



THE 500- 440 BC GREEK WORLD

STEPHEN
CLARKE

SMALL CAPS

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440 BC
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500 BC

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440 BC

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***The Greek World, 500–440 BC* introduces the ancient Greek societies of the Mediterranean and the Near East at the time of external threats and internal transformation. This new work considers the Greek responses to the expanding Persian Empire under Darius and Xerxes, the rise of Athenian power and the emergence of democracy in Athens. Each development transformed the Greek world and laid the foundations of a complex system of alliances that culminated in a clash between the Greeks themselves.**

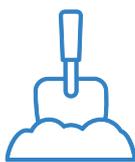
The book's approach to these topics combines the practice of historians with the needs of senior secondary students. Like the historian, students engage with secondary literature before investigating and interpreting the sources. By taking this approach, students apply the historical concepts of causation, continuity and change, perspectives, significance, and contestability. This approach prepares students to become more than simple observers of the past. They are empowered to understand it and its implications.



Chapters and activities apply historical concepts and skills, including the analysis and use of sources, historical interpretation, historical investigation and research, and explanation and communication.



Historically accurate images, including photographs and artworks, along with diagrams and tables, enhance engagement and present information and interpretations in a variety of ways.



Source studies, which include artwork, photographs, extracts from speeches, laws, personal accounts, and historians' interpretations, feature regularly throughout the textbook. Each source study includes exam-styled questions.



Review activities consolidate student understanding, encourage the synthesis of content, include opportunities for research, and support the application of historical concepts.



Each **chapter ends with activities** that focus on larger historical questions arising from the topic and suggestions for further resources.

Publisher acknowledgements

Textbook number five, and the third with Steve Clarke. Every project comes with its challenges and this, like Spartan Society, suffered from COVID. But then everything in 2022 suffered from COVID. Despite it all, Steve maintained his good cheer and candour. Throughout we spoke of things Greek, matters history and events of the days. Thanks again Steve.

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Author acknowledgements

This is the third book I have written with Small Caps, and the first one as a sole author. An author gets to the end of a book and often wonders how the thing managed to write itself; I think there is a chemical in the body that ensures you forget the experience so that you will go around again. I will not be writing textbooks for a little while as I allow these books to breathe and gain traction. I first talked with Michael about writing this series with the focus on teaching students to work like an historian around a decade ago—I am genuinely delighted by the results.

I owe a debt of thanks to Michael's team at Small Caps, and to Michael himself who is a genuinely wonderful publisher for whom to write books. The self-indulgence of writing always has an impact on family, and I dedicate this particular book, my passion in history, to my wife, Jane, and our beautiful children, Eli and Aaliyah, who are my passion in life. No doubt my children will repay me in this dedication by having absolutely no interest in history whatsoever as they grow—and that will be fine.

– Stephen Clarke

Glossary

agora

the large, open space that was often the central and key area of a polis; usually the centre of politics, law, economy and religion in the city

arkhe

often translated as empire, but used in Greek to imply rule by one person or group of people over others where the people who are controlled are, in some way, robbed of their autonomy; often associated with Athenian power in the mid- and later 5th century BC

aparkhe

the 1/60th of the *phoros* that was dedicated to Athena

arkhonship

the nine annually elected magistracies, *arkhons*, who held traditionally the most powerful positions in the state

Asia Minor

the land on the western edges of the Persian Empire, on the eastern side of the Aegean, now the south-western, coastal area of present-day Turkey (also known as Anatolia)

Ath. Pol.

abbreviation of *'Athenaion Politeia'*, an account of Athenian political history (or the Constitution of Athens) attributed to Aristotle, but most likely written by one of his students

autonomy

Greek: 'self-governing'. In ancient Greece the idea that a polis was entitled to make its own laws, and follow its own customs, without interference from another state

bandaka

kinsmen or close associates in the Persian aristocracy

boule

the council of 500, 50 from each tribe, that administered the daily running of the city and organised meetings of the *ekklesia*

bouletai

members of the *boule*

buckler

a type of small shield

Delian League

the naval alliance founded by Athens in 478-77 BC to protect the Greeks against further Persian attacks

deme

the small towns of Attika, the smallest unit of democratic administration

earth and water

the tokens of submission to the Persians, symbolising land on which the Persian king can stay, and water to provide sustenance for him and his troops

ekklesia

the Athenian assembly, where citizens met regularly to vote on decisions of state; the main part of Athenian democracy

ephor

one of the five men elected annually in Sparta to assist in running the state; one of his roles was to control foreign relations

episkopoi

inspectors, selected by lot and paid, sent around to allied states to ensure that Athenian interests were being followed

guest-friend

ties of friendship in the ancient world between wealthy men of different cities that allowed them to travel and stay in various cities, ensuring safe travel

hegemon

Greek: the leader of a group of allies that technically had equal standing in the alliance

hegemonia

Greek: a group of allies who were thought of as relatively equal (English: hegemony)

helot

a member of the the population of the Peloponnese that had been conquered by Sparta and were treated as slaves and, under Spartan law, were possessions of the state

hippeis

the second-highest social class; their land traditionally produced between 300 and 500 measures of produce. They also traditionally provided the cavalry for the army and were the bodyguards of the Spartan king. Though they were named *hippeis* (cavalry), they fought like the rest of the army, on foot (Greek: *hippo* means horse)

hoi polloi

a derogatory term used to describe 'the masses' in Athenian society

hoplite

a typical Greek infantry soldier, equipped with a large shield, long spear and wearing bronze armour

impiety

breaking religious laws or taboos; being disrespectful towards the gods

isegoria

equality for everyone under the law, the driving concept of Kleisthenes' democratic revolution

klerukhia

a colony of citizens from one polis sent out to settle and control land (the people of a *klerukhia* were called *klerukhs*)

kratos

Greek: power, usually in the form of military or political power over another, or the power of a father over the members of his family

kuklos

an ancient naval strategy, favoured by Greek triremes, in which an outnumbered squadron of triremes would row backwards to have the stern of their boats nearly touching, forming a circle. They would then sail out and ram any enemy vessel that would approach too close

Lakedaimonian

the people who came from the area controlled by Sparta, including the Spartans, *perioikoi* (free people who lived around it) and the *helots* (the slave-like population controlled by Sparta)

lot

random selection. In Athenian politics it applies to the random selection of office bearers and was usually conducted by a simple 'machine'

Mede

the peoples who came from the region of Media in the Persian Empire; the term used to denote the Persians in Greek texts

medise

to go over to the side of the Persians (or the Medes, as the Greeks called them)

Messene

the part of the Peloponnese west of Sparta; conquered by Sparta probably during the 7th century BC and its original population made into *helots*

navarch

a naval commander

oikos

Greek: a household

oligantropia

Greek: literally, a 'fewness of men', the decline of the Spartiate population leading to the overall decline in Sparta's power

ostracism

in ancient Greece, the process in Athens where an election could be held every year to vote on a leading figure who was seen as becoming too powerful; the person receiving the most votes was exiled from Athens for 10 years

panoply

an entire suit of hoplite armour

Peloponnese

a region to the south of mainland Greece, largely controlled by Sparta, connected by the thin strip of land called the Isthmus of Corinth

pentakosiomedimnoi

the highest social class; their land produced over 500 measures of produce

perioikoi

the non-Spartan people who lived in the towns and villages around the city of Sparta (Lakonia)

periplous

an ancient naval strategy, particularly used by Phoenecians, in which the attackers would sail between lines of enemy vessels and drop a gangplank to board them

phalanx

a group of hoplites fighting as one unit, in rows, using their shield to protect themselves and part of the man on their left, attacking the enemy with their *sarissa* (spear) over or under the shield

phoros

Greek: 'contribution'; the money given to Athens as leader of the Delian League

phourarkh

a commander of troops in a garrison, positioned in allied states, who had revolted or shown signs of revolt from Athenian control

polemarkhos

one of the *arkhons*, traditionally responsible for command of the Athenian armed forces

polis (pl. poleis)

Greek: a self-governing city, where that city had the right to make its own laws, follow its own customs and religious practices, and control its own economic resources. Greece was almost entirely made up of *poleis* in the Classical period (from 500 BC to 338 BC)

proxenos

a person of one city who was considered the official representative of another state in their own city. This practice was called *proxenia*

prytany

the division of the Athenian year for administrative purposes, corresponding to the 10 months of the Athenian year

reaggregation

the process of bringing someone back into a larger group after they have done things that may have caused them to be seen as a problem

regent

one who rules in the place of a king who is too young to rule yet

sarissa

a Greek spear

satrap

a Persian who governed a province of the Persian Empire, which was called a satrapy

Spartan

any person who was of Spartan descent who lived in Sparta, which included Spartiates, women and children

Spartiates

full Spartan male citizens who had undertaken the Spartan education system, the *agoge*; the rest of the population of Sparta were simply called Spartans

stele (pl. stelai)

a large standing stone slab on which an inscription was carved. In Athens, laws and decisions of the *ekklesia* were often inscribed on *stelai*

strategia

the board of 10 generals

strategos (pl. strategoi)

one of the 10 annually elected generals (one from each tribe), primarily responsible for commanding the Athenian army and navy

symmakhia

Greek: a military alliance that required the ally to assist at times of military need

synod

the group of leaders who meet to discuss policy and make decisions

thesmothetae

six *arkhons* who oversaw the Athenian courts

thetes

the lowest social class; if they owned land it produced up to 200 measures. They usually did not own land, and often worked in the city or urban areas

tholos

the round building in which the *bouletai* on duty would stay

tribe

in ancient Greece the 10 artificial groupings created by Kleisthenes from the four existing tribes, used as the basis for democratic involvement (voting for magistracies and organising the *boule*) and military service

trittys (pl. trittyes)

the 30 divisions, one in each region created by Kleisthenes. Each *trittys* had a corresponding number up to 10, and the *trittyes* of the same number formed a tribe

trophy

in ancient Greece, a marker, usually in the form of a large statue or tripod, set up after a victory in battle at the place where the enemy line was turned in flight (Greek: *tropaion*, a turning)

tyrant

in ancient Greece a leader of a state that came to power usually with the support of the poorer masses of a city. They set up a tyranny, a form of government where the tyrant controlled the state

yokefellows

a farming term, where two oxen are used to pull a plough. Used to indicate that Sparta and Athens were both leading Greece equally

zeugitai

the third-highest social class; their land produced between 200 and 300 measures of produce

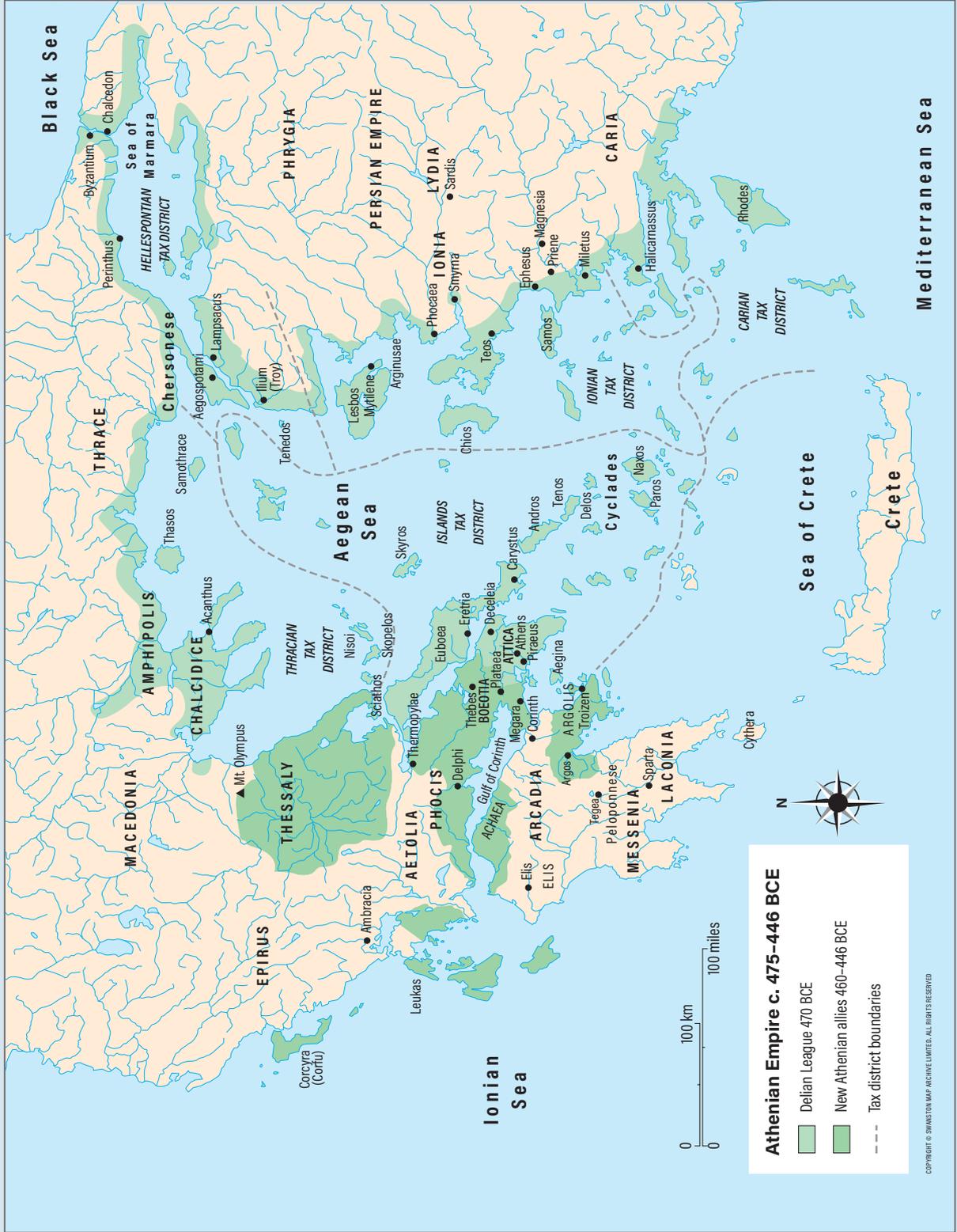


The Greek World

Ancient Greece
c. 500 BCE

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The Athenian Empire



Chapter

1

Introducing the Greek world

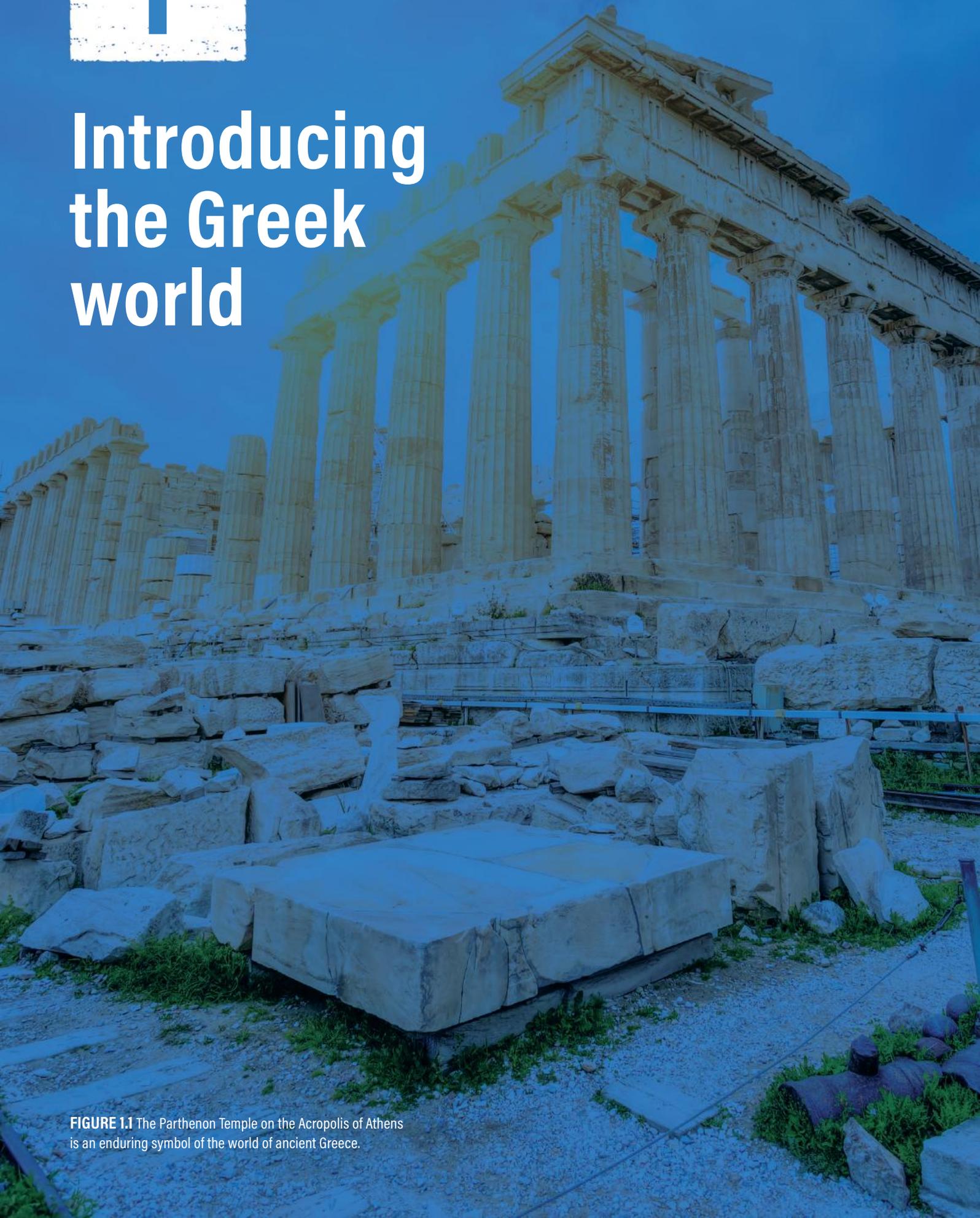


FIGURE 1.1 The Parthenon Temple on the Acropolis of Athens is an enduring symbol of the world of ancient Greece.

Far from being united, the land we now call Greece was actually a collection of many cities of various sizes between 500 and 440 BC. At the beginning of the Classical period (c. 500 BC), Sparta was the most powerful city in Greece, but other cities, such as Athens, were growing in power and influence. Other cities, such as Corinth, had extensive overseas trading networks. All of these cities and the way they operated was determined by the geography of Greece and their historical background. This also shaped how they interacted with each other and with non-Greek powers, such as Macedonia, or even Persia.

This chapter will explain the:

- impact of geography on the development and resources of Greece
- chronological context of the period 500–440 BC
- different powers of the region
- nature of connections between Greek states and between Greek and non-Greek states.

Chronological and geographical context of ancient Greece

Ancient Greece consisted of many different city-states, called *poleis* (singular: *polis*). Greece was not a unified nation as it is today. Instead, all cities were independent, maintaining their own laws, customs and religious practices. They were usually similar, but each *polis* was independent and maintained control over their own lands. There were some exceptions to this, for example, Athens controlled a large amount of land, called Attika, where all the original towns in the region became unified under Athenian control and its people were all Athenian citizens. Sparta also controlled a large amount of land, though it was not as generous in its relations with other towns and did not give its subject people citizenship, allow them to participate in certain activities or join the military.

Over the course of the 5th century, many political aspects of Greece underwent considerable change. In particular, Athens increased its influence and power, building what has become known as the Athenian ‘Empire’, controlling *poleis* and their lands more directly than previously. Athenian power grew as a direct result of the Greek victory in the Persian Wars, and their implementation of a new form of government, *demokratia* meaning power or rule of the people (democracy), made them feel confident in their moral superiority over other cities. This, combined with other factors, such as economic motives, gave them the belief that exerting their power over other *poleis* was justified and right. This growth of Athenian power probably caused the ‘First’ Peloponnesian War and, later, ‘The’ Peloponnesian War in 431 BC (outside the scope of this topic). The increase in power and success of Athens led the Athenians to increase the democratic elements of their government, leading to a ‘radicalisation’ of the democracy in 461 BC.

In the **Peloponnesian**, Sparta had always dominated the region, but the successes in the Peloponnesian War also encouraged the Spartans to dominate the region more aggressively. This was halted in 465 BC with a major **helot** revolt, which lasted up to a decade. This revolt showed clearly the dangers of using helot labour as the basis for most of the labour in the Spartan state, highlighting the limit of Spartan power. Spartan power rested on control of the *helots*, as they provided the basis of the Spartan social system. The *helots* had been conquered by the mid-7th century BC and provided all labour for the **Spartiates**, which

polis (pl. *poleis*)

Greek: a self-governing city, where that city had the right to make its own laws, follow its own customs and religious practices, and control its own economic resources

Peloponnesian

a region to the south of mainland Greece, largely controlled by Sparta, connected by the thin strip of land called the Isthmus of Corinth

helot

a member of the population of the Peloponnesian that had been conquered by Sparta and were treated as slaves and, under Spartan law, were possessions of the state

Spartiates

full Spartan male citizens who had undertaken the Spartan education system, the *agoge*. The rest of the population were simply called Spartans

Asia Minor

the land on the western edges of the Persian Empire, on the eastern side of the Aegean, now the south-western, coastal area of present-day Turkey (also known as Anatolia)

Delian League

the naval alliance founded by Athens in 478-77 BC to protect the Greeks against further Persian attacks

arkhe

often translated as 'empire,' but used in Greek to imply rule by one person or group of people over others where the people who are controlled are, in some way, robbed of their autonomy, often associated with Athenian power in the mid- and later 5th century BC

allowed them to have much more leisure time than most other Greeks of the period. The Spartiates used some of this time to develop the most powerful army of the era. Sparta's strength and influence spread through the Peloponnese, into mainland Greece, and even across the Aegean, where their reputation as the most formidable army of Greece led to them being asked to assist in fighting the Persians who had begun to move into **Asia Minor**.

The 5th century is a pivotal period in Greek history and can be divided into three distinct phases. Firstly, the Persian Wars provided the stimulus for change in the region. The Greek states were largely able to unite and defeat the Persians in two separate invasions of their homeland in what can only be considered a most remarkable achievement. The second period is dominated by the Athenian responses to Persia after the Persian Wars. Athens led a group of allies in the **Delian League**. War with the Persians lasted until the Peace of Kallias in 450-49 BC, when the Persians agreed that they would not enter the Greek area of influence. This period also included transformations in Athenian politics, where the government became increasingly democratic, leading to the institution of what is called the 'radical' democracy in 461 BC. The third period featured the growth of Athenian power and its transformation into what could be called an Athenian 'Empire'. This was traditionally thought to have started gradually in the 460s BC and 450s BC, but when Athens required the allies of the Delian League to continue to contribute to the defence of Greece through payment or in contributing naval vessels to Athenian war efforts, a change in the relationship between Athens and the 'allies' is thought to indicate the transition from league to empire. However, most scholars now argue that the transition to an Athenian Empire after a more generous period of Athenian hegemony means that those who lost their power in the earlier period of Athenian control were not given any sort of voice. In reality, the Athenian *arkhe* began soon after the Persian Wars ended.



FIGURE 1.2 Three phases of Greek history during the 5th century BC

Timeline 1.1: Key developments 800-449 BC

- 800-500 BC** • The Archaic period of Greece
- c. 660 BC** • The end of the Second Messenian War, where Sparta conquers much of the Peloponnese
- c. 556 BC** • The beginning of the tyranny of Pisistratus in Athens
- 510 BC** • The end of the tyranny in Athens
- 509-08 BC** • Foundation of the elements of democracy by Kleisthenes in Athens
- 500-323 BC** • The Classical period of Greece
- 499 BC** • The Ionian revolt
- Athenian assistance sent to Ionian revolt

- 493 BC ▪ Failed Persian expedition to punish Athens and Eretria
 - 490 BC ▪ First Persian invasion of Greece; Battle of Marathon
 - 481 BC ▪ Foundation of the Hellenic League
 - 480–79 BC ▪ Second Persian invasion of Greece
 - 478–77 BC ▪ Foundation of the Delian League
 - 465 BC ▪ Earthquake in Sparta
 - 460–45 BC ▪ 'First' Peloponnesian War
 - 450–49 BC ▪ The Peace of Kallias
 - 440–39 BC ▪ The Samian War with Athens
-

The impact of the geography of Greece

The political character of ancient Greece was greatly influenced by its geography. The land is highly mountainous, which meant that cities tended to develop independently, contributing to the development of the *polis* ideology, where every state governed itself. The mountainous lands of Greece were not suited to growing wheat crops (it could sustain crops of other grains, such as barley), but they yielded large crops of olives and grapes. This meant that these crops, along with the two products that come from them, oil and wine, were of considerable importance. The Greek *poleis* were able to export these desirable products in large quantities, allowing large *poleis* like Athens who could not grow enough food to feed its own population, to purchase grain from around the Aegean.

For the effective export and import of goods, *poleis*, like Athens, relied on sea-borne trade. The Aegean became the lifeline of many cities who relied on imports and exports of goods. As a result whole industries, such as shipbuilding, merchants, boat insurance and banking, developed to ensure that this all worked as efficiently as possible. Importantly, the Greek *poleis* developed navies to help them protect their naval trade. Corinth, in particular,



FIGURE 1.3 The mountainous geography of Greece limited the crops that could be cultivated and influenced the trade patterns of the region.

was the first to build a significant naval fleet to protect their trade interests. Eventually, Athens constructed a large fleet of possibly 200 triremes, the standard Greek naval vessel of the period. This was probably at least double the size of the next largest fleets of Corinth and Corcyra. This enabled Athens to dominate sea-borne trade in the Aegean Sea after the Persian Wars.

The limited fertile land for crops meant that there was considerable conflict to control this resource. Classical Greece was marked by almost constant warfare. Most *poleis* had citizen armies, where men who owned a certain amount of land (it was considered that they had something worth fighting to protect) were required to train on a reasonably regular basis. This was because almost every year there would be a need to go to war with another *polis*. Sparta was the only *polis* to maintain a standing army—every citizen (who were only men in the ancient world) was required to be a 'professional' soldier.

Importantly, while the geography of Greece emphasised the importance of the independence of each *polis*, it also created a powerful sense of unity about what it was to be Greek. The Greeks were highly xenophobic, not trusting people who were not ethnically the same as they were. To be 'Greek', a person needed to live in a city that could be identified as Greek, (primarily one that had an *agora*), they needed to speak a form of Greek, they needed to wear Greek-style clothing, and they needed to worship Greek gods. If these features were missing, a people and their city were not considered Greek by the Greeks themselves. This means that the Greeks living in Ionia, across the sea in Asia Minor, were thought of as Greek, even though they were controlled by the Lydians, and then the Persians. However, the people living on the plains of Thessaly just to the north of mainland Greece were considered to be 'barbarians' (*barbaroi*, ie, those who said 'bar bar' and could not be understood). To the Greeks to be a *barbaros* meant that you lacked civilisation and culture, and were therefore beneath them.

agora

the large, open space that was often the central and key area of a *polis*; usually the centre of politics, law, economy and religion in the city

Spartan (noun)

any person who was of Spartan descent who lived in Sparta, which included Spartiates, women and children

tyrant

a leader of a state that came to power usually with the support of the poorer masses of a city. They set up a tyranny, a form of government where the tyrant controlled the state

medise

to go over to the side of the Persians (or the Medes, as the Greeks called them)

Key powers in the region

In Greece, Sparta was the dominant power. Since the 7th century BC, Sparta dominated the Peloponnese, and by the 6th century was beginning to exert influence over the affairs of other *poleis*. For example, the **Spartans** became involved in the affairs of Athens. The Athenians even needed to expel a Spartan garrison that was placed there to try to interfere with internal Athenian politics in the late 6th century. Athens had not yet become the major power it was destined to be in the 5th century, and was almost treated like a backwater before the Persian Wars of 490 BC and 480–79 BC. Corinth, on the other hand, was a Spartan ally in the Peloponnesian League but was powerful enough to remain somewhat independent. They did not always follow what Sparta demanded, and sometimes even convinced Sparta to do what benefitted Corinth because of their importance and influence. They possessed a large navy, but it was their economic power that was so influential; Corinth was called 'wealthy Corinth' in the generations before the 5th century.

Athens had been a less significant power in Greece until the beginning of the 5th century. The **tyrant** Pisistratus, who had come to power in c. 556 BC, invested considerable money in making Athens a more influential city. After the military reforms of the late 6th century after the Pisistratids were removed from power, Athens began to show the military and political potential the region had always shown.

Thebes, to the immediate north of Athens, was an influential city that increased its power throughout the 5th century. The city was generally despised by most Greeks as they so readily *medised*, or went over to support Persia. Thebes often would cause problems for Athens throughout the period but it did not become powerful enough to challenge the positions of Athens or Sparta.



FIGURE 1.4 The trireme was the standard vessel of the Greek city states' navies. Naval power was essential to protect valuable merchant shipping. This modern reconstruction provides a sense of the scale of these ships.

North of Greece lay two major powers that had the potential to become influential, but never quite did. Thessaly was a large open area of plains dominated by chieftains who commanded huge cavalries. There were many cities in the area that were only loosely allied, with the city of Larissa dominating most of the politics of Thessaly. Macedonia was the kingdom to the far north of Greece. It dominated the northern land passes into Greece and was influential enough to be involved in the Persian Wars, but it was never politically stable enough to become a threat to the development of Greece in the 5th century BC.

The major power of the region was the Persian Empire. Ruled by the 'Great King' or 'King of Kings' (so powerful was the office of the Persian 'Great King' that he had many kings who owed their loyalty to him), Persia controlled an empire that stretched from the Aegean Sea to western India. The Persian Empire can truly be considered the world's first superpower, as the armies of the Great King seemed unstoppable, and people tended to submit to the Persians rather than fight them. Importantly for the Greeks, Persia controlled the shores of Asia Minor (the western coastline of modern Turkey), where many Greek cities had been established as Greek colonies. This meant that Greek autonomy was limited by the Persian Empire. This came to be unacceptable. In fact, the Persians allowed significant autonomy, even allowing whatever form of government and religion the city had always possessed, as long as they paid their taxes and supplied troops to the Persian army when required. The Persian Empire was divided into a number of *satrapies*, or provinces, controlled by a **satrap**, usually a high-born Persian noble or relative of the Great King.

The Great King controlled many Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor. Many Greeks had been sent as colonists from mainland Greece to occupy more fertile areas, and over time they had become independent. In all ways, these colonies were Greek, and are often thought of by historians as being centres of scientific and philosophical innovation and cultural sophistication, particularly the cities of the region called Ionia. This region (on the coast of Asia Minor) fell under the control of the Lydian kings in the 6th century BC, and after the fall of the Lydian Empire to the Persians, they became part of the Persian Empire.

satrap

a Persian who governed a province of the Persian Empire, which were called *satrapies*

The nature of contact with other societies

The Greeks were in regular contact with peoples from all over the Mediterranean Sea. The main form of contact with people outside of Greece was trade. The Greek trading network stretched all the way to Sicily and Carthage in the west, Egypt in the south, into the Black Sea and beyond in the north, and throughout the Persian Empire. This trade network promoted cross-cultural influence and allowed the Greeks to remain in contact with various people and their different cultures for centuries. Greek values and ideas spread widely and the Greeks were also shaped by this experience in return. Greek political ideas influenced the development of cities in Sicily, Rome, Persia and further afield. Democracy, as it emerged in Athens, is an example of the spread of Greek ideas. Similarly, the Greek distrust of monarchy, tyranny and oligarchy began to move through the region, particularly the Aegean, as a result of continual contact.

Importantly, the contact of trade brought wealth to different regions, increasing the importance of certain cities, particularly those at strategically important locations. One such city was Byzantium at the point of entry to the Black Sea. This was a region that exported many luxury items to the Aegean cities, so control of Byzantium could be very profitable. Athens sought to control the whole of the region in which Byzantium was located, including Thrace and the Chersonese, because it allowed them to control the wealth brought into the Aegean through trade.

Disagreements over control of such regions often led to armed conflict. Athens fought several wars to control trade routes and resources. In the mid-6th century BC, the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus sent an ally to control the fertile Chersonese in the north Aegean, where several wars were fought to secure its control. In 465 BC, Athens went to war with Thasos, which was important because it controlled part of the trade route from the Black Sea as well as extensive goldmining facilities on the lands opposite the Chersonese. The continual fighting during the first half of the 5th century BC between the Persian Empire and Greek states was largely fought for political reasons. Greek cities, supported by Athens and the Delian League, continually fought to ensure that the Greek cities in Asia Minor were protected from Persian control.

Even religion was an important point of cultural contact. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus, for example, argued that the Greek gods were versions of Egyptian deities. This suggests that the ancient Greeks were aware of the influence of other cultures of the Mediterranean region on their own. The oracle of Apollo at Delphi was considered one of the most important oracles in the ancient world and strengthens the argument that there was interconnection between religious systems. Even kings from Asia Minor who were not culturally Greek visited the temple of Apollo to ask a question of the priests there. The question would be taken to the *pythia*, a priestess, who (it has been suggested), while under the influence of sulphur fumes that leaked out of a fissure in the volcanic mountain, would respond to the question. Her answer, garbled and often nonsensical, was interpreted by the priests and returned to the person asking the question. The priests always made sure that the response was vague enough to be interpreted in a number of ways as the *pythia* was often asked questions of high importance by kings and leaders, including about questions of war and peace.

Activities

Bringing it together

1. What is a *polis*? Explain what the concept of the *polis* tells us about Greek society.
2. What seem to be the key features of the Greeks?
3. In what ways was Sparta different from other *poleis*?
4. Why should Athens be considered to have been an 'empire' from soon after the Persian Wars?
5. Describe the main forms of contact between different cultures in the region in the 5th century BC?
6. Explain why the King of Persia was called the 'Great King' or 'King of Kings'?

Activities

1. Research the cities of Ionian Greece and explain the impact of their achievements on the Greek world.
2. Locate images from around different parts of Greece. Add these images to a map of Greece. Explain the impact of the landscape you have created on the area.
3. Using the map of Ancient Greece on page x, identify the location of the Greek *poleis* mentioned in this chapter.
4. Create a mind-map that shows the key chronological and geographical developments of Greece.

Chapter

2

The Persian invasion, 490 BC



FIGURE 2.1 The helmet Miltiades wore at the Battle of Marathon, which he dedicated to the god Zeus at Olympia after the battle.

The Persian invasions of Greece were possibly the first overseas invasions of another region in history. They involved huge numbers of troops and extensive planning, and are rightly seen as a remarkable Persian logistical achievement, despite their failure. On the other hand, for the Greeks to unify and repel the largest invasion forces ever launched was similarly remarkable. Even today the Greeks regard these victories as one of their greatest accomplishments. This chapter focuses on the 490 BC invasion and the interlude before the invasion of 480–79 BC.

This chapter will explain the:

- significance of Persian imperialism and the Ionian revolt
- key features of the Persian invasion of 490 BC
- significance of the Battle of Marathon
- role of Miltiades
- preparations of the Persians and Greeks in the 480s BC.

Timeline 2.1: The rise of the Persian Empire

- 612 BC • Assyrian Empire overthrown
- 559 BC • Cyrus becomes King of Persia
- 550 BC • Cyrus defeats the Medes
- 544 BC • Cyrus defeats the Lydians
- 539 BC • Cyrus defeats the Babylonians
- 525 BC • Cambyses (son of Cyrus) conquers Egypt
- 522 BC • Darius becomes King of Persia
- 513 BC • Persian invasion of Skythia

Origins

Once Persian power had spread across **Asia Minor**, it appeared inevitable that there would be conflict between Persia and the Greek *poleis*. There were a number of reasons for the Persian Wars, but the nature of Persian imperialism, spurring on the Ionian revolt (in 499 BC) and Athenian involvement in it, are the most important triggers for the conflicts between Greeks and Persians. Importantly this conflict did not conclude until Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persian Empire over 150 years later, in 328 BC.

Persian imperialism

The Persian Empire was a superpower in the truest sense of the word. Its growth had been remarkable, with Persia becoming an empire that had proven itself nearly impossible to defy. The first Great King of Persia, Cyrus, considered himself to be 'King of the Universe', in keeping with the idea of a universal empire, with power over all other 'minor' kingdoms. This was an important aspect of Persian imperialism. This idea drove Cyrus and his successors to expand the sphere of Persian influence as if it were their right. Often, they expanded by subversion, ensuring that any invasion had the best chance of succeeding by buying key rivals with large amounts of treasure or other rewards. However, Persian rule

Asia Minor

the land on the western edges of the Persian Empire, on the eastern side of the Aegean, now the south-western, coastal area of present-day Turkey (also known as Anatolia)

polis (pl. *poleis*)

Greek: a city in Greece, which was independent, made and followed its own laws, and controlled its own lands directly. Greece was almost entirely made up of *poleis* in the classical period (from 500 to 338 BC)

was generally tolerant. The Persians allowed kingdoms and cities to retain their government and continue to worship their gods, as long as they contributed their required tribute each year, and provided contingents to the Persian army as mandated. Religion was a key element of Persian imperialism. Zoroastrianism became the official 'state religion' under Darius the Great. A key element of Zoroastrianism was the belief in a binary universe of good and evil. Evil was 'The Lie'. Those who did not submit to the power of the man in whom was vested 'The Truth', the Great King, was a perpetuator of 'The Lie'. 'The Lie' needed to be humbled. Persian propaganda depicted Persian expansion as bringing 'The Truth' to the areas of darkness in the universe.

The expansion of the Persian Empire

The Persian Empire emerged from the remains of the Assyrian Empire. In 612 BC, the Assyrians had been overthrown as masters of the Middle East. They had been oppressive and aggressive masters of their empire. An alliance of four powers, including the Lydians and Medes, defeated them and established independent kingdoms that lasted for about a century after the fall of Assyria. The Medes were a group of people related to the Persians, coming from the region of Anshan. In 559 BC, Cyrus became King of the Persians and, in 550 BC, defeated the Medes. In response to the the growing power of Cyrus, the Lydian king, Croesus, made a pact of 'friendship' with the Spartans, along with alliances with Egypt and Babylon, to shore up his position. This did not provide enough of a defence, and in 544 BC, Cyrus conquered the Lydians and, in 539 BC, the Babylonians.

The conquest of Lydia resulted in Persian contact with the Greek cities of Asia Minor. Greeks had been living in settlements on the westernmost coastline of Asia Minor for generations, and many of these settlements were colonies of mainland Greek cities. The most influential of the Greek regions in Asia Minor was Ionia. It possessed large fertile plains, the control of significant trade routes from the Black Sea through the eastern Aegean Sea, and was the birthplace of many of the early Greek philosophers. The cities were

sophisticated, advanced and, above all, wealthy. The cities had, for generations, paid tribute to the kings of Lydia. The last king, Croesus, was said to have been the wealthiest man in the world. He allowed fairly generous terms for the Greek cities he controlled, permitting them to do as they wished as long as they remained obedient to him and paid him taxes. Many of the cities were ruled by tyrants who were supported by the populations of the cities, both wealthy and poor alike.

The Persians and the Greeks of Asia Minor

When Cyrus went to war with Croesus, the Persians encouraged the Ionians to revolt against the Lydians. There were quite possibly generous terms for doing so. That they refused to do so indicates that Lydian control was quite benevolent. After Croesus' defeat, the Ionians then sent an embassy to Cyrus asking for terms on the same conditions as they had had under Croesus. Cyrus refused to negotiate with them. He left the issue for the moment and turned back east, leaving a Lydian in charge of the treasury of the newest part

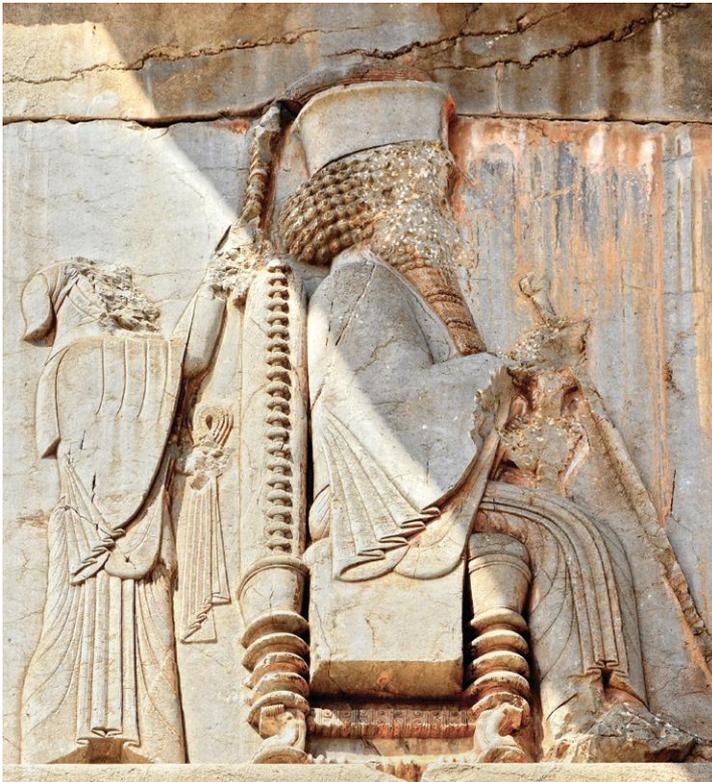


FIGURE 2.2 Bas relief of King Darius I, Persepolis, in modern Iran

of the Persian Empire. This man led Lydia in revolt against Persia, and the Ionians joined him. These *poleis* asked the Spartans for assistance in their revolt against the Persians. The Spartans are alleged to have sent a delegation to Persia to warn the Great King not to interfere in the affairs of Greek cities, which Cyrus dismissed contemptuously. When Cyrus sent forces to suppress the revolt, he was not as generous. His soldiers besieged cities individually and forcibly brought them under Persian control, occasionally using the violent tactic of killing the men and enslaving the women and children.

On the whole, however, the Persians were restrained in their treatment of the Greek cities. They required them to pay tribute and allowed the existing tyrants to continue ruling their cities. Miletus, the most well-known city of Ionia, was given special privileges, which it had also possessed under Croesus. Also, as a result of the suppression of this revolt against Persia, many islands also came over to the Persians voluntarily, notably the island of Chios, and the city of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, which were both key strategic locations during the 6th and 5th centuries BC. The island of Samos, after initially resisting Persian expansion and assisting Egypt, was also brought under Persian control. In response to Samians becoming pro-Persian, Sparta and Corinth invaded Samos in 525 BC, attempting unsuccessfully to take the island. However, they seem to have successfully helped to remove the tyrant in Naxos, a neighbouring island, from power at this time. Cyrus' son and successor Cambyses conquered Egypt in 525 BC, continuing the westward expansion of Persian power. Cambyses successfully bought key Egyptian commanders who brought over key parts of the Egyptian army and navy, and even possibly assisted in building bridges over the Nile.

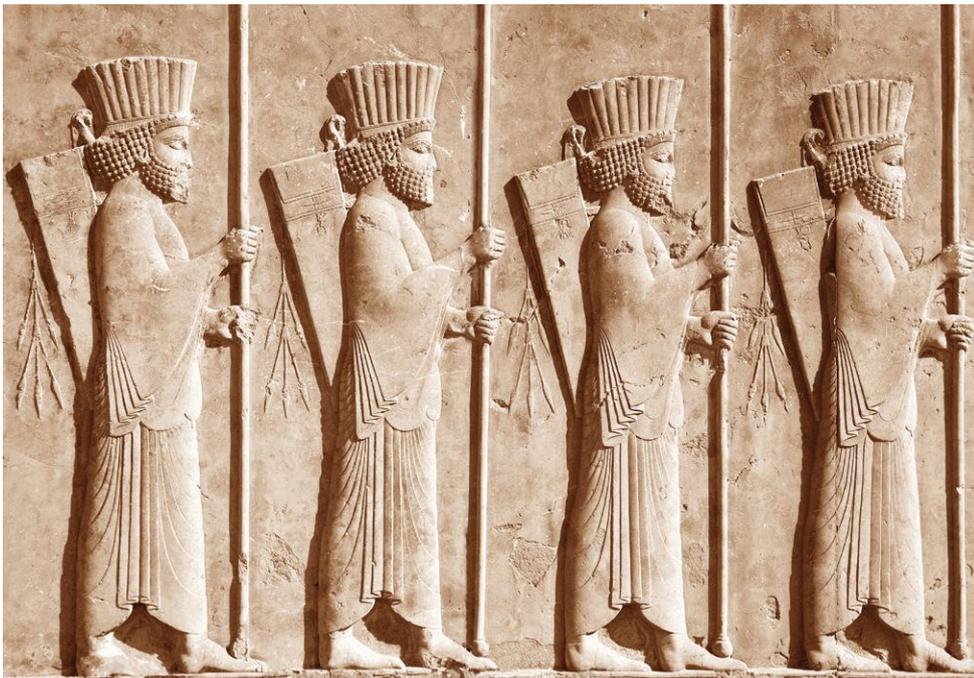


FIGURE 2.3 Bas relief of the soldiers of King Cyrus in Shiraz, modern Iran

The rise of Darius

Upon Cambyses' death in 522 BC, there were a series of revolts across the empire, and Darius, a member of a lesser branch of the royal family, seized the throne from Cambyses' younger brother, Bardiya. Darius used propaganda to justify his claim, which is taken to mean that he seized power unlawfully. He needed a year to quell the rebellions that seem to have occurred across the empire. Darius also married Cyrus' and Bardiya's daughters to

link himself with the previous royal family. To help secure power, he associated himself with the worship of Ahuramazda and made Zoroastrianism the official 'state religion'. He also removed all influence of the Medians in his court, making clear in official propaganda that he and his court were Persian. This may have been done to emphasise the change in families from Cyrus' to Darius'.



FIGURE 2.4 Darius I inspects the 'Liar Kings', Behistun Inscription. Note how the King (the tallest figure) is contrasted to the chained and bound Liar Kings. The god Ahuramazda is also depicted overhead.

Source study 2.1 Behistun Inscription

Source A

King Darius says: My father is Hystaspes; the father of Hystaspes was Arsames; the father of Arsames was Ariaramnes; the father of Ariaramnes was Teispes; the father of Teispes was Achaemenes. King Darius says: That is why we are called Achaemenids; from antiquity we have been noble; from antiquity has our dynasty been royal. King Darius says: Eight of my dynasty were kings before me; I am the ninth. Nine in succession we have been kings.

King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda am I king; Ahuramazda has granted me the kingdom.

King Darius says: These are the countries which are subject unto me, and by the grace of Ahuramazda I became king of them: Persia, Elam, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, the countries by the Sea, Lydia, the Greeks, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdia, Gandhara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia and Maka; twenty-three lands in all.

www.livius.org/sources/content/behistun-persian-text/

Question

1. How has Darius been depicted in the Behistun Inscription? Can you explain this type of representation in the inscription?

Expansion under Darius

Under Darius I the empire grew to its largest extent, controlling territory as far away as Macedonia and Thrace in the west and India in the east. He also instituted a highly centralised administration of the provinces, ensuring a standardised schedule of when tribute should be paid and tight control over the **satraps** and the people of the satrapies. He monitored his empire using an extensive transport structure and an effective network of spies, called the 'King's Eyes'. The King's Road allowed trade, information and troops to move quickly and efficiently around the empire.

In 513 BC, Darius personally led an expedition against the Scythians, a nomadic people who had extended their influence into areas north of the Black Sea in modern Ukraine. His personal leadership might indicate that this was designed to be a permanent expansion of the empire. The Scythians are reported to have tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Spartans to join them to defeat the Persians. Supporting Darius was a large naval force supplied by the Greek cities in the empire. After using boats to bridge the Bosphorus, the straits dividing Europe and Asia Minor, he advanced through Thrace to the Danube River. The Scythians retreated but burned everything that could be used to house or feed the Persian force. This forced Darius to retreat across the Danube. He was then attacked on his return march, but this did not matter as he had achieved what was probably his goal—the establishment of Thrace as a new satrapy south of the Danube, and warning the Thracians beyond the Danube not to invade the new Persian territory. Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian, depicts this as a failed attempt, with the Thracian tribes chasing Darius out of Thrace, but the fact that a new satrapy was established, and the surrounding regions gradually brought under Persian control, suggests otherwise. Also, there are remains of several Persian administrative buildings in modern Georgia and Azerbaijan, probably established after the Persians started to conquer the region after the Thracian expedition, indicating a more permanent presence was established around the Black Sea at this time.

While Darius was north of the Danube, he left a group of tyrants from the Greek cities of Asia Minor to guard the bridge. Miltiades, an Athenian who was tyrant of the Thracian Chersonese, was one of those who was left there. His involvement, along with the other tyrants, indicates that they were trusted to take part in what was an important exercise in Persian imperial expansion. The list given by Herodotus of these tyrants also tells us the extent of the empire at the time, which included the Greek cities of Asia Minor, the eastern Hellespont (the straits that divided Asia from Europe, and known today as the Dardenelles), key cities along the Propontis, Byzantium (a crucial city situated on the entrance to the Black Sea), the Chersonese, and several key islands in the Aegean: Chios, Lesbos and Samos. Persia also received **earth and water** from Macedonia in this period. Except for the acquisition of a small number of other cities, this marked the extent of the Persian Empire's western borders until the Persians mounted a large expedition to subdue the island of Naxos in 499 BC.

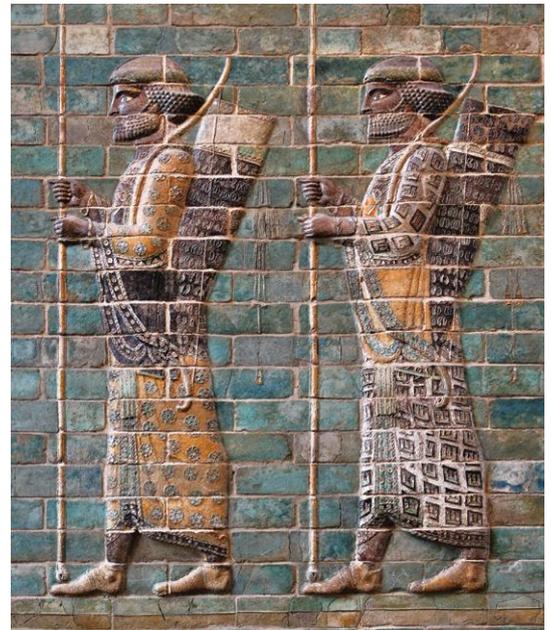


FIGURE 2.5 A colorful glazed brick frieze of Persian Achaemenid warriors from Susa of Iran. They may be the 'Immortals', the elite Persian forces who played a leading role in Darius' attack on the Scythians, and in the 480 BC invasion of Greece.

satrap

a Persian who governed a province of the Persian Empire, which was called a satrapy

earth and water

the tokens of submission to the Persians, symbolising land on which the Persian king can stay, and water to provide sustenance for him and his troops

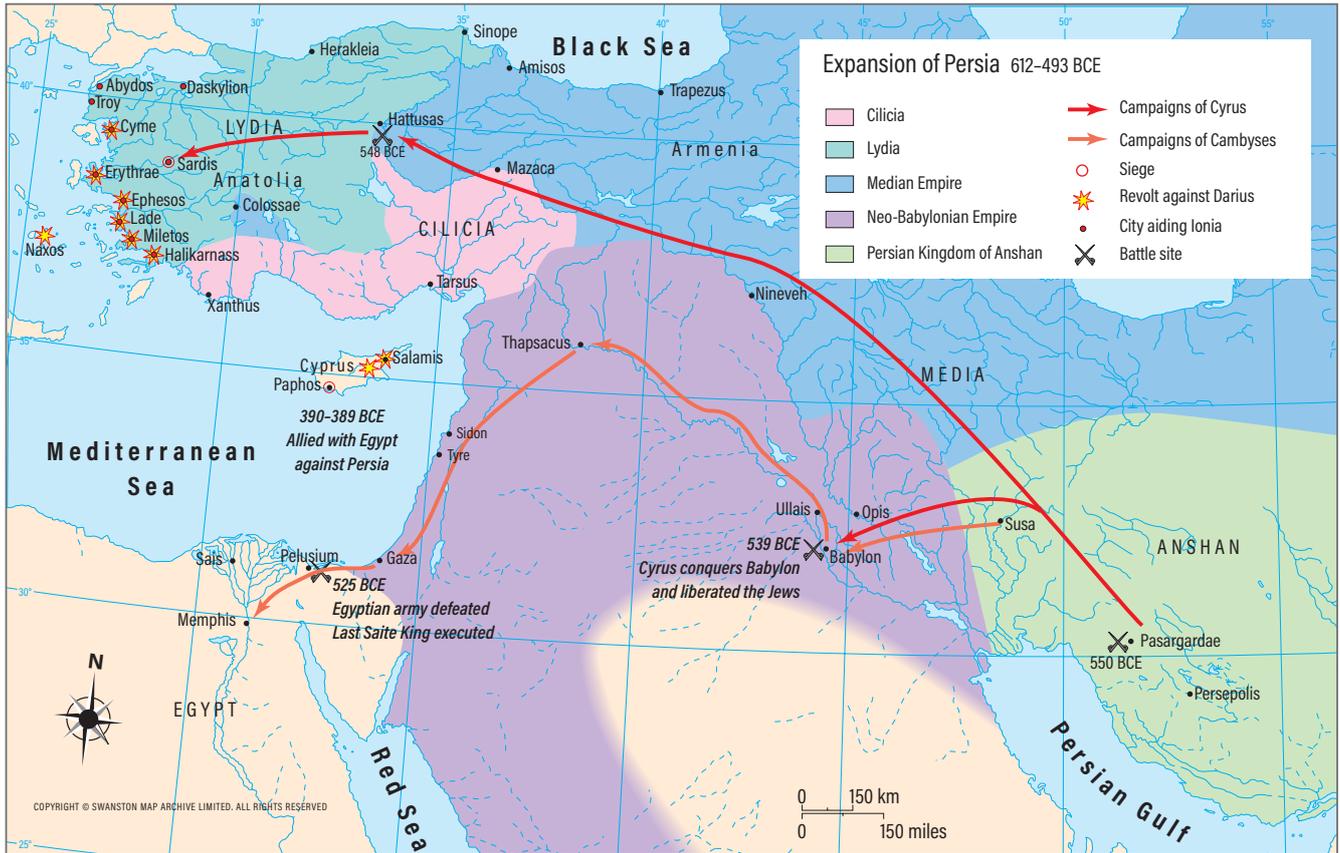


FIGURE 2.6 Map of Persian Empire, 490 BC

Source study 2.2 Persian imperial ideology

Source A Hyland

Darius I crafted an imperial ideology with lasting implications for Persian foreign policy. Its cornerstone was the creed of Persia's unequalled power and universal rule, 'far and wide', with which it was endowed by the creator god Ahuramazda ... It implies a claim to ownership not only of Persia's provinces but of distant, autonomous communities such as the overseas Greeks, subject to influence rather than direct control.

Darius' inscriptions assert the obligation to punish enemies of stability across the world ... To combat such conditions, Ahuramazda raised the king to the throne and made him the perfect judge and warrior, equipped with unique attributes for restorative action ... Darius and his heirs disseminated this message through numerous means, including the circulation of translated edicts, depictions of royal majesty on coins and seals, bestowals of honorary gifts on faithful vassals, solicitations of tribute, and naval and military campaigns beyond the frontiers ...

For all their boasts of omnipotence, Persia's kings were fully conscious of practical limits on the extension of power. The claim to world rule did not require an actual intention to push direct governance to the ends of the earth. Rather, its symbolic resonance was broad enough to encompass varied political interactions with different types of peoples and territories.

J. O. Hyland (2018), *Persian Interventions. The Achaemenid Empire, Athens, and Sparta, 450-386 BCE*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 7–8

Question

1. How does Hyland believe that Persian imperialism operated in theory and in practice?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe the key aspects of Persian imperialism under both Cyrus and Darius. Outline examples of each feature.
2. Explain how the depiction of Darius' inspection of the Liar Kings demonstrates Persian power.
3. Evaluate the significance of Cyrus' conquest of the Kingdom of Lydia.
4. Explain the impact of Darius' accession to the throne.
5. Identify Thrace on a map and explain how successful the Thracian expedition in 513 BC was and why it may have been significant for the mainland Greeks.
6. Outline the instances in which the Spartans were asked to become, or did become, involved against Persia. Why do you think this happened, even though Sparta was a very long way from Persian power?

The Ionian revolt

Herodotus claims that the impetus for a Persian invasion of the island of Naxos in 499 BC came from Naxian exiles who encouraged Aristagoras, the tyrant of Miletus, to help them return by conquering the island. However, a fleet of 200 ships was sent under the command of Megabates, a cousin of Darius, which probably indicates that this was a Persian decision, and they used Greeks, such as Aristagoras and the Naxian exiles, to help them. The Naxians withstood a siege for four months, and the Persians were forced to withdraw. Aristagoras had been involved in the planning or execution of the plan but then had a falling-out with Megabates. He must have feared the repercussions, because when he returned from the Naxian expedition, he almost immediately led the Ionians in a revolt against Persian control.

According to Herodotus, the Ionian revolt was a direct result of Aristagoras' failure to take the island of Naxos. Fearing retribution from Darius, Aristagoras was encouraged by Histiaeus, his father-in-law and the former tyrant of Miletus (now an 'honoured guest' of the King in his court because he was seen to be reaching for too much power), to overthrow Persian rule. The story Herodotus tells us is fraught with problems and probable inaccuracies, but Histiaeus may have been privy to information that made revolt

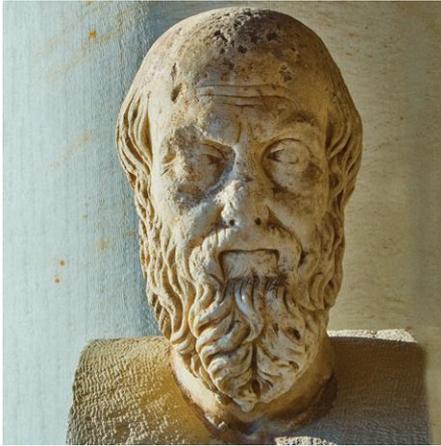


FIGURE 2.7 Sculpture of Herodotus housed in the Stoa of Attalos in the *Agora* of Athens. Herodotus is commonly regarded as the first true historian. His record of the Persian Wars has played a key role in shaping our understanding of the period.

seem like a good alternative. It is surprising, however, because even though there may have been a general dislike of Persian rule, there was no hatred of tyranny from the ordinary people in Ionia, and the Persians were not unduly harsh, either economically or politically. Actually, the Persians made it their business to ensure that cities continued much as they had before their incorporation into the empire, providing they paid their tribute and sent the required military forces when requested.

Once the decision to revolt was taken by Aristagoras and his allies in 499 BC, an envoy was sent to the Ionian Greek fleet that had attempted to take Naxos. All commanders whose sympathies may not have been in line with the revolt were taken prisoner. Next, Aristagoras renounced his position as tyrant and declared Miletus a democracy, no doubt to gain the support of the majority of people in the city. Other tyrannies and unpopular regimes in the region were also removed to gain further support. This would no doubt have led to broad support for the movement to revolt against Persia. The defeat of the Persians in Thrace probably also encouraged the Ionians to revolt. Within days of the beginning of the revolt, Aristagoras went to mainland Greece to gain support from cities there.

Aristagoras seeks support

Aristagoras tried to persuade the Spartan King, Cleomenes, to support the Ionian revolt against the Persians. When he was told of the distances involved Cleomenes refused to help. Aristagoras then tried bribery on the Spartan king, only to have Cleomenes' daughter encourage her father to ignore the Ionian. Most likely a fear of a **helot** revolt drove Spartan policy. When Aristagoras failed in Sparta, he went to Athens. He convinced the Athenian assembly, with arguments of easy victory and plentiful booty, to send aid. The Athenians sent 20 triremes to assist in the revolt. They did this because they were concerned that they might be a target of the Persians in the future. Technically, the Persians were already bound to punish the Athenians. In 508 BC, the Spartans had interfered in Athenian politics. In response, the Athenians sent an embassy to Persia to request Persian assistance. The Persians demanded earth and water, and the Athenian embassy agreed to this. When they returned home, they were charged as traitors, and the Athenians refused to comply. Soon after this, the Athenians heard that the satrap Artaphernes had been convinced by the former Athenian tyrant Hippias to restore him to power. The Athenians refused to do this, which increased their fears that they could be invaded in retribution and have the tyranny restored.

Furthermore, it was the belief of the Athenians and the Ionians that they were kin, and so were responsible in some way for the Ionians. The city of Eretria also sent five triremes to assist in the Ionian revolt—Herodotus tells us that Miletus assisted the Eretrians in a previous war and the Eretrians were repaying the debt.

The Athenians and Eretrians probably arrived early in 498 BC. They joined with the Ionians at the city of Ephesus and began a march inland, most likely to cause a distraction to the Persian forces besieging Miletus. Their target was the city of Sardis, the seat of Persian power in the region. They surprised the small garrison of troops and attacked the lower portion of the city, but were unable to take the citadel, where the garrison was located. In the process of sacking the lower city, a fire started that burned much of Sardis, including the famous temple of Kybele. At the time, the satraps had been meeting to plan a response to the Ionian revolt; the Ionian attack on Sardis probably came as a surprise. They immediately mustered their forces and moved on Sardis. No doubt aware of the Persian forces marching to meet them, the Ionians fled Sardis, only to be met in full force by the Persians at Ephesus. The Persian army defeated them. It was then that the Athenians recognised that they had been lied to about the strength of the Persian forces and the possibility of an easy victory. The Athenians returned home to leave the Ionians to fight the Persians alone.

helot

a member of the population conquered by the Spartans, probably in the 8th century BC, who were used as a slave population for agricultural purposes

The suppression of the revolt

The Ionian revolt led to fighting the next year in the Hellespont and Carian regions. The cities on the strategically important island of Cyprus also revolted. Once the Persians had established control of Cyprus, they besieged each of the cities in revolt, subduing them one by one. In this way, they were able to bring the revolt under control. Finally, Miletus was attacked by sea and land. The Battle of Lade in 494 BC ended with the defeat of the city that had started the revolt. Aristagoras died in the fighting, while his father-in-law, Histiaeus, who had encouraged him, had fled the Persian court and taken forces to Thrace. There he fought on and was finally killed in fighting with Thracian tribes.

Herodotus tells us that the Persian punishment was severe. He recorded that whole populations were killed or sold into slavery, young sons of noble families castrated, and the remaining population of Miletus (after the murder of men, and enslavement of most women and children) transported to another city in the empire. The writings state the most handsome boys on the islands of Chios, Lesbos and Tenedos were castrated, and the most beautiful girls sent to Darius' court. This no doubt happened, but in very small pockets. On the whole, the Persian response to the cities that revolted was quite mild for the time: they reassessed tribute to be paid, enforced a system to settle disputes between cities (a possible source of resentment that might have led to the revolt), and it is possible that democracies were set up or, at the very least, the rights of tyrants in cities were limited or prescribed by law.

In 492 BC, the son-in-law of Darius, Mardonius, settled all affairs in Asia Minor with the Ionian cities, then led his forces to the Hellespont, where he restored Persian control of the key islands of Chios, Lesbos and Tenedos. Mardonius' forces also conquered cities in the Chersonese and on the European side of the Hellespont, extending Persian control. He then marched against the Thracian tribes and, after suffering a defeat, reduced other regions in Thrace. The Persians then began a joint land and sea operation, moving towards mainland Greece. This ominous move by the Persians ended when a massive storm destroyed most of the Persian fleet, supposedly of 300 ships. The land forces were also attacked by the Thracian tribes of the area and forced back. While Herodotus depicts this as a defeat for the Persians, it is likely that Mardonius was instructed to consolidate Persian control of the lands on the European side of the Hellespont, which he did with remarkable success.



FIGURE 2.8 The Ionic Stoa at Miletus, in modern Turkey. Little remains of this ancient Greek city.

Source study 2.3 The Ionian revolt

Source A Herodotus

Aristagoras was not able to accomplish his promise to Artaphrenes, and he was being squeezed hard by the demands for the cost of the army. Also, he was fearful of Megabates should the army go badly, and that rule over Miletus be removed from him. Fearing these things, he decided to revolt, for it happened that the messenger from Susa from Histaeus with the tattoo on his head, indicating that Aristagoras should revolt from the King. Histaeus had wanted to tell Aristagoras to revolt and there was no other way to send the message safely because all of the roads were guarded, so he shaved and tattooed the head of his most trustworthy slave and waited for the hair to grow back. As soon as it had grown back, he sent him to Miletus giving him no other commands except for when he arrived at Miletus to request Aristagoras to shave his hair and look at his head. As I have already said, the tattoos indicating he should revolt. Histaeus did this because he hated the misfortune of his detention in Susa; if a great revolt was to happen, it was his hope to be sent to the coast, but if nothing new happened with Miletus, he thought he would never return there.

Herodotus, 5.35

Source B Herodotus

Coming before the people, Aristagoras said the same thing as he did in Sparta about all of the good things in Asia and how the Persians don't usually use a shield or spear in war and would be easy to overcome. He said this, and also added that the Milesians were colonists of the Athenians, and it was right to save them because the Athenians were a great power. And there was nothing that he did not promise, such was his charm, until he convinced them... The Athenians, having been completely persuaded, voted to send 20 ships in aid of the Ionians, appointing Melanthios as general, a man of Athens of great reputation. These ships were the beginning of the evils for both Greeks and barbarians.

Herodotus, 5.97

Source C Rahe

Like the nations who had revolted against Cambyses and had refused to give their allegiance to Darius, when he overthrew Bardiya, they were *bandaka* who had rebelled, and they were guilty of the greatest of crimes, for they had embraced what the Persians called *Drauga*: "The Lie". When, after giving earth and water, the Athenians refused to take direction from Artaphernes, they made liars of themselves.

P. Rahe (2015), *The Grand Strategy of Classical Sparta: The Persian Challenge*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 103

bandaka

kinsmen or close associates in the Persian aristocracy

Questions

1. What does Herodotus (Source A) tell us about the reasons for the Ionian revolt?
2. What arguments did Aristagoras use in Source B to convince the Athenians to support the revolt? Why do you think they were so successful, when they were not convincing to King Cleomenes of Sparta?
3. According to Rahe (Source C), why was it necessary for Persia to go to war with Athens?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Persian rule was generally very mild and tolerant, so why do you think the Ionians supported Aristagoras?
2. Explain Aristagoras' voyage to mainland Greece in 499 BC.
3. Explain the role of religion in the Persian decision to attack Athens.
4. What is earth and water and what did it signify?
5. Identify which mainland Greek *poleis* supported the Ionian revolt. Why did they do this? What was the outcome for them?
6. Summarise the outcome of the Ionian revolt for the Ionians.
7. Explain the response of the Great King in 492 BC to Athenian and Eretrian involvement in the revolt. What were the Persians trying to do and what was the result?

The invasion of 490 BC

Herodotus says that after the Ionian revolt, Darius ordered a slave to remind him three times at dinner every day of the Athenian involvement in the burning of Sardis. The slave would whisper in his ear, 'Remember the Athenians.' This is great storytelling, but almost definitely untrue; the story was probably made up to glorify the Athenian role in the revolt. Herodotus is therefore saying that the Persian invasion of Greece in 490 BC was about punishing the Athenians and Eretrians for their involvement in the Ionian revolt. It is more likely that the Persian Empire was expanding, as empires tend to do, and Greece was the next territory in line for Persian conquest.

In 491 BC, in preparation for his advance, Darius sent demands to the cities of Greece for earth and water. The Athenian response to the ambassadors was extreme. The Athenians pushed them into the pit where they would leave criminals to die; the Spartans threw them down a well. This response was encouraged by Miltiades, the former tyrant of the Chersonese, who had returned to Athens when it became clear that his tyranny, and possibly his life, was under threat. Importantly, as he had been on campaign with the Persians, he knew firsthand how the Persians were likely to act. In Athens in particular, there was a fear of Persia: they had already refused the demands to take Hippias back as tyrant, and they feared retribution from Darius as a result.

Source study 2.4 A tragic play

Source A Herodotus

The Athenians made clear their enormous grief at the taking of Miletus in many ways, but particularly in the writing and production of the play 'The Sack of Miletus' by Phrynikhos, when the whole theatre burst into tears. For causing them to remember a loss so close to home, they fined him 1000 drachmae, and decreed that that particular play never again be performed.

Herodotus, 6.21

Question

1. Explain the Athenian reaction to Phrynikhos' play 'The Sack of Miletus'.

The fact that the Athenians' enemies, the people of Aegina, an island that can be seen from the Athenian port of Piraeus, provided Darius' envoys with earth and water might have made co-operation with the Persians seem even less desirable.

The invasion commences

In 490 BC, the Persian forces began to assemble under the command of Datis and Artaphernes, the son of the satrap in Sardis. The total number of their forces is unknown, but the poet Simonides, who was living in Athens at the time, claims that there were 90 000 troops in total, which, if accurate, would mean there was a force of 300 triremes. This is probably too high, but it was surely a large force, probably the largest force ever assembled for an 'international' invasion in world history to that time. They gathered their forces and sailed to Ionia, where they built their forces further, then sailed across the Aegean, island-hopping their way across, forcing each island at which they stopped to submit to Persian authority. The plains of Marathon, in Attika, provided a good staging ground for troops as they arrived from Asia Minor, and it may have been their plan to establish this location as a permanent base. Also, Hippias was guiding the expedition, and Marathon was where his father had landed in 546 BC to establish the tyranny in Athens; it may have been an area where he thought he could raise local support because of this family connection.

On the way to the Greek mainland, the Persian forces stopped at numerous islands. One of the places they landed was Naxos, where the people mostly fled into the hills while the Persians burned the city and temples as punishment for resisting the earlier attack in 499 BC. The Persians also stopped at the island of Delos.

While they [the Persians] did this, the Delians also left Delos and fled to Tenos. While the expedition was sailing towards land, Datis sailed ahead and ordered the fleet not to anchor off Delos, but at Rhenae, on the other side. Having learned where the Delians were, he sent a herald to them, proclaiming, 'Holy men, why have you fled, and not understood my good intent? For I myself don't wish to do any harm to the land where the two gods were born, neither to the countryside nor the people who live here, and this is also the king's command. So now, go back to your homes and enjoy your island.' He proclaimed this to the Delians, and then piled up 300 talents' worth of frankincense on the altar and burned it.

Herodotus, 6.97

After this, the Persian fleet made their way to Carystus, a strategically important location on the island of Euboea, on the east coast of Attika. The Carystians refused to join the Persians, but the destruction of their crops and surrounding countryside encouraged them to accept Persian control. The Persian forces then sailed to Eretria. The siege of the city lasted six days, but the city was then betrayed to the Persians by a pro-Persian faction. The population of Eretria was taken into captivity, and the city and temples were looted and burned as punishment for their involvement in the burning of Sardis. The Persian navy then sailed to Marathon and landed their forces there. They most likely made their way slowly on purpose, as one of the features of Persian imperialism was to impress and awe anyone who saw a Persian force.

Darius is presented as wishing to subject those Greeks who refused [to give earth and water]. They included, it later emerges, not just Athens but also Sparta ... No other mainland states are named, though the Aeginetans and 'the other islanders' submitted ... If all this is true, the scope of Marathon must have been much wider than merely to punish Athens and Eretria. The Persian aim in 490, as in 480, was not just to punish. It was rather to begin the incorporation of mainland Greece within the Empire.

G. Cawkwell (2005), *The Greek Wars. The Failure of Persia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 87–88



FIGURE 2.9 Map of the Persian advance

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were the Persians' reasons for an invasion of mainland Greece?
2. What was the response of Athens and Sparta to the Persian demands of earth and water? Why they act in such an extreme way?
3. What was the possible size of the army and how did it get to mainland Greece?
4. Explain the examples of Persian imperialism that can be seen on the voyage from Asia Minor to Marathon.
5. Describe what the Persians did to Eretria. Explain the significance of this for Athens.
6. Explain why the Persians chose to land at Marathon.
7. What does Cawkwell suggest was the overall aim of Persia in this invasion? How does he prove this?

The Battle of Marathon

Marathon was an ideal location for the Persians to land. Besides being a place where Hippias probably believed he could raise local support, it had large open plains that were ideal for pasturing cavalry, the strongest part of the Persian army. It was also an ideal harbour, with the headland and large bay providing an excellent port for the navy. The location also had a marsh to the west, providing protection from any attack from that direction. Once the Persians had landed at the beginning of September, the Athenian force of around 10 000 hoplites, with an additional force of up to 10 000 light-armed troops, marched immediately to meet them. They were also aided by 600 hoplites from the city of Plataea, and Athens promised any Athenian slaves their freedom if they fought against the Persians. The decision to commence the 8- to 10-hour march to Marathon was pushed by the Athenian general Miltiades. According to Herodotus, he had been elected one of the 10 *strategoï* for the year because he had knowledge of the Persian forces and strategies, having fought with them in the Thracian campaign of 513 BC. The Athenian force took a position in the hills to the south of the plains of Marathon, which allowed them to remain safe from the Persian cavalry, while helping them to block the passes to Athens.

Prior to marching out, Athens had sent an emergency message to Sparta, asking for their help. The Spartans replied that they would march out as soon as the festival they were celebrating, the Karneia, had finished (due to end on 10 September). Historians have suggested that this was a cynical move by the Spartans, who sent forces out at similar times of festival, such as the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC; but the Spartans were known to be extremely religious, and their reason for not sending troops is possibly genuine. It may be that the Persians planned to land at this time for this precise reason. As a result, the Athenians waited in the hills for as long as possible.

While the Athenian force was able to hold its position indefinitely in wait for the Spartans, as they could be resupplied as often as needed, the Persians were not in a similar position. They would have started running short of food and supplies reasonably soon. According to Herodotus, Miltiades was in favour of attacking the Persians, whereas some of his colleagues were in favour of returning to Athens to fortify the city. The *strategoï* were evenly divided, and Miltiades successfully convinced the *polemarkhos*, Callimachus, to remain and attack. When this was decided, the *strategoï* who supported Miltiades gave their day of command to him, but he waited for his properly allocated day to attack. This anecdote is likely untrue, but it does tell us that there was a delay of some days before the Athenians attacked, waiting for the Spartans to join them.

hoplite

a typical Greek infantry soldier, equipped with a large shield, long spear and wearing bronze armour

strategos (pl. strategoi)

one of 10 generals (one from each tribe) elected each year

polemarkhos

one of the *arkhons*, traditionally responsible for command of the Athenian armed forces



FIGURE 2.10 The mound of Marathon

The Athenian and Plataean force were likely in a strong position, with ample supplies of water and easy access to routes to provide supplies, but the Persians would have been in a difficult situation. They must have recognised the strong Greek position, but they could not afford to wait too long; they would already have been getting low on supplies on the eleventh day after landing, having expected a quick victory. Also, they would have known that the weather was about to change, making it nearly impossible to return home by sea should they need to. The Persians tried to get the Greeks to leave their position by attacking locations in north Attika, but they would not fall for the trap. Possibly to break the stalemate that had developed, the Persians decided to make an attack on Athens.

An anecdote tells us that on the eleventh morning after landing, the Persians started to board their cavalry onto the ships to sail directly to Athens. The Athenians were supposedly told this by Ionians who climbed the trees to send signals, again probably untrue as it would have been nearly impossible to do this.

The Athenians must have had an informant in the Persian camp, however, because it would have made more sense to wait until the Persians became more desperate, and for the Spartan troops to arrive in just two more days. The Athenians also knew that the Persians could not have waited there indefinitely, as their supplies would have been running low. Once the Athenians realised what was happening they prepared to attack immediately, without the Spartans. The fact that they probably knew that the Spartans would be there in the next day or two, yet still attacked, tells us that there was an immediate need to do so. The Athenians might also have been getting nervous about waiting, as the longer they waited, the greater the chance that the pro-Persian faction would become stronger in Athens.

The Athenian force ran the entire distance—according to Herodotus, about 1.5 kilometres, which is unlikely. However, they probably ran as soon as they were in range of the Persians' famed archers to minimise the impact of their arrows. The Athenians had extended the length of their line to match that of the Persians, which was standard Greek practice, but Herodotus tells us that Miltiades knew that the Persians placed their strongest troops in the centre of their battle line. To counter this, Miltiades allegedly planned a double-envelopment strategy, whereby he strengthened the wings of his own battle line and weakened the centre. As long as the centre of the Athenian line held against the Persian and Sacae troops, known as the fiercest in the Persian Empire, the wings would defeat the Persian wings and the Athenian troops would effectively surround the Persians.

As fortune would have it, the Athenian forces did indeed defeat the Persian wings and force them to retreat, but instead of following them, either by plan or luck, they attacked the Persian centre from behind, causing a rout. Many of the Persian survivors escaped into the marshes and were slaughtered there. The Persians fled to their ships. That the Athenians only captured seven Persian vessels, suggests that they were probably being boarded as the Athenians attacked.

The Athenian victory

After the battle, the Greek troops had a short break, then returned to Athens, no doubt concerned that the city could be betrayed if they did not arrive in time. They left a garrison of soldiers, under the leadership of Aristides, a prominent statesman, to guard the booty and the battlefield.

The Persian fleet sailed around Attika past the point of Sunium, where it is said that they received a signal, a shield reflecting light, indicating that there were people inside the city ready to betray it to them. When the Persians arrived, however, the Athenian army had already reached the city. This meant that if the Persians wanted to land troops, it would be against an Athenian army, fresh from their recent victory. Also, they probably realised that any support they would have had from within the city was minimised by the overwhelming

Athenian victory. The Persians recognised that a landing under these circumstances would be nearly impossible, so they decided to sail home. Against the odds, the Athenians had defeated the Persian army. At some point soon after this, the Athenians returned and buried the remains of the Athenian troops. They lost 192 soldiers, and though this number has been questioned, it is plausibly correct. Herodotus claims that 6400 Persian soldiers were killed and, again, this number may also be correct, as the Athenians would have wanted an accurate recording of deaths to publicly announce. The Persian soldiers

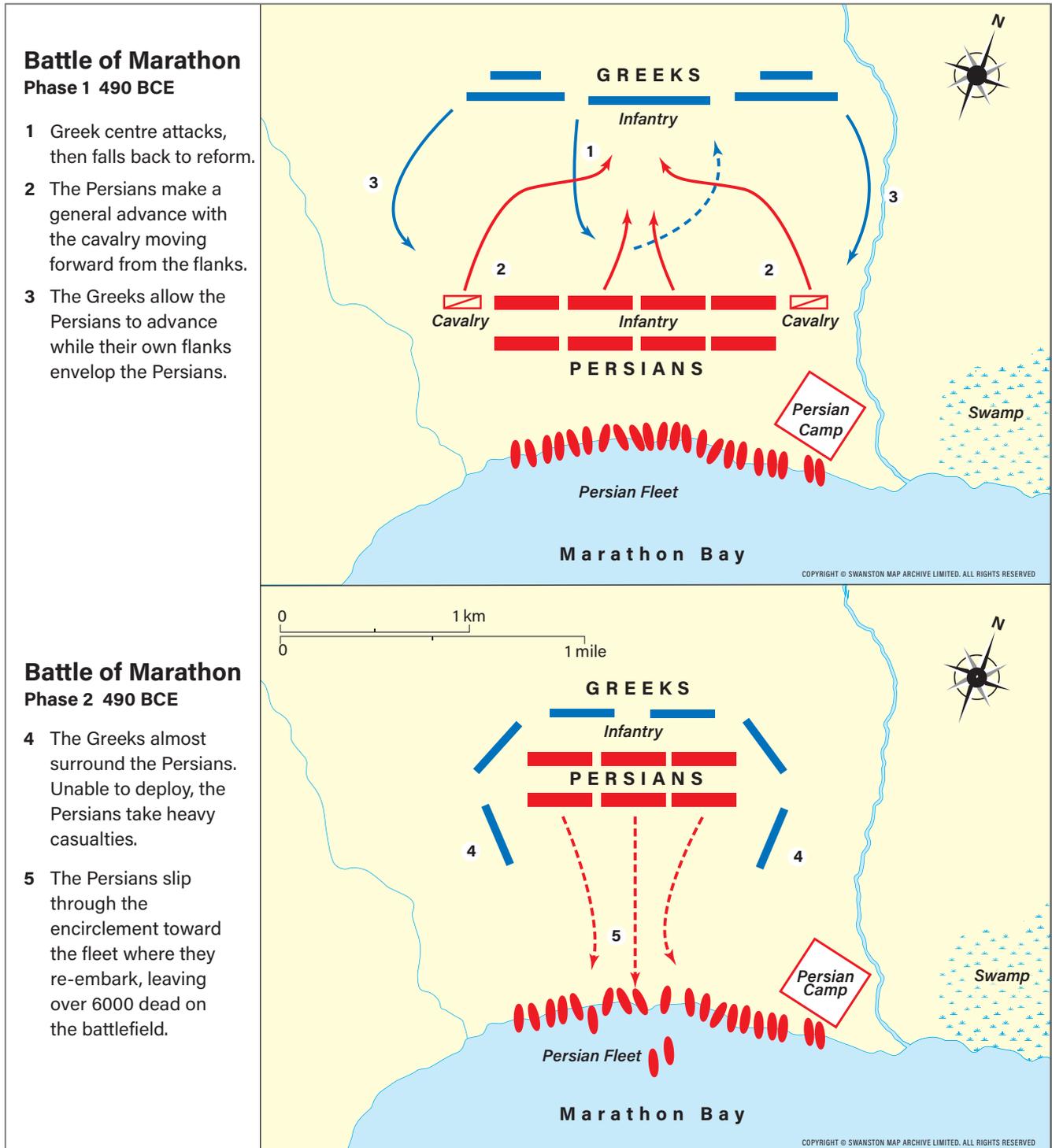


FIGURE 2.11 The Battle of Marathon, 490 BC

were buried in a trench near the location of the **trophy** set up by the Athenians, but not until after the Spartans, arriving two days after the battle, had inspected the bodies. The Spartans would no doubt have been somewhat impressed with the Athenian and Plataean efforts. The Spartans only arrived with a small force of 2000 hoplites, which could suggest that there were problems in the Peloponnese with which the Spartans were trying to deal.

The Lacedaemonians were not only delayed in their departure. When they finally did appear, they showed up with a very small contingent. Ten years later they were able to field five times that number. Moreover, on a mission that was arguably of vital importance to their own security ... the Spartans did not bring with them any of their Peloponnesian allies. There is reason to suspect that the Spartans had encountered difficulties that, inclined to secrecy as they were, they were extremely loath to divulge ... In *The Laws*, Plato ... intimates that the Spartans were unable to answer Athens' appeal because they were preoccupied at the time with a *helot* revolt ... The *helots* must have overheard their masters discussing the Persian armada wending its way through the Cyclades.

P. Rahe (2017), *The Grand Strategy of Classical Sparta: The Persian Challenge*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp 158–59

trophy

in ancient Greece, a marker, usually in the form of a large statue or tripod, set up after a victory in battle at the place where the enemy line was turned in flight (from the Greek: *tropaion*, a turning)

Source study 2.5 Sending signals and the Battle of Marathon

Source A *The Suda* (10th century AD encyclopedia of the ancient world)

When Datis had invaded Attika, it is said that after his withdrawal the Ionians climbed trees and signalled to the Athenians that the horses were away; when they found out that they had left, Miltiades charged and thus won a victory.

The Suda, s.v. The horses are away

Source B Cawkwell

On the south frieze of the temple of Athena Nike ... there is represented a battle of Greeks and Persians, which has often been regarded as the Battle of Marathon. It contains four horsemen. This has been taken as proof that the Persian cavalry was indeed involved in the battle ... This may be right. But there are strong reasons for doubting it. The re-embarcation of the cavalry must have taken no little time ... although Herodotus reports the flight of the Persians to the ships, with the Athenians in hot pursuit, only seven ships were captured and there is no mention of the cavalry left stranded. This strongly suggests that the withdrawal had begun before the battle had started, indeed Miltiades only attacked when the Persians were no longer able to use all their army ... [During the battle] the Persian centre broke through the Athenians and pursued them fleeing inland. If the cavalry had been involved in the pursuit, more than one hundred and ninety-two Athenians would have been killed.

G. Cawkwell (2005), *The Greek Wars. The Failure of Persia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 88–89

Questions

1. What did the Persians do on the tenth/eleventh days? Why did they do this? (Source A)
2. Does *The Suda* (Source A) preserve some information that is correct? Explain your answer.
3. Explain how Cawkwell (Source B) deduces that the cavalry was not used in the battle. Why would the Athenians still depict the cavalry as present at Marathon?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Outline the forces standing against the Persians at Marathon.
2. Explain the positions taken by the Athenians prior to the battle at Marathon.
3. Explain why the Persians were at a disadvantage at Marathon.
4. Why did the Spartans not come to the aid of the Athenians? Were the Spartans leaving the Athenians to their fate? Explain your answer.
5. How did the Persians try to break the stalemate that developed at Marathon?
6. Explain the strategy used by the Athenians at Marathon.
7. What was the result of the Battle of Marathon?
8. What was the Persian response to their defeat at Marathon?
9. What casualties did both the Athenians and Persians suffer in the battle? Are the numbers accurate?
10. How does Rahe account for the Spartans not arriving at Marathon earlier, or with a larger force?

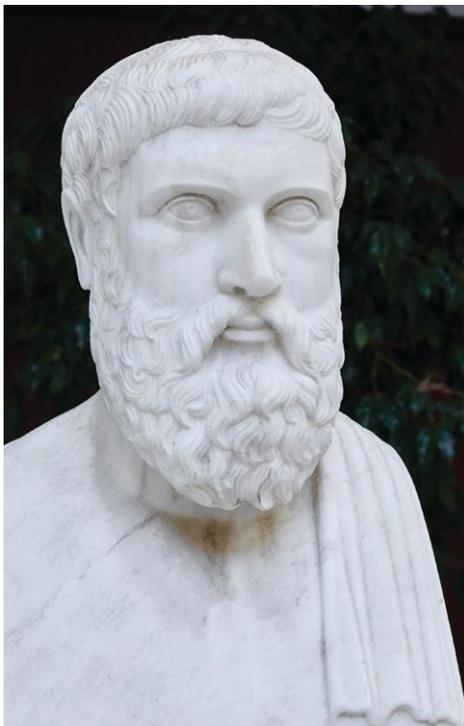


FIGURE 2.12 Miltiades was a talented military strategist

The role of Miltiades

There is little doubt that Miltiades was a key leader in this crisis. He was able to use his first-hand knowledge of the Persians to bring about an Athenian victory. He was clear-sighted and probably also understood what lay in store for Athens and its people if the Persians were to emerge victorious.

Miltiades' background

Before returning to Athens in 493 BC, Miltiades had been the tyrant of the Chersonese, an important piece of land projecting into the north Aegean. Its position gave it an important role in controlling trade from the wealthy Black Sea region. His uncle, also named Miltiades, had probably been sent there by the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus to control the productive lands of the region and to establish an Athenian presence there. The younger Miltiades was eventually sent to do the same in 524 BC. In 513 BC, he was part of the group of tyrants that guarded the bridge created by Darius during his invasion of Scythia, and Herodotus tells us that he suggested destroying the bridge to trap Darius there. This is almost certainly later propaganda by his family to absolve themselves of the guilt of being tyrants.

As a result of this involvement in the campaign, Miltiades developed a good understanding of the Persians, and how they planned and executed their military operations. As Persian control spread across the Aegean and threatened Miltiades' position in Chersonese, he returned to Athens, where he was prosecuted for being a tyrant. In securing his acquittal, he possibly had the assistance of Themistocles, who became an influential leader during the second Persian invasion of Greece. It is quite possible that many Athenians, who realised that the Persians were moving westward, saw the benefit of having in their army someone who had been a leader in a previous Persian invasion.

Miltiades' role in the invasion of 490 BC

As both a political and military leader, Miltiades proved himself to have been far-sighted. His first involvement in affairs was his argument that it was dangerous to wait for the Persians behind the city walls. He knew that the Persians preferred to use deception to take a city, offering huge rewards for people to open the gates stealthily and let the Persian army in. Miltiades probably knew that it was only a matter of time before this was to happen.

The later historian Cornelius Nepos (*Life of Miltiades*, 4) tells us that Miltiades was the lone voice urging the Athenians to send the army out of the city to meet the Persians in battle, though he most likely led a group of like-minded people in advocating this policy.

Miltiades was one of the 10 *stratego*i elected for the year, and again he was likely elected because he had knowledge of the Persians' battle tactics. Once the Athenian army was in their position at Marathon, there was significant disagreement about whether the Athenians should stay or return home, with five generals on either side of the debate. Miltiades pulled aside the *polemarkhos*, whose vote could break the deadlock, and had an extensive discussion with him. Herodotus recounts this conversation:

The opinions of our ten generals have diverged, some are for attacking, others for retreating. If we don't attack now, I fear that that a great civic strife will fall on and shake the spirit of the Athenians, leading to medism. But if we attack before anything unsound corrupts the Athenians, if the Gods deal things out fairly we will triumph in the battle. All of this concerns and hangs on you now, for if you are of a mind to vote with me, your fatherland will be free and the leading city of Greece, but if you go with those wanting zealously to avoid battle, you will bring about the opposite of the things I have just outlined.

Herodotus, 6.109.4–6

This encouraged Callimachus to vote in favour of remaining to confront the Persians at Marathon. Again, this could be a story invented years afterwards to absolve Miltiades and his family of the guilt of his tyranny, but it does seem a logical decision, and Miltiades would have known well how the Persians would have encouraged civil discord in Athens to achieve their aims. When the decision to stay was made, Herodotus tells us that those who wanted to stay gave their day of command to Miltiades, but he chose not to attack until it was his actual day of command. Again this is likely to be untrue. But it could have been his influence that kept the Athenians there until the Persians tried to break the stalemate by loading the horses to attack Athens. He is then said to have deployed the army in his famous double-envelopment manoeuvre, with deep wings and a shallow centre. This was specifically designed to allow the Persian centre, where they placed their strongest troops, to push the Athenian centre back while being surrounded by the strong Athenian wings. The Athenian troops also made the final advance towards the Persians at a run, which could also be seen as Miltiades' knowledge of the initial arrow volleys fired by the Persians at an advancing army. These tactics are probable evidence of Miltiades' excellent knowledge of Persian battle tactics.



FIGURE 2.13 Commemorative Greek stamp from 2010 marking 2500 years since the Battle of Marathon, showing Miltiades' bronze Corinthian-style helmet.

The interwar period

To suggest that the campaign of 490 BC was a disaster for the Great King is an overstatement—the defeat of the forces in Greece simply meant a temporary setback in what would have been seen as the inevitable incorporation of Greece into the Persian Empire. The Persian army made extensive preparations to ensure that the second invasion force was successful. An important feature of Persian imperialism was the ‘shock and awe’ technique employed, using overwhelming force to cow peoples into submission. The conquest of Greece was to be no exception. The Persians had, after all, avenged themselves on the Eretrians and taken them as captives, extended their power through the Aegean Sea, and launched possibly the first major overseas invasion in world history. After the captives they had taken from Eretria and the islands were settled in cities to the east of the Empire, they planned to invade Greece again.

Persian preparations for war

It took three years for Darius to prepare his forces for the next invasion of Greece, and Herodotus tells us, probably correctly, that the whole of Asia was in motion in this preparation (ie, every province was required to contribute). However, a revolt in Egypt, likely encouraged by the success of the Greeks, forced the Great King to redirect these prepared resources towards ensuring that one of the most important parts of his empire was brought to heel. Darius was never to see this happen. He died before he was able to send his army to Egypt.

His son and successor, Xerxes, was left to quell the Egyptian revolt, which he did with speed and great success. Soon after this, a brief revolt in Babylon also took his attention away from Greece. It was not until 483 BC that Xerxes was again able to turn his mind to the Greeks. Xerxes had prepared the largest invasion army up to that time for this invasion, in conjunction with the largest naval force ever assembled. Peoples from across the entire empire were required to contribute forces. This force planned to march along the coastline, with the navy remaining in close contact, sailing nearby. Such a force would require large food supplies, much more than could be carried in the baggage train, so food depots with garrisons of troops were also set up along the proposed route. So the fleet would not run afoul of the weather, as it had done in 492 BC under Mardonius, the Great King had a channel cut through the Mt Athos peninsula, where the previous fleet had been wrecked. This was also, no doubt, to demonstrate to the Greeks the Persian King’s mastery of his power over the very land he travelled. In order to cross the Hellespont, Xerxes had two pontoon bridges built, supported by boats.

Once the preparations were made, Xerxes' army started to mass. When they arrived at Sardis, he sent ambassadors throughout Greece, demanding earth and water. He no doubt hoped that most of Greece would submit once word of his enormous military force spread, and many did indeed **medise**. He pointedly sent no ambassadors to Athens or Sparta. When spring arrived, the great force marched to the coast and met the naval forces at Abydos to make the crossing over the Hellespont. A storm had destroyed part of the bridge during its construction, so when he arrived, the Hellespont required punishment. Herodotus describes the events as follows:

When Xerxes learned of this, he was very angry and commanded that the Hellespont be whipped with 300 lashes, and that leg-chains be thrown into the sea. I even heard that he also sent branders there to brand the Hellespont. He ordered them, while whipping, to say bizarre and reckless things: 'Vindictive water, our master lays this punishment on you, because you wronged him when you had not suffered an injustice from him. Furthermore, King Xerxes will cross over you, whether you want it or not. According to justice, no man will sacrifice to you, for you are a foul and briny river.' He commanded that the sea receive this punishment and that those in charge of building the bridge have their heads cut off.

medise

to go over to the side of the Persians (or the Medes, as the Greeks called them)

After rebuilding the bridge, Xerxes' troops crossed and made their way to the city of Doriskos, where the Great King carried out an inspection of his entire army and its commanders. While Herodotus tells us that it comprised a million men, with 1200 naval vessels, it is more likely that it consisted of up to 200 000 men, of which some 40 000 or so would have been attendants, slaves, butchers, bakers, builders and other necessary workers. There may have been 600 to 800 vessels in total. This was by far the largest military force assembled in one place to date and preparing the invasion force was possibly the greatest logistical accomplishment to that time also.

Greek preparations for war

The Greek *poleis* would have known they were in for trouble. The Athenians, who were to emerge as influential leaders of Greece, had been divided after Marathon in 490 BC. There had been significant political struggle, most likely between groups who favoured coming to terms with Persia and those who wanted to resist the Persians. Miltiades had died in jail in 489–88 BC after being unable to pay a fine for an unsuccessful attempt to take the island of Naxos. The man who led the prosecution was Xanthippus (father of the later statesman Pericles), of the Alkmeonid family, who seems to have had a record of supporting co-operation with the Persians. About a year after this, a man named Themistocles became one of the leading statesmen. In 488–87 BC, he successfully used the law of **ostracism**, possibly introduced at this time, to exile Xanthippus and, a year later, Aristides, another prominent Athenian statesman and a friend of the Alkmeonid family. As Themistocles was anti-Persian, it is quite possible that the fear of Persian retaliation in the 480s BC was a factor in Athenian politics, and other friends and relatives of the Pisistratid family, who had accompanied the invasion of 490 BC, were also exiled at this time. Those who wanted to resist Persia now seem to have been in the ascendance in Athenian politics. The leader of this charge was Themistocles, who became prominent in the upcoming Persian invasion.

The fear of the Persians, however, did not put an end to the traditional local rivalries around the Greek world in the inter-war period. In particular, Athens and Aegina had recommenced a war that had been fought on and off for decades. Battles had been fought in the early to mid-480s BC. When the Athenians found a new vein of silver in Attika in 483 BC, Themistocles is supposed to have argued against a handout of money to each citizen, instead arguing for the construction of a fleet of triremes, ostensibly for use against Aegina but with a view to using them against Persia also. However, this story was possibly invented after the invasion, as it takes years to build the infrastructure to develop a silver mine, not least one of the magnitude of this mine. The Athenians had already built a strong harbour at Piraeus in 493 BC (also possibly at the suggestion of Themistocles), but it does seem likely that Themistocles encouraged the Athenians to begin the build-up of a fleet in the mid- to late-480s BC, knowing that it would not only be useful against Aegina, but also against a future Persian invasion.

The Spartans, who were to lead the alliance that was formed against Persia, were in a strong position. They dominated the **Peloponnesian League**, and if there was a revolt in 490 BC, as has been suggested before, they must have stamped it out successfully as the *helots* did not attempt to revolt from the Spartans at this time.

The Greeks would have been well aware of what the Great King was planning. The Spartans sent an embassy to Delphi to enquire about the future, which seemed pessimistic for the Greeks; but it gave a slim chance of victory if a Spartan king was to die. The Athenians did the same, and they were given a similarly bleak outlook in a first oracle, but were told in the second that their 'wooden walls' would protect them. As a result, the Athenians passed a resolution in the *ekklesia* in 481 BC that required all citizens to make preparations to evacuate Athens. The Athenians also recalled exiles in 481–80 BC, partly to ensure that there were no disgruntled Athenians who could render detailed assistance to the Great King.

ostracism

in ancient Greece, the process in Athens where an election could be held every year to vote on a leading figure who was seen as becoming too powerful; if voted for, the person was exiled from Athens for 10 years

Peloponnesian League

the alliance created and held together by Sparta, based primarily in the Peloponnese

ekklesia

the Athenian assembly, where citizens met regularly to vote on decisions of state; the main part of Athenian democracy

But in the third year after that, when Xerxes was marching through Thessaly and Boeotia against Attika, they repealed the law [of ostracism] and decreed the return of those who had been exiled, because they were very concerned that Aristides might become corrupted by the enemy and turn many of the citizens to the barbarian.

Plutarch, *Life of Aristides*, 8

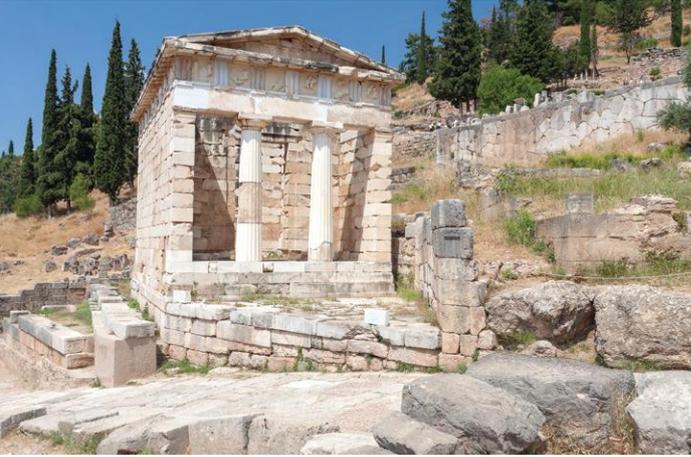


FIGURE 2.14 The reconstructed Athenian Treasury, originally built at Delphi to commemorate the Greek victory at the Battle of Marathon. It was rebuilt in the early 20th century.

In 481 BC, the Spartans invited anyone from around Greece who wanted to resist the Persian invasion to meet in Sparta. A formal alliance was made that has been named the Hellenic League by modern historians. It required all wars being fought at the time to cease, so ending the ongoing war between Athens and Aegina. The centrally located Corinth was made the official headquarters of the League. The Spartans were named as leaders both at land and sea, even though the Athenians were contributing the largest naval contingent by far (possibly some 200 of the up to 600 triremes of the League's naval force). Spies were also sent out to gauge the Great King's forces, but they were caught. Instead of the spies being executed, they were treated well and given a tour of the military forces and sent back to Greece, with the obvious aim of making any Greek *polis* planning on resisting the Persian forces reconsider their position.

Source study 2.6 Themistocles' navy

Source A Smith

One might wonder how Themistocles, by now a wealthy and upper crust aristocrat, maintained his influence with the lower classes during this time. But we must not forget that the thousands of thetes, the lower-class who rowed triremes, were loyal to Themistocles after the employment they found through the construction of his triremes. As it was now about a year after the vote on Laurium's silver, many of those triremes would now be at the point of completion and would need crews to be hired. With their stable employment and regular wages, they thanked Themistocles with political allegiance.

J. A. Smith (2022), *Themistocles. The Powerbroker of Athens*, Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, p. 51

Question

1. What does Smith suggest may have been a further motive for Themistocles in pushing for the growth of the navy in Athens?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain why it took 10 years for the Persians to return to Greece.
2. Identify the challenges faced by the Persians and explain how they overcame them.
3. Explain why the Great King did not send ambassadors to Athens and Sparta to demand earth and water.
4. Explain the purpose of Xerxes' punishment of the Hellespont (and the men who oversaw its construction).
5. Summarise what had been happening in Athens between 490 BC and 481 BC.
6. What happened for Athens in 483 BC and what was its historical significance?
7. Describe the oracles that were received by Athens and Sparta from Delphi.
8. What was the Hellenic League and what was done by its members once it was formed?

Further resources

G. Cawkwell (2005), *The Greek Wars. The Failure of Persia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

J. O. Hyland (2018), *Persian Interventions. The Achaemenid Empire, Athens, and Sparta, 450–386 BCE*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

P. Rahe (2017), *The Grand Strategy of Classical Sparta: The Persian Challenge*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press

J. A. Smith (2022), *Themistocles. The Powerbroker of Athens*, Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military

Activities

Bringing it together

1. Why did the Persian Empire continue to expand?
2. Was the Ionian revolt the cause for the 490 BC invasion of Greece? Explain your answer.
3. Explain the reasons for Greek success against the Persians at Marathon.
4. Consider the preparations of both sides in the interwar period. Whose preparations were more effective? Explain your answer.

Activities

1. Research what happened in the Ionian revolt after Athens left. Write a brief account of the revolt and its consequences.
2. Read the account in Herodotus of the Persian sack of Miletus (6.101–102). Explain why the decision to move away from Athens was probably the best plan to follow.
3. Create a mind-map of Miltiades' role, using 'Miltiades' political contributions' and 'Miltiades' military contributions' as a basis for the mind-map. Include specific examples and at least three sources as evidence. Where possible, include possible problems with the sources or interpretations of Miltiades' role.

HSC-style questions

1. Assess the factors that led to the Persian invasion of Greece in 490 BC. (25 marks)
2. Assess the role of Miltiades in defeating the Persians in 490 BC. (25 marks).

Chapter

3

The second Persian invasion, 480–79 BC

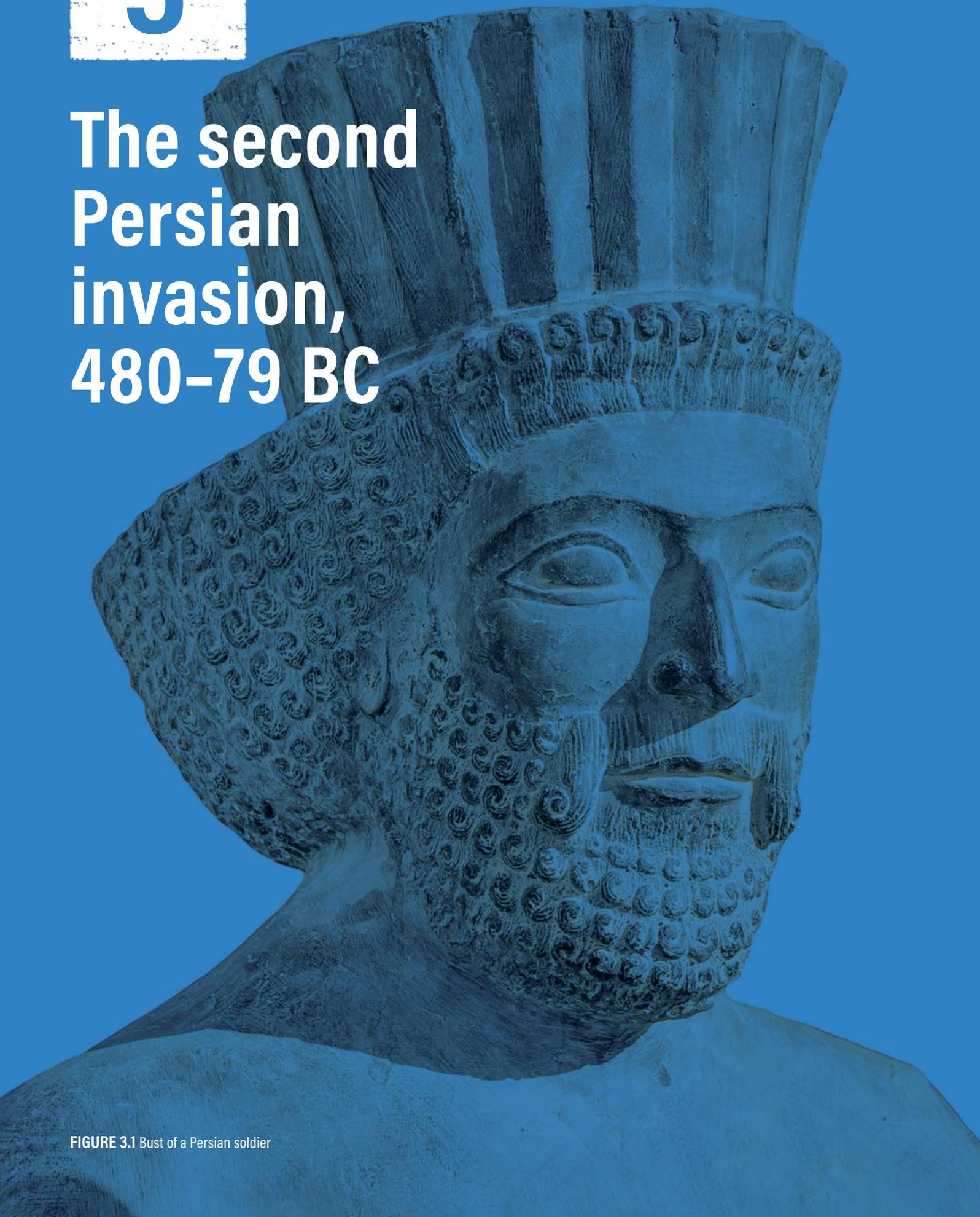


FIGURE 3.1 Bust of a Persian soldier

When the Athenian and Plataean forces defeated the Persian forces, they must have known that the Persian juggernaut would not stop at that. While it took some time to prepare the forces, the new king, Xerxes, undertook to continue his father's western expansionist policy. The force he prepared was likely the largest military force assembled in world history, indicating the importance he attached to successfully making an example of the Greeks, even though the incorporation of Greece into the Persian Empire would have brought few benefits. The Greeks would have been foolish not to be extremely concerned about their prospects.

This chapter will explain the:

- movement of Persian force to, and through, mainland Greece
- significance of the Battles of Thermopylae and Artemisium
- destruction of Athens at Persian hands (twice)
- significance of the Battle of Salamis
- significance of the Battle of Plataea
- role of various leaders in the Greek victory
- various factors that led to the Greek victory and Persian defeat.

Timeline 3.1: The second Persian invasion

- 488-87 BC ▪ Themistocles gains more power as an Athenian statesman
- 484-80 BC ▪ Persian forces regroup and prepare for second invasion of Greece
- 481 BC ▪ Hellenic League is formed: led by the Spartans, central headquarters in Corinth
- 480 BC ▪ Xerxes marches to Macedonia, then into Thessaly
- Battle of Thermopylae and the death of the Spartan king Leonidas
- Battle of Salamis, Persian forces retreat
- 479 BC ▪ Battle of Plataea, Greek forces defeat Persians on land
- Battle of Mykale cripples Persian fleet

The Persians invade a second time

It took four years to prepare the Persian forces for a second invasion of Greece. On the way to the first major staging point of Doriskos, Xerxes demanded earth and water from the cities he passed. It seems obvious that one of Xerxes' aims was to use the size of his army to create a sense of fear in as many cities as he could, hoping to encourage revolts in Greece before he even needed to send troops into battle. As part of the propaganda war, Xerxes also showed respect for the people with whom he came into contact on the march. For example, at Ilium, the ancient city of Troy, Xerxes sacrificed to the gods of the city in an explicit attempt to depict himself as avenger of the Trojan War.

Once across the Hellespont, Xerxes' army marched to enjoy the hospitality of Alexander, King of Macedonia, taking a leisurely two months to make the trek. Xerxes' fleet sailed to the port of Therme, just to the south of Macedonia, through the channel cut through Mt Athos by his engineers a few years previously. Alexander was on good terms both with the Athenians (who had given him honours as a *proxenos*) and his Persian master, Xerxes,

proxenos

a person of one city who was considered the official representative of another state in their own city. This practice was called *proxenia*



FIGURE 3.2 A relief sculpture on the tomb of Xerxes shows the diversity of the people who made up the Persian army, as can be seen in their different forms of dress.

to whom he had already submitted earth and water. We are told by Herodotus that while Xerxes was staying in Macedonia, Alexander sent word to the Athenians about the Persian force, though it could also have been Alexander's propaganda after the Greek victory to make him seem more pro-Greek than he actually had been. Xerxes and his army remained in Macedonia, staying at Therme for a little while, so that Xerxes could make tours of the region (as he enjoyed doing), and visit Mt Olympus while his army prepared to march south into Thessaly.

The movement of such a vast military force would have been confronting to the Greeks, who became aware of the extent of the Persian invasion that was, in every respect, designed to awe them into submission. It would be a mistake to think that all people in the cities who were withstanding the Persians were determined to resist them. After the victory at Marathon, Miltiades, the Athenian commander, persuaded the Athenian *ekklesia* to give him a fleet without declaring its purpose. He used this fleet to attack the island of Paros, which was unsuccessful. This failure, as noted in Chapter 2, led to Miltiades' trial by Xanthippus—the father of Pericles—and his eventual imprisonment and death. Significantly, Xanthippus was later **ostracised**, quite possibly because of widespread Greek anti-Persian sentiment.

Moreover, the Greeks had continued their traditional local rivalries between cities in the inter-war period. In particular, Athens and Aegina had recommenced a war that had been going on and off for decades. Battles had been fought over the early- to mid-480s BC, which allowed Themistocles to convince the Athenian *ekklesia* to build triremes using the newly discovered vein of silver in Attika. It is likely that the Athenians used timber from heavily forested Macedonia to construct these triremes. This may have been the reason that the Athenians gave Alexander *proxenia* in the 480s BC, so granting him a special relationship with them.

To bolster their chances of success, the Greeks sent embassies to Sicily (the island to the south of Italy), to Crete (in the Aegean Sea) and to Korkyra (the island on the western side of mainland Greece). Only the people of Korkyra responded positively to the request for assistance, sending a fleet of 60 triremes, a significant contribution.

ostracism

in ancient Greece, the removal of a person from Athens for 10 years if they had been considered too influential in Athens



FIGURE 3.3 The routes taken into Greece by Xerxes' army.

The Vale of Tempe

The first possible chance of stopping the Persians came at the Vale of Tempe, the mountain pass between Macedonia and Thessaly. The powerful Aleuad family, who controlled the city of Larissa in Thessaly, had medised, or shifted allegiance to support the Persians. As a result, Thessalian cities opposed to the Aleuadae sent an embassy to the Hellenic League at Corinth requesting their support in preventing the Persians from coming into Thessaly. Themistocles urged the Hellenic League to send a force to try to prevent the Persians from entering Thessaly, in the hope that the Persians would be forced to retreat through lack of resources. Themistocles himself was elected to lead the Athenian contingent, whereas the Spartans had a general, rather than a king, to lead their troops. This might indicate that they were not fully supportive of this strategy—they had possibly already decided that their best

Mede

The peoples that came from the region of Media in the Persian Empire; the term used to denote the Persians in Greek texts



FIGURE 3.4 Themistocles as portrayed on a modern Greek stamp.

chance of survival was to build a wall across the Isthmus of Corinth. Ten thousand Greeks were sent by boat to meet up with the Thessalian cavalry as quickly as possible.

When the **Medes** were finally coming into Hellas and the Athenians were deciding about who the generals should be, they say that the rest abstained from the generalship, driven away by fear. But Epicycles, son of Euphemides, a demagogue in speech but with a weak spirit and open to bribes, aimed at the office and was likely to win in the vote. So, Themistocles, fearing that affairs be utterly destroyed should leadership fall to this man, bribed with money the ambition of Epicycles.

Plutarch, *Life of Themistocles*, 6

Soon after the Greeks arrived, an embassy from Alexander of Macedonia informed them of the sheer size of the Persian invasion force. They also found that there was not just one mountain pass that could be taken by the Persians, but three. Moreover, it became clear that most of the Thessalian cities had medised, or were preparing to. The Hellenic League forces did not have the resources at their disposal to trap the Persians in the mountain pass, so they were forced to retreat.

When Xerxes reached Larissa, there was feasting and celebrations. Again, he remained in Thessaly for some time to stage games and display his wealth and generosity. The Persians then marched south; they had several options for the route to be taken into mainland Greece, but the only logical choice for an army of this size was the pass at Thermopylae. They made camp at the town of Trachis, just to the north of Thermopylae, and waited for the fleet to arrive, which had left from Therme 11 days after the army. On the day before the fleet arrived, a storm hit the fleet and part of it was destroyed or damaged—Herodotus tells us that 400 warships and many more support vessels were lost. Even if Herodotus' figure is inaccurate, it seems that there was a significant loss of ships and manpower for the Persians before they had even fought a battle with the Greek fleet.



FIGURE 3.5 The entrance to the Tembi Valley (the ancient Vale of Tempe), northern Greece



FIGURE 3.6 Thessaly was famous for its cavalry, depicted in the 4th century BC on the Alexander sarcophagus.

Source study 3.1 Spartan attitude to the Vale of Tempe strategy

Source A Rahe

The Spartans were homebodies ... The prospect of making a journey to distant Thessaly cannot have fired their imaginations ... It can hardly be an accident that the Spartans sent neither Leonidas nor his Eurypontid colleague Leotychidas nor even Leonidas' younger brother Cleombrotus to lead this expedition but a polemarch, instead ... who was, Herodotus pointedly tells us, not of royal blood.

P. Rahe (2017), *The Grand Strategy of Classical Sparta: The Persian Challenge*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 205–06

Question

1. What does Rahe imply about Spartan attitudes to the Vale of Tempe strategy?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the key strategy used by Xerxes for the invasion.
2. Does it seem as if Xerxes was trying to get to Greece as quickly as possible? Explain your answer.
3. Herodotus seems to have had access to a written account of Xerxes' enumeration of his troops. Why would the Great King have had a copy kept of this account of the invasion force?
4. According to Herodotus, why was a force sent to Thessaly? What was the strategy of the Greeks at the Vale of Tempe?
5. What is Themistocles alleged to have done to ensure that he was given command of the Athenian forces in Thessaly? Given Themistocles' anti-Persian stance, what might this tell us about attitudes in Athens at the time?
6. What was the result of the Vale of Tempe strategy?

Thermopylae and Artemisium

As soon as they learned the Persians had left Therme, the Hellenic League sent a force to guard the pass at Thermopylae under the leadership of the Spartan king Leonidas. This force was comprised of 300 Spartans, 500 Tegeans, 500 Mantineians, 120 Orchomenians, 100 Arcadians, 400 Corinthians, 700 Thespians, 400 Thebans, 200 Phliaisians and 80 Mycenaeans. A naval force (primarily comprised of an Athenian fleet of 127 triremes) was also stationed at the bay at Artemisium, off the northern part of the island of Euboea. This was an ideal location because it had high lookout positions and protected the island from any attempt by the Persians to land troops there. The fleet was led by a Spartan, the *navarch* Eurybiades, who was to command the Hellenic League fleet for the entire campaign.

navarch

a naval commander

An early skirmish between a Persian advance fleet and three Greek triremes led to the capture of two of the Greek vessels, indicating that the Greeks' position and plans may have been known to the Persians before they arrived. The Greek fleet temporarily retreated to the narrows between Euboea and the mainland, possibly to tempt the Persian fleet into trying to sail into a narrow area, which would limit the impact of their numbers; but Herodotus' claim, that Eurybiades was spooked by the easy Persian victory over the Greek scout ships, is also possible. It is, however, more likely that the Greeks retreated because of the weather conditions, choosing a safer location in the event of a storm similar to the one that destroyed part of the Persian fleet, as such storms were frequent at that time of year.

When the Greeks returned to their position at Artemisium, a squadron of Persian ships arriving in the region mistook the Greek fleet for the Persian one, which had now anchored at a place called Aphetae. The Greeks captured all 15 vessels, thereby learning about the Persian positions, plans and the composition of the fleet. Not long after examining the Persian fleet from afar, the Greeks started to become concerned about their prospects of victory, and debated whether or not they should withdraw from Artemisium again. The people of Euboea tried to convince Eurybiades that this should not happen, and when they could not convince him of this, Herodotus tells us that they bribed Themistocles with the huge sum of 30 talents (close to a ton of silver), which he shared with both Eurybiades and the Corinthian commander (while keeping 22 talents for himself).

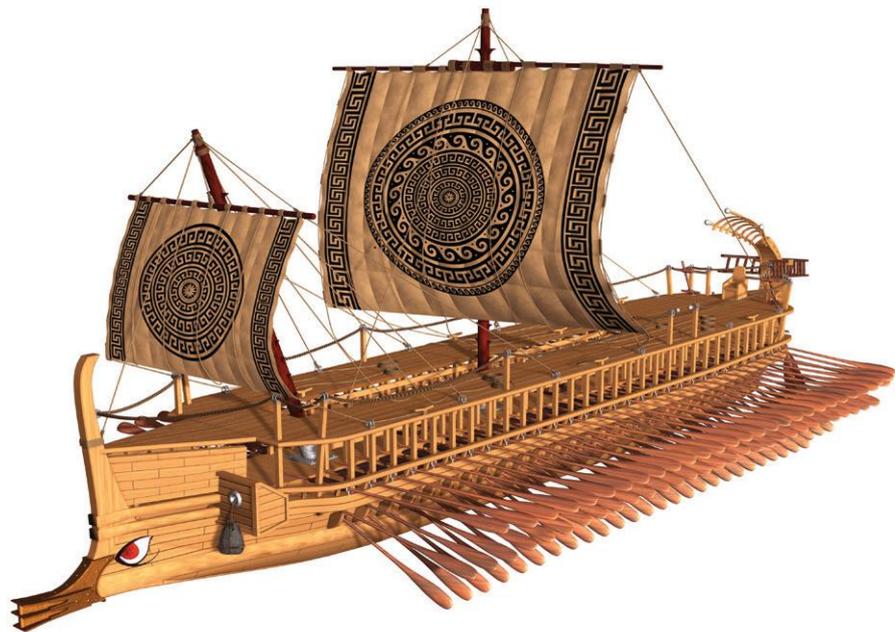


FIGURE 3.7 A 3D computer image of a trireme, showing its two sails, bronze-covered beak at the front and three levels of oars.

There were three gates at Thermopylae, and prior to the Persians arriving, Leonidas had determined to fortify the position at the middle, or ‘Phocian’ gate, so named because the Phocians had originally built it to keep the Thessalians out. The plan of the Hellenic League forces, both on land and sea, was to hold the Persians at bay. Such a huge force would be unable to wait for too long before running out of food and water, and the Persian forces were too large to survive on foraged food. Also, part of Xerxes’ plans had been to take his time in arriving at this point because the Greeks were celebrating the Olympic games, and the Spartans were celebrating the festival of the Karneia. However, as he had moved so slowly, the fleet was at risk because of the frequency of storms at that time of the year. The Greeks expected to be reinforced when the respective festivals had concluded, and the role played by the fleet was to prevent the Persians from landing troops behind the Greek position at Thermopylae, which would cause the Greeks to be trapped and easily defeated. Herodotus notes that:

While they were debating among themselves in this way, Xerxes sent a mounted scout to see how many there were and what they were doing. While he was still in Thessaly, he had heard that a small army had gathered there and that its leaders were Lakedaimonians, and that Leonidas, of the Heracleid family, was there. The cavalry approached the camp, but he could not see and observe all of it, for it was not possible to view those inside the wall which they had rebuilt and were guarding. He did observe those outside, who had laid their arms in front of the wall, and it happened at the time to be Lakedaimonians posted there. He saw that some of the men were training naked, while others were combing their hair. He marvelled at the sight, and noted the number of them. Having observed everything most precisely, he made away at leisure, for no one followed him or paid him any attention. When he returned, he told Xerxes everything he had seen.

Herodotus, 7.208

Source study 3.2 Sparta’s attitude to Thermopylae

Source A Cartledge

... the Spartans, the overall leaders of the resisting Greeks, seemed themselves to be in at least two minds as to the wisdom of a Thermopylae defence. On the one hand, the senior of the two kings, Leonidas, was apparently in no doubt whatsoever, and did all he could both strategically and ideologically to ensure a good turnout of Greek allies at the pass. But his city seems not to have striven very energetically to back him ... It was, however, claimed—and this was clearly the official Spartan line, which in public at least Leonidas had to endorse—that a larger force would arrive in due course, and good reasons of a religious nature were alleged for its arrival being necessarily later than that of the supposed advance guard ...

P. Cartledge (2013), *After Thermopylae*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 95–96

Question

1. In what way does Cartledge indicate that the strategy was not favoured by all Spartans?
2. What does this account by Cartledge, in addition to the possible Spartan attitudes to the Vale of Tempe strategy, tell us about the idea of Greek unity at this time?

Soon after arriving at Thermopylae, Leonidas was told about the Anopaea path over the mountains, which could allow the Persians to take a smaller body of troops over the mountains and behind the Greek position at the Phocian Gate. To counter this, Leonidas sent the 1000 Phocians to guard this pass should the Persians find out about it. Not long after, the Persians sent an embassy to ask the Greeks to lay down their weapons and submit to Persian authority. In response, the Spartan king is supposed to have responded, 'Come and get them.' Herodotus continues, elaborating on the Spartan attitude toward the Persians.

Thus, the Lakedaimonians and Thespians conducted themselves in this way, but the Spartan Dienekes is said to have been the bravest man. They say that he said the following short utterance before engaging the Medes—he had learned from a Trachinian that because there were so many of them, whenever the barbarians loosed their arrows, the sun was hidden by their multitude. Dienekes was not concerned by this, and with regard to the doings of so many Medes he was pleased that the Trachinian had brought him such good news: if the Medes blocked out the sun, the battle against them would be in the shade.

Herodotus, 7.226



FIGURE 3.8 *Leonidas at Thermopylae*, by Jacques-Louis David, a romanticised painting of Leonidas and the Spartans at the pass preparing for battle.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the Persians deliberately took over a month to travel the distance from Therme to Trachis?
2. Outline the Hellenic League forces present at Thermopylae.
3. Explain the Greeks' retreat, and plans for a second retreat, from their position at Artemisium.
4. Why did the Euboeans bribe Themistocles?
5. It is believed Herodotus' account of the Spartans training before battle is true. This seems to have unnerved the Persian spy. Why might the Spartans have done this as part of preparation for battle?

6. What was the strategy of the Greeks at Thermopylae? Does it seem like a reasonable strategy?
7. What was the Anopaea path and why was it a problem for the Greeks?

Battle at land and sea

Four days after arriving at Trachis, probably the day the Persian fleet arrived at Aphetæ, Xerxes launched his attack. Wave after wave of Persian troops were sent against the Greek position, but they were unable to dislodge them. The narrow pass allowed the Greeks to maintain their position, while the Spartans performed their famous tactic of pretending to flee, then turning as a unit and launching themselves on the enemy. The wicker shields and minimal armour of the Persians could not stand up to the attack of the iron-tipped *sarissa* of a Spartan hoplite, and the length of the Persians' weapons, significantly shorter than those of the Greeks, meant that they were ill-equipped to attack them in turn. The onslaught lasted two days, but the Persians were unable to move the Greeks from their position.

Meanwhile, the Persian and Greek fleets had been watching each other at a safe distance, trying to determine the best tactic. To attempt to break the impasse that was developing at sea, the Persians sent 200 triremes around the east coast of Euboea. If their voyage was successful, this could have forced the Greeks to retreat from their position at Artemisium to defend the position at Thermopylae on two fronts, which would have been difficult. However, the Persian plan was highly risky, because the storms on the eastern side of Euboea at that time of the year were notoriously severe. The Persians then bided their time; a defector to the Greeks informed them of the 200 vessels that had been sent around Euboea, which forced the Greeks to attempt to draw the Persians into battle. Herodotus describes this aspect of the naval confrontation in considerable detail:

Considering this, they devised the following: separating 200 of the ships from the whole fleet, then sent them around Skiathos so that they might not be seen sailing around Euboea by the enemy, and by Kaphereos around Geraistos to the Euripos so that they might trap the Greeks between them. One part [of the fleet] was to hold that course and bar the retreat, and they themselves to attack them directly. Having planned this, they sent the arrayed ships on their way ordering them not to attack the Greeks that same day or before the signal was seen, at which point the ships sailing around were to make their presence known.

Herodotus, 8.7

The first naval encounter was designed by the Greeks to engage the part of the Persian fleet stationed closest to them. After some initial Greek success, the Persian vessels started to increase in number and surround the Greeks using a tactic called the *periplous*. In response, the Greeks implemented a tactic called the *kuklos*, and as the Persian ships encircled them more closely, the Greeks would simultaneously sail out at full speed and ram the Persian hulls. This led to a Greek victory on the day, with the Greeks capturing 30 Persian vessels. That night, another storm struck: not only did the storm force debris and dead bodies into the waters where the Persians were anchored, it also destroyed the fleet of triremes sailing around Euboea. The next morning, a reinforcement of 53 Athenian triremes arrived at Artemisium, which brought the news of the destruction of the Persian ships off the east coast of Euboea. That afternoon, a minor skirmish led to a small Greek victory, but, at Thermopylae, far more important events were transpiring.

After the second day of fighting at the pass, a local man named Ephialtes informed the Persians of the Anopaea path. Offering to serve as a guide, he was no doubt expecting a rich reward. Xerxes sent his elite troops, the 10 000 Immortals (so named because their number was always kept at 10 000) under the command of their leader, Hydarnes. The Greek seer Megistias is said to have read the entrails of the sacrifice that night and predicted that the Greeks would meet their death the next day. That night, deserters from the Persian camp reported that the Immortals would be upon them the next day. The Phocians on

sarissa

the Greek spear

periplous

an ancient naval tactic, particularly used by Phoenicians, in which the attackers would sail between lines of enemy vessels and drop a gangplank to board them

kuklos

an ancient naval tactic, favoured by Greek triremes, in which an outnumbered squadron of triremes would row backwards to have the sterns of their boats nearly touching, forming a circle. They would then sail out and ram any enemy vessel that would approach too close



FIGURE 3.9 Map of the Battles of Thermopylae

the Anopaea path were in a fortified position, but when the Immortals approached, the Phocians retreated into their defensive position. Upon realising that this was not a Spartan garrison, the Persians launched a swift barrage of arrows and continued their advance. Lookouts observed the approach of the Immortals, and Leonidas met with his generals. While some advocated a full retreat, Leonidas opted to stay, as did the Thespians and Mycenaeans. Herodotus says that this was because the Spartans were given an oracle from Delphi saying that Sparta needed to mourn the death of a king before they were victorious over the Persians:

The allies who were dismissed went away, obedient to Leonidas, but only the Thespians and Thebans remained with the Lakedaimonians. Those Thebans remained against their will and did not want to stay, because Leonidas had made them hostages. The Thespians were happy to stay, and said that they would not abandon Leonidas and those with him by leaving, instead they would stay and die with them.

Herodotus, 7.222

Persian success

Once the departing Greeks had left Thermopylae, Leonidas led the remaining Greek forces well past the Phocian Wall that had protected them for the preceding days. Ferocious fighting ensued, and the Greeks seem to have killed a disproportionate number of Persian troops. After some time, the Spartan king was killed, leading to a particularly bloody fight to gain possession of his body by both forces. Many important Persian leaders from the royal family

also died in the fighting, indicating that though the Greeks lost at Thermopylae, the fighting was particularly fierce. Once the Immortals arrived, however, the Thebans surrendered. The remaining Greek forces retreated to a hill, and they died there, fighting with whatever they could, including bare hands, and even their teeth.

At approximately the same time as the Spartan-led forces were preparing for battle, the Greek fleet was preparing to engage the Persian forces that had sailed out to meet them. Historians know little about the battle; though it seems that it was costly for both sides, the Greeks probably fared better. Herodotus tells us that about half of the Athenian triremes were damaged. The Greek commanders were already deciding whether it was feasible to remain and continue fighting after such a costly victory when word came that the position at Thermopylae had been lost. In order to ensure a quick retreat, the Greeks beached and burned any vessels that had to be towed (and would therefore slow down the retreat) so that they did not fall into Persian hands. They then slaughtered all of the cattle of the nearby town of Histiaea and feasted on them, roasting the meat over large bonfires so denying the Persians further supplies of meat. More importantly, Themistocles wanted the slaughter and feasting to be very visible to the Persians on the other side of the strait. After feasting, the Greeks piled wood on the fires to make it seem to the Persians as though they were remaining, then boarded their vessels and sailed south. On the journey south, Themistocles is said to have left messages at the locations of fresh water, encouraging the Ionian and Carian contingents of the Persian fleet to abandon the Great King. While it may not have been expected to work by Themistocles, it served to place doubt in the mind of the Persian leadership about the reliability of key components of the Persian navy, and served the Greeks well at the Battle of Salamis.

The Persians move south

Victory at Thermopylae gave the Persians a foothold on mainland Greece. This meant that evacuations of many cities commenced as troops returned from Thermopylae and Artemisium. The Athenians had already planned the evacuation of Athens some time earlier, and it is likely that many Athenian families had already fled to Troezen, on the



FIGURE 3.10 The Leonidas monument at Thermopylae, a modern commemoration of the sacrifice of Leonidas and the Spartans. At the base of the statue, an epitaph by the Greek poet Simonides says, 'Stranger, tell the Spartans that we are at rest here, obedient to the laws.'

island of Salamis. The Athenian fleet returned to assist the evacuation of the remaining Athenians to Salamis. However, there were some Athenians who were more difficult to convince to leave, and in a show of 'bipartisan' support, Themistocles' political opponent Cimon, son of Miltiades, led a procession of wealthy citizens with their horse bridles to the Acropolis to dedicate the horse bridles to Athena. This indicated, at least for the moment, acceptance that Athens' future lay on the sea, not on the land. However, around 500 citizens remained on the Acropolis because they believed that the wooden walls the oracle at Delphi had said would protect Athens were actually a reference to the wooden walls around the Acropolis, not the Athenian fleet, as Themistocles had interpreted it.

It is not possible for Pallas [Athena] to please Olympian Zeus
 With many prayers and cunning counsels.
 However, to you I will again speak of adamantine strength.
 Everything will be completely lost that the sacred border of Cecrops
 Holds today, and also the sacred lands of Cithaeron.
 A wooden wall will be given by all-seeing Zeus
 To the Triton-born [Athena], for you and your children to remain unravaged.
 Do not wait for the cavalry and many infantrymen
 Of the army from overseas meekly, but withdraw,
 Turning your back. The day will come yet when you will face them.
 O Divine Salamis, you will bring death to the sons of women
 When that which belongs to Demeter [grain seeds] is scattered or gathered in.

Herodotus 7.141

After the defeat at Thermopylae, Peloponnesian members of the Hellenic League, including Sparta, sent a force to the Isthmus of Corinth and started to build a wall across it. This indicates that the Peloponnesian forces had little faith in the ability of the navy to protect them; however, if the Greek navy was not going to be able to withstand the Persians' fleet, the wall was being built for little purpose, as the Persians would simply be able to sail around it and drop troops behind Greek lines.

Once the Persians realised that the Greeks had evacuated Artemisium, they landed forces across the bay and raided the coastal towns of Euboea. To hide the losses incurred at Thermopylae from embassies from around Greece who had medised and were visiting to pay their respects to the Great King, Xerxes buried his dead except for 1000 soldiers, to make it seem as though he had not suffered so significantly in victory. Four days after the final battles, the Persians made their way south, plundering the territory and lands of the Phocian cities (at the instigation of their rivals, and medisers, the Aleuadae of Larissa). The forces split into different groups and met up just northwest of the city of Chaeronea, then split up again to move further south, no doubt to spread maximum fear, as well as to make it easier to feed and provide fresh water for the forces. The oracle at Delphi was left untouched by the Persian forces; Herodotus tells us that the gods protected it with thunderbolts and the arrival of two heroic soldiers who chased away the Persian forces. It was more likely that leaving Delphi untouched was part of Xerxes' propaganda, showing the Greeks that it was possible to continue with their way of life if they simply submitted to his rule.

Moving into Boeotia, the Spartan exile Demaratus, an exiled Spartan king now living in Persia, arranged for his friends in Thebes to become **guest-friends** of Xerxes. At this time, Persian troops were sent to destroy the cities of Thespieae and Plataea, traditional enemies of Thebes. It took the Persian forces six days to travel to Thebes from Thermopylae, though it would normally take only three. This may have been because Xerxes was expecting major cities to submit to his will when they heard of the devastation being wrought on other cities. However, this did not happen, and when he reached Attika, it was largely deserted. The 500 or so Athenians that remained were eventually captured and executed (if they did not jump off the side of the Acropolis to their deaths before their capture) and the buildings on the Acropolis were set alight, thus fulfilling the promise of revenge for the burning of Sardis in 499 BC. The next day, however, the Athenian exiles living in his court were asked

guest-friends

ties of friendship in the ancient world between wealthy men of different cities that allowed them to travel and stay in various cities, ensuring safe travel

to make appropriate sacrifices according to Athenian customs. Soon after this, on the eighth day after Artemisium, the Persian fleet arrived and anchored at the Athenian bay at Phalerum. It is likely that there were approximately 700 triremes at his disposal. After meeting with his commanders, Xerxes determined to move against the Greeks immediately.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was the purpose of the Persian army's slow and destructive march south from Thermopylae?
2. What did most Athenians in Athens do after the defeat at Thermopylae? What did a small number of them do instead, and why?
3. What did the Peloponnesians, led by the Spartans, do after Thermopylae? What was the problem with this strategy?
4. What does the destruction of Plataea and Thespieae tell us about the possible reasons of those who medised?
5. Why did Xerxes have the Athenian Acropolis destroyed, but then have Athenians make sacrifices there the next day?

Salamis

Winter was a dangerous time to campaign in Greece, by both land and sea, and Xerxes did not have sufficient supplies for a lengthy stay with his entire force. He sent his fleet to prepare for battle and scout the waters around Salamis. The Greek navy had gathered there after attending to the evacuation of their cities. Though it had grown in size since Artemisium, it is likely that it was approximately half the size of the Persian fleet.

There was furious debate about what to do. The Peloponnesian forces, including the Corinthians, were in favour of returning to the Isthmus of Corinth with all forces to make a stand there. When word arrived that the Persians had burned Attika and Athens, the meeting broke up, with many contingents preparing to leave the next day. Themistocles convinced Eurybiades to summon the naval commanders to meet a second time. Themistocles emphasised that to retreat would just lead the Persians to a position where they could attack the Greeks more easily, but at Salamis, the narrow straits would favour the Greek fleet over the Persian one, turning the seeming Persian advantage of numbers against the Persians themselves. When the Corinthian commander, Adeimantus, responded angrily to Themistocles, the Athenian commander turned to Eurybiades and said that if the Greek fleet abandoned its position at Salamis, the Athenians would sail away and settle in Italy. This would mean that there would be insufficient forces to defend against the Persian navy, rendering the wall at the Isthmus of Corinth useless. Eurybiades decided that battle would be fought at Salamis.

When Eurybiades, who was weak-hearted when things became dangerous but was commander of the fleet on account of the superior claim of Sparta, wanted to pick everything up and sail to the isthmus, where the infantry of the Peloponnesians were also mustered, Themistocles spoke against it. It was then that he pronounced the memorable saying. When Eurybiades said to him, 'Themistocles, in athletic contests, those who start early get whipped,' Themistocles replied, 'Yes, but those who are left behind are not given a crown [prize].' When Eurybiades raised his staff to hit him, Themistocles said, 'Hit me, but hear me.' Eurybiades was amazed at his calmness and



FIGURE 3.11 A Greek hoplite fighting a Persian soldier depicted on a Greek vase.

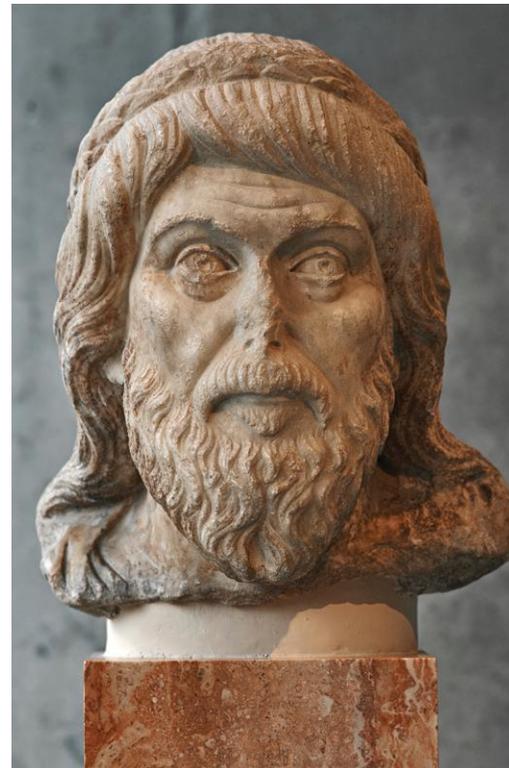


FIGURE 3.12 Plutarch, a Greek historian of the 2nd century AD

asked him to speak, and Themistocles brought him to his opinion with his speech. But with regard to the saying [of Adeimantus of Corinth] that a man without a *polis* has no right advising men who still had a city to abandon and betray it, Themistocles addressed the following speech: 'You wretch, it is true that we have left behind our house and walls, not thinking it proper to become slaves on account of such lifeless things. But we still have the greatest city in Hellas, our 200 triremes, which are ready to help if you want to be saved by them. But if you go away and betray us a second time, many Hellenes will immediately learn that the Athenians have acquired both a city that is free and land that is better than the one they threw away.'

Plutarch, *Life of Themistocles*, 11

In preparation for a battle off the coast of Salamis, Xerxes' engineers constructed a mole, a stone or wooden wall, to trap the Greek forces, which caused panic among the Greeks. This led to a third meeting, at which it was decided to abandon the position at Salamis and retreat to the Isthmus of Corinth. In response, Themistocles implemented a plan that night, most likely pre-arranged for such an eventuality. He sent a trusted slave to the Persian command at Phalerum. The slave told the Persians that the Athenians had decided to medise, and that the Greeks at Salamis were planning to retreat. He advised that the Persians should attack at their first opportunity and send a force to cut off the Greek retreat at the west of the island of Salamis. This was not entirely untrue for the most part, and it was also a message that the Persians expected to hear—they had planned their shock and awe campaign to encourage such Greek betrayals.

It is likely that Xerxes had already commanded his forces to attack the next day. The Egyptian forces, who had been the most effective naval vessels at Artemisium, were now sent to the west of the island to catch any Greek who might decide to retreat in that direction, while he ordered the remainder of his fleet to split into three columns. He also had a force of soldiers land on the island of Psyttaleia, in the middle of the entrance to the straits, to kill any Greeks who might try to land on the island and assist their own forces. The Persian navy was then deployed that night to ensure that no Greeks escaped. This meant that while the Greek sailors were sleeping and preparing for battle, the Persian sailors were spending the entire night maintaining position in lines at sea, which was also no doubt part of Themistocles' plan. At a meeting that night, the Greek commanders were again at odds, still planning to retreat. When the Athenian *strategos* Aristides arrived, he informed Themistocles that he had to escape a Persian detachment and that their points of escape were blocked. At this time, the Athenian commanders jointly informed the Greeks of the situation, and that a fight would now be favourable to the Greeks. A defecting Greek vessel from the Persian fleet confirmed this fact, so the Greeks finally prepared for battle.

Source study 3.3 Mixed messages

Source A Cawkwell

Herodotus would have it thought that Xerxes was moved to order battle by a message sent the night before the engagement by Themistocles saying that the Greeks were planning to run away ... There should be no doubt that a message of some sort was sent ... There should equally be no doubt that the message had no part in persuading Xerxes to fight. The fleet set out at midnight and in Herodotus' account the message was sent by night, too late therefore to influence the Persian high command, for preparations would have had to be begun long before that.

G. Cawkwell (2005), *The Greek Wars. The Failure of Persia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 108-09

Question

1. What does Cawkwell say about the impact of Themistocles' message on Persian strategy for the battle?

The Battle of Salamis

The next morning, Xerxes set himself up at a vantage point on the Attik coast so that he could see the battle unfold. This would have been a powerful motivator for the Persian fleet, as distinguishing oneself in front of the Great King in battle led to rich rewards. After daybreak, the Persian forces began to sail up the coast of Attika and were met with the cheers, shouts, horn-blowing and battle cries of the Greek fleet as they sailed out to meet them in battle. It is difficult to determine exactly what happened, but it seems most likely that as the Persians sailed into the Saronic Gulf, the Athenians rowed out of the more northern bay to lure the Persians further into narrower waters. Herodotus tells us that the Corinthians then fled north, but it is most likely that they were feigning retreat to lure the Persian fleet even further into the straits; it would also have served the double purpose of protecting against the Egyptian fleet that had sailed to the west of the island from attacking them from behind. Once the Persian fleet began to sail past the island of Psyttaleia, the Peloponnesian component of the Greek fleet sailed out from the more southern bay of Salamis. As they sailed further into the straits to

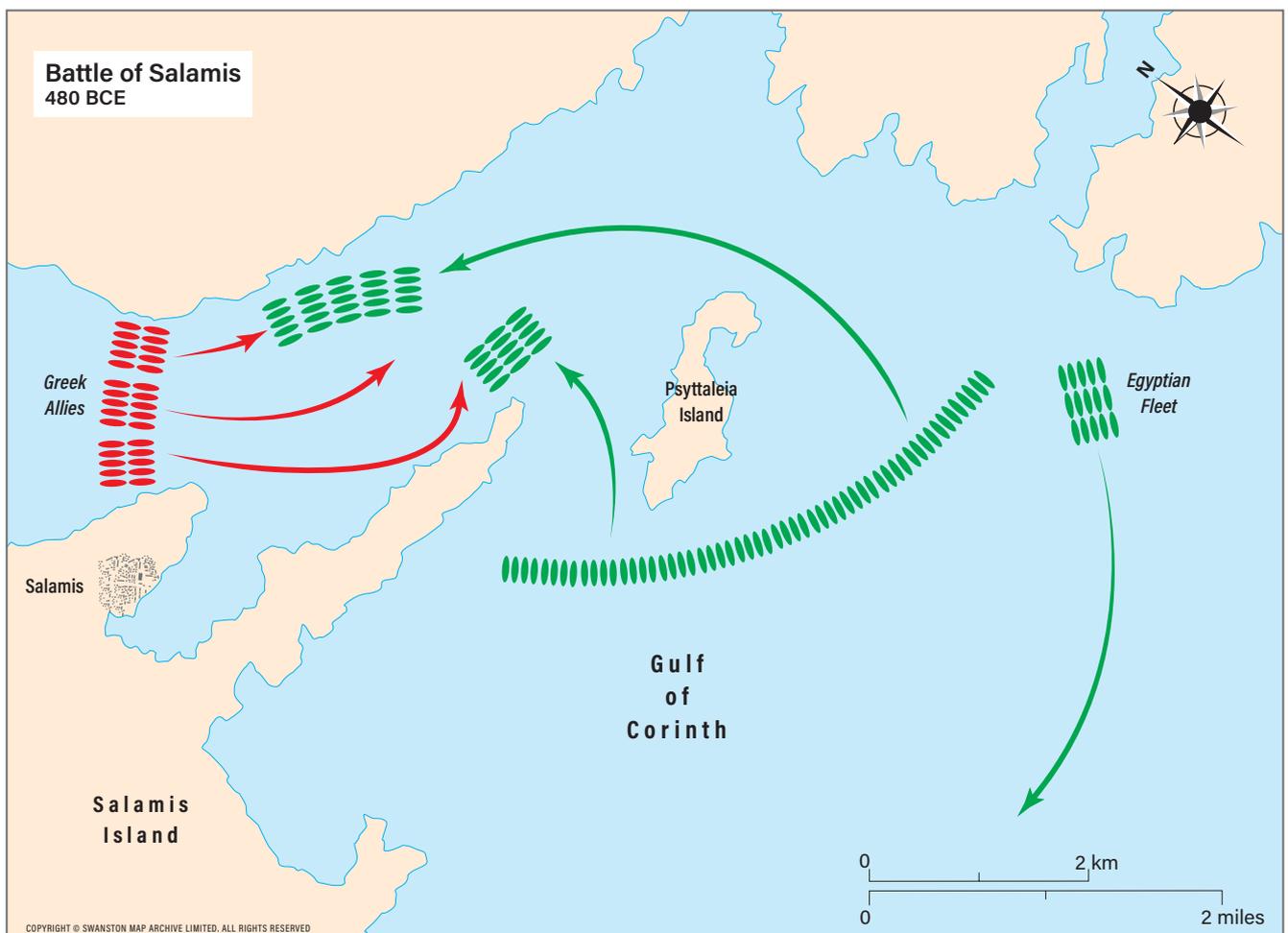


FIGURE 3.13 Map of the Battle of Salamis

meet the Greek fleet, the Persians had to alter their lines because of the shallow waters, which caused confusion, with some of the Persian vessels turning side-on to the Athenian triremes. When the Persian commander's vessel was attacked and sunk, the Persians fell into further confusion, which the Athenian fleet exploited. The Athenian vessels attacked, ramming the Persian vessels to sink them, or sailing past them, cutting off the oars, leaving them an easy target and unable to move.

Source study 3.4 Herodotus and the Battle of Salamis

Source A Herodotus

Athenians say that as soon as the ships joined battle, the Corinthian general, Adeimantus, wanting to leave and suffering from extreme fear, hoisted sails and fled away. When the Corinthians saw the general's ship fleeing, they left in the same way, but when in their flight they were opposite the precinct of Athena Skiras on Salamis, a divinely led fast-sailing ship approached them. No one seemed to have sent it, and nothing about the battle's progress was known to the Corinthians. They considered this to be a divine action because when the ship came near, those on the ship said this: 'Adeimantus, you have turned your ships around in flight and betrayed the Hellenes, but they are overcoming the enemies, just as they prayed they would.' When they said this, Adeimantus did not believe them, so they spoke yet again, saying that they could be taken hostage and killed if the Greeks were not the clear victors. Thus, he and others turned the ships around and returned to the fleet, but it was all over. This rumour was spread by the Athenians, but the Corinthians do not agree at all, but consider themselves to be foremost in the naval battle, and the rest of Hellas are witness to that.

Herodotus, 8.94

Question

1. What does the interaction recorded by Herodotus tell us about the unity of the Greek forces at this point? Can you explain this situation?

The tide turns

After several hours of fighting, the conditions changed, as many locals expected that they would. A strong southerly wind started to blow, and the swell changed, forcing the Persian vessels around and exposing their sides. This made very easy targets for the Greek vessels, which rammed them with ease. The Persian vessels sat much higher out of the water than the very low-lying Greek vessels, which made them harder to control in this specific set of circumstances, a fact that the Greeks, particularly Themistocles, would have known. As the Persian vessels turned to retreat, they crashed into the vessels still advancing, causing even more confusion and carnage on the water. Later in the day, as the tide and wind forced survivors onto Psyttaleia, the Persian soldiers stationed there were rescuing their own and killing any Greek who came ashore. The Athenian commander Aristides saw this and took a force of hoplites over and killed the Persians on the island.



FIGURE 3.14 Wilhelm von Kaulbach's 1868 painting *The Battle of Salamis*

By the end of the day, the Greeks were the clear victors, performing their deeds under the watchful eyes of Xerxes, who had witnessed this saga play out in slow motion. For the loss of 40 triremes, the Greeks had sunk much of the Persian fleet (Diodorus claims it was 200 hundred vessels) and completely demoralised their forces. Though the Greeks prepared for another battle the next day, Xerxes recognised that his naval forces had been defeated and there was no way to continue. He had his forces make visible preparations for battle the next day, but when night came, he left for Asia Minor with the remnant of his fleet. On 2 October, Mardonius (Xerxes' brother-in-law) and the Persian army evacuated Athens and marched to Thessaly, where they prepared to spend the winter. An eclipse happened on that day (which allows us to date it accurately), which the superstitious Greeks saw as a sign not to pursue the Persians.

It was not until the next day that the Greeks realised the extent of their victory. They attempted to pursue the fleet by sea, but could not catch them. Themistocles argued that the fleet should sail north and destroy the bridge of boats constructed across the Hellespont, but Eurybiades' argument that they should not trap the Persian army in Greece won over the commanders. They were not aware that a large force was left in Greece by Xerxes, under the command of Mardonius, to spend the winter and prepare for another campaign in the next season. The Athenians were particularly angry that they did not pursue the Persians, but Themistocles urged them to focus on sowing new crops and rebuilding their homes. He also allegedly sent a message to Xerxes—one version of this story claims that the message said that he did a great favour for Xerxes in convincing the Greeks not to pursue him, while another version claims that Themistocles warned Xerxes he should hurry, lest the Greeks beat him to the Hellespont and tear down the bridge of boats. Both messages, it seems, were an attempt to encourage the Persians to leave Greece as quickly as possible while making himself seem like a secret mediser to the Great King—Themistocles always ensured he had a foot in both camps.

Source study 3.5 Historians and the Battle of Salamis

Source A Rahe

We are told by Plutarch that the Persian assault persisted until nightfall, and Aeschylus intimates that the struggle lasted the full twelve hours separating dawn from dusk at that time of the year. This suggests that contingent after contingent sailed up the channel to be slaughtered in turn by the Greeks, and it leaves one wondering just how long the rowers in the Persian fleet—who had been active, as Themistocles had intended, the entire night before the battle—had the stamina to man the oars in their triremes with any effectiveness.

P. Rahe (2015), *The Grand Strategy of Classical Sparta: The Persian Challenge*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 277

Source B Cartledge

The import and impact of Salamis cannot ... be gainsaid. It was a major humiliation for Xerxes personally, who had watched the conflict from the Attic shore and chose to return to Asia immediately afterwards ... But it was no means the end of the Persians' Greek affair, and when Xerxes departed, he might reasonably have had every confidence that the man to whom he handed over the supreme command would be able to finish the job satisfactorily ... And there is a good case for claiming that Mardonius ought to have finished the job, especially as Plataea was ... on a razor's edge ...

P. Cartledge (2013), *After Thermopylae*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 100

Questions

1. What point does Rahe (Source A) make about the impact of Themistocles' message to Xerxes?
2. What does Cartledge (Source B) claim about the continuation of the Persian campaign once he left?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did Xerxes likely feel he needed to force a battle with the Greek fleet as soon as possible?
2. What strategy did the Peloponnesian forces want to adopt? Why did they want to do this? How did Themistocles counter this?
3. What did Themistocles do once he realised that the Greek forces were likely to retreat? Explain why he did this.
4. What was the Persian response to the message from Themistocles?
5. Explain why Xerxes positioned himself to watch the Battle of Salamis. Do you think this may have had an impact on the battle, either positively or negatively?
6. How did the Greek fleet lure the Persian fleet into the narrower straits around Salamis?
7. What impact did the Peloponnesian fleet sailing out after the Persians who were already in the straits have on the battle?
8. How did the Greek (mostly Athenian) knowledge of the weather conditions affect the outcome of the Battle of Salamis?
9. In what way did the Corinthians contribute to the Battle of Salamis? Is the inclusion of Herodotus' story of their retreat fair?
10. Why did Xerxes have his fleet make it seem as though they were going to fight again the next day?
11. Why did the Greek forces not pursue the Persians after the battle?

Between Salamis and Plataea

After the Persian fleet left, Themistocles sailed to islands that had medised to exact punishment for their crimes. The fines they levied were no doubt required to ensure that they could keep their triremes at sea—seafaring was a very costly endeavour—and to provide funds to rebuild cities that had been destroyed, such as Athens, and sow crops for a harvest. Once the Athenians returned home, they made offerings to the gods and sent part of the plunder for dedication at the oracle at Delphi. Themistocles was awarded for his command by the Hellenic League and was also celebrated at Sparta. There, he was awarded an olive wreath, an offering that was given to victorious athletes and a significant honour, and when he returned to Athens, he was accompanied to the border of Spartan territory by the *hippeis*, the 300-strong bodyguard of the Spartan kings. This would have made him look as though he was superior and possibly aiming at tyranny in Athens. Combined with the destruction that the Athenians realised had been wrought on their city and homes as a result of Themistocles' policy of abandoning them to the Persians, and after learning that the Persians had left a large army in Thessaly to continue the fight, the Athenian commander was criticised heavily. Themistocles was soon stripped of his military command, which was given by popular vote to his political rival, Xanthippus. He would not be elected to command again for the next campaigning season. Xanthippus was given command of the Athenian navy, while Aristides was awarded command of the Athenian army.

hippeis

the bodyguard of the Spartan king. Though they were named *hippeis* (cavalry), they fought like the rest of the army, on foot (Greek: *hippo* means horse)

Preparations for continuing the war

Mardonius likely understood the significance of Xanthippus' and Aristides' appointments in Athens, as both belonged to a political grouping that had previously favoured coming to terms with Persia. To test the resolve of Athens, Mardonius sent Alexander of Macedonia to Athens, again to emphasise that Xerxes wanted to make peace with Athens and offer generous terms: the Great King would forget about all past wrongs, give the Athenians their land and another land of their choosing, and rebuild their temples. The Athenians did not immediately have Alexander address the *ekklesia*, but waited for the Spartans to arrive to put pressure on them.



FIGURE 3.15 Rodrigo Santoro as Xerxes in the film *300: Rise of an Empire*. Here, he is portrayed as a god-king. Looking back at other representations of Persians from the time of Xerxes, do you think this is an accurate representation of the Persian king? Why might Hollywood have portrayed him in this manner?

The Spartans wanted the Athenians to sail their navy to Ionia and cause the Great King to recall his forces to fight there, but the Athenians also wanted assurances that the Spartans would fight the Persians in mainland Greece. Aristides convinced the Athenians to reject the Persian offer, and he advised the Spartans to send the army to fight Mardonius in Boeotia and prevent another attack on Attika. Instead of sending the fleet to Ionia, the Athenians used it to evacuate the city and its people to Salamis again when it became clear that Sparta was not going to protect them. Mardonius then sent a second embassy to the Athenians once they were on Salamis.

The Athenians sent an embassy led by Xanthippus, the Athenian admiral, to Sparta to urge the Spartans again to send an army north. The Athenians were supported in this by the Megarians and Plataeans. The Spartans delayed answering the appeal for 10 days, at which point they summoned the Athenian embassy and announced that they had already despatched a force of 5000 Spartiates, led by the **regent** Pausanias. A further 5000 *perioikoi* were sent to accompany the embassies north. It is quite likely that the Spartans had decided to send a force early, but needed to ensure that the *helot* population was sufficiently cowed before doing this. This also explains why the Spartan force marched north-west before moving north-east towards the Isthmus of Corinth. Soon after this, Athens sent a fleet of some 140 triremes to the Hellenic League fleet at Aegina.

In the year separating the battle of Thermopylae from that of Plataea, the Spartans do not occupy the centre of the stage. Indeed we observe the re-emergence of an exclusively Peloponnesian vision of Spartan interests, shown by the decision to hold a defensive position to protect the isthmus of Corinth. To judge from Herodotus' narrative, this isolationist ideal was quite pervasive ... as for the fleet, the Spartans and other Peloponnesians preferred to fight near the isthmus ... Even after the victory of Salamis, when Mardonius re-invaded Athens in the summer of 479 and the Spartans did not intervene to help ... once again the delay is justified through religious engagement and an exclusive interest in the Peloponnese ... Herodotus suggests a generational change was responsible for the change of mind. On the one hand, Kleombrotus is the commander who built the wall; with his death the wall, although completed, is revealed in all its futility and disappears from view.

M. Lupi (2018), 'Sparta and the Persian Wars, 499-478', in A. Powell (Ed.), *A Companion to Sparta*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, p. 280

regent

a person who rules in the place of a king who is too young to rule yet

perioikoi

the non-Spartan people who lived in the towns and villages around the city of Sparta (Lakonia)

Source study 3.6 Athenian attitudes towards Persia before Plataea

Source A Herodotus

On account of this, he [Mardonius] sent Murykhides to Salamis, who came before the *boule* and told them Mardonius' message. Lykidas, one of the members of the *boule*, then said that it seemed right to accept the offer brought to them by Murykhides and bring it to the people. He made this opinion known, either because he had been bribed by Mardonius, or because the offer pleased him. The Athenians on the *boule* were angered, as were those outside who heard it. They surrounded Lykidas and stoned him to death, but they sent Murykhides the Hellespontine away unharmed. There was great discussion on Salamis about Lykidas, and when the Athenian women learned what happened, they went to the house of Lykidas of their own accord, calling out one woman to another, and stoned to death his wife and children also.

Herodotus, 9.5

Question

1. What does the story of Murychides in Herodotus tell us about the attitude of the Athenians towards Persia?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was done after Salamis to assist in rebuilding Athens and other cities that had been destroyed by the Persians?
2. How was Themistocles honoured by the Spartans? In contrast, what happened to Themistocles in Athens, and why?
3. What may the election of Xanthippus and Aristides have meant for the policy against Persia in Athens?
4. Why did the Spartans seem not to support the Athenian appeal for assistance in fighting the Persians?

Plataea

Once Mardonius heard that the Greek army was gathering, he destroyed as much of Athens and Attika as he could on the march north, arriving at Thebes where he decided to build a huge stockade of 900 acres. This took his army two weeks to construct and was intended to serve as protection for the baggage train and as a base should events turn against the Persians. The size also indicates that he had approximately 60 000 foot soldiers and 10 000 cavalry, though a Persian source, Ctesias, tells us that he had 100 000 soldiers and 20 000 cavalry, which is also possible. This was bolstered by medising Greek forces from Boeotia (notably Thebes), Thessaly, Malis and Locris. They located themselves near the open plains to make the best use of their cavalry, and near a fresh water supply. Provisioning this large force was difficult, and the Phocians also attacked the Persian supply lines wherever they could.

In contrast, the Greeks marched to the hills to the south of the Persian position and based themselves near the town of Erythrae, which gave them an excellent view of the plains and allowed them access to their supply lines down south. They spread themselves along the ridge and waited, as they could afford to do. This was the largest hoplite force ever assembled, around 38 700 hoplites in total, including 8000 Athenians and 5000 Spartiates. To draw them down onto the plains, Mardonius sent the cavalry commander Masistius with his forces to attack the Megarians by surprise before dawn, as they were closest to the plains. The Athenian commander Aristides sent his bodyguard of 300 lightly armed troops and archers to assist in repelling the Persian forces. This skirmish led to the death of the talented commander Masistius, which was a heavy blow to Mardonius—once he had fallen from his horse and was killed, the Greeks even managed to capture his body, which was a further insult to the Persians. The Greeks paraded the corpse of Masistius from the mountain ridge for the Persians to see, taunting them, but also giving them hope that the Persian force could be defeated.

Soon after this, a lack of fresh water forced the Greeks to reposition themselves. The Spartans and Tegean troops were situated near the spring of Gargaphia. The other troops were spread out along the ridges surrounding this position, but remained on the high ground. The Persians redeployed themselves to match this surprise move. After eight days



FIGURE 3.16 Depiction of a Persian archer on Athenian pottery

of waiting, a medising Greek suggested that the Persians circle around the Greek position and attack the supply line. Mardonius ordered a night attack that successfully captured a huge provision of food that the Greeks were waiting for. This forced the Greeks into a difficult position, as it was now they who were running short on supplies. Mardonius continued to attack their position as best he could with his archers. The next day, he also sent a force to guard the Gargaphia spring and had his men and their horses foul the water and make it undrinkable. With no fresh water and limited supplies, the Greeks needed to reposition themselves again.

Source study 3.7 Greek discontent at Plataea

Source A Plutarch

While Hellas was in suspense and Athens in a precarious state of affairs, men from that city from well-known and wealthy families, but impoverished by the war, realised that along with all of their money, their power in the city and reputation had been ruined, while others were honoured and rewarded with offices. So, they met secretly at the house of a certain man from Plataea and conspired to overthrow the democracy, or if they did not succeed, to bring about the ruin of affairs and betray them to the barbarians.

While these things were happening, many were already being corrupted, Aristides was made aware and being fearful of this particular moment, determined neither to ignore the matter nor uncover it publicly, since he was not sure how many would be found out in an investigation that was based on justice rather than that which was advantageous. Thus, he seized eight or so from the many possible men. Two of them, against whom the charge was first brought, and who were the most at fault, Aeschines of Lamptraia and Agesias of Akharnae, departed in flight from the camp, while he released the rest of them.

Plutarch, *Life of Aristides*, 13

Question

1. What story does Plutarch preserve that indicates that the Persian attack was taking its toll on the Greek forces?

As a result of the successful harrying of the Greek troops, Pausanias and the Greek commanders decided to make a move at night to a more favourable position. This was a hard enough task to do in daylight. At night it was extremely difficult and dangerous. The Greeks in the centre were to move to a location known only as 'the island', but their experience of the Persians over the preceding days made them panic and they camped at the sanctuary (small temple) of Hera, instead. The Spartans were stuck in their current position at the time of departure because one of the commanders thought it was disgraceful to flee and the Spartan commanders did not want to leave one-fifth of the force behind. When dawn came, the Spartans decided to leave anyway, and the stubborn Spartan commander eventually followed. Herodotus claims that the Spartan force ended up moving in the opposite direction in error, but it is possible that the plan all along was for the Spartans and the Athenians, who were following them at some distance, to open a supply route while remaining high enough in the foothills to avoid the Persians. Once Mardonius realised that the Greek forces were split in three locations, he ordered an immediate attack.

The Spartans and Tegeans were pinned down at the sanctuary of Eleusinian Demeter, near the town of Hysiae; the Athenians and Plataeans were caught on the plains trying to follow the Spartans; and the rest of the army was located near Plataea.

A force of Persian cavalry were sent against the Spartans and Tegeans, who sent a message requesting urgent support from the Athenians. However, the Athenians were pinned down by medising Greek forces, including Thebans and Thessalians. It was at this point that Mardonius assumed that the Greeks were actually in flight, so he sent a large support force to attack the Spartans and Tegeans over the River Asopus, leaving the territory that favoured the cavalry. In the meantime, the Persians had barricaded the Spartans in with their wicker shields, firing volleys of arrows at the Spartan position; the Spartans and Tegeans were waiting patiently behind their large shields for favourable omens to be obtained to attack. As soon as they received the divine blessing they were seeking, they attacked the Persian position and, after a long struggle, succeeded in breaking down the Persian barricade and putting them to flight. No doubt, the fact that the Persian spears were significantly shorter than the Greek *sarissas* played a significant role. At some point after this, Mardonius was struck by a rock and killed, and the Persian force ran in full retreat back to the stockade. The Athenian troops had also been hard-pressed, particularly by the Theban force, but the Athenians were eventually victorious and joined the Spartans and Tegeans in attacking the Persian fort. A force of around 40 000 soldiers, led by the commander Artabazus, initially marched for the third location of Greek troops, but when he saw the Persian retreat, he decided to march his army north and leave Greece. The remaining Persian forces, now holed up in the fort, were eventually unable to defend it. Tens of thousands of Persians were killed, and some 3000 were taken prisoner to be ransomed off. This marked the end of the Persian invasion of Greece.



FIGURE 3.17 A relief of Persian soldiers and archers at Persepolis, the capital of the Persian Empire

Source study 3.8 Pausanias' failure

Source A Cawkwell

Mysterious too is the Greek strategy once the assembled Greek army advanced into Boeotia ... Pausanias' inactivity was far from masterly. During the ten days the Greeks delayed, they were sorely afflicted by the Persian army ... The only thing he could do if he was not to be at the mercy of the Persians was to advance to the Asopus river to the plain and fight a battle. There can be only one explanation why he did not. He and the other Greek generals felt there was no hope in victory. Indeed a mood of something akin to despair came on the Greek army ... The Persian cavalry had been too much for them.

G. Cawkwell (2005), *The Greek Wars. The Failure of Persia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.113-14

Question

1. Cawkwell is critical of Pausanias' conduct at the battle. Do you think it was poor leadership or poor morale that may have led to the decisions being made as they were? Explain your answer.

Mykale

We are told that on the same day that the Greeks defeated the Persians at Plataea, the Hellenic League's naval forces also won a stunning victory against the Persians. Not long after Xanthippus' Athenian fleet of 110 triremes arrived to create a combined Greek fleet of 250 triremes, a message arrived from the island of Samos asking for their assistance in rebelling against Persia. After leaving Greece, the Persian navy had been stationed at Samos to prevent any potential revolt across the bay in Ionia. The Spartan King Leotykidas sailed promptly to Samos, and the Persian fleet, overly cautious about meeting a Greek fleet in battle again, retreated to the Mykale promontory, where they hauled their ships out of the water to use as part of a barricade. They were also supported by a regional Persian army that had arrived. The Persians had Samians and other Greeks who had demonstrated untrustworthiness assigned to guard duties away from the potential battleground, and then formed up a wicker-shield barricade behind the beached triremes. The Greek forces landed their troops, and while the Spartans approached cautiously, the Athenians rushed the blockade, taking little time to remove the barricade, again likely because of the longer Greek *sarissas*. The Persian forces were massacred with few survivors. Before leaving, the Greeks burned the Persian ships and the barricade that the Persians had built.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was the purpose of the stockade that the Persians' forces built at Plataea?
2. What seem to have been the key problems for the Persians from the outset of this battle?
3. Explain the positioning of the Greek forces in the first stage of the battle.
4. Why did the Persians attack the Megarian forces? What happened as a result of this?
5. Why did the Greek forces reposition themselves in the second stage of the battle? How did the Persians counter this?
6. What happened for the tables to be turned on the Greek forces, which led them to need to move their position again?
7. Explain the sequence of events that led to the Greek forces being split into three different locations.

8. Outline the events that led to the Persians being forced back into the stockade and defeated.
9. How did it happen that the Greek fleet sailed across the Aegean to Mykale?
10. Explain the Persians' response to the Greek naval advance to Mykale.

Reasons for Greek victory and Persian defeat

It would have come as a significant surprise that the Greeks defeated the Persians. Not only were the Persians defeated, but the Greeks stopped completely their western expansion, even though Persian success would have been seen as inevitable by most people at the time. There are many closely interrelated reasons for this victory.

Weapons and armour

The differences in Greek and Persian styles of weapons and armour had a fundamental impact on the outcome of battles. Greek hoplites, the main part of the Hellenic League forces, were equipped in bronze helmets, breastplates and greaves supported by thick leather, with a 2m wide bronze-faced shield, an iron sword and iron-tipped *sarissas* that were around 2m long. Fighting as a **phalanx**, hoplites' combined use of shields and spears was formidable, in contrast with the weaponry and armour of the Persians. Most of the

phalanx

a group of hoplites fighting as one unit, in rows, using their shield to protect themselves and part of the man on their left, attacking the enemy with their *sarissa* (spear) over or under the shield



FIGURE 3.18 A Spartan hoplite

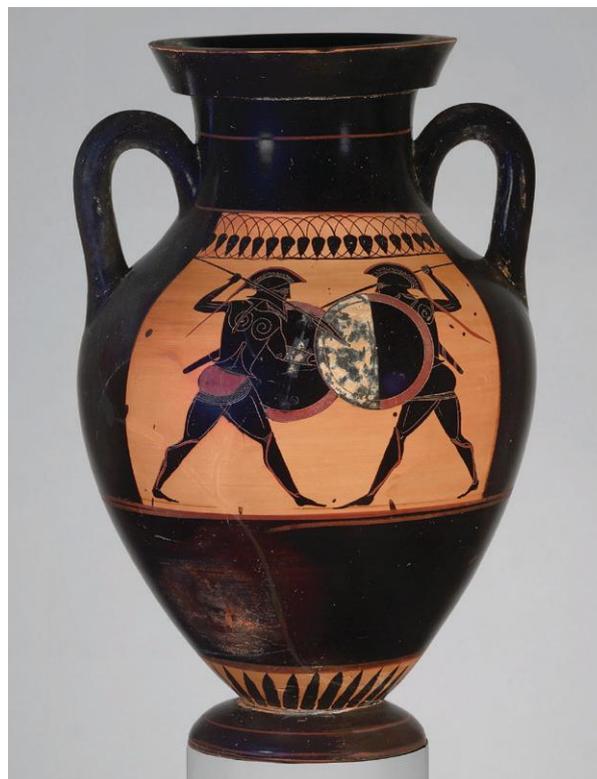


FIGURE 3.19 A 5th-century BC Athenian vase painting of hoplites fighting, showing their clothing and weapons.



FIGURE 3.20 A glazed brick relief of the Persian Immortals from Persepolis, clearly showing their ceremonial clothing and weapons.

Persian troops were equipped according to their own local customs, often armoured in toughened leather covered by a bright tunic. Their main weapon was the bow and a spear that was significantly shorter than the Greek *sarissa*. This meant that when the two forces were in close combat, the Greeks were able to attack the Persians more effectively. Also, the Greek armour protected the hoplites, making the arrows shot by the Persian archers, one of the most important parts of the Persian army, far less effective.

The Persian cavalry was renowned as one of the best forces in the ancient world, and when combined with the medising Thessalian cavalry would have been formidable. However, the terrain on which the battles occurred made their success on the field far less likely.

The part of the Persian army that was most feared, the 10 000 Immortals, was a formidable force indeed. Although depicted in Persian art wearing ceremonial tunics and robes (most notably Persepolis), soldiers in battle would have been well armoured. However, again, their success in battle would have been limited by the longer Greek *sarissa*.

Source study 3.9 Uniforms and armour: an extract from Xerxes' enumeration at Doriskos

Source A Herodotus

The Persians were equipped in this way: they wore on their heads loose caps called tiaras, and on their bodies embroidered sleeved tunics, with scales of iron like the scales of fish in appearance, and trousers on their legs; for shields they had wicker **bucklers**, with quivers hanging beneath them; they carried short spears, long bows, and reed arrows, and daggers that hung from the girdle by the right thigh ... The Assyrians in the army wore on their heads helmets of twisted bronze made in an outlandish fashion not easy to describe. They carried shields and spears and daggers of Egyptian fashion, and also wooden clubs studded with iron, and they wore linen breastplates ... The Bactrians in the army wore a headgear very similar to the Median, carrying their native reed bows and short spears. The Sacae, who are Scythians, had on their heads tall caps, erect and stiff and tapering to a point; they wore trousers, and carried their native bows, and daggers, and also axes which they call 'sagaris' ... The Indians wore garments of tree-wool, and carried reed bows and iron-tipped reed arrows ... The Arians were equipped with Median bows, but in all else like the Bactrians ... The Caspians in the army wore cloaks and carried their native reed bows and short swords ... The Sarangae were conspicuous in their dyed garments and knee-high boots, carrying bows and Median spears ... The Pactyes wore cloaks and carried their native bows and daggers ... The Arabians wore mantles girded up, and carried at their right side long bows curving backwards. The Ethiopians were wrapped in skins of leopards and lions, and carried bows made of palmwood strips, no less than four cubits long, and short arrows pointed not with iron but with a sharpened stone that they use to carve seals; furthermore, they had spears pointed with a gazelle's horn sharpened like a lance, and also studded clubs ... These Ethiopians of Asia were for the most part armed like the Indians; but they wore on their heads the skins of horses' foreheads, stripped from the head with ears and mane; the mane served them for a crest, and they wore the horses' ears stiff and upright; for shields they had bucklers of the skin of cranes ... The Libyans came in leather garments, using javelins of burnt wood ... The Paphlagonians in the army had woven helmets on their heads, and small shields and short spears, and also javelins and daggers; they wore their native shoes that reach midway to the knee ... The Lydian armour was most similar to the Greek. The Mysians wore on their heads their native helmets, carrying small shields and javelins of burnt wood ... The Thracians in the army wore fox-skin caps on their heads, and tunics on their bodies; over these they wore embroidered

buckler

a type of small shield

mantles; they had shoes of fawnskin on their feet and legs; they also had javelins and little shields and daggers ... The [Pisidians] had little shields of raw oxhide; each man carried two wolf-hunters' spears; they wore helmets of bronze, and on these helmets were the ears and horns of oxen wrought in bronze, and also crests; their legs were wrapped around with strips of purple rags ... The Mares wore on their heads their native woven helmets, and carried javelins and small hide shields. The Colchians had wooden helmets and small shields of raw oxhide and short spears, and also swords ...

Herodotus, 7.61–79

Questions

1. The Persian forces, and the Medes who were equipped similarly, were the most important part of the Persian army. Explain what their equipment tells us about their battle tactics.
2. Outline the most common form of armour described in this extract.
3. Which of the Persian contingents were best prepared for fighting the Greek forces? Explain why they were better prepared.
4. Explain how the Persian contingents were probably well-equipped for battle in their own lands, but not in Greece.
5. Explain how the contingents of the Persian army were prepared for fighting using Persian tactics, but ill-prepared to take on a phalanx of Greek hoplites.
6. Source A seems to have been copied from a record maintained by the Persians, and first made at the time of the invasion. Why would the Great King want to advertise his forces in this way at the time of the invasion? What does this tell us about Herodotus as a source?



FIGURE 3.21 A view of the mountains of Thermopylae around the battlefield site. This image clearly shows the mountainous region, which was difficult for incoming forces to breach, a fact that was used as a defensive strategy by the Greeks.

Leadership

While there was excellent leadership on both sides of this conflict, it is evident that the Greek leaders were better able to use the advantages at their disposal (such as superior weapons and armour and knowledge of the terrain) to place them in a better position to win individual battles. Themistocles was clearly an outstanding leader, particularly known for his cunning strategies and tactics. Like Miltiades before him, he understood the need to be proactive when facing the Persian threat so that the city could not be betrayed. Themistocles also knew how to sow discord in the enemy ranks. Examples of this ability include the messages he left for Ionians after the Battle of Artemisium, and those sent to the Great King prior to the Battle of Salamis. In contrast, Pausanias' only role was in the Battle of Plataea commanding the Hellenic League forces, but it was a pivotal one. While it is usually asserted that the Spartan move westward just before dawn was a mistake, it has also been suggested that this was to draw the Persians out to attack. Regardless of this, Pausanias' battlefield command at the battle was clearly crucial, and can be compared to Leonidas' command at Thermopylae, where he was able to command the troops in battle to hold the Persian attacks for three days.

On sea, Eurybiades was a constant presence, and he has been depicted negatively as a weak leader. However, as a Spartan, he would have been expected to take the lead. By following Themistocles' advice, it could easily be argued that he was demonstrating a strength of character that not many Spartans possessed. Following the advice of an Athenian, and being able to retain his position of leadership of the naval forces, indicates that he was likely able to handle any criticism from his fellow Spartiates about following the advice of Themistocles. This strength of character benefitted the Hellenic League as a whole. Persian leadership lacked these benefits, and generals such as Mardonius on land and Artabazos on sea, were put into difficult situations as a result of the disadvantages they already faced (such as inferior weapons, and lack of knowledge of the terrain); at Salamis, the Great King himself put them into a losing situation.

Knowledge of the terrain and weather patterns

Having the 'home ground advantage' in war is of enormous benefit, and the Greek leaders were able to use this knowledge to their advantage. While the Greeks were not able to stop the Persian advance into the Vale of Tempe, the Greek knowledge of the near impregnability of the pass at Thermopylae allowed them to put in place a strategy to hold the Persians, hopefully for long enough to force them to run out of supplies. Had it not been for the inability to hold the Anopaea path, this strategy would likely have been successful.

Moreover, the knowledge of the weather patterns was of critical importance for the success of the Greek fleet. At Artemisium, knowing when to draw the ships to safety protected the Greek forces from storms while wreaking havoc on the Persian fleet. Similarly, the knowledge of the tides and winds at Salamis allowed Themistocles to put in place a strategy that meant the Persian vessels, which sat higher in the water, would be more vulnerable when the weather conditions changed, allowing the Greek forces to ram them with ease. The Persians' lack of knowledge meant that they were placed in vulnerable positions regularly, even at Plataea, where their position should have allowed them to use their cavalry to great effect except that they were sent into battle on ground that did not favour them.

Tactics and strategies

The tactics and strategies implemented by both sides of this conflict were designed to play to their strengths. From the start, the Persian strategy of shock and awe was well conceived, and many Greek and non-Greek cities and states submitted to the Persians as a result. However, this meant that the force needed to be impressive, and the supply issues



FIGURE 3.22 A reenactment group shows the basic rowed hoplite formation, the phalanx. With overlapping shields and long spears, the hoplites presented ideal in defensive and offensive strategies against the Persians.

that this presented contributed to its eventual demise as the Persians were continually mindful that they needed to force a solution, whereas the Greek forces could afford to play a longer game. Their overall strategy was to hold the Persian forces back as long as possible to exacerbate their supply deficiencies. This can be seen from the outset at the Vale of Tempe, then at Thermopylae and Artemisium. When battle was joined on land, the Persians defaulted to their main methods of warfare, massed archers and cavalry attacks. The archers, however, had their impact limited by the Greek armour, while the impact of the cavalry was limited because the terrain of Greece does not make cavalry attacks easy. The Greek phalanx was a particularly effective tactic against the Persians (as seen at both Thermopylae and Plataea), both because the formation was difficult to break up and because Persians' weapons were ineffective against it.

At sea, the fundamental difference between Persian and Greek vessels meant that different tactics were employed by both sides. The Persian fleet was made up of vessels from many different parts of the Persian Empire, but the bulk of the fleet, Phoenician and Egyptian triremes, sat higher in the water than Greek triremes. The main tactic of the Persians was to lower a gangplank onto an enemy ship and have soldiers board and then attack the enemy crew. In contrast, the lower, sturdier Greek triremes were designed to ram the enemy vessels with their bronze prow to sink or disable them. This favoured the Greeks, particularly at Salamis where the weather conditions turned the Persian fleet sideways and allowed the Greeks to ram them almost at will.

Supply and issues of timing

The Greeks were obviously in a position of strength with regards to the issue of supply. They had access to their own resources as needed, unless they were destroyed by the Persians (such as the destruction of Athenian crops). In contrast, the Persians had enormous difficulty in provisioning the largest invasion force ever assembled to that date. It required huge logistical effort, with supply depots established prior to the Persian force even leaving for Greece. Also, once they left, the Persians needed to ensure that they kept moving because fresh water and food would run out very quickly with such a large army.

This meant that the overall Greek strategy of stopping the advance of the Persian army was highly effective, even at the Battle of Marathon, where lack of food and water would have begun to present themselves quickly. This meant that at critical times, decisions were taken that affected the outcome of the campaign.

Also, timing of events played a critical role. The Great King deliberately marched his army slowly into Greece, most likely with the hope that most of the Greek *poleis* would submit or betray their own cities before a battle even needed to be fought. However, this also placed his naval forces in a difficult situation, because the delay meant that the dangerous sailing season was approaching. This forced the naval commanders to make risky decisions, such as the squadron of ships sent to round Euboea prior to the Battle of Artemisium in the hope of breaking the deadlock at Thermopylae. Also, it was fortunate for the Persians that several of their battles happened at the same time as Greek festivals, particularly ones that engaged Sparta, so much so that it is thought not to be a coincidence. The former Spartan king Demaratus accompanied Xerxes on the second invasion, while the former Athenian tyrant Hippias attended the first Persian invasion of 490 BC. Both men would have had intimate knowledge of this information and would have encouraged the Persians to attack at these times. It played an important role at the Battle of Marathon, because the Persians would have needed to attack before the Spartans arrived after the Karneia, while at Thermopylae a similar situation would have encouraged the Persians to find a way to break through the Spartan position before the arrival of more Spartan forces who were in Sparta, again celebrating the Karneia.

Unity and disunity in military forces

There were moments where the Hellenic League was at the point of fracturing, such as when Peloponnesian forces were forced to retreat to the Isthmus of Corinth before the Battle of Salamis, or when the Spartans refused to send an army to protect Athens prior to the second occupation of the city. Even the Spartan dispatch of an ordinary general to the Vale of Tempe is evidence of the lack of faith in the plan to stop the Persians at that location. However, for all the fragility of Greek unity, their unity of purpose, fighting to defend their homes and ancestral temples and tombs, led them eventually to putting their differences aside and fighting for the common good. In contrast, the Persian forces were, by their very nature, highly fractured. They came from different regions of the Persian Empire, spoke different languages, and were only there fighting because they were commanded to by the Great King. This would have played a decisive role, but nowhere more pronounced than at Salamis, where the various naval contingents seem not to have been able to communicate to each other at different points at the battle, which led to greater confusion than otherwise would have happened. While the Persian forces may not have been disunited, they lacked the cohesion of the Greek forces who were fighting for a common purpose.

Further resources

P. Rahe (2017), *The Grand Strategy of Classical Sparta: The Persian Challenge*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press

P. Cartledge (2013), *After Thermopylae*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

G. Cawkwell (2005), *The Greek Wars. The Failure of Persia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

M. Lupi (2018), 'Sparta and the Persian Wars, 499–478', in A. Powell (Ed.), *A Companion to Sparta*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 271–290

Activities

Bringing it together

1. In what ways can we see that the Greek forces were disunited? How can we explain this disunity?
2. Explain the overall strategy of the Persian and Greek forces, using examples. Did they both seem to have a reasonable chance of success? How successful were they both in the end?
3. Which of the reasons for Greek victory and Persian defeat do you think was the most important? Explain your answer, using examples.
4. Which of the Greek leaders played the most decisive roles in the campaign of 480–79 BC? Can their leadership be compared to Miltiades' role in the 490 BC invasion in any way?

Activities

1. Create a timeline of the entire campaign of 480–79 BC.
2. Research Aeschylus' *Persians*. Explain the problems of using this as a source. Find extracts that you feel are relevant and accurate, and explain how they could be used to support our knowledge of events.

HSC-style questions

1. Analyse the reasons for Greek victory over the Persians in the 480–79 BC invasion of Greece. (25 marks)
2. Assess the role of Themistocles in the Persian Wars. (25 marks)
3. Assess the view that Salamis was the most significant battle in the Persian Wars, 490–479 BC. (25 marks)

Going further

1. Research the Troezen Decree. Outline what it was and explain the problems surrounding its use by historians.
2. **The contribution of Themistocles, Leonidas, Pausanias and Eurybiades**

While there were various reasons for the Greek victory, the leadership of the Greek forces was one of the most central reasons. In particular, though he did not

play a role in the final year of the war, Themistocles was responsible for most of the major decisions on policy, even though the actual responsibility for command rested with various Spartan commanders. However, that does not minimise the role played by the Spartans—while Leonidas' role was limited to one battle, it was a battle that allowed the Greek forces to rally and fight another day. Similarly, without Pausanias' battlefield strategies at Plataea, even though this was his first command, he was central to the victory. Finally, Eurybiades may seem like a weak leader, able to be bullied by Themistocles into what he wanted, but Themistocles was clearly the superior commander, and it would have taken a very strong Spartan leader to be able to effectively hand over the decision-making to an Athenian in full view of not only the Spartan forces, but the entire Greek naval command.

- a. Working in groups, read through the chapter and create a list of each of the leaders' contributions. Once you have made this list, create a mind-map and categorise the different types of contributions (for example, strategy, battlefield tactics). For each leader, find a quote from modern or ancient sources related to their contribution and incorporate these into the mind-map.
 - b. Once you have completed the mind-map, use the information you have gathered to answer the essay topic: *Assess the contribution of two Greek leaders during the second Persian invasion of Greece, 480–79 BC*. You should discuss the contributions of Themistocles and one other of the leaders in your mind-map.
3. Create a mind-map of the various reasons for Greek victory and Persian defeat. Include as many examples as you can from both the 490 BC and 480–79 BC invasions. Once you have finished, draw lines in a different colour that connect different details together; for example, you may connect Themistocles' leadership with his knowledge about weather and terrain at Salamis, and explain these connections. Drawing connections in this way is called 'analysis', an important skill to develop when you approach any HSC questions that ask you to analyse.

The development of Athens and the Athenian Empire

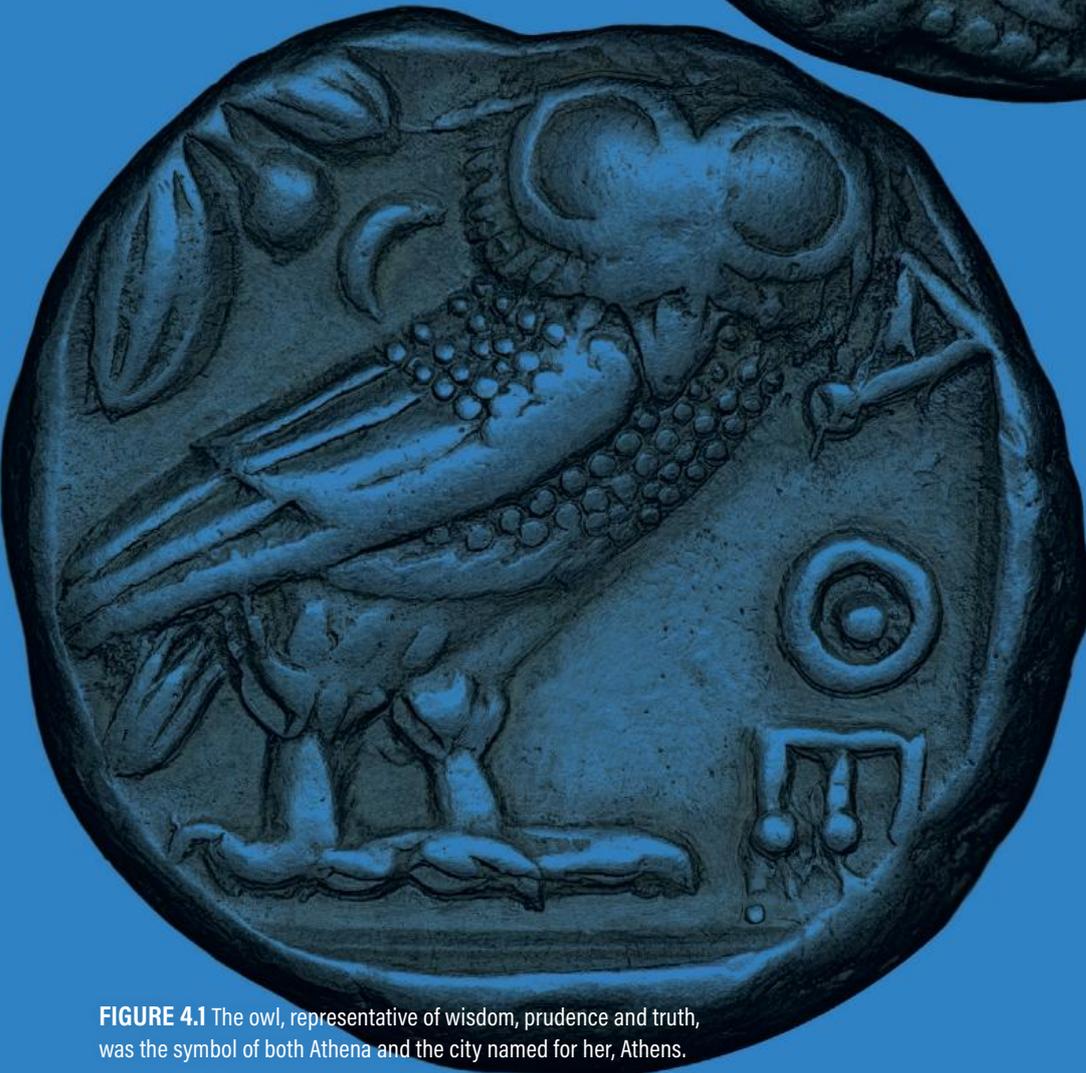


FIGURE 4.1 The owl, representative of wisdom, prudence and truth, was the symbol of both Athena and the city named for her, Athens.

The Delian League is the modern term of the organisation headed by the Athenians that was mostly comprised of island and coastal *poleis*. It was formed to continue the war with Persia. After the Persian Wars of 480–79 BC, it became clear that Sparta did not want to continue in an active leadership role and seemed willing to hand over the leading role against Persia to Athens. The League was founded with a genuine motivation to remove the Persians for the benefit of all Greek states. This period is traditionally seen as a transition from a more generous Athenian leadership to one of increasing tyranny from the very beginning, but it should be remembered that the individuals leading the Delian League sought always to bring greater benefit to themselves and Athens, which led to what historians call the Athenian Empire.

This chapter will explain the:

- actions of the Greeks after the Persian Wars
- origins and development of the Delian League
- campaigns of the Delian League against Persia
- change in relations between Athens and Sparta
- nature of Athenian imperialism
- methods of Athenian control over the allies.

Timeline 4.1: A contested timeline

Note: it is important to recognise that the dates of 5th century BC Greece are not certain and subject to scholarly debate. Many of the dates traditionally used in histories of this period have now been changed to reflect more recent research. The dates used in this chapter are listed here next to the corresponding traditional date to make clear how these dates may have changed.

Date	Event	Traditional date
479–78 BC	Rebuilding of the walls of Athens	479–78 BC
478–77 BC	Hellenic League expedition to Byzantium	478–77 BC
478–77 BC	Foundation of the Delian League	478–77 BC
477 BC	Siege of Eion	476–75 BC
475 BC	Skyros incorporated into Delian League	473 BC
473 BC	Coercion of Karystos	472 BC
471 BC	Pausanias expelled from Byzantium	471 BC
466 BC	Revolt of Naxos	469 BC
466–65 BC	Cimon's Carian campaign; Battle of Eurymedon River	468 BC
465 BC	Revolt of Thasos	465 BC
465 BC	Cimon's Thracian campaign	465 BC
465 BC	Revolt of Thasos	465 BC
465–64 BC	Earthquake in Lakadaimonia; first Athenian expedition to Lakadaimonia	465–64 BC

Date	Event	Traditional date
462 BC	Second Athenian expedition to Lakadaimonia; dismissal of Athenian forces by Sparta	461 BC
461 BC	Ostracism of Cimon	461 BC
460 BC	Athens sends Egyptian expedition	460 BC
460 BC	Beginning of First Peloponnesian War	460 BC
454 BC	Egyptian expedition ends in failure; Delian League treasury moves from Delos to Athens	454 BC
451 BC	Five Year Truce agreed between Athens and Sparta	451 BC
451-50 BC	Cimon's expedition to Cyprus; death of Cimon	451-50 BC
450-49 BC	Peace of Kallias	450-49 BC
440-39 BC	War with Samos	440-39 BC

After Mykale

At the end of the campaigning season of 479 BC, Pausanias, as leader of the Hellenic League, called a meeting to determine what should happen to the Thebans, who had fought with the Persians at Plataea. It was determined that only those most responsible for medising be handed over to the Hellenic League for punishment. When the Thebans refused, the Hellenic League destroyed the Theban countryside and put the city to siege, eventually leading to the submission of the city. Those most responsible for medising who were still in the city handed themselves over to the Greeks who had besieged the city, and were eventually executed by Pausanias in Corinth. The way this potentially difficult situation was handled set a positive tone for the Spartan regent Pausanias, and he displayed common sense and dignity. This did not last.

After the Battle of Mykale, several Ionian and island states were requesting to be made members of the Hellenic League now that they were free. In response to these requests from the people of Samos, Lesbos and Khios, Leotykhidas suggested that they leave their lands and return to mainland Greece (it was thought that the Ionians were all originally from Attika) and take the lands of those states that had medised. This proposal was in line with the oaths taken at the outset of the Hellenic League but was not received well by the island states. More importantly, the Athenians were not supportive of this suggestion, as they recognised that this could increase the influence of Sparta throughout Greece. Xanthippus managed to convince the League members present that they should be admitted to the Hellenic League, which they were. Once this was agreed, the Hellenic League fleet sailed to the Hellespont to destroy the bridge of boats that had been built to allow Xerxes' army to cross from Asia. Once they arrived and found that the bridge had already been destroyed by the elements, the Peloponnesian contingents of the Hellenic League fleet sailed home. The Athenian fleet remained, though, and put the city of Sestus to siege with other local *poleis* that had rebelled against Persian authority. It was still garrisoned by a Persian force and the Athenians had a long history of control of this region—Miltiades had been tyrant of the Thracian Chersonese, and the Athenians knew the importance of its fertile lands and easy control of the trade route.

Rebuilding the walls of Athens

Once the Persians were defeated at Plataea, there was a genuine fear that they would again return to attempt to conquer the Greeks. The Spartans were concerned that walled cities in mainland Greece could be used by the Persians as bases if they returned. In particular, the

fear of the growth of Athenian power by some Peloponnesian states, particularly Sparta, Corinth and Megara, encouraged them to send an embassy to Athens in 479–78 BC. These Spartan ambassadors suggested that the Athenians should join them in pulling down all walls outside the Peloponnese. When Themistocles, again the dominant political leader in Athens, suggested that the people dismiss the Spartan ambassadors, they agreed. He then urged the Athenians to send him on an embassy to Sparta to discuss the walls, during which time he required every man, woman and child in Athens to work night and day to construct a wall.

While in Sparta, Themistocles put off talking to the Spartan *ekklesia*, waiting for a message from Athens to say that the walls were completed to a defensible height. Themistocles shrugged off messages from Spartan allies that claimed that there was indeed a wall being built, urging the Spartans to send an embassy to Athens to discover the truth for themselves, while sending a message to the Athenians that they need to keep the Spartans in Athens for as long as possible. Once the walls were completed, he then admitted to the Spartans that the Athenians had indeed been building walls, and that now the walls were completed the Athenians could determine their own policies without Spartan assistance or direction. Thucydides says that the Spartans remained calm and did not display any anger, but it is unlikely that they were happy with the situation. It is also evidence of continued hostility and mistrust between Athens and Sparta during the period. In particular, while the Spartans had previously feted Themistocles, they must have now seen him as potential threat and enemy to their interests.

ekklesia

the Athenian assembly, where citizens met regularly to vote on decisions of state; the main part of Athenian democracy



FIGURE 4.2 The remains of the walls of Themistocles in the Kerameikos, Athens.

Hellenic League expeditions and Pausanias

In 478 BC, Pausanias was sent to command the Hellenic League naval forces. The League's first action was to support a revolt against the Persians in Cyprus, which provided an important component of the Persian fleet. Once that action was completed, Pausanias then sailed the fleet to Byzantium. This city was important because it could be used as a staging point for another Persian invasion and controlled trade from the Black Sea.

During the expedition to Byzantium, the behaviour of Pausanias towards both the Ionians and mainland Greeks was arrogant and aggressive. Diodorus tells us that even some of the Peloponnesian forces decided that his behaviour was unacceptable, returning home to encourage their governments to send embassies to Sparta to lodge complaints about Pausanias' conduct. Importantly, one of the charges against him by the Hellenic League members was **medism**. They claimed that Pausanias had allowed a friend of his from the city of Eretria to escape with a group of valuable Persian captives, including members of the Persian royal family, returning them to Persia. Pausanias also started to dress in elaborate Persian clothing and provide himself a bodyguard from amongst Egyptian and Median captives. Herodotus even tells us that he attempted to arrange a marriage between himself and the prominent Persian satrap Megabates, though Herodotus himself is quick to dismiss this story as a fabrication, as the reader should also.

medise

to go over to the side of the Persians (or the Medes, as the Greeks called them)



FIGURE 4.3 An example of Persian clothing, similar to what Pausanias was alleged to have worn.

As a result of the complaints, Pausanias was recalled by Sparta and put on trial. He was found guilty of mistreating the Hellenic League allies but acquitted of the charge of medism. The Greeks sent a new commander, Dorkis, who was not of royal blood, as it seems likely that the Spartans were concerned about the potential of their kings to develop too much power and wealth outside of Sparta. By this time, the naval forces had decided that they would prefer to be led by the Athenians, who no doubt encouraged this attitude. The Spartans had already demonstrated that they did not want to lead forces too far from the Peloponnese when they suggested that the Asian Greeks return to the mainland, so they recalled their forces and did not send out further resources. While Thucydides again claims that the Spartans were not angry at the Athenians, they secretly must have thought that the Athenians had encouraged this attitude towards Sparta, and likely would have been secretly offended by the events as they happened.

Source study 4.1 The removal of Pausanias

Source A Thucydides

But the other Hellenes had already started to hate the violence of the man [Pausanias], especially the Ionians and others who were newly freed from the King. They sent embassies to the Athenians and requested that they become their leaders on account of their kinship, and not entrust them to Pausanias, who was so aggressive. The Athenians accepted these overtures and took heed of this judgement, being mindful to settle everything else as it was best for themselves. In the meantime, the Lakedaimonians recalled Pausanias who was being investigated about what they had learned. Many bad accusations had been reported by the Hellenes, and it appeared greatly that he was more of a tyrant than a general. As it came to pass, they recalled him at the same time as the allies had gone over to the Athenians, except for the Peloponnesians, through the hatred of the man.

Thucydides, 1.95

Source B Plutarch

Subsequently, the naval commanders and generals of the Hellenes, particularly the Khians, Samians and Lesbians, prevailed upon Aristides to proclaim himself the leader and bring himself over to the side of the allies, who had for a long time wished to be delivered from the Spartans and align themselves with the Athenians. He replied that he repeatedly saw the necessity and justice in what they said, but it was necessary to establish trust by an action, by doing which it would be made impossible to return to their former allegiance. So, Uliades of Samos and Antagoras of Khios made a pact together, and rammed the trireme of Pausanias at Byzantium, closing in when he was sailing out from the middle of the line.

Plutarch, *Life of Aristides*, 23

Source C Rahe

The ramming of Pausanias' trireme appears to have taken place at Aristides' instigation. To those who asked that the Athenians assume the leadership, he reportedly responded that they would have to establish their trustworthiness by a deed which, once done, would by dint of the depth of hostility it evinced rule out their reversing course a second time. It is a reasonable guess that Dorcis' rejection was similarly staged.

P. Rahe (2019), *Sparta's First Attic War. The Grand Strategy of Sparta, 478-46 B.C.*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, p. 39

Questions

1. Read Thucydides' and Plutarch's accounts (Sources A and B) of the rejection of Pausanias. Identify the similarities and differences in the accounts. How do they both represent Pausanias and Aristides and their roles in what happened?
2. How does Rahe (Source C) depict Aristides' role in the change of leadership of naval forces? Can this be justified in the sources?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What happened to the Thebans for their medising? Why do you think it would have been seen as important to deal with them so quickly?
2. What was the Spartan response to the Ionians who wanted to join the Hellenic League? What might this tell us about Spartan attitudes towards leadership of the Hellenic League?
3. What did the Hellenic League fleet do after the battle of Mykale? Why did they do this?
4. Why might Athens have remained to besiege Sestus after the Peloponnesian fleets returned from the Hellespont?
5. What was the Spartan attitude towards walled cities outside of the Peloponnese? Account for their attitude.
6. What does Themistocles' stratagem to build the walls of Athens tell us about his attitude towards Sparta? Explain the Spartan reaction to what happened.
7. Explain why the Hellenic League allies moved towards Athenian leadership of the naval forces.
8. What does the sending of Dorkis (a non-royal general) tell us about Spartan attitudes towards the Hellenic League?

The Delian League

The Delian League was the alliance that began after the Spartans handed over the leadership of the Hellenic League's naval forces to Athens. A more appropriate term, however, would be 'Athens and its allies', denoting that Athens was very much the leader of this alliance from the outset.

Origins and aims of the Delian League

After the removal of Sparta from leadership of the naval forces in 478 BC, the allies met at the island of Delos. This was an important religious and cultural centre for Ionian Greeks, who comprised most of the members of the Delian League. Members of the League also determined that the League was to have its treasury on the island. The institution of a 'Treasury of the Greeks' was important because the League was naval and triremes were very expensive to build, crew and maintain.

Once the Delian League had been established, the members determined that there would be an assessment of each member to decide how many ships each state would be required to contribute to the League's navy. If members decided that they opted to pay a *phoros* ('contribution') instead of providing ships and sailors, the assessment determined the amount to be paid. The funds raised were to be used by the League to construct triremes and fund extra troops or sailors. There is disagreement about the actual amount of *phoros* that was initially assessed, but it is most likely 460 talents (approximately 13 tons) of silver. There is disagreement if this was the actual amount of *phoros* received, or if the *poleis* contributing ships had an estimate of the worth of their naval contribution converted into an equivalent monetary form, which is more likely. The assessment was carried out by the Athenians, led by the politician Aristides. He was nicknamed 'the Just' by the Athenians and the allies at the time, most likely a reflection of the fact that as the *phoros* increased over time, Aristides' original determinations seemed much fairer to the allies. In calculating payments, Aristides most likely used the former Persian tribute, called the *dasmos*, as a model to determine how much each state could afford to contribute.

phoros

Greek: 'contribution'; the money given to Athens as leader of the Delian League

The overall aim of the Delian League was simple: to attack the Persian Empire and cause as much harm as possible, taking the maximum amount of war booty from Persian cities. By doing so, the League was hoping to prevent further attacks by Persia on Greek states by keeping the Persians as busy as possible.

Organisation of the Delian League

At the time of its creation, membership of this new League was voluntary. Membership gave the allies protection and the chance of spoils of war from attacks on Persia. From the outset, the alliance may have been seen as permanent. Plutarch tells us that lumps of iron were sunk into the sea by the allies, symbolising the fact that the alliance would continue until the lumps of iron rose. There is no contemporary evidence of this action and the story could easily be later Athenian propaganda to justify the continued existence of the League after a permanent treaty with Persia was agreed.

Meetings of the Delian League **synod** were to be held at the island of Delos. The League most likely voted on strategies and actions to be taken, with each state having a single vote. However, while this may seem democratic, the Athenians were most likely able to sway the votes of smaller states to ensure that Athenian policies were Delian League policies.

As the official **hegemon** of the League, Athens supplied all the commanders of League forces. This gave Athens a lot more influence than other states because the **strategos** on campaign would be able to make decisions that would benefit Athens. Moreover, the Athenians were given charge of the Delian League treasury, with Athenian officials called *Hellenotamiai* ('Treasurers of the Hellenes') responsible for the treasury and its maintenance.

synod

the group of leaders who meet to discuss policy and make decisions

hegemon

Greek: the leader of a group of allies that technically had equal standing in the alliance

strategos pl. strategoi

the 10 annually elected generals, primarily responsible for commanding the Athenian army and navy



FIGURE 4.4 The Terrace of the Lions on Delos. The island, believed to be the birthplace of Apollo, held great significance for the Greeks.

Source study 4.2 The Delian League

Source A Thucydides

After this [the refusal to serve under Dorkis], the Lakedaimonians sent no-one out, because they feared that anyone that went out would make things worse, just as had happened with Pausanias, and also because they wanted to be rid of the war with the Medes, considering the Athenians to be sufficient as leaders and good friends at the time.

Thucydides, 1.92

Source B Zaccharini

Thucydides presents a rather peaceful, resigned reaction of the Spartans to their loss of the leadership over the Greeks. After desultory attempts at regaining the hegemony ... the Spartans quietly relinquished any claim, trusting the Athenians as friends ... Perhaps Thucydides is very subtly alluding to some malice ... Additionally, in 478–77 BC the Spartans let the Athenians gain the hegemony because they feared that their own citizens might experience moral corruption, as Pausanias had done ... an example of the bizarre, irrational and naïve literary behaviour of the Spartans—especially when abroad—to which the traditional often attributes their decisions.

M. Zaccharini (2017), *The Lame Hegemony. Cimon of Athens and the Failure of Panhellenism, ca. 478–450 BC*, Bologna: Bononia University Press, pp. 52–53

Question

1. Read Sources A and B. Explain the reaction of Sparta as described in Thucydides. How does Thucydides make it clear that Sparta did not willingly relinquish leadership of the naval forces?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the significance of the term 'Athens and its allies' as the official title of the Delian League.
2. Why do you think the establishment of the 'Treasury of the Greeks' an important part of the foundation of the League?
3. What was the *phoros*? How was it assessed? How did Aristides probably arrive at the amount for each state?
4. What was the purpose of the League?
5. What is significant about the possible sinking of lumps of iron into the sea at the foundation of the League?
6. How were decisions taken in the League?
7. How were the Athenians able to achieve their own objectives in the League?

Activities of the Delian League in the Aegean

Timeline 4.2: Early activities of the Delian League

478–77 BC	▪ Delian League formed
477 BC	▪ Thessalian city of Eion attacks with the help of Menon
475 BC	▪ Delian League attacks Skyros
	▪ Lemnos and Imbros settles with <i>klerukhs</i> by the Athenians
473 BC	▪ After a two-year siege, Karystos is forced to join the Delian League
471 BC	▪ Pausanias expelled from Byzantium, Delian League takes control
466 BC	▪ Naxos leaves the Delian League and is punished

As soon as the Delian League was established (478–77 BC), League forces were sent out under the command of the Athenian *strategos* Cimon. The first location they attacked was the fortified city of Eion in 477 BC, which had been an important base established by the Persians in their preparations for the 480 BC expedition. Located on the river Strymon, it would have been an important site to control to prevent the Persians gaining another foothold in the region. The fact that it also lay near plentiful gold mines and abundant forests of good ship-building timber would have influenced the decision to attack quickly. The League forces attacked the city with the aid of the tyrant of the Thessalian city of Pharsalus, Menon, who had commenced a siege before the League forces arrived. He also contributed a welcome 12 talents of silver to the Delian League operations. After a siege of approximately 12 months, in 476 BC the Persian garrison commander, Boges, decided that there was no chance of victory. He had a large pyre lit, then had his wife and children killed and thrown upon it. He ensured that the treasure of the city was thrown into the Strymon then he jumped into the fire himself. The people of the garrison then handed themselves over to the Delian League, and the survivors were enslaved. Significantly, the Athenians settled a *klerukhia* of their own citizens in the region and turned the city into an important naval base and trade city.

klerukhia

a colony of citizens from one *polis* sent out to settle and control land (the people of a *klerukhia* were called *klerukhs*)

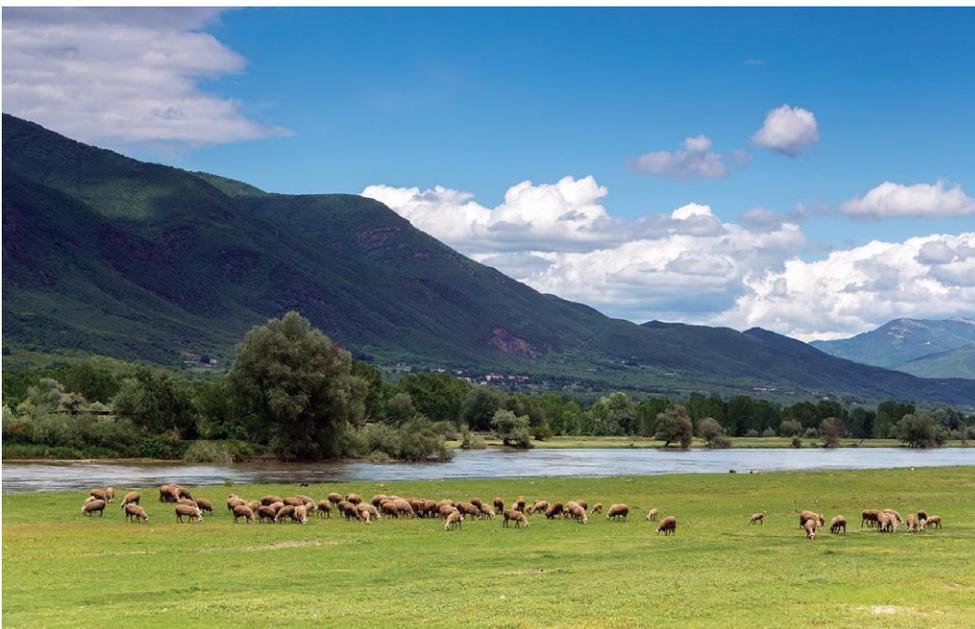


FIGURE 4.5 Grazing land next to the River Strymon. The land in this area was valuable for many reasons: forest for timber, metals to mine in the mountains and good grazing land for animals.

In 475 BC, the island of Skyros became a target for Athens. An oracle had been received by the Athenians, saying that they should recover the bones of the Athenian hero Theseus from Skyros and rebury them in Attika. They were told that if they did so, the island would become theirs. It should be noted, though, that this story does not appear in any contemporary sources and could be a later invention from the 4th century BC. The justification for attacking Skyros would have been accepted because the native population were not Greek, but Dolopian, who would frequently engage in piracy. Cimon was charged with recovering the bones, which were allegedly found and returned to Athens. The Dolopian people were attacked, subjugated and enslaved. The island was said to have been settled with an Athenian *klerukhia*, but the absence of Skyros on the tribute lists makes this less likely. The Athenian allies in Thessaly seem to have aided the Athenians in the venture; since the Spartans attacked Thessaly at around the same time (see p. 105), it could be evidence that the Spartans were trying to intervene in Thessaly, where Athens had established a presence. At around the same time, the islands of Lemnos and Imbros were also settled with *klerukhs* by the Athenians. While the end of piracy has always been seen as an important result of this action, it should also be noted that the islands sat in critical locations for trade and commerce around the Aegean, providing the Athenians with a strong motivation for their control.

The city of Karystos on the southern tip of Euboea soon became a target. Karystos seems to have been a small collection of villages, but the region was rich in ore and its port Geraistos, was an important port on the trade route. In 475 BC, it was decided that Karystos needed to be punished for medism and brought into the Delian League. Karystos had decided not to join the naval alliance, but it was still benefitting from the League's activities. Moreover, its port had been used as a base in 480 BC after being destroyed for resisting the invasion of 490 BC and could become a naval base for the Persians again, so the city was forcibly brought into the alliance in 473 BC after a two-year siege.

In 471 BC, the Athenians led a League effort to take the city of Byzantium, which was in the possession of Pausanias (see p. 105). Historians know almost nothing about Pausanias' time in Byzantium, except that he mistreated the Byzantines. Cimon led the League forces in attacking and successfully besieging the city, expelling Pausanias. This episode suggests that the transfer of power in the region from Sparta, as hegemon of the Hellenic League, to Athens, as hegemon of the Delian League, was far from peaceful. It seems as though Sparta was intent on keeping an important foothold in the region and trying to ensure that the Athenians could not gain possession of it for themselves.



FIGURE 4.6 This enormous marble quarry on a mountainside on the island of Naxos produced Naxian marble, for which the island was well-known in the ancient world.

Possibly in 466 BC, Naxos revolted against the Athenian hegemony of the Delian League. We do not know the reasons, but Thucydides claims that the Athenians had made themselves harsh masters of their allies. Perhaps the Naxians felt that the League was not permanent and they saw little benefit from continuing to be members. However, the Athenians—and it seems the Athenians alone and not the League—decided that Naxos was not entitled to leave the Delian League. They put the city to siege and reduced it by removing its autonomy and forcing it to continue to pay the *phoros*. Thucydides claims that this was the first time that the Athenians took such an action against a Greek state.

Source study 4.3 The Delian League

Source A Thucydides

Of the various accusations that led to revolt, the greatest was related to the failure to produce *phoros* and ships, and the refusal to serve in the forces. For the Athenians were very severe and exacting, and were causing suffering to those who did not want to be, nor were used to being, made to do things through necessity. In some other ways, the Athenians were no longer the same agreeable rulers, and if they served above and beyond their fair share, it was then easy to bring the allies back in. In this, the allies were to blame: their shrinking away from service in the armed forces and the making of most of them contribute their share in money instead of in providing ships, so they could stay at home. So, while Athens increased the navy with the money the allies paid, when they would revolt they would be without resources or experience in warfare.

Thucydides, 1.99

Questions

1. Explain the main points Thucydides is making about Athenian control of the Delian League.
2. How did payment of the *phoros* leave the allies unprepared for wars with Athens?
3. This commentary about Athenian power comes directly after the discussion of the revolt of Naxos. What does this tell us about Athens and the allies as early as 472 BC?

The Delian League advance into Persian territory

In the 460s BC, the Delian League started to push into Persian territory, most likely because they had removed much of the Persian presence in the Aegean. The major exception to this was the city of Doriskos; it was not until approximately 465 BC that the governor, Maskames, who had held out against continual Greek attacks, finally abandoned the city and returned to Persia (where he and his descendants were honoured for holding out for so long).

In 466–65 BC, the Greeks were informed that the Persians were again assembling a great armada. It seems likely that the Persians wished to challenge Athenian control of the Aegean in preparation for another invasion. In response, Cimon led League forces on a campaign into Caria, encouraging revolts from the Persians, defeating Persian garrisons in towns and taking towns that resisted by force. He then seems to have led League forces inland to Lycia, again using both force and diplomacy to cause revolts or capture cities. Once Cimon's forces reached the wealthy city of Phaselis, they appealed to the city to revolt from the Great King, which they refused to do. After ravaging the lands, the League forces



FIGURE 4.7 The remains of the north harbour at Phaselis

from the island of Khios appealed to the Phaselites to reconsider, which they eventually did, even contributing 10 talents of silver to the League's funds. This marked the furthest point of Delian League expansion. From Phaselis, Cimon sailed to where the Persians were said to be assembling their fleet, the Eurymedon river. Different accounts of the size of the fleet exist, but it was anywhere from 350 to 600 vessels, and a further 80 triremes were on their way from Phoenicia. The Delian League fleet was already outnumbered, so Cimon decided to attack before the Phoenician fleet arrived to increase the size of the enemy forces.

Cimon sailed up to the mouth of the Eurymedon, while the Persian fleet retreated in the hope of preserving the fleet until the Phoenician fleet arrived. The Greeks pursued and eventually the Persians were unable to retreat further, and a battle ensued in which the Persians were soundly defeated. The Persians then dragged the remaining vessels onto the riverbank and joined the Persian infantry forces that had been based at nearby Apendus. The League forces disembarked from their ships, formed a phalanx and attacked, comprehensively defeating the Persians and putting their army to flight. The Battle of Eurymedon marked the high point in the League's resistance to the Persians. This had a significant impact on the monarchy of Persia, and possibly within 12 months, Xerxes, the Great King of Persia, was assassinated, most likely as a result of his continual military failures.

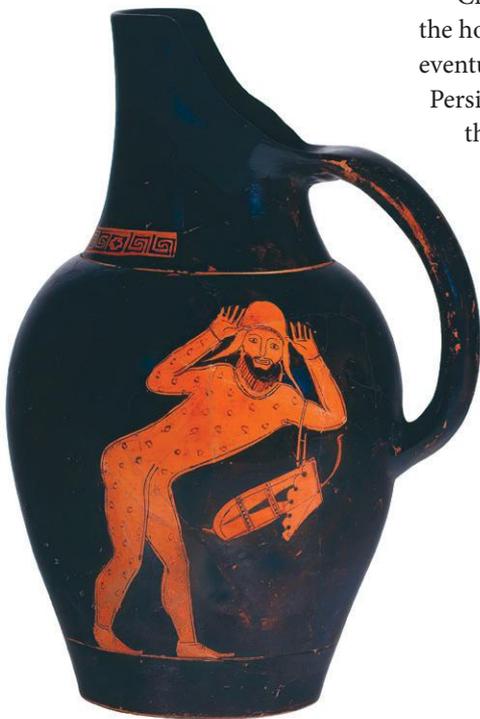


FIGURE 4.8 One side of the Eurymedon vase, which says 'I am Eurymedon, I stand bent over', with a naked Greek man standing behind him; a not-so-subtle allusion to the effect that Eurymedon had on Persian control of the area.

The Aegean after Eurymedon

The Battle of Eurymedon marked a significant turning point in the war against Persia. It seems clear that the Persians suffered a critical setback at Eurymedon from which they were not able to recover easily. To follow up this victory, in 465 BC Cimon led an Athenian force to the Chersonese, where the Athenians had already liberated Sestus immediately after the Persian Wars. Plutarch tells us that with a small force of four ships he expelled the Persian fleet of 13 vessels and liberated the Chersonese from Persian control. It was likely at this time that the commander of the last major Persian garrison, Maskames, decided that his position at Doriskos was untenable and he evacuated it. Cimon's family had close ties with the Chersonese, his father Miltiades having been tyrant there for many years, a position he had inherited from his family. The fertile lands there, and the position alongside the trade route from the Black Sea, became Athenian possessions again.



FIGURE 4.9 Mt Pangaion, located near the gold mines disputed by Athens and Thasos

The Thracian campaign

Soon after this, a dispute arose about the control of the gold mines in the Mt Pangaion region of Thrace, specifically the Skaptesytle mines. These were controlled by the Thasians but control was disputed by others. Athens was asked to arbitrate and came down against Thasos, making it obvious that this was a decision based on the Athenian desire to control the highly lucrative gold mines. Athens had a connection to the region as the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus had been involved in the gold trade while he was exiled from Athens and had generated much of his wealth from there. As a result of this decision, the Thasians decided to leave the Delian League. This was a significant development, as Thasos was probably the second wealthiest member of the League, after Athens itself, and presented the Athenians with a significant challenge to their leadership. Athens fought an initial naval battle against Thasos, which they won, and blockaded the island and besieged the city. After a two-year siege, the Thasians came to terms with Athens and were brought into the League as *phoros* paying members, paying a large initial war indemnity, which probably indicates that the war had been expensive for Athens. Soon after this war commenced, Athens and some allies sent a group of colonists, as many as 10 000, to settle in the fertile region known as Ennea Hodoi, ‘The Nine Ways’, in Thrace. After some initial success, they were soon defeated and wiped out by a concerted attack by Thracian tribes who did not want an Athenian presence in the region. This area was eventually colonised by Athens as the city of Amphipolis, which became a very wealthy city, explaining the Athenian desire to strengthen their presence in the region as much as possible. It is possible that the decision to create a colony near the Thasian gold mines caused the Thasians to become sceptical of Athenian motives, encouraging them to leave the Delian League. It was likely that, in preparation for a war with Athens, Thasos sent embassies around the Aegean requesting support. The only

state that historians know of who promised support was Sparta. Secretly, Sparta promised to assist the Thasians by invading Attika, creating a war on two fronts that would have presented the Athenians with severe difficulties. They were unable to do this, or even likely meet with the Peloponnesian League to discuss this, because of events as they unfolded in the Peloponnese.

When Cimon returned from the siege of Thasos, he was charged with accepting bribes from the Macedonian king, Alexander I. His political enemies claimed that Macedonia would have been an easy conquest while his forces were in the region and that Macedonia should have been brought into the Delian League. This claim was difficult to prove, and Cimon was acquitted of the charge, but it is indicative of his political decline, and he was only one major disaster away from political trouble—that disaster arrived soon after.



FIGURES 4.10 and 4.11 Many items were fashioned from gold mined in ancient Greece, such as these intricate pieces of jewelry.

Source study 4.4 Plutarch

Source A Plutarch

Now there were certain Persians who did not want to leave the Chersonese, and also called in the Thracians from the interior, thinking little of Cimon who had sailed from Athens with only a few triremes in all. Cimon sailed against them with four triremes and captured 13 of theirs, drove the Persians away completely and defeated the Thracians, and claimed the entire Chersonese for his city. After this, when the Thasians were in revolt from Athens, he took control of the lands which the Thasians controlled there.

Plutarch, *Life of Cimon*, 14

Questions

1. How does Plutarch describe the Persian response to Athenian successes?
2. What was the result of Cimon's Thracian campaign?
3. Explain how the people of Thasos may have been threatened by Cimon's successes in the area.
4. Explain how the result of the Thasian war may explain Athenian motivations.

The earthquake in the Peloponnese

In 465–64 BC, probably not long after the Spartans made their promise to aid the Thasian revolt, a series of earthquakes shook the Peloponnese, with their epicentre likely near the towns that comprised Sparta. This was a disaster for Sparta—only five houses were left standing and up to 20 000 **Lakedaimonians** were killed, including approximately half of the full Spartiate population (those who could fight in the Spartan army). It is quite possible that this set in motion the events that would lead to the **oliganthropia** that would plague Sparta for the next 100 years and be a decisive factor in the final collapse of Spartan society after the Battle of Leuctra in 371 BC. This led to immediate *helot* revolts, and even several *periokic* communities revolted at the time. Argos took advantage of the Spartan misfortune and seem to have attacked and defeated the pro-Spartan city of Mycenae, selling the inhabitants into slavery. Also, Tegea and most Arkadian cities seem to have gone to war with Sparta at this time, and the Spartans only narrowly defeated the Tegean-Arkadian alliance at the battle of Dipaia at around this time, though it is possible that the battle occurred earlier. However, both of these actions represented a blow to Spartan influence in the northern Peloponnese.

In response to the earthquake and subsequent *helot* revolt, the normally secretive Spartans requested assistance from the members of the Hellenic League. They had suffered immediate attacks from the local *helot* population of Lakedaimonia. It was only the quick thinking of king Arkhidamos that ensured Sparta survived at all, because he summoned all Spartiates for battle as soon as he could, assuming that the *helots* would mount an attack. Historians know that the *poleis* of Mantinea and Aegina responded quickly, and most of the Peloponnesian League members sent their forces in support, as did other states outside the Peloponnese, such as Plataea. Athens also sent a large contingent of Athenian troops to assist. There was most likely a group within Athens, possibly supporters of the now-exiled Themistocles, who would have opposed this request for aid, the most prominent being a former political ally of Themistocles' named Ephialtes. He is alleged to have urged Athens to let the *helots* repay the Spartans for their arrogance. Cimon opposed this, saying that Athens and Sparta were **yokefellows**, and that if Sparta was destroyed, Athens would be weakened. The *ekklesia* agreed with Cimon and sent a force of 4000 hoplites under his command.

Lakedaimonia

the region of the Peloponnese controlled by Sparta, including the Spartans, *periokoi* (see below) and the *helots* (the slave-like population controlled by Sparta)

oliganthropia

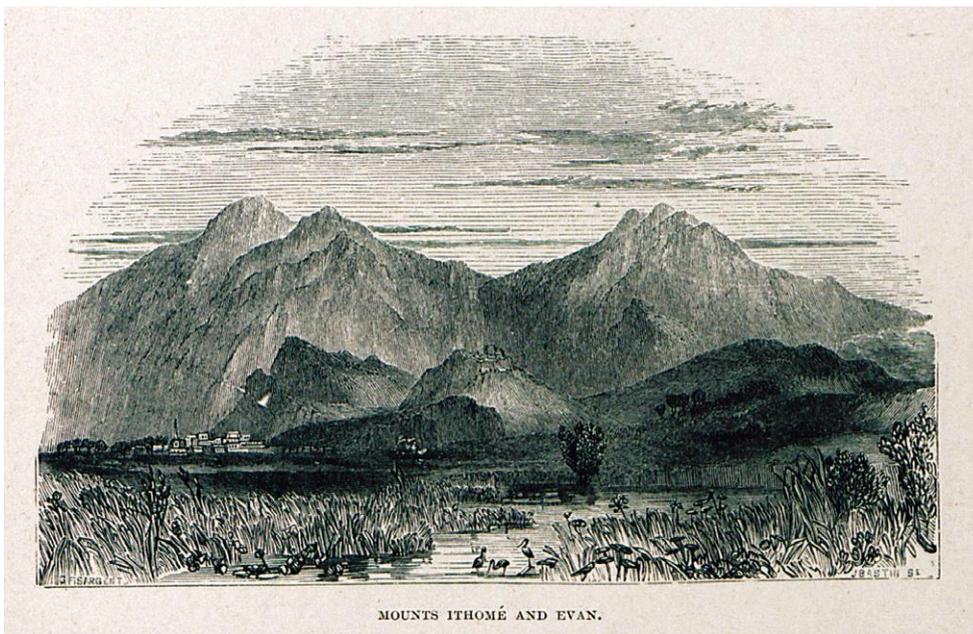
Greek: literally, a 'fewness of men', the decline of the Spartiate population leading to the overall decline in Sparta's power

periokoi

Greek: the non-Spartan people who lived in the towns and villages around the city of Sparta (Lakonia)

yokefellows

a farming term, where two oxen are used to pull a plough. Used to indicate that Sparta and Athens were both leading Greece equally



MOUNTS ITHOMÉ AND EVAN.

FIGURE 4.12 Mt Ithome, as depicted in a 19th-century engraving, was the location of the final siege in the *helot* war of 465 BC.

The *helot* revolt led to a full-scale war against Messenia. However, the Spartans, with the aid of the Peloponnesian states, seem to have managed to control the situation, and the Athenian force returned home. After several years, the Spartans had contained the *helots* of Messenia in a stronghold at Mt Ithome in Messenia. Again, the Spartans requested the aid of the Athenians, who were reportedly known as effective siege-breakers after their experiences in the Aegean against Persian bases and cities. Again, Cimon led a force into the Peloponnese but, soon after arriving, the Spartans claimed that they no longer required the Athenians' assistance and requested that they leave. This was an obvious lie, as the *helots* were still firmly in control of Mt Ithome and even the Athenians had been unable to dislodge them. This caused understandable and significant offence in Athens. The Spartans seem to have been genuinely concerned that the Athenians would cause more problems with the *helots* than they would solve—the Athenians were known as 'revolutionary' and the Spartans seem to have been concerned that they may take the side of the *helots*, or at least encourage further *helot* revolts. It is possible that while Cimon was in Lakedaimonia assisting the Spartans in 462 BC, the Athenians found out that the Spartans had promised to invade Attika from the Thasians (which may also provide the reason that the Spartans feared Athenian interference with the *helots*). This may have led to a complete collapse of Cimon's political position, leading to the attacks on the *Areopagus* led by Ephialtes. When Cimon returned home in 461 BC, he tried to have the democratic reforms of Ephialtes overturned, but he was unsuccessful and at a subsequent **ostracism**, he was exiled from Athens. This led to a change in foreign policy in Athens. While the Athenians and Spartans had clearly never been close allies, if not openly hostile at various times since the end of the Persian Wars, Athens took this opportunity to make alliances with traditional Spartan enemies, beginning the 'First Peloponnesian War' (see pp. 112–13).

ostracism

in ancient Greece, the process in Athens where an election could be held every year to vote on a leading figure who was seen as becoming too powerful; the person receiving the most votes was exiled from Athens for 10 years

The Egyptian expedition

In approximately 460 BC, Egypt revolted against Persian rule. Inaros, an Egyptian who declared himself ruler of Egypt, led a rebellion against Persia and appealed to Athens for assistance. This indicates that while the Persians may not have been actively pursuing a war against the Greeks after Eurymedon, a war continued.

A Delian League naval force of some 200 vessels was sent to assist the Egyptian rebels. For the first few years of the revolt, the Egyptian and Greek forces were successful, liberating most of the country. By 457 BC, the Persians had recognised the situation they were in, and the Great King, Artaxerxes, sent a large force to Egypt. This Persian force defeated the Egyptian army, then confined the Greek forces onto a small island in the Nile called Prosopitis, where they remained for around 18 months. The Persians decided after that time that the Greek forces would be unable to withstand them and they attacked, annihilating the League forces and capturing and executing Inaros. The League had decided to send a reserve naval force of 50 triremes, but it arrived late and it, too, was destroyed by the Persian navy. This was the single greatest loss for the Athenians and for the Delian League since its foundation, and would have caused great alarm in Athens, in particular. The expedition had been ongoing for six years, resulting in a huge loss of vessels, manpower and prestige. It seems to have led to a general change in Athenian policy. For three years after this, there is no record of a campaign by Athens or the Delian League, indicating that the loss must have shaken the League to its foundations, or possibly led to financial hardship, as the League and Athens would have needed to rebuild a significant number of triremes to replace those that were lost.



FIGURE 4.13 A seal of Artaxerxes I, depicting the execution of Inaros

Source study 4.5 Sparta's oppression of the *helots*

Source A Rahe

This time, however, the Athenians may have been a bit more reluctant. The emergency had passed. Lacedaemon's survival was no longer at stake. Moreover, they had had time to reflect at leisure on their situation and on that of the Spartans. They could now more easily consider what it was that they were being asked to do, and they could question whether Athens had anything to gain from such an effort. Panhellenic sentiment still had a hold on them, of course. But the rebels on Ithome were not barbarians, much less Persians. They were Hellenes, as the Athenians well knew. It was one thing to assist fellow Greeks in subjugating barbarians. This was a matter of ethnic solidarity. The barbarians were, after all, the common foe. Under the leadership of Darius and Xerxes, they had attempted to deprive the Athenians and the other Hellenes of the liberty that had long distinguished the Greeks as Greeks. The veterans of the battles fought at Marathon, Artemisium, Salamis, Plataea, Mycale, Sestos, Cyprus, Byzantium, Eion, Eurymedon, and elsewhere needed no instruction in such matters. But to assist the Spartans in denying other Hellenes the liberty they bravely sought—there was something distasteful about that.

P. Rahe (2019), *Sparta's First Attic War. The Grand Strategy of Sparta, 478-46 B.C.*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, p. 140

Question

1. What does Rahe tell us may have been another reason for the Athenians' unwillingness to assist the Spartans against the *helots* in 462 BC?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the significance of the fort city at Eion.
2. Why would the Athenians treat Skyros in the way that they did?
3. Explain how we know that Byzantium was a significant site in this period.
4. Why is the revolt of Naxos significant in this period?
5. Outline Cimon's campaign that led to the Battle of Eurymedon. Explain its significance.
6. What does Cimon's Thracian campaign tell us about Athenian attitudes and policies at the time?
7. Explain the significance of the Athenian war with Thasos for Athens and for relations with Sparta.
8. What was the immediate impact of the earthquake in 465 BC on Sparta?
9. What does the Athenian reaction to the Spartan request for assistance against the *helots* tell us about Athenian attitudes at the time?
10. What happened to the second Athenian force that was sent to Sparta? Why did this happen?
11. Explain the connection between the second Athenian war with Thasos, the decline of Cimon's political influence, and the Athenian assistance to Sparta.
12. Explain the significance of the Egyptian expedition and disaster for Athens and the League.
13. It is clear that Athens and Sparta were not close allies in this period. Outline all the instances where we can see traces of their attitude towards each other.
14. There are several Athenian motivations for expanding their empire that we can see emerge in this period. Explain these motivations from what happened between 478 and 461 BC.

The 'transformation' from League to Empire

We should be very mindful of the concept of a 'transformation' of the Delian League into the Athenian Empire. Scholarship in the 19th and 20th centuries had always focused on the more generous nature of the Delian League in comparison to the later harsh nature of the Athenian Empire. This seems to have become prominent in British accounts of Athenian history, which wanted to depict the benefits of a 'good' empire for its subjects. When the Athenians and their allies were controlled by educated, upper-class 'gentlemen', as the British Empire had been, the British believed Athens had done a great amount of good for the Greek world. However, as soon as there had been a radical democratic revolution in Athens that gave more power to the *demos*, 'the mob', in Athens, some historians believed that Athenian control of the Delian League descended into Athenian despotism. British scholars cited Thucydides in this transformation, and tended to depict the change in Athenian rule in the same way for similar reasons. It is obvious, though, that Athenian control of the Delian League had always been out of self-interest from the very foundation, with actions taken by the Athenians and the Athenian leaders clearly demonstrating their desire to control the Aegean for their own commercial benefits.

The tribute lists

At some point after the foundation of the Delian League, the 'Treasury of the Greeks' was moved from Delos to Athens. Evidence exists to show that in 454 BC, Athens began dedicating 1/60th of the *phoros* from each ally and recording that on stone *stelai*, known as the 'Athenian tribute lists'. The amount required by each ally was reassessed every four years and delivered to Athens at the time of the Dionysia, a major Athenian festival to Dionysus, the god of wine, good times, chaos and uncertainty.

stèle (pl. *stelai*)

a large standing stone slab on which an inscription was made. In Athens, laws and decisions of the *ekklesia* were often inscribed on *stelai*

It is thought that the treasury was moved to Athens from Delos after the disaster of the Egyptian expedition. This seems to make the most sense. While it is possible that it had already been located in Athens in 454 BC, it would be a significant coincidence if the so-called 'first fruits' payment of 1/60th happened to commence at this time. It seems more likely that the Athenians were concerned about the security of Delos after the loss of such a substantial portion of their fleet and that the move of the treasury to Athens was done to ensure continued and safe access to Delian League funds.

Peace treaties with Sparta and Persia

In 451 BC, both Athens and Sparta saw the need to end their war. Sparta was in a strong position and Athens could not afford to lose any more territory. While some sources claim that Cimon was recalled to Athens after the battle of Tanagra in 457 BC, it is more likely that his exile continued for most of the mandated 10 years. He may have been recalled some months early to negotiate a peace with Sparta. The so-called Five Year Truce stopped the war and, in 445 BC, Thirty Years Peace (which was to last only 13) officially ended hostilities between Athens and Sparta. This allowed Athens an opportunity to recommence active warfare against the Persians. In 451–50 BC, Cimon led a League expedition to Cyprus. While on campaign there, he died, the sources claiming it was either from disease or a wound. This led to a retreat of the League forces after a successful campaign of around 18 months. Plutarch recounts that it was Themistocles, living in exile in the Persian court, who was ordered to lead the Persian fleet against Cimon. Rather than fight Cimon, whom Themistocles reportedly considered a better commander than himself, Themistocles chose to commit suicide. Though this is most likely an invention, the alleged double-deaths bring to a close an important period of Greek history—it was at this point that the Persians seem to have admitted defeat and agreed to terms with the Delian League.

Though most historians believe that the Peace of Kallias, named for the Athenian who headed the embassy to Persia, is an historical reality, no contemporary sources mention it. It is completely left out of Thucydides' narrative of the period. Herodotus tells us that Kallias, son of Hipponikos, was in Susa 'on other business' in his *Histories*, 7.151, indicating that the correct person was known to be in Persia, but the dating of when he was there is far from secure. The first mention historians have of the Peace comes in 380 BC (*Isocrates*, 4.117–120), which was repeated by other 4th century BC orators. Plutarch (*Life of Cimon*, 13.4) says that peace was obtained after Eurymedon, but we would not expect to see continued warfare after that if peace was agreed in the 460s BC. Diodorus gives us the most detail, and he may be working from sources we no longer possess. However, Diodorus is a problematic source, so care should be taken when using his work. It should be noted, though, that all warfare between Athens and Persia seems to stop until the last phase of the Peloponnesian War, 40 years later.

The Peace of Kallias marks the official end of hostilities between Athens, the Delian League and the Persian Empire. This meant that the Delian League, founded with the express purpose of making war on Persia, had no reason to continue to exist. The reassessment of tribute in the tribute lists in 450 BC shows many allies missing from the 450–49 BC assessment period, but reappearing in the 446–45 BC period, indicating that the allies may well have thought the same thing. Athens clearly had other ideas, which is where historians tend to talk less of a League or alliance, and more of an empire or *arkhe* of Athens.

When King Artaxerxes learned of the defeat at Cyprus, he took council with friends about the war and decided that it was to his advantage to conclude a peace with the Hellenes ... The Athenians were ready to listen, and sent ambassadors with full powers to negotiate, the leader being Kallias son of Hipponikos. Thus, the peace was made with the Athenians and their allies, and the main part of it was this: 'All of the cities of the Hellenes are to be autonomous; the



FIGURE 4.14 The reconstruction of part of the 454–450 BC tribute lists.

arkhe

often translated as 'empire', but used in Greek to imply rule by one person or group of people over others where the people who are controlled are, in some way, robbed of their autonomy; often associated with Athenian power in the mid- and later 5th century BC

Persian satraps are not to go within three days travel of the sea, nor are Persian vessels to sail within Phaselis or the Kyanean Rocks. If these terms are observed by the King and his generals, the Athenians will not advance into the territory over which the King rules'. After accomplishing this, the Athenians withdrew their forces from Cyprus, having won a notable victory and brought to fruition a peace with great distinction.

Diodorus of Sicily, 12.4



FIGURE 4.15 The remains of the *polis* of Salamis, on Cyprus, the site of one of the battles of Cimon's Cypriot campaign in 450 BC.

The war with Samos

In 440 BC, the island of Samos revolted against Athenian control. The people of the city of Miletus were arguing with the Samians about who should control an important port-city, with the Athenians coming down on the side of Miletus. This was a significant event because Samos was wealthy, and one of only three states who still supplied ships to the League rather than money. Because of this the Samians still had the capacity and experience to wage war against Athens. At the same time, the city of Byzantium also revolted against Athens, indicating either widespread disaffection or a coordinated action against Athens. The Athenians sent a force to Samos and set up a democracy, but as soon as the Athenian

forces left, a part of the city of Samos rose up against the garrison that had been left there. The Samians acquired a mercenary force supported by the Persian satrap of the region and stole the hostages that the Athenians had taken to ensure their goodwill. The Athenians immediately sent 60 triremes under Pericles, some of which were sent out to scout for the Phoenician navy in case the Persians decided to take advantage of the situation, which did not eventuate. The Athenians defeated the Samians in a naval battle and then besieged the city. After a surprise attack, the Samians defeated the Athenians and were in control of the island for two weeks, but reinforcements arrived under Pericles who again



FIGURE 4.16 The remains of the Heraion (temple to Hera) on Samos.

put them under siege. After a siege of nine months, the Samians surrendered, and the Athenians destroyed their city walls, confiscated their naval vessels, took hostages again and demanded a large war indemnity. They also were brought back into the League as *phoros* paying members.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were the tribute lists? What did they record? How does their first appearance in 454 BC provide us with a possible connection to the disaster in Egypt in 454 BC?
2. Explain the significance of the return of Cimon in 451 BC slightly early from his ostracism.
3. Explain the problems with the certainty of the Peace of Kallias.
4. Why do historians consider the Peace of Kallias was thought by many allies to be the end of the Delian League? Would the members of the League have been justified in thinking this? Explain your answer.
5. What does Diodorus tell us were the key terms of the Peace of Kallias?
6. Cyprus was an important part of the Persian Empire. Explain the connection to the Peace and Cimon's final campaign in Cyprus.

The role and contributions of Aristides and Cimon to the Delian League

While Athens had become a democracy, it was still prominent, wealthy Athenians who led the debates in the Athenian *ekklesia* and, therefore, set Delian League policy. Moreover, only these same types of men led League forces, which meant that they had a significant sway over the direction taken by the Delian League. The tradition that associates Aristides and Cimon together in their control of the Delian League is strong, with both men being considered honest, capable generals, and even being accused of the same crimes (most likely unjustly): involvement with Alexander I of Macedonia and theft of public funds.

Aristides 'the Just'

Aristides had been a prominent political leader in Athens before the Persian Wars. He was best known as the most vocal opponent of Themistocles. In 483–82 BC, Themistocles seems to have defeated his political rival and had him ostracised, most probably because of the naval policy proposed by Themistocles. Aristides was recalled in 481 BC with all other ostracised Athenians and played a prominent role in the battles, particularly before the battle of Salamis, where he worked with Themistocles to convince the Hellenic League force to remain and fight at Salamis, and at Plataea, where he led the Athenian contingent of troops.

Aristides has a reputation for two things: moral character and cunning—which were not mutually exclusive in Greek eyes. Plutarch preserves the story that Aristides suggested to the Chians, Lesbians and Samians who wished to be rid of Spartan leadership in 479 BC that they ram Pausanias' ship to make a clear break with Sparta, thus demonstrating their commitment to Athenian leadership. Plutarch also claims (probably incorrectly) that it was Aristides who made the allies drop lumps of iron into the sea to demonstrate the permanence of the Delian League. He consistently displayed a single-minded attitude to ensure that Athens would benefit most in any situation. To do this, he used his cunning, an attribute much admired by Greeks. He came

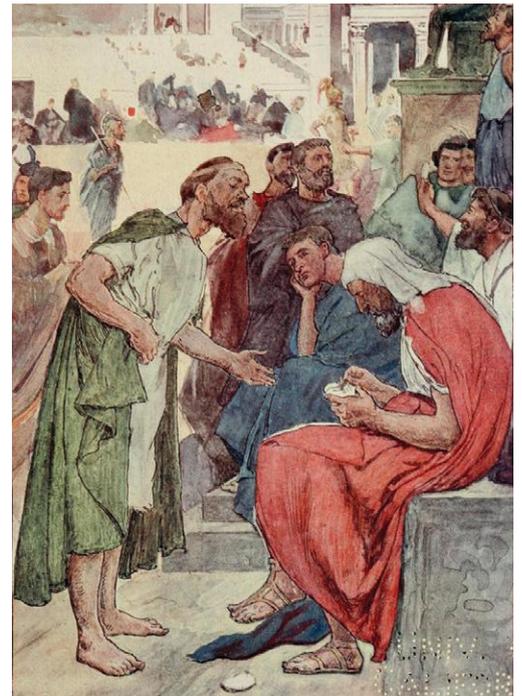


FIGURE 4.17 Aristides and the citizens

deme

the small towns of Attika, the smallest unit of democratic administration

from the *deme* Alopeke (the name of a person's *deme* of origin was incorporated into every citizen's official name), which means 'of the fox' in Greek; one comedian made the pun that he was 'fox by name and fox by nature'.

Aristides was also known for his integrity. Such was his reputation that he was nicknamed 'the Just' in Athens. In one story (most likely fictional), at the time of an ostracism, an old blind man asked Aristides to write the name of the man he wanted ostracised onto the pottery sherd. Aristides was surprised to hear that the man wanted his own name, Aristides, to be inscribed. When the surprised politician asked why, the man replied that he was so sick of Aristides being called 'the Just' all the time. Aristides

dutifully wrote his own name on the sherd. The story taps into the idea of Aristides being honest and incorruptible. This is an important part of his story in the Delian League, because Aristides was reportedly so honest that the allies wanted him to make the assessments of *phoros* at the outset of the Delian League. His assessments were considered fair (probably because most of them were based on the Persian assessment, the *dasmos*) but in comparison to later assessments, which could sometimes be triple Aristides' original assessment, it made Aristides seem very 'just' indeed.

He was obviously an important early commander in the Hellenic League, and his presence in Byzantium, as commander of the Athenian navy, indicates the military role he played. Plutarch claims that he had been on campaign when he died, most likely between 468 BC and 464 BC, indicating that his military service continued right up to the point of his death, as it did with Cimon.



FIGURE 4.18 An *ostrakon* bearing the name of Aristides, son of Lysimakhos, possibly from an ostracism vote in the 480s BC.

Cimon

Cimon, son of Miltiades (the Athenian *strategos* at the Battle of Marathon), is rightly considered the most influential person in the early years of the Delian League. No other individual contributed more to its military success than Cimon. He came from a wealthy family, and his father had been the tyrant of the Chersonese until the Persian advance into the Aegean in the 490s BC. His mother was a Thracian of royal blood, tying him closely to the northern Aegean in which he regularly operated. Cimon enjoyed social events, particularly drinking and horse racing, and he was noted as being especially fond of women. He married a daughter of the prominent Alkmeonid family in Athens, but may have had three children with a mistress: one of them was named Lakedaimonios, to indicate his own close ties to Sparta. He also used his wealth cleverly for political purposes, allowing anyone of his *deme* to pick any fruit he wanted from his property, and always carrying spare clothes with his attendants so that he could give them to any poor Athenians he met. Also, like Aristides, he was considered honest, morally upright and sincere in his actions and beliefs.

Cimon served in the Athenian navy in the Persian Wars and is said to have played a prominent role at Salamis. He reportedly worked with Aristides in developing a close relationship with the Ionians so that they would invite Athens to lead a naval alliance in 478 BC. He then led the early campaigns against the Persians, notably Eion, once the Delian League had been founded. Cimon also led the Athenian forces in the conquest of Skyros, and it was at his urging that they reportedly follow the oracle advising Athens to return the bones of Theseus. He played the part of the political showman well, carrying a large coffin that allegedly held the bones of the Athenian hero. Again, he commanded the forces at Karystos and led the forces that ended the revolt of Naxos and the one that forced

Pausanias to leave Byzantium. Cimon also led the League forces that attacked and subdued the coastline of Asia Minor in the mid-460s BC, leading to the battle of Eurymedon, which was his high point as a *strategos*.

Cimon's involvement in the war against Thasos in 465 BC indicates his true policies. While he led the forces that attacked and besieged Thasos, it is likely that he was the proponent of the policy of colonising the area around Drabeskos, which led to the massacre of the colonists. While it was a Delian League colony, with colonists coming from the League, it would have been very much an Athenian initiative, and was led by an Athenian, likely with the intent of creating a pro-Athenian Thrace. This indicates that his policy was in line with others in Athens who wanted to see Athenian power grow, regardless of the cost to the allies.

One of Cimon's most significant reforms was to the Athenian navy. During the Persian Wars, Themistocles had ensured that Athenian triremes were only partially decked, which meant only four archers and 10 hoplites could be on board. This was done to make them more manoeuvrable against the Phoenician triremes. At some point in the 470s BC, Cimon had the triremes fully decked, allowing up to 20 hoplites to be stationed on the decks. This reflected the changed naval strategy—during the Persian Wars, Themistocles required light, unencumbered triremes, whereas Cimon's strategy required large numbers of troops to be transported by a navy that could also operate as triremes in sea battles.

Cimon's pro-Spartan policies were an important part of his identity as a politician. He believed that it was important for Sparta to remain the leaders of the Greeks on land, while Athens should control the Greeks at sea, creating an important dual hegemony in Greece. This had an impact on the Delian League, which largely remained a naval alliance, while Cimon played a significant role in developing and implementing policy. However, after the dismissal of Athenian forces from Sparta in 462–61 BC, Cimon lost his influence. It had been declining since the defeat of the colonists at Drabeskos and the charges of bribery with Alexander I (see p. 79), but his political eclipse by Ephialtes and Pericles means that his impact on the Delian League after his return from exile was limited. He led the campaign to Cyprus in 450 BC, where he died.



FIGURE 4.19 Cimon's ostracism on a 19th-century French advertisement for beef stock. The top caption reads: 'The century of Pericles. Cimon is ostracised'. The bottom caption reads: 'Liebig: the real meat extract'.



FIGURE 4.20 A depiction of Cimon taking command of the Delian League in 466 BC, when he went on to defeat the Persian fleet and army at the Battle of the Eurymedon River.

Changing relations with allies

While the Athenians and their leaders may always have focused on the advantage of Athens, it is clear that the way that they achieved and maintained dominance changed over time. The Delian League started as a voluntary alliance with a goal of resisting Persian advances into the Aegean. To achieve this goal, the League required strong leadership, finances and military resources. In achieving this, Athens built a military machine that was capable of suppressing any resistance to the growth of Athenian dominance over the allies. This allowed Athens to bring in more effective forms of control to ensure its dominance.

Pericles' land empire

One of the clearest indicators of Athenian dominance over its allies is the use of League resources for its own benefit. Pericles had become the leading figure in the Athenian democracy, and his powers of persuasion and continual re-election to the office of *strategos* ensured that there was a consistent policy of expansion in this period. Moreover, in 449 BC, Pericles requested a meeting of the Hellenic League to discuss the rebuilding of the acropolis of Athens—needless to say, only Athens' allies attended. The Athenians decided after much debate that money of the Delian League should be used to fund the rebuilding of temples, indicating the attitude of the Athenians to the resources of its allies. As part of the First Peloponnesian War (see pp. 112-13), Pericles started to build an empire in mainland Greece. The focus of this was the Athenian conquest of Boeotia and its incorporation into the Athenian alliance. This was made possible because of the Athenian alliance with Megara, which restricted Sparta primarily to the Peloponnese. Throughout the First Peloponnesian War, the Athenians used the League's resources for their own private war against Sparta, indicating that while Athens had always been self-interested, there was a change in attitude towards the allies, and a blending of the ideas about what belonged to the Delian League and what belonged to Athens. By the 450s BC, it was obvious that the Athenians considered the Delian League to be an extension of Athens itself to a large degree.



FIGURE 4.21 Pericles giving his famous speech at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War. His powers of persuasion as a skilled orator contributed to his rise as a leader in Athens.

The spread of democracy

One of the most effective forms of control of the allies was the deliberate spread of democracies around the Aegean. While not all allies were democracies, and the Athenians did not impose democracies on its allies at all times, once a city broke from Athenian control, or if the *demos* of an allied city showed an inclination towards a democratic form of government, the Athenians might impose a democracy on the *polis*. It is generally believed that by giving the mass of citizens in a city a greater political voice and opportunity, the loyalty of most of the citizens would be increased. However, many allied democracies also revolted against Athenian control, so the other impositions on the *polis* could be more pressing than the possibility for involvement in government.

Klerukhies

One of the most insidious forms of control was the use of *klerukhies* in allied territory, which increased over the 5th century BC. Once a city revolted, part of its citizens' land was confiscated and given to Athenian citizens. Sometimes citizens from Athens, usually poorer people, would be given the land; other times, wealthier Athenians would be given the land, and while those new landowners remained in Athens, they would rent the land back to the people of the *polis* from whom it was confiscated. The original owners would be required to pay rent, usually in the form of produce, while much of the remainder of the food was required to be sold in the Athenian market. In the first instance, this would mean that poor Athenians were being given the opportunity to make a more prosperous life for themselves while simultaneously acting as early warning systems for discontent in allied lands. In the second instance, it meant that Athens was securing an increased food supply for Attika. The increasing use of this method of control marked a significant change in relations with allies, and when a second naval alliance was formed in the 4th century BC (almost exactly one century after the foundation of the Delian League), Athens was required to swear an oath that they would not reinstitute *klerukhies* in any form.

autonomy

Greek: 'self-governing'. In ancient Greece, the idea that a *polis* was entitled to make its own laws, and follow its own customs, without interference from another state

boule

the council that assisted the *ekklesia* in the running of the state



FIGURE 4.22 An 'Attik owl', the coinage of Athens

episkopoi

inspectors, selected by lot and paid, sent around to allied states to ensure that Athenian interests were being followed

lot

random selection; in Athens, choosing by lot was done with stones or with a special machine to select people for office

phrouarkh

a commander of troops in a garrison, positioned in allied states who had revolted or shown signs of revolt, from Athenian control

Judicial interference

Greek cities were fiercely independent, and one of the most important markers of that independence was the right to make laws and judge citizens without any interference from other *poleis*. The most overt example of changing relations with allies was the requirement of cases involving Athenian citizens in allied states to be heard in Athenian courts. This took away the most fundamental symbol of allied **autonomy** and indicated that the city was no longer able to govern itself. Often, this requirement followed a probable revolt from Athenian control, or concerns about the safety of Athenian officials or citizens in an allied city, and it would have been resented by the upper class particularly, as travelling to Athens to make your case before an Athenian jury would have been an expensive and time-consuming activity.

Oaths of loyalty

In the event of a revolt against Athens, the people and/or the **boule** of a city were required to swear an oath of loyalty to Athens. They were required to swear that they would be loyal to Athens and that they would not revolt, and would report any seditious talk or activity to the Athenian official. This would have been a relatively useful form of control in religious Greek societies, as the oaths invited the wrath of the gods if people broke their word.

The use of Athenian coinage, and weights and measures

An obvious aim of the Athenians and their leaders was to create an economic monopoly throughout the Aegean. This was made easier by the fact that the Athenian navy had become the most powerful navy in the Greek world—possibly in the entire world. They did this not just for the money and wealth generated that could be then accessed by wealthy and poor alike in Athens, but also to ensure access to food, particularly grain, throughout the Aegean. The Athenians came to ensure that all grain trade stopped at key Athenian-controlled locations to provide the population of Attika, which had grown enormously in the 5th century BC, with sufficient food. One of the main ways that this was done was by decreeing that all allies use Athenian coinage, and Athenian standards for weights and measures. This has traditionally been seen by some historians as possibly welcomed by many *poleis* across the Aegean, as it regulated trade and made sure that trade was facilitated in all ports. However, we cannot look past the obvious use of imperial power to achieve this. By making all allies use Athenian standards in trade, it was made clear that Athens was dominant and that even though it may have assisted trade, the loss of autonomy would have been resented. Moreover, allied cities were required to send their coins to Athens, where they would be melted down and stamped with the Athenian 'owl', the symbol of Athens, on coinage, with Athens taking a small percentage of the coinage as payment for this service.

Inspectors and garrisons

One of the increasing methods of control which began in the later part of this period was the use of garrisons and inspectors. Inspectors (**episkopoi**, literally 'lookers at') were paid magistracies in Athens. Once they were appointed (by **lot**), they would be required to visit a city and present a report on the activities of the city and ensure that there were no concerns there for Athens. If concerns were noted, or if there had already been anti-Athenian actions, a garrison with a garrison commander (**phrouarkh**) would be sent to the city to act as a police force and ensure that the city was kept in order, suppressing any anti-Athenian sentiments.

Source study 4.6 Athenian decrees and power

Source A The Phaselis Decree, pre-450 BC

... Whatever cause of action arises at Athens against any Phaselites, the trials are to be held at Athens before the *Polemarkhos*, as for the Khians, and nowhere else ... If any of the other officials accepts a case against any of the Phaselites contrary to this, if he condemns the condemnation shall be made invalid ...

Inscriptiones Graecae P³ 10

Source B The Erythrae Decree, c. late 450s BC

... The *boule* shall be appointed by lot of 120 men. [The man appointed shall be examined] in the *boule*; there shall be prosecution of anyone who has not undergone the public scrutiny. No one shall be a member of the *boule* twice in four years. The council will be allotted and installed by the *boule* and garrison commander, not less than 30 days before the *boule's* term of office ends.

They will swear by Zeus and Apollo and Demeter, invoking ruin on anyone who breaks the oath, and his children. The oath will be administered by the [garrison commander] ... The *boule* will swear as follows: 'I will be a member of *boule* as best and as justly as I can for the *demos* of the Erythraeans and of the Athenians and the allies, and I will not defect from the *demos* of Athens or the allies of the Athenians myself, nor will I be persuaded by another who revolts, nor will I persuade anyone else ...'

Inscriptiones Graecae P³ 14

Source C

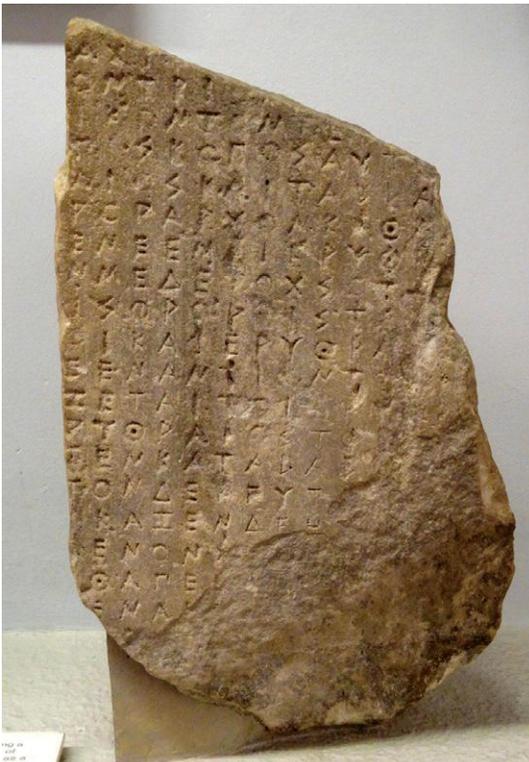


FIGURE 4.23 A portion of the Erythrae Decree

Source D Brock

There [is] a clutch of examples in the troubled decade either side of 450 [BC], all of which are to some extent problematic. Probably the earliest is Erythrae, most frequently dated to 453–52 [BC]. It is also for our purposes far and away the most clear-cut, since the decree which specifies the regulation to be imposed on Erythrae after the suppression of a revolt lays down certain constitutional principles, including a council which is chosen by sortition, and so clearly democratic; a clause forbidding immediate iteration in office is also reminiscent of Athenian procedures.

R. Brock (2009), 'Did the Athenian empire promote democracy?' in J. Ma, N. Papazarkadas, R. Parker (Eds.), *Interpreting the Athenian Empire*, London: Duckworth, p. 153

Source E Low

There is certainly a strong centralising urge, which at times might even suggest that the Athenians were starting to conceptualise their empire as a single *polis* ... the city's power in the empire itself can, at times, seem surprisingly elusive. This is not to deny that the Athenians had the capacity to impose their will on the subject cities (and to do so extremely brutally) when they wished to do so; but I would suggest that the sort of extreme interventionism ... should be thought of as an exception rather than a general rule ... This rather low-impact approach to imperial legislation and jurisdiction is in keeping with other aspects of Athenian activity in this period ... It is also an approach which brings various practical advantages: the Athenians did just enough to establish ... their authority over the cities of the empire and to make plausible their assertions of their right to legislate for those cities and to intervene in their judicial affairs. But they then rather neatly sidestepped at least some of the problems of actually exercising that authority, by allowing many of those powers to revert back to the subject cities ... This is a pragmatic approach rather than a glamorous one, and it is probably not coincidental that it is much easier to find boasting assertions of the extent of Athenian *kratos* in our fifth-century (Athenian) sources than it is to find accounts of co-operation with the subject states.

P. Low (2013), 'Law, authority and legitimacy in the Athenian empire', in J. Duindam, J. Harries, J. Diana Harries, C. Humfress, H. Nimrod (Eds.), *Law and Empire. Ideas, Practice, Actors*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, pp. 43–44

kratos

Greek: power, usually in the form of military or political power over another, or the power of a father over the members of his family

polemarkhos

one of the *arkhons*, traditionally responsible for command of the Athenian armed forces

Questions

1. The Phaselis decree (Source A) guarantees legal cases would be held in the court of the **polemarkhos**, which would have made it easier to have them heard more quickly. Explain how this makes it seem as though this was not imposed after a revolt. Also, explain any associations with Cimon's Eurymedon campaign or its immediate aftermath.
2. What did the Athenians impose on Erythrae (Sources B and C) after its likely revolt? Explain why this would have been seen as effective.
3. What does Brock (Source D) seem to say is the main way that Athens imposed control over Erythrae? How is this associated with any other events happening at the time? Explain your response.
4. What does Low (Source E) claim about the nature of Athenian control over the allies? What could this tell us about the Athenian intervention at Erythrae?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain how the development of Pericles' 'land empire' is indicative of the changing attitudes of Athens towards the allies in the 450s BC.
2. How did the institution of democracies in allied *poleis* assist in ensuring Athenian control of the allies?

3. Why would a *klerukhia* have been seen as a particularly unpleasant action to enforce on allies?
4. How did Athenian interference in allied *poleis* limit the city's autonomy?
5. Why were oaths of loyalty imposed on cities that had revolted?
6. What were the purposes of imposing Athenian coinage, weight and measurement standards on allied *poleis*?
7. Explain the role played by *episkopoi* and garrisons in ensuring control of allied *poleis*.

The nature of Athenian imperialism

The words 'empire' and 'imperialism' are problematic in a study in ancient history. They have many modern implications that are not relevant to the ancient world. Many modern historians prefer to use the word *arkhe*, which implies strong leadership, or *hegemonia*, denoting a leadership of a group of allies that are more or less equal. It can be seen that while the Athenians were appointed as hegemon (leader) of the Delian League, the League was always managed for the interests of Athens.

Athenian power was largely carried out by the navy. The League forces were primarily Athenian, and the Athenians seem to have encouraged their allies to contribute a *phoros* rather than ships. By doing this, as Thucydides claimed, the Athenian navy could grow at the expense of the allies. When allies then attempted to revolt, they lacked the experience for naval warfare and were unable to defend themselves. The League treasury therefore funded the growth of Athenian power.

It seems as though one of the driving motivations for the growth of Athenian power was to develop Athenian economic interests. Right from the outset, the Athenians demonstrated their interests in becoming active in controlling key locations in the Aegean and beyond. The very first city that Athens took from the Persians after the Persian War was Sestus, and most of the major actions in which Athens was involved could be seen as the Athenians trying to ensure that they controlled strategic locations such as this.

Naval trade was very lucrative, particularly the trade that came through the Black Sea, the source of many profitable luxury items. A more important consideration for Athenian control of naval trade was grain. Athens was unable to provide enough goods in Attika to sustain the population, accounting for early attempts to colonise the Chersonese. By ensuring that they controlled fertile lands, such as Euboea, the Athenians could ensure access to the food that they required to feed the population of Attika. Moreover, such ventures were highly popular with wealthy men who may have had a personal stake in such trade. For much of the first half of the 5th century BC, individuals such as Cimon would have had personal financial interests in colonising the lands around the Aegean, benefitting from the trade generated.

It is likely that *klerukhies* were actually absentee rentiers, meaning that the land of many *klerukhies* settled by Athens in this period was owned by wealthy individuals, and once the land was confiscated from a *polis*, the wealthy Athenians would rent the land back to the people who used to own it, taking a proportion of their produce as part of their rent and bring it back to sell in grain-poor Attika. This gave Athenian imperialism a very economic slant, as the wealthy Athenians influencing decisions both in the Athenian *ekklesia* and the League council would have had interests in the trade businesses, and therefore had a vested economic interest in ensuring that Athenian power brought economic benefits that they could exploit.

A further development that could be seen to influence Athenian imperialism was the growth of democracy in Athens. Democracy required a significant amount of money to function, and it brought money to Athenians who were able to serve in the various magistracies in the city. This meant that the ordinary people in Athens, particularly the lower classes, could benefit from the growth of Athenian power in the Aegean and the flow of money into the city. Not only did the *demos* get money from serving the democracy,

hegemonia

leadership of a group of allies who were thought of as relatively equal



FIGURE 4.24 Athenian pottery from the early 4th century BC showing workers weighing objects.

the money brought into the city was used to fund the building program of Pericles, which included the buildings on the Athenian Acropolis. Many members of the *demos* were gainfully employed as labourers in this, again indicating the economic benefits that Athenian imperialism brought to Athenians.

There was also a clear religious element to the nature of Athenian imperialism. The dedication of the *aparkhe* to Athena, the patron goddess of Athens, rather than to Apollo, the protector god of the Delian League, helped to refocus the League as Athenian. The main festival of Athens, the Panathenaia, became the focus of Athenian control because the allies were required to send a cow and *panoply* to Athens. These were symbols that represented Athens as the mother-city of the allied *poleis*. By sending a cow, the allies recognised (forcibly or not) the need to support Athens in real terms, such as with food (a cow was an important part of a religious feast); and the hoplite armour represented the requirement to defend the mother-city at times of war. The allies would also bring their tribute to Athens at the time of the City Dionysia, a festival dedicated to dramatic contests where Athenian identity was a focus. This probably made it clear that, while the allies were part of Athens, they did not share in the identity of Athenians. Also, it seems that Athens started to plant Athenian cults around allied territory, requiring the worship of gods in Athenian practices. The Athenians would confiscate land and dedicate (or rededicate) it to gods important to Athens, such as Athena or Poseidon, and then claimed the produce and money generated from this religious land. Deities seen as critical to Athenian self-identity, such as the hero Ion (the origin of the name Ionia), were maintained in Attika and Athens only to ensure that there was a specifically Athenian identity still being maintained. Thus, the religious nature of Athenian imperialism was designed to unify the Ionians under Athenian leadership, but also to keep them at arms' length to ensure that a unique Athenian identity continued to exist.

aparkhe

the 1/60th of the *phoros* that was dedicated to Athena.

panoply

an entire suit of hoplite armour

Finally, Athenian imperialism brought a prestige to Athens that the Athenians enjoyed. As Athenian power and dominance over the allies grew, more allies were required to engage in acts that gave the Athenian people, even the lowliest of the *thetes*, much more respect. The Athenian requirement for cases involving Athenians in allied territory to be heard at Athens had two outcomes: first, it meant that Athenians were given almost a special status abroad, which would bring prestige to any magistrates who were on duty in allied cities. Second, jurors began to be paid from the mid-5th century BC. This meant that poorer Athenians sat in judgement of the wealthier citizens of allied cities. This brought much prestige to the poorer Athenians and helped them to form an ideology of the superiority of Athenian citizens.

thetes

the lowest social class; if they owned land it produced up to 200 measures. They usually did not own land, and often worked in the city or urban areas

Source study 4.7

The success of democracy

Source A Raaflaub

Thus, success provided democracy with legitimacy and was crucial to both justifying the political equality and supporting the political identity of the lower-class citizens. Such success could only be achieved through war and ongoing expansion. Imperialism in its relentlessly activist form typical of Athens, therefore, provided the citizens with the opportunities they needed to prove themselves, to renew their legitimation, and to keep it alive through continuing success.

K. A. Raaflaub (2018), 'Democracy, power and imperialism', in J. P. Euben, J. R. Wallach and J. Ober (Eds.), *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstitution of Athenian Democracy*, Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, p. 145

Question

1. Create a mind-map that incorporates the various natures of Athenian imperialism. Include examples of each aspect of the nature of Athenian imperialism. On the mind-map, explain how Raaflaub's opinion about Athenian imperialism can be seen in each aspect.



FIGURE 4.25 Hoplite armour, similar to this, was offered as tributes by Athenian allies at the Panathenaia festival.

Further resources

C. Carey (2017), *Democracy in Classical Athens* (2nd ed.), London: Bloomsbury

P. Low (2013), 'Law, authority and legitimacy in the Athenian empire,' in J. Duindam, J. Harries, J. Humfress, J. Diana Harries, C. Humfress, H. Nimrod (Eds.), *Law and Empire. Ideas, Practice, Actors*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, pp. 25–44

J. Ma, N. Papazarkadas, R. Parker (Eds.), (2009), *Interpreting the Athenian Empire*, London: Duckworth, pp. 149–166

K. A. Raaflaub (2018), 'Democracy, power and imperialism,' in J. P. Euben, J. R. Wallach and J. Ober (Eds.), *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstitution of Athenian Democracy*, Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, pp. 103–146

P. Rahe (2019), *Sparta's First Attic War. The Grand Strategy of Sparta, 478–46 B.C.*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press

M. Zaccharini (2017), *The Lame Hegemony. Cimon of Athens and the Failure of Panhellenism, ca. 478–450 BC*, Bologna: Bononia University Press

Activities

Bringing it together

1. Why was Athens seen as a more desirable leader of naval forces than Sparta?
2. Explain the success of the Delian League through the period.
3. In what way did the aims of Athens as leader of the Delian League change throughout the period?
4. In what way did the Athenian methods of control match the nature of Athenian imperialism?
5. How did the relationship between Athens and Sparta change over this period?
6. Explain how the last event in this period, the revolt of Samos and the subsequent war, are indicative of a 'transformation' of the Delian League into an Athenian 'empire'.

Activities

1. Read Thucydides' *Pentekontaetia* (literally '50-year period', *Thucydides*. 1.89–118). Create a list of events in this period. While reading it, note Thucydides' opinions about why events happened. Once you have finished, explain Thucydides' attitudes about what happened in the period between 479 BC and 439 BC.
2. Print out a map of the Aegean and locate the sites of as many of the events described as possible. Write the date of events on the map where possible.
3. Research other Athenian decrees of the period. Explain what they add to our knowledge of Athenian methods of control.
4. Create a mind-map profile of Aristides and Cimon. Start with their personal attributes and their backgrounds, explaining the significance of these. Outline their contributions to the Delian League, including what they did and how it affected the League, both short and long-term. Use Plutarch's *Lives* of the two men to add depth to the profiles.
5. Research Pericles' life. Create a list of actions he took in this period from 461 BC to 439 BC and write a paragraph explaining his impact on Athens and the growth of Athenian power.

HSC-style questions

1. Assess the success of the Delian League in the period 479–49 BC. (25 marks)
2. To what extent did relations between Athens and Sparta change in the period after 479 BC? (25 marks)
3. With reference to the following quote and your own knowledge, explain the extent to which Athenian relations with the allies changed after 479 BC. (25 marks)

Of the various accusations that led to revolt, the greatest was related to the failure to produce *phoros* and ships, and the refusal to serve in the forces. For the Athenians were very severe and exacting, and were causing suffering to those who did not want to be, nor were used to being, made to do things through necessity. In some other ways, the Athenians were no longer the same agreeable rulers, and if they served above and beyond their fair share, it was then easy to bring the allies back in. In this, the allies were to blame: their shrinking away from service in the armed forces and the making of most of them contribute their share in money instead of in providing ships, so they could stay at home. So, while Athens increased the navy with the money the allies paid, when they would revolt they would be without resources or experience in warfare.

Thucydides, 1.99

Chapter

5

Athens and Sparta



FIGURE 5.1 *Themistocles takes the bowl of poison* by Henri-Camille Danger, 1887. After being one of the influential commanders against Persia, Themistocles was ostracised and spent his remaining years in the court of the Great King. Plutarch maintained that he died by drinking poison, or bull's blood.

After the Persian Wars, the cities that had contributed the most to the efforts against the Persians had different experiences. While Athenian power around the Aegean and Greece grew, Sparta became focused on its role within the Peloponnese. This new insular focus gave rise to several challenges in the organisation it founded and led, the Peloponnesian League. This allowed Athens, in particular, to become more influential, which led to significant conflict between the two *poleis* within years of the end of the Persian Wars, no doubt fuelled by the Athenian political leader, Themistocles.

This chapter will explain the:

- impact of the Persian Wars on both Athens and Sparta
- changing relationship between Athens and Sparta
- role of Themistocles in the deterioration of the relationship between Athens and Sparta
- development of the Peloponnesian League in the period during and after the Persian Wars
- the 'First' Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta.

Timeline 5.1: The changing relationship between Athens and Sparta

- 479 BC ▪ Athenians rebuild their city walls in defiance of Spartan wishes
- 477 BC ▪ Sparta removed from leadership of naval forces of the Hellenic League
- 475 BC ▪ Sparta debates going to war against Athens
- 471 BC ▪ Themistocles ostracised from Athens
- 466 BC ▪ Sparta demands that Athens put Themistocles on trial for collaborating with the Persians
- 465 BC ▪ Earthquake in Sparta
- 460 BC ▪ Outbreak of the 'First' Peloponnesian War
- 451 BC ▪ Five Year Truce agreed between Athens and Sparta
- 445 BC ▪ Thirty Years' Peace agreed between Athens and Sparta

The impact of the Persian Wars

The Persian Wars were a key point in Greek history, marking the beginning of a more 'historical' period of the past, for which there exists far more evidence. Our main sources for this period, Herodotus and Thucydides, both provide excellent information, but from an Athenian perspective. While it is relatively easy to trace the impact of the Persian Wars on Athens, particularly in the development of its power, it is far more difficult to do this for Sparta. This is because the Spartans were secretive, and because our Athenocentric sources had a vested interest in depicting Sparta in a less favourable way.

Relations between Athens and Sparta

Relations between the two cities that contributed the most to the Hellenic League forces were never as close as has been traditionally thought by scholars. Athens almost needed to blackmail the Spartans to ensure that they contributed to fighting beyond the Peloponnese during the Persian Wars. In 478–77 BC, when the Spartans are said to have handed over

the war with Persia to the Athenians with no ill will, we should be suspicious. While the Spartans clearly did not want to continue to fight a war in the eastern Aegean, demonstrated by their suggestion that the eastern Greeks should evacuate their cities and return to the mainland, this would still have been a humiliation for them that the Athenians were asked to take over as leaders. While relations were not strong to start with, they worsened over the coming decades.

Themistocles' policy towards Sparta

After Salamis, Themistocles had been honoured by Sparta in a way that no other non-Spartan had. Even though he had suffered a political setback when returning to Athens after Salamis, he still returned to a position of leadership of the *ekklesia* after the Persian Wars. It seems that there was some concern in the Peloponnesian League about Athenian power, not from Sparta, but from Corinth and Aegina. While Aegina was only a minor power, Corinth was a loud voice in the Peloponnesian League, and had been a vocal opponent of Athenian strategic proposals during the Persian invasions.

The concern centred on whether the Athenians should rebuild their city walls, destroyed by the Persians. In 479 BC, Sparta—no doubt with some prompting from the Corinthians and Aeginetans—suggested that not only should Athens not rebuild their walls, but no city north of the Isthmus of Corinth should do so; the Persians had invaded twice, and it was expected that they would do so again. It seems as though Sparta had seen an opportunity to again become the leading state in mainland Greece. Themistocles determined on a strategy of deception to ensure that Athens rebuilt their walls. After suggesting that the Spartan ambassadors be dismissed, he left for Sparta immediately, telling the Athenians to build the walls with every man, woman and child, night and day. On reaching Sparta, he assured the Spartans that walls were not being built, even though reports kept coming in to the contrary. Themistocles told the Spartans to send another embassy to Athens to determine the facts for themselves, while simultaneously sending a message to the Athenians that they should prevent any Spartan embassy from leaving Athens. When he received word from Athens that the wall was built he informed the Spartans that Athens had indeed been building a wall that was now finished, and that Athens was now fully able to determine its own policies.



FIGURE 5.2 The Temple of Apollo, Corinth. In the background is the Acrocorinth, a large rock formation on which fortifications and castles were built from the late 7th century BC into the Middle Ages. Its importance for the defence of the Peloponnese contributed to Corinth's influence in the Peloponnesian League.

Thucydides tells us that the Spartans remained outwardly friendly to Themistocles but secretly angry about what had happened. This indicates that they probably felt that they should have been able to influence Greek affairs as they wanted, and as they had done before the Persian Wars. In 477 BC, the Spartans were also informed that they would no longer be required to lead the naval forces against Persia, which must have increased the resentment against Athens.

In 478–77 BC, Themistocles was the Athenian representative to the Amphictyonic League, a religious organisation of some importance in Greece. The League passed laws determining relationships between different cities and the main temples, and authorised ‘religious wars’ against states that had broken the religious laws of the League. At this meeting, the Spartans suggested that any member who had not fought in the Hellenic League should be expelled. This was most likely a political move by Sparta, calculated to remove their rivals for power in the League, the Thebans and the Thessalians. Themistocles argued against this, reminding everyone present that only three members of the Amphictyonic League fought against Xerxes’ invasion, thus ending the argument and earning Themistocles considerable enmity from the Spartans. This tells us that the Persian Wars had done little to increase the trust that Athens and Sparta had for each other.

Some Spartans seem to have been so angry that, in 475 BC, Diodorus of Sicily tells us, that they decided to go to war with Athens. They convinced the Spartiates that they should contest maritime leadership with Athens, primarily for both honour and wealth for the city and themselves. However, Hetoemaridas, one member of the *gerousia* who could trace his descent back to the hero Herakles, advised the Spartans that their power was not on the sea, but the land. Because of this, he argued, it would be folly to try to contend with the Athenians at sea. He cooled the temper of the *ekklesia* in Sparta. While historians cannot test the veracity of this story, it at least represents the mood of the Spartans towards Athens, who had managed to wrest some of the mantle of leadership from Sparta as a result of the Persian Wars.

However, while Themistocles seemed to have become Sparta’s greatest enemy, his political opponents were using this in Athens against him. It seems that he may have gone too far with his anti-Spartan policies and, probably in 471 BC, Themistocles was ostracised from Athens. He moved to Argos, the great opponent of Sparta in the Peloponnese, and is said to have made frequent trips around the Peloponnese. Sparta was under considerable pressure as leader of the Peloponnesian League from the League members (see p. 105), and the ever-constant threat posed by *helot* revolt would no doubt have been a target for Themistocles.

Themistocles in exile

When Themistocles went to Argos, he was travelling to a Peloponnese that was rife with dissension and probably had been since the 490s BC. In 494 BC, Sparta went to war with Argos and defeated the Argives at the Battle of Sepeia, killing so many (around 6000 men) that the city was ruined for a generation. The Spartan king Cleomenes, when he was exiled in c. 490 BC, fled to Arcadia where he caused such problems for Sparta that the authorities eventually recalled him from exile, leaving an anti-Spartan Arcadia in his wake. Mantinea, the leading city of Arcadia, did not send troops to Plataea, and neither did the Eleans. Clearly, the Persian Wars had in some way shown Sparta to be lacking as a leader, and other potential candidates were beginning to show their hand.

It is possible that Themistocles arrived in Argos at a time of demographic change, where the sons of those killed at the Battle of Sepeia were removing from power those who had come into the city and become prominent after 494 BC. These men had a particular desire to see Sparta defeated. Around the time that Themistocles arrived in Argos the

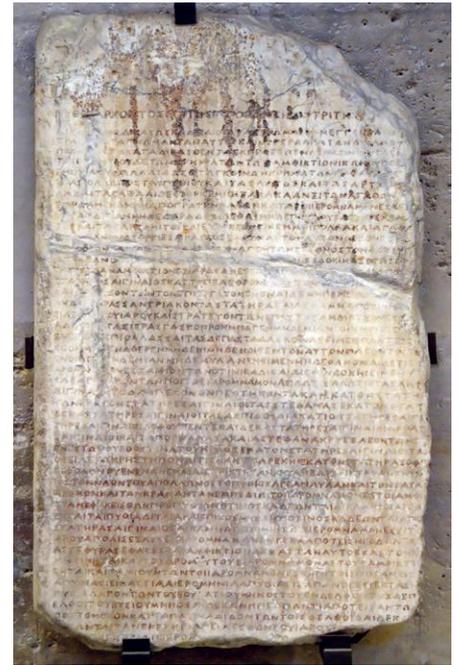


FIGURE 5.3 An inscription of the Amphictyonic League, found at Delphi.

gerousia

the council of elders in Sparta, mainly responsible for advising the king



FIGURE 5.4 The remains of the Temple of Hera at Argos, looking across to the Inakchos plain.

cities of Elis also came together, increasing their power significantly and posing a threat to Spartan control of the Peloponnese. Not long after this, Argos possibly played a role in the coming together of Tegean villages under the control of Tegea, and the unification of regional towns under Mantinea, making Elis, Tegea and Mantinea independently powerful. Historians do not know if Themistocles played a role in these affairs, but it is more than possible. There is evidence that he travelled around the Peloponnese at this time, increasing the chance that the anti-Spartan leader played a role in stirring up opposition to Sparta. It is also likely that he played a role in the alliance between his hosts, the Argives, and Tegeans, in approximately 469 BC, which aimed at ensuring that Argos could regain control of the cities and towns of the Argolid that had become independent since the Battle of Sepeia. This created problems for Sparta that needed to be addressed, as these regions bordered on the most fertile areas worked by Sparta's *helot* population. Sparta soon sent an army of Spartiates and *perioikoi* to Tegea, where they won a battle over the Argive/Tegean alliance, but not a decisive one. Importantly, historians can be reasonably assured of Themistocles' role because the poet Simonides, a friend of Themistocles, wrote a short poem commemorating the Athenians who died in the battle.

It seems that while Athenian official state foreign policy was not hostile to Sparta, there were still many in Athens who supported Themistocles' anti-Spartan position.

In 466 BC, Sparta could not tolerate Themistocles' presence in the Peloponnese any longer. They sent a demand to Athens that the Athenians submit Themistocles to trial for medism. They claimed, probably correctly, that Themistocles had been working with the Spartan regent Pausanias, who had been found (again, most likely) to have been collaborating with the Persians in trying to stir up a *helot* revolt (see p. 105). Themistocles chose to flee, travelling around Greece, then to Macedonia and finally to the court of Artaxerxes, the Great King and son of Xerxes, where he died in exile. Themistocles had been remarkably successful in playing on the concerns of Peloponnesian states about Sparta, which had declined in influence after the Persian Wars. The Spartans realised how vulnerable they were as a result of the Persian Wars, and their decision to retreat from leadership against Persia was likely a sign for other powerful Peloponnesian states that Spartan dominance could be overthrown. The leadership of Sparta was also seen to be susceptible, leading to a further desire to remain as a local power and stay out of any external conflicts that could draw them away from their basis of power, the *helot* population.

perioikoi

Greek: the non-Spartan people who lived in the towns and villages around the city of Sparta (Lakonia)

Source study 5.1 Themistocles

Source A Plutarch

When the army of the Hellenes put into port at Pagasae, after Xerxes had left, and was wintering there, he made a speech before the Athenians, saying that he had a certain plan that would be beneficial and provide safety to them, but was not to be discussed in public. So, the Athenians ordered him to disclose it to Aristides only, and if he should sanction it, to proceed. Themistocles then told Aristides that he intended to burn the fleet of the Hellenes. Aristides then came before the people and said about the scheme that Themistocles intended to carry out that nothing was more advantageous nor more unjust. Therefore, the Athenians commanded Themistocles to stop the plan.

Plutarch, *Life of Themistocles*, 20

Source B Smith

His decision to flee to Argos, of all places, was wise ... His ultimate goal was, as always, self-serving: he wished to transform Argos into a democracy and therefore make it a strong ally of Athens, which would endear him enough to the Athenians' voting assembly that they would recall him from exile. And if that failed, he might be able to set himself up as tyrant of Argos.

J. A. Smith (2022), *Themistocles. The Powerbroker of Athens*, Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Military, p. 207

Questions

1. Plutarch (Source A) tells us about Themistocles' secret plan at Pagasae. This is likely connected to Leotykidas' invasion of Thessaly (as king of Sparta) with a large Spartiate army. Knowing Themistocles was strongly anti-Spartan, what do you think was the purpose of his plan?
2. What is Smith's (Source B) opinion about Themistocles' use of Argos during his exile? Do you think this could be correct? Are there later events that might suggest that going to Argos was not just about self-interest for Themistocles? Explain your answer using evidence.

Internal problems for Sparta

Being a Spartan king was a dangerous occupation. Most of the kings of Sparta in the late 6th and 5th centuries BC faced exile, heavy fines or even execution, often unreasonably. While Spartiates respected the idea of monarchs descended from the line of Herakles, the concept of equality in Sparta seems to have meant that Spartiates also had a problem with a king who was above the rest, both in terms of status and wealth.

One of the obvious impacts of the Persian Wars on Sparta was on the monarchy. The continual Spartan emphasis on the respect for the political institutions has led some scholars to think that this was actually propaganda, and that the Spartans were emphasising it to hide this weakness. Leotykidas, leading the Spartan expedition to Thessaly after the Persian Wars, was found trying to hide the silver from a bribe in his sleeves, according to Herodotus. The word used for sleeve, *kheiris*, is a reference to a specifically Persian item of clothing, indicating that the Spartan king had 'gone Persian'. After the Battle of Plataea, Pausanias is said to have had the Persian cooks put on a typical Persian feast: this may have included slow-cooked and heavily spiced lamb and goat, incorporating fruits and lots of spiced rice. Pausanias commented on its sumptuousness, comparing it to a typical Spartan

meal he also had prepared and wondering out loud to the Greek commanders he had assembled to marvel at the sight why the Persians would want to conquer Greece when this was what they were going to be conquering; an ominous sign for Pausanias' later behaviour. There seems to have been a justified fear that Spartan kings could 'go Persian'.

In 479–78 BC, Pausanias led the Hellenic League fleet on campaign against Persia. He supported a revolt of Cyprus from Persia and then sailed north to attack Persian-held Byzantium, both critical locations. His conduct towards the other Greeks at this time was arrogant and aggressive; he was also charged with medism. He is said to have dressed in decadent Persian clothing, travelled with a Persian-style bodyguard and dined in the manner of a Persian tyrant. Herodotus tells us that he also wished to become a tyrant over Greece, trying to arrange his marriage to the daughter of a Persian satrap. In response to this, Pausanias was recalled in 477 BC, but was acquitted of the charge of medism.

ephor

one of the five men elected annually in Sparta to assist in running the state; one of his roles was to control foreign relations

After his acquittal, Pausanias left Sparta, seemingly with the support of the *ephors* and returned to Byzantium. He then contacted the Persians again and steadily built influence with them, possibly helping the Persians to rebuild a presence in Thrace, until Cimon, commanding Delian League naval forces, attacked and removed Pausanias from Byzantium. Pausanias then stayed in Persian territory at the city of Colonae for some months until he was summoned home. Upon his return, he was imprisoned for a trial, but was soon released because of his influence within Sparta. When he attempted to continue communicating with a Persian satrap, proof of his medism was uncovered. He took sanctuary in the Temple of Athena Khalkioikos in Sparta, so the Spartans bricked him into the building. At the point of death, officials removed the brick walls they had built and had him dragged from the temple and left to die.

The fate of Pausanias led the Spartans to fear that Spartan leaders sent out would become similarly corrupted. More accurately, though, it seems as if the Persian Wars provided opportunities for the Spartan kings on campaign that they had never possessed. The political enemies of the monarchy likely feared the wealth and influence that could be attained by Spartan kings who commanded forces away from the watchful eyes of their Spartiate peers.



FIGURE 5.5 A 19th-century depiction of Pausanias being carried out of the Temple of Athena Khalkioikos.

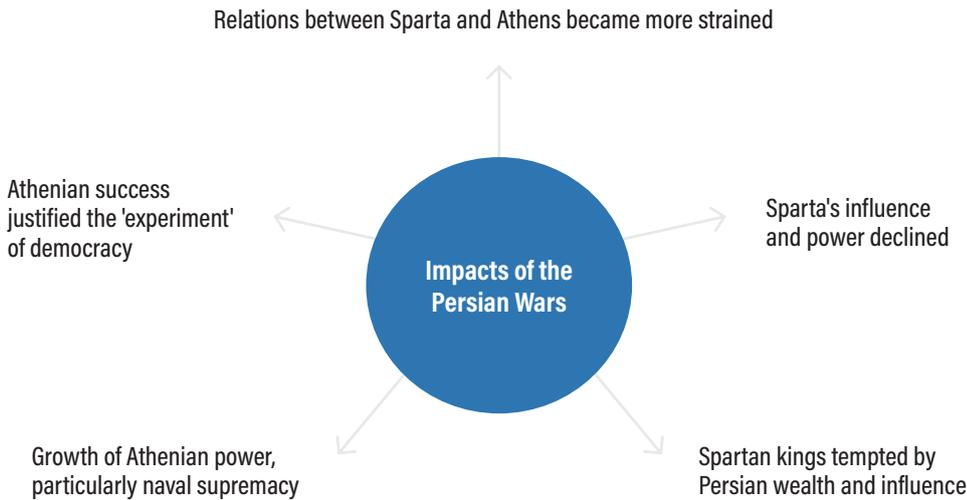


FIGURE 5.6 Impacts of the Persian Wars

Source study 5.2 Spartan kings

Source A Powell

From the few decades before the fall of Pausanias, Sparta's best-known king was Leonidas, acclaimed—*after* his death—for courageous leadership at Thermopylae. But the story of Leonidas and his 300 was a distraction ... It distracted from the thoughts of Spartan failure to hold the pass of Thermopylae. It also distracted, perhaps intentionally, from the thoughts of what happened to other Spartan kings of the period.

A. Powell (2018), 'Sparta's foreign – and internal – history, 479–403', in A. Powell (Ed.), *A Companion to Sparta*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 293

Source B Zaccharini

Sparta's interest in [the Hellespont] is consistent with Pausanias' seven-year long sojourn there: such a prolonged stay can hardly be regarded as a personal initiative. For a long time, behind the regent's affairs in Byzantium there was Sparta's official support, rather than a sort of private tyranny ... Pausanias did return to Sparta when recalled for trial despite his easy access to his new friends in Asia.

M. Zaccharini (2017), *The Lame Hegemony. Cimon of Athens and the Failure of Panhellenism, ca. 478–450 BC*, Bologna: Bononia University Press, p. 95

Questions

1. What does Powell (Source A) tell us about how Leonidas at Thermopylae was used as propaganda?
2. Does Zaccharini (Source B) consider Pausanias' stay in Byzantium to be evidence of medism? How does he justify this conclusion?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Provide an example from the Persian Wars where Athens needed to 'blackmail' Sparta to do something they did not necessarily want to do.
2. If Sparta did not want to carry on the war in the eastern Aegean, why would there be a problem if Athens was asked to lead the efforts?
3. Explain how the rebuilding of the walls of Athens was a source of tension for Athens and Sparta. What would have been the Spartan motives for suggesting that cities north of the Isthmus of Corinth remain unwallled?
4. What possibly happened in 475 BC that tells us that Sparta took issue with growing Athenian power?
5. Why do you think Themistocles went to live in Argos? What did he have to gain from using that city as a base?
6. Outline the problems that Themistocles seems to have caused for Sparta when he was in Argos.
7. Explain the significance of Athenian involvement in the Battle of Tegea.
8. What seems to have been the real issue about Spartan kings after the Persian Wars?
9. Explain the evidence for Pausanias' medism.

The growth of Athenian power

The most obvious impact of the Persian Wars was the growth of Athenian power. The Athenian navy had demonstrated it was the new naval superpower in the Aegean world, not only through the sheer size of the navy, but also because of its leadership. Themistocles showed that he was a sophisticated military thinker, willing to try innovative strategies and was not bound by traditional ways of thinking. This allowed him to use the navy to its full effect, as at the Battle of Salamis. This was a tradition continued by Cimon, who also developed into a first-rate naval and military commander. The Persian Wars allowed the Athenians to demonstrate their supremacy at sea, and when the first opportunity arose for the Greeks to invite Athens to lead the alliance against Persia in 478–77 BC, they took it, demonstrating a clear connection between the Persian Wars and Athenian leadership.

Moreover, the Athenians had a vested interest in maintaining dominance because it allowed them to control trade. Athens had settled key trade locations as far back as the mid-6th century BC, under the Pisistratid tyranny. Part of the reason for this was to ensure that the Athenians could import enough grain to feed the population, as Attika could not produce sufficient food to sustain its population. Moreover, to sustain the naval force, significant revenue was required—triremes were expensive to build, maintain and man, particularly when each rower on board was paid. Control of the sea ensured that all trade could be funnelled through Athenian-controlled *poleis*, and the Athenians could then exact sufficient *phoros* from those cities to fund the navy, among other things. This control was, again, a result of the Persian Wars as the position of leadership it assumed, and the levying and control of the *phoros*, ensured that the Athenians could maintain their supremacy at sea.

phoros

Greek: 'contribution'; money given to Athens as leader of the Delian League



FIGURE 5.7 A fragment of an *ostrakon* with 'Kimon' (Cimon) written on it. This would have been used to vote to exile (or ostracise) the person whose name is on the pottery. Cimon was dismissed from Athens in 461 BC.

Growth of democracy

Success in the Persian Wars gave the Athenians justification for their democratic experiment. Democracy was a new ‘invention’, and it was believed that by giving citizens a voice and the right to participate in political life, the people had more for which to fight. They had something that their enemies did not—freedom. This freedom was worth fighting to protect and, if possible, extend to others. Not only did success in the Persian Wars of 490 BC, 480–79 BC, and down to 449 BC, mean that the Athenians were given encouragement to expand their own democracy, but they felt that it should be spread to other states. This was because the Athenian democracy, controlled by people of all classes, felt that a more trustworthy government would be a democracy, thus the Persian Wars not only consolidated democracy in Athens, but led to the spread of democracy around the Greek world.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the connection between the Athenian Empire and the Persian Wars.
2. How did the Persian Wars lead to greater grain security for Athens?
3. Why did democracy grow and spread around Greece as a result of the Persian Wars?

The Peloponnesian League

The Peloponnesian League, as historians call it, was established in the mid-6th century BC and expanded over the course of the 6th century BC.

It is one of the most poorly named organisations of this period. While it was led by Sparta and consisted of many Peloponnesian states, it was not entirely Peloponnesian. Moreover, it was not a ‘league,’ which would imply that the members were allied to each other; it was more of an alliance, whereby the Spartans determined what was in their interest and pursued a policy that met that interest.

It can easily be seen that the key purpose of the Peloponnesian League was the security of the Spartan state. Its beginning can be traced back to the end of the Tegean War in the mid-6th century BC, where Sparta had fought a long and bloody war against the Arkadian state of Tegea. Instead of pushing the war further and possibly making an enemy that would always resent them, the Spartans opted for an alliance. The location of Tegea, near the region of newly conquered **Messene**, would have been an ideal location to cause trouble within the *helot* populations, and preventing *helot* unrest was the key driver of Spartan policy within the Peloponnesian League.

Messene

the part of the Peloponnese west of Sparta; conquered by Sparta probably during the 7th century BC and its original population made into *helots*

The nature of the League

The Peloponnesian League was, in Greek, a *symmakhia*, or military alliance (in Greek, the words ‘*syn*’ or ‘*sym*’ and ‘*makhia*’ mean ‘fighting together’). It required members to fight together defensively (if someone was attacked by a group that was not part of the League), or offensively (as determined by Sparta). Each member made an agreement with Sparta and Sparta only. Xenophon records the oath that says the League members would agree to have the same friends and enemies as Sparta and to follow Sparta wherever it may lead. Sparta, in return, agreed to defend them in specified circumstances. This agreement meant that while they were required to follow Sparta’s military lead, they were free to fight other members of the League. The alliances agreed between Sparta and the allies were permanent and not able to be broken. This meant that anyone who broke away from the Peloponnesian League

symmakhia

Greek: a military alliance that required the ally to assist at times of military need



FIGURE 5.8 The remains of the Temple of Athena at Tegea

could expect to have the full force of the Spartans and their allies brought to bear on them. It should be noted, though, that this did not mean that the Spartans controlled the members of the League—they were autonomous and could not be made to do anything they did not want to do (in theory, at least).

Unlike the Delian League, the members of the Peloponnesian League were not required to contribute anything on an ongoing basis, only troops for campaigns that were approved by the League council. The process of summoning the League council was simple. Firstly, only Sparta had the ability to call a meeting of the League members, which automatically ensured that it would usually be Spartan interests at stake. After a debate in their *ekklesia* (about which very little is known, but contrary to traditional views Spartan *ekklesia* meetings seem to have become quite heated at times), a vote would be taken about whether to call a meeting of the League members. If a meeting was called, Spartan *ephors* would chair and control the council meeting. No doubt if the Spartan representatives felt they would achieve their goals by holding a vote, a council vote was held in which it seems Sparta did not have a vote themselves. A majority decision was binding on all League members.

If a decision was made to go to war, the Spartans provided the commanders, which would normally be a Spartan king. All decisions after the declaration of war or peace by the League council were in the control of the Spartans only, meaning that they would decide on how to conduct wars, or how to make peace agreements.

The composition of the League

The Peloponnesian League had its origins in the mid-6th century BC wars that led to Spartan dominance in the Peloponnese. Herodotus tells us that by approximately 546 BC, Sparta had won control over most of the Peloponnese. Other dates are not known, but at the time of the Spartan invasion of Attika in 508 BC, when the Spartan king Cleomenes attempted to overthrow the budding Athenian democracy, member states of the Peloponnesian League included Corinth, Megara, Elis, Sicyon, numerous towns in

Arcadia, and towns near Argos. It is also likely that the island of Aegina became a member soon after this. At some point in the 5th century BC, Boeotia also became a member of the Peloponnesian League. The membership of the League makes it evident that the primary purpose was to maintain secure Spartan control, particularly over the *helots*.

The list of those who fought at Plataea, recorded on the Serpent Column dedicated by the Greeks at Delphi, records those who participated. It is interesting to note that not all of the Peloponnesian states were there: only Tegea and Orkhomenos supplied troops, while Herodotus records that the Mantineians arrived late. This tells us that, while Sparta was dominant, the fear of defeat against the Persians seems to have been a more powerful factor than fear of the Spartans.

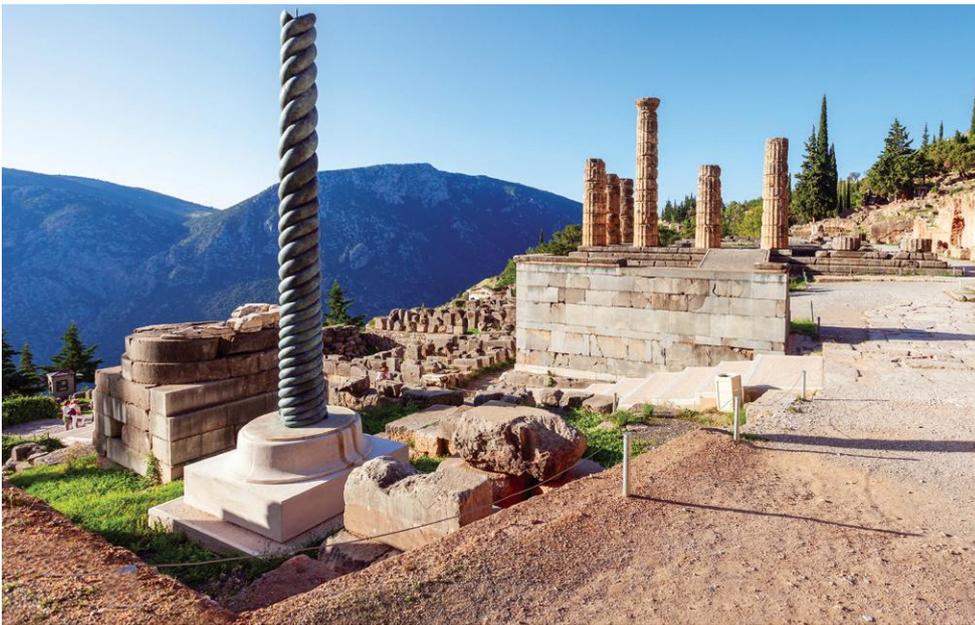


FIGURE 5.9 This is a replica of the Serpent Column at Delphi; the original is still in existence in the Hippodrome in Istanbul after it was taken there by Constantine.

The activities of the League

There is evidence for two sets of early incidents of the Peloponnesian League: in approximately 525 BC, Sparta was requested to come to the aid of Samos, which was supported by the Corinthian fleet; and the invasions of Attika in 512 BC, 510 BC and 508 BC, which involved an entire Peloponnesian League force. The 508 BC expedition indicated that the League had grown, and that powerful members could cause problems for Sparta, because the expedition was recalled as the Corinthians withdrew their support during the campaign.

It would not have been a major surprise for most Greeks when Sparta decided to relinquish leadership of the Greek forces in 479 BC. Sparta was always more focused on the Peloponnesians and the *helot* populations. It seems that though Sparta had played a major role in the defeat of the Persians, there were problems with Spartan control of the Peloponnesian League.

At some point soon after the Battle of Mykale, Leotykidas, the Spartan king and commander at Mykale, was in charge of an expedition against Thessalian towns that had medised in 480 BC. It seems likely that this would have been a force that involved Peloponnesian League members, particularly as they had an interest claiming part of the fine that would have been levied against Thessalians' towns. Leotykidas was charged

with bribery and exiled as a result of it, and he made his way to Tegea. While Sparta had no control over the internal affairs of member states, this would have been seen as provocative by the Spartan state, possibly even a little indication of dissatisfaction with Sparta from the Tegeans. Thucydides (1.118) tells us that Sparta had to fight ‘internal wars’, while Herodotus (9.35) records that after the Battle of Plataea, Sparta was forced to fight Tegea and the Argives, then the Arkadians (which included Tegea), then the Messenians, and finally the Athenians and Argives. This means that the Spartans fought Tegea and the Argives twice—that such important and powerful cities in the Peloponnese fought Sparta in quick succession indicates that there were problems in the League. In 465 BC, the war with the *helot* population in Messene was triggered by a major earthquake. It is likely that this also had a significant impact on the population of Sparta. We are told that only Aegina and Mantinea provided immediate support, again indicating that there were concerns in the League about Sparta. At the time, Thucydides tells us that the Spartans had agreed to provide support to the revolt of Thasos from Athenian control, which would no doubt have taken the form of an invasion of Attika, but it is not known if a League council was summoned to make that decision, or it was unilaterally taken by Sparta. The fact that only two allies supported the *helot* revolt immediately, as well as two loyal *perioikic* communities revolting at the same time, indicates that Sparta must have made some poor decisions in the period between 479 BC and 465 BC.

Source study 5.3 Historical views of the Peloponnesian League

Source A de Ste Croix

... I wish to establish ... within the whole Spartan alliance an important group of allies who could, and in certain cases must, be asked by Sparta to *vote* on a particular issue, with the consequence that the decision of the majority bound them all, ‘*unless something to do with the gods or heroes prevented it*’. These states were, so to speak, the hard core of the Spartan alliance, and only in respect of them is it permissible to speak of a ‘league’ without straining the use of that word far beyond its normal limits.

G. E. M. de Ste Croix (1972), *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, London: The Garden City Press Ltd, p. 104

Source B Powell

If Tegea became a permanent enemy of Sparta, Messenia itself, and thus the Spartan economy, could be destabilised if runaway *helots* gained shelter, and perhaps established armed forces, in Tegean territory ... With her northern neighbours putting up sustained armed resistance, Sparta was in trouble.

A. Powell (2018), ‘Sparta’s foreign – and internal – history, 479–403’, in A. Powell (Ed.), *A Companion to Sparta*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 296

Questions

1. What does de Ste Croix (Source A) tell us about who really comprised the Peloponnesian League? To which states do you think he is referring?
2. What does the failed invasion of Attika by the League in 508 BC tell us about the position of powerful allies? Does this support de Ste Croix’s opinion? Explain your answer.
3. What does Powell (Source B) claim is the significance of Spartan wars with Tegea? What does this tell us about the main purpose of the Peloponnesian League?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Define the term 'Peloponnesian League.'
2. Why did the Spartans choose to make an alliance with Tegea rather than conquer it? How did this lead to the development of the League?
3. What was the main aim of the Peloponnesian League for Sparta?
4. What made the Peloponnesian League a *symmakhia*?
5. In what way could the Spartans control the League members?
6. How was a League council summoned, who could call a meeting, and what happened at one?
7. Why were the Spartans happy to relinquish leadership of the war against Persia in 479 BC? Is this consistent with the main purpose of the Peloponnesian League?
8. Explain how we know there were problems in the Peloponnesian League after the Persian Wars.

The 'First' Peloponnesian War

Timeline 6.2: Events associated with the 'First' Peloponnesian War

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 461 BC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Athens is dismissed from Messene ▪ Megara allies itself with Athens |
| 460–445 BC | ▪ 'First' Peloponnesian War |
| 460 BC | ▪ Battle of Oenoe |
| 459 BC | ▪ Battles of Halieis, Cecryphaleia and Aegina |
| 457 BC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Athens conquers Aegina ▪ Peloponnesian League force sent to Doris to hold back Athenian influence in Boeotia ▪ Battle of Tanagra |
| 456 BC | ▪ Athens burns shipyards of Peloponnesian forces in Gytheion |
| 451 BC | ▪ Athens and Peloponnesian League agree to Five Year Truce |
| 445 BC | ▪ Athens and Sparta agree to the terms of the Thirty Years' Peace, ending the war |

The dismissal of Athens from Messene in 461 BC (see p. 81) was probably designed to be deliberately provocative, and the Spartans must have known that the Athenians would react aggressively, which they did, making an alliance with Sparta's enemies, Argos and Thessaly. This started what is known as the 'First Peloponnesian War', to differentiate it from the later Peloponnesian War. This first conflict lasted on and off from 460 BC to 445 BC.

The Spartan control of the Peloponnesian League was placed under pressure when Megara made an alliance with Athens in 461–60 BC. This was significant. Megara provided access into Attika, and without Megarian support, it was difficult to march a Peloponnesian army into central Greece. In 460 BC, the Battle of Oenoe was fought, where the Athenians and Argives defeated a Peloponnesian force. The Corinthians and Epidaurians defeated an Athenian force at the Battle of Halieis in 459 BC, followed by an Athenian victory of a League navy at the Battles of Cecryphaleia and Aegina. Aegina was then put to siege by Athens. The League council seem to have approved the sending of 300 Peloponnesian League hoplites to assist the Aeginetans, and a force of Peloponnesian League troops led by Corinth were sent to raid Megarian lands to distract Athens. The Athenian invasion of Aegina was particularly humiliating for Sparta because, at the time, there were Aeginetan hoplites assisting them against the *helots*. This assistance was ultimately unsuccessful, and Athens eventually conquered Aegina in 457 BC and made the island into a tribute-paying 'ally' of Athens. In 458 BC or 457 BC, a Peloponnesian League force was sent to Doris in central Greece in what seems to be a concerted attempt to provide a check



FIGURE 5.10 *Priestess of Delphi* by John Collier, 1891. The Oracle of Delphi played a key religious role for all ancient Greeks. A supplicant would put a question to the priestess whose answer would usually be cryptic. Plutarch argued that the oracle's powers were associated with the vapours of water springs under the temple. Others have attributed her visions to chewing oleander, a poisonous plant, and inhaling the smoke when it was burnt.

on Athenian influence in Boeotia. The force consisted of 1500 Spartan and 10 000 Peloponnesian League troops, which made this quite an invasion force, particularly as Athenian control of Megara meant that the forces needed to sail across the Gulf of Corinth. Athens then sailed a naval force into the Gulf of Corinth to cut off the return route, so the Peloponnesian forces needed to stay in southern Boeotia. In response to this, Athens sent a large force of over 15 000 troops, which was supported by Thessalian cavalry, and met the Spartan forces at Tanagra. At the Battle of Tanagra, the Peloponnesian League forces defeated the Athenian forces, but could not inflict a decisive defeat on the Athenians who, two months later, marched an army into the region and defeated a Boeotian force (who were by now members of the Peloponnesian League) and made Boeotia a tribute-paying ally of Athens. In 456 BC, Athens also sailed around the Peloponnese and burned the shipyards of the Peloponnesian forces at Gytheion.

At some point in the 450s BC, Athens made further inroads against Spartan power by making alliances with Achaia and Troizen in the Peloponnese. Also, when Sparta agreed to a truce with the *helots* between 460 BC and 455 BC (the exact date is unknown), allowing them to leave Messene unharmed, Athens assisted them in settling at Naupaktos, across from the Peloponnese on the Gulf of Corinth. There is no evidence of actions for or against the Peloponnesian League until 451 BC, when Athens and the Peloponnesian League agreed on the Five Year Truce, temporarily ceasing hostilities.

Not long after the truce was agreed, Sparta sent a Peloponnesian League force to Delphi. This was done to ensure that a pro-Spartan government was in charge at Delphi. This 'Sacred War' was designed to remove the Phokians, staunch allies of Athens, from control of Delphi, and return it to the Delphians. This would allow the Spartans priority access to Delphi as oracles were important for the Greeks, and particularly for the religious-minded Spartans. This did not last long, however, as Athens soon marched into Delphi and returned control of Delphi to Phokis. Soon after this, Megara returned to the Peloponnesian League and the Spartans took the opportunity to lead League forces in an invasion of Attika while the Athenians were focused on the revolt of Euboea from their control. The invasion force did not make it, however, as the king, Pleistoanax, seemed to feel that an invasion was not necessary at the time, for which he was exiled on a charge of bribery. As a result of the foray into Attika, which ravaged the countryside as far as Eleusis (almost 20 km from Athens), the Athenians decided in 446 BC that a permanent treaty would be desirable. In return for what has been called the Thirty Years' Peace, Athens evacuated the two ports of Megara that they still controlled: Troizen and Achaia. The Peloponnesians then set into an uneasy peace with Athens, until 440 BC, when we are told by Thucydides that Sparta held a League council to determine if the League should go to war with Athens, who were at the time fighting a major war against the island of Samos. The Corinthians claim that they argued against this, and the League forces were not summoned as a result to invade Attika.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did the 'First' Peloponnesian War start? What were the first moves that Athens made to limit Spartan power?
2. Explain why the inability to assist Aegina meaningfully when the Athenians besieged the island would have been a blow to Spartan prestige.
3. How did the war come to an end?
4. What does the debate about assisting Samos against Athens tell us about the Peloponnesian League and Sparta's attitudes towards Athens?

Further resources

G. E. M. de Ste Croix (1972), *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, London: The Garden City Press Ltd

A. Powell (2018), 'Sparta's foreign—and internal—history, 479–403', in A. Powell (Ed.), *A Companion to Sparta*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 291–319

J. A. Smith (2022), *Themistocles. The Powerbroker of Athens*, Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Military

M. Zaccharini (2017), *The Lame Hegemony. Cimon of Athens and the Failure of Panhellenism, ca. 478–450 BC*, Bologna: Bononia University Press

Activities

Bringing it together

1. Explain the significance of Themistocles in the post-Persian War period.
2. Identify the concerns the Spartans had about their kings after the Persian Wars? To what extent were these fears justified?
3. Who benefitted more from the Persian Wars, Athens or Sparta? Explain your answer.
4. Explain how the alliances that Athens made with Peloponnesian states were more significant than the battles they fought.

HSC-style questions

1. Account for the changing relations between Athens and Sparta between 479 BC and 451 BC. (25 marks)
2. Assess the role of Sparta in conflict between Athens and Sparta after 479 BC. (25 marks)

Activities

1. On a map of Greece, locate the members of the Peloponnesian League. Explain the importance of the locations of Tegea, Argos, Corinth and Megara.
2. Create a list of the impacts of the Persian Wars on Athens and Sparta. Rank each list by relative significance and explain your rankings in an extended response.
3. Create a timeline of the 'First' Peloponnesian War, explaining the significance of the events on it.

Chapter

6

Key democratic developments



FIGURE 6.1 Pallas Athena, goddess of war and patron of Athens, was venerated in the Athenian acropolis. In the modern era her association with Athens has linked her with freedom and democracy. This statue rises above the fountain in front of the Austrian parliament.

Athens had the first democracy in world history. It was not like ours, because all Athenian citizens could vote on all matters, making it a 'direct participatory democracy.' Its institution and development are tied up with the development of the Athenian Empire—the more powerful Athens became, the more democratic the government became. This was seen as a reflection of the growing confidence of the ordinary Athenian people.

This chapter will explain the:

- structure of Athenian democracy
- development of the democracy over time
- growing influence of the *thetes* as a result of the growth of empire
- institution of ostracism and its importance
- importance of Pericles' Citizenship Law of 451 BC.

Timeline 6.1: Athenian democratic reforms

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 508–07 BC | ▪ Kleisthenes implements the beginnings of democracy |
| 507 BC | ▪ <i>Trittyes</i> introduced and assigned to tribes, replacing the four original tribes of Athens |
| | ▪ <i>Ekklesia</i> begins to gain more power over public policy |
| | ▪ <i>Boule</i> is reformed and given greater powers, such as receiving embassies, controlling public money and ensuring decrees of the <i>ekklesia</i> were carried out |
| 501 BC | ▪ Ten <i>stratego</i> i elected to command armies and be involved in public life; still under supervision of <i>polemarkhos</i> |
| 487–86 BC | ▪ <i>Stratego</i> i are no longer under the supervision of <i>polemarkhos</i> ; still members of aristocracy |
| 461 BC | ▪ Ephialtes introduces more radical reforms to Athenian democracy, to make the <i>ekklesia</i> sovereign and court system more powerful |
| 458–57 BC | ▪ Pericles introduces payment for jurors, <i>bouletai</i> and other magistracies |
| | ▪ Office of <i>arkhon</i> made available to the <i>zeugitai</i> |
| 451 BC | ▪ Introduction of Pericles' Citizenship Law |

The structure and development of Athenian democracy

In 508–07 BC, the Alkmeonid politician Kleisthenes introduced the foundations of democracy in Athens. After losing popularity and failing to be elected to a senior position within the Athenian state, he planned to introduce *isegoria*, or equality, into political life. Concerned about what this meant, his political enemy, the conservative politician Isagoras, requested Spartan assistance in clearing the city of this rabble-rousing element. When the Spartan army arrived in Athens and tried to do this, first by exiling Kleisthenes, part of the population fought back and forced the Spartans to leave the city under a humiliating truce after being besieged on the acropolis. Following a further unsuccessful attempt to stop the implementation of democracy the next year, Kleisthenes was recalled and elements of democracy were introduced over the coming years. While for a long time the traditional

isegoria

equality for everyone under the law, the driving concept of Kleisthenes' democratic revolution

arkhanship

the nine annually elected magistracies, *arkhons*, who held traditionally the most powerful positions in the state

trittys (pl. trittyes)

the 30 divisions, one in each region created by Kleisthenes. Each *trittys* had a corresponding number up to 10, and the *trittyes* of the same number formed a tribe

tribe

in ancient Greece, the 10 groupings created by Kleisthenes from the four existing tribes, used as the basis for democratic involvement (voting for magistracies and organising the *boule*) and military service

elite continued to play a large role in controlling affairs of the city as leaders of the *ekklesia* and in the **arkhanship**, the power of the traditional aristocracy was largely broken and democracy continued to become more radicalised over time.

Breaking the direct power of the aristocracy

When Kleisthenes returned from exile, he divided Attika into three regions: the city, the coast and the inland. He then divided each of these three areas into 10 parts, which were entirely artificial and, most probably, largely randomly assigned. Each tenth part within each region, called **trittyes**, was given a number and together each similar number in each region became part of the same **tribe**. Tribes were the basis for voting magistrates to office and participation in the military for the remainder of the classical period in Athens, and they replaced the four original tribes of Athens that had been heavily influenced by the aristocracy. Kleisthenes did this to limit the power of the aristocracy to influence voting. By breaking up land in the way he did, Kleisthenes attempted to stop wealthy men who owned large amounts of land from forcing people to vote for the men that the wealthy landowners wanted the poorer people to vote for.

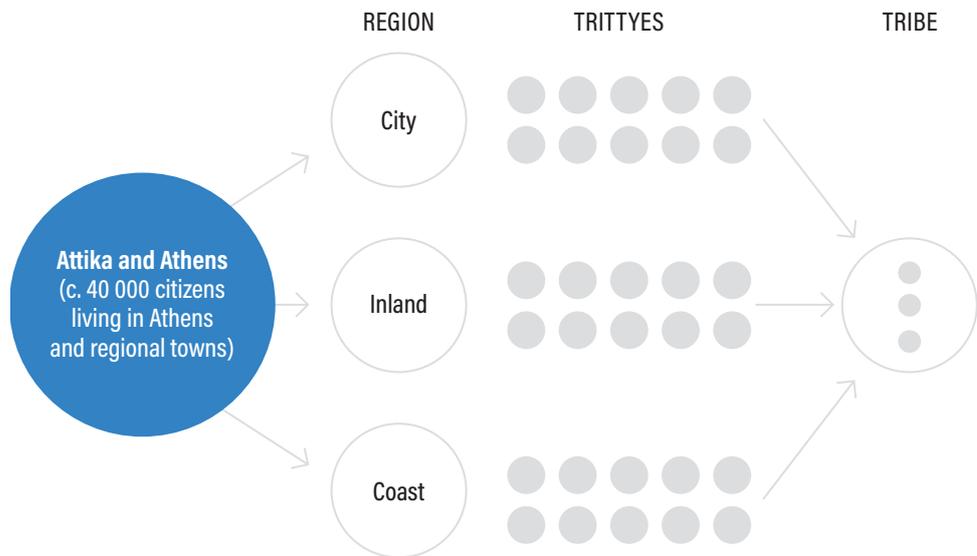


FIGURE 6.2 Diagram of Athenian democracy under Kleisthenes. One part of each region associated together to form 10 tribes (eg, *trittys* II the city, inland and coastal became the tribe Aegeis; *trittys* VI in each region became the tribe Oeneis).

deme

the small towns of Attika, the smallest unit of democratic administration

The basic unit of the democracy was the **deme**. These were the existing towns around Attika, or the different areas of the city of Athens, and Kleisthenes seems to have ensured that there were roughly the same number of people in each of the *trittyes* by distributing *demes*. When a boy came of age (at 18 years old), his father would take him down to register at the local *deme* office, and after his two years of mandatory military service (from 18 to 20 years old), he would officially become eligible to vote in the *ekklesia* or in local *deme* meetings.

It was important for Kleisthenes to break the influence of the wealthy aristocrats, because if they continued to hold the same sway that they had always held, the power of the people would be limited. This was critical because part of Kleisthenes' reforms was to increase the power of the *ekklesia*.

The *ekklesia*

There had been an *ekklesia* in Athens, possibly for hundreds of years. However, prior to Kleisthenes’ reforms it had little real power. Historians know little detail about its functions, but after Kleisthenes’ reforms it seems likely that it had the final vote on issues of public policy, with votes taken by a counting of hands. They met four times each month (there were 10 months each year in the calendar) at the open-air area on the nearby Pnyx hill, though emergency meetings could be called if required. Only citizens (men who had completed their two-year mandatory military service and registered in their *deme*) could attend, and if there were not enough attendees at the commencement of proceedings, slaves called the Scythian Archers would drag a rope painted red through the *agora*. If the rope touched a citizen who was not in the *ekklesia*, he was forced to attend and pay a fine. For certain votes, a minimum of 6000 votes were required. Meetings started at dawn and would last until around lunchtime, which meant that participation in the functioning of democracy was quite an onerous task, particularly for the poor who needed to work, or for citizens who lived outside the city.

At a meeting, anyone was permitted to contribute to debates. The President (selected randomly for the day from the *boule*) would control proceedings and decide when it was time to take a vote. Meetings could get quite boisterous and, more often than not, it was the leading citizens—often wealthy, educated men—who led debate. By the time of Ephialtes’ reforms of 461 BC, the *ekklesia* had become the most important body in the democracy.

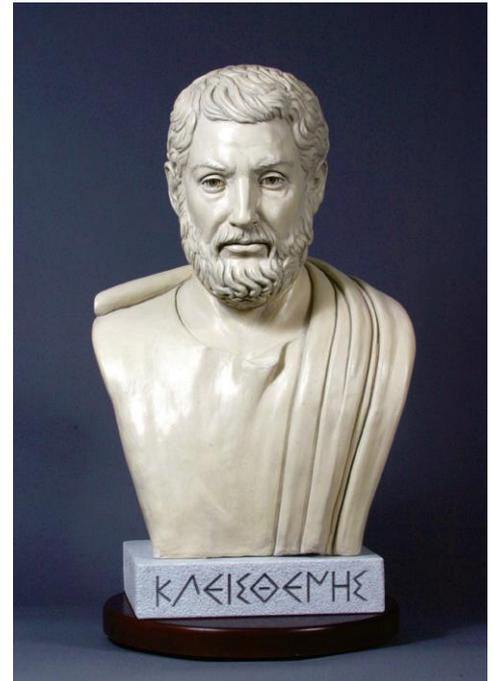


FIGURE 6.3 Bust of Kleisthenes, on display at the Ohio State Court House, USA

boule
the council of 500, 50 from each tribe, that administered the daily running of the city and organised meetings of the *ekklesia*

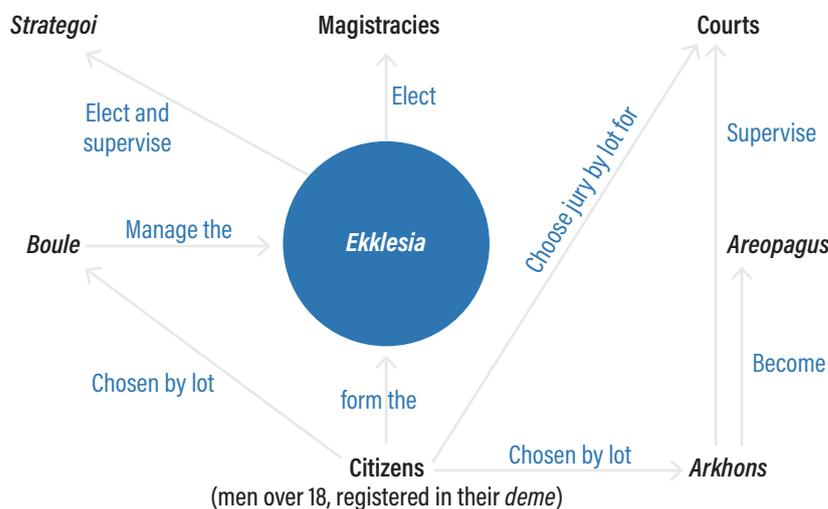


FIGURE 6.4 Structures within Athenian democracy

The *boule*

One of the reforms put in place by Kleisthenes was the extension of the powers of the *boule*. Before the reforms, it seems only to have prepared the agenda for the *ekklesia* and supplied the officials to control each meeting and count votes as required. Over the course of the first half of the 5th century BC, it came to play a significant role: it soon received embassies from



FIGURE 6.5 The Pnyx, with the *bema*, or speakers' platform, where the *ekklesia* met. To the left, the Acropolis can be seen in the background.

foreign powers and supervised other magistracies. At some point in the 5th century BC, it also started to control some public money, as well as ensuring that decrees of the *ekklesia* were carried out.

lot

random selection. In Athenian politics it applies to the random selection of office bearers and was usually conducted by a simple 'machine'

bouletai

members of the *boule*

tholos

the round building in which the *bouletai* on duty would stay

strategia

the board of 10 generals

strategos (pl. *strategoí*)

one of 10 annually elected generals, primarily responsible for commanding the Athenian army and navy

polemarkhos

one of the *arkhons*, traditionally responsible for command of the Athenian armed forces

There were 500 members selected by **lot**, 50 from each tribe. **Bouletai** were required to be over the age of 30 and could not serve two terms successively. In the 5th century BC, the *boule* met daily as a whole body, but one tribe was in continuous session each month, one third of whom slept in the *tholos* to ensure they could be summoned if required. They were also paid, a fundamental aspect of democracy, as it allowed even the poorest people to participate in government.

The *strategia*

One of the few magistracies in Athens that remained elected was the *strategia*. Each year, 10 **strategoí**, one from each of the 10 tribes, were elected to command armies and play important roles in various areas of Athenian public life. Elected for the first time in 501 BC, they were initially still under the supervision of the **polemarkhos**, but this changed by 487–86 BC. Often, *strategoí* were also prominent political leaders in the 5th century BC, and it was seen as important for them to be able not only to lead troops, but also to address the *ekklesia*. As a result, *strategoí* continued to be aristocrats, particularly as it remained the only magistracy that was unpaid. The fact that it was also the only office to which a man could be continually elected without a break increased its prestige and importance.

The Council of the *Areopagus* and *arkhons*

Athens' traditional leaders were the nine *arkhons*, elected annually. They had to be at least 30 years old and were elected to office after Kleisthenes' reforms. Once their term of office was finished, they became life members of the venerable Council of the *Areopagus*, so named because it met on the Areopagus Hill. Kleisthenes' reforms took some of their power and gave it to the *ekklesia*, *boule* and *strategia*, but they continued to play important functions in the government, such as the supervision of the laws and public officials.

Arkhons were elected each year by lot; these were the Eponymous *arkhon*, after whom the year was named, the *polemarkhos*, who supervised the *strategia*, the *arkhon basileus*,

the king *arkhon*, who supervised the Council of the *Areopagus*, and six *thesmothetae*, who supervised the various courts in Athens. While their roles were central to the running of the state in the early democracy, over time, their roles became largely ceremonial or supervisory, with little real power, which was given to various other magistracies or the *ekklesia*. However, taking into account the possible Athenian population and life expectancy, it has been suggested that there were around 150 ex-*arkhons* who formed the Council of the *Areopagus*, which was seen as an invaluable council of elders of Athens.

The *Areopagus* was left with the jurisdiction of certain cases of homicide and wounding, poisoning, arson and certain religious offences, while the authority and powers of the assembly, the popular law-courts and the *boule* were enhanced. In archaic Athens the Council of the *Areopagus* enjoyed more extensive supervisory authority, but it was [later] regarded as a symbol of aristocratic ethos. For its members were a select group—those who had served as *arkhons*—and they retained their membership for life. Nor were their decisions subject to appeal. In matters political, therefore, the *Areopagus* was an anomaly for it was in no sense responsible to the *Demos* nor was it drawn from the people at large.

R. K. Sinclair (1988), *Democracy and Participation in Athens*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 18–19

thesmothetae

six *arkhons* who oversaw the Athenian courts



FIGURE 6.6 Looking out across Athens and the Areopagus Hill (bottom right), where the Council of the *Areopagus* met. This view is from the Acropolis Hill.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain what Kleisthenes was trying to do in 508–07 BC.
2. How did Kleisthenes primarily attempt to break the power and influence of aristocratic families over elections?
3. Describe the role and structure of the *ekklesia*.
4. Explain the role of the *boule*. Why was it central to the daily functioning of the Athenian state?
5. What made the *strategia* unique in the Athenian democracy? Explain why you think this was the case.
6. Identify how and why the role of the *arkhons* and *Areopagus* change over the 5th century BC?
7. Account for the changes in Athenian democracy after 487 BC.

The democratic reforms of 487–86 BC

While the reforms of Kleisthenes were a significant step in the distribution of power to the non-elite classes of Athens, it was not complete, and the process of reform continued throughout the 5th century BC. There seems to have been a minor raft of reforms in 501 BC, which included the development of the *strategia*, but the democracy of this early period has often been called the ‘Areopagite Democracy’ because of the supervisory role the Council of the *Areopagus* continued to play with regard to the laws and supervision of magistrates. In 487–86 BC, a number of significant changes were made to the democracy. Given the role played by Themistocles at this time in Athenian politics, it is quite possible that he played a substantial role in this redistribution of power in the democracy, though historians have no direct evidence of this.

In Athenian society, there were four social classes: the *pentakosiomedimnoi*, the *hippeis*, the *zeugitai* and the *thetes*. These divisions were determined by the amount of produce generated by their respective land, with the *thetes*, the lowest class, usually not being owners of land at all, often living in the city and working for wages. Until 487–86 BC, *arkhons* were required to be members of the highest social class, but from this time, *hippeis* could also be *arkhons*. More importantly, however, from 487–86 BC the *arkhonship* became a magistracy selected by lot and not subject to a popular vote. This was a significant step, as it meant that the prestige of the *arkhonship* and, therefore the *Areopagus*, came to be diminished because it was no longer an office that only the wealthy could hold.

Also, from this time the *polemarchos* was no longer required to supervise the *strategia*. It is clear that the generals had distinguished themselves at Marathon, and it was also probably decided that the *stratego*i elected by the people should not be reliant on a *polemarchos* who may not have any military experience or ability whatsoever.

A significant further development in 487–86 BC was ostracism (see pp. 124–25). While some scholars continue to attribute the institution of ostracism to Kleisthenes’ original reforms, the first use of ostracism was in 487–86 BC, when Hipparchus was ostracised. Thus, it is ventured by more recent scholarship that ostracism was actually instituted at this time of reforms, giving democratic leaders in the *ekklesia* the opportunity to remove anyone who stood in the way of the development of democracy.

pentakosiomedimnoi

the highest social class; their land produced over 500 measures of produce

hippeis

the second-highest social class; their land traditionally produced between 300 and 500 measures of produce. They also traditionally provided the cavalry for the army (Greek: *hippo* means horse)

zeugitai

the third-highest social class; their land produced between 200 and 300 measures of produce

thetes

the lowest social class; land if they owned it, produced up to 200 measures. They usually did not own land, and often worked in the city or urban areas

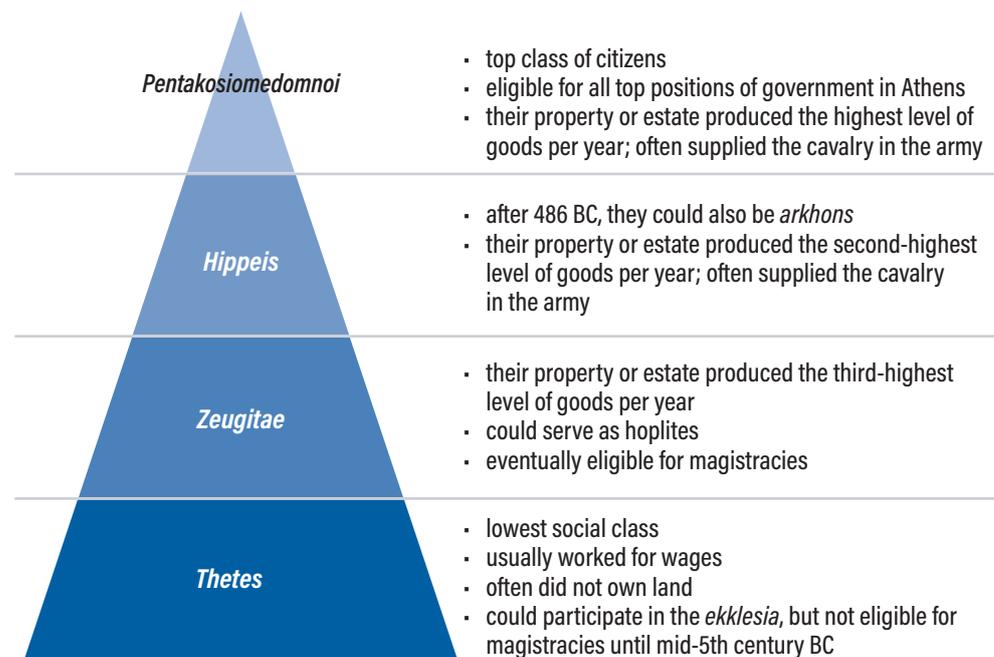


FIGURE 6.7 The Athenian class system

Ephialtes' reforms of 461 BC

Until 461 BC, historians consider democracy to be more moderate in character. After the reforms introduced by Ephialtes in 461 BC it began the process of radicalisation of Athenian democracy, where the *ekklesia* was sovereign and the court system was powerful. To do this, Ephialtes used the absence of the leader of the conservative grouping, Cimon, who was in Sparta, to bring lawsuits against many of the members of the *Areopagus*. That he did this indicates that the *Areopagus* still wielded significant power in the state. Sources tell us that the power of the *Areopagus* actually increased after the Persian Wars, and some may have felt this to not be in the spirit of a democracy. Once Ephialtes had removed opposition, he stripped the *Areopagus* of all powers except in certain religious cases, including **impiety** and murder. Other powers were allocated to the *boule*, the courts and the *ekklesia*. When Cimon returned from Sparta, he attempted to undo the reforms, but was ostracised for his efforts.

impiety

breaking religious laws or taboos;
being disrespectful towards the
gods

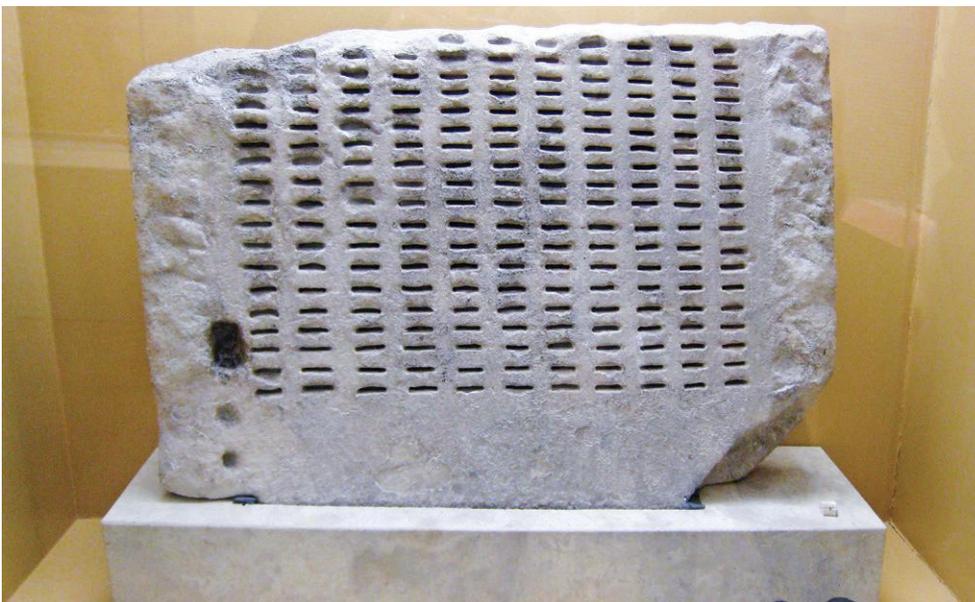


FIGURE 6.8 The remains of a *kleroterion*, or sorting machine, used to select people at random using balls and a special individual token.

Source study 6.1 Ephialtes' reforms

Source A Carey

... as the democracy grew, the existence of a powerful body which was not collectively answerable to the people must have seemed increasingly anomalous ... Certainly, the power of the demos was already considerable, as we can see both from its punishment of leaders who failed it such as Miltiades in the 480s BC, and the fact that Ephialtes could use trials in the Assembly or popular courts to break the hold of the *Areopagus* ... The need for prosecutions itself suggests that both the *Areopagus* was like any elite body hostile to any attempt to shrink its influence and also that it was a powerful adversary. The opponents of democracy were also ready to resort to violence and subversive measures. Ephialtes was assassinated.

C. Carey (2017), *Democracy in Classical Athens* (2nd ed.), London: Bloomsbury, p. 27

Question

1. What does Carey suggest about the nature of reforms in 461 BC?

The reforms of 458–57 BC

One of the politicians who worked with Ephialtes to achieve the reforms of 461 BC was the leader of the Alkmeonid family, Pericles. He became the most prominent leader in Athens from this time until his death in 429 BC, elected almost every single year after 461 BC for over 30 years. One of his most crucial reforms happened in 458–57 BC, when he introduced payment for jurors, then for *bouletai*, then all other magistracies. In conjunction with the ever-increasing use of the lot for appointment to office, these were seen as the engine room of democracy, as they allowed everyone to have the same chance for selection (believing it was then the choice of the gods) and everyone could afford to participate, not just wealthy men with free time.

Also in 458–57 BC, the office of *arkhon* was made available to those of the *zeugitai* class, further watering down the prestige and influence of the arkhonship and *Areopagus*. Possibly in response to this, a group of aristocrats planned to betray the city to a force of Spartans, with whom Athens was at war, in 457 BC, with the express desire to suppress the democratic reforms. This indicates that while democracy was popular with many people, particularly the lower classes, it might only take a few disaffected citizens to bring the system down through betrayal.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Define the term 'Areopagite democracy'.
2. Explain the term 'radical' Athenian democracy.
3. Can the reforms of 458–57 BC be seen as a continuation of the reforms of 461 BC, or are they different? Explain your answer.

phoros

Greek: 'contribution'; the money given to Athens as leader of the Delian League



FIGURE 6.9 Marble bust of Pericles

Influence of the *thetes*

By the mid-5th century BC, the Athenian Empire was a dominant power in the region. It came to control the sea, trade and allied states, and this control generated a significant amount of wealth, from trade and *phoros*. This money was used in the city in the form of magistracies and building programs, but it was also used to pay for rowers in the fleet. This gave the people who rowed the boats, the lower classes, particularly the lowest social class, the *thetes*, an increased importance in the state because it was the fleet that made Athens powerful. The continued growth of the Athenian Empire meant more money flowing into the city, in which *thetes* had a vested interest.

Over time, the traditional classes who fought as hoplites became co-opted into the democratic ideal, but they never lost their identity as hoplites—this status and ideology was inextricably bound up with land ownership. In contrast, the *thetes*, by definition, usually did not own land. They often worked in the city, whether in their own business or doing odd jobs as they came up. It is generally thought the average poor person in Athens, which was most of the population, was around one to two weeks away from potential starvation, thus the possibility of continued work in building projects, or the possibility of a day's pay as a juror,

or even the increased work that was available in the Piraeus, all depending on the income and trade generated by Athenian power, was significant. Their ideology became favourable towards increasing Athenian power because they had a vested interest in doing so.

Not only did the *thetes* gain financial benefit from the continued growth of Athenian power, they also gained in political power. The reforms of 461 BC and 458–57 BC are considered by some historians to be recognition of their importance in the growth of the Athenian state. While the aristocrats may have grumbled about the involvement of the masses, the *hoi polloi*, in politics and decision-making that was traditionally the preserve of the wealthy, most of them would also have benefited financially from the growth of Athenian power. The growth of the *thetes*' political influence and power must have seemed almost virtually unstoppable, a bitter pill for the traditional ruling class to swallow.

hoi polloi

a derogatory term used to describe 'the masses' in Athenian society



FIGURE 6.10 The Athenian acropolis, most of which was constructed by *thetes* as part of Pericles' building program.

Ostracism

One of the most novel inventions of Athenian democracy was ostracism. It was reportedly introduced by Kleisthenes in 508–07 BC as a way of solving a political crisis in leadership by removing a leader for a period of 10 years. First, in the sixth *prytany* of each year, a vote was held to decide if an ostracism was required. If, by a show of hands, a majority in the *ekklesia* voted yes, then in the eighth *prytany* a vote was held. Each person dropped an *ostrakon* (a sherd of broken pottery) bearing the name of the person whom they wanted exiled into large urns. After voting, the urns were smashed and, if there were at least 6000 *ostraka* in total, the man with the most votes was required to leave Athens within 10 days. He lost none of his property or possessions and could return without penalty after 10 years (or earlier, if recalled). Thousands of *ostraka* with names inscribed on them have been discovered. The handwriting of many of them have been analysed and shown to be the same. This does not indicate that people were being dishonest in their voting; it tends to suggest that political groups would have pre-inscribed names of their political enemies onto *ostraka* to be distributed on the day of voting.

prytany

the division of the Athenian year for administrative purposes, corresponding to the 10 months of the Athenian year

It has been suggested more recently by some historians that ostracism was, in fact, not an invention of Kleisthenes, but was introduced in the early 480s BC at the time of its first use. It is unlikely that the Athenian people would have waited 30 years to use this procedure, particularly as after its first use, there was an ostracism held almost every year from 487 BC in the 480s BC. It is significant that the victims of these ostracisms were family members, known supporters or political allies of known supporters of the Pisistratid tyrants. In particular, the Alkmeonid family were a particular target, with four of the five ostracisms in the 480s BC targeting their political group. It seems possible, then, that ostracism was introduced to act as a safeguard of the democracy at times of crisis. Historians are aware of its use only eight times after the 480s BC during the 5th century BC, including Themistocles in 471 BC, Cimon in 461 BC, and Thucydides, son of Melesias in 442 BC. Thus, while ostracism served the purpose of safeguarding the democracy after the first Persian invasion of 490 BC, the Athenians seem to have voted 'no' to holding another ostracism most of the time for the remainder of the 5th century BC.



FIGURE 6.11 *Ostraka* bearing the name Themistocles

Source study 6.2 Ostracism

Source A Kosmin

reaggregation

the process of bringing someone back into a larger group after they have done things that may have caused them to be seen as a problem

... ostracism, focalized on the targeted politician, has not the double home-away structure of banishment but the triple structure of a *rite de passage*—separation, marginality, and **reaggregation**—that transforms a dangerous or treacherous politician into a safe member of the Athenian community. Second, and more importantly, the functionalist reduction of ostracism to expulsion bypasses all the supposedly irrational, overly formalized, and superfluous elements of the institution. The removal of a dangerous citizen by communal vote could have been achieved in far simpler ways. Both the ancient evidence (the *ostraka* above all) and modern anthropological theory suggest that the enactment of the ostracism procedure, the mass ceremonial in all its processual, expressive, emotional, and embodied strangeness, was as important as the expulsion which it sometimes prompted.

P. J. Kosmin (2015), 'A phenomenology of democracy: Ostracism as political ritual', *Classical Antiquity* 34, p. 122

Question

1. Kosmin believes that only part of the importance of ostracism was the removal of an individual. What does he say were the added points of importance of an ostracism?

The Citizenship Law

In 451 BC, Pericles introduced the Citizenship Law, which was approved by the *ekklesia*. The law tightened the conditions of citizenship in Athens. It required a citizen to have an Athenian-born citizen father as well as an Athenian-born mother, in addition to the existing requirements that a citizen be registered in their *deme* roll and have undertaken their two years of military service. This was significant, as the provision of pay for magistracies in the mid-5th century BC would have meant that more people would have found this an attractive prospect. By limiting citizenship it meant that it limited the number of people who could claim money from the state.

Source study 6.3 Reasons for the Citizenship Law

Source A Hansen

It is tempting to see Pericles' law in relation to the decision of the Athenians to give pay for jury service: once citizens had got an advantage out of political activity they were glad not to have too many others to share it with. By Pericles' reforms, the gulf that separated citizens from non-citizens was made deeper, and the citizenry became a closed population with a limited potential for growth.

M. H. Hansen (1991), *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes. Structure, Principles and Ideology* (trans. by A. J. Cook), Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, p. 38

Source B Blok

The common views of Athenian citizenship as defined by political rights, military duties or landownership cannot fully explain the purpose and date of the single extant law on citizenship ... Considering the losses in human lives and the blow to its self-confidence that Athens had suffered by the end of the 450s [BC], it is utterly unlikely that [the Citizenship Law] was issued owing to the large number of citizens, as *Ath. Pol.* supposed in its paragraph dealing with the law. Athens rather needed measures to revive its morale: Perikles proposed his law when after depressing years of war the citizens had to face the future with new confidence ... Citizenship, I have argued, entailed legitimate descent, that is sharing in the *hiera kai hosia* [sacred ritual offerings] of the *oikos*, as conditional to sharing in the *hiera kai hosia* and the *timai* [honour] of the polis. Continuing earlier policies aiming at increasing citizen equality, [the Citizenship Law] was motivated by precisely what it claimed to be doing: raising the requirements of legitimate descent and hence of participation in the polis [to allow all Athenians to participate as legitimate priests of the state].

J. Blok (2009), 'Perikles' Citizenship Law: A new perspective', *Historia* 58, pp. 168–69

Ath. Pol.

abbreviation for '*Athenaion Politeia*', an account of Athenian political history (or the Constitution of Athens) attributed to Aristotle, but most likely written by one of his students

oikos

Greek: a household

Question

1. Compare the opinions of Hansen (Source A) and Blok (Source B). How are their opinions about the goal of the Citizenship Law different?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was the connection between the *thetes*, the navy and the empire?
 2. In what way did the *thetes* develop an ideology that could be seen as similar to that of the hoplite classes?
 3. Why were the reforms of 461 BC and 458–57 BC seen as recognition of the *thetes'* importance?
 4. What was the purpose of ostracism?
 5. How did an ostracism occur and how was it voted?
 6. What is the evidence for politics in the process of ostracism?
 7. What did Pericles' Citizenship Law change in 451 BC?
-

Further resources

J. Blok (2009), 'Perikles' Citizenship Law: A new perspective', *Historia* 58, pp. 141–170

C. Carey (2017), *Democracy in Classical Athens* (2nd ed.), London: Bloomsbury

M. H. Hansen (1991), *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes. Structure, Principles and Ideology* (trans. by A. J. Cook), Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

P. J. Kosmin (2015), 'A phenomenology of democracy: Ostracism as political ritual', *Classical Antiquity* 34, pp. 121–161

R. K. Sinclair (1988), *Democracy and Participation in Athens*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Activities

Bringing it together

1. Explain the significance of Kleisthenes to Athenian democracy.
2. Explain in your own words how *demes*, *trittyes* and tribes were related.
3. Explain how the Athenian democracy developed between 508 BC and 451 BC.
4. How democratic was the Athenian democracy at the beginning of the 5th century BC in comparison to what it became by 458–57 BC?
5. In what way could ostracism be seen as democratic?

Activities

1. Research the individuals who were ostracised between 487 BC and 440 BC and explain why you think they were ostracised.
2. The lawcourts (*dikasteria*) were considered an important part of Athenian democracy. Find out how they worked, who served on juries and what a day in court looked like. Write a paragraph explaining how law courts were an important part of Athenian democracy.
3. Find a map of Athens in the 5th century BC and create your own map of Athens, locating the following buildings/regions on it:
 - a. Crag of Ares
 - b. Pnyx
 - c. *Agora*
 - d. Old *Bouleterion*
 - e. *Strategion* (headquarters of the *stratego*)
 - f. *Tholos*
 - g. *Heliaia* (location of the *dikasteria*)
 - h. Stoa of the *Arkhon Basileus*

Going further

1. Examine Timeline 6.1 of democratic reforms. Try to match up these reforms with other events that were happening to or around Athens at the time. Explain any connections that you can find.

HSC-style questions

1. To what extent did Athens become democratic in the period down to 451 BC?
2. Analyse the connection between the Athenian democracy and the Athenian Empire.

Conclusion

The legacy of the 5th century BC

This is one of the most intensely studied periods of ancient history, and has always been. Even the Romans studied and dissected the accounts of Herodotus and Thucydides, and it has been said that in comparison to its geographical size, more has been written about the Athenian Empire than any other empire in the ancient world. It is important to understand what happened, for its own sake as well as for its legacy to our own society today in the development of literature, history, culture, politics and government.

The period of this topic ends at 440 BC (in the middle of the Samian War, a crucial conflict in which Athens was at war with the most powerful navy in the Delian League besides themselves). It leads on to The Peloponnesian War (fought on and off between 431 BC and 404 BC), which caused such a loss of life and economic resources that it left the Greek world fundamentally different, as well as weakened for the eventual conquest of Greece in 338 BC by Alexander the Great's father, Philip II. The Peloponnesian War was the culmination of the animosity and conflict between Athens and Sparta that had been building since the very first Spartan invasion of Athens in 510 BC; this relationship was full of mistrust and suspicion, and not a small amount of resentment towards each other. Both had become the greatest cities of Greece as a result of the Persian Wars, but the impact of the Persian invasions left different legacies for Athens and Sparta. The growth of Athenian power was given by Thucydides as the direct result of the eventual outbreak of 'The' Peloponnesian War in 431 BC. Athens had achieved the ascendancy over much of the war, and it was not until Sparta enlisted the help and funds of the Persians (yes, you read that correctly) that they were able to build a navy and defeat Athens. The trade-off for Persian support was to allow the Persians to take possession of the Greek *poleis* of Asia Minor (yes, you read that correctly, too). Many people around the Greek world were tired of Athenian control, and many supported the Spartans, but after the war they realised that they had traded the Athenians for the Spartans, and in many ways the Spartans were less pleasant. This led to the Corinthian War (395–87 BC), which was ended when the Greek cities asked the Persian Great King to come in and arbitrate a fair peace, the King's Peace (yes again, you read that correctly).

The King's Peace became the basis for Greek affairs for much of the next 50 years. The Spartans, as the self-appointed arbiters of the King's Peace, made themselves resented again, which led to a battle with Thebes: the Battle of Leuctra, where the Spartans were defeated. Thebes then invaded the Peloponnese the next year and freed the Messenian *helots*, and Sparta was never again a power to fear. In response to Spartan imperialism, Athens established a new naval alliance, called by historians the 'Second Athenian Naval Confederacy', in which they promised not to become like the Athenians in the time of the Delian League. After a while, Athens started implementing practices eerily reminiscent of their first 'empire', which led to the Social War (357–55 BC), in which Athens was forced to allow many of the allies to become independent. Athens was never to have the same power after this point. At the same time, Philip II of Macedonia was expanding his kingdom, and through a combination of clever diplomacy, politics and warfare he came to control much of northern Greece in the 350s BC and 340s BC, then all of Greece by 338 BC after the defeat of a Greek coalition at the Battle of Chaeronea. This heralded the end of the classical period and the beginning of the Hellenistic period of Greek history, where Alexander the Great completely defeated the Persian Empire (finally) and spread Hellenic culture as far as India.

Throughout the Classical period, there is so much continuity that we can see, much of which stems from this period of study. Problems such as Greek *poleis* and how they handled concepts of 'empire', the fear of Persia and Persian involvement in Greek history, the inability of Athens and Sparta to move past traditional fears of each other, along with

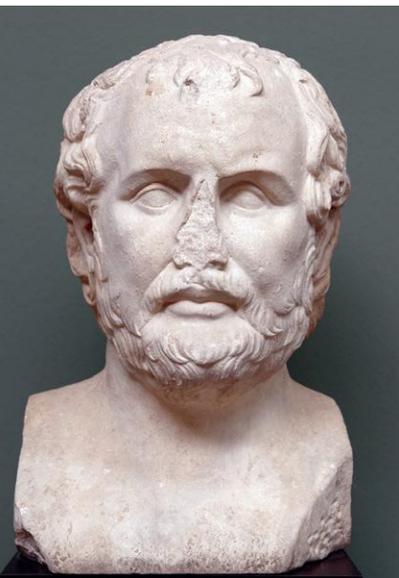


FIGURE 7.1 Hellenistic bust of Philip II, King of Macedonia



FIGURE 7.2 The Spartan general Lysander outside the walls of Athens in 404 BC (19th-century lithograph).

so many more, drove the development of the Classical period. But we should also see in the Classical period the foundation of western culture. The way we govern ourselves in many respects has a basis in Athenian democracy. Our artistic and creative endeavours, such as in theatre, comedy, literature, and architecture, also have their bases in the Greek world of the Classical period. Even our concept of citizenship and how we belong to communities is, in many ways, derived from Classical Greek concepts of 'belonging'. Many of these ideas were transmitted to us through the Romans, who also found value in the achievements (and lessons in the failures) of the Greeks. In this period of ancient history, we often find reflections of ourselves, our triumphs and our defeats, so much so that for much of the Cold War, political scientists used Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War to try to figure out how to act and react in certain situations, and who would eventually win. While using history in this way is never safe, and always fraught with problems, the period studied in this book, and the one immediately following it, are important to understand and investigate in full.

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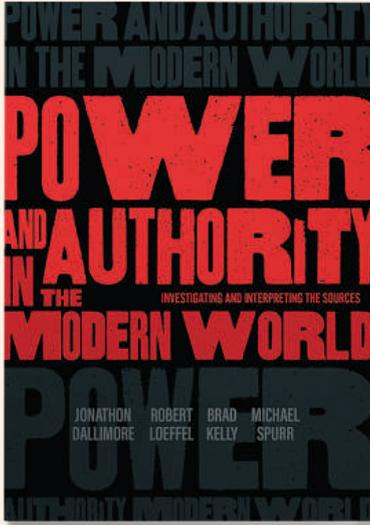
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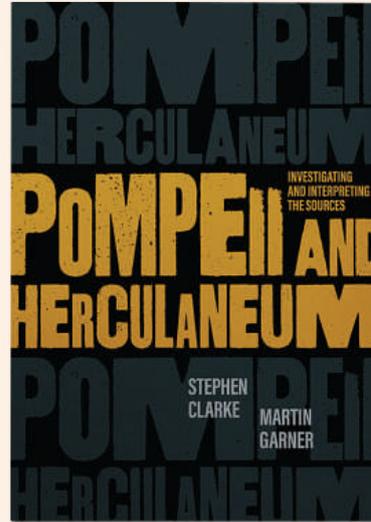
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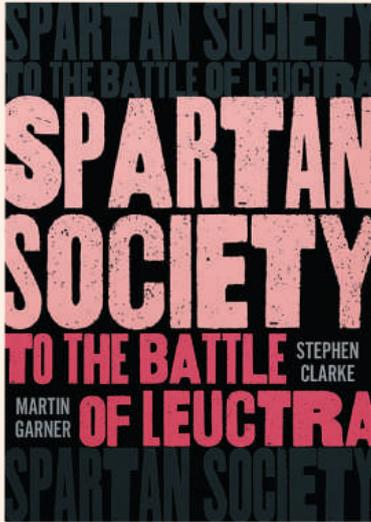
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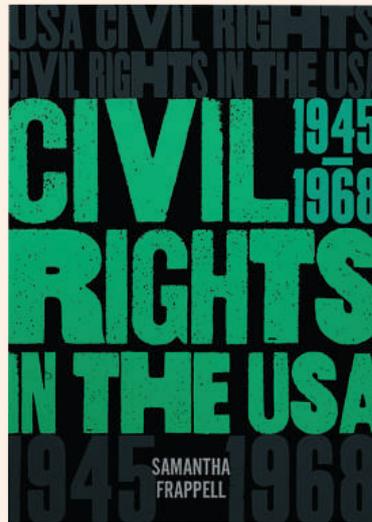
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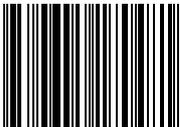
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Samantha is a senior History teacher based in Sydney. She is the author of several school texts for primary and secondary students and has a PhD in History from the University of Sydney.

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