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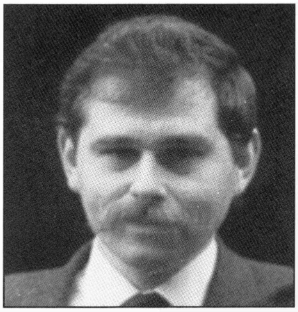
Marathon 490 BC

The first Persian invasion of Greece

Nicholas Sekunda • Illustrated by Richard Hook



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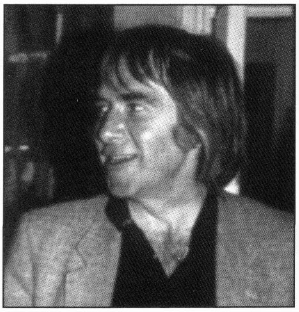

RICHARD HOOK was born in 1938 and trained at Reigate College of Art. After national service with 1st Bn, Queen's Royal Regiment, he became art editor of the much-praised magazine *Finding Out* during the 1960s. He has worked as a freelance illustrator ever since, earning an international reputation particularly for his deep knowledge of Native American material culture; and has illustrated more than 30 Osprey titles. Richard is married and lives in Sussex; his three children Adam, Jason, and Christa are all professionally active in various artistic disciplines.

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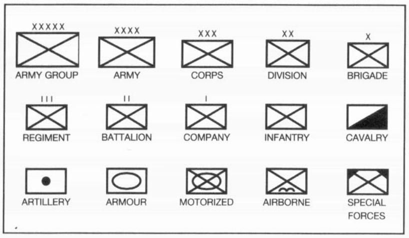

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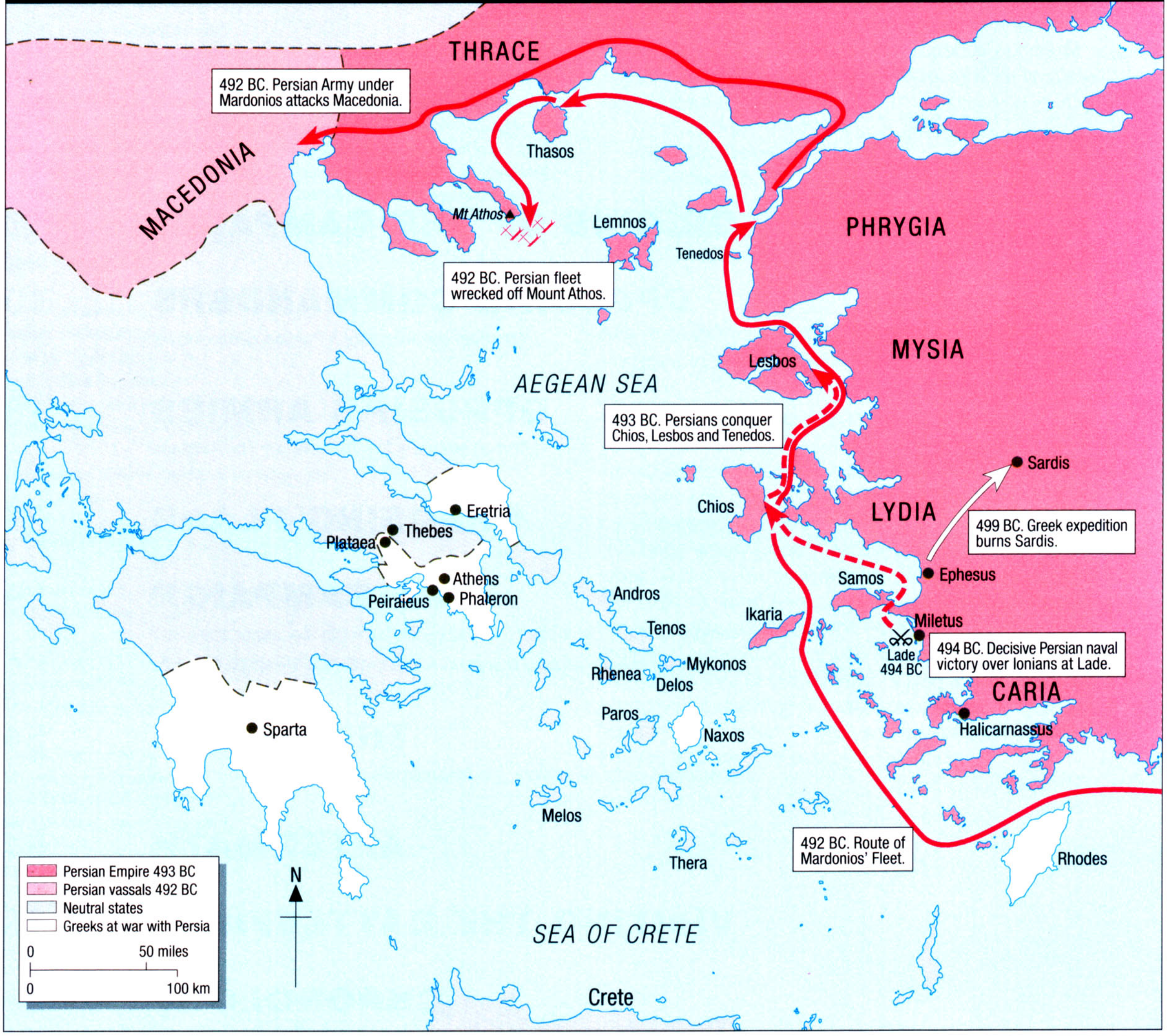
THE AEGEAN, 499–492BC



492 BC. Persian Army under Mardonios attacks Macedonia.

492 BC. Persian fleet wrecked off Mount Athos.

493 BC. Persians conquer Chios, Lesbos and Tenedos.

499 BC. Greek expedition burns Sardis.

494 BC. Decisive Persian naval victory over Ionians at Lade.

492 BC. Route of Mardonios' Fleet.

ORIGINS OF THE CAMPAIGN

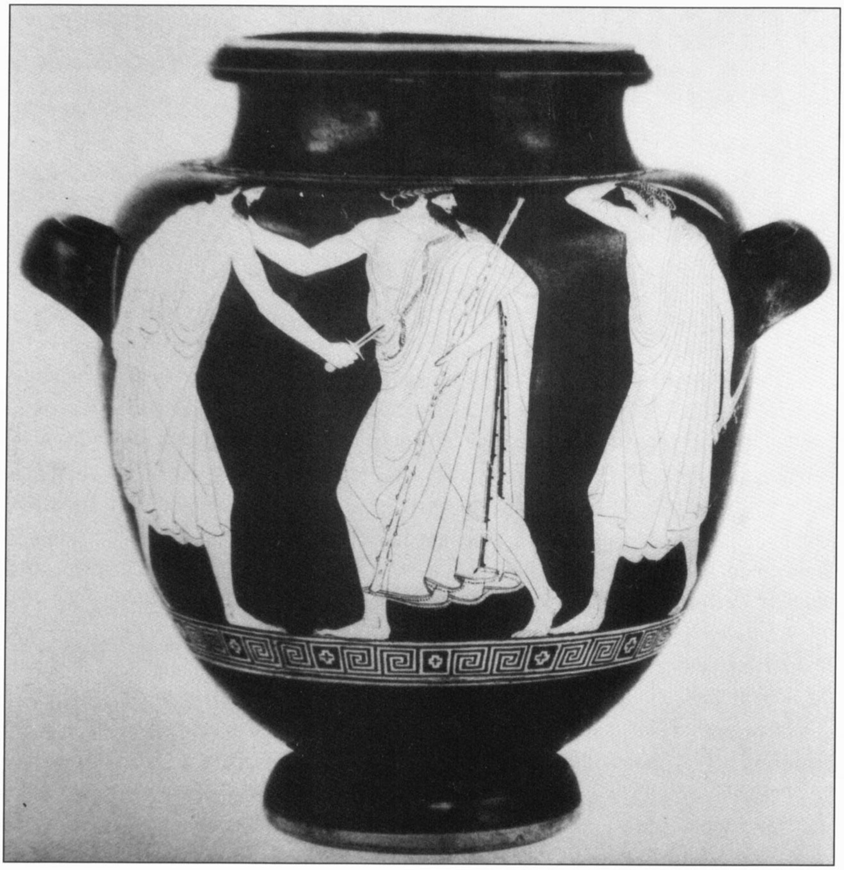
The Persians attempted to invade mainland Greece twice – once in 490 and again in 480–479. These are conventionally called the First and Second Persian Wars. These terms are not entirely satisfactory, as they betray a Greek- and European-centred perspective. I would prefer to use the terms First and Second Persian invasions of Greece. The key battle of the first campaign was Marathon. Its strategic effect was limited, for it did nothing to prevent the second invasion which came a decade later. The moral effect was enormous. It was the first time a Greek army had successfully faced the Persian enemy and demonstrated the superiority of hoplite tactics and equipment.

Tyranny and democracy at Athens

At the time of Marathon, Athens had only recently emerged as a democracy from nearly half a century of government under the Peisistratid dynasty of 'tyrants'. The Greek definition of a tyrant does not have the connotations of modern usage. An absolute ruler, be he good or bad, who had established his rule through force was a tyrant, as opposed to a king, who ruled in accordance with natural custom.

Peisistratos first made himself tyrant around 561BC. His enemies succeeded in expelling him, but he returned in 546. Landing at Marathon, he defeated his enemies at Pallene and re-took Athens. After the death of Peisistratos from disease in 527 the tyranny was assumed by his two sons Hippias and Hipparchos. Conditions worsened as foreign dependencies were lost with the advance of Persia. In 514 Hipparchos was assassinated

The evidence from literary sources can to some extent be supplemented by representational evidence. The richest source is the 'Oxford Brygos cup', so-called because the potter Brygos has left his name painted on one of the handles. Although the date of production of the vase cannot be established with complete certainty, it seems likely to refer to the battle of Marathon.



Early depiction of the assassination of Hipparchos by Harmodios and Aristogeiton on a vase painted by the 'Copenhagen Painter'. It perhaps represents an early statue group on the Acropolis destroyed in the Persian sack of 480/79, and later replaced by a more dramatic composition designed by Kritios and Nesiotes in 477/76. (Langlotz, *Griechische Vasen in Würzburg* pl. 82)

by the 'tyrant-slayers' Harmodios and Aristogeiton. Hippias became increasingly apprehensive, and made an alliance to strengthen his position – giving his daughter away in marriage to Aiantides the son of Hippokles tyrant of Lampsakos, who had great influence with King Darius. Three years later Hippias was deposed by an invasion of the Lakedaimonian King Kleomenes and fled under truce to Sigeion, from there to Lampsakos, and then to the court of Darius. He had to wait a further 20 years before he returned to Attica, by then an old man, accompanied by a Persian army. Athens became a democracy and a new constitution was introduced by Kleisthenes in 508/07.

The Ionian Revolt, 499–494BC

The Persian Empire had reached the Aegean in 547BC and the local Greek cities had a new set of masters. During the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses Persian imperial expansion was largely directed elsewhere, and it was only after Darius came to the throne in 521 that Persia again looked to the west. Darius left Susa to start a campaign against Scythia. He crossed the Bosphorus, and then the Danube, on bridges of boats. Darius was forced to retreat, spent the next year in Sardis and then returned to Susa, leaving his brother Artaphernes as satrap in Sardis. His generals Megabazos and then Otanes continued the gradual pacification of Europe south of Scythia.

In 508, increasingly threatened by pressure from Sparta, Athenian envoys entered negotiations with Artaphernes at Sardis. When the satrap demanded earth and water the Athenian envoys obliged (Hdt. 5.73). We do not fully understand what these symbolic gifts represented in Achaemenid diplomacy: alliance, submission, hospitality? The Athenian envoys possibly misunderstood the depth of the obligations they had entered into, and their actions were later disavowed by the Athenian assembly. In 505 Hippias turned up at Sardis and Artaphernes ordered the Athenians to take him back (Hdt. 5.96). The Athenians refused and relations between Athens and the Persians deteriorated.

This is why Athens became involved in the Ionian Revolt, which brought about the first Persian invasion of Greece. The Ionian Revolt was led by Aristagoras tyrant of Miletus. Aristagoras sought support for the revolt in the states of mainland Greece. King Kleomenes of Sparta refused aid, as he was reluctant to become involved in a largely naval campaign. However, the Athenians agreed to send 20 triremes to help the Ionians, tempted by the prospect of plentiful booty. They were supported by 5 triremes sent by the Eretrians.

The fleet landed at Ephesus in 499, supported by Ionian and Milesian triremes. The expeditionary force marched on Sardis, the Persian administrative centre for their westernmost provinces, and occupied it, whereupon Artaphernes retired to the citadel. An isolated fire started by a Greek soldier spread and burnt the city to the ground with considerable loss of civilian life. The Athenians sailed home with no booty. Herodotus (5.101) does not convey the outrage the Persians surely felt over the incident. A campaign of revenge on the Athenians and Eretrians was now inevitable.

Detail from the Great Relief of Darius from Behistun in Iran, carved about 30 years before Marathon, when Darius first seized the throne. The king, holding a bow, stands at his natural height of 5ft 10ins. Behind him stands the commander of the Spearbearers, Gobryas, the second man in the Empire. (Photo: Claus Breede, West Asian Department, Royal Ontario Museum)

The Ionian Revolt was only suppressed following a decisive Persian naval victory at Lade in 494 and the destruction of the city of Miletus. The Persian fleet sailed along the eastern coast of the Aegean Sea, subduing, in turn, the islands of Chios, Lesbos and Tenedos, which it reached in 493. In the following year, 492, a large Persian force under Mardonios invaded Macedonia. Herodotus (6.43.4) believed that their ultimate goal was Athens and Eretria. The expedition was a combined land and naval operation, but was called off when half the fleet was lost in a storm off Mount Athos.

Darius sent heralds to the states of Greece in 491 (or possibly 492), demanding earth and water. The states reacted differently. Most of the islands and many mainland cities complied with the Persian request. The Athenians, says Herodotus (7.133), threw the envoys into a chasm, the *barathron*, used for executing serious criminals. It was Miltiades, says Pausanias (3.12.7), who was responsible for their death. The envoys sent to Sparta were thrown into a well 'to collect their own earth and water'. Here too, their murder was probably designed to unify the citizens against Persia by complicity in the crime (Sealey 18). Darius ordered the construction of warships and horse-transports (Hdt. 6.48-9) and prepared for war.

OPPOSING COMMANDERS

ATHENIAN COMMANDERS

The command structure of the Athenian army was constantly evolving during the first half of the 5th century. Its precise form in 490 is not fully understood.

The leader of the army, according to Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution*, was one of the three traditional principal magistrates or *archons* called the Polemarch (22.2). This office, he says (3.2), had come into being 'because some of the kings were not good soldiers'. According to Herodotus (6.109.2) at the time of Marathon the Polemarch was selected by lot rather than elected, although Aristotle (22.5) says that selection of the archons by lot was introduced only in 487/86. Aristotle is probably correct. After this date the role of the Polemarch diminished and he was soon relegated primarily to religious functions necessary for the army.

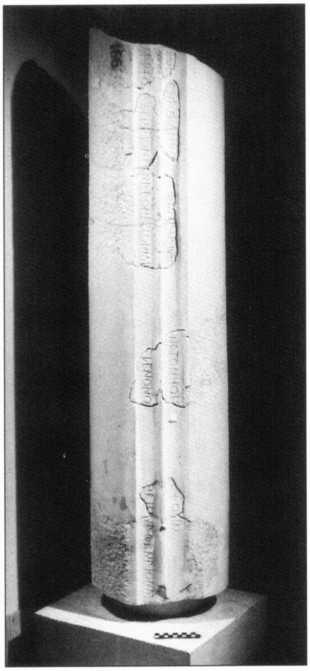
At the time of Marathon the Polemarch still had many duties aside from his religious functions. He led the army as it marched out of the city and took up the post of honour on the extreme right wing of the battle line. It is possible that, contrary to the impression created by Herodotus, the Polemarch still retained overall command over the board of *strategoi*. Herodotus may have deliberately sought to emphasize the role Miltiades played in the battle and minimize the role of Kallimachos.

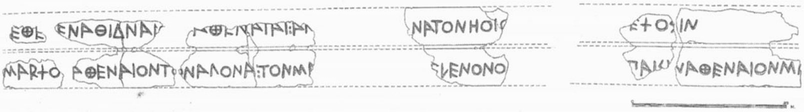
Fragment of a pot from Eleusis (1223) painted by Euthymides showing Iris, the rainbow, the fleeting but brilliant phenomenon in the sky, which vanishes as quickly as it appears, the swift messenger of the gods. She is identified by her wings and her messenger's wand or *kerykeion*. Though painted two decades before Marathon, it shows her popularity in late Archaic Athens, and gives an idea of the appearance of the crowning element of the Kallimachos Monument. (*Hesperia* 5, p.66, fig. 5)

The Athenian army had been restructured into ten tribal regiments of hoplites in 508/507. The command structure was reformed in 501/500 to conform with this change. From that date on, ten generals (*strategoi*) were elected, one from each tribe. In the later 5th century the strategoi became separated from command of the tribal regiments, and one of the ten was appointed as overall commander of any particular expeditionary force. At Marathon their primary role was still as commanders of the ten tribal regiments. They also met as a board of generals to take common command decisions.

Kallimachos of Aphidna held the post of Polemarch at Marathon. A monument from the Athenian Acropolis, destroyed in the later Persian sack of 480/79, appears to have been dedicated during his year of office. It consisted of a tall column supporting a winged female figure, either Iris (the female messenger of the gods) or Nike (the goddess of victory). The inscription is only partly preserved, but well enough to identify a Polemarch from Aphidna who fought bravely in battle.

This inscription helps us understand the role of Kallimachos in 490. According to one restoration of the inscription (see illustrations) Kallimachos had been victorious in the Panathenaic Games of 490



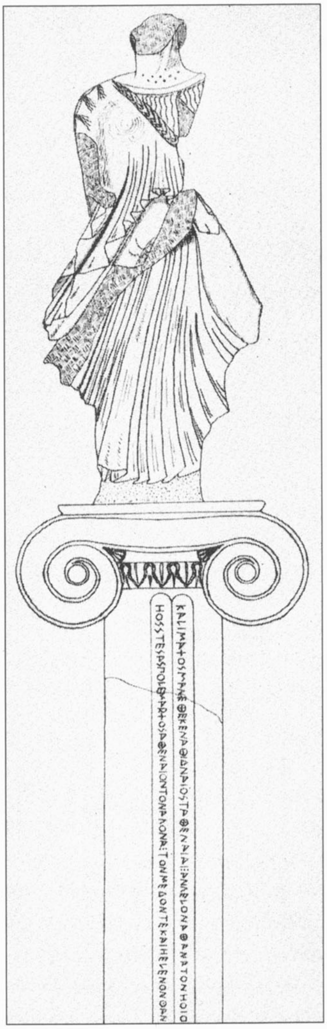


[Kallimachos] of Aphidn[a ded]icated [me] to Athena:
I am the mess[enger of the imm]ortals who have [their thrones on] O[lympos],
[because he was victorious, when he was Pole]march, in the festival of the Athenians.
And fighting mo[st bravely] of them all he won [fairest renown]
for Athenian men-at-arms and a mem[orial of his own valour].

before the battle was fought. The festival was celebrated on the 28th day of the month *Hekatombaion*, eight days or so before news of the Persian landing arrived at Athens. It may be that his victory was believed to have brought luck to the whole army. Other restorations of the inscription are possible. In one of them Kallimachos vows to erect the monument if he was victorious, apparently after making a personal vow to Iris.

One thing is certain. The column was an impressive monument erected by the Athenians to the honour of Kallimachos. It was sited on the Acropolis, overlooking the city, and was constructed shortly after the battle. At the same time Miltiades was dying in prison, fined 50 talents for deceiving the Athenian people. The picture we have of the relative roles played by Kallimachos and Miltiades may have been seriously distorted by the propaganda campaign mounted by Miltiades' son Kimon in the 460s to glorify the memory of his father. The monument is testimony in stone to the fact that the Athenians of 490 thought that Kallimachos had fought most bravely 'of them all', and he rather than Militiades had been the hero of the battle.

Miltiades was born in the late 550s, son of Kimon of the noble Philaid family, early opponents of the Peisistratid tyranny. Kimon left Athens and his brother, also Miltiades, established himself as ruler of the

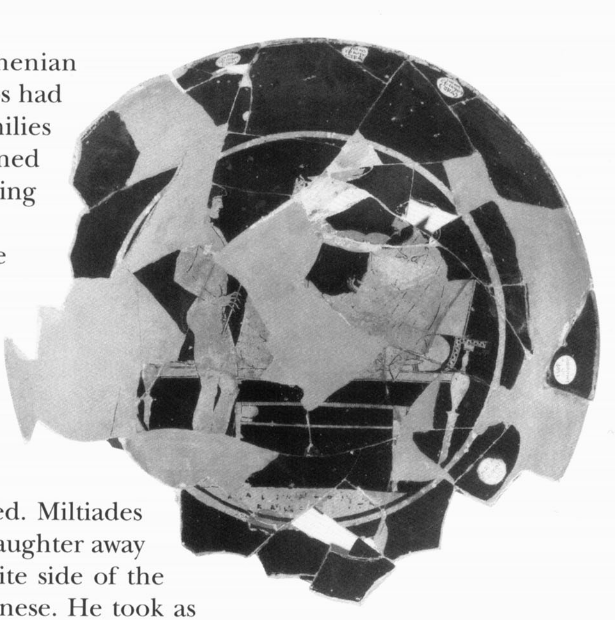


The shaft of the Kallimachos monument (*IG* i^2 609; Athens, Epigraphic Museum 6339) has been reassembled from the debris of the Persian sack of 480/79. The difficulties of reading the inscription (drawing Helen Besi) are evident. The translation is of the restoration proposed by Harrison. The two surviving fragments of the female figure from the top (Athens, Epigraphic Museum 690) pose considerable problems of identification. Most favour Iris, but Harrison prefers Nike. The reference to 'the messenger of the immortals' suggests Iris. Reconstruction drawing after P. Lemerle *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique* 58 (1938) 443.

Thracian Chersonese along with a group of Athenian colonists. During his second period of rule, Peisistratos had succeeded in reconciling some of the noble families opposed to him, including the Philaids. Kimon returned to Athens, but lost his life in the power struggle following Peisistratos' death.

Kimon's son Miltiades continued to enjoy favour. He was appointed archon for the year 524/23, and about this time he married for the first time, possibly to a relative of Hippias. Around 516 Hippias sent Miltiades to rule in the Thracian Chersonese. This followed the death of Miltiades' brother, Stesagoras, who had earlier succeeded his childless uncle, the elder Miltiades.

Relations with Hippias became increasingly strained. Miltiades possibly divorced his first wife when Hippias gave his daughter away to Aiantides of Lampsakos. Lampsakos, on the opposite side of the Hellespont, was the arch-rival of the Thracian Chersonese. He took as his second wife Hegesipyle, daughter of the Thracian king Oloros. His son and heir Kimon was born about 510. Miltiades was obliged to seek an accommodation with the Persians, and accompanied Darius as a subject on his Scythian Campaign. Miltiades was left with the other Ionian commanders at the bridge of boats over the Danube. He later claimed to have recommended that the Greeks break up the bridge, leaving Darius stranded in Scythia, but this could be a later fabrication aimed at improving his image in Athens.



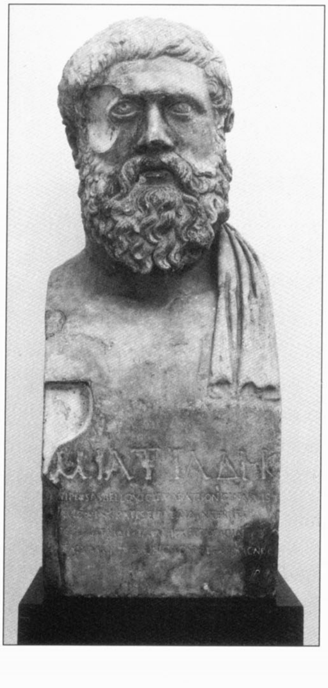
ABOVE **The inside of this cup, painted by Douris c. 490, shows a reclining adult and a youth. The painted inscription reads 'Kallimachos is fair'. The adult possibly represents Kallimachos of Aphidna, whose age is unknown, but more likely the recipient of this cup was a younger man of the same name, perhaps a relative. It is generally believed that inscriptions of this type have a homosexual context. (Paris, Louvre C 10907)**

Miltiades became increasingly insecure. He sought rapprochement with the new democratic government in Athens and co-operated with the Athenians in seizing the island of Lemnos (possibly in 499). In 493, after the collapse of the Ionian Revolt, when the Persian fleet reached Tenedos, Miltiades fled for Athens. He succeeded in surviving a trial for tyranny, and re-entered Athenian political life. Metiochos, his son by his first marriage, was captured by the Phoenician fleet and never returned to Athens, but was granted a Persian wife and lands by Darius. The Persian kings liked to collect Greek noble exiles who could be put to work for them in the future.

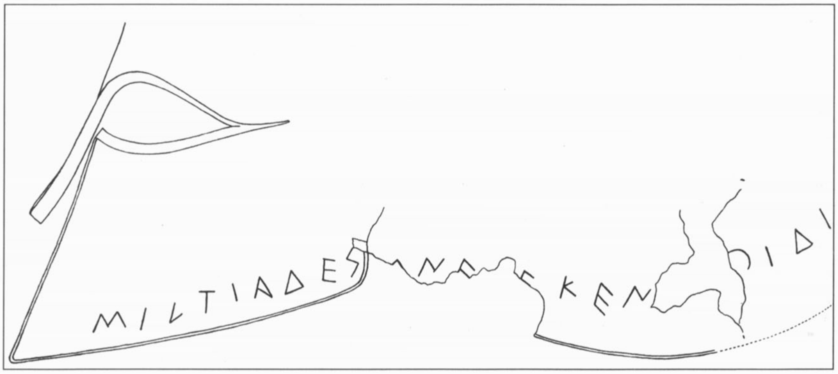
Miltiades would have been in his early 60s when the battle of Marathon was fought. He had lived only a year or two in the new democratic Athens. It would be wrong to see him as a passionate defender either of liberty or democracy, as many ancient authors imply. Miltiades had no choice but to return and fight for Athens.

There are good reasons for thinking that the role Miltiades played in the victory is exaggerated in our sources at the expense of Kallimachos. Nevertheless, his service alongside the Persians in the Scythian campaign must have given insights into Persian methods of operation that were invaluable to the Athenians. Much of the credit for the Athenian victory must be due to the courage and determination of Miltiades, to save his own skin if nothing else.

Arimnestos commanded the Plataean contingent at Marathon. After the battle the Plataeans built a temple to Athena Areia 'the Warlike' in Plataea with their share of the spoils of the battle. At the feet of the cult



RIGHT **The inscription on this damaged Corinthian helmet from Olympia (B 2600) states that it was offered to Zeus by Miltiades. According to Kunze (*Olympiabericht* V 1956) the helmet's shape and the letter forms indicate a date of around 520, suggesting it was dedicated after an incident early in the career of Miltiades, rather than Marathon. (Athens, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut)**

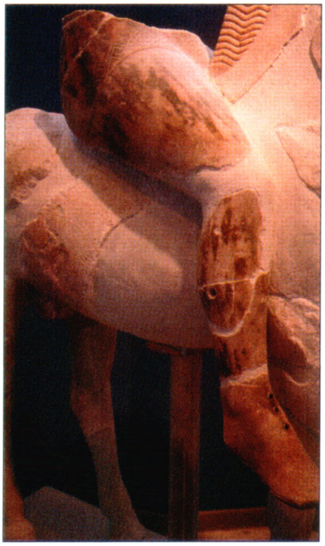


BELOW, LEFT **Roman copy of a bust of Miltiades, complete but for a chip near the right eye. The style suggests it is based on an original of mid-5th century date, making it one of the oldest Greek portrait statues known. This bust has a colourful history. It was found in 1553 in Rome, and passed into the collection of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este before disappearing. It was rediscovered in 1940 at the mouth of the river Reno by local fishermen along with a number of other busts, evidently part of the cargo of a ship that had foundered. The main Greek inscription identifies it as 'Miltiades'. A second bilingual inscription in Latin and Greek adds 'He who defeated the Persians in battle on the field of Marathon perished through the ingratitude of his countrymen and fatherland. All, oh Miltiades, know your martial deeds, the Persians and Marathon, sanctuary of your heroism'. (Ravenna, Muzeo Nazionale 31378)**

statue was a portrait of Arimnestos, who, according to Pausanias (9.4.2), commanded the Plataeans at the battle of Marathon and also at Plataea 11 years later. The fact that the same person held command in both crucial campaigns surely attests to the decisive role of Arimnestos in the politics of the small state. He may have been instrumental in the brave decision of this tiny city to stand by their Athenian allies. Many historians (Lazenby 10–11) believe he is the direct source for Herodotus' account (9.72) of the death of Kallikrates the Lakedaimonian at the battle of Plataea. It is possible that he also supplied Herodotus with information on Marathon.

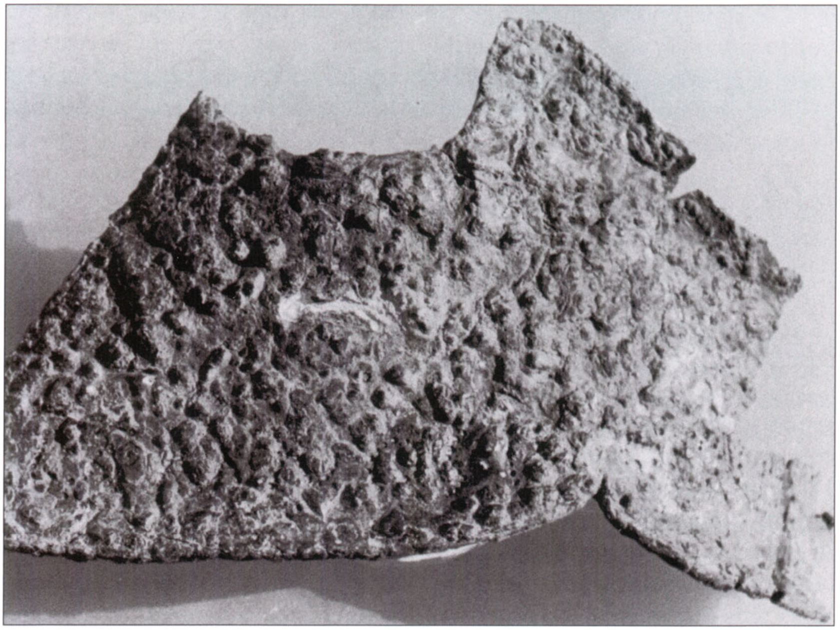
PERSIAN COMMANDERS

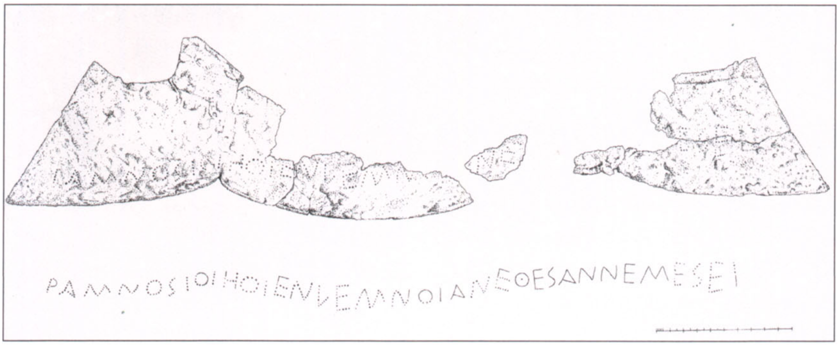
The satrap was the king's representative in each satrapy, or province, of the Persian Empire. The key satrap of western Anatolia was **Artaphernes the Elder**, who was based at Sardis. It was Persian practice to separate military from administrative functions in the same area, though one individual could be both satrap in one region and military commander



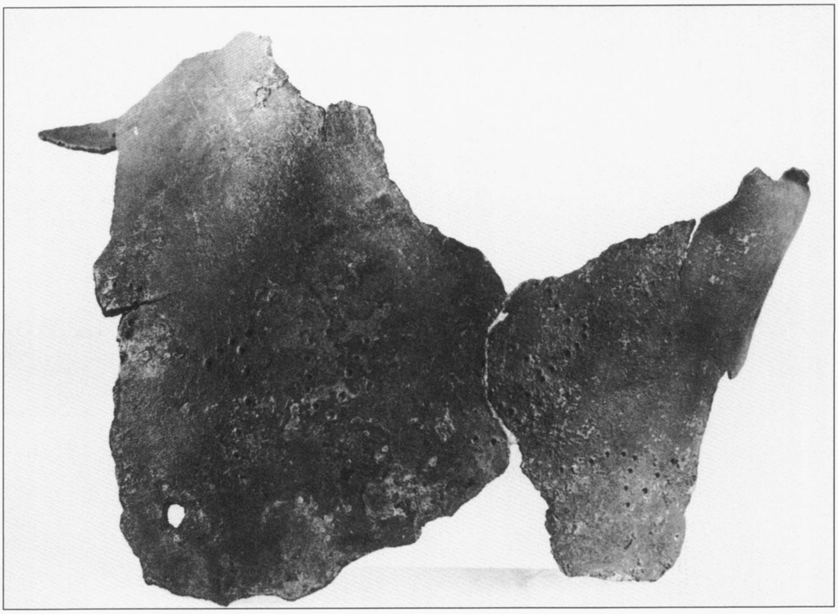
ABOVE **Remains of one of a number of statues from the Acropolis (606), destroyed by the Persians in 480, showing young Athenian aristocrats mounted**

TOP, LEFT **Attic plate (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum 310) by Paseas, about 515BC showing a youth, not yet wearing a beard as all adults did at this time, dressed and equipped as a Scythian mounted archer, and inscribed 'Miltiades is beautiful'. Wade-Gery (*Journal of Hellenic Studies* 1951) suggested it may show an equestrian statue of the young Miltiades dedicated earlier on the Acropolis, but the inscription probably refers to a younger relative of the general.**





LEFT **Corroded fragment of the left cheek-piece of a Corinthian helmet found in the sanctuary of Nemesis at Rhamnous. The inscription on the whole helmet (drawing K. Eliaki) states that 'The Rhamnousians dedicated [this, taken] on Lemnos, to Nemesis' as booty from Miltiades' expedition to Lemnos c. 499. It was dedicated by the deme-contigent from Rhamnous. (Archaeological Society at Athens)**



Fragment of a helmet dedicated on the Acropolis. The punch-dots preserve a few letters of an inscription (*IG* i$_{c}$ 453) which suggest that it had also been captured at Lemnos. Like most booty, this helmet was hammered onto the wooden beams of a temple: note the nail-hole bottom left. (Athens, National Museum 7322)

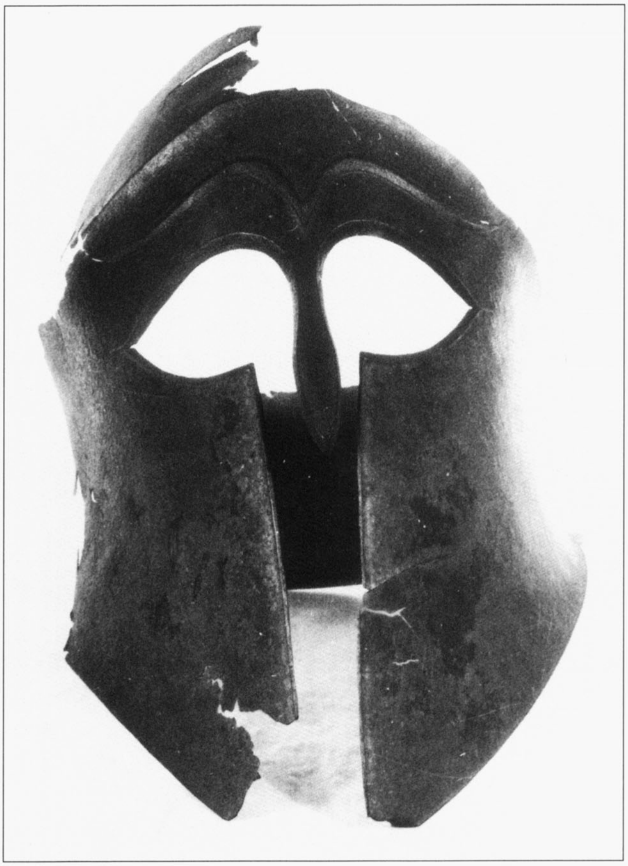
in another. Artaphernes, although responsible for security within his own satrapy, did not take command of the expedition. Nor did **King Darius** take personal command of the expedition. He had now been ruling for more than three decades. We do not know his age precisely, but he was to die shortly after the campaign in 486.

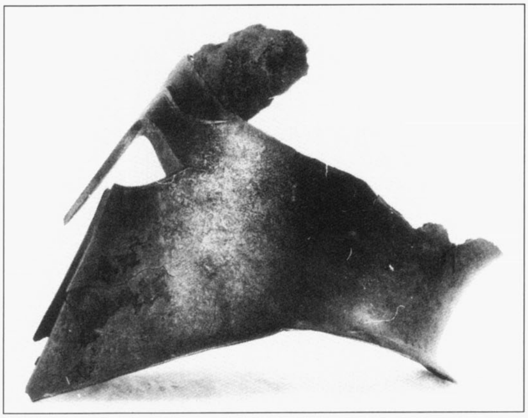
Datis was appointed to supreme command of the 490 invasion force in place of Mardonios, after the expedition in the northern Aegean had met with such ill-fortune in 493 (Hdt. 6.94). Very little is known about Datis. Both Herodotus (6.94) and Diodorus (10.27) state he was 'of Median race', but this may be a Greek misunderstanding of the Achaemenid practice of naming eminent Persians after the provinces they governed. In his *Moralia* (305B) Plutarch says that Datis was a satrap, information repeated in Suidas (*Hippias*). It seems probable that Datis was a Persian, holding the office of satrap of Media in parallel with a field command.

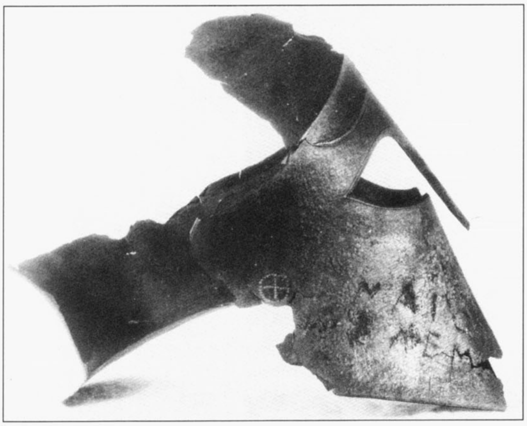
Datis is perhaps mentioned in a tablet from Persepolis written in Elamite (Lewis):

'7 *marris* beer Datiya received as rations. He carried a sealed document of the King. He went forth from Sardis (via) express (service), went to the King at Persepolis. 11th month, year 27. (At) Hidali.'

It is possible that 'Datiya' is the Datis of Greek texts. Few individuals mentioned in the Persepolis ration documents are issued with a ration as large as 70 quarts of wine or beer to distribute among their entourage, which means that Datiya was an extremely important official of the Empire. The tablet was issued between 17 January and 15 February 494 at Hidali, only three stations on the road from Persepolis. The date falls within the winter preceding the final campaign of the Ionian Revolt. He is travelling on the authorization of the king. Journeys were normally authorized at their point of origin, and so 'Datiya' would have been returning from a journey to Sardis on the orders of Darius. This could have been a tour of inspection and co-ordination for the final campaign. Datiya (Datis?) may therefore have held an earlier command in the west.







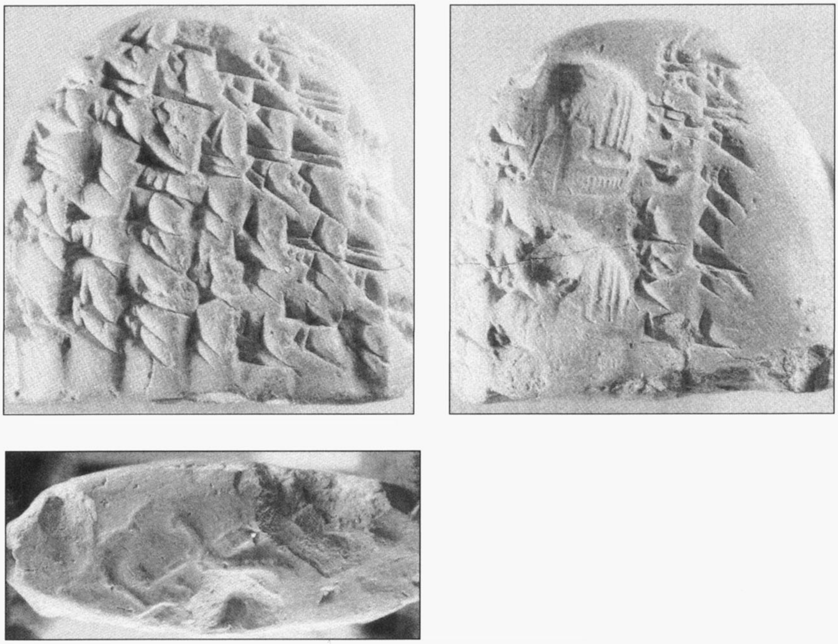
A relatively complete Corinthian helmet discovered during excavations at Olympia and published by Emil Kunze, *Festschrift C. Weikert* (Berlin 1955) 9–11. The inscription states it was captured on Lemnos and dedicated by the Athenians. (Athens, National Museum 15189)

Bringing these few scraps of information together, it seems that Datis was overall commander of all Persian forces in the West, superior in rank to all local satraps and other generals appointed by the king, perhaps both during the closing stages of the Ionian Revolt and throughout the Marathon campaign. Perhaps his title was 'Leader of the Hosts' – *kara-naya.*

Artaphernes the Younger is the only other Persian commander mentioned at Marathon. Herodotus (6.94-5) merely states that Datis and Artaphernes commanded the expedition, that they left the King's presence and went to Cilicia and took over the fleet assigned to each of them. This might lead one to believe that the two held equal commands, but it is evident that Datis held the supreme command. In a reference of much later date, Pausanias (1.32.7) mentions the 'mangers of the horses of Artaphernes' in the rocks at Marathon, which suggests that Artaphernes commanded the cavalry.

Artaphernes 'the Younger' was son of Artaphernes the Elder, previously mentioned, brother of Darius and satrap in Sardis. Herodotus distorts his name as Artaphrenes, while Ktesias calls his father Ataphernes. This is nearest to the Old Persian form of the name, Atrfarnah – 'with the majesty of the fire-god'.

Of Artaphernes the Younger we know very little. He first appears during the Marathon campaign. He may have already gained some experience of service in the west in the company of his father, or he may

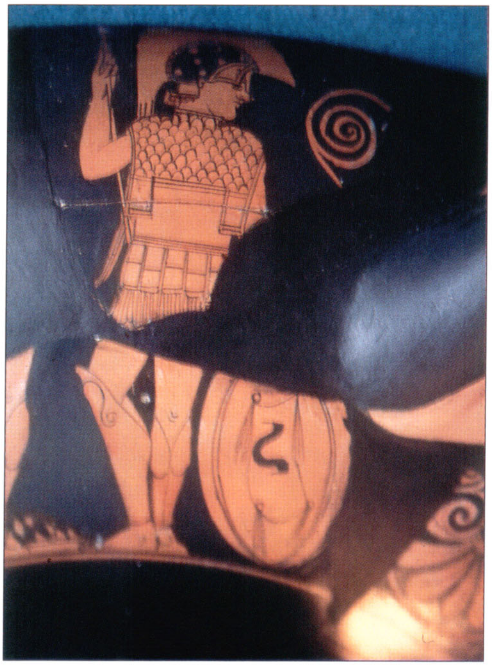


Fortification tablet excavated at Persepolis. The main body of text on the obverse mentions the return of Datiya (Datis?) to Persepolis from Sardis in 494. On the reverse is a small stamp seal bearing a figure at left facing an altar with an animal on it, with a moon above. This is Datiya's seal, or perhaps that of a guide acting for him. The left edge is stamped with a much simpler seal, which perhaps belonged to the ration supplier at Hidali. (University of Chicago, Oriental Institute, Q-1809)

have remained at court. Following the Marathon campaign he accompanied Datis back to Susa with the Eretrian prisoners (6.119). He later took part in the second Persian campaign against Greece in 480, commanding one of the army contingents (7.74).

OPPOSING ARMIES

THE ATHENIANS



Armour typically worn by contemporary Athenian warriors is shown in this back view, a detail from the Oxford Brygos cup. Plate armour has been completely replaced by composite constructions. This is shown most clearly in the shoulder-pieces: the scales laid running upwards, not downwards as was more normal. Note the square nape-protector, an extension of the back-plate of the shoulder-pieces. The skull of the helmet is of an extremely interesting and rare construction. It also seems to be a composite construction of plates or scales covered in leather. The lighter spots visible probably represent the ends of rivets holding them together. Greaves and a hoplite shield and spear complete the panoply. The scene is most plausibly interpreted as showing the veterans of Marathon arming themselves to defend their homeland again.

The Athenian army at Marathon was a wholly infantry force of hoplites.[1] It had been completely reorganized by Kleisthenes in 508/07. Previously different political factions at Athens had drawn support from three regions of Attica, known as 'Town', 'Shore' and 'Inland'. The Peisistratid tyrants had drawn much of their support from 'Inland', the mountainous areas of Attica. Kleisthenes' aim was to mix up contingents from different areas in a new military and political division called a 'tribe' (*phyle*). Kleisthenes sent a list of 100 heroes to Delphi, from which the Delphic priestess selected ten. Each of the new tribes was given the name of one of these heroes.

Each new tribe had three 'thirds' (*trittyes*) assigned to it by lot, one each from 'Town', 'Shore' and 'Inland' areas. There were a total of 30 trittyes, ten located in the 'Town', ten in the 'Shore', and ten in the 'Inland'. Each *trittys* was of about the same size, and fielded a company, or *lochos*, of 300 hoplites commanded by a *lochagos*.

Attica was divided into more than 100 'parishes', each known as a 'deme' (*demos*) with a *demarchos* at its head. Parish registers listing its citizens formed the basic documentation for elections and for military mobilization. An Athenian citizen remained liable for military service outside the borders of Attica until the age of 50. In times of national danger all males capable of bearing arms were pressed into service. Neighbouring demes were grouped together into trittyes. The number of demes in a trittys varied. For example the trittys of Acharnai, a large town lying outside the city of Athens, was formed of a single deme, also called Acharnai.

Kleisthenes expanded the military strength of Athens by admitting to citizenship free foreigners resident in Attica, and freed slaves. They would have been enrolled in the numerically weaker demes, balancing them to achieve a strength of 300 for each trittys and a total strength of 9,000 for the army as a whole.

Over the 17 years between the reforms of Kleisthenes and the battle of Marathon the balance of the strength of these administrative divisions may have shifted. The number of citizens becoming too old for service would rarely match the number of younger citizens coming of age, and the overall size of the army might fluctuate up and down from 9,000.

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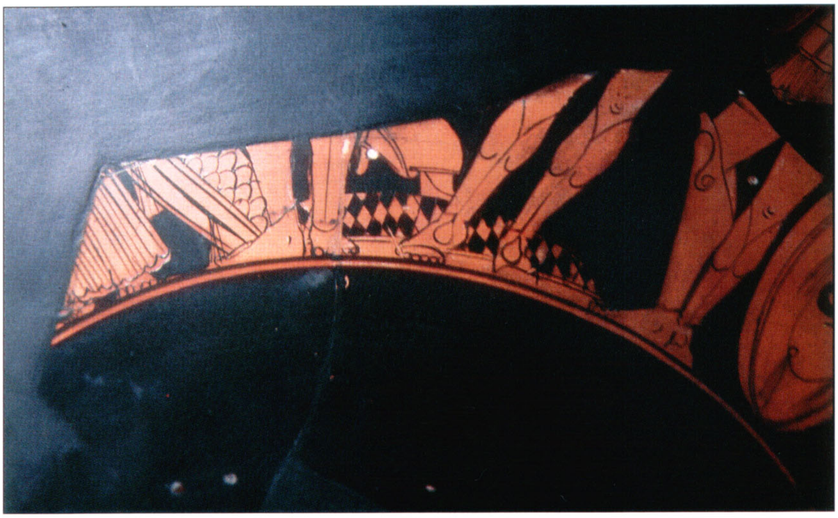
[1] See Warrior 27, *Greek Hoplite*, N. Sekunda (Osprey 2000).



Further details of contemporary Athenian hoplite weaponry: to the right, a back view of the thin, springy bronze greaves. Both hoplite shields have the bronze rims typical of hoplite shields, but the round bowls display unusual features. The one lying flat is decorated in a diamond-pattern, presumably either painted directly onto the bronze surface, or onto a leather cover glued onto the latter. It would, however, be difficult to understand the patterning on the bowl of the second shield as showing anything other than scales. In such case it may be that in the very first decades of the 5th century the hoplite shield was sometimes of composite construction too.

Pausanias (7.15.7) states that Miltiades and the Athenians set slaves free before the battle of Marathon. Later (10.20.2) he notes that no more than 9,000 Athenians marched to Marathon 'including the old and slaves'. It seems that the army had fallen significantly from its establishment strength, even after 'old men' over 50 had been mobilized. Miltiades therefore persuaded the Athenian assembly to move the necessary legislation to free the number of slaves necessary to bring the army up to full strength. Hammond (1992, 147–50) has suggested that the slaves fought in a separate unit. But, in view of the earlier practice, it is more probable that they were integrated into the tribal regiments to bring them up to strength.

THE PLATAEANS

The small Boeotian city of Plataea, which bordered Attica, had been allied to Athens for three decades before Marathon. Plataea sought Athenian protection against Thebes, the most important city of the region, and the Thebans' long term policy of bringing the whole of Boeotia under their power. Herodotus does not record the strength of the Plataean contingent, but he (6.108.1) does state that they sent a full levy (*pandemei*). Justin (2.9) and Nepos (*Milt.* 5) say the Plateans numbered 1,000 hoplites. Strangely, when fighting against the Persians 11 years later in 479 Herodotus gives their number as 600 (Hdt. 9.28). It may be that some of the Plataeans had gone over to the Persian camp, as had happened in most other Boeotian states. A Plataean strength of 1,000 at Marathon seems reasonable.

Pausanias (1.32.3) reports a grave of the Plataeans and slaves at Marathon, though some modern historians have doubted that Plataean citizens and Athenian slaves would have been buried together. Van Der Veer (303) suggests that as 'non-Athenians' they could have been. We do not know whether the slaves had been given freedom before the battle, or only promised the reward of it after, in which case the fallen would have died unfree. Even if freed before the battle, this does not mean they automatically received Athenian citizenship.

Marinatos believed the 'Classical' tumulus at Vrana to be the tomb of the Plataeans. The stone entrance at the front is modern and allows viewing of the burials in the centre of the tumulus, which were not filled in after excavation.

In 1970 Spyridon Marinatos identified an impressive tumulus over 3m high and 30m in diameter, as the tomb of the Plataeans, even though it lies at Vrana, 2.5km from the Sorós. This identification has obvious problems, not least that Pausanias implies it lay close to the tomb of the Athenians, which can certainly be identified with the Sorós (Welwei, *Historia* 28 (1979) 101–6). If the graves do not belong to the Plataeans and Athenian slaves, their date and the fact that a monumental tumulus was raised over them, indicates a connection with the battle (Van Der Veer 304).

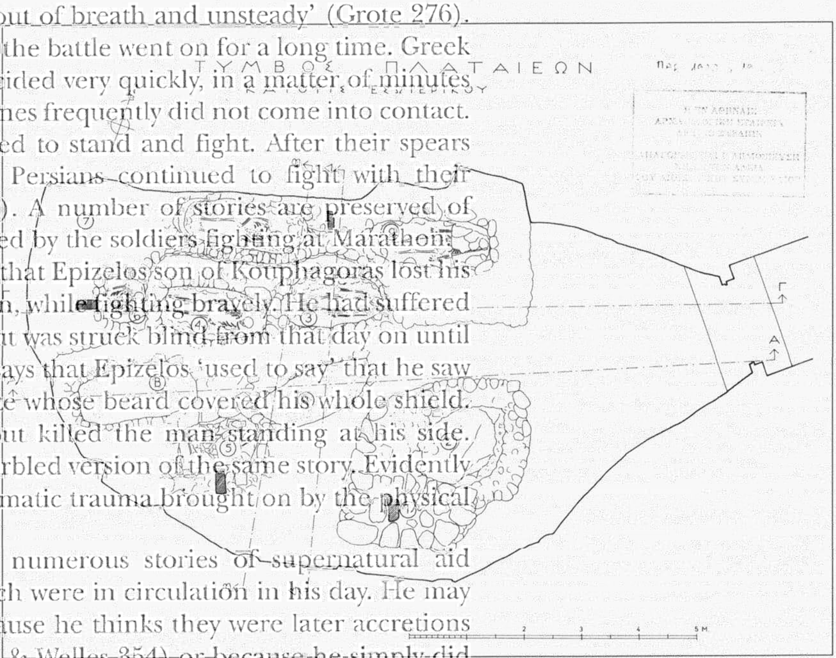
THE PERSIANS

Herodotus gives no figures for the strength of the Persian forces at the battle, and indeed there is no reason why the Greeks should have had an accurate idea of the enemy strength. Within little more than 10 years the Athenians were claiming to have defeated 46 nations at Marathon (Hdt. 9.27.5). In the absence of fact, later authors wildly exaggerate Persian numbers. The Roman writer Ampelius (5.9) puts the number of troops commanded by Datis (and Tissaphernes!) at 80,000. Simonides, in an epigram commissioned by the Athenians to commemorate the battle, put the Persian strength at 90,000, a figure which Hammond (1968, 33) thought to be 'within the scope of reason'. According to Nepos (*Milt.* 4) Datis commanded a total force of 200,000 infantry, of which 100,000 fought at the battle, while Artaphernes commanded 10,000 horse and the fleet numbered 500 ships. In his *Moralia* (305 b) Plutarch puts the Persian strength at 300,000, a figure repeated in Pausanias (4.25.5) and Suidas (*Hippias* 2). Plato (*Menexenos* 240 A) says Datis was given 500,000 men in 300 ships – a physical impossibility. Lysias (2.21) also quotes 500,000 men, while Justin (2.9) increases this to 600,000.

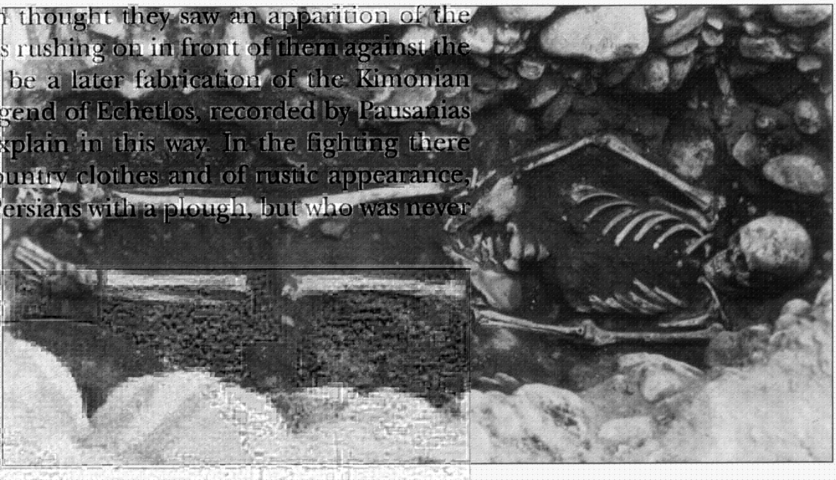
Persian front, they were both out of breath and unsteady' (Grote 276). Herodotus (6.113) tells us that the battle went on for a long time. Greek hoplite battles were usually decided very quickly, in a matter of minutes rather than hours. In fact the lines frequently did not come into contact. At Marathon both sides decided to stand and fight. After their spears were broken the Greeks and Persians continued to fight with their swords (Aristoph., *Knights* 781). A number of stories are preserved of supernatural visions experienced by the soldiers fighting at Marathon.

Herodotus (6.117) records that Epizelos son of Kouphagoras lost his sight in the middle of the action, while fighting bravely. He had suffered barely a scratch on his body, but was struck blind from that day on until the end of his life. Herodotus says that Epizelos 'used to say' that he saw confronting him a huge hoplite whose beard covered his whole shield. This spectre passed by him but killed the man standing at his side. Plutarch (*Mor.* 305B) gives a garbled version of the same story. Evidently Epizelos suffered a psychosomatic trauma brought on by the physical and mental stress of battle.

Herodotus chose to omit numerous stories of supernatural aid afforded to the Athenians which were in circulation in his day. He may fail to record them either because he thinks they were later accretions to the Marathon legend (How & Welles 354) or because he simply did not believe them (Garland 55). Plutarch (*Theseus* 35) says that many of those who fought at Marathon thought they saw an apparition of the Athenian hero Theseus in arms rushing on in front of them against the enemy. This detail could well be a later fabrication of the Kimonian propaganda campaign. The legend of Echetlos, recorded by Pausanias (1.32.5) is more difficult to explain in this way. In the fighting there appeared a man dressed in country clothes and of rustic appearance, who slaughtered many of the Persians with a plough, but who was never

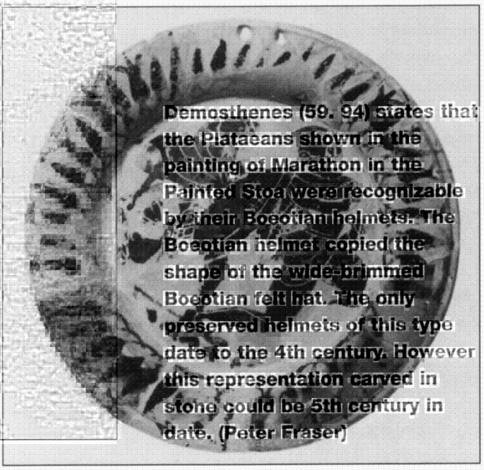


The 'Classical' tumulus covered 11 burials: nine males aged 20 to 30, a boy aged about ten, and a male about 40. Marinatos suggested that the boy might have been a slave employed to relay orders. The nine inhumations are marked 1 to 9 and the two cremations A and B. The graves had stone markers erected over them. [illegible] the grave of the older man was the name Archias. Marinatos assumed Archias was a Plataean officer, but the letters are in the Attic alphabet not the Boeotian. The [illegible] was probably heaped over these marked graves at a later date.



The skeleton and skull in burial number 4 were one of the best preserved of the burials in the tomb. [illegible] the resting place of one of the Plataeans killed at Marathon.

The grave goods were very poor. The pottery dates to 500–490 and included this Attic [illegible] Museum K 156). It shows two running hoplites, who are wearing Corinthian helmets and, unusually, cloaks. (Archaeological Society at Athens)



Demosthenes (59. 94) states that the Plataeans shown in the painting of Marathon in the Painted Stoa were recognizable by their Boeotian helmets. The Boeotian helmet copied the shape of the wide-brimmed Boeotian felt hat. The only preserved helmets of this type date to the 4th century. However this representation carved in stone could be 5th century in date. (Peter Fraser)

Although painted 30 years after the battle, the bull's head on the hoplite's shield may be intended to mark him as a veteran of Marathon. He wears a Boeotian helmet, and so may be one of the Plataeans fighting on the left wing. He stabs a Persian archer between the shoulder-piece and breast-plate of his cuirass with his spear. One the other side of the vase a second archer runs, panic-stricken, into the Great Marsh. (Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, Inv. BS 480 photo: Claire Niggli)

seen again after the battle. After the battle the Athenians consulted the oracle at Delphi and Apollo ordered them to worship Echetlaios 'He of the Plough-handle' as a hero. Aelian (*NA* 6.38) tells us that one Athenian had his dog with him at the battle, which appears in the painting of the battle in the Painted Stoa.

In the centre the Persians won, for this was where they had stationed their best troops – the Persian and Saka regiments. The Persians may have been spearmen more suitably equipped for hand-to-hand fighting than the archers and pavise-bearers on the two flanks of the line. They were also fighting against the weakened tribes of the centre of the Athenian line. Plutarch (*Arist.* 5.3) mentions that it was the two tribes Leontis and Antiochis which were hardest pressed. If drawn up 4 deep they would be occupying a frontage of 450 files, fighting approximately four or five Persian regiments drawn up 10 deep. Plutarch says that it was here that the Persian line held longest, while Herodotus says that the Persians actually won, they broke the Athenian line 'and pursued them inland' (towards Agrieliki). As has already been suggested, the two broken regiments may have only been able to rally in the area of the Sorós.

On the wings the Athenians and Plataeans were victorious and routed their enemy. It may have been the Plataeans who first broke the Persian line at its extreme right flank, given that the *tropaion* or trophy of weapons [which was traditionally built at the point where the battle 'turned'] was later built around this area. Pausanias (1.32.7) states that when the Persian line broke, many of the barbarians fell into the lake and the marshes because of their ignorance of the paths through it, and that this was the cause of their great losses. His evidence is supported by Pausanias (1.15.3) who records that the centre of the picture in the

Painted Stoa showed the barbarians in flight and pushing one another into the morass.

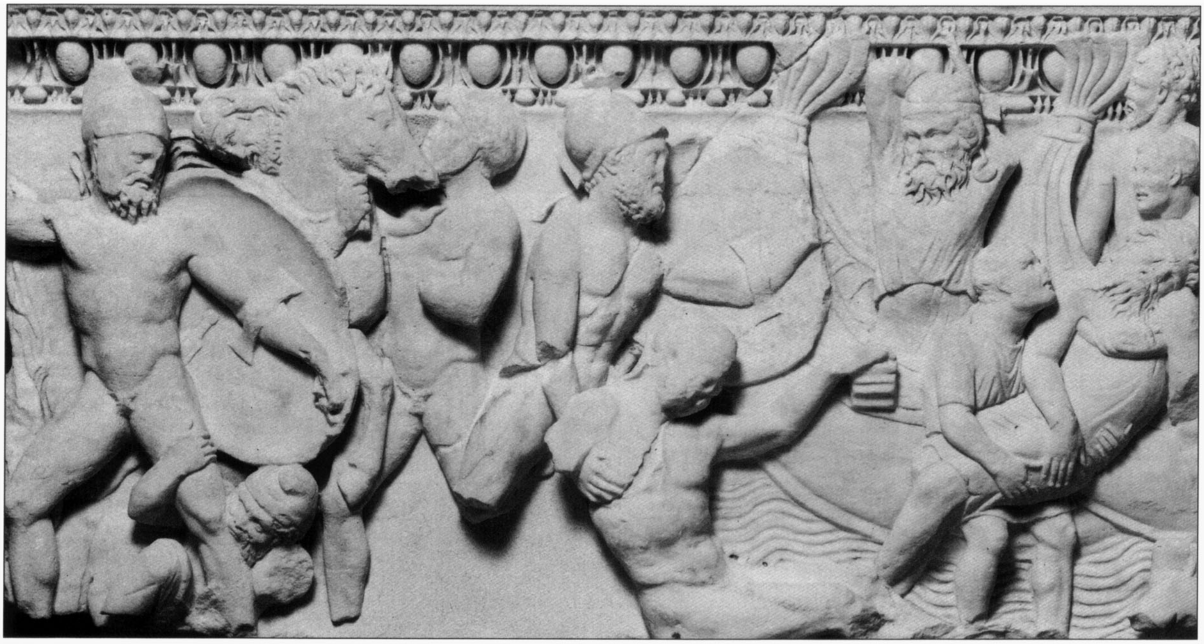
In a confusing passage Herodotus (6.113) records that that the two wings of the Athenian line allowed their routed enemy to flee, joined the two wings together, and fought the enemy who had broken their centre. Does Herodotus mean the Athenians about-faced in formed units, formed a new line and then advanced inland against the Persian centre? A manoeuvre as complicated as this would be beyond the training of Greek troops of this period. Perhaps he is describing an action altogether less complicated and formal. Perhaps groups streamed back on their own initiative to hit the Persian centre in rear? Either way the Athenians were victorious. As the Persians fled, the Greeks followed them, cutting them down until they reached the sea.

The battle by the ships

Fighting now took place on the shoreline where the last Persian ships were 'backing out' to sea (Hdt. 6.115). The tribe Aiantis was most heavily involved in the fighting. As Aiantis was stationed on the extreme right of the Athenian line, this would seem to confirm that the two lines were formed up and fought at right angles to the coast, and not parallel to it. We may assume that the Persian fleet had remained at anchor along the whole 3km length of Schoinias beach while it awaited the outcome of the battle so as to pick up the remainder of their forces. The fighting for the ships would have taken place at the very south-west end of the beach, not far behind the original position of the Persian left wing, before the Persian ships had time to put to sea.

The interior of the Oxford Brygos cup shows two middle-aged, bearded warriors rising from a common tomb. The moulding indicates an altar. They stand back-to-back, unsheathing their swords for action. It has been suggested that they may represent two Marathonian heroes rising from their grave to defend Athens once again, presumably at Plataea. Presumably these two heroes are the only two officers who died, the Polemarch Kallimachos and the *strategos* Stesileos, who fell in the fighting near the ships.

Kallimachos the Polemarch now fell 'having proved himself a good man and true' (Hdt. 6.114). Plutarch (*Mor.* 305B) says that the body of Kallimachos was pierced with so many spears that although dead, he stood upright. The *strategos* Stesileos son of Thrasileos, presumably of Aiantis, also fell (Hdt. 6.114). The Athenians 'called for fire and laid hold of the ships'. There was little point calling for fire, as the nearest

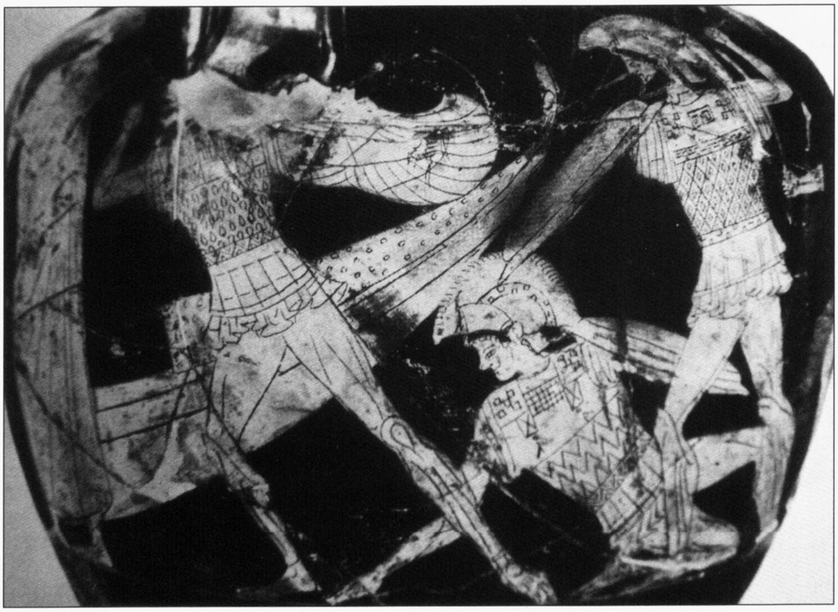


The battle by the ships is shown on this Roman sarcophagus. On the right Persians attempt to drag their wounded aboard ship, in the centre Aischylos holds his dying brother Kynegeiros in his arms, on the left a Persian is pulled from his horse. The ferocity of the fighting is shown on the left, where an unarmed Persian bites the leg of an Athenian hoplite, and a horseman (an officer?) is dragged from his mount. (Brescia Archaeological Museum)

fire available was miles away in the Athenian camp. The battle had now reached the level of an epic struggle, and the similarity with the Homeric battle by the ships would have surely not been lost on the contemporary participants. 'Herodotus in describing this incident is at his most Homeric, unconsciously equating it with the great moment when Hector laid hands on the ships of the Achaeans and called for fire (*Il.* 15. 718)' (J.R. Grant, *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 264).

Kynegeiros son of Euphorion, gripped the poop of one of the Persian ships with his hand and had it chopped off with an axe: he died, as did 'many renowned Athenians also'. The loss of a hand might not prove fatal in modern warfare, but the ancients lacked the means to replace large quantities of lost blood. Kynegeiros must have bled to death. He probably died in the sight, and arms, of his brother Aischylos. Justin (2.9) records an embroidered version of Kynegeiros' heroism at the ships, where he first loses his right hand, but then grabs hold of the ship with his left hand. When this is cut off in turn he grabs hold of the ship with his teeth! According to Justin he 'fought to the last, maimed as he was, with his teeth, like a wild beast'. Justin fails to explain how he managed to keep hold of the ship with his teeth and fight with them at the same time.

The Athenians succeeded in capturing seven Persian ships. Pausanias (1.15.3) states that the end of the picture in the Painted Stoa showed the Phoenician ships, and the Greeks killing the foreigners scrambling into them. It seems the Athenians killed a considerable number of the enemy as they were boarding the triremes. Ktesias (18) states that Datis was among the dead, and that the Athenians refused to give up his body. He is surely mistaken, for Herodotus mentions Datis having a dream later on at the island of Mykonos. Cicero (*ad Atticum* 9.10.3) followed by Justin (2.9) says that Hippias also died in the battle, but once again this seems to be false information for both Ktesias (18) and Suidas (*Hippias* 2) say he died later on the island of Lemnos.

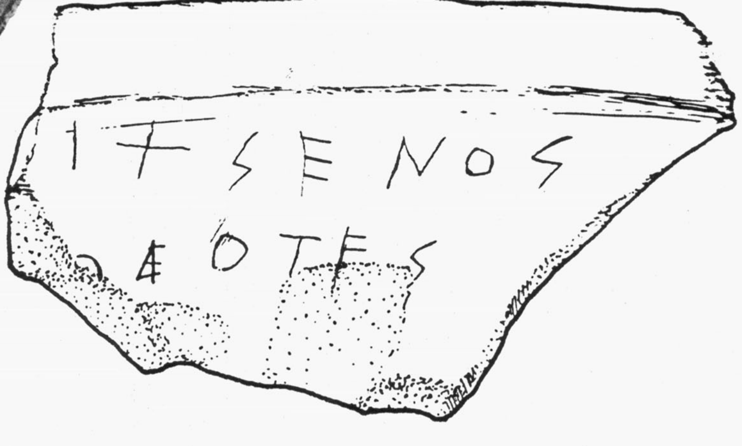


The epic battle fought by the Trojans for the Greek ships, here defended by the hero Ajax, is recorded in the 15th book of Homer's *Iliad* and is shown in this scene from an amphora. Grote (277) remarked that the fighting by the ships 'must have emphatically recalled' this work in the mind of the tragic poet Aischylos. (Munich, Museum für Antike Kleinkunst 3171 - J. 890)

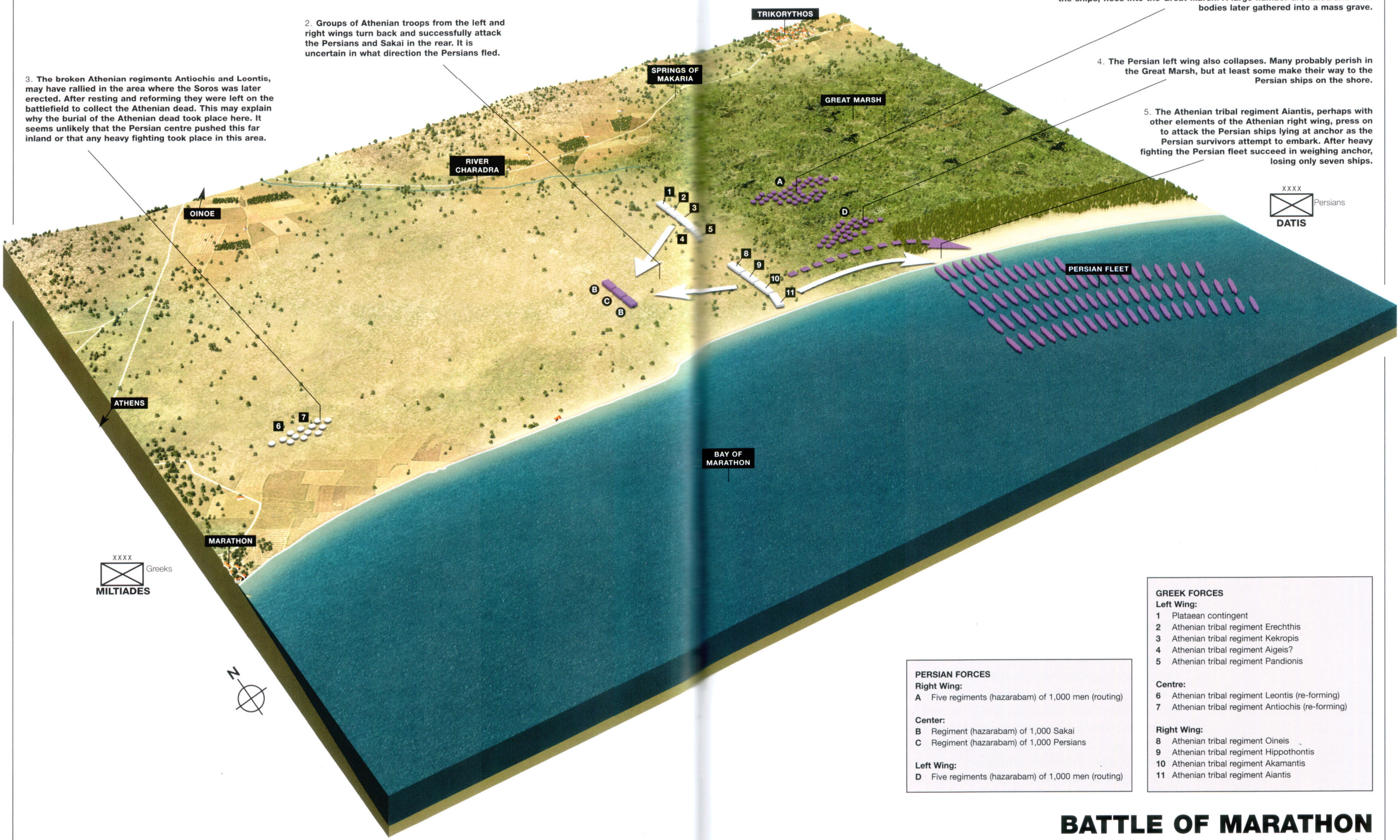
The shield signal

Herodotus (6.115) records that 'there was a slander prevalent in Athens' that the Persians got the idea of their surprise attack on Athens from a sign sent to them by the Alkmaeonids. 'It was said' that the Alkmaeonids, in accordance with a pact with the Persians, showed a signal, holding up a shield, for the Persians aboard the ships. It should be noted that Herodotus clearly states that the traitors held up a shield, not flashed a signal from it. Indeed a signal cannot physically be flashed from the convex surface of a hoplite shield (Hodge 2001).

Herodotus goes to great lengths to defend the Alkmaeonids from the treason charge, even though he states there is no doubt a shield was shown (6.124). Despite Herodotus' kind



Ostrakon cast against Kallixenos son of Aristonymos the Alkmaeonid with a broken inscription, apparently naming him a *prodotes* or 'traitor'. He is our best candidate for the leader of the pro-Persian conspiracy in Athens. (American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations Inv. P. 3786)



1. **The Persian right wing, with no chance of withdrawing to the safety of the ships, flees into the Great Marsh. A large number are killed and their bodies later gathered into a mass grave.**

2. **Groups of Athenian troops from the left and right wings turn back and successfully attack the Persians and Sakai in the rear. It is uncertain in what direction the Persians fled.**

3. **The broken Athenian regiments Antiochis and Leontis, may have rallied in the area where the Soros was later erected. After resting and reforming they were left on the battlefield to collect the Athenian dead. This may explain why the burial of the Athenian dead took place here. It seems unlikely that the Persian centre pushed this far inland or that any heavy fighting took place in this area.**

4. **The Persian left wing also collapses. Many probably perish in the Great Marsh, but at least some make their way to the Persian ships on the shore.**

5. **The Athenian tribal regiment Aiantis, perhaps with other elements of the Athenian right wing, press on to attack the Persian ships lying at anchor as the Persian survivors attempt to embark. After heavy fighting the Persian fleet succeed in weighing anchor, losing only seven ships.**

PERSIAN FORCES
Right Wing:
A Five regiments (hazarabam) of 1,000 men (routing)

Center:
B Regiment (hazarabam) of 1,000 Sakai
C Regiment (hazarabam) of 1,000 Persians

Left Wing:
D Five regiments (hazarabam) of 1,000 men (routing)

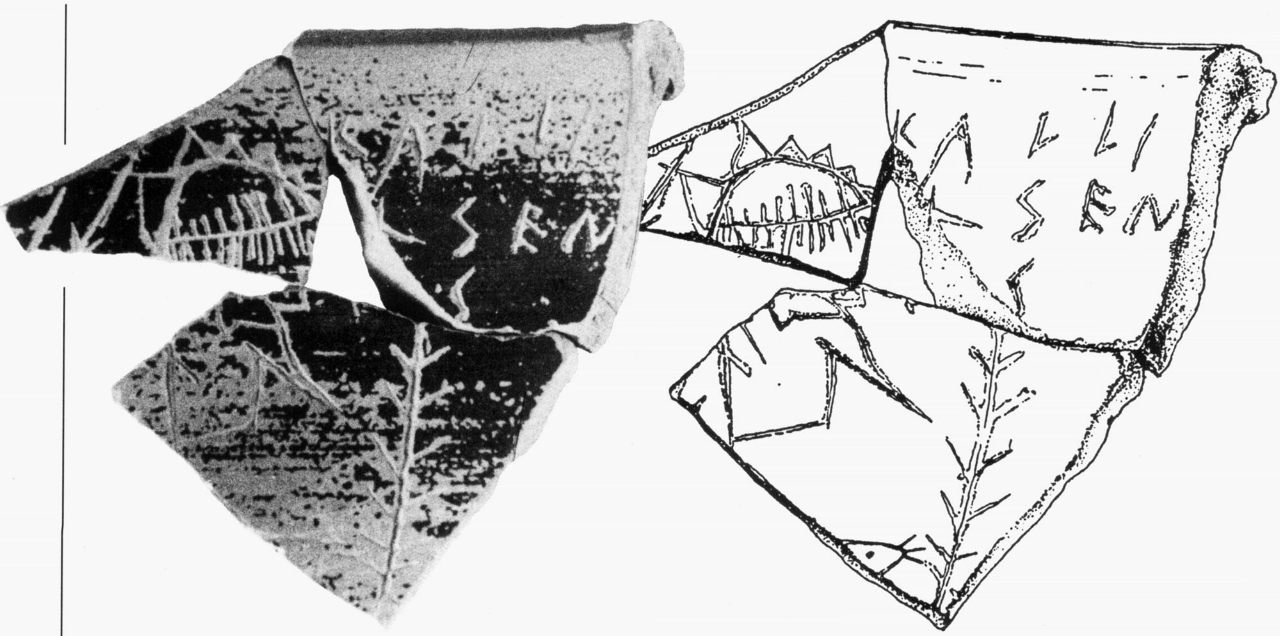
GREEK FORCES
Left Wing:
1 Plataean contingent
2 Athenian tribal regiment Erechthis
3 Athenian tribal regiment Kekropis
4 Athenian tribal regiment Aigeis?
5 Athenian tribal regiment Pandionis

Centre:
6 Athenian tribal regiment Leontis (re-forming)
7 Athenian tribal regiment Antiochis (re-forming)

Right Wing:
8 Athenian tribal regiment Oineis
9 Athenian tribal regiment Hippothontis
10 Athenian tribal regiment Akamantis
11 Athenian tribal regiment Aiantis

BATTLE OF MARATHON

11 September 490BC, viewed from the south-west, showing the destruction of the Persian forces and the fighting around the ships.



A second ostrakon cast against Kallixenos son of Aristonymos also includes an 'unflattering portrait' of the 'traitor'. (American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations Inv. P. 7103)

words, the Alkmaeonids undoubtedly formed a 'fifth column' in Athens, serving Hippias and the Persians. The person who showed the shield was probably Kallixenos son of Aristonymos the Alkmaeonid (Bicknell 434 n. 57); his name appears on a huge number of ostraka of the 480s, and on one he is called 'the traitor'. Another Alkmaeonid traitor may have been Megakles son of Hippokrates, ostracized in 487/86, when, as Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 22. 6) tells us, the Athenians started to ostracize 'the friends of the tyrants' which continued for three years.

The signal must have had a simple pre-arranged meaning. Most modern authorities maintain that it was a sign that Athens was ripe for a coup, and that the Persians could now make their move. This is illogical, given that the signal came after the Persians had already started to embark. It has been suggested that on the contrary, the signal communicated that the plot had failed. Indeed, the later confusion that developed in Athens as to whether or not the Alkmaeonids were traitors 'is far more easily explained if their conspiracy had failed to materialise' (Reynolds 102–3). At this stage a key factor in Persian operational planning was the activity of the Lakedaimonian army – had it left yet, and when would it arrive at Athens? It may have been information on this subject that was transmitted by the signal.

Datis decided the capture of Athens while unguarded had to be attempted. The Athenian army would have been exhausted and disorganized after the battle, and might take a long time to get back to the city before the Persian fleet arrived. Could the Athenians risk a second battle in their exhausted and depleted state? Although the Athenians lost only 192 dead (Hdt. 6.117) 'total casualties must have been at least five times that number, one tribe probably remained on the field of battle, and it is nowhere stated that the Plataeans came back to Athens; moreover, it had fought a hard battle and done a forced march since morning, and must have been utterly tired out, while the Persians in the ships were fresh' (Reynolds 102).

THE RACE TO PHALERON

The main Persian fleet in Marathon Bay backed water, sailed to the island of Aigilia to collect the Eretrian captives, and then sailed on towards Cape Sounion. According to Herodotus (6.115) they hoped to reach Athens before the Athenian army.

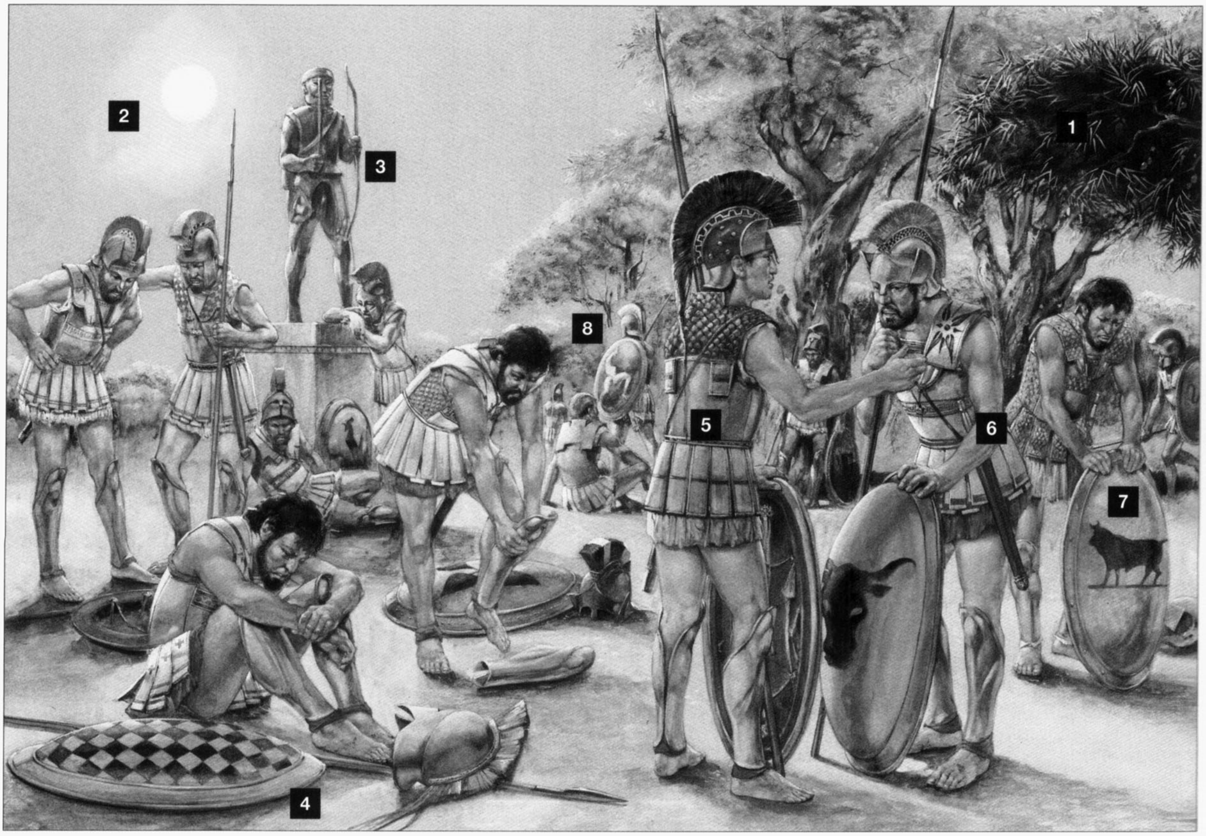
There has been much debate as to how long it might take the Persian fleet to get to Phaleron. The distance around Cape Sounion from Marathon to Phaleron is around 100km, and the latest estimates indicate that a single trireme could have covered this distance, optimistically, in about 10 hours (Lazenby 74). Ten years later the Persian fleet took three days to reach Phaleron from the Euripus straits of Euboea (Hdt. 8.66), but they were in no hurry, and the weather conditions are unknown.

Plutarch (*Arist.* 5. 4) states that when the Athenians had pushed the Persians back into their ships, they saw that they were sailing not back towards the Cyclades, but were being 'forced back by an onshore wind and swell towards Attica'. In other words there was a strong wind and high seas were running towards Cape Sounion. This wind Plutarch describes would seem to be the wind known to the ancients as the Etesian and to the moderns as Meltemi, a seasonal wind which blows into early September (Hodge 1975, 99).

Calculation of the journey time is more complicated. Had part of the fleet already left, perhaps even the day before? Were they sailing with only their fastest ships, or accompanied by slower transports? What were the weather conditions? It has escaped modern commentators that these questions would also have been asked by the Athenians as they saw the Persian fleet back out. It was imperative to get back to the city as soon as possible, assuming, of course, that the Persians had not already reached Athens!

According to a number of late sources a messenger was sent ahead first to take news of the victory to Athens. According to Plutarch (*Mor.* 347C) Herakleides Pontikos stated that it was Thersippos of Eroidai, but most historians say it was Eukles who ran to the city 'in full armour'. He died at the doors of the government buildings having only been able to shout out 'Hail, we are victorious!'. Lucian (*Pro Lapsu* 3) says it was Philippides who brought the news to the archons, shouted 'Joy to you, we've won,' and died. Given these conflicting accounts, Frost (1979) has suggested that no messenger was sent back at all.

The land route was slightly less than the distance of the modern Marathon run (which was extended for the second London Olympics so as to pass beneath the balconies of Buckingham Palace) – a demanding march for an already exhausted army. Herodotus (6.113) states that the battle had lasted 'a long time': just how long is difficult to say. It must have taken a massive effort on the part of the commanders to get the tired troops reorganized after the battle and set them on the march. According to Frontinus (*Strat.* 2.9.8) it was Miltiades who halted their rejoicing and set them on the march back. The Athenian army 'rushing with all speed to defend their city' (Hdt. 6.116), reached it before the Persian fleet and encamped in the sanctuary of Herakles at Kynosarges, a suburb of Athens. Most modern historians maintain the Athenian army arrived on the evening of the day of the battle, which seems



THE ATHENIANS REACH THE HERAKLEION AT KYNOSARGES (pages 78–79)

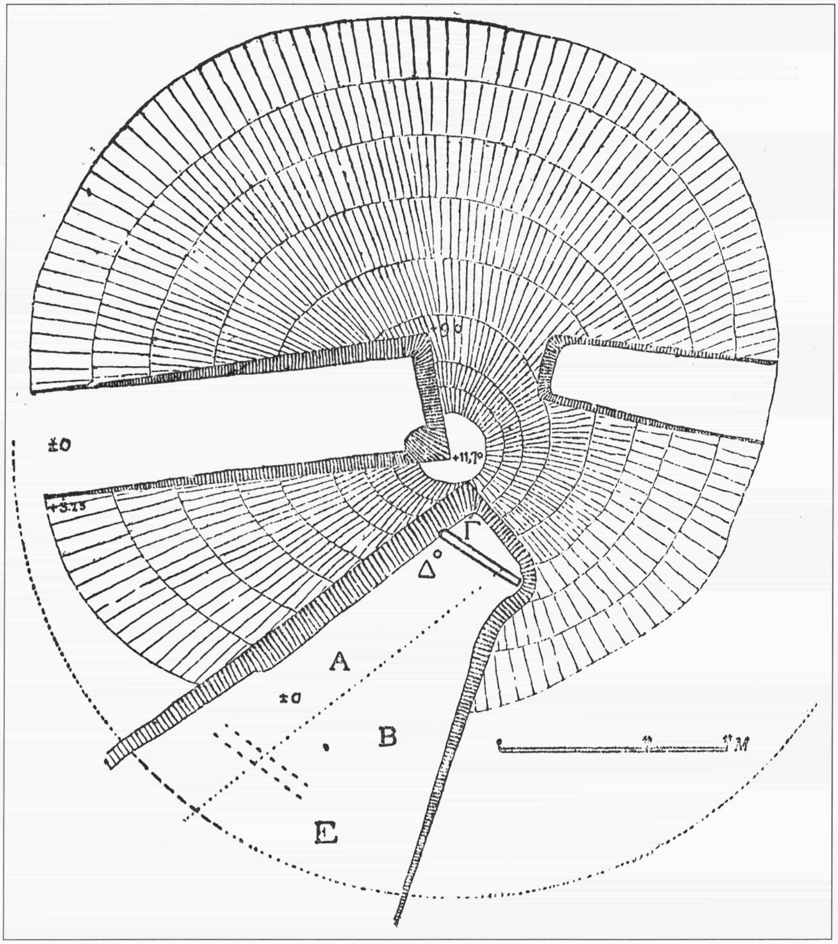
After the battle at Marathon, which Herodotus says lasted 'a long time', the Greeks had little time to rejoice at their victory. As soon as the tired troops could be reorganised they began a forced march back to Athens, in a race against time to beat the Persian fleet to the city. Reaching Athens before the Persians, they encamped in the sanctuary of Herakles at Kynosarges. Already drained by their charge at the run and a fiercely fought battle, the forced march must have left the Athenians physically and mentally exhausted. This must have been tempered, however, by the knowledge that thanks to their Herculean efforts the city had been saved. The sanctuary of Herakles at Kynosarges lies under the modern city of Athens and very little is known of its ancient appearance at the time of Marathon. The sanctuary presumably included an extensive holy precinct (*temenos*) surrounding the temple itself, big enough to hold the Athenian forces. This quite possibly included a sacred grove of olives (1)**. Night has fallen, but the scene is illuminated by the moon of the lunar month *Metageitnion*, which has only just started to wane** (2)**. The cult statue of Herakles** (3) **is based on an Archaic bronze now in Kassel. It may originally have been a Lakonian work, and may copy the cult statue of Herakles in armour from the Spartan Sanctuary of Herakles mentioned by Pausanias (3.15.3). We have no comparable representational evidence of this type from Athens. The armour worn by the Athenian hoplites is largely of composite type, and our re-constructions are largely based on information from the Oxford Brygos cup and the lost vase once on the Rome market. Notice the shield lying flat to the bottom left of the picture** (4)**, which copies one shown on p.19. The diamond pattern surface decoration of the shield might reflect that it too was of composite construction. The figure to right of centre** (5) **is particularly worthy of attention as it attempts to recreate the figure shown on p.18. Note the bronze scales of the upper back plate fixed to run upwards, and the composite helmet. The skull is made of plates fixed to an outer shell of hardened leather by ornamental rivets. To his right stands a hoplite** (6) **based on one of the figures shown on p.44. The bull's head shield device is an iconographic device used to mark him out as a veteran of Marathon, as is also the Marathonian bull decorating the shield of the hoplite to his right** (7)**. Nevertheless it is possible that these shield devices may have been used by hoplites fighting at the battle, particularly those recruited from the four settlements in the Plain of Marathon. Also shown is the *triskeles* device painted on the shield of another hoplite** (8)**. There is some evidence to suggest that this device was particularly popular among the Alkmaeonids, who some accused of traitorous dealings with the tyrants and their Persian supporters. (Richard Hook)**

probable. The forced march must have left an indelible impression in the minds of the veterans.

The Persians rounded Sounion and anchored off Phaleron. After riding at anchor for a while they sailed back to Asia. The Lakedaimonian advance party of 2,000 men arrived on the next day, 18 Metageitnion/12 September (Plato, *Laws* 698E) having set out from Sparta after the full moon and reached Athens on their third day out of the city. The total adult male population was 8,000 and the number of Spartans of fighting age at this period was 5,000. The 2,000 probably represent the first ten age-classes, sent out as a 'flying-column' to bring help as quickly as possible. Though too late for the battle, they were anxious to see what the Persians looked like, and they set off for Marathon to inspect the bodies (Hdt. 6.120). This may be when the Athenians made sketches of the clothing and equipment of the Persian dead.

Booty and burial

Aristeides had been left behind at Marathon with his tribe Antiochis 'to guard the captives and booty' (Plut., *Aristid.* 5.5–6). Plutarch says the booty was captured from the tents and the hulls of the ships. Note also that Nepos (*Milt.* 5.5) says the Persians fled, not to their camp, but to their ships. But Herodotus does not mention tents, nor any Persian



Plan of the excavations of the Sorós carried out by Valerios Staïs in 1890 and 1891, which first confirmed the identity of the tumulus as the burial place of the Athenian fallen. 'Cremation Trays' were found at points D and E, the second one being brick-lined. The latter was 5m long and 1m wide, scattered with ash, the bones of animals and birds as well as eggs consumed in the funeral feast, and intentionally smashed pottery. (*Athenische Mitteilungen* 18 (1893) 49)

One of the few remaining wetland areas left on the Marathon plain, just behind the Megalo-Mati pumping station. This gives an idea of the marshes into which many of the defeated Persians fled and where they met their deaths.

camp. My assumption is the Persians had broken camp the previous night when the bulk of their forces had embarked. The booty was taken from the captured ships and from enemy bodies and captives. References to the Persian camp and tents were probably added by later authors.

Aristeides was perhaps entrusted with this task because of his reputation for honesty. Herodotus (8.79.1) made enquiries into Aristeides' character and was 'convinced that he was the best and justest man in Athens'. He was elected eponymous archon for the following year 489/88. (It is also possible that his tribe Antiochis was left behind because it had suffered most in the battle.) Plutarch says Aristeides allowed nobody to touch the booty. It was pooled communally, and the Plataeans were later given their share (Paus. 9.4.1).

Fighting in the ranks of Antiochis was Aristeides' cousin, Kallias son of Hipponikos of the deme Alopeke, who was hereditary torchbearer in the Eleusinian mysteries. Kallias was extremely wealthy, so much so that his nickname was *Lakkoploutos* 'well-wealthy'. The nickname surely only means that his wealth was 'as deep as a well'. However, malicious gossips invented a story of how he had acquired his wealth. He had fought in the battle in priestly dress. A Persian placed himself under his protection and showed Kallias where he had buried money in a well (*lakkos*). Kallias killed the Persian and took the money. A more plausible explanation of the family's wealth is given by Herakleides Pontikos (Athenaeus 12.537A). An Eretrian named Diomnestos gave his riches to Kallias' father for safe-keeping. When Diomnestos was deported with the other Eretrians, Hipponikos kept the money.

Another duty of the Antiochis regiment would have been to bury the dead. The burial of the Athenian dead on the field of battle was quite exceptional. Thucydides (2.34.5) and Pausanias state that the normal practice was to bring the remains of the fallen back to the city, and that this exception was due to the 'outstanding valour' of those who fought at Marathon. They were awarded heroic honours: Pausanias(1.32.4) says a cult was established. An annual sacrifice was performed at the Sorós under the auspices of the Polemarch 'on behalf of those who had died in the cause of freedom' (Garland 58).

Herodotus (6.117) gives the number of dead as 192 Athenians (not including Plataeans or slaves) and 6,400 Persians. Most historians have accepted this figure because they think it reasonable or believe a body count was made after the battle. Yet the ratio of dead 1:33⅓ looks suspicious (Avery 1973). According to Justin (2.9) the Persians lost 2,000 men in the battle and shipwrecks. If we combine the variant traditions dealing with how it came about that 500 goats were sacrificed to Artemis Agrotera, a case could be made for 500 barbarian casualties. Pausanias says the Athenians insist that they buried the Persian dead, because, he (1.32.5) states 'in every case the divine law applies that a corpse should be laid under the earth, yet I could find no grave. There was neither mound nor other trace to be seen, as the dead were carried to a trench and thrown in anyhow'.

In the winter of 1884/5 Captain von Eschenburg surveyed the Marathon Plain to produce an archaeological map of the area. He records that 'in the vineyard belonging to Skouzes a large quantity of remains of bones was found, haphazardly placed, which seems to belong to hundreds of dead. I thank for the information Mr. Skouzes' steward, a clever young Greek under whose direction the vineyard was planted. I myself dug at the edges of the vineyard and ascertained that this area full of remains of bones extends as far as the marshes' (Petrakos 24). Most agree that von Eschenburg had found the Persian mass grave. Presumably it never had any monumental superstructure, hence Pausanias' inability to find it. The location, between the Church of Panaghia Mesosporitisa and the Great Marsh, would fit what we know of the battle, for the majority of the Persians seem to have died in the Marsh.

An interesting piece of trivia is connected with the battle. Pliny (*HN* 18.43.144) states that 'Median Grass', lucerne or alfalfa, is foreign to Greece and was first brought from Media (its place of origin) 'during the Persian war which Darius launched'. It has been suggested that the occasion was Marathon; the grass perhaps was self-seeding (Evans 103). If Marathon was the occasion, the grass was more likely found as fodder in one of the seven captured triremes. A more likely opportunity for the arrival of 'Median Grass' was the wreck of the Persian fleet off Mount Athos in 492. This was the occasion when, for example, white pigeons first came to Europe (L. Pearson, *Early Ionian Historians* 147–8).

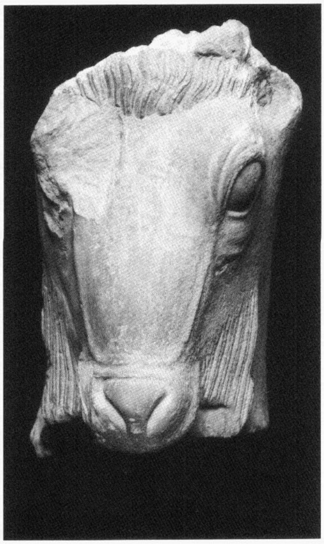
AFTERMATH

Datis sailed back to Asia via the island of Mykonos, and there had a vision in his sleep. At dawn he searched his ships and found a golden image of Apollo in one of the Phoenician vessels. He asked where this image had been looted, and after learning the name of the shrine, he sailed with his own ship to Delos. There he placed the image in the shrine of Apollo and asked the Delians to take the image to the sanctuary of Delion in Theban territory on the coast opposite Chalkis. The Delians failed to comply with his request. It was only some 20 years later, on the command of a prophecy, that the Thebans took the statue to Delion (Hdt. 6.118).

Immediately after the battle the Athenians consecrated a temple to Eukleia 'Glory' from the spoils of the battle (Paus. 1.14.5). They also started construction work on the predecessor of the Parthenon. A cave under the Acropolis was dedicated to Pan and sacrifices and torch-races in his honour were intiated. The votive statue of Pan was supposedly inscribed with an epigram by Simonides: 'Me, the goatfooted Pan, the Arcadian, hostile to Medes, to the Athenians an aid, Miltiades erected'. Pan was worshipped in a number of caves throughout Attica. There is no evidence for such worship at any of these sites prior to the battle, nor does the god appear in Attic art before that date. Garland (61) believes there was a dramatic expansion in the god's cult after 490, rather than a completely fresh start.

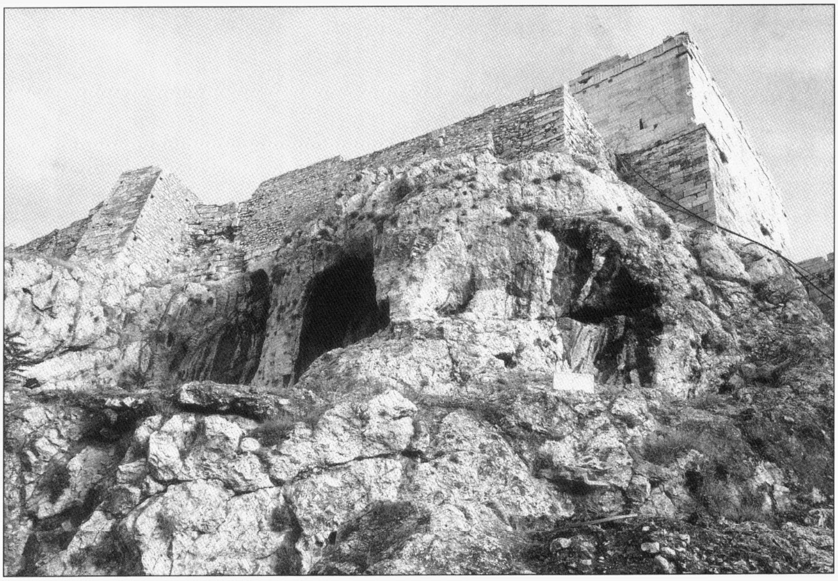
Soon after the Marathon campaign, the Athenians granted Miltiades a fleet of 70 ships to make war on the islands that had helped the Persians. Some date the expedition to immediately after Marathon, as the Parians believed that Datis was still at Mykonos with his fleet. Others place the campaign in 489. According to Nepos (1.7) Miltiades compelled many of the islands to change sides, but the Parians refused, confident in their fortifications. He laid siege to the city and demanded 100 talents compensation. Herodotus (6.134) says that several differing accounts of events had survived. The Parians claimed that a priestess named Timo was showing Miltiades a way into the city when he injured his thigh in trying to leap over a fence. In another account Ephoros says the Parians were on the point of surrender when a chance fire broke out on Mykonos. They assumed it was Datis and the Persian fleet signalling to them, so they continued to resist. After 26 days the siege was lifted.

On his return to Athens Miltiades was prosecuted on the capital charge of 'deceiving the Athenian people' by an Alkmaeonid, Xanthippos son of Ariphron. Unable to stand, he was defended by his friends. His wound had started to putrify, and he was confined to a couch. Miltiades escaped the death sentence, but was fined the enormous sum of 50 talents (300,000 drachmas). He died in prison soon after with the fine still unpaid, and his son Kimon was left to settle the debt.



Limestone head of Pan, 0.354m high, once painted in colour, of which traces remain. It is said to have been found on the north slope of the Acropolis, and so would seem to be a fragment of statue dedicated before the Persian sack of 480/79. A cult statue as important as the one dedicated by Miltiades would probably have been of bronze, not stone. (Cleveland Museum of Art 26. 538)

The cult of Pan was established in this cave on the north-west slope of the Acropolis. The role of Pan in the battle is puzzling. The 2nd century BC historian Polemon (2.41) refers to one of the Persian ships 'being pursued by Pan'. Julius Africanus (*Kestai* 1.2.11) says that Pan fought against the Persians at Marathon alongside the Athenians. Aristeides (*Panath.* 108 [202D]) writing in the 2nd century AD mentions the 'dance of Pan' being performed after the battle. Strangely, Pan does not participate in the battle either in Herodotus' account or in the painting of the battle in the Painted Stoa.



When the Persian fleet reached Asia, Datis and Artaphernes took the enslaved Eretrians to Susa. Despite the damage they had done to his property (the city of Sardis) Darius did them no further harm, but settled them on his own estates at Arderikka in Cissia 'and they were there in that country still in my time, still speaking their ancient language' records Herodotus (6.199). No more is heard of Datis. Whether he was executed for his failure, as Plato suggests, is unknown. Nine years later Xerxes led a second invasion of Greece with Mardonios commanding the army. Nepos (*Pausanias* 1) states that Mardonios was 'the royal satrap, by nation a Mede'. If, as discussed earlier, this designation relates to office rather than nationality, Mardonios may have also replaced Datis as satrap of Media.

To some extent the glory of the battle of Marathon was diminished by the victories won over the Persians a decade later. Many of the monuments and festivals associated with Marathon were established much later thanks to the activities of Kimon, son of Miltiades, who rose to political prominence in the 460s. Perhaps the most famous of these was the painting of the battle of Marathon by Mikon and Panainos in the 'Painted Stoa' at Athens. In this painting Miltiades took pride of place among the other heroes of the battle (Paus. 1.15.3). Probably it was only in the Kimonian period too that the Sorós was piled over the grave of the fallen. Likewise we do not know if the cult of the Marathonian heroes was established immediately after the battle, or grew up later, especially in the period of Kimon.

The celebration of the battle took place not on the anniversary of the battle – 17 Metageitnion (11 September) – but on 6 Boedromion, the festival of Artemis Agroteria, to whom the Athenians had offered to sacrifice before the battle. The battle was still being commemorated at least 367 years later, and possibly much longer still after that (Petrakos 38–9).

Kimonian propaganda also exalted Miltiades and Marathon at the pan-Hellenic shrine at Delphi. Pausanias (10.10.1–2) describes a series of statues showing the Athenian tribal and other heroes, plus Athena,

This vase, found in the debris of the Persian sack of Athens in 480/79, might have been 'specially dedicated at what might well have been a sanctuary of Zeus Eleutherios in memory of the victory of Marathon' (Williams 78 n. 33). A warrior, perhaps personifying Kallimachos, pours a libation at the altar of Zeus 'God of Freedom'. After the Persian Wars the sanctuary of Zeus the 'Saviour' at Athens was given the further name 'Liberator'. (Athens, American School of Classical Studies, Agora Excavations P 42)

***Lebes* (cauldron) in the Canellopoulos Collection, discovered around 1958 near the Sorós, it reputedly contained charred human bones when found. The inscription around the rim runs 'The Athenians (give this as) a prize (in the games) for those (who died) in the war'. It was probably won in the games established by the Athenians to honour the dead at Marathon as heroes. (Athens, Canellopoulos Museum 199)**

Apollo and Miltiades. He says that the statues were by Pheidias, and that an inscription recorded that they were a tithe of the spoils taken at Marathon. This is impossible. Pheidias was too young to have produced the statues; he was active only in the middle of the century, during the administrations of Kimon and Perikles. For the same reasons Pheidias' statue of Athena Promachos on the Acropolis cannot have been made from a tithe of the booty of the battle, as Pausanias (1.28.2) asserts.

Another false inscription runs around the base of the Athenian Treasury at Delphi, proclaiming 'The Athenians dedicate to Apollo the tenth of the booty they took from the Medes during the battle of Marathon'. Pausanias (10.11.5) accordingly believed that the Treasury had been built from the spoils of Marathon. In fact the Treasury seems to have been built before Marathon, and the inscribed base was added later. Great care is needed when considering what light these monuments can actually shed on the battle.

The democratic Athens that had taken shape over the 17 years that had passed since the reforms of Kleisthenes was a very different society from the faction-torn Athens of the days of Peisistratos (Reynolds 103). It is doubtful that Hippias would have really been able to bring about the betrayal of anything other than a limited minority in the city. This was perhaps the biggest shortcoming in Persian strategic and operational planning.

On a tactical level, it must be remembered that Greeks and Persians had not yet really encountered one another in battle, and had no preconceived opinions as to the relative merits of their different equipment and methods of fighting. According to Herodotus (6.112)

The Sorós at Marathon. The mound was probably erected over the graves of the Athenian dead two decades or more after the battle, when Kimon's propaganda campaign to celebrate the battle was at its height. The mound today, decapitated by the initial primitive excavations of Schliemann and two and a half millennia of erosion, still rises some 9m above the present ground surface and has a diameter of 50m. Staïs established that the ancient surface of the plain lies some 3m further down, so the Sorós was originally at least 12m high. Soil must have been brought from an extensive surface area of the surrounding plain for its construction.

the Athenians at Marathon were the first Greeks to have charged the enemy at a run, and were the first to endure the sight of Median dress and the men that wore it: 'for up till then even the name of the Medes was a terror for the Greeks'. This last statement needs a little correction, for the eastern Greeks had the dubious pleasure of fighting Persians during the Ionian Revolt.

Undoubtedly the Athenians and Plataeans had displayed great resolve in daring to face the Persians, and dauntless courage in the battle. But had the Athenian commander responsible for the deployment, be it Kallimachos or Miltiades, thinned the centre merely because of their numerical inferiority and their fear of being outflanked? Or had he deliberately sought the repulse of the Athenian centre? Was the aim of the deployment to provoke a double envelopment along the lines of Cannae as so many military historians assert? Or had they been forced to thin the line where it stood least chance of causing complete defeat.

Two considerations prevent us from making a decision. We have no idea of whether the victorious Athenians on the wings turned to attack the Persian centre deployed in tactical formations. Nothing supports such a view. We have no other description of a Greek hoplite army being capable of such sophisticated manoeuvre this early on, and there is no indication in any of our sources that any of the Greeks predicted the collapse of their centre. They probably turned back on the Persians and Sakai in the centre in 'huddles'. On the other hand it is true that Miltiades had some experience of Persian methods of warfare. If he knew that the Persians would station their commander and their best forces in the centre of the line, why then did he deploy the weakest Athenian forces at precisely this point?

VISITING THE BATTLEFIELD

The distances across the plain of Marathon on the map seem much greater when you are walking them under a September sun. I would advise any visitor to the battlefield to hire a car, but the following short guide is for anyone travelling by public transport and foot. I have given detailed directions as the terrain is so confusing.

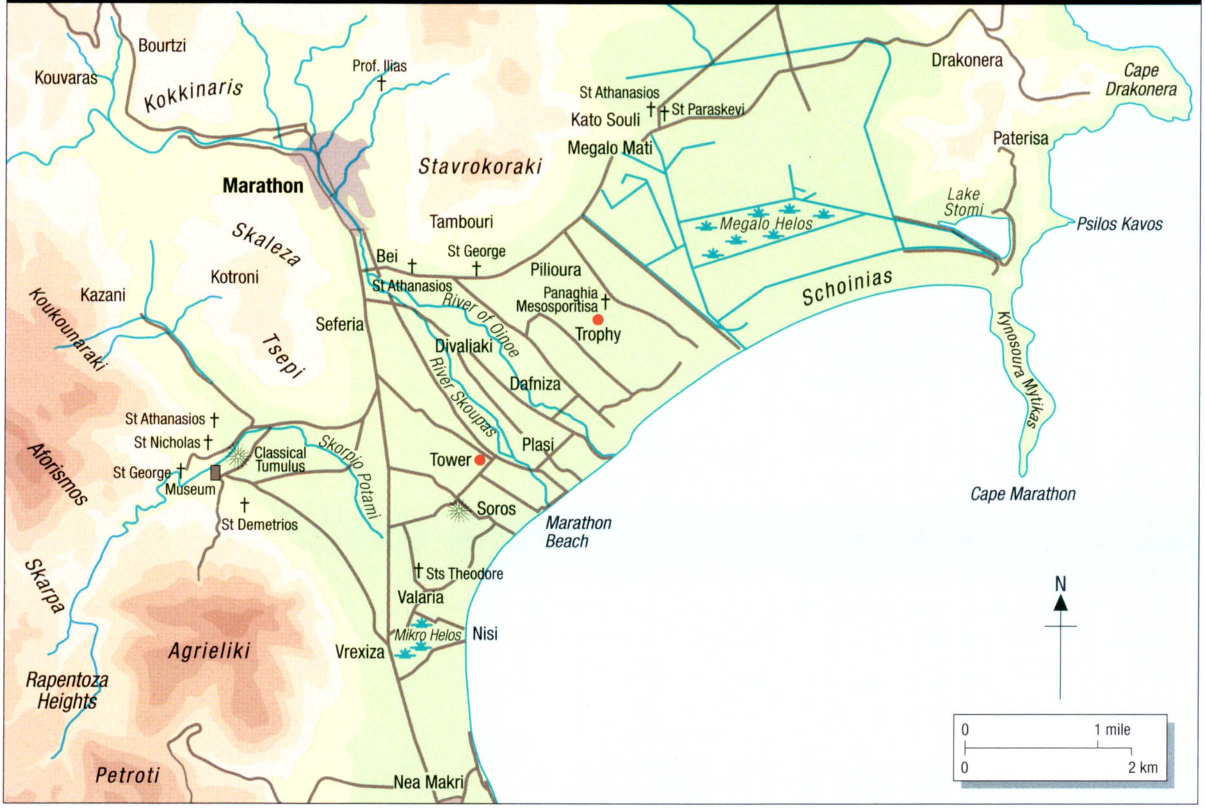
There are many buses from Athens to Marathon, or that pass through it. One bus runs all the way to ΣΧΟΙΝΙΑΣ (Schoinias) beach from Mavromateon Street. The bus stop is about 100m down from Plateia Aigyptou on the right-hand side. This bus can also be caught from the bus stop opposite the entrance to Ethniki Amyna metro station. A number of other buses from this stop, such as those marked 'Marathon', stop at Marathon Beach or the Tomb of the Athenians, a 90-minute ride. Accommodation is best found at Marathon Beach.

The lazy walker can take the bus all the way to the end of Schoinias Beach, but to walk the battlefield get off two stops after the Tomb of the Athenians. The main points of interest at Marathon are the **Frankish Tower** (site of the Trophy), the **spring of Makaria** (a survival of the Great

OPPOSITE **Remains of the old *kháni*, a resting place for travellers built during the Turkish period, on the road to Kato-Souli, shortly before the turn-off for Panaghia Mesosporitisa.**

BELOW **Turkish guard tower on the rocky spur above the Megalo-Mati pumping station.**

THE MARATHON AREA IN MODERN TIMES



Marsh), **Schoinias Beach** (the Persian landing site and camp) and the **Museum**. The following instructions will take you to all these sites in order, but they need to be followed *very* carefully if you are not to get lost.

From the bus stop, take the road leading off east towards Schoinias and Kato Souli. Shortly after leaving the junction a modern concrete bridge crosses the course of the Charadra, in the bed of which lies a WW2 anti-tank ditch system (see photo on p.49). Continue along the road, without forking down the metalled and signposted road to the right. A spur of the Stavrokoraki mountain meets the road from the left (north). A little further on the left is the chapel of Agios Giorgios. The road now bends sharply to the left. Continue past two minor road junctions to the right, the main road continues bending left but less sharply.

A stand of tall cypresses starts running alongside the road on the right. Halfway along them are the ruins of an Ottoman period *khâni* (rest station). Carry on until the end of the cypresses then turn right (south-east) down a minor metalled road. About 15 mins from the main road, after passing a group of farmhouses and an old factory on the right, you reach a white church, which lies inside a stone enclosure wall ringed with cypress trees. The ruins of the **Frankish Tower** lie in the middle of this enclosure. Some of the chisel-decorated blocks still to be seen in the base of the Tower come from 4th-century tombs. You are now near the site of the **Trophy**.

Return to the main road and continue north-east. You come to a road junction signposted to Schoinias 2.5 km to the right (south-east).

Continue straight on to Kato Souli, the olive tree-lined road bends first left then right. On the left of the road runs a ruined stone and concrete aquaduct. Another stone aquaduct runs down to the road at right angles on the left. Ahead the road curves sharply right and then left as the spur of the mountain runs into the plain. In antiquity the **Makaria springs** rose where this mountain spur met the Great Marsh. An old Ottoman guard tower (worth a visit) can be seen on the spur above, and as you round the spur an old pumping station comes into view. The water once supplied Athens. During WW2 it was guarded by a sentry, hence the pillbox to the right of the road. To the immediate south of the pumping station is a pond. This is one of the few remaining pockets of wetland surviving the draining of the **Great Marsh**, and gives some idea of how the whole area looked in antiquity.

Return to the road junction signposted to Schoinias. It will take about half an hour to reach the south-western edge of **Schoinias Beach** walking straight along this road. In the late summer prevailing eastern winds blow onshore here, on the south-western half of the beach. It takes about an hour to walk to the north-eastern half of the beach, which is sheltered from the winds by the Kynosoura promontory. You will pass the reed-beds of the drained Schoinias marshes on the left, and then the dried-out bed of Lake Stomi. The terminus for the bus to Schoinias is at the group of restaurant buildings at the north-eastern edge of the beach.

ABOVE **The surviving disjointed members of the Marathon Victory monument, the 'trophy of white marble' of Pausanias, assembled here in Marathon Museum. Many drums from the shaft are missing.**

LEFT **A Second World War pill-box on the road to Kato-Souli, 'guarding' the Megalo-Mati pumping station. Like most pill-boxes of the period, it could scarcely have been sited less effectively, commanding a view of no more than 50m.**

If you have walked for a couple of hours under the late summer sun you will now have a vague impression of the fatigue that must have been experienced by participants in the battle. Many reconstructions of the battle would have the Athenians, after charging and fighting a battle, run towards the Persian ships still anchored under Kynosoura. It is only now that you will realize the implausibility of such armchair speculation. Schoinias Beach is a fine white-sand beach, favoured by bathers from Athens, set against a backdrop of pretty umbrella pines, and is a good place for a rest.

The **Museum**, built thanks to the generosity of Evgenios Panagopoulos, a lover of archaeology, is worth a visit. At the time of writing opening hours are 8.30am to 3.00pm but the museum is closed on Mondays. The entrance ticket also gives admission to the Tomb of the Athenians. If you are walking, follow the signs to the Museum from the Marathon–Nea Makri road. You will pass the 'classical' tumulus (marked 'Tomb of the Plataeans') on the right about 200m before the museum entrance. As the Museum comes into view you will see the church of St. Demetrios slightly up on the mountainside to the left. Between you and the church is the area where Soteriades suggested the Herakleion lay. The Museum contains the Trophy monument, pottery from the 'Classical' tumulus, the two inscriptions from Valaria mentioning the cult of Herakles, all in Gallery III. Also of interest is a fine 4th-century funerary monument, a standing lion, found near the Makaria spring.

Getting back to Athens is simpler than reaching Marathon. Buses to Athens halt at stops along the main road from Marathon to Nea-Makri until quite late in the evening. In September it starts to get dark about 8.00pm.

CHRONOLOGY

499–94BC Ionian Revolt.

494BC Persian naval victory at Lade.

493BC Miltiades returns to Athens.
Persians conquer Chios, Lesbos and Tenedos.

492BC Mardonios invades Macedonia.
Persian fleet wrecked off Mount Athos.
Miltiades survives trial for tyranny and enters Athenian public life.

491BC Darius send envoys to the Greek states demanding earth and water.
Darius orders a fleet to be built and an army assembled.

490BC, *early summer* Datis and Artaphernes leave Darius and march to Cilicia.

July Persian fleet sets sail from Cilicia.
Siege of Lindos, Rhodes?
Persian fleets reaches Samos.

25 July Start of the Athenian civic year: Athenian generals take up office.

Early August The Persian Campaign in the Cyclades.

22 August Panathenaic Games. Victory of Kallimachos?

Late August Persian fleet sails to Euboea.
Karystos is forced over to the Persian side.
Siege and fall of Eretria.

1 September? Persian fleet lands at Marathon.

2 September News reaches Athens of the Persian landing at Marathon.
Philippides sets out for Sparta.

3 September Philippides reaches Sparta.

4 September Philippides returns to Athens.
The Athenian assembly accepts the motion of Miltiades 'to set out once they have obtained food' to Marathon.
A messenger is sent asking the Plataeans to join them at Marathon.

Night Athenian army sets out for Marathon.

5 September, morning Athenians camp in the Herakleion.

Evening? The Plataeans join the Athenians at Marathon.

6 September? Datis appeals to the Athenians to submit.
The debate of the Athenian generals.

9 September, first light Lakedaimonian advance guard leaves Sparta.

10 September The Persians break camp.
Half the Persian forces including the cavalry embark and put to sea.

Night Ionians inform the Athenians that 'The cavalry is away'.

11 September, morning Battle of Marathon

Evening The Athenian march to the Sanctuary of Herakles at Knynosarges.

12 September Arrival of the Lakedaimonian advance guard at Athens.
Persian fleet leaves Bay of Phaleron and sails to Mykonos.

13 September The Lakedaimonians visit Marathon and inspect the Persian dead.

10 October First sacrifice to Artemis Agroteria celebrating the victory.

October Miltiades leads the expedition against Paros.
Miltiades returns to Athens having failed to take Paros.

November? Trial, imprisonment and death of Miltiades.

Note:

The key chronology which places the battle itself on 11 September (17 *Metageitnion*) is explained on pages 37 and 50 in the text above. The equation of the Athenian months with the months of the contemporary calendar is based on the statement in Herodotus (6.106) that the full moon took place on the 15th day of the second month of the year of Marathon. Astronomical calculation establishes that there was a full moon on 9 September in 490BC. Therefore 15 Metageitnion should correspond to 9 September in 490BC. The Athenian year was divided into 12 lunisolar months of 30 days each (a total of 360 days). The month was divided into three decades of ten days. The seven-day week is a Jewish calendrical system, which only entered the European year much later with the adoption of Christianity. Extra days were intercalated rather haphazardly to keep the calendar in synchronisation with both the phases of the moon and the sun, however, so absolute certainty is not possible. Nevertheless it is improbable that there was a discrepancy so early on in the year. All the other dates offered in this reconstruction are speculative and are extrapolated from my reconstruction of the relative chronology between, and at either side of, the known dates of Philippides departure from Athens and the date of the arrival of the advance party of the Lakedaimonian forces in Athens.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

Our prime written source for Marathon is Herodotus. Any reconstruction of the battle must be firmly anchored on his account. There is some evidence that he researched the battle carefully. He certainly conducted personal interviews when trying to find out the circumstances surrounding the blinding of Epizelos during the battle, for he (6.117) states: 'I ascertained that Epizelos used to say these things'. Herodotus first recited his *Histories* in Athens in about 425BC (though the date is hotly debated, some place it a decade or so later). At this date Aristophanes was putting on his production of *Acharnians,* which mentions (line 180), that a few veterans of the battle – 'men as hard as oak' – were still alive.

Occasionally Herodotus can be supplemented from a variety of later written sources. The most important is the *Miltiades* of Cornelius Nepos, written around the third quarter of the 1st Century BC. Hammond (1968, 53) suggested that this work and several fragmentary passages gathered in the *Lexicon* of Suidas and in other later sources, might be based on the works of Demon. Demon wrote a local history of Attica and a collection of proverbs in around 300BC. Pausanias' traveller's guide to Greece is also of value. Though written six and a half centuries after the battle, it describes in detail the ancient topography of the Marathon plain. He also records local tradition concerning the battle, some of mixed value.

Even so, there are still significant gaps in our knowledge of what happened at the battle. In an article published in 1964, though first communicated in 1920, Whatley (123–4) pointed out the near impossibility of reconstructing any battle of antiquity, because of the inadequate nature of the written sources. He stressed that the key to arriving at a plausible reconstruction is a thorough investigation of the topography of the battlefield. The art of reconstructing Marathon lies in understanding precisely what Herodotus is saying, and relating his account to the ancient topography of the Marathon plain.

FURTHER READING

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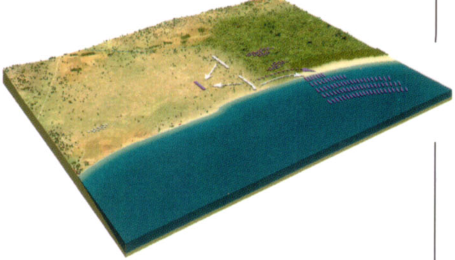

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