



BYZANTIUM

BYZANTIUM (Byzantion), contact with the Achaemenids (ca. 513-439 BCE). The Greek polis of Byzantium, in the European province of Thrace (OPers. Skudra), stood on the peninsula dividing the Bosphorus from the Sea of Marmara; it thus played a pivotal role in the Greco-Persian wars. Though Achaemenid control of Byzantium was never as stable as in other garrison centers throughout the Thracian region, it nevertheless ranked with the Persian garrison at Sestos as a key Achaemenid port on the European coast of the Bosphorus and Hellespont. It came under Achaemenid control in the late 6th century b.c., when the Achaemenid King Darius I (522-486 b.c.) set forth on an attempt to conquer Scythia, which lay north and east of the Pontus (Black Sea). In about 513 his troops entered Byzantium by means of a bridge constructed by the Samian engineer Mandrokles across the narrows north of the city, where the Bosphorus flows out of the Black Sea (Herodotus, 4.87-89; Polybius, 4.43.2; Dionysius Byzantius, 57). After Byzantium had been subdued, Ariston, the Greek commander in charge of Byzantium (Herodotus, 4.138), and Miltiades, the Athenian tyrant of Thracian Chersonese (the Gallipoli peninsula), joined the eastern Greek fleet, which sailed into the Pontus and up the Danube under Persian direction. Darius's European land forces were, however, too small and had too little time to achieve major conquests: In Thrace, aside from Byzantium itself, only some parts of the southwestern Pontic coast and the Hebros (Maritsa, Meriç) valley were subdued. When Darius, after several months' fighting in Scythia, returned in defeat to Sardis, Byzantium and the towns on the southwestern Pontic coast seem to have thrown off Persian domination.



When the king returned to Susa in 513 he appointed his general Otanes to command the coast from the Bosphorus to the Aegean (Herodotus, 4.143, 5.26; Ktesias, in Jacoby, *Fragmente* 688 F 13.21). In about 510 b.c. Otanes reconquered Byzantium, took Chalcedon on the Asian side, and subdued Antandros and Lamponia in the southern Troad; with ships obtained from Lesbos, he also captured the key islands of Lemnos and Imbros (Imroz) in the northeastern Aegean (Herodotus, 5.98.1). Byzantium and part of Imbros had subsequently to be reconquered, however.

During the period of Achaemenid supremacy Byzantium was governed by local Greek noblemen, appointed as *hyparchoi* (governors), who supervised the apportioning of taxes and the mustering of troops for the Persian army and controlled the administration; it is possible that the old aristocratic council and assembly also continued to function in a limited way. Local laws, tribunals, magistracies, and priestly functions were retained, and local aristocrats continued to control private property, as long as Achaemenid demands were met (e.g., Herodotus, 5.27, 7.33, 7.105-06). It is quite probable that the Persian presence in Byzantium was limited to a garrison, for, though hundreds of Skudrians, perhaps including Byzantines, had begun to appear at Susa and Persepolis and throughout Pārsa (Fārs; Darius Susa e, in Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 141-42, and Steve; Hallock, glossary, s.vv. *Iškudra and Iškudrap*) by 504 b.c., no archeological evidence of Achaemenid occupation has yet been uncovered in the city itself.

In 499 b.c., following a Greek raid on Sardis, Byzantium apparently rebelled. The Persian imperial fleet did not succeed in retaking it until the spring of 493; in the meantime, many Byzantines fled north to Mesembria on the Pontic coast midway to the mouth of the Danube, a region outside Achaemenid control (Herodotus, 6.33; Strabo, 7.139; Eustathius, 803). The Byzantine action suggests that the tenuous Persian control of the Pontic shore of Thrace and the newly established Persian city of Boruza (Hekataios in Jacoby, *Fragmente* I, F 166) had quickly disintegrated, as it had in the upper Hebros valley, the Aegean coastal regions, and the Propontic coast from the Bosphorus to the Hellespont.

Byzantium apparently remained securely under Achaemenid control for the next fourteen years (Herodotus, 9.89.4). Yet in 479 b.c., after the defeat of the Persian navy at Mykale, Greek maritime forces attacked and took Sestos, and proceeded to attack Byzantium in the late spring of 478 b.c. (Herodotus, 9.114-21). The Spartan Pausanias led the attack, during which a number of



Persian nobles, including members of the royal family, were captured (Thucydides, 1.94, 128; Diodorus Siculus, 11.44.31; Nepos, *Pausanias* 2.2). It seems that local Byzantine support of the Greeks hastened the fall of the city and the destruction of the Persian garrison. Nevertheless, the confederated Greeks rejected Pausanias' leadership and chose Athenian command instead. In ca. 477-72 b.c., when Pausanias was again temporarily in control of Byzantium, the town may have reestablished political ties with Persia, though that remains uncertain (Justin, 11.1, 3). In 440-39 b.c. Byzantium again severed ties with the confederated Greek naval alliance (Thucydides, 1.115.2) and briefly but unsuccessfully sought Persian assistance. The Greeks regained control of Byzantium in 439 b.c., however, and it never again formed part of the Achaemenid empire (Thucydides, 1.117.3).

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