

GCSE (9–1)

Prescribed Source Booklet

ANCIENT HISTORY

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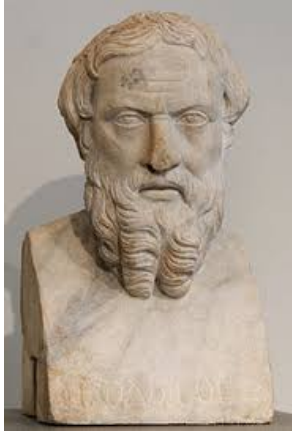


For first teaching in 2017

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE 559-465BC SOURCES AND KEY LEARNING

*Dr Paul Grigsby
University of Warwick*



The Persian Empire, 559–465 BC

Source	Period	Aims and agenda	Key problems	Views on Persia
<p>Herodotus</p> 	Lived approx. 484-425BC	<p>Herodotus' claimed at the beginning of his <i>Histories</i> that his purpose in writing was so the things of the past would not be forgotten, including the great deeds of Greeks and foreigners, and the reasons why they had fought together.</p> <p>His agenda was to provide the Greeks with a story of their own heroism in the face of a great enemy.</p>	<p>Herodotus was writing for a mainly Athenian audience and he has been accused of pro-Athenian bias and a lack of objectivity. Plutarch wrote an essay 'On the Malice of Herodotus' rejecting his anti-Theban bias.</p> <p>Part of what Herodotus does is give us peoples' stories – those handed down by posterity or through eyewitnesses - rather than necessarily trying to get to the underlying truth. His accounts of earlier times especially often descend into the mythical, and he is fond of a tall tale in his descriptions of other lands.</p>	Herodotus has a traveller's interest in other peoples, but he often writes with the anti-Persian bias of his Athenian audience
<p>Ctesias</p> 	Fifth Century BC	<p>Ctesias was physician to the Achaemenid King Artaxerxes II and author of treatises on rivers, on the Persian revenues, of the <i>Indica</i> concerning India, and a 23 book history of Assyria and Persia, the <i>Persica</i>, supposedly written using the Persian Royal Archives.</p>	<p>Ctesias was writing from a Persian perspective supposedly using Persian Royal documents, but his works contain many factual errors. As a part of the Royal entourage, you would expect an insider view, but details are often lacking. His placement also encourages a very pro-Persian bias.</p>	Pro-Persian
<p>Plutarch</p> 	Lived AD 46 – AD 120	<p>Wrote the '<i>Parallel Lives</i>' comparing famous Greeks to Romans.</p> <p>Each 'Life' comparison attempted to give a moral lesson.</p> <p>Alexander was compared to Julius Caesar.</p>	<p>Plutarch wrote '<i>biography, not history</i>'.</p> <p>More concerned with character over political and military achievements.</p> <p>Plutarch did not write in great detail</p> <p>Plutarch highlighted supernatural events and dreams as omens.</p> <p>Plutarch was a priest at the important Temple of Apollo at Delphi.</p>	Shows greater objectivity in his accounts than either of the above

Key sources:

Introduction to the Persian world

(Suggested timings: 1–2 hours)

Herodotus *Histories* Preface 1.1-1.7

1. What Herodotus from Halicarnassus has learnt by inquiry is here set forth: in order that so the memory of the past may not be blotted out from among men by time, and that great and marvellous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners and especially the reason why they warred against each other may not lack renown.

The Persian learned men say that the Phoenicians were the cause of the feud. These (they say) came to our seas from the sea which is called Red,¹ and having settled in the country which they still occupy, at once began to make long voyages. Among other places to which they carried Egyptian and Assyrian merchandise, they came to Argos, which was about that time preeminent in every way among the people of what is now called Hellas. The Phoenicians then came, as I say, to Argos, and set out their cargo. On the fifth or sixth day from their coming, their wares being now well-nigh all sold, there came to the sea shore among many other women the king's daughter, whose name (according to Persians and Greeks alike) was Io, the daughter of Inachus. They stood about the stern of the ship: and while they bargained for such wares as they fancied, the Phoenicians heartened each other to the deed, and rushed to take them. Most of the women escaped: Io with others was carried off; the men cast her into the ship and made sail away for Egypt.

2. This, say the Persians (but not the Greeks), was how Io came to Egypt, and this, according to them, was the first wrong that was done. Next, according to their tale, certain Greeks (they cannot tell who) landed at Tyre in Phoenicia and carried off the king's daughter Europe. These Greeks must, I suppose, have been Cretans. So far, then, the account between them stood balanced. But after this (say they) it was the Greeks who were guilty of the second wrong. They sailed in a long ship to Aea of the Colchians and the river Phasis¹: and when they had done the rest of the business for which they came, they carried off the king's daughter Medea. When the Colchian king sent a herald to demand reparation for the robbery, and restitution of his daughter, the Greeks replied that as they had been refused reparation for the abduction of the Argive Io, neither would they make any to the Colchians.

3. Then (so the story runs) in the second generation after this Alexandros son of Priam, having heard this tale, was minded to win himself a wife out of Hellas by ravishment; for he was well persuaded that, as the Greeks had made no reparation, so neither would he. So he carried off Helen. The Greeks first resolved to send messengers demanding that Helen should be restored and atonement made for the rape; but when this proposal was made, the Trojans pleaded the rape of Medea, and reminded the Greeks that they asked reparation of others, yet had made none themselves, nor given up the plunder at request.

4. Thus far it was a matter of mere robbery on both sides. But after this (the Persians say) the Greeks were greatly to blame; for they invaded Asia before the Persians attacked Europe. "We think," say they, "that it is wrong to carry women off: but to be zealous to avenge the rape is foolish: wise men take no account of such things: for plainly the women would never have been carried away, had not they themselves wished it. We of Asia regarded the rape of our women not at all; but the Greeks, all for the sake of a Lacedaemonian woman, mustered a great host, came to Asia, and destroyed the power of Priam. Ever since then we have regarded Greeks as our enemies." The Persians claim Asia for their own, and the foreign nations that dwell in it; Europe and the Greek race they hold to be separate from them.

5. Such is the Persian account of the matter: in their opinion, it was the taking of Troy which began their feud with the Greeks. But the Phoenicians do not tell the same story about Io as the Persians. They say that they did not carry her off to Egypt by force: she had intercourse in Argos with the captain of the ship: then, perceiving herself to be with child, she was ashamed that her parents should know it, and so, lest they should discover her condition, she sailed away with the Phoenicians of her own accord.

These are the stories of the Persians and the Phoenicians. For my own part, I will not say that this or that story is true, but I will name him whom I myself know to have done unprovoked wrong to the Greeks, and so go forward with my history, and speak of small and great cities alike. For many states that were once great have now become small: and those that were great in my time were small formerly. Knowing therefore that human prosperity never continues in one stay, I will make mention alike of both kinds.

6. Croesus was by birth a Lydian, son of Alyattes, and monarch of all the nations west of the river Halys, which flows from the south between Syria and Paphlagonia, and issues northward into the sea called Euxinus. This Croesus was as far as we know the first foreigner who subdued Greeks and took tribute of them, and won the friendship of others,—the former being the Ionians, the Aeolians, and the Dorians of Asia, and the latter the Lacedaemonians. Before the reign of Croesus all Greeks were free: for the Cimmerian host which invaded Ionia before his time did not subdue the cities but rather raided and robbed them.

7. Now the sovereign power, which belonged to the descendants of Heracles,¹ fell to the family of Croesus—the Mermnadae as they were called—in the following way. Candaules, whom the Greeks call Myrsilus, was the ruler of Sardis; he was descended from Alcaeus, son of Heracles; Agron, son of Ninus, son of Belus, son of Alcaeus, was the first Heraclid king of Sardis, and Candaules, son of Myrsus, was the last. The kings of this country before Agron were descendants of Lydus, son of Atys, from whom all this Lydian district took its name; before that it was called the land of the Meii. From these the Heraclidae, descendants of Heracles and a female slave of Iardanus, received the sovereignty and held it in charge, by reason of an oracle; and they ruled for two and twenty generations, or 505 years, son succeeding father, down to Candaules, son of Myrsus.

The rise of the Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great (559–530 BC)

(Suggested timings: 8–9 hours)

Cyrus' accession, the conquest of the Medes and the treatment of the conquered peoples

550 BC

(Suggested timings: 2 hours)

Herodotus *Histories* 1.110

110. So saying, he sent forthwith a messenger to that one of Astyages' cowherds whom he knew to pasture his herds in the likeliest places and where the mountains were most haunted of wild beasts. The man's name was Mitrdates, and his wife was a slave like him; her name was in the Greek language Cyno, in the Median Spako: for "spax" is the Median name for a dog. The foothills of the mountains where this cowherd pastured his kine are to the north of Agbatana, towards the Euxine sea: for the rest of Media is everywhere a level plain, but here, on the side of the Saspis,¹ the land is very high and mountainous and covered with woods. So when the cowherd came with all speed at the summons, Harpagus said: "Astyages bids you take this child and lay it in the most desolate part of the mountains, that it may thus perish as soon as may be. And he bids me say, that if you kill not the child, but in any way save it alive, you shall die a terrible death: and it is I who am ordered to see it exposed."

Herodotus *Histories* 1.112-1.115

112. And with that the cowherd uncovered it and showed it. But when the woman saw how fine and fair the child was, she fell a-weeping and laid hold of the man's knees and entreated him by no means to expose him. But the

husband said he could do no other; for, he said, there would be comings of spies from Harpagus to see what was done, and he must die a terrible death if he did not obey. So then being unable to move her husband, the woman said next: "Since I cannot move you from your purpose to expose, then do you do this, if needs must that a child be seen exposed. Know that I too have borne a child, but it was dead; take it now and lay it out, but, for the child of the daughter of Astyages, let us rear it as it were our own; so shall you escape punishment for offending against our masters, and we shall have taken no evil counsel. For the child that is dead will have royal burial, and he that is alive will not lose his life."

113. Thinking that his wife counselled him exceeding well in his present strait, the cowherd straightway did as she said. He gave his wife the child whom he had brought to kill him, and his own dead child he put into the chest wherein he carried the other, and decked it with all the other child's adornment and laid it out in the most desolate part of the mountains. Then on the third day after the laying out of the child, the cowherd left one of his herdsmen to guard it and went to the city, where he came to Harpagus' house and said he was ready to show the child's dead body. Harpagus sent the most trusty of his bodyguard, and these saw for him and buried the cowherd's child. So it was buried: and the cowherd's wife took and reared the boy who was afterwards named Cyrus; but she gave him not that but some other name.

114. Now when the boy was ten years old, it was revealed in some such wise as this who he was. He was playing in the village where these herdsmen's quarters were: there he was playing in the road with others of his age. The boys in their play chose for their king that one who passed for the son of the cowherd. Then he set them severally to their tasks, some to the building of houses, some to be his bodyguard, one (as I suppose) to be the King's Eye; to another he gave the right of bringing him messages; to each he gave his proper work. Now one of these boys who played with him was son to Artembares, a notable Median; as he did not obey the command Cyrus gave him, Cyrus bade the other boys seize him, and when they did so he dealt very roughly with the boy and scourged him. As soon as he was loosed, very angry at the wrong done him, he went down to his father in the city and complained of what he had met with at the hands of the son of Astyages' cowherd,—not calling him Cyrus, for that name had not yet been given. Artembares went with his anger fresh upon him to Astyages, bringing his son and telling of the cruel usage he had had: "O King," said he, "see the outrage done to us by the son of your slave, the son of a cowherd!" and with that he showed his son's shoulders.

115. When Astyages heard and saw, he was ready to avenge the boy in justice to Artembares' rank: so he sent for the cowherd and his son. When they were both present, Astyages said, fixing his eyes on Cyrus, "Is it you, then, the son of such a father, who have dared to deal so despitely with the son of the greatest of my courtiers?" "Nay, master," answered Cyrus, "what I did to him I did with justice. The boys of the village, of whom he was one, chose me in their play to be their king: for they thought me the fittest to rule. The other boys then did as I bid them: but this one was disobedient and cared nothing for me, till he got his deserts. So now if I deserve punishment for this, here am I to take it."

Herodotus *Histories* 1.119

1.119. When Harpagus heard this he did obeisance and went to his home, greatly pleased to find that his offence had served the needful end and that he was invited to dinner in honour of this fortunate day. Coming in, he bade his only son, a boy of about thirteen years of age, to go to Astyages' palace and do whatever the king commanded, and in his great joy he told his wife all that had happened. But when Harpagus' son came, Astyages cut his throat and tearing him limb from limb roasted some and boiled some of the flesh, and the work being finished kept all in readiness. So when it came to the hour for dinner and Harpagus was present among the rest of the guests, dishes of sheep's flesh were set before Astyages and the others, but Harpagus was served with the flesh of his own son, all but the head and hands and feet, which lay apart covered up in a basket. And when Harpagus seemed to have eaten his fill, Astyages asked him, "Are you pleased with your meal, Harpagus?" "Exceeding well pleased," Harpagus answered. Then those whose business it was brought him in the covered basket the head and hands and feet of his son, and they stood before Harpagus and bade him uncover and take of them what he would. Harpagus did so; he uncovered and saw what was left of his son: this he saw, but he mastered himself and was not dismayed. Astyages

asked him, “Know you what beast’s flesh you have eaten?” “Yea,” he said, “I know, and all that the king does is pleasing to me.” With that answer he took the rest of the flesh and went to his house, purposing then, as I suppose, to collect and bury all.

Key learning:

- **According to Herodotus, Cyrus was the grandson of the Median king Astyages. Astyages ordered his trusted advisor Harpagus to have his grandson killed due to the dreams he had. Cyrus was not killed, and eventually Astyages found out. As revenge for disobeying Astyages’ orders, Harpagus’ son was killed and cooked in a stew, which was then served to Harpagus.**
- **Use to discuss the personalities and priorities of Cyrus as demonstrated in these events**

Herodotus *Histories* 1.123.1

Herodotus 1.123.1. This then was the beginning of that legend. But as Cyrus grew to man’s estate, being the manliest and best loved of his peers, Harpagus courted him and sent him gifts, wishing to be avenged on Astyages; for he saw no hope of a private man like himself punishing Astyages, but as he saw Cyrus growing up he sought to make him an ally, for he likened Cyrus’ misfortune to his own.

Herodotus *Histories* 1.127-1.128

127. The Persians had long been ill content that the Medes should rule them, and now having got them a champion they were glad to win their freedom. But when Astyages heard that Cyrus was at this business, he sent a messenger to summon him; Cyrus bade the messenger bring back word that Astyages would see him sooner than he desired. Hearing this, Astyages armed all his Medians, and was so infatuated that he forgot what he had done to Harpagus, and appointed him to command the army. So no sooner had the Medes marched out and joined battle with the Persians than some of them deserted to the enemy, but most of them of set purpose played the coward and fled; those only fought who had not shared Harpagus’ counsels.

128. Thus the Median army was foully scattered. Astyages, hearing this, sent a threatening message to Cyrus, “that even so he should not go unpunished”; and with that he took the Magians who interpreted dreams and had persuaded him to let Cyrus go free, and impaled them; then he armed the Medes who were left in the city, the youths and old men. Leading these out, and encountering the Persians, he was worsted: Astyages himself was taken prisoner, and lost the Median army which he led.

Nabonidus Chronicle Column 2, 1–4

[ii.1] [The sixth year:note Astyages] mustered (his army) and marched against Cyrus, king of Anšan, for conquest [...]

[ii.2] The army rebelled against Astyages and he was taken prisoner. Th[ey handed him over] to Cyrus. ([...])

[ii.3] Cyrus <marched> to Ecbatana, the royal city. The silver, gold, goods, property, [...]

[ii.4] which he carried off as booty (from) Ecbatana, he took to Anšan. The goods (and) property of the army of [...].

Key learning:

- **Herodotus, the Nabonidus Chronicle and two Babylonian clay cylinders suggest the Median king Astyages ruled the Persians before Cyrus led a rebellion and managed to reverse the situation. The disaffected Median noble Harpagus may well have aided him in the rebellion.**

Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.5.17–20

17. As they continued their march and came near to Media, Cyrus turned aside to visit Cyaxares. And when they had exchanged greetings, the first thing Cyrus told Cyaxares was that a palace had been selected for him in Babylon, and

official headquarters, so that he might occupy a residence of his own whenever he came there; and then he also gave him many splendid presents.

18. Cyaxares accepted them and then introduced to him his daughter, who brought him a golden crown and bracelets and a necklace and the most beautiful Median robe that could be found.

19. As the princess placed the crown on Cyrus's head, Cyaxares said, "And the maiden herself, my own daughter, I offer you as well, Cyrus, to be your wife. Your father married my father's daughter, whose son you are. This is she whom you used often to pet when you came to visit us when you were a boy. And whenever anybody asked her whom she was going to marry, she would say 'Cyrus.' And with her I offer you all Media as a dowry, for I have no legitimate male issue."

20. Thus he spoke, and Cyrus answered: "Well, Cyaxares, I heartily approve of your family and your daughter and your gifts. And I desire, with the approval of my father and mother, to accept your offer."

Thus Cyrus answered; but still he made the young lady presents of everything that he thought would please Cyaxares as well as herself. And when he had done so, he proceeded on his way to Persia.

Key learning:

- Xenophon says power peacefully passed to Cyrus when the last Median king had no male heirs.

Herodotus *Histories* 1.130.1

130. Thus Astyages was deposed from his sovereignty after a reign of thirty-five years: and the Medians were made to bow down before the Persians by reason of Astyages' cruelty. They had ruled all Asia beyond the Halys for one hundred and twenty-eight years,¹ from which must be taken the time when the Scythians held sway.

Ctesias F9 Photius §1

[1] He begins by stating that Astyages (whom he also calls Astyigas) was not related to Cyrus; that he fled from him to Ecbatana and hid himself in the vaults of the royal palace with the aid of his daughter Amytis and her husband Spitamas; that Cyrus, when he came to the throne, gave orders that not only Spitamas and Amytis, but also their sons Spitaces and Megabernes should be put to the torture for assisting Astyigas; that the latter, to save his grandchildren from being tortured on his account, gave himself up and was taken and loaded with chains by Oebares; that shortly afterwards he was set free by Cyrus and honored as his father; that his daughter Amytis was treated by him as a mother and afterwards became his wife. Her husband Spitamas, however, was put to death, because, when asked, he had falsely declared that he did not know where Astyigas was. In his account of these events Ctesias differs from Herodotus.

Key learning:

- All the sources state that Cyrus treated Astyages well.
- Use to discuss the treatment of Astyages

The conquest of Lydia and the treatment of the conquered peoples

c.546 BC

(Suggested timings: 2 hours)

Herodotus *Histories* 1.46, 1.53, 1.71, 1.73

1.46. Croesus, after the loss of his son, sat in deep sorrow for two years. After this time, the destruction by Cyrus son of Cambyses of the sovereignty of Astyages son of Cyaxares, and the growth of the power of the Persians, caused him to cease from his mourning; and he resolved, if he could, to forestall the increase of the Persian power before they grew to greatness. Having thus determined, he straightway made trial of the Greek and Libyan oracles, sending messengers separately to Delphi, to Abae in Phocia, and to Dodona, while others again were despatched to Amphiaraus and Trophonius,¹ and others to Branchidae in the Milesian country. These are the Greek oracles to which Croesus sent for divination: and he bade others go to inquire of Ammon in Libya. His intent in sending was to test the knowledge of the oracles, so that, if they should be found to know the truth, he might send again and ask if he should take in hand an expedition against the Persians.

1.53. The Lydians who were to bring these gifts to the temples were charged by Croesus to inquire of the oracles, "Shall Croesus send an army against the Persians: and shall he take to himself any allied host?" When the Lydians came to the places whither they were sent, they made present of the offerings, and inquired of the oracles, in these words: "Croesus, king of Lydia and other nations, seeing that he deems that here are the only true places of divination among men, endows you with such gifts as your wisdom merits. And now he would ask you, if he shall send an army against the Persians, and if he shall take to himself any allied host." Such was their inquiry; and the judgment given to Croesus by each of the two oracles was the same, to wit, that if he should send an army against the Persians he would destroy a great empire. And they counselled him to discover the mightiest of the Greeks and make them his friends.

1.71. Croesus, mistaking the meaning of the oracle, invaded Cappadocia, thinking to destroy Cyrus and the Persian power. But while he was preparing to march against the Persians, a certain Lydian, who was already held to be a wise man, and from the advice which he now gave won great renown among the Lydians, thus counselled him (his name was Sandanis): "O King, you are making ready to march against men who wear breeches of leather and their other garments of the same, and whose fare is not what they desire but what they have; for their land is stony. Further they use no wine, but are water-drinkers, nor have they figs to eat, nor aught else that is good. Now if you conquer them, of what will you deprive them, seeing that they have nothing? But if on the other hand you are conquered, then see how many good things you will lose; for once they have tasted of our blessings they will cling so close to them that nothing will thrust them away. For myself, then, I thank the gods that they do not put it in the hearts of the Persians to march against the Lydians." Thus spoke Sandanis; for the Persians, before they subdued the Lydians, had no luxury and no comforts; but he did not move Croesus.

1.73. The reasons of Croesus' expedition against Cappadocia were these: he desired to gain territory in addition to his own share, and (these were the chief causes) he trusted the oracle, and wished to avenge Astyages on Cyrus; for Cyrus, son of Cambyses, had subdued Astyages and held him in subjection. Now Astyages, king of Media, son of Cyaxares, was Croesus' brother-in-law: and this is how he came to be so. A tribe of wandering Scythians separated itself from the rest, and escaped into Median territory. This was then ruled by Cyaxares, son of Phraortes, son of Deioces. Cyaxares at first treated the Scythians kindly, as being suppliants for his mercy; and as he held them in high regard he entrusted boys to their charge to be taught their language and the craft of archery. As time went on, it chanced that the Scythians, who were wont to go hunting and ever to bring something back, once had taken nothing, and when they returned empty-handed, Cyaxares (being, as hereby appeared, prone to anger) treated them very roughly and despitely. The Scythians, deeming themselves wronged by the usage they had from

Cyaxares, plotted to take one of the boys who were their pupils and cut him in pieces, then, dressing the flesh as they were wont to dress the animals which they killed, to bring and give it to Cyaxares as if it were the spoils of the chase; and after that, to make their way with all speed to Alyattes son of Sadyattes at Sardis. All this they did. Cyaxares and the guests who feasted with him ate of the boy's flesh, and the Scythians, having done as they planned, fled to Alyattes for protection.

Key learning:

- **Herodotus suggests that Croesus, king of Lydia, misunderstood an oracle. Confident of victory and greedy for more land, Croesus attacked Cyrus.**
- **Use to discuss the personalities and priorities of Cyrus as demonstrated in these events**

Herodotus *Histories* 1.75-1.77; 1.79-1.80; 1.84

Herodotus 1.75–1.77, 75. This Astyages then was Cyrus' mother's father, and was by him subdued and held subject for the reason which I shall presently declare. Having this cause of quarrel with Cyrus, Croesus sent to ask the oracles if he should march against the Persians; and when a quibbling answer came he thought it to be favourable to him, and so led his army to the Persian territory. When he came to the river Halys, he transported his army across it,—by the bridges, as I hold, which then were there; but the general belief of the Greeks is that the army was carried across by Thales of Miletus. This is the story: As the bridges aforesaid did not then yet exist, Croesus knew not how his army should pass the river: then Thales, being in the encampment, made the river, which flowed on the left hand, flow also on the right of the army in the following way. Starting from a point on the river higher up than the camp, he dug a deep semicircular trench, so that the stream, turned from its ancient course, should flow in the trench to the rear of the camp, and, again passing it, should issue into its former bed, so that, as soon as the river was thus divided into two, both channels could be forded. Some even say that the ancient channel was altogether dried up. But I do not believe this; for how then did they pass the river when they were returning?

76. Croesus then passing over with his army came to the part of Cappadocia called Pteria (it is the strongest part of this country and lies nearest to the city of Sinope on the Euxine sea), where he encamped, and laid waste the farms of the Syrians; and he took and enslaved the city of the Pterians, and took also all the places about it, and drove the Syrians from their homes, though they had done him no harm. Cyrus, mustering his army, and gathering to him all those who dwelt upon his way, went to meet Croesus. But before beginning his march he sent heralds to the Ionians to try to draw them away from Croesus. The Ionians would not be persuaded; but when Cyrus had come, and encamped face to face with Croesus, the armies made trial of each other's strength with might and main in the Pterian country. The battle was stubborn; many on both sides fell, and when they were parted at nightfall neither had the advantage. With such fortune did the two armies contend.

77. Croesus was not content with the number of his force, for his army which had fought was by far smaller than that of Cyrus; therefore, seeing that on the day after the battle Cyrus essayed no second attack, he marched away to Sardis, intending to invite help from the Egyptians in fulfilment of their pledge (for before making an alliance with the Lacedaemonians he had made one also with Amasis king of Egypt), and to send for the Babylonians also (for with these too he had made an alliance, Labynetus being at this time their sovereign), and to summon the Lacedaemonians to join him at a fixed time. It was in his mind to muster all these forces and assemble his own army, then to wait till the winter was over and march against the Persians at the beginning of spring. With such intent, as soon as he returned to Sardis, he sent heralds to all his allies, summoning them to assemble at Sardis in five months' time; and as for the soldiers whom he had with him, who had fought with the Persians, all of them who were not of his nation he disbanded, never thinking that after so equal an issue of the contest Cyrus would march against Sardis.

1.79–1.80, 79. When Croesus marched away after the battle in the Pterian country, Cyrus, learning that Croesus had gone with intent to disband his army, took counsel and perceived thereby that it was his business to march with all speed against Sardis, before the power of the Lydians could again be assembled. So he resolved and so he did speedily; he marched his army into Lydia and so himself came to bring the news of it to Croesus. All had turned out contrariwise to Croesus' expectation, and he was in a great quandary; nevertheless, he led out the Lydians to battle. Now at this time there was no nation in Asia more valiant or warlike than the Lydian. It was their custom to fight on horseback, carrying long spears, and they were skilled in the management of horses.

80. So the armies met in the plain, wide and bare, which is before the city of Sardis: the Hyllus and other rivers flow across it and rush violently together into the greatest of them, which is called Hermus (this flows from the mountain sacred to the Mother Dindymene¹ and issues into the sea near the city of Phocaea). Here when Cyrus saw the Lydians arraying their battle, he was afraid of their horse, and therefore did as I will show by the counsel of one Harpagus, a Mede. Assembling all the camels that followed his army bearing food and baggage, he took off their burdens and set men upon them equipped like cavalymen; having so equipped them he ordered them to advance before his army against Croesus' horse; he charged the infantry to follow the camels, and set all his horse behind the infantry. When they were all arrayed, he commanded them to kill all other Lydians who came in their way, and spare none, but not to kill Croesus himself, even if he should defend himself against capture. Such was his command. The reason of his posting the camels to face the cavalry was this: horses fear camels and can endure neither the sight nor the smell of them; this then was the intent of his device, that Croesus' cavalry, on which the Lydian relied for the winning of some glory, might be of no use. So when battle was joined, as soon as the horses smelt and saw the camels they turned to flight, and all Croesus' hope was lost. Nevertheless the Lydians were no cowards; when they saw what was happening they leaped from their horses and fought the Persians on foot. Many of both armies fell; at length the Lydians were routed and driven within their city wall, where they were besieged by the Persians.

1.84 84. Now this is how Sardis was taken. When Croesus had been besieged for fourteen days, Cyrus sent horsemen about in his army to promise rewards to him who should first mount the wall. After this the army made an assault, but with no success. Then, all the rest being at a stand, a certain Mardian¹ called Hyroeades essayed to mount by a part of the citadel where no guard had been set; for here the height on which the citadel stood was sheer and hardly to be assaulted, and none feared that it could be taken by an attack made here. This was the only place where Meles the former king of Sardis had not carried the lion which his concubine had borne him, the Telmessians having declared that if this lion were carried round the walls Sardis could never be taken. Meles then carried the lion round the rest of the wall of the acropolis where it could be assaulted, but neglected this place, because the height was sheer and defied attack. It is on the side of the city which faces towards Tmolus. So then it chanced that on the day before this Mardian, Hyroeades, had seen one of the Lydians descend by this part of the citadel after a helmet that had fallen down, and fetch it; he took note of this and considered it, and now he himself climbed up, and other Persians after him. Many ascended, and thus was Sardis taken and all the city like to be sacked.

Key learning:

- **After an inconclusive battle and with winter approaching Croesus withdrew to Sardis to wait for reinforcements from allies before planning to attacking Cyrus again. Cyrus caught Croesus unawares by following him to Sardis. After another battle which Cyrus used camels to blunt Croesus cavalry, Sardis was captured after a short siege.**
- **Use to discuss Herodotus' treatment of Croesus and other peoples/cultures**

Herodotus *Histories* 1.86-1.87; 1.88-1.89

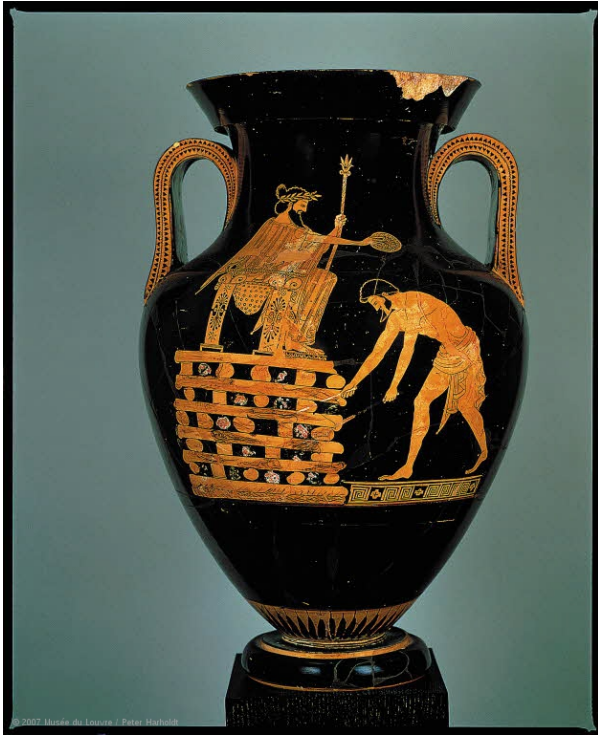
Herodotus 1.86–1.87, 86. So the Persians took Sardis and made Croesus himself prisoner, he having reigned fourteen years and been besieged fourteen days, and, as the oracle foretold, brought his own great empire to an end. Having then taken him they led him to Cyrus. Cyrus had a great pyre built, on which he set Croesus, bound in chains, and twice seven Lydian boys beside him: either his intent was to sacrifice these firstfruits to some one of his gods, or he desired to fulfil a vow, or it may be that, learning that Croesus was a god-fearing man, he set him for this cause on the pyre, because he would fain know if any deity would save him from being burnt alive. It is related then that he did this; but Croesus, as he stood on the pyre, remembered even in his evil plight how divinely inspired was that saying of Solon, that no living man was blest. When this came to his mind, having till now spoken no word, he sighed deeply and groaned, and thrice uttered the name of Solon. Cyrus heard it, and bade his interpreters ask Croesus who was this on whom he called; they came near and asked him; Croesus at first would say nothing in answer, but presently, being compelled, he said, “It is one with whom I would have given much wealth that all sovereigns should hold converse.” This was a dark saying to them, and again they questioned him of the words which he spoke. As they were instant, and troubled him, he told them then how Solon, an Athenian, had first come, and how he had seen all his royal state and made light of it (saying thus and thus), and how all had happened to Croesus as Solon said, though he spoke with less regard to Croesus than to mankind in general and chiefly those who deemed themselves blest. While Croesus thus told his story, the pyre had already been kindled and the outer parts of it were burning. Then Cyrus, when he heard from the interpreters what Croesus said, repented of his purpose. He bethought him that he, being also a man, was burning alive another man who had once been as fortunate as himself; moreover, he feared the retribution, and it came to his mind that there was no stability in human affairs; wherefore he gave command to quench the burning fire with all speed and bring Croesus and those with him down from the pyre. But his servants could not for all their endeavour now master the fire.

87. Then (so the Lydians relate), when Croesus was aware of Cyrus’ repentance and saw all men striving to quench the fire but no longer able to check it, he cried aloud to Apollo, praying that if the god had ever been pleased with any gift of his offering he would now come to his aid and save him from present destruction. Thus with weeping he invoked the god: and suddenly in a clear and windless sky clouds gathered and a storm burst and there was a most violent rain, so that the pyre was quenched. Then indeed Cyrus perceived that Croesus was a good man and one beloved of the gods; and bringing him down from the pyre, he questioned him, saying, “What man persuaded you, Croesus, to attack my country with an army, and be my enemy instead of my friend?” “O King,” said Croesus, “it was I who did it, and brought thereby good fortune to you and ill to myself: but the cause of all was the god of the Greeks, in that he encouraged me to send my army. No man is so foolish as to desire war more than peace: for in peace sons bury their fathers, but in war fathers bury their sons. But I must believe that heaven willed all this so to be.”

88. So said Croesus. Then Cyrus loosed him and set him near to himself and took much thought for him, and both he and all that were with him were astonished when they looked upon Croesus. He for his part was silent, deep in thought. Presently he turned and said (for he saw the Persians sacking the city of the Lydians), “O King, am I to say to you now what is in my mind, or keep silence?” Cyrus bidding him to say boldly what he would, Croesus asked, “Yonder multitude, what is this whereon they are so busily engaged?” “They are plundering,” said Cyrus, “your city and carrying off your possessions.” “Nay,” Croesus answered, “not my city, nor my possessions; for I have no longer any share of all this; it is your wealth that they are ravishing.”

89. Cyrus thought upon what Croesus said, and bidding the rest withdraw he asked Croesus what fault he saw in what was being done. “Since the gods,” replied the Lydian, “have given me to be your slave, it is right that if I have any clearer sight of wrong done I should declare it to you. The Persians are violent men by nature, and poor withal; if then you suffer them to seize and hold great possessions, you may expect that he who has won most will rise in revolt against you. Now therefore do this, if what I say finds favour with you. Set men of your guard to watch all the

gates; let them take the spoil from those who are carrying it out, and say that it must be paid as tithe to Zeus. Thus shall you not be hated by them for taking their wealth by force, and they for their part will acknowledge that you act justly, and will give up the spoil willingly.”



Abobe: Myson's 'Croesus on pyre' amphora – early C5BC

Ctesias F9 Photius §5

[5] After the city was taken Croesus fled for refuge to the temple of Apollo; he was three times put in chains, and three times loosed invisibly from his bonds, although the temple was shut and sealed, and Oebaras was on guard. Those who had been prisoners with Croesus had their heads cut off, on suspicion of having conspired to release him. He was subsequently taken to the palace and bound more securely, but was again loosed by thunder and lightning sent from heaven. Finally Cyrus, against his will, set him free, treated him kindly from that time, and bestowed upon him a large city near Ecbatana, named Barene, in which there were 5000 horsemen and 10,000 peltasts, javelin-throwers, and archers.

Key learning:

- Herodotus states that Cyrus brought Croesus forward to be placed on a pyre. The pyre had already been lit before Cyrus changed his mind and put out the flames. Ctesias and the lyric poet Bacchylides tell different stories.

Herodotus *Histories* 1.155-157

155. When Cyrus had news of this on his journey, he said to Croesus, “What end am I to make, Croesus, of this business? it seems that the Lydians will never cease making trouble for me and for themselves. It is in my mind that it may be best to make slaves of them; for now methinks I have done like one that should slay the father and spare the children. So likewise I have taken with me you who were more than a father to the Lydians, and handed the city over to the Lydians themselves; and then forsooth I marvel that they revolt! “So Cyrus uttered his thought; but Croesus feared that he would destroy Sardis, and thus answered him: “O King, what you say is but reasonable. Yet do

not ever yield to anger, nor destroy an ancient city that is guiltless both of the former and of the latter offence. For the beginning was my work, and on my head is the penalty; but it is Pactyes, in whose charge you left Sardis, who does this present wrong; let him therefore be punished. But let the Lydians be pardoned; and lay on them this command, that they may not revolt or be dangerous to you; send, I say, and forbid them to possess weapons of war, and command them to wear tunics under their cloaks and buskins on their feet, and to teach their sons lyre-playing and song and dance and huckstering. Then, O king, you will soon see them turned to women instead of men; and thus you need not fear lest they revolt.”

156. Such counsel Croesus gave Cyrus, because he thought this was better for the Lydians than to be sold as slaves; he knew that without some reasonable plea he could not change the king’s purpose, and feared that even if the Lydians should now escape they might afterwards revolt and be destroyed by the Persians. Cyrus was pleased by this counsel; he abated his anger and said he would follow Croesus’ advice. Then calling Mazares, a Mede, he charged him to give the Lydians the commands which Croesus advised; further, to enslave all the others who had joined the Lydians in attacking Sardis; and as for Pactyes himself, to bring him by whatever means into his presence alive.

157. Having given these commands on his journey, he marched away into the Persian country. But Pactyes, learning that an army sent against him was drawing near, was affrighted and fled to Cyme. Mazares the Mede, when he came to Sardis with whatever part he had of Cyrus’ army and found Pactyes’ followers no longer there, first of all compelled the Lydians to carry out Cyrus’ commands; and by his order they changed their whole manner of life. After this, he sent messengers to Cyme demanding that Pactyes be given up. The Cymaeans resolved to make the god at Branchidae their judge as to what counsel they should take; for there was there an ancient place of divination, which all the Ionians and Aeolians were wont to consult; the place is in the land of Miletus, above the harbour of Panormus.

Key learning:

- **The Lydians initially rebelled, but tradition holds that the unrest was short-lived and that Cyrus ordered the inhabitants of Sardis to be treated well except for the leaders of the rebellion.**

Herodotus *Histories* 1.141

141. As soon as the Lydians had been subdued by the Persians, the Ionians and Aeolians sent messengers to Cyrus, offering to be his subjects on the same terms as those which they had under Croesus, Having heard what they proposed, Cyrus told them a story. Once, he said, there was a flute-player who saw fishes in the sea and played upon his flute, thinking that so they would come out on to the land. Being disappointed of his hope, he took a net and gathered in and drew out a great multitude of the fishes; and seeing them leaping, “You had best” said he, “cease from your dancing now; you would not come out and dance then, when I played to you.” The reason why Cyrus told the story to the Ionians and Aeolians was that the Ionians, who were ready to obey him when the victory was won, had before refused when he sent a message asking them to revolt from Croesus. So he answered them in his anger. But when the message came to the Ionians in their cities, they fortified themselves severally with walls, and assembled in the Panionion,² all except the Milesians, with whom alone Cyrus had made a treaty on the same terms as that which they had with the Lydians. The rest of the Ionians resolved to send envoys in the name of them all to Sparta, to ask help for the Ionians.

Herodotus *Histories* 1.153.3-154

1.153.3 Presently, entrusting Sardis to a Persian called Tabalus, and charging Pactyes, a Lydian, to take charge of the gold of Croesus and the Lydians, he himself marched away to Agbatana, taking with him Croesus, and at first making no account of the Ionians. For he had Babylon on his hands and the Bactrian nation and the Sacae and Egyptians; he was minded to lead an army himself against these and to send another commander against the Ionians.

154. But no sooner had Cyrus marched away from Sardis than Pactyes made the Lydians to revolt from Tabalus and Cyrus; and he went down to the sea, where, as he had all the gold of Sardis, he hired soldiers and persuaded the men of the coast to join his army. Then marching to Sardis he penned Tabalus in the citadel and besieged him there.

Herodotus *Histories* 1.160-161; 168-169; 177

160. When this answer was brought to the hearing of the Cymaeans they sent Pactyes away to Mytilene; for they desired neither to perish for delivering him up nor to be besieged for keeping him with them. Then Mazares sent a message to Mytilene demanding the surrender of Pactyes, and the Mytilenaeans prepared to give him, for a price; I cannot say with exactness how much it was, for the bargain was never fulfilled; for when the Cymaeans learnt that the Mytilenaeans had this in hand, they sent a ship to Lesbos and brought Pactyes away to Chios. Thence he was dragged out of the temple of City-guarding Athene and delivered up by the Chians, they receiving in return Atarneus, which is a district in Mysia over against Lesbos. The Persians thus received Pactyes and kept him guarded, that they might show him to Cyrus; and for a long time no Chian would offer sacrifice of barley meal from this land of Atarneus to any god, or make sacrificial cakes of what grew there; nothing that came from that country might be used for any sacred rite.

161. Pactyes being then delivered up by the Chians, Mazares presently led his army against those who had helped to besiege Tabalus, and he enslaved the people of Priene, and overran the plain of the Maeandrus, giving it up to his army to pillage, and Magnesia likewise. Immediately after this he died of a sickness.

168. Thus, then, it fared with the Ionian Phocaea. The Teians did in like manner with the Phocaeans: when Harpagus had taken their walled city by building a mound, they all embarked on shipboard and sailed away for Thrace. There they founded a city, Abdera, which before this had been founded by Timesius of Clazomenae; yet he got no good of it, but was driven out by the Thracians. This Timesius is now honoured as a hero by the Teians of Abdera.

169. These were the only Ionians who, being unable to endure slavery, left their native lands. The rest of the Ionians, except the Milesians, though they faced Harpagus in battle as did the exiles, and bore themselves gallantly, each fighting for his own country, yet, when they were worsted and their cities taken, remained each where he was and did as they were commanded. The Milesians, as I have already said, made a treaty with Cyrus himself and struck no blow. Thus was Ionia for the second time enslaved: and when Harpagus had conquered the Ionians of the mainland, the Ionians of the islands, fearing the same fate, surrendered themselves to Cyrus.

177. Harpagus then made havoc of lower Asia; in the upper country Cyrus himself subdued every nation, leaving none untouched. Of the greater part of these I will say nothing, but will speak only of those which gave Cyrus most trouble and are worthiest to be described.

Key learning:

- **Cyrus had previously asked the Ionians under Croesus' yoke to join the Persian campaign. The Ionians refused and thus the new regime treated them harshly. A rebellion followed. The Medes Mazares and Harpagus were left to subdue the Greeks as Cyrus returned to the heartland of his empire**

The conquest of Babylon and the treatment of the conquered peoples, including the liberation of the Jews

539 BC

(Suggested timings: 2–3 hours)

Herodotus *Histories* 1.178; 1.190-1.191

Herodotus 1.178, 178. When Cyrus had brought all the mainland under his sway, he attacked the Assyrians. There are in Assyria many other great cities; but the most famous and the strongest was Babylon, where the royal dwelling had been set after the destruction of Ninus.¹ Babylon was a city such as I will now describe. It lies in a great plain, and is in shape a square, each side an hundred and twenty furlongs in length; thus four hundred and eighty furlongs make the complete circuit of the city. Such is the size of the city of Babylon; and it was planned like no other city whereof we know. Round it runs first a fosse deep and wide and full of water, and then a wall of fifty royal cubits' thickness and two hundred cubits' height. The royal cubit is greater by three fingers' breadth than the common cubit.

190. Then at the opening of the second spring, when Cyrus had punished the Gyndes by parting it among the three hundred and sixty canals, he marched at last against Babylon. The Babylonians sallied out and awaited him; and when in his march he came near to their city, they joined battle, but they were worsted and driven within the city. There, because they knew already that Cyrus was no man of peace, and saw that he attacked all nations alike, they had stored provision enough for very many years; so now they cared nothing for the siege; and Cyrus knew not what to do, being so long delayed and gaining no advantage.

191. Whether, then, someone advised him in his difficulty, or he perceived for himself what to do, I know not, but this he did: he posted his army at the place where the river enters the city, and another part of it where the stream issues from the city, and bade his men enter the city by the channel of the Euphrates when they should see it to be fordable. Having so arrayed them and given this command, he himself marched away with those of his army who could not fight; and when he came to the lake, Cyrus dealt with it and with the river just as had the Babylonian queen; drawing off the river by a canal into the lake, which was till now a marsh, he made the stream to sink till its former channel could be forded. When this happened, the Persians who were posted with this intent made their way into Babylon by the channel of the Euphrates, which had now sunk about to the height of the middle of a man's thigh. Now if the Babylonians had known beforehand or learnt what Cyrus was planning, they would have suffered the Persians to enter the city and brought them to a miserable end; for then they would have shut all the gates that opened on the river and themselves mounted up on to the walls that ran along the river banks, and so caught their enemies as in a trap. But as it was, the Persians were upon them unawares, and by reason of the great size of the city—so say those who dwell there—those in the outer parts of it were overcome, yet the dwellers in the middle part knew nothing of it; all this time they were dancing and making merry at a festival which chanced to be toward, till they learnt the truth but too well.

Key learning:

- Herodotus states that Cyrus took Babylon using novel means. In Herodotus' version of events, the Persians defeated the Babylonians in battle near Babylon, before besieging them. Cyrus drained the River Euphrates so that the Persians army could infiltrate the city.
- Use to discuss the personalities and priorities of Cyrus as demonstrated in these events and Herodotus' treatment of other peoples/cultures

The Cyrus Cylinder



[When ...] ... [... wor]ld quarters [...] ... a low person was put in charge of his country, but he set [a (...) counter]feit over them. He ma[de] a counterfeit of Esagil [and ...] ... for Ur and the rest of the cult-cities. Rites inappropriate to them, [impure] fo[od- offerings ...] disrespectful [...] were daily gabbled, and, intolerably, he brought the daily offerings to a halt; he inter[fered with the rites and] instituted [...] within the sanctuaries. In his mind, reverential fear of Marduk, king of the gods, came to an end. He did yet more evil to his city every day; ... his [people...], he brought ruin on them all by a yoke without relief. Enlil-of-the-gods became extremely angry at their complaints, and [...] their territory. The gods who lived within them left their shrines, angry that he had made them enter into Babylon (Shuanna). Ex[alted Marduk, Enlil-of-the-Go]ds, relented. He changed his mind about all the settlements whose sanctuaries were in ruins and the population of the land of Sumer and Akkad who had become like corpses, and took pity on them. He inspected and checked all the countries, seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took under his hand Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything. He made the land of the Qutu and all the Medean troops prostrate themselves at his feet, while he looked out in justice and righteousness for the black-headed people whom he had put under his care. Marduk, the great lord, who nurtures his people, saw with pleasure his fine deeds and true heart and ordered that he should go to Babylon He had him take the road to Tintir, and, like a friend and companion, he walked at his side. His vast troops whose number, like the water in a river, could not be counted, marched fully-armed at his side. He had him enter without fighting or battle right into Shuanna; he saved his city Babylon from hardship. He handed over to him Nabonidus, the king who did not fear him. All the people of Tintir, of all Sumer and Akkad, nobles and

governors, bowed down before him and kissed his feet, rejoicing over his kingship and their faces shone. The lord through whose trust all were rescued from death and who saved them all from distress and hardship, they blessed him sweetly and praised his name.

I am Cyrus, king of the universe, the great king, the powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world, son of Cambyses, the great king,, king of the city of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, the great king, ki[ng of the ci]ty of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, the great king, king of Anshan, the perpetual seed of kingship, whose reign Bel and Nabu love, and with whose kingship, to their joy, they concern themselves.

When I went as harbinger of peace i[nt]o Babylon I founded my sovereign residence within the palace amid celebration and rejoicing. Marduk, the great lord, bestowed on me as my destiny the great magnanimity of one who loves Babylon, and I every day sought him out in awe. My vast troops marched peaceably in Babylon, and the whole of [Sumer] and Akkad had nothing to fear. I sought the welfare of the city of Babylon and all its sanctuaries. As for the population of Babylon [..., w]ho as if without div[ine intention] had endured a yoke not decreed for them, I soothed their weariness, I freed them from their bonds(?). Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced at [my good] deeds, and he pronounced a sweet blessing over me, Cyrus, the king who fears him, and over Cambyses, the son [my] issue, [and over] my all my troops, that we might proceed further at his exalted command. All kings who sit on thrones, from every quarter, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, those who inhabit [remote distric]ts (and) the kings of the land of Amurru who live in tents, all of them, brought their weighty tribute into Shuanna, and kissed my feet. From [Shuanna] I sent back to their places to the city of Ashur and Susa, Akkad, the land of Eshnunna, the city of Zamban, the city of Meturnu, Der, as far as the border of the land of Qutu - the sanctuaries across the river Tigris - whose shrines had earlier become dilapidated, the gods who lived therein, and made permanent sanctuaries for them. I collected together all of their people and returned them to their settlements, and the gods of the land of Sumer and Akkad which Nabonidus – to the fury of the lord of the gods – had brought into Shuanna, at the command of Marduk, the great lord, I returned them unharmed to their cells, in the sanctuaries that make them happy. May all the gods that I returned to their sanctuaries, every day before Marduk and Nabu, ask for a long life for me, and mention my good deeds, and say to Marduk, my lord, this: “Cyrus, the king who fears you, and Cambyses his son, may their ... [...] [.....].” The population of Babylon call blessings on my kingship, and I have enabled all the lands to live in peace. Every day I copiously supplied [... ge]ese, two ducks and ten pigeons more than the geese, ducks and pigeons [...]. I sought out to strengthen the guard on the wall Imgur-Enlil, the great wall of Babylon, and [...] the quay of baked brick on the bank of the moat which an earlier king had bu[ilt but not com]pleted, [I ...] its work. [...] which did not surround the city] outside, which no earlier king had built, his troops, the levee from his land, in/to Shuanna. [...] with bitumen and baked brick I built anew, and completed its work. [...] great [doors of cedarwood] with copper cladding. I installed all their doors, threshold slabs and door fittings with copper parts. [...] I saw within it an inscription of Ashurbanipal, a king who preceded me, [...] ... [...] ... [...] for] ever.

Inscription Comment

The following translation (by Michalowski) is given by Chavalas (ed.) 2006, and reproduced by permission of the author and publisher. A slightly different English translation was published previously by Pritchard, and repeated by Ghias Abadi on pp. 35-36 with Farsi on pp. 15-22, French on pp. 33-34 and German (after Berger) on pp. 30-31.

[When ...] his ... [...] the regions ..., an insignificant (candidate) was installed as high priestess (of the Moon) in his land, and [...] he imposed upon them. He made a replica of the Esaggil, [... established] improper rites for Ur and the remaining cult centres as well as [unclean offer]ings; daily he continuously uttered unfaithful (prayers); furthermore he maliciously suspended the regular offerings and upset the rites. He plotted to end the worship of Marduk and continuously perpetuated evil against his city. Daily [he ...] brought all his [people] to ruin by (imposing) toils without rest.

Hearing their complaints, the Enlil of the Gods was terribly angry [and left] their territory; the gods living amongst them abandoned their abodes. (Nabonidus) brought them into Babylon, to (Marduk's) fury. Marduk, ex[alted one,

the Enlil of the God[s], roamed through all the places that had been abandoned, (and upon seeing this) reconciled his anger and showed mercy to the people of Sumer and Akkad who had become (as) corpses.

He sought and looked through all the lands, searching for a righteous king whose hand he could grasp. He called to rule Cyrus, king of Anshan, and announced his name as the king of the universe. He made the Gutti-land and all the Medes (Ummanmanda) bow in submission at his feet and so (Cyrus) assiduously looked after the justice and well-being of the Black-Headed People over whom he had been made victorious (by Marduk). And Marduk, the great lord, leader of his people, looked happily at the good deeds and steadfast mind of Cyrus and ordered him to march to his own city Babylon, set him on the road to Babylon, and went alongside him like a friend and companion. His teeming army, uncounted like water (flowing) in a river, marched with him fully armed. (Marduk) allowed him to enter Babylon without battle or fight, sparing his own city of Babylon from hardship, and delivered Nabonidus, who had not worshipped him, into his hands.

All the people of Babylon, the entire land of Sumer and Akkad, rulers and princes, bowed down to him, kissed his feet, and rejoiced at his rule, filled with delight. They happily greeted him as the lord, by means of whose trust those who were as dead were revived and saved from all trial and hardship; they praised his name.

I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of the lands of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the universe, son of Cambyses, great king, king of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, great king, king of Anshan, from an ancient royal lineage, whose reign is beloved by (the gods) Marduk and Nabu, whose kingship they desired to make them glad.

After entering Babylon in peace, amidst joy and jubilation I made the royal palace the centre of my rule. The great lord Marduk, who loves Babylon, with great magnanimity, established (it) as (my) destiny, and I sought to worship him each day. My teeming army paraded about Babylon in peace, and I did not allow any trouble in all of Sumer and Akkad. I took great care to peacefully (protect) the city of Babylon and its cult places. (And) as for the citizens of Babylon ... whom (Nabonidus) had made subservient in a manner (totally) unsuited to them against the will of the gods, I released them from their weariness and loosened their burden. The great lord Marduk rejoiced in my deeds. Kindly he blessed me, Cyrus, the king, his worshipper, Cambyses, the offspring of my loins, and all of my troops, so that we could go about in peace and well-being.

By his lofty command, all enthroned kings, the whole world, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, inhabitants of distant regions, all the kings of the West, tent dwellers, brought their heavy tribute to me in Babylon and kissed my feet. From [Babylon] to Ashur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, the cities of Zamban, Meturnu, Der as far as the borders of the Gutians – I returned to these sanctuaries on the other side of the Tigris, sanctuaries founded in ancient times, the images that had been in them there and I made their dwellings permanent. I also gathered all their people and returned to them their habitations. And then at the command of Marduk, the great lord, I resettled all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus had brought into Babylon to the anger of the lord of the gods in their shrines, the places which they enjoy. May all the gods whom I have resettled in their sacred cities ask Marduk and Nabu each day for a long life for me and speak well of me to him; may they say to Marduk, my lord that Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Canbyses, his son ... their ... I settled all the people of Babylon who prayed for my kingship and all their lands in a peaceful place. Daily I supplied (the temple) [with offerings of x gee]se, two ducks, and ten turtledoves above the former (offerings) of geese, ducks, and turtledoves. The wall Imgur-Enlil, the great (city) wall of Babylon, I strove to strengthen its fortifications [...] the baked brick quay on the bank of the city moat, constructed by an earlier king, but not completed, its work [I ... thus the city had not been completely surrounded], so [to complete] the outside, which no king before me had done, its troops, mustered in all the land, into Babylon [...]. I made it anew with bitumen and baked bricks and [finished the work upon it ... I installed doors of] mighty [cedar] clad with bronze, thresholds and door-opening[s cast of copper in all] its [gates ... I saw inside it an in]scription of Ashurbanipal, a king who came before [me ... for e]ver.

New translation by Irving Finkel, Curator of Cuneiform Collections at the British Museum. Taken from:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1

Key learning:

- **The Cyrus Cylinder states that the Babylonian god Marduk requested Cyrus become king because the Barbarian king Nabonidus was not respected the local deities and was treating his subjects badly.**
- **Cyrus placed great emphasis on the idea that he respected the Babylonian gods and their temples. After the conquest, Cyrus made great capital out of returning statues to their original temples. Anticipating a Persian invasion, Nabonidus had gathered the divine statues from around the region and brought them into Babylon for safekeeping.**
- **Cyrus also claimed that deported Assyrian peoples were to be allowed to return to their homelands.**

2 Chronicles 36.20

36.2 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia

Ezra 1.1-11

1.1-11 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. 4And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

5Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. 6And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. 7Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; 8even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. 9And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives, 10thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. 11All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

Ezra 5.13–15, 6.3–5

5.13–15, 13But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God. 14And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; 15and said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place.


6.3–5 3in the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; 4with three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house: 5and also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God.

Key learning:

- **The Old Testament suggests Jews who had been deported to Babylon received similarly favourable treatment: they were allowed to return to Jerusalem and Cyrus supplied them with funding to rebuild the temple there.**

The construction of Pasargadae

(Suggested timings: 1 hour)

 Winged Guardian Genius



Winged Guardian at Pasargadae (image from <http://pasargadae.info/en/sites/the-winged-figure>)

 Archaeological remains of Pasargadae



The Audience Palace at Pasargadae (By Bernard Gagnon - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=67378282>)



The tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae (By Behrad18n - en.wikipedia, Copyrighted free use, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15098310>)

Key learning:

- **The scale and design of Cyrus' buildings in Pasargadae should be analysed in some detail. The archaeological remains of the city and palace offer some clues as to the personality and priorities of Cyrus, and aspects of Persian culture**
- **Use to discuss Persian culture and the personality and priorities of Cyrus**

Cyrus death and accession of Cambyses

530 BC

(Suggested timings: 1 hour)

Herodotus *Histories* 1.201; 205-206; 208; 211-214

201. When Cyrus had conquered this nation also, he desired to subdue the Massagetae. These are said to be a great people and a mighty, dwelling towards the east and the sunrise, beyond the Araxes and over against the Issedones; and some say that they are a Scythian people.

205. Now at this time the Massagetae were ruled by a queen, called Tomyris, whose husband was dead. Cyrus sent a message with a pretence of wooing her for his wife, but Tomyris would have none of this advance, well understanding that he wooed not her but the kingdom of the Massagetae. So when guile availed him nothing Cyrus marched to the Araxes and openly prepared to attack the Massagetae; he bridged the river that his army might cross, and built towers on the pontoons that should carry his men over.

206. But while he was at this work Tomyris sent a herald to him with this message: "Cease, king of the Medes, from that on which you are intent; for you cannot know if the completion of this work will be for your advantage. Cease, and be king of your own country; and be patient to see us ruling those whom we rule. But if you will not take this counsel, and will do all rather than remain at peace, then if you so greatly desire to essay the strength of the Massagetae, do you quit your present labour of bridging the river, and suffer us to draw off three days' journey from the Araxes; and when that is done, cross into our country. Or if you desire rather to receive us into your country, do you then yourself withdraw as I have said." Hearing this, Cyrus assembled the chief among the Persians and laid the matter before them, asking them to advise him which he should do. They all spoke to the same purpose, urging him to suffer Tomyris and her army to enter his country.

208. So these opinions contended; and Cyrus set aside his former plan and chose that of Croesus; wherefore he bade Tomyris draw her army off, for he would cross (he said) and attack her; so she withdrew as she had promised before. Then he gave Croesus to the care of his own son Cambyses, to whom he purposed to leave his sovereignty, charging Cambyses to honour Croesus and entreat him well, if the crossing of the river against the Massagetae should not prosper. With this charge he sent the two back to Persia, and crossed the river, he and his army.

211. Having so answered, Hystaspes returned across the Araxes to Persia to watch Darius for Cyrus; and Cyrus, going forward a day's journey from the Araxes, did according to Croesus' advice. After this Cyrus and the sound part of the Persian army marched away back to the Araxes, leaving behind those that were useless; whereupon a third part of the host of the Massagetae attacked those of the army who were left behind and slew them despite resistance; then, seeing the banquet spread, when they had overcome their enemies they sat down and feasted, and after they had taken their fill of food and wine they fell asleep. Then the Persians came upon them and slew many and took many more alive, among whom was the son of Tomyris the queen, Spargapises by name, the leader of the Massagetae.

212. When Tomyris heard what had befallen her army and her son, she sent a herald to Cyrus with this message:—"Bloodthirsty Cyrus, be not uplifted by this that you have done; it is no matter for pride if the fruit of the vine—that fruit whereof you Persians drink even to madness, so that the wine passing into your bodies makes evil words to rise in a flood to your lips—has served you as a drug to master my son withal, by guile and not in fair fight. Now therefore take this word of good counsel from me: give me back my son and depart unpunished from this country; it is enough that you have done despite to a third part of the host of the Massagetae. But if you will not do this, then I swear by the sun, the lord of the Massagetae, that for all you are so insatiate of blood, I will give you your fill thereof."

213. This message was brought to Cyrus, who cared nothing for it. But Spargapises, the son of the queen Tomyris, when his drunkenness left him and he knew his evil plight, entreated Cyrus that he might be loosed from his bonds; and this was granted him; but no sooner was he loosed and had the use of his hands, than he made away with himself.

214. Such was the end of Spargapises. Tomyris, when Cyrus would not listen to her, collected all her power and joined battle with him. This fight I judge to have been the stubbornest of all fights that were ever fought by men that were not Greek; and indeed I have learnt that this was so. For first (it is said) they shot at each other from a distance with arrows; presently, their arrows being all shot away, they rushed upon each other and fought at grips with their spears and their daggers; and for a long time they battled foot to foot and neither would give ground; but at last the Massagetae had the mastery. There perished the greater part of the Persian army, and there fell Cyrus himself, having reigned thirty years in all save one. Tomyris filled a skin with human blood, and sought for Cyrus' body among the Persian dead; when she found it, she put his head into the skin, and spoke these words of insult to the dead man: "Though I live and conquer thee, thou hast undone me, overcoming my son by guile; but even as I threatened, so will I do, and give thee thy fill of blood." Many stories are related of Cyrus' death; this, that I have told, is the worthiest of credence.

Key learning:

- Herodotus states that an arrogant Cyrus was killed attacking the Messagatae, a Scythian tribe. However, there are many other, very different accounts of Cyrus' death in existence.
- It is tempting to speculate that Herodotus chose the version that best fitted his theme of men made arrogant through power risking all they had achieved
- Use to discuss the nature and evidence for Cyrus' death

Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.7.5–12

5. And when the same thing befell him on the next day and the day after that, he summoned his sons; for they had accompanied him, as it chanced, and were still in Persia. He summoned also his friends and the Persian magistrates; and when they were all come, he began to speak as follows:

6. "My sons, and all you my friends about me, the end of my life is now at hand; I am quite sure of this for many reasons; and when I am dead, you must always speak and act in regard to me as of one blessed of fortune. For when I was a boy, I think I plucked all the fruits that among boys count for the best; when I became a youth, I enjoyed what is accounted best among young men; and when I became a mature man, I had the best that men can have. And as time went on, it seemed to me that I recognized that my own strength was always increasing with my years, so that I never found my old age growing any more feeble than my youth had been; and, so far as I know, there is nothing that I ever attempted or desired and yet failed to secure.

7. "Moreover, I have lived to see my friends made prosperous and happy through my efforts and my enemies reduced by me to subjection; and my country, which once played no great part in Asia, I now leave honoured above all. Of all my conquests, there is not one that I have not maintained. Throughout the past I have fared even as I have wished; but a fear that was ever at my side, lest in the time to come I might see or hear or experience something unpleasant, would not let me become overweeningly proud or extravagantly happy.

8. "But now, if I die, I leave you, my sons, whom the gods have given me, to survive me, and I leave my friends and country happy;

9. and so why should I not be justly accounted blessed and enjoy an immortality of fame?

“But I must also declare my will about the disposition of my throne, that the succession may not become a matter of dispute and cause you trouble. Now, I love you both alike, my sons; but precedence in counsel and leadership in everything that may be thought expedient, that I commit to the first born, who naturally has a wider experience.

10. I, too, was thus trained by my country and yours to give precedence to my elders—not merely to brothers but to all fellow-citizens—on the street, in the matter of seats, and in speaking; and so from the beginning, my children, I have been training you also to honour your elders above yourselves and to be honoured above those who are younger. Take what I say, therefore, as that which is approved by time, by custom, and by the law.

11. So you, Cambyses, shall have the throne, the gift of the gods and of myself, in so far as it is mine to give.

“To you, Tanaoxares, I give the satrapy of Media, Armenia, and, in addition to those two, Cadusia. And in giving you this office, I consider that I leave to your older brother greater power and the title of king, while to you I leave a happiness disturbed by fewer cares;

12. for I cannot see what human pleasure you will lack; on the contrary, everything that is thought to bring pleasure to man will be yours. But to set one’s heart on more difficult undertakings, to be cumbered with many cares, and to be able to find no rest, because spurred on by emulation of what I have done, to lay plots and to be plotted against, all that must necessarily go hand in hand with royal power more than with your station; and, let me assure you, it brings many interruptions to happiness.

Key learning:

- **Xenophon has Cyrus die of old age surrounded by friends and family.**
- **It seems that Cyrus did eventually end up in the tomb he prepared in Pasargadae.**

Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.7.11

11. So you, Cambyses, shall have the throne, the gift of the gods and of myself, in so far as it is mine to give.

“To you, Tanaoxares, I give the satrapy of Media, Armenia, and, in addition to those two, Cadusia. And in giving you this office, I consider that I leave to your older brother greater power and the title of king, while to you I leave a happiness disturbed by fewer cares;

FGrH 688 F 9 Photius Ctesias §8

[8] Cyrus, when near his death, declared his elder son Cambyses king, his younger son Tanyoxarces governor of Bactria, Chorasmia, Parthia, and Carmania, free from tribute. Of the children of Spitamas, he appointed Spitaces satrap of the Derbices, Megabernes of the Barcanians, bidding them obey their mother in everything. He also endeavored to make them friends with Amorges, bestowing his blessing on those who should remain on friendly terms with one another, and a curse upon those who first did wrong. With these words he died, three days after he had been wounded, after a reign of thirty years. This is the end of the eleventh book.

Key learning:

- **Cambyses succeeded Cyrus although, according to Xenophon and Ctesias, Cambyses’ brother was appointed satrap of some of the eastern provinces.**

Cambyses II, Smerdis and the accession of Darius (530–522 BC)

(Suggested timings: 5–6 hours)

Cambyses conquest of Egypt and the treatment of Egyptian religion and culture

525–522 BC

(Suggested timings: 3–4 hours)

Herodotus *Histories* 3.1–3.3

Herodotus 3.1–3.3 1. It was against this Amasis that Cambyses led an army of his subjects, Ionian and Aeolian Greeks among them.¹ This was his reason: Cambyses sent a herald to Egypt asking Amasis for his daughter; and this he did by the counsel of a certain Egyptian, who devised it by reason of a grudge that he bore against Amasis, because when Cyrus sent to Amasis asking for the best eye-doctor in Egypt the king had chosen this man out of all the Egyptian physicians and sent him perforce to Persia away from his wife and children. With this grudge in mind he moved Cambyses by his counsel to ask Amasis for his daughter, that Amasis might be grieved if he gave her, or Cambyses' enemy if he refused her. So Amasis was sorely afraid of the power of Persia, and could neither give his daughter nor deny her; for he knew well that Cambyses would make her not his queen but his mistress. Reasoning thus he bethought him of a very tall and fair damsel called Nitetis, daughter of the former king Apries, and all that was left of that family; Amasis decked her out with raiment and golden ornaments and sent her to the Persians as if she were his own daughter. But after a while, the king greeting her as the daughter of Amasis, the damsel said, "King, you know not how Amasis has deceived you: he decked me out with ornaments and sent me to you to pass for his own daughter; but I am in truth the daughter of his master Apries, whom he and other Egyptians rebelled against and slew." It was these words and this reason that prevailed with Cambyses to lead him in great anger against Egypt.

2. This is the Persian story. But the Egyptians claim Cambyses for their own; they say that he was the son of this daughter of Apries, and that it was Cyrus, not Cambyses, who sent to Amasis for his daughter. But this tale is false. Nay, they are well aware (for the Egyptians have a truer knowledge than any man of the Persian laws) firstly, that no bastard may be king of Persia if there be a son born in lawful wedlock; and secondly, that Cambyses was born not of the Egyptian woman but of Cassandane, daughter of Pharnaspes, an Achaemenid. But they so twist the story because they would claim kinship with the house of Cyrus.

3. So much for this matter. There is another tale too, which I do not believe:—that a certain Persian lady came to visit Cyrus' wives, and greatly praised and admired the fair and tall children who stood by Cassandane. Then Cassandane, Cyrus' wife, said, "Ay, yet though I be the mother of such children Cyrus dishonours me and honours this newcomer from Egypt." So she spoke in her bitterness against Nitetis; and Cambyses, the eldest of her sons, said, "Then, mother, when I am grown a man, I will turn all Egypt upside down." When he said this he was about ten years old, and the women marvelled at him; but he kept it in mind, and it was thus that when he grew up and became king, he made the expedition against Egypt.

Ctesias F13a Athenaeus

According to Ctesias (FGrH 688 F 13a), Cambyses' expedition against Egypt also occurred because of a woman; for when Cambyses heard that Egyptian women were better in bed than any others, he sent a message to King Amasis of Egypt, asking to marry one of his daughters. Amasis did not give him one of his own children, since he suspected

that Cambyses would treat her as a concubine rather than as a wife, but sent him Neitetis the daughter of Aprias instead. Aprias had lost the Egyptian throne when the inhabitants of Cyrene defeated him, and had been executed by Amasis.⁵⁶ Cambyses enjoyed Neitetis and was extremely excited by her, and when she told him the whole story and asked him to avenge the murder of Aprias, he was convinced to make war on Egypt

Key learning:

- **Herodotus offers an overly personalised account of the motives for Cambyses' invasion. Apparently Cambyses was insulted when the Egyptian king did not send one of his daughters to be one of Cambyses' partners. A daughter of the previous king was sent instead. Ctesias tells a similar story**
- **Use to discuss the reasons why Cambyses might have wanted to invade Egypt and the personality and priorities of Cambyses II**

Herodotus *Histories* 3.9

Herodotus 3.9 9. Having then pledged himself to the messengers who had come from Cambyses, the Arabian planned and did as I shall show: he filled camel-skins with water and loaded all his live camels with these; which done, he drove them into the waterless land and there awaited Cambyses' army. This is the most credible of the stories told; but I must relate the less credible tale also, since they tell it. There is a great river in Arabia called Corys, issuing into the sea called Red. From this river (it is said) the king of the Arabians carried water by a duct of sewn ox-hides and other hides of a length sufficient to reach to the dry country; and he had great tanks dug in that country to receive and keep the water. It is a twelve days' journey from the river to that desert. By three ducts (they say) he led the water to three several places.

Herodotus *Histories* 3.44

Herodotus 3.44 44. It was against this ever-victorious Polycrates that the Lacedaemonians now made war, being invited thereto by the Samians who afterwards founded Cydonia in Crete. Polycrates had without the knowledge of his subjects sent a herald to Cambyses son of Cyrus, then raising an army against Egypt, to ask that Cambyses should send to Samos too and require men from him. On this message Cambyses very readily sent to Samos, asking Polycrates to send a fleet to aid him against Egypt. Polycrates chose out those townsmen whom he most suspected of planning a rebellion against him, and sent them in forty triremes, charging Cambyses not to send the men back.

Key learning:

- **Cambyses seemed to have enjoyed reasonable relations with the Arabians; according to Herodotus they aided Cambyses' march across the desert to Egypt. Cambyses also received aid from Polycrates of Samos, who sent 40 triremes**
- **Use to discuss the treatment of family, friends and other peoples / cultures**

Herodotus *Histories* 3.10-3.11; 3.13-3.15

Herodotus 3.10–3.11, 3.13–3.15 10. Psammenitus, son of Amasis, was encamped by the mouth of the Nile called Pelusian, awaiting Cambyses. For when Cambyses marched against Egypt he found Amasis no longer alive; he had died after reigning forty-four years, in which no great misfortune had befallen him; and being dead he was embalmed and laid in the burial-place built for himself in the temple. While his son Psammenitus was king of Egypt, the people saw a most wonderful sight, namely, rain at Thebes of Egypt, where, as the Thebans themselves say, there had never been rain before, nor since to my lifetime; for indeed there is no rain at all in the upper parts of Egypt; but at that time a drizzle of rain fell at Thebes.

11. Now the Persians having crossed the waterless country and encamped near the Egyptians with intent to give battle, the foreign soldiery of the Egyptian, Greeks and Carians, devised a plan to punish Phanes, being wroth with him for leading a stranger army into Egypt. Phanes had left sons in Egypt; these they brought to the camp, into their father's sight, and set a great bowl between the two armies; then they brought the sons one by one and cut their throats over the bowl. When all the sons were killed, they poured into the bowl wine and water, and the foreign soldiery drank of this and thereafter gave battle. The fight waxed hard, and many of both armies fell; but at length the Egyptians were routed.

Ctesias F13 Photius §10

[10] Bagapates was in command of the expedition against Egypt and its king Amyrtaeus, whom he defeated, through the treachery of his chief counselor Combaphis the eunuch, who betrayed the bridges and other important secrets, on condition that Cambyses made him governor of Egypt. Cambyses first made this arrangement with him through Izabates, the cousin of Combaphis, and afterwards confirmed it by his personal promise. Having taken Amyrtaeus alive he did him no harm, but merely removed him to Susa with 6000 Egyptians chosen by himself. The whole of Egypt then became subject to Cambyses. The Egyptians lost 50,000 men in the battle, the Persians 7000.

Key learning:

- **Cambyses won a decisive victory and then offered to make an agreement with the Egyptian king. The Egyptians killed the herald carry Cambyses' message and so the Persians besieged Memphis. The Egyptians surrendered and in doing so encouraged the Libyans and citizens of Cyrene to do likewise. Herodotus suggests that the deposed king would have continued to govern Egypt, but he was killed after scheming against Cambyses. Ctesias says that the former king was sent to Susa**
- **Use to discuss the reasons why Herodotus might have portrayed Cambyses in such a negative light**

Herodotus *Histories* 3.17; 3.21; 3.25-26

Herodotus 3.17, 3.21, 3.25–3.26 17. After this Cambyses planned three expeditions, against the Carchedonians,¹ and against the Ammonians, and against the “long-lived”² Ethiopians, who dwelt on the Libyan coast of the southern sea. Taking counsel, he resolved to send his fleet against the Carchedonians and a part of his land army against the Ammonians; to Ethiopia he would send first spies, to see what truth there were in the story of a Table of the Sun in that country, and to spy out all else besides, under the pretext of bearing gifts for the Ethiopian king.

21. These were the men to whom the Fish-eaters came, offering gifts and delivering this message to their king: “Cambyses king of Persia, desiring to be your friend and guest, sends us with command to address ourselves to you; and he offers you such gifts as he himself chiefly delights to use.” But the Ethiopian, perceiving that they had come as spies, spoke thus to them: “It is not because he sets great store by my friendship that the Persian King sends you with gifts, nor do you speak the truth (for you have come to spy out my dominions), nor is your king a righteous man; for were he such, he would not have coveted any country other than his own, nor would he now try to enslave men who have done him no wrong. Now, give him this bow, and this message: ‘The King of the Ethiopians counsels the King of the Persians, when the Persians can draw a bow of this greatness as easily as I do, then to bring overwhelming odds to attack the long-lived Ethiopians; but till then, to thank the gods who put it not in the minds of the sons of the Ethiopians to win more territory than they have.’”

25. Having viewed all, the spies departed back again. When they reported all this, Cambyses was angry, and marched forthwith against the Ethiopians, neither giving command for any provision of food nor considering that he was about to lead his army to the ends of the earth; and being not in his right mind but mad, he marched at once on hearing from the Fish-eaters, setting the Greeks who were with him to await him where they were, and taking with him all his land army. When he came in his march to Thebes, he parted about fifty thousand men from his army, and

charged them to enslave the Ammonians and burn the oracle of Zeus; and he himself went on towards Ethiopia with the rest of his host. But before his army had accomplished the fifth part of their journey they had come to an end of all there was in the way of provision, and after the food was gone they ate the beasts of burden till there was none of these left also. Now had Cambyses, when he perceived this, changed his mind and led his army back again, he had been a wise man at last after his first fault; but as it was, he went ever forward, nothing recking. While his soldiers could get anything from the earth, they kept themselves alive by eating grass; but when they came to the sandy desert, certain of them did a terrible deed, taking by lot one man out of ten and eating him. Hearing this, Cambyses feared their becoming cannibals, and so gave up his expedition against the Ethiopians and marched back to Thebes, with the loss of many of his army; from Thebes he came down to Memphis, and sent the Greeks to sail away.

26. So fared the expedition against Ethiopia. As for those of the host who were sent to march against the Ammonians, they set forth and journeyed from Thebes with guides; and it is known that they came to the city Oasis,¹ where dwell Samians said to be of the Aeschrionian tribe, seven days' march from Thebes across sandy desert; this place is called, in the Greek language, the Island of the Blest. Thus far, it is said, the army came; after that, save the Ammonians themselves and those who heard from them, no man can say aught of them; for they neither reached the Ammonians nor returned back. But this is what the Ammonians themselves say: When the Persians were crossing the sand from the Oasis to attack them, and were about midway between their country and the Oasis, while they were breakfasting a great and violent south wind arose, which buried them in the masses of sand which it bore; and so they disappeared from sight. Such is the Ammonian tale about this army.

Key learning:

- **Campaigns against the peoples who bordered Egypt were said to have gone badly.**

Herodotus *Histories* 3.27-3.30.1

127. After Cambyses was come to Memphis there appeared in Egypt that Apis¹ whom the Greeks call Epaphus; at which revelation straightway the Egyptians donned their fairest garments and kept high festival. Seeing the Egyptians so doing, Cambyses was fully persuaded that these signs of joy were for his misfortunes, and summoned the rulers of Memphis; when they came before him he asked them why the Egyptians acted so at the moment of his coming with so many of his army lost, though they had done nothing like it when he was before at Memphis. The rulers told him that a god, who had been wont to reveal himself at long intervals of time, had now appeared to them; and that all Egypt rejoiced and made holiday whenever he so appeared. At this Cambyses said that they lied, and he punished them with death for their lie.

28. Having put them to death, he next summoned the priests before him. When they gave him the same account, he said that "if a tame god had come to the Egyptians he would know it"; and with no more words he bade the priests bring Apis. So they went to seek and bring him. This Apis, or Epaphus, is a calf born of a cow that can never conceive again. By what the Egyptians say, the cow is made pregnant by a light from heaven, and thereafter gives birth to Apis. The marks of this calf called Apis are these: he is black, and has on his forehead a three-cornered white spot, and the likeness of an eagle on his back; the hairs of the tail are double, and there is a knot under the tongue.

29. When the priests led Apis in, Cambyses—for he was well-nigh mad—drew his dagger and made to stab the calf in the belly, but smote the thigh; then laughing he said to the priests: "Wretched wights, are these your gods, creatures of flesh and blood that can feel weapons of iron? that is a god worthy of the Egyptians. But for you, you shall suffer for making me your laughing-stock." So saying he bade those, whose business it was, to scourge the priests well, and to kill any other Egyptian whom they found holiday-making. So the Egyptian festival was ended, and the priests were punished, and Apis lay in the temple and died of the blow on the thigh. When he was dead of the wound, the priests buried him without Cambyses' knowledge.

30. By reason of this wrongful deed, as the Egyptians say, Cambyses' former want of sense turned straightway to madness. His first evil act was to make away with his full brother Smerdis, whom he had sent away from Egypt to Persia out of jealousy, because Smerdis alone could draw the bow brought from the Ethiopian by the Fish-eaters as far as two fingerbreadths; but no other Persian could draw it.

Key learning:

- **Herodotus portrays Cambyses as having treated the Egyptians badly and shown contempt for their religion and culture. Herodotus tells a tale of a king driven mad by power, failure and paranoia. In the above he tells of the murder by Cambyses of the Apis Bull**

📖 Herodotus *Histories* 3.31-3.32

31. This, they say, was the first of Cambyses' evil acts; next, he made away with his full sister, who had come with him to Egypt, and whom he had taken to wife. He married her on this wise (for before this, it had by no means been customary for Persians to marry their sisters): Cambyses was enamoured of one of his sisters and presently desired to take her to wife; but his intention being contrary to usage, he summoned the royal judges² and inquired whether there were any law suffering one, that so desired, to marry his sister. These royal judges are men chosen out from the Persians to be so till they die or are detected in some injustice; it is they who decide suits in Persia and interpret the laws of the land; all matters are referred to them. These then replied to Cambyses with an answer which was both just and safe, namely, that they could find no law giving a brother power to marry his sister; but that they had also found a law whereby the King of Persia might do whatsoever he wished. Thus they broke not the law for fear of Cambyses, and, to save themselves from death for maintaining it, they found another law to justify one that desired wedlock with sisters. So for the nonce Cambyses married her of whom he was enamoured; yet presently he took another sister to wife. It was the younger of these who had come with him to Egypt, and whom he now killed.

32. There are two tales of her death, as of the death of Smerdis. The Greeks say that Cambyses had set a puppy to fight a lion's cub, with this woman too looking on; and the puppy being worsted, another puppy, its brother, broke its leash and came to help, whereby the two dogs together got the better of the cub. Cambyses, they say, was pleased with the sight, but the woman wept as she sat by. Cambyses perceived it and asking why she wept, she said she had wept when she saw the puppy help its brother, for thinking of Smerdis and how there was none to avenge him. For saying this, according to the Greek story, Cambyses put her to death. But the Egyptian tale is that as the two sat at table the woman took a lettuce and plucked off the leaves, then asked her husband whether he liked the look of it, with or without leaves; "With the leaves," said he; whereupon she answered: "Yet you have stripped Cyrus' house as bare as this lettuce." Angered at this, they say, he leaped upon her, she being great with child; and she miscarried and died of the hurt he gave her.

Key learning:

- **The murder of Cambyses' sister bride**

📖 Herodotus *Histories* 3.30

3.30. By reason of this wrongful deed, as the Egyptians say, Cambyses' former want of sense turned straightway to madness. His first evil act was to make away with his full brother Smerdis, whom he had sent away from Egypt to Persia out of jealousy, because Smerdis alone could draw the bow brought from the Ethiopian by the Fish-eaters as far as two fingerbreadths; but no other Persian could draw it. Smerdis having gone to Persia, Cambyses saw in a dream a vision, whereby it seemed to him that a messenger came from Persia and told him that Smerdis had sat on the royal throne with his head reaching to heaven. Fearing therefore for himself, lest his brother might slay him and so be king, he sent to Persia Prexaspes, the trustiest of his Persians, to kill Smerdis. Prexaspes went up to Susa and so did; some say that he took Smerdis out a-hunting, others that he brought him to the Red¹ Sea and there drowned him.

Key learning:

- **The murder of Cambyses' brother, Smerdis**

 Herodotus *Histories* 3.34-3.36

34. I will now tell of his mad dealings with the rest of Persia. He said, as they report, to Prexaspes—whom he held in especial honour, who brought him all his messages, whose son held the very honourable office of Cambyses' cup-bearer—thus, I say, he spoke to Prexaspes: "What manner of man, Prexaspes, do the Persians think me to be, and how speak they of me?" "Sire," said Prexaspes, "for all else they greatly praise you; but they say that you love wine too well." So he reported of the Persians; the king angrily replied: "If the Persians now say that 'tis my fondness for wine that drives me to frenzy and madness, then it would seem that their former saying also was a lie." For it is said that ere this, certain Persians and Croesus sitting with him, Cambyses asked what manner of man they thought him to be in comparison with Cyrus his father; and they answered, "that Cambyses was the better man; for he had all of Cyrus' possessions and had won besides Egypt and the sea." So said the Persians; but Croesus, who was present, and was ill-satisfied with their judgment, thus spoke to Cambyses: "To my thinking, son of Cyrus, you are not like your father; for you have as yet no son such as he left after him in you." This pleased Cambyses, and he praised Croesus' judgment.

35. Remembering this, then, he said to Prexaspes in his anger: "Judge you then if the Persians speak truth, or rather are themselves out of their minds when they so speak of me. Yonder stands your son in the porch; now if I shoot and pierce his heart, that will prove the Persians to be wrong; if I miss, then say that they are right and I out of my senses." So saying, he strung his bow and hit the boy, and bade open the fallen body and examine the wound: and the arrow being found in the heart, Cambyses laughed in great glee and said to the boy's father: "It is plain, Prexaspes, that I am in my right mind and the Persians mad; now tell me: what man in the world saw you ever that shot so true to the mark?" Prexaspes, it is said, replied (for he saw that Cambyses was mad, and he feared for his own life), "Master, I think that not even the god himself could shoot so true." Thus did Cambyses then; at another time he took twelve Persians, equal to the noblest in the land, proved them guilty of some petty offence, and buried them alive up to the neck.

36. For these acts Croesus the Lydian thought fit to take him to task, and thus addressed him: "Sire, do not ever let youth and passion have their way; put some curb and check on yourself; prudence is a good thing, forethought is wisdom. But what of you? you put to death men of your own country proved guilty of but a petty offence; ay, and you kill boys. If you do often so, look to it lest the Persians revolt from you. As for me, your father Cyrus earnestly bade me counsel you and give you such advice as I think to be good." Croesus gave him this counsel out of goodwill; but Cambyses answered: "It is very well that you should dare to counsel me too; you, who governed your own country right usefully, and gave fine advice to my father—bidding him, when the Massagetæ were willing to cross over into our lands, to pass the Araxes and attack them; thus you wrought your own ruin by misgoverning your country, and Cyrus's by overpersuading him. Nay, but you shall rue it; long have I waited for an occasion to deal with you." With that Cambyses took his bow to shoot him dead; but Croesus leapt up and ran out; and Cambyses, being unable to shoot him, charged his attendants to take and kill him. They, knowing Cambyses' mood, hid Croesus; being minded, if Cambyses should repent and seek for Croesus, to reveal him and receive gifts for saving his life; but if he should not repent nor wish Croesus back, then to kill the Lydian. Not long after this Cambyses did wish Croesus back, perceiving which the attendants told him that Croesus was alive still. Cambyses said that he too was glad of it; but that they, who had saved Croesus alive, should not go scot free, but be killed; and this was done.

Key learning:

- The murder of Prexaspes' son


 Herodotus *Histories* 3.16

16. From Memphis Cambyses went to the city Sais, desiring to do that which indeed he did. Entering the house of Amasis, straightway he bade carry Amasis' body out from its place of burial; and when this was accomplished, he

gave command to scourge it and pull out the hair and pierce it with goads, and do it despite in all other ways. When they were weary of doing this (for the body, being embalmed, remained whole and did not fall to pieces), Cambyses commanded to burn it, a sacrilegious command; for the Persians hold fire to be a god; therefore neither nation deems it right to burn the dead, the Persians for the reason assigned, as they say it is wrong to give the dead body of a man to a god; while the Egyptians believe fire to be a living beast that devours all that it catches, and when sated with its meal dies together with that whereon it feeds. Now it is by no means their custom to give the dead to beasts; and this is why they embalm the corpse, that it may not lie and be eaten of worms. Thus Cambyses commanded the doing of a thing contrary to the custom of both peoples. Howbeit, as the Egyptians say, it was not Amasis to whom this was done, but another Egyptian of a like stature, whom the Persians despitefully used thinking that they so treated Amasis. For their story is that Amasis learnt from an oracle what was to be done to him after his death, and so to avert this doom buried this man, him that was scourged, at his death by the door within his own vault, and commanded his son that he himself should be laid in the farthest corner of the vault. I think that these commands of Amasis, respecting the burial-place and the man, were never given at all, and that the Egyptians but please themselves with a lying tale.

Key learning:

- **The treatment of Amasis' mummy**

 **Herodotus *Histories* 3.37**


37. Many such mad deeds did Cambyses to the Persians and his allies; he abode at Memphis, and there opened ancient coffins and examined the dead bodies. Thus too he entered the temple of Hephaestus and made much mockery of the image there. This image of Hephaestus is most like to the Phoenician Pataïci,¹ which the Phoenicians carry on the prows of their triremes. I will describe it for him who has not seen these figures: it is in the likeness of a dwarf. Also he entered the temple of the Cabeiri, into which none may enter save the priest; the images here he even burnt, with bitter mockery. These also are like the images of Hephaestus, and are said to be his sons.

Key learning:

- **Further sacrileges**

 **Inscription of sarcophagus of Apis bull**

[Cambyses], the King of Upper and Lower Egypt ... made as his monument to his father Apis-Osiris a large sarcophagus of granite, dedicated by the king [...], endowed with all life, with all perpetuity and prosperity (?), with all health, with all joy, appearing eternally as king of Upper and Lower Egypt. (Posner no 4).

 **Epitaph for Apis bull**


Year 6, 3rd month of the season of Shemu, day 10, under the Majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mesuti-Re, given life forever. The god was taken up [in peace towards the perfect West, and was laid to rest in his place in the necropolis], in the place which his Majesty has made for him, [after] all [the ceremonies had been performed for him] in the Hall of Embalming ... All was done that his Majesty had ordered ... in year 27 ... of Cambyses. (Lactor 16,21)

 Hieroglyphic inscription of Udjahorresnet

The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Cambyses, came to Sais. His Majesty proceeded to the temple of Neith. He touched the ground with his forehead before Her Majesty very greatly as every king has done. He made a great offering of all good things to Neith the Great, the mother of the god, and the great gods who are in Sais, as every excellent king has done (Lactor 16,20).



Statue of Udjahorresnet. Rome, Museo Gregoriano Egizio (image from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Udjahorresnet#/media/File:Museo_Gregoriano_004a.jpg)

 Hieroglyphic seal inscription

The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Cambyses, beloved of [the goddess] Wajet, sovereign of [the town of] Imet, great, Eye of the Sun, sovereign of the Sky, mistress of the gods, to whom is given life, as to the Sun. (Trans from 'From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire' by Pierre Briant 2002.

Herodotus *Histories* 5.25

5.25 This, then, is what Darius said, and after appointing Artaphrenes, his father's son, to be viceroy of Sardis, he rode away to Susa, taking Histiaeus with him. First, however, he made Otanes governor of the people on the coast. Otanes' father Sisamnes had been one of the royal judges,¹ and Cambyses had cut his throat and flayed off all his skin because he had been bribed to give an unjust judgment. Then he cut leather strips of the skin which had been torn away and with these he covered the seat upon which Sisamenes had sat to give judgment. After doing this, Cambyses appointed the son of this slain and flayed Sisamnes to be judge in his place, admonishing him to keep in mind the nature of the throne on which he was sitting.

Key learning:

- However, independent Egyptian evidence shows that Cambyses may have respected Egyptian religion and played a full role in ceremonies.
- Perhaps Cambyses was a harsh but fair ruler as depicted in Herodotus 5.25, with treatment of a corrupt judge

The events surrounding Cambyses death and Darius' accession

522 BC

(Suggested timings: 2 hours)

For a key to the inscriptions of Darius (such as DB below) visit**<https://www.livius.org/sources/content/achaemenid-royal-inscriptions/>**

DB §10–15

[10] Says Darius the king: This (is) what (was) done by me after that I became king; Cambyses by name, the son of Cyrus (was) of our family; he was king here; of this Cambyses there was a brother Bardiya (i. e. Smerdis) by name possessing a common mother and the same father with Cambyses; afterwards Cambyses slew that Bardiya; when Cambyses slew Bardiya, it was not known to the people that Bardiya was slain; afterwards Cambyses went to Egypt; when Cambyses went to Egypt, after that the people became hostile; after that there was Deceit to a great extent in the provinces, both in Persia and in Media and in the other provinces.

[1.11] Says Darius the king: Afterwards there was one man, a Magian, Gaumata by name; he rose up from Paishiyauvada; there (is) a mountain Arakadrish by name; from there - 14 days in the month Viyakhna were in course when he rose up; he thus deceived the people; I am Bardiya the son of Cyrus brother of Cambyses; afterwards all the people became estranged from Cambyses (and) went over to him, both Persia and Media and the other provinces; he seized the kingdom; 9 days in the month Garmapada were in course - he thus seized the kingdom; afterwards Cambyses died by a self-imposed death.

[1.12] Says Darius the king: This kingdom which Gaumata the Magian took from Cambyses, this kingdom from long ago was (the possession) of our family; afterwards Gaumata the Magian took from Cambyses both Persia and Media and the other provinces; he seized (the power) and made it his own possession; he became king.

[1.13] Says Darius the king: There was not a man neither a Persian nor a Median nor any one of our family who could make Gaumata the Magian deprived of the kingdom; the people feared his tyranny; (they feared) he would slay the many who knew Bardiya formerly; for this reason he would slay the people; "that they might not know me that I am not Bardiya the son of Cyrus;" any one did not dare to say anything against Gaumata the Magian until I came; afterwards I asked Auramazda for help; Auramazda bore me aid; 10 days in the month Bagayadish were in course I thus with few men slew that Gaumata the Magian and what men were his foremost allies; there (is) a stronghold Sikayauvatish by name; there is a province in Media, Nisaya by name; here I smote him; I took the kingdom from him; by the grace of Auramazda I became king; Auramazda gave me the kingdom.

[1.14] Says Darius the king: The kingdom which was taken away from our family, this I put in (its) place; I established it on (its) foundation; as (it was) formerly so I made it; the sanctuaries which Gaumata the Magian destroyed I restored; for the people the revenue(?) and the personal property and the estates and the royal residences which

Gaumata the Magian took from them (I restored); I established the state on (its) foundation, both Persia and Media and the other provinces; as (it was) formerly, so I brought back what (had been) taken away; by the grace of Auramazda this I did; I labored that our royal house I might establish in (its) place; as (it was) formerly, so (I made it); I labored by the grace of Auramazda that Gaumata the Magian might not take away our royal house.

Herodotus *Histories* 3.30; 3.61

30. By reason of this wrongful deed, as the Egyptians say, Cambyses' former want of sense turned straightway to madness. His first evil act was to make away with his full brother Smerdis, whom he had sent away from Egypt to Persia out of jealousy, because Smerdis alone could draw the bow brought from the Ethiopian by the Fish-eaters as far as two fingerbreadths; but no other Persian could draw it. Smerdis having gone to Persia, Cambyses saw in a dream a vision, whereby it seemed to him that a messenger came from Persia and told him that Smerdis had sat on the royal throne with his head reaching to heaven. Fearing therefore for himself, lest his brother might slay him and so be king, he sent to Persia Prexaspes, the trustiest of his Persians, to kill Smerdis. Prexaspes went up to Susa and so did; some say that he took Smerdis out a-hunting, others that he brought him to the Red Sea and there drowned him.

61. Now after Cambyses son of Cyrus had lost his wits, while he still lingered in Egypt, two Magians, who were brothers, rebelled against him.² One of them had been left by Cambyses to be steward of his house; this man now revolted from him, perceiving that the death of Smerdis was kept secret, and that few persons knew of it, most of them believing him to be still alive. Therefore he thus plotted to gain the royal power: he had a brother, his partner, as I said, in rebellion; this brother was very like in appearance to Cyrus' son, Smerdis, brother of Cambyses and by him put to death; nor was he like him in appearance only, but he bore the same name also, Smerdis. Patizeithes the Magian persuaded this man that he, Patizeithes, would manage the whole business for him; he brought his brother and set him on the royal throne; which done, he sent heralds to all parts, one of whom was to go to Egypt and proclaim to the army that henceforth they must obey not Cambyses but Smerdis the son of Cyrus.

Key learning:


- **The Behistun Inscription and Herodotus both say a jealous Cambyses had his brother killed. While Cambyses was in Egypt, a Median imposter revolted and took the Persian throne. This Median was supposedly a magus pretending to be Cambyses' brother – the one Cambyses had already killed**
- **Use to discuss the nature of the evidence for these events**

Herodotus *Histories* 3.64

64. At the name of Smerdis, Cambyses was smitten to the heart by the truth of the word and the fulfilment of his dream; for he had dreamt that a message had come to him that Smerdis had sat on the royal throne with his head reaching to heaven; and perceiving that he had killed his brother to no purpose, he wept bitterly for Smerdis. Having wept his fill, in great grief for all his mishap, he leapt upon his horse, with intent to march forthwith to Susa against the Magian. As he mounted, the cap slipped off the scabbard of his sword, and the naked blade struck his thigh, wounding him in the same part where he himself had once smitten the Egyptian god Apis; and believing the blow to be mortal, Cambyses asked what was the name of the town where he was. They told him it was Agbatana. Now a prophecy had ere this come to him from Buto, that he would end his life at Agbatana; Cambyses supposed this to signify that he would die in old age at the Median Agbatana, his capital city; but as the event proved, the oracle prophesied his death at Agbatana of Syria. So when he now enquired and learnt the name of the town, the shock of his wound, and of the misfortune that came to him from the Magian, brought him to his senses; he understood the prophecy and said: "Here Cambyses son of Cyrus is doomed to die."

Key learning:

- **The exact circumstances of Cambyses' death are unclear. Herodotus states that he injured himself in the leg when mounting a horse on his journey to deal with the rebellion**

 Herodotus *Histories* 3.67-3.70; 3.74-3.75; 3.76; 3.78

67. Cambyses being dead, the Magian, pretending to be the Smerdis of like name, Cyrus' son, reigned without fear for the seven months lacking to Cambyses' full eight years of kingship. In this time he greatly benefited all his subjects, in so much that after his death all the Asiatics except the Persians wished him back; for he sent hither and thither to every nation of his dominions and proclaimed them for three years freed from service in arms and from tribute.

68. Such was his proclamation at the beginning of his reign; but in the eighth month it was revealed who he was, and this is how it was done:—There was one Otanes, son of Pharnaspes, as well-born and rich a man as any Persian. This Otanes was the first to suspect that the Magian was not Cyrus' son Smerdis but his true self; the reason was, that he never left the citadel nor summoned any notable Persian into his presence; and in his suspicion—Cambyses having married Otanes' daughter Phaedyne, whom the Magian had now wedded, with all the rest of Cambyses' wives—Otanès sent to this daughter, asking with whom she lay, Smerdis, Cyrus' son, or another. She sent back a message that she did not know; for (said she) she had never seen Cyrus' son Smerdis, nor knew who was her bedfellow. Then Otanes sent a second message, to this effect: "If you do not yourself know Cyrus' son Smerdis, then ask Atossa who is this that is her lord and yours; for surely she knows her own brother."

69. To this his daughter replied: "I cannot get speech with Atossa, nor can I see any other of the women of the household; for no sooner had this man, whoever he is, made himself king, than he sent us to live apart, each in her appointed place." When Otanes heard that, he saw more clearly how the matter stood; and he sent her this third message: "Daughter, it is due to your noble birth that you should run any risk that your father bids you face. If this man be not Smerdis son of Cyrus, but another whom I suspect him to be, then he must not go unscathed, but be punished for sharing your bed and sitting on the throne of Persia. Now, therefore, when he lies with you and you see that he is asleep, do as I bid you and feel for his ears; if you see that he has ears, then you may think that it is Smerdis son of Cyrus who is your lord; but if he has none, it is Smerdis the Magian." Phaedyne answered by messenger that she would run very great risk by so doing; for if it should turn out that he had no ears, and she were caught feeling for them, he would surely make an end of her; nevertheless she would do it. So she promised to achieve her father's bidding. It is known that Cyrus son of Cambyses had in his reign cut off the ears of this Magian, Smerdis, for some grave reason—I know not what. So Phaedyne, daughter of Otanes, performed her promise to her father. When it was her turn to visit the Magian (as a Persian's wives come in regular order to their lord), she came to his bed and felt for the Magian's ears while he slumbered deeply; and having with no great difficulty assured herself that he had no ears, she sent and told this to her father as soon as it was morning.

70. Otanes then took to himself two Persians of the highest rank whom he thought worthiest of trust, Aspathines and Gobryas, and told them the whole story. These, it would seem, had themselves suspected that it was so; and now they readily believed what Otanes revealed to them. They resolved that each should take into their fellowship that Persian whom he most trusted; Otanes brought in Intaphrenes, Gobryas brought Megabyzus and Aspathines Hydarnes¹; so they were six. Now came to Susa Darius son of Hystaspes, from Persia, of which his father was vicegerent; and on his coming the six Persians resolved to make Darius too their comrade.

74. While they were thus planning, matters befell as I will show. The Magians had taken counsel and resolved to make a friend of Prexaspes, because he had been wronged by Cambyses (who had shot his son with an arrow) and because he alone knew of the death of Cyrus' son Smerdis, having himself been the slayer; and further, because Prexaspes was very greatly esteemed by the Persians. Therefore they summoned him and, to gain his friendship, made him to pledge himself and swear that he would never reveal to any man their treacherous dealing with the Persians, but keep it to himself; and they promised to give him all things in great abundance. Prexaspes was persuaded and promised to do their will. Then the Magians made this second proposal to him, that they should

summon a meeting of all Persians before the palace wall, and he should go up on to a tower and declare that it was Smerdis son of Cyrus and no other who was king of Persia. They gave him this charge, because they thought him to be the man most trusted by the Persians, and because he had oftentimes asserted that Cyrus' son Smerdis was alive, and had denied the murder.

75. Prexaspes consented to do this also; the Magians summoned the Persians together, and brought him up on to a tower and bade him speak. Then, putting away from his mind all the Magians' demands, he traced the lineage of Cyrus from Achaemenes downwards; when he came at last to the name of Cyrus, he recounted all the good which that king had done to Persia, after which recital he declared the truth; which, he said, he had till now concealed because he could not safely tell it, but was now constrained by necessity to reveal: "I," said he, "was compelled by Cambyses to kill Smerdis son of Cyrus; it is the Magians who now rule you." Then, invoking a terrible curse on the Persians if they failed to win back the throne and take vengeance on the Magians, he threw himself headlong down from the tower; thus honourably ended Prexaspes' honourable life.

76. The seven Persians, after counsel purposing to attack the Magians forthwith and delay no longer, prayed to the gods and set forth, knowing nothing of Prexaspes' part in the business. But when they had gone half way they heard the story of him; whereat they went aside from the way and consulted together, Otanes' friends being wholly for waiting and not attacking in the present ferment, but Darius' party bidding to go forthwith and do their agreed purpose without delay. While they disputed, they saw seven pairs of hawks that chased and rent and tore two pairs of vultures; seeing which all the seven consented to Darius' opinion, and went on to the palace, heartened by the sight of the birds.

78. It chanced that both the Magians were within, consulting together on the outcome of Prexaspes' act. Seeing the eunuchs in confusion and hearing their cries they both sprang back: and when they saw what was afoot they set about defending themselves; one made haste to take down his bow, the other seized his spear; so the seven and the two met in fight. He that had caught up the bow found it availed him nothing, his enemies being so close and pressing him hard; but the other defended himself with his spear, smiting Aspathines in the thigh and Intaphrenes in the eye; Intaphrenes was not slain by the wound, but lost his eye. So these were wounded by one of the Magians; the other, his bow availing him nothing, fled into a chamber adjoining the men's apartment and would have shut its door. Two of the seven, Darius and Gobryas, hurled themselves into the chamber with him. Gobryas and the Magian grappling together, Darius stood perplexed by the darkness, fearing to strike Gobryas; whereat Gobryas, seeing Darius stand idle, cried to know why he did not strike; "For fear of stabbing you," quoth Darius. "Nay," said Gobryas, "thrust with your sword, though it be through both of us." So Darius thrust with his dagger, and by good luck it was the Magian that he stabbed.

Ctesias F13 Photius §11–13

[11] In the meantime a certain Magian called Sphendadates, who had been flogged by Tanyoxarces for some offense, went to Cambyses and informed him that his brother was plotting against him. In proof of this he declared that Tanyoxarces would refuse to come if summoned. Cambyses thereupon summoned his brother, who, being engaged on another matter, put off coming. The Magian thereupon accused him more freely. His mother Amytis, who suspected the Magian, advised Cambyses not to listen to him. Cambyses pretended not to believe him, while in reality he did. Being summoned by Cambyses a third time, Tanyoxarces obeyed the summons. His brother embraced him, but nevertheless determined to put him to death, and, unknown to his mother Amytis, took measures to carry out his plan.

[12] The Magian made the following suggestion. Being himself very like Tanyoxarces, he advised the king publicly to order that his head should be cut off as having falsely accused the king's brother; that in the meantime Tanyoxarces should secretly be put to death, and henote should be dressed in his clothes, so that Tanyoxarces should be thought alive. Cambyses agreed to this. Tanyoxarces was put to death by being forced to drink bull's blood; the Magian put on his clothes and was mistaken for him by the people. The fraud was not known for a long time except to Artasyras, Bagapates, and Izabates, to whom alone Cambyses had entrusted the secret.

[13] Then Cambyses, having summoned Labyzus, the chief of Tanyoxarces' eunuchs, and the other eunuchs, showed them the Magian seated and dressed in the guise of his brother, and asked them whether they thought he was Tanyoxarces. Labyzus, in astonishment, replied, "Whom else should we think him to be?" the likeness being so great that he was deceived. The Magian was accordingly sent to Bactria, where he played the part of Tanyoxarces. Five years later Amytis, having learnt the truth from the eunuch Tibethis, whom the Magian had flogged, demanded that Cambyses should hand over Sphendadates to her, but he refused. Whereupon Amytis, after heaping curses upon him, drank poison and died.

Key learning:

- **Cambyses died, leaving it up to Darius and 6 other Persian nobles to deal with the usurper. The usurper was unmasked and murdered; a course of events in which Darius claimed a leading role.**

 Herodotus *Histories* 3.83-3.88

83. Having to judge between these three opinions, four of the seven declared for the last. Then Otanes, his proposal to give the Persians equality being defeated, thus spoke among them all: "Friends and partisans! seeing that it is plain that one of us must be made king (whether by lot, or by our suffering the people of Persia to choose whom they will, or in some other way), know that I will not enter the lists with you; I desire neither to rule nor to be ruled; but if I waive my claim to be king, I make this condition, that neither I nor any of my posterity shall be subject to any one of you." To these terms the six others agreed; Otanes took no part in the contest but stood aside; and to this day his house (and none other in Persia) remains free, nor is compelled to render any unwilling obedience, so long as it transgresses no Persian law.

84. The rest of the seven then consulted what was the justest way of making a king; and they resolved, if another of the seven than Otanes should gain the royal power, that Otanes and his posterity should receive for themselves specially a yearly gift of Median raiment and all such presents as the Persians hold most precious. The reason of this resolve was that it was he who had first contrived the matter and assembled the conspirators. To Otanes, then, they gave this peculiar honour; but with regard to all of them alike they decreed that any one of the seven should, if he so wished, enter the king's palace unannounced, save if the king were sleeping with a woman; and that it should be forbidden to the king to take a wife saving from the households of the conspirators. As concerning the making of a king, they resolved that he should be elected whose horse, when they were all mounted in the suburb of the city, should first be heard to neigh at sunrise.

85. Now Darius had a clever groom, whose name was Oebares. When the council broke up, Darius said to him: "Oebares, in the matter of the kingship, we are resolved that he shall be king whose horse, when we are all mounted, shall first neigh at sunrise. Now do you devise by whatever cunning you can that we and none other may win this prize." "Master," Oebares answered, "if this is to determine whether you be king or not, you have no cause to fear; be of good courage; no man but you shall be king; trust my arts for that." "Then," said Darius, "if you have any trick such as you say, set about it without delay, for to-morrow is the day of decision." When Oebares heard that he did as I will show. At nightfall he brought a mare that was especially favoured by Darius' horse, and tethered her in the suburb of the city; then bringing in Darius' horse, he led him round her near, so as ever and anon to touch her, and at last let the stallion have his way with the mare.

86. At dawn of day came the six on horseback as they had agreed. As they rode out through the suburb and came to the place where the mare had been picketed in the past night, Darius' horse trotted up to it and whinnied; and as he so did there came lightning and thunder out of a clear sky. These signs given to Darius were thought to be foreordained and made his election perfect; his companions leapt from their horses and did obeisance to him.

87. Some say that this was Oebares' plan; but there is another story in Persia besides this: that he touched the mare with his hand, and then kept it hidden in his breeches till the six were about to let go their horses at sunrise; when he took his hand out and held it to the nostrils of Darius' horse, which forthwith snorted and whinnied.

88. So Darius son of Hystaspes was made king,¹ and the whole of Asia, which Cyrus first and Cambyses after him had subdued, was made subject to him, except the Arabians; these did not yield the obedience of slaves to the Persians, but were united to them by friendship, as having given Cambyses passage into Egypt, which the Persians could not enter without the consent of the Arabians. Darius took wives from the noblest houses of Persia, marrying Cyrus' daughters Atossa and Artystone; Atossa had been wife of her brother Cambyses and afterwards of the Magian, Artystone was a virgin. He married also Parmys, daughter of Cyrus' son Smerdis, and that daughter of Otanes who had discovered the truth about the Magian; and the whole land was full of his power. First he made and set up a carved stone, whereon was graven the figure of a horseman, with this inscription: "Darius son of Hystaspes, aided by the excellence of his horse" (here followed the horse's name) "and of Oebares his groom, won the kingdom of Persia."

Ctesias F13 Photius §17

[17] Darius was chosen king from the seven conspirators in accordance with a test agreed upon, his horse being the first to neigh after the sun had risen, the result of a cunning stratagem.

Key learning:

- As a saviour of Persia, Darius rises above the fellow 6 nobles to become Great King. Herodotus doesn't offer quite so glowing a report: Darius tricks his way on to the throne.
- However it is likely that Gaumata (the pretender to the throne) was in fact Baridiya (the legitimate heir and Cyrus' other son). In an attempt to control and manipulate information. Darius recast the rebel king as an imposter.

The reign of Darius the Great (522–486 BC)

(Suggested timings: 12–13 hours)

Darius' restoration of control over the empire

(Suggested timings: 1 hour)

Herodotus 3.88

Herodotus *Histories* 3.88

88. So Darius son of Hystaspes was made king,¹ and the whole of Asia, which Cyrus first and Cambyses after him had subdued, was made subject to him, except the Arabians; these did not yield the obedience of slaves to the Persians, but were united to them by friendship, as having given Cambyses passage into Egypt, which the Persians could not enter without the consent of the Arabians. Darius took wives from the noblest houses of Persia, marrying Cyrus' daughters Atossa and Artystone; Atossa had been wife of her brother Cambyses and afterwards of the Magian, Artystone was a virgin. He married also Parmys, daughter of Cyrus' son Smerdis, and that daughter of Otanes who had discovered the truth about the Magian; and the whole land was full of his power. First he made and set up a carved stone, whereon was graven the figure of a horseman, with this inscription: "Darius son of Hystaspes, aided by the excellence of his horse" (here followed the horse's name) "and of Oebares his groom, won the kingdom of Persia."

Darius' inscriptions on columns of Palace S and P claiming Cyrus for the Achaemenid lineage (CMa = DMa, CMb = DMb, CMc = DMc)

[CMa] I, Cyrus the king, an Achaemenid.

[CMb] Cyrus, the great king, an Achaemenid.

[CMc] Cyrus the great king,

son of Cambyses the king, an Achaemenid,

says: When [...] made [...]


Herodotus *Histories* 1.209-1.210

209. Then, being now across the Araxes, he dreamt at night while sleeping in the country of the Massagetae, that he saw the eldest of the sons of Hystaspes wearing wings on his shoulders, the one wing overshadowing Asia and the other Europe. (Hystaspes son of Arsames was an Achaemenid, and Darius was the eldest of his sons, being then about twenty years old; this Darius had been left behind in Persia, being not yet of an age to follow the army.) So when Cyrus awoke he considered his vision, and because it seemed to him to be of great import, he sent for Hystaspes and said to him privately, "I find, Hystaspes, that your son is guilty of plotting against me and my sovereignty; and I will tell you how I know this for a certainty. I am a man for whom the gods take thought, and show me beforehand all that is coming. Now this being so, I have seen in a dream in the past night your eldest son with wings on his shoulders, overshadowing Asia with the one and Europe with the other; wherefore it is from this vision most certain that he is plotting against me. Do you therefore go with all speed back to Persia, and so act that when I come thither after subduing this country you shall bring your son before me to be questioned of this."

210. So spoke Cyrus, thinking that Darius was plotting against him; but in truth heaven was showing him that he himself was to die in the land where he was, and Darius to inherit his kingdom. So then Hystaspes answered him thus:—"Sire, the gods forbid that any Persian born should plot against you! but if such there be, may he speedily perish; for you have made the Persians freemen instead of slaves and rulers of all instead of subjects. But if your vision does indeed tell that my son is planning aught to your hurt, take him; he is yours to use as pleases you."

Key learning:

- **Darius' recasting of his genealogy Darius' restoration of control over the empire**
- **At the time of his accession, he faced many problems but a mix of brutal suppression and propaganda would see him emerge as a powerful ruler**
- **Despite Darius' propaganda to the contrary, he was not closely related to Cyrus' family. Darius had to recast his ancestry. His marriage to Atossa, Cyrus' daughter and Cambyses' former wife, was a political union designed to sure up his position and tie him more closely to the official ruling dynasty. Herodotus mentions Cyrus' dream which foretells Darius as a ruler of Persia.**
- **Use to discuss the legitimacy of Darius at this moment**

 **DB §52–54, §70**

(52) King Darius says: This is what I have done. By the grace of Ahuramazda have I always acted. After I became king, I fought nineteen battles in a single year and by the grace of Ahuramazda I overthrew nine kings and I made them captive.

One was named Gaumâta, the Magian; he lied, saying 'I am Smerdis [Bardiya], the son of Cyrus [Kûruš].' He made Persia to revolt.

Another was named Âššina, the Elamite [Ûvjiya]; he lied, saying: 'I am king the king of Elam.' He made Elam to revolt.

Another was named Nidintu-Bêl [Naditabaira], the Babylonian [Bâbiruviya]; he lied, saying: 'I am Nebuchadnezzar [Nabukudracara], the son of Nabonidus [Nabunaita].' He made Babylon to revolt.

Another was named Martiya, the Persian; he lied, saying: 'I am Ummanniš, the king of Elam.' He made Elam to revolt.

Another was Phraortes [Fravartiš], the Mede [Mâda]; he lied, saying: 'I am Khshathrita, of the dynasty of Cyaxares [Uvaxštra].' He made Media to revolt.

Another was Tritantaechmes [Ciçataxma], the Sagartian [Asagartiya]; he lied, saying: 'I am king in Sagartia, of the dynasty of Cyaxares [Uvaxštra].' He made Sagartia to revolt.

Another was Frâda, of Margiana; he lied, saying: 'I am king of Margiana [Marguš].' He made Margiana to revolt.

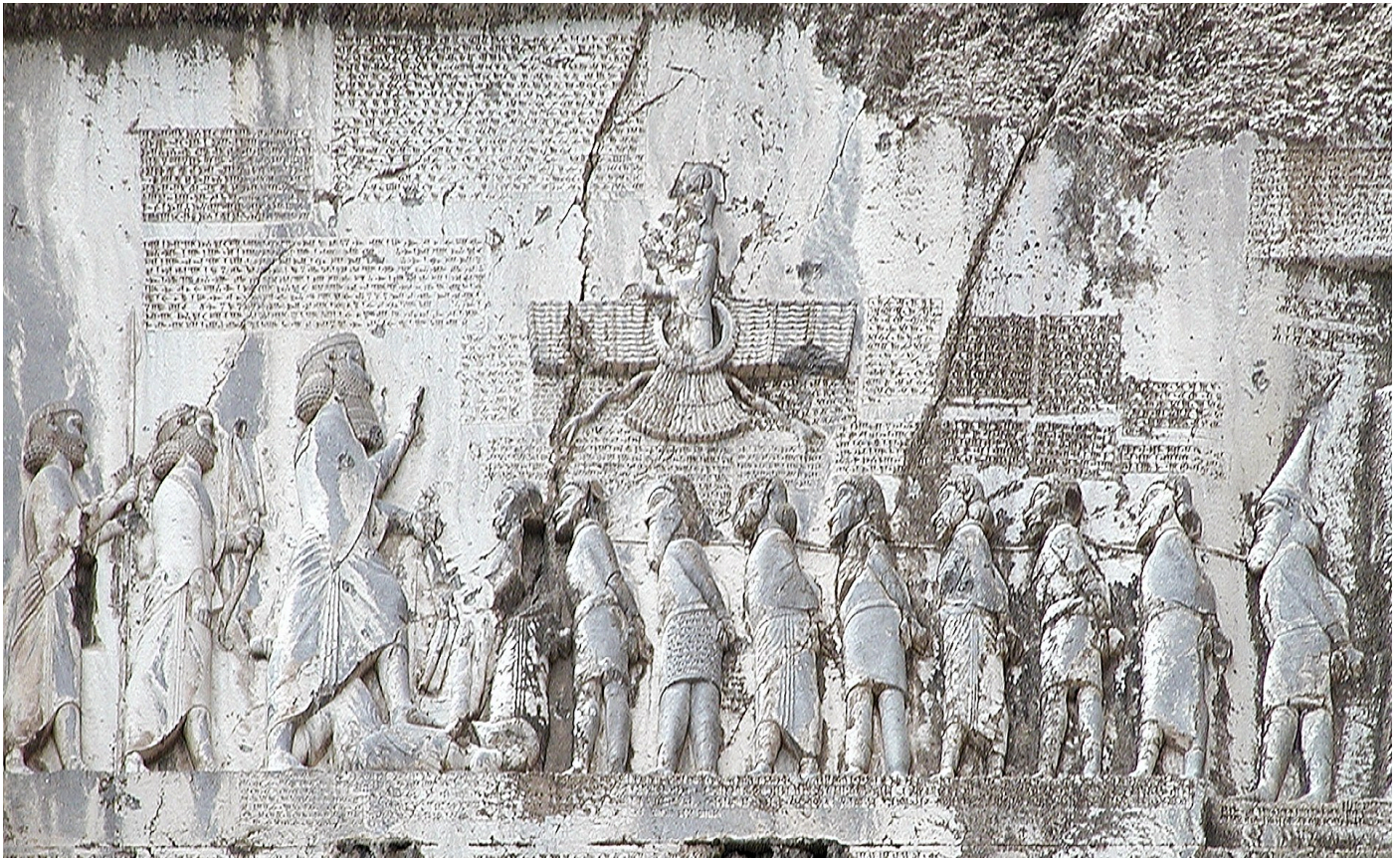
Another was Vahyazdâta, a Persian; he lied, saying: 'I am Smerdis [Bardiya], the son of Cyrus [Kûruš].' He made Persia to revolt.

Another was Arakha, an Armenian [Arminiya]; he lied, saying: 'I am Nebuchadnezzar, [Nabu-kudra-asura], son of Nabonidus.' He made Babylon to revolt.

(53) King Darius says: These nine kings did I capture in these wars.

(54) King Darius says: As to these provinces which revolted, lies made them revolt, so that they deceived the people. Then Ahuramazda delivered them into my hand; and I did unto them according to my will.

(70) King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda this is the inscription which I have made. Besides, it was in w:Aryan script, and it was composed on w:clay tablets and on w:parchment. Besides, a sculptured figure of myself I made. Besides, I made my lineage. And it was inscribed and was read off before me. Afterwards this inscription I sent off everywhere among the w:provinces. The people unitedly worked upon it.



📖 Behistun relief (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Behistun_inscription_reliefs.jpg)

Key learning:

- **The prevalence of rebellion during this period implies that the Empire was in a state of civil war and others were taking the opportunity to rebel. The Behistun Inscription depicts and describes the 9 liar kings who revolted**
- **Use to discuss the potential significance of Babylon revolting**

Herodotus *Histories* 3.118-3.119

118. So much for these matters. But Intaphrenes, one of the seven rebels against the Magian, was brought to his death by a deed of violence immediately after the rebellion. He desired to enter the palace and speak with the king; for this was the law, that the rebels should come into the king's presence without announcement given, if the king were not with one of his wives. Intaphrenes then claimed his right to enter unannounced, as one of the seven; but the gate-warden and the messenger forbade him, the king being, they said, with one of his wives. Intaphrenes thought they spoke falsely; drawing his scimitar he cut off their noses and ears, then strung these on his horse's bridle and bound it round the men's necks, and so let them go.

119. They showed themselves to the king and told him the reason why they had been so treated. Darius, fearing that this might be a conspiracy of the six, sent for each severally and questioned him, to know if they approved the deed; and being assured that they had no part in it, he seized Intaphrenes with his sons and all his household—for he much suspected that the man was plotting a rebellion with his kinsfolk—and imprisoned them with intent to put them to

death. Then Intaphrenes' wife came ever and anon to the palace gates, weeping and lamenting; and at last her continual so doing moved Darius to compassion; and he sent a messenger to tell her that Darius would grant her the life of one of her imprisoned kinsfolk, whomsoever she chose. She, after counsel taken, answered that if this were the king's boon she chose the life of her brother. Darius was astonished when he heard her answer, and sent one who said to her: "Woman, the king would know for what reason you pass over your husband and your children and choose rather to save the life of your brother, who is less close to you than your children and less dear than your husband." "O King," she answered, "another husband I may get, if heaven so will, and other children, if I lose these; but my father and mother are dead, and so I can by no means get another brother; that is why I have thus spoken." Darius was pleased, and thought the reason good; he delivered to the woman him for whose life she had asked, and the eldest of her sons besides; all the rest he put to death. Thus immediately perished one of the seven.

Key learning:

- **The incident involving Intaphernes suggests that Darius was fearful of plots against him.**

DB §18–§20, §49–§51

(18) King Darius says: Then I marched against that Nidintu-Bêl, who called himself Nebuchadnezzar. The army of Nidintu-Bêl held the Tigris; there it took its stand, and on account of the waters (the river) was unfordable. Thereupon I supported my army on (inflated) skins, others I made dromedary-borne, for the rest I brought horses. Ahuramazda brought me help; by the grace of Ahuramazda we crossed the Tigris. Then did I utterly overthrow that host of Nidintu-Bêl. On the twenty-sixth day of the month w:Âçiyâdiya (13 December 522 BC) we joined battle.

(19) King Darius says: After that I marched against Babylon. But before I reached Babylon, that Nidintu-Bêl, who called himself Nebuchadnezzar, came with a host and offered battle at a city called w:Zâzâna, on the w:Euphrates. Then we joined battle. Ahuramazda brought me help; by the grace of Ahuramazda did I utterly overthrow the host of Nidintu-Bêl. The enemy fled into the water; the water carried them away. On the second day of the month Anâmaka (18 December 522 BC) we joined battle.

(20) King Darius says: Then did Nidintu-Bêl flee with a few horsemen into Babylon. Thereupon I marched to Babylon. By the grace of Ahuramazda I took Babylon, and captured Nidintu-Bêl. Then I slew that Nidintu-Bêl in Babylon.

(49) King Darius says: While I was in Persia and in Media, the Babylonians revolted from me a second time. A certain man named w:Arakha, an Armenian, son of Haldita, rebelled in Babylon. At a place called Dubâla, he lied unto the people, saying: 'I am Nabû-kudurri-Aşur (Nebuchadnezzar), the son of Nabonidus.' Then did the Babylonian people revolt from me and they went over to that Arakha. He seized Babylon, he became king in Babylon.

(50) King Darius says: Then did I send an army unto Babylon. A Persian named Intaphrenes [Vidafarnâ], my servant, I appointed as their leader, and thus I spoke unto them: 'Go, smite that Babylonian host which does not acknowledge me.' Then Intaphrenes marched with the army unto Babylon. Ahuramazda brought me help; by the grace of Ahuramazda Intaphrenes overthrew the Babylonians and brought over the people unto me. On the twenty-second day of the month Markâsanaš (27 November) they seized that Arakha who called himself Nebuchadnezzar, and the men who were his chief followers. Then I made a decree, saying: 'Let that Arakha and the men who were his chief followers be crucified in Babylon!'

(51) King Darius says: This is what was done by me in Babylon.

Herodotus *Histories* 3.150-3.160

Herodotus 3.150–3.160 150. When the fleet had gone to Samos, the Babylonians revolted;¹ for which they had made very good preparation; for during the reign of the Magian, and the rebellion of the seven, they had taken advantage of the time and the disorders to prepare themselves against the siege; and (I cannot tell how) this was unknown. At the last they revolted openly and did this:—sending away all the mothers, they chose each one woman

from his own household, whom he would, as a bread-maker; as for the rest, they gathered them together and strangled them, that they should not consume their bread.

151. When Darius heard of this he mustered all his power and led it against Babylon, and he marched to the town and laid siege to it; but the townsmen cared nothing for what he did. They came up on to the bastions of the wall, and mocked Darius and his army with gesture and word; and this saying came from one of them: "Why sit you there, Persians, instead of departing? You will take our city when mules bear offspring." This said the Babylonian, supposing that no mule would ever bear offspring.

152. A year and seven months passed and Darius and all his army were vexed by ever failing to take Babylon. Yet Darius had used every trick and every device against it. He essayed the stratagem whereby Cyrus took the city, and every other stratagem and device, yet with no success; for the Babylonians kept a marvellous strict watch and he could not take them.

153. But in the twentieth month of the siege a miraculous thing befell Zopyrus, son of that Megabyzus who was one of the seven destroyers of the Magian: one of his food-carrying mules bore offspring. Zopyrus would not believe the news; but when he saw the foal for himself, he bade those who had seen it to tell no one; then taking counsel he bethought him of the Babylonian's word at the beginning of the siege—that the city would be taken when mules bore offspring—and having this utterance in mind he conceived that Babylon might be taken; for the hand of heaven, he supposed, was in the man's word and the birth from his own mule.

154. Being then persuaded that Babylon was fated to fall, he came and inquired of Darius if he set great store by the taking of the city; and when he was assured that this was so, he next looked about for a plan whereby the city's fall should be wrought by himself alone; for good service among the Persians is much honoured, and rewarded by high preferment. He could think of no way of mastering the city but to do violence to himself and then desert to the Babylonians; so he accounted it but a little thing to mishandle himself past cure; cutting off his nose and ears, shaving his head for a disfigurement, and scourging himself, he came in this guise before Darius.

155. The king was greatly moved at the sight of so notable a man thus mishandled. Leaping up with a cry from where he sat he asked Zopyrus who had done him this outrage and why. "There is no man," answered Zopyrus, "save yourself, who could bring me to this plight; this, O King! is the work of none other but myself; for I could not bear that Persians should be mocked by Assyrians." Darius answered, "Hard-hearted man; if you say that it is to win the city that you have maltreated yourself past cure, you do but give a fair name to a foul deed. Foolish man! think you that our enemies will yield the sooner for this violence done to you? Nay, you were clean out of your wits to destroy yourself thus." "Had I told you," said Zopyrus, "what I was minded to do, you would have forbidden it; as it is, I have considered with myself alone and done it. Now, then, matters so stand that if you but play your part Babylon is ours. I will in my present plight desert into the city, pretending to them that you have done this violence upon me; and I think that I shall persuade them that this is so, and thus gain the command of an army. Now, for your part, on the tenth day from my entering the city do you take a thousand men from that part of your army whereof you will least rue the loss, and post them before the gate called the gate of Semiramis; on the seventh day after that, post me again two thousand before the gate called the gate of the Ninevites; and when twenty days are past after that seventh, lead out four thousand more and post them before the Chaldean gate, as they call it; suffering neither these, nor the others that have come before them, to carry any weapons of war save daggers; leave them these. But immediately after the twentieth day bid the rest of your army to assault the whole circuit of the walls, and, I pray you, post the Persians before the gate of Belus and the gate called Cissian. For I think that I shall have achieved such exploits that the Babylonians will give into my charge the keys of their gates, and all else besides; and it will thenceforward be my business and the Persians' to do what is needful."

156. With this charge, he went towards the city gate, turning and looking back as though he were in truth a deserter. When the watchers posted on the towers saw him, they ran down, and opening half the gate a little asked him who he was and for what purpose he was come; he told them that he was Zopyrus, come to them as a deserter. Hearing this the gate-wardens brought him before the general assembly of the Babylonians, where he bade them see his lamentable plight, saying of his own work that it was Darius' doing, because that he had advised the king to lead his

army away, seeing that they could find no way to take the city. "Now," said he in his speech to them, "I am come greatly to aid you, men of Babylon, and greatly to harm Darius and his army and the Persians; not unpunished shall he go for the outrage he has wrought upon me; and I know all the plan and order of his counsels." Thus he spoke.

157. When the Babylonians saw the most honoured man in Persia with his nose and ears cut off and all bedabbled with blood from the scourging, they were fully persuaded that he spoke truth and was come to be their ally, and were ready to grant him all that he asked, which was, that he might have an army; and having received this from them he did according to his agreement with Darius. On the tenth day he led out the Babylonian army, and surrounded and put to the sword the thousand whom he had charged Darius to set first in the field. Seeing that his deeds answered his words, the Babylonians were overjoyed and ready to serve him in every way. When the agreed number of days was past, he led out again a chosen body of Babylonians, and slew the two thousand men of Darius' army. When the Babylonians saw this second feat of arms, the praise of Zopyrus was in every man's mouth. The agreed number of days being again past, he led out his men to the place he had named, where he surrounded the four thousand and put them to the sword. After this his third exploit, Zopyrus was the one man for Babylon: he was made the captain of their armies and the warden of their walls.

158. So when Darius assaulted the whole circuit of the wall, according to the agreed plan, then Zopyrus' treason was fully revealed. For while the townsmen were on the wall defending it against Darius' assault, he opened the gates called Cissian and Belian, and let in the Persians within the walls. Those Babylonians who saw what he did fled to the temple of that Zeus whom they call Belus; those who had not seen it abode each in his place, till they too perceived how they had been betrayed.

159. Thus was Babylon the second time taken. Having mastered the Babylonians, Darius destroyed their walls and reft away all their gates, neither of which things Cyrus had done at the first taking of Babylon; moreover he impaled about three thousand men that were chief among them; as for the rest, he gave them back their city to dwell in. Further, as the Babylonians, fearing for their food, had strangled their own women, as I have shown above, Darius provided that they should have wives to bear them children, by appointing that each of the neighbouring nations should send a certain tale of women to Babylon; the whole sum of the women thus collected was fifty thousand: these were the mothers of those who now inhabit the city.

160. There never was in Darius' judgment any Persian before or since who did better service than Zopyrus, save only Cyrus, with whom no Persian could compare himself. Many times Darius is said to have declared that he would rather have Zopyrus whole and not foully mishandled than twenty more Babylons. Very greatly the king honoured him; every year he sent Zopyrus such gifts as the Persians hold most precious, and suffered him to govern Babylon for all his life with no tribute to pay, giving him many other things besides. This Zopyrus was father of Megabyzus, who was general of an army in Egypt against the Athenians and their allies; and Megabyzus' son was that Zopyrus who deserted from the Persians to Athens.

Key learning:

- **The Behistun Inscription implies that Babylon revolted twice early in Darius' reign whereas Herodotus' narrative places a Babylonian revolt later. Herodotus tells a tale of Zopyrus, one of the fellow conspirators, mutilating himself, and deserted to the Babylonians. Zopyrus was able to gain the trust of the Babylonians and he was able to open the city gates and let the Persians in. Herodotus claims 3,000 Babylonian nobles were impaled before the rest of the people were allowed to continue living in their city**

Darius' construction projects, administration of the empire and Persian culture and religion under Darius

(Suggested timings: 3–4 hours)

DB §6–9 on peoples conquered and tribute

(6) King Darius says: These are the countries which are subject unto me, and by the grace of Ahuramazda I became king of them: Persia [Pârsa], Elam [Ûvja], Babylonia [Bâbiruš], Assyria [Athurâ], Arabia [Arabâya], Egypt [Mudrâya], the countries by the Sea, Lydia [Sparda], the Greeks [Yauna (Ionia)], Media [Mâda], Armenia [Armina], Cappadocia [Katpatuka], Parthia [Parthava], Drangiana [Zraka], Aria [Haraiva], Chorasmia [Uvârazmîy], Bactria [Bâxtriš], w:Sogdia [Suguda], Gandhara [Gadâra], Scythia [Saka], Sattagydia [Thataguš], Arachosia [Harauvatiš] and Maka [Maka]; twenty-three lands in all.

(7) King Darius says: These are the countries which are subject to me; by the grace of Ahuramazda they became subject to me; they brought tribute unto me. Whatsoever commands have been laid on them by me, by night or by day, have been performed by them.

(8) King Darius says: Within these lands, whosoever was a friend, him have I surely protected; whosoever was hostile, him have I utterly destroyed. By the grace of Ahuramazda these lands have conformed to my decrees; as it was commanded unto them by me, so was it done.

(9) King Darius says: Ahuramazda has granted unto me this empire. Ahuramazda brought me help, until I gained this empire; by the grace of Ahuramazda do I hold this empire.

Darius' Foundation Charter from Susa DSf (#45)

A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Darius king, one king of many, one lord of many.

Darius the King says: By the grace of Ahuramazda I built this palace.

Darius the King says: Ahuramazda, the greatest of the gods, created me, made me king, bestowed upon me this kingdom, great, possessed of good horses, possessed of good men.

By the grace of Ahuramazda, my father Hystaspes and Arsames my grandfather - these both were living when Ahuramazda made me king in this earth.

To Ahuramazda thus was the desire: he chose me as his man in all the earth; he made me king in all the earth.

I worshipped Ahuramazda. Ahuramazda bore me aid. What was by me commanded to do, that he made successful for me. What I did, all by the grace of Ahuramazda I did.

This palace which I built at Susa, from afar its ornamentation was brought. Downward the earth was dug, until I reached rock in the earth. When the excavation had been made, then rubble was packed down, some 40 cubits in depth, another part 20 cubits in depth. On that rubble the palace was constructed.

And that the earth was dug downward, and that the rubble was packed down, and that the sun-dried brick was molded, the Babylonian people performed these tasks.

The cedar timber, this was brought from a mountain named Lebanon. The Assyrian people brought it to Babylon; from Babylon the Carians and the Yaunâ [=Greeks] brought it to Susa. The yakâ-timber was brought from Gandara and from Carmania.

The gold was brought from Lydia and from Bactria, which here was wrought. The precious stone lapis lazuli and carnelian which was wrought here, this was brought from Sogdia. The precious stone turquoise, this was brought from Chorasmia, which was wrought here.

The silver and the ebony were brought from Egypt. The ornamentation with which the wall was adorned, that from Yaunâ was brought. The ivory which was wrought here, was brought from Kush and from India and from Arachosia.

The stone columns which were here wrought, a village named Abirâdu, in Elam - from there were brought. The stone-cutters who wrought the stone, those were Yaunâ and Lydians.

The goldsmiths who wrought the gold, those were Medes and Egyptians. The men who wrought the wood, those were Lydians and Egyptians. The men who wrought the baked brick, those were Babylonians. The men who adorned the wall, those were Medes and Egyptians.

Darius the King says: At Susa a very excellent work was ordered, a very excellent work was brought to completion. May Ahuramazda protect me, my father Hystaspes, and my country.

Inscription from Susa DSe (Empire list)

A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this world, who created yonder sky, who created mankind, who created happiness for mankind, who made Darius king. One king for many, one leader of many.

I am Darius, the great king, king of kings, king of all kinds of peoples of all kinds of origins, king of this earth far and wide, the son of Hystaspes, the Achaemenid, Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan of Aryan descent.

King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda, these are the nations that I subdued outside Persia. I ruled them. They brought me tribute. What I ordered them, they did. They kept my law: the Mede, the Elamite, the Parthian, the Arian, the Bactrian, the Sogdian, the Chorasmian, the Drangian, the Arachosian, the Sattagyedian, the Macian, the Gandaran, the Indian, the Haoma-drinking Saca, the Saca with pointed caps, the Babylonian, the Syrian, the Arab, the Egyptian, the Armenian, the Cappadocian, the Lydian, the Greeks near and across the sea, the Thracian, the Libyan, the Kushite, the Carian.

King Darius says: Much that was done badly, I made good. The nations were in commotion; people were fighting each other. By the grace of Ahuramazda, I brought about that they no longer fight each other at all. Each one is in his place. They feel fear of my law, so that the stronger does not fight or destroy the weak.

King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda, much constructions that had previously been put out of place, I put in place. In a town called [lacuna], the wall was fallen from age. Before this unrepaired wall I built another, [to serve] from that time into the future.

King Darius says: May Ahuramazda and the gods protect me, my royal house, and what I wrote in this inscription.

Key learning:

- **The scale and design of Darius' building projects at Susa and Persepolis should be analysed in some detail, as should some of his principal inscriptions. These should give an idea of the religion and culture under Darius**

DNa and DNb (Upper and lower register of Darius' tomb)

DNa A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Darius king, one king of many, one lord of many.

I am Darius the great king, king of kings, king of countries containing all kinds of men, king in this great earth far and wide, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid, a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan, having Aryan lineage.

King Darius says: By the favor of Ahuramazda these are the countries which I seized outside of Persia; I ruled over them; they bore tribute to me; they did what was said to them by me; they held my law firmly; Media, Elam, Parthia, Aria, Bactria, Sogdia, Chorasmia, Drangiana, Arachosia, Sattagydia, Gandara, India, the haoma-drinking Scythians, the Scythians with pointed caps, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, Armenia, Cappadocia, Lydia, the Greeks, the Scythians across the sea, Thrace, the sun hat-wearing Greeks, the Libyans, the Nubians, the men of Maka and the Carians.

King Darius says: Ahuramazda, when he saw this earth in commotion, thereafter bestowed it upon me, made me king; I am king. By the favor of Ahuramazda I put it down in its place; what I said to them, that they did, as was my desire.

If now you shall think that "How many are the countries which King Darius held?" look at the sculptures [of those] who bear the throne, then shall you know, then shall it become known to you: the spear of a Persian man has gone forth far; then shall it become known to you: a Persian man has delivered battle far indeed from Persia.

Darius the King says: This which has been done, all that by the will of Ahuramazda I did. Ahuramazda bore me aid, until I did the work. May Ahuramazda protect me from harm, and my royal house, and this land: this I pray of Ahuramazda, this may Ahuramazda give to me!

O man, that which is the command of Ahuramazda, let this not seem repugnant to you; do not leave the right path; do not rise in rebellion!

DNb A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this excellent thing which is seen, who created happiness for man, who set wisdom and capability down upon King Darius.

King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda I am of such a sort, I am a friend of the right, of wrong I am not a friend. It is not my wish that the weak should have harm done him by the strong, nor is it my wish that the strong should have harm done him by the weak.

The right, that is my desire. To the man who is a follower of the lie I am no friend. I am not hot-tempered. What things develop in my anger, I hold firmly under control by my thinking power. I am firmly ruling over my own impulses.

The man who is cooperative, according to his cooperation thus I reward him. Who does harm, him according to the harm I punish. It is not my wish that a man should do harm; nor indeed is it my wish that if he does harm he should not be punished.

What a man says against a man, that does not convince me, until I hear the sworn statements of both.

What a man does or performs, according to his ability, by that I become satisfied with him, and it is much to my desire, and I am well pleased, and I give much to loyal men.

Of such a sort are my understanding and my judgment: if what has been done by me you see or hear of, both in in the palace and in the expeditionary camp, this is my capability over will and understanding.

This indeed my capability: that my body is strong. As a fighter of battles I am a good fighter of battles. When ever with my judgment in a place I determine whether I behold or do not behold an enemy, both with understanding and with judgment, then I think prior to panic, when I see an enemy as when I do not see one.

I am skilled both in hands and in feet. As a horseman, I am a good horseman. As a bowman, I am a good bowman, both on foot and on horseback. As a spearman, I am a good spearman, both on foot and on horseback.

These skills that Ahuramazda set down upon me, and which I am strong enough to bear, by the will of Ahuramazda, what was done by me, with these skills I did, which Ahuramazda set down upon me.

O man, vigorously make you known of what sort I am, and of what sort my skillfulnesses, and of what sort my superiority. Let not that seem false to you, which has been heard by your ears. Listen to what is said to you.

O man, let that not be made to seem false to you, which has been done by me. That do you behold, which has been inscribed. Let not the laws be disobeyed by you. Let not anyone be untrained in obedience. [The last line is unintelligible]

Apadana stairway

A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Xerxes king, one king of all kings, one commander for all commanders.

I am Xerxes, the great king, the king of kings, the king of all countries, having all kinds of human beings, king in this earth far and wide, the son of king Darius, the Achaemenid.

The great king Xerxes says: What was done by me here, and was done by me farther off, I did by the grace of Ahuramazda. May Ahuramazda and the gods protect me, my kingdom, and what I did.

Epitaph of Apis bull in Egypt in 518 BC

Year 6, 3rd month of the season of Shemu, day 10, under the Majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Mesutire, given life forever. The god was taken up [in peace towards the perfect West, and was laid to rest in his place in the necropolis], in the place which his Majesty has made for him, [after] all [the ceremonies had been performed for him] in the Hall of Embalming ... All was done that his Majesty had ordered ... in year 27 ... of Cambyses. (Lactor 16,21)

Hieroglyphic inscription of Udjahorresnet

The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Cambyses, came to Sais. His Majesty proceeded to the temple of Neith. He touched the ground with his forehead before Her Majesty very greatly as every king has done. He made a great offering of all good things to Neith the Great, the mother of the god, and the great gods who are in Sais, as every excellent king has done (Lactor 16,20).

Hieroglyphic inscription on base of Darius statue in Susa

To you is given all power, stability, all health and gladness of heart. All lands of the plains and of the mountains are reunited under your sandals. To you is given Upper and Lower Egypt, who offer their adoration to your beautiful face, like unto the god Ra, in eternity.

Another inscription, near the king's right foot, says:

His Majesty has consecrated this long-lasting statue fashioned in his likeness so that the memory of his spirit would dwell forever next to Atum.

And on the left and right sides of the base are inscriptions of Darius' conquered nations – Babylonia, Armenia, Lydia, Cappadocia, Thrace, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, Cyrenaica, Kush, Maka, India, Persis, Media, Elam, Aria, Parthia, Bactria, Sogdia, Gandara, Drangiana, Sattagydia, Chorasmia and the Scythians – see

<https://www.livius.org/articles/place/susa/susa-photos/susa-statue-of-darius/>

Key learning:

- Treatment of other peoples from ancient sources

Herodotus *Histories* 2.158.1-2 and **DZc**

158.1-2. Psammetichus had a son Necos, who became king of Egypt. It was he who began the making of the canal into the Red Sea,¹ which was finished by Darius the Persian. This is four days' voyage in length, and it was dug wide enough for two triremes to move in it rowed abreast. It is fed by the Nile, and is carried from a little above Bubastis by the Arabian town of Patumus; it issues into the Red Sea. The beginning of the digging was in the part of the Egyptian plain which is nearest to Arabia; the mountains that extend to Memphis (in which mountains are the stone quarries) come close to this plain

DZc: A great god is Ahuramazda, who created yonder sky, who created this earth, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Darius king, who bestowed on Darius a great kingdom with good horses and good people.

I am Darius the great king, king of kings, king of all kinds of men, king in this great earth far and wide, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid.

King Darius says: I am a Persian; setting out from Persia, I conquered Egypt. I ordered to dig this canal from the river that is called Nile and flows in Egypt, to the sea that begins in Persia. Therefore, when this canal had been dug as I had ordered, ships went from Egypt through this canal to Persia, as I had intended.

Key learning:

- **Darius, in his Suez Inscriptions (DZc), claims to have successfully organised the construction of a canal linking the Red Sea to the Nile.**
- **Herodotus (2.158 above) argued that it was Darius who finally completed the canal**
- **Herodotus on the Red Sea Canal**
- **The view from Persian sources**

Herodotus *Histories* 3.89; 3.95-3.97 on satraps and tribute

89. Having so done in Persia, he divided his dominions into twenty governments, called by the Persians satrapies¹; and doing so and appointing governors, he ordained that each several nation should pay him tribute; to this end he united each nation with its closest neighbours, and, beyond these nearest lands, assigned those that were farther off some to one and some to another nation. I will now show how he divided his governments and the tributes which were paid him yearly. Those that paid in silver were appointed to render the weight of a Babylonian talent; those that paid in gold, an Euboïc talent; the Babylonian talent being equal to seventy-eight Euboïc minae. In the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses after him there was no fixed tribute, but payment was made in gifts. It is by reason of this fixing of tribute, and other like ordinances, that the Persians called Darius the huckster, Cambyses the master, and Cyrus the father; for Darius made petty profit out of everything, Cambyses was harsh and arrogant, Cyrus was merciful and ever wrought for their well-being.

95. Now if these Babylonian silver talents be reckoned in Euboïc money, the sum is seen to be nine thousand eight hundred and eighty Euboïc talents: and the gold coin being counted as thirteen times the value of the silver, the gold-dust is found to be of the worth of four thousand six hundred and eighty Euboïc talents. Therefore it is seen by adding all together that Darius collected a yearly tribute of fourteen thousand five hundred and sixty talents; I take no account of figures less than ten.

96. This was Darius' revenue from Asia and a few parts of Libya. But as time went on he drew tribute also from the islands and the dwellers in Europe, as far as Thessaly. The tribute is stored by the king in this fashion: he melts it down and pours it into earthen vessels; when the vessel is full he breaks the earthenware away, and when he needs money coins as much as will serve his purpose.

97. These were the several governments and appointments of tribute. The Persian country is the only one which I have not recorded as tributary; for the Persians dwell free from all taxes. As for those on whom no tribute was laid, but who rendered gifts instead, they were, firstly, the Ethiopians nearest to Egypt, whom Cambyses subdued in his march towards the long-lived Ethiopians; and also those who dwell about the holy Nysa,¹ where Dionysus is the god of their festivals. [The seed of these Ethiopians and their neighbours is like the seed of the Indian Callantiae; they live underground.] These together brought every other year and still bring a gift of two choenixes² of unrefined gold, two hundred blocks of ebony, five Ethiopian boys, and twenty great elephants' tusks. Gifts were also required of the Colchians and their neighbours as far as the Caucasian mountains (which is as far as the Persian rule reaches, the

country north of the Caucasus paying no regard to the Persians); these were rendered every four years and are still so rendered, namely, an hundred boys and as many maidens. The Arabians rendered a thousand talents' weight of frankincense yearly. Such were the gifts of these peoples to the king, besides the tribute.

Key learning:

- **Herodotus' view of the satraps and tribute**
- **There is debate as to whether the organisation of the empire into satrapies originated under Cyrus or Darius. However the regional satraps were directly accountable to the king and held positions of great responsibility. One of their key responsibilities of the satraps was to collect tribute from their regions. Darius had reorganised the system and fixed the levels payable**

Herodotus *Histories* 5.52-5.53; 8.98 & Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.6.17-18

52. Now the nature of this road¹ is as I shall show. All along it are the king's stages and exceeding good hostelries, and the whole of it passes through country that is inhabited and safe. Its course through Lydia and Phrygia is of the length of twenty stages, and ninety-four and a half parasangs. Next after Phrygia it comes to the river Halys, where there is a defile, which must be passed ere the river can be crossed, and a great fortress to guard it. After the passage into Cappadocia the road in that land as far as the borders of Cilicia is of twenty-eight stages and an hundred and four parasangs. On this frontier you must ride through two defiles and pass two fortresses; ride past these, and you will have a journey through Cilicia of three stages and fifteen and a half parasangs. The boundary of Cilicia and Armenia is a navigable river whereof the name is Euphrates. In Armenia there are fifteen resting-stages, and fifty-six parasangs and a half, and there is a fortress there. From Armenia the road enters the Matienian land, wherein are thirty-four stages, and an hundred and thirty-seven parasangs. Through this land flow four navigable rivers, that must needs be passed by ferries, first the Tigris, then a second and a third of the same name, yet not the same stream nor flowing from the same source; for the first-mentioned of them flows from the Armenians and the second from the Matieni; and the fourth river is called Gyndes, that Gyndes which Cyrus parted once into three hundred and sixty channels.¹ When this country is passed, the road is in the Cissian land, where are eleven stages and forty-two and a half parasangs, as far as yet another navigable river, the Choaspes, whereon stands the city of Susa.

53. Thus the whole tale of stages is an hundred and eleven. So many resting-stages then there are in the going up from Sardis to Susa. If I have rightly numbered the parasangs of the royal road, and the parasang is of thirty furlongs' length (which assuredly it is), then between Sardis and the king's abode called Memnonian² there are thirteen thousand and five hundred furlongs, the number of parasangs being four hundred and fifty; and if each day's journey be an hundred and fifty furlongs, then the sum of days spent is ninety, neither more nor less.

98. While Xerxes did thus, he sent a messenger to Persia with news of his present misfortune. Now there is nothing mortal that accomplishes a course more swiftly than do these messengers, by the Persians' skilful contrivance. It is said that as many days as there are in the whole journey, so many are the men and horses that stand along the road, each horse and man at the interval of a day's journey; and these are stayed neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness from accomplishing their appointed course with all speed. The first rider delivers his charge to the second, the second to the third, and thence it passes on from hand to hand, even as in the Greek torch-bearers' race in honour of Hephaestus. This riding-post is called in Persia, angareïon.

Xenophon, 8.6.17. We have observed still another device of Cyrus inaugurates a postal system Cyrus to cope with the magnitude of his empire; by means of this institution he would speedily discover the condition of affairs, no matter how far distant they might be from him: he experimented to find out how great a distance a horse could cover in a day when ridden hard but so as not to break down, and then he erected post-stations at just such distances and equipped them with horses and men to take care of them; at each one of the stations he had the

proper official appointed to receive the letters that were delivered and to forward them on, to take in the exhausted horses and riders and send on fresh ones.

18. They say, moreover, that sometimes this express does not stop all night, but the night-messengers succeed the day-messengers in relays, and when that is the case, this express, some say, gets over the ground faster than the cranes. If their story is not literally true, it is at all events undeniable that this is the fastest overland travelling on earth; and it is a fine thing to have immediate intelligence of everything, in order to attend to it as quickly as possible.

Key learning:

- **Herodotus' and Xenophon's accounts of the Royal Roads**
- **The Royal Road and outposts along the way for getting messages quickly across the empire.**

Herodotus *Histories* 1.131–132; 1.135; 1.137–1.138

131. As to the usages of the Persians, I know them to be these. It is not their custom to make and set up statues and temples and altars, but those who make such they deem foolish, as I suppose, because they never believed the gods, as do the Greeks, to be in the likeness of men; but they call the whole circle of heaven Zeus, and to him they offer sacrifice on the highest peaks of the mountains; they sacrifice also to the sun and moon and earth and fire and water and winds. These are the only gods to whom they have ever sacrificed from the beginning; they have learnt later, to sacrifice to the "heavenly" Aphrodite, from the Assyrians and Arabians. She is called by the Assyrians Mylitta, by the Arabians Alilat, by the Persians Mitra.

132. And this is their fashion of sacrifice to the aforesaid gods: when about to sacrifice they neither build altars nor kindle fire, they use no libations, nor music, nor fillets, nor barley meal; but to whomsoever of the gods a man will sacrifice, he leads the beast to an open space and then calls on the god, himself wearing a wreath on his cap, of myrtle for choice. To pray for blessings for himself alone is not lawful for the sacrificer; rather he prays that it may be well with the king and all the Persians for he reckons himself among them, He then cuts the victim limb from limb into portions, and having boiled the flesh spreads the softest grass, trefoil by choice, and places all of it on this. When he has so disposed it a Magian comes near and chants over it the song of the birth of the gods, as the Persian tradition relates it; for no sacrifice can be offered without a Magian. Then after a little while the sacrificer carries away the flesh and uses it as he pleases.

135. But of all men the Persians most welcome foreign customs. They wear the Median dress, deeming it more beautiful than their own, and the Egyptian cuirass in war. Their luxurious practices are of all kinds, and all borrowed; the Greeks taught them unnatural vices. Every Persian marries many lawful wives, and keeps still more concubines.

137. This is a law which I praise; and it is a praiseworthy law too which suffers not the king himself to slay any man for one offence, nor any other Persian for one offence to do incurable hurt to one of his servants. Not till reckoning shows that the offender's wrongful acts are more and greater than his services may a man give vent to his anger. They say that none has ever yet killed his father or mother; when suchlike deeds have been done, it cannot be but that on inquest made the doer is shown to be a child falsely substituted or born of a concubine for it is not to be believed (say they) that a son should kill his true parent.

138. Moreover of what they may not do neither may they speak. They hold lying to be foulest of all, and next to that debt; for which they have many other reasons, but this in especial, that the debtor must needs (so they say) speak some falsehood. The citizen who has leprosy or the white sickness may not come into a town or consort with other Persians. They say that he is so afflicted because he has sinned in some wise against the sun. Many drive every stranger, who takes such a disease, out of the country; and so they do to white doves, for the reason aforesaid. Rivers they chiefly reverence; they will neither make water nor spit nor wash their hands therein, nor suffer anyone so to do.

Key learning:

- **Herodotus' view of Persian religion and culture**

Darius' expansion of the empire into the Aegean, India, and Scythia

(Suggested timings: 3 hours)

Herodotus *Histories* 3.139–3.140

139. After this, Darius conquered Samos, the greatest of all city states, Greek or other, the reason of his conquest being this:—When Cambyses, son of Cyrus, invaded Egypt, many Greeks came with the army to that country, some to trade, as was natural, and some to see the country itself; among whom was Syloson, son of Aeaces, Polycrates' brother, and now banished from Samos. This Syloson had a stroke of good luck. He was in the market at Memphis wearing a red cloak, when Darius, at that time one of Cambyses' guard and as yet a man of no great account, saw him, and coveting the cloak came and offered to buy it. When Syloson saw Darius' eagerness, by good luck he was moved to say, "I will not sell you my cloak; but if it must be so, and no help for it, you can have it for nothing." To this Darius agreed and took the garment.

140. Syloson supposed that he had lost his cloak out of foolish good nature. But in time Cambyses died, the seven rebelled against the Magian, and of the seven Darius came to the throne; Syloson then learned that the successor to the royal power was the man to whom he had given at request the garment in Egypt; so he went up to Susa and sat at the king's porch, saying that he was one of Darius' benefactors. When the gate-ward brought word of this to the king, "But to what Greek benefactor," Darius asked, "can I owe thanks? In the little time since I have been king hardly one of that nation has come to us, and I have, I may say, no need of any Greek. Nevertheless let him be brought in, that I may know his meaning." The gate-ward brought Syloson in and set him before them; and the interpreters asked him who he was, and what he had done to call himself the king's benefactor. Then Syloson told the story of the cloak, and said that it was he who had given it. "Most generous man," said Darius, "you are he who made me a present when I had as yet no power; if it was but a little thing, yet it was as thankworthy as if someone now gave me a great gift. Take in requital abundance of gold and silver, that you may never repent of the service you did Darius son of Hystaspes." "Nay," Syloson answered, "I ask neither gold, O king, nor silver; only win me back my fatherland of Samos, where my brother Polycrates has been done to death by Oroetes, and our slave now rules; give me back Samos, but so that there be no bloodshed nor enslaving."

Key learning:

- **In Samos the murder of Polycrates, by the governor of Sardis Oroites, led to a dispute over who should rule the island. Polycrates' servant Maiandrios was in control. Herodotus would have us believe that Darius sided with Polycrates' brother Syloson as the latter had once given him a red cloak before he became king; Darius supposedly felt duty bound to help when Syloson arrived in Susa asking to be installed as ruler of Samos**
- **Use this and the following to discuss the personalities and priorities of Darius as demonstrated in these events**

Herodotus *Histories* 5.26–5.27

26. This Otanes then, who sat upon that seat, was now made successor to Megabazus in his governorship; he took Byzantium and Calchedon, and Antandrus in the Troad, and Lamponium; and he conquered with ships that he got from the Lesbians Lemnos and Imbros, both then still inhabited by Pelasgians.

27. The Lemnians fought well and defended themselves, till at last they were brought to evil plight, and the Persians set a governor over those that were left of them, Lycaretus the brother of Maeandrius who had been king of Samos. This Lycaretus came to his end while ruling in Lemnos; this was because he strove to enslave and subdue all the people, accusing some of shunning service against the Scythians, and others of plundering Darius' army on its way back from Scythia.

Key learning:

- **Darius would soon take direct control of Lemnos and Imbros. Both were strategic islands on the grain route between the fields north of the Black Sea and Athens. Byzantium on the European side of the Bosphorus was also taken. This series of takeovers, when considered with the fact that Darius later sanctioned an expedition to Naxos under Aristagoras, suggest that Darius' policy towards Samos had less to do with an obligation towards Syloson. The policy towards Samos was simply part of wider policy of expansion and Darius thought Syloson reliable enough to be installed as a client ruler.**

Herodotus *Histories* 4.44

44. But as to Asia, most of it was discovered by Darius. There is a river Indus, which of all rivers comes second in producing crocodiles. Darius, desiring to know where this Indus issues into the sea, sent ships manned by Scylax, a man of Caryanda, and others in whose word he trusted; these set out from the city Caspatyrus and the Pactyic country, and sailed down the river towards the east and the sunrise till they came to the sea; and voyaging over the sea westwards, they came in the thirtieth month to that place whence the Egyptian king sent the Phoenicians aforementioned to sail round Libya. After this circumnavigation Darius subdued the Indians and made use of this sea. Thus was it discovered that Asia, saving the parts towards the rising sun, was in other respects like Libya.

Key learning:

- **The evidence for Darius' involvement in India is minimal and confined to a short passage of Herodotus. It seems that a reconnaissance mission was sent to the Indus.**

Herodotus *Histories* 3.132–3.134

132. So now for having healed Darius at Susa Democedes had a very great house and ate at the king's table; all was his, except only permission to return to his Greek home. When the Egyptian chirurgeons who had till now attended on the king were about to be impaled for being less skilful than a Greek, Democedes begged their lives of the king and saved them; and he saved besides an Elean diviner, who had been of Polycrates' retinue and was left neglected among the slaves. Mightily in favour with the king was Democedes.

133. Not long after this, Atossa, Cyrus' daughter and Darius' wife, found a swelling growing on her breast, which broke and spread further. As long as it was but a small matter, she said nothing of it but hid it for shame; but presently growing worse, she sent for Democedes and showed it to him. He promised to cure her, but made her to swear that she would requite him by granting whatsoever he requested of her; saying, that he would ask nothing shameful.

134. His remedies having made her whole, Atossa at Democedes' prompting thus addressed Darius in their chamber: "Sire, you are a mighty ruler; why sit you idle, winning neither new dominions nor new power for your Persians? If you would have them know that they have a man for their king, it is right and fitting for one of your youth and your wealth to let them see you achieving some great enterprise. Thereby will you gain a double advantage: the Persians will know that their king is truly a man; and in the stress of war they will have no leisure for conspiring against you. Now is your time for achieving great deeds, while you are still young: for as a man's mind grows with his body's growth, so as the body ages the mind too grows older and duller for all uses." Thus she spoke, being so prompted. "Lady," said Darius, "what you say I am already minded to do. I am resolved to make a bridge from this to the other continent and so lead an army against the Scythians; and in a little while we will set about accomplishing this." "See now," Atossa answered, "forbear for the nonce to attack the Scythians; you will find them whenever you so desire; nay, rather, I pray you, march against Hellas. I have heard of Laconian and Argive and Attic and Corinthian women, and would fain have them for handmaidens. There is a man by you who is fitter than any other to instruct and guide you in all matters concerning Hellas: I mean the physician who healed your foot." "Lady," answered Darius, "since it

is your desire that we should first try conclusions with Hellas, methinks it is best that we send Persians with the man of whom you speak to spy out the land and bring us news of all that they have seen in it; thus shall I have full knowledge to help my adventure against Hellas.”

Key learning:

- **The specific reasons given for the expedition into Scythia by Herodotus are riddled with motifs. It is impossible to know whether there was a specific reason rather than simply the weight of expectation and internal issues influencing Darius**
- **Use this and following to discuss the nature of the evidence for the Scythian campaign**

Herodotus *Histories* 4.84

84. Then Oeobazus a Persian, who had three sons, all with the army, entreated Darius that one might be left behind. “Nay,” said the king, “you are my friend, and your desire is but reasonable; I will leave all your sons.” Oeobazus rejoiced greatly, supposing that his sons were released from service; but Darius bade those whose business it was to put all Oeobazus’ sons to death.

Key learning:

- **Darius’ brother warns him against attacking Scythia. An arrogant Darius ignores the advice. Darius proceeds to execute the three sons of a Persian noble who asked for one of his sons to be left behind**

Herodotus *Histories* 4.122; 4.126; 4.128; 4.131–4.132; 4.134–4.137; 4.139–4.144

122. This convoy being first sent on its way, the advance guard of the Scythians found the Persians about a three days’ march distant from the Ister; and having found them they encamped a day’s march ahead of the enemy and set about clearing the land of all growing things. When the Persians saw the Scythian cavalry appearing, they marched on in its tracks, the horsemen ever withdrawing before them; and then, making for the one Scythian division, the Persians held on in pursuit towards the east and the river Tanais; which when the horsemen had crossed the Persians crossed also, and pursued till they had marched through the land of the Sauromatae to the land of the Budini.

126. All this continuing long, and there being no end to it, Darius sent a horseman to Idanthysus the Scythian king, with this message: “Sir, these are strange doings. Why will you ever flee? You can choose which of two things you will do: if you deem yourself strong enough to withstand my power, wander no further, but stand and fight; but if you know yourself to be the weaker, then make an end of this running to and fro, and come to terms with your master, sending him gifts of earth and water.”

128. So the herald went to carry this message to Darius; but the Scythian kings were full of anger when they heard the name of slavery. They sent then the division of the Scythians to which the Sauromatae were attached, and which was led by Scopasis, to speak with those Ionians who guarded the bridge over the Ister; as for those of the Scythians who were left behind, it was resolved that they should no longer lead the Persians astray, but attack them whenever they were foraging for provision. So they watched for the time when Darius’ men were foraging, and did according to their plan. The Scythian horse ever routed the Persian horse, and the Persian horsemen falling back in flight on their footmen, the foot would come to their aid; and the Scythians, once they had driven in the horse, turned about for fear of the foot. The Scythians attacked in this fashion by night as well as by day.

131. This having often happened, Darius was in a quandary, and when they perceived this, the Scythian kings sent a herald bringing Darius the gift of a bird, a mouse, a frog, and five arrows. The Persians asked the bringer of these gifts what they might mean; but he said that no charge had been laid on him save to give the gifts and then depart with all speed; let the Persians (he said), if they were clever enough, discover the signification of the presents.

132. The Persians hearing and taking counsel, Darius' judgment was that the Scythians were surrendering to him themselves and their earth and their water; for he reasoned that a mouse is a creature found in the earth and eating the same produce as men, and a frog is a creature of the water and a bird most like to a horse; and the arrows (said he) signified that the Scythians surrendered their fighting power. This was the opinion declared by Darius; but the opinion of Gobryas, one of the seven who had slain the Magian, was contrary to it. He reasoned that the meaning of the gifts was, "Unless you become birds Persians, and fly up into the sky, or mice and hide you in the earth, or frogs and leap into the lakes, you will be shot by these arrows and never return home."

134. But after the sending of the gifts to Darius, the Scythians who had remained there came out with foot and horse and offered battle to the Persians. But when the Scythian ranks were arrayed, a hare ran out between the armies; and every Scythian that saw it gave chase. So there was confusion and shouting among the Scythians; Darius asked what the enemy meant by this clamour; and when he heard that they were chasing the hare, then said he (it would seem) to those wherewith he was ever wont to speak, "These fellows hold us in deep contempt; and I think now that Gobryas' saying concerning the Scythian gifts was true. Seeing therefore that my own judgment of the matter is like his, we need to take sage counsel, whereby we shall have a safe return out of the country." To this said Gobryas: "Sire, reason alone wellnigh showed me how hard it would be to deal with these Scythians; but when I came I was made the better aware of it, seeing that they do but make a sport of us. Now therefore my counsel is, that at nightfall we kindle our camp-fires according to our wont at other times, that we deceive those in our army who are least strong to bear hardship, and tether here all our asses, and so ourselves depart, before the Scythians can march straight to the Ister to break the bridge, or the Ionians take some resolve whereby we may well be ruined."

135. This was Gobryas' advice, and at nightfall Darius followed it. He left there in the camp the men who were worn out, and those whose loss imported least to him, and all the asses too tethered. The reason of his leaving the asses, and the infirm among his soldiers, was, as regarding the asses, that they might bray; as to the men, they were left by reason of their infirmity, but his pretext was, forsooth, that they should guard the camp while he attacked the Scythians with the sound part of his army. Giving this charge to those who were left behind, and lighting camp-fires, Darius made all speed to reach the Ister. When the asses found themselves deserted by the multitude, they brayed much the louder for that; and the Scythians by hearing them were fully persuaded that the Persians were still in the same place.

136. But when day dawned the men left behind perceived that Darius had played them false, and they held out their hands to the Scythians and explained their position; who, when they heard, gathered their power with all speed, both the two divisions of their host and the one division that was with the Sauromatae and Budini and Geloni, and made straight for the Ister in pursuit of the Persians. But seeing that the Persian army was for the most part of footmen and knew not the roads (these not being marked), whereas the Scythians were horsemen and knew the short cuts, they kept wide of each other, and the Scythians came to the bridge much before the Persians. There, perceiving that the Persians were not yet come, they said to the Ionians, who were in their ships, "Now, Ionians, the numbered days are past and you do wrongly to remain still here. Nay—for it is fear which has ere now kept you from departing—now break the bridge with all speed and go your ways in freedom and happiness, thanking the gods and the Scythians. As for him that was once your master, we will leave him in such plight that never again will he lead his army against any nation."

137. Thereupon the Ionians held a council. Miltiades the Athenian, general and despot of the Chersonesites of the Hellespont, gave counsel that they should do as the Scythians said and set Ionia free. But Histiaeus of Miletus held a contrary opinion. "Now," said he, "it is by help of Darius that each of us is sovereign of his city; if Darius' power be overthrown, we shall no longer be able to rule, neither I in Miletus nor any of you elsewhere; for all the cities will choose democracy rather than despotism." When Histiaeus declared this opinion, all of them straightway inclined to it, albeit they had first sided with Miltiades.

139. These then chose to follow Histiaeus' counsel, and resolved to make it good by act and word: to break as much of the bridge as reached a bowshot from the Scythian bank, that so they might seem to do somewhat when in truth they did nothing, and that the Scythians might not essay to force a passage across the Ister by the bridge; and to say while they broke the portion of the bridge on the Scythian side, that they would do all that the Scythians desired.

This resolve they added to their decision; and presently Histiaeus answered for them all, and said, "You have brought us good advice, Scythians, and your zeal is well timed; you do your part in guiding us aright and we do ours in serving your ends as need requires; for as you see, we are breaking the passage, and will use all diligence, so much do we desire our freedom. But while we break this bridge, now is the time for you to seek out the Persians, and when you have found them to take such vengeance on our and your behalf as they deserve."

140. So the Scythians trusted the Ionians' word once more, and turned back to seek the Persians; but they mistook the whole way whereby their enemies returned. For this the Scythians themselves were to blame, inasmuch as they had destroyed the horses' grazing-grounds in that region and choked the wells. Had they not so done, they could readily have found the Persians if they would. But as it was, that part of their plan which they had thought the best was the very cause of their ill-success. So the Scythians went searching for their enemies through the parts of their own country where there was provender for horses and water, supposing that they too were aiming at such places in their flight; but the Persians ever kept to their own former tracks, and so with much ado they found the passage of the river. But inasmuch as they came to it at night and found the bridge broken, they were in great terror lest the Ionians had abandoned them.

141. There was with Darius an Egyptian, whose voice was the loudest in the world; Darius bade this man stand on the Ister bank and call to Histiaeus the Milesian. This the Egyptian did; Histiaeus heard and obeyed the first shout, and sent all the ships to ferry the army over, and made the bridge anew.

142. Thus the Persians escaped. The Scythians sought the Persians, but missed them again. Their judgment of the Ionians is that if they are regarded as free men they are the basest cravens in the world; but if they are to be reckoned as slaves, none would love their masters more, or less desire to escape. Thus have the Scythians taunted the Ionians.

143. Darius marched through Thrace to Sestos on the Chersonesus; thence he crossed over with his ships to Asia, leaving as his general in Europe Megabazus, a Persian, to whom he once did honour by saying among Persians what I here set down. Darius was about to eat pomegranates; and no sooner had he opened the first of them than his brother Artabanus asked him of what thing he would wish to have as many as there were seeds in his pomegranate; whereupon Darius said, that he would rather have that number of men like Megabazus than make all Hellas subject to him. By thus speaking among Persians the king did honour to Megabazus; and now he left him behind as his general, at the head of eighty thousand of his army.

144. This Megabazus is for ever remembered by the people of the Hellespont for his saying—when, being at Byzantium, he was told that the people of Calchedon had founded their town seventeen years before the Byzantines had founded theirs—that the Calchedonians must at that time have been blind; for had they not been so, they would never have chosen the meaner site for their city when they might have had the fairer. This Megabazus, being now left as general in the country, subdued all the people of the Hellespont who did not take the side of the Persians.

Key learning:

- **The Scythians divided their forces and utilised a scorched earth policy to thwart Darius.**

Ctesias F13 Photius §21

[21] Darius then collected an army of 800,000 men and crossed the Bosphorus and the Ister by a bridge of boats into Scythian territory in fifteen days. The two kings sent each other a bow in turn. Darius, seeing that the bow of the Scythians was stronger, turned back and fled across the bridges, destroying some of them in his haste before the entire army had crossed. Eighty thousand of his men, who had been left behind in Europe, were put to death by the ruler of the Scythians. Darius, after he had crossed the bridge, set fire to the houses and temples of the Chalcedonians, because they had attempted to break down the bridges which he had made near their city and had also destroyed the altar erected by him, when crossing, in honor of Zeus Diabaterios.

Key learning:

- **Later the Scythians used guerrilla tactics against the foraging Persians. Darius, it seems, had to retreat to the Ister. Herodotus states that he left his weakest men behind.**

Herodotus *Histories* 5.1–5.2; 5.10–5.11; 5.23–5.24

1. Those Persians whom Darius had left in Europe under the command of Megabazus, finding the Perinthians unwilling to be Darius' subjects, subdued them before any others of the people of the Hellespont. These Perinthians had already been roughly handled by the Paeonians. For the Paeonians from the Strymon had been bidden by an oracle of their god to march against Perinthus, and if the Perinthians being encamped over against them should call to them, crying out their name, then to attack them, but, if there were no such call, then not to attack. Thus the Paeonians did; and the Perinthians being encamped in front of their city, the armies challenged each other to a threefold duel, wherein man was matched against man, horse against horse, and dog against dog. The Perinthians won the victory in two of the combats and raised the cry of "Paeon" in their joy. The Paeonians reasoned that this was that whereof the oracle spoke; they said to each other, as I suppose, "This is surely the fulfilment of the prophecy; now here is work for us"; and with that, the Perinthians having cried "Paeon," the Paeonians set upon them and won a great victory, leaving few of their enemies alive.

2. The Perinthians had already been thus treated by the Paeonians; and now they fought like brave men for their liberty, but Megabazus and the Persians overcame them by weight of numbers. Perinthus being taken, Megabazus marched his army through Thrace, subduing to the king's will every city and every people of that region. For this was the charge given him by Darius, even the conquest of Thrace.

10. But the Thracians say that all the land beyond the Ister is full of bees, and that by reason of these none can travel there. This is no credible tale, to my mind; for those creatures are ill able to bear cold; but it appears to me rather that it is by reason of the cold that the northern lands are not inhabited. Such, then, are the stories about this region. Whatever be the truth, Megabazus made its sea-coast subject to the Persians.

11. As soon as Darius had crossed the Hellespont and come to Sardis,² he remembered the good service done him by Histiaeus of Miletus and the counsel of Coes the Mytilenaeus; and he sent for them to come to Sardis and offered them the choice of what they would. Then Histiaeus, seeing that he was despot of Miletus, desired no further sovereignty than that, but asked for Myrcinus¹ in the Edonian land, that he might there build a city. This was Histiaeus' choice; but Coes, inasmuch as he was no despot but a plain citizen, asked that he might be made despot of Mytilene.

23. In some such wise these things fell out. But Megabazus came to the Hellespont, bringing with him the Paeonians; thence he crossed it and came to Sardis. Now as Histiaeus the Milesian was by this time fortifying the place which he had asked of Darius as his reward for guarding the bridge (this was a place called Myrcinus by the river Strymon), Megabazus had learnt what Histiaeus was about, and no sooner had he come to Sardis with the Paeonians than he said to Darius: "Sire, what is this that you have done? You have given a clever and cunning Greek a city to build in Thrace, where are forests in plenty for ship-building, and much wood for oars, and mines of silver, and much people both Greek and foreign dwelling around, who when they have a champion to lead them will do all his behests by day or by night. Do you then stay this man from these his doings, lest you have a war on hand with your own subjects; but to this end bring him to you by gentle means; and when you have him safe, see to it that he never return to Hellas."

24. Darius was readily persuaded by this, for he thought that Megabazus foresaw the future aright; and presently he sent this message to Myrcinus: "These to Histiaeus from Darius the king:—My thoughts can show me no man who is a truer friend to me and mine; not words but deeds have proved this to me. Now therefore let nothing hinder you from coming to me, that I may disclose to you certain great purposes which I have in mind." Trusting these words, and proud, moreover, that he should be the king's counsellor, Histiaeus came to Sardis; and when he had come Darius said to him, "Histiaeus, I will tell you wherefore I sent for you. As soon as I returned from Scythia and you

were gone from my sight, there was nothing whereof I had so immediate a desire as the seeing and speaking with you; for I knew that the most precious of all possessions is a wise and loyal friend; and I can witness of my own knowledge that you have dealt both wisely and loyally with me. Now therefore, seeing that you have done well in coming hither, I make you this proposal:—leave Miletus and your newly founded Thracian city, and follow me to Susa, to have there all that is mine and to share my table and my counsels.”

Key learning:

- **Megabazus was left in Europe to subjugate other Thracian tribes and the Hellespont region. Thrace was rich in raw materials and manpower.**
- **Herodotus’ emphasis on Scythia and the probability that the River Ister (Danube) was bridged, it is unlikely that Darius travelled as far into Scythia as Herodotus suggests: the timescale the historian outlined does not allow for the ground Darius was said to have covered. The primary aim of the expedition seems to have been to conquer Thrace, the Getai and the gold producing areas of Transylvania. A clay tablet records that Darius established an administrative building in the latter area. The Getai were conquered en route to the Ister**

The relationship between Greeks and Persia

507–493 BC

(Suggested timings: 2 hours)

Herodotus *Histories* 5.73; 5.96

73. So these were bound and put to death. After that, the Athenians sent to bring back Cleisthenes and the seven hundred households banished by Cleomenes; then they despatched envoys to Sardis, desiring to make an alliance with the Persians; for they knew that they had provoked the Lacedaemonians and Cleomenes to war. When the envoys came to Sardis and spoke as they had been bidden, Artaphrenes son of Hystaspes, viceroy of Sardis, asked them, “What men are you, and where dwell you, who desire alliance with the Persians?” Being informed by the envoys, he gave them an answer whereof the substance was, that if the Athenians gave king Darius earth and water, then he would make alliance with them; but if not, his command was that they should begone. The envoys consulted together and consented to give what was asked, in their desire to make the alliance. So they returned to their own country, and were there greatly blamed for what they had done.

96. Thus then Sigeum came to be under Athenian rule. But Hippias, having come from Lacedaemon into Asia, left no stone unturned, maligning the Athenians to Artaphrenes, and doing all he could to bring Athens into subjection to himself and Darius; and while Hippias thus wrought, the Athenians heard of it and sent messengers to Sardis, warning the Persians not to believe banished Athenians. But Artaphrenes bade them receive Hippias back, if they would be safe. When this bidding was brought back to the Athenians, they would not consent to it; and as they would not consent, it was resolved that they should be openly at war with Persia.

Key learning:

- **Antagonism between Athens and Persia had grown in the years prior to the beginning of the Ionian Revolt. In 507 BC, the new democratic Athens asked the Persians for help to defend themselves against the Spartans who were determined to restore the tyrant Hippias. The embassies agreed to offer ‘earth and water’. In 503 BC, the Persian satrap Artaphrenes requested that Hippias be reinstated. Athens’ refusal resulted in open hostility between Athens and Persia**
- **Use this and the following sections to discuss:**
- **What can we deduce about the potential reasons why the Ionians revolted**
- **The reasons why the revolt spread so widely**
- **The impact/significance of the Ionian revolt on relations between Persia and Greeks**
- **The treatment of other peoples/cultures**

Herodotus *Histories* 5.28; 5.30–5.32

28. All this Otanes achieved when he had been made governor. Thereafter, when there had been no long surcease of evils, trouble began to come on the Ionians from Naxos and Miletus once more. For Naxos surpassed all the other islands in prosperity, and at about the same time Miletus was then at the height of her fortunes, insomuch that she was the chief ornament of Ionia; but for two generations before this she had been very greatly troubled by faction, till the Parians made peace among them, being chosen out of all Greeks by the Milesians to be peace-makers.

30. Thus the Parians made peace in Miletus. But now these cities began to bring trouble upon Ionia, and thus it befel:—Certain men of substance, being banished from Naxos by the commonalty, betook themselves to Miletus. Now it chanced that the deputy ruling Miletus was Aristagoras son of Molpagoras, son-in-law and cousin of that Histiaeus son of Lysagoras whom Darius kept with him at Susa; for Histiaeus was despot of Miletus, and was at Susa

when the Naxians came; and they had been guests and friends of Histiaeus. The Naxians then on their coming to Miletus asked of Aristagoras if haply he could give them some power and so they might return to their own country. Considering that if by his means they were restored to their city he would be ruler of Naxos, and making a pretext of their friendship with Histiaeus, he made them this proposal: "For myself, it lies not in my rights to give you such a power as will restore you, against the will of the Naxians who hold your city; for I am assured that the Naxians have eight thousand men that bear shields, and many ships of war; but I will use all diligence to contrive the matter. And this is my plan. Artaphrenes is my friend; now know, that Artaphrenes is Hystaspes' son and brother to Darius the king; he is governor of all the sea-coast peoples of Asia and has a great army and many ships; this man then will, I think, do whatever we desire." Hearing this, the Naxians left the matter for Aristagoras to deal with as best he could, bidding him promise gifts and the costs of the army, for which they would themselves be chargeable; for they had great hope that when they should appear off Naxos the Naxians would obey all their commands, and that the rest of the islanders would do likewise. For as yet none of these Cyclades islands was subject to Darius.

31. Aristagoras came to Sardis and told Artaphrenes that Naxos was indeed an island of no great size, but for the rest a fair and a good land and near to Ionia, with much wealth withal and many slaves therein. "Do you therefore send an armament against that country, bringing back the men who have been banished thence. And if you so do, I have a great sum at your service, over and above the costs of the armament; for it is but just that we, who bring you, should be chargeable for that; and further, you will win new dominions for the king, Naxos itself and the islands which are its dependants, Paros, Andros, and the rest of those that are called Cyclades. Making these your starting-point, you will easily attack Euboea, which is a great and a wealthy island, no smaller than Cyprus and very easy to take. An hundred ships suffice for the conquest of all these." "This plan which you set forth," Artaphrenes answered, "is profitable for the king's house, and all this your counsel is good, save as to the number of the ships; not one hundred but two hundred ships shall be ready for you when the spring comes. But the king too must himself consent to this."

32. When Aristagoras heard that, he went away to Miletus in great joy. Artaphrenes sent a messenger to Susa with the news of what Aristagoras said; and Darius himself too consenting to the plan, he equipped two hundred triremes and a very great company of Persians and their allies besides, and appointed for their general Megabates, a Persian of the Achaemenid family, cousin to himself and to Darius; this was he whose daughter (if indeed the tale be true) Pausanias the Lacedaemonian, son of Cleombrotus, at a later day betrothed to himself, being ambitious of the sovereignty of Hellas. Having appointed Mega-bates general, Artaphrenes sent his army away to Aristagoras.

Herodotus *Histories* 5.33, 5.35

33. Then Megabates¹ brought Aristagoras from Miletus, and the Ionian army, and the Naxians, and pretended to make sail to the Hellespont; but when he came to Chios he put in with his ships at Caucasa,² that he might cross with a north wind to Naxos. But, since it was not written that the Naxians were to be destroyed by this armament, this befel which I here relate. For when Megabates went his rounds among the ships' watches, it chanced that on a ship of Myndus there was no watch kept; whereat Megabates, being very angry, bade his guards find the captain of this ship (whose name was Scylax) and thrust him partly through an oar-hole of the ship and bind him there, in such fashion that his head was outside the ship and his body inside. So Scylax was bound; and one brought word to Aristagoras, that his Myndian friend was bound and despitefully entreated by Megabates. Aristagoras went then and pleaded with the Persian for Scylax, but obtained nothing that he requested; whereupon he came and released the man himself. When Megabates learnt this, he was very angry, and was violent against Aristagoras. But Aristagoras said, "But you—what have you to do with these matters? Did not Artaphrenes send you to obey me and to sail whithersoever I bid you? Why are you so meddlesome?" So said Aristagoras; Megabates, enraged by this, sent men at nightfall in a boat to Naxos, to tell the Naxians of the trouble in store for them.

35. Aristagoras had no way of fulfilling his promise to Artaphrenes; he was hard pressed by demands for the costs of the armament, and he feared what might come of the ill-success of the army and Megabates' displeasure against him; it was like, he thought, that his lordship of Miletus would be taken away from him. With all these fears in his mind, he began to plan revolt; for it chanced that at that very time there came from Susa Histiaeus' messenger, the man with the marked head, signifying that Aristagoras should revolt from the king. For Histiaeus desired to signify to

Aristagoras that he should revolt; and having no other safe way of so doing (for the roads were guarded) he shaved and pricked marks on the head of his trustiest slave, and waited till the hair grew again; as soon as it was grown, he sent the man to Miletus with no other message save that when he came to Miletus he must bid Aristagoras shave his hair and examine his head. The writing pricked thereon signified revolt, as I have already said. This Histiaeus did, because he sorely disliked his enforced sojourn at Susa; now he had a good hope that if there were a revolt he would be sent away to the sea-coast; but if Miletus remained at peace, he reckoned that he would return thither no more.

Key learning:

- **Herodotus tells a story that focuses on the machinations of Aristagoras, tyrant of Miletus. Aristagoras convinces the Persian satrap Artaphernes to sponsor a campaign in Naxos. The expedition failed to take Naxos, and in a weak position and in debt to Persia, Aristagoras seems to have opted to proclaim a popular revolt.**

Herodotus *Histories* 5.97

97. They being thus minded, and the Persians hearing an evil report of them, at this moment Aristagoras the Milesian, driven from Sparta by Cleomenes the Lacedaemonian, came to Athens; for that city was more powerful than any of the rest. Coming before the people, Aristagoras spoke to the same effect as at Sparta, of the good things of Asia, and how the Persians in war were wont to carry neither shield nor spear and could easily be overcome. This he said, and added thereto, that the Milesians were settlers from Athens, and it was but right to save them, being a very wealthy people; and there was nothing that he did not promise in the earnestness of his entreaty, till at last he over-persuaded them. Truly it would seem that it is easier to deceive many than one; for he could not deceive Cleomenes of Lacedaemon, one single man, but thirty thousand Athenians he could. The Athenians, then, were over-persuaded, and voted the sending of twenty ships in aid of the Ionians, appointing for their admiral Melanthius, a citizen of Athens in all ways of good repute. These ships were the beginning of troubles for Greeks and foreigners.

Key learning:

- **Aristagoras looked for help from the Greek mainland. After failing to convince the Spartan king, the Athenian agreed to send 20 ships. Five Eretrian ships join the Athenian fleet.**

Herodotus *Histories* 5.100-5.102

100. The Ionians, having with this armament come to Ephesus, left their ships at Coresus¹ in the Ephesian territory, and themselves marched inland with a great host, taking Ephesians to guide them on their way. Journeying beside the river Caicus, and crossing thence over Tmolus, they came to Sardis and took it, none withstanding them; all of it they took, save only the citadel, which was held by Artaphrenes himself with a great power.

101. Now this it was that hindered them from plundering the city. The greater part of the houses in Sardis were of reeds, and as many as were of brick, even they had roofs of reeds. So it was that when one of these was set afire by a soldier, the flames spread from house to house all over the whole city. While the city was burning, the Lydians and all the Persians that were in the citadel, being hemmed in on every side (for the fire was consuming the outer parts), and having no exit from the city, came thronging into the marketplace and to the river Pactolus, which flows through the market-place carrying down gold dust from Tmolus, and issues into the river Hermus as does the Hermus into the sea; they assembled in the market-place by this Pactolus, and there of necessity defended themselves, Lydians and Persians. When the Ionians saw some of their enemies defending themselves and a great multitude of others approaching, they were afraid, and drew off out of the city to the mountain called Tmolus; whence at nightfall they departed to their ships.

102. So Sardis was burnt,¹ and therein the temple of Cybele,² the goddess of that country; which burning the Persians afterwards made their pretext for burning the temples of Hellas. But, at this time, the Persians of the provinces this side¹ the Halys, on hearing of these matters, gathered together and came to aid the Lydians. It chanced that they found the Ionians no longer at Sardis; but following on their tracks they caught them at Ephesus. There the Ionians stood arrayed to meet them, but were utterly routed in the battle; many men of renown among them the Persians put to the sword, of whom was Evalcides the general of the Eretrians, one that had won crowns as victor in the lists and been greatly belauded by Simonides of Ceos; those of the Ionians that escaped from the battle fled scattered, each to his city.

Key learning:

- **The Greek force headed inland to Sardis. Much of Sardis was burnt, including the temple to the Lydian god Cybele. A counter-attack was launched and the Greek retreated to the coast where they lost a battle**

Herodotus *Histories* 5.103; 5.105

103. Thus for the nonce they fared in their fighting. But presently the Athenians wholly separated themselves from the Ionians and refused to aid them, though Aristagoras sent messages of earnest entreaty; yet the Ionians, though bereft of their Athenian allies, did none the less busily carry forward their war against the king, so heavily they stood committed by what they had done to Darius. They sailed to the Hellespont and made Byzantium subject to them, and all the other cities of that region; then sailing out from the Hellespont they gained to their cause the greater part of Caria; for even Caunus, which till then had not willed to be their ally, did now join itself to them after the burning of Sardis.

105. Onesilus, then, besieged Amathus. But when it was told to Darius that Sardis had been taken and burnt by the Athenians and Ionians, and that Aristagoras the Milesian had been leader of the conspiracy for the weaving of this plan, at his first hearing of it (it is said) he took no account of the Ionians,—being well assured that they of all men would not go scatheless for their rebellion,—but asked who were the Athenians; and being told, he called for his bow, which he took, and laid an arrow on it and shot it into the sky, praying as he sent it aloft, “O Zeus, grant me vengeance on the Athenians,” and therewithal he charged one of his servants to say to him thrice whenever dinner was set before him, “Master, remember the Athenians.”

Key learning:

- **The Athenians returned home and didn't send further help. The rebellion however did spread as far as Caria, Cyprus and Byzantium.**

Herodotus *Histories* 5.116; 6.6; 6.9

116. So the Cyprians, having won freedom for a year, were enslaved once more.¹ Daurises and Hymaees and Otanes, all of them Persian generals and married to daughters of Darius, pursued after those Ionians who had marched to Sardis and drove them to their ships; after which victory they divided the cities among themselves and sacked them.

6. Such were the doings of Histiaeus and the Mytilenaeans. As regards Miletus itself, there was expectation of a great fleet and army coming against it; for the Persian generals had joined their power together and made one host, which they led against Miletus, taking less account of the other fortresses. Of the fleet, the Phoenicians were the most eager to fight, and there came with them to the war the newly subdued Cyprians, and the Cilicians and Egyptians.

9. These were the Ionian ships; the ships of the foreigners were six hundred. Now these, too, being come to the Milesian shore, and all their land power being there, the Persian generals, when they learnt the number of the Ionian ships, began to fear lest they should be too weak to overcome the Greeks, and thereby, if they had not the mastery of the sea, should fail of taking Miletus and peradventure be evilly entreated by Darius. Having this in mind,

they assembled the despots of the Ionians, who had been deposed from their governments by Aristagoras of Miletus and had fled to the Medes, and were now as it chanced with the army that was led against Miletus; they assembled, I say, as many of these as were with them, and thus they addressed them: “Men of Ionia, let each one of you now show that he has done good service to the king’s house; let every one of you essay severally to separate his own countrymen from the rest of the allied power. Set this before them, and promise withal, that they shall suffer no hurt for their rebellion, and that neither their temples shall be burnt nor their houses, nor shall they in any regard be more violently used than aforetime. But if they will not be so guided, and nothing will serve them but fighting, then utter a threat that shall put constraint upon them, and tell them that if they are worsted in battle they shall be enslaved; we will make eunuchs of their boys, and carry their maidens captive to Bactra, and deliver their land to others.”

Key learning:

- **Gradually the Persians brought the revolt under control. The Battle of Lade (494) and the fall of Miletus signalled the end of the revolt, and the Ionian cities returned to Persian rule.**

Herodotus *Histories* 6.18–6.20; 6.25; 6.30–6.32; 6.41

18. When the Persians had vanquished the Ionians by sea, they laid siege to Miletus by sea and land, mining the walls and using every device against it, till in the sixth year after the revolt of Aristagoras they took the city high and low and enslaved it.¹ Thus did this calamity accord with the oracle concerning Miletus.

19. For when the Argives enquired at Delphi of the safety of their city, there was given them an oracle of twofold import, part of it regarding the Argives themselves, but there was an oracle added thereto for the Milesians. Of that which concerned the Argives I will then make mention when I come to that part of my history; but this was the propheqy given to the Milesians, they not being then present:

In that day, Miletus, thou planner of works that
are evil,
Thou for a banquet shalt serve and a guerdon rich
of the spoiler;
Many the long-locked gallants whose feet shall be
washed by thy women;
Woe for my Didyman² shrine! no more shall its
ministers tend it.

All this now came upon the Milesians; for the most part of their men were slain by the long-haired Persians, and their women and children were accounted as slaves, and the temple at Didyma with its shrine and place of divination was plundered and burnt. Of the wealth that was in this temple I have often spoken elsewhere in my history.

20. After that, the captive Milesians were brought to Susa. King Darius did them no further hurt, but settled them by the sea called Red, in the city called Ampe, whereby flows the river Tigris as it issues into the sea. Of the Milesian land the Persians themselves held what was nearest to the city, and the plain, giving the hill country into the possession of Carians from Pedasa.

25. After the fight at sea for Miletus, the Phoenicians at the Persians’ bidding brought Aeaces, son of Syloson, back to Samos, for the high worth of his service to them, and his great achievements; and by reason of the desertion of their ships in the sea-fight the Samians were the only rebel people whose city was not burnt, nor their temples. Miletus being taken, the Persians thereby at once gained possession of Caria, some of the towns submitting themselves of their own accord and others being subdued perforce.

30. Now had he been taken prisoner and brought on his way to king Darius, no harm had been done him (to my thinking) and the king had forgiven his guilt; but as it was, Histiaeus being brought to Sardis, there both by reason of what he had done, and for fear that he might escape and again win power at the court, Artaphrenes, viceroy of Sardis, and Harpagus who had taken Histiaeus, impaled his body on the spot, and sent his head embalmed to king Darius at Susa. When Darius learnt of this he blamed those who had so done, because they had not brought Histiaeus before him alive; for the head, he gave command that it should be washed and buried with full observance, as the head of one that had done great good to Darius himself and to Persia.

31. Thus it fared with Histiaeus. The Persian fleet wintered at Miletus, and putting out to sea in the next year easily subdued the islands that lie off the mainland, Chios and Lesbos and Tenedos. Whenever they took an island, the foreigners would “net” each severally. This is the manner of their doing it:—the men link hands and make a line reaching from the northern sea to the southern, and then advance over the whole island hunting the people down. They took likewise also the Ionian cities of the mainland, albeit not by netting the people; for that was not possible.

32. There the Persian generals failed not to fulfil the threats which they had uttered against the Ionians when they were encamped over against them; for when they had gained the mastery over the cities, they chose out the comeliest boys and castrated them, making them eunuchs instead of men, and they carried the fairest maidens away to the king; this they did, and burnt the cities, yea, and their temples. Thus thrice had the Ionians been enslaved, first by the Lydians and then once and now yet again by the Persians.

41. But now, learning that the Phoenicians were in Tenedos, he sailed away to Athens with five triremes laden with the possessions that he had by him. Setting sail from Cardia he crossed the Black Bay, and as he sailed past the Chersonese the Phoenician ships fell in with him. Miltiades himself escaped with four of his ships to Imbros, but the fifth was pursued and overtaken by the Phoenicians. Now, it chanced that the captain of this ship was Metiochus, the eldest son of Miltiades by another wife, not the daughter of Olorus the Thracian; this man the Phoenicians took captive with his ship, and hearing that he was Miltiades’ son brought him up to the king; they thought that this would be a very thankworthy service, seeing that Miltiades had given his voice among the Ionians for obeying the Scythians when they demanded of the Ionians that they should break the bridge of boats and sail away to their homes. But when the Phoenicians brought Miltiades’ son Metiochus before him, Darius did him no hurt but much good, giving him a house, and substance, and a Persian wife, who bore him children that were reckoned as Persians. As for Miltiades, he made his way from Imbros to Athens.

Key learning:

- **In Miletus and Caria, among other places, men were massacred and women and children reduced to slavery. Those who survived, however, were treated reasonably: they were resettled near the Persian Gulf. Some boys were castrated to serve as eunuchs. The Temple of Didyma was burnt for the sacrileges committed in Sardis**

Herodotus *Histories* 6.42

42. In this year¹ no further deed of enmity was done by the Persians against the Ionians; but at this same time certain things happened which greatly benefited them. Artaphrenes viceroy of Sardis summoned to him ambassadors from the cities and compelled the Ionians to make agreements among themselves, that they might submit to redress at law and not harry and plunder each other. This he compelled them to do; and he measured their lands by parasangs, which is the Persian name for a distance of thirty furlongs, and appointed that each people should according to this measurement pay a tribute which has remained fixed ever since that time to this day, even as it was ordained by Artaphrenes; the sum appointed was about the same as that which they had rendered heretofore. This then tended to their peace.

Key learning: The Persians also made administrative changes: establishment of boundaries, fixing tribute levels and a system for arbitrating disputes

Mardonius' expedition

493/2 BC

(Suggested timings: 1 hour)

Herodotus *Histories* 6.43

Herodotus 43. But at the beginning of spring,¹ the other generals being now deposed by the king from their offices, Mardonius son of Gobryas, a man young in years and lately wedded to Darius' daughter Artozostre, came down to the coast at the head of a very great army and fleet; with which when Mardonius was come to Cilicia, he himself embarked on shipboard and sailed with the rest of his ships, while the land army was led by other captains to the Hellespont. When Mardonius arrived at Ionia in his voyage by the coast of Asia, he did a thing which I here set down for the wonder of those Greeks who will not believe Otanes to have declared his opinion among the Seven that democracy was best for Persia:² Mardonius deposed all the Ionian despots and setup democracies in their cities. This done, he made all speed for the Hellespont; and a great multitude of ships and a great army being there assembled, the Persians crossed the Hellespont on shipboard and marched through Europe, with Eretria and Athens for their goal.

Key learning:

- **Mardonius, in response to the Ionian Revolt, marched through Asia-Minor and removed the tyrants of the Greek cities and allowed the cities more democratic rights.**
- **Use to discuss the reasons for the removal of the tyrants in Ionia**

Herodotus *Histories* 6.44

44. This was the avowed end of their expedition; but their intent being to subdue as many of the Greek cities as they could, first their fleet subdued the Thasians, who did not so much as lift up their hands against it; and next, their land army added the Macedonians to the slaves that they had already; for all the nations nearer to them than Macedonia had been made subject to the Persians ere this. Crossing then over from Thasos they voyaged near the land as far as Acanthus, and putting out from thence they would have rounded Athos. But as they sailed, there brake upon them a north wind great and irresistible, and dealt very roughly with them, driving many of their ships upon Athos; three hundred, it is said, was the tale of the ships that perished, and more than twenty thousand men. For inasmuch as these coasts of Athos abounded in wild beasts, some were carried off by these and so perished; others were dashed against the rocks; and those of them that could not swim perished by reason of that, and others again by the cold.

Key learning:

- **Mardonius passed over to Europe where his forces ran into difficulties. His fleet was destroyed off Mount Athos and his army suffered heavy losses in Thrace.**
- **Use to discuss the aims of the expedition**

Herodotus *Histories* 6.45

45. Thus then it fared with the fleet; as for Mardonius and his land army, while they were encamped in Macedonia the Brygi of Thrace attacked them by night, and slew many of them, wounding Mardonius himself. Nevertheless not even these themselves could escape being enslaved by the Persians; for Mardonius did not depart out of those lands before he had made them subject to him. Yet when he had subdued them, he led his host away homewards, seeing that the Brygi had dealt a heavy blow to his army and Athos a blow yet heavier to his fleet. This expedition then after an inglorious adventure returned back to Asia.

Key learning:

- **Herodotus states that Mardonius aimed to conquer mainland Greece and therefore portrays the campaign as a failure. However, Mardonius was able to take more direct control of Macedonia on behalf of Darius.**

Herodotus *Histories* 6.48.1; 7.133.1

48.1. Then Darius attempted to learn whether the Greeks intended to wage war against him or to surrender themselves. He sent heralds this way and that throughout Hellas, bidding them demand a gift of earth and water for the king.

133.1. To Athens and Sparta Xerxes sent no heralds to demand earth, and this he did for the following reason. When Darius had previously sent men with this same purpose, those who made the request were cast at the one city into the Pit1 and at the other into a well, and bidden to obtain their earth and water for the king from these locations.

Key learning:

- **In 491 BC, heralds were sent to play on Greek differences. Many cities medised. Athens and Sparta killed the Persian heralds sent to them.**

Herodotus *Histories* 6.94–6.97

Herodotus 94. Thus Athens and Aegina grappled together in war. But the Persian was going about his own business; for his servant was ever reminding him to remember the Athenians,¹ and the Pisistratidae were at his elbow maligning the Athenians, and moreover Darius desired to take this pretext for subduing all the men of Hellas that had not given him earth and water. As for Mardonius, who had fared so ill with his armament, him he dismissed from his command, and appointed other generals to lead his armies against Athens and Eretria, Datis a Mede, and his own nephew Artaphrenes son of Artaphrenes; and the charge he gave them at their departure was, to enslave Athens and Eretria, and bring the slaves into his presence.

95. When these the appointed generals on their way from the king's presence were arrived at the Aleïan plain in Cilicia, bringing with them a host great and well furnished, there they encamped and were overtaken by all the armament of ships that was assigned to each portion; and the transports too for horses came up, that in the year before this Darius had bidden his tributary subjects to make ready. Having cast the horses into these, and embarked the land army in the ships, they sailed to Ionia with six hundred triremes. Thence they held their course not by the mainland and straight towards the Hellespont and Thrace, but setting forth from Samos they sailed by the Icarian sea and from island to island; this, to my thinking, was because they feared above all the voyage round Athos, seeing that in the year past they had come to great disaster by holding their course that way; and moreover Naxos constrained them, in that they had not yet taken it.

96. When they approached Naxos from the Icarian sea and came to land (for it was Naxos which the Persians purposed first to attack), the Naxians, mindful of what had before happened,¹ fled away to the mountains, not abiding their coming. The Persians enslaved all of them that they caught, and burnt even their temples and their city; which done, they set sail for the other islands.

97. While they so did, the Delians also left Delos and fled away to Tenos. But Datis, when his host was sailing landwards, went before it in his ship and bade his fleet anchor not off Delos, but across the water off Rhenea; and being informed where the Delians were, he sent a herald to them with this proclamation: "Holy men, why have you fled away, and so misjudged my intent? For it is my own desire, and the king's command to me, to do no harm to the land wherein the two gods² were born, neither to the land itself nor to those that dwell therein. Now, therefore, I bid you return to your homes and dwell in your island." This proclamation he made to the Delians, and presently laid upon the altar and burnt there three hundred talents' weight of frankincense.

Key learning:

- **Sailing across the Aegean, Datis burnt Naxos and hostages were taken from the islands. The population and religious sites of Delos, in contrast, were treated with respect.**
- **Use this and the following to discuss the aims of the expedition and the treatment of other peoples/cultures**

Herodotus *Histories* 6.101–6.102; 6.119

101. So they saved themselves by crossing over to Oropus; the Persians in their sailing held their course for Temenos and Choereae and Aegilea, all in Eretrian territory, and having taken possession of these places they straightway disembarked their horses and made preparation to attack their enemies. The Eretrians had no design of coming out and fighting; all their care was to guard their walls, if they could, seeing that it was the prevailing counsel not to leave the city. The walls were stoutly attacked, and for six days many fell on both sides; but on the seventh two Eretrians of repute, Euphorbus son of Alcimachus and Philagrus son of Cineas, betrayed the city to the Persians. These entered the city and plundered and burnt the temples, in revenge for the temples that were burnt at Sardis; moreover they enslaved the townspeople, according to Darius' command.

102. Having subdued Eretria they delayed for a few days, and then sailed to the Attic land, pressing hard forward and thinking that they would do to the Athenians what they had done to the Eretrians; and Marathon¹ being the fittest part of Attica for horsemen to ride over, and nearest to Eretria, thither they were guided by Hippias son of Pisistratus.

Key learning:

- **Eretria was betrayed. Captives were taken and later resettled near Susa. Datis moved onto Marathon. The plan appears to have been to restore Hippias.**

Herodotus *Histories* 6.102–103; 6.105–6.107; 6.109; 6.112–6.113; 6.115–6.116

102. Having subdued Eretria they delayed for a few days, and then sailed to the Attic land, pressing hard forward and thinking that they would do to the Athenians what they had done to the Eretrians; and Marathon¹ being the fittest part of Attica for horsemen to ride over, and nearest to Eretria, thither they were guided by Hippias son of Pisistratus.

103. When the Athenians learnt of this, they too marched out to Marathon. Ten generals led them, of whom the tenth was Miltiades, whose father, Cimon son of Stesagoras, had been, as fate would have it, banished from Athens by Pisistratus son of Hippocrates. Being an exile, he had the luck to win the prize for four-horse chariots at Olympia, by this victory gaining the same honour as his mother's son Miltiades had won. At the next Olympiad he was a winner again with the same team of mares, but suffered Pisistratus to be proclaimed victor, for which surrender of his victory he returned to his home under treaty. A third Olympic prize he won with the same team; after that, Pisistratus himself being now dead, fate willed that Miltiades should be slain by Pisistratus' sons; these suborned

men and slew him by night in the town-hall. Cimon lies buried outside the city, beyond the road that is called Through the Hollow; and the mares that won him the three Olympic prizes are buried over against his grave. None others save the mares of the Laconian Evagoras had ever achieved the same. Now Stesagoras, the eldest of Cimon's sons, was at that time being brought up in the Chersonese with Miltiades his uncle; but the younger, named Miltiades after that Miltiades who planted a settlement on the Chersonese, was with Cimon himself at Athens.

105. And first, while they were yet in the city, the generals sent as a herald to Sparta Phidippides, an Athenian, and one, moreover, that was a runner of long distances and made that his calling. This man, as he said himself and told the Athenians, when he was in the Parthenian hills above Tegea, met with Pan; who, calling to Phidippides by name, bade him say to the Athenians, "Why is it that ye take no thought for me, that am your friend, and ere now have oft been serviceable to you, and will be so again?" This story the Athenians believed to be true, and when their state won to prosperity they founded a temple of Pan beneath the acropolis, and for that message sought the god's favour with yearly sacrifices and torch-races.

106. But now, at the time when he was sent by the generals and said that Pan had appeared to him, this Phidippides was at Sparta on the day after he left Athens;¹ and he came before the rulers and said, "Lacedaemonians, the Athenians entreat you to send them help, and not suffer a most ancient city of Hellas to be brought into bondage by foreigners; for even now Eretria has been enslaved, and Hellas is the weaker by the loss of a notable city. "Thus Phidippides gave the message wherewith he was charged, and the Lacedaemonians resolved to send help to the Athenians; but they could not do this immediately, being loath to break their law; for it was the ninth day of the first part of the month, and they would make no expedition (they said) on the ninth day, when the moon was not full.²

107. So they waited for the full moon. As for the Persians, they were guided to Marathon by Hippias son of Pisistratus. Hippias in the past night had seen a vision in his sleep, wherein he thought that he lay with his own mother; he interpreted this dream to signify that he should return to Athens and recover his power, and so die an old man in his own mother-country. Thus he interpreted the vision; for the nonce, being the Persians' guide, he carried the slaves taken in Eretria to the island of the Styreans called Aeglea; moreover, it was he who made the ships to anchor when they had put in at Marathon, and who set the foreigners in array when they were landed. Now while he dealt with these matters he fell a-sneezing and a-coughing more violently than he was wont; he was well stricken in years, and the most of his teeth were loose; whereby the violence of his cough made one of his teeth to fall out. It fell into the sand, and Hippias used all diligence to find it; but the tooth being nowhere to be seen, he said lamentably to them that stood by, "This land is none of ours, nor shall we avail to subdue it; my tooth has all the share of it that was for me."

109. But the counsels of the Athenian generals were divided; some advised that they should not fight, thinking they were too few to do battle with the Median army, and some, of whom was Miltiades, that they should. Now there was an eleventh that had a vote, namely, that Athenian who had been chosen as polemarch¹ by lot,—for by old Athenian custom the polemarch voted among the generals,—and at this time the polemarch was Callimachus of Aphidnae; so their counsels being divided and the worse opinion like to prevail, Miltiades betook himself to this man. "Callimachus," said he, "it is for you to-day to choose, whether you will enslave Athens, or free her and thereby leave such a memorial for all posterity as was left not even by Harmodius and Aristogiton. For now is Athens in greater peril than ever since she was first a city; and if her people bow their necks to the Medes, their fate is certain, for they will be delivered over to Hippias; but if our city be saved, she may well grow to be the first of Greek cities. How then this can be brought about, and how it comes that the deciding voice in these matters is yours, I will now show you. We ten generals are divided in counsel, some bidding us to fight and some to forbear. Now if we forbear to fight, it is likely that some great schism will rend and shake the courage of our people till they make friends of the Medes; but if we join battle before some at Athens be infected by corruption, then let heaven but deal fairly with us, and we may well win in this fight. It is you that all this concerns; all hangs on you; for if you join yourself to my opinion, you make your country free and your city the first in Hellas; but if you choose the side of them that would persuade us not to fight, you will have wrought the very opposite of the blessings whereof I have spoken."

112. Their battle being arrayed and the omens of sacrifice favouring, straightway the Athenians were let go and charged the Persians at a run. There was between the armies a space of not less than eight furlongs. When the

Persians saw them come running they prepared to receive them, deeming the Athenians frenzied to their utter destruction, who being (as they saw) so few were yet charging them at speed, albeit they had no horsemen nor archers. Such was the imagination of the foreigners; but the Athenians, closing all together with the Persians, fought in memorable fashion; for they were the first Greeks, within my knowledge, who charged their enemies at a run, and the first who endured the sight of Median garments and men clad therein; till then, the Greeks were affrighted by the very name of the Medes.

113. For a long time they fought at Marathon; and the foreigners overcame the middle part of the line, against which the Persians themselves and the Sacae were arrayed; here the foreigners prevailed and broke the Greeks, pursuing them inland. But on either wing the Athenians and Plataeans were victorious; and being so, they suffered the routed of their enemies to fly, and drew their wings together to fight against those that had broken the middle of their line; and here the Athenians had the victory, and followed after the Persians in their flight, hewing them down, till they came to the sea. There they called for fire and laid hands on the ships.

115. Seven ships the Athenians thus won; with the rest the Persians pushed off from shore, and taking the Eretrian slaves from the island wherein they had left them, sailed round Sunium, hoping to win to the city before the Athenians' coming. There was an accusation rife at Athens that this plan arose from a device of the Alcmeonidae, who, it was said, made a compact with the Persians and held up a shield for them to see when they were now on shipboard.

116. So they sailed round Sunium; but the Athenians marched back with all speed to defend their city, and outstripped the foreigners in their coming; they came from one precinct of Heracles at Marathon, and encamped in another at Cynosarges. The foreign fleet lay a while off Phalerum, which was then the Athenians' arsenal; there they anchored, and thence sailed away back to Asia.

Herodotus *Histories* 6.118

118. Datis journeyed with his army to Asia; and being arrived at Myconos he saw a vision in his sleep. What that vision was, no man says; but as soon as day broke, Datis made search through his ships; and finding in a Phoenician ship a gilt image of Apollo, he enquired whence this plunder had been taken. Learning from what temple it had come, he sailed in his own ship to Delos; where, the Delians being now returned to their island, Datis set the image in the temple, and charged the Delians to carry it away to the Theban place Delium, on the sea-coast over against Chalcis. This charge given, Datis sailed back. But the Delians never carried that statue away; twenty years after that, the Thebans brought it to Delium, being so commanded by an oracle.

Key learning:

- **The Athenians were positioned on the slopes of Mount Pentele so as to better defend themselves against cavalry assaults; the Persians waited on the flat coastal plain. A stalemate ensued as the Athenians waited for promised Spartan reinforcements and the Persians held off committing their force to a battle on the mountain.**
- **Use to discuss the impact the defeat at Marathon might have had on the Persian Empire**

Xerxes 486 – 465 BC

(Suggested timings: 8 ½ hours)

The death of Darius and accession of Xerxes; the completion of Darius' building programmes

486 BC

(Suggested timings: 1 hour)

Herodotus *Histories* 7.1-7.7

Herodotus 1. When the message concerning the fight at Marathon came to Darius son of Hystaspes, greatly wroth as he was already against the Athenians for their attack upon Sardis, he was now much more angered and the more desirous of sending an expedition against Hellas. Forthwith he sent messengers to all cities commanding the equipment of an army, charging each to provide much more than they had before provided of ships and horses and provision and vessels of transport. By these messages Asia was shaken for three years,¹ the best men being enrolled for service against Hellas and making preparation therefor. In the fourth year the Egyptians, whom Cambyses had enslaved, revolted from the Persians; thereupon Darius was but the more desirous of sending expeditions even against both.

2. But while Darius was making preparation against Egypt and Athens, there arose a great quarrel among his sons concerning the chief power in the land, they holding that he must before his army marched declare an heir to the kingship according to Persian law. For Darius had three sons born to him before he became king by his first wife, the daughter of Gobryas, and four besides after he became king by Atossa daughter of Cyrus; of the earlier sons Artobazanes was the eldest, and Xerxes of the later; and being sons of different mothers they were rivals, Artobazanes pleading that he was the eldest of all Darius' offspring and that it was everywhere customary that the eldest should rule; Xerxes, that he was son of Cyrus' daughter Atossa and that it was Cyrus who had won the Persians their freedom.

3. Darius delaying his judgment in this matter, it chanced that at this time Demaratus son of Ariston had come up to Susa, banished of his own will from Lacedaemon after he had lost the kingship of Sparta. Learning of the contention between the sons of Darius, this man, as the story goes, came and counselled Xerxes to add to what he said another plea, to wit, that he had been born when Darius was already king and ruler of Persia, but Artobazanes when Darius was yet a subject; therefore (Xerxes should say) it was neither reasonable nor just that any rather than he should have the royal prerogative; for at Sparta too (said Demaratus in his counselling) it was ever customary, that if there be sons born before their father became king, and another son born later when the father was king, to the later-born should fall the succession to the kingship. Xerxes then following Demaratus' advice, Darius judged his plea to be just and declared him king. But to my thinking Xerxes would have been made king even without this advice; for Atossa was all-powerful.

4. Having declared Xerxes king, Darius was intent on his expedition. But in the year after this, and the revolt of Egypt, death came upon him in the midst of his preparation, after a reign of six and thirty years¹ in all; nor was it granted to him to punish either the revolted Egyptians, or the Athenians.

5. Darius being dead, the royal power descended to his son Xerxes. Now Xerxes was at first by no means eager to march against Hellas; it was against Egypt that he mustered his army. But Mardonius son of Gobryas, who was Xerxes' cousin and son of Darius' sister, and was ever with the king and had more influence with him than any Persian, reasoned thus in his discourse: "Sire, it is not seemly that the Athenians should go unpunished for their

deeds, after all the evil they have done to the Persians. Nay, my counsel is that for the nonce you do what you have in hand; then, when you have tamed the insolence of Egypt, lead your armies against Athens, that you may have fair fame among men, and that all may in time to come beware how they invade your realm." This argument of his was for vengeance' sake;² but he would ever slip a plea into it, that Europe was an exceeding fair land, one that bore all kinds of orchard trees, a land of high excellence, worthy of no mortal master but the king.

6. This he said, because he desired adventures, and would himself be viceroy of Hellas. And at the last he so wrought upon and over-persuaded Xerxes that the king was moved to do as he said; for there were other things too that allied themselves to aid in winning Xerxes' consent. Firstly, there came messengers out of Thessaly from the Aleuadae (who were princes of Thessaly) with all earnestness inviting the king into Hellas; and secondly, those of the house of Pisistratus who had come up to Susa did likewise, using the same pleas as the Aleuadae, and offering Xerxes besides even more than they. With these came Onomacritus, an Athenian oracle-monger,¹ one that had set in order the oracles of Musaeus; with him they had come, being now reconciled to him after their quarrel: for Onomacritus had been banished from Athens by Pisistratus' son Hipparchus, having been caught by Lasus² of Hermione in the act of interpolating in the writings of Musaeus an oracle showing that the islands off Lemnos should disappear into the sea. For this cause Hipparchus banished him, though before that they had been close friends. Now he came to Susa with Pisistratus' kin; and whensoever he came into the king's presence they would use high language concerning him and he would recite from his oracles; all that portended disaster to the Persian he left unspoken, but chose out and recited such prophecies as were most favourable, telling of the Hellespont, how it must be bridged by a man of Persia, and how the host should march. So Xerxes was beset by Onomacritus with his oracles, and by the Pisistratidae and Aleuadae with their counsels.

7. Having been over-persuaded to send an expedition against Hellas, Xerxes first marched against the rebels, in the year after Darius' death. These he subdued, and laid Egypt under a much harder slavery than in the time of Darius; and he committed the governance of it to Achaemenes, his own brother, Darius' son. This Achaemenes, being then viceroy of Egypt, was at a later day¹ slain by a Libyan, Inaros son of Psammetichus.

Key learning:

- In the aftermath of the Battle of Marathon, Darius planned another expedition. However, a revolt in Egypt and ultimately his death prevented him from exacting his revenge.
- Use to discuss the nature of Persian culture under Xerxes

Herodotus *Histories* 7.2-7.3

2. But while Darius was making preparation against Egypt and Athens, there arose a great quarrel among his sons concerning the chief power in the land, they holding that he must before his army marched declare an heir to the kingship according to Persian law. For Darius had three sons born to him before he became king by his first wife, the daughter of Gobryas, and four besides after he became king by Atossa daughter of Cyrus; of the earlier sons Artobazanes was the eldest, and Xerxes of the later; and being sons of different mothers they were rivals, Artobazanes pleading that he was the eldest of all Darius' offspring and that it was everywhere customary that the eldest should rule; Xerxes, that he was son of Cyrus' daughter Atossa and that it was Cyrus who had won the Persians their freedom.

3. Darius delaying his judgment in this matter, it chanced that at this time Demaratus son of Ariston had come up to Susa, banished of his own will from Lacedaemon after he had lost the kingship of Sparta. Learning of the contention between the sons of Darius, this man, as the story goes, came and counselled Xerxes to add to what he said another plea, to wit, that he had been born when Darius was already king and ruler of Persia, but Artobazanes when Darius was yet a subject; therefore (Xerxes should say) it was neither reasonable nor just that any rather than he should have the royal prerogative; for at Sparta too (said Demaratus in his counselling) it was ever customary, that if there

be sons born before their father became king, and another son born later when the father was king, to the later-born should fall the succession to the kingship. Xerxes then following Demaratus' advice, Darius judged his plea to be just and declared him king. But to my thinking Xerxes would have been made king even without this advice; for Atossa was all-powerful.

Key learning:

- **There appears to have been debates as to who would succeed Darius. Xerxes, Darius son with Atossa, was the 'chosen one'**
- **Use to discuss the potential impact of the Egypt and Babylon revolts on the Persian Empire**

 **Inscription from Gate of All Lands / Nations, Persepolis, XPa, XPf**

XPa [1-6] A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this earth, who created heaven, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Xerxes king, one king of many kings, commander of many commanders.

[6-11] I am Xerxes, the great king, the king of kings, the king of all countries and many men, the king in this great earth far and wide, the son of Darius, an Achaemenid.

[11-17] King Xerxes says: by the favor of Ahuramazda this Gate of All Nations I built. Much else that is beautiful was built in this Persepolis (Pârsâ), which I built and my father built. Whatever has been built and seems beautiful - all that we built by the favor of Ahuramazda.

[17-20] King Xerxes says: may Ahuramazda preserve me, my kingdom, what has been built by me, and what has been built by my father. That, indeed, may Ahuramazda preserve.

XPf [1-8] A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this earth, who created heaven, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Xerxes king, one king of many kings, commander of many commanders.

[8-15] I am Xerxes, the great king, the king of kings, the king of all countries and many men, the king in this great earth far and wide.

[15-27] King Xerxes says: My father was Darius; Darius' father was named Hystaspes; Hystaspes' father was named Arsames. Both Hystaspes and Arsames were living at the time -thus was Ahuramazda's desire- when my father Darius was made king of this earth. When Darius became king, he did much that was excellent. [King] Xerxes says ...

[28-43] Darius had other sons, but - thus was Ahuramazda's desire - my father Darius made me the greatest [mathišta] after himself. When my father Darius went away from the throne, by the grace of Ahuramazda I became king on my father's throne. When I became king, I did much that was excellent. What had been built by my father, I protected, and other I added other buildings. What I built, and what my father built, all that by the grace of Ahuramazda we built.

[44-48] King Xerxes says: May Ahuramazda protect me, my kingdom, and what was done by my father. May Ahuramazda protect this.

Key learning:

- **Xerxes' own inscriptions in Persepolis stress that his accession was the will of Ahuramazda. In Xerxes' inscriptions, clear reference is made to continuing and completion of Darius' building projects.**

Herodotus *Histories* 7.7

7. Having been over-persuaded to send an expedition against Hellas, Xerxes first marched against the rebels, in the year after Darius' death. These he subdued, and laid Egypt under a much harder slavery than in the time of Darius; and he committed the governance of it to Achaemenes, his own brother, Darius' son. This Achaemenes, being then viceroy of Egypt, was at a later day¹ slain by a Libyan, Inaros son of Psammetichus.

Key learning:

- **Xerxes immediately crushed the Egyptian Revolt although information on the campaign is scarce.**

Ctesias F13 Photius §26

[26] Thence he proceeded to Ecbatana, where he heard of the revolt of the Babylonians and the murder of Zopyrus their satrap. Ctesias' account is different from that of Herodotus. What the latter relates of Zopyrus is attributed by Ctesias, with the exception of his mule giving birth to a foal, to Megabyzus, the son-in-law of Xerxes and the husband of his daughter Amytis. Babylon was taken by Megabyzus, upon whom Xerxes bestowed, amongst other rewards, a golden hand-mill, weighing six talents, the most honorable of the royal gifts.

Key learning:

- **There is even less evidence on the situation in Babylonia. Many Babylonian archives came to abrupt end in 484, perhaps suggesting Persian intervention at this time. Ctesias states that there were two rebellions. Herodotus mentions Xerxes' actions in Babylon earlier in his narrative but makes no mention of a revolt.**

Xerxes' invasion of Greece: the motivations

(Suggested timings: 1 hour)

Herodotus *Histories* 7.8–7.19

8. After the conquest of Egypt, purposing now to take in hand the expedition against Athens, Xerxes held an assembly of the noblest among the Persians, convened with special intent, that he might learn their opinions and himself declare his will before them all. When they were assembled, Xerxes spoke to them as follows:—"Persians! this is no new law of my bringing in and ordaining, but one that I have received and will obey. As I learn from our eldest, we have never yet remained at peace ever since Cyrus deposed Astyages and we won this our lordship from the Medes. It is the will of heaven; and we ourselves win advantage by our many enterprises. Now of the nations that Cyrus and Cambyses and Darius my father subdued and added to our realm, none need tell you; for well you know them. But for myself, ever since I came to this throne, I have taken thought how best I shall not fall short in this honourable place of those that were before me, nor gain for the Persians a lesser power than they; and my thought persuades me, that we may win not only renown, but a land neither less nor worse, but more fertile, than that which we now possess; and not only so, but vengeance and requital withal. For this cause I have now summoned you together, that I may impart to you my purpose. It is my intent to bridge the Hellespont and lead my army through Europe to Hellas, that I may punish the Athenians for what they have done to the Persians and to my father. You saw that Darius my father was minded to make an expedition against these men. But he is dead, and it was not granted him to punish them; and I, on his and all the Persians' behalf, will never rest till I have taken and burnt Athens, for the unprovoked wrong that its people did to my father and me; first they came to Sardis with our slave Aristagoras the Milesian, and burnt the groves and the temples; and next, how they dealt with us when we landed on their shores and Datis and Artaphrenes were our generals, all of you, I think, know. For these causes then I am resolved to send an army against them; and thus much advantage, as my reckoning shows me, we shall gain thereby: if we subdue those men, and their neighbours who dwell in the land of Pelops the Phrygian, we shall make the borders of Persian territory and of the firmament of heaven to be the same; for no land that the sun beholds will lie on our borders, but I will make all to be one country, when I have passed over the whole of Europe. For, as I learn, there will then be left neither inhabited city, nor nation of men, that is able to meet us in battle, if those of whom I speak are once taken out of our way. Thus they that have done us wrong and they that have done us none will alike bear the yoke of slavery. As for you, this is how you shall best please me: when I declare the time for your coming, every one of you must appear, and with a good will; and whosoever comes with his army best equipped shall receive from me such gifts as are reckoned most precious among us. All this, then, must so be done; but that none may think that I take counsel of myself alone, I lay the matter before you all, and bid him who will to declare his opinion." So spoke Xerxes, and ceased.

9. After him spoke Mardonius, and said:—"Sire, you surpass not only all Persians that have been but also all that shall be; for besides that you have dealt excellently and truly with all other matters, you will not suffer the Ionians¹ that dwell in Europe to make a mock of us, which thing they have no right to do. For it were strange indeed, that we, who have subdued and made slaves of Sacae and Indians and Ethiopians and Assyrians and many other great nations, for no wrong done to the Persians but of mere desire to add to our power,—that we, I say, shall not take vengeance on the Greeks for unprovoked wrong-doing. What have we to fear from them? Have they mighty hosts or abundance of wealth to affright us? Their manner of fighting we know, and their wealth we know, that it is but little; and we have conquered and hold their sons, even those who dwell in our land and are called Ionians and Aeolians and Dorians. I myself have tried conclusions with these men, when by your father's command I marched against them; and I marched as far as Macedonia and wellnigh to Athens itself, yet none came out to meet me in battle. Yet

wars the Greeks do wage, and, as I learn, most senselessly they do it, in their wrongheadedness and folly. When they have declared war against each other, they come down to the fairest and most level ground that they can find and there they fight, so that the victors come not off without great harm; and of the vanquished I say not so much as a word, for they are utterly destroyed. Yet speaking as they do the same language, they should end their disputes by the means of heralds and messengers, and by any way rather than fighting; or if needs must that they war against each other, they should discover each where his strongest defence lies, and there make his essay. The Greek custom, then, is no good one; and when I marched as far as the land of Macedonia, it came not into their thoughts to fight. But against you, O king! who shall make war? For you will have at your back the multitudes of Asia, and all your ships; for myself, I think there is not so much boldness in Hellas as that; but if time should show me wrong in my judgment, and those men were foolhardy enough to do battle with us, they would be taught that we are the greatest warriors no earth. But whatsoever betide, let us be ever venturesome; for nought comes of itself, and all men's gains are the fruit of adventure."

10. Thus smoothly Mardonius spoke of Xerxes' opinion, and made an end. The rest of the Persians held their peace, not daring to utter any counsel contrary to that which had been given; then spoke Artabanus the son of Hystaspes, who was the king's uncle, and emboldened thereby. "O king," he said, "if opinions opposite the one to the other be not uttered, it is not possible that choice should find the better, but that one which has been spoken must be followed; but if they be spoken, the better can be found; even as the purity of gold cannot of itself be discerned, but when gold by rubbing¹ is compared with gold, we then discern the better. Now I forbade Darius, your father and my brother, to lead his army against the Scythians, who have no cities anywhere to dwell in. But he, in his hope to subdue the nomad Scythians, would not be guided by me; he led his army, and returned from that expedition with the loss of many gallant men of his host. You, O king! are purposing to lead your armies against men far better than the Scythians—men who are said to be most doughty warriors by sea and land; and it is right that I should show to you what danger lies therein. You will bridge the Hellespont (so you say) and march your army through Europe to Hellas. Now I will suppose that matters have so fallen out that you are worsted either by land or by sea, or even both; for the men are said to be valiant, and well may we guess that it is so, seeing that so great a host, that followed Datis and Artaphrenes to Attica, was destroyed by the Athenians alone. Be it, then, granted that they win not success both by sea and by land; but if they attack with their ships and prevail in a sea-fight, and then sail to the Hellespont and thereafter break your bridge, that, O king, is the hour of peril. It is from no wisdom of my own that I thus conjecture; it is because I know what disaster was that which wellnigh once overtook us, when your father, making a highway over the Thracian Bosphorus, and bridging the river Ister, crossed over to attack the Scythians. At that time the Scythians used every means of entreating the Ionians, who had been charged to guard the bridges of the Ister, to break the way of passage¹; and then, if Histiaeus the despot of Miletus had consented to the opinion of the other despots and not withstood it, the power of Persia had perished. Yet it were a thing of dread even in the telling, that one, and he but a man, should hold in his hand all the king's fortunes. Do you then make no plan to run into any such danger, when there is no need therefor, but be ruled by me: for the nonce, dismiss this assembly; and presently, whenever you so please, having first considered the matter by yourself, declare what seems to you best. A well-laid plan is ever to my mind most profitable; for even though it be thwarted later, yet none the less has the plan been good, and it is but chance that has baffled the design; but he that has made a sorry plan has gotten, if fortune favour him, but a chance prize, and none the less has his plan been evil. You see how the god smites with his thunderbolt creatures of greatness more than common, nor suffers them to display their pride, but such as are little move him not to anger; and you see how it is ever on the tallest buildings and trees that his bolts fall; for it is heaven's way to bring low all things of surpassing bigness. Thus a numerous host is destroyed by one that is lesser, the god of his jealousy sending panic fear or thunderbolt among them, whereby they do unworthily perish; for the god suffers pride in none but himself. Now haste is ever the parent of failure, whereof grievous hurts are apt to come; but in waiting there is good, which in due time shall appear, though in the present it seem not so. This, O king,

is my counsel to you. But to you I say, Mardonius son of Gobryas! cease from foolish speaking about the Greeks, for they deserve not to be maligned. It is by speaking calumniously of the Greeks that you would hearten the king to send this expedition; and that, methinks, is the end to which you press with all eagerness. Nay, let it not be so. Calumny is a very gross business; there are two in it that do and one that suffers wrong. He that utters the calumny wrongs another, accusing an absent man, and the other does a wrong likewise in that he is overpersuaded before he has learnt the whole truth; and he that is absent and hears not what is said of him suffers wrong in the matter, being maligned by the one and condemned by the other. Nay, if an army must by all means be sent against these Greeks, hear me now: Let the king himself abide in the Persian land, and let us two stake our children's lives upon it; then do you lead out the army, choosing what men you will and taking as great an armament as you desire; and if it fare with the king's fortunes as you say it will, let my sons be slain, and myself too with them; but if the issue be as I foretell, let your sons be so treated, and you likewise, if you return. But if you will not submit yourself to this; and will at all hazards lead your army overseas to Hellas, then I think that they who are left behind in this place will hear that Mardonius has wrought great harm to Persia, and is torn asunder by dogs and birds in the land of Athens or of Lacedaemon, if not peradventure ere that on the way thither; and that thus you have learnt what manner of men are they whom you would persuade the king to attack."

11. Thus spoke Artabanus. But Xerxes answered in wrath, "Artabanus, you are my father's brother; that shall save you from receiving the fit reward of foolish words. Yet for your craven lack of spirit I lay upon you this disgrace, that you shall not go with me and my army against Hellas, but abide here with the women; and I myself will accomplish all that I have said, with no help from you. For may I not be the son of Darius, who was the son of Hystaspes, who was the son of Arsames, who was the son of Ariaramnes, who was the son of Teïspes, who was the son of Cyrus, who was the son of Cambyses, who was the son of Teïspes, who was the son of Achaemenes,¹ if I do not avenge me on the Athenians; well knowing, that if we remain at peace, yet so will not they, but will assuredly invade our country, if we may infer from what they have done already, for they burnt Sardis and marched into Asia. Wherefore, it is not possible for either of us to turn back; to do or suffer is our task, that what is ours be under the Greeks, or what is theirs under the Persians; there is no middle way in our quarrel. Honour then demands that we avenge ourselves for what has been done to us; thus shall I learn what is this evil that will befall me when I march against these Greeks—men that even Pelops the Phrygian, the slave of my forefathers, did so utterly subdue that to this day they and their country are called by the name of their conqueror."

12. So far discourse went; and presently came the night-time, and Xerxes was pricked by the counsel of Artabanus; and taking counsel of night, he saw clearly that to send an army against Hellas was none of his business. Having made this second resolve he fell asleep; then it would appear (for so the Persians say) that in the night he saw this vision: It seemed to Xerxes that a tall and goodly man stood over him and said, "Art thou then changing thy counsel, Persian, and wilt not lead thine army against Hellas, albeit thou hast proclaimed the mustering of thy host? thou dost not well to change thy counsel, nor will he that thou seest pardon thee for it; nay, let thy course be according to thy design of yesterday."

13. Thus the vision spake, and seemed to Xerxes to vanish away; but when day dawned the king took no account of this dream, but assembling the Persians whom he had before gathered together, he thus addressed them: "Forgive me, Persians! for that I turn and twist in my purpose; for I am not yet come to the fulness of my wisdom, and they are ever with me who exhort me to do as I said. 'Tis true that when I heard Artabanus' opinion my youthful spirit did for the nonce take fire, whereby there brake from me an unseemly and wrongful answer to one older than myself; yet now I see my fault and will follow his judgment. Know therefore that my purpose of marching against Hellas is changed, and abide in peace."

14. When the Persians heard that, they rejoiced, and did obeisance. But when night came on, the same vision stood again over Xerxes as he slept, and said, "Son of Darius, hast thou then plainly renounced thine army's march before the Persians, and made my words of no account, as though thou hadst not heard them? Know then this for a surety: if thou ledest not thine army forthwith, this shall be the outcome of it, that as a little while made thee great and mighty, so in a moment shalt thou be brought low again."

15. Greatly affrighted by the vision, Xerxes leapt up from his bed, and sent a messenger to Artabanus to call him; and when he came, "Artabanus," said Xerxes, "for the moment my right judgment forsook me, and I answered your good counsel with foolish words; but after no long time I repented, and saw that it was right for me to follow your advice. Yet, though I desire, I cannot do it; for since I have turned me and repented, a vision comes haunting my sight, that will in no wise consent that I should do as you counsel; and even now it has gone with a threat. Now if it be a god that sends the vision, and it be his full pleasure that there be this expedition against Hellas, that same dream will hover about you and lay on you the same charge as on me; and I am persuaded that this is likeliest to be, if you take all my attire and sit so clothed upon my throne, and presently lie down to sleep in my bed."

16. Thus said Xerxes; Artabanus would not obey the first command, thinking it was not for him to sit on the royal throne; at last he was compelled, and did as he was bidden, saying first: "O king, I judge it of equal worth whether a man be wise, or be willing to obey good counsel; to both of these you have attained, but evil communications are your bane; even as the sea, who is of all creatures the most serviceable to men, is hindered (they say) from following his natural bent by the blasts of winds that fall upon him. But for myself—it was not the hard words I had from you that stung me so much as this, that when two opinions were laid before the Persians, the one tending to the increase of pride, and the other to its abatement, showing how evil a thing it is to teach the heart continual desire of more than it has, of these two opinions you preferred that one which was most fraught with danger to yourself and the Persians. Now, therefore, since you are turned to the better opinion, you say that while you would renounce your expedition against the Greeks you are haunted by a dream sent by some god, which forbids you to leave off from the expedition. But you err again, my son; this is none of heaven's working. The roving dreams that visit men are of such nature as you shall learn of me, that am many years older than you. Those visions that rove about us in dreams are for the most part the thoughts of the day; and in these latter days we have been very earnestly busied about this expedition. But if nevertheless this be not such as I determine, and have in it somewhat of heaven's will, then you have spoken the conclusion of the matter; let it appear to me even as it has to you, and utter its command; but if it has ever a mind to appear, I must needs see it none the more by virtue of wearing your dress instead of mine, and sleeping in your bed rather than my own. Whatever be this that appears to you in your sleep, assuredly it has not come to such folly as to infer from your dress that I am you, when it sees me. We are now to learn if it will take no account of me and not deign to appear and haunt me, whether I wear your robes or my own; for if indeed it will continually be coming, I myself would say that it is of heaven's sending. But if you are resolved that so this must be done, and there is no averting it, but it has come to this pass, that I must lie down to sleep in your bed, so let it be; this duty I will fulfil, and let the vision appear also to me. But till then I will keep my present opinion."

17. So saying, Artabanus did as he was bidden, hoping to prove Xerxes' words vain; he put on Xerxes' robes and sat on the king's throne. Presently while he slumbered there came to him in his sleep the same dream that had haunted Xerxes, and standing over him thus it spoke: "Art thou then he that would dissuade Xerxes from marching against Hellas, thinking so to protect him? But neither hereafter nor now shalt thou go scathless for striving to turn aside that which must be. To Xerxes himself hath it been declared what shall befall him, if he disobey."

18. With this threat (so it seemed to Artabanus) the vision made as though it would burn his eyes with hot irons, and he leapt up with a loud cry; then sitting by Xerxes he told him all the tale of what he had seen in his dream, and next

he said: "O king, having seen, as much as a man may, how the greater has often been brought low by the less, I was loath that you should always give the rein to your youthful spirit; for I knew how evil a thing it was to have many desires, remembering the end of Cyrus' expedition against the Massagetae and Cambyses' against the Ethiopians, and having myself marched with Darius against the Scythians. Knowing this, I judged that you had but to abide in peace for all men to deem you fortunate. But since heaven impels, and the gods, as it seems, mark Hellas for destruction, I myself do change and correct my judgment; and do you now declare the god's message to the Persians, and bid them obey your first command for all due preparation: so act, that nought on your part be lacking to the fulfilment of heaven's commission." After this discourse, the vision giving them courage, Xerxes when daylight came imparted all this to the Persians, and Artabanus now openly persuaded to that course from which he alone had before openly dissuaded.

19. After this Xerxes, being now intent on the expedition, saw yet a third vision in his sleep, which the Magians interpreted to have regard to the whole earth and to signify that all men should be his slaves. This was the vision: Xerxes thought that he was crowned with an olive bough, the shoots of which spread over the whole earth, and presently the crown vanished from off his head where it was set. This the Magians interpreted; and of the Persians who had been assembled, every man forthwith rode away to his own governorship and there used all zeal to fulfil the king's behest, each desiring to receive the promised gifts; and thus it was that Xerxes dealt with the mustering of his army, searching out every part of the continent.

Key learning:

- Herodotus present discussions taking place in the Persian court about whether to invade Greece or not
- Herodotus had Mardonius provide Xerxes with other reasons why he should invade Greece, including the motivation to match the achievements of his predecessors and conquer territory
- Xerxes' no doubt felt obliged to avenge the Persian defeat at Marathon. As soon as matters in Egypt were settled, Xerxes began organising a major expedition to Greece
- Use to discuss the personality and priorities of Xerxes and the nature of the evidence for Xerxes' motivations for invading Greece

Xerxes' invasion of Greece: the preparation

(Suggested timings: 1 hour)

Key learning:

- Use the following passages to discuss:
- The personality and priorities of Xerxes
- The treatment of other peoples and their cultures
- Persian strategy towards Greek city-states
- The tensions between different Greek city-states on strategy/where to defend
- Xerxes' preparations were thorough. You may wish to cover the following aspects / events:

Herodotus *Histories* 7.20; 7.22–7.25; 7.116–7.117

20. For full four years¹ from the conquest of Egypt he was equipping his host and preparing all that was needful therefor; and ere the fifth year was completed he set forth on his march with the might of a great multitude. Of all armaments whereof we have knowledge this was by much the greatest, insomuch that none were aught in comparison of it, neither the armament that Darius led against the Scythians, nor the host of the Scythians when in pursuit of the Cimmerians they brake into Media² and subdued and ruled wellnigh all the upper lands of Asia, wherefor Darius afterwards essayed to punish them, nor—in so far as report tells—the armament led by the sons of Atreus against Troy, nor that Mysian and Teucric host which before the Trojan war crossed the Bosphorus into Europe,³ subduing there all the Thracians and coming down to the Ionian sea, and marching southward as far as the river Peneus.

22. First of all he had now for about three years been making all his preparations in regard of Athos, inasmuch as they who first essayed to sail round it had suffered shipwreck. Triremes were anchored off Elaeus in the Chersonese; with these for their headquarters, all sorts and conditions of men in the army were made to dig a canal under the lash, coming by turns to the work; and they that dwelt about Athos dug likewise. Bubares son of Megabazus and Artachaeus son of Artaeus, Persians both, were the overseers of the workmen. This Athos is a mountain great and famous, running out into the sea; it is inhabited by men. At the mountain's landward end, it is in the form of a peninsula, and there is an isthmus of about twelve furlongs' width; here is a place of level ground or little hills, from the sea by Acanthus to the sea which is over against Torone. On this isthmus, which is at the end of Athos, there stands a Greek town, Sane; there are others too seaward of Sane and landward of Athos, which it was now the Persians' intent to make into island and not mainland towns; to wit, Dion, Olophyxus, Acrothoum, Thyssus, Cleonae.

23. These are the towns situate on Athos; and the foreigners dug as I shall show,¹ dividing up the ground among their several nations. They drew a straight line near to the town of Sane; and when the channel had been dug to some depth, some stood at the bottom of it and dug, others took the stuff as it was dug out and delivered it to yet others that stood higher on stages, and they again to others as they received it, till they came to those that were highest; these carried it out and cast it away. With all save only the Phoenicians the steep sides of the canal brake and fell, doubling the labour thereby; for inasmuch as they made the span of the same breadth at its highest and its lowest, this could not but happen. But the Phoenicians showed therein the same skill as in all else that they do; having taken in hand the portion that fell to them, they so dug as to make the topmost span of the canal as wide again as the canal was to be, and narrowed it ever as they wrought lower, till at the bottom their work was of the same span as what the rest had wrought. There is a meadow hard by, where they made a place for buying and marketing; and ever and anon much ground grain was brought to them from Asia.

24. As far as I judge by conjecture, Xerxes gave command for this digging out of pride, because he would display his power and leave memorials of it; for they might very easily have drawn their ships across the isthmus; yet he bade them dig a canal from sea to sea, wide enough to float two triremes rowed abreast. The same men who were charged with the digging were also charged to join the banks of the river Strymon by a bridge.

25. Thus did Xerxes accomplish this work; and for the bridges he charged the Phoenicians and Egyptians with the making of ropes of papyrus and white flax,¹ and storing of provision for his army, that neither it nor the beasts of burden in the march to Hellas should starve; in such places as enquiry showed to be the fittest he bade them store it, carrying it to the several places from all parts of Asia in vessels of merchandise and transports. For the corn, they brought that as they were severally charged to the White Headland (as it is called) in Thrace, or Tyrodiza in the Perinthian country, or Doriscus, or Eïon on the Strymon, or Macedonia.

116. When Xerxes came to Acanthus, he declared the Acanthians his guests and friends, and gave them a Median dress, praising them for the zeal wherewith he saw them furthering his campaign, and for what he heard of the digging of the canal.

117. While Xerxes was at Acanthus, it so befel that Artachaees, overseer of the digging of the canal, died of a sickness. He was high in Xerxes' favour, an Achaemenid by lineage; he was the tallest man in Persia, lacking four finger-breadths of five royal cubits¹ in stature, and his voice was the loudest on earth. Wherefore Xerxes mourned him greatly and gave him a funeral and burial of great pomp, and the whole army poured libations on his tomb. The Acanthians hold Artachaees a hero, and sacrifice to him, calling upon his name; this they do by the bidding of an oracle.

Key learning:

- The construction of the Mount Athos canal and Xerxes' reaction to the chief architects death

Herodotus *Histories* 7.34–7.37

34. Beginning then from Abydos they whose business it was made bridges across to that headland, the Phoenicians one of flaxen cables, and the Egyptians the second, which was of papyrus. From Abydos to the opposite shore it is a distance of seven furlongs.² But no sooner had the strait been bridged than a great storm swept down and brake and scattered all that work.

35. When Xerxes heard of that, he was very angry, and gave command that the Hellespont be scourged with three hundred lashes, and a pair of fetters be thrown into the sea; nay, I have heard ere now that he sent branders with the rest to brand the Hellespont. This is certain, that he charged them while they scourged to utter words outlandish and presumptuous: "Thou bitter water," they should say, "our master thus punishes thee, because thou didst him wrong albeit he had done thee none. Yea, Xerxes the king will pass over thee, whether thou wilt or no; it is but just that no man offers thee sacrifice, for thou art a turbid and a briny river." Thus he commanded that the sea should be punished, and that they who had been overseers of the bridging of the Hellespont should be beheaded.

36. So this was done by those who were appointed to that thankless honour; and new masters of their craft set about making the bridges. The manner of their doing it was as I will show. That they might lighten the strain of the cables, they laid fifty-oared ships and triremes alongside of each other, three hundred and sixty to bear the bridge that was nearest to the Euxine sea, and three hundred and fourteen to bear the other; all lay obliquely to the line of the Pontus and parallel with the current of the Hellespont.¹ Having so laid the ships alongside they let down very great anchors, both from the end of the ship nearest the Pontus to hold fast against the winds blowing from within that sea, and from the other end, towards the west and the Aegean, to hold against the west and south winds. Moreover they left for passage an opening in the line of fifty-oared ships and triremes, that so he that would might be able to voyage to the Pontus, or out of it. Having so done, they stretched the cables from the land, twisting them taut with wooden windlasses; and they did not as before keep the two kinds apart, but assigned for each bridge two cables of flax and four of papyrus. All these were of the same thickness and fair appearance, but the flaxen were heavier in their proportion, a cubit thereof weighing a talent.¹ When the strait was thus bridged, they sawed balks of wood to a length equal to the breadth of the floating supports,² and laid them in order on the taut cables, and having set them alongside they then made them fast. This done, they heaped brushwood on to the bridge, and when

this was all laid in order they heaped earth on it and stamped it down; then they made a fence on either side, lest the beasts of burden and horses should be affrighted by the sight of the sea below them.

37. When the bridges and the work at Athos were ready, and the moles at the canal's entrances, that were built to prevent the surf from silting up the entrances of the digged passage, and the canal itself was reported to be now perfectly made, the army then wintered, and at the beginning of spring³ was ready and set forth from Sardis to march to Abydos. When they had set forth, the sun left his place in the heaven and was unseen, albeit the sky was without clouds and very clear, and the day was turned into night. When Xerxes saw and took note of that, he was moved to think upon it, and asked the Magians what the vision might signify. They declared to him, that the god was showing to the Greeks the desolation of their cities; for the sun (they said) was the prophet of the Greeks, as the moon was theirs. Xerxes rejoiced exceedingly to hear that, and kept on his march.

Key learning:

- **The construction of pontoon bridges to bridge the Hellespont, and Xerxes' punishment of the builders and whipping of the Hellespont when the first bridge was destroyed**

Herodotus *Histories* 7.38–7.39

38. As he led his army away, Pythius the Lydian, being affrighted by the heavenly vision and encouraged by the gifts that he had received, came to Xerxes and said, "Sire, I have a boon to ask that I desire of you, easy for you to grant and precious for me to receive." Xerxes, supposing that Pythius would demand anything rather than what he did verily ask, answered that he would grant the boon, and bade him declare what he desired. Thereupon Pythius took courage and said: "Sire, I have five sons, and all of them are constrained to march with you against Hellas. I pray you, O king! take pity on me that am so old, and release one of my sons, even the eldest, from service, that he may take care of me and of my possessions; take the four others with you, and may you return back with all your design accomplished."

39. Xerxes was very angry, and thus replied: "Villain, you see me myself marching against Hellas, and taking with me my sons and brothers and kinsfolk and friends; and do you, my slave—who should have followed me with all your household and your very wife—speak to me of your son? Then be well assured of this, that a man's spirit dwells in his ears; when it hears good words it fills the whole body with delight, but when it hears the contrary thereto it swells with anger. At that time when you did me good service and promised more, you will never boast that you outdid your king in the matter of benefits; and now that you have turned aside to the way of shamelessness, you shall receive a lesser requital than you merit. You and four of your sons are saved by your hospitality; but you shall be mulcted in the life of that one whom you most desire to keep." With that reply, he straightway bade those who were charged to do the like to find the eldest of Pythius' sons and cut him asunder, then having so done to set the one half of his body on the right hand of the road and the other on the left, that the army might pass this way between them.

Key learning:

- **Phythius and his five sons, his request to save the eldest and the murder of the eldest**

Herodotus *Histories* 7.43

43. When the army had come to the river Scamander, which was the first river after the beginning of their march from Sardis that fell short of their needs and could not suffice for the army and the cattle,—being arrived at this river, Xerxes ascended to the citadel of Priam, having a desire to view it; and having viewed and enquired of all that was there he sacrificed a thousand kine to Athene of Ilium, and the Magians offered libations to the heroes. After their so doing, the army was seized with a panic fear in the night. When it was day they journeyed on thence, keeping on their left the towns of Rhoetium and Ophryneum and Dardanus, which marches with Abydos,¹ and on their right the Teucrian Gergithae.

Key learning:

- **Xerxes' honouring the gods at Troy**

Herodotus *Histories* 7.145–7.147

145. These oracles, then, had been given to the Athenians. All the Greeks that had the better purpose for Hellas now assembling themselves together and there taking counsel and plighting faith, they resolved in debate to make an end of all their feuds and their wars against each other, from whatever cause arising; and among others that were afoot the greatest was the war between the Athenians and the Aeginetans. Presently, learning that Xerxes was at Sardis with his army, they planned to send men into Asia to spy out the king's doings, and to despatch messengers, some to Argos, who should make the Argives their brothers in arms against the Persian, some to Gelon son of Dinomenes in Sicily, some to Corcyra, praying aid for Hellas, and some to Crete; for they hoped that since the danger threatened all Greeks alike, all of Greek blood might unite and work jointly for one common end. Now the power of Gelon was said to be very great, surpassing by far any power in Hellas.

146. Being so resolved, and having composed their quarrels, they first sent three men as spies into Asia. These came to Sardis, and took note of the king's army; but they were discovered, and after examination by the generals of the land army they were led away for execution. So they were condemned to die; but when Xerxes heard of it he blamed the judgment of his generals, and sent some of his guards, charging them if they found the spies alive to bring them before him. They were found still living and brought into the king's presence; then Xerxes, having enquired of them the purpose of their coming, bade his guards lead them about and show them all his army, horse and foot; and when the spies should have seen all to their hearts' content, send them away unharmed whithersoever they would go.

147. The reason alleged for his command was this: had the spies been put to death, the Greeks would not so soon have learnt the unspeakable greatness of his power, and the Persians would have done their enemy no great harm by putting three men to death; "but if they return to Hellas," said he, "methinks when the Greeks hear of my power they will before the expedition surrender this peculiar freedom that they have, and so we need not be at pains to march against them." This was like that other saying of Xerxes', when he was at Abydos and saw ships laden with corn sailing out of the Pontus through the Hellespont, voyaging to Aegina and the Peloponnese. They that sat by him, perceiving that they were enemy ships, were for taking them, and looked to the king for him to give the word. But Xerxes asked them whither the ships were sailing; "to your enemies, Sire," said they, "carrying corn." Where to Xerxes answered, "And are not we too sailing to the same places as they, with corn among all our other provisions? What wrong are they doing us in carrying food thither?"

Key learning:

- **Xerxes' treatment of Hellenic League spies**

Herodotus *Histories* 7.32; 7.131–7.133

32. Having arrived in Sardis, he first sent heralds to Hellas to demand earth and water and command the preparation of meals for the king; to all other places he sent to demand earth, only neither to Athens nor to Lacedaemon. The reason of his sending for earth and water the second time was this—he fully believed that as many as had formerly not given it to Darius' messengers, would now be compelled to give by fear; and he sent because he desired to know this of a surety.

131. Xerxes delayed for many days in the parts of Pieria; for a third part of his army was clearing a road over the Macedonian mountains, that all the army might pass by that way to the Perrhaebian country; and now returned the heralds who had been sent to Hellas to demand earth, some empty-handed, some bearing earth and water.

132. Among those who paid that tribute were the Thessalians, Dolopes, Enienes, Perrhaebians, Locrians, Magnesians, Melians, Achaeans of Phthia, Thebans, and all the Boeotians except the men of Thespieae and Plataea. Against all of these the Greeks who declared war with the foreigner entered into a sworn agreement, which was this:

that if they should be victorious they would dedicate to the god of Delphi the possessions of all Greeks who had of free will surrendered themselves to the Persians. Such was the agreement sworn by the Greeks.

133. But to Athens and Sparta Xerxes sent no heralds to demand earth, and this was the reason: when Darius had before sent men with this same purpose, the demanders were cast at the one city into the Pit² and at the other into a well, and bidden to carry thence earth and water to the king. For this cause Xerxes sent no demand. What calamity befel the Athenians for thus dealing with the heralds I cannot say, save that their land and their city was laid waste; but I think that there was another reason for this, and not the aforesaid.

Key learning:

- **In 481 BC, heralds were sent to Greek city-states, except Athens and Sparta.**
- **Also in 481, a defensive alliance between city-states was formed to resist the Persians. Today it is known as the Hellenic League. Athens and Sparta were key members.**
- **The twin concern of self-preservation and self-interest motivated a significant number of Greek city-states to medise.**

Xerxes' invasion of Greece: the Battle of Thermopylae, including Persian military organisation and techniques

480 BC

(Suggested timings: 2 hours)

Herodotus *Histories* 6

Herodotus 7.61–7.100 describes the equipment of the different peoples who made up the Persian army.

61. Those that served in the army were as I will now show. Firstly, the Persians; for their equipment they wore on their heads loose caps called tiaras, and on their bodies sleeved tunics of divers colours, with scales of iron like in appearance to the scales of fish, and breeches on their legs; for shields they had wicker bucklers, their quivers hanging beneath these; they carried short spears, long bows, and arrows of reed, and daggers withal that hung from the girdle by the right thigh. Their commander was Otanes, father of Xerxes' wife and son of Amestris. These Persians were in old time called by the Greeks Cephenees, but by themselves and their neighbours Artaei. But when Perseus the son of Danaë and Zeus had come to Cepheus the son of Belus, and taken his daughter Andromeda to wife, a son was born to him whom he called Perses, and him he left there; for Cepheus had no male issue; it was from this Perses that the Persians took their name.¹

62. The Medes in the army were equipped like the Persians; indeed that fashion of armour is Median, not Persian; their commander was Tigranes, an Achaemenid. These were in old time called by all men Arians,² but when the Colchian woman Medea came from Athens among the Arians they changed their name, like the Persians. This is the Medes' own account of themselves. The Cissians in the army were equipped like the Persians, but they wore turbans and not caps. Their commander was Anaphes son of Otanes. The Hyrcanians¹ were armed like the Persians; their leader was Megapanus; who was afterwards the governor of Babylon.

63. The Assyrians of the army wore on their heads helmets of twisted bronze made in an outlandish fashion not easy to describe. They bore shields and spears and daggers of Egyptian fashion, and wooden clubs withal studded with iron, and they wore linen breastplates. These are called by Greeks Syrians, but the foreigners called them Assyrians. With them were the Chaldeans. Their commander was Otaspes son of Artachaees.

64. The Bactrians in the army wore a headgear most like to the Median, carrying their native bows of reed, and short spears. The Sacae, who are Scythians, had on their heads tall caps, erect and stiff and tapering to a point; they wore breeches, and carried their native bows, and daggers, and axes withal, which they call "sagaris." These were Amyrgian Scythians, but were called Sacae; for that is the Persian name for all Scythians. The commander of the Bactrians and Sacae was Hystaspes, son of Darius and Cyrus' daughter Atossa.

65. The Indians wore garments of tree-wool,² and carried bows of reed and iron-tipped arrows of the same. Such was their equipment; they were appointed to march under the command of Pharnazathres son of Artabates.

66. The Arians were equipped with Median bows, but in all else like the Bactrians; their commander was Sisamnes son of Hydarnes. The Parthians, Chorasmians, Sogdians, Gandarians, and Dadicae in the army had the same equipment as the Bactrians. The Parthians and Chorasmians had for their commander Artabazus son of Pharnaces, the Sogdians Azanes son of Artaeus, the Gandarians and Dadicae Artyphius son of Artabanus.

67. The Caspians in the army wore cloaks, and carried the reed bows of their country and short swords. Such was their equipment; their leader was Ariomardus, brother to Artyphius; the Sarangae made a brave show with dyed garments and boots knee-high, carrying bows and Median spears. Their commander was Pherendates son of Megabazus. The Pactyes wore cloaks and carried the bows of their country and daggers; their commander was Artayntes son of Ithamitres.

68. The Utians and Mycians and Paricanians were equipped like the Pactyes; the Utians and Mycians had for their commander Arsamenes son of Darius, the Paricanians Siromitres son of Oeobazus.

69. The Arabians wore mantles girded up, and carried at their right side long bows curving backwards.¹ The Ethiopians were wrapt in skins of leopards and lions, and carried bows made of palm-wood strips, full four cubits long, and short arrows therewith, pointed not with iron but with a sharpened stone, that stone wherewith seals are carved; moreover they had spears pointed with a gazelle's horn sharpened to the likeness of a lance, and studded clubs withal. When they went into battle they painted half their bodies with gypsum and the other half with vermilion. The Arabians, and the Ethiopians who dwell above Egypt, had for commander Arsames son of Darius and Artystone daughter of Cyrus, whom Darius loved best of his wives, and had an image made of her of hammered gold.

70. The Ethiopians above Egypt and the Arabians had Arsames for commander, and the Ethiopians of the east¹ (for there were two kinds of them in the army) served with the Indians; they differed nothing in appearance from the others, but only in speech and hair; for the Ethiopians from the east are straight-haired, but they of Libya have of all men the woolliest hair. These Ethiopians of Asia were for the most part armed like the Indians; but they wore on their heads the skins of horses' foreheads, stripped from the head with ears and mane; the mane served them for a crest, and they wore the horses' ears stiff and upright; for shields they had bucklers of cranes' skin.

71. The Libyans came in leathern garments, using javelins of charred wood. Their commander was Massages son of Oarizus.

72. The Paphlagonians in the army had plaited helmets on their heads, and small shields and short spears, and javelins and daggers withal; they wore the shoes of their country, reaching midway to the knee. The Ligyes and Matieni and Mariandyni and Syrians were equipped like the Paphlagonians. These Syrians are called by the Persians Cappadocians. Dotus son of Megasidrus was commander of the Paphlagonians and Matieni, Gobryas son of Darius and Artystone of the Mariandyni and Ligyes and Syrians.

73. The Phrygian equipment was most like to the Paphlagonian, with but small difference. By what the Macedonians say, these Phrygians were called Briges as long as they dwelt in Europe, where they were neighbours of the Macedonians; but when they changed their home to Asia they changed their name also and were called Phrygians.¹ The Armenians, who are settlers from Phrygia, were armed like the Phrygians. Both these together had for their commander Artochmes, Darius' son-in-law.

74. The Lydian armour was most like to the Greek. The Lydians were formerly called Meiones, till they changed their name and were called after Lydus, son of Atys. The Mysians wore on their heads helmets of native form, carrying small shields and javelins of charred wood. These are settlers from Lydia, who are called Olympieni after the mountain Olympus. The commander of the Lydians and Mysians was that Artaphrenes, son of Artaphrenes, who made the onfall on Marathon with Datis.

75. The Thracians in the army wore fox-skin caps on their heads, and tunics on their bodies; mantles of divers colours were their covering; they had shoes of fawnskin on their feet and legs, carrying withal javelins and little shields and daggers. These took the name of Bithynians after they crossed over to Asia; before that they were called (as they themselves say) Strymonians, as dwelling by the Strymon; they say that they were driven from their homes by Teucrians and Mysians. The commander of the Thracians of Asia was Bassaces son of Artabanus.

76. The [Pisidians] had little shields of raw oxhide; each man carried two wolf-hunter's spears; they wore helmets of bronze, with the ears and horns of oxen wrought in bronze thereon, and crests withal; their legs were wrapped round with strips of purple stuff. In this country is a place of divination sacred to Ares.

77. The Cabelees,¹ who are Meiones, and are called Lasonii, had the same equipment as the Cilicians; when I come in my recording to the place of the Cilicians, I will then declare what it was. The Milyae had short spears and garments fastened by brooches; some of them carried Lycian bows, and wore caps of skin on their heads. The commander of all these was Badres son of Hystanes.

78. The Moschi wore wooden helmets on their heads, and carried shields and small spears with long points. The Tibareni and Macrones and Mossynoeci in the army were equipped like the Moschi. Their commanders who marshalled them were, for the Moschi and Tibareni, Ariomardus son of Darius and Parmys, the daughter of Cyrus'

son Smerdis; for the Macrones and Mossynoeci, Artaÿctes son of Cherasmis, who was governor of Sestus on the Hellespont.

79. The Mares wore on their heads the plaited helmets of their country, carrying small shields of hide and javelins. The Colchians had wooden helmets and small shields of raw oxhide and short spears, and swords withal. The commander of the Mares and Colchians was Pharandates son of Teaspis. The Alarodians and Saspises in the army were armed like the Colchians; Masistius son of Siromitres was their commander.

80. The island tribes that came from the Red Sea, and from the islands where the king plants those who are called Exiles, wore dress and armour likest to the Median. The commander of these islanders was Mardontes son of Bageus, who in the next year,¹ being then general at Mycale, was there slain in the fight.

81. These are the nations that marched by the mainland and had their places in the land army. Of this host the commanders were those of whom I have spoken, and these were they that marshalled and numbered the host and appointed captains of thousands and ten thousands, the captains of ten thousands appointing the captains of hundreds and of tens. Others too there were, leaders of troops and nations.²

82. The commanders then were as aforesaid. The generals of these and of the whole land army were Mardonius son of Gobryas, Tritantaechmes son of that Artabanus who counselled that there should be no expedition against Hellas, Smerdomenes son of Otanes (these two latter were sons of Darius' brethren, whereby they were Xerxes' cousins), Masistes son of Darius and Atossa, Gergis son of Ariazus, and Megabyzus son of Zopyrus.

83. These were the generals of the whole land army, saving the Ten Thousand; Hydarnes son of Hydarnes was general of these picked ten thousand Persians, who were called Immortals for this reason, that when any one of them fell out of the number by force of death or sickness, another was chosen, and so they were never more or fewer than ten thousand. The Persians showed of all the richest adornment, and were themselves the best in the army. Their equipment was such as I have recorded; over and above this they made a brave show with the abundance of gold that they had; carriages withal they brought, bearing concubines and servants many and well equipped; and their food was brought to them on camels and beasts of burden, apart from the rest of the army.

84. There are horsemen in these nations, yet not all of them furnished cavalry, but only such as I will show: first the Persians, equipped like their foot, save that some of them wore headgear of hammered bronze and iron.

85. There are also certain nomads called Sagartian; they are Persian in speech, and the fashion of their equipment is somewhat between the Persian and the Pactyan; they furnished eight thousand horsemen. It is their custom to carry no armour of bronze or iron, save daggers only, and to use ropes of twisted leather.¹ In these they trust when they go to battle; and this is their manner of fighting: when they are at close quarters with their enemy, they throw their ropes, these having a noose at the end; and whatever they catch, be it horse or man, the thrower drags it to himself, and the enemy thus entangled in the prisoning coils is slain.

86. This is their manner of fighting; their place in the army was with the Persians. The Median horse were equipped like their foot, and the Cissians likewise. The Indians were armed in like manner as their foot; they rode swift horses and drove chariots drawn by horses and wild asses. The Bactrians were equipped as were their foot, and the Caspians in like manner. The Libyans too were armed like the men of their infantry, and all of them too drove chariots. So likewise the Caspians and Paricanians were armed as the men of their infantry. The Arabians had the same equipment as the men of their infantry, and all of them rode on camels no less swift than horses.

87. These nations alone are riders; and the number of the horsemen was shown to be eighty thousand, besides the camels and the chariots. All the rest of the riders were ranked in their several troops, but the Arabians were posted hindmost; for the horses not enduring the sight of camels, their place was in the rear, that so the horses might not be affrighted.

88. The captains of horse were Harmamithres and Tithaeus, sons of Datis; the third who was captain with them, Pharnuches, had been left behind sick at Sardis. For as they set forth from Sardis, an unwelcome mishap befel him; a dog ran under the feet of the horse that he rode, and the horse taken unawares reared up and threw Pharnuches; after his fall he vomited blood and his hurt turned to a wasting sickness. The horse was straightway dealt with

according to Pharnuches' command; his servants led it away to the place where it had thrown their master, and cut off its legs at the knee. Thus it was that Pharnuches lost his captaincy.

89. The number of the triremes was shown to be twelve hundred and seven; and these were they that furnished them. First, the Phoenicians; they, with the Syrians of Palestine, furnished three hundred. For their equipment, they had on their heads helmets well-nigh of Greek fashion; they wore linen breastplates, and carried shields without rims, and javelins. These Phoenicians dwelt in old time, as they themselves say, by the Red Sea; passing over from thence, they now inhabit the sea-coast of Syria; that part of Syria and as much of it as reaches to Egypt, is all called Palestine. The Egyptians furnished two hundred ships. These wore plaited helmets, and carried hollow shields with broad rims, and spears for sea-warfare, and great poleaxes. The greater part of them wore cuirasses and carried long swords.

90. Such was their armour: the Cyprians furnished a hundred and fifty ships; for their equipment, their princes wore turbans wrapped round their heads; the people wore tunics, but in all else were like the Greeks. Their tribes are these¹: some are from Salamis and Athens, some from Arcadia, some from Cythnus, some from Phoenice, and some from Ethiopia, as the Cyprians themselves say.

91. The Cilicians furnished a hundred ships. These, too, wore on their heads the helmets of their country, carrying bucklers of raw oxhide for shields, and clad in woollen tunics; each had two javelins and a sword fashioned well-nigh like the falchions of Egypt. These Cilicians were in old time called Hypachaei, and took the name they bear from Cilix a Phoenician, son of Agenor.¹ The Pamphylians furnished thirty ships: they were armed like Greeks. These Pamphylians are descended from the Trojans of the dispersal who followed Amphilocheus and Calchas.

92. The Lycians furnished fifty ships; they wore cuirasses and greaves, carrying bows of cornel-wood and unfeathered arrows and javelins; goat-skins hung from their shoulders, and they wore on their heads caps set about with feathers; daggers they had too, and scimitars. The Lycians were of Cretan descent, and were once called Termilae; they took the name they bear from Lycus, an Athenian, son of Pandion.

93. The Dorians of Asia furnished thirty ships; their armour was Greek; they were of Peloponnesian descent. The Carians furnished seventy ships; they had scimitars and daggers, but for the rest Greek equipment. Of them I have spoken in the beginning of my history,² telling by what name they were formerly called.

94. The Ionians furnished a hundred ships; their equipment was like the Greek. These Ionians, as long as they were in the Peloponnese dwelling in what is now called Achaia, before Danaus and Xuthus came to the Peloponnese, as the Greeks say, were called Aegialian Pelasgians¹; they were named Ionians after Ion the son of Xuthus.

95. The islanders furnished seventeen ships; they were armed like Greeks; they also were of Pelasgian stock, which was later called Ionian by the same right as were the Ionians of the twelve cities,² who came from Athens. The Aeolians furnished sixty ships; they were equipped like Greeks; in former days they were called Pelasgian, as the Greek story goes. Of the people of the Hellespont, they of Abydos had been charged by the king to abide at home and guard the bridges; the rest that came from Pontus with the army furnished a hundred ships, and were equipped like Greeks. They were settlers from the Ionians and Dorians.

96. There were fighting men of the Persians and Medes and Sacae on all the ships. The best sailing ships were furnished by the Phoenicians, and among them by the Sidonians. These, like those of them that were ranked in the land army, had their native leaders severally, whose names I do not record, as not being needful for the purpose of my history; for these several leaders of nations are not worthy of mention, and every city, too, of each nation had a leader of its own. These came not as generals but as slaves, like the rest of the armament; who the generals of supreme authority were, and who the Persian commanders of each nation, I have already said.

97. Of the navy, the admirals were Ariabignes son of Darius, Prexaspes son of Aspathines, Megabazus son of Megabates, and Achaemenes son of Darius, Ariabignes, son of Darius and Gobryas' daughter, being admiral of the Ionian and Carian fleet; the admiral of the Egyptians was Achaemenes, full brother to Xerxes, and the two others were admirals of the rest. As for the ships of thirty and of fifty oars, and light galleys, and great transports for horses, the sum of them altogether was shown to be three thousand.

98. Of those that were on shipboard, the most famous, after the admirals, were these: Tetramnestus of Sidon, son of Anysus, Matten of Tyre, son of Siromus, Merbalus of Aradus, son of Agbalus, Syennesis of Cilicia, son of Oromedon, Cyberniscus of Lycia, son of Sicas, Gorgus son of Chersis, and Timonax son of Timagoras, Cyprians both; and of the Carians, Histiaeus son of Tymnes, Pigres son of Hysseldomus, and Damasithymus son of Candaules.

99. I name none of the rest of the captains, having no need so to do, save only Artemisia, who moves me to marvel greatly that a woman should have gone with the armament against Hellas; for her husband being dead, she herself had his sovereignty and a young son withal, and followed the host under no stress of necessity, but of mere high-hearted valour. Artemisia was her name; she was daughter to Lygdamis, on her father's side of Halicarnassian lineage, and a Cretan on her mother's. She was the leader of the men of Halicarnassus and Cos and Nisyru and Calydnos, furnishing five ships. Her ships were reputed the best in the whole fleet after the ships of Sidon; and of all his allies she gave the king the best counsels. The cities, whereof I said she was the leader, are all of Dorian stock, as I can show, the Halicarnassians being of Troezen, and the rest of Epidaurus. Here ends what I have said of the fleet.

📖 Frieze of archers, Palace of Darius, Susa



📖 Image of Immortals (Tripylon, staircase, Persepolis)



Key learning:

- **Xerxes had assembled a huge force from across the whole Persian Empire for the expedition. Herodotus portrayed the army as poorly armed with small shields and short spears, and that Persian soldiers had to be forced into battle ‘under the whip’. The most fearsome were the ‘Immortals’ and the mounted archers.**
- **Use this and the following to discuss the nature of the Persian forces and the problems this brought logistically; the range of languages; the commitment of the allied contingents to the campaign for which they had been called up**

Herodotus *Histories* 7.206–7.209

206. These, the men with Leonidas, were sent before the rest by the Spartans, that by the sight of them the rest of the allies might be moved to arm, and not like others take the Persian part, as might well be if they learnt that the Spartans were delaying; and they purposed that later when they should have kept the feast of the Carneia,¹ which was their present hindrance, they would leave a garrison at Sparta and march out with the whole of their force and with all speed. The rest of the allies had planned to do the same likewise; for an Olympic festival fell due at the same time as these doings; wherefore they sent their advance guard, not supposing that the war at Thermopylae would so speedily come to an issue.

207. Such had been their intent; but the Greeks at Thermopylae, when the Persian drew near to the entrance of the pass, began to lose heart and debate whether to quit their post or no. The rest of the Peloponnesians were for returning to the Peloponnese and guarding the isthmus; but the Phocians and Locrians were greatly incensed by this counsel, and Leonidas gave his vote for remaining where they were and sending messages to the cities to demand aid, seeing that he and his were too few to beat off the Median host.

208. While they thus debated, Xerxes sent a mounted watcher to see how many they were and what they had in hand; for while he was yet in Thessaly, he had heard that some small army was here gathered, and that its leaders were Lacedaemonians, Leonidas a descendant of Heracles among them. The horseman rode up to the camp and viewed and overlooked it, yet not the whole; for it was not possible to see those that were posted within the wall which they had restored and now guarded; but he took note of those that were without, whose arms were piled outside the wall, and it chanced that at that time the Lacedaemonians were posted there. There he saw some of the men at exercise, and others combing their hair. Marvelling at the sight, and taking exact note of their numbers, he rode back unmolested, none pursuing nor at all regarding him; so he returned and told Xerxes all that he had seen.

209. When Xerxes heard that, he could not understand the truth, namely, that the Lacedaemonians were preparing to slay to the best of their power or be slain; what they did appeared to him laughable; wherefore he sent for Demaratus the son of Ariston, who was in his camp, and when he came questioned him of all these matters, that he might understand what it was that the Lacedaemonians were about. "I have told you already," said Demaratus, "of these men, when we were setting out for Hellas; but when you heard, you mocked me, albeit I told you of this which I saw plainly would be the outcome; for it is my greatest endeavour, O king, to speak truth in your presence. Now hear me once more: these men are come to fight with us for the passage, and for that they are preparing; for it is their custom to dress their hair whensoever they are about to put their lives in jeopardy. Moreover I tell you, that if you overcome these and what remains behind at Sparta, there is no other nation among men, O king! that will abide and withstand you; now are you face to face with the noblest royalty and city and the most valiant men in Hellas." Xerxes deemed what was said to be wholly incredible, and further enquired of him how they would fight against his army, being so few. "O king," Demaratus answered, "use me as a liar, if the event of this be not what I tell you."

Key learning:

- **The Hellenic League forces that the Persians encountered at Thermopylae were limited in number; led by the Spartan King Leonidas they planned to hold the narrow pass to prevent Xerxes' army moving into central Greece.**

Herodotus *Histories* 7.210–7.212

210. Yet for all that Xerxes would not believe him. For the space of four days the king waited, ever expecting that the Greeks would take to flight; but on the fifth, seeing them not withdrawing and deeming that their remaining there was but shamelessness and folly, he was angered, and sent the Medes and Cissians against them, bidding them take the Greeks alive and bring them into his presence. The Medes bore down upon the Greeks and charged them; many fell, but others attacked in turn; and though they suffered grievous defeat yet they were not driven off. But they made it plain to all and chiefly to the king himself that for all their number of human creatures there were few men among them. This battle lasted all the day.

211. The Medes being so roughly handled, they were then withdrawn from the fight, and the Persians whom the king called Immortals attacked in their turn, led by Hydarnes. It was thought that they at least would make short and easy work of the Greeks; but when they joined battle, they fared neither better nor worse than the Median soldiery, fighting as they were in a narrow space and with shorter spears than the Greeks, where they could make no use of their numbers. But the Lacedaemonians fought memorably. They were skilled warriors against unskilled; and it was among their many feats of arms, that they would turn their backs and feign flight; seeing which, the foreigners would pursue after them with shouting and noise; but when the Lacedaemonians were like to be overtaken they turned

upon the foreigners, and so rallying overthrew Persians innumerable; wherein some few of the Spartans themselves were slain. So when the Persians, attacking by companies and in every other fashion, could yet gain no inch of the approach, they drew off out of the fight.

212. During these onsets the king (it is said) thrice sprang up in fear for his army from the throne where he sat to view them. Such was then the fortune of the fight, and on the next day the foreigners had no better luck at the game. They joined battle, supposing that their enemies, being so few, were now disabled by wounds and could no longer withstand them. But the Greeks stood arrayed by battalions and nations, and each of these fought in its turn, save the Phocians, who were posted on the mountains to guard the path.¹ So when the Persians found the Greeks in no way different from what the day before had shown them to be, they drew off from the fight.

Key learning:

- **A series of ethnic groups were said to have taken turns at charging the Greek line. Two days of fighting saw no progress in weakening the Greek line.**

Herodotus *Histories* 7.213–7.218

213. The king being at a loss how to deal with the present difficulty, Epialtes son of Eurydemus, a Malian, came to speak with him, thinking so to receive a great reward from Xerxes, and told him of the path leading over the mountain to Thermopylae; whereby he was the undoing of the Greeks who had been left there. This Epialtes afterwards fled into Thessaly, for fear of the Lacedaemonians; and he being so banished a price was put on his head by the Pylagori¹ when the Amphictyons sat together in their council at Thermopylae; and a long time after that, having returned to Anticyra, he was slain by Athenades, a man of Trachis. It was for another cause (which I will tell in the latter part of my history)² that this Athenades slew Epialtes, but he was none the less honoured for it by the Lacedaemonians.

214. Such was the end of Epialtes at a later day. There is another story current, that it was Onetes son of Phanagoras, a Carystian, and Corydallus of Anticyra, who spoke to the king to this effect and guided the Persians round the mountain; but I wholly disbelieve it. For firstly, we must draw conclusion from what the Pylagori did; they set a price on the head of the Trachinian Epialtes, not of Onetes and Corydallus; and it must be supposed that they used all means to learn the truth; and secondly, we know that Epialtes was for this cause banished. I do not deny that Onetes might know the path, even though not a Malian, if he had many times been in that country; but the man who guided them by that path round the mountain was Epialtes, and on him I here fix the guilt.

215. Xerxes was satisfied with what Epialtes promised to accomplish; much rejoicing thereat, he sent Hydarnes forthwith and Hydarnes' following; and they set forth from the camp about the hour when lamps are lit. Now this path¹ had been discovered by the Malians of the country, who guided the Thessalians thereby into Phocis, at the time when the Phocians sheltered themselves from attack by fencing the pass with a wall; thus early had the Malians shown that the pass could avail nothing.²

216. Now the path runs thuswise. It begins at the river Asopus which flows through the ravine; the mountain there and the path have the same name, Anopaea; this Anopaea crosses the ridge of the mountain and ends at the town of Alpenus, the Locrian town nearest to Malis, where is the rock called Blackbuttock and the seats of the Cercopes; and this is its narrowest part.³

217. Of such nature is the path; by this, when they had crossed the Asopus, the Persians marched all night, the Oetean mountains being on their right hand and the Trachinian on their left. At dawn of day they came to the summit of the pass. Now in this part of the mountain-way a thousand Phocians were posted, as I have already shown, to defend their own country and guard the path; for the lower pass was held by those of whom I have spoken, but the path over the mountains by the Phocians, according to the promise that they had of their own motion given to Leonidas.

218. Now the mountain-side where the Persians ascended was all covered by oak woods, and the Phocians knew nothing of their coming till they were warned of it, in the still weather, by the much noise of the enemy's tread on the leaves that lay strewn underfoot; whereupon they sprang up and began to arm, and in a moment the foreigners were upon them. These were amazed at the sight of men putting on armour; for they had supposed that no one would withstand them, and now they fell in with an army. Hydarnes feared that the Phocians might be Lacedaemonians, and asked Epialtes of what country they were; being informed of the truth he arrayed the Persians for battle; and the Phocians, assailed by showers of arrows, and supposing that it was they whom the Persians had meant from the first to attack, fled away up to the top of the mountain and prepared there to perish. Such was their thought; but the Persians with Epialtes and Hydarnes paid no regard to the Phocians, but descended from the mountain with all speed.

Herodotus *Histories* 7.219–7.222

219. The Greeks at Thermopylae were warned first by Megistias the seer; who, having examined the offerings, advised them of the death that awaited them in the morning; and presently came deserters, while it was yet night, with news of the circuit made by the Persians; which was lastly brought also by the watchers running down from the heights when day was now dawning. Thereupon the Greeks held a council, and their opinions were divided, some advising that they should not leave their post, and some being contrariwise minded; and presently they parted asunder, these taking their departure and dispersing each to their own cities, and those resolving to remain where they were with Leonidas.

220. It is said indeed that Leonidas himself sent them away, desiring in his care for them to save their lives, but deeming it unseemly for himself and the Spartans to desert that post which they had first come to defend. But to this opinion I the rather incline, that when Leonidas perceived the allies to be faint of heart and not willing to run all risks with him he bade them go their ways, departure being for himself not honourable; if he remained, he would leave a name of great renown, and the prosperity of Sparta would not be blotted out. For when the Spartans enquired of the oracle concerning this war at its very first beginning, the Pythian priestess had prophesied to them that either Lacedaemon should be destroyed of the foreigners, or that its king should perish: which answer was given in these hexameter verses:

Fated it is for you, ye dwellers in wide-wayed
Sparta,
Either your city must fall, that now is mighty and
famous,
Wasted by Persian men, or the border of fair
Lacedaemon
Mourn for a king that is dead, from Heracles' line
descended.
Yea, for the foe thou hast nor bulls nor lions can
conquer;
Mighty he cometh as Zeus, and shall not be stayed
in his coming;
One of the two will he take, and rend his quarry
asunder.

Of this (it is my belief) Leonidas bethought himself, and desired that the Spartans alone should have the glory; wherefore he chose rather to send the allies away than that the departure of those who went should be the unseemly outcome of divided counsels.

221. In which matter I hold it for one of my strongest proofs, that Megistias the Acarnanian (reputed a descendant of Melampus), who advised the Greeks from the offerings of what should befall them, was past all doubt bidden by Leonidas to depart, lest he should perish with the rest. Yet though thus bidden Megistias himself would not go; he had an only son in the army, and him he sent away instead.

222. So those of the allies who were bidden to go went their ways in obedience to Leonidas, and the Thespians and Thebans alone stayed by the Lacedaemonians; the Thebans indeed against their will and desire, and kept there by Leonidas as hostages; but the Thespians remained with great goodwill. They refused to depart and leave Leonidas and his comrades, but remained there and died with him. Their general was Demophilus son of Diadromes.

Key learning:

- **Ephialtes came forward to tell the Persians that there was a way to bypass Thermopylae and get behind the Greek army. As a result of this, some Greeks headed home. The Spartans remained behind.**

Herodotus *Histories* 7.223–7.225

223. Xerxes, having at sunrise offered libations, waited till about the hour of marketing and then made his assault, having been so advised by Epialtes; for the descent from the mountain is more direct and the way is much shorter than the circuit and the ascent.² So the foreigners that were with Xerxes attacked; but the Greeks with Leonidas, knowing that they went to their death, advanced now much farther than before into the wider part of the strait. For ere now it was the wall of defence that they had guarded, and all the former days they had withdrawn themselves into the narrow way and fought there; but now they met their enemies outside the narrows, and many of the foreigners were there slain; for their captains came behind the companies with scourges and drove all the men forward with lashes. Many of them were thrust into the sea and there drowned, and more by far were trodden down bodily by each other, none regarding who it was that perished; for inasmuch as the Greeks knew that they must die by the hands of those who came round the mountain, they put forth the very utmost of their strength against the foreigners, in their recklessness and frenzy.

224. By this time the spears of the most of them were broken, and they were slaying the Persians with their swords. There in that travail fell Leonidas, fighting most gallantly, and with him other famous Spartans, whose names I have learnt for their great worth and desert, as I have learnt besides the names of all the three hundred.¹ There too fell, among other famous Persians, Abrocomes and Hyperanthes, two sons of Darius by Phratagune daughter of Artanes. This Artanes was brother to king Darius, and son of Hystaspes who was the son of Arsames; and when he gave his daughter in marriage to Darius he dowered her with the whole wealth of his house, she being his only child.

225. So two brothers of Xerxes fell there in the battle; and there was a great struggle between the Persians and Lacedaemonians over Leonidas' body, till the Greeks of their valour dragged it away and four times put their enemies to flight. Nor was there an end of this mella till the men with Epialtes came up. When the Greeks were aware of their coming, from that moment the face of the battle was changed; for they withdrew themselves back to the narrow part of the way, and passing within the wall they took post, all save the Thebans, upon the hillock that is in the mouth of the pass, where now stands the stone lion in honour of Leonidas. In that place they defended themselves with their swords, as many as yet had such, ay and with fists and teeth; till the foreigners overwhelmed them with missile weapons, some attacking them in front and throwing down the wall of defence, and others standing around them in a ring.

Ctesias F13 Photius §27

[27] Then Xerxes, having collected a Persian army, 800,000 men and 1000 triremes without reckoning the chariots, set out against Greece, having first thrown a bridge across at Abydos. Demaratus the Spartan, who arrived there first and accompanied Xerxes across, dissuaded him from invading Sparta. His general Artapanus, with 10,000 men,

fought an engagement with Leonidas, the Spartan general, at Thermopylae; the Persian host was cut to pieces, while only two or three of the Spartans were slain. The king then ordered an attack with 20,000, but these were defeated, and although flogged to the battle, were routed again. The next day he ordered an attack with 50,000, but without success, and accordingly ceased operations. Thorax the Thessalian and Calliades and Timaphernes, the leaders of the Trachinians, who were present with their forces, were summoned by Xerxes together with Demaratus and Hegias the Ephesian, who told him that the Spartans could never be defeated unless they were surrounded. A Persian army of 40,000 men was conducted by the two leaders of the Trachinians over an almost inaccessible mountain-path to the rear of the Lacedaemonians, who were surrounded and died bravely to a man.

Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 11.10

10. The soldiers, then, in accordance with the orders given them, forming in a compact body fell by night upon the encampment of the Persians, Leonidas leading the attack¹; and the barbarians, because of the unexpectedness of the attack and their ignorance of the reason for it, ran together from their tents with great tumult and in disorder, and thinking that the soldiers who had set out with the Trachinian had perished and that the entire force of the Greeks was upon them, they were struck with terror. Consequently many of them were slain by the troops of Leonidas, and even more perished at the hands of their comrades, who in their ignorance took them for enemies. For the night prevented any understanding of the true state of affairs, and the confusion, extending as it did throughout the entire encampment, occasioned, we may well believe, great slaughter; since they kept killing one another, the conditions not allowing of a close scrutiny, because there was no order from a general nor any demanding of a password nor, in general, any recovery of reason. Indeed, if the king had remained at the royal pavilion, he also could easily have been slain by the Greeks and the whole war would have reached a speedy conclusion; but as it was, Xerxes had rushed out to the tumult, and the Greeks broke into the pavilion and slew almost to a man all whom they caught there. So long as it was night they wandered throughout the entire camp seeking Xerxes—a reasonable action; but when the day dawned and the entire state of affairs was made manifest, the Persians, observing that the Greeks were few in number, viewed them with contempt; the Persians did not, however, join battle with them face to face, fearing their valour, but they formed on their flanks and rear, and shooting arrows and hurling javelins at them from every direction they slew them to a man. Now as for the soldiers of Leonidas who guarded the passes of Thermopylae, such was the end of life they met.

Key learning:

- Diodorus and Herodotus offer differing accounts of the final battle; Leonidas was killed and Persian archers killed the remaining Spartans.

Herodotus *Histories* 7.238

238. Having thus spoken, Xerxes passed over the place where the dead lay; and hearing that Leonidas had been king and general of the Lacedaemonians, he bade cut off his head and impale it. It is plain to me by this especial proof among many others, that while Leonidas lived king Xerxes was more incensed against him than against all others; else had he never dealt so outrageously with his dead body; for the Persians are of all men known to me the most wont to honour valiant warriors. So they who were thus charged did as I have said.

Key learning

- Xerxes had Leonidas' head chopped off and placed on a pole. Herodotus states that this went against Persian customs.
- On the same day the Greek fleet fighting off Artemisium sailed south to Salamis, after frustrated the Persian navy by blocking the straits of Artemisium

Xerxes' invasion of Greece: the sack of Athens and the battle of Salamis

(Suggested timings: 2–2 ½ hours)

Herodotus *Histories* 8.31–8.35

31. This answer being returned to them, thereat the Thessalians in their wrath against the Phocians began to guide the foreigner on his way. From the lands of Trachis they broke into Doris; for there is a narrow tongue of Dorian land stretching that way, about thirty furlongs wide, between the Malian territory and the Phocian, which in old time was Dryopian; this region is the motherland of the Dorians of the Peloponnese. To this Dorian territory the foreigners did no harm at their invasion; for the people took the Persian part, and the Thessalians would not have them harmed.

32. When they entered Phocis from Doris, the Phocians themselves they could not catch; for some of the Phocians ascended to the heights of Parnassus; and the peak of Parnassus called Tithorea, which rises by itself near the town Neon, has room enough for a multitude of people; thither they carried up their goods and themselves ascended to it, but the most of them made their way out of the country to the Ozolian Locrians, where is the town of Amphissa above the Crisaeian plain. The foreigners overran the whole of Phocis, the Thessalians so guiding their army; and all that came within their power they burnt and wasted, setting fire to towns and temples.

33. Marching this way down the river Cephissus they ravaged all before them, burning the towns of Drymus, Charadra, Erochus, Tethronium, Amphicaea, Neon, Pediea, Tritea, Elatea, Hyampolis, Parapotamii, and Abae, where was a richly endowed temple of Apollo, provided with wealth of treasure and offerings; and there was then as now a place of divination there. This temple, too, they plundered and burnt; and they pursued and caught some of the Phocians near the mountains, and did certain women to death by the multitude of their violators.

34. Passing Parapotamii the foreigners came to Panopea; and there their army parted asunder into two companies. The greater and stronger part of the host marched with Xerxes himself towards Athens and broke into the territory of Orchomenus in Boeotia. Now the whole people of Boeotia took the Persian part, and men of Macedonia sent by Alexander safeguarded their towns, each in his appointed place; the reason of the safeguarding being, that Xerxes might understand the Boeotians to be on the Persian side.

35. So this part of the foreign army marched as aforesaid, and others set forth with guides for the temple at Delphi, keeping Parnassus on their right. These, too, laid waste whatsoever part of Phocis they occupied, burning the towns of the Panopeans and Daulii and Aeolidae. The purpose of their parting from the rest of the army and marching this way was, that they might plunder the temple at Delphi and lay its wealth before Xerxes; who (as I have been told) knew of all the most notable possessions in the temple better than of what he had left in his own palace, and chiefly the offerings of Croesus son of Alyattes; so many had ever spoken of them.

Key learning:

- After Thermopylae Xerxes' fleet and army moved towards Athens. Herodotus listed a host of war crimes committed by the Persians and their Greek allies.
- Use this and the following passages to discuss:
- The aims and scope of the expedition
- The treatment of other peoples and cultures
- The personality of Xerxes as demonstrated in these events
- The importance/impact of the outcome to both Greece and Persia
- The nature of the evidence regarding these events
- The reasons for the Greek victory

Herodotus *Histories* 8.40–8.41

40. The Greek fleet, after it had left Artemisium came by the Athenians' entreaty to land at Salamis; the reason why the Athenians entreated them to put in there being, that they themselves might convey their children and women safe out of Attica, and moreover take counsel as to what they should do. For inasmuch as the present turn of affairs had disappointed their judgment they were now to hold a council; they had thought to find the whole Peloponnesian force awaiting the foreigners' attack in Boeotia, but now of that they found no whit, but learnt contrariwise that the Peloponnesians were fortifying the Isthmus, and letting all else go, as deeming the defence of the Peloponnese to be of greatest moment. Learning this, they therefore entreated the fleet to put in at Salamis.

41. So the rest made sail thither, and the Athenians to their own country. Being there arrived they made a proclamation that every Athenian should save his children and servants as he best could. Thereat most of them sent their households to Troezen, and some to Aegina and Salamis. They made haste to convey all out of harm because they desired to be guided by the oracle, and for another reason, too, which was this: it is said by the Athenians that a great snake lives in their temple, to guard the acropolis; in proof whereof they do ever duly set out a honey-cake as a monthly offering for it; this cake had ever before been consumed, but was now left untouched. When the priestess made that known, the Athenians were the readier to leave their city, deeming their goddess, too, to have deserted the acropolis. When they had conveyed all away, they returned to the fleet.

Key learning:

- **Apart from a few diehard Athenians, the population was evacuated**

Herodotus *Histories* 8.51–8.53

Herodotus 51. Now after the crossing of the Hellespont whence they began their march, the foreigners had spent one month in their passage into Europe, and in three more months they arrived in Attica, Calliades being then archon at Athens. There they took the city, then left desolate; but they found in the temple some few Athenians, temple-stewards and needy men, who defended themselves against the assault by fencing the acropolis with doors and fogs; these had not withdrawn to Salamis, partly by reason of poverty, and also because they supposed themselves to have found out the meaning of the Delphic oracle that the wooden wall should be impregnable, and believed that this, and not the ships, was the refuge signified by the prophecy.¹

52. The Persians sat down on the hill over against the acropolis, which is called by the Athenians the Hill of Ares, and besieged them by shooting arrows wrapped in lighted tow at the barricade. There the Athenians defended themselves against their besiegers, albeit they were in extremity and their barricade had failed them; nor would they listen to the terms of surrender proposed to them by the Pisistratids, but defended themselves by counter-devices, chiefly by rolling great stones down on the foreigners when they assaulted the gates; insomuch that for a long while Xerxes could not take the place, and knew not what to do.

53. But at the last in their quandary the foreigners found an entrance; for the oracle must needs be fulfilled, and all the mainland of Attica be made subject to the Persians. In front of the acropolis, and behind the gates and the ascent thereto, there was a place where none was on guard and none would have thought that any man would ascend that way; here certain men mounted near the shrine of Cecrops' daughter Aglaurus, though the way led up a sheer cliff.² When the Athenians saw that they had ascended to the acropolis, some of them cast themselves down from the wall and so perished, and others fled into the inner chamber. Those Persians who had come up first betook themselves to the gates, which they opened, and slew the suppliants; and when they had laid all the Athenians low, they plundered the temple and burnt the whole of the acropolis.

Key learning:

- **Xerxes ordered the city to be sacked. Persian guile saw the Acropolis taken. The temples on the acropolis were burnt on Xerxes command.**

Herodotus *Histories* 8.54

54. Being now wholly master of Athens, Xerxes sent a horseman to Susa to announce his present success to Artabanus. On the next day after the messenger was sent he called together the Athenian exiles who followed in his train, and bade them go up to the acropolis and offer sacrifice after their manner, whether it was some vision seen of him in sleep that led him to give this charge, or that he repented of his burning of the temple. The Athenian exiles did as they were bidden.

Key learning:

- **However the following day, the Athenian exiles accompanying Xerxes' expedition were sent to offer sacrifices on the acropolis according to Athenian custom.**

Herodotus *Histories* 8.67–8.69 Artemisia's advice:

67. So when all these were come to Athens, except the Parians (who had been left behind in Cythnus watching to see which way the war should incline)—the rest, I say, being come to Phalerum, Xerxes then came himself down to the fleet, that he might consort with the shipmen and hear their opinions. When he was come, and sat enthroned, there appeared before him at his summons the despots of their cities and the leaders of companies from the ships, and they sat according to the honourable rank which the king had granted them severally, first in place the king of Sidon, and next he of Tyre, and then the rest. When they had sat down in order one after another, Xerxes sent Mardonius and put each to the test by questioning him if the Persian ships should offer battle.

68. Mardonius went about questioning them, from the Sidonian onwards; and all the rest gave their united voice for offering battle at sea; but Artemisia said: "Tell the king, I pray you, Mardonius, that I who say this have not been the hindmost in courage or in feats of arms in the fights near Euboea. Nay, master, but it is right that I should declare my opinion, even that which I deem best for your cause. And this I say to you—Spare your ships, and offer no battle at sea; for their men are as much stronger by sea than yours, as men are stronger than women. And why must you at all costs imperil yourself by fighting battles on the sea? have you not possession of Athens, for the sake of which you set out on this march, and of the rest of Hellas? no man stands in your path; they that resisted you have come off in such plight as beseemed them. I will show you now what I think will be the course of your enemies' doings. If you make no haste to fight at sea, but keep your ships here and abide near the land, or even go forward into the Peloponnese, then, my master, you will easily gain that end wherefor you have come. For the Greeks are not able to hold out against you for a long time, but you will scatter them, and they will flee each to his city; they have no food in this island, as I am informed, nor, if you lead your army into the Peloponnese, is it likely that those of them who have come from thence will abide unmoved; they will have no mind to fight sea-battles for Athens. But if you make haste to fight at once on sea, I fear lest your fleet take some hurt and thereby harm your army likewise. Moreover, O king, call this to mind—good men's slaves are wont to be evil and bad men's slaves good; and you, who are the best of all men, have evil slaves, that pass for your allies, men of Egypt and Cyprus and Cilicia and Pamphylia, in whom is no usefulness."

69. When Artemisia spoke thus to Mardonius, all that were her friends were sorry for her words, thinking that the king would do her some hurt for counselling him against a sea-fight; but they that had ill-will and jealousy against her for the honour in which she was held above all the allies were glad at her answer, thinking it would be her undoing. But when the opinions were reported to Xerxes he was greatly pleased by the opinion of Artemisia; he had ever deemed her a woman of worth and now held her in much higher esteem. Nevertheless he bade the counsel of the more part to be followed; for he thought that off Euboea his men had been slack fighters by reason of his absence, and now he purposed to watch the battle himself.

Herodotus *Histories* 8.71–8.72

71. Nathless the Greeks had used every device possible to prevent the foreigners from breaking in upon them by land. For as soon as the Peloponnesians heard that Leonidas' men at Thermopylae were dead, they hastened together from their cities and encamped on the Isthmus, their general being the brother of Leonidas, Cleombrotus son of Anaxandrides. Being there encamped they broke up the Scironian road,¹ and thereafter built a wall across the Isthmus, having resolved in council so to do. As there were many tens of thousands there and all men wrought, the work was brought to accomplishment; for they carried stones to it and bricks and logs and crates full of sand, and they that mustered there never rested from their work by night or by day.

72. Those Greeks that mustered all their people at the Isthmus were the Lacedaemonians and all the Arcadians, the Eleans, Corinthians, Sicyonians, Epidaurians, Phliasians, Troezenians, and men of Hermione. These were they who mustered there, and were moved by great fear for Hellas in her peril; but the rest of the Peloponnesians cared nothing; and the Olympian and Carnean festivals were now past.

Herodotus *Histories* 8.74–8.76

74. So the Greeks on the Isthmus had such labour to cope withal, seeing that now all they had was at stake, and they had no hope of winning renown with their ships; but they that were at Salamis, although they heard of the work, were affrighted, and their dread was less for themselves than for the Peloponnese. For a while there was but murmuring between man and man, and wonder at Eurybiades' unwisdom, but at the last came an open outbreak; and an assembly was held, where there was much speaking of the same matters as before, some saying that they must sail away to the Peloponnese and face danger for that country, rather than abide and fight for a land won from them by the spear; but the Athenians and Aeginetans and Megarians pleading that they should remain and defend themselves where they were.

75. Then Themistocles, when the Peloponnesians were outvoting him, went privily out of the assembly, and sent to the Median fleet a man in a boat, charged with a message that he must deliver. This man's name was Sicinnus, and he was of Themistocles' household and attendant on his children; at a later day, when the Thespians were receiving men to be their citizens, Themistocles made him a Thespian, and a wealthy man withal. He now came in a boat and spoke thus to the foreigners' admirals: "I am sent by the admiral of the Athenians without the knowledge of the other Greeks (he being a friend to the king's cause and desiring that you rather than the Greeks should have the mastery) to tell you that the Greeks have lost heart and are planning flight, and that now is the hour for you to achieve an incomparable feat of arms, if you suffer them not to escape. For there is no union in their counsels, nor will they withstand you any more, and you will see them battling against each other, your friends against your foes."

76. With that declaration he departed away. The Persians put faith in the message; and first they landed many of their men on the islet Psyttalea, which lies between Salamis and the mainland; then, at midnight, they advanced their western wing towards Salamis for encirclement, and they too put out to sea that were stationed off Ceos and Cynosura; and they held all the passage with their ships as far as Munychia.¹ The purpose of their putting out to sea was, that the Greeks might have no liberty even to flee, but should be hemmed in at Salamis and punished for their fighting off Artemisium. And the purpose of their landing Persians on the islet called Psyttalea was this, that as it was here in especial that in the sea fight men and wrecks would be washed ashore (for the island lay in the very path of the battle that was to be), they might thus save their friends and slay their foes. All this they did in silence, lest their enemies should know of it. So they made these preparations in the night, taking no rest.

Key learning:

- **The sight of the Persians moving towards the Isthmus at Corinth panicked the Peloponnese. They readied themselves to return home. Fearing defeat, Themistocles sent a message to trick Xerxes. The trick worked, ensuring that a battle off Salamis would be fought and preventing the Peloponnese forces from returning home.**

Herodotus *Histories* 8.86 for summary

86. Thus it was with these two; but the great multitude of the ships were shattered at Salamis, some destroyed by the Athenians and some by the Aeginetans. For since the Greeks fought orderly and in array, but the foreigners were by now disordered and did nought of set purpose, it was but reason that they should come to such an end as befel them. Yet on that day they were and approved themselves by far better men than off Euboea; all were zealous, and feared Xerxes, each man thinking that the king's eye was on him.

Key learning:

- **The battle is difficult to reconstruct. It seems the Greek triremes were more manoeuvrable in the choppy waters and were able to ram the Persian ships. The Persian plan appears to have been to launch boarding parties onto the Greek ships to take advantage of their superior numbers.**

Herodotus *Histories* 8.87–8.88, 8.90

87. Now as touching some of the others I cannot with exactness say how they fought severally, foreigners or Greeks; but what befel Artemisia made her to be esteemed by the king even more than before. The king's side being now in dire confusion, Artemisia's ship was at this time being pursued by a ship of Attica; and she could not escape, for other friendly ships were in her way, and it chanced that she was the nearest to the enemy; wherefore she resolved that she would do that which afterwards tended to her advantage, and as she fled pursued by the Athenian she charged a friendly ship that bore men of Calyndus and the king himself of that place, Damasithymus. It may be that she had had some quarrel with him while they were still at the Hellespont, but if her deed was done of set purpose, or if the Calyndian met her by crossing her path at haphazard, I cannot say. But having charged and sunk the ship, she had the good luck to work for herself a double advantage. For when the Attic captain saw her charge a ship of foreigners, he supposed that Artemisia's ship was Greek or a deserter from the foreigners fighting for the Greeks, and he turned aside to deal with others.

88. By this happy chance it came about that she escaped and avoided destruction; and moreover the upshot was that the very harm which she had done won her great favour in Xerxes' eyes. For the king (it is said) saw her charge the ship as he viewed the battle, and one of the bystanders said, "Sire, see you Artemisia, how well she fights, and how she has sunk an enemy ship?" Xerxes then asking if it were truly Artemisia that had done the deed, they affirmed it, knowing well the ensign of her ship; and they supposed that the ship she had sunk was an enemy; for the luckiest chance of all which had (as I have said) befallen her was, that not one from the Calyndian ship was saved alive to be her accuser. Hearing what they told him, Xerxes is reported to have said, "My men have become women, and my women men"; such, they say, were his words.

90. It happened also amid this disorder that certain Phoenicians whose ships had been destroyed came to the king and accused the Ionians of treason, saying that it was by their doing that the ships had been lost; the end of which matter was, that the Ionian captains were not put to death, and those Phoenicians who accused them were rewarded as I will show. While they yet spoke as aforesaid, a Samothracian ship charged an Attic; and while the Attic ship was sinking, a ship of Aegina bore down and sank the Samothracian; but the Samothracians, being javelin throwers, swept the fighting men with a shower of javelins off from the ship that had sunk theirs, and boarded and seized her themselves. Thereby the Ionians were saved; for when Xerxes saw this great feat of their arms, he turned on the Phoenicians (being moved to blame all in the bitterness of his heart) and commanded that their heads be cut off, that so they might not accuse better men, being themselves cowards. For whenever Xerxes, from his seat under the hill over against Salamis called Aegaleos, saw any feat achieved by his own men in the battle, he inquired who was the doer of it, and his scribes wrote down the names of the ship's captain and his father and his city. Moreover it tended somewhat to the doom of the Phoenicians that Ariaramnes, a Persian, was there, who was a friend of the Ionians. So Xerxes' men dealt with the Phoenicians.

Key learning:

- Herodotus' account of Xerxes execution of some loyal Phoenician captains and praise of Artemisia should be analysed to help shed light on the personality and character of Xerxes.
- Gradually more and more Persian ships were sunk. Eventually the remnant of the Persian fleet was forced to retreat.

Herodotus *Histories* 8.97–8.100, 101–103, 107–108

97. When Xerxes was aware of the calamity that had befallen him, he feared lest the Greeks (by Ionian counsel or their own devising) might sail to the Hellespont to break his bridges, and he might be cut off in Europe and in peril of his life; and so he planned flight. But that neither the Greeks nor his own men might discover his intent, he essayed to build a mole across to Salamis,² and made fast a line of Phoenician barges to be a floating bridge and a wall; and he made preparation for war, as though he would fight at sea again. The rest who saw him so doing were fully persuaded that he was in all earnestness prepared to remain there and carry on the war; but none of this deceived Mardonius, who had best experience of Xerxes' purposes.

98. While Xerxes did thus, he sent a messenger to Persia with news of his present misfortune. Now there is nothing mortal that accomplishes a course more swiftly than do these messengers, by the Persians' skilful contrivance. It is said that as many days as there are in the whole journey, so many are the men and horses that stand along the road, each horse and man at the interval of a day's journey; and these are stayed neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness from accomplishing their appointed course with all speed. The first rider delivers his charge to the second, the second to the third, and thence it passes on from hand to hand, even as in the Greek torch-bearers' race¹ in honour of Hephaestus. This riding-post is called in Persia, *angareïon*.²

99. When the first message came to Susa, telling that Xerxes had taken Athens, it gave such delight to the Persians who were left at home that they strewed all the roads with myrtle boughs and burnt incense and gave themselves up to sacrificial feasts and jollity; but the second, coming on the heels of the first, so confounded them that they all rent their tunics, and cried and lamented without ceasing, holding Mardonius to blame; and it was not so much in grief for their ships that they did this as because they feared for Xerxes himself.

100. Such was the plight of the Persians for all the time until the coming of Xerxes himself ended it. But Mardonius, seeing that Xerxes was greatly distressed by reason of the sea-fight, and suspecting that he planned flight from Athens, considered with himself that he would be punished for overpersuading the king to march against Hellas, and that it was better for him to risk the chance of either subduing Hellas or dying honourably by flying at a noble quarry; yet his hope rather inclined to the subduing of Hellas; wherefore taking all this into account he made this proposal: "Sire, be not grieved nor greatly distressed by reason of this that has befallen us. It is not on things of wood that all the issue hangs for us, but on men and horses; and there is not one of these men, who think that they have now won a crowning victory, that will disembark from his ship and essay to withstand you, no, nor anyone from this mainland they that have withstood us have paid the penalty. If then it so please you, let us straightway attack the Peloponnese; or if it please you to wait, that also we can do. Be not cast down for the Greeks have no way of escape from being accountable for their former and their latter deeds, and becoming your slaves. It is best then that you should do as I have said; but if you are resolved that you will lead your army away, even then I have another plan. Do not, O king, make the Persians a laughing-stock to the Greeks; for if you have suffered harm, it is by no fault of the Persians, nor can you say that we have anywhere done less than brave men should; and if Phoenicians and Egyptians and Cyprians and Cilicians have so done, it is not the Persians who have any part in this disaster. Wherefore since the Persians are nowise to blame, be guided by me; if you are resolved that you will not remain, do you march away homewards with the greater part of your army; but it is for me to enslave and deliver Hellas to you, with three hundred thousand of your host whom I will choose."

101. When Xerxes heard that, he was as glad and joyful as a man in his evil case might be, and said to Mardonius that he would answer him when he had first taken counsel which of the two plans he would follow; and as he consulted with those Persians whom he summoned, he was fain to bid Artemisia too to the council, because he saw that she alone at the former sitting had discerned what was best to do. When Artemisia came, Xerxes bade all others

withdraw, both Persian councillors and guards, and said to her: "It is Mardonius' counsel that I should abide here and attack the Peloponnese; for the Persians, he says, and the land army are nowise to blame for our disaster, and of that they would willingly give proof. Wherefore it is his counsel that I should do this; else he offers to choose out three hundred thousand men of the army and deliver Hellas to me enslaved, while I myself by his counsel march away homeward with the rest of the host. Now therefore I ask of you: as you did rightly in counselling me against the late sea-fight, so now counsel me as to which of these two things I shall be best advised to do."

102. Being thus asked for advice she replied: "It is difficult, O king, to answer your asking for advice by saying that which is best; but in the present turn of affairs I think it best that you march away back, and that Mardonius, if he wills and promises to do as he says, be left here with those whom he desires. For if he subdue all that he offers to subdue, and prosper in the purpose wherewith he speaks, the achievement, Sire, is yours; for it will be your servants that have wrought it. But if again the issue be contrary to Mardonius' opinion, it is no great misfortune so long as you and all that household of yours be safe; for while you and they of your house are safe, many a time and oft will the Greeks have to fight for their lives. As for Mardonius, if aught ill befall him, it is no matter for that; nor will any victory of the Greeks be a victory in truth, when they have but slain your servant; but as for you, you will be marching home after the burning of Athens, which thing was the whole purpose of your expedition."

103. Artemisia's counsel pleased Xerxes; for it happened that she spoke his own purpose; in truth I think that he would not have remained, though all men and women had counselled him so to do; so panic-stricken was he. Having then thanked Artemisia, he sent her away to carry his sons to Ephesus; for he had some bastard sons with him.

107. Having given his sons to Artemisia's charge to be carried to Ephesus, Xerxes called Mardonius to him and bade him choose out whom he would from the army, and make his words good so far as endeavour availed. For that day matters went thus far; in the night, the admirals by the king's command put out to sea from Phalerum and made for the Hellespont again with all speed, to guard the bridges for the king's passage. When the foreigners came near to the "Girdle"¹ in their course, they thought that certain little headlands, which here jut out from the mainland, were ships, and they fled for a long way; but learning at last that they were no ships but headlands they drew together and went on their way.

108. When it was day, the Greeks saw the land army abiding where it had been and supposed the ships also to be at Phalerum; and thinking that there would be a sea-fight they prepared to defend themselves. But when they learnt that the ships were gone, they straightway resolved on pursuit; so they pursued Xerxes' fleet as far as Andros, but had no sight of it; and when they came to Andros they held a council there. Themistocles declared his opinion that they should hold their course through the islands, and having pursued after the ships should sail forthwith to the Hellespont to break the bridges; but Eurybiades offered a contrary opinion, saying that to break the bridges would be the greatest harm that they could do to Hellas. "For," said he, "if the Persian be cut off and compelled to remain in Europe, he will essay not to be inactive, seeing that if he be inactive neither can his cause prosper nor can he find any way of return home, but his army will perish of hunger; but if he be adventurous and busy, it may well be that every town and nation in Europe may join itself to him severally, by conquest or ere that by compact; and he will live on whatsoever yearly fruits of the earth Hellas produces. But, as I think that the Persian will not remain in Europe after his defeat in the sea-fight, let us suffer him to flee, till he come in his flight to his own country; and thereafter let it be that country and not ours that is at stake in the war." With that opinion the rest of the Peloponnesian admirals also agreed.

Ctesias F13 Photius §30

[30] Xerxes then advanced against Athens itself, the inhabitants of which manned 110 triremes and took refuge in Salamis; Xerxes took possession of the empty city and set fire to it, with the exception of the Acropolis, which was defended by a small band of men who had remained; at last, they also made their escape by night, and the Acropolis was fired. After this, Xerxes proceeded to a narrow strip of land in Attica called Heracleum, and began to construct an embankment in the direction of Salamis, intending to cross over on foot. By the advice of the Athenians Themistocles and Aristides archers were summoned from Crete. Then a naval engagement took place between the Greeks with 700 ships and the Persians with more than 1000 under Onophas. The Athenians were victorious, thanks

to the advice and clever strategy of Aristides and Themistocles; the Persians lost 500 ships, and Xerxes took to flight. In the remaining battles 12,000 Persians were killed.

Key learning:

- **After the battle, Xerxes retreated to Sardis, leaving Mardonius to fight another campaign the following year. This too ended in a Persian defeat at the Battle of Plataea.**

The Battle of Eurymedon and Plutarch's 'famous peace'

(Suggested timings: 1 hour)

Thucydides, 1.96–1.100

XCVI. After the Athenians had succeeded in this way to the leadership over the allies, who freely chose them on account of their hatred of Pausanias, they assessed the amount of their contributions, both for the states which were to furnish money for the war against the Barbarians and for those which were to furnish ships, the avowed object being to avenge themselves for what they had suffered by ravaging the King's territory. And it was then¹ that the Athenians first established the office of Hellenic treasurers, who received the tribute; for so the contribution of money was termed. The amount of the tribute first assessed was four hundred and sixty talents, and the treasury of the allies was Delos, where the meetings were held in the temple.

XCVII. Exercising then what was at first a leadership over allies who were autonomous and took part in the deliberations of common assemblies, the Athenians, in the interval between this war and the Persian, undertook, both in war and in the administration of public affairs, the enterprises now to be related, which were directed against the Barbarian, against their own allies when they attempted revolution, and against such of the Peloponnesians as from time to time came into conflict with them in the course of each attempt. And I have made a digression to write of these matters for the reason that this period has been omitted by all my predecessors, who have confined their narratives either to Hellenic affairs before the Persian War or to the Persian War itself; and Hellanicus, the only one of these who has ever touched upon this period, has in his Attic History treated of it briefly, and with inaccuracy as regards his chronology. And at the same time the narrative of these events serves to explain how the empire of Athens was established.

XCVIII. First, then, under the leadership of Cimon son of Miltiades, they took by siege Eion on the Strymon, which the Persians held, and enslaved its inhabitants¹; then they enslaved Scyros, the island in the Aegean inhabited by Dolopians, and colonised it themselves. And a war arose between them and the Carystians, the other Euboeans taking no part in it, and after a time terms of capitulation were agreed upon. After this they waged war upon the Naxians,¹ who had revolted, and reduced them by siege. And this was the first allied city to be enslaved in violation of the established rule; but afterwards the others also were enslaved as it happened in each case.


XCIX. Now while there were other causes of revolts, the principal ones were the failures in bringing in the tribute or their quota of ships and, in some cases, refusal of military service; for the Athenians exacted the tribute strictly and gave offence by applying coercive measures to any who were unaccustomed or unwilling to bear the hardships of service. And in some other respects, too, the Athenians were no longer equally agreeable as leaders; they would not take part in expeditions on terms of equality, and they found it easy to reduce those who revolted. For all this the allies themselves were responsible; for most of them, on account of their aversion to military service, in order to avoid being away from home got themselves rated in sums of money instead of ships, which they should pay in as their proportionate contribution, and consequently the fleet of the Athenians was increased by the funds which they contributed, while they themselves, whenever they revolted, entered on the war without preparation and without experience.

C. After this occurred at the river Eurymedon in Pamphylia the land-battle and sea-fight of the Athenians² and their allies against the Persians; and the Athenians were victorious in both on the same day under the command of Cimon son of Miltiades, and they took and destroyed triremes of the Phoenicians to the number of two hundred all told. And some time afterwards it came to pass that the Thasians revolted from them,¹ a quarrel having arisen about the trading posts and the mine² on the opposite coast of Thrace, of which the Thasians enjoyed the profits. Thereupon the Athenians sailed with their fleet against Thasos, and, after winning a battle at sea, disembarked on the island. About the same time they sent to the river Strymon ten thousand colonists, consisting of Athenians and their allies, with a view to colonising the place, then called Nine Ways, but now Amphipolis; and though these colonists gained possession of Nine Ways, which was inhabited by Edoni, yet when they advanced into the interior of Thrace they

were destroyed at Drabescus in Edonia by the united forces of the Thracians, to whom the settlement of the place was a menace.

Key learning:

- **The Delian League, under the leadership of Cimon, took the fight to the Persians to free the Greek cities of Asia Minor, and prevent any possibility of a Persian counter-attack.**
- **Use to discuss the nature of the evidence regarding a peace agreement between the Greeks and Persians**

 Plutarch, Cimon 12–13

XII. And surely there was no one who humbled the Great King himself, and reduced his haughty spirit, more than Cimon. For he did not let him go quietly away from Hellas, but followed right at his heels, as it were, and before the Barbarians had come to a halt and taken breath, he sacked and overthrew here, or subverted and annexed to the Hellenes there, until Asia from Ionia to Pamphylia was entirely cleared of Persian arms. Learning that the generals of the King were lurking about Pamphylia with a great army and many ships, and wishing to make them afraid to enter at all the sea to the west of the Chelidonian isles, he set sail from Cnidus and Triopium¹ with two hundred triremes. These vessels had been from the beginning very well constructed for speed and manœuvring by Themistocles; but Cimon now made them broader, and put bridges between their decks, in order that with their numerous hoplites they might be more effective in their onsets. Putting in at Phaselis, which was a Hellenic city, but refused to admit his armament or even to abandon the King's cause, he ravaged its territory and assaulted its walls. But the Chians, who formed part of his fleet and were of old on friendly terms with the people of Phaselis, laboured to soften Cimon's hostility, and at the same time, by shooting arrows over the walls with little documents attached, they conveyed messages of their success to the men of Phaselis. So finally Cimon made friends with them on condition that they should pay ten talents and join him in his expedition against the Barbarians.

Now Ephorus says that Tithraustes was commander of the royal fleet, and Pherendates of the infantry; but Callisthenes says that it was Ariomandes, the son of Gobryas, who, as commander-in-chief of all the forces, lay at anchor with the fleet off the mouth of the Eurymedon, and that he was not at all eager to fight with the Hellenes, but was waiting for eighty Phoenician ships to sail up from Cyprus. Wishing to anticipate their arrival, Cimon put out to sea, prepared to force the fighting if his enemy should decline an engagement. At first the enemy put into the river, that they might not be forced to fight; but when the Athenians bore down on them there, they sailed out to meet them. They had six hundred ships, according to Phanodemus; three hundred and fifty, according to Ephorus. Whatever the number, nothing was achieved by them on the water which was worthy of such a force, but they straightway put about and made for shore, where the foremost of them abandoned their ships and fled for refuge to the infantry which was drawn up near by; those who were overtaken were destroyed with their ships. Whereby also it is plain that the Barbarian ships which went into action were very numerous indeed, since, though many, of course, made their escape and many were destroyed, still two hundred were captured by the Athenians.

XIII. When the enemy's land forces marched threateningly down to the sea, Cimon thought it a vast undertaking to force a landing and lead his weary Hellenes against an unwearied and many times more numerous foe. But he saw that his men were exalted by the impetus and pride of their victory, and eager to come to close quarters with the Barbarians, so he landed his hoplites still hot with the struggle of the sea-fight, and they advanced to the attack with shouts and on the run. The Persians stood firm and received the onset nobly, and a mighty battle ensued, wherein there fell brave men of Athens who were foremost in public office and eminent. But after a long struggle the Athenians routed the Barbarians with slaughter, and then captured them and their camp, which was full of all sorts of treasure.

But Cimon, though like a powerful athlete he had brought down two contests in one day, and though he had surpassed the victory of Salamis with an infantry battle, and that of Plataea with a naval battle, still went on competing with his own victories. Hearing that the eighty Phoenician triremes which were too late for the battle had

put in at Hydrus,¹ he sailed thither with all speed, while their commanders as yet knew nothing definite about the major force, but were still in distrustful suspense. For this reason they were all the more panic-stricken at his attack, and lost all their ships. Most of their crews were destroyed with the ships. This exploit so humbled the purpose of the King that he made the terms of that notorious peace, by which he was to keep away from the Hellenic sea-coast as far as a horse could travel in a day, and was not to sail west of the Cyanean and Chelidonian isles with armoured ships of war.

And yet Callisthenes denies that the Barbarian made any such terms, but says he really acted as he did through the fear which that victory inspired, and kept so far aloof from Hellas that Pericles with fifty, and Ephialtes with only thirty, ships sailed beyond the Chelidonian isles without encountering any navy of the Barbarians. But in the decrees collected by Craterus there is a copy of the treaty in its due place, as though it had actually been made. And they say that the Athenians also built the altar of Peace to commemorate this event, and paid distinguished honours to Callias as their ambassador.

By the sale of the captured spoils the people was enabled to meet various financial demands, and especially it constructed the southern wall of the Acropolis with the generous resources obtained from that expedition. And it is said that, though the building of the long walls, called "legs," was completed afterwards, yet their first foundations, where the work was obstructed by swamps and marshes, were stayed up securely by Cimon, who dumped vast quantities of rubble and heavy stones into the swamps, meeting the expenses himself. He was the first to beautify the city with the so-called "liberal" and elegant resorts which were so excessively popular a little later, by planting the market-place with plane trees, and by converting the Academy from a waterless and arid spot into a well watered grove, which he provided with clear running-tracks and shady walks.

Key learning:

- **In 468 BC it seems that the Persians sought to bring a halt to Cimon's operations, and thus sea and land battles were fought at the Eurymedon River. The Greeks won. Plutarch suggests that after the battle Xerxes was so stung by defeat that a peace treaty may have been signed.**
- **Plutarch refers to this as the 'famous peace'. However some earlier authors deny any formal agreement was signed. Alternatively, a peace treaty – the Peace of Callias – was signed, but much later in c.449 BC**

This Source Book was created by Dr Paul Grigsby of the Warwick Classics Network as part of the Classics for All Ancient History GCSE Resource Project.

