

Xerxes against Hellas

An Iconic Conflict from Different Perspectives

Edited by

Peter Funke, György Németh, András Patay-Horváth
and Josef Wiesehöfer

ORIENS ET OCCIDENS

Studien zu antiken Kulturkontakten und ihrem Nachleben | 44

Franz Steiner Verlag





Oriens et Occidens

Studien zu antiken Kulturkontakten und ihrem Nachleben

Herausgegeben von

JOSEF WIESEHÖFER

in Zusammenarbeit mit

PIERRE BRIANT, GEOFFREY GREATREX und ROBERT ROLLINGER

Band 44

www.steiner-verlag.de/brand/Oriens-et-Occidens

Xerxes against Hellas
An Iconic Conflict from Different Perspectives

Edited by Peter Funke, György Németh,
András Patay-Horváth and Josef Wiesehöfer

Franz Steiner Verlag

Gedruckt mit freundlicher Unterstützung der Universität Münster

Umschlagabbildung:

Modern reconstruction of the serpent column in Delphi. © Didier Laroche

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

Dieses Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt.
Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes
ist unzulässig und strafbar.

© Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2025

www.steiner-verlag.de

Layout und Herstellung durch den Verlag

Druck: Beltz Grafische Betriebe, Bad Langensalza

Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier.

Printed in Germany.

ISBN 978-3-515-13774-4 (Print)

ISBN 978-3-515-13781-2 (E-Book)

DOI 10.25162/9783515137812

magistro optimo
studiorum litterarum Graecarum et Latinarum in Hungaria illustrissimo fautori
Sigismundo Ritoók
nonagesimum quintum annum agenti
collegae, sodales, discipuli
hoc volumen gratissimis animis
D D D

Foreword

PETER FUNKE / GYÖRGY NÉMETH /
ANDRÁS PATAY-HORVÁTH / JOSEF WIESEHÖFER

Almost exactly 2500 years ago, in 480 BC, one of the decisive clashes of the Persian Wars between the Persians and the Greeks took place in the Bay of Salamis. More precisely, the battle was fought by the ethnically and culturally diverse navy of the Persian Great King Xerxes, son of Darius, which included many Greeks from Asia Minor, and the fleet of the Hellenic League under the command of the Spartan Eurybiades and with significant involvement of the Athenian Themistocles. A year later (479 BC) the Persians and their allies were again defeated, on land at Plataea in Boeotia and at sea at Cape Mycale in western Asia Minor. These battles were attributed world-historical significance in antiquity and, even more so, in the centuries that followed. Yet, the details of what happened, as well as their military-political and cultural impact and detailed evaluation, have been the subject of much controversial research, not least because of the difficult nature of the sources.

While in modern times some politicians and scholars have declared the battle of Marathon, for example, to be the “birth cry of Europe”, others have attempted to relate the significance of these battles to the history of the Persian Empire and the history of the relationships between the Greek *poleis* and *ethne* and the Great Kings. Others have portrayed themselves as the successors of the Greek heroes of Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis and Plataea using this history to legitimise their own rule or political aims and propagate ideas of an insurmountable opposition between ‘West and East’, ‘Asia and Europe’, ‘Occident and Orient’ by depicting the downfall of ‘Greek’ culture in the event of a Persian victory. Others, for example, some classical scholars in Germany during the Nazi era, attempted to separate the two “master nations” (“*Herrenvölker*”), the Persians and Greeks, from the other inhabitants of the Near East (Babylonians, Jews, etc.) and attributed the Persian defeats to the disastrous influence of the Semitic Orient on the (Aryan) Persians. For example, the parallel Hermann Göring drew between the Battle of Thermopylae and the end of the Battle of Stalingrad in early 1943 is particularly well-known in this context. However, false analogies such as these and the misuse of historical arguments have been met with strong opposition and refuted based on close and critical reading of the ancient evidence, among which Herodotus’

“Histories” is of particular importance. Such views are also supported by topographical, archaeological and iconographical findings from the Aegean and monumental evidence from the Persian Empire and through an approach with a global-historical, comparative or *longue durée* perspective. Indeed, the history of the reception of the “Persian Wars” (or “Greek Wars” [Gore Vidal]) in literature, art, music and philosophy has also attracted increasing attention in recent decades.

With this in mind, what can we now say with certainty about the Persian Wars? On the one hand, there is no doubt that the main features of the Persian kings’ expansionist efforts, as well as basic events of the campaigns, are historical, especially those which are, like the battle of Marathon, also attested to archaeologically (for example, by the burial mounds of the fallen Athenians and Plataeans). It is also undisputed that the Persians, having secured the coastal regions of Asia Minor and parts of the Balkans, had a particular interest in the political conditions in the Aegean. Nevertheless, the problems of the sources become apparent when looking at the details: the campaigns of Darius and Xerxes and their generals, as well as the motivations for the actions of the participants, can not be reconstructed in any great detail, and the images of Darius and Xerxes painted by Aeschylus, Simonides, Herodotus and others are more literary or narratological than historical-biographical. On the whole, it is the Athenian view of the conflict that survived to become tradition although, it can be said, this view is certainly not one-dimensional: various perspectives emerge from different genres because of the differing intentions of the authors and artists, and as reflections of the numerous political opinions within the polis. It is also necessary to take into account that the perception of the enemy in the East varied at different times, that various assessments of the Persian *barbaricum* as a counter-world and a place of fascination coexisted and that the pejorative view of the barbarian developed gradually. Worldviews and political practices also varied and could change depending on the political situation.

Cross-epochal and comparative studies of the structural elements of empires have also shown that empires always found it much more difficult to bring a fragmented political world under their control than a large structured region or neighbouring empire. Thus, the geographically, politically and culturally diverse world of mainland Greece and the Aegean, with its internal political struggles and external rivalries, proved difficult to control, as did the mountain and steppe peoples. Accordingly, Darius and Xerxes opted for flexible forms of indirect control rather than the satrapalisation of such areas. The Persian Wars are a prime example of the logistical and infrastructural effort that the Persian Empire had to make in order to succeed in the West, which is evidence against the frequently held assumption that there were plans to enforce direct Persian rule over Hellas.

Conferences and exhibitions celebrating the anniversaries of these battles have been held in many places and with very different aims, questions and results. For example, in 2010, there was a conference on the battle of Marathon (‘Marathon: The Day After’), in 2020, an exhibition at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (‘Glorious

Victories: Between Myth and History’) and a conference at the Cultural Centre of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (‘Thermopylae and Salamis: Assessing Their Importance in the Modern World’). In 2022, there was an exhibition in Munich on the battle of Salamis and a conference at Harvard on the battle of Plataea. Furthermore, a collection of essays on the battle of Plataea (edited by Andreas Konecny) was published in Vienna that same year.

The conference ‘Xerxes against Hellas: An Iconic Conflict from Different Perspectives’ is to be included in the series of celebrations listed above. It was jointly organised by scholars from various Central European countries and attracted speakers from around the world. It took place in Budapest from 28 February to 2 March 2022 but was held in hybrid form due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was, thus, accessible to all those interested in the topic. This conference was intended to bring together scholars of all branches of classical studies and related disciplines to discuss some aspects of the conflict between the Persian Achaemenid Empire and the Hellenic League and the reception of this conflict in antiquity. According to this principle, the contributions compiled in these proceedings are organised in two sections: (i) Graeco-Persian Wars, Diplomacy and Acculturation, (ii) Commemorating and remembering the war.

We received considerable help with the organisation of the conference from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, and the Association of the Hungarian Humboldt Fellows and would like to express our deepest gratitude for this. The publication of the proceedings was generously supported by the University of Münster.

The conference was planned for the 2500th anniversary of a major war but nobody could have foreseen that it would take place at a time when a new war was breaking out in the immediate European region. The impact of this war on the conference was quite significant: the fights on Snake Island (known, in antiquity, as the White Island or the Island of Achilles) were already incorporated into a presentation and the conflict was discussed intensely during the conference breaks. It was extremely depressing that one of the speakers from Russia was unable to come to Budapest, while another colleague from Budapest had to leave immediately before the event in order to rescue his family from Ukraine. We are glad that both these scholars succeeded in submitting their contributions to the present volume. May the publication of the proceedings coincide with the end of this absurd and cruel war just as the conference coincided with its beginning.

Table of Contents

Graeco-Persian Wars, Diplomacy and Acculturation

EDUARD RUNG

Between Gifts and Bribery

Persian "Gold Diplomacy", Arthmios of Zeleia and Medism in the Peloponnese 17

JOHN O. HYLAND

Xerxes' Greek Spectacles and the Royal Campaign Tradition 33

ANDREAS KONECNY

Wer war der Sieger von Plataiai? 51

HILMAR KLINKOTT

The Greek-Persian 'State Contracts' from an Achaemenid Perspective 69

LÁSZLÓ KRÉN

Medism in the Cimmerian Bosphorus

*The Greek Cities of the Northern Black Sea Region during
and after Xerxes' Campaign* 93

ANDREAS KLINGENBERG

In Danger of Barbarization?

*Persian Cultural and Religious Interactions with the Populations
of Western Asia Minor* 111

EDINA GRADVOHL

Fruits of Persia 129

Commemorating and Remembering the War

KERASIA A. STRATIKI

Morts sur le champ de bataille, héros des guerres médiques 145

ANDRÁS PATAY-HORVÁTH

The Victory Monuments of the Greeks

Competitive Dedications in Panhellenic Sanctuaries 165

MARION MEYER

The Victory at Salamis, the Athenians, and Their Fleet

Some Thoughts on the Lack of Images 177

MICHAL HABAJ

The Persian Council Debate before Xerxes' Expedition to Greece (Hdt. 7.8–11)

Exploring the Dynamics of Decision-Making in Herodotos' Histories 209

IAN MACGREGOR MORRIS

The Pragmatic King

Herodotus 7.8–15 and The Book of Esther in Comparative Perspective 235

WOLFGANG BLÖSEL

Enthusiastic Medisers versus Faint-hearted Defenders of Freedom?

An Herodotean Paradox in the Description of the Mainland Greeks' Behaviour during Xerxes' Invasion 281

MICHAEL JUNG

Perserkriege

Ein umkämpftes Deutungskonzept im fünften Jahrhundert v. Chr. 309

FEDERICO CASELLA

A Paradigm for Human Wars

Mythical Allusions to Xerxes' Expedition in Plato's Atlantis Story 325

DÁNIEL BAJNOK

Fighting Xerxes in the Attic Orators 339

ANJA BETTENWORTH

The Role of Xerxes in Curtius Rufus' *Historiae Alexandri Magni* 359

SIMON LENTZSCH

Zur Darstellung und Deutung der Perserkriege bei Valerius Maximus 373

JOHN BINTLIFF

Thermopylae

*The Forgotten 700 'Heroes' and the Search for 'a Place in History' amongst
Greek Rural Communities Today* 395

Graeco-Persian Wars, Diplomacy and Acculturation

Between Gifts and Bribery *Persian “Gold Diplomacy”, Arthmios of Zeleia and Medism in the Peloponnese*

EDUARD RUNG

Introduction

It is well known that the relationship of the Persian Kings with their subjects was based on the tradition of gift exchange. The Persians did not only give gifts to the King, but received them from him. Earth and water, for example, were specific gifts to the King, demanded/offered from foreign rulers and peoples¹. They meant subjugation to the Persians. The Persian “gold diplomacy” also may be included in the gift-giving process in which money was a kind of “political gift” and the King was a gift-giver².

The Great Kings of Persia regularly sent their gifts to all people who recognized the superiority of a Persian monarch all around the world. Both reward and punishment were so significant in the Achaemenid ideology that they determined an actual royal policy towards the various peoples. Reward was thought of as stimulating their loyalty toward the King, while punishment was considered as the most effective way to cause fear among subjects and to prevent them from uprisings. Old Persian inscriptions emphasize reward and punishment on Darius’ behalf:

The man who was loyal, him I treated well, who was disloyal, him I punished severely (DB § 8B–D); The man who strove for my (royal) house, him I treated well, who did harm, him I punished severely (DB § 63K–N); The man who co-operates, for him according to the co-operation, thus I care for him; who does harm, according to the harm done, thus I punish him ... What a man achieves or brings according to his powers, by that I become satisfied, and it is very much my desire; and I am pleased and give generously to loyal men (DNb § 6E–G).

¹ See Rung 2015, 503–515.

² On Persian gift-exchange in the Achaemenid Empire: Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1989, 129–146. On the Greek attitude toward the Persian gifts see Ellis 2021, 77–88.

Among those who were rewarded, there were citizens of Greek city-states (7.116; 8.120) as well as the most zealous of his subjects who had rendered important services to the king; the rewards were money, cities and lands (3.140; 5.11, 94; 6.70; 8.136), houses and Persian wives (6.39), troops to command (9.109) and honorary titles (3.140; 8.85). Let us quote two examples in which the king's reward was given to citizens of two Greek communities:

When Xerxes came to Acanthus, he declared the Acanthians his guests and friends, and gave them Median clothing, praising them for the zeal with which he saw them furthering his campaign, and for what he heard of the digging of the canal (Hdt. 7.116).

It is known that when Xerxes came to Abdera in his return, he made a compact of friendship with its people and gave them a golden sword and a gilt tiara (Hdt. 8.120).

On several occasions, Herodotus cites the titles of "king's friend" (7.134, 150) and "king's benefactor" (3.139–140; 8.85); they were received by the king's subjects, including the Greeks, for their services³. The Persians began using gold as part of their diplomatic efforts as early as the Greco-Persian Wars⁴. There were a number of occasions on which the Persians used gold to curry favors with the Greeks in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.⁵ However, there was a difference between the Greek and the Persian attitude towards the political meaning of the gold: if from the Greek viewpoint, the Persian gold was usually considered as a bribe, from the Persian viewpoint, it was perceived as a royal gift. So, the Persian "gold diplomacy" should not be seen as a result of the Persian defeat in the Greco-Persian wars which followed the "earth-and-water diplomacy", but both types of Persian diplomatic activities go side by side, and their combination may be reasonably considered as "carrot and stick politics" in the Achaemenid diplomacy.

The Persian gold as a political gift

The *Suda* lexicon (s.v. Ἀριστείδης) reports that on the eve of his invasion of Greece, Xerxes had unsuccessfully attempted to provide money to the Athenian politician Aristides, who was in exile and resided by then on Aegina:

- 3 On titles: Wiesehöfer 1980; On *philia* in Persian-Greek diplomacy: Mitchell 1997, 435–323; Waters 2014.
- 4 See Lewis 1989, 227–234; Rung, Venidiktova, and Vostrikov 2019, 316–329. The Lydians also used money to achieve political ends before the Persians. The Lesbian poet Alcaeus mentions the sum of 2,000 stateres which his faction obtained from the Lydians to fight against the tyrant Myrsilus of Mytilene (Alc. F. 69 L–P). This may be considered the first known example of an Oriental kingdom that provided a Greek city with money to carry out its own political objectives.
- 5 Rung 2004, 413–425; Rung 2014, 37–52.

This same Aristеides was banished and spent time in Aegina. And Xerxes sent an ambassador to him in his banishment when he was coming into Greece and offered him three thousand darics. He said he had no use for Persian wealth, living the sort of life that he did.

Aristеides, son of Lysimachos, known as “the Just”, was one of the leading Athenian politicians in the Persian Wars period and was ostracized by his people in 482 (Arist. *Ath. pol.* 22). When Aristеides was ostracized, he could be suspected of pro-Persian treason, like some other Athenians who were exiled by ostracism after Marathon campaign. Anticipating Xerxes’ invasion, the Athenians passed a decree returning all exiles in order to prevent them from joining Xerxes (Andoc. 1. 107; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 22. 8; Themistocles decree: ML 23. 44–48). Plutarch (*Arist.* 8) says that “the chief reason for this was their fear of Aristеides, lest he attach himself to the enemy’s cause, and corrupt and pervert many of his fellow-citizens to the side of the Barbarian”. Indeed, before this, as Herodotus (7.6) reports, some Peisistratids arrived in Susa after Xerxes’ accession in 486/5 and urged him to invade Greece. One year earlier, Hipparchos son of Charmos, exiled by ostracism, also joined Xerxes (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 22.4) and, according to the orator Lycurgus (1.117), the people resolved to demolish his statue and to write the names of all the traitors on its base. On the *ostraca* from the Athenian agora Kallixenos the Alkmaionid was labelled as a traitor⁶, Menon was named as one of traitors, Leagros was accused for “committing treason”, Habronichos was mentioned as *Medizing*, and Kallias, son of Kratios, was suspected of collaboration with the Persians⁸. One *ostrakon* refers to Aristеides as the “brother” of Da[tis] or Da[rrius], though there are some doubts in the literature concerning this interpretation⁹. It seems that Xerxes, having been advised by some Greeks from his royal court (by Damaratos the Spartan?), could expect to establish contact with Aristеides who was in exile at this time because he had already considered him as his loyal supporter, and hoped to reward him with money for the loyalty.

The Persian defeat at Salamis in 480 was crucial for the further development of Xerxes’ campaign in Greece and Greco-Persian relations in general. It was first major failure of the Persians from the beginning of Xerxes’ invasion. As a result, the Great King left his army and departed for Asia, leaving Mardonios as general-in-chief of all Persian forces in mainland Greece. In these circumstances the Persian king allowed Mardonios to take more flexible actions, relying mainly on diplomacy. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Persians took an initiative in peace negotiations with the Athenians, separately from the other allies in the Hellenic League, especially the Spartans. If these negotiations had met with success the Persians would have achieved

6 Lang 1990, 88.

7 Francis and Vickers 1981, 101.

8 Brenne 2002, 87–89; Shapiro 1982, 71.

9 See Lang 1990, 38; Robertson 1999, 172–179.

everything by diplomacy that they were not able to achieve by war. Herodotus (8.137, 140) says that Mardonios sent Alexander, son of Amyntas, the king of Macedon, to the Athenians on behalf of Xerxes:

When he [Alexander, son of Amyntas] came to Athens from Mardonios who had sent him, he spoke as follows: ‘This, Athenians, is what Mardonios says to you: there is a message come to me from the king, saying, “I forgive the Athenians all the offenses which they have committed against me; and now, Mardonios, I bid you do this. Give them back their territory and let them choose more for themselves besides, where ever they will, and dwell under their own laws. Rebuild all their temples which I burnt, if they will make a pact with me.”’ (Hdt. 8.140. 1–2).

Alexander’ speech in Herodotus (8.140.3–4) proposes to convince the Athenians of the senselessness of resistance to Xerxes. He having delivered the message from Mardonios about the might and multitude of the Persian army, called on the Athenians to make the peace with Persia, keep their freedom, and agree to be Persians allies in all faith and honesty. He also put some of own arguments to support the Persian peace proposals and to urge the Athenians to agree to them (Hdt. 8.140.5–7). Aristodemus (*FGrH* 104 F 1) reports that Mardonios promised 10,000 talents to the Athenians if they would agree to his conditions and abandon the Hellenic League:

Mardonios sent Alexander of Macedon to the Athenians ... offering to give them ten thousand talents and land in Greece which they desire and to retain their freedom and autonomy, if they would have abandoned the alliance with other Greeks.

Isocrates confirms that the Persians offered to the Athenians some splendid gifts (4.94: our ancestors scorned to accept his gifts).¹⁰ Herodotus (8.144) seems to support these statements. He refers to the motives of the Athenians in rejecting the Persian proposals:

there is nowhere on earth such store of gold or such territory of surpassing fairness and excellence that the gift of it should win us to take the Persian part and enslave Hellas.

This information also indicates that the Persians were ready to spend money for the Greeks, though not just certain politicians, but a *whole state* to side with them. However, this sum of money may be considered as a gift by the Persians because it was offered for the Athenians by the King as a reward for their future loyalty. However, when Alexander’s mission failed, Mardonios sent a certain Murychides the Hellespontian as his emissary to the Athenians on Salamis, probably intending to provide the most influential politicians with money. Herodotus does not clarify what conditions Murychides offered to the Athenians, but he seems to propose that they could have been

10 On the negotiations see Weissenberger 1996, 418–424.

the same as those which were offered through Alexander. The historian (9.4–5) tells us that Lykides, one of the councilors, said that it seemed best to him to receive the offer brought to them by Murychides and lay it before the people. As Herodotus notes, this was the opinion which he declared, either because he had been bribed by Mardonios, or because the plan pleased him. The Athenians in the council were, however, very angry; so too were those outside when they heard of it. They made a ring round Lykides and stoned him to death. Murychides the Hellespontian, however, they permitted to depart unharmed.

There was much tumult at Salamis over the business of Lykides, and when the Athenian women learned what was afoot, one calling to another and bidding her follow, they went on their own initiative to the house of Lykides and stoned to death his wife and his children. Demosthenes and some later authors confused the Athenian punishment of Lykides and his family with the putting to death Kyrtilos and his family for advising them to subdue themselves to the Persians (Dem. 18.204; Liban. 1.51; Suid. s. v. Κυρσίλος; Phot. s. v. Κυρσίλος). These episodes are so similar that A. Verral has even proposed that the name Lykides is only patronymic for Kyrtilos.¹¹ So Herodotus and some other authors could be referring to the execution of Kyrtilos son of Lykos by the Athenians. But one should note that the historical context of both events is different, so it remains possible that the Athenians executed two different men on two different occasions. In the case of Lykides and/or Kyrtilos the Persian gold could have been offered to the Greeks not on king's orders, but on own initiative by Mardonios. Therefore, it looked like a bribe from a Greek perspective, because this money should have been distributed among the individuals in Athens to prompt effectively their collaboration with the Persians. However, it might have been considered as a gift for services to the King from a Persian perspective.

Meanwhile, just before the decisive battle of Plataea, some Greeks from the Persian military camp attempted to convince Mardonios to change the tactics of war and to rely more on bribery of the Greeks to persuade some of them to abstain from prosecuting the war against the Persians. Herodotus (9.2) attributes this advice to several Thebans in the Persian service:

But when, in the course of its march, the army had come into Boeotia, the Thebans attempted to stay Mardonios, advising him that he could find no country better fitted than theirs for encampment; he should not (they begged) go further, but rather halt there and subdue all Hellas without fighting. As long as the Greeks who were previously in accord remained so, it would be difficult even for the whole world to overcome them by force of arms; “but if you do as we advise,” said the Thebans, “you will without trouble be master of all their battle plans. Send money to the men who have power in their cities, and thereby

11 Verral 1909, 36–40.

you will divide Hellas against itself; after that, with your partisans to aid you, you will easily subdue those who are your adversaries”.

Same thoughts were expressed also by Artabazos at the Persian military council on the eve of the decisive battle of Plataea in 479, as Herodotus (9.41) also states:

Artabazos thought it best that they should strike their camp with all speed and lead the whole army within the walls of Thebes. Here there was much food stored and fodder for their beasts of burden; furthermore, they could sit at their ease here and conclude the business by doing as follows: they could take the great store they had of gold, minted and other, and silver drinking-cups, and send all this to all places in Hellas without stint, excepting none, but especially to the chief men in the cities of Hellas. Let them do this (he said) and the Greeks would quickly surrender their liberty; but do not let the Persians risk the event of a battle. This opinion of his was the same as the Thebans, inasmuch as he too had special foreknowledge.

Herodotus asserts that Mardonios did not follow this advice and was prepared to fight in the battle. But the significance of Herodotus' evidence has never been fully appreciated in the historiography.¹² The Thebans and Artabazos had outlined to Mardonios and alternative approach to relations with the Greek world, one which the Persians followed after the end of the Greco-Persian Wars. It was the diplomacy of gold that dominated Greco-Persian relations in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Let us now turn to the first unofficial diplomatic mission to Greece carried out by Arthmios of Zeleia.

Arthmios' mission to Greece

Arthmios' mission to Greece is not attested by the Greek historians of the fifth century BC (Herodotus, Thucydides), and is known to us due to several mentions in the speeches of the fourth-century Attic orators Demosthenes (9. 41–43; 19. 271–272), Aeschines (3. 258–259) and Dinarchus (2. 24–25), as well as the later writers Plutarch (*Them.* 6) and Aelius Aristides (1. 369; 3. 334–336, 650–651). This episode was commented on by lexicographers (Harpocrat. s. v. "Ἀρθμῖος; "Ἀτμῖος) and by some scholiasts on Aeschylus' *Persians* and Aelius Aristides' works. C. Habicht considers the story of Arthmios as an instance of the Athenian falsification of the past, but there is no reason to reject its historicity.¹³ Attic orators mention the existence of an Athenian

12 Hornblower 1991, 175, for example, sees only in Megabazus' mission to Sparta of 456 the first use of a new and ultimately decisive Persian tactics: financial instead of military pressure.

13 Habicht 1961, 16–19, 23–25. Robertson 1976, 3–25 does not include the decree concerning Arthmios in his list of so-called false documents from classical Athens. I doubt that the Athenians intentionally conducted the policy of falsification of their past, as some modern scholars believe. I would

decree concerning Arthmios, son of Pythonax, which was inscribed on a copper *stela* and installed on the Acropolis on the right side near the large bronze statue of Athena *Promachos*. The decree denounces Arthmios as the enemy of the Athenian people for bringing Persian gold to the Peloponnese. M. C. Monaco argues that the area of the Acropolis around the colossal bronze statue of *Promachos* was characterized by the presence of the *atimia* decree of Arthmios, trophies, inscriptions, and treaties, which had an exclusively political and anti-Persian value until Late Antiquity.¹⁴ The date of the decree is controversial.

There is no precise dating in any of our sources, but scholars put Arthmios' mission and the decree in a wide chronological framework, ranging from the Greco-Persian Wars to the end of the Peloponnesian War. M. B. Wallace considers that Arthmios was the Persian agent who secured the neutrality of Argos in 480.¹⁵ The suggestion that Arthmios had a role in relations between Xerxes and the Argives is very probable although Herodotus does not mention Persian gold among the reasons for Argive mediocrity, and it was not Arthmios, but some other Persian herald who had secured the neutral position of Argos in 480. M. Cary relates Arthmios' mission to the first decade after the Persian Wars, considering him the agent in the communications between Pausanias and Themistocles and Xerxes and his satraps from 477 to 470 B. C.¹⁶ E. Luppino Manes dates the mission and decree to the period between 471/0 and 465/4 B. C.¹⁷ Other scholars have dated Arthmios' visit to the period of Athens' Egyptian expedition and associated it with Megabazos' mission to Sparta in 457/6 (Thuc. 1.109.2–3; Diod. 11.74.5–6).¹⁸ N. Robertson put Arthmios' mission at the end of the Peloponnesian War (dating it to 408 and 407).¹⁹

But dating Arthmios' mission to the post-Persian Wars period, regardless of the arguments put forward by scholars in favor of each date, is highly conjectural and receives no confirmation from the sources. The orators and later writers do not date it at all.

Some dating may be found only in the records of the anonymous commentaries to the works of ancient authors. The *Scholiae* on Aeschylus' *Persians* put Arthmios' mission to the historical context just before the expedition of Datis and Artaphrenes in 490 and simultaneously with Darius' sending of heralds to Greece demanding earth

consider that there were some documents relating to their glorious past which the Athenians made objects of their pride.

14 Monaco 2009, 275–311.

15 Wallace 1970, 200–202. See also: Forrest 1960, 239; Hofstetter 1978, 32.

16 Cary 1935, 177–180. Meiggs 1972, 509–512 follows Cary's interpretation.

17 Luppino Manes 1982, 247–250.

18 Swoboda 1893, 49; Judeich 1896, 1449; Lewis 1989, 230; Famerie 1992, 198. Contra Salmon 1965, 161–165; Meiggs 1972, 511; Biondi 2016, 50–56.

19 Robertson 1980, 293–301.

and water. The scholiasts say that Arthmios was the ambassador of Darius when he brought Persian gold to the Athenians and was declared an outlaw:

And Arthmios of Zeleia was declared an outlaw, the Barbarian gold to them brought from Darius being the ambassador

The scholiast to Aelius Aristides' *Panathinaic oration* (1.369) dates Arthmios' visit to Sparta to the period of Xerxes' campaign in Greece. He considers it part of Xerxes' plans to dissolve the Hellenic League by bribing the Spartans.

When Xerxes marched against Greece, wishing to send money to the Spartans, so that they might be won over by it and join with him against the Athenians, he compelled Arthmios to convey it against his will; the man was living in Athens and by chance had been captured at that time by the Persians

So, there are two rival datings in the sources. Where is the truth? We can be fairly sure that the scholiast to Aeschylus' *Persians* confused possibly genuine information with erroneous material. He says that Darius sent the Athenians a basket for them to put earth and water in, claiming to be the overlord of both land and sea, but he errs in saying that the Athenians dropped the envoys alive into a well, telling them to obtain their earth and water for the king from this location. The scholiast confuses this episode with the Spartans' treatment of Darius' heralds. Then the scholiast mentions the execution of a Samian interpreter by the Athenians. This information is confirmed by Plutarch (*Them.* 6) who attributes it to Themistocles, possibly before Xerxes' invasion of Greece. The scholiast further records the Arthmios episode and refers to the story of Kyrtilos, reporting that he was killed, together with his family, by the Athenians for advising them to give earth and water. As for the Kyrtilos' story, all other sources also attribute this event to Xerxes' campaign in Greece.

Consequently, one can propose that the Arthmios episode in the *Scholiae* to Aeschylus' *Persians* may be referring not to Darius, but to Xerxes, as is evident in some other instances, though it is doubtful whether Arthmios ever visited Athens as a Persian ambassador bringing gold. Demosthenes (9.43) says he conveyed gold not to Athens but to the Peloponnese. Some authors report also that Arthmios would have been banished by the people from Athens as the decree proscribed (Aesch. 3.258–259; Din. 2.24–25). But this may simply mean that he could have been proclaimed an exile *in absentia*.

The scholiast to Aelius Aristides provides us with more reliable information. He certainly relates Arthmios' mission to Xerxes' expedition and reports some interesting facts from the life of Arthmios. The author says that he was living in Athens and had been captured by the Persians. It well corresponds with the Aeschines' evidence (3.258) that Arthmios had once resided in Athens, and was *proxenos* of the Athenian people. Besides, Xerxes had good reasons to hope for the success of Arthmios' mission to Sparta. Firstly, the Spartans had been forgiven for their execution of Darius' heralds

because of Sperthias' and Boulis' embassy to Xerxes. Secondly, they were not able to fight against the Persians at Marathon although they were the Athenians' allies. Meanwhile, one needs to ask whether Arthmios' gold was royal gift or bribe.

So, Xerxes could expect that the Spartans, having been provided with money by Arthmios, would abstain from war, in spite of their official refuse to give earth and water and thereby to express their subjugation. It is quite probable that Arthmios during his trip visited other *poleis* in the Peloponnese, which were included in the Peloponnesian alliance and were ready to fight for Greek freedom, but only under Spartan leadership. That is why this gold may be reasonably considered by the Greeks as a bribe. But the scholiast's belief that the Persian gold brought by Arthmios was intended for the Spartans could have been based on his knowledge of later enmity between Athenians and Spartans.

As for the dating of the Athenian decree for Arthmios, scholars usually considered that it belonged to the period after the end of the Greco-Persian Wars. The decree declares Arthmios and his family outlaws and enemies of the people of Athens and of *their allies* (Dem. 9.42–43; 19.271) and warned him out of Athens and out of *all the territory under Athenian control* (Aesch. 3.259) – this indicates that it belongs to the period of the Delian League, after 477. As for the author of this decree, that Plutarch in his biography of *Themistocles* (6) attributes the document to Themistocles, but the anonymous scholiast on Aelius Aristides' work having referred to the *Collection of Decrees* by Craterus considered Cimon as its author (Craterus *FGrH* 324 F. 14):

There was a certain Craterus, who collected all the decrees that were recorded in Greece; and this decree recorded on the stele is by Cimon; Aristides says that this is by Themistocles

In theory both persons may have been authors of the decree against Arthmios of Zeleia if it is dated to the early of 470s B.C., when both influential politicians, Themistocles and Cimon, were political opponents and playing leading roles in Athens.

So, the best solution is to date Arthmios' mission to the period of Xerxes' invasion of Greece and to put the decree in the immediate post-war period. The mission's result is obscure and the Athenians denounced Arthmios, whether with a decree proposed by Themistocles or a decree proposed by Cimon remains disputable. Arthmios' trip may be seen as the earliest informal Persian diplomatic mission with money to Greece. However, it seems Arthmios' gold actually to have been both royal gift to the *Medizers* in the Peloponnese and bribe for those, who did not yet side with the Persians and were waiting for outcome of war or/and material stimulus from Xerxes.

However, if one places Arthmios' visit to Greece into the historical setting of the Greco-Persian Wars, that his diplomatic mission should have been looked in connection with other similar actions by the Persians of use the financial resources for political aims.

Medism in the Peloponnese

There is a possibility that gold was also given by Arthmios as royal gift to Xerxes' loyal supporters in the Peloponnese, in Argos, Elis or some *poleis* in Arcadia. The position of Argos during the Greco-Persian Wars requires a special comment. Herodotus does not include the Argives in his list of *Medizers* (7. 132) and never explicitly designates their position as medism. He only refers to the Argive attitude toward Persia twice (7.148–152; 9.12). In one passage (9.12) he reports that the Argives had promised Mardonios to prevent the Spartan army from leaving the Peloponnese in 479 – an undertaking they failed to fulfill, allegedly because of the Spartans' eventual speed of movement. Earlier, in the seventh book (7.148–152) he reports controversial explanations of Argive unwillingness to participate in the war: the reduction of population as the result of losses in the battle of Sepeia; a prediction from the Delphic oracle; a mythical relationship between Argives and Persians through their lineage from legendary ancestor Perseus (cf. *FGrH* 105 F. 3 where is stated that the kinship with the Persians was a reason for Argives' refusal to fight in the battle of Thermopylae on the Spartan side); the enmity of the Spartans. Herodotus referred to the friendship (7.151) which originated from the treaty concluded between Argives and Xerxes on the eve of his invasion of Greece. Such a treaty, if it indeed existed, might have been made on the terms of giving earth and water to the Great King (as had been demanded of the Athenians in the negotiations at Sardis in 508/7 (Hdt. 5.73), and of other Greeks by Persian heralds in 491 and 481). A treaty with the Great King on such conditions implied the subjugation of Argos to the Persians and may be considered as an act of medism, though the Argives may have acquired a privileged status like the Milesians under the treaty with Cyrus the Great (Hdt. 1.141, 143). Some scholars argue for Argive neutrality, though this opinion reflects the tradition obtained by Herodotus from Argos.²⁰

Herodotus chooses to be silent on true nature of Argos' position during the Persian Wars, and may even be trying to justify the Argives' medism. This might be explained by the subsequent rapprochement of Argos and Athens in the First Peloponnesian War (from 461). Contemporaries, by contrast, did not differentiate the medism of Argos from that of Thebes and Thessaly, as becomes evident from Plutarch's story about the proposal of the Spartans to drive the Argives out of the Delphic Amphictyony after the Greek victory (*Themistocles* 20).²¹ In other passage (8.73) after listing the nations of the Peloponnese, Herodotus states: "all the remaining cities of these seven nations,

20 On Greek neutrality during the Persian Wars see Phillipson 1911, 304; Bauslaugh 1991, 93–98; Berdeman 2001, 215; Viviers 1995, 257–269; Troncoso 2001, 365–375; Vannicelli 2004, 199–217. On Argive neutrality see Gillis 1979, 61–62; Green 1996, 67; Mikalson 2003, 60.

21 Plutarch himself blames Herodotus for the wrong representation of the Argives' position in the Persian Wars and speaks of the Argives' neutrality as a well-known fact (*De Her. malign.* 863B). He argues also for the unwillingness of the Argives to cooperate with the Persians against the Greeks in the attack of the Peloponnese (863F). However, Plutarch cannot be trusted here, since his judg-

except those I enumerated, stayed neutral. If I may speak freely, by staying neutral they medized". The historian says that the Lacedaemonians and all the Arcadians, the Eleans and Corinthians and Sicyonians and Epidaurians and Phliasians and Troezenians and Hermionians "marched out and feared for Hellas in her peril", while "the rest of the Peloponnesians cared nothing, though the Olympian and Carnean festivals were now past".

These were the lists of cities on the serpent column at Delphi, erected by the Greeks on the occasion of their victory at Plataea (Tod, I, 19 = ML., 27), and also on the copper statue of Zeus at Olympia (Paus. 5.23.1). In spite of Herodotus' reference to "all the Arcadians" who marched out to the Isthmus, the Mantineans were not listed on Hellenic monuments in Delphi and Olympia, though they also arrived under the leadership of Spartans to defend Thermopylae (Hdt. 7.207). The Mantineans did not participate in the final battle of Plataea. Herodotus (9.77) reports that they were too late to arrive on the battlefield, which hints at some of their disagreements with the Spartans, and also suggests their actions could be interpreted by other Greeks as medism:

Upon learning that they had come too late for the battle, they were extremely upset and said that they ought to punish themselves for that. When they heard that those Medes with Artabazos were fleeing, they would have pursued them as far as Thessaly. The Lacedaemonians, however, would not permit them to pursue the fleeing men. When they returned to their own land, the Mantineans banished the leaders of their army from the country.

There are at least two possible reasons for the absence of the Mantineans in the list on the victorious monuments in Delphi and Olympia: their conflict with the Spartans, or their medism. Herodotus mentions medism among the Arcadians elsewhere (8.26), when he speaks of the arrival of "defectors from Arcadia" to the camp of Xerxes. The Roman writer Vitruvius (1.5) reports about the punishment by the Greeks after his victory over the Persians of the Arcadian town of Carya:

Carya, a city of Peloponnesus, joined the Persians in their war against the Greeks. These in return for the treachery, after having freed themselves by a most glorious victory from the intended Persian yoke, unanimously resolved to levy war against the Caryans. Carya was, in consequence, taken and destroyed, its male population extinguished, and its matrons carried into slavery²².

But this data does not imply with certainty that the Spartans accused the Mantineans of medism, so the possibility remains that the formal excuse for excluding the Mantineans from the lists of winners was their non-participation in the battle of Plataea, but real, some kind of disagreement with the Spartans. On the other hand, the Eleans,

ments are aimed against those of Herodotus, and also may reflect the same Greek public opinion which was expressed not so explicitly in Herodotus' work.

22 On this episode see Huxley 1967, 29–32.

despite a similar situation (the delay to the battlefield and the subsequent expulsion of their generals: Hdt. 9.77) were nevertheless included in the lists both on the Delphic tripod and on the statue of Zeus. W. How and J. Wells believed that the Mantineans and Eleans were guilty of medism and were late to the battlefield due to the fact that they were expecting the outcome of the battle.²³ D. Gillis also admits this proposition: "Their subsequent exile of their leaders may be proof of their rage at ineptitude; or anger at the latent Medism of their chiefs; or simply an embarrassed attempt to divert attention from their own deficiencies."²⁴ M. Flower and J. Marincola comment on this episode as follows: "It is puzzling that the Mantineans were not included on the Serpent Column even though they sent 500 hoplites to Thermopylae (7.202), whereas the Eleans, who had not made an appearance at Thermopylae, were included"²⁵ The "puzzle", however, is quite easily solved, given that the Eleans controlled Olympia, the place where the Hellenes made consecrations after the battle of Plataea (Hdt. 8.72).

In the time of this decree the Greeks certainly should have already reconciled with the *Medizers*. An inscription from Olympia (SEG 26: 475; 28: 426; 31: 358), having been discovered by P. Siewert in 1965 and dated back to the first half of the 5th century (470s BC), records:

Offering to Zeus. Pyrrhon, secretary, Charixenos, and the *mastroi* have decided that the verdicts, which Menandros and Aristolochos rendered against the Boiotians in favour of the Athenians, were not justly rendered in favour of both the Thespians and their dependants, and they have rescinded the penalty against the Thessalians.²⁶

This inscription reports that certain Elean magistrates have imposed punishment on the Boeotians and the Thessalians in favor of the Athenians and the Thespians. The inscription does not specify what the punishments were, but *a priori* it can be assumed that it was most likely a fine. Further, although it is difficult to conclude definitely about the historical context that led to the decision regarding the imposition of punishments, the content of the inscription gives a more or less definite answer to this question, since it suggests a connection of this decision with the Greco-Persian wars.

Herodotus unambiguously assumes that the Thessalians sided with Xerxes immediately after the troops of the Hellenic League left Tempe, i. e. before the Battle of Thermopylae. Thus, the Thessalians actually had to participate in the Persian devastation of Thespieae (Hdt. 8.50). Boeotians joined the Persian army, among some other Greek communities, immediately after Thermopylae (Hdt. 8.66), were to participate in the attack on Attica. Taking these considerations into account, it becomes quite clear that the text mentions in pairs the Athenians and the Thespians with the Boeotians and

23 How and Wells 1912, ii: 320.

24 Gillis 1979, 80.

25 Flower and Marincola 2002, 243.

26 See Beck 2014, 38–39; Schachter 2016, 59.

the Thessalians. But what could serve as a formal reason for the imposition of punishments? P. Sievert, and some other researchers believe that the punishment was imposed on those Greek states that sided with the Persians for violating the Olympic peace of 480 BC.²⁷ However, the subsequent abolition of punishments may also be explained given the tendency towards reconciliation of the Greeks with the *Medizers* after the failure of Xerxes' invasion. That is why one can propose that the fact that the Athenians in their decree decided not to mention a city or cities visited by Arthmios of Zeleia, but referred generally to the Peloponnese, may be due to the ideological reasons of reconciliation in the post-war period.

Meanwhile it was very difficult for the Greeks to differentiate a point where gifts turned into bribery. The reason for this was the difference between the Greek and the Achaemenid ideologies. The Greek ideology was panhellenic, aimed at struggle for liberty against the Barbarian foe, while the Achaemenid one was ideology of oriental despotism, that viewed the entire world as being under Great Kings' power and all the people, including the Greeks, as only the Kings' subordinates. That is why freedom-loving Greeks usually considered any gifts to them from the Barbarians at all times only as bribes.

Bibliography

- Bauslaugh, Robert. 1991. *The Concept of Neutrality in Classical Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Beck, Hans. 2014. "Ethnic Identity and Integration in Boeotia: The Evidence of the Inscriptions (6th and 5th Centuries B. C.)." In *The Epigraphy and History of Boeotia: New Finds, New Prospects*, edited by Nikolaos Papazarkadas, 19–44. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Bederman, David. 2001. *International Law in Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Biondi, Ennio. 2016. *La Politica Imperialistica Ateniese a Metà del V Secolo a. C. Il Contesto Egizio-cipriota*. Milano: LED Edizioni Universitarie.
- Brenne, Stefan. 2002. "Die Ostraka (487 – ca. 416 v. Chr.) als Testimonien (T 1)." In *Ostrakismos-Testimonien: Die Zeugnisse antiker Autoren, der Inschriften und Ostraka über das athenische Scherbengericht aus vorhellenistischer Zeit (487–322 v. Chr.)*, edited by Peter Siewert, 33–166. Stuttgart.
- Cary, Max. 1935. "Arthmios of Zeleia." *Classical Quarterly* 29 (3/4): 177–180.
- Ellis, Samuel. 2021. "Greek conceptualizations of Persian traditions: Gift-giving and Friendship in the Persian Empire." *Classical Quarterly* 71 (1): 77–88.
- Famerie, Étienne. 1992. "La condamnation d'Arthmios de Zéleia." In *Serta Leodiensia Secunda. Mélanges publiés par les Classiques de Liège l'occasion du 175^e anniversaire de l'Université*, 191–99. Liège.
- Flower, Michael, and Marincola, John. 2002. *Herodotus: Histories Book IX*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Forrest, William George. 1960. "Themistocles and Argos." *Classical Quarterly* 10 (3/4): 221–41.

27 Siewert 1981, 228; Roy 1998, 361–363.

- Francis E. D., and Vickers, Michael. 1981. "Leagros Kalos." *Cambridge Classical Journal* 27: 97–136.
- Gillis, Daniel. 1979. *Collaboration with the Persians*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Green, Peter. 1998. *The Greco-Persian Wars*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Habicht, Christian. 1961. "Falsche Urkunden zur Geschichte Athens im Zeitalter der Perserkriege." *Hermes* 89 (1): 1–35.
- Hofstetter, Josef. 1978. *Die Griechen in Persien. Prosopographie der Griechen im Persischen Reich vor Alexander*. Berlin: Reimer, Dietrich.
- Hornblower, Simon. 1991. *A Commentary on Thucydides* i. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- How W. W., and Wells, John West. 1912. *A Commentary on Herodotus* ii. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huxley, George. 1967. "The Medism of Carya." *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 8 (1): 29–32.
- Judeich, Walther. 1896. "Arthmios." *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* ii: 1449.
- Lang, Mabel. 1990. *The Athenian Agora* vol. xxv [Ostraka]. Princeton, New Jersey.
- Lewis, David Malcolm. 1989. "Persian gold in Greek international relations." In *Le tribute dans l'empire perse: actes de la table ronde de Paris, 12–13 decembre 1986*, edited by Pierre Briant and Clarisse Herrenschildt, 227–34. Paris: Peeters.
- Luppino Manes, Emma. 1982. "Il decreto ateniese di atimia contro Artmio di Zelea (prosseno degli Ateniesi?)." *Rivista storica dell'antichità* 12: 241–50.
- Meiggs, Russell. 1972. *The Athenian Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mikalson, Jon. 2003. *Herodotus and Religion in the Persian Wars*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Mitchell, Lynette. 1997. *Greeks Bearing Gifts: The Public Use of Private Relationships in the Greek World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Monaco, Maria Chiara. 2009. "Sull' Acropoli, all' ombra della Promachos." *Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene* 87: 275–311.
- Phillipson, Coleman. 1911. *The International Law and Custom of Ancient Greece and Rome* ii. London: Macmillan and Co., Limited.
- Robertson, Noel. 1976. "False Documents at Athens: Fifth-Century History and Fourth-Century Publicists." *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 3 (1): 3–25.
- Robertson, Noel. 1980. "The Sequence of Events in the Aegean in 408 and 407 B. C." *Historia* 29 (3): 282–301.
- Robertson, Noel. 1999. "Aristeides 'Brother'." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 127: 172–79.
- Roy, Jim. 1998. "Thucydides 5.49.1–50.4: The Quarrel between Elis and Sparta in 420 B. C. and Elis' Exploitation of Olympia." *Klio* 80 (2): 360–68.
- Rung, Eduard. 2004. "Xenophon, the Oxyrhynchus Historian and the Mission of Timocrates to Greece." In *Xenophon and His World. Papers from a conference held in Liverpool in July 1999*, edited by Christopher Tuplin, 413–25. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Rung, Eduard. 2014. "The Mission of Philiscus to Greece in 369/8 B. C." *Anabasis. Studia classica et orientalia* 4: 37–52.
- Rung, Eduard. 2015. "The Language of the Achaemenid Imperial Diplomacy towards the Greeks: The meaning of Earth and Water." *Klio* 97 (2): 503–15.
- Rung, Eduard, Venidiktova Elena and Vostrikov Igor. 2019. "The gold diplomacy in Greco-Persian relations." *Opción* 35: 316–29.
- Salmon, Pierre. 1965. *La politique Egyptienne d'Athènes (VIe et Ve siècles avant J.-C.)*. Bruxelles: Palais des Académies.

- Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Helen. 1989. "Gifts in the Persian Empire." In *Le tribute dans l'empire perse: actes de la table ronde de Paris, 12-13 decembre 1986*, edited by Pierre Briant and Clarisse Herrenschiemdt, 129-46. Paris: Peeters.
- Schachter, Albert. 2016. *Boiotia in Antiquity. Selected Papers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shapiro, Harvey Alan. 1982. "Kallias Kratiou Alopekethen." *Hesperia* 51 (1): 69-73.
- Siewert, Peter. 1981. "Eine Bronze-Urkunde mit elischen Urteilen über Boeöter, Thessaller, Athen und Thespiat." In *Olympia. X. Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia 1966-1976*, edited by Alfred Mallwitz, 228-48. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Swoboda, Heinrich. 1893. "Arthmios von Zeleia." *Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn* 16: 46-98.
- Troncoso, Victor Alonso. 2001. "Die neutralen Staaten in den Perserkriegen und das griechische Völkerrecht." In *Gab es das Griechische Wunder? Griechenland zwischen dem Ende des 6. und der Mitte des 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. Tagungsbeiträge des 16. Fachsymposiums der Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung veranstaltet vom 5. bis 9. April 1999 in Freiburg im Breisgau*, edited by D. Papenfuß und V.M. Strocka, 365-75. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.
- Vanicelly, P. 2004. "Whose Side are you on?" In *The World of Herodotus. Proceedings of an International Conference held at the Foundation Anastasios G. Leventis, Nicosia*, edited by V. Karageorgis and I. Taifacos, 199-217. Nicosia.
- Verral, Arthur Woollgar. 1909. "The Death of Kyrtilos Alias Lykides: A Problem in Authorities." *Classical Review* 23 (2): 36-40.
- Viviers, Didier. 1995. "Hérodote et la Neutralité des Crétois en 480 Avant Notre ère: La Trace d'un Débat Athénien?" *Hermes* 123 (3): 257-69.
- Wallace, M. B. 1970. "Early Greek Proxenoï." *Phoenix* 24 (3): 189-208.
- Waters, Matthew. 2014. "Earth, Water, and Friendship with the King: Argos and Persia in the Mid-fifth Century." In *Extraction & Control: Studies in Honor of Matthew W. Stolper*, edited by Michael Kozuh, Wouter F. M. Henkelman, Charles E. Jones, and Christopher Woods, 331-36. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- Weissenberger, Michael. 1996. "Das persische Friedensangebot an Athen. Umdatierung und Wertung eines historischen Faktums bei den Rednern des 4 Jhs." *Hermes* 124 (4): 418-24.
- Wiesehöfer, Josef. 1980. "Die 'Freunde' und 'Wohltäter' des Grosskönigs." *Studia Iranica* 9: 7-21.

Xerxes' Greek Spectacles and the Royal Campaign Tradition*

JOHN O. HYLAND

Introduction: Did Xerxes Lose the Persian War?

Xerxes' expedition to Greece in 480 BCE is commonly viewed as the climax of a state of armed hostility between Persians and Greeks, beginning with either the Ionian Revolt of 499–93 or the Marathon campaign of 490 – a conflict referred to already in antiquity as the Persian or Median War, following the Greek and Roman tradition of naming conflicts for the enemy. Through the naval defeat at Salamis and the disastrous land battle at Plataea, the conventional history goes, the Persians lost a war to incorporate mainland Greece within their empire.¹ This model takes much of its force from the fact that the Persians did not repeat the invasions of mainland Greece, on the scale of either the Marathon campaign or Xerxes' greater expedition, despite the continuation of fighting in other parts of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean for three additional decades, until the much-debated cessation of hostilities in the mid-5th century.

But the Greek sources obscure, and modern scholarship tends to overlook, a fundamental difference between modern Western or ancient Greek definitions of warfare and military victory, and Achaemenid Persian models of successful royal campaigns. This results in serious misunderstandings of the potential objectives of Persian impe-

* My paper developed out of a larger monograph in progress on Persia's Greek campaigns in their Near Eastern imperial contexts. I wish to thank the organizers for the opportunity to participate in this exciting and timely conference. Conversations with the fellow participants enriched the final version of the paper, and I am particularly grateful to Jared Wolfe, who attended online, for his thoughtful feedback.

1 The Achaemenid rulers' actual intentions regarding the overseas Greeks remain a matter of debate in the absence of explicit narrative sources from within the empire; for the possible goal of incorporation within an outer sphere of client states rather than more direct absorption and rule through the satrapal administrative system, see Wiesehöfer 2004; Rollinger and Degen 2021, 435–36. For a model stressing interactions between Achaemenid goals of frontier control and extraction and Athens' early Aegean expansionism, see Schulz 2018, 676–81.

rial warfare and its intended outcomes. To better define Persian perspectives, despite our lack of direct narrative accounts from the Persians themselves, it is possible to contextualize Xerxes' expedition through study of the campaign traditions of the earlier Teispid and Achaemenid rulers and their Ancient Near Eastern predecessors.² In this approach, the royal campaign is better envisioned as a discrete, ritualized progress, entailing but not limited to punitive action against opponents of order, rather than an effort to achieve victory in a formal conflict. Such campaigns defined success via the monarch's safe return with suitable visual and material displays of triumph, and lack of repetition of campaigning against a particular enemy did not have to constitute an indication of failure. On these terms, it is legitimate to doubt that Xerxes would have conceptualized a "war" to be lost. Nevertheless, there are strong indications, despite the necessity of critical doubt towards the most triumphalist Greek representations, and the efforts of king and court to portray the Greek campaign as positively as possible, that Salamis and its aftermath undermined and tarnished the intended power display.

Defining War and Military Success in the Ancient Near East

The Greeks of the late Archaic and early Classical periods were beginning to define war as a state of formal conflict between hostile polities, often initiated through communicative declarations of hostility, and concluded by diplomatic arrangement which might include a timed period of peace to precede further negotiation. One side might be expected to win and the other to lose, before bringing hostilities to a close through diplomatic communication and formal treaty stipulating the terms and duration of a peace. Not all the formalities, of course, were respected in practice, as indicated by the so-called herald-less war (*polemos akeruktos*) between Athens and Aigina during the decade preceding Xerxes' invasion; but again, in that case we see the concept of a prolonged state of conflict requiring a negotiated settlement for both poleis to participate in the anti-Persian alliance. Wars between Archaic poleis with limited state structures and manpower might often be resolved through a single campaign or battle, but over the course of the fifth century, we see a greater tendency towards prolonged conflict in which neither side regards singular defeats as a cause for definitive submission.³ This trend allows Thucydides to disparage the so-called *Medikos polemos* as a war with only four battles (1.23.1), in contrast with the multiple sequences of violent conflict, including a period of indecisive peace, that he stitches together as a single Peloponnesian War.

2 For readings of early Achaemenid imperialism in Near Eastern contexts, Rollinger 2021 and Rollinger and Degen 2021 are useful starting points; see Manning 2021 for particular application of the principle to Achaemenid military organization and recruitment.

3 See Garlan 1975, 41–57; Shipley 1993, 2–7; Gabrielsen 2007, 248–49.

In contrast, Ancient Near Eastern royal texts – notably those of the Neo-Assyrian kings, but also other annals and chronicles from Urartu, Babylon, and Darius' Bisotun inscription – refer to military expeditions led by the king as singular events, most often confined within a single regnal year, rather than episodes in a larger war. A feeling of mutual dislike between certain neighboring kingdoms or royal dynasties might be long-lasting, inherited from one's ancestors (as in the state of relations between Assyria and Elam before their peace treaty in the reign of Esarhaddon). Rebellions or civil wars over royal succession might have more distinctive parameters akin to Greek-style conflicts, with explicit starting points and a measurable conclusion in the suppression of the rebels or losing faction. But most royal campaigns were not exactly compatible with a state of war between combatant parties in the Greek sense, as they required neither an explicit beginning nor a formal diplomatic resolution (on the latter point, the Assyrian-Elamite friendship pact of the 670s was a short-lived exception).⁴

In royal texts such as the Neo-Assyrian annals, these royal campaigns are almost always represented as successful (although eponym lists, or chronicles produced outside, if in dialogue with the palace, occasionally, if rarely, mention defeats). Tactical setbacks might be downplayed or even represented to audiences at home as victories, so long as they did not end in a catastrophe so serious as to prevent the possibility of denial, such as the ruler's captivity or violent death.⁵ But the working definition of military success, while it might sometimes entail the sack of a certain city or ravaging of its territory, the destruction of an enemy army, or elimination of a hostile ruler, did not always require such a decisive ending that prevented the enemy from ever engaging in further opposition. This contrasts with an understanding of a conflict in which each side seeks to "win the war": victory was not defined through compulsion of enemy surrender in a Greek sense, or accomplishment of operational strategic objectives like those envisioned in Sunzi's *Art of War* ("to take the enemy's country" (3.1) or "break the enemy's resistance" (3.2)), or Carl von Clausewitz's *Vom Kriege* (1.2, 4, 8: "to compel our opponent to follow our will", to do which one aims "to disarm an enemy" through successive operations). While such objectives were desirable if possible, royal martial success did not have to pass such a high bar. Representations of enemy flight and fear, indicating successful chastisement of the wicked by the just and divinely favored ruler, were sufficient to set the stage for the next royal triumph.

The perception of royal victory was constructed through the execution of elaborate triumphal displays, during the campaign and at its conclusion, that showed off

4 For this Assyrian-Elamite treaty and its limitations, see Waters 2022, 54–60.

5 The death of the Neo-Assyrian ruler Sargon II is the exception that proves the rule; on Assyrian responses to defeat, see Melville 2014; Melville 2018; Fuchs 2019. The infamous contrasts between Herodotus' account of Cyrus' death and Ctesias' story of Cyrus' mortal wound may reflect early Persian tensions between the impact of a ruler's campaign-related demise and the urgency of representing a campaign's outcome in positive terms where possible.

the ruler's heroism and divine favor, the state's resources, and the power to punish the empire's enemies, before mass audiences of courtiers, soldiers, clients, and subjects.⁶ Campaign accounts do not make narrative reference to these successes as progress towards victory in an extended conflict, keeping score in a Assyrian-Elamite or Babylonian-Egyptian War. Rather, they conceptualize each campaign as a new opportunity to reiterate the divine favor, justice, courage, and power of the king and his state. This might encompass not only a specific enemy's defeat, but competition with ancestors and pursuit of what we might call "record-breaking" achievement, from Darius' pride in winning more battles in a single year than any previous ruler (DB Pers. § 59), to the demonstrated capacity to march in unprecedented force to frontiers at previously inconceivable distances from the imperial center.

The singularity of each royal campaign seems to have become even more pronounced in the Teispid and early Achaemenid period. Whereas the Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs fought repeatedly against particular state rivals, or sought to exert control over certain regions (such as Syria and the northern Levant) through annual campaigns, the early Persian conquests and annexation of surrounding kingdoms removed this iterative element from imperial warfare. After the succession conflict chronicled at Bisotun, Darius campaigned in person on only four known occasions, progressing in four directions: to the central Asia of the Saka Tigrakhauda, Egypt, the Indus valley, and Thrace. These expeditions displayed world supremacy by progressing outwards to the margins and extending the so-called four quarters of the Ancient Near Eastern universe.⁷ Xerxes' two attested campaigns, to Egypt and trans-Aegean Greece, are suggestive of efforts to emulate the same pattern, although the silence of sources on years 8 through 20 of his reign prevents us from ascertaining whether he followed up the Greek campaign with comparable expeditions on the northern or eastern frontiers.⁸ Finally, as shown in recent studies, the frontier marches of Darius and Xerxes acted out the empire's symbolic universal rule through the crossing of bodies of water conceived in ideological terms as the world's outer margins, and their naval expeditions enacted displays of universal authority over the seas.⁹

6 See Parker 2011 and Parker 2014, 286–87, for symbolic performance and audience in Assyrian royal warfare; for Achaemenid campaigns and imperial display see Haubold 2012 and Rollinger 2013, and compare Kosmin 2014 on royal progresses in the Seleucid empire.

7 See Hyland forthcoming.

8 This is a possible, albeit not a certain implication of the addition of the Dahae and mysterious Akaufaka to the subject list in XPh § 3; the Saka imagery of 5th-century seals and the Tatarli tomb may be reflective of royal military activity in central Asia (see Wu 2010), but could also refer to memories of warfare in the reign of Darius or earlier.

9 See Haubold 2012; Rollinger 2013; Klinkott 2021.

Triumphal Returns and the Definition of Successful Campaigns

While scholarship has emphasized the spectacles performed at the king's initial outward departures and upon arrival at the frontiers, the king's safe homeward journey to the center of the empire, with a loyal and satisfied army and court entourage, played a final and decisive role in the staging of performative campaigns. Triumphal celebrations, showing off and celebrated the expedition's completion through displays of spoils and captives, were vital steps in the rendering of a campaign as tangibly successful and beneficial to the population and socio-economic institutions of the imperial center.¹⁰

The ceremonial importance of the royal return is exemplified in the Assyrian sources by Ashurbanipal's homeward march after his army crushed his Elamite enemy Teumman at the battle of Til-Tuba; the king and army passed through multiple Assyrian cities, from Arbela to Nineveh, and displayed prominent enemy captives and the severed head of Teumman before assembled crowds to the strains of festive music (RINAP Ashurb. 003 vi 43–47, 57–59). Similar festivities can be envisioned as the backdrop for Nabonidus' boast of the bestowal of Cilician slaves on Babylonian temples (Inscription 1 col. IX 3–47) and the late Babylonian chronicle account of captive Sidonian women entering the palace of Artaxerxes III (ABC 9), not to mention the Nabonidus Chronicle's reports of Cyrus' booty-laden progresses from captured palaces back to his own royal centers ("The silver, gold, goods, property . . . which he carried off from Ecbatana, he took to Anshan," ABC 7 ii.3–4). A comparable atmosphere is present in Herodotus' description of premature celebrations performed in Susa on receipt of Xerxes' Athenian victory announcement, in anticipation of the king's heroic return (8.99).

The royal return was a slow and extended process, involving spectacles and celebrations in multiple stages and locations; this was already true for Ashurbanipal, and above all in the Achaemenid period due to the larger scale of the empire. Achaemenid royal frontier campaigns were more likely than Assyrian ones to entail an extension for more than a single calendar year before the final return march, because of the greater geographical distance entailed; for instance, the well-known Achaemenid Babylonian muster document, Dar. 253, records a three-year tour of duty in the royal camp. The slow and deliberate nature of the king's return march allowed for detachment of some forces from the expedition to continue localized campaigning against stubborn opponents in peripheral regions, even as the monarch rested from personal participation. For example, Cyrus delegated Mazares to respond to Lydian rebellion while he continued back towards center of empire with the main army that had captured Sardis (Hdt. 1.156). The king might remain in relative proximity to the frontier region for an extended period,

¹⁰ See Nadali 2013.

while withdrawing from personal campaigning to a palace center better situated for royal comfort and communications with officials in the rest of the empire. An extreme case is Nabonidus' decade-long stay in Teima, but Nebuchadnezzar's extended residence at Riblah during the sieges of Jerusalem and Tyre is more typical and prefigures Darius' residence at Sardis while his general Megabazos campaigned in Thrace, not to mention Xerxes' sojourn at Sardis while Mardonios continued operations in Greece in 479. As we will see in the last case, the outcome of continued fighting by royal subordinates held the potential to enhance the image of the overall campaign's success before the final, dramatic completion of the king's completed homeward journey.

With that in mind, let us consider Xerxes' Greek campaign achievements, and the ways in which Salamis and its aftermath problematized the image of the intended return, albeit without precluding its partial restoration.

Xerxes' Greek triumphal spectacles

Several scholars have already recognized the spectacular aspects of Xerxes' campaign. Pierre Briant has demonstrated that the empire-wide journey and assembly of subject contingents represented gestures of political cohesion, acting out and promoting imperial unity, and parading might with contingents aimed more for display of diversity than for actual combat.¹¹ Johannes Haubold's study on the Achaemenids and the sea showed how Xerxes' construction of a massive Mediterranean fleet and crossing beyond the waves reenacted scripts for royal heroics and displays of worldwide rule through emulation of legendary sea-crossings at the edge of the world by Gilgamesh and Sargon.¹²

In the Herodotean narrative of Xerxes' march from Iran to Anatolia to Thrace and Macedonia, it is possible to perceive a sequence of escalating spectacles displaying the empire's manpower, universal reach, and cohesion, even as Herodotus presents each in an inverted form that seeks to undercut the supposed hubris of the doomed Persian ruler. Notable examples include the departure parade at Sardis (7.40–41), the sacrifice at Troy (7.43), the Hellespont crossing (7.44, 54–56), reviews at Doriskos (7.59–60, 100), geographical tourism off the Thessalian coast (7.128–130, and horse races in Thes-saly (7.196).¹³

In particular, Herodotus' narrative of the military encounters from Thermopylae to the eve of Salamis refers to several spectacular gestures designed to maximize the visibility of battlefield victory and conquest. Xerxes's efforts to advertise martial success

11 Briant 1999, 117–20; Briant 2002, 526.

12 Haubold 2012; see also Rollinger 2013; Klinkott 2021.

13 See Klinkott 2023 for detailed examination of Xerxes' campaign as Achaemenid ideological program.

begin in the aftermath of Thermopylae victory with the exemplary display of Leonidas' mutilated remains (7.238), and the showing of the collected corpses of the fallen Greeks to an audience of naval personnel assembled at the site because they, unlike the army, had not witnessed the battle in person (8.24–25). Herodotus paraphrases an order from Xerxes to his intended audience, inviting anyone who wishes “to go and see with his own eyes how he fights against the madmen who thought they could beat him” (8.24.2); perhaps unconsciously, the syntax echoes the rhetoric of the Naqsh-e Rostam passage asking those who wish to know the scale of Darius' empire to look upon the images that bear the throne, which will prove that the Persian man's spear has reached forth far (DNa § 4).¹⁴

The punitive burnings of sites associated with Greek opposition – the Phocian towns, Thespiiai and Plataea, the outlying districts of Attica, and of course the temples of the Athenian acropolis – constituted further spectacles of triumphant royal justice, visible over great distances to friend and foe alike.¹⁵ In Herodotus' telling, the report of Athens' fate sparked initial panic among the Greek fleet at Salamis (8.56), which surely fulfilled Xerxes' intentions; the topos of the heroic monarch's inspiration of terror among his opponents is well-attested in Bisotun (DB Pers. § 23) as well as Assyrian royal literature.¹⁶ The messenger dispatch to Artabanos in Susa carrying the news of Athens' capture (8.54), which is supposed to have prompted public celebrations among the king's subjects (8.99), is also illustrative of a plausible project of empire-wide spectacular display that sought to amplify the effects of royal success. (The report that Xerxes also sent a second message, announcing the disaster of Salamis, is more likely to be fictional, given the avoidance of reference to defeat or casualties on one's own side throughout ancient Near Eastern royal literature.)

Last but not least, Herodotus suggests that Xerxes arranged several dramatic gestures on the eve of Salamis to maximize his association with the expected victory. These included the mass audience with an assembly of client kings and naval commanders (8.67–69), and the construction of an observation station on Mount Aigaleos, empowering Xerxes to view and reward heroic service during the naval combat (8.86, 88, 90).¹⁷ This lent itself to apocryphal stories such as the execution of the Phoenicians and the misinterpretation of Artemisia's self-serving attack on a fellow Achaemenid warship (8.87–88, 90). Several recent studies, noting the frequency of visual allusions to the enthroned monarch and audience scenes in Achaemenid iconography, have suggested

14 For further comparisons between the battlefield displays at Thermopylae and the treatment of Darius' enemies in the Bisotun inscription, see Macgregor Morris 2022, 52–53. See also Branscome 2013, 193–200, 212–18, for Herodotus' treatment of spectacle and audience in the depiction of Xerxes after Thermopylae.

15 See Macgregor Morris 2022, 39, on the correlation of this destruction with the spectacle of restoration of legitimate ritual by Xerxes' entourage of Athenian exiles on the acropolis.

16 For the Assyrian material, see Rollinger 2016, 222–35.

17 See Haubold 2012, 14.