wanted to quit their position at Salamis and join up with the army at Corinth, whereas the Athenians quite understandably refused to abandon their families on the island.

Themistocles, in spite of opposition from the Corinthians, managed to convince Eurybiadas, the Spartan admiral, that if he left Salamis the fleet would disintegrate as each squadron looked to the defence of its own territory.

The battle of Salamis

As Pritchett remarked when he published his second article on the battle of Salamis in 1965, there have probably been more articles published on this battle than any other in world history—Herodotus devoted the equivalent of a book to it and Aeschylus wrote a play about it. It is also dealt with by Plutarch in two of his lives and Diodorus Siculus, who also gives an account of the battle.

Amongst the modern commentators, N. G. L. Hammond gives the most complete survey in which he includes some very important observations. He is quite right in insisting that Aeschylus should be used as, although the evidence comes from his play, *The Persians*, and he has used considerable 'poetic licence' in his presentation of the material, he fought in the battle and therefore must be treated as an eyewitness.

While Xerxes had been putting down the resistance at Athens the two fleets lay at anchor, each waiting for the other to make the first move. The main Persian fleet was beached in the bay of Phalerum just south of Athens, while detachments were anchored at the entrance to the Salamis strait. Herodotus later mentions detachments at Ceos and Cynosura. Ceos is impossible to identify but it may be one of the two small islands off Lipsokoutali. Cynosura (the dog's tail), however, is easy to identify as the long, narrow promontory projecting eastwards from Salamis island.

This places the Greek anchorage farther up the channel, probably divided into three parts: one in the bay of Ambelaki in front of the ancient town of Salamis; another in the bay of Paloukia; and a third in the bay of Arapis. Herodotus gives the number of ships in the Greek fleet as 380. Of this number 89 came from the Peloponnesus (this includes 40 from Corinth) and 180 from Athens. Among the minor contingents the largest numbers were from Aegina (30), Chalcis (20) and Megara (20). The subsequent battle formation implies that the Athenians occupied the bay of Paloukia, the Peloponnesians the northern bay of Arapis, and the others the southern bay of Ambelaki, for this is how they formed up in battle line.

Aeschylus in his play *The Persians* gives the Greek numbers as 310, but he has probably reduced the number for effect, just as he has surely grossly exaggerated the Persian numbers. 'How great was the number of the Greek ships that dared with their rams to engage the Persian host?' The answer—310 Greek against 1,207 Persian. The Persian figure is obviously not meant to be taken seriously as this is the number of ships given by Herodotus for the beginning of the campaign and, even if the original figure were to be accepted, it makes no allowance for the hundreds of ships lost in the storms along the east coast. To suggest that the fleet was brought up to exactly the same strength by reinforcements is quite absurd.

The strength of the Persian fleet may be guessed by examining the Persian strategy. Again and again Herodotus stresses the superiority of the Persian ships and seamen, so it is clear that Xerxes did not need to outnumber the Greeks to expect to win. Why then did Xerxes not blockade the Greek fleet in the Salamis channel with half his fleet and then launch a two-pronged attack on the Peloponnesus, by land along the isthmus and by sea with the remainder of the fleet?

The attraction of this course of action is enormous. Cut off by land and sea, the great number of Athenians on Salamis would soon have exhausted their meagre supplies. In a very short time they would have been starved into submission. Xerxes was unable to adopt these tactics for one simple reason—he had neither enough ships nor soldiers to accomplish the task. It is likely that the Persian fleet now numbered no more than 500 vessels.

Once again the Persians appear to have waited several days to see if the Greek fleet would abandon its position. Xerxes must have known that, as usual, the Greeks were at loggerheads. The story that it was Themistocles who

brought on the battle by sending a messenger to Xerxes to tell him that the Greek fleet intended to escape is probably untrue. Autumn was drawing on and Xerxes almost certainly had only planned on a one-season campaign. Once the fleet was destroyed nothing could stop him invading the Peloponnesus. So he decided to take the initiative and bring on the battle.

Having decided to force a confrontation within the straits on the following morning, the Persians set about preparing the proposed battle area. The main fleet put out from Phalerum and began to move up towards the channel.

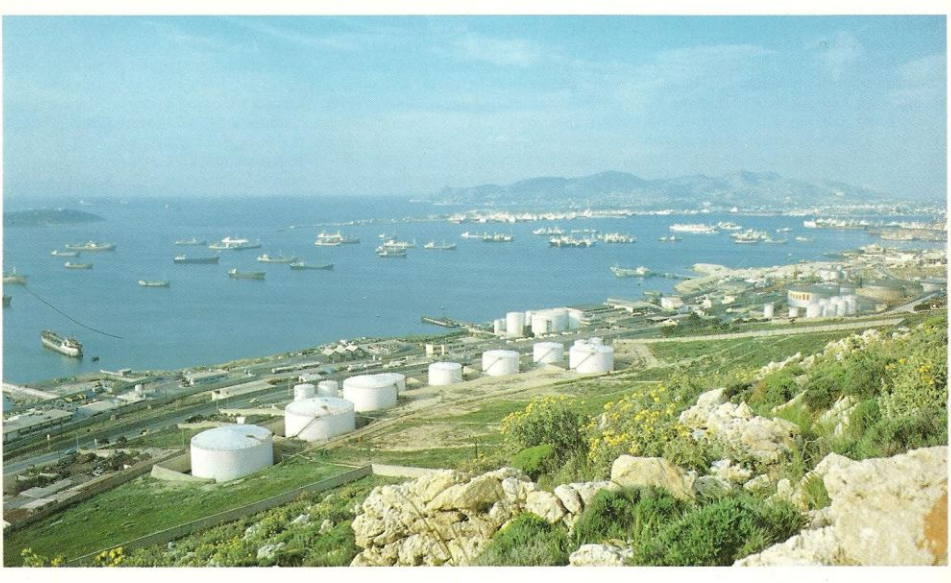
Soon after dusk the Persians moved as many soldiers as they could across to the island of Psyttalea, which lay between Salamis and the mainland. This island lay in the path of the projected battle area and many of the wrecks from the battle would be washed up there. Here the soldiers could slay the Greeks and offer succour to their shipwrecked friends. The identification of this island is hotly disputed. Hammond claims that it must be the island of Agios Georgios opposite Perama in the middle of the strait, whilst Pritchett contends that it must be the island of Lipsokoutali at the entrance to the channel. Hammond would appear to put too must trust in the accounts of ancient authors such as Strabo who had probably never visited the area. Drawing conclusions from their descriptions would appear to be very hazardous. If the Persians occupied Agios Georgios, which lies directly in front of the Greek anchorage only about 400m from the shore, the Greeks would certainly have seen them at first light. There would have been little that the Persians could have done to prevent their instant dislodgement. Moreover, the island of Lipsokoutali controls the entrance to the strait, and it would have been vital for the Persians to secure it before moving into the channel itself. It must be added that the wrecks did drift southwards after the battle.

After occupying the island the Persians despatched the Egyptians, who made up the western wing of the fleet, to blockade the western end of the Salamis channel. Then at midnight the rest of the fleet, including the detachments at Cynosura and Ceos, moved into the entrance of the strait, occupying the area from Salamis to Munychia.

News that the Persian fleet had moved up into the entrance to the strait was received in the Greek camp during the night. It was said to have been brought in by Aristides, the Athenian exile, who managed to get through the Persian lines from Aegina so that he could fight for his city in its hour of peril. The lookouts on Salamis, however, must have got some idea of what was happening. The Greeks now knew that they had to fight. Everything was to their advantage. In the narrow straits the Phoenicians would be unable to use their superior seamanship.

Just before first light the Greeks dragged their galleys down to the water, boarded, ran out their oars and waited for the signal. The trumpets sounded and the flutes struck up their tune. Then, to the rhythmic chant of their

Below
The site of the decisive battle of Salamis. The long promontory (Cynosura) is in the centre and the site of the ancient town of Salamis on the right. Part of the island of Lipsokoutali can be clearly seen on the left.



war song, they pulled at their oars and the galleys began to move out into the channel.

Xerxes had taken up his position on Mount Aegaleos overlooking the strait. Here a throne had been erected for him so that he could watch the battle.

The Persian seamen strained at their oars and pulled towards the Greek lines.

As the two fleets closed, the Greeks in the centre backed water so that their line bowed. Seeing the Greeks backing the Persian sailors were convinced that they were going to break in flight and, raising their war cry, they charged into the salient—and still the centre backed water. According to Plutarch they were waiting for something that they knew must happen. Suddenly the Persian fleet lurched as the swell came up the channel. The wave caught the Persian ships from behind. Some of them were knocked out of line, veering broadside on to the Greeks. The Greek sailors raised a great shout—'On you sons of Greece! Free your native land, free your children, your wives, the fanes of your fathers' Gods, and the tombs of your ancestors. Now you battle for your all'. Then they charged; their bronze-plated rams darting through the foam crashed through the banks of oars and ripped into the bows of the Persian ships.

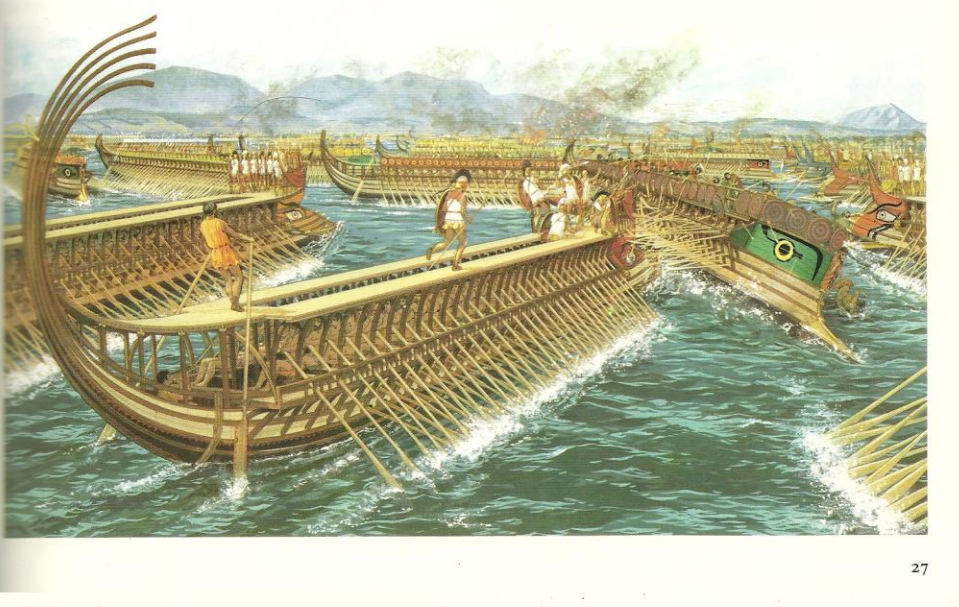
It is rather difficult to understand Herodotus' description of the battle formation: 'The Phoenicians (for they had the western wing, towards Eleusis) were arrayed opposite to the Athenians, and to the Lacedaemonians the Ionians, on the eastern wing, nearest the Piraeus'. It would only be possible to use the terms east and west wing if he is describing the position of the fleet before it entered the channel, and from thereon continuing to use this description for the Ionian and Phoenician fleets. (It is interesting that he does not use these terms for the Greek fleet.) If this were the case, then the description of the west wing as being towards Eleusis is a little strange. However, it would be impossible to use the terms east and west when the fleet is drawn up in a north to south line and advancing directly westwards.

It seems certain that the ships from Aegina were stationed in the bay of Ambelaki as this is the only point from which they could have launched a flank attack on the withdrawing Persians. It was also they who came to the support of an Athenian ship that was in trouble. It follows that the Athenians must have held position next to the Aeginetans, i.e. the centre and right, and therefore the Peloponnesians held the left wing.

It seems to be agreed that there has been a general rise in the sea level in the area around Athens. Pritchett quotes many examples of places that were above the water level in classical times and are now below it. Several ancient quarries have been discovered submerged beneath two to three metres of water. The same feature was observed when the ship sheds at Zea were excavated. A classical shrine at the village of Agios Cosmas was also found below the water level.

There is a small reef 350m off the Attic coast opposite Perama; in classical

Below
The battle of Salamis. The Greeks withdrew the centre of their line, luring the Persian fleet further and further into the narrow straits, where the superior Phoenician seamanship was of no advantage.



times this must have been an island. Between this island and the mainland there would have been a shallow channel where the water was not deep enough for galleys to navigate. This small island would have made an excellent point on to which the Greeks could lock their left wing without fear of missile attack from the Persian infantry on the mainland or of being outflanked. Their inferiority in numbers made it all the more important for the Greeks to avoid being outflanked. For this reason the Corinthian fleet of 40 ships was despatched to prevent the Egyptians entering the west end of the channel. There can be no truth in Herodotus' statement—almost certainly taken from a biased Athenian source—that the Corinthians fled before the battle.

This also undermines the arguments of those who would place the battle area farther up the channel in front of the island of Agios Georgios with no locking point for the right wing. This would have allowed the Persian ships to break through the right wing at will. The Greek fleet would have been drawn up in front of their anchorages with the Peloponnesian fleet of 49 ships occupying the left wing and resting on the islet. It is also inconsistent to attempt to reconcile Aeschylus' figure of 310 for the Greek fleet with Herodotus' 380 by suggesting that the missing 70 ships formed the Corinthian squadron which left before the battle. This would have left only 19 Peloponnesian ships to form the left wing.

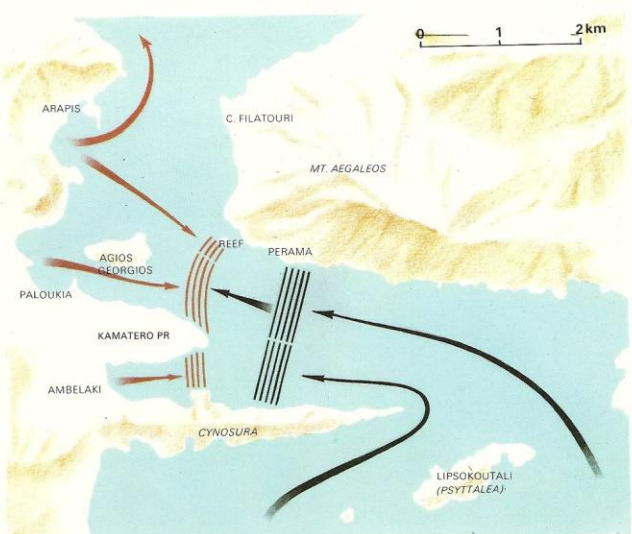
The Athenian fleet of 180 ships covered the centre with its right wing resting on the tip of the Kamatero promontory, whilst the other 111 ships, including the 30 ships from Aegina, occupied the bay of Ambelaki. The distance from the islet to the tip of the Kamatero promontory is about 1,050m. Allowing a minimum of 20m per galley the ships would have to be drawn up in four to five lines.

According to Aeschylus, as the Persians entered the straits they first heard the Greek fleet singing their battle hymn and only later saw them. This has been used to support the view that the Greek fleet was drawn up in the channel to the north of Kamatero, shielded from the Persian view by Mount Aegaleos. However, although Burn and Hammond both make this point, neither actually show the Greek fleet in this position. Both show it pivoted on the Kamatero promontory in full view of the Persian fleet. If Aeschylus is to be interpreted this way, then the battle would have to be fought between Arapis and Cape Filatouri. A more likely explanation is that there might have been a slight haze or it was still dark. Alternatively, the Persians may have heard the Greek singing before they actually entered the straits. Herodotus later mentions a west wind which blew the wreckage down the coast. This could have carried the sound of the Greek singing the three to four kilometres to the Persian fleet.

The battle was on. Caught in the narrow channel there was no room to manoeuvre. It was ship against ship. The Greeks managed to retain their formation but, for the Persians, this was impossible. The mass of the Persian ships were jostled in the centre of the channel, caught in the devastating pincer movement as the wings charged. The Persians tried desperately to turn about while at the same time trying to avoid ramming each other. The Greeks were able to pick off the enemy ships on the outside of the mass at will.

The Persian sailors fought bravely before the gaze of their king. The javelineers swept the decks of the Greek galleys as they tried to ram them. Just off the promontory of Kamatero an Ionian ship from Samothrace charged out from the mass of Persians and ripped into the hull of an Athenian galley, but before it could free itself from the wreckage a trireme from Aegina rounded the promontory and caught the Ionian ship amidships. While the Ionian ship was sinking, her complement of javelineers swept the Greek marines off the deck, boarded and captured the trireme, much to the delight of Xerxes.

Despite these isolated successes, the



Left
The Persian fleet entered the strait with the Phoenicians sailing in column to the east of Lipsokoutali (nearest the Piraeus) and the Ionians to the west of the islet. They would have deployed into line in the strait. The Peloponnesians formed up opposite the Phoenicians and the Athenians opposite the Ionians whilst the rest (c.110 ships) lay in wait in the bay of Ambelaki, from which they attacked the retreating Persian ships.

Persian fleet, crammed helplessly in the channel, was in a desperate position. The battered fleet tried to disengage. As they withdrew from the narrows, the ships from Aegina lay waiting for them in the bay of Ambelaki and, as they passed, caught them in a devastating flank attack. The Athenians too, following up the retreat, played havoc amongst the fleeing ships.

The victorious Greek sailors showed no mercy to their shipwrecked enemies. Grabbing oars or any other weapon that came to hand, they clubbed to death or drowned the enemy sailors as they struggled helplessly in the water.

Meanwhile, Aristides, the Athenian exile, gathered together many of the hoplites who were on the shore watching the sea battle, and with these managed to capture the island of Psyttalea and slaughter the Persian garrison there, thus cutting off the last resort for the wrecked Persian ships. Those wrecks that did not drift ashore on the island floated down the coast and came ashore on the promontory of Colias about four kilometres south of Phalerum.

Although the Persian fleet was far from being destroyed and still probably outnumbered the Greeks, Xerxes now realised that his hopes of a quick campaign were gone. He handed over command of the bulk of his army—possibly 150,000 men—to Mardonius and returned to Asia. Mardonius withdrew into Thessaly and there went into winter quarters. For a few months at least southern Greece had a breathing space.

Xerxes feared that the defeat at Salamis might encourage the Ionians to revolt, so he withdrew the fleet to Cyme and the following spring stationed it at Samos.

The Spartans mobilise

In the following spring Aristides and Xanthippus, another exile who had returned to defend his country, were elected generals at Athens.

Mardonius now tried by diplomacy to separate Athens from her alliance with the Peloponnesians, offering her very handsome terms. But Athens was full of bitterness over what had happened and, although under normal circumstances she, like all the other Greek states, would not shy away from betraying a cause in the preference of self interest, she now rejected the Persian proposals out of hand. However, she did use them to try, without success, to force Sparta into promising more aid.

Summer had arrived when Mardonius moved south again. Waiting until the crops were ripening, he advanced once more on Athens and once again occupied it unopposed. And once again Sparta failed to come to the aid of her ally. At Salamis Athens had risked all and in so doing saved Sparta. She had also refused to betray the Greek cause but this had little effect on the Spartans. The only thing that held the Greeks together was a foreign enemy, not any love for each other. The Greek resistance to Persia from Marathon onwards is a catalogue of bad planning, gross inefficiency and selfishness punctuated with occasional acts of brilliance and heroism. It is incredible that they could possibly have won. The Persians, on the other hand, displayed excellent strategy, a great deal of energy and considerable bravery but suffered from appalling back luck. In the final campaign they completely outmanoeuvred the Greeks, and then made one miscalculation which cost them the war.

With the reoccupation of Athens the citizens again crossed over to Salamis. Mardonius once more tried to come to terms with those on the island. The Athenians sent an embassy to Sparta to beg them to come to their aid but, as at Marathon and Thermopylae, they were keeping a religious festival and refused to move. In the meantime they were feverishly heightening the wall across the isthmus, making it clear to all that this was where they intended to fight. Day after day they temporised, each day putting off their decision until the next; this went on for ten days. It was not until the Athenians threatened to accept Mardonius' terms, which would place the Athenian navy under Persian control, thus laying the Peloponnesus wide open to attack and rendering the isthmus defences obsolete, that Sparta acted.

Once the decision was made Sparta acted with great energy. The entire Greek forces were placed under the command of Pausanias, son of king Cleombrotus (as Leonidas' son Pleistarchus was still a minor) and Euryanax, the son of Doreius whom Cleombrotus had co-opted as his colleague.

Five thousand Spartans, nearly two-thirds of the total Spartan levy, plus 35,000 *helots*, immediately set out northwards. On the way they were joined by 17,000 hoplites from the north-eastern Peloponnesus.

Mardonius immediately evacuated Athens, destroying what remained of the city before he left. Eleusis was also put to the flame. He now withdrew to Boeotia where the country was much more open and suitable for his cavalry.

As Mardonius started northward he heard that an advance guard of 1,000 Spartans had already reached Megara, only 45km from Athens. Mardonius turned and, sending his cavalry ahead, made a lightning strike against Megara, but when he failed to take the town and heard that the Greek army was gathering at the isthmus, he called off his troops and retired into Boeotia. He passed to the east of Mount Parnes, crossed the Asopus river (this is not the same as the river at Thermopylae) and ascended its north bank past Tanagra to Scolus in the territory of Thebes. Here he established a fortified camp which Herodotus describes as about 10 *stades* square (about 1,800m²), which is just over five times the size of the Roman camp described by Polybius which held 20,000 infantry and 2,500 cavalry. This suggests that Mardonius' army might not be much more than 120,000 men including cavalry.

Herodotus says that the Persian troops were ranged along the river from Erythrae to past Hysiae as far as the lands of Plataea. It is unfortunate that only the site of Plataea can be identified with certainty; the sites of Scolus, Hysiae and Erythrae are uncertain.

Over several years Pritchett has done a tremendous amount of groundwork on the battlefield of Plataea. He has walked scores of miles across the fields and hillsides that make up the battlefield search for traces of ancient habitation. The method he has used is called sherding—searching the ground, preferably immediately after ploughing, for fragments of ancient tiles and pots. Where these are found in large numbers over a wide area, one can postulate an ancient town or village. The results of his findings have been published in two articles. The first appeared in the *American Journal of Archaeology* in 1957. The