

## CROSSING THE STRAITS: THE PERSIANS IN THRACE\*

Jan P. Stronk

In or shortly before 513<sup>1</sup>, King Darius collected a large fleet from among the Greek cities in Asia Minor and sent it to the Pontic coast. A Greek engineer, Mandrocles, constructed a boat-bridge across the Bosphorus. As Herodotus states (Hdt. IV.87), two marble memorial stelae commemorated this feat in Greek and "Assyrian characters", by which he can have meant Old Persian, Elamite, or Akkadian. The Persian army crossed the bridge and entered Thrace, following the fleet. People from the West Pontic coast until the Ister, including Greek colonies and Thracian tribes, submitted to the Persians without resistance. Without problems the army continued its march to the Ister. Meanwhile a pontoon bridge had been constructed across the river. Darius crossed the Danube and started a campaign against the Scythians of the South Russian steppes. As Bury puts it: "Cyrus had conquered the eastern coasts of the Mediterranean; Cambyses had completed and secured that conquest on the south side by the subjection of Egypt; it remained for Darius to complete and secure his empire on the north side by the reduction of Thrace" (Bury 1970, 238).

A key function in this policy was preserved for "The Straits", the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Control of the Straits was in more than one respect important for Persia. First because the Straits connected rather than divided the Thracians living on either sides of the Straits (cf. Stronk 1995, 59-60), second because mastery of the Straits facilitated the hegemony of the Ionian states in the Euxine region,<sup>2</sup> third

\* In 1994, I submitted a paper with this title to the Thracia Pontica VI conference at Sozopol (Bulgaria). Due to technical problems the text was printed somewhat mutilated, occasionally even stating the opposite of my intentions. I have, therefore, decided to reshape the paper and to present, though under the original title, a completely revised text. The dates mentioned in the text are B.C.

<sup>1</sup> cf. Burn 1984, 128; Dandamaev (1989) postulates an earlier date, about 516.

<sup>2</sup> During the fifth century there were over twenty Ionian colonies in the Black Sea region, partly concentrated on the Crimea, but also scattered on the Eastern, Southern, and Western shores; cf., e.g., Isaac 1986, 50-51; Boardman 1980<sup>3</sup>; Morkot 1996.



Fig. 1. The Dardanelles (after *Admiralty Chart 2429*)

because any action directed at expansion either towards Greece or towards northern Thrace and beyond depended on Persian check of the Straits.

According to Herodotus' account in his fourth book Darius' expedition was far from successful, in fact more or less a defeat. This may, perhaps, be true for that part of the expedition beyond the Danube River,

directed against the Scythians. Darius succeeded to save himself and most of his army, largely thanks to the fact that the Ionian guardsmen who guarded the bridge across the Danube refused to destroy it in spite of the Scythians bidding them to do so. Darius had, though, marched a considerable distance through the steppes in pursuit of his ever retreating adversaries. To some extent he may, therefore, have been politically justified in adding the *Sakā parādrayā* (Scythians across the sea) in the list of peoples subject to Persian rule though we may, apparently, safely assume that a real subjection never took place. As for Thrace, it appears that, at least in the region bordering the Black Sea, the Persians gained a firm hold. Among the tribes that were conquered were the Thracians of Salmydessos, i.e. Thracians belonging to the Thynians, and Thracians living in the hinterland of Apollonia Pontica, modern Sozopol, and Mesembria (Hdt. IV.93; Lenk 1936, c. 419), present day Nessebur. Probably they were Odrysian tribes. The Getae resisted fiercely but were, nevertheless, enslaved. Only after the defeat of the Persian army in 479 and the death of Mardonius the picture altered considerably and Persian authority in the European part of Thrace disappeared quickly.

The attack on the Scythians appears to fit in the Achaemenid policy as regards the peoples that surrounded the Persian empire to the north and northeast: Cyrus had at an advanced age still fought the Massagetae, while Darius had participated in at least two campaigns against other Scythian groups or entities, the *Sakā tigraxaudā* of Central Asia (cf. Dandamaev 1989, 138-139). Now this policy was extended, one might say as Cyrus had predicted (cf. Hdt. I.152-3), to the areas west and northwest of the Empire. As we have seen Darius' attempt failed as concerns the Scythians, though not for an important part of Thrace. Having crossed the Ister back into safety, Darius marched through Thrace to Sestus on the Chersonese and thence crossed over with his ships to Asia. He left, however, a general in Thrace, Megabazus (Hdt. IV.143), who subdued all the people of the Hellespont who did not voluntarily take the side of the Persians (Hdt. IV.144).<sup>3</sup> In this period we must place the massive deportation of Paeonians to Asia, because their territory could not be garrisoned by the Persians (Burn 1984, 136). The story told by Herodotus on this deportation (Hdt. V.12-6) really is out of order.

Though the Ionian revolt may have affected the Persian occupation of Thrace somewhat, Persian domination was, however, speedily after

<sup>3</sup> Briant (1996, 156) also states that the result of Darius' expedition finally was far from unsuccessful: the Danube had become a firm border between the Persian Empire and the Scythians living north of it and the King had gained a territory that was rich in strategic products.

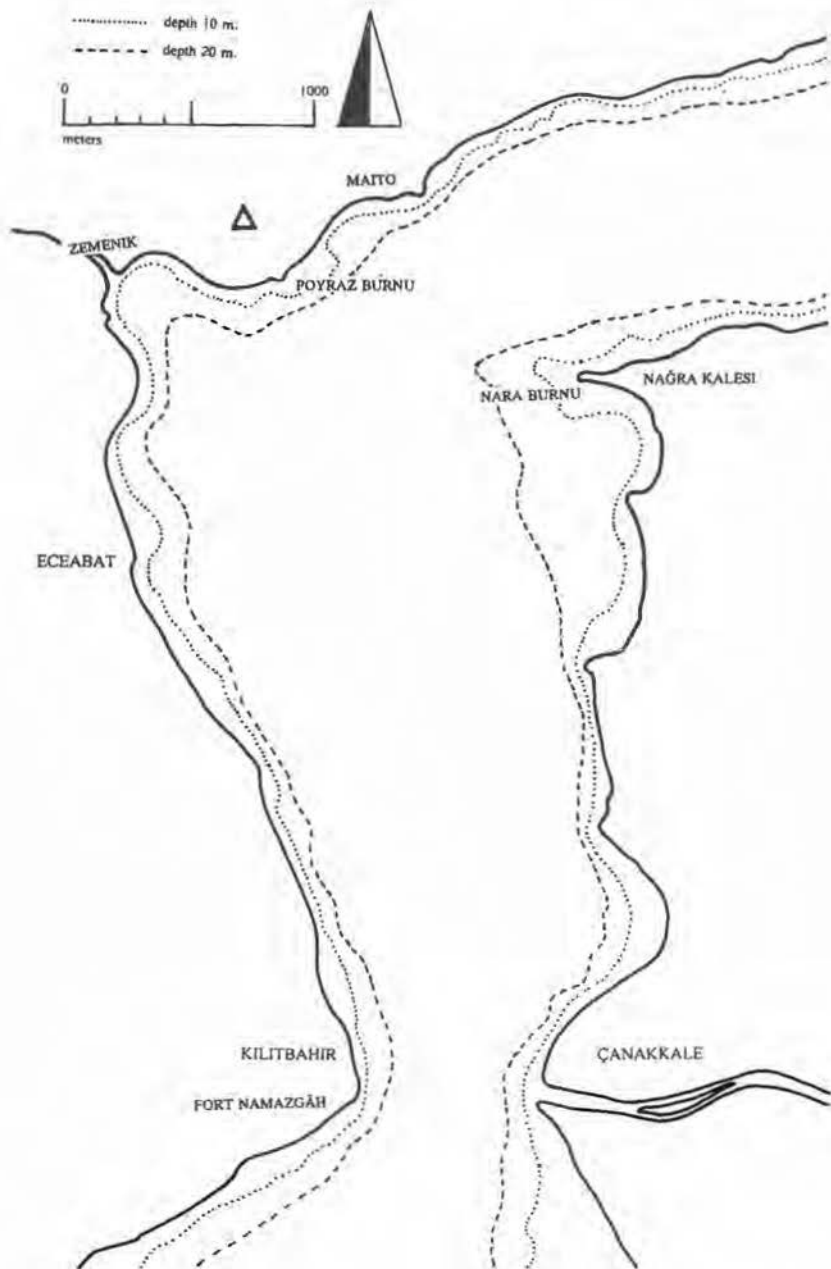


Fig. 2. Part of the narrows of the Dardanelles  
(after *Admiralty Chart 2429*).

493 re-established by another Persian general, Mardonius<sup>4</sup> (Hdt. VI.43 sqq.). Shipwreck of his fleet at Athos (492) and attacks by the Brygi, a Thracian tribe, temporarily forced Mardonius to retire. During an attack by the Brygi Mardonius himself was wounded (Hdt. VI.45). Though Persian domination in Thrace continued, at least in the coastal regions, Mardonius himself was called back to Persia.

In spite of the fact that the struggle between Persia and the Greeks continued with attacks on mainland Greece, Thrace was not directly involved in the so-called Persian Wars until about 481/480. The new Persian King Xerxes had ordered a massive invasion of Greece. To facilitate the crossing of the Dardanelles by the army the construction of a bridge across the Hellespont was ordered.

The Hellespont, or Dardanelles (cf. Figs. 1-3), is a geological syncline connecting the Sea of Marmora and the Aegean,<sup>5</sup> some 60 to 65 kms long and with a width varying between 1.2 kms and 6.5 kms. From the Sea of Marmora it runs more or less SWW, makes an almost 90° turn, to the S at Nara Burnu, and again between Çanakkale (Asia) and Kilitbaki (Europe) and resumes its original course, turning W just at the point of the Turkish War Memorial (First World War, so-called Gallipoli landing) and opening into the Aegean. Its floor is wide and over 60 m deep, with irregular slope and intersected by potholes that are more than 100 m deep. Sedimentation in the Dardanelles is very prominent: only between Nağra Kalesi (Nara Burnu) and Çanakkale the speed of the current at the seafloor is so strong that a deposit is prevented. Since the banks of the Dardanelles decline rather steeply, it seems conceivable that the present situation does not significantly differ from that some 2500 years ago: factors that may have contributed to a slightly different situation are the rise of the sea level by some 1 to 2 m<sup>6</sup> and the washing away of a part of the shoreline by the currents (cf. *infra* ad 8).

The description of the construction of the bridge given by Herodotus (Hdt. VII.36) runs as follows: "That they might lighten the strain of the cables, they laid penteconters and triremes alongside of each other, three hundred and sixty to bear the bridge that was nearest to the Euxine sea, and three hundred and fourteen to bear the other; all lay

---

<sup>4</sup> Mardonius was the nephew and son-in-law of King Darius, commander of Ionia since c. 492 and restored from there Persian authority in southern Thrace; he was left in command in Greece after the Persian defeat at Salamis; he was killed in the battle at Plataea in 479.

<sup>5</sup> Most of the information on the Dardanelles is based upon Mertz 1928, 41 sqq. and 223.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Stanley/Blanpied 1980; also Lambek 1996.



Fig. 3. Northern Aegean, Dardanelles, and Sea of Marmora seen from the space (Photo: NASA).

obliquely to the line of the Pontus and parallel with the current of the Hellespont. Having so laid the ships alongside they let down very great anchors, both from the end of the ship nearest the Pontus to hold fast against the winds blowing from within that sea, and from the other end, towards the west and the Aegean, to hold against the west and south winds. Moreover they left for passage an opening in the line of penteconters and triremes, that so he that would might be able to voyage to the Pontus, or out of it. Having so done, they stretched the cables from the land, twisting them taut with wooden windlasses; and they did not as before keep the two kinds apart, but assigned for each bridge two

cables of esparto grass and four of papyrus. All these were of the same thickness and fair appearance, but those of esparto grass were heavier in their proportion, a cubit thereof [= c. 46 cms] weighing a talent [= c. 80 lbs or 36 kgs, JPS].<sup>7</sup> When the strait was thus bridged, they sawed balks of wood to a length equal to the breadth of the floating supports [i.e. the penteconters and triremes, JPS], and laid them in order on the taut cables, and having set them alongside they then made them fast. This done, they heaped brushwood on to the bridge, and when this all was laid in order they heaped earth on it and stamped it down; then they made a fence on either side, lest the beasts of burden and horses should be affrighted by the sight of the sea below them."

It seems the description of an almost Herculean task and it is, therefore, surprising that relatively little attention has been given to this work.<sup>8</sup> Though there certainly are some problems to accept Herodotus' statement as a matter of fact I think it essentially renders the situation.<sup>9</sup> I would, however, like to add some remarks:

1. it was not only the wind but also especially the combination of the frequently fierce winds (cf. *Black Sea Pilot*, 57-58, 85) and the currents in the Hellespont that made secure anchoring necessary;<sup>10</sup>
2. I therefore do not believe Macan's theory (Macan 1908, 142 sqq.), which speaks of two sets of anchors for each bridge. I think that Herodotus stated that each ship anchored by two large anchors, one at the stem and one at the stern (that was directed to the Pontus);
3. considering the depth of the Dardanelles it will have required enormous stones (anchors) to keep the anchor lines taut and to prevent the ships from drifting. This task alone must have required Herculean strength and extraordinary skills;
4. we are not informed whether the ships were placed side to side or

---

<sup>7</sup> Herodotus may have seen the remains of (the tackle of) the bridge in person, as they had been transported to Athens to be dedicated (and probably displayed) in the temples: Hdt. IX.121.

<sup>8</sup> Hignett 1963, 94, e.g., remarks, almost casually, that "to facilitate the achievement [i.e. the advance of the Persian army through Thrace and Macedonia, JPS] ... two pontoon bridges were thrown across the Hellespont at Abydos...". No further detail, nor comment, is given.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. also the remarks on building bridges by Arr., *An.* VII.7, who compares the method described by Herodotus with the, in his view, more efficient Roman method.

<sup>10</sup> At present the average maximum rate of the current in the Dardanelles varies between 2.5 knots to 3 knots p/h in and southwards of the narrows, but it may increase up to 5 knots under abnormal conditions (cf. *Black Sea Pilot*, 41). Since the Dardanelles may have been c. 500 at least somewhat narrower and the difference in level of Sea of Marmara and Aegean probably at least the same as at present (the level of the Sea of Marmara is higher than the Aegean; *Black Sea Pilot*: 37, 39) we may assume that the currents (the upper-and the lower current) may have been at least as strong as they are today.

were anchored with small intervals in between: considering the fiercety of the (upper) current I prefer the latter solution;

5. Herodotus (Hdt. VII.33-4) is quite specific on the spot where the Dardanelles were bridged (cf. Figs. 1 and 2): Herodotus suggests that the crossing was made between Abydus on the Asiatic side (near Cape Nara = Nara Burnu, near present-day Nağra Kalesi) and a wooded cliff between the cities of Sestus (modern Zemenik) and Madytus (modern Maito) on the European side,<sup>11</sup> probably somewhat NW of Poyraz Burnu, at the foot of Poyraz Tepe (alt. 143 m). It is unclear whether Herodotus considered this point the narrowest point of the Hellespont. As its width he mentions 7 stadia (about 1239 m): at present the width between Nara Burnu and the nearest point on the European shore is some 1950 m, between Nara Burnu and Poyraz Burnu almost 2400 m (as a matter of fact: the narrowest point of the Dardanelles is at present between the points direct S or N of the mouth of the Sari Çayı, flowing into the Dardanelles at modern Çanakkale, and just N of the ruins of Fort Namazgâh, just S of modern Kilitbaki, i.e. 1325 m: cf. Fig. 2);

6. I agree with How and Wells (1928, II, 140 ad VII.34) that "not the cape itself, but the little valleys on either side would be the most convenient landing-places for the host". Nevertheless the strength of the current is there almost maximal;

7. the northernmost part of the Dardanelles has the more clement conditions as regards currents, generally less than 0.75 knot (*Black Sea Pilot*, 41); in the central and southern parts current rates generally are over 2.5 knots or higher;

8. How and Wells frequently state that the Dardanelles are nowadays wider than in Herodotus' days because of the washing away of sands due to currents and winds: they probably base their opinion upon the difference in the width of the Dardanelles (at Abydus?) as given by Herodotus and the present situation, a difference of about 50%. In doing so they appear to neglect the general rise of the water level that has taken place since Herodotus' days (cf. *supra*) and other possible natural causes that might explain the difference, though it should be admitted that the Dardanelles curve S at precisely this point and washing away of sand on this point is highly conceivable (cf. Fig. 2). They also neglect the possibility that Herodotus was right on the minimum width of the Hellespont, but located it at the wrong place. Even if we would accept that natural causes would account for a difference in sea-

---

<sup>11</sup> How/Wells 1928, II, 140 ad VII.33 suggest between Sestus and Coila (modern Kilia). Madytus was situated some miles further to the south of Coila. I will use the names as they appear on the *Admiralty Maps*, map 2429 (Dardanelles), of 1996.

level between Herodotus' days and at present of 10 m, the width of the Dardanelles at Abydos would be between 1425 and 1650 m. Only a difference of 20 m would render the width Herodotus seems to indicate for the Hellespont at Abydos (but even then the crossing at Çanakkale is less in width, though the difference is smaller: cf. Fig. 2);

9. the difference in numbers of ships needed for each bridge is not explained. Did one bridge completely exist of triremes and another of the more slender penteconters, was there some distance between the bridges, or did one bridge cross the Hellespont in a different angle than the other? Herodotus remains unspecific on these points;

10. Herodotus mentions penteconters *and* triremes as supports (my italics, JPS) for the bridge: though we can not exclude the possibility that one of the bridges consisted completely of triremes (cf. supra 9) I suppose the ships used were essentially penteconters next to perhaps a number of so-called "old" triremes. Since triremes were the most formidable weapons in a war at sea at that moment, I cannot imagine that ships still fit for combat would have been used for the construction of the bridges. You do not waste your best weapons if you intend to fight an adversary that is provided with a relatively modern fleet;

11. in spite of the suggestion that Herodotus appears to make by the use of ἐντεταμέναι (Hdt. VIII.117, IX.114) as well as by his phrasing ὑπο μὲν τὴν [γέφυραν] (Hdt. VII.36) that the ropes and the roadway were the true bridge I think that the ships were the basis of the bridge (cf. also Arr., *An.* VII.7.i, who also appears to suggest that boats were the basis of the bridge). The cables must have rested on the decks of the ships and have been fastened to the ships. The drawing taut (and keeping them taut) of cables that, once put together,<sup>12</sup> measured perhaps up to a mile in length or even more and with the weight indicated by Herodotus is, I think, inconceivable. If, however, only the part between the first ship (and the last) and the shore had to be drawn taut, the achievement would, though still enormous, be less unimaginable;

12. to draw the cables taut the Persians used, according to Herodotus, capstans or windlasses. No doubt a capstan or windlass with at least four handspikes and the available block-and-tackle arrangements, whether or not in combination with an A-frame (= shear-legs), could

---

<sup>12</sup> At present cables are some 720 feet long. It seems to me that the builders of the bridge used at least some 8 to 10 cables that were lashed together to a single rope; it would have been (nearly) impossible to transport and to handle the ropes if they had been made as a single cable, if only because of its weight and dimension. A single cable of nearly 1400 m, the length necessary to bridge the Dardanelles, would have weighed 108,000 kgs.



Fig. 4. Boat bridge crossing Kabul River, Afghanistan (after Green 1996, 207).

provide sufficient power to bridge some distance.<sup>13</sup> The sheer mass of the rope as described by Herodotus, however, that would assemble on the capstan's shaft if, say, a distance over some 50 m would have to be bridged makes it, in my view, impossible that the ropes were the real foundation of the bridges;

13. no indication whatsoever is given how the windlasses (or shear-frames) were anchored; if the ropes were to carry the full weight of the bridge this problem could, I think, only be solved with present-day techniques. Also this leads me to discredit Herodotus' concept;

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Hero of Alexandria, *Mechanica* II, dealing with all kinds of mechanical devices. For the windlass: II.1, 10, cf. also Drachmann 1963, 50-52; for the compound pulley: II.3, 11-13, Drachmann 1963, 53-55; cf. also Hero II.23-24, Drachmann 1963, 86-88; for another possible instrument to draw cables taut, the *barulkos*, Hero I.1, cf. also Drachmann 1963, 22-32. Vitruvius, X.ii.1-4, gives a technical description of the A-frame, cf. Drachmann 1963, 142-145. cf. also Drachmann 1963, 199, 203-204.

14. we may suppose that, in order to obtain an even surface for the ropes to rest upon, the triremes (probably at least somewhat higher than penteconters) carried an extra load of ballast, at least if not only ships of one type were used to construct the bridges (cf. *supra* 9): creating such a smooth basis may well have been another of the major problems to overcome.

Reviewing my remarks, I think the concept of the bridge was basically that of a boat bridge, with some adaptations to match both the unfavourable natural conditions and the expected number of users (the load of a crossing army of about 200,000 men and its camp followers: Herodotus' estimation of the size of Xerxes' army (2,000,000 men) seems greatly exaggerated).<sup>14</sup> As such we may compare it with an example that functioned until at least quite recently. Crossing the Kabul River in present-day Afghanistan we find a boat-bridge that fits at least the greater part of Herodotus' description. Especially the balks, the brushwood and the stamped earth are noteworthy, but also the fact that it is the boats that actually form the basis of the bridge (cf. Fig. 4). Essentially the difference between the bridges across the Kabul River and the Dardanelles appears that of scale and, it should be admitted, the sophistication of the fence on the Dardanelles' bridges. Though certainly not all questions concerning these bridges are solved (cf. Macan 1908, 144-146), I think we may look upon their construction as a landmark in the history of engineering.<sup>15</sup> As long as the bridges existed (they were found destroyed by the Greeks shortly after the battle of Plataea in 479: Hdt. IX.114) they also could check the sailing through the straits, especially that by corn-ships heading for Greece. Generally, however, such a check was no main objective in at least Xerxes' policy as is shown by his remarks quoted by Herodotus (Hdt. VII.147). As I already indicated above, the cultural similarity of the regions on either side of the Straits was manifest, both being inhabited by Thracians. Of these, the Thracians in Asia already were, more or less, accustomed to Persian authority. Between c. 513/512 and the battle of Plataea (cf. the remarks by Bury 1970, 238-241) also a major part of the Thracians in Europe appeared to accept Persian suzerainty. The possession of, or at least control over, both parts of Thrace provided

<sup>14</sup> Hignett 1963, 351 remarks that an Oxford scholar (no name is given) remarked to him that Greek writers may have misinterpreted the Persian unit of calculation of a *chiliad* as a *myriad*, so that all figures were automatically multiplied by ten. If this theory is applied to Herodotus' figures for Xerxes' army this would give 170,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry, excluding, of course, the camp-followers.

<sup>15</sup> One Harpalus is said to have been the bridge-builder; Diels 1904, 8.

Persia with an important stronghold both in defensive and offensive respect for any policy it wished to pursue in Europe.

Though Hoddinott calls Thrace (meaning the European part of it) a satrapy (Hoddinott 1981, 101-2; cf. also Hammond: 1986, e.g. 179, 208 sqq.), I am not completely convinced that Thrace really has been one. We know that Darius appointed Megabyzus (also called Megabazus) as στρατηγός (Hdt. IV.143, V.14). Especially Herodotus V.14 stresses the military function of Megabyzus, which is normally only part of a satrap's tasks (cf. e.g. How/Wells 1928, I, 402). One might suppose that before a territory was considered so pacified that it could be regarded as "definitively" incorporated within the Persian realm, a military governor, the *strategos*, ruled it. Among the texts from the Persian Empire are several lists of peoples that were ruled by the Persian Kings. These lists are (presented in the fashion adapted by Kent - in which the first capital indicates the name of the king (D = Darius, X = Xerxes) and the second the provenance of the text) to be found at Behistun (Bisitun) DB I, § 6 (Kent 1953, 119), Persepolis DPe § 2 (Kent 1953, 136), the Suez Canal DZa-c (Kent 1953, 146-147), Persepolis DPh (Kent 1953, 136-137), Hamadan DH (Kent 1953, 147), Naqš-i-Rustam DNa, § 3 (Kent 1953, 137-138), Susa DSe, § 3 (Kent 1953, 141-142) and DSm, § 2 (Kent 1953, 145) and Persepolis XPh (also known as the 'Daiva-inscription'), § 3 (Kent 1953, 150-152). We find among the names of peoples the *Skudra*, i.e. the Macedonians, the Thracians or the Scythians<sup>16</sup> in the texts from Naqš-i-Rustam (DNa), Susa (DSe and DSm), and Persepolis (XPh). In DNa and DSe the king claims to have "seized [these countries] outside of Persia; I ruled over them; they bore tribute to me; what was said to them by me, that they did". In DSm and XPh he simply states: "...these are the countries of which I was [c.q. became] king."

In general the name *Skudra* should include the natives behind the Greek coastal fringe in the north Aegean (Cook 1983, 64). Though Persian domination over the region appears thus firmly attested in the (Persian) texts, there is, nevertheless, one thing one should not overlook. These lists of subjected peoples, impressive as they are, are no lists of satrapies, as How and Wells already noted (How/Wells 1928, I, 406; cf. also Cook 1983, 81). Moreover: they are highly political, almost a canon. If we look at the texts, which name the *Skudra*, we notice that DNa also mentions among the subjects of the king the *Sakā parādayā*, which Darius had pursued to no good purpose in 513. Apart

---

<sup>16</sup> How/Wells 1928, II, 335 ad IX.116.1; Cook 1983, 58-59 and 240 n. 21; Herzfeld 1968, 348-349. Scydra is a Macedonian town, situated in Emathia: Detschew 1976, 462.

from the *Skudra* DSe and XPh mention among the subjected peoples the Ionians, "this side and at the other side of the sea". At least the latter remark essentially remained wishful dreaming. It seems, therefore, to me that the Persian texts do not give firm evidence for the regions administered by the state. The only detailed information on Persian administration and satrapies we have (at present) is given by Herodotus (Hdt. III.89-94; cf. Cook 1983, 81).<sup>17</sup>

Herodotus tells us that the Persian Empire was divided in twenty satrapies and mentions each of them, also telling the name of the peoples constituting each satrapy. Then, however, things become somewhat complicated. Writing III.96 Herodotus mentions that "ἀπὸ νήσων προσήιε ἄλλος φόρος ... καὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ μέχρι Θεσσαλίας" (from those from the islands a different type of tribute came in ... and from the people from Europe until Thessaly); then he concludes (III.97): "Αὗται μὲν νυν ἀρχαί τε ἦσαν καὶ φόρων ἐπιτάξεις". Neither the Thracians nor any other European people are mentioned in the list of twenty satrapies; they are, however, mentioned later as people who are obliged to pay tribute, more specific: another kind of tribute. Also in his final statement Herodotus distinguishes between satrapies and tributes, by not stating "their tributes". I doubt, therefore, whether we may call Thrace a satrapy (or part of a satrapy) during Darius' reign, especially because of Herodotus' use of the word ἄλλος. That, indeed, tribute of some kind was offered to the Persian king by Thracians or related people, at the occasion of Nowruz (Persian New Year), may appear from the reliefs on the E side of the Persepolis apadana (cf. Stronk 1994/95, 68).<sup>18</sup>

During the reign of Xerxes Mascames is styled as ὑπαρχος (Hdt. VII.105-6), but also Artayctes, living at Sestus, wears the same title (Hdt. IX.116). How and Wells state that this is the term Herodotus used for the function of satrap, as he used νόμος for satrapy (cf. Hdt. III.70; also How/Wells 1928, I, 281 ad III.89). However, they also conclude that *huparchos* is as well used as the commander of a fortress, while *nomos* is used for districts smaller than satrapies.<sup>19</sup> Here, too, no certainty for the status of Thrace is to be found.

Considering the fact that evidence is, to my knowledge, not yet con-

<sup>17</sup> For an elaborated discussion on the position and functions of a satrap, the various ways to describe the satrap and the list of Herodotus cf. Dandamaev/Lukonin 1989, 98-103; Briant 1996, 402-404.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. for taxes (and [gift]-obligations) of various kinds within the Achaemenid Empire Dandamaev/Lukonin 1989, 177-195; Briant 1996, 405-433.

<sup>19</sup> How/Wells 1928, II: 335 ad IX.116; LSJ describes the *huparchos* as 1. the subordinate commander, the lieutenant, 2. the subordinate governor (of satraps).

clusive, How and Wells are, rightly, very careful with their description of the status of the European conquests of Darius (How/Wells 1928, II, 335 ad IX.116.1). I think it conceivable that stating that the Persian conquests in Europe belonged to a satrapy or even formed one is founded rather on an over-rating of their (or indeed: European) importance than on solid evidence. Only of this we can be sure: the Asiatic part of Thrace, Bithynia, did belong to a satrapy and also paid a fixed amount of taxes to the Persian king (cf. Hdt. III.90; also X., *An.* VI.iv.24 and VI.v.30). That European Thrace and surroundings formed part of a satrapy is possible, or perhaps even conceivable, but in my view not yet proven beyond doubt.<sup>20</sup>

During the period of Persian domination in the European part of Thrace both Megabyzus and Mardonius delegated considerable power to tribal chiefs. They especially empowered those of the Odrysians and the Thynians who had not opposed the Persian arrival and were considered trustworthy. Nevertheless, it was a risky delegation of power since these tribes were strategically placed at the eastern end of the Thracian plain (Hoddinott 1981, 101-102). A reflection may have been that treating them like this might produce some loyalty towards Persia. Moreover, by keeping all power in Persian hands, Thracian feelings of pride could be hurt, especially in a strategically important area that could have provoked a dangerous situation. Notably Mardonius had already shown himself to be a man who was clearly aware of political feelings with the people he had to deal with.<sup>21</sup> He may well have taken another bold decision and, eventually, got the better of it. Looking at the situation from a different point of view one also could state that the Persians evidently lacked sufficient power to exercise effective control on Thracian territory and found the Odrysians useful allies, to the benefit of both parties.

As I stated above, Persia had several interests in obtaining (and maintaining) a firm foothold on either side of the Straits. But not only the Persians were interested in Thracian lands. The Greeks (as the Mycenaeans had before them: Hoddinott 1981, 127-132) also regard-

---

<sup>20</sup> Though it may not at all be considered as conclusive evidence it is noteworthy that neither Stephen of Byzantium nor the *Suda* mention the existence of a Persian satrapy of Skydra; Stephen only mentions the name as a place in Macedonia; cf. *supra* note 11. cf. also Archibald 1998, 79-90 and more specific 102: "In the previous chapter [i.e. on pp. 79-90, JPS] I outlined the reasons why we should reject the notion of a formal Persian administrative unit on the European side of the Straits...".

<sup>21</sup> The deposition of tyrants of Ionian cities and the creation of democracies instead, Hdt. VI.43, may well have been aimed at gaining support from the local population for the Persians, the more important since at least some of the tyrants could not be trusted completely: cf. How/Wells 1928, II, 80 ad loc.

ed Thracian territory, especially the coasts, as a profitable place, e.g. because of its fertile plains in the hinterland, the dockyards and the gold- and silver mines (Strabo VII, Fr. 33-34, 36). In the 5th century it was especially Athens that showed great interest in Thrace (cf. Danov 1976, 240-251). The construction of fortresses by Thracians makes clear that at least some Thracians resented growing Greek influence in their territory (Hoddinott 1981, 81-82), like their ancestors had defended themselves against advancing Mycenaeans (Hoddinott 1986, 129-131). What mattered at that moment was not only the result of the struggle of power, more or less focused on the control of the Straits, between notably Athens and Persia, but also, and to much greater extent, how the Thracians could manage to further their own interests without provoking either of the contesting powers.

One may suppose that the Odrysians succeeded best in doing so, thereby fully exploiting the privileges granted to them by Megabyzus and Mardonius. It is, otherwise, difficult to explain that within a decade or less of the Persian defeat at Plataea the Odrysians under king Teres had formed the nucleus of their own state. This state must have emerged soon after Xerxes' defeat at Salamis in 480/479<sup>22</sup> and occupied the better part of Thrace (cf. Hoddinott 1981, 102; Danov 1976, 226-236).<sup>23</sup> According to Lenk the Odrysian prince Teres used the grudge against the foreign oppressor to unite the eastern Thracian tribes (Lenk 1936, c. 421). Teres' action was clearly a defection of the Persians. It may be an explanation for the hostile attitude of the Thynians (who, like the Odrysians, also had supported the Persians) towards Teres, resulting in the latter's death (cf. X., *An.* VII.ii.22). Of course it also is possible that the Thynians preferred a distant overlord above a nearby ruler. Anyway, it will have required great political skill of Teres, using a grudge of Thracians against the Persians or, for that matter, any other excuse to create a Thracian (Odrysian) state, to explain why the

<sup>22</sup> Cf., e.g., also Archibald 1998, 102: "... Teres must already have established a leading position in central Thrace soon after the Persian Wars."

<sup>23</sup> In an extract for "*Thracia Pontica V*" Tačeva (1991, 41) even proposed to date the beginning of the Odrysian kingdom before 514. As her theory was published only as an extract, I cannot check all arguments she may have. She mentions that: "Die Quellenanalyse gestattet, die Herrschaft vom Odruse Teres (Thuc.II.xxix.2) vor dem Dareiosfeldzug (ca. 514 v.Chr.) zu datieren ...". Thucydides' text Tačeva refers to is: "Now this Teres, the father of Sitalces, was the first to found the great kingdom of the Odrysians, which extended over the larger part of Thrace; for a large part of the Thracians is independent." I cannot see how this passage may be used as an indication that the Odrysian kingdom was established in or even before 514. I am, therefore, not convinced of the rightness of her view, the more since I know of no other sources that might give additional evidence. I therefore still suppose that a date after the battle of Salamis is more likely.

Odrysiens first had supported the Persians but had deserted them now. The military strength of the Odrysiens and their level of organisation (both with courtesy to Mardonius and Megabazus) may well have been one of the main arguments.

An exact date for the beginning of the Odrysian Kingdom - Teres had made himself a *basileus* - is hard to give (cf. Danov 1976, 282). The estimation of Fol and Spiridonov - about 478 - must be very close (Fol/Spiridonov 1983, I/2, 102). They connect the Odrysian rising with the outcome of the siege of Sestus, by which Persia lost its hold of Thrace. Though Persians held Eion at the mouth of the Struma until 476 and Doriscus still longer (Hdt. VII.106-7), their grip was lost. Certainly this may have been the breaking point. Personally, I think that already after the battles of Plataea (during which Mardonius was killed) and Mycale (where Persia lost the remnants of its fleet) the situation must have seemed favourable to Teres to free himself of his Persian overlords and become an independent ruler. Especially the death of Mardonius, who is depicted by Herodotus (VII.9) as the champion of the "European policy" of the Persian kings, may have facilitated Teres' schemes to fill the vacuum left by the Persians. Teres may have guessed that both the outcome of the battles of Salamis and Mycale and the death of Mardonius would affect Persia's position as well as Persia's interest in Europe. In such a case it would be wise policy for the leader of a tribe that had collaborated with the Persians to strike quick to safeguard his own position.

So far the vicissitudes of the Persians in Europe. Starting vigorously with Darius' march against the Scythians, extending, one might say, the "Royal Doctrine" towards the west, the Persian presence in Europe gradually remained only meaningful within the context of an expedition against the Greeks. Because the Persians failed to check the Straits effectively during the majority of time, both Scythians and Greeks could counter the Persians. Especially since the death of Mardonius, who adhered for some reason or another to the policy of expansion in the west, the Persians, or should one say the Persian King, lost interest in this policy. The episode resulted in a powerful state in European Thrace, that was directed both at keeping good relations with Scythians, Persians, and, whenever possible, Greeks and at the same time securing a maximum of independency. The Straits were now dominated by Greek poleis, and a marked distinction between the status of Thracian tribes in Asia and Europe became clear.

- Admiralty Charts and Publications*, chart 2429 (Çanakale Boğazi/The Dardanelles), Taunton, 24 December 1996.
- Archibald, Z.H. 1998, *The Odrysian Kingdom of Thrace. Orpheus unmasked*, Oxford.
- The Black Sea Pilot, comprising the Dardanelles ...etc.*, published by the hydrographer of the Navy, [Taunton, Somerset] 1969<sup>11</sup>.
- Boardman, J. 1980<sup>3</sup>, *The Greeks Overseas*, London.
- Briant, P. 1996, *Histoire de l'empire perse*, Paris.
- Burn, A.R. 1984<sup>2</sup>, *Persia & the Greeks* (with a postscript by D.M. Lewis), London.
- Bury, J.B., A history of Greece to the death of Alexander the Great, London/Basingstoke 1970<sup>3</sup> (3rd ed. rev. by R. Meiggs).
- Cook, J.M. 1983, *The Persian Empire*, London/Melbourne/Toronto.
- Dandamaev, M.A. 1989, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire* (translated into English by W.J. Vogelsang), Leiden.
- Dandamaev, M.A./V.G. Lukonin 1989, *The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran* (English edition by P.L. Kohl with the assistance of D.J. Dadson), Cambridge [repr. 1994].
- Danov, Chr.M. 1976, *Altthrakien*, Berlin/New York.
- Detschew, D. 1976<sup>2</sup>, *Die thrakischen Sprachreste*, Wien.
- Diels, H. 1904, *Laterculi Alexandrini* (Abh. Berl. Akad.), Berlin.
- Drachmann, A.G. 1963, *The Mechanical Technology of Greek and Roman Technology. A study of the literary sources*, Munksgaard.
- Fol/Spiridonov 1983, Фол, А., и Т. Спиридонов, Историческа география на Тракийските племена, до III в. пр. н.Е. (I.1) и Атлас (I.2), София 1983 (*Historical geography of the Thracian tribes until the 3rd century B.C. [I.1] and Atlas [I.2]*, Sofia 1983).
- Green, P. 1996, *The Greco-Persian Wars*, Berkeley etc.
- Hammond, N.G.L. 1986<sup>3</sup>, *A history of Greece to 322 B.C.*, Oxford.
- Herzfeld, E. 1968, *The Persian Empire*, Wiesbaden.
- Hoddinott, R.F. 1981, *The Thracians*, London.
- Hoddinott, R.F. 1986, Thrace, Mycenae and Troy, *Pulpudeva* 5, 125-132.
- Hignett, C. 1963, *Xerxes' invasion of Greece*, Oxford.
- How, W.W./J. Wells 1928<sup>2</sup>, *A commentary on Herodotus, with introduction and appendices*, in two volumes, Oxford [repr. 1968].
- Isaac, B.H. 1986, *Greek Settlements in Thrace until the Macedonian Conquest*, Leiden.
- Kent, R.G. 1953<sup>3</sup>, *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, New Haven.
- Lambek, K. 1996, Sea-level change and shore-line evolution in Aegean Greece since Upper Palaeolithic time, *Antiquity* 70, 588-611.
- Landels, J.G. 1997, *Engineering in the Ancient World*, London [1978].
- Lenk, Br. *et alii*, Thrake, in: *RE* VI A, 1936, cols. 392-551.
- Macan, R.W. 1908, *Herodotus. The Seventh, Eighth & Ninth Books with Introduction, Text, Apparatus, Commentary, Appendices, Indices, Maps*, vol. ii (Appendices, indices, maps), London.
- Merz, A. 1928, *Hydrographische Untersuchungen in Bosporus und Dardanellen*, (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Meereskunde, geografisch-naturwissenschaftliche Reihe, Heft 18), bearbeitet von L. Möller, Berlin.
- Morkot, R. 1996, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Greece*, Harmondsworth.
- Stanley, D.J./C. Blanpied 1980, Late Quaternary water exchange between the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea, *Nature* 285, 537-541.
- Stronk, J.P. 1995, *The Ten Thousand in Thrace. An Archaeological and Historical Commentary on Xenophon's Anabasis, Books VI.iii-VII*, Amsterdam.

Stronk, J.P. 1994/95, Nowruz in Thrace?, *TALANTA* 26/27, 59-73.

Tačeva, M. 1991, Die persischen Feldzüge durch Thracia Pontica, in: *Thracia Pontica* V, *Sozopol 1991, Les Ports dans la vie de la Thrace ancienne, Résumés*, Sozopol, 41.

J.P. Stronk, Department of Ancient History, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Oude Turfmarkt 129, NL-1012 GC Amsterdam, The Netherlands