at the results and began to plan a getaway. It now seemed impossible to him to prevail over Darius. . . . On the whole, he thought Myrcinus the best place for an escape. So he left Miletus in the care of a respected citizen named Pythagoras and, taking with him anyone who wanted to go, he set sail for Thrace and got possession of Myrcinus. But then he and his followers were killed by the Thracians while besieging a different town, even though the inhabitants had already agreed to leave the place.

The Ionian revolt dragged on for several more years after the deaths of its leaders, since the Greek navy was still capable enough to withstand the Phoenician ships fighting on behalf of the Persians. But in a great naval showdown at Lade, just offshore from Miletus, Ionian morale collapsed and many Greek ships deserted to the enemy side. Resistance was no longer possible, and the Persians sacked and burned the city of Miletus, killing the men and enslaving the women and children (494 B.C.E.). The whole rebellion had lasted five years and had produced no results except the total destruction of the leading city of Ionia.

VII
Persia versus Greece:
Darius' Wars
(494–490 B.C.E.)

The reconquest of the Ionian Greeks by Persia left the mainland Greeks deeply unsettled. Since Athens and Eretria had taken a small but significant part in the burning of Sardis, Darius remained determined to have revenge on those two cities at least. Beyond that, the Persians faced the larger question of whether their rule over Ionia could ever be secure as long as the mainland Greeks remained free. Perhaps supposing that it would be safer to conquer all the Greeks than only some, Darius began in the years 494 and 493 to lay plans for the subjugation of the Greek mainland. Many Greek cities were all too willing to surrender without a fight.

[6.48–49] After this, Darius began to make trial of the spirit of the Greeks, to see whether they would offer resistance or submit to him. He therefore sent heralds to various places throughout Greece to demand earth and water for the king. At the same time, he sent other messengers to the coastal towns already under his dominion, requiring them to provide warships and cavalry transports. These vessels were duly provided, and many of the mainland cities of Greece gave the tokens demanded by the king, as did all the islanders whom the heralds visited.

Among the latter who gave earth and water were the Aeginetans. This act of submission immediately aroused the anger of the Athenians, who believed that they intended to join Darius in attacking Athens. Gladly seizing on this as a pretext, the Athenians put the matter before the Spartans, accusing the Aeginetans of having betrayed Greece by their action.

[6.50] In response to this accusation, Cleomenes, son of Anaxandrides and king of Sparta,¹ crossed over to Aegina with the intention

¹. We have already met this colorful Spartan monarch on two previous occasions, as the leader of the series of Spartan interventions in Athenian politics between 510 and 508 (p. 93), who later refused to help Aristagoras in his revolt from Persia in 499 (5.49 ff.). He reigned roughly from 520 to 490 and,
The Athenians were drawn up in an enclosure sacred to Heracles when they were joined by the Plataeans in full force.30

The Athenian generals were divided in their opinions, some arguing against risking a battle in view of their numerical inferiority, while others were in favor. Among the latter was Miltiades. Seeing that opinion was divided and that the less valiant view was likely to prevail, Miltiades resolved to approach the Polemarch, who held the eleventh and decisive vote. (At this period of time, the man on whom the lot fell to be Polemarch was entitled to an equal vote with the ten generals.) The Polemarch on this occasion was Callimachus of Aphidna, and it was he whom Miltiades approached, speaking as follows: “It is in your hands, Callimachus, either to enslave Athens, or to make her free, and to leave behind you for all time a memory surpassing even that of Harmodius and Aristogeiton.31 Never in all their history have the Athenians faced a greater peril. If they bow their necks to the Medes, no one can doubt what they will suffer when given over to Hippia; but if our native city fights and wins, it can become the leading city of all Greece. How such things can be, and how it rests with you to determine the course of events, I shall now make clear. We generals, ten in number, are divided in our opinions, some in favor of risking a battle, some against. If we do not fight now, I expect to see bitter dissension break out in Athens, which will shake men’s resolution and lead to submission to Persia.32 But if we join battle before the rot can spread throughout the citizen body, and if the gods do but grant us fair play, we can win in the engagement. So yours is now the decisive voice; all depends on you. If you cast your vote on my side, your country will be free and the foremost city of Greece. But if you support those who are against giving battle, then the opposite of those blessings I have mentioned will be your lot.”

These words of Miltiades convinced Callimachus, and with the Polemarch’s vote added to the others, the decision to fight was made. Thereupon the generals who had been in favor of fighting, as each one got his turn to exercise supreme command for the day, all resigned authority in favor of Miltiades. He accepted their offer but nevertheless waited until his own turn of command came around before he would join battle.33

Then the Athenian army was drawn up for battle in the following order. The right wing was commanded by the Polemarch, for it was the custom of the Athenians at the time for the Polemarch to have the right wing. Then, in their regular order, the tribes were arrayed in an unbroken line, and finally on the left wing were stationed the Plataeans. And ever since this battle, whenever the Athenians offer sacrifice at their quadrennial festivals, the Athenian herald prays that the Plataeans, along with the Athenians, receive benefits. Now the way that the Athenian troops were arranged at Marathon had this result, that the extending of the Athenian front to equal that of the Medes left their center the weakest part of the line, being few ranks deep, whereas both wings were strengthened.

These dispositions being made and the sacrifices being favorable, with the word being given, the Athenians charged the enemy at a run. The distance between the armies was about a mile.34 The Persians, seeing them coming on at a run, prepared to receive them; they thought that the Athenians had lost their senses and were bent on self-destruction, for they were inferior in number and came on at a rush without cavalry or archers. Such were the thoughts of the barbarians, but the Athenians fell upon them in close order and fought in a way never to be forgotten. They were the first of the Greeks, as far as we know, to charge the enemy at a run and the first to look unafraid at Median dress and the men wearing it. Before this, the very name “Mede” had been a terror to the Greeks.35

30. Plataea was the only Greek city to come to Athens' aid in this crisis, but her contribution of troops was hardly a voluntary one; in the sections omitted here Herodotus describes how Plataea had become a dependent of Athens decades earlier in order to escape harassment by her neighbors.

31. The illustrious “tyrant-slayers” who had assassinated one of the Pisis-tratids in 514 and thus ushered in the end of autocratic rule.

32. Miltiades envisions Athens being destroyed by internal factionalism, just as Eretria had been. His own experience since returning to Athens had revealed to him the strength of the accommodationist faction.

33. Much confusion arises from this chapter, as from other aspects of Herodotus' account of the battle of Marathon. Why would Miltiades want to wait before attacking, given his words in the previous chapter about the creeping “rot” that threatened Athenian unity? Probably he was hoping that the Spartan army would arrive to help him—a fact that Athenian legend later conveniently “forgot.”

34. Needless to say, it is impossible to imagine men wearing heavy armor running at full speed for a mile without exhausting themselves completely. Legend has clearly exaggerated the distance involved. Probably the troops did run for a short while, if only to avoid the hail of arrows falling on them as they advanced.

35. A striking reminder of the novelty of this confrontation; the Greeks had not faced a barbarian threat on the mainland in all of their recorded history.
The struggle at Marathon lasted a considerable time. In the center, which was held by the Persians themselves and the Sacae, the invaders had the upper hand. It was there that they broke the line and pursued the fugitives inland, whereas on the wings the Athenians and the Plataeans were victorious. Where they had prevailed they allowed the enemy to flee and, uniting both wings, they fell upon those who had broken the center and defeated them. They pursued the fleeing Persians and cut them down as they fled to the sea. Then, laying hold of the ships, they called for fire.

[6.114–15] It was in this phase of the battle that the Polemarch Callimachus, who had fought valiantly, lost his life, and one of the generals, Stesilaurus, was slain, and Cynegirus, as he was laying hold of the vessel's stern, had his hand cut off by an ax and so perished. So likewise did many other notable Athenians. Nevertheless, in this way the Athenians managed to secure seven of the ships. The rest succeeded in getting away, and the Persians, after taking on board the Etruscan prisoners from the island where they had left them, sailed around Sunium and headed for Athens, hoping to reach it before the Athenian army could return. In Athens the Alcmaeonids were accused of suggesting this tactic. They had, it was said, an agreement with the Persians and raised a shield to signal to them when they were embarked on their ships.

[6.116] So the Persians were sailing around Sunium, but the Athenians made all possible speed in returning to the city and succeeded in arriving before the Persians. Just as at Marathon they had taken up a position in an enclosure sacred to Heracles, so they now

36. A plausible explanation of how the Greeks prevailed; the Persians allowed their "crack" troops in the center to become cut off from the wings and isolated, such that the Athenians could close in on them from both sides. What Herodotus fails to explain, however, is why the Persians' cavalry, which could have given them an easy victory, played no role in the battle. Some have speculated that the Greeks attacked at a moment when the horses were still on board the transport ships and could not be deployed.

37. Having failed at Marathon, the Persians now attempt to take the city of Athens itself while the army is still in the field. However, this entailed a journey all the way around the Attic peninsula, since the harbor of Phalerum lay on its western coast.

38. The Alcmaeonids were a wealthy, politically liberal family at Athens that had produced Cleisthenes, among other populist leaders. There is reason to believe that they may indeed have been involved in a collusion with the Persians, though Herodotus takes pains to refute the charge in a passage omitted here.
hold, then he filled full the bulging front of his tunic, scattered gold dust all over his hair, stuffed some more into his mouth, and was scarcely able to stagger out of the treasury, looking barely human with his mouth stuffed full and his figure all swollen. When Croesus saw him, he was overcome with laughter and gave him all the gold he was carrying and as much again. Thus it was that the house of Alcmaeon acquired great wealth, and Alcmaeon was able to maintain a racing-stable with which he won the four-horse chariot race at Olympia.

[6.126] Then, in the next generation, Cleisthenes, ruler of Sicyon,\(^{39}\) raised Alcmaeon's family to even greater heights than they had attained before. Cleisthenes had a daughter named Agariste, whom he wished to marry to the best suitor he could find in all Greece. So at the Olympic games where he himself had won the chariot race, he caused a proclamation to be made that any Greek who wished to become Cleisthenes' son-in-law should come to Sicyon within sixty days, or even sooner; within a year's time from the end of the sixty days, Cleisthenes would decide on the man to marry his daughter. Thereupon all the Greeks who had confidence in their own merit and in that of their country came as suitors to Sicyon, where Cleisthenes had prepared for them a racetrack and a wrestling-ground for this very purpose.

[6.127] From Sybaris in Italy (Sybaris was at that time at the height of its prosperity) came Smindyrides, a man famous above all others for the art of luxurious living; and from Siris, also in Italy, came Damasus, son of Amyris, who was called the Wise. Then there was Amphimnestus, from Epidamus on the Ionian Gulf, and from Aetolia came Males, brother to Titomus who was the strongest man in Greece and who had sought retirement in the remotest parts of Aetolia so as to avoid his fellowmen. From the Peloponnesse came Leocedes... Next was Amiantus from Trapezus in Arcadia, and Laphanes, an Azenian of Paeus... and lastly Onomastus, a native of Elis. These were the four from the Peloponnesse. From Athens came Megacles, the son of that Alcmaeon who had visited Croesus, and Hippocleides, the wealthiest and handsomest of the Athenians. From Eretria, which at this time was a flourishing city, came Lysianas, the only man from Euboea. From Thessaly came Diactorides, one of the Scopodae of Crannon, and Alcon from the Molossians. This was the list of suitors.

[6.128] When they were all assembled on the appointed day, Cleisthenes first made inquiry as to each one's country and parentage, and then, keeping them with him for a year, he made trial of their many virtues, their temper, their accomplishments, and their disposition, sometimes conversing with them singly, sometimes drawing them all together. Those who were not too old he took with him to the gymnasia, but the greatest test was at the banquet table. It so came about that the suitors who pleased him best were from Athens, and of these he gave preference to Hippocleides, partly on account of his many virtues, partly because he was related far back to the Cypselids of Corinth.

[6.129] When at last the day arrived for the marriage feast and for Cleisthenes to declare his preferred suitor, he sacrificed a hundred oxen and gave a banquet for the suitors and all the Sicyonians. Dinner being over, the suitors competed with one another in music and in public speaking. As the drinking proceeded, Hippocleides, who far outclassed the others, bade the flute-player play him a tune, which the man did, and Hippocleides danced to it. No doubt he danced well to his own satisfaction, but Cleisthenes looked askance at the entire performance. After a brief pause, Hippocleides bade someone bring a table, and, the table being produced, he danced on it, first some Laconian figures, then some Attic figures, and then he stood on his head on the table, tossing his legs about in the air. Cleisthenes, although he was now quite averse to the idea of Hippocleides as a son-in-law because of his shameless display of dancing, had restrained himself throughout the Laconian and Attic figures, wishing to avoid a public outburst. But when he saw Hippocleides beating time with his legs in the air, he could no longer contain himself and cried out: "Son of Tisander, you have danced away your marriage!" "What does Hippocleides care?" came the other's reply, and that was how the proverb originated.\(^{40}\)

[6.130] Then Cleisthenes called for silence and addressed the assembly. "Gentlemen, suitors of my daughter, I have the highest esteem for you all, and if it were possible, I would show favor to you all by not choosing one and disappointing the others. But since, with only one daughter, it is beyond my power to please all, I bestow on those of you who have failed to win the bride a talent of silver, in appreciation of the honor you have done me in wishing to marry into my house and to compensate you for your long absence from home. My daughter, Agariste, I betroth to Megacles, son of Alcmaeon, according to Athenian law." When Megacles declared his acceptance, Cleisthenes had the marriage formally solemnized.

\(^{39}\) Grandfather of the more famous Cleisthenes who founded the democratic regime at Athens.

\(^{40}\) Evidently Greeks of Herodotus' day said "What does Hippocleides care?" to express disregard for conventional opinion.
[6.131] Such was the Trial of the Suitors, and in this way the Alcmaeonids became famous throughout Greece. From this marriage was born Cleisthenes—named after his maternal grandfather, Cleisthenes of Sicyon—who organized the Athenians into their tribes and instituted democratic government in Athens. A second son of Megacles was Hippocrates, whose children were another Megacles and another Agariste, named after Agariste, daughter of Cleisthenes. She married Xanthippus, son of Ariphon, and, being with child, she had a dream wherein she thought she was delivered of a lion. In a few days she gave birth to a son, Pericles.41

Herodotus now returns to the narrative present to record the fortunes of Miltiades, hero of Marathon, in the period after the battle. Not content to rest on his laurels, Miltiades promised the Athenians he would make them rich if they gave him money and troops with which to attack an objective he refused to name. The target turned out to be Paros, a wealthy Greek island that had participated, under compulsion, in the Persian attack on Eretria and Athens. Miltiades' forces put the main city of the island under siege but failed to make any headway, and then, while conducting some sort of covert operation, Miltiades himself injured his leg jumping from the top of a fence. Incapacitated by his injury and disgraced by the failure to capture Paros, Miltiades returned to Athens to undergo a second political trial mounted by his enemies. His reputation as the hero of Marathon notwithstanding, he was fined a huge sum of money and soon thereafter died as a result of gangrene in his injured leg.

With Book 7 we enter the most detailed and least fragmented portion of the Histories. Herodotus “fast forwards” in only a few paragraphs through the final years of Darius’ reign, roughly 490–86, to arrive at the accession of King Xerxes in the fifth chapter. From that point on, his narrative pace slows dramatically, such that his next three books cover only five years of historical time, as compared with the decades covered in the previous three books and the centuries of the first three. He follows month by month, and finally day by day, the progress of Xerxes’ invasion of Greece in 480, concluding with the defeat of the last remaining Persian forces in Europe in 479. Because of its internal unity, its grand scale, and its focus on the figure of King Xerxes, this section is sometimes referred to as “the Xerxiad,” on the analogy of Homer’s epic poem the Iliad.

The first major scene of Book 7 is a debate in the Persian council chamber over the question of the proposed war on Greece. It contains some of the longest and most ornately composed speeches in the whole of the Histories, put in the mouths of the three great leaders of the day: Xerxes the king, Mardonius the army commander, and Artabanus the elder sage. The scene must be largely invented, since Herodotus could not have had much information about what was said in secret council meetings far removed from him in both time and space. But the value of these speeches for readers of the Histories goes far beyond the artistry of their composition. Herodotus here attempts an analysis of the internal workings of the Persian political system, as well as providing character sketches of the major “players” of the day. His depiction of how a major decision got made at the Persian court reveals the strengths and (mostly) weaknesses of an entire society. The comparison that can be drawn between this council meeting and two similar scenes in the Greek world, the debates of the admirals at Salamis (8.58 ff.), is inescapable and highly illuminating.

[7.5]1 After Darius’ death, the throne passed to Xerxes, Darius’ son.2 At first Xerxes was in no way eager to launch an invasion of Greece;