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POLITICAL PERFORMANCE OF XERXES

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ABSTRACT

Xerxes, the son of « Darius the great » and «Atosa»; the daughter of Cyrus, took the government after dying his father. During the Xerxes kingdom, he ruled over very wide areas so that it's been read markedly in the inscriptions. At first, Xerxes prepared himself for the war and revenge, with authority and collecting a huge army. He lost many forces in these wars and finally stepped aside after these failures. He assigned the war to the commanders and constructed the monuments of Persepolis and doing this, he weakened the Achaemenid government but, it cannot be ignored his used policies and power. In this study, we have tried to deal with the Xerxes ' political performances and to investigate it completely. The research method of this study is analytical and descriptive and finally it comes to an end with the conclusion of the Xerxes performance and the points mentioned in the wars.

Keywords: Xerxes, Politics, Inscription, Achaemenian, War

INTRODUCTION

Domestic Policy of Xerxes

As soon as Xerxes came to the throne, his first task was to chase the royal achievements of his father. Although the war between Persia and Greece in the time of Xerxes relates to his foreign policy; until then, it had been occurred two major wars between Greek and Persian lands; the one, the Ionian revolt and the other, the Marathon war. Both of these battles had occurred at the time of Darius. Little time

had passed since the Marathon war and many commanders and soldiers who participated in the war, still served in the army.

Considering this situation, Xerxes summoned all the commanders and high – ranking courtiers and consulted them and after the end of the decision – making, he got ready to fight with Greece (Kuch , 1388 , 177 also Durant , volume 2 , 1372 , 255) .

The successors of Darius completed the necessary preparations and departed to reconquest of the Greek city – states specially Greece, with a massive army; that if we set aside the Herodotus million exaggerations: « ... Indeed, it was incommensurably greater than whatever the Europe had ever seen in itself ...» (**McEvedy, 1388 , 86**)

Xerxes' motives for invasion to Greece can be summarized in the following:

- Preventing the Greeks' incitements in the Asia Minor.
- The Greeks' punishment because of the Egyptians incitements to riot.
- Full domination over the strait of Bosphorus, the Dardanelles and the Aegean and Black Sea, in general.
- Response to the exiled Greeks incitements such as Demaratus; the former king of Sparta (**Mahmoud abadi, 1378, 126-127**) the purpose of Xerxes was not a simple border war but to enforce obedience to all over the Greece. Careful preparations, extensive design and the quantity of resources he has used, shows this well (Bengson , 1376 , 70). But what certain is that Greeks themselves had a great role in the Xerxes invitation to invade the Greece. Also, due to the Agoues conflicts with the Spartans, they

encouraged the Persians to invade the Greece. (**Herodotus, 1380, 397**).

Xerxes came to Sardis in the fall of 481 to participate in the war to take command of the grand army personally himself. In this battle, fleet was the most important because the food supply and army equipment relied on the navy. The number of Iranian warships has been estimated 1207 that had been provided by Phoenicians, Egyptians and Greeks (**Hawar , 1375 , 67- 68**). Although the ancient Greek historians have paid much attention to the numbers, but always in the wars against Iranians have written the number of Greeks, little and exaggerated about Iranians to show the Greeks courage and exaggerate their success much.

Except the Herodotus and Aeschylus (Eshil) who themselves have participated in the battle of Salamis and have written the Iranians' tragedy. Eight years later, Ktesias; the court physician of Darius II and Artaxerxes II who has claimed that he has accessed to the Achaemenid parchments, has cited one thousand for the number of the warships of three rows Iranian rows Iranian rowing and eight hundred thousand for the number of Iran's army (**Ktesias , 1380 , 64**).

The historians believe that these numbers have been exaggerated and they have estimated the Xerxes army sixty to seventy thousand people (**Greemberg , 1369 , Volume 2 , 49**). Also they believe that the number of Iranian warships has been sixty planes that if this number had safely passed the Hellespont and had entered the waters of central Greece, Iranian fleet victory was guaranteed but by destruction of a third of Iranian warships in the storm, they have not had so much numerical superiority to the Greek fleet (**Hignett , 1387 , 106-113**). There is no doubt that the army of Xerxes was very large. As it's been said: « ... It was the largest army the history has seen like it ... »(**Sicily , 1384 , 199**) .

After preparing all the logistics by Xerxes command for passing the Hellespont .the two – tier bridges were created using four hundred seventy – four ships , one for passing of the horses , cargo and luggages and the other for crossing the guards that the storm devastated them . Again by trying of the Phoenicians and Egyptians a stronger bridge was built (**Herodotus, 1380, 365 – 366 / Figure 7**).

Indeed, bearing all those difficulties, crossing the sea and bearing willingly the suffering of the long way,

coordinating the army and the navy needs to motivation and perfect planning (**Herodotus, 1380, 403**).

So, how can the Xerxes be known as an chinless, powerless and self – indulgent person and how can even the Darius be condemned in improper upbringing of his chils.

According to herodotus'quote, in the way, the Greek sity – states made many contributions to Iran's army. some gave ships to the navy and some others dispatched soldiers for the king's infantry.

The resistance main core against the Iran's army was Athens that the great commander – in – chief named Temistocete commanded it.

Before the marathon battle, Temistocete had convinced the Athenians that the only way to defeat their enemies is the sea. So, they should try to form a powerful navy . he had asked the people of Athens to spend the loriuome's silver mines incomes for building the warships (**Plotarch , 1369, volume 1 , 308**). thus , in ten years , two hundred txriexrem ships , three – row boats with one hundred and fifty rower was built and until the time of war against Xerxes , the united Greeks were able to provide three hundred Txriexrems (**authers faculty 1378 , volume 1 . 133**) .

After advancing the Iran's army in the territory of Greece, the first encounter of the Iranians and the Greeks took place that was of little importance in the final outcome of the war (**Plotarch , 1369 , volume 1 , 314**) . After that , the Greeks faced to the Iran's army in the Thermopylae strait. The Greeks were trying to prevent the person's entrance to the central Greece territory by defense of Thermopylae strait which had a little space and Iranians were not able to use of the cavalries and mass of their soldiers and also by situating the navy in the Artemis – one near the Thermopylae (**Herodotus, 1380, chapter 402, 401**).

The Greeks resisted a lot to the command of Leonia's and inflicted a lot of damage to the Xerxes army until they were defeated by a Greek treachery who showed the Iranians a detour into the passage way.

Leonidas; the king of Sparta, and three hundred of his companions gave up the ghost in Thermopylae (**Curtis, 1387, 84 and pigoloskaya, 1385, 74**). Although, in Thermopylae, the Iran's army was definitely victorious but in artemis – one the Iran's fleet had been captured in a terrible thunder and lightning and storm and had lost part of its ships and soldiers. Eventually, the Xerxes occupied Athens in 48 before christ.

It's been said that the Iran's army put Acdopolisnamely; city – citadel, to the torch (**Herodotus, 1380, 441**). Ironically, all the story of so – called Athens burning and plundering by the Persians, altogether has been first book, 236).

Thus, after three month of passing the Iran's army from Hellespont, the Xerxes had conquered the Athens and he had been the empowered of that. He reached to his greatest desire that was to take revenge of the Athenians .So, he sent a courier to susa to in formardavan; his uncle who was responsible for running the country in his absence, of his victory. Then he set off on salamis. Before the invasion of salamis, he summoned the ship captains and admirals and inquired their opinion. Apart from the Queen Artemisia who was the likarnas fleet commander, the rest of the commanders were in favor of war insalamis. The Xerxes liked the comment of Artemisia who had warned him of the sea battle but to respect the vote of the majority. He issued the order of attacking the salamis (**Herodotus, 1380, 446-447**).

If the Xerxes had taken no action and only had surrounded them, with all of their supplies, they would certainly be submitted and he had won the victory

easily and without war (Olmsted, 1388, 345).

But hurry, haste and lack of insight in Xerxes made disaster. because on one hand, the Xerxes' army Ionian leaders betraye4d him and sent one sumosian to temistocles by swimming to put the Greeks on to the general map of the war and the fleet deployment and to inform that; they will be separated from the Iranians during the battle (Sicilian , 1384 , 213) and on the other hand , due to the tightness of the location , the ships had no possibility to move and manoeuvres ; and collid and were drowned. thus, the Iranian navy was heavily damaged and when the Iranian admiral was killed, the brother of Xerxes and a number of sailors and soldiers were forced to retreat and a great victory was given to Greeks (Plotarch , 1369, volume 1 , 324 -325).

Since winter was approaching and there was not any opportunity to rebuild the fleet any more , the Xerxes didn't make any another attempt.

He entrusted the commanding of his troops to mardonius and without being prevented by the Greeks , he retreated to Thessaly to return to Asia (the authors faculty , 1378 , volume 1 , 134) and that , 573 to arrive to Hellespont , Xerxes had been forty five days on the road and

such a slow movement can't be called « the Escape » (Badie , 1383 , volume 4 , the first book ,242 , 247).

Pear Bryan has also rejected what the Greeks writers have called « maniacally Escape » of Xerxes And writes :« Despite the overwhelming defeat of Xerxes , his military record was not horrible . practically, the army was remained intact . this force was able to resist in the war.

Even it could invade to fortifications the Spartans had created. Flect , also indisputably had not completely disappeared . the Greeks were still afraid of it. So, in any way , the issue of « maniacally escape» was not true ... » (Bryan , 1387 , volume 1 , 833)

Xerxes , who had entrusted the continuation of the battle in Greece to the army in commander of mardonius , returned to sardis to spend the winter there. He remained in sardis by the mid-summer of 479 BC and he was in constant touch with mardonius form there.

Then mardonius captured Athens again . Athenians who had left athens for the second time and had fled to salamis , asked for help from the Spartans and were bound for the battle field with them . mardonius moved from Athens to Teb that were the friends of Iran and

the flat lands and favourable to war . the war happened in platte . in this war , also , news related to Iran's revolutionary guard logistics and were provided for Greeks by the betrayal of Alexander maghdooni the amyntas son who mardonius trusted him and they appeared against mardonius and his army with appropriate preparation . in this war , also at first , the victory was gaining by mardonius army . but mardonius ' big mistake was that he ; himself , had participated in the war and the army fell apart with his death and the Iranians were defeated . artabaz ; the other iranian commander moved the rest of the army quickly to Hellespont to return to Iran (**Herodotus ,1380 ,471 – 509**).

At the end, it's necessary to enumerate the reasons of the Persians failure in medic wars and the cause of these wars importance for Greeks and in the eyes of some historians.

The causes of Xerxes and the persian's failure in medic wars include

1- Iran's army was consist various countries subordinate to Iran , like , Babylon , the Caucasus , Egypt , Saudi Arabia , ... ; that neither they understood each other's language , nor they wanted to fight by each other well and this news of

disorderly overcrowding had no other result (**Mole , 1384 , 218**).

- 2- Although the power and capability of Iranian crops often thousand people was not concealed to anybody and Iranians' skill in the use of war horses had led to Iran's victory in majority of wars but in these battles , the Greek phalanges were superior to them with heavy – gun infantry that were fighting in compressed lines and in a mass quantity (**Khourihaiti , 1382 , 308**) . among the most important Iranian weapons were bows and appears that they used the spears in hand – to – hand battle but their failure in marathon and platte battle indicated that they were not able to defend their selves by this weapon and short daggers against the swords with twice length as much as theirs , didn't have necessary efficiency (**Kokh , 1380 , 308**) and again , it's not clear that although they were defeated in the marathon battle by these weapons , why did they get present in the platte battle by the same war equipments and didn't take any action to reform them ?
- 3- Greeks knew the Greece's sea and it's straits very well and they were skillful sailors .by the way, they had

narrow ships that could easily pass through the strait . whereas Iranians were not well – versed in sea battle and their ships were also wide and they collided in narrow places like salamis.

- 4- Finally, the cause of Iran's failure in the wars against the Greece was their own fault that was a turning point in history for the Athenians . but for the kings of Iran who still remained the Asia's without rival and absolute master for a hundred and fifty years , it was not an important issue and a turning point in history (**Von Fraunhofer , 1389 , 77 – 79**).

RESULTS

- 1- The Persians defect against the Greeks in Xerxes times destroyed the horror of Greeks of the achaemenid empire and downgraded them of the invincibility stage in minds of the Greeks .
- 2- Although the defeat against the Greeks inflicted a severe mental shock to the Xerxes , but drew his attention more in construction of monument in Persepolis and other places .
- 3- The relation between Persia and Greece in Xerxes times didn't elapse only in the war and military conflicts , rather the cultural relationships

were also established between them . the presence of Phidias ; the famous Greek sculptor in Achaemenid court is the proof of this claim .

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