

THE THESSALIAN EXPEDITION OF 480 B.C.

AFTER Herodotus describes the stock-taking in Greece on the eve of Xerxes' invasion, and before he passes to the actions at Thermopylae and Artemisium, we are briefly told of an expedition to Thessaly (vii 172-4). As Xerxes approached the Hellespont, Thessalian envoys appealed for help to the Greek loyalists, who sent a large army in response. This enterprise argues a very high degree of confidence and organisation among the loyalists, and yet the sequel is strangely disappointing, for just a few days after reaching their destination the Greek forces withdrew again and were seemingly disbanded. Understandably enough the episode has puzzled scholars, and no agreement exists as to either the motives behind the expedition or the reasons for the withdrawal. The facts need to be re-examined, especially as Herodotus' testimony has in one respect been misconstrued and another vital piece of evidence has escaped attention. I shall argue that the expedition was capably and resolutely planned as the main line of defence against Xerxes; that the federal authorities in Thessaly co-operated to the fullest; that the Greek army adopted the best strategic position for their purpose; and that the scheme miscarried only because of obstruction from an unexpected quarter. The dismaying failure of the Thessalian expedition helps to explain why the subsequent efforts of the loyalists during the campaign of 480 were so often confused or behindhand.

I. THE SOURCES

Herodotus is our primary source.¹ The substance of his report has sometimes been dismissed out of hand on the assumption that the Thessalian appeal led to nothing more than a small reconnaissance mission which brought back a discouraging report. But why Herodotus or his informants should perpetrate such an extravagant hoax has not been convincingly explained, and it is most unlikely that all the circumstantial details recounted by Herodotus were fabricated. A large-scale expedition to Thessaly certainly took place. Others have criticised Herodotus for omitting mention of the two western passes from Macedon to Thessaly or else for confusing them with the route over Lower Olympus ('past Gonnus'), and despite a recent effort to vindicate his description, it is clear that he did not know the terrain apart from Tempe or understand the strategy of the defence. We shall also find reason to challenge Herodotus' location of the Greek encampment. Yet his mistakes are venial and easily accounted for; in all essential points he deserves belief—above all in what he tells us of Thessalian affairs. He comes to speak of the Greek expedition precisely in order to show why Thessaly sided with Persia during the invasion. But modern critics, bound by preconceptions about the role of the Aleuads, have consistently misinterpreted Herodotus' meaning, which we shall take up in the next section.

Herodotus refers simply to the 'Thessalians', a term which in the larger sense includes the tributary peoples living round the Thessalian plain. Diodorus xi 2.5-3.2 offers more precision about the alignment of these peoples and of the Thessalians proper. Most of them, says Diodorus, medised while the Greeks still held Tempe—Aenianians, Dolopians, Malians, Perrhaebians, and Magnesians; only the Phthiotid Achaeans and the Thessalians proper (as well as the Locrians and the Boeotians) went over after the Greeks left. Both the intrinsic probability and the authenticity of Diodorus' information have been variously judged in the past, and no firm decision can be rendered. The five early medisers are the hill-tribes of Thessaly, the Phthiotid Achaeans and the Thessalians proper are lowlanders;

¹ Besides the common abbreviations I use the following: Th. D. Axenidhis, *PL* = *Ἡ Πελοπόννησος* (1947-9); K. J. Beloch, *GG* = *Griechische Geschichte*² (1912-27); A. R. Burn, *PG* = *Persia and the Greeks* (1962); V. Ehrenberg, *SS*² = *From Solon to Socrates*² (1973); N. G. L. Hammond, *HM* i = *A History of Macedonia* i (1972); C. Hignett, *XIG* = *Xerxes' Invasion of Greece* (1963); W. W. How and J. Wells, *CH* = *A Commentary on Herodotus* (1912); J.

Kromayer, *AS* ii = *Antike Schlachtfelder in Griechenland* ii (1907); J. A. O. Larsen, *GFS* = *Greek Federal States* (1968); E. Meyer, *FAG* = *Forschungen zur Alten Geschichte* (1899); *id.*, *TH* = *Theopomps Hellenika* (1909); F. Obst, *FX* = *Der Feldzug des Xerxes* (1913); W. K. Pritchett, *AGT* ii = *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography* ii (1969); M. Sordi, *LT* = *La Lega Tessala* (1958); H. D. Westlake, *TFC* = *Thessaly in the Fourth Century B.C.* (1935).

and it is not so hard to imagine circumstances which would induce the hill-tribes to medise with alacrity. Indeed the notice of Perrhaebian medism will suit any reconstruction of events which makes the Greeks retire because of hostile natives. And no doubt Ephorus, Diodorus' source, *might* have found this sequence of medisers in some early authority. None the less scepticism is the better course. The present passage resembles many another Ephoran refinement, and as so often Ephorus is perhaps merely drawing out various indications in Herodotus (especially vii 132.1 and 185.2); if so, the results have no independent claim on our belief.

A passage of Aelius Aristides, ii 254 Dindorf, contains an interesting point: treachery, he says, forced the Greeks to withdraw, but he refuses to name the traitors, *προδοθέντες ὑφ' ὄτων δὴ ποτε*. The circumstances of the withdrawal were disputed. No doubt Aristides might express himself thus whether the issue were the actual identity of the traitors, or the existence of treachery as against some other embarrassment such as Herodotus suggests. In the second case the disagreement was between Herodotus and Ephorus, in the first between Ephorus and Damastes of Sigeium (of whom more below).

Plutarch has two novelties, of unequal value. The suggestion that the Thessalian campaign was only a sop to opponents of Themistocles' naval strategy (*Them.* 72) is perhaps the biographer's own inference, or rather his careless way of simplifying motives and events; of course such a view may equally have been expressed somewhere in his sources, but deserves no better credit for that, unless we are prepared to abandon Herodotus.² On the other hand Plutarch found it somewhere stated that the Thebans sent to Thessaly a contingent of 500 men under a general named Mnamias (*mor.* 864E), and this detail is likely to be authentic. His authority was in all probability Aristophanes of Boeotia, who corrected a material point in Herodotus' report of the Thebans at Thermopylae (*mor.* 867A = *FGH* 379 F 5, a passage which comes just before the mention of the Theban numbers and general).³ The publication of Aristophanes' work falls in the last quarter of the fifth century or, less plausibly, in the first quarter of the fourth; in treating the Persian War he may thus have drawn, like Herodotus, upon living tradition, and he certainly cited documents (*FGH* 379 F 6), as Herodotus did not.

Much more significant information, at least for our purpose, comes from Damastes of Sigeium. Damastes, as cited by Speusippus in the year 342, told how the Greek allies took their stand at Heracleium in Macedonia and were saved from disaster by Alexander son of Amyntas (*Letter to Philip* 30 = *FGH* 5 F 4):

ὑστερον δὲ στρατευσάντων τῶν βαρβάρων οἱ Ἕλληνες ἐπὶ τὸ ὑμέτερον Ἡράκλειον ἀπήντησαν, Ἀλεξάνδρου δὲ τὴν Ἀλεύου καὶ Θετταλῶν προδοσίαν τοῖς Ἕλλησι μηνύσαντος ἀναζεύξαντες οἱ Ἕλληνες δι' Ἀλέξανδρον ἐσώθησαν. καίτοι τούτων χρῆν μὴ μόνον Ἡρόδοτον καὶ Δαμάστην μεμνήσθαι τῶν εὐεργεσιῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν ἐν ταῖς τεχναῖς ἀποφαινόμενον κτλ.

In this passage the details which do not belong to Herodotus can be ascribed to Damastes. Alexander's intervention is also known to Herodotus: both writers have him transmit an urgent message, but the message is not the same. The mention of Heracleium belongs to Damastes alone and conflicts with Herodotus' account, in which the Greeks do not advance beyond Tempe. We shall consider Alexander's message in due course; here it is enough to say that Damastes' version of the message is more plausible than Herodotus', but that this feature is not a criterion for rating the two writers in respect of trustworthiness, for the actual message, communicated to the Greek commanders, may in the nature of things have never reached the public domain, so that its content was always subject to conjecture. The

² According to Larsen, *GFS* 117, n. 1, 'Plutarch has preserved a correct tradition to the effect that Themistocles was opposed to the Thessalian venture from the outset'; others too lay weight on Plutarch's statement. Plutarch however recounts the expedition and its consequences in just over 25 words, beginning 'because of great opposition he led out a great force', and this offhand way of speaking suggests to me that the biographer has chosen the simplest way of mediating between Themistocles' celebrated

naval policy and the Thessalian expedition.

³ Ch. 31-3 of Plutarch's essay deal with Herodotus' treatment of the Thebans, and it has often been conjectured that much of the material comes from Aristophanes of Boeotia. Jacoby on *FGH* 379 F 5-6 sceptically remarks that 'Plutarch's fluent polemic operates with very few facts', but the 500 troops and the general Mnamias are among the few; they were not invented by Plutarch, nor yet, one would think, by his source.

second contradiction concerns a matter of public knowledge and must be faced squarely: the Greek base was either at Tempe, as Herodotus says, or at Heracleium, as Damastes says; two successive bases of equal moment cannot be entertained, if the entire sojourn of the Greek army lasted only a few days. Now we shall find that Heracleium, a stronghold uniquely situated so as to bar the coastal defile by Olympus, was beyond all doubt a much more feasible base than Tempe: Damastes here has the advantage of Herodotus. It is worth inquiring after Damastes' credentials.

Damastes, a voluminous author according to the *Suda*, combined large geographical and historical interests, and so resembles Hecataeus, Herodotus, and Hellanicus; he is most often linked with the last in the very cursory notices which provide our only explicit evidence for his date (*FGH* 5 T 1–9). Current opinion therefore places Damastes' activity at the end of the fifth century, but in fact all these notices are nearly worthless, for the affiliations which they allege rest on mechanical inference.⁴ More substantial help comes from Strabo i 3.1, 47C, where Damastes is found quoting the personal observations of Diotimus son of Strombichus, an Athenian worthy who appears to have flourished in the third quarter of the fifth century (*FGH* 5 T 7, F 8).⁵ Since Diotimus' very mischievous account of the route to Susa must have been quickly superseded by further travel, it is reasonable to suppose that Damastes published the account soon after it was rendered, perhaps no later than *c.* 425. Although the titles of four works are known, the scant remains make it hard to judge Damastes' merit. The majority of the fragments probably derive from the geographic work on *Peoples and Cities*, and here (as we should expect in this *genre*) error and even fantasy can be descried; but it could not be maintained on the showing of these fragments that Damastes fell below the standard of Herodotus.⁶ No doubt Speusippus consulted the book *On Events in Greece*, *περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἑλλάδι γενομένων*, and it was presumably in virtue of this work that Dionysius put Damastes among the historians 'just prior to the Peloponnesian War and surviving to the time of Thucydides' (*FGH* 5 T 2) and that the elder Pliny's authority included Damastes in a long roll-call of historians attesting successive advances in naval architecture (F 6): Damastes on the bireme (invented, he said, at Erythrae) immediately precedes Thucydides i 13.2–3 on the trireme. So our author, though better known as a geographer, also passed as a respectable historian (of course the company he keeps in both Dionysius and Pliny seems to us very mixed); and his failure to survive except in a handful of fragments may be laid entirely to formal defects. Damastes deserves a fair hearing, and what he tells us about the Thessalian expedition is circumstantial and convincing.

2. THE GOVERNMENT AND POLICY OF THESSALY

According to Herodotus the Aleuads medised even before the actual invasion, but 'the

⁴ The *Suda* makes Damastes 'a pupil of Hellanicus'. It is sometimes said that Damastes 'agrees' with Hellanicus (so D.H. i 72.2 and Plin. *h.n.* vii 154, whence V. Max. viii 13 *ext.* 6), and in several catalogues of geographical authorities Damastes comes after Hellanicus. On the other hand Porphyry declared that Hellanicus' treatment of Scythia was taken from Herodotus and Damastes (Eus. *p.e.* x 3). On this evidence it is safer to conclude only that the works of Damastes and Hellanicus showed similarities which suggested indebtedness to later writers, and that priority was usually awarded to the more famous name. The likeness between the Scythian portions of their respective works may be due to common use of Aristaeas' *Arimaspeia* (*cf.* Steph. *Hyperboreioi* = *FGH* 4 F 187 and 5 F 1), a widely current work which stands behind Hecataeus too and probably accounts for Agathemerus' statement that Damastes 'copied out' Hecataeus.

⁵ Diotimus (*PA* 4386) was general in 433/2, commanding at Corcyra. His embassy to Susa almost certainly antedates the Peloponnesian War: it

may be Aristophanes' target at *Ach.* 61–90, where the date 438/7 is given, perhaps capriciously, for the departure of the ambassadors; and it may be the occasion of Pylilampes' obtaining the peacocks that became a spectacle at Athens for many years ('more than 30 years', if we believe Antiphon *fr.* 57 Thal., delivered before 411 at the latest). The victory which Diotimus gained at Naples while commanding an Athenian fleet probably fell in the 430's, during the Sabellian invasion of Campania (so Meyer, *FAG* II 321–2, overlooked by Jacoby at *FGH* 566 F 98, who rejects several inferior suggestions), unless it was even earlier, perhaps during the raids of Etruscan pirates, as J. K. Davies suggests to me.

⁶ F 1, cited from *Peoples and Cities*, lists the fabulous neighbours of the Scythians—the same as in Herodotus. Other likely fragments of this work are F 2, 5, 8, 9, 10. Damastes is scouted by Strabo for loose talk, *λίηροι*, but Strabo's own citation proves him captious: Damastes explicitly queried Diotimus' geography.

Thessalians', disapproving, asked for help against the Persians, and when it was sent, 'the Thessalian cavalry' took the field. In the context 'the Thessalians' ought to be a federal body, and 'the Thessalian cavalry' a federal levy. In recounting the decision to withdraw Herodotus says nothing of the Thessalians; after the withdrawal he notes their immediate and wholesale accession to the Persians. Damastes on the other hand, as reported by Speusippus, said that 'the treachery of Aleuas and the Thessalians' was disclosed to the allies by Alexander and dictated the withdrawal. 'Aleuas' is a slip for 'Aleuads', perhaps due to Speusippus rather than Damastes, for Aleuas of Larisa, whose three sons accompanied Xerxes (Hdt. ix 58.2), had died long before. 'The Thessalians' of Damastes or Speusippus need not be, like 'the Thessalians' of Herodotus, a compendious term; it perhaps is meant to amplify 'Aleuas' and merely designates whatever support the Aleuads commanded. If so, there is no overt contradiction between Herodotus and Damastes. Finally, we may recall that Diodorus, in a passage of very doubtful value, distinguishes between the hill-tribes as medising early and the Thessalians and Phthiotic Achaeans as medising later.

Thus far our sources. Modern writers put much more stress on the political situation in Thessaly at this time, and although their views are seemingly founded on ancient evidence, they do run counter to the impression which we carry away from Herodotus and Damastes, who speak of devious or furtive machinations on the part of the Aleuads, without suggesting that Thessaly at large was prey to dissension. Herodotus' account of an earnest, popular appeal to the Greek allies has been set aside almost without exception. Instead Thessaly is depicted as sharply divided or even largely pro-Persian, and for this reason the expedition seems threatened or doomed from the outset; and so it may be that the allied aim was never more than tentative or ostensible. (Of course such judgments are also bound up with the military aspects of the expedition, which we shall consider in the next two sections.) The appeal, it is commonly held, came from only a segment of the Thessalians. The segment is variously identified—the democratic opposition to the power of the nobles;⁷ or an aristocratic minority which failed to gain the allegiance of the peasants;⁸ or local dynasts inherently at odds with the Aleuads of Larisa, above all the 'Echecratids of Pharsalus'.⁹ Or simply some influential group who 'favoured the nationalist cause'.¹⁰ The segment, however described, set itself against the prevailing or official policy of medism; and the ambassadors who brought its case to the Isthmus could not claim to represent the Thessalian state. None of these opinions can be reconciled with Herodotus. A rival theory takes account of this objection and holds that the appeal was indeed issued by the Thessalian authorities, who are thought to be the Aleuads of Larisa: the Aleuads, though prone to medise, none the less saw the need of an *alibi* in case the Greeks should finally win.¹¹ But Herodotus still comes off no better, for he plainly distinguishes the Aleuads and the authors of the appeal.

Let us look more closely at Herodotus' narrative. He turns to the Thessalian expedition with the words, 'The Thessalians medised only of necessity, since they had given proof of their distaste for what the Aleuads were plotting' (vii 172.1). It has sometimes been argued that in fact most Thessalians were partial to Xerxes and that Herodotus or his informants for whatever reasons fastened the burden of guilt on the Aleuad family.¹² If the present passage stood alone, we might indeed suspect the simplicity and convenience of Herodotus' explanation. But the Aleuads and their prompt and unswerving medism are repeatedly stigmatised throughout the whole story of Xerxes' invasion. At vii 6.2, when Xerxes has just assumed the diadem, messengers from the Aleuads urge him to conquer Greece. At viii 130.3 Xerxes, on arriving in Thessaly, is reminded that the Aleuads were the first Greeks to submit, and 'supposes' that they spoke for all Thessalians. At ix 1 we are told of the zeal of Thorax, the eldest Aleuad: he had conducted Xerxes safely out of Greece, and now opened the way back for Mardonius. At ix 58 the climactic speech of Mardonius before the battle of Plataea is addressed to Thorax and his two brothers. It is perfectly clear from these

⁷ E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums* iii² (1937) 365; Toepffer, *RE* i 1 (1893) 1373, s. Aleuadai.

⁸ Munro, *CAH* iv 282.

⁹ H. D. Westlake, *JHS* lvi (1936) 16–17; Hignett, *XIG* 102; Larsen, *GFS* 115.

¹⁰ The formula is Burn's, *PG* 341; cf. Ehrenberg, *SS*² 153.

¹¹ M. Sordi, *RIL* lxxxvi (1953) 309–10; cf. Beloch, *GG* ii 1² 41–2; Axenidhis, *PL* i 92–4.

¹² Meyer, *FAG* ii 212; Munro, *JHS* xxii (1902) 305.

passages that the Aleuads were notorious beyond all other Thessalians for their attachment to Xerxes and Mardonius.¹³ At vii 130.3, as in the account of the Thessalian expedition, the Aleuads are actually contrasted with the rest of their countrymen.

What then was the standing of Thorax and the Aleuad family within Thessaly? This is the central question, to which all recent critics have returned the same answer: Thorax, as head of the Aleuads, was also Tagus or chief of the Thessalian federal state. All the interpretations of Thessalian affairs noticed above rest on this belief. The evidence, however, has been misread: although it is very likely that a Tagus commanded the Thessalian federal forces in 480, this Tagus was certainly not Thorax or any member of his family. To demonstrate the point will require a brief digression on the Tageia.

Our only explicit information concerning the Tageia comes from Xenophon's record of Thessalian affairs during the years 375–69. Jason of Pherae spoke of the Tageia as a constitutional office which he wished to revive and assume (*Hell.* vi 1.8–9, 12), as in fact he did (vi 1.18–19, 4.28); on Jason's death his two brothers became joint Tagi, and when one of them died first the other, then a nephew, succeeded as sole Tagus (vi 4.33–5). Two features of the Tageia are made very clear by Jason's professions and manoeuvres. (1) A Tagus was installed through some form of election which required the consent of all parts of Thessaly. (2) The office was filled only at irregular intervals and was accompanied by a general levy of Thessalian troops and of tribute from the subject peoples. Thus the Tagus was essentially a war-leader who took command in time of national danger or national enterprise. It follows that the office was temporary, lasting as long as needed. To be sure, a majority of scholars affirm that the Tagus, once elected, held office for life;¹⁴ but they have been unduly swayed by the example of Jason and his successors, who thoroughly abused the constitutional office. There is also the supposed example of earlier 'kings' of Thessaly, as certain figures are styled in our sources. The earlier references, however, must be interpreted in the light of Xenophon's detailed account, which leaves no doubt that the Tageia was an extraordinary and hence a temporary post: it would be most illogical if the Thessalians were bound by law to elect a federal leader only under sudden stress, and then to rely upon him for permanent direction in normal circumstances.¹⁵

The only Tagus we know of before Jason served during the Peloponnesian War. Thessaly as a whole sided with Athens in the War (Th. ii 22.2–3, iv 78.2–3), and Daochus of Pharsalus was appointed Tagus for the duration of hostilities, even though the Thessalians were not very active or successful in the field. According to the monument erected at Delphi in the 330's by his like-named grandson, Daochus 'was the constitutional ruler of all Thessaly for 27 years' (*SIG*³ 274). The 27 years of his tenure will have spanned the entire War, Thessaly maintaining an alert during the Peace of Nicias because the Boeotians, her neighbours and enemies, did not subscribe to the treaty.¹⁶ That Daochus was a Tagus rather than some other kind of ruler cannot be doubted: the legality, νόμωι, of his broad powers receives the same emphasis as that of Jason's Tageia (X. *Hell.* vi 4.28). Thucydides says that in 424 Brasidas was able to slip through Thessaly only because the people *δυναστεῖαι μᾶλλον ἢ*

¹³ So too at Ctes. *FGH* 688 F 13, §27.

¹⁴ A life-long Tageia is argued by Meyer, *TH* 220–2; Beloch, *GG* i 2² 200–1; F. Gschnitzer, *AA* vii (1954) 191–2; Sordi, *LT* 334–9; and Larsen, *CP* lv (1960) 238–9 and again *GFS* 14–16, 19. On the other hand Cary at *CAH* iii 602, Westlake, *TFC* 25–6, Morrison, *CQ* xxxvi (1942) 59, and Axenidhis, *PL* i 88, envisage a short-term Tageia, but Cary mistakenly relies on *SIG*³ 55 (on which see J. Chadwick in *Studi Ling. V. Pisani* i [1969] 231–4), and Westlake and Axenidhis adopt the paradoxical view that the constitutional term was 'usually' prolonged for an indefinite period or even for life.

¹⁵ In discussing the Aesymnēteia as an 'elective tyranny', Aristotle says that whereas some such leaders were appointed 'for certain periods or certain undertakings', others 'held this office for life' (*pol.* iii

14, 1285a 33–5). Presumably the life-long Aesymnēteia was always a desperate resort: it is hard to believe that any Greek state made *constitutional provision* for electing a life-long, absolute ruler.

¹⁶ Daochus' Tageia ended in or before 404, when Lycophrōn aimed to dominate the whole of Thessaly (X. *Hell.* ii 3.4): on any possible view, then, it overlaps the first part of the Peloponnesian War, including the campaign of 431 which saw a Thessalian contingent fighting in Attica (Th. ii 22.3, where Gomme errs). If the outbreak of the War is allowed to be the likeliest occasion for Daochus' appointment, his 27 years' tenure shows that the office was conferred for the duration of hostilities. The epigram describes Thessaly as 'teeming with peace and wealth' under Daochus—the best compliment for his military inactivity.

ἰσονομίαι ἐχρῶντο (iv 78.3): i.e. constitutional procedures were in place for prosecuting the war, though they were now thwarted by pro-Spartan magnates. As we shall see, events took a similar turn in 480.

The term *Tagus* is never used by any Greek writer save Xenophon. Modern critics, regarding the *Tageia* as an elective kingship, are prone to identify as *Tagi* all Thessalians who are named as leaders or dynasts in the Archaic period.¹⁷ If the *Tagus* was appointed to take command only in time of need, we ought to restrict our search accordingly. Our sources know of several occasions before 480 when Thessalian troops, usually specified as cavalry, served outside their homeland; all these campaigns were fairly important and all may well have been conducted by a *Tagus*. It will be useful to consider what little is said of the commanders in question. (1) A series of sharp engagements in Phocis, the last of them costing 4,000 Thessalian lives, are narrated in great detail without mention of any Thessalian commander:¹⁸ to be sure, our sources take the Phocian point of view (and name the Phocian leaders); but if the enemy commander were the foremost Thessalian of the day, say a Scopad or an Aleuad, he would have been remembered. (2) In the battle of Ceresus in Boeotia the Thessalian commander, τὸν ἄρχοντα, lost his life (Plu. *mor.* 866F, *Cam.* 19.4);¹⁹ he bore the rare name Lattamyas, which so far as we know was not associated with any great house.²⁰ (3) During the first Spartan attack on Hippias, and probably during the second as well, the Thessalian cavalry supporting the tyrant were commanded by Cineas, described as ἄνδρα Κονιαῖον (Hdt. v 63.3). On the face of it the phrase means 'a man of Conia', but since no such place is known, the adjective has been emended to give the sense 'a man of Gonnus' or 'of Cytina' or, more plausibly, 'of Condaea': whatever the true reading, it is certain that Herodotus identifies Cineas as a native of some rather unimportant place in Thessaly. Although Cineas is said to be a 'king' (the title will be discussed below), he can scarcely have belonged to any well-known clan, since these clans were based on the larger centres like Larisa and Crannon. 'Cineas' is a fairly common Thessalian name, not distinctive of any region, still less of any family.²¹ Our Cineas came to Attica at the instance of the Thessalian federal state, κοινῆ γνώμη, and he led 1,000 horsemen—a considerable force, which indeed defeated the Spartan army in the first encounter. (4) It was probably in the same period, and perhaps in the same train of events, that Thessaly assisted Chalcis too with a body of cavalry—of unknown size, but sufficient to decide the battle against Eretria (if we may trust Plutarch's account) by scattering the enemy's hoplites as well as his cavalry (*mor.* 760D–61B). The name of the Thessalian commander, who died gallantly, was Cleomachus. Again the name is not distinctive; yet we can be sure that Cleomachus was not a great dynast, for given the amplitude of the tradition concerning this battle, an outstanding pedigree would have been recorded or remembered.²² (5) Finally, the Thessalian commander in the First Sacred War deserves to be canvassed, for although he is very likely fictitious, the tale of the First Sacred War was elaborated at a time when the federal institutions of Thessaly were still alive, *sc.* in the mid 340's, and hence the account of Thessalian participation ought to be true to the spirit of those institutions. The commander (of unspecified forces) who captured Crisa, according to the fullest reports of the fighting, was 'Eurylochus the Thessalian' (Pi. *P.* argg. b, c, d; ps.-Thessalus, *presb.*; Str. ix 3.4, 10; Polyae. vi 13). Eurylochus may have been conceived as a *Tagus*, and his subordinate

¹⁷ Hypothetical *Tagi* are mustered in large numbers by Meyer, *TH* 237–49; Beloch, *GG* i 2² 197–210; Axenidhis, *PL* i 84–91; and R. J. Buck, *CP* lxiii (1972) 95–6. Of their instances, apart from Daochus, I admit only Eurylochus (as a fictional *Tagus*), Cineas, and Lattamyas; the only name I add is Cleomachus.

¹⁸ Hdt. viii 27.2–28; Plb. xvi 32.1–2; Plu. *mor.* 244A–D; Paus. x 1.3–11, 13.4, 6–7; Polyae. vi 18.2, viii 65.

¹⁹ Beloch, *GG* i 2² 205, was wary of claiming Lattamyas as a *Tagus*, but according to Buck, *CP* lxvii (1972) 95, ἄρχοντα 'should mean that he was a

tagos, not a subordinate official, a ruler, not simply a local commander'. It is hard to see why.

²⁰ A late grave-stone from Crannon addresses Λάτταμε Ἐχεκρατίδου (*IG* IX 2, 469), perhaps the only other instance of the name. Echekratides is not rare, and no connexion with the 'Echekratids' of the fifth century can be entertained.

²¹ L. Robert in P. Bernard *et al.*, *Fouilles d' Ai Khanoum* i 1 (1973) 219–22.

²² The details given by Plutarch do not favour Jacoby's assertion (on *FGH* 427 F 5) that the name Cleomachus 'was obviously invented along with the story'.

'Hippias the Thessalian' (Pi. *P.* argg. b, d) as another federal officer, perhaps a Tetrarch or a Hipparch. Now Eurylochus too is a common name; it has no evident connexion with any great house, and indeed, if our Eurylochus were an Aleuad as some have thought,²³ the tradition would say so. On any view of the First Sacred War, it is significant that the Thessalian commander bears a nondescript name.

These are the only Thessalian war-leaders whom we hear of down to the time of Xerxes' invasion. If any of them was a Tagus, then the office was not reserved for the leading dynasts of Thessaly; and if most or all of them were Tagi, then the office was not normally held by such dynasts. Our sources sometimes give the title 'king', βασιλεύς, to Thessalian dynasts—to Aleuas and the Aleuads (Pi. *P.* x 3–5; Hdt. vii 6.2; Plu. *mor.* 492A–B; Suda *Aleuadai*), to Antiochus (Philostr. *ep.* 73), and to Echecratidas (Th. i 111.1; cf. *A.P.* vi 142). It is wrong to suppose that βασιλεύς is the customary equivalent of Tagus.²⁴ An elected, temporary leader is no more a βασιλεύς in Greek than a 'king' in English, as we may see from Aristotle's discussion of Aesymneteia (*pol.* iii 14, 1285a 29–b 3).²⁵ Archaic Thessaly was made up of the domains of local dynasts like the Aleuads of Larisa, the Scopads of Crannon, and perhaps the Meno's of Pharsalus; and the Aleuads and the rest are βασιλείς in virtue of their local standing. To be sure, the Aleuads are called Θεσσαλῆς βασιλέες (Hdt. vii 6.2), and Echecratidas τοῦ Θεσσαλῶν βασιλέως (Th. i 111.1). Here the difference between Greek and modern idiom has misled unwary readers. Greek uses a classifying genitive like Θεσσαλῆς or Θεσσαλῶν where English would use an adjective.²⁶ The Aleuads are 'Thessalian kings' (or 'kings in Thessaly'), and Echecratidas is 'the Thessalian king'; but a King of all Thessaly does not exist.²⁷ In short, the title βασιλεύς would not normally be used of a Thessalian Tagus:²⁸ it was certainly not used of Jason.

There is no reason to believe that in the early fifth century Tagi were recruited from the Aleuad family.²⁹ On the contrary, such evidence as we have suggests that the Targeia, so far from resting with the barons of the northern plains, was controlled chiefly by the southern

²³ So Meyer, *TH* 242, 254; Beloch, *GG* i 2² 201; Axenidhis, *PL* i 41.

²⁴ So Meyer, *TH* 237; Beloch, *GG* i 2² 200; Axenidhis, *PL* i 85, 102; Gomme on Th. ii 22.3; Sordi, *LT* 335.

²⁵ In *pol.* iii 14–17 the professed subject is Basileia, and Aristotle uses this term consistently except when he comes to discuss Aesymneteia as the third type—not of Basileia, but of Monarchia (iii 14, 1285a 30); after Aesymneteia he effects the transition to the fourth type, which is again true Basileia, by the phrase μοναρχίας βασιλικῆς (1285b 4). Aristotle could not bring himself to apply the term Basileia to an elective, and in most cases temporary, magistracy.

²⁶ A good example is Arrian, *Ind.* 5.3, Σανδρακόττου . . . τῷ μεγίστῳ βασιλεῖ Ἰνδῶν, καὶ Πύρον ἔτι τούτῳ μείζονι, 'Sandracottus, the greatest Indian ruler', etc.

²⁷ Or rather, exists only in the imagination of writers who recount the *novella* of Thargelia. The story in all its bearings was properly discounted by Hiller at *RE* VI A 1 (1936) 118, *s.* Thessalia, but some details continue to be accepted at face value, as by Sordi, *LT* 330 n. 3. Those who believe Antiochus King of Thessaly will presumably also believe that Thargelia survived him as Queen of Thessaly for thirty years, which comprehended Xerxes' invasion (Phot. and Suda *Thargelia*).

²⁸ Of the events of 511–10 Herodotus says that the Thessalians, acting in concert, 'sent a thousand horse and their king, Cineas a man of Conia' (v 63.3). The emphatic phrase τὸν βασιλέα τὸν σφέτερον, which seems to have gone unnoticed by commentators and

translators, is chosen because the Spartans, by contrast, did not at first depute a king to lead the Spartan force (v 63.2, 64.1). Of course the phrase need not mean that Cineas was the only king in Thessaly. Cineas, as we have seen, may have been a Tagus, but we cannot know whether Herodotus called him a king *qua* Tagus: if he did, he showed his usual ignorance or indifference concerning constitutional forms.

²⁹ The passages of Pindar and Herodotus often adduced in this connexion do not in the least imply that the Targeia belonged to the Aleuads. In describing the whole Aleuad family as 'Thessalian kings' Herodotus vii 6.2 plainly means hereditary rulers: he could scarcely speak thus even if the Targeia had devolved on two or three Aleuads in succession. The words which Pindar addressed to his Thessalian patrons in 498—'the skilful piloting of cities is the patrimony of good men' (*P.* x 71–2)—mark their power as regional, not federal (so Hiller at *RE* VI A 1 [1936] 118). The opening lines of *P.* x, and also lines 69–71, merely show that the nobles of Thessaly, including the Aleuads, claimed descent from Heracles and of course ruled their domains by hereditary right; we need not infer that Pindar puts the Thessalian Targeia on a footing with the Spartan kingship, still less that the Aleuads then held or aspired to the Targeia. All the wrong conclusions were drawn by Wilamowitz, *Pindaros* (1922) 123—who thought that the Targeia passed to the Aleuads after the Scopads collectively came to grief beneath a collapsing house!

city of Pharsalus.³⁰ The only undoubted Tagus before Jason is Daochus of Pharsalus; of the conjectural Tagi reviewed above Cleomachus was a Pharsalian, and Lattamyas may have been, for all we know; and all recorded Tetrarchs come from Pharsalus—Daochus' grandfather Acnonius and grandson Daochus the younger, and the latter's associate Thrasydaüs. In aspiring to the Tageia Jason required the support of Pharsalus, and when Pharsalus (in the person of Polydamas) assented, he became a fully legitimate Tagus (*X. Hell.* vi 1.8, 18, 4.28): the emphasis which Xenophon gives to this procedure distinctly implies that Pharsalus had more than an equal share in the election of a Tagus. The federal sanctuary of Athena at Itonus lay in Pharsalian territory;³¹ and indeed the system of Tetrads appears to favour Pharsalus, inasmuch as Phthiotis is by far the smallest Tetrad and Pharsalus is its sole important city. It may be that the word Tagus, no doubt denoting a local magistrate in the first instance, was native to southern Thessaly.³² We ought to remember too that the federal campaigns among the southern neighbours of Thessaly would concern Pharsalus much more closely than any of the other large centres, which lay further north. Thus a case can be made for linking the Tageia with the city of Pharsalus and for regarding it as a constitutional counterweight to the power of the feudal barons:³³ in the early 450's the Athenians attacked Pharsalus on behalf of the exiled son of Echekratidas (*Th.* i 111.1), and so we may suspect that the dynast had been ousted by federal authorities in Pharsalus.³⁴

Here we shall take leave of the Tageia, for the main features of the office are clear, and they preclude the view that Thorax the Aleuad was Tagus in 480. The Tageia was a temporary elective office, whereas the Aleuads are always described as hereditary rulers of Larisa, co-existing with other rulers of other domains in Thessaly's feudal society: such rulers, moreover, were seldom or never appointed to the Tageia. Returning to Herodotus, we see that in fact he never speaks of Thorax in terms which suggest a Tagus. On the two occasions when Thorax is brought on stage, he is introduced as 'the Larisaean' (*ix* 1, 58.1); at *ix* 1 he is singled out as the most conspicuous among all the medising leaders of Thessaly (*τοῖσι δὲ Θεσσαλίας ἡγεομένοισι*, probably meaning the nobles as a class).³⁵ Now if Thorax was at the same time the supreme authority in Thessaly, why did Herodotus forbear to mention the fact? And when he narrates the circumstances in which the Greek expedition was dispatched and then withdrawn, how could he omit to say that the Aleuads, whose medism was resisted by the Thessalians at large, were in fact the acknowledged leaders of their countrymen? It is often thought that Herodotus is unduly tender towards the Thes-

³⁰ In the fifth century Larisa minted an abundant coinage (surpassing Pharsalus as well as all other centres), and the types were widely imitated in northern Thessaly. This state of affairs has been taken to reflect the primacy of the Aleuads and of Larisa in the Thessalian federal state (so F. Herrmann, *ZN* xxiii [1923] 33-43 and xxv [1925] 1-69). Herrmann's interpretation of the numismatic evidence was dictated by the prevailing view of Thessalian history and (it should be clearly recognised) is by no means mandatory. Larisa always had close ties with Macedon and the north (as we shall see below) and hence access to the silver supply in Thrace; it was therefore natural that she should take the lead in minting coins.

³¹ Since the port of Halus was Pharsalian (*Str.* IX 2, 5.8, 433c), Itonus, only sixty stades away, must have been Pharsalian too. The federal worship of Athena Itonia happens to be first attested in Hellenistic inscriptions (P. Boesch, *Θεωπός* [1908] 28, line 2; Segre, *RFIC* [1934] 172, B2, line 6; *SEG* xxv 653, lines 20-1), but undoubtedly existed long before.

³² A fifth-century decree of Thetonium (*IG* IX 2, 257 = *SIG*³ 55, lines 7-8) provides the sole mention of a local Tagus before the Hellenistic period, when Tagi are attested for various parts of Thessaly. The

site of Thetonium at Kupritsi lies about 15 km. SW of Pharsalus. At Delphi the title Tagus was used of the head of a phratry.

³³ In Pharsalus itself the federal office-holders are not the Meno's, famous in literature as the great landowners of the area, but the family of Daochus, whom we know mainly from their several monuments at Delphi and Pharsalus.

³⁴ The reason given by Morrison (*CQ* xxxvi [1942] 61-3) for the Athenian attack on Pharsalus, namely that the city lay on their road, is not sufficient in itself, for we can hardly suppose that the Athenians meant to reduce, in geographical order, every important town in Thessaly; and had their main objective lain elsewhere, they could have skirted Pharsalus by starting from the Gulf of Pagasae.

³⁵ The phrase might also denote all Thessalian authorities, whether dynasts or magistrates, who remained in power during the invasion. In either case we cannot determine whether the federal apparatus continued to function after the Greek withdrawal. The charge of medism which Herodotus brings against the Thessalian leaders at *ix* 1 is of course consistent with his account at *vii* 174 of the mass reaction when the Greeks left.

saliars: did he then pass over an obvious and sufficient reason for their siding with Xerxes?³⁶

As soon as we give up Thorax as Tagus, the interpretation of Herodotus' narrative becomes perfectly simple. The Tagus elected in the face of Xerxes' invasion remains unknown to us (the Tetrarchs under him may have included Acnonius), but we have no grounds for thinking that he medized; on the contrary, he will have supported or even sponsored the appeal to the Greek allies, which doubtless took the form of a resolution by the federal Assembly. As Herodotus intimates, the appeal was sincere and Thessaly's contribution to the allied effort was substantial. But when the allies abandoned the northern line of defence, the Thessalians submitted to Xerxes without hesitation; Herodotus represents this step as natural and indeed inevitable. He does not disguise the usefulness of Thessaly to Xerxes, and yet some incidental points in his narrative indicate that the country was never firmly committed to the Persian cause. Both on their advance in 480 and on their retreat in 479 the Persians distrusted the popular feeling (vii 191.1; ix 89.2); loyalist Greeks could safely enter Thessaly even when it was occupied by the Persian army (vii 232; cf. 182); and the Thessalians presumably shared the general recalcitrance of the King's Greek allies at Plataea (ix 67).

The active and dangerous medisers were the Aleuads; here Herodotus and Damastes agree. According to Damastes, however, the 'treachery' of the Aleuads was revealed by Alexander to the Greek allies at Heracleium, whereas Herodotus says that the Aleuads courted Xerxes right from his accession and implies that their intrigues were known to the Thessalian body which issued the appeal. Yet there is no real contradiction if the 'treachery' of the Aleuads consisted not in their disposition to medise but in some concrete threat to the allies; we shall take up the matter below. At the same time it is worth remarking that the conduct of the Aleuads before the actual invasion is not a subject on which Herodotus and his informants can be trusted very far; memories will have been too largely coloured by passion. In particular the Aleuad embassy to Xerxes, as one of the factors determining the King to invade Greece, belongs to a portion of the drama which is more than suspect.³⁷ That for some years before the invasion Larisa minted coins, the first in Thessaly, on the Persian standard of weight has been generally regarded as corroborating Herodotus.³⁸ Perhaps it does; on the other hand the Persian standard may simply have been familiar or convenient; the Thracian mines from which Larisa must have drawn her silver supply were then under Persian control. It remains possible that the Aleuads did not medise until Xerxes' army approached, and that their act took the Greek allies by surprise.

3. THE SCALE OF THE EXPEDITION

The allied army which took up position at Tempe numbered 10,000 hoplites, says Herodotus; Plutarch, perhaps following Aristophanes of Boeotia, knows of 500 Thebans. Sparta and Athens must have been well represented too, for Herodotus names the commanders of their respective contingents, 'Euaenetus son of Carenus, appointed from the Polemarchs though not of royal blood', and Themistocles.³⁹ At least part of the allied force—probably, the contingents from the Peloponnesus and Attica—came by sea through the Euripus, disembarked at Halus where they left the ships, and then marched the length of Thessaly. The Thessalian cavalry also turned out beside the hoplites. The whole force was mustered, transported, and deployed well in advance of the invasion: according to Herodotus the Thessalian appeal reached the allies as the enemy 'was about to cross into Europe', and the expedition itself took place 'while the King was about to cross from Asia into Europe and was already at Abydos'.

These details mark the expedition as a large effort with a serious purpose. None the less

³⁶ The Theban speaker at Th. iii 62.3–4 excuses the Thebans for medising on the grounds that a few powerful medisers controlled the state.

³⁷ Beloch, *GG* ii 1² 42 n. 1, not unreasonably dismissed the story as a 'slander', but added a false argument, namely that the Aleuads already ruled Thessaly and hence had nothing to gain from

collaborating with Xerxes.

³⁸ So Westlake, *JHS* lvi (1936) 12; Sordi, *RIL* lxxxv (1953) 297–8.

³⁹ In place of *Εὐαίνετος* the mss. of D.S. give *Συνετός*, a most unlikely name; and since proper names are so often corrupted in Diodorus, no one will hesitate to accept the obvious correction.

modern writers have found great difficulty in accepting Herodotus' report that the Greeks fully intended to face the Persians in the Olympus region but reversed themselves at the last moment because of some alarming intelligence. Instead it is argued that the defence of Thessaly was made conditional on local factors to be assessed in due course, or that the allied aim was always more limited, or merely specious. The expedition is regarded as a trial venture, founded on hopes that did not materialise;⁴⁰ or as a 'demonstration in force', which if successful might have led to a more substantial undertaking;⁴¹ or as nothing more than a reconnaissance;⁴² or as a kind of bluff to discountenance the advocates of resistance by land rather than by sea;⁴³ or as a sham to mislead the same people.⁴⁴ None of these views is intrinsically very plausible. Most of them are due to dissatisfaction with Herodotus; scholars have looked far and wide for some motive which he missed. Yet Herodotus' account is not so inconsequent after all: the misunderstanding about the Aleuads has been disposed of above; the obscure reasons for the Greek withdrawal will be sought below. This section and the next aim to vindicate the strength and seriousness of the expedition.

The allied force that was eventually deployed Herodotus reckons at 10,000 hoplites, together with the Thessalian cavalry. Nor is it likely that Herodotus has exaggerated the Greek numbers, for such is not his way; and in any case he is obviously not concerned to magnify the Thessalian campaign, which he relates in the briefest compass so as to clear the stage for Thermopylae. On the contrary, because he missed the full significance of the campaign and of its issue, he probably omitted some components of the allied force. One would expect 10,000 hoplites to be accompanied by a large number of light-armed troops: at Plataea all the allies save Sparta contributed as many light-armed as hoplites, and Sparta several times as many (ix 29.2). It may be that in the Thessalian expedition the light-armed were not dispatched at the same time as the hoplites; Xerxes was still far off and the light-armed could march overland much faster than men with heavy armour; it was doubtless to avoid the rigours of the march that some of the hoplites came by ship. And since the hoplites returned home again after a few days, the light-armed may have never set out; hence their absence in Herodotus. Indeed it is possible that the hoplites too were due to be reinforced before the fighting began;⁴⁵ at Thermopylae a few days more would have brought the full levy of Sparta and the Peloponnese to join the advance party under Leonidas (vii 206). The total of Thessalian cavalry can only be conjectured: perhaps about 6,000. This was the number that Jason of Pherae gave for the federal muster 'whenever Thessaly is under a Tagus' (X. *Hell.* vi 1.8); at the time of Jason's boast there had been no Tagus for many years, so that the number is perhaps traditional; in any case the number in Jason's day could hardly be greater than in 480, for the economic developments of the intervening century had reduced the power of the land-owning barons and the size of their estates, and it was from this quarter that the cavalry were recruited.⁴⁶ Thus a reasonable estimate of the total allied force committed to the defence of Thessaly would be 26,000–10,000 hoplites,

⁴⁰ Ehrenberg, *SS*² 153–4. Cf. Obst, *FX* 52–5; Munro, *CAH* iv 281–2; Larsen, *GFS* 117.

⁴¹ Hignett, *XIG* 103.

⁴² De Sanctis, *RFIC* viii (1930) 339–42; Sordi, *RIL* lxxxvi (1953) 299–310, 323, and *LT* 92–6.

⁴³ M. R. Cataudella, *Athenaeum* xliii (1965) 389–90.

⁴⁴ Schachermeyr, *JOAI* xlvi (1963) 169.

⁴⁵ Diodorus asserts that reinforcements were sought, but he cannot be trusted. In his maundering way he tells us first that 'the Greeks' dispatched 10,000 hoplites to Thessaly under Euaenetus and Themistocles, and then that 'these', *sc.* Euaenetus and Themistocles, sent ambassadors to other Greek cities requesting further levies (xi 2.5). Whether or not this sequence of events is derived from Ephorus, it scarcely merits the attention which it receives from Larsen, *GFS* 115.

⁴⁶ Larsen, *GFS* 17–18, considers 6,000 a paper figure and suggests 3,000 as the reality; Westlake,

TFC 108–9, says 4,000; but Wade-Gery, *JHS* xlv (1924) 62 thinks it 'not impossible' that Jason's estimate was sound. In fact Jason as Tagus subsequently had under arms 'more than 8,000 cavalry including the allies' (X. *Hell.* vi 1.19): the reputed size of Jason's army is roughly vindicated by Westlake, *TFC* 105–12, and the allies would hardly account for more than a quarter of the cavalry force. The Thessalian cavalry who accompanied Alexander or who sided with the Greeks in the Lamian War numbered 2,000, but there is no reason to think that they were a general levy, and in any case Thessaly was not then the power that it had been in Jason's day, to say nothing of the late Archaic period. Moreover, in the fourth century a large proportion of Thessalians served as hoplites (*Hell.* vi 1.8 and 1.19); these were the class of smallholders settled round the cities which had grown up since Archaic times.

10,000 light-armed, and 6,000 cavalry. The force was certainly the largest ever assembled on Greek soil down to that time or indeed down to the battle of Plataea.⁴⁷

The timing of the Thessalian expedition, as of the appeal which it answered, has troubled some readers of Herodotus. When he introduces the episode and again when he takes leave of it Herodotus fixes the time in words already quoted: as 'the Persian was about to cross into Europe'; 'while the King was about to cross from Asia into Europe and was already at Abydos'. In view of this emphatic testimony—and nowhere else, until the two sides meet, does Herodotus so precisely synchronise the Greek preparations with the stages of Xerxes' advance—it is unwise to urge a different reconstruction on grounds of general probability.⁴⁸ The Persians spent a month at Abydos before the crossing (viii 51.1), and both the appeal and the expedition can easily have taken place within this time, which was roughly the month of May.⁴⁹ According to Herodotus the appeal was frank and urgent, indeed a virtual ultimatum: the allies must send 'a large army' to guard the Olympus passes, or the Thessalians will save themselves by medising. Herodotus speaks as if this were the first communication between Thessaly and the allies, but he is clearly striving for dramatic effect; the Thessalian episode climaxes the round of embassies related in ch. 148–71.⁵⁰ On the other hand the substance and the effect of the appeal may have been just as he describes them: such a message at such a time is perfectly understandable even if the allies had been negotiating with the Thessalians for a year or more beforehand. The timing of the appeal therefore causes no difficulty. It is possible too that the Thessalian federal Assembly regularly met at this season, and that the Assembly of spring 480 made it their business to ratify and transmit the appeal. Or perhaps when the allied troops went to Halus the Thessalians were due to gather at their federal sanctuary nearby. Of course the timing of the expedition must have had a strategic reason as well, and it is not far to seek. Although Xerxes' army would take weeks to march (and in places to defile) along the coast of Thrace, an advance force could be transported by ship within days to seize the passes over Olympus. Such a tactic was by no means unlikely; the Persians already had an advance base on the Athos peninsula; the next step might bring them to Olympus. So the allied expedition was hardly premature. And Thessaly with its vast rich farmlands was well able to feed the allied army for a few weeks: it fed the Persian army for several months.⁵¹

⁴⁷ This would still be true if we restricted our view to the 10,000 hoplites. The only larger figure that Herodotus reports before Plataea is the paper strength of the Siceliot Greeks, as expounded by Gelo to the allied ambassadors: 20,000 hoplites (vii 158.4). Although this figure was repeated by Timaeus (Plb. xii 26b = *FGH* 566 F 94)—who was capable of imagining a Greek army of 50,000 foot at Himera (D.S. xi 21.1)—Ephorus reduced it at one stroke to 10,000 (sch. Pi. P. i 146a, b = *FGH* 70 F 186: P. A. Brunt, *Historia* ii [1953] 159 n. 2 regards 10,000 as a ms. corruption of 20,000, but the figure is given twice). It is in the nature of things that such estimates should be grossly inflated: the paper strength of 8,000 'shield' for Naxos (Hdt. v 30.4) is simply a physical impossibility. Casualty figures may be doubted too, but certain instances are instructive. The 6,000 Argives fallen at Sepeia (Hdt. vii 148.2: Paus. iii 4.1 says 5,000 and an Argive tradition cited by Plu. *mor.* 245D says 7,777) represents the full citizen levy of one of the most populous mainland states fighting on native soil. In a calamitous defeat at the hands of the Iapygians Rhegium lost 3,000 men and Tarentum many more, 'the greatest slaughter of Greeks of all that we know of' (Hdt. vii 170.3): thus the army fielded by two leading states of Magna Graecia might have numbered 10,000. On this showing the force which went to Thessaly is extremely impressive. In their

maximum effort at Plataea the Greeks were serving much closer to home—especially the Athenians, whose contingent of 8,000 must have included every available man. Larson, *GFS* 114–16, correctly observes that the army deployed in Thessaly was superior in some respects to the army of Plataea.

⁴⁸ Westlake, *JHS* lvi (1936) 18 n. 28, thinks that 'since the Greeks would hardly wait idly for some two months at Tempe', they did not arrive until Xerxes was in Thrace.

⁴⁹ The Persians reached Attica three months after crossing the Hellespont (Hdt. vii 51.2): the date of their arrival in Attica is disputed, however, and to argue the matter fully would take more space than is warranted, since the precise date of the Thessalian expedition has small importance.

⁵⁰ Westlake, *JHS* lvi (1936) 17, says that the story of the Thessalian expedition 'takes the reader by surprise'; 'casual and almost parergic' was Macan's label, which Westlake quotes with approval: I can see no basis for these judgments, except so far as Herodotus' narrative is continually surprising and has the air of artless reminiscence. It is certainly wrong to argue from such impressions that the actual expedition was 'a hastily improvised scheme' (so Westlake).

⁵¹ From 170 to 31 B.C. we hear of five successive Roman armies that were quartered and provisioned in Thessaly (Westlake, *TFC* 6).

A large part of the allied force was mustered in Attica and the Peloponnese, shipped to Halus, and then conducted overland to Olympus. Thus they were spared a long and taxing march as far as Halus.⁵² Herodotus does not say or imply that all 10,000 hoplites went by sea.⁵³ Mnamias and his 500 Thebans, who doubtless belonged to a larger Boeotian contingent under a federal officer,⁵⁴ would naturally follow the land route; so too Phocians and Locrians, if they took part. Some scholars have thought Halus a strange destination for the sea-borne units; Pagasae, it is averred, was more conveniently placed at the head of the gulf. Hence the suggestion that Halus, as a dependency of Pharsalus, was the only safe port amid the prevailing medism of Thessaly. But if the Thessalians were largely hostile, the allies would scarcely attempt to march across the length of the country; witness Thucydides iv 78.2 on the dangers of Thessaly. In truth there is little to choose between Halus and Pagasae from the logistical point of view; Halus, however, lies directly on the line of march for those proceeding overland, and so makes a more natural staging-point. The main reason for selecting Halus was surely its proximity to Itonus, the site of the federal sanctuary of Athena and probably of the federal Assembly.

The upshot is that the Thessalian expedition cannot be discounted as a foray or a demonstration, much less as a mere reconnaissance. The force was indeed withdrawn after a short time; yet Herodotus does not represent the original undertaking as in any way provisional or tentative. The plan of 'guarding the pass' was the same as the Greeks subsequently adopted at Thermopylae, and is described in the same terms (vii 173.1~175.1). Not only was the allied army the largest ever seen in mainland Greece, but most of the troops were serving farther from home than citizen levies had ever done before or indeed would ever do again. Their task must have been commensurate. In traversing Thessaly from Halus to the Peneius valley they doubtless heartened the Thessalian loyalists and cowed any medisers who then existed; but this cannot have been a principal aim of the expedition, for the effort would accomplish nothing if the army did not remain—as the sequel showed. There is no alternative but to accept the view of Herodotus, as of all other ancient sources, that the Greeks meant to face the Persian invaders and deny them entry to Greece at the country's northern limit.

4. THE STRATEGY OF THE GREEK DEFENCE (see FIG. 1, The Area of Tempe and Heracleium)

Mount Olympus divides Thessaly from Macedonia. The Thessalians, says Herodotus, pointed out the wisdom of 'guarding the Olympus approach, so that Thessaly and all Greece may be sheltered from the war'. The allied army 'went to Tempe, the pass which leads from Lower Macedonia to Thessaly along the Peneius River, between Mount Olympus and Mount Ossa', and there set up camp. Afterwards he gives it as his opinion that the Greeks retired from Thessaly when they found that the Peneius route could be turned by another pass 'leading by way of Upper Macedonia through the territory of the Perrhaebians past the town of Gonnus, by which the army of Xerxes did in fact make its entrance'. In an earlier passage, when he has brought Xerxes as far as Therma, Herodotus states that the King 'intended to march his army by the upper road through the Macedonians who live above into the territory of the Perrhaebians past the town of Gonnus; for he was told that this was the safest way' (vii 128.1). But Xerxes himself sailed ahead to Tempe, since he was curious to see the narrow passage between the great mountains of Olympus and Ossa, which were visible from Therma (vii 128-30). Afterwards he returned to Therma and 'waited in Pieria for many days together', while 'a third part of his army was engaged in clearing a way over the Macedonian mountains, so that the whole army could get through into the territory of the Perrhaebians' (vii 131).

⁵² Hignett, *XIG* 103 n. 1, following Grundy, holds that the allies went by sea only because the Boeotians could not be relied upon. But if ships were to hand, the sea passage through the sheltered waters of the straits of Euboea was preferable to the land route in every way—shorter, quicker, easier.

⁵³ Larsen, *GFS* 115, wrongly assumes that contingents marching from states close to Thessaly, such as Boeotia, Phocis, and Locris, were additional to a sea-borne force of 10,000.

⁵⁴ Buck, *CP* lxxix (1974) 48.

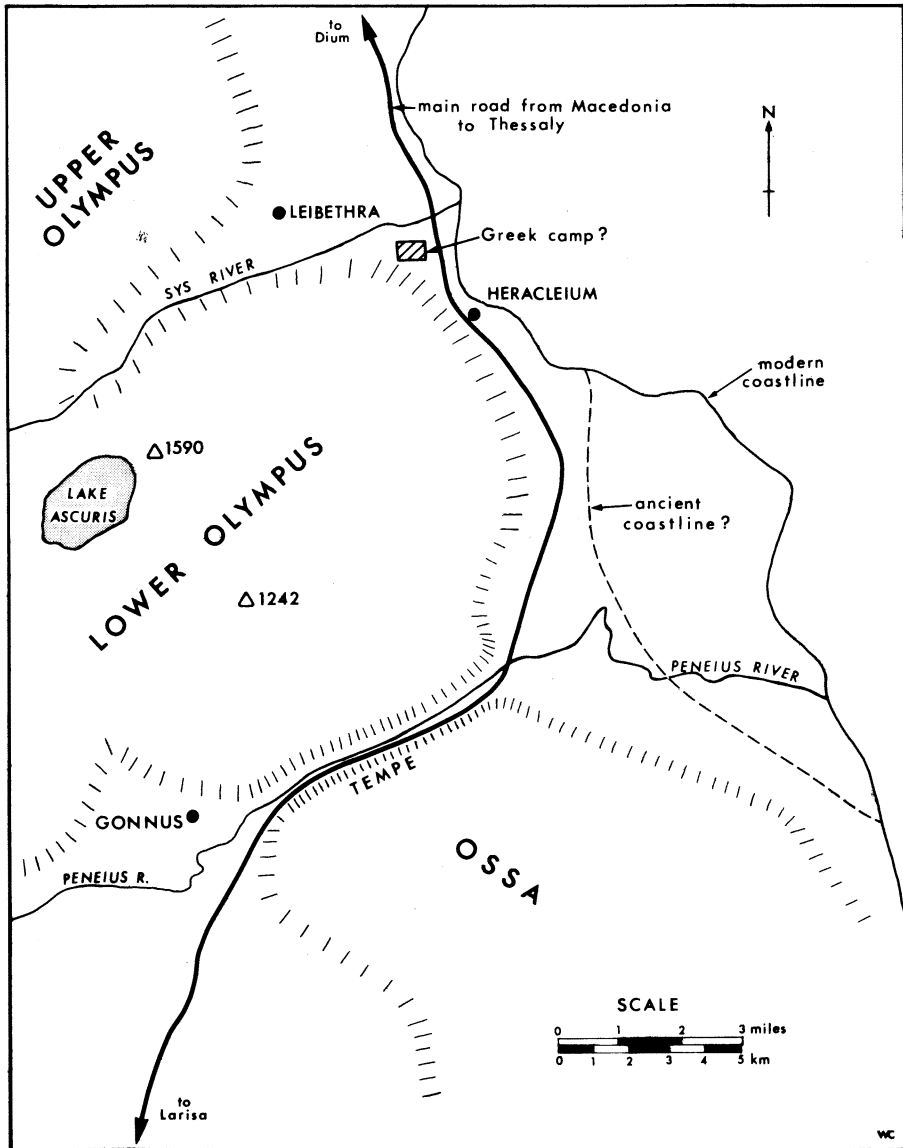


FIG. 1

On the face of it then we have two, and only two, routes from Macedonia to Thessaly. The coast road turns inland through the Vale of Tempe; this route the Greeks proposed to block. A mountainous inland route led from Upper Macedonia to Gonnus; this route Xerxes actually took. Yet the truth of the matter is quite different. Firstly, the mountain track which issues at Gonnus cannot possibly be approached from 'Upper Macedonia', in any conceivable sense of the term. Secondly, besides Tempe and the Gonnus route two other passes further west provide access to Thessaly. Thirdly, the difficult Gonnus route might be used to turn a defence of Tempe, but not to march a whole army when the road through Tempe stood open. There can be no question of upholding Herodotus' account; our task is to define and explain his misunderstanding. Let us first consider the several routes into Thessaly.

(1) The main road runs through Tempe, but is easily barred where it narrows to a deep winding gorge five miles long. At times when Macedon was menaced from the south, the gorge was closed by the stronghold of Gonnus at the western entrance and also by garrisons placed at other strategic points (Livy xlv 6.9-11). No record exists, however, of an actual defence of Tempe against an invader from the north, unless the Thessalians here attempted to

resist Alexander in 336 (Polyaen. iv 3.23). In this direction defenders were best advised, as we shall see, to bar the coast road where it is pinched by an outrunner of Lower Olympus. (2) The route 'past the town of Gonnus', which according to Herodotus alarmed the Greeks and admitted Xerxes, starts from the coast just a few miles north of the Peneius mouth, and crosses the level top of Lower Olympus from north to south at a height of just over 1,000 m.⁵⁵ Unlike the other routes, it does not follow a pass, but leads through open though sometimes steep and broken terrain. None the less the track could certainly be held by resolute defenders. Again our evidence comes from Perseus' efforts to halt the Romans (Livy xlii 2-5). The ascent of the south slope of Lower Olympus was blocked by Gonnus, and a stronghold beside Lake Ascuris dominated the plateau. To be sure, the Romans eventually slipped through, but only at great cost and only because of the enemy's incompetence; moreover, they reached the plateau from the west, a manoeuvre which was impossible for the Persians.⁵⁶ In 480 the allies had to prevent the Persians from ascending the north slope of Lower Olympus, and this should have been easy, since the north slope, unlike the south, is densely wooded and trackless. (3) Of the two western passes, the nearer is a deep and narrow gorge eight miles long from Petra to Pythium, skirting the west side of Upper Olympus.⁵⁷ The route leaves the plain of Pieria near Dium, and enters Thessaly at the north-east, descending from Olosson in Perrhaebia along the upper valley of the Europus into the plain near Larisa.⁵⁸ To bar the Petra pass was simple, and Perseus did so. (4) The route through the Volustana pass is much longer and harder. It leads far up the long, deep gorge of the Haliacmon, then turns to climb the steep north face of the Cambunian mountains to the high pass, which opens on a more gradual descent to the south.⁵⁹ This route meets the other at Olosson before debouching in the Thessalian plain. The Volustana pass too is easily defensible.⁶⁰

Which route was actually used by Xerxes? Scholars disagree. Yet the right answer can still be found. In the first place, it is hardly reasonable to suggest that Xerxes divided his army and sent the smaller bodies over two or three different routes;⁶¹ time, security, and provisioning dictated a uniform advance. A case has recently been argued for the Gonnus route, but it will convince no one.⁶² Xerxes might well prefer the coastal route to either of the western passes, but having reached Lower Olympus he would not turn off the direct road to conduct his army over the mountain:⁶³ in suspicious circumstances an advance force might be sent by the Gonnus route in order to secure Tempe for the main body; but of course Herodotus describes Xerxes' plan very differently. Nor would it help to conjecture that Herodotus, preoccupied with the mysterious route over Lower Olympus, has missed or suppressed the actual line of march through Tempe; for the whole story of Xerxes' visit to

⁵⁵ W. K. Pritchett, *AJA* lxx (1961) 373-5; B. Helly, *Gonnoi* (1973) i 10-11.

⁵⁶ The Roman route is traced by Pritchett, *AGT* ii 164-76, and more convincingly by Helly, *RP* xlvi (1972) 276-82.

⁵⁷ Kromayer, *AS* ii 270 (a brief description); Pritchett, *AGT* ii pl. 146 (a photograph taken within the pass).

⁵⁸ Students of Xerxes' invasion almost invariably describe this route as reaching the Thessalian plain by way of the Melouna pass, which crosses a ridge of Olympus southeast of Olosson. In fact the normal route in ancient times, and certainly the route to be preferred by the Persian army, led through the Europus valley; see A. J. B. Wace and M. S. Thompson, *Prehistoric Thessaly* (Cambridge 1912) 7.

⁵⁹ Hammond, *HM* i 117, 430 n. 2.

⁶⁰ Either the col above the Haliacmon valley, known as Stena Portas, which forms the northern entrance to the pass, or the pass itself, now called Stena Sarandaporou, is easily defensible (Hammond). It is also possible to get from Macedon to Thessaly by ascending the Haliacmon even further and then

striking south to Aeginium and Tricca or southeast to Perrhaebia (Westlake, *TFC* 18-19 and Hammond, *HM* i 109, 118); but these routes are so long and difficult that they can be ignored for the present purpose.

⁶¹ R. W. Macan, *Herodotus, Books vii, viii and ix* (London 1908) i 164-5; How and Wells, *CH* ii 175; Munro, *CAH* iv 292; Hignett, *XIG* 110.

⁶² Pritchett, *AJA* lxx (1961) 369-75. Although Pritchett's avowed aim is to save Herodotus from his critics, Herodotus is in fact misrepresented; the key passages vii 128.1 and 131 are not even mentioned in Pritchett's article, and the treatment of 'Upper Macedonia' also ignores viii 137.2. Ehrenberg, *SS*² 153 and 425 n. 49, professes to accept Pritchett's conclusions, but his narrative shows that he has not envisaged the route correctly.

⁶³ Pritchett argues at length that the coast road as far as Lower Olympus, followed by the track over the mountain, is easier as well as shorter than either the Petra or the Volustana routes; but he never compares the mountain track with Tempe.

the area presupposes that his army did not pass that way. And several features of Herodotus' narrative are incompatible with a route either through Tempe or by Gonnus—the elaborate preparations in a distant quarter, the emphasis on the long detour inland.⁶⁴

Only the Petra pass or the Volustana pass can be seriously entertained. Some scholars leave the choice open, and indeed most of the details given by Herodotus fit both. Both undoubtedly led through Perrhaebian territory (as did the Gonnus route also). Xerxes might have sojourned in Pieria, the coastal strip between Olympus and the Haliacmon, whether his pioneers were at work on the way to Petra or to Volustana. Another passage, however, implies that the whole army advanced to Pieria (vii 177), and this speaks for the Petra pass. The mention of 'Upper Macedonia' or of 'Macedonians living above' might seem to favour the Volustana pass, for as later defined Upper Macedonia embraces chiefly Elimeia, Orestis, Lynchus, and Pelagonia (Str. vii 7.8, 326), and the upper Haliacmon belongs to Elimeia; on this showing the route through the Petra pass lies in Lower Macedonia. It would be rash to assume, however, that the strict demarcation of Upper Macedonia was known to Herodotus or indeed that it was current before the country became a unitary state under Philip II. Herodotus, like Thucydides after him, clearly applies the term to the mountainous inland districts;⁶⁵ but whether he meant anything more precise may be doubted. So the Petra pass between the Pierian mountains and the western reaches of Olympus might very well be assigned to Upper Macedonia.⁶⁶

But although Herodotus cannot decide the issue for us, realistic considerations do. The route through the Volustana pass is ruled out as too long, too arduous, and too risky. No one who has read a traveller's account of the Haliacmon gorge and the ascent to the pass will imagine that the whole Persian army, with horses, baggage animals, draught animals, and wagons, traversed this route.⁶⁷ Its total length, from the lower Haliacmon to Larisa, can be estimated at 125–150 miles; such a distance over such terrain would have created insuperable problems of supply and maintenance.⁶⁸ And Elimeia, through which half the journey lay, was inhabited by mountain folk who owed no allegiance to the king of Macedon.⁶⁹ A march through Elimeia was out of the question for an army so little practised as the Persians in mountain filing and skirmishing and so dependent on external provisioning. Thus Xerxes must have taken the route through the Petra pass, which though shorter and easier than the other still led through forested mountains and gave full employment to the pioneers. Why Xerxes chose this route, when his practice was to hug the coast, and after the Greeks had abandoned Tempe, requires a special explanation, to be attempted in the following section.

It is unlikely that the western passes figured largely in the planning of the Greek allies.

⁶⁴ How and Wells, *CH* ii 175, suppose that Herodotus' account of 'the great labour involved in cutting a road' points to the track over Lower Olympus; but Herodotus clearly thinks of this operation as taking place far from Tempe and over a much longer stretch than Lower Olympus ('the Macedonian mountains', vii 131). Moreover, the passage which How and Wells adduce from Livy as describing the difficulty of the track (xliv 3.3) actually refers to an area much further west—the initial stage of the Roman march from Tripolitania past Mount Otolobus to Lower Olympus—and so has nothing to do with any route used or in prospect of being used by the Persians in 480.

⁶⁵ Pritchett, *AJA* lxxv (1961) 375, contends that the term signified something entirely different to Herodotus, namely the coastal plain of Dium north of the massif of Heracleium, whereas Lower Macedonia is the narrow coastal plain south of Heracleium beside Lower Olympus. The latter is a minuscule region which could scarcely be treated as a geographic entity and may not even have belonged to Macedon

in the fifth century; and the notion of Upper Macedonia as a coastal zone is excluded by Herodotus vii 128.1 and viii 137.2.

⁶⁶ It is no objection that Herodotus, when thinking of the Peneius as the sole outlet from the Thessalian basin, describes Olympus and Ossa jointly as 'Thessalian mountains' (vii 128.1). If Herodotus thought that a route starting in Upper Macedonia could emerge at Gonnus, he plainly had no inkling of the geography of the Macedonian interior.

⁶⁷ Hammond, having walked from Verria to Servia and again from Servia to Elassona, firmly excludes this route for the Persian army (*HM* i 430 n. 2).

⁶⁸ From a close reading of *Hdt.* vii 183.2–3, 192.1, 193.1, 196, it would appear that Xerxes and his army got from Therma to Malis in 14 days; but this reckoning cannot be accepted on any view of Xerxes' route.

⁶⁹ The European contingents of Xerxes' army listed at vii 185.2 include Eordians, Bottiaeanes, Brygians, Pierians, and Macedonians proper, but not Elimioti (first mentioned in literature at *Th.* ii 99.2).

The Thessalians were probably charged with closing the two passes.⁷⁰ That they could be effectively closed to even the strongest army is proved by Livy xlv 2–6, who reproduces with tolerable clearness Polybius' account of the campaign of Q. Marcius Philippus in the year 169, during the Third Macedonian War. Polybius himself had accompanied the Romans in their difficult and dangerous crossing of Olympus (Plb. xxviii 13, 1–2). Marcius, advancing north from Pharsalus, sought to force an entry into Macedon, and Perseus to keep him out. The choice of routes is described at xlv 2.5–11. The two western passes—'by Pythium' and 'through the Cambunian range'—would have served the Roman army best,⁷¹ but Perseus, who had seized the area from the Thessalians two years before (xlii 53), now posted a few strategic garrisons—10,000 light-armed troops at Volustana, and no doubt a similar or smaller force at Pythium, though Livy omits to say so. Thus guarded the western passes were nearly impregnable. Marcius, commanding a force of about 43,000 men, including two consular armies,⁷² advanced to Tripolitis and pitched camp, plainly or ostensibly of purpose to proceed through either the Petra or Volustana pass.⁷³ But whether this was a probe or a feint, Marcius did not try to dislodge the defenders; instead he turned east and made his way with enormous difficulty across Lower Olympus. It is true that in 168 Aemilius Paullus succeeded in forcing the Petra pass; but every detail in the accounts of Livy xlv 35, 6–24 and of Plutarch, *Aem.* 15–16.4 shows that this was an extraordinary feat, which could not have been accomplished without brilliant planning, perfect discipline, and a large element of luck. While Paullus feigned an elaborate operation in another quarter, and further diverted the enemy by fighting two sharp battles, P. Scipio Nasica led a strong picked force to Pythium under absolute secrecy and surprised the garrison in a night attack. In 480 no one will have expected Xerxes to display such resourcefulness.

Some scholars reckon that the allies, having resolved to defend Tempe, took alarm on discovering the two western passes.⁷⁴ This is a variation of Herodotus, who said that the Greeks suddenly had their eyes opened to the Gonnus route, which however could easily be held. The modern view is no less naïve. Suppose that no member of all the high command was acquainted with Thessaly or Macedon through travel and hospitality: had the allies no means of obtaining advice? Were they not in fact in consultation with the Thessalian authorities? Suppose they heard conflicting reports: could they not reconnoitre the ground before committing 10,000 troops? After all, Themistocles, who led the Athenian contingent, had a reputation for intelligent planning. The convenience of the western passes has been greatly exaggerated by modern writers. The allies doubtless knew the passes well, but foresaw that they would play no part in a direct encounter with Xerxes. The Thessalians in 480 could bar the passes as easily as Perseus did in 169. To contest these positions was unpromising at any time and would take the Persian army much too far from its supply line on the coast. The allies rightly regarded their task as blocking the coast road and the side-track over Lower Olympus.

We can now appreciate how Herodotus' misunderstanding arose. The two western passes escaped his notice because, secure in Thessalian hands, they were inessential to the campaign as conceived by the Greek leaders in 480 and as recalled by members of the expedition in after days. In the event, and for reasons which we have yet to fathom, the Persians turned aside at Dium and struck into the mountains; Herodotus heard of this, and mistakenly connected the manoeuvre with the setting of the allied expedition. That setting was familiar to him. His remarks on the general configuration of Thessaly were certainly

⁷⁰ How and Wells, *CH* ii 370–1; Munro at *CAH* iv 282; Westlake, *JHS* lvi (1936) 19.

⁷¹ In the previous year A. Hostilius Mancinus had led his army through the Volustana pass to Elimeia. Livy's report of this episode has been lost after xliii 3.7, but we can be sure that the pass was not defended.

⁷² To the original force of perhaps 37,600 Marcius added another 5,000 in spring 169 (Kromayer, *AS* ii 340–8).

⁷³ Livy hereabouts has simplified Polybius without understanding the topography, and at xlv 2.6–8

writes as if Tripolitis would also be a natural starting-point for a route over Lower Olympus ('past Lake Acuris'). It was much too far to the northwest. Of course Marcius had to evade the Macedonian post at Gonnus, but there was no need to go further north or west than Olosson at the outside. Pritchett, *AGT* ii 170, Helly, *RP* xlvii (1972) 277, and Hammond, *HM* i 137, all seem to accept Livy's view of Tripolitis as a cross-roads leading equally to Lower Olympus.

⁷⁴ How and Wells, *CH* ii 370; Burn, *PG* 342–3.

made from first-hand knowledge (vii 129.1-4, especially the concluding sentence), and so it is very likely that he toured the Peneius valley, and that at Gonnus he was shown the southern exit of the route across Lower Olympus. A secret track, as at Thermopylae: the satisfaction with which Herodotus received the news is evident in his words: *δοκέειν δέ μοι, ἦν τὸ πείθον, ὡς ἐπίθοντο κτλ.*

One question remains. Where was the Greek position? Herodotus says Tempe, Damastes Heracleium. Damastes is right, for Heracleium is the logical place to confront an invader from the north. To wait behind Lower Olympus in the Vale of Tempe is to yield the coastal plain round the Peneius mouth and to the north, a perfect staging-ground for enemy attack.⁷⁵ It is easy to suppose that Herodotus has misled us here. He knew Tempe, that spectacular landscape, and might readily assume that this was the theatre of operations. Not being a military man, he would not reflect that the narrow and wooded valley of the Peneius was no place for the Thessalian cavalry, whose presence he faithfully registers. Clearly the Greeks foresaw fighting on open ground. Now the stronghold of Heracleium commands the coastal plain north and east of Lower Olympus. An outrunner of the mountain forms a high bluff overlooking the sea; here stood Heracleium. The site, still marked by the ruins of a great Venetian fortress, has always controlled the coastal road leading to Tempe, which passes over the ridge to the west. The allied army stationed at Heracleium could also prevent a sea-borne landing on the open beaches to north and south. And of course the approaches to the route over Lower Olympus, the fatal threat in Herodotus' account, would be effectively blocked. The coastal plain north of Heracleium is bisected by the River Ziliana, probably the Sys of ancient writers, which in its middle course runs through a deep gorge.⁷⁶ To reach the ascent of the north slope of Lower Olympus, Xerxes must either follow the left bank up to the headwaters or cross the river in the plain: in the first case, the Greeks could easily forestall him on the north slope of the mountain, and in the second, a large army ranged on the opposite bank would give him pause. The ascent of Lower Olympus on this side is naturally difficult,⁷⁷ and Polybius deemed it impossible in the face of opposition (Livy xlv 6.12-13).⁷⁸ Thus Heracleium was the ideal defence: in 424, when Heracleium was in hostile hands, Brasidas was obliged to go round by the Petra pass.⁷⁹

The position here is much superior to either Thermopylae or the Isthmus, in that the Greek defenders did not require a naval arm to prevent the enemy fleet from landing troops in their rear: the coast of Magnesia, with Ossa and Pelium falling sheer into the sea, is virtually unapproachable.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ If we credit a story of Polyaeus (iv 3.23), Tempe could also be turned by way of Mount Ossa. Alexander cut steps in the vertical rock and brought his army over the peak while the Thessalians were holding Tempe: 'even today as you go through Tempe you can see the rocks of Ossa worked into steps'. Not very plausible (despite Westlake, *TFC* 217-18); though of course the story could conceivably rest on the circumstance which scholars deduce from it, namely that Thessaly resisted Alexander in 336.

⁷⁶ That the Ziliana is the Sys has been generally assumed. But the site of the town Leibethra, which was once overwhelmed by the Sys in spate (Paus. ix 30.11), is contested by Hammond, *HM* i 135-6, who would identify it with some rather shabby Hellenistic remains lying above the Ziliana between two torrent-beds; in consequence he makes the Sys one or other of the torrents, and suggests (p. 138 n. 1), on very slight grounds, that the Ziliana was anciently called the Lapathus.

⁷⁷ Marcus' descent to the coast north of Heracleium was a terrible ordeal that lasted four days and exhausted his army, even though he was unhampered by the enemy. The area through which he passed is debatable: see Kromayer, *AS* ii 281-5; Pritchett,

AGT ii 170, 174-5; Helly, *RP* xlvi (1972) 276-82; Hammond, *HM* i 138. In Helly's reconstruction, which seems to me the likeliest, the first two days of Marcus' 'descent' were in fact spent on the east side of Lower Olympus.

⁷⁸ In 1941 the Germans, by crossing Lower Olympus from Skotina to Gonnus, were able to circumvent defenders who held both Platamona-Heracleium and Tempe (Pritchett, *AJA* lxx [1961] 375); but the defenders were very few, a mere battalion, and the Germans a whole division, so that the episode does not show what would have happened in 480.

⁷⁹ On Brasidas' route see Edson, *CP* xlii (1947) 97-8, and Gomme on Th. iv 78.6. Heracleium was assessed for tribute in 425 and 421; Edson affirms, Gomme doubts, that it was effectively controlled by Athens. If it was not, it must have been in the hands of Thessalians unfriendly to Brasidas.

⁸⁰ Down to the moment when the battle of Salamis and its issue took both sides by surprise, the task of the Greek fleet was merely to support the main defence by land. This needs to be said, because the importance of offensive action at sea is hugely overrated by some recent critics, especially

5. THE REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL

With a large force and a strong position, the Greek effort promised well: why then was it abandoned after a few days? And another question arises, just as puzzling: why did Xerxes reject the coast road and the pass of Tempe, by far the shortest and easiest route, and choose instead to spend much time and trouble in clearing a way through the mountainous interior? Modern writers have found no convincing answer to the first question; the second they have not even posed. The two questions are doubtless connected. Yet we are debarred from what might seem the obvious solution, namely that both sides fought shy of the other at the last moment, the Greeks retiring and the Persians veering aside; for in Herodotus' narrative the Greek expedition ends long before Xerxes comes to contemplate the choice of routes into Thessaly. The expedition is dispatched and withdrawn again as the Persian army prepared to cross the Hellespont; then follows the march through Thrace and Chalcidice to Therma, Xerxes' reconnaissance of Tempe, the advance into Pieria, and the preliminary clearing of the mountain route by a third part of the army. Any estimate of time elapsed must be very rough; but it would seem that when the Persian army actually began the march into the mountains from the coast near Diium, the coast road to the south and the pass of Tempe had been clear of Greek defenders for at least six weeks (perhaps from the end of May to mid-July). The key points in this sequence of events—the moment of the Greek withdrawal and the moment of Xerxes' reconnaissance—are specified so emphatically by Herodotus that we cannot challenge them without upsetting the whole chronicle of the invasion. The answer must be sought within the Herodotean framework.

Herodotus offers two alternative explanations of the withdrawal. Neither is satisfactory as it stands, but both contain elements that will help us to a better understanding. He tells us first that the allies received a report of the enormous multitudes marching against them, enough to trample the Greeks underfoot; Alexander of Macedon, who sent the report, counselled retreat, and as 'the Macedonian appeared to be well disposed towards them', they did as he advised. The substance of Alexander's report is not to be taken seriously, however: as everyone knows, the Persian numbers are preposterously inflated by Herodotus, and in fact his catalogue of millions comes soon after the story of the expedition (vii 184-7). Whatever the true size of Xerxes' army—and the example of Hellenistic armies recruited from the same or comparable domains suggests that it could not exceed about 80,000 men⁸¹—

those concerned to vindicate 'Themistocles' decree' as inscribed in the third century. It is obvious that no naval action was envisaged during the Thessalian expedition: Themistocles commanded the Athenian hoplite contingent, and the allied fleet, or some considerable part of it, lay beached at Halus. After the withdrawal Thermopylae, not Artemisium, became the key to the Greek defence. Herodotus' narrative leaves not the slightest doubt. The council at the Isthmus resolved to defend Thermopylae (vii 175.1); the ordering of the fleet to Artemisium was a corollary (viii 175.2), since enemy troops could otherwise be landed behind the Greek position (a threat which did not arise in Thessaly). The soldiers at Thermopylae were full of confidence (indeed they were over-confident; and subsequently sacrificed themselves out of chagrin), the sailors at Artemisium were timid and even panicky. Herodotus describes the ground at Thermopylae in great detail (viii 1762.—177, 198-201), while the site of Artemisium receives passing mention (viii 176.1). The fighting at Thermopylae is so magnified with anecdote and retrospect (vii 201-39, viii 24-5) that it only falls short of Salamis; the much more varied action at Artemisium seems brief and blurred by comparison (viii 1-21). This despite the fact that Herodotus gathered his information at Athens, which sent levies to Artemisium but not to Therm-

opylae. Finally, the news of Thermopylae caused the fleet to retire from Artemisium (viii 21.2) and was received with shock and alarm throughout Greece (viii 40-1). It follows that Themistocles could never have urged a naval defence as a substitute for a defence by land.

⁸¹ Although no consensus exists, understandably, about the size of the Persian army, there is a certain disposition to speak of the range 150,000-200,000, either as representing three army corps of about 60,000 each, or as the tenth part of Herodotus' total, with chiliads substituted for myriads, or as the maximum number that could be sustained by the water-supply *en route*. None of these conjectures has any value, and they certainly do not corroborate each other. Hignett, *XIG* 355, reckons 80,000, including 9,000 cavalry; Larsen, *GFS* 116, suggests a single infantry corps of 50,000 plus a few thousand cavalry. More to the point is Tarn's remark, apropos of the figure 600,000 which Arrian gave for Darius' army at Issus, 'the greatest force raised by Antigonos when king of Asia west of Euphrates was 88,000 men, partly Europeans, and . . . in 302-301, when every state was making a supreme effort, Macedonia, Greece, Thrace, Egypt, and Asia west of India, with mercenaries, pirates, and Illyrians, had some 230,000-240,000 men under arms of whom probably half were Europeans' (*CAH* vi 367).

it must have been approximately known to the allies for months before the expedition went to Thessaly: the principal components were mustered at Sardis, and however we regard the adventure of the three spies (vii 146–147.1), details would infallibly reach Greece. Thus Alexander could scarcely enlighten the allies on this score. None the less we are not required to doubt that messengers from Alexander approached the Greek camp and conferred with the generals; but in later years conjecture played upon their message, and some said that Alexander, whose country lay in Xerxes' line of march, brought the first news of the Persian host. Herodotus did not reflect that by his own account Xerxes' army was still in Asia, and that at this remove Alexander was no better placed than the Greeks to determine its size.

The other explanation advanced by Herodotus is that the allies took alarm at the discovery of the Gonnus route. We have already seen that this explanation will not do: the allies were certainly acquainted with the several routes in question before they undertook the expedition, and neither the Gonnus route over Lower Olympus nor any other route could threaten a well-organised defence. But although Herodotus is confused about the Gonnus route, the details which he provides enable us to identify the route actually followed by Xerxes, namely the Petra pass.

Damastes' version as related by Speusippus is different again. While the Greeks were at Heracleium, 'Alexander disclosed the treachery of Aleuas and the Thessalians, and the Greeks, withdrawing, owed their safety to Alexander'. As already noted, 'Aleuas' is a slip for 'the Aleuads', and the phrase 'Aleuas and the Thessalians' will mean the Aleuads and such Thessalians as supported them, to be distinguished from the Thessalians at large, who were committed to the allied defence. The implications of the message will be considered presently. What is most important is Alexander's role as warner. In this respect Damastes and Herodotus agree, and their conflicting notions of the actual warning make the agreement all the more significant: Alexander's role is the common ground on which different explanations of the Greek withdrawal have been erected. We have excellent warrant then for believing that Alexander of Macedon had a hand in that strange decision.

Nor is this so surprising. We can easily imagine Alexander's dismay when the Greek allies resolved on the defence of Lower Olympus. A Persian army bottled up in the Pierian plain would soon exhaust the resources of his little kingdom. The Greek position at Heracleium does not imply his approval, much less his co-operation, for it is very doubtful whether Heracleium and the stretch of coast immediately north of the Peneius mouth belonged to Macedon in 480, a time when Thessaly was strong and Macedon was weak,⁸² and even if the town was nominally his, Alexander could not exclude a large Greek army. So it was that he found himself in a very awkward predicament; and yet he managed to get clear. Alexander's record proves him extremely nimble. Though a vassal of Persia, he enjoyed the trust of the Greek loyalists, as Herodotus says. He was both the confidant of Mardonius and the friend, Proxenos, and Euergetes of Athens (viii 136.1, 143.3). He medised throughout the invasion but was still acceptable at Athens as a third party. And after the war, when he seasonably took Amphipolis from the Persians, he was allowed to commemorate the achievement with a modest offering at Delphi ([D]. 12.21). It is understandable that some moderns have delighted to portray him as a smooth and shifty rogue; and perhaps there was a certain lack of principle or of sincerity. A king of Macedon, solicited by larger powers, was often tempted or constrained to change course, witness Perdiccas during the Archidamian War; yet the notable point with Alexander is not his tactics but his success.

Somehow he induced the Greeks to retreat from Heracleium, and this intervention was remembered afterwards a positive service. According to Damastes he revealed the treachery of the Aleuads. The true import of Damastes' statement has gone unrecognised because of the general supposition that the Aleuads of Larisa were the rulers of Thessaly;

⁸² Edson, *CP* xlii (1947) 97, and in *Ἀρχαία Μακεδονία* (Salonica 1968), 37–38, holds that the name Heracleium betrays a Macedonian foundation and a 'propagandist' intent, inasmuch as Heracles

sired the Argead dynasty. But the name would suit Thessalian pretensions just as well, for the magnates of Thessaly also harked back to Heracles.

hence Damastes, if he is regarded at all, is taken to show that Thessaly at large was wavering, not firm as Herodotus says. But we have seen that Herodotus' picture of Thessaly is entirely consistent and plausible. The federal government under a Pharsalian Tagus genuinely wished to repulse the Persians; whether the Aleuads had in fact intrigued with the Persians before this time remains doubtful, but they were in any case a fractious local sept who could not influence the undertakings of the federal government and the rest of the Greeks. Often enough in Thessalian history Larisa and the Aleuads were at odds with the other centres further south. The conjunction of the Aleuads and the king of Macedon in Damastes' report ought to have alerted scholars at once: they are traditional allies. Of course the evidence comes from a later time; it could not be otherwise. So far as our knowledge reaches, however—from Alexander's son Perdiccas down to Philip II, when Thessaly lost its independence—the Aleuads are invariably found collaborating with the king of Macedon.

In 424, when Brasidas marched through Thessaly in defiance of popular sentiment, the liaison with Perdiccas was provided by Niconidas of Larisa, a close friend of the king and probably an Aleuad (Th. iv 78.2).⁸³ In the closing years of the fifth century the Aleuads handed over Larisa to Archelaus in order to secure their own interests ([Herodes] *pol.* 16–18; the Aristippus who figures here is proved an Aleuad by Pl. *Meno* 70b). Hellanocrates of Larisa, the bearer of an Aleuad name, was a favourite of Archelaus (Arist. *pol.* v 10, 1311b 17–20). In 369 the Aleuads appealed to Alexander II against Jason (D.S. xv 61.3), and a decade later to Philip against Jason's sons (D.S. xvi 14.2). Philinna of Larisa, whom Philip married in order to gain support in Thessaly (Satyrus as cited by Ath. xiii 5, 557C), was very likely an Aleuad.⁸⁴ According to Demosthenes 18.48 it was Philip's Aleuad partisans who made Thessaly subject to Macedon. In the light of these examples we shall know better how to interpret Alexander's message and the paradox of one mediser denouncing another to the Greek loyalists. The treachery of the Aleuads was doubtless instigated by Alexander in order to dislodge the Greeks.

Yet how could any act of the Aleuads compromise the Greek defence? Thessaly outside of Larisa was united behind the Greeks. With a small body of Thessalians guarding the Petra pass, with the allied army entrenched at Heracleium, the Persian⁶ faced a solid front, which Alexander himself had no power to overcome. There was only one point at which the Greeks were vulnerable, and this point rested with the Aleuads. Polybius' extensive comments on the Roman campaign of 169 make the situation very clear. After Marcius by a long traverse of the southern ridges of the Olympus range had come down to the coast near Heracleium, the Macedonians still possessed several strongholds in or above the defile of the Peneius, and Polybius explains how easily they might have sprung the trap on Marcius (Livy xlv 6.4–16). A few men could close the pass of Tempe behind a great army, cutting off supplies and communications and the avenue of retreat. The defile might be fortified in several places, but the chief permanent stronghold was the Perrhaebian town of Gonnus, commanding the western entrance to the defile. Throughout the years when Macedon was threatened by a Roman army operating in Thessaly, Gonnus was the 'bolt' that closed the door (Livy xlv 6.6; *cf.* Plb. xviii 27.2, Livy xxxiii 10.6, xxxvi 10.11, xlv 54.7, xlv 6.10). In the fifth century Gonnus, like the other towns in southern Perrhaebia, was subject to Larisa.⁸⁵ Thus the Aleuads had an excellent opportunity to disrupt the allies' communications.⁸⁶ No doubt the allies might take counter-measures, but if they could not rely on the natives who

⁸³ In view of this passage we may suspect that the Thessalian magnates who had intrigued with Perdiccas during the previous year (Th. iv 132.2) were partly or chiefly Aleuads of Larisa.

⁸⁴ Beloch, *GG* iii 2² 69. No one should be misled by historians of Alexander who vilify Philinna as a 'dancer', a 'harlot', and the like.

⁸⁵ B. Helly, *Gonnoi* (1973) i 75–6.

⁸⁶ When Larisa sided with Macedon against southern Thessaly, the Macedonians would be

admitted through Tempe and their adversaries would have little warning. 'Alexander's Tower', at which Philip V encamped on the first night after Cynoscephalae, before proceeding to Gonnus the next day (Plb. xviii 27.2), is evidently a fortress or watchtower on the road south of Gonnus, and such a place would only be needed if Gonnus were not available; the builder was probably Alexander of Pherae, who early in his reign fought with Macedon while meeting opposition in Larisa.

lived beside the defile and understood the terrain, the actual contest with Xerxes would find the allied army critically insecure in its line of supply and retreat.

Thus the treachery which Alexander revealed to the Greeks touched Achilles' heel, and the advice he gave, though not disinterested, was sound. The Greeks were grateful to him afterwards; of course the ultimate issue of the war at Salamis and Plataea give them no reason to regret the decision at Heracleium. And no doubt Alexander's words were pained and sympathetic: he had tried to use his leverage with the Aleuads, but to no avail, etc. Did any of the Greeks suspect the imposture? Perhaps; for Alexander was dealing with Themistocles, and Themistocles may have known him well through negotiating for ship's timber.⁸⁷ But when the war was over, and Alexander hellenised as briskly as he had medised before, there was no reason to recriminate. The only hint of disenchantment is Plutarch's notice that Cimon at one time was expected to seize a part of Macedonia from Alexander (*Cim.* 14.3); but this episode cannot be dated, and in any case may be unconnected with Alexander's performance during the invasion.

The Greek withdrawal is best explained on the hypothesis of collusion between Alexander of Macedon and the Aleuads of Larisa. We may turn to the other question raised at the outset: why did Xerxes clear a road through the mountains instead of taking his army by way of Tempe? When the King arrived at Therma, Alexander, we may be sure, was waiting to assure him that the coast road and the pass of Tempe stood open. He could report that the only obstacle to the invasion of Greece, namely the allied force at Heracleium, had been removed some weeks before; and perhaps he even confided his own role in the affair. But the description of Tempe Xerxes heard with disquiet; the place was worth inspecting. His reconnaissance left no doubt that the Greeks had gone and the pass was clear, that the Aleuads were obliging and the other Thessalians tractable. Obviously it was safe for a huge army, moving in concert with a huge fleet, to march along the coast and through Tempe. But the Greek withdrawal suggested another danger, which autopsy confirmed. Xerxes too had to guard his rear. The campaign in Greece would take some time, and communications by land as well as by sea must be secure, as also the line of ultimate withdrawal, not to speak of possible retreat. Tempe was still a threat. This is why Xerxes spent 'many days together' in clearing a sufficient road through the mountains. And his army, having once advanced by this route, would be able to return by it under less ideal conditions. It may be objected that if Xerxes feared hostile action in his rear or during his withdrawal, many other points on the invasion route were nearly as unsafe as Tempe, not least the Petra pass which he chose instead. This is true, and perhaps only the example of the Greeks' own discomfiture can account for the exaggerated caution that made Xerxes avoid Tempe.

We have come to understand why the Greek loyalists abandoned a strong position on the border of Macedon and Thessaly. It is important to recognise that they had previously made a most determined attempt to defend the position. To check the Persians at the northern limit of Greece was sound strategy but required a huge effort of planning and co-operation. In fact it was the greatest effort of the war; for in the Plataea campaign the various contingents gathered on short notice and served close to home. The unexpected failure of the Thessalian expedition explains why the subsequent operations of 480 were inadequate or irresolute; the allies had been demoralised. Herodotus, intent on the actual fighting, missed the significance of the expedition.

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⁸⁷ M. B. Wallace, *Phoenix* xxiv (1970) 199 n. 13 (on p. 200).