



DATIS

DATIS (Gk. *Dâtis*), Iranian personal name, reflecting Old Iranian **Dātiya-* (cf. El. *Da-ti-ya*; see below), rather than **Dāti-*, as previously assumed (cf. Old Pers. final *-iya-*, reflected in Gk. *-is*, as in *Bṛdiya-/ Smérdis*). The name is formed with the hypocoristic suffix *-iya-* attached to the well-attested but ambiguous stem **dāta-* (Schmitt, p. 468 n. 38a).

One famous bearer of this name is known, Datis the Mede, though little information on him is available (Herodotus, 6.94.2; Diodorus, 10.27.1); he seems to have been a kind of specialist on Greek affairs under Darius I (522-486 B.C.E.). Together with Artaphernes, son of Artaphernes (see [ARTAPHRENĒS](#)) and nephew of Darius, he led the large Persian amphibious expedition against Greece in 490 B.C.E., with the goal of subduing Eretria and Athens. He succeeded the unfortunate Mardonius (Herodotus, 6.94.2; Nepos, *Miltiades* 4.1), who in 492 had suffered military and naval defeats in Thrace and off Mount Athos. Although he is mentioned together with Artaphernes several times (Herodotus, 6.119.1, 7.8b.3, 7.10b.1, 7.74.2), Datis seems to have been the actual commander, for he alone is named in the narrative of the campaign (cf. Diodorus, 11.2.2). About his life and career before 490 B.C.E. nothing is known from the classical sources (but see below).

In the spring of 490 B.C.E. a great Persian army gathered in the Cilician plain, whence it embarked on 600 triremes, sailing along the coast to Samos, passing through the Cyclades, and burning Naxos, which had not previously been captured (Herodotus, 6.95-96). The next stations were Delos and Carystos (6.97-99), where the Persians enslaved their captives. The first main objective



of the expedition, Eretria, was taken through betrayal on the seventh day; it was sacked and burned, and its inhabitants were deported (6.100-01) and settled in [Arderikka](#) (see also [DEPORTATIONS i](#)), about 40 km from Susa (6.119.1-4).

Up to that point the expedition had been totally successful, and a few days later the Persians set sail for Attica. On the advice of the exiled former tyrant Hippias, who was with Datis, they landed at Marathon (Herodotus, 6.102, 107.1); Diodorus' story (10.27.1-3) about a defiant message sent by Datis to the Athenians and Miltiades' reply is certainly pure fabrication (cf. also the remarks in Plato, *Leges* 3.698e). Details on the battle of Marathon (q.v.) are missing or rather vague in Herodotus' account (6.111-16); the purpose and execution of several military operations are not patent, and it is unclear whether or not Datis made the first decisive move (cf. Nepos, *Miltiades* 5.4). After long and heavy fighting the Athenians, led by Miltiades, gained the victory at Marathon, even before the arrival of the Spartans, to whom they had appealed for help (Herodotus, 6.120). They pursued the fleeing Persians to the shore and tried to set fire to their ships (6.113.2, 6.115.1) but were able to capture only seven. The remainder of the fleet hastened to reach Athens, rounding Cape Sounion before the people of the city and its harbor, Phaleron, heard news of the battle and could prepare for defense (6.115-16). According to Pliny (*Naturalis Historia* 35.57), the leaders of both Greeks and Persians, including Datis, were portrayed in a painting of the battle at Marathon (by Phidias' brother or nephew Panaenus?) in the so-called "painted hall" at Athens.

Datis and his forces, having achieved nothing on the Greek mainland and having taken only the Cyclades, returned to Asia (Herodotus, 6.116, 6.118.1-3). Ctesias reported (cf. Jacoby, *Fragmente* IIC, p. 462 frag. 13 par. 22), contrary to Herodotus' account, that Datis fell at Marathon and that his corpse was not handed over to the Persians, but this story is not supported by other evidence.

Details of Datis' subsequent life are unknown, though his sons Harmamithres and Tithaeus (Títhaios) were cavalry leaders under Xerxes I (486-65 B.C.E.) ten years later (Herodotus, 7.88.1). The authenticity of reports of Datis' dedications in 490 B.C.E. to the temple of Athena at Lindos, chief city of Rhodes, included in a temple chronicle of the Hellenistic period (Jacoby, *Fragmente* IIIB, p. 512), has been questioned repeatedly (see most recently Baslez). On the basis of an ostrakon found in the Athenian agora, on which the Athenian nobleman and leader Aristeides is characterized as the "fellow of Datis" (Raubitschek, pp.



240-41), it has been argued that Datis had fairly close contacts with Greek officials. Evidence from Herodotus and other sources that Datis showed respect for Greek deities, especially the Delian Apollo, may point in the same direction. It is certainly in harmony with Datis' apparent efforts to speak Greek, though rather haltingly, so that Greek *datismós* became a kind of synonym for "barbarism." A similar allusion is found in the proverbial expression "Datis' song" (*tò Dátidos mélos*; Aristophanes, *Pax* 289; cf. Raubitschek, pp. 234-37).

D. M. Lewis (pp. 194-95) recognized that this Datis was also mentioned once, in the Elamite form *Da-ti-ya*, on one of the Persepolis Fortress tablets, Q-1809. *Da-ti-ya* was a person of high rank who was returning "from Sardis to the king at Persepolis" in the eleventh month of the twenty-seventh year of Darius (i.e., January-February 494 B.C.E.), carrying "a sealed document of the king." He is recorded as having been recipient of a rather large ration of beer. Lewis interpreted this text as evidence that before the famous expedition of 490 B.C.E. Datis had gained experience in the Ionian revolt, perhaps on a tour of inspection to coordinate the final campaigns to end the revolt early in 494 B.C.E.

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