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## XERXES' MARCH FROM DORISCUS TO THERME

Herodotus' narrative of Xerxes' march from Doriscus to Therme in 7.108-127 may be divided into three sections. The ends of the first two sections are defined by insertion of comment about Thracian tribes, and there is an interlude between the second and third sections.<sup>1</sup>

*Section 1* 108-111 deal with the journey from Doriscus to the Thasian *poleis* (i.e. the places along the shore west of the Nestos as far as Oesyne, some 14 km. SSW of Kavala, where archaic and classical temples were discovered in 1988 (Isaac 1986: 9; AR 1987/88: 54, 1989/90: 60). Herodotus names first a series of Greek settlements which the army passed and then (110-111) lists the Thracian tribes whose territory was traversed in the same section.

*Section 2* 112-115 begins at the Pierian forts, Phagres and Pergamos. These are conventionally located near Eion, though a funerary inscription of Sosiocrates of Phagres recently turned up at Eleutheropolis (AR 1989/90: 59), which lies at the eastern end of the Pierian Vale between Symbolon and Pangaeum. Xerxes passes through the Pierian Vale and, after further material about the Strymon and Argilus, the section ends at Acanthus, just north of the Athos Canal.<sup>2</sup> As with Section 1 there is a note at the end about the Thracian *ethne* traversed in this section.<sup>3</sup>

*Interlude* Herodotus reports what happened at Acanthus, viz. Xerxes' reward of the Acanthians for their enthusiastic help with the canal and the funeral of Artachaies, to whom the Acanthians, directed by an oracle, sacrifice as to a hero. He then provides information about the burden imposed upon Greek cities of providing the King's Dinner: this comes with two anecdotes, concerning the Thasian shore and Abdera – in other words we are in effect going back to Section 1.

1 All Herodotus references are to Book VII unless otherwise stated.

2 The faint remnants of the Athos Canal – a strangely impressive memorial of the comparatively brief presence of Achaemenid imperial power in Northern Greece – have been rather neglected since Struck 1907, but see Isserlin 1991, Isserlin *et al.* 1994. Lazenby 1993 contains a photograph.

3 Herodotus also comments on the Thracians' continued respect for the road used by Xerxes (below p. 289) – a remark which incidentally need not apply only to the Argilian shore, as is sometimes supposed. (For another – or part of the same – "old royal road" in Aegean Thrace cf. Livy 39.27.10, adduced by Kienast 1971: 251 n. 22, *quae ad Thraciae Paroreiam subeat, usque ad mare [declinans]*, and which formed the boundary of Philip V's Macedonia and Maroneia.)

Section 3 121-127 covers the voyage of the fleet from the Canal to Therme round the shores of Sithonia and Pallene and the army's march by an inland route (τὴν μεσόγιαϊαν τάμνων τῆς ὁδοῦ) across the R. Echeidorus.

There are various points to be made about this narrative.

First, terminology. Herodotus repeatedly relates the movement of the army to named places with the verbs παραμείβεσθαι, παρέρχεσθαι and παρεξέρχεσθαι. The words all convey the sense of "passing by" somewhere and are interchangeable. There is no necessary implication of "by-passing", i.e. passing some distance away from a given point of reference. This is clear when we read that Xerxes "passed by" Stagirus (115.2), for the topographical setting scarcely permits any great space between the line of the road to Acanthus and the buildings of Stagirus. It is even clearer when we see that Xerxes can be said to "pass by" the River Nestos (109.1) – a river which he had perforce to cross. When, therefore, he says specifically that the army went past the very walls of Phagres and Pergamos (112) he is not implying that the army did not pass that close to other towns or cities. At best he is revealing (what is evident anyway) that παραμείβεσθαι is a deliberately neutral word – and the suspicion will arise that in using it Herodotus is not so much asserting the specific, circumstantial fact that Xerxes went past e.g. Abdera as asserting the logical deduction that, if Xerxes started at Doriscus and reached the River Strymon, he must have passed Abdera on the way. This sort of process may help to explain how Xerxes can be said to march through the Pierian Vale – south of Pangaeum ("with Pangaeum on his right") – but also to traverse (παρεξέρχεσθαι) the Doberes and Paeoplae who live north of Pangaeum (112-113).<sup>4</sup>

- 4 Perhaps it also helps with the fact that the Satrae are a completely inaccessible *ethnos* in 111 (at the end of Section 1) but one of the tribes whose land Xerxes crosses in 110 and the principal exploiters of Pangaeian precious metals in 112 (in Section 2). Any inconsistency here reflects the fact that Herodotus is not only combining sources with different perceptions of the Satrae but also reconstructing the route on the basis of general geographical data (derived either from personal knowledge of the area or written [periegetic] sources). – It has long been seen (e.g. Jacoby 1912: 2713f., 1913: 260, 446ff., Zahrnt 1971: 7f.) that Herodotus' narrative hereabouts is a geographical framework with historical items added and that the geographical framework could come at least in part from written sources. The dangers of using periegetic texts include mis-orientation. The case of Acanthus is discussed below (p. 403). The same thing happens at Thermopylae where Herodotus orients the pass North-South, not East-West (7.200). This mistake ought to be impossible – not just because the position of the sun is inconsistent with it but because anyone who stands either at Thermopylae or near Lamia can see that the road joining them must go through a huge bend and should therefore check any assumptions he might otherwise make about the orientation of the road either side of that bend – but the writer at his desk (even if he has visited the site) remains vulnerable to the "natural" inference from its being on the high road between northern and southern Greece, and a periegetic source will be no protection. So far as autopsy in Thrace goes, all we *know* is that Herodotus was once at Thasos (6.47). But autopsy is not inconsistent with use of written sources anyway (cf. Jacoby ll.cc.).

Second, a marked feature is the sudden reappearance of the fleet in Section 3. In Sections 1 and 2 it is present only indirectly insofar as 111 and 115 state that Thracians or *ethne* living by the coast were pressured into naval service. But in Section 3 we are given details about its course from the canal to Therme, with some thirty toponyms for capes, peninsulas and cities. This excess (indeed excess) of detail is not due to the availability of circumstantial information about any one of these cities. It is simply that the maritime cities in this part of the journey had to be attached to the fleet because nobody was marching along the adjacent coast. The reconstruction of a narrative from a combination of general geographical data and logical inference produces different results in different places.

Third, errors can occur. In 108.3-109.1 Herodotus offers the following propositions. (i) The westernmost Samothracian fort is Mesembria and next to it is Stryme, with the R.Lisos running in between, a river which the army drank dry. (ii) Crossing the dried-up Lisos Xerxes passed by Maroneia, Dicaea, Abdera. (iii) In the area of Maroneia, Dicaea and Abdera he also passed famous lakes, Ismaris between Maroneia and Stryme and Bistonis in the vicinity of Dicaea. Most of the landmarks here are reasonably securely located. Maroneia and Abdera are certain. Dicaea must be on the shores of Bistonis. Lake Ismaris must be east of Bistonis and west of Mt. Ismaros. There is no river east of Mt. Ismaros substantial enough for the claim that it was drunk dry to be interesting, so the Lisos ought to be the Philouri.<sup>5</sup> Some have doubted whether Mesembria is the excavated site on the Shabla-Dere,<sup>6</sup> but it must in any case be east of Mt. Ismaros. But Stryme is not independently fixable, and that is a pity because Stryme is at the centre of an inconsequence in Herodotus' text. Herodotus' description of what lies west of Mesembria comes in two, ill-articulated bits (108.2 and 109.1). The only rational way to read what he says as a single, east-west picture gives Mesembria, R.Lisos, Stryme, Lake Ismaris, Maroneia, Dicaea with Lake Bistonis (κατὰ Δίκαιαν), Abdera, but the brute fact is that he says both that (a) Stryme is next to Mesembria and separated from it by the Lisos but (b) that having crossed the Lisos Xerxes passed Maroneia, and this means something is amiss: for given the configuration of the landscape and granted the constraints imposed by identifiable fixed points there is no way in which statements (a) and (b) can both be true. There is no simple explanation, i.e. one which involves just a single piece of inadvertence. Müller's explanation is certainly not of that character: his view is that Stryme (assumed to be just east

5 The identification with the Yali-Dere in *ATL* (Gazetteer s.v.) is not cogent, and arises from privileging Herodotus' statement about Mesembria and Stryme at the expense of the statement about Maroneia, Lake Ismaris and Stryme.

6 J.& L. Robert repeatedly suggested it was Zone: cf. *BE* 1976: 464, 1978: 312, 1979: 282, 1980: 319, 1981: 326, 1982: 353, 1983: 266.

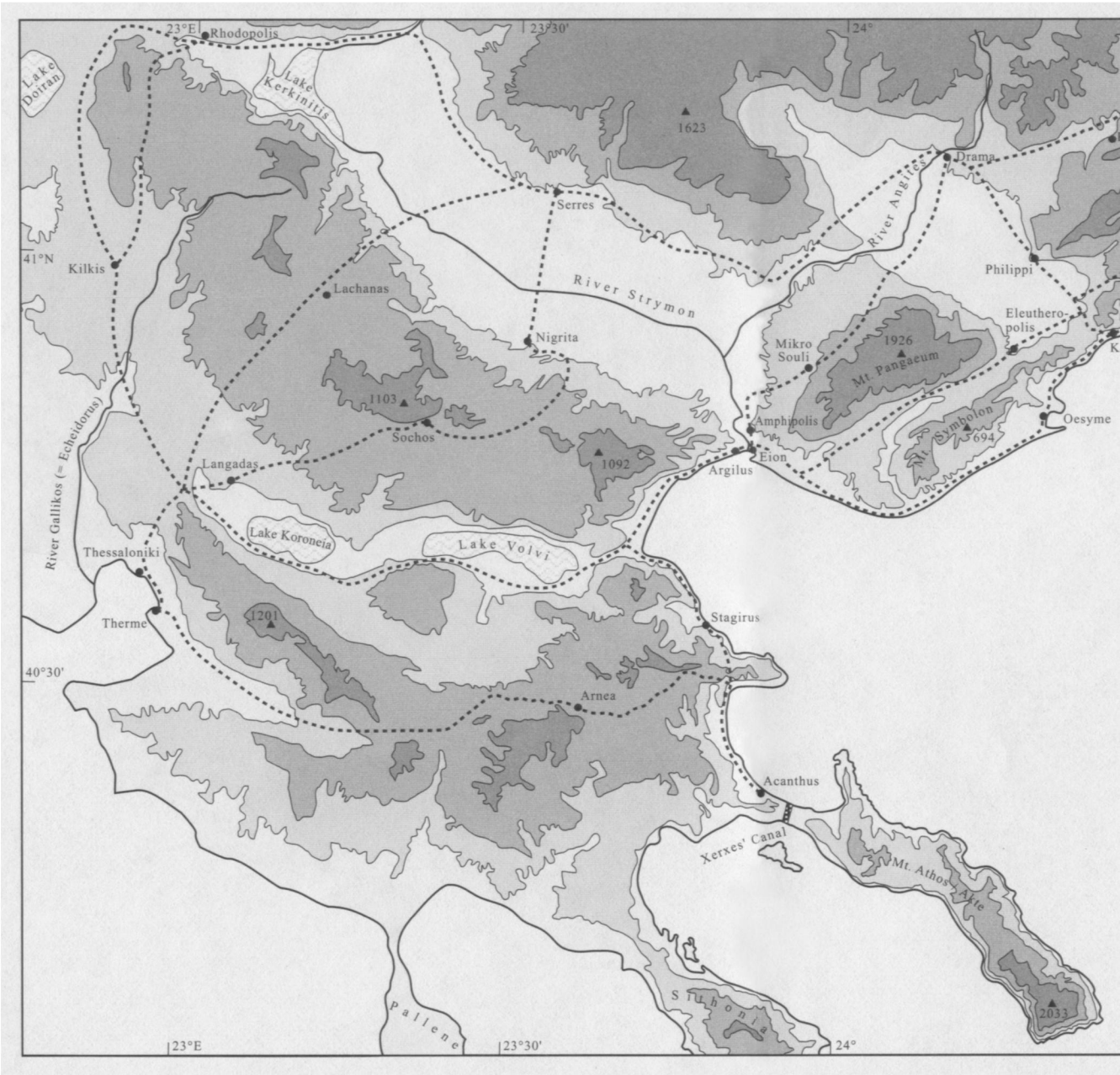
of Dicaea) is next to Mesembria across the Lisos = Philouri for someone travelling round the northern side of Mt. Ismaros, but on that scenario you do not pass Maroneia after crossing the Lisos. A possible variant – one unacceptable to Müller, but supportive to the overall interpretation advanced in this paper – would be to say that Herodotus preserves traces of two different routes – a phenomenon encountered elsewhere, as mentioned in my text – viz. [i] Mesembria - north side of Mt. Ismaros - R.Lisos - Stryme and [ii] Mesembria - coastal road - Maroneia. But one would still have to postulate a further error in relation to [ii], i.e. the statement that Maroneia comes after the Lisos. Another approach is to say that Herodotus encountered the statement that the Lisos separated Maroneia and Stryme, misremembered it as a statement about Mesembria and Stryme and incorporated it at the appropriate place in his reconstruction. After a small digression about Gallaice (7.108.3) he resumed his narrative, logically enough in his own by now erroneous terms, by saying that the army crossed the Lisos and came to Maroneia, Dicaea and Abdera. This involves a second (if venial) error in ignoring Stryme. He then inserts the observation about Lake Ismaris being between Maroneia and Stryme. This was an accurate statement, inserted in the “right” place: but it compounds error and involves Herodotean inadvertence. There is certainly something wrong with Herodotus’ account but too much has gone wrong for there to be one patently correct account of the mechanism of error. But the fact that the inconsequence in 7.108-109 comes in connection with parenthetical remarks about Gallaice, Briantice and the Land of the Ciconians may help to confirm that the trouble is in part due to Herodotus’ use of more than one written source, and I remain convinced that this part of his narrative is in part informed by use of his equivalent of maps.

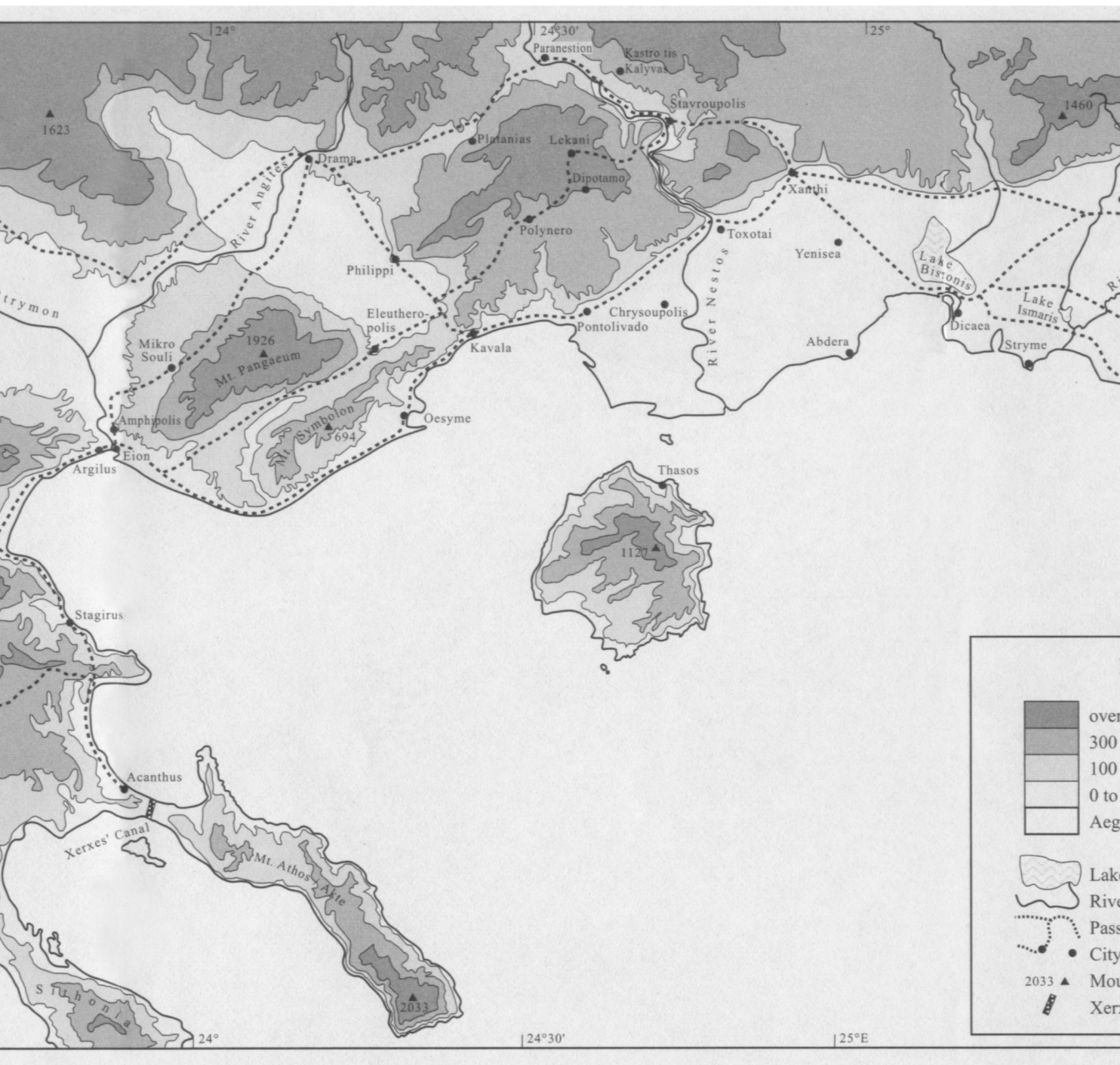
Fourth, Herodotus does have some circumstantial information, but it is not copious.

In Section 1 the only circumstantial fact is that the R.Lisos was drunk dry. For the rest the passage is entirely gazetteer-like – almost self-parodically when, having said that Xerxes passed famous lakes between Maroneia and Dicaea, Herodotus adds “around Abdera there was no famous lake for him to pass by, but he did pass the Nestos as it flows into the sea”.<sup>7</sup> Later on, of course, he does produce information about the King’s provisioning by Greek communi-

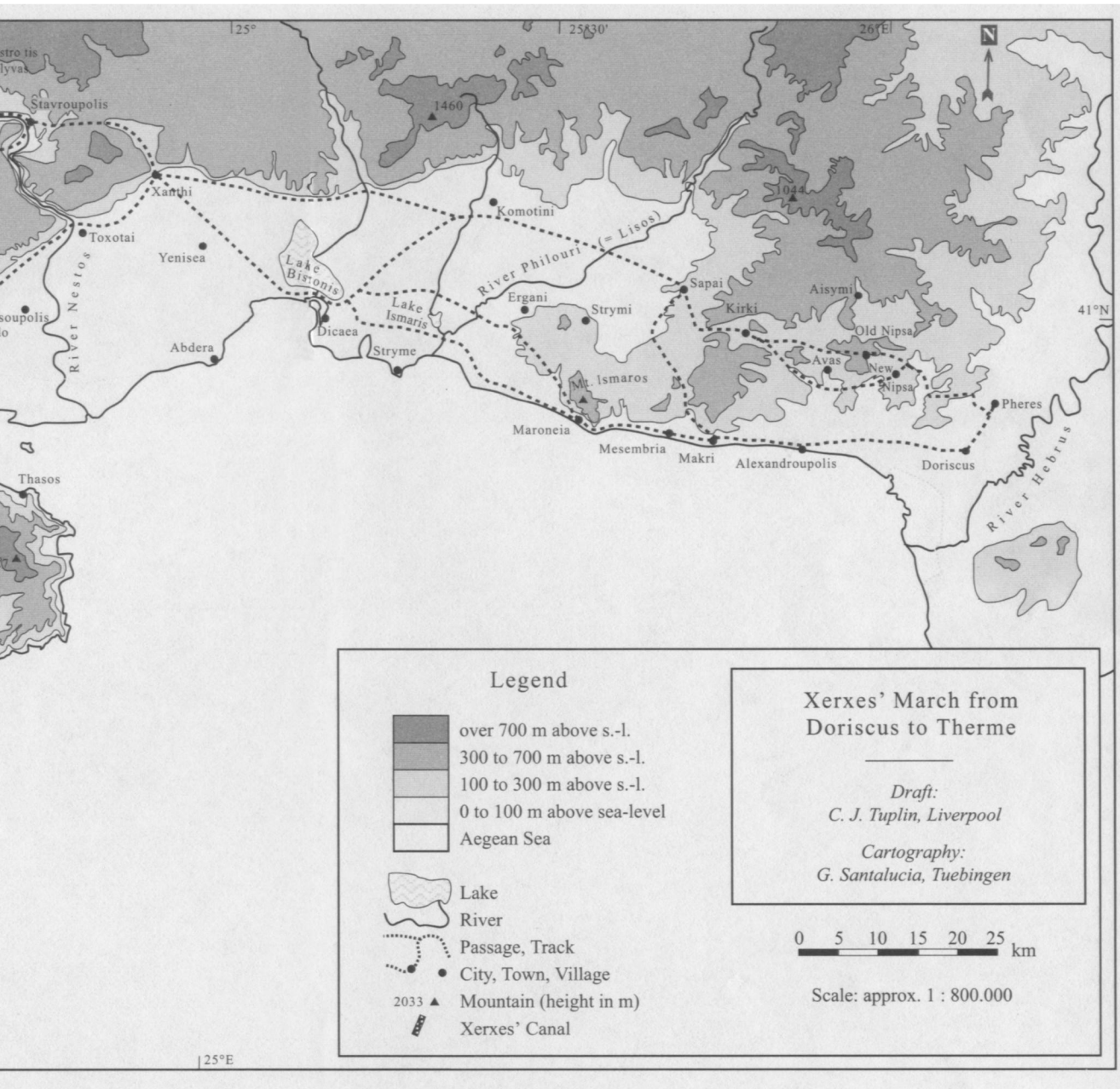
7 Some (Macan 1908: i 139; Isaac 1986: 73) infer Abdera was right next to the Nestos mouth (now 10 miles or more west of the site). I doubt that immediate proximity is an inevitable inference from *κατὰ δὲ Ἀβδηρα λίμνην μὲν οὐδεμίαν εὐσάν ὀνομαστήν παραμείψατο Ξέρξης, ποταμὸν δὲ Νέστον ῥέοντα ἐς θάλασσαν*. That Herodotus described Lake Bistonis as *κατὰ Δίκαιαν* does not prove Abdera was as close to the Nestos as Dicaea is assumed to have been to Bistonis. In any case the city-territory of Abdera might have stretched all or most of the way to the Nestos if its ancient course resembled its present one. Theophr. *HP* 3.1.5 reports that the Nestos often flooded beyond its banks and













ties the specific examples of which actually belong here. Why he delays this information till 118 is debatable, though it does have the effect of placing it after all the Greek cities that are going to be passed on land in the Doriscus-Therme journey have been passed.

Section 2 offers the story of the sacrifice of white horses and the burial alive of young men and women at Ennea Hodoi (at or near the later site of Amphipolis) – though it cannot be said that the historian casts much light on this latter event. Somewhat more mundanely it refers to bridges at Ennea Hodoi (Herodotus earlier [24] reported that the work groups responsible for the Canal also had to bridge the Strymon) and observes that the road which the King followed remained untouched in the historian's own day. A question which springs to the mind but cannot be decisively answered is whether this road represents a piece of formal engineering carried out in advance and in conjunction with the bridge building. Later on we read of road clearance immediately prior to the march south from Macedonia (131), but this was beyond the previous edge of the empire and so may not be a relevant parallel. In the present case the road evidently lay across what had been farmland – otherwise the Thracians' failure to plough and cultivate it after 480/79 (115.3) would be unremarkable – but this does not prove it was created by anything other than the actual effect of men, animals and wagons tramping across the terrain.

Section 3 offers just one circumstantial (and rather exotic) item, the attacks of lions upon the camels in Xerxes' baggage train, but there are two further relevant items which emerge later on (8.115-116). When Xerxes was returning home six months or so later he discovered that the sacred chariot of Zeus which he had left for safe-keeping with the Paeonians of Siris had been given to the Thracians; and the king of the Bisaltians and of Crestonia, who had taken refuge in the Rhodope massif, punished his six sons who had defied him by joining Xerxes' army and now returned unscathed by putting their eyes out. Siris corresponds to modern Serres (east of the Strymon) and the realm of the Bisaltian king must have been in the mountains between the Strymon and Echeidorus valleys, so these items pertain to Sections 2 and 3 of the march-narrative. One can understand the literary judgment which delayed mention of them but both must be taken into account when it comes to trying to

consequently changed course but says nothing which requires this to be more than a pretty local phenomenon (and it will not have been in flood in midsummer 480 BC). In short, there is nothing here to affect the argument of this paper. The same goes for suggestions of coastal change between Maroneia and Bistonis: I know of no geomorphological facts which limit our choices hereabouts. The remarks of Strab. 59C and VII fr. 43,44a are also unhelpful.

imagine Xerxes' real movements on real ground as distinct from his formal movements on the chessboard of Herodotus' gazetteer.

There is one final item to be considered. At the start of Section 3 we read that Xerxes told his generals that the naval force should wait in Therme and then instructed the ships to set off leaving him behind. Herodotus remarks that the Therme in question is the eponym of the Thermaic Gulf and then subjoins two explanatory additions. The first is ταύτη γὰρ ἐπυνθάνετο συντομώτατον εἶναι (121.1). At first sight this means (literally) "for by this route he discovered it was shortest to go", but that does not appear to signify very much. The real sense is perhaps "for there, he discovered, was the closest place where he could rejoin them": one may compare 4.183.2 where συντομώτατον δ' ἐστὶ τοὺς Λωτοφάγους, ἐκ τῶν τριήκοντα ἡμερέων ἐς αὐτοὺς ὁδὸς ἐστὶ means "the land of the Garamantes is the start of the shortest route to the Lotus Eaters, from whose land it is thirty days to the Garamantes". The second comment, also introduced by γὰρ, is the revelation that all the way from Doriscus to Acanthus the army actually marched in three *moirai*, one beside the sea in conjunction with the fleet, a second through the *mesogaia* and the third in between the other two. The commanders of each *moira* are named and it is said that Xerxes travelled with the middle one. The essential connection of thought is presumably still proximity to the fleet, though it can hardly be called lucid and it is a strikingly out-of-the-way place suddenly to produce what looks like an important additional piece of circumstantial information. There have been various reactions to this information. Macan declared that one of the three contingents was actually travelling *on* the ships. This is certainly not what Herodotus says and, although a single moment's inadvertence on his part might suffice to produce what he does say out of what Macan thought to be the truth, it is not a view to adopt lightly.<sup>8</sup> A century ago Anderson 1898 proposed that the *mesogaia* route involved marching along the Hebros valley (i.e. through central Bulgaria) and then descending either the Strymon or the Axios. Grundy 1901: 221 and Munro 1902: 300 thought the same, and How and Wells 1912: ii 171 were evidently inclined to do so. For those who believe that central Bulgarian Thrace was part of the empire at this date and that Xerxes drew military contingents from it there may seem some attraction in such a theory.<sup>9</sup> But the detour is prodigious. Moreover Herodotus does state in 110 that the Thracian tribes whose territory was traversed in Section 1 fell into two groups, those παρὰ

8 Note that Herodotus' access to strictly Persian sources would afford him no more or less protection against error here (or anywhere else) than his access to any other sort of source.

9 Hammond 1980 (cf. 1988: 537f.) deduces Persian control of Bulgarian Thrace from the double reference to Thracians in 185 and espouses Anderson's view of the march in 480. Zahrnt 1992: 271f. dissents, as no doubt do most readers of Hammond's article.

θάλασσαν and those in the *mesogaia*, and the tribal names he offers all belong south of Rhodope. So *mesogaia* is not intended by the historian to take us very far afield from the Aegean coast. Of course, it is precisely this which is the problem: fitting three entirely distinct routes into the space available is clearly difficult, and a recent investigator, Dietram Müller, admits the coexistence of three routes only in the section after Acanthus – and even then the southernmost is not “in conjunction with the fleet” since it crosses the main body of Chalcidice while the fleet was sailing round the prongs of Sithonia and Pallene. Prior to the Strymon valley Müller recognizes no more than two coexistent routes and that only in places where the coastal plain was wide enough to accommodate them.<sup>10</sup>

- 10 Müller 1975, 1987: 34ff. (The same author has more recently discussed the route *before* Doriscus: Müller 1994.) – Macan 1908: ii 137-139 essentially accepts the Herodotean picture (while noting the conceivable possibility that one army-section went by sea [cf. n. 31]) but does not attempt to specify inland routes between Doriscus and a north-south line through Neapolis. Beloch 1914: 39 devotes just nine lines to Xerxes' march from Sardis to Therme; the accompanying footnote does not even mention Hdt. 7.108-127. Danov 1976: 132, 183, 275f. mentions Xerxes' passage through Aegean Thrace but is of no interest here. (He is entirely concerned with Thracian tribes, but does not discuss their location in a fashion which interacts with the present theme). Authors of book-length studies of the invasion devote little space to our subject. Burn 1962: 337f. repeats Herodotus (including the three columns) in abbreviated form and with a small amount of topographical commentary (e.g. the contrast of lowlands east of Nestos [slightly oversimplified to say the least] and the wilder land to its west or the observation that three routes can be found through or round Pangaeum). Green 1970: 87-91 also reproduces Herodotus, somewhat more succinctly. He believes there were three columns, but only *east* of the Nestos (the up-country route being uncertain). His text takes the whole army to Acanthus, but his map disagrees. Hignett 1963: 105 devoted 12 lines to Xerxes' progress from Sardis to Therme. Lazenby 1993: 114f. manages 13 lines, and observes “it is not easy to determine exactly the routes followed by the three columns” whose existence he neither endorses nor denies. Müller 1975 is listed in his bibliography but not cited here. Instead there is reference to How & Wells 1912: ii 171f. and Hammond 1988: 537f. The distinctive thing in How & Wells is citation of the views of Anderson and Macan (cf. n. 31). As for Hammond, he follows Anderson's view. His reasoning is based on the assertion that no one could march an army east-west along Rhodope, Pirin and Orbelus: this is perfectly correct but a major contention of my argument is that there is high ground *south* of these ranges which can be traversed from east to west. At one point Hammond writes: “between Doriscus and Kavala there is a coastal plain of varying width”. This statement simply ignores the high ground N/NE of Mt. Ismarus separating the Alexandroupolis area from the Komotini/Xanthi plain and the reference later on to a “belt of low [sic] limestone hills with gulleys” separating Makri from Khamilon only compounds the fault. The failure to grasp the actual local geography which is disclosed here is of a piece with his blinkered (albeit entirely conventional) views about the high ground north of the coastal region. In the light of this the fact that Hammond *does* envisage a column passing straight along the coast from the Makri region *via* Maroneia to the southern side of Lake Bistonis (a fact more evident, it is true, from his map, p. 529, than from the verbal

We thus come to the question of how to relate Herodotus' formal narrative to the real ground of Thrace south-of-Rhodope. Complete justification of Herodotus may not be feasible, but Müller (and others) understate the available possibilities. I shall discuss in succession the stretches (1) from Doriscus to the plains around Lake Bistonis, (2) from there to the Strymon and (3) from the Strymon to Therme. To avoid misunderstandings I should perhaps remark that only two routes dealt with in my text have not at some time been postulated or at least assumed as available to Xerxes' troops, that there is nothing about the general lie of land (contours, lateral space and so forth) along these routes which distinguishes them clearly and damagingly from the others or from other routes in Greece which historians are happy to associate with the movement of ancient armies, that as a consequence nothing is proposed in what follows which is in principle less plausible than what is encountered in existing literature (at least so far as topographic constraints are concerned). It is not the purpose of the paper to affirm of any particular and very specifically defined piece of ground that part of Xerxes' army marched over it. The purpose is rather to clarify how many quite distinct possibilities anyone foolhardy enough to attempt such an affirmation has to choose from. Furthermore I am concerned with establishing the base-line for discussions about Persian strategy not conducting such a discussion myself. I will note only that we know that a good deal of preparatory work was done well ahead of the invasion and that the Persians could be expected to know about the (potential) road system of the region long before they actually came to Doriscus.

(1) *Doriscus to Lake Bistonis*. In the first stretch Herodotus takes us (toponymically) along the coast: Sale, Mesembria, Maroneia, R.Lisos, Stryme and so forth. Müller 1975 takes the view that there has never been a direct route along the sea-coast from Mesembria to Maroneia and that all parts of the army proceeded from Doriscus to Sale (roughly = modern Alexandroupolis) and followed the later Via Egnatia route (equivalent to that of the modern National Highway), leaving the coast before Mesembria and passing over Mt. Tsomban into the plain of Komotini. This is simply not true. In the first place, there are maps which show such a road – not only the Freytag-Berndt 1: 600,000 road-map of c.1960 but the map in Baker 1877 – and the eighteenth century traveller Edward Clarke may indicate that it was then part of a standard route from Komotini to the lower Evros.<sup>11</sup> In the second place Kazarow certainly travelled

description) cannot in good conscience be adduced as an independent judgment by a competent authority about the feasibility of such a road. He is right to envisage such a route but it is not clear that he is right by any other means than accident.

- 11 Clarke 1811/14: 2.3.435f., 441 n. 2. The question is whether Mary, the only named intermediate place on the route, is Maroneia (as is suggested by Clarke's description of it as the erstwhile Ismarus, later called Maroneia) or Makri, east of Mesembria on the Via



directly from Mesembria to Maroneia in 1917 (1918: 31 n. 4, reporting a fortification of unstated date one hour east of Maroneia). In the third place, the direct road still exists. Starting at the western entrance of the (very extensive) Maroneia archaeological zone it is a little more than 16 km. to the excavated site of Mesembria over an *asphalti* which is pot-holed but perfectly passable by car.<sup>12</sup> The road is not literally coastal but runs at varying distances from the sea (on the whole moving closer the further east one goes) across the spurs of Mt. Ismaros. There are therefore plenty of bends, crests and troughs, but the lie of the land could not possibly be described as representing a substantial natural impediment to land-based communication. In my view one would require rather strong special reasons to maintain that no road followed this route in antiquity, when Maroneia and Mesembria were live places, not archaeological sites. It is certainly a much less arduous way to get from Alexandroupolis to the vicinity of Dicaea than taking the Via Egnatia route over Mt. Tsomban, which involves crossing two successive high saddles in the course of the 16 km. or so from Makri (just east of Mesembria) to the plain of Komotini. In stormy weather, of course, the coastal route might well be uncomfortable. One recalls the sufferings of Cleombrotus' army on the exposed coast road from Creusis to Aigosthena in 379/9 (Xenophon *Hellenica* 5.4.18) – but the possibility of such discomfort did not mean that there was no road from Creusis to Aigosthena, and it will not mean there was none from Mesembria to Maroneia. The essential point to stress is that, although Mount Ismaros comes close to the sea, it does not create the sort of cliffs or steep slopes falling directly into the sea which would prevent the creation of a road in the absence of dynamite.<sup>13</sup>

Next, are there *other* ways of getting from Doriscus to the plain of Komotini? Müller does not consider the question, but the answer is certainly yes. The 1960 Freytag-Berndt road-map and the wartime General Staff map suggest as much and there is confirmatory information in Edward Clarke and elsewhere. Clarke 1811/14: 2.3.435f. describes travelling from Komotini to Pheres, 6 km

Egnatia route (as is suggested by the relative times from Komotini to Mary and Mary to Pheres). – The route described in my text also appears on the 1:250,000 ROAD Editions map (Thraci) which has become available since research for this paper was done.

- 12 Rossiter 1973: 577 speaks of a "rocky path" from Maroneia to Mesembria (a 3.5 hour journey). The current asphalt has been repaired several times to judge from the stratigraphy of some of its potholes, though this might all have happened since 1973 (or 1967 [the first edition of Rossiter's book]). However the c. 1960 Freytag-Berndt map definitely implies more than a mere path, so if Rossiter's description is correct there was a severe deterioration in the early 60s. There certainly *are* patches where any asphalt has disappeared altogether and what is left is undoubtedly rocky.
- 13 Lazaridis 1971: fig.8, 1975: fig.8 marks the coastal route as certainly used by Xerxes, though in the later volume (1975: 34) he thinks it less important than the route north of Mt. Ismaros.

north of Doriscus, by a direct route through the mountains. Similar routes are indicated on the maps in MacIntosh 1854, Baker 1877 and Clark 1878. I do not claim after only a brief, and rain-interrupted, investigation to have identified this route precisely. It may exist in several variations, and in fact I am almost certain that there is at least one more northerly variant, passing closer to Aisymi. But I can certainly speak for the existence of a route which shares with Clarke's description at least the admittedly mobile toponym Derveni.

Starting in Pheres one proceeds initially along what was once the route of a light railway. A journey of some 20 km. brings one to the site of Old Nipsa, marked by a church with a fine bell-tower, and not to be confused with New Nipsa (previously Chiflik), which replaced it after the Civil War. From Old Nipsa two paths set off westwards, one each side of the ridge immediately south of the village. The northern one goes in the general direction of (modern) Aisymi, the other path leads to Avas, through what the local *khorphulakas* agreed with the General Staff map (and with Edward Clarke) in calling Derveni. More precisely this latter route comes out on the N-S asphalt road between Avas and Aisymi at the point just north of the mediaeval castle of Avas where a dirt track continues due west towards the village of Kirki. About 2 km before Kirki this track meets the Komotini-Alexandroupolis railway next to a lignite mine. There are no significant gradients between Avas and this point and (obviously) none after it as the route continues along the railway to Kirki and out into the southern part of the Komotini plain. The railway itself keeps close to the north side of Mt. Ismaros, but it is equally natural from Kirki to make for Sapai, and this place certainly figures in the itineraries of Clarke and others. The total distances from Doriscus to Komotini by the modern National Highway and the Nipsa-Kirki route just described are respectively c. 88 and c. 86 km - i.e. indistinguishable. The interesting comparison is the one concerning gradients. The National Highway requires (as already noted) a 16 km. passage over Mt. Tsomban, the Nipsa-Kirki one has no significant gradients at all except in the 7 km. section between Old Nipsa and Avas, and the climbing required in that section is quite unlike that involved on the other route. It makes sense that there should have been times when the Nipsa-Kirki route was of at least some importance, and it would be entirely appropriate if an informant encountered at the lignite mine near Kirki was right in his insistence that a long stony patch in the dirt route west of Avas represents Turkish period *kalderim*. One may also note that *AD 33 Khronika* 311f. reports the discovery of ancient wall traces at Skotino (not marked on the General Staff map) 2 km. NE of Avas, very close indeed to the Old Nipsa - Avas section of the route, and that other such remains have been mentioned in the vicinity of Kirki (*AD 30 Khronika* 301). There is a further point to make. I noted that the Nipsa-Kirki route out of Pheres starts along a now defunct light railway. This ran the whole way *via* Chiflik / New Nipsa to join the main line south of Avas (cf. Collart 1929 pl.xxii) - a fact

which implies that it is possible to get from Doriscus to the Komotini plain without any significant gradients *at all*. It will be a more roundabout route, but only very slightly: I have driven a version of it the whole way and the total is 92 km (as against 86 or 88).<sup>14</sup>

The crucial point to emerge is this: casual inspection of a map may suggest that the coastal plain of Doriscus and its continuation beyond Alexandroupolis is firmly cut off by mountains from the next plain and that the traveller must, come what may, have a pretty hard time getting from one to the other. This is simply wrong. There is, I think, a tendency among those who examine the region to be too impressed by the sharp physical contrast between the flat plains around L. Bistonis and the Rhodope massif behind it and by knowledge of the sharp politico-ethnic contrasts between Hellenes and Thracians or Greeks and Bulgarians which have tended to accompany it. For the main massif this is entirely fair; but one should not casually lump in all the foothills as well.

My conclusion, then, is that, if we wish, we can postulate three routes from Doriscus into the Komotini plain. Two of them, (a) along the line of the National Highway and (b) through Pheres, Nipsa and Kirki are entirely distinct from one another. The third, (c), starts out from Doriscus along route (a) but diverges after c. 35 km. to proceed directly along the coast to Maroneia and beyond.<sup>15</sup>

(2) *Lake Bistonis to the Strymon*. The National Highway follows a roundabout route from Komotini, going south west around the seaward side of Lake Bistonis, then north west to Xanthi, then south west again across the Nestos past Chrysoupolis towards Kavala. Although details are debated it is agreed that the Via Egnatia did not behave like this. First, it stayed north of Lake Bistonis, crossing the R. Kompsatos east of Iasmos like the current direct Komotini - Xanthi road. (A handsome ruined Turkish bridge over the Kompsatos a little way north of the current road and railway bridges shows that there was a road this way in mediaeval / early modern times as well.) Second, it probably avoided Xanthi and went direct to Chrysoupolis, crossing the Nestos some way

- 14 O'Sullivan 1972: 119f. in fact believes that the Via Egnatia did not cross Mt. Tsomban (like the modern National Road) but followed the same path as the railway between Kirki and the coast at Alexandroupolis. Lazaridis 1971: fig.8, 1975: fig.8 shows a route north of Mt. Ismaros starting at Mesembria and following a line south of the (conventional) Via Egnatia, past Strymi and Ergani, to rejoin the Mesembria-Maroneia route near L. Ismaris.
- 15 Since Doriscus was a food-storage site there would, of course, be no particular logistical difficulty in having two of the army's three *moirai* using the first 35 km. of the route west in succession; and if the group setting off last used the Mesembria-Maroneia route (which is more direct than the road over Mount Tsomban) it would be able to make up any loss of time: both groups could be expected to be equivalently far west after, say, five days.

south of the modern bridges at Toxotai: the main Turkish period road here did this too, passing through Yenisea *alias* Yenidje, a settlement about half-way between Xanthi and Abdera and the major place of the vicinity until supplanted by Xanthi.<sup>16</sup> This is not, however, the issue I wish to highlight at the moment (though we shall return to a version of it later on). What interests me here is the general assumption that the way in which the mountains crowd in from the north beyond Chrysoupolis means that the traveller is committed to pass through Kavala and then make the steep climb to the plain of Philippi before continuing through the Pierian Valley or the Angites Valley to Amphipolis. It is true that the Via Egnatia was a route of this sort, witness recent finds of milestones, one *in situ* from Amygdaleon, 5 km. north of Kavala,<sup>17</sup> and another re-used at Zabarnikeia (25 km. west of Mikro Souli) overlooking the Angites valley (*AD* 34 *Khronika* 332; *AR* 1989/1990: 62). We may also allow that Herodotus' general reference to Xerxes' passing by the "Thasian cities", of which only Pistyros (= Pontolivado) is named, embraces Neapolis = Kavala as well. But the real point is that there is no necessity to go anywhere near Kavala.

Xanthi originated as a cooler, mountainside resort for the Turks of Yenidje. Its precise location depends on a striking cleft in the hinterland massif through which passed, and passes, a major route traversing Stavroupolis and Paranes-tion and eventually reaching the northerly part of the plain of Philippi near Drama, perfectly placed for continuing to Amphipolis *via* the Angites valley. The route starts by climbing quite steeply high above the ravine of the Esketze Cay (anc. Kosintos). Road and river come together after 5 km. and the pre-modern use of this route (and also variations in its precise line) is nicely illustrated by two very fine Turkish bridges in the next 5 km. or so. The gentle climb up the valley of the Esketze is succeeded by a 13 km. long, and eventually steep, descent across open mountain sides into Stavroupolis, a modern garrison town on the NE edge of the mountain plain from which the Nestos descends to sea level through a gorge unpenetrated by any road. Between Stavroupolis and Paranes-tion the road follows the Nestos and presents no problems at all. Recent excavations at Kastro tis Kalyvas, 9 km. north of the Ioniko crossroads, have brought to light a stunning fortress evidently constructed, perhaps by Philip II, to keep an eye both on a side route into the higher Rhodope massif and on the main Nestos valley route far below.<sup>18</sup> There are also fortifications at Karsi Baylar near Daphnon and at Aerikon across the Nestos from Kalyva. At Paranes-tion the Nestos is crossed and the road rises steadily for 5 km. then descends (though it is not steep for long) through the Stena Korpillon (at which point an

16 Cf. maps in Baker 1877, Clark 1878; a similar route (through Bouron Kalesi on the north tip of Lake Bistonis) is probably implied in Ray 1693: 2.12f.

17 Now thought to be the Peutinger Table's Fonsco (*AR* 1990/91: 57).

18 Plan and photographs in Avramea & Selimis 1994: 92f.



earlier version of the route is visible at a lower level) into fairly open country. There are no significant natural difficulties in the remaining 20 km. from here to intersection with the Kavala-Drama highway. What is worth noticing is another kastro reported in *AD 22 Khronika* 428 at Platanias and (perhaps) two villages on the north side of the road slightly further west called Teikhos and Psilokastro. The distance from Xanthi is some 85 km, and this will certainly make for a longer journey to Amphipolis than one along the route through Kavala – though only appreciably so if the latter reaches Amphipolis through the Pierian Valley (south of Mt. Pangaeum) rather than diverting like the Via Egnatia (O'Sullivan 1972: 109; Collart 1976: 191) to use the Angites valley north of Pangaeum. But the present argument is about identification not of the shortest single route but of available alternative routes. If it was preferable not to have the whole army strung out along a single route, then it would certainly make sense to send part of it by the route just described, especially given the King's desire to rake in military contributions from local Thracian tribes – for the Xanthi-Stavroupolis-Paranestion route passes through upland areas (notably the enclosed plain of Stavroupolis) which may well have sustained significant bodies of population.<sup>19</sup>

(3) *The Strymon to Therme*. We have succeeded in identifying two distinct ways in which army groups might have proceeded from the Nestos to the Strymon. Whether there was a third is a question to which we shall return later. In the meantime, what happened after the Strymon? There are three factors to be taken into account.

First, we can define some obvious major through-routes.<sup>20</sup> One, route (a), is that past Lakes Volvi and Koroneia, whether going south of the lakes (as the National Highway does and as most people think the Via Egnatia did) or north

19 Isaac 1986: 74 (cf. Polaschek 1936: 1125, Danov 1976: 138) identifies the start of the Abdera-Danube route (Thuc. 2.97) with the ascent into Rhodope from Xanthi area. (The new inscription in Velkov & Domaradzka 1994, linking Maroneia and Vetren-Pistiros, west of Plovdiv, may be a further reflection of this route.) Given such a road in 480, the hardest part of the inland route from the Komotini plain to the Philippi region (the first few miles) was in place. – Stavroupolis is still a garrison town because (as the German invasion of April 1941 illustrates: cf. Büchner 1957: 31f.) the north Aegean coast is, despite Rhodope, vulnerable to attack from Bulgaria *via* this part of the Nestos. Büchner's monograph notes that the Stavroupolis road is an alternative to the coast as a way to get from Komotini to the Strymon but is otherwise not much concerned with details of east-west routes.

20 Consultation of Clarke 1811/1814: 2.3.375f., Leake 1835: iii 198f., 225f., 229f., and maps in Cousinéry 1831, Baker 1877 and Clark 1878 will show that the current pattern of main routes goes back at least to the early nineteenth century and is not simply the product of modern engineering or the internal combustion engine.

of them (as was the norm during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries).<sup>21</sup> The route is not flat the entire way because Thessaloniki and Therme are separated from Langadas by some high ground (the northern outriders of Mt. Chortiatis, itself the last northerly extension of the mountains of Chalcidice). In addition to this straight route from Ennea Hodoi there are two other immediately obvious possibilities. The first, route (b), involves travelling up the Strymon, turning west through the corridor of level ground north of Rhodopolis which leads to Lake Doiran, then south to Kilkis and Thessaloniki. This is quite a detour but it is the way the railway goes between Thessaloniki and Serres and it is accordingly entirely flat. The other, route (c), is that corresponding to the Thessaloniki-Serres road via Lachanas. It is apt to be ignored in discussions of Xerxes' movements, but although it involves a substantial climb from the Strymon valley (my notes describe the modern road as "relentless, but not cruelly steep") as a whole the route merely undulates with a general downward trend and it is obviously available as a through route.<sup>22</sup> It comes out in the same region as route (a), requiring the traveller to cross further high ground before reaching Thessaloniki or Therme. Nor do these three roads exhaust the possibilities. One can, for example, abandon route (b) at Rhodopolis and strike more or less due south across the mountains to the upper Echeidorus valley (route [d]). This involves a fairly gentle 10 km climb (a beautifully graded precursor of the current asphalt is visible on the other side of the valley) and a much briefer and steeper descent on the other side. It is likely that there also exist more southerly equivalents starting near modern L. Kerkinitis, but I have only map evidence for this. South of the Lachanas route (route [c]) there is certainly a road (route [e]) from Nigrita to the upland plain of Sochos and thence to the end point of routes (a) and (c) either direct or (a recognized variant in the nineteenth century) by way of the road along the north side of the lakes, though this involves a more severe initial ascent from the Strymon valley. But what must be stressed above all is this: as you stand in the Strymon valley and look west the way may seem blocked by a wall of mountain stretching from Amphipolis to Lake Kerkinitis. But this wall is actually permeable. Moreover the worst part of it is the bit closest to the Strymon. Most of the land between the Strymon and the Echeidorus is open, undulating upland, not mountain terrain in any substantial – or romantically picturesque – way at all.

- 21 Aesch. *Pers.* 492f. takes the Persian retreat in 479 by way of Volve. – For the route immediately north of the lakes cf. maps in Baker 1877 and Clark 1878, Leake 1835: iii 232, Clarke 1816: 2.3.375f.
- 22 Casson 1926: 26 identified the road built by Sitalces through Mt. Cercine (Thuc.2.98) as a route over the mountains west of the Lower Strymon. The normal view, however, is that it refers to Mt. Ograzden, part of Rhodope to the NE of Strymon valley (Hammond / Griffith 1979: 128).

A second factor is the hydrography of the Strymon valley.<sup>23</sup> In the last century there was a lake stretching upstream of Amphipolis as far as the line between Serres and Nigrita. By the inter-war period this had split into two lakes. Now there is no lake at all, though there is Lake Kerkinitis much further north. In Thucydides' time there was a large (but anonymous) lake above Amphipolis (4.108): what he says about it would be consistent with conditions similar to those of the nineteenth century, though they do not preclude a more extensive piece of water.<sup>24</sup> Herodotus knew of a Lake Prasias (5.15f.) which must be either this lake or one similar to modern Lake Kerkinitis, unless indeed the two should be amalgamated making the whole Lower Strymon valley a lake. This is the solution which Müller 1975 favours, but it strikes me as rather alarming. If this area had really contained a lake as long as the distance from Corinth to Athens or Thermopylae to Artemisium, I think existing sources of ancient evidence could be expected to have left us in no doubt about the fact. The essential Herodotean evidence about Lake Prasias is Megabazus' operation in c. 513 when he conquered the Siriopaeonians, Paeoplae and other (Paeonian) tribes as far as Lake Prasias but not the Paeonians of Pangaeum or those on the actual shores of Prasias. This makes most sense if Prasias is a distinct lake away to the north of Serres. But it cannot be as far away as Lake Doiran, because Herodotus also says that a direct route leads from Lake Prasias across Mt. Dysoron into Macedonia: from Lake Doiran you can enter Macedonia without crossing any mountain at all.

As for the lower course of the Strymon: Herodotus' description of the area on the north side of Pangaeum as stretching to the Strymon and to the Angites which flows into the Strymon rather tells against there being a lake at all in the region immediately north of Amphipolis, whatever Thucydides says about conditions half a century later. In any case Persian movements in 480, in particular the role of Siris (on which more in a moment), make it hard to believe that any Lower Strymon lake stretched far enough north to cut Serres off from the Lachanas road to Thessaloniki (route [c]). If there really was no Lower Strymon bridge until Xerxes' work-force built one, the conclusion would be certain: the absence of a proper crossing at Amphipolis would only have been tolerable if there was a river bridge further north carrying the Lachanas route from Therme forward to Serres and thence east by the Angites valley – a reversal of the state of affairs postulated by Thucydides in which Amphipolis is where you have to cross because upstream is blocked by a lake. But it is, of

23 There is plenty of modern literature which bears on this question. Consultation of Gomme 1956: 581, Hammond 1972: 191-203, Müller 1975 may suffice. Note the inconsistency of maps 2 and 3 as against Map 9 in Hammond / Griffith 1979.

24 Samsaris 1979: 422-3 publishes an inscription from Paralimnion near Serres (cf. BE 1983 no. 267) which suggests there was a navigable lake at that point in the later 4 or 3 c. BC.

course, possible that what Xerxes' workmen provided was extra or better bridges.

The third and final factor is information directly provided by Herodotus about Persian movements between the Strymon valley and Therme. (i) Herodotus has Xerxes himself proceed from Strymon to Acanthus. (This is still within Section 2 of the narrative as defined at the outset.) Nothing compels us to assume that the whole or indeed any significant part of the army also went to Acanthus. (ii) Xerxes' own route from Acanthus to Therme is described as an inland route (τὴν μεσόγαίαν τάμνων τῆς ὁδοῦ) "through Paeonia and Crestonia to the R. Echeidorus". This indicates a route further north than the Serres-Lachanas one (route [c]), for only in that way can one reach the R. Echeidorus before one reached Therme. This would mean that, having made a considerable southerly detour to see the canal, Xerxes then made a considerable northerly detour. This does seem rather implausible, and appears to make Herodotus' comment about Therme being the closest place at which the King could rejoin the fleet particularly and excessively *mal à propos*. Yet (iii) it appears to receive some confirmation in the information about Siris. Xerxes left his sacred chariot there on the outward journey and, on his hurried return journey, left some of his wounded there but found the chariot gone. Siris is, of course, well north of the direct route from Pangaeum *via* Amphipolis and the Lakes (i.e. route [a]), though it is on or near the way from the Angites valley to Lachanas (route [c]) or any more northerly route. If Xerxes was actually there after being at Acanthus perhaps he did after all make a very roundabout trip. (It would be even worse if we took him there before Acanthus.) But we probably do not have to postulate a personal visit – at least if we assume that Siris was so much the principal place of the valley that it was a natural place to send valuables for storage and especially if at least part of the army did go there.<sup>25</sup> (iv) We can be reasonably certain that the army did not confine itself to the coastal/lakeside route (route [a]) – assuming that it used it at all. The flight of the disaffected

- 25 Kienast 1996: 307 postulates a Persian garrison at Siris dating from Megabyzus' time, of which Herodotus was unaware because he was only well-informed about coastal places. Herodotus' narrative does not allow for there being any Persian troops at Siris in 480 (whether a generation-old garrison or a detachment left by Xerxes) who might have stopped the Paeonians "giving" the chariot to the Thracians. Of course, if there really was a major raid by Thracians from the Upper Strymon (Triballians?) any such troops may simply have been overwhelmed and/or forced to be party to a Paeonian wish to hand over the chariot in order to protect their other property from depredation (and this remains the most plausible context for the Paeonians simply "giving" the chariot to anyone). So Herodotean silence does not preclude some form of Persian military presence. But it remains odd that he heard the story without any Persian component, if such a component had existed. I am not yet persuaded that the list of garrisons in Tuplin 1987 requires amendment.



Bisaltian king to Rhodope while his sons joined the Persian army probably occurred when a section of that army turned up in his territory demanding submission. This would point to use of the Lachanas route (route [c]) if not also the northern corridor (route [b]).

One is left, then, with a suspicion that more than one land-route was in fact concurrently used by the Persian army in the Strymon-Therme stretch.<sup>26</sup> So, which routes should we be considering? We have seen that two entirely distinct routes can be identified from Doriscus as far as the Lower Strymon (not to mention three *nearly* entirely distinct ones from Doriscus to the Komotini / Xanthi plain). If the Persians *had* used both of those routes, it would be natural to assume that they continued by two distinct routes as far as Therme. At first sight the natural continuations are the coastal/lakeside route (route [a]) and the Lachanas route (route [c]). But that would create a bottle-neck west of Langedas and neither of the two, of course, can be the route which Herodotus actually describes. We can solve both these problems either by replacing one of the two routes just named by route [b] (or one of the shorter variants from Lake Kerkinitis to Kilkis) or by postulating that at this stage more than two distinct routes were used (i.e. Herodotus' Echeidorus route and two others).<sup>27</sup> The latter approach is attractive insofar as Herodotus himself speaks of the army being divided into three *moirai*. Unfortunately it is around this point that his text (as it stands) also implies that the army *ceased* to be divided into three *moirai*.

Before trying to resolve that problem, we should probably darken counsel still further by considering the possibility that Herodotus' description of the Echeidorus route (implicitly the sole land-route in Section 3) may not be a

26 The situation resembles a rather clearer one in Thessaly (196-197), where Xerxes is found at Halos (on the coast), but the army is also said to have drunk dry the R. Onochonos (well inland, near Pharsalus), an inconsequence to which the proper solution is that (at least) two routes were used from Northern Thessaly to the Malian Gulf. Two further cases are perhaps slightly more contentious. (a) Between Lower Macedonia and Northern Thessaly we hear (in very close conjunction) of the "Macedonian Mountain", Upper Macedonia, Perrhaebia and Gonnus (128, 131, 173). These should arguably be separated into (i) the route through Servia-Elasson-Tirnavos and (ii) the coastal route, with perhaps the local detour *via* Skotina, Kallipefki and Gonni to avoid Tempe. (Herodotus' description of Artabazus' retreat through Thessaly and Macedonia as τὴν μεσόγειαν τῶν τῆς ὁδοῦ [9.89] is relevant here, since *pace* Hammond 1979: 101, who refers the phrase to Thrace and to the road *via* Siris, careful reading shows that Herodotus is talking about the route before arrival in Thrace.) (b) After the fighting at Thermopylae Herodotus takes the Persians to Phocis *via* Doris (8.31), i.e. by a route *not* passing through Thermopylae. But it seems inconceivable that none of the Persian army used the high-road which Thermopylae actually blocked – not, of course, the coastal route but the Mendhenitsa-Klisoura route or one of the other Kallidromo passes east of Thermopylae (cf. Pritchett 1982: 123-233, 1985: 190-216, 1992: 145-156).

27 Hammond 1979: 100 takes such a view.

reliable indication that it was actually used at all. If we are going to doubt that Xerxes himself went the way Herodotus says he went (see above) and if we concede that lions could just as well have roamed round Lachanas as further north, we might conclude that Herodotus' talk about Paeonia, Crestonia and the R. Echeidorus is another bit of armchair or gazetteer reconstruction: he knew of a connection between the march and Paeonian Siris and he knew about a road from Paeonia to Macedonia *via* the Echeidorus (it could even be the same as the one over Mt. Dysorum: 5.17). He therefore boldly asserted that Xerxes used it. The disadvantage of this is that, if we revert to the "natural" continuations of the two routes from Doriscus to the Lower Strymon, we are still left with the problem of a bottleneck at Langadas. To mitigate that without postulating use of the Echeidorus route will require a different approach again, viz. to assume that a significant part of the army did after all go to Acanthus and then proceeded thence to Therme across central Chalcidice (route [f]). Some portions of this west of Arnea would be rather tiresome, but otherwise this is not a bad route. But one cannot claim any independent confirmation. For example, it would be neat to say that it accounted for the claim in 7.185 that "the Chalcidican *genos*" and Bottiaeans joined Xerxes' army, but I am not sure what Herodotus means by Chalcidican *genos* and the Bottiaeans certainly belong around Olynthus and Spartolus – far to the south and on the wrong side of the mountains.<sup>28</sup>

We have reached something of an *impasse*. Let us restate its fundamental features and see how we can escape. (1) There are potentially rather a lot of ways to travel from the Lower Strymon to Therme. (The above discussion identifies six.) (2) Herodotus' narrative explicitly names Acanthus and the R. Echeidorus as though they were both part of one route (taken by Xerxes). In fact they are actually proper to two routes at opposite (northern and southern) ends of the range of routes available. Logically we must either choose one of the two as the sole land-route used by the army (we could permit Xerxes a personal side-trip to Acanthus) or accept that there was concurrent use of more than one route. Since there are *other* arguable indications that routes well north of Acanthus / North Chalcidice were used (Siris; the Crestonian King) the second of these choices is much the more attractive one. (3) The report that the army marched from Doriscus to Acanthus in three *moirai* is in any case surprisingly belated and it will be entirely inconsequential, misplaced and misleading *unless* Herodotus believed that *after* Acanthus the army marched (as indeed his narrative on the surface suggests) by *one* route. (4) The report has also (so far) not received independent endorsement, since we have only established grounds for postulating two entirely distinct routes the whole way from Doriscus to the Lower Strymon.

28 It is presumably for this reason that Hammond 1979: 100 postulates a route from Acanthus to Therme *via* Olynthus rather than *via* north-central Chalcidice.

One thing is clear. Unless *all* of the army went to Acanthus and then directly on to Therme (a condition we cannot reasonably accept: see [2] above), Herodotus has seriously misrepresented the real geographical facts by treating Section 2 of the march as running from the Thasian shore to Acanthus. The real end of that section should be the Strymon valley, since that is where significant choices about route would have to be made.<sup>29</sup> Herodotus seems largely unaware of this (but cf. n. 29) and of the fact that, although the road from the Strymon to Acanthus *starts* by going south-west (towards Therme), Acanthus is actually south (even a little east of south) of the river, not west of it. Moreover his statement about the three lines of march underscores the problem, since it highlights the role of Acanthus as the terminal point of the second section of narrative, while advancing a proposition which at least in part simply cannot be true: for, whatever might or might not be the case elsewhere in the country between the Hebros and Therme, the geography of NE Chalcidice ensures that the proposition that an invasion force *reached Acanthus* in three distinct *moirai* is senseless and inevitably false. In short, Herodotus writes as though he supposes (i) that there was a decently spacious coastal plain running in an east-west direction the whole way from Doriscus to Acanthus, capable of accommodating three lines of march (or perhaps two lines of march, with a third interior line passing through consistently permeable higher ground to the north) and – in view of his placing of the comment about the three *moirai* (cf. [3] above) – (ii) that the geography changed radically at Acanthus, eliminating the possibility of parallel progress. In both respects these apparent assumptions are, of course, unsatisfactory.<sup>30</sup>

29 The sacrifice at the Strymon (7.113) and the lodging of the chariot of Zeus at Siris do imply (in contrast to the general construction of Herodotus' narrative) that the Strymon represented a significant point on the journey (Kienast 1996: 306f.). Why it should be a point requiring special reactions of this sort is another matter. It is not the furthest edge of all effective Persian authority (that was represented by the southern and western boundaries of Macedonia). A theoretical alternative is that the part of the empire subject to satrapal government (as distinct from vassal adjuncts like Macedonia) ended at the Strymon, but to accept this implies that Chalcidice (certainly not part of the Macedonian Kingdom) was entirely outside the empire. This seems hard to square with the construction of the Athos canal – an exercise which might not require *prior* Persian authority over the area but surely connoted the imposition of such authority. (The fact that the base-camp for building operations was at Elaious in the Chersonese, 22, argues confidence in the recognition of such authority; and the warm relations between the Acanthians and Xerxes, 116, are not inconsistent with their city being properly within imperial boundaries.) Another possibility is that the difference between the Strymon and the Nestos or Hebros (which are not reported to have attracted religious rituals) lies in the contrast between the relatively open setting of the latter rivers' lower valleys and the more enclosed and threatening setting of some sections of the lower Strymon.

30 Kienast 1996: 310f. has a brief (non-topographical) discussion of the odd way in which Herodotus treats Doriscus-Acanthus as a unit.

Granted this, how much of Herodotus' record can we, or should we, preserve? A radically sceptic investigator might (a) regard the statement that the army marched in three *moirai* from Doriscus to Therme as too profoundly undermined by its association with a misconception of the natural geographic sections of the overall journey to be worth further consideration, (b) insist that all parts of the Herodotean narrative which are under any suspicion of being gazetteer-constructed must be regarded as of no more validity (perhaps less validity) than the comparable efforts of a modern historian with a map and direct knowledge of the landscape, and therefore (c) concede useful evidential status only to the scattered circumstantial details provided by Herodotus. My own view is that even those who would not claim in principle to be approaching Herodotus in a radically sceptical frame of mind are in this case likely in practice to adopt something very like positions (b) and (c). On (a), however, it may not be necessary to go quite so far. We are, of course, as a minimum going to have to assert *contra* Herodotus that, if multiple lines of march are to be envisaged at all, they can be envisaged just as well in the stretch from the Strymon ("Acanthus") to Therme as in the earlier part of the journey.<sup>31</sup> But Herodotus' claim is not just that there were multiple lines but specifically that there were three lines. Can that claim be sustained or explained in a fashion which at least leaves the principle of multiple lines of march intact?

Our current position is this. (i) There is no great problem in finding three routes from the Strymon valley to Therme (and if we choose the Echeidorus route, the Lachanas route and the Acanthus/North Chalcidice route, we can eliminate *all* duplication of use over even short stretches). (ii) There are certainly two quite distinct routes the whole way from Doriscus to the Strymon Valley.<sup>32</sup> So there are essentially three approaches open to us: either demonstrate that there could be *three* distinct routes from Doriscus to the Strymon Valley (in which case Herodotus' actual error is limited to implying that

31 The unnatural highlighting of Acanthus may simply be due to the fact that Acanthus is the first place at which the fleet has to be mentioned – because of the canal – and the start of the first portion of the trip during which the fleet necessarily loses contact with *all* parts of the army for some of the time. (To say this is not, however, to endorse the suggestion that Herodotus has failed to realize that the army group which he describes as going along the coast ὁμοῦ τῷ ναυτικῷ was actually travelling *on* the ships (Macan 1908: i 152, ii 137 n. 1) – It is, of course, possible that the terminology used to describe the route from Acanthus to Therme (τὴν μεσόγαίαν τάμνων τῆς ὁδοῦ: 124) is actually an unconscious hint at the three-*moirai* scenario, *mesogaia* being the term used to define the route furthest from the sea and the Echeidorus route ([b]) being indeed further inland than any other which comes into question.

32 i.e. Doriscus - Pheres - Kirki - Komotini - Xanthi - Stavroupoli - Paranestion - Angites Valley - Strymon Valley; and Doriscus - Lake Bistonis (either *via* Mesembria and Maroneia or *via* Mount Tsomban and the southern Komotini plain) - Yenisea - Kavala - Pierian Vale - Strymon Valley.



tripartite division stopped at Acanthus [or "Acanthus")] or assume that there were really only two routes used the whole way from Doriscus to Therme (and explain Herodotus' postulation of three as due to false combination of sources<sup>33</sup> or assume there were two routes as far as the Strymon, but three thereafter (and explain Herodotus' error as due to false retrospective generalization). The last of these approaches sits ill with the fact that Herodotus actually manages to write as though the multiple lines of advance were abandoned at just the moment when they actually became three in number and the middle one cannot help sounding like special pleading (though it *is* the only way Xerxes can be both in the "middle" route and at Acanthus). So the only approach that is ever likely to seem satisfactory (which is not to say be true, since there may be no rational way of determining what can be excluded as unsatisfactorily unreasonable errors) is the first.

It is not too difficult to satisfy the requirement for three distinct routes from Doriscus as far as the Nestos, (A) an inland route (Pheres - Old Nipsa - Komotini - Xanthi - Stavroupolis [Nestos]), (B) a coastal route (Doriscus - Mesembria - Maroneia - Dicaea - Abdera [or some point north of Abdera] - Yenisea - Nestos) and (C) an intermediate route keeping as far north as possible of the coast between Doriscus and the pass over Mt. Tsomban, then reaching the Nestos west of Xanthi by a route north of Lake Bistonis but closer to the lake than route (A).<sup>34</sup> There is perhaps a slight air of artifice about this, but that is not the biggest problem. The biggest problem is extending the game to the area between the Nestos and the Strymon.

We have successfully delineated *two* distinct routes for that section, Xanthi - Stavroupolis - Paranestion - Angites Valley - Strymon and Yenisea - Kavala - Pierian Vale - Strymon: the room for manoeuvre for a third is very restricted. Any such route would have to pass through the upland area between the modern Xanthi - Kavala road to the south and the Stavroupolis - Paranestion road to the north. The internal topography of this area certainly does not preclude communications: in particular there is a modern route joining Stavroupolis to the plain of Philippi (by way of Lekani, Platamon and Polyneron) whose general charac-

33 For example, Herodotus had heard there was more than one line of march and misinterpreted a separate statement about Xerxes proceeding in the middle of his army – a statement perhaps really meant to indicate his position in the coastal army group, between an inland army group and the invasion fleet – as indicating that there were three *land* groups.

34 Note that we do not have to deploy the argument in n. 15 above, allowing two groups in practice to share 35 km. of a single route at the outset. There would in principle be room in the land immediately west of Doriscus for one group to proceed very close to the sea (making for the Mesembria-Maroneia route) while another proceeded just slightly inland (making for the start of the climb over Mount Tsomban). – I am assuming a road along the south shore of Lake Bistonis (which Herodotus makes clear *was* a lake, not a sea-inlet).

teristics are not dissimilar to those of the Serres - Lachanas - Thessaloniki road (Strymon-Therme, route [c]) described above.<sup>35</sup> The difficulty is that, because of the impenetrable mountains either side of the Nestos gorge (west of Xanthi), access to this route is either from the Stavroupolis plain or from the Xanthi - Kavala highway. The former option is certainly incompatible with route-separation (two thirds of the army would have to climb the road from Xanthi to Stavroupolis), but the latter might just work.

If the middle and coastal routes from Doriscus to the Nestos (routes C and B as defined on p. 405) ran respectively immediately north of Lake Bistonis to reach the Nestos in the vicinity of Toxotai and immediately south of Lake Bistonis to reach the Nestos in the vicinity of Chrysoupolis, then the former could turn north (to exploit part of the Stavroupolis - Lekani - Platamon - Philippi road) a little east of the point at which the latter would join the line of the Xanthi - Kavala highway. This expedient would keep the three routes separate (though only just) as far as the line of the Kavala - Drama highway. After that the coastal route continues through the Pierian Vale to the vicinity of Eion, while the other two can be kept distinct provided that two separate ways can be found through the Philippi plain and the region either side of the Angites (north of Pangaeum). Much depends here on the undifferentiated availability of virtually all parts of the Komotini - Xanthi plain as suitable terrain for army groups to march across and on the ease with which one could get over the Nestos in more than one place – of which the former is perhaps the trickier problem.<sup>36</sup>

The complaint of artificiality, already envisaged as possible, might well recur here; and it might still be the case that we would do better to allow for

35 There is some firm climbing over a distance of c. 14 km. to get out of the Stavroupolis plain (though the contours are not as unforgiving as those of the mountains west of the Strymon), but thereafter we are dealing with an upland route in largely quite open countryside, with just a couple of local crests to be crossed (after Lekani and Dipotamo). – Nicephoras Gregoras 13.1 reports a route from Nestos to Philippi leaving the Stena of Christoupolis [= Kavala] on the left. But this may be a strictly local detour (cf. O'Sullivan 1972: 109), beginning immediately east of Kavala rather than a reference to a route entering the hills much nearer to the Nestos.

36 Müller 1975 notes the existence of two Nestos fords; and we could not safely apply an argument from silence to preclude prior bridge-building or bridge-improvement on the Nestos (as well as the Strymon). So getting over the Nestos can be managed. The plausibility of a strictly coastal route from Maroneia to Abdera may be more debatable, but provided that the southern side of Lake Bistonis was crossable there would probably always elsewhere be room for the army to avoid patches of coastal marshland. The worst problem is probably the restricted space between the north tip of Lake Bistonis and the mountains, the base of which is roughly marked by the direct Komotini-Xanthi (cf. Collart 1929: 356; Müller 1987: 36). Two army groups sharing this space would be within a couple of kilometres of one another.

some cases of successive use of the same stretch of road by different *moirai* rather than insisting on three completely distinct routes. Herodotus' statement would still be true within reasonable latitudes of error-by-simplification. It is not, in the end, the purpose of the present analysis to assert a decision of that issue. The purpose is rather to assert that the topographical characteristics of the region under discussion (from Doriscus to the shores of the Thermaic Gulf) do not preclude the truth of Herodotus' statement about the three *moirai* – always with the proviso that any apparent implication of its only applying as far as Acanthus (or “Acanthus”) should be rejected.

The fact that the statement *could*, topographically speaking, be true does not, of course, mean that it *is* true.<sup>37</sup> Textual evidence and general topographic considerations regularly prompt one to postulate use of two routes in subsequent sections of the march to Attica.<sup>38</sup> It is much less certain that one could always postulate three (in the sense of identifying three potential routes) without either inducing a much worse sense of artificiality than in the case of Doriscus/Therme or adopting a significantly more liberal attitude to the successive use of stretches of road by different army-groups – but then there is nothing in the historical record pushing one to do so, except the reference to a τριτημορίς of the army road-clearing in the Macedonian Mountain (131). So a case could certainly be made for setting aside Herodotus' three-*moirai* statement and believing in a double line of march the whole way from Doriscus to Athens. The point of *fact* involved is not of merely antiquarian interest, for it is connected by a frustrating vicious circle of argument and speculation with issues of army size, logistical support and the tactical and strategic decisions which led to Xerxes' defeat. But for the moment I insist only upon the point of *method*, viz. that we cannot safely use topographical parameters to rule out Herodotus' description of the division of Persian forces in Aegean Thrace. If this paper prompts someone with the appropriate resources of expertise, time and money to return to the region and conduct a thorough relevant examination, it will have served its purpose well enough.<sup>39</sup>

37 Kienast 1996: 299 observes that it made sense for Xerxes to count the army at Doriscus if he was about to split it for the purposes of the march west. Even if this is true it does not, of course, require a three-way split.

38 Cf. n. 26. Further south Boeotia can be entered either *via* Parapotamioi and Chaeronea or *via* Hyampolis; and Attica can be entered *via* Plataea / Eleusis or Tanagra / Decelleia.

39 My own brief visit to the region on 1-4 September 1989 was funded by a grant from the British Academy which enabled me to spend three weeks in Greece inspecting Persian War battle-sites and lines of communication – an illuminating experience for which I am extremely grateful. This paper was originally completed in summer 1998 (and has not been further updated). The delay in publication was occasioned by the difficulty I encountered in supplying an adequate map.

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