

CLAH4005 Defenders, Conquerors, Vanquished

Lecture 4: *The Persian Wars I*



Kroisos of Lydia

- Croesus was a Lydian by birth, son of Alyattes, and sovereign of all the nations west of the river Halys, which flows from the south between Syria and Paphlagonia and empties into the sea called Euxine. [2] This Croesus was the first foreigner whom we know who subjugated some Greeks and took tribute from them, and won the friendship of others: the former being the Ionians, the Aeolians, and the Dorians of Asia, and the latter the Lacedaemonians. [3] Before the reign of Croesus, all Greeks were free: for the Cimmerian host which invaded Ionia before his time did not subjugate the cities, but raided and robbed them. Herodotos 1.6

The struggle for the sea



The advent of Persia

- Thus Astyages was deposed from his sovereignty after a reign of thirty-five years: and the Medes had to bow down before the Persians because of Astyages' cruelty. They had ruled all Asia beyond the Halys for one hundred and twenty-eight years, from which must be subtracted the time when the Scythians held sway. [2] At a later time they repented of what they now did, and rebelled against Darius ; but they were defeated in battle and brought back into subjection. But now, in Astyages' time, Cyrus and the Persians rose in revolt against the Medes, and from this time ruled Asia. [3] As for Astyages, Cyrus did him no further harm, and kept him in his own house until Astyages died. This is the story of the birth and upbringing of Cyrus, and of how he became king; and afterwards, as I have already related, he subjugated Croesus in punishment for the unprovoked wrong done him; and after this victory he became sovereign of all Asia. Hdt 1.130

The Persian Empire



Darius' Expansion

- Darius I, king of Persia 522-486 BCE, expanded the empire greatly both towards the east and towards the west.
- These are the countries which are subject unto me, and by the grace of Ahuramazda I became king of them: Persia, Elam, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, the countries by the Sea, Lydia, the Greeks, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasnia, Bactria, Sogdia, Gandara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia and Maka; twenty-three lands in all.
- [Behistun inscription §6]

Darius' Scythian Expedition (c.513 BCE)

- While Darius was making preparations against the Scythians, and sending messengers to direct some to furnish infantry and some to furnish ships, and others again to bridge the Thracian Bosphorus, Artabanus, son of Hystaspes and Darius' brother, by no means wanted him to make an expedition against the Scythians, telling him how hard that people were to deal with. [2] But when, for all his good advice, he could not deter the king, Artabanus ceased to advise, and Darius, all his preparations made, led his army from Susa. Herodotos 4.83

Darius' Defeat

- Darius' Scythian Expedition failed with only Thrace and parts of Macedon coming under Persian control.



The Ionian Revolt

- The Greeks of Asia Minor decided to revolt against Persia.
- In the account of Herodotos, an important role in the revolt was played by Histiaios and Aristagoras, tyrants of Miletos.

Help from the mainland

- The Spartans refused to help the Ionians in their revolt and so did the majority of the Greek cities approached by the rebels.
- Athens and Eretria were the only two poleis to send help to the Ionians.



The revolt crushed

- When the Persians had conquered the Ionians by sea, they laid siege to Miletus by sea and land, mining the walls and using every device against it, until they utterly captured it in the sixth year after the revolt of Aristagoras. They enslaved the city, and thus the calamity agreed with the oracle concerning Miletus. ...After that, the captive Milesians were brought to Susa. King Darius did them no further harm, settling them by the sea called Red, in the city of Ampe, by which the river Tigris flows 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. Hdt 6.18-20

Persian Expansion into the Aegean

- 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) the people. [2] 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 also captured the Ionian cities of the mainland in the same way, but not by netting the people; for that was not possible. Hdt 6.31

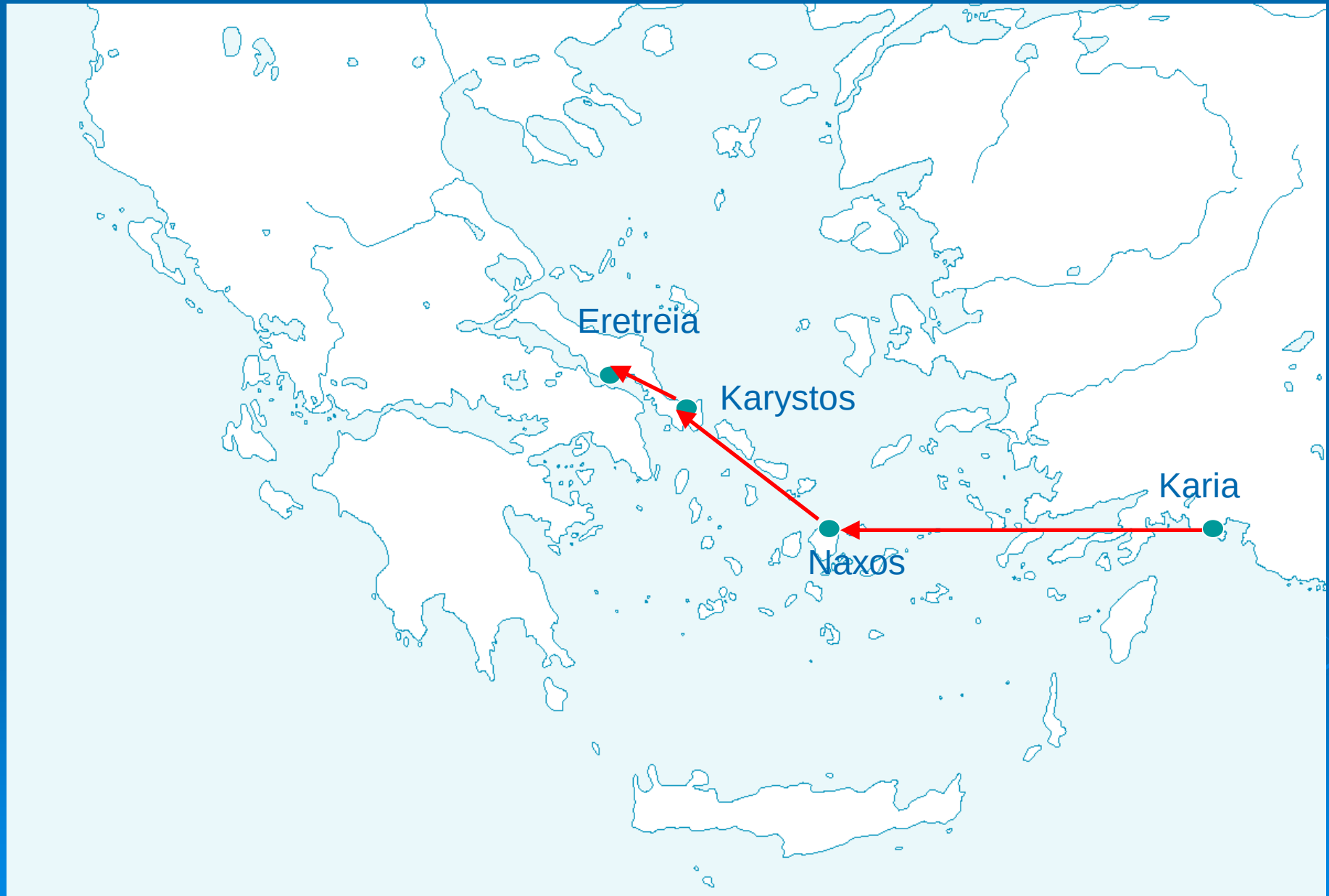
The Marathon Campaign

- The Persian did not sit idle after the Ionian Revolt. They had already started looking towards the west in the 6th century and now was the time to continue their conquest of Europe.

A naval campaign

- When these appointed generals on their way from the king reached the Aleian plain in Cilicia, bringing with them a great and well-furnished army, they camped there and were overtaken by all the fleet that was assigned to each; there also arrived the transports for horses, which in the previous year Darius had bidden his tributary subjects to make ready. [2] Having loaded the horses into these, and embarked the land army in the ships, they sailed to Ionia with six hundred triremes. From there 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 around Athos, seeing that in the previous year they had come to great disaster by holding their course that way; moreover, Naxos was still unconquered and constrained them. Hdt 6.95

The Route of the Persian Fleet



The Destruction of Eretria

- So they saved themselves by crossing over to Oropus; the Persians sailed holding their course for Temenos and Choereae and Aegilea, all in Eretrian territory. Landing at these places, they immediately unloaded their horses and made preparation to attack their enemies. [2] The Eretrians had no intention of coming out and fighting; all their care was to guard their walls if they could, since it was the prevailing counsel not to leave the city. The walls were strongly 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. [3] They 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. Hdt 6.101

The Battle of Marathon

- The Persians then attacked Athens by landing at Marathon.
- The Athenians asked for help from the rest of the Greeks but only the Plataians responded.
- The Spartans did not send help in time due to the constraints of their festival calendar.

The Athenian victory

- They fought a long time at Marathon. In the center of the line the foreigners prevailed, where the Persians and Sacae were arrayed. The foreigners prevailed there and broke through in pursuit inland, but on each wing the Athenians and Plataeans prevailed. [2] In victory they let the routed foreigners flee, and brought the wings together to fight those who had broken through the center. The Athenians prevailed, then followed the fleeing Persians and struck them down. When they reached the sea they demanded fire and laid hold of the Persian ships. Hdt 6.113

Questions?



Follow-up Reading

- Herodotos Books 7
- Find the link to the online edition (Perseus) on Moodle.