The Persian Wars

The Limits of Empire
And the Birth of a Greek World View
Assyria

- **Sennacherib**
  Destroys Babylon in 689 BC.
- **Esarhaddon (681-669)**
  Conquers Egypt in 671 BC.
- **Ashurbarnipal (669-630)**
  Struggles to maintain the empire until he abdicates in 630 BC.
Media

- **Deioces** (728-675 BC)
- **Phraortes** (675-653 BC)
  - United the Median tribes
  - Attacked Assyria.
- **Cyaxares** (653-ca 645/ 617 - 585)
  - Overrun by the Scythians while Recovered Media and allied with Babylon
Babylon

• **Nabopolassar** (625-605)
  – Asserts Babylonian independence.
  – Defeats the Assyrians at Qablinu in 615 BC
  – Alliance with Media:
  – 612 BC: Fall of Nineveh
Median Empire

• **Cyaxares:**
  – Attacks Lydia in 590 BC.
  – On 28 May 585 BC. the war ends.

• **Astyages (585-550 BC)**
  – Married Aryenis in 585 BC.
  – Gave Mandane to Cambyses I before 580 BC.
  – Deserted by his troops and defeated by his grandson, Cyrus, in 550 BC.
Cyrus the Great

- King of Anshan in 560 BC.
- Attacked Media in 550 BC.
- Defeated Croesus of Lydia in 547/6 BC.
- Defeated Babylon in 539 BC.
- Died in 530 BC. attacking the Massagetae
Cyrus’ Campaigns

- 560: King on Anshan
- 550: King of Media
- 547: Conquest of Lydia
- 539: Conquest of Babylon
- 535 – 530: Expansion East
Cambyses

- King of Babylon by 27 March, 538 BC.
- Great King in Sept, 530.
- Invaded Egypt in 525.
- Cambyses was “not in his right mind, but mad” (Hdt. 3.25).
- Died accidentally in 522 BC.
- Succeeded by Smerdis, March 522.
- Smerdis killed September 522 BC.
Darius I

- Two years of rebellions: consolidated power by 520 BC.
- Reorganization into 20 satrapies
- Invaded Scythia via Europe in 513
- Satrapy in Europe, Skudra (Thrace)
- Construction of Persepolis
- 507: Accepted ‘Earth and Water’ from Athens.
Empire of Darius I
Persia in the Aegean ca 510
The Ionian Revolt

- Aristagoras, Tyrant of Cyzicus and Miletus
  - Convinced Persians to invade Naxos
  - Four month siege failed in 499
  - Aristagoras and Histiaeus launch revolt of the Ionians
Ionian Revolt

- Cleomenes refused to participate
- Athens contributed 20 ships
  - “Perhaps it is easier to fool a crowd...” (Hdt. V.97).
  - Sardis sacked, the temple of Cybele burned.
  - Ionian army defeated near Ephesus
  - Athenian aid withdrawn
  - Aristagoras killed in Thrace
Persian Response

- **498**
  - Took Byzantium, Chalcedon, the Troad, Lamponium, Lemnos and Imbros
    - Defeated the Ionian army at Ephesus
    - Took Clazomenae and Cyme
- **497-494**
  - Besieged Miletus and campaigned in that area
- **494 BC.**
  - The Battle of Lade
  - The fall of Miletus
Mardonius

- Son of Gobryas,
  - Nephew and son in law of Darius
- 492:
  - Replaced Otanes as Commander of the Coast
  - Assembled a fleet in Cilicia
  - Army mustered in Sardis
  - Crossed the Hellespont
  - Subdued Macedonia
Mardonius’ Failure

- Fleet destroyed rounding Athos
- Mardonius defeated by the Brygi
- Most of the army wasted away
- Removed from his command in 491
  - Replaced by Datis
  - But... he was a close friend to Xerxes.
Datis the Mede

- 491
  - Made Commander of the Coast
  - Enlisted Hippias as guide.

- 490
  - Mustered in Cilicia and crossed the Aegean via the Cyclades Islands
    - Rhodes - Samos - Naxos - Delos
  - Captured Euboea from Carystos to Eretria
Miltiades son of Cimon

- Tyrant of the Chersonese
  - Subject to Darius
  - At the bridge over the Ister in 513
  - Fled the Chersonese in 496
- Marathon: Sept. 490 BC.
  - Miltiades elected 10th. General
  - Advocated a quick attack
  - The run under the arrows
Marathon Satellite
Marathon ii
The Marathon Run

- **Plutarch**
  - Pheidippides ran the 22 miles

- **Herodotus**
  - No mention

- **Modern:**
  - Introduced at the first Olympic Games of the Modern Era, Athens, 1896.
  - 42.195 k./ 26 miles 385 yards
  - 1908 London Olympics
Xerxes

• 489-7: Darius prepares for a third invasion
• 487: Egyptian Revolt
• 486: Darius dies in November.
• 485
  – Xerxes Recovers Egypt.
• 484-2
  – Canal cut across Athos
  – Revolt in Babylon delays preparations
Really Big Numbers

• 481
  – Mustered the army in Cappadocia
  – Moved to Sardis by the fall.

• 480
  – Marched to Abydos and crossed the Hellespont
  – Army counted at Doriscus (1,700,000)
  – Marched in 3 columns to Therma
  – Fleet to Artemisium, Army to Thermopylae
Greek Response

- Allied fleet:
  - 271 ships
  - 127 Athenian
  - Battle of Artemisium

- Land forces:
  - The Tempe Pass
  - The Isthmus of Corinth
  - Thermopylae
Leonidas

• King of Sparta 490 - 480 BC.
  – Delphic oracle

• The 300
  – Men with sons
  – Greek allies ordered to withdraw.
  – 19 – 20 August, 480 BC.
  – “We will fight in the shade!”
  – Stranger, go tell the Lacedaemonians that here we lay, obedient to their command.
Themistocles of Athens

- Archon in 493 BC.
  - Used the Laurium surplus to build a fleet
  - Initiated the walls around the Piraeus
- Artemisium (late August, 480)
  - commanded the 127 Athenian ships
  - Eurybiades of Sparta admiral of the fleet
  - Persian fleet reduced by about 1/3
Xerxes in Athens

- **Thermopylae to Attica**
  - Xerxes marched through Trachis, Doris, then Phocis.
  - At Panopea the army split:
    - 4000 troops went to Delphi
    - The main army sacked Thespia and Plataea

- **Athens**
  - Themistocles had convinced the Athenians to move to Salamis
  - Persians besieged the priests on the Acropolis
  - The fleet moved to Phalerum
In the Saronic Gulf
The Battle of Salamis

- **Themistocles:**
  - Salamis and Megara need to be held to protect the Isthmus
  - Threatened to pull out the Athenian ships
  - Warned Xerxes of the plan to withdraw

- **The Battle:**
  - The Persians surround the Island
  - The Greeks fought in the narrow channels

- **Xerxes withdraws**
  - 300,000 left under Mardonius
Trireme
Salamis Satellite
Plataea

Mardonius:
– Led the Persian forces to Thebes in summer 479 BC.
– Occupied Athens in July (city abandoned again)
– Moved to Thebes to draw the Greeks onto the plains.

Pausanias & Aristides
– Withdrawal to Plataea
– Spartans caught on the plain.
– Persians forced inside the walls
– Athenians take the walls
Mycale

• Persian fleet docked at Samos in spring 479
• Greek fleet, under Leutychides, docked at Delos.
– Sailed to Samos in July of 479 BC.
• Persians withdrew to fortify Mycale.
• Greek fleet pursued.
– Made a beachhead.
– Defeated the Persians, burned the fleet
The Battle of Mycale