians told them; others may well have had doubts. Most likely it was to gain first hand intelligence that spies were dispatched to Sardis in the fall of 481B.C. (7.145-6). Once there, they were allowed to view the king's forces without restriction, but what information they brought back to Greece on their return cannot be ascertained. It is clear, however, that some Greeks, both those who

[82] Hignett, 1963, 439-440; Fontenrose, 1978, 77-78. Georges, 1986, 14-59, argues that the oracles given to Athens were not genuine either, but were, rather, created after Artemisium and Thermopylae to induce the Athenians to abandon Attica and offer resistance at Salamis.

had previously given earth and water and those who had not, were entertaining second thoughts about their original decision. Herodotus reports that those who had refused to give earth and water were now "sore afraid, since there were not in Hellas ships enough to do battle with the invader, and the greater part of them had no stomach for grappling with the war, but were making haste to side with the invader." (7.138) Clearly Persian propaganda could boast some success, but even as Xerxes was at Abydos about to cross into Europe (7.174), the Thessalians, who had previously given earth and water, now offered to renounce that act and join with those Greeks who were determined to resist. The one condition they insisted upon was that the Greeks would attempt to guard the route into Thessaly from the north along the Peneus River between Mounts Olympus and Ossa (7.172) The Greeks readily agreed to dispatch an army of 10,000 men to Thessaly for that purpose (7.173).

If Xerxes really did expect his enemies to give up without a fight when they heard of his vast forces, then clearly Persian propaganda had not been the resounding success he anticipated. He may not have known that the Thessalians had had a change of heart, but he surely knew that some Greeks steadfastly refused to give earth and water, and in Thrace the king of the Bisalte refused to become his subject (8.116) as did the hill-dwelling Satrae tribe (7.110-111). Every effort had to be made to intimidate anyone, non-Greek as well as Greek, still determined to resist and to prevent further defections. In other words, the propaganda campaign had to be stepped up and it may well be for this reason that the Persians now enlisted the assistance of Alexander I of Macedon[83]. No sooner had the Greek army arrived in Thessaly when messengers came from Alexander advising them to withdraw because of the vast army and navy they were about to face (7.173). The Greeks did withdraw, but Herodotus was not sure whether it was this advice they received from Alexander or whether it was because they now learned that there was another route into Thessaly from the north and if Xerxes took this route, which he later did, the Greeks would be in danger of being cut off there. Either way, the withdrawal was a major victory for the Persians, for the Thessalians now had no choice but to side with them (7.174).

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[83] Herodotus 7.173. On these events see Badian, 1994, 107-130, who believes (pp. 117-118) that Alexander may have been the ultimate source for some of the Persian figures we find in Herodotus. That may well be, but Alexander probably knew nothing more than what the Persians told him about the size of their forces.

These events, as noted above, transpired while Xerxes was at Abydos where he arrived at the beginning of spring 480 B.C. (7.37). Herodotus says (8.51) he spent a month at the Hellespont[84], and the question that needs to be asked is why? It is possible that the reconstruction of the collapsed bridges (7.35) contributed to this delay, but it is equally likely that the pause was premeditated. Persian propaganda had not been the resounding success the king had been counting on and not all Greeks were willing to surrender without a fight. Abydos, on the Asiatic coast just a short hop across the strait from the European mainland, was the perfect location to make one final effort to cow the Greeks into submission with a display of force and a visual spectacle of the king's might and power that could be carried by eyewitnesses to those Greeks still intent on resisting. The bridging of the Hellespont seemed to Aeschylus[85] an extraordinary achievement and so it must have seemed to many of his contemporaries as well, particularly those who actually saw the bridges. There must have been many who did, for in constructing them Xerxes took deliberate care to leave gaps so that traffic into and out of the Hellespont would not be impeded. We are specifically told that he allowed ships laden with grain to sail through to Aegina and the Peloponnesus (7.147), because, Herodotus says, the ships were only carrying grain to the same place the Persians were headed. We can be sure, however, that the crews of these ships brought tales of the stupendous bridges and the Persian forces assembled together in one spot. It was also at Abydos, moreover, that Xerxes reviewed his army and navy and contingents of his navy staged a ship race while the king looked on from his white marble throne (7.44-45). Surely this was a carefully choreographed propaganda ploy. Psychologically it would provide an uplift for his forces, but just as important was the impact it would have on the crews of Greek ships passing through the strait. Finally, no matter what one may think of Herodotus' description of the army crossing the bridges into Europe (7.54-57), it must have presented a striking sight to anyone witnessing it as any number Greek seaman must have done. These eyewitness reports of the king's forces would be the first received by the Greeks since the return of the three spies earlier sent to Asia.

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[84] Hammond, 1988, 537 places him at the Hellespont from late April until late May 480 B.C. Macan, 1908, 402-403 believes that the term month in Herodotus is not to be taken literally, but rather as an approximation.

[85] See *Persae*, 68-70; 128-132; 745-750; 799, and especially 722-723 where Aeschylus has Atossa say that Xerxes must have had divine assistance on the project.

It may also be significant that once in Europe, Xerxes was in no hurry; indeed three months would pass from the crossing of the Hellespont to his arrival in Athens (8.51). His immediate destination was the Persian fortress at Doriscus, which was no great distance from Sestos on the European side of the Hellespont[86]. From a logistical point of view this made sense, for provisions had been stockpiled there (7.25) and, with the Hebrus River nearby (7.59), there was an adequate water supply and grazing land for the livestock. Although the chronology is far from certain, Xerxes seems to have stayed fully as long at Doriscus as he had at the Hellespont[87], and again the question is why? Xerxes may well have been waiting for the completion of the road being constructed through Thrace (7.115) but other considerations may have contributed to the delay as well. If the display of force put on at the Hellespont was to have the desired effect, time was required for reports of eyewitnesses to reach southern Greece, where most of the states determined to resist were located. Evaluating these reports and arriving at decisions on the basis of them would require additional time, and if any Greeks were now willing to capitulate, it would require still further time for that news to reach the king. There is, in fact, some reason to believe that Xerxes did not passively sit by waiting for the Greeks to contact him with pledges of earth and water; he may have dispatched heralds to Greece a second time, either before setting out from Sardis, or from Abydos, or perhaps even from Doriscus.

Neither Herodotus nor any other ancient source tells us specifically that such heralds were dispatched, but that would seem to be the only explanation for Herodotus' report that after leaving Doriscus and advancing into

[86] Lazenby, 1993, 114 gives the distance from Sestos on the European side of the Hellespont to Doriscus as about 170 kilometers, a more reliable figure than that of Hammond, 1988, 537 who gives the distance from Abydos on the Asiatic side of the Hellespont as some 75 kilometers. On Xerxes march through Thrace see Archibald, 1998, 88-90.

[87] The chronology of events throughout the whole course of Xerxes' campaign admits of little certainty. The most useful items in the lengthy bibliography are Macan, 1908, 398-412; Beloch, 1911, 2:2, 46-56, Hignett, 1963, 379-385, 448-457; Lazenby, 1993, 118-123; Hammond, 1988, 588-591. Burn, 1962, 338 remarks that the 300 mile trip through Thrace took about 45 days and that Xerxes did not reach Macedonia until July. Much of this 45 day period must have been spent at Doriscus, a delay which has not received much attention by students of the war. One exception is Hammond, 1988, 537 who believes that Xerxes spent about a month at Doriscus because he was intent on harvesting the grain growing in the region and that he did not leave there until late June. Macan, 1908, 411 also has Xerxes at Doriscus for about a month.

the hills of Pieria in southern Macedonia, where Xerxes spent many days, heralds arrived at his camp, some with, some without pledges of earth and water (7.131). Herodotus simply assumes that these were the heralds that Xerxes had dispatched from Sardis upon his arrival there, and interpreters of Herodotus from Grundy to Briant[88] either accept this assumption and pass over it in complete silence or simply ignore this passage and assume that the heralds must have returned to Sardis at a much earlier date[89]. Surely, these cannot be the heralds that were dispatched from Sardis in the summer or fall of 481 B.C., eight, nine or even more months earlier. If we accept this proposition then we must believe that Xerxes had no idea which Greek states had given earth and water and which had not until he was at the very borders of Thessaly, and this is hardly credible. Either Herodotus is mistaken and no heralds brought news to the king at Pieria, or if that report is accurate, then Xerxes must have sent out heralds on a second occasion. If, as argued above, the king was counting on a display of force at Abydos to induce some Greeks to have a change of heart, the dispatch of envoys to receive pledges of earth and water would be a perfectly reasonable course of action for him to adopt. Whether he sent out heralds or not, the lengthy period of time spent at Doriscus may well have been dictated by the king's hope that some Greek states might now be willing to give earth and water.

Whatever the reasons behind the king's delay the time spent at Doriscus was put to good use. The ships were hauled out of the water and allowed to dry (7.59), an essential maintenance operation[90], but one that may have carried some psychological impact as well, for as any seaman knew a dry ship was a lighter ship and a lighter ship was a faster ship. It was here, too, that Xerxes reviewed his army and navy (7.100), and this must have been an impressive spectacle if by chance it was viewed by any Greek. The king, accompanied by his scribes, moved among his land forces in his royal chariot and reviewed the navy from his royally appointed Sidonian ship with its golden canopy (7.100).

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[88] Grundy, 1901, 225-226; How & Welles, 1912, 2, 176-177; Briant, 1996, 545; only Burn, 1962, 343 makes a valiant effort to explain why the heralds return to Xerxes only at this point. He suggests that, relying on the traditional inviolability of heralds, they remained in this region, presumably for six months or more, to remind any Greeks that wavered of the sacred pledge they had made to the king.

[89] Hammond, 1988, 544 and Balcer, 1995, 232.

[90] Harrison, 1999, 168-171 on the importance of this operation.

It was also at Doriscus, according to Herodotus (7.60), that the army was counted by ethnic contingents, which Herodotus then proceeds to enumerate. Most commentators scoff at the method Herodotus says was employed to count the troops; namely, 10,000 men were herded into an area which was then surrounded by a wall. These 10,000 men were then withdrawn and the walled off area again filled, presumably with another 10,000 men, until all had been counted[91]. Herodotus himself concluded that the army consisted of 1,700,000[92] men and this would have necessitated repeating this operation 170 times. We might legitimately doubt the accuracy of the story, but unless we are to believe with Fehling[93] that Herodotus simply made things up as he went along, we must believe that he heard from some informant, possibly even several informants, that the army was counted at Doriscus in essentially the manner he describes. In fact, Fehling[94] believes that Aeschylus' reference in the *Persae* (980) to the king's Eye as the counter of tens of tens of thousands provided all the inspiration Herodotus needed to make up the story about the counting of the troops. It seems just as reasonable to suppose, however, that both the tragedian and historian had each heard some story about counting by units of 10,000 men[95]. The story may not be, probably is not true, but it is such brilliantly conceived propaganda that it does not strain either the evidence

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[91] Herodotus 7.60. How & Wells, 1912, 2 364-366 call the story "an obvious folktale which cannot be taken seriously" (366), and attribute Herodotus' figure on the size of the force in part "to an extravagant over-estimate deliberately adopted by the historian" (364). Cook, 1983, 113 calls it "a curious story," but offers no opinion on its historicity. Burn, 1962, 329 calls the story childish. Grundy, 1901, 218 says the method may, or may not have been employed. Lazenby, 1993, 90 says the story "though not impossible, does not seem very likely." Hammond, 1988, 533 says "Herodotus probably wrote tongue in cheek." On the review of the army at Doriscus see the remarks of Briant, 1996, 209-211, and 1999, 1116-120 who believes that Xerxes was not reviewing his military forces but the ethnic and cultural diversity of the peoples of the empire.

[92] Herodotus 7.60; Lazenby, 1993, 90 makes the interesting observation that the largest numbers we have for Persian forces come from writers closest in time to the actual invasion and the further removed we get the smaller the numbers become. On numbers in Herodotus generally see Lateiner, 32-33, 238. Keyser, 1986, 230-242 finds only seven errors of calculation in the *Histories* and they can usually be easily explained.

[93] Fehling, 1989; in rebuttal see Shrimpton & Gillis, 1997, 229-265; Dover, 1998, 219-225; Pritchett, 1993, takes on Fehling and other critics of Herodotus.

[94] Fehling, 1989, 247-248.

[95] Hirsch, 1985, 184 n. 8 reports that one of the scholiasts of Aeschylus, which I have not seen, says specifically that the King's Eye counts the armies but this can be no more than a guess.

or the imagination to see the Persians themselves as its ultimate source. What better way of demoralizing any Greeks still contemplating resistance than by reminding them of the many different ethnic groups included in the king's army, while at the same time circulating the misinformation that his army was so huge that it had to be reckoned in units of 10,000 men? This is as many men as the Greeks were able to muster when they briefly thought about defending the route into Thessaly (7.173), and probably more men than they had at Marathon a decade earlier.

So far as we know at least, no offers of surrender came forth, and after probably close to a month at Doriscus Xerxes renewed his advance toward Greece. It must have become painfully obvious by now that his initial expectation that the Greeks would give up without a fight had been overly optimistic and he could not dally at Doriscus forever. The time for propaganda was over; he either had to call off the invasion and return to Asia, or prepare to do battle, and he chose the latter.

It is not likely that any propaganda initiatives had been planned beyond the initial exaggeration of Persian forces and the display of might staged at the Hellespont, though a few things might have been devised on the spur of the moment later. While there may have been solid logistical reasons for splitting the army into three separate units upon leaving Doriscus[96] and moving toward Greece with three separate forces, this may have carried some psychological clout as well. It is certainly possible that Xerxes' behavior at Acanthus, where he declared the Acanthians his guests and friends, presented them with a Median dress and praised them for their assistance in digging the canal (7.116) was a subtle reminder that cooperation would be rewarded[97]. It is also possible that the race between Persian and Thessalian horses, which Xerxes had heard were the fastest in Greece, was staged more to impress the Greeks than anything else[98]. Finally, as the

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[96] Herodotus 7.121. Müller, 1975, 1-11 argues that this report can only be partly accurate.

[97] There is plenty of evidence to indicate that royal rewards for such assistance were commonplace in the Persian Empire. Herodotus 8.90 reports that at the Battle of Salamis Xerxes' scribes wrote down the name of any ship captain who performed well and those who did were later rewarded (8.85). This suggests that such rewards were not haphazardly and arbitrarily handed out. Records were kept, rather, and rewards dispensed accordingly. This would seem to be confirmed by oriental sources: *Esther* 2.21-23; 6.2-3, DNb 16-20, 55-60 and especially the Behistun inscription, DB I 20-24 and DB IV 61-71. Donner & Röllig, 1962, #14, offer a Phoenician inscription in which Eshmunazzar, King of Sidon, boasts of being rewarded with substantial territory in return for services rendered.

[98] Herodotus 7.196; on the route through Thessaly see Decourt, 1990, 81-84.

Persians moved southward, the territory of Greek states and peoples that refused to give earth and water, such as the Phocians (8.32-33), Thespae, Plataea (8.50) and Athens (8.50,53) was plundered and burned and this can only be viewed as a carefully calculated use of terror to frighten other obstinate Greeks into the Persian camp[99].

It is a tribute to the success of Persian propaganda that as hostilities were about to break out at Thermopylae and Artemisium the Greeks were apprehensive and fearful (7.207; 8.4). It is also reported that there was fear and dread among the Greeks, especially the Peloponnesians, on the eve of the battle of Salamis (8.70). Many wanted to abandon that location and make a stand at the Isthmus (8.49, 56, 74). Not all Greeks were as terrified as those of the mainland, however. Although the bulk of the Ionians remained loyal to their Persian overlord, despite Themistocles efforts to win them over (8.22), a number of islanders seem not to have been convinced of Persian superiority from the outset. The Ceans, Styrians and Cythians provided ships for the Greek fleet (8.46), while Seriphos, Siphnos and Melos never gave earth and water to the king (8.46). The Naxians did send four ships with orders to assist the Persians, but they deserted to the Greeks[100] and the Parians were still not sure which way the fighting would go just before Salamis (8.67). In addition to the reluctance of these island states to join the Persians are two defections worthy of note. Even during the first naval engagement at Artemisium, Antidorus of Lemnos deserted the Persians and went over to the Greeks (8.11), as did a single ship from Tenos just before the battle of Salamis (8.82). These defections by ships from Tenos and Lemnos and the reluctance of other islanders to embrace wholeheartedly the Persian cause stands in sharp contrast to the

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[99] That the Persians understood the use of terror as a weapon of psychological warfare is clear from the Behistun inscription (DB II 70-78) where Darius boasts that when the Median rebel Phraortes was captured and brought before him, "I cut off his nose and ears and tongue, and put out one eye; he was kept bound at my palace entrance, all the people saw him. Afterward I impaled him at Ecbatana; and the men who were his foremost followers, those I (flayed and) hung out (their hides stuffed with straw)." The Akkadian version (Section 25) is similar, but the last line is worth quoting from von Voigtlander's translation: "I executed his nobles, a total of (47). I hung their heads inside Ecbatana from the battlements of the fortress." At Arbela, the Sargatian rebel Ciçantakhma suffered a similar fate (DB II 78-91).

[100] Herodotus 8.46. Plutarch, *Moralia,* 869a takes Herodotus to task here citing Hellanicus (*FGrH* 4 F 183) as saying that the Naxians sent six ships and Ephorus (*FGrH* 70 F 187) that they sent five ships.

fear expressed by the mainland Greeks. It is possible, though certainly not provable, that the islanders had more accurate information about the actual size of the Persian forces. This is most assuredly true of the Lemnians and Tenians who had originally accompanied the Persians and been part of their forces, but beyond that we cannot say.

If Persian propaganda was as ubiquitous during Xerxes' invasion of Greece as has been posited above, then traces of that propaganda should be discernable not just in the *Histories* of Herodotus, but also in the works of other contemporaries and near contemporaries of the invasion. Apart from Simonides and Aeschylus, however, there is not much to go on. Neither *The Fall of Miletus* nor *The Phoenician Women* of Phrynichus survives[101]. Theognis does briefly mention the war of the Medes, most likely a reference to Marathon[102], and there are brief references to Artemisium and Salamis in Pindar[103]. This reluctance of contemporary authors to say much about the wars is surprising, for we know that the Persians became a popular subject for writers in the years after Salamis[104]. In addition to Herodotus, three authors, the inscrutable Dionysius of Miletus, Hellanicus of Lesbos and Charon of Lampsacus wrote *Persica.* Unfortunately, only brief fragments survive and they do little to enlighten us[105].

In the end we are left with only Simonides and Aeschylus, important sources, for both men were resident in Athens at the time of the invasion and Aeschylus an active participant in the war. They, like Herodotus, were convinced that Xerxes marched on Greece with massive force. Only a few brief fragments survive from the poems that Simonides wrote on various battles[106], but we do have the epitaph, quoted by Herodotus (7.228), that he composed for the Spartans who fell at Thermopylae. In its few lines we

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[101] Snell, 1971, 69-79 has collected the few fragments that survive.

[102] Theognis, 773-775; Highbarger, 1937, 98-110 argues that the reference is to Marathon.

[103] Pythian 1 75-78 and Fragments 76-77 and 109 in Maehler, 1989; generally see Kierdorf, 1966, 29-47.

[104] On this see Tuplin, 1996, 132-152 and the important work of Hall, 1989,

[105] None of these figures was, apparently, a contemporary of the invasion but each may have written before Herodotus. The fragments of these *Persika* have been collected by Jacoby, *FGrH* #687 (Dionysius of Miletus), 687a (Hellanicus), and 687b (Charon), There are four fragments of Dionysius, eleven of Hellanicus and six of Charon. They are admirably discussed by Drews, 1973, 20-32 with full references to the earlier literature.

[106] The fragments have been collected by Page, 1981, 194-238 with full discussion; the authenticity of many is questionable; see also Molyneux, 1992, 147-196 and Kierdorf, 1966, 16-29.

are told that the Spartans faced 300 myriads of men there. Aeschylus' *Persae* was staged at Athens in 472 B.C. and, as previously noted, he gives the size of the Persian fleet as 1207 ships (341-343) and speaks of "rowers in multitude past all numbering" (39-40) and, as also previously noted, he refers to the kings Eye as the counter of tens of tens of thousands (980) and several times says that the king's army included the whole of Asia[107].

Both Simonides and Aeschylus, like Herodotus, had an exaggerated notion of the size of Xerxes' forces, but is this exaggeration based on a desire to inflate the size of the Persian army and navy in order to amplify the Greek victory? Or is it based upon the best information then available, information derived ultimately from the Persians themselves, who deliberately inflated the size of their army and navy to frighten the Greeks into submission? No definitive answer can be given, of course, and while little more can be said about Simonides, there are clear indications in the *Persae* that Aeschylus was more than passingly familiar with some of the major themes of Persian imperial propaganda. Once the king is said to be the ruler of Asia (72-74), and once he is said to be the ruler of the whole of Asia (58-60), and on another occasion is said to rule over the whole of Asia by grace of god. (762-764). Three times the divine like qualities of the king are mentioned[108], and Darius is said to have had the favor of the gods (163-164), while Xerxes is said to have had divine assistance in bridging the Hellespont (722-723). It may also be significant that Aeschylus was familiar with some of the titles by which Persian kings were known. Once the monarch is called the Great King (24)[109], and on another occasion he is referred to as δέσποτα δεσπότου (665-666), which is perhaps best translated here as king of kings[110]. Since these general themes of Persian imperial propaganda

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[107] Aeschylus, *Persae,* 12-13; 55-57; 268-271; 548-549; 718; frequently he speaks of the vast army or navy and the numerous casualties: see 25; 38-40; 342-344; 533-534; 898-903; 925-926; 979-981; 1029; generally see Kierdorf, 1966, 64-82.

[108] The pertinent passages are 80; 654-656; and 856-858 and they are perceptively discussed by. Badian, 1994, especially pp. 15-16 who also notes that at lines 156-158 Atossa is referred to as the wife and mother of a god, but he thinks this is flattery of the queen and should not be taken literally.

[109] Herodotus refers to the great king four times, at 1.188; 1.192; 5.49 and 8.140; on the lengthy history of this title in the ancient Near East see Artzi & Malmat, 1993, 28-38.

[110] This is the translation preferred by Schmitt, 1978, 19-20, although the normal rendering in Greek would be βασιλεὺς βασιλέων. Frye, 1964, 36-54 discusses the lengthy history of the title king of kings in the ancient Near East while Griffiths, 1953, 145-154 discusses its use by the Greeks. If the letter from Darius to Gadatas (Meiggs & Lewis,

were known to Aeschylus and made their way into his work, we should not be surprised if specific provisions of the propaganda of the moment, namely, the amplified size of Xerxes' forces, did so as well.

It is not likely that either Simonides, Aeschylus or Herodotus recognized that he was repeating Persian propaganda, for nothing in their experience could have prepared them for it. This must have been the first time in their history that the Greeks were exposed to such a sophisticated and systematic barrage of enemy propaganda. Polybius may be over stating when he says that early on in their history the Greeks "would not even consent to get the better of their enemies by fraud...,"[111] but at this point in their development there is nothing comparable in Greece to the Behistun inscription or the Cyrus cylinder and the Greeks did not have a history of psychological warfare and propaganda literally thousands of years in the making. As Herodotus remarks on Xerxes' canal across the isthmus at Athos suggest[112], he was well aware that the king sometimes did things primarily for their psychological impact on the enemy and he recognized several deliberate uses of misinformation, by the Xerxes himself in an effort to conceal Persian losses from his own men at Thermopylae (8.24-25), and also by the Persian commander Artabazus (9.89). But he can be excused for not perceiving just how important propaganda and misinformation were in the Persian arsenal of weapons.

It may well be the case that Aeschylus, Simonides and Herodotus did exaggerate the size of Xerxes' forces but the original embellishment, surely, began with the Persians themselves. Knowing what we know about them we can be as certain as we can of anything in antiquity that from the outset they deliberately, and successfully, sought to mislead the Greeks in to believing that their forces were much larger than they actually were. Anything less would have been wholly out of character, and they should be given their due for reminding us once again of that old maxim — the first casualty of war is truth.

1988, 20-22, #12), is really genuine, that would be the first use of the title in Greek. On the nature of the Persian monarchy in Aeschylus see Tourraix, 1984, 123-134.

[111] Polybius 13.3.2-6; Pritchett, 1975, 156-176 has collected the evidence for surprise attacks in Greek warfare.

[112] Herodotus, 7.24 believed that the ships could easily have been hauled overland the attributes Xerxes' desire to dig the canal to his μεγαλοφροσύνης, "because he would display his power and leave memorials of it." Many years later Plato, *Laws,* 699a-c maintained that the bridging of the Hellespont and the digging of the canal had a powerful psychological impact on the Athenians.

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