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HERODOTUS VII. XERXES ACCORDING TO HERODOTUS
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HERODOTUS

vii. XERXES ACCORDING TO HERODOTUS

Bad advisors. The young king inherited a solid empire, which was greater than any before in history. Subsequent events come under the curse of the great war of the years 480 and 479, which Herodotus describes as an immense struggle and to which he devotes a third of his work. Xerxes' venture was indeed not only directed against the whole of Hellas, but against the entire part of the world which had so far remained ungoverned. Xerxes had already been prefigured in his essential features by Aeschylus's tragedy *Persae* (Gammie, 1986, p. 183; Hutzfeld, 1999; Harrison, 2001). In that work too there were already mentions of arrogant plans and bad advisors. In Herodotus's work, the role of bad advisor is assumed by Mardonius. As soon as the intention was expressed to put down the rebellion in Egypt, Mardonius insisted on marching against Athens (7.5.1-2; cf. Van Ophuijsen and Stork, 1999, pp. 1-76). Once again, the primary motive was revenge, but Herodotus instantly discerned Mardonius's deeper motives: in fact, all Hellas was to be subjected (7.5.3-6.1). Mardonius was not the only bad advisor in the king's surroundings; the Aleuads and Pisistratids also exerted their influence (7.6).

Claim to world dominion. Xerxes first marched against Egypt (7.7). Afterwards

the council was convened, to which Xerxes submitted his plans for a campaign against Athens (7.7). Xerxes not only intended to join the tradition of the great conquerors Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius, but wanted immediately to march against the whole of Europe. Persian soil was to reach the god's heaven; thus he openly sought world domination (7.8a-c). A speech by Mardonius directly followed, which supported these plans. The decision was to be carried out on the sea and on land (7.9c), as had already been predicted by Aeschylus (*Persae* 101 ff.). When Mardonius pointed out the weak points of the Greeks, Herodotus may also have been expressing some criticisim directed against contemporary Athenian imperialism (Fornara 1971, pp. 86 ff.).

Artabanus. The counterpart to Mardonius was old Artabanus, who had already played the part of the warner during Darius's Scythian campaign. He thus called to mind the fatal outcome of those of Darius's ventures which had gone beyond divine limits with heedless lust for territory (7.10a.2-c.2; cf. Van Ophuijsen and Stork, pp. 77-150, 215-60). Artabanus already clearly anticipated the approaching disaster: the intervention of higher powers (7.10e-f), the underestimating of the opponent, and the possible debacle (7.10g-h). As usual, however, the warner was sent packing. With the king oblivious to realities, Artabanus was told to stay home with his women (7.11.1)—precisely where Xerxes was to end up after the failure of his campaign (9.108-9).

Hybris and deceptive visions. Xerxes' pride in his lineage made him blind against any danger (7.11.2). He sought an absolute decision. Either the Persians would rule over the Greeks or the other way round (7.11.3). Thus the claim to world domination was once more expressed (7.11.4). Hence Herodotus described Xerxes as possessed by hybris and blind from the very start. This is important because of the fact that the succeeding deceptive visions were not affecting an innocent person. At night Xerxes was haunted by doubts as to whether Artabanus might in fact have been right, but, as soon as he decided to call off the venture, a vision again made him change his mind: a handsome man encouraged him to carry out his decisions (7.12). Yet on the following day the Great King announced that he would give up the plan of a campaign. The dream once more afflicted him and threatened him with loss of his power if he gave up the war (7.14). Xerxes' resolution flagged, and he asked Artabanus for advice (7.15a.1). They decided to put the divinity to the test, and Artabanus, who against his better instincts agreed to the project, slept in the king's clothes on the royal throne (7.15a.1). Thus he, too, became accountable to the god. The dream threatened Artabanus with consequences if he tried to avert what was

bound to happen (7.17). The latter finally acknowledged the divine will for war (7.18).

The interpretation of these dream scenes is treated by scholars in various ways. On the one hand, the interconnection between delusion and fatality is emphasized, and the malicious pretense of false facts is accentuated (Regenbogen, 1930/1982; Schlögl, 1998, pp. 57 ff.). Herodotus thus showed the inevitability of the conflict (Köhnken, 1988). On the other hand, Xerxes' previous inappropriate behavior is pointed out. The latter was not considered as an innocent victim of a higher fate, but as an arrogant and fickle man of power. The higher powers merely drove things to a decision which were already decided (Bichler, 1985b, pp. 140 ff.; Bichler, 2000b, p. 322; Van Ophuijsen and Stork, 1999, pp. 172-288; Pietsch, 2001). In any case, the decision to make war was now definitely taken (7.18.3-4). The dream vision appeared for the third time. Xerxes is crowned with a wreath of olive branches, whose shoots reach over the entire earth, but the crown suddenly disappears (7.19.1). The Magians considered this as a sign of success (7.19.2), but the reader knows: the hope of world domination will come to nothing.

Subjugating the elements. Xerxes continued the preparations begun by Darius for another four years (7.20.1) in order to establish the greatest army of all times—including the mythical period (7.20.2). The reciprocal crossings of the border between Europe and Asia are pointed out in a kind of second prooemion. As for the different territories of Europe and Asia, Herodotus mentions them both at the beginning and at the end of his work (1.4.4; 9.116.3). Here the myths about the abduction of women are apparently presented as legitimating points of view by later warring parties (cf. Fehling, 1989). Thus erudite Persians make the Phoenicians and their abduction of Io responsible for the beginning of the conflict (1.1.1). In the end, however, it was the occupation of Ilium that decisively triggered the later wars (1.5.1). Here the question is far more complex, since Mysians and Teucrians had already crossed the Bosphorus to Thessaly long before the Trojan War (7.20.2), but Xerxes was now striving to actually eliminate the natural borders. The bridging of the Hellespont is thus—already by Aeschylus (*Persae* 745 ff.)—characterized as a conscious sin of subjugating the elements, when Xerxes ordered his men to whip the sea and have shackles sunk down in it after the storm had destroyed an initial bridge (7.34-35; Briquel and Desnier, 1983; Eckstein, 1981/83 [1989]). A new pontoon bridge of 700 ships was built (7.36), across which the gigantic army later was driven under the lash for

seven days and seven nights (7.56.1). Also during the digging of a canal across the isthmus of Mount Athos, the laborers were driven with whips (7.22-24).

The army. The size of the army, with its contingents coming from all countries, exceeded all dimensions. They arrived in Sardis, then moved towards the Hellespont (7.40-41; on the army's route in Asia see Müller 1997). In front was the supply train; in the center were the Persians; and the rear consisted of the tribes of the empire. The Persians were already marching in formation (7.40.2-4). The king was followed by 1,000 select spearbearers and horsemen (7.41; Kienast, 1996). After reaching Abydos, the fleet sailed in formation for maneuvers at the Hellespont (7.44). The king enjoyed the sight of his gigantic army. The Hellespont was crossed near Doriscus, where Herodotus placed the great military review (7.59-100). This account clearly shows a connection with the great catalogue of the Iliad (Armayor, 1978c). First the size of the land army is determined, which comprised 1,700,000 fighting men (7.60). Then the army is presented by nation (7.61-80). Herodotus here focuses on clothes and equipment; the information he gives significantly differs from the iconographic record of the Persepolis reliefs (Armayor, 1978c, pp. 5 f.; Calmeyer, 1987). Noticeable, too, is the attempt to call many of the commanders by name. The Achaemenids play a special part (Schmitt, 1987; Briant, 1990, pp. 89 ff.). Here Herodotus may have referred in part to trustworthy information (Lewis, 1985, pp. 113 f.). The entire geographic extent of the empire is presented.

Next Herodotus adds an excursus, naming the highest commanders and describing their rich equipment (7.81-83). There follows a description of the cavalry, which Herodotus estimates at 80,000 men, not including camel riders and baggage train (7.84-88). Since he enumerates 10 cavalry nations, he must have calculated contingents of 10 times 8,000 men. In addition, there were the Arab camel riders (7.86.2). Next he lists the catalogue of ships (7.89-99). Herodotus adopts Aeschylus's figure of 1,207 boats (*Persae* 339 ff.), which on their part represent homage to the 1,186 ships of the Iliad. However, Herodotus divides these among twelve nations, whereby he again shows the geographic dimensions of the Persian Empire. Here Greek contingents also play an important part, besides Phoenicians, Syrians, and Pamphylians. Certain naval commanders then are named, among whom a woman, Artemisia, receives particular attention (7.99). The size of the entire force according to Herodotus consisted of 1,700,000 infantrymen, 80,000 horsemen, 1,207 animals, and 3,000 cargo ships. The king inspected a great review on sea

and land and had the contingents recorded (7.100).

Through Thrace to Thessaly. Afterwards, the army marched in three parallel columns through Thrace towards Athos (7.121.2-3). (About the possible march routes in Hellas, cf. Müller, 1987.) It grew even larger, and Herodotus appears particularly eager to record the newly recruited troops (7.110, 115.2). The fleet passed through the Athos canal to Therma, where the towns of Chalcidice (carefully listed, 7.122-23) kept their ships. Xerxes covered the route to Therma on land (7.124-27). So far the Persians were moving on already conquered ground, for Darius had pushed the border forward to Thessaly (7.108.1). In Therma, the king was informed of which Greeks had complied with the Persians' demand to offer earth and water (7.131-132.1). Herodotus here adds a digression about the Hellenic communities which had rejected the demand, whereby he particularly underlined Sparta's and Athens's love of freedom (7.134-44). Xerxes sent no more messengers to either one, since they had already refused to pay tribute under Darius (7.32). There follows a further section showing the vain search for allies against the Persians (7.148-71; Bichler, 1985a sees in the inefficiency of the search an indication of lack of historicity; Zahrnt 1993 disagrees). Herodotus uses this opportunity to describe the Persian urge for expansion and to show the potential maximum option for the defenders. Already on this occasion Herodotus looks ahead and records the synchronism between the battle of Salamis and that of Himera in Sicily (7.166).

Calculating the Persian forces. Herodotus expressly exonerates the Thessalians from the reproach of Medism; their country could not have been defended (7.172-74; cf. already 7.128-30). The Greeks took up their defensive positions at the pass of Thermopylae and Cape Artemisium (7.175-78). So far Xerxes' fleet had not suffered any military losses (7.184.1). This provided Herodotus with an occasion to once more take stock of the Persian forces (7.184-87). He estimated 200 men per trireme and reported the force of the fleet as amounting to 214,000 men (7.181.1). In addition, each ship had a special fighting troop consisting of Persians and Medes and amounting to 36,210 men (7.184.2). For the 3,000 transport boats, he estimated a crew of 80 men per boat, altogether amounting to 240,000 men (7.184.3). The fleet thus had a total strength of 517,610 men (7.184.4).

Regarding the army, Herodotus repeats his previous data, but he now summarizes the force of the Arab camel riders and the Libyan charioteers, reporting them as 20,000 men. Thus the army altogether amounted to

2,317,610 men (8.186.5), in addition to hangers-on and European allies (7.186.5). Hence the Persians had more than 2,641,610 infantrymen fit for action (7.185.3), without counting the Thessalians and the allies of central Greece. The supply train was almost equally great, counting altogether 5,283,220 men—excepting women, eunuchs, and animals (7.187.1). It is not surprising that an army of that size would drink up entire rivers and lakes (7.21.1; 187.1) and that the communities doomed to provide for them would face ruin (7.118-120). A third of the land forces deforested the mountain woods of Macedonia, so that the army could get through (7.131).

Barbarian threat in east and west. Xerxes appeared to realize that, contrary to Mardonius's words, he was about to fight against capable enemies. Already when crossing the Hellespont, he urged the noble Persians to be brave (7.52.1). Once the Greeks were overcome, nothing could stop the Persians (7.52). Thus the Greeks became the bulwark for the rest of the world, against which Xerxes' ambitions were directed (7.138.1). This is particularly shown in the dialogue of the Greek envoys with Gelon of Syracuse, for whom they laid out a scenario of a sinister threat (7.157-62). At the same time, the danger hovering over the Greeks was intensified by the fact that the invasion of Sicily by the Carthaginians pointed to a mighty Barbarian threat in both east and west. Amilcas with his 300,000 men had exactly the same forces (7.165) with which Mardonius was later to march up at Plataeae (8.113.3). Amilcas's forces also were presented in a catalogue enumerating the supporting peoples, and he too marched into a foreign country; yet Herodotus conspicuously avoided any reference to a Carthaginian presence in Sicily. The highpoint of this general presentation of a concentrated threat is the set of battle synchronisms; in either case a combined land and sea battle took place on the same day: Himera and Salamis (7.166), Thermopylae and Artemisium, Plataeae and Mycale (8.15.1; 9.100.2; 101.2; Bichler, 1985a; see also Walser, 1984, pp. 40-48). In addition, Herodotus again and again refers to Xerxes' plan to conquer to whole of Europe (7.52.4; 209.4; 8.108.2-4).

Argives. A special part is played by the Argives. The latter remained neutral, as they were advised to do by Delphi (7.148.3-149.1). Yet Xerxes' herald had expressly reminded them of the mythical origin of the Persians and of their ancestor Perses from Argos (7.1.50). Later an Argive delegation is said to have asked Artaxerxes whether the friendship they had established with Xerxes still held good (7.151). In this context, Herodotus refers to his supposedly Argive sources (7.152.1).

Ominous signs. It seems clear that the huge numbers quoted by Herodotus were of a poetic and legendary kind and have no historical validity (Bichler, 2000b, p. 333; see also Kehne, 2002). They illustrate the presumptuousness in human accumulation of power and indicate from that that the project was predestined to fail. Thus the march of the Persian army was accompanied by ominous signs. Already Artabanus pointed out that the divinity ruined those who were arrogant (7.10e). When the army set out for Sardis, there was a solar eclipse (7.37.3-3). (This cannot be astronomically proved. Cf. Mosshammer, 1981; Wenskus, 1990.) Afterwards, when the rich Pythius asked Xerxes to exempt his eldest son from serving in the army, he had the young man cut in half and ordered his army to march between his two parts (7.38-40.1; Rollinger, 2000a). When the army marched through the sites of the Trojan War, thunder was heard and lightning seen coming from Mount Ida, and these destroyed part of the army (7.42.2). In spite of a huge sacrifice to Athene in Ilium, the army was seized with panic at night (7.43.2). The first bridge over the Hellespont was destroyed by a storm (7.34-35). Artabanus's warnings that the army was too big and that luck was transitory were unheeded (7.46-52). Xerxes' belief that he had nothing to fear from the Ionians (7.50-52) was later disproved by their breaking away (9.104). A mare gave birth to a hare (7.57.1), and a mule bore young which turned out to be a hermaphrodite (7.57.2). All this ought to have shown Xerxes that impossible things might happen. After the military review at Doriscus, Demaratus appeared as warner. The latter for a while occupied the place of Artabanus, who had been sent back to Susa with the royal scepter, to look after the household and rulership of the Great King. Demaratus expressly pointed out the power of the Greeks, whereupon Xerxes merely responded with a smile (7.105.1). The well-informed reader knows that, in the Histories, to rise above others with a smile is a sign of fatal self-satisfaction (Lateiner, 1977).

In the town of Ennea Hodoi ("Nine Paths"), nine native boys and girls were buried alive, and this was presented as a Persian custom (7.114.1). Queen Amestris [q.v.] is said to have ordered similar things to honor the subterranean divinity (7.114.2). Thus the barbaric brutality of the enemy was displayed. Something similar was demonstrated by the behavior of the cavalry leader Pharnuches. The latter fell from his horse when a dog got in his way, as a result of which he was unable to participate in the parade at Sardis. With despotic willfulness he had the horse's legs mutilated (7.88). When the army marched towards Therma, lions attacked the camels (7.125-26). Artachaees, one of the outstanding Achaemenids, who had managed the work on the Athos

canal, died shortly afterwards (7.117.1).

First losses. Despite all these negative signs, the Persian advance proceeded, initially without problems. The troops continued to advance toward Thermopylae without meeting any resistance, and the fleet took a supporting position near Sepias at the southern end of the peninsula of Magnesia (7.183.3-184.1). Here, however, a three-day storm struck, which destroyed at least 400 warships (7.190-191.1). In early fights before Artemisium, 15 Persian ships were sunk by Sandoces of Cyme (7.194-95). The following night, rain and storm destroyed a further 200 Persian ships, which were attempting to sail around Euboea (8.7, 13). Thus the Persians had already lost altogether 600 ships without the enemy's doings, a fact which Herodotus attributes to the will of the divinity: the latter is said to have wanted to create a balance of power between the two sides (8.13). In comparison, the capture of three Greek ships near Sciathus seemed a trifling matter (7.179-82).

Thermopylae. Before the battle of Thermopyle, Herodotus once more drew attention to the respective forces. 1,700,000 Persians confronted 4,120 Hoplites (7.202-207). In addition there were 1,000 Phocians and all the Opuntian Locrians on the Greek side (7.203.1). As at Marathon, the heroic accomplishments of the defenders increased with the absence of expected support; for the Greeks were looking forward to the Olympic Games, and the Spartans, the Carnean festival (7.206.2). Leonidas alone was sent off in advance with 300 selected Hoplites, and a Theban contingent joined them. The battle lasted altogether for three days (For the battle, cf. Dascalakis, 1962; Hammond, 1996; Dillery, 1996; Szemler, Cherf, and Kraft, 1996; Flower, 1998). For two days the defenders were able to resist the onslaught (7.210-12). It was not until the Persians went around the pass that the situation changed (7.213-18), whereupon the majority of the Greeks decided to retreat (7.219.2). Herodotus assumes that Leonidas himself had sent back the allies, so as to attribute the fame of self-sacrifice to the Spartans alone (7.220-222). Yet there were also other contingents waiting along with the Spartans, among them 700 Thespian Hoplites under Demophilus and the Helots of the Spartans (8.25). The Thebans were forced to stay by Leonidas (7.222) but are said to have surrendered later (7.225.2; 233). According to Herodotus, the Persians were forced to the onslaught by whips, and some of them were trampled down alive by their own troops (7.233).

Their opponents, however, fought of their own free will, following their fathers' custom. Herodotus reports that there were about 4,000 victims on the

Greek side (7.228.2; 8.25.2) and 20,000 on the Persian side (8.24.1). Two of Darius's sons, Abrocomas and Hyperanthes, were also said to have fallen (7.224.2). Xerxes wanted to conceal his own great losses and had most of the bodies buried in ditches. Only 1,000 dead Persians remained on the battlefield (8.24.1). Yet according to Herodotus's calculations, he still had 1,680,000 footsoldiers. The threat to Hellas was uninterrupted. With the grotesque show of the victims, Herodotus cleverly avoids mentioning that the defenders were unable to maintain their position and that the Persians had gained an important strategic success (Bichler, 2000b, pp. 338 f.). Such matters, in any case, did not put a stop to the myth of "Thermopyle" (MacGregor, 365; Rebenich, 2002). Even the speeches and omens accompanying the battle and framing the events took people's minds off the Greek defeat and directed their eyes towards future events. Thus Xerxes in his blindness considered the brave defenders of Thermopyle as foolish (8.24.2). Here Tritantaechmes, the son of Artabanus, appeared as a warner. When Greek deserters from Arcadia reported that the Greeks were calmly preparing themselves for the Olympic Games (8.26.1-2), he drew the right conclusions and recognized their invincible force (8.26.3). In his typical manner, Herodotus thus compares the apparently different systems of values: masculine pride and dignity were compared with the striving for measurable goods (Konstan, 1987).

Already before the battle, Xerxes' scouts observed how the Lacedaemonians were calmly combing their long hair (7.208). Demaratus stressed the fact to the king that these men risked their lives of their own free will. Once they were conquered, no nation on earth would stand in his way any longer (7.209). After the battle, Xerxes wanted to know how many such men still existed, and so Demaratus provided him with a survey of the strength of the Lacedaemonians. He mentioned 8,000 Spartans (7.234.1-2), and, in reply to the king's question how he could easily conquer them (7.234.3), Demaratus suggested a strategy which was to prove effective in Herodotus's lifetime: Xerxes was to occupy Cythera with 3,000 boats and tie up the Spartan forces there (7.235). Achaemenes, the commander of the fleet, advised against this plan (7.236), and Xerxes agreed with him (7.237). Thereupon he had the body of Leonidas mutilated and put on show (7.238).

Cape Artemisium. Similarly sinful behavior marked the Persian naval action at Cape Artemisium. It was decided that not a single Greek was to be left alive, not even the bearers of the holy fire (*pyrphóros*, 8.6.2). Here, too, the battles continued for three days and were exactly synchronous with Thermopylae.

The Persians mustered 712 triremes: 592 ships of their own—1,207 minus 600 minus 15—as well as 120 boats from the European allies (7.185.1). The Greeks possessed 271 boats, apart from the fifty-oared ones (8.2.1). In addition there were another 53 boats from Attica (8.14.1). The Persians were thus more than twice as strong. Nevertheless the Greeks ventured a daring exploit and attacked their disconcerted enemies. They let themselves be surrounded, then broke through the Persians and captured 30 ships (8.9-11). Nightfall finally separated the fighting men (8.11.3). Thus Herodotus described the events on a structural level, as he did at Thermopylae. At the beginning, the Greeks were successful and impressively proved their fighting strength despite their lower numbers. This was also true of the following day, where an advance of the Cilician fleet was averted with the enemy suffering high losses (8.14.2). On the third day, the Persians moved up in close crescent-shaped formation (8.15.1). In the battle, the opponents proved to be evenly matched, and Herodotus expressly mentions the considerable losses of the Greeks. (8.16). The Egyptian fleet particularly distinguished itself (8.17). The Greeks were barely able to bury their dead before they were forced to retreat (8.18). Themistocles had inscriptions put up at those places on Euboea, where drinking water was available for the fleet, to warn the Ionians siding with the Persians not to fight against their own compatriots (cf. Bösel, 2001 regarding the personality of Themistocles in Herodotus). The Carians also were encouraged to break away (8.22.1-2; cf. West, 1985). Themistocles believed, however, that the enemy could be defeated, if the Persians were deprived of the aid of the Ionians (8.19.1).

Phocis and Delphi. It is noteworthy that the gigantic Persian army will never be deployed as a whole and that it will entirely dissolve after Salamis. It will constantly be beset by evil omens. After Thermopylae, the massive force, guided by the Thessalians, moved across Doris and into the land of the Phocians (8.31). The latter had for the most part abandoned their country, which was now being devastated (Kase and Szemler, 1982). The Persians were even setting the temples on fire, and the Apollo shrine in Abai went up in flames (about the destruction of shrines, cf. Walser, 1984, pp. 49-52; Scheer, 2000, pp. 201-29; Scheer, 2003). In a catalogue, Herodotus lists twelve cities that were burnt. Women were repeatedly violated until they died (8.32-33; Walcot, 1978). Xerxes, who was greedy for Croesus's votive offerings, commanded a special detachment to plunder Delphi (8.35). However, the divinity announced the protection of its shrine by a miraculous token (8.37.1-2), and at Athene's shrine a massive rockfall amid flashes of lightning annihilated the hostile

soldiers (8.37.3). At the same time, the vision of a hero is observed (8.38-39). Thus ends the report about the subjection of Phocis in a not entirely coherent legend of Delphi's defense, which Herodotus cleverly divides into two independent sources (Fehling, 1989, pp. 12 ff.; Erbse, 1991).

Devastating Athens and Attica. The major part of the army took up quarters in Boeotia (8.34). The Athenians left their city and sought protection on the island of Salamis, where the allied fleet had also assembled (8.40-41). Instead of a report about how the Persians had occupied deserted Athens, Herodotus now describes the devastation of Attica. He gives this event a special indication by dating it to the year when the archon Calliades was in office (8.51.1; Bichler, 2003). When occupying the Acropolis, the Persians committed a grave sin. They killed the remaining defenders and burnt down the shrines (8.52-53). Xerxes then proudly sent a messenger to Artabanus in Susa to inform him of this success (8.54). The next day he ordered the Athenian exiles who were in his entourage to offer sacrifice, and they saw a miraculous omen. A holy olive tree on the Acropolis, after the burning, put out a fresh shoot (8.55). Thus the divinity sent a sign of hope for a better future in the hour of the greatest need.

Salamis. Herodotus now directs his attention towards Salamis. Once more a miraculous sign boded misfortune to the Persians. A great cloud of dust arose, and loud cries were heard near Eleusis. Demaratus ordered his men to keep silent about the omen (8.65). There followed the decisive battle of Salamis, which Herodotus describes vividly. The defenders provide 380 warships, in addition to the fifty-oar boats; these are listed with precision in a fleet catalogue (8.43-48). (Aeschylus, however, only mentioned 310 ships in *Persae* 337 ff.) The Persians mustered about 600 boats minus the losses (not precisely counted) near Artemisium, perhaps making about 500 ships; but Herodotus augments this number. There must also have been newly added contingents, but Herodotus keeps silent about them (cf. Usher, 1988, p. 53). Themistocles had to use all his powers of persuasion to make the allies agree to fight (8.48, 57-63). They were discouraged because of the occupation of Athens (8.50; 56). However, the Athenian imposed his will: the decision was to be sought in the straits of Salamis. The lesser number of ships was to be compensated for by greater mobility (8.60a-b). A good omen supported this decision. Earth and sea shook at sunrise (8.64). The Persian council of war also voted for battle (8.67.2-68a.1). The warnings of the woman Artemisia, that the Greeks were as superior to the Persians on sea as the men were to the women, were cast to the winds (8.68a.1). Her recommendation to keep Athens as a pledge and to march

toward the Peloponnese was ignored (8.68a.2-b.2). Artemisia praised the character of the Great King, but she pointed out the inferior quality of his servants, among whom she named the Egyptians, Cypriots, Cilicians, and Pamphylians (8.68c). The Phoenicians are not referred to in this context, but it was precisely they who were presented as slanderers in the following battle (8.90), whereupon the king had some of them decapitated (cf. Erbse, 1992, p. 86). Xerxes praised the advice of Artemisia, yet he was inclined to fight the battle. He let the council decide and agreed with the majority, which voted for battle (8.69). Thus the only democratic procedure among the Persians quoted in the Histories directly led them into ruin. The scenario represents Herodotus's irony, which presents a valiant and brave Artemisia in the circle of effeminate men; later she does not shy away from ramming the ship of her own allies, deluding the Greek enemy, and thus achieving her own escape from the debacle (8.87-88). After the battle Xerxes stated that the women had become men and the men had become women (8.88.3).

The battle is described by Herodotus with numerous details. When the Persian fleet was ready for action, it frightened the Greeks, and especially the Peloponnesians (8.70, 74). In order to overcome the increasing hesitation, Themistocles decided to resort to a trick and provoke Xerxes to attack (8.74-75). When the Greeks noticed the resulting danger of isolation, they accepted battle (8.76-83). Of course, this did not happen without auspicious omens, for there had just arrived the cult statues of the Aeacids, which had beeen evacuated from Aegina (8.88.3). In addition there was the oracle of Bacis (8.77), the truth of which Herodotus definitely trusted (cf. Kirchberg, 1965, p. 106). According to Darbo-Peschanski (1987), Herodotus did not consider oracles as normative instances, but used them as a means to deepen historical insight. When the fighting began, a woman was said to have appeared to the Athenians, encouraging them to be brave (8.84.2). The battle order reflected the polar assessment of the Greek contingents as being aligned with Athens or with Sparta, with those two each forming one of the wings (8.85.1). This despite the fact that Sparta only provided 16 boats (8.43)! With the Persians, the Phoenicians and Ionians provided the wings, with the former situated opposite the Athenians (8.85.1).

Herodotus expressly points out that the Ionians fought hard (8.85.1). As a sign of gratitude, Theomestor was later to be appointed as tyrant of Samos, and Phylacus was enrolled as one of the royal benefactors, the Orosangs (cf. Wiesehöfer, 1980; 8.85.2-3). On the Greek side, Herodotus particularly

emphasized the Aeginetans as well as the Athenians (8.86; cf. also 8.91-93). Yet, despite all talk of effeminate men, he also credited the Persians with being brave. He ascribed their defeat to the fact that, contrary to the Greeks, they had lost good order (8.86). Many barbarians were drowned, because they were unable to swim (8.89; Hall, 1994; Rollinger, 2001a). Xerxes' brother Ariabignes was among the killed (8.89.1). Once the battle was won, the Greeks were immediately ready for a further encounter (8.96.1, 108.1). The king, however, who was in a state of shock, immediately planned a retreat, since he was worried about the Hellespont bridge (8.97). Merely as a feint, Xerxes had a pontoon bridge built towards Salamis (8.97.1), but on the same night, the demoralized fleet departed from Phalerum (8.108.1).

Regrouping the forces. Themistocles wanted to take advantage of the Persian defeat and immediately advance to the Hellespont with his fleet, but Eurybiades, the Spartan commander of the fleet, hesitated. The intact Persian army also appeared to be shocked and no longer marched towards the Peloponnese. It still consisted of 1,700,000 soldiers, 800,000 horsemen, and 20,000 charioteers; and so the fear of a conquest of all of Europe persisted (8.108.2-3). Before Herodotus related the ordeal of the retreat of the Persian army, he turned to Susa and described how the joy of victory about the seizure of Athens changed into lament and despair (8.99).

Mardonius tells Xerxes to stay in the country with 300,000 soldiers and to conquer Greece (8.100). The anxious king is too happy to follow this advice (8.103). He sends back Artemisia with his sons and the eunuch Hermotimus to Ephesus (8.103-104). The rest of the fleet is full of fear. On their nocturnal escape, the crews mistake the Attic cliffs for hostile ships (8.107). Mardonius proceeded with the withdrawing army to Thessaly, where he selected out 300,000 soldiers for his force (8.113). An anecdote points to their future fate. A messenger from Sparta demanded atonement for the death of Leonidas. The king laughed and referred him to Mardonius, saying that the latter would make amends (8.114).

Wild escape. On the other hand, what was to happen with the approximatly 1,500,000 infantry who, according to Herodotus's calculation, began the retreat with Xerxes? On his 45-day odyssey to the Hellespont, Xerxes was said to have lost his entire army (8.115.1). Epidemics, hunger, and sickness decimated the Persians (8.115.2-3). Meanwhile a storm had destroyed the pontoon bridge (8.117.1). Herodotus on the whole offers a sparse report about the retreat with few dramatic scenes. Even the holy chariot is stolen (8.115.4). According to a

variant of the account, the king escaped on a Phoenician boat and was shipwrecked. The Persian retinue jumped overboard to give up their lives for their master. Xerxes first presented the helmsman with a golden wreath for having saved him, but later had him decapitated, because the return journey had cost so many Persians their lives (8.118). Herodotus rejects this story, assuming that Xerxes would rather have had the Phoenician oarsmen jump into the sea than the Persian retinue (8.119). The anecdote nevertheless serves its purpose by emphasizing the servility of the Persian nobility and the unpredictability of the capricious despot (Erbse, 1992, pp. 88-89). Thus stories about the king's cruelty and arbitrariness embellish the scenery of the wild escape.

Loss of the northern Aegean. Following the defeat of Salamis, the Persians also lost their power over the northern Aegean, as Herodotus only briefly mentions. Artabazos, who accompanied Xerxes to the Hellespont with 60,000 men, was preparing to subject Potidaea, which had meanwhile broken away (8.126). Olynthos, which was equally suspected of treason, was conquered (8.127), but the siege of Potidaea did not succeed (8.128). The major part of the army was drowned during an attempt to attack on the seaward side; Herodotus refers to local sources, who reported that the reason for the disaster was a heinous deed perpetrated against a Poseidon shrine (8.129). With the few survivors Artabazus went back to Mardonius, to whom he was to become the unheeded warner before Plataeae. After Plataeae the movement to break away speeded up. For Thrace and the Hellespont in general, Herodotus holds that the Persian hyparchs were ousted by the Greeks (7.106.2). There are two episodes in which he emphasizes the heroism of certain Persian noblemen. Mascemes, the commander of Doriscus, could not be compelled to surrender, and therefore Xerxes sent him a yearly present to honor him (7.106). Boges, the commander of Eion, refused to accept the offer of an honorable withdrawal. He destroyed his fortune, killed his family, and burnt himself to death on the pyre (7.107).

Already in the Scythian Logos, Herodotus had mentioned a large mixing vessel set up by Pausanias at the mouth of the Bosphorus, which was to recall the Persian loss of Byzantium (4.3). The Greek capture of Sestus marks the end of the ongoing tale of the Hellespont in the Histories—that border, the crossing of which ended up in a huge debacle for the Persians; henceforth it would be the Greeks preparing to make the crossing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See HERODOTUS xi. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.