

Chapter 1 : Greco-Persian Wars: Battle of Thermopylae | HistoryNet

Battle of Thermopylae; Part of the Greco-Persian Wars: The site of the battle today. Mount Kallidromon on the left, and the wide coastal plain formed by accretion of fluvial deposits over the centuries; the road to the right approximates the BC shoreline.

Diodorus gives 4, as the total of Greek troops, and Pausanias 11, Why did Leonidas only bring men? Apparently at the time there was a religious festival in Sparta, and the soldiers, by law, were not allowed to travel. Greek preparations After the expedition to Greece was under way, Xerxes sent messengers to all the states offering blandishments if they would submit and asking earth and water from their soil as a token of submission. Many smaller states submitted. The Athenians threw their envoys into a pit, and the Spartans threw theirs into a well, taunting them with the retort, "Dig it out for yourselves. A congress met at Corinth in late autumn of B. It had the power to send envoys asking for assistance and to dispatch troops from the member states to defensive points after joint consultation. There is no evidence that any one state was in charge. Herodotus calls them simply "the Greeks" or "the Greeks who had banded together. Nothing else is known about the internal workings of the congress or the discussion during its proceedings. The Persian army first encountered a joint force of 10, Athenian and Spartan hoplites led by Euanetus and Themistocles in the vale of Tempe. Upon hearing this, Xerxes sent the army through the Sarantaporo strait, which was unguarded, and sidestepped them. The hoplites, warned by Alexander I of Macedon, vacated the pass. Using the fleet they might also have crossed Maliacos bay and outflanked the Greek army again. The Greek high strategy is confirmed by an oration later in the same century: But while Greece showed these inclinations [to join the Persians], the Athenians, for their part, embarked in their ships and hastened to the defence of Artemisium; while the Lacedaemonians and some of their allies went off to make a stand at Thermopylae, judging that the narrowness of the ground would enable them to secure the passage. Another theory is that the land army was to hold the Persian army in the north for as long as possible, and defeat it through attrition, epidemics, and food deprivation. Historians know of one case in which a small force did stop a larger invading force from the north; in B. Herodotus is quite clear on the subject. The force with Leonidas was sent forward by the Spartans in advance of their main body, that the sight of them might encourage the allies to fight, and hinder them from going over to the Medes, as was likely they might have done had they seen that Sparta was backward. They intended presently, when they had celebrated the Carneian Festival, which was what now kept them at home, to leave a garrison in Sparta, and hasten in full force to join the army. The rest of the allies intended to act similarly; for it happened that the Olympic Festival fell exactly at this same period. None of them looked to see the contest at Thermopylae decided so speedily; wherefore they were content to send forward a mere advance guard. Such accordingly were the intentions of the allies. He was convinced that he was going to certain death, which he would not have been if he had thought the forces given him were adequate for a victory. He selected only men who had fathered sons that were old enough to take over the family responsibilities. Plutarch mentions in his Sayings of Spartan Women, that after encouraging her husband before his departure for the battlefield, Gorgo, the wife of Leonidas I asked him what she should do when he had left. To this he replied, "Marry a good man and have good children. Topography of the battlefield At the time, the pass of Thermopylae consisted of a track along the shore of the Gulf of Malis so narrow that only one chariot could pass through. Along the path was a series of three constrictions, or "gates" pylai , and at the center gate a short wall that had been erected by the Phocians in the previous century to aid in their defense against Thessalian invasions. Today the pass is not that, but is inland, due to infilling of the Gulf of Malis. The old track appears at the foot of hills around the plain, flanked by a modern road. It remains a natural defensive position to modern armies. Battle The Battle of Thermopylae and movements to Salamis. Arrival of the Persians When the Persian army reached the entrance to Thermopylae, the Greeks instigated a council meeting. The Peloponnesians advised withdrawing to the isthmus and defending only the Peloponnesus there. They knew, of course, that the Persians would have to defeat Athens before they could arrive at the isthmus. The Phocians and Locrians, whose states were located nearby, becoming indignant, advised defending

Thermopylae and sending for more help. Leonidas thought it best to adopt their plan. Meanwhile the Persians entered the pass and sent a mounted scout to reconnoiter. The Greeks allowed him to come up to the camp, observe them and depart. When the scout reported to Xerxes the size of the Greek force, and that the Spartans were indulging in calisthenics and combing their long hair, Xerxes found the reports laughable. Seeking the counsel of a Greek in his employ, Demaratus, he was told that the Spartans were preparing for battle and that it was their custom to adorn their hair beforehand. They were the bravest men in Greece, he said, and they intended to dispute the pass. According to another account, he did send emissaries to the Greek forces. At first he asked Leonidas to join him and offered him the kingship of all of Greece. Leonidas answered, "If you knew what is good in life, you would abstain from wishing for foreign things. For me it is better to die for Greece than to be monarch over my compatriots. It is today the emblem of the Greek First Army Corps. Greek morale was high. Herodotus wrote that when Dienekes, a Spartan soldier, was informed that Persian arrows would be so numerous as to blot out the sun, he remarked with characteristically laconic prose, "So much the better, we shall fight in the shade. Xerxes waited four days for the Greek force to disperse. On the fifth day he ordered the Medes and the Cissians to take them prisoner and bring them before him. Failure of the frontal assault Xerxes sent in the Medes at first perhaps because he preferred them for their bravery or perhaps, as Diodorus Siculus suggested, [26] because he wanted them to bear the brunt of the fighting—the Medes had been only recently conquered by the Persians. The Medes coming up to take the Greeks prisoner soon found themselves in a frontal assault. The Greeks had camped on either side of the rebuilt Phocian wall. The fact that it was guarded shows that the Greeks were using it to establish a reference line for the battle, but they fought in front of it. Details of the tactics are somewhat scant. The Greeks probably deployed in a phalanx, a wall of overlapping shields and layered spearpoints, spanning the entire width of the pass. Herodotus says that the units for each state were kept together. The Persians, armed with arrows and short spears, could not break through the long spears of the Greek phalanx, nor were their lightly armored men a match for the superior armor, weaponry, and discipline of the Greek hoplites. And yet there are some indications they did not fight entirely in close formation. They made use of the feint to draw the Medes in, pretending to retreat in disorder only to turn suddenly and attack the pursuing Medes. In this way they killed so many Medes that Xerxes is said to have started up off the seat from which he was watching the battle three times. According to Ctesias the first wave numbered 10, soldiers and were commanded by Artapanus. The king then withdrew the Medes. Having taken the measure of the enemy, he threw the best troops he had into a second assault: The Immortals, an elite corps of 10, men. On his side, Leonidas had arranged a system of relays between the hoplites of the various cities so as to constantly have fresh troops on the front line. Yet in the heat of the battle the units did not get a chance to rotate. Being able to approach the Greek line only in such numbers as the space allowed, the Immortals succeeded no better than the Medes. Xerxes had to withdraw them also. The first day of battle probably ended here. The assault failed again. The account of the slain gives some indication of why: The wall of bodies must have broken up the Persian line and detracted from their morale. History judges them perhaps too harshly. Climbing over the bodies they could see that they had stepped into a killing machine, but the officers behind prevented them from withdrawing. The king at last stopped the assault and withdrew to his camp, totally perplexed. He now knew that a head-on confrontation against Spartan-led troops in a narrow place was the wrong approach. Encirclement of the Greeks Late on the second day of battle, as the king was pondering what to do next, he received a windfall circumstance: A Malian, named Ephialtes, informed him of a path around Thermopylae and offered to guide them. Ephialtes was motivated by the desire of a reward, though he was later assassinated. The path led from east of the Persian camp along the ridge of Mt. Anopaea behind the cliffs that flanked the pass. It branched, one path leading to Phocis, and the other down to the Gulf of Malis at Alpenus, first town of Locris. Leonidas had stationed Phocian volunteers on the heights to guard this path. For all their previous indignation and insistence on a defense at Thermopylae, they were not prepared: There were no advance positions, sentinels or patrols. Their first warning of the approach of the Immortals under Hydarnes was the rustling of oak leaves at first light on the third day of the battle. Herodotus says that they "jumped up," suggesting that they were still asleep, and were "greatly amazed," which no alert unit should have been. Hydarnes was as amazed to see them hastily arming themselves. He feared that they

were Spartans, but was enlightened by Ephialtes. Not wishing to be delayed by an assault, Hydarnes resorted to a tactic that later turned out to be the winning one: He fired "showers of arrows" at them. The Phocians retreated to the crest of the mountain, there to make a last stand their story. The Persians branched left to Alpenus. For this act, the name of Ephialtes received a lasting stigma:

Chapter 2 : Battle of Thermopylae - New World Encyclopedia

Battle of Thermopylae, (bce), battle in central Greece at the mountain pass of Thermopylae during the Persian Wars. The Greek forces, mostly Spartan, were led by Leonidas. After three days of holding their own against the Persian king Xerxes I and his vast southward-advancing army, the Greeks.

The Battle of Marathon Many will know of the Battle of Thermopylae as it was made famous by the film which depicts a small number of Greek forces under the leadership of Leonidas battling against thousands of Persian warriors. This is a great film but there is more to this battle than meets the eyes, this being said the outline of the film does depict one famous part of the battle. Battle of Thermopylae Facts The date of the Battle of Thermopylae is in debate with two dates under contention. The dates in question are either August 7th or September 8th to the 10th of the year BC. The total number of forces on both sides are still debated but the Greek numbered between 5, to 11, and the Persian between 70, and , historical numbers put the Persian army at around 2,, men. The Greeks found out about this but the Spartans, renowned warriors in Greece were enjoying a festival called Carneia in which no armed battles were allowed to take place. Given the urgency because of the large Persian army marching on Greece it was deemed that there was ample reason to still go into battle. King Leonidas I of Sparta was the chosen leader and he took to the Oracle to find out what would happen in battle, the Oracle advised that he would die. Because of what the Oracle had said Leonidas chose men of the Royal bodyguard who had sons to carry on the family lineage as he knew he would not die alone. As the Spartans marched on Thermopylae their numbers swelled to over 5, by gaining more soldiers from other Greek cities, as mentioned earlier in the article. Of the men with Leonadis he stationed a four figure number of Phocians high in the mountains to protect a hidden goat trail so the armed forces could not be ambushed by the advancing Persian army. When the Persians landed they sent their emissary, something common in the times prior to battle. The Battle of Thermopylae The position of the Greek army at the narrow pass at Thermopylae was a tactical move, the idea that was the Greek army was a lot smaller but because the pass was tight the Persian army would not be able to overrun the Greeks. Five days after the Persians arrived at Thermopylae the battle commenced with Xerxes sending men to bring the Greeks back, this did not happen as a battle started. The Greeks standing in front of the Phocians defensive wall formed the Greek phalanx, an impenetrable wall of men that rotated continuously so those out of the battle will be brought in and out keeping the Greeks from tiring. This was not the case though as the Immortals also ended up suffering heavy losses. The second day ended up in the same vain as the first with Xerxes becoming furious as more men were sent to the slaughter, the day finished with Xerxes withdrawing his forces back to camp frustrated. Unfortunately for the Greeks the fortunes of Xerxes changed when a Greek called Ephialtes went to Xerxes hoping for reward by telling Xerxes about the Goat trail in the mountains. On the third day Xerxes sent a force of men under the leadership of commander Hydarnes to go through the Goat trail where the Phocians were defending. The Phocians were surprised when they saw the Persians and took up weapons before moving back to a hill for defence as they expected a fierce battle. The Persians however did not attack; they sent a volley of arrows and continued on their way to cut off the Greek force led by Leonidas. One of the Phocians had run to Leonidas as soon as the Persians were seen so the Greeks knew what was coming. This caused the Greek commanders to hold council and decide what will happen, this finished with nearly all the Greek force withdrawing or being ordered to do so. With the Persians coming there were only Spartans, Thebans and Thespians left to do battle. As the Persians were coming down from the mountain Xerxes also sent his army for a frontal attack, in response the Greeks moved out into the wider part of the pass. During the ensuing battle the Greeks fought hard but Leonadis was killed by Persian archers causing a battle for the body which the Greeks won. The Greeks retreated to the defensive position of a hill where they made their last stand until Persian archers sent volley after volley of arrows until the Greek soldiers were all dead.

Chapter 3 : Thermopylae (BCE) - Livius

The Battle of Artemisium was fought in early August BC in conjunction with the Battle of Thermopylae. The Battle of Artemisium was a naval engagement between the Greek and Persian fleets and saw fighting over a three day span.

His commanders had warned him that great risks were involved: Therefore, Xerxes prepared himself well and built a very large army. The Greeks, who had against all odds managed to overcome their perennial struggles and had accepted Spartan leadership, understood that if they wanted to survive the invasion, they first had to annihilate the Persian transport fleet, because without its support, the enemy army would be forced to return. The Greek navy therefore made a stand at Artemisium. Meanwhile, the Spartans, commanded by their king Leonidas, were to keep the coastal road at Thermopylae the name, "hot gate", is derived from a sulfurous spring in the neighborhood. By occupying this position, the Spartans and their allies would prevent the Persian army from attacking the Greek navy in the rear. To synchronize the attack on Thermopylae with the fight at Artemisium, Xerxes waited four days before he ordered his soldiers to attack the contemptibly small Greek garrison of 4, men. He first sent the Median and Elamite contingents, which were easily repelled by the defenders of the narrow road. A second wave of troops consisted of the ten thousand Immortals, who were, according to Herodotus of Halicarnassus our main source the royal bodyguard. These elite troops did no better. The Persian position did not improve during the second day of battle. Against these "men of bronze", the Persians were no match. Many of them fell into the sea and drowned. If we are to believe Herodotus, it was at this moment that a Greek named Ephialtes told the great king about the possibility to turn the position of the Greek army. There was a mountain path. The story is hardly credible: Anyhwo, during the night, the Immortals, commanded by Hydarnes, made a detour and attacked the Greek contingent that guarded the path. The exact route of the nightly attack can not be identified. This is just one of the many tracks in the hinterland of Thermopylae. The fact that a nightly operation was possible, makes it possible to date the battle of Thermopylae to a night with more or less full moon: The Unsolved Riddle The mountain path At the beginning of the third day, the Greeks learned that the Persians would soon descend from the mountains and attack their rear. In one line 7. Anyhow, only the Spartans Spartiates and helpers, Thespians, and Thebans remained. It is possible that they also wanted to leave, but that they were trapped when the Immortals arrived. Torso of a Spartan hoplite, found at Sparta and identified as a memorial statue to Leonidas. Herodotus admits that he is puzzled. Having said that the people abandoned Leonidas and having offered the other interpretation, he wonders why Leonidas might have ordered the soldiers to stay. Leonidas decided to stay because an oracle had announced that Sparta would either be destroyed or lose its king. Leonidas preferred the second alternative. It may be true - devotio was not an uncommon military practice - but it smells of propaganda, and the story may well have been invented during the difficult months between the defeat at Thermopylae and the victory at Plataea. Endgame Reportedly, Leonidas ordered his men to go forward against their opponents, who were lashed towards the Spartans by their officers. When Leonidas fell, a bitter struggle over his body broke out. Herodotus tells that the Greeks drove off their enemy four times, and finally succeed in dragging the corpse away. This is too homeric to be true, and again we do not know if this really happened: Immortal Susa Still according to Herodotus, the Thebans, whose support for the cause of Greece was halfhearted, deserted their allies and surrendered. Probably, this has been written with the benefit of hindsight: It is more probable, however, that the Thebans at Thermopylae were fighting for Greece as well. Only when these soldiers, the most anti-Persian men of Thebes, had been taken captive, their town was prepared to collaborate. With some justification, Herodotus has been accused of "malice" by a later author, Plutarch. After the death of Leonidas and the end of Theban resistance, the surviving Spartans and Thespians retreated to a small hill, where they were killed by Persian archers. Later generations have always venerated this hill; for example, Philostratus calls it "the loftiest spot" in Greece. Reportedly, a local blacksmith found many of them and was happy with a large supply of raw material. Modern archaeologists have also found several arrowhead; similar projectiles have been excavated in Asia and in Greek towns, where they were dedicated to the eternal gods. Artemisium was evacuated, and it became unavoidable that Thebes would be captured and Athens sacked. The story of the

three hundred Spartans and their usually forgotten allies from Thespia and Thebes , as told by Herodotus, has become a "classic". Stranger, go tell the Spartans that here we are buried, obedient to their orders. There are also two modern monuments, one dedicated to Leonidas, one to the Thespians. This page was created in ; last modified on 1 November

Chapter 4 : 10 Interesting Facts About The Battle of Thermopylae | Learnodo Newtonic

The long path to battle at Thermopylae began in what is now Iran, heart of the once vast Persian empire. Nowadays, ancient ruins attest to its long-vanished greatness, but to the Greeks of the early 5th century bc, the Persian empire was young, aggressive and dangerous.

WhatsApp Battle of Thermopylae is most famous for the last stand of Spartans though it is not known by many that it also involved warriors from other Greek states. The Greeks chose the narrow pass of Thermopylae as the site of the battle in a brilliant strategic move and were able to hold the Persian army for 2 days before the Persians discovered an alternate route and were able to surround them. This led to one of the most famous last stands in history in which the Greeks led by Leonidas I of Sparta fought valiantly against the Persians but died to the last man. Here are 10 interesting facts about the causes, events and aftermath of the Battle of Thermopylae. The Greek city-states of Athens and Eretria supported the Ionian Revolt during which parts of the region were burnt by the Greeks including Persian temples in the cities. Though the revolt was ultimately crushed by the Persians, Darius I, king of the Persian Empire at the time, vowed to punish those involved in it, especially Athens. This led to the First Persian Invasion of Greece in BC involving the famous Battle of Marathon in which the Greeks decisively defeated the more numerous Persian army inflicting heavy casualties on them. He planned a massive invasion of Greece to avenge for the Persian losses in the Ionian Revolt and the Battle of Marathon. The Persian Empire at the time was the largest ever empire in ancient history stretching from the Indus river in Asia to the Nile river in Africa. Xerxes used his vast resources to assemble soldiers, build ships and buy supplies for his invasion of Greece. Depiction of Xerxes I of Persia from his tomb at Naqshe Rostam 3 The Persian army numbered probably in hundreds of thousands Hellespont is a narrow, natural strait. Xerxes decided that the strait would be bridged to shorten his route to Europe. The resulting spectacular pontoon or floating bridges are considered feats of exceptional engineering which was beyond any other contemporary state. In BC, the Persian army crossed over the floating bridges to reach Europe. Though ancient historians claim that the strength of the Persian army was in millions, modern scholarly estimates are generally in the range of 70,000, A fleet of about warships escorted this massive land army. Even by modern estimates, it was still one of the largest and most sophisticated army ever assembled for invasion in the ancient world. The largest of the city states, Athens and Sparta, were bitter rivals. In BC, a confederate alliance of Greek city-states was formed to defend their land against the Persians. This was remarkable for the Greek world as many of the city-states were still technically at war with each other. Athenian politician and military general, Themistocles, who had been preparing for war by strengthening the Athenian fleet, primarily prepared the Greek strategy of defence against the Persians. It is believed that the Thermopylae pass at the time was only yards at its widest and so the Persians had to come through it in small numbers which could be countered by the relatively small Greek force. Also their cavalry would be rendered useless. Themistocles understood that the Persian navy could sail through the Straits of Artemisium to reach behind the Greek ground force and surround it. Thus, to block the strait, he positioned there an allied Greek navy of which he was the de facto commander. Ancient historian Herodotus reports that Spartan king Leonidas consulted the sacred Oracle of Delphi who said that either your town would be sacked or it would mourn the loss of a king. Leonidas believed he was that king and agreed to lead the Greek defence at Thermopylae. He chose Spartans with living sons to make sure their bloodline was not terminated. Along the way his army was reinforced by contingents from various Greek cities and by the time it reached Thermopylae it numbered around 7,000, The Persians attacked the Greeks in waves of around 10,000 men but failed to make any headway during the first two days of the battle. These attacks included attacks by the elite force of Persian soldiers known as The Immortals. At the simultaneous naval Battle of Artemisium, a Persian fleet of around 120 warships was up against a Greek fleet of warships. There too the Persians failed to make any headway. They sent warships to reach behind the Greek land force through a different, longer route but unfortunately for them they all drowned during a storm at night. The famous Greek shield known as Hoplon was heavier and stronger than their opponents, handing them an advantage. The Persians wore light armour as they needed agility to

fight in the open plains of Asia. Their armour, even of The Immortals, was easily pierced by the Greek Dory. Depiction of the Greek Phalanx 9 The famous last stand of the Greeks included soldiers, not After losing tens of thousands of his men in the first two days of battle, Xerxes had a stroke of fortune when a Greek named Ephialtes informed him of a mountain pass that would lead his men behind the Greek army. Ephialtes betrayed his homeland in hope of receiving a reward from the Persians. Leonidas was aware of the mountain pass and had placed a force of 1, Phocians to guard it but they withdrew thinking incorrectly that their homeland Phocis was under attack. When Leonidas came to know the he was being outflanked, he dismissed the bulk of the Greek army. The only remaining soldiers to guard their retreat were Spartans, Thespians and Thebans. In one of the most famous last stands in history, Leonidas and his men fought valiantly against the Persians but died to the last man. It is said Leonidas died after being struck from an arrow. Although Persians were known for treating valiant warriors with great honour, Xerxes was so outraged at his losses that he ordered that the head of Leonidas to be cut off and his body crucified. The simultaneous naval Battle of Artemisium ended as the Greeks withdrew after their defeat at Thermopylae. Xerxes went on to burn Greek cities to ground as he had desired, though most of the people were evacuated. Map showing the Greek world during the Greco-Persian Wars Movie Accuracy Released in , was a commercially successful movie based on the Battle of Thermopylae. The film used figures and accounts given by ancient Greek historians which are considered to be inaccurate by most modern historians. But it is not the inaccuracies that disturbed most of its critics as they could be due to the purpose of entertainment and as part of artistic liberty. What was heavily criticized by several scholars was its polarizing portrayal of the democratic, good and rational West versus the tyrannical, evil and irrational East.

Chapter 5 : Thermopylae - Wikipedia

The Battle The confrontation at Thermopylae took place in the late summer of Some modern accounts seem to know exactly on what dates the battle fell, because Herodotus says (7.) the the festival of Apollo Carneia was on at Sparta and that the Olympic games were also in progress.

Plutarch criticised Herodotus in his essay "On The Malignity of Herodotus", describing Herodotus as "Philobarbaros" barbarian-lover , for not being pro-Greek enough. This actually suggests that Herodotus might have done a reasonable job of being even-handed. The Persian Empire was still relatively young, and prone to revolts amongst its subject peoples. In Athens, however, the ambassadors were put on trial and then executed by throwing them in a pit; in Sparta, they were simply thrown down a well. The task force then moved on Eretria, which it besieged and destroyed. At the ensuing Battle of Marathon , the Athenians won a remarkable victory, which resulted in the withdrawal of the Persian army to Asia. In BC, Xerxes sent ambassadors around Greece asking for earth and water, but making the very deliberate omission of Athens and Sparta. A congress of city states met at Corinth in late autumn of BC, [32] and a confederate alliance of Greek city-states was formed. It had the power to send envoys asking for assistance and to dispatch troops from the member states to defensive points after joint consultation. This was remarkable for the disjointed Greek world, especially since many of the city-states in attendance were still technically at war with each other. However, once there, they were warned by Alexander I of Macedon that the vale could be bypassed through the Sarantoporo Pass, and that the army of Xerxes was overwhelming, the Greeks retreated. The route to southern Greece Boeotia, Attica and the Peloponnesus would require the army of Xerxes to travel through the very narrow pass of Thermopylae. This could easily be blocked by the Greek hoplites, despite the overwhelming numbers of Persians. Furthermore, to prevent the Persians bypassing Thermopylae by sea, the Athenian and allied navies could block the straits of Artemisium. This dual strategy was adopted by the congress. During the Carneia, military activity was forbidden by Spartan law; the Spartans had arrived too late at the Battle of Marathon because of this requirement. Leonidas took with him the men of the royal bodyguard, the Hippeis, and a larger number of support troops drawn from other parts of Lacedaemon including helots. The Oracle is said to have made the following prophecy: O ye men who dwell in the streets of broad Lacedaemon! Either your glorious town shall be sacked by the children of Perseus, Or, in exchange, must all through the whole Laconian country Mourn for the loss of a king, descendant of great Heracles. Leonidas calmed the panic and agreed to defend Thermopylae. However, Xerxes delayed attacking for four days, waiting for the Allies to disperse, before sending troops to attack them.

Chapter 6 : Leonidas - HISTORY

The Battle of Thermopylae The position of the Greek army at the narrow pass at Thermopylae was a tactical move, the idea that was the Greek army was a lot smaller but because the pass was tight the Persian army would not be able to overrun the Greeks.

It took place in a narrow gorge, called Thermopylae, where a group of Spartan hoplites died heroically, blocking a way to the Persian army of the tsar Xerxes I. Irrespective of Herodotus, the later author Ktesiy from Knid told about the battle of Thermopylae, according to the Persian sources. Other antique sources mention the developed legend, to which invented details were added. The Battle of Thermopylae, which took place on August 11th, AD, was one of the well-known battles of the Greek-Persian war where the small group of the army of the tsar of Sparta Leonid struggled and died heroically in the battle with a huge army of the Persian tsar Xerxes. Thermopylae was the way to the Middle Greece, where a unique public road from Thessaly to Lokrida passed. It was quite a narrow path, 14 to 21 m wide, and up to 6,5 km long, being narrowed at the entrance and at the exit, and extending in the middle, where there were hot sulfur springs, which entitled this way, going from the northwest to the southeast. The first campaign of tsar Darius I to Greece appeared unsuccessful; a bit later, in BC, the sortie of the Persians was beaten off by Athens at the Marathon. Darius began to prepare a new campaign, but he died in BC, and his son Xerxes ascended the Persian throne. Some years passed after the battle at the Marathon. The Persians started to be forgotten gradually in Greece and in Athens. A laurel branch, a victory symbol, was added to the image of the goddess of Athena on the Athenian coins. It seemed that the Persians, having received a bad experience at the Marathon, would not go to Hellas any more. Only the most far-sighted Athenians and the outstanding figure of the Athenian democracy, Femistocle, guessed about the fact that the new Persian invasion was inevitable. The matter was that Femistocle understood perfectly: In this sense, the Marathon victory was only random: In the sea war, the wise Athenians believed, the parts would be equal and it was not known to who the gods would grant a victory. Xerxes affirmed in his power. Meanwhile, the old tsar Darius died in Persia. His successor Xerxes spent some years destroying his rivals and affirming his power. Only after that he started to draw up forces from all the ends of the huge state. At last, military preparations of the Persians were completed. The huge fleet ships was approaching to the coast of Asia Minor, and the overland army gathered in Sardis, the capital of Lidia satrapy, consisting of different tribes and armed people. These imperial bodyguards were called so because a number of their group always remained invariable, new guardsmen were accepted immediately instead of those who died or were killed. In total, for the campaign to Hellas, Xerxes collected, as the Greeks considered, more than 5 million people; there were 1 million thousand soldiers among them. Actually, the Persian army could hardly reach more than thousand people. The bigger quantity could not even live there. There would be not enough drinking water in all the rivers and reservoirs for it. However, such an army exceeded several times those forces that all the Greek polities could collect together to repulse the Persians. The trouble was that it appeared impossible: The Persians, courageous soldiers, dashing equestrians and well-aimed archers were the most efficient part of multilingual troops who moved to Hellas because of the will of the Persian tsar. Each Persian had been taught three things since the childhood: The Persians were armed with spears which were shorter than the ones of the Greeks, bows and daggers, their body was protected with a short scaly armor and the wattled shield, fitted by skin. Some, mainly in the cavalry, had metal helmets. The majority of the army was armed only with bows and darts. The Greeks sent an army, consisting of 10 thousands of hoplites, in order to detain the Persians on distant approaches to Peloponnese. At first, the allied army wanted to constrain Xerxes on the northern border of Thessaly with Macedonia, but then it departed on Istm, an isthmus, connecting the peninsula of Peloponnese to the Balkans. However, in that case, many Greek cities on the continent would appear defenseless, and the army passed to Thermopylae, a narrow path in the mountains from the area of Thessaly to the Middle Greece. The main objective of the Greeks was to detain the movement of the Persian army on the territory of Hellas. Defending the narrow Thessaly path, the Greeks could hope to solve this strategic problem. Unlike the Greeks, the

Persians could not stop, as their army needed to be supplied with foods, which was taken from the conquered territories. Therefore, it was necessary for the Persians to break through the Thermopylae gorge to win the campaign. From the tactical point of view, the Thermopylae gorge suited perfectly for the Greeks. In a close face-to-face fight, protected by armor, the hoplites were stronger than badly-armed infantry of the opponent. A weak point of the position was a roundabout mountain path. Though it was impassable to cavalry, soldiers could pass it on foot. Leonid was warned about the existence of the path and sent one thousand fokiyets to protect it. The average width of the path was 60 steps. The army of the Greeks consisted of constant city groups of the professional heavy-armed soldiers-hoplites, sent as detached forces while the cities collected militias. Leonid was the 3rd or the 4th son of the Spartan tsar Anaxandrid, however, two eldest sons died, having opened Leonid the way to the power. In BC, he was about 40 years old. Spartan tsars two from different families governed at the same time possessed a complete power only during the war, and in a peace time, they carried out rather representative functions. Even during the terrible invasion, the Greeks were not going to make gods angry by their refusal from celebrations. Leonid selected worthy men from the citizens who already had children. Other Spartans were going to join the army after the end of the celebration. Leonid was married to his niece, Gorgo, the daughter of his elder brother Cleomenes, who was the Spartan tsar before his death and who had a minor son Plistarkh. The Greeks set up the camp behind the wall, blocking the narrow Thermopylae path. The wall represented a low barricade, laid out of heavy stones. The Persian army stopped at the city of Trakhina before the entrance to Thermopylae. In reply, Spartan Diyenek joked carelessly: In the middle of August, the Persian army appeared on the bank of the Malian gulf at the city of Trakhina before the entrance to Thermopylae. The soldiers from Peloponnese were afraid of the sight of the Persian power, and they suggested coming back and protecting Isthmus of Corinth. The fokiyets and lokras, whose lands were outside the bounds of the Peloponnese peninsula, were overwhelmed with such an offer. The dispute was resolved by Leonid who made the decision to remain in the same place. When this offer was rejected by Leonid, the ambassador said to the Greeks that Xerxes ordered to lay down arms. The legendary answer was given: Xerxes had been waiting for 4 days, and on the 5th day, he sent the most efficient groups from the native medians. According to Diodor, Xerxes sent to fight close relatives of the soldiers, who had died 10 years earlier in the fight with the Greeks at the Marathon. The Greeks met them face to face while the other part of the Greeks remained on the wall. The Greeks pretended they were receding, but then they turned around and counterattacked the upset crowds of the Persians. Then Xerxes replaced the medians with the kissiyets and the sakes, famous for their eagerness to fight. Worse-armed barbarians could not break through the dense phalanx of the Greeks, which was covered by the wall of big shields. However, they receded after a short fight. The second day, Xerxes sent to fight the soldiers, known for their courage, with the promise of a good award for success and death for those escaping from the battlefield. The second day also passed in useless attacks. The Persians replaced attacking groups, the Greeks, in turn, replaced each other in the battle. Xerxes did not know what to undertake further when a local man, Epialt, volunteered to lead the Persians along the mountain path, bypassing Thermopylae, for compensation. The path was protected by the group of the fokiyets from the Middle Greece, consisting of soldiers. Having persecuted them on the top of the mountain, Gidarn continued moving back, protecting Thermopylae. The Fokiyets sent their runners to report the Greeks about the roundabout maneuver of the Persians; the Greeks were warned about it at night by Tirradiad, a deserter from the Persian camp. The opinions of the allies were divided. The majority, submitting to the will of the circumstances, went to their cities. The number of soldiers in groups was specified at the beginning of the battle, but after 2 days of struggle, the Greeks had notable losses. Thespieae and Thebes were the cities in Boeotia through which the way of the Persian army should inevitably lie, so the groups of these cities protected their native land in Thermopylae. Herodotus was writing his historical work at the time of hostility of Thebes with Athens, therefore, he did not miss an opportunity to expose the fivanets-traitors of Hellas. He reported that the fivanets group was withheld against their will as hostages by Leonid. According to Diodor, there were only soldiers left at the disposal of Leonid for the 3rd day. Herodotus considered that Spartan hoplites were accompanied by Helots the state serfs in Sparta whom the Spartans used as badly-armed soldiers and servants, but with who they did not share glory. According to Herodotus, in the fight at Plataea,

each Spartan-hoplite had 7 Helots-servants; the ratio in Thermopylae battle was not known, but, probably, was approximately the same, judging by the number of the Greeks who were killed. Without reckoning on the victory but only on the glorious death, the remained Greeks accepted the battle in the distance from the former place where the path widened. Even there the Persians could not turn around and perished in masses in a crush or were dumped from the steep coast. During the struggle, Leonid died; the Persians lost Abrocomes and Hyperanthes, brothers of tsar Xerxes. Having noticed the approach of the Persian group from the back, headed by Epialt, the Greeks receded to the wall, and then, having passed it, took a position on the hill near the exit from the path. According to Herodotus, during the retreat, the fivanets separated and were captivated, thus, they saved the lives at the price of branding in slavery. The Spartans and thespians accepted the last battle. The Persians shot the last heroes with the arrows, and stoned them. According to Herodotus, the Spartans Diyenek, brothers Alfey and Maron, a thespians Dithyramb distinguished themselves with valor. When returning to Sparta, Aristodem was expected to meet disgrace and shame. Nobody spoke to him; he was given a nickname of Aristodem-Coward. They say there was another Spartan alive called Pantit, who had been sent as the messenger to Thessaly.

Chapter 7 : Ancient Greece - War - The British Museum

In the Battle of Thermopylae of B.C.E. an alliance of Greek city-states fought the invading Persian army at the pass of Thermopylae. Vastly outnumbered, the Greeks delayed the enemy in one of the most famous last stands of history.

On the fifth day after the Persian arrival at Thermopylae and the first day of the battle, Xerxes finally resolved to attack the Greeks. After that, Xerxes sent a force of 10,000 Medes and Cissians to take the defenders prisoner and bring them before him. However, he does not say who those men were. Anopaea behind the cliffs that flanked the pass. It branched, with one path leading to Phocis and the other down to the Malian Gulf at Alpenus, the first town of Locris. This is a juxtaposition of various historical and legendary elements from the Battle of Thermopylae. At daybreak on the third day, the Phocians guarding the path above Thermopylae became aware of the outflanking Persian column by the rustling of oak leaves. Herodotus says they jumped up and were greatly amazed. While many of the Greeks took him up on his offer and fled, around two thousand soldiers stayed behind to fight and die. Knowing that the end was near, the Greeks marched into the open field and met the Persians head-on. Many of the Greek contingents then either chose to withdraw without orders or were ordered to leave by Leonidas. Herodotus admits that there is some doubt about which actually happened. It is commonly stated that the Spartans were obeying the laws of Sparta by not retreating, but it seems it was actually the failure to retreat from Thermopylae that gave rise to the notion that Spartans never retreated. However, since the prophecy was specific to him, this seems a poor reason to commit 1,000 other men to a fight to the death. If they had all remained at the pass, they would have been encircled and would eventually have all been killed. Herodotus suggests they were brought to the battle as hostages to ensure the good behavior of Thebes. The Greeks this time sallied forth from the wall to meet the Persians in the wider part of the pass, in an attempt to slaughter as many Persians as they could. Herodotus observes this was very uncommon for the Persians, as they traditionally treated "valiant warriors" with great honour. The example of Pytheas, captured off Skiathos before the Battle of Artemisium, strengthens this suggestion. Legend has it that he had the very water of the Hellespont whipped because it would not obey him. After the Persian invasion was repulsed, a stone lion was erected at Thermopylae to commemorate Leonidas. The simultaneous naval Battle of Artemisium had been a tactical stalemate, and the Greek navy was able to retreat in good order to the Saronic Gulf, where they helped to ferry the remaining Athenian citizens to the island of Salamis.

Thermopylae is a mountain pass near the sea in northern Greece which was the site of several battles in antiquity, the most famous being that between Persians and Greeks in August BCE.

Dattatreya Mandal January 23, Popular culture has been kind to the historical episode of the Battle of Thermopylae, but with romanticized anecdotes intertwined between the actual events that took place before and during the particular military encounter. One apt example would pertain to King Leonidas I himself, who was probably closer to the age of 60 at the time of the battle, as opposed to what Hollywood would make us believe by contrast, Xerxes was only years old at the time of the battle. So without further ado, let us try to sift some of the facts from fiction, and have a gander at the 10 things one should know about the Battle of Thermopylae – a momentous episode of history that stands testament to the importance of tactics and bravery in war. In that regard, the Greeks were not able to stop the Persian juggernaut in the four clashes out of five that took place in open-land during the preceding Ionian revolt. The fifth clash was a chaotic affair with a night-time ambush on the part of the Greeks. But beyond just the numbers game, it was the Persian combined-arms style of mass combat that allowed them to regularly triumph over the Greek armies. According to much impressed Thucydides, at the commencement of the battle, the Spartan army officers grouped the hoplites and their lines started moving forward with some wearing wreaths, while the king began to sing one of many marching-songs composed by Tyrtaios. He was complemented by pipers who played the familiar tune, thus serving as a powerful auditory accompaniment to the progressing Spartan army. Interestingly, as with many Greek customs, there might have been a practical side underneath this seemingly religious veneer. To that end, the songs and their tunes kept the marching line in order, which entailed a major battlefield tactic – since Greek warfare generally involved closing in with the enemy with a solid, unbroken line. This incredible auditory scope ended in a crescendo with the collective yet sacred war-cry of paean, a military custom that was Dorian in origin. As a matter of fact, even some of the regular infantrymen, armed with short spears and double-edged daggers, carried their bows and a fair share of arrows in a gorytos, a case that housed both the weapon and the projectiles. As for the dedicated Persian archers, they probably carried composite bows that were rather large by contemporary standards. According to Xenophon, the Persian archers even outranged the Cretans, who were considered as specialists in archery from the Greek domain. And beyond just the bow itself, much of the improved shooting probably had to do with the better archery techniques and the lighter arrows preferred by the Persians. And thus many of the Achaemenid Great Kings could boast how he could conquer Greece with his archers, with a possible pun in the offering. The decimal system was also upheld when ten such regiments were combined to form a division *baivarabam* of 10,000 men. In other words, the casualties in this elite division might have been replaced as soon as possible from the best candidates from other Persian *baivarabam*. As Herodotus goes on to describe these *Athanatoi Immortals* in the battle of Thermopylae BC – a body of picked Persians under the leadership of Hydarnes, the son of Hydarnes. This corps was known as the Immortals, because it was invariably kept up to strength; if a man was killed or fell sick, the vacancy he left was at once filled, so that the total strength of the corps was never less – and never more – than ten thousand. Of all the troops in Persian army, the native Persians were not only the best but also the most magnificently equipped; their dress and armor I have mentioned already, but I should add that every man glittered with the gold which he carried about his person in unlimited quantity. They were accompanied, moreover, by covered carriages full of their women and servants, all elaborately fitted out. Special food, separate from that of the rest of the army, was brought along for them on dromedaries and mules. The Greek historian further mentions their rich attire – The dress of these troops consisted of the tiara, or soft felt cap, embroidered tunic with sleeves, a coat of mail looking like the scales of a fish, and trousers; for arms they carried light wicker shields, quivers slung below them, short spears, powerful bows with cane arrows, and short swords swinging from belts beside the right thigh. As a matter of fact, such elite divisions tended to flaunt their vibrant and ritzy uniforms and armaments – as is evident from their accounts of carrying spears with golden pomegranates, silver pomegranates, and even golden apples. The numbers

game” Source: ThingLink The most popular misconception about the Battle of Thermopylae probably relates to the numbers fielded in the battle. In fact, in many corners of popular culture, the encounter is often depicted as Spartans aided by their rag-tag group of allies versus over a million Persians. These numbers, however, are without a shred of doubt exaggerations based on flawed historical accounts, modern-day pop culture sensationalism and of course romanticism. In fact, during the period circa BC, Sparta alone could have fielded over 8,000 of its free adult citizens as hoplites. But historically they could not bring forth their entire army at the Battle of Thermopylae due to religious observances like the feast of Apollo Karneia and the Panhellenic Olympic Games. This brings us to the question” how many men did each side have in this incredible encounter? Well interestingly enough, Herodotus” the man who claimed that the Persian forces numbered over a million troops, clarified how the Greek side at least had 5,000 men as opposed to only Spartans. The figure included the over thousand perioikoi the free yet non-citizens of Sparta, Mantineans, Tegeans, Arcadians, Corinthians, Thespians and even Thebans who probably numbered over 1,000, along with groups of other Peloponnesians. Modern historians also add the helots to this array of forces, thus bringing the total number of Greeks probably over 7,000 men. The Persians on the other hand, while undoubtedly having their numerical superiority, would have had logistical constraints to even field half-a-million men, considering the size of their fleet. To that end, modern scholarship suggests that the Persians could have carried forth around 1,000 men in their 1,000 triremes” but only a percentage of them were actual soldiers, with others serving the duties of oarsmen, baggage carriers, and camp followers. To summarize, the plausible figure range for the Persian army at the Battle of Thermopylae was somewhere between 80,000, men. ThingLink Another popular misconception though more valid about the Battle of Thermopylae relates to how Leonidas made his last stand in the encounter. And while the Greek forces were busy repairing the makeshift fortification, Leonidas also took heed of many of the flanking routes that bypassed the gates. One of these treacherous pathways, known as the Anopaia path, was actually guarded by around 1,000 Phokian hoplites under the directive of the Spartan king. ThingLink It is no hidden secret that the sheer level of training and high morale of the Spartans allowed them to be steadfast in the face of an overwhelming Persian force in the first day of the Battle of Thermopylae. And Herodotus, while being vague on casualty figures, talked about how the longer spears of the Greeks were actually better suited to the task of engaging the enemy than the shorter spears of the Persian infantrymen. We are also told that the Greeks fought in relays, with contingents allowed to take a break from the front-line” thus making the defense more effective with fresher batches of men. In many ways, their army was the closest to what can be termed as a professional military force in the contemporary ancient world. To that end, an often overlooked ploy in the Battle of Thermopylae related to how the Spartans not only held their positions but also made organized retreats, to lure the Persians into tighter terrains. And once a large enemy force was cut off from the main body, the Greeks turned around and used their superior melee skills along with the element of surprise to destroy them in a piecemeal fashion. Artwork by Steve Noon for Osprey Publishing. The second day of the Battle of Thermopylae also played out in a similar fashion like its previous day, with the Persians unable to make any significant breakthrough. But as we fleetingly mentioned before, once again contrary to popular notions, Leonidas was already aware of the existence of such a path. In fact, this very passage, known as the Anopaia path, was actually guarded by the local Phokian contingent that had around a thousand men. But unfortunately for the Greeks, the Persians sent their elite Immortals presumably guided by Ephialtes, who probably set out in their full numbers to make a deciding impact in the conflict. And by the dawn of the third day, they reached the Phokian positions, with both sides rather surprised by each others presence. In the following encounter during the Battle of Thermopylae, the Immortals quickly overwhelmed their opponents by focused arrow-fire volleys. The Phokian militias rapidly retreated to the higher grounds, and then most of them pleaded for their lives to the arriving Persian forces. Interestingly enough, the Immortals, instead of dallying with the Phokian forces, continued their calculated advance into the rear part of the Greek positions, thus ultimately turning the tide of the battle. ThingLink After Leonidas heard the news of their vulnerable position in the battle, he once again resorted to a tactical decision that ironically entailed making a last stand. In essence, while later tales extolled the virtues of defiance and braveness in the face of imminent death and justifiably so, Leonidas and his men stayed behind not for their posthumous praises, but for covering a

significant part of the army that had over 5,000 men. Suffice it to say, he bravely and wisely chose the former. And this allowed the majority of the defending Greek soldiers to escape from the clutches of Xerxes at the Battle of Thermopylae. They were probably aided by their helot attendants possibly numbering over 1,000, along with around 700 Thespians and Thebans who, according to Herodotus were held against their will, though practicality of warfare suggests otherwise. And instead of occupying the narrow pass, Leonidas ordered his assembled rear-guard to advance to a broader area, knowing well that their previously guarded position was now vulnerable to the approaching Immortals from behind. The Greek army of Hoplites made their characteristic slow advance with shield-walls, singing of paean hymns and ritual sacrifices. Interestingly enough, the orthodox method of marching was soon done with, as Persian arrows began to fall among the ranks. Leonidas, comprehending the urgency of the situation, ordered his men to sprint along the last few yards and quickly close the gap between the enemy and themselves, thus once again denying the Persian archers to have a go at relatively immobile targets. And once the armies met, a furious clash ensued, which resulted in even greater Persian casualties according to Herodotus. But unfortunately for the Greeks, Leonidas met his demise in the chaotic melee engagement, and his guards valiantly defended the fallen body of their king to the last man. Finally, the Greeks decided to fall back to the narrow pass, and made their stand on a hillock with broken spears and swords, though the remaining Thebans possibly endeavored to surrender themselves and their weapons to the enemy. Thus ended the Battle of Thermopylae, resulting in a Pyrrhic victory for the invading Persians. In essence, the last stand was not just about the heroics of Spartans, but rather encompassed the gutsy feat of over a thousand Greeks that included both free-men hoplites and lightly armed slaves. In fact, Herodotus even grudgingly mentioned the corpses of helots lying on the battlefield, thus suggesting how some of these slaves willingly laid down their lives for a concerted military effort.

The most popular misconception about the Battle of Thermopylae probably relates to the numbers fielded in the battle. In fact, in many corners of popular culture, the encounter is often depicted as Spartans (aided by their rag-tag group of allies) versus over a million Persians.

The Greek allies met at the Isthmus of Corinth to decide what to do. The initial plan was to hold the Vale of Tempe, on the border between Macedonia and Thessaly, but this position was too easy to outflank - there was an inland route into Thessaly from Macedonia, and that was the one chosen by Xerxes. A force was sent forward to Tempe, but then pulled back to the Isthmus of Corinth and tried to decide what to do next. Their decision was to defend the narrow pass of Thermopylae, while the fleet was posted at Artemisium on the coast of Euboea. This would prevent the Persians fleet from outflanking the Greeks without sailing all the way around Euboea, a trip that would have left the army without naval support. The land forces were commanded by King Leonidas of Sparta, although his country famously only provided men. Herodotus gives a detailed breakdown of the Greek forces, which appears to be rather more realistic than his report of the Persian forces. The largest contingent of heavy infantry came from the Peloponnese. As well as the Spartiates not including Leonidas, there were from Tegea, from Mantinea, from Orchomenus in Arcadia, 1, from the rest of Arcadia, from Corinth, from Phleious and 80 from Mycenae, a total of 3, Boeotia provided from Thespieae and from Thebes despite that city having decided to side with the Persians. This gives us 5, and the Locrians, a total of around 7, hoplites and an unstated number of lighter troops. Leonidas had deliberately recruited the Thebans in an attempt to discover where their loyalty laid. The rest of the Spartan army was waiting for the end of the festival of Carneia before they could march. They have often been blamed for this attitude, but most of the other contingents were also only advance guards, as the Persian invasion coincided with the Olympic festival and the Greeks expected the Persians to be held up at Thermopylae for some time. The pass of Thermopylae no longer exists. In antiquity it was a narrow strip of land with the sea on one side and cliffs towering above it on the other. Since then the shallow sea has silted up, and a mile-wide plain now sits between the cliffs and the water. Herodotus provides us with an estimate of the size of the Persian army. He gives Xerxes 1, infantry and 80, cavalry from Asia and another, from Europe, for a total of just over two million fighting men. The core of the army was made up by the much smaller contingents from Persia, Media and the Sacae, a Scythian tribe. Adding in the naval forces and non-combatants he comes up with a grand total of 5,, men. This figure had been discounted as just about impossible by just about everyone who has examined it. The general consensus now is that Xerxes had around, men, but given a lack of reliable way to calculate the size of his army that can only be a guess. Xerxes waited for four days after arriving at the northern end of the pass, possibly because he expected the Greeks to retreat, or possibly because he wanted to coordinate the land attack with an expected naval battle. On the first day of the battle Xerxes launched a costly frontal assault on the Greek position, defended by most of the 7, Greeks. This attack was easily repulsed. The first attack was made by the Medes and Cissians. They found that narrow pass negated their numbers, and their shorter spears made it difficult for them to come to grips with the Greeks. In addition their weight of numbers made it difficult for the Medes and Cissians to withdraw, and they suffered heavy losses in a long battle. Eventually they were able to withdraw and Xerxes then sent in his Immortals, the best 10, men in the Persian contingent. The Immortals were also unable to make any progress. The Spartans made a number of feigned retreats, tricking the Persians into an undisciplined pursuit before turning back and cutting into them. Ancient Greece This pattern was repeated on the second day of the battle. This time the Phocians were sent to guard a path through the mountains inland of the coastal pass, while the other Greek contingents fought in turn in the pass. Once again the Persians were forced to pull back at the end of the day. That night a Greek, Ephialtes, offered to guide the Persians along mountain paths that led behind the Greek position. Xerxes sent Hydarnes and a contingent of troops along the path, starting at dusk on the second day of the battle. At the top of the pass they found the thousand Phocians who had been sent to guard the path. When the Persians attacked them the Phocians retreated to a nearby mountain top and prepared to fight to the death, but instead they had to watch as the Persian force ignored

them and continued on down the path. Just before dawn on the third day some deserters warned the Greeks that the Persians were on the mountain path. A short time later the Greek scouts arrived, reporting the same thing. Naturally this caused a drop in Greek morale, and many of the contingents began to prepare to leave. Leonidas is said to have recognised this and ordered most of the other contingents to go. Only three contingents stayed - the survivors of the Spartans, Thespians and Thebans. The Thebans were probably kept almost as hostages, but the Thespians were fighting to defend their homeland, which would be first to fall to the Persians. On the third day the Greeks advanced out of the narrowest part of the pass and fought in a wider area. They were able to inflict very heavy casualties on the Persians attacking from the front, but eventually Leonidas was killed. His men rescued his body and even pushed the Persians back four times. In a typically tangled family tree their mother Phratagoune was the daughter of Artanes, a half-brother of Darius. Greek resistance was finally broken after the Persians sent across the mountain paths arrived in their rear. The surviving Spartans and Thespians pulled back to the narrowest part of the pass, where they made a grim last stand where a wall blocked the pass. By now most had lost their spears and were described as fighting with daggers, or hands and teeth. Only two of the Spartiates survived the battle. Aristodamus was either recovering from an eye injury or serving as a messenger, and chose not to return to the army. He returned to Sparta where he was disgraced, but in the following year he redeemed himself at Plataea. The second, Pantites, was carrying a message to Thessaly. Despite having a legitimate reason to be away from the battle he was also disgraced at Sparta and committed suicide. The Thebans fought with the Greeks during the first two days of the battle and during the first phase of the third day, but when the Spartans and Thespians withdrew to the wall they took their chance to surrender. The Greek fleet, which had been holding its own at Artemisium, also retreated south, taking up a new position in the straits of Salamis. Three monuments were erected at Thermopylae soon after the battle, none of which were fair to the Thespians. One recorded that Here once were three million of the foe Opposed by four thousand from the Peloponnese The second, and most famous, read Stranger, tell the people of Lacedaemon That we who lie here obeyed their commands The third was to the diviner Megistias, who chose to fight on the third day and was killed in the battle. According to Herodotus the Persians lost 20,000 dead at Thermopylae. The Greek losses are uncertain. According to Herodotus Xerxes was later able to display 4,000 Greek bodies at Thermopylae, which included the Thespian and Spartiate dead from the third day of the battle, any casualties from the first two days, and the helots killed alongside their Spartan masters. In the aftermath of Thermopylae Xerxes advanced into Attica and sacked Athens, but a few days later his fleet was defeated at the battle of Salamis. With control of the seas lost the Persians were in a dangerously exposed position in southern Greece and Xerxes decided to retreat back into Thessaly. He left his brother-in-law Mardonius in charge of the remaining army and then returned to Persia. How to cite this article: