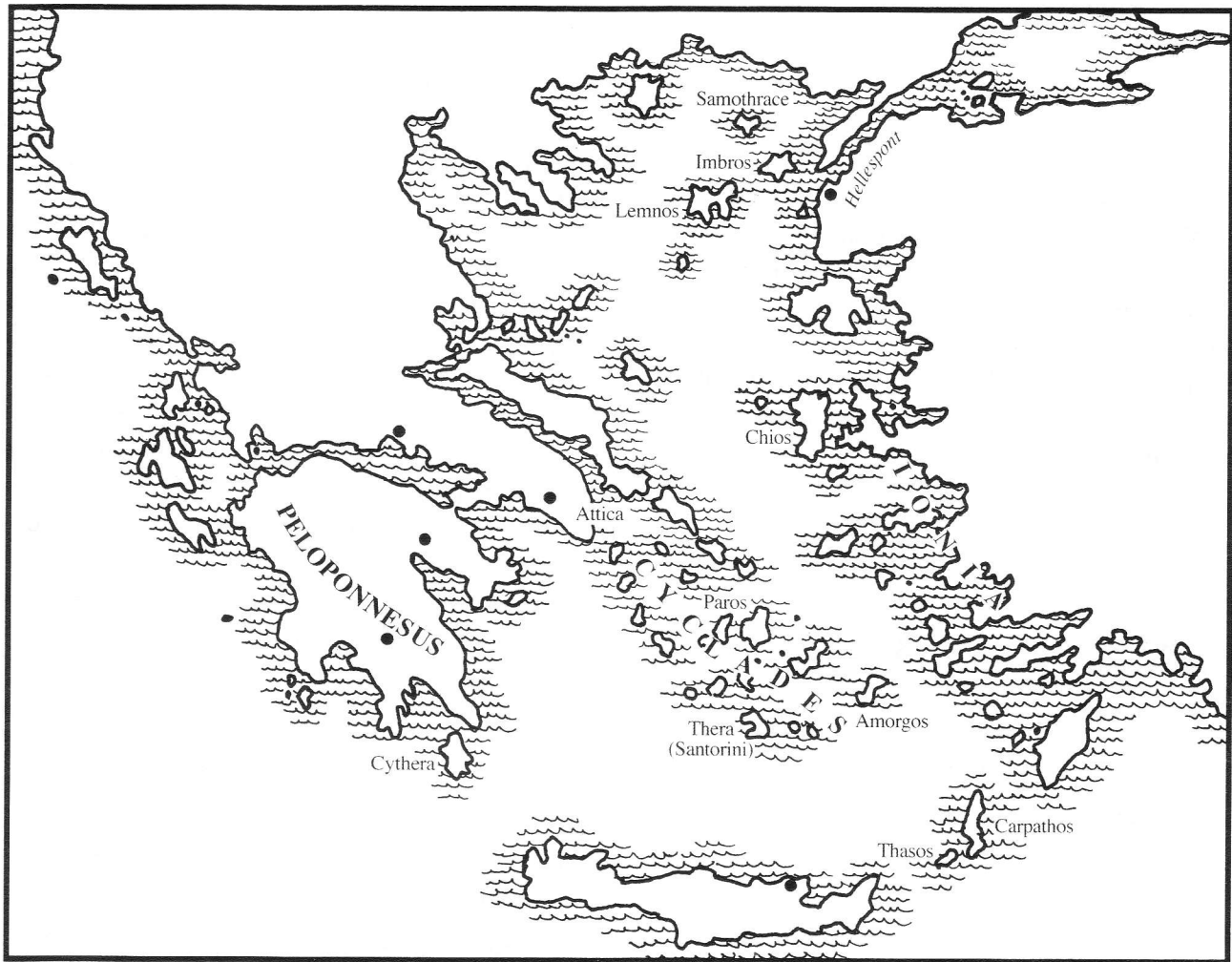


Expansion in the Aegean World



In time, Greek city-states and trading colonies came to dominate the entire Mediterranean Sea region. As early as the 800s B.C., the Greeks were establishing colonial city-states to the east of Greece along the eastern shores of Ionia.

This region (today it is the western coast of Turkey) became the home of many influential traders and merchants, as well as scholars and philosophers. Chief among the Ionian city-states was the trading center of Miletus.

By the 6th century B.C., many of the Ionian city-states had fallen under the domination of the Persian Empire far to the east. However, the Ionian Greeks had originally lost their independence to the Lydians, who had defeated them in the mid-500s B.C. during the reign of King Croesus. During a later military campaign, Croesus marched into Anatolia where he met the Persians in battle. Croesus was soon

defeated and the conquering Persians took over his lands, including the Ionian city-states.

In 499 B.C., Ionia rebelled against Persian rule. Other city-states, including Athens, agreed to help the Ionians in their rebellion. However, the Persians were too powerful and defeated the Ionians and their allies.

After ending the revolt in Ionia, the Persians then prepared to invade Greece, ready to make the Athenians pay for supporting the Ionians. The result was the Persian Wars.

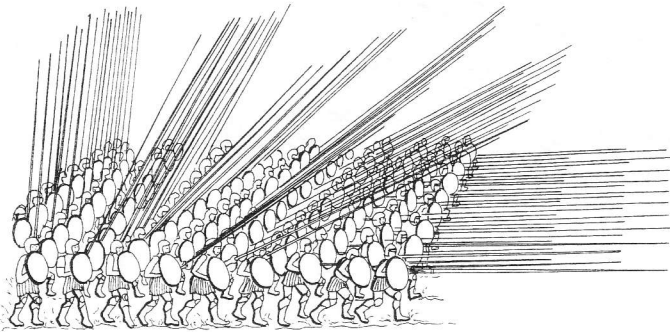
Map Exercise

On the map, place the following locations: Athens, Sparta, Delphi, Mycenae, Argos, Crete, Knossos, Rhodes, Miletus, the Aegean Sea, and the Ionian Sea.

The Persian Wars Begin

The revolt of the Ionians against the Persians lasted from 499 to 494 B.C. Although the Ionians received help from mainland Greek city-states such as Athens, the Ionians went down in defeat and returned to Persian rule.

The Persian monarch, King Darius I, was angered by the Athenians and their support of the Ionians. He made a vow to teach the Athenians a lesson for fighting against him. According to Greek legend, Darius ordered one of his servants to remind him constantly of his hatred of the Athenians. At all meals, the slave was to repeat three times to the king: "Sire, remember the Athenians."



In 490 B.C., Darius was prepared to move against the Greeks. He sent a fleet of ships to the west where Persian soldiers burned the Greek city-state of Eretria, north of Athens.

Alarmed, the leaders of Athens requested help from the military city-state of Sparta to the south. The Spartans agreed. However, they were unable to send more than a few troops to the front to engage in the fighting.

This left the vastly outnumbered Athenian fighters with few allies to do battle against the Persians. But the Athenian generals, led by Miltiades (550–489 B.C.), organized the Athenian army well. He planned an attack against the Persians which involved well-armed Greek troops called the hoplites.

These forces formed the backbone of the Athenian army. They were citizen-soldiers who purchased their own weapons, including a lengthy iron-tipped spear and a shield. Such troops wore bronze helmets and body armor for protection, as well as bronze greaves, which protected the soldiers'

knees and ankles. The hoplites formed the Athenian army's infantry, or foot soldiers.

These troops were well trained. They worked closely together on the battlefield, marching in tight formations called *phalanxes*. A phalanx was a block of men, perhaps a dozen deep and as many across. It moved as a single unit, using 21-foot-long spears thrust out beyond the front of the unit to meet the enemy. This standard Greek battle formation worked well for the Athenians.

Miltiades used his hoplites and their phalanx formation against the Persians. At the battle of Marathon, the two armies met one another. (Marathon was a plain about five miles long by two miles wide.) Despite the Athenians being outnumbered two to one (20,000 to 10,000), the Persians were defeated by them because of their superior weapons and the phalanx formation.

Knowing that Persian ships could then sail around the peninsula and reach the city of Athens before the citizens could be informed of the great Athenian land victory, the army hurriedly marched to Athens to protect their city.

When the Persian navy reached the fortifications of Athens, the Athenian troops were already there, manning the stone walls. Having already suffered humiliating defeat on land and now finding a well-defended Athens prepared against them, the Persians had no choice but to return home in defeat.

For the time being, the Greeks managed to defeat the invading Persians. Those who had fought on the field at Marathon were heroes. For years to follow, those victorious, outnumbered troops were lauded as *Marathon Fighters*.

Review and Research

A well-known legend came out of the battle of Marathon involving a Greek named Pheidippides. The legend also explains why today we use the term *marathon* to refer to a 26-mile run.

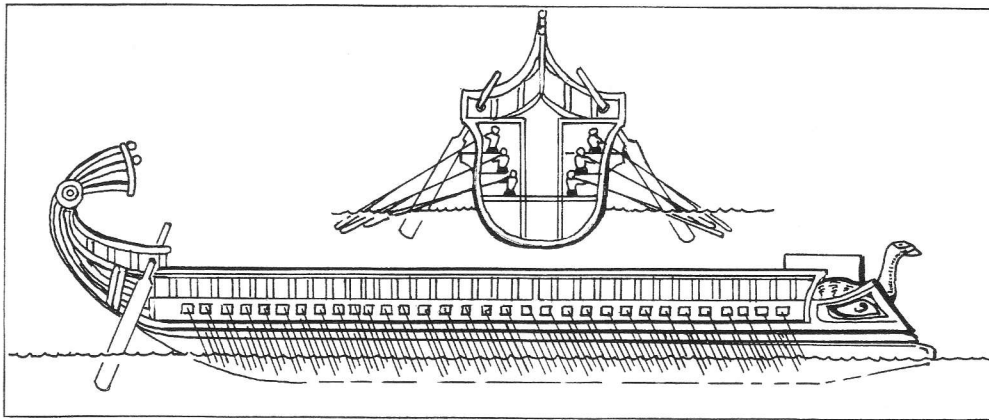
Research the story and write about it.

The Persian Wars Continue

After their 490 B.C. slaughter at the battle of Marathon, the Persian king, Darius I, learned a valuable lesson: defeating the Greeks would require more troops than he had planned. Despite his failures against the Athenians, Darius began planning another campaign to Greece. However, in 486, he died.

Xerxes I, the son of Darius, who ruled from 486–565 B.C., took up his father's cause and continued to make plans for another war with the Athenians. Eventually, Xerxes prepared an army of 100,000 well-trained Persian troops for the task (five times the number his father had sent against Athens in 490).

Knowing the Persians would probably return to Athens some day, the leaders of the city made plans as well. One of the city's leading citizens, a general named Themistocles, proposed that the city build a powerful navy to meet the Persian ships that he was certain would one day again menace Athens. But shipbuilding was expensive, and the Persians had one of the largest navies in the Mediterranean world.



Two views of the deadly Greek trireme, 480 B.C.

Luckily for the Athenians, a group of slave miners working in mines south of Athens discovered a huge vein of silver in 483 B.C. In a short time, this discovery produced several tons of pure silver.

Despite strong opposition in Athens, Themistocles encouraged city leaders to use much of the newly discovered silver to build hundreds of huge naval ships called *triremes* to protect Athens.

A trireme was a huge, low-lying vessel measuring 120 feet in length and 18 feet in width. It was called a trireme because it was propelled through the

water by three levels of oarsmen, numbering around 170. These sleek ships could move at a speed of five knots and were highly maneuverable. On the upper deck, 40 hoplites would be ready to fight any enemy, especially the Persians.

Themistocles was able to convince his fellow citizens to invest in these deadly naval ships. Before long, Athens had constructed a fleet of hundreds of ships, many of them triremes. Without the fortunate silver strikes, however, little of this defensive navy could have been constructed in time.

In 480 B.C., the Persian armies, under the command of King Xerxes, marched through southern Europe against Athens and her allies, including the Spartans.

A small Spartan force—just 300 men—engaged the huge Persian army in a battle at Thermopylae, where they were annihilated. The city of Athens was occupied and burned. The war did not look promising for the Greeks.

However, the tide turned against the Persians

during a great naval battle at the Bay of Salamis, just 10 miles west of Athens. On September 20, the Athenian navy of 300 triremes engaged 500 Persian and Egyptian ships.

In this battle, the money spent on Athenian triremes paid off. The Persian navy was vastly outmaneuvered by the Greeks as they used their ships like battering rams to destroy enemy vessels. The Persians lost over 200 ships that day

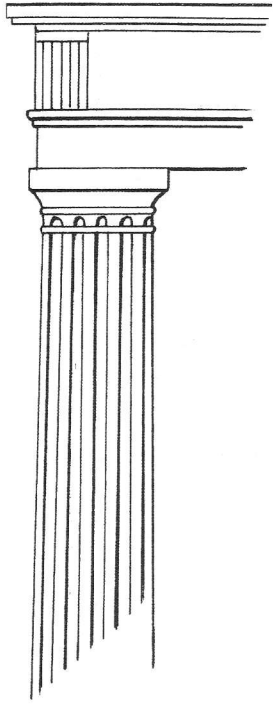
compared to about 40 Greek naval losses.

As King Xerxes watched helplessly from a nearby hillside, he knew all was lost. The Persians were defeated in 479 B.C. and never campaigned against the Athenians again.

Review and Write

Why was a major discovery of silver by slave miners important to the defense of Athens?

The Golden Age of Athens, 478 – 431 B.C.



With the defeat of the Persians in 479 B.C., their threat to Athens and other Greek city-states came to an end. The two great cities of Athens and Sparta fought together against this common enemy from the east.

However, the alliance of the victors did not continue for long. The Spartans dropped out of their leadership position, not wanting to remain responsible for the protection of other city-states. In a short period of time, Athens rose to the rank of the greatest of the Greek city-states and Sparta became Athens' enemy.

In 478 B.C., the Athenians organized the Delian League, which was a combination military defense and trade alliance. Although the league's headquarters was located on the island of Delos, its leadership was entirely Athenian. Athens provided 100 ships to protect the league's members.

Soon, the Delian League was actively liberating Greek city-states throughout the Aegean region from Persian control. By 469 B.C., the Persians were removed from the last of the Greek city-states.

Once the league had ultimately defeated the Persians, some city-states decided to drop out of the organization, certain their work was done. However, Athens would not permit them to leave the league. The Delian League was becoming a power tool of Athenian control and imperialism. When a nation is imperialistic, it seeks to control other nations and states through force and intimidation. Athens was becoming very aggressive against its neighbors, including its own allies.

Beginning in 461 B.C., Athens came under the leadership of a dominant politician named Pericles. He ruled the city-state from 461 to 429 B.C. The period of influence wielded by Pericles is known today known as the Golden Age of Athens. The city-state was prosperous, imperialistic, and advanced in the arts.

Despite Athens's tendency in this period to bully its neighbors, the city was still a democracy. By the 440s B.C., the ecclesia (the legislative assembly of Athens) had a membership of 43,000 male citizens.

Since much of Athens had been burned by the Persians, Pericles took a personal interest in rebuilding the city. A close friend named Phidias, a sculptor, served as the chief supervisor of many building projects in Athens, including temples and public buildings. The greatest example of ancient Greek architecture, the Parthenon, was built during Pericles' rule as part of a larger building project begun in 447 B.C.

Athens became the center of an artistic explosion. The most talented artists, muralists, sculptors, philosophers, architects, and playwrights came to Athens to be part of this great period of power, wealth, and art.

Review and Write

1. From your reading, why do you think Athens became so aggressive with its neighbors following the Persian Wars?

2. What do you think allowed Athens to develop its arts and architecture so quickly in such a short period of time during the 5th century B.C.?
