

Battle of Marathon

According to Herodotus Persian were defeated by Greeks at Marathon(490 B.C). Here we are going to examin the facts to see to what extand Herodotus claims are correct.

This is what Herodotus says and since his book is the only source remaining from that period, we have to see what he has to say but we can NOT blindly accept his words just because he says so. It's a known fact that he hated Persians.

The Greeks and Eretria attacked Sard(Sard was Persian territory) and burned its holy temple. Dariush decided to punish the Greeks. There were other events that contributed to the situation such as kidnaping of some princess or wives of some royal family members by Greeks and Eretrian.

Dariush first ordered the building of special long ships to be able to carry horses. He put Datis and Artaferen in charge of the fleet of 600 ships. Hippias who is Greek accompanied the Persian Army. Hippias was living in exile in Lydia after the Athenian revolution. He was the one who was lobbying Dariush for a Persian invasion of Greek in hope of him to come to power. He had promised the Persians that as soon as they arrive in Athens, people would rise and choose him as their leader. With that promise in hand the Persians set sail first to Eretria and after that to Greece. Hippias took the Persian forces to Marathon Gulf and they prepared for war. Greek army from Athens and other part of Greece gathered. At the beginning of the war Persians were successful and pushed back the mid section of the Greek army but the left and the right section of Greek army came to rescue and pushed the Persian army back all the way to their ships. Greeks took 7 out of the 600 ships Persians had brought and Persians sailed home with the rest of ships. Then a soldier ran to Athens to bring the news of victory to people and in doing that he died.

Herodotus painted a terrible and total defeat of the Persian army, writing that 6000 Persian were killed while only 192 Greek soldiers were killed. According to Herodotus, Persian army had comprised of 200,000 soldiers. Herodotus also mentioned one very important point; he talked about a Greek on the highest point of the island At-Teek signaling with his shield [separ] that Athens is empty of soldiers. This is a very significant. That's all what Herodotus says.

NOW, it is one thing to read Herodotus and another thing to accept his lies. His book at best gives us some clues of what may have actually happened and I believe with very small amount of logic and common sense, one could come to a totally different conclusion of what actually happened. The battle of Marathon was NOT a total defeat in a major war, but rather it was merely a military maneuver. Here are the reasons:

(1) 600 ships can NOT carry 200,000 soldiers. Herodotus himself in another part of his book writes that the **PERSIAN NAVY** in Athos (492 B.C) taking heavy loses due to a storm and lost 600 ships. Herodotus then writes that 20,000 soldiers were killed in that storm. So 600 ships can carry about 20,000 soldiers. Therefore 600 Persian ships at that time could NOT be carrying 200,000 soldiers. We have to take into account also horses, food and other military machines and instruments. Other scholars calculated the Persian army as 40,000 (Grundi), 25,000 (Munro) and 20,000 (Ed. Mayer).

(2) Dariush was at the height of his power. The most powerful man in the world at that time would NOT send ONLY 20,000/40,000 man army to invade Greek.

(3) Marathon's shore is not a good place to launch an attack. In fact Marathon is a very small gulf having an opening of 9 km long and 2 km wide, which is called dashte Marathon. So there is no way you can place 200,000 soldiers and horseman on that small place.

(4) How can Persians take almost all of their ships (593) with them if they are being chased, while they are running back? How can the Persians manage to get out of there if they are losing the war with almost all of their ships? They should have lost many more ships if that's true. How could one lose a war when out of 600 ships only 7 ships are taken and 593 are still in the hands of the Persians!!! Moreover, getting into the 593 ships require discipline and order and all of that without having any harbor [eskele].

The fact that Persian Army chose that place far from Athens was to bring out the Greek army out of Athens and into Marathon in order to have Athens empty. The Persians were counting on Hippias words that his supporter in Athens would rise up and take over Athens when they find the town empty of Athenian soldiers. This, of course, did NOT happened.

The fact that there is a Greek on top of the mountain of At-Teek signaling with his shield [separ] is the evidence that this was only a trap for Greek Army to leave Athens alone. While they were far away from Athens, Persians could sail to Athens in the hands of supporter of Hippias .

A soldier would NOT run himself to death to bring good news of victory. The Greek soldier, instead, ran himself to death from Marathon to Athens to try to warn the Athenian people of the impending Persian invasion. Think about it.

Why Datis didn't invade Athens while he had the chance? He had the chance when Athens was completely empty but he seems to not want to risk losing the army in invading Athens with ONLY 20,000 soldiers, without having much support from inside Athens. This was not what the Persians had planned and expecting so it seems that they calculated the risks involved and decided to back off from invading Athens.

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