ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

Συγγραφή : *Στεφανίδου Βέρα*
Μετάφραση : *Χρυσανθόπουλος Δημήτριος*
Για παραπομπή : *Στεφανίδου Βέρα , "Persian navy in Asia Minor", Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Μείζονος Ελληνισμού, Μ. Ασία*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=9372>

Περίληψη :

The Persian navy was formed around 525 BC by king Cambyses II. The subordinate nations of the Persian Empire played an important role in its creation and development. The Persians used ships and manpower from the coastal nations (e.g. Greeks of Asia Minor, Phoenicians, etc), depending on the needs of each campaign.

Χρονολόγηση

6th-3rd cent. BC

Γεωγραφικός εντοπισμός

Asia Minor

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1. Formation

The Persian king Cambyses II (530-522 BC) is reported to have been the creator of the Persian navy, which was necessary for the expansion of the Persian Empire in Egypt and the efficient control over the coastal regions.[1] The creation of the Persian navy must have been a glorious operation, proportional to the size of the Persian Empire, and included the construction of war ships, the establishment of naval bases-ports, the training and compensation of oarsmen, sailors and fighting sailors.[2]

2. Historical information

During the Persian conquest of the eastern Aegean Sea (546 BC), the islands were not under immediate threat, since the Phoenicians had not been subjugated yet and the Persians did not possess any naval prowess. After the subjugation of the Phoenicians, the navy counted on their naval prowess and expertise,[3] as well as those of the Greek city-states of Asia Minor. The Persians used the navy of the coastal subordinate nations, inside or outside the geographical region of Asia Minor (e.g. Cypriots, Egyptians).[4]

The Persian navy usually supported the army, following its course during the different campaigns, as shown, for example, by their combined operations at the battle of Thermopylae and the naval battle of Artemision during the Persian wars. Some of the most important information on the activity, size and command of the Persian navy can be found in Cambyses II's campaign against Egypt (525 BC), Darius' Scythian campaign (around 514 BC), the attempt at conquering Naxos (500 BC),[5] the Ionian revolt, the suppression of the revolt at Cyprus (498 BC), the naval battle of Lade (494 BC),[6] the naval preparations and operations of the Persian wars (Artemision, Salamis), the naval battle of Mycale (479 BC) and the war operations of the Athenian Cimon (Eurymedon 466 or 461 BC).

Generally speaking, the Persian navy was proportional to the size and power of the Persian Empire and up until 335 BC, it outnumbered and outweighed the navy of the Greek city-states and the kingdom of Macedonia. Despite its superiority, however, it did not manage to prevent the landing operation of Alexander the Great's army in northeastern Asia Minor, because it had been sent to Egypt to suppress the Egyptians' revolt and because the Macedonian army had already occupied key positions on the Asiatic coast of the Hellespont, making its task impossible.[7]

3. Composition – Structure

The structure and composition of the Persian navy has been compared to those of the Roman navy.[8] Ancient Greek writers used different words and expressions in order to refer to the construction, equipment and manning of the "Persian" ships.[9] The ships of the Persian navy were sometimes characterized as Ionian, Cilician, Phoenician, and so forth, depending on the subordinate crew members that manned the Persian king's ships.[10] It is therefore possible that the subordinate nations considered the ships in question "their

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own", since their naval services were rewarded with amounts of money and privileges, as shown by the status of the citizens of [Halicarnassus](#).

According to information handed down to us by [Herodotus](#), the nations of Asia Minor that took part in Xerxes I's campaign against the Greeks were the Cilicians, the Pamphylians, the Lycians, the Dorians of Asia, the Carians, the Ionians, the Aeolians, as well as the Ionians and Dorians of the cities of Bosporus and Hellespont.[11]

The role of the subordinate "sea nations" and city-states has yet to be clarified by modern scholars. We know that they were not released of their tax duties, whereas the unconditional participation of their navy in the Persian king's often long campaigns might have caused some harm to their primary source of income, which was maritime trade, creating further problems to tax collection.

As regards the structure of the Persian navy, we know that around 480 BC, it possessed some kind of command hierarchy. More specifically, each unit had its own admiral (naupati) and it is possible that there was a naval commander with increased jurisdiction, although the king of the Persians had the supreme command. Admirals of Iranian origin seem to have been responsible for the troops on board the ships. Due to their lack of naval expertise, however, they left navigation and control over the sailors to local officers.[12] Finally, we know that during the naval battle of Salamis in 480 BC, the royal fleet comprised of triremes, just like the fleet of the Greek city-states.

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1. Hdt. 3.19, 3.34.4. On the creation of the persian navy see Wallinga, H.T., *Ships and sea power before the great Persian War. The ancestry of the ancient trireme* (Mnemosyne Supplementa 121) (Leiden – Brill 1993), p. 118. For a different view see How, W.W. – Wells, J., *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford 1912).

2. Cilicia seems to have been one of the bases of the persian navy in 490 BC. On the creation of the persian navy see Wallinga, H.T., "Naval Installations in Cilicia Pedias: The Defence of the Parathalassia in Achaemenid Times and After", *AnA* 1 (1991), pp. 277-282; Wallinga, H.T., *Ships and sea power before the great Persian War. The ancestry of the ancient trireme* (Mnemosyne Supplementa 121) (Leiden – Brill 1993), pp. 118-119.

3. Hdt. 3.19.

4. Cyprus was probably integrated into the Persian Empire in 526-525 BC, when the empire possessed its own navy and was able to maintain control over the island. Watkin, H.J., "The Cypriot surrender to Persia", *JHS* 107 (1987), pp. 154-163.

5. Hdt. 5.30; Keaveney, A., "The Attack on Naxos: A 'Forgotten Cause' of the Ionian Revolt", *CQ* 38 (1980), PP. 76-81.

6. Hdt. 5.108-112; Plut., *Mor.* 861B-C.

7. For different views see Wilcken, U., *Alexander the Great* (New York 1967), p. 83; Hamilton, J.R., *Alexander the Great* (London 1973), p. 53; Bosworth, A.B., *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's 'History of Alexander'* 1 (Oxford 1980), p. 137; Anson, E.M., "The Persian fleet in 334", *ClPhil* 84 (1989), pp. 44-49; Hammond, N.G.L., *Alexander the Great: Commander and Statesman* (London 1981), p. 66.

8. Walling, H.T., *Ships and sea power before the great Persian War. The ancestry of the ancient trireme* (Mnemosyne Supplementa 121) (Leiden – Brill 1993), pp. 119-120.

9. Hdt. 3.41, 4.83, 6.8, 6.15, 7.21, 7.90; Thuc. 6.52.

10. Hdt. 6.9, 6.118, 7.89-95, 8.118, 8.121, 8.130; Thuc. 1.116, 1.16, 8.46.1; Diod. 11.3.7-9. On reports about "royal ships" see Ephor. *FGrHist.* 70 F 192; Plut., *Cim.* 12.5, 18.6, *Mor.* 861C; Nepos, *Milt.* 7.3; Lysanias from Malos *FGrHist.* 426 F 1. The king is reported to have ordered the islanders and the greek cities of western and northern Asia Minor to construct ships due to their shipbuilding experience. Diod. 11.2.1, 11.3.8.

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11. Hdt. 7.89-99, 7.184; Plut. *Them.* 14.

12. On the command of the persian fleet in 480 BC see Hdt. 7.96-97, 8.130; Diod. 11.12.2, 11.13.5, 11.18.3-5, 11.27.2; Tarn, W.W., "The fleet of Xerxes", *JHS* 28 (1908), p. 207, note 24.

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Persian Wars Shipwreck Survey Home Page

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Γλωσσάριο :

trireme

Anc. oblong war ship (37 m. length and 5.5 m. width) which used 170 oarsmen who sat in three levels. It could quickly cover long distances and ram the ships of the enemy.
Byz. the largest type of dromon, powered by three banks of rowers. In "De ceremoniis" of Constantine VII, there are references to this large type of dromon which had banks of oars for 230 rowers. The length of these large tenth-century dromons has been estimated at 60 m, their breadth at 10 m, and their height from the keel to the top of the bow and stern towers as 5–6 m. Their draft was 1.5 m. With a displacement of more than 100 tons, these vessels could cruise at 5 knots and developed a battle speed of 7 knots.