



OUR AFFAIRS HANG ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE

*The Persian Advance, The Greek Fracture,
and The Miracle at Marathon*

"Our affairs hang on the razor's edge, men of Ionia, either to be free or to be slaves; and slaves, too, who have shown themselves runaways." — Dionysius, the Phocaeen Captain

Source Analysis:
Herodotus, Book VI




THE PERSIAN NETTING STRATEGY



The human chain sweeps across the territory, symbolizing the systematic, inescapable capture of every inhabitant.

THE FATE OF MILETUS: A WARNING FROM THE EAST

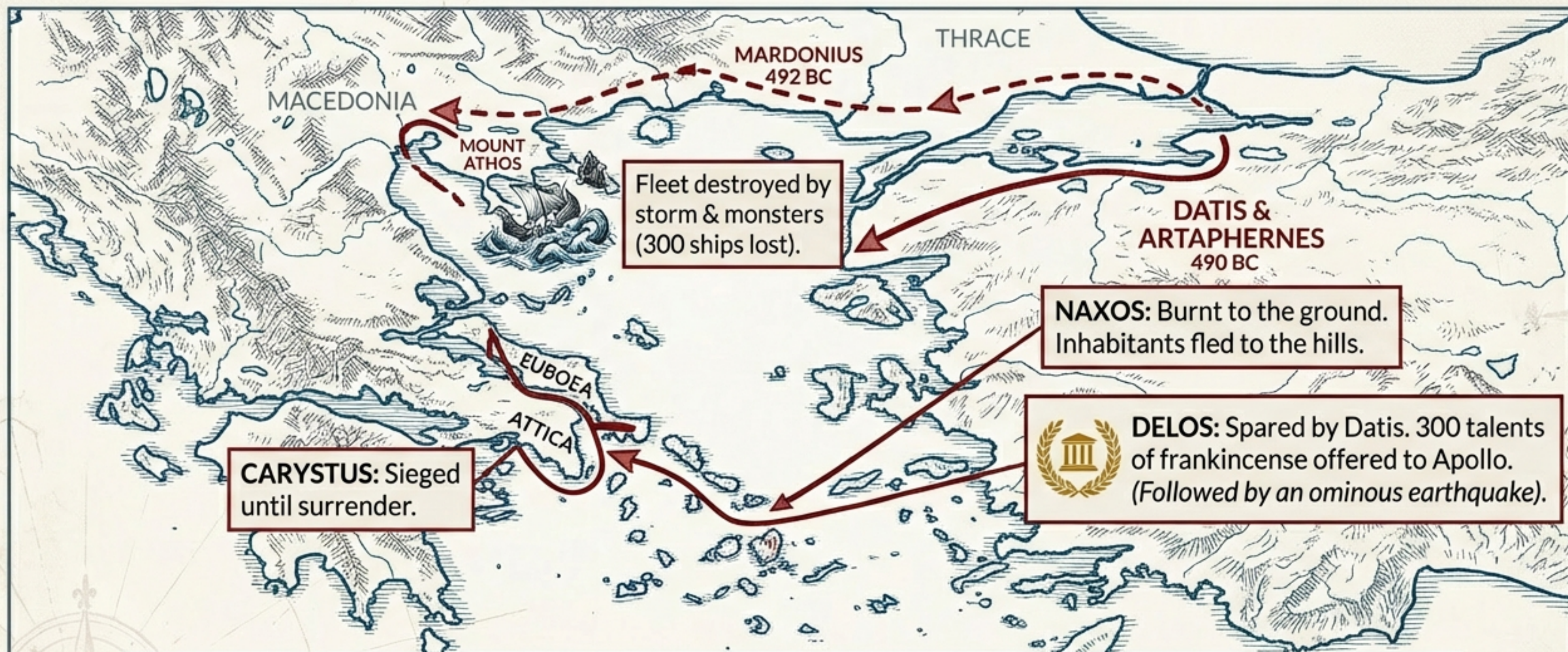
The Ionian Revolt ends in total erasure.

-  **The Collapse:** Miletus taken by siege; walls mined and breached.
-  **The Oracle Fulfilled:** Men slain, women and children enslaved, the sanctuary at Didyma burnt.
-  **The Displacement:** Survivors forcibly relocated to Ampe (Tigris River), thousands of miles east.

Cultural Impact:

The poet Phrynichus was fined 1,000 drachms by Athens for his play "The Capture of Miletus." The depiction of the tragedy distressed the audience too deeply, mirroring their own potential fate.

THE IMPERIAL MACHINE MOVES WEST



Strategic Insight: The campaign demanded 'Earth and Water'—tokens of total psychological submission.

THE PARALYZED SUPERPOWER: CHAOS IN SPARTA



KING CLEOMENES

The Plotter

ACTIONS: Conspired to depose his co-king. **Bribed** the Delphic Oracle (Prophetess Perialla) to declare his rival illegitimate.

OUTCOME: Descended into **madness**. Struck citizens with his sceptre. Committed **suicide** by self-mutilation (*slashing flesh from legs to belly*).



KING DEMARATUS

The Exile

ACCUSATION: Accused of **illegitimacy** based on a servant's overheard remark about his premature birth.

OUTCOME: **Deposed** and fled to **Persia**. Became an **advisor** to Darius.

STRATEGIC IMPACT: Internal dynastic **rot paralyzed** Sparta, the primary military power of Greece, on the eve of **invasion**.



A HOUSE DIVIDED: THE ATHENS-AEGINA WAR

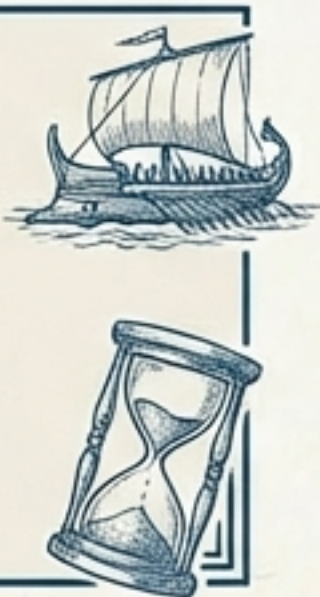
The Hostage Crisis

Spartan King Cleomenes seizes 10 Aeginetan nobles (including Crius and Casambus) and deposits them in Athens.



The Coup Attempt

Nicodromus attempts to seize Aegina for Athens. The Athenian fleet arrives one day late.



Diplomatic Deadlock

Aegina demands hostages back. Athens refuses, citing the need for two Spartan kings to authorize release.



The Sacrilege

Aeginetans cut off the hands of a suppliant clinging to the temple door of Ceres.



ATHENS

AEGINA

SPARTA

ARGOS

Result: The Greek alliance is **fractured** by a bitter **civil war** as the Persian fleet approaches.



THE WARNING SHOT: THE ENSLAVEMENT OF ERETRIA

Walls are useless against treachery.

The Assault:
6 Days of **Siege**.

Heavy casualties
on both sides.

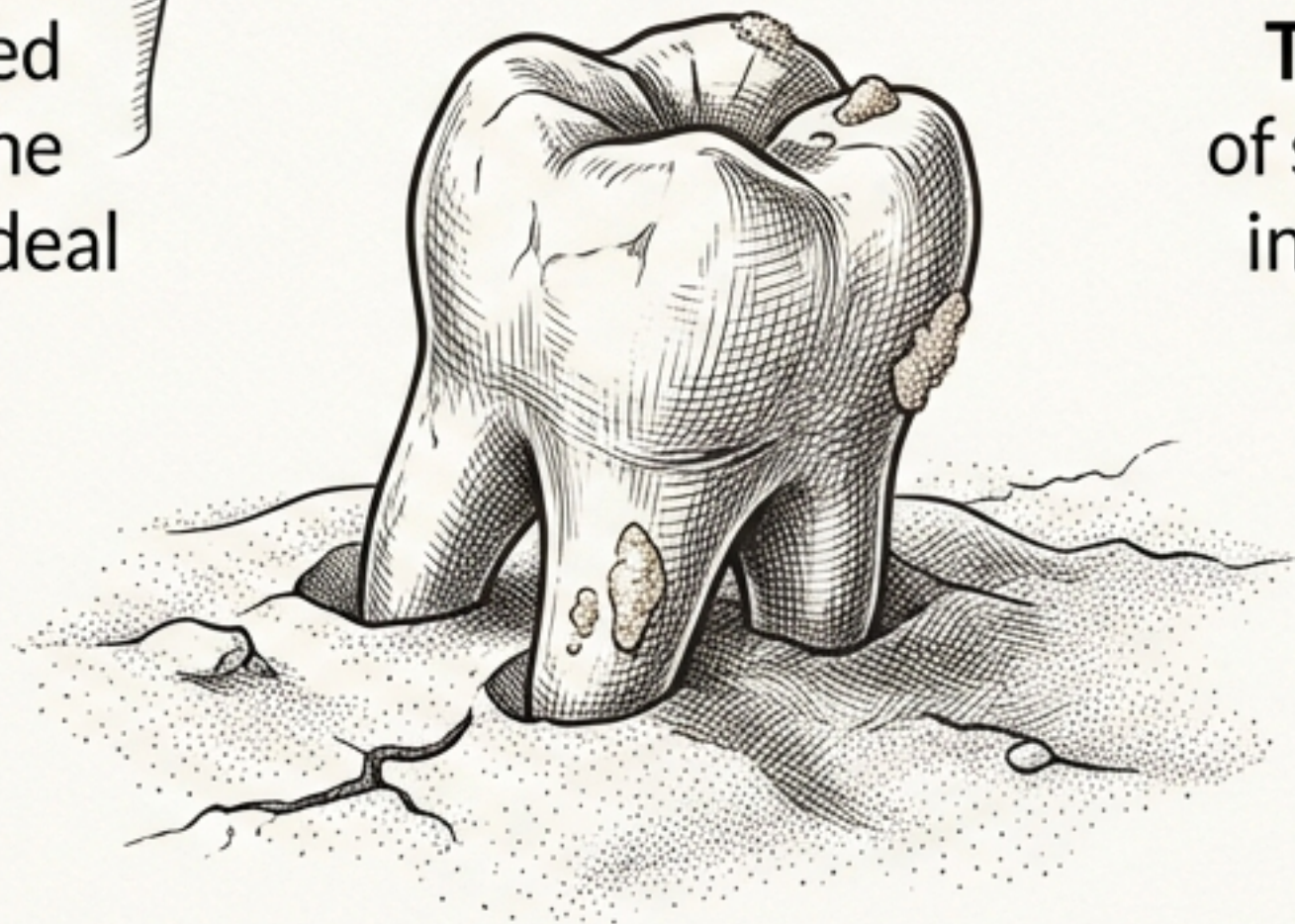


The **Betrayal**: On the
7th day, citizens
Euphorbus and
Philagrus open the
gates to the enemy.

The Consequence: Temples **plundered and burnt** (Revenge for Sardis). The population chained and **deported** to Persia. Athens is now the only target left.

THE TRAITOR'S RETURN: HIPPIAS AT MARATHON

The Guide: **Hippias**, exiled tyrant of Athens, leads the **Persians** to **Marathon** (ideal ground for cavalry).



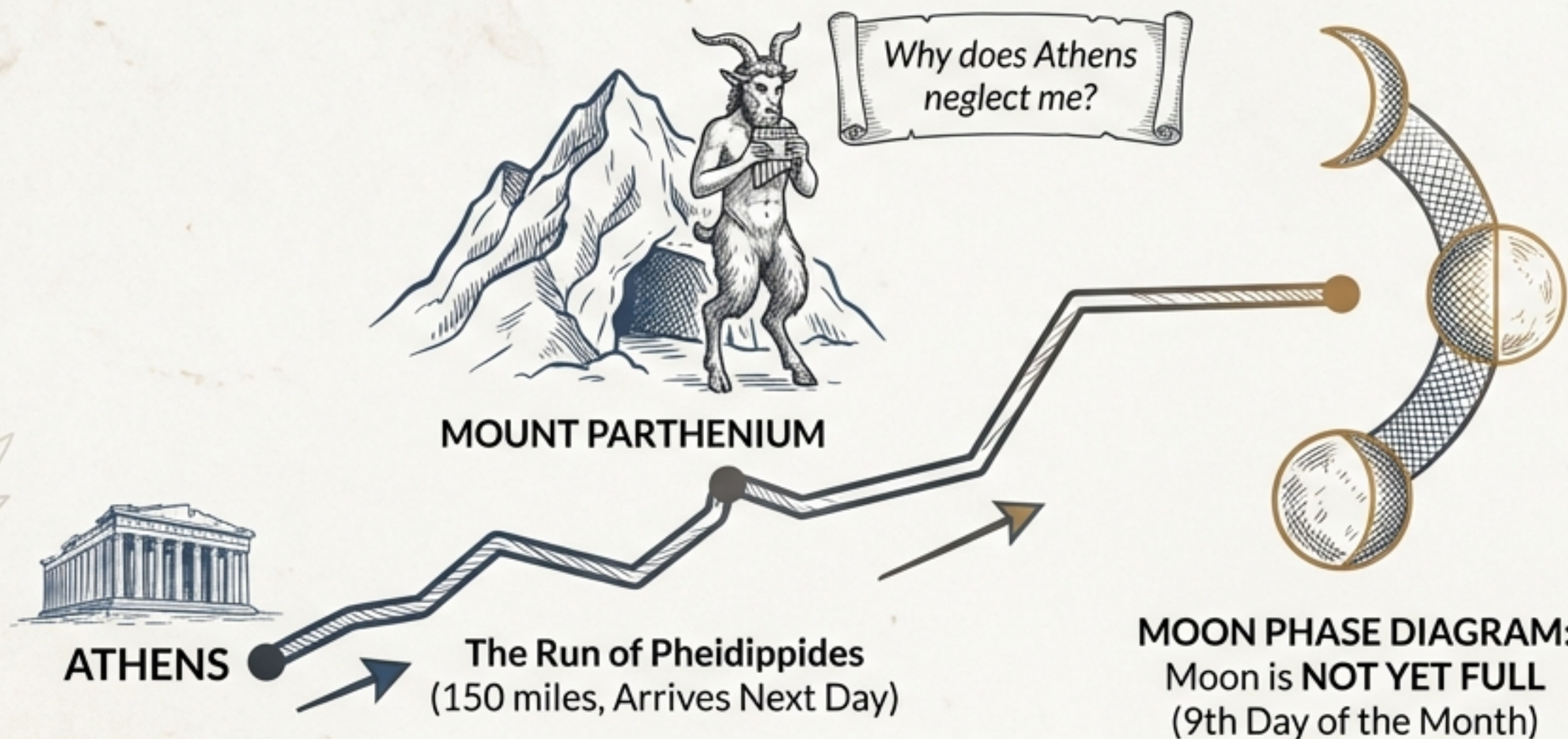
The Dream: **Hippias** dreams of sleeping with his mother. He interprets this as a **prophecy** that he will reclaim his land and **power**.

The Omen of the Tooth: While marshalling troops, the elderly **Hippias** coughs violently. A loose **tooth** flies into the sand and is **lost**.

"After all, the land is not ours... All my share in it is the portion of which my tooth has possession."

ALONE AGAINST THE EMPIRE

The Run of Pheidippides and the Spartan **Refusal**



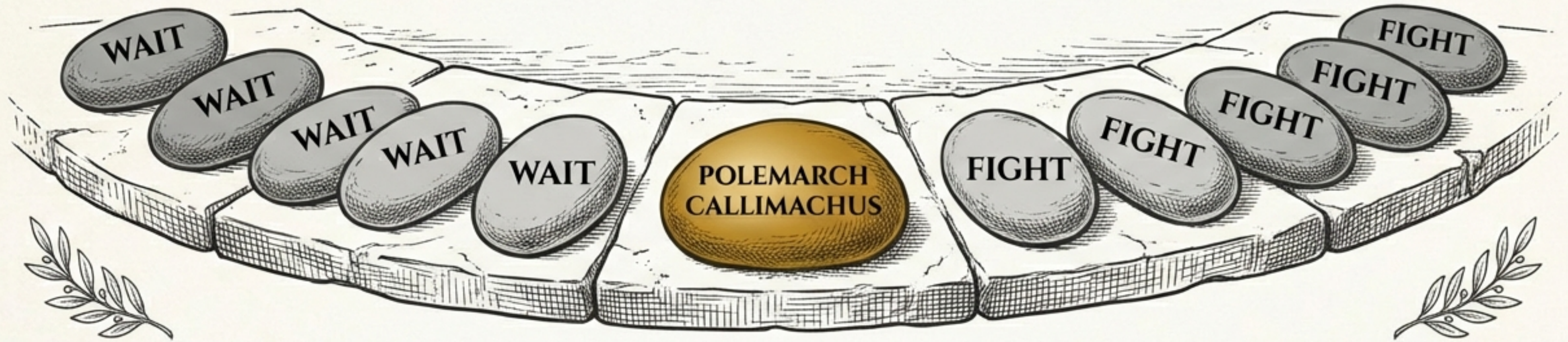
THE SPARTAN VERDICT

They agree to help, but religious law **forbids** marching until the **moon is full** (9th day of the month).

THE CONSEQUENCE

Athens **stands alone**, save for a **small contingent of loyal Plataeans**.

THE CASTING VOTE: FREEDOM OR SLAVERY



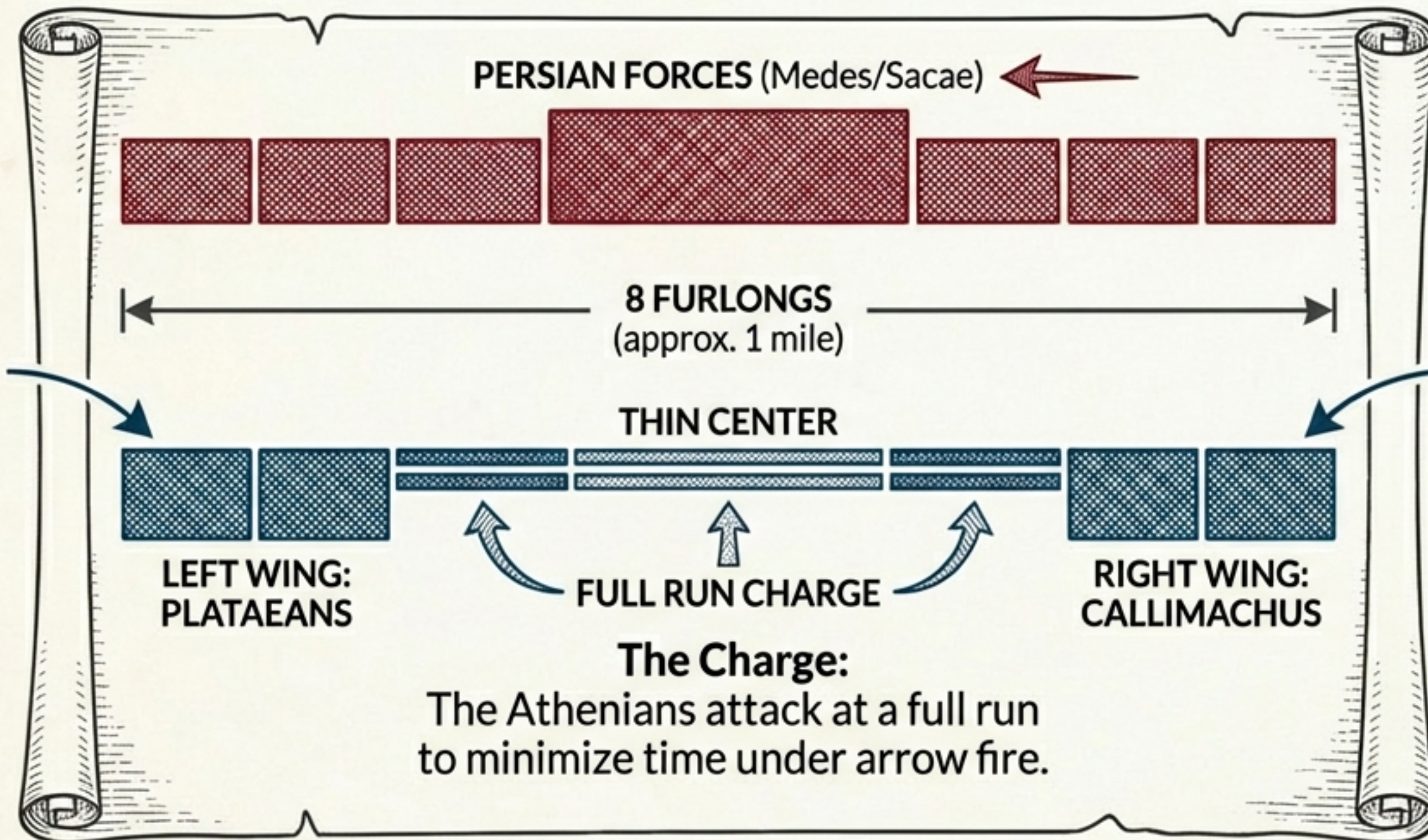
With thee it rests, Callimachus... either to bring Athens to slavery, or, by securing her freedom, to leave behind thee a memory beyond even Harmodius and Aristogeiton.

ANALYSIS:

- **The Danger:** Delay breeds 'rotteness' (treachery) [[Spartan Crimson](#)].
- **The Decision:** Callimachus casts the tie-breaking vote for war [[Aegean Indigo](#)]. Command is ceded to Miltiades.

THE ASYMMETRIC SOLUTION: THIN CENTER, IRON WINGS

The Distance:
8 Furlongs
(approx. 1 mile).
The Athenians
attack at a full run
to minimize time
under arrow fire.

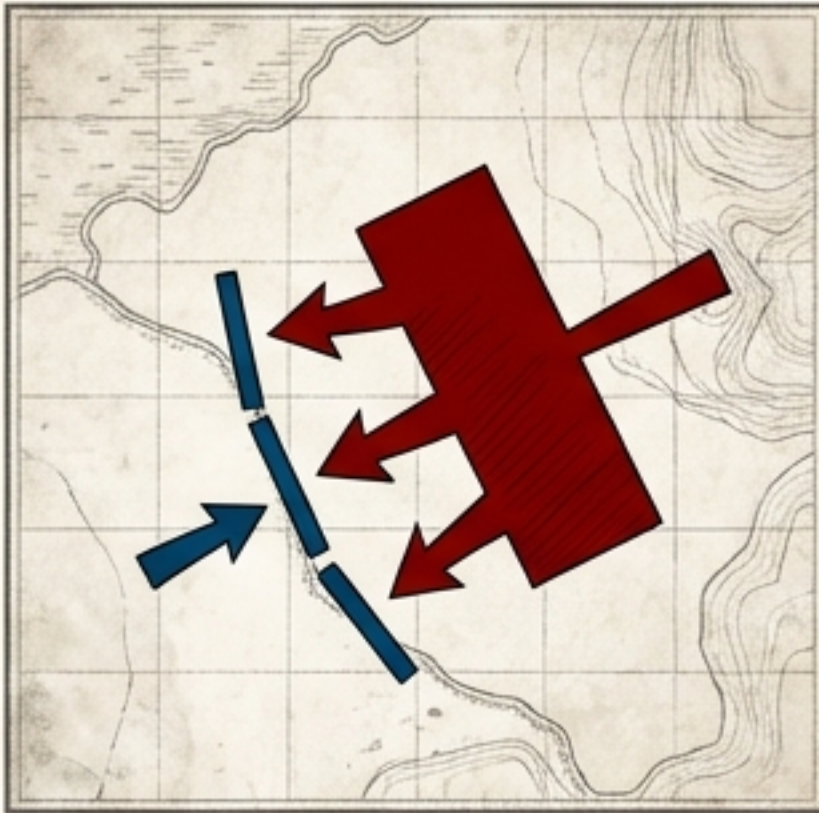


The Psychological Shock: The first Greeks to look upon the Median dress without terror.

By thinning the center, Miltiades creates a trap, inviting the Persians in while the heavy wings envelop their flanks.

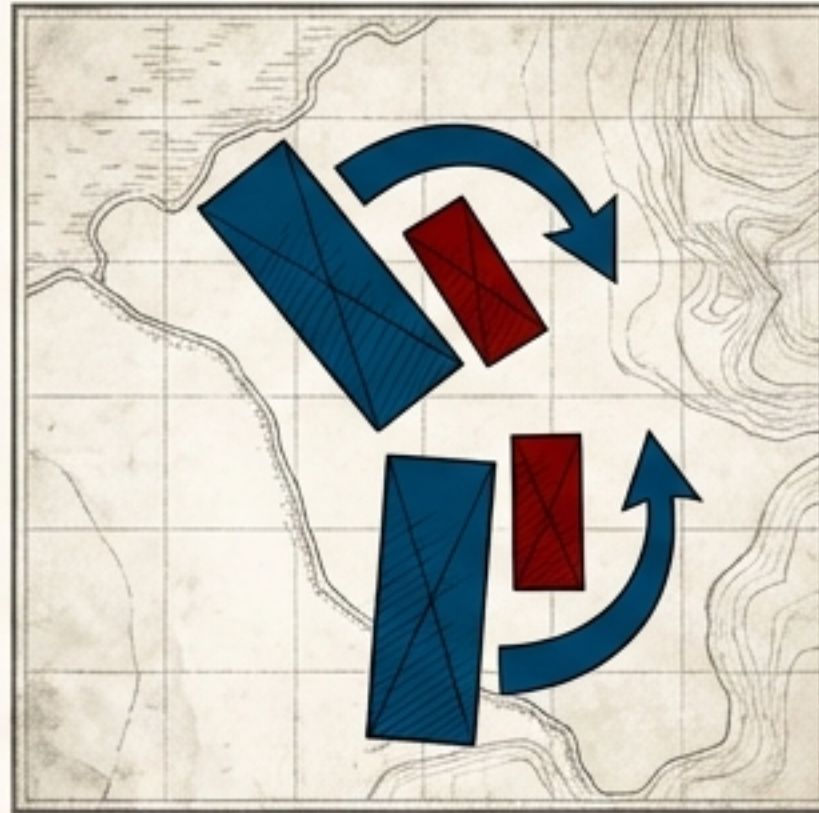
THE PINCER CLOSES

I. THE BREAK



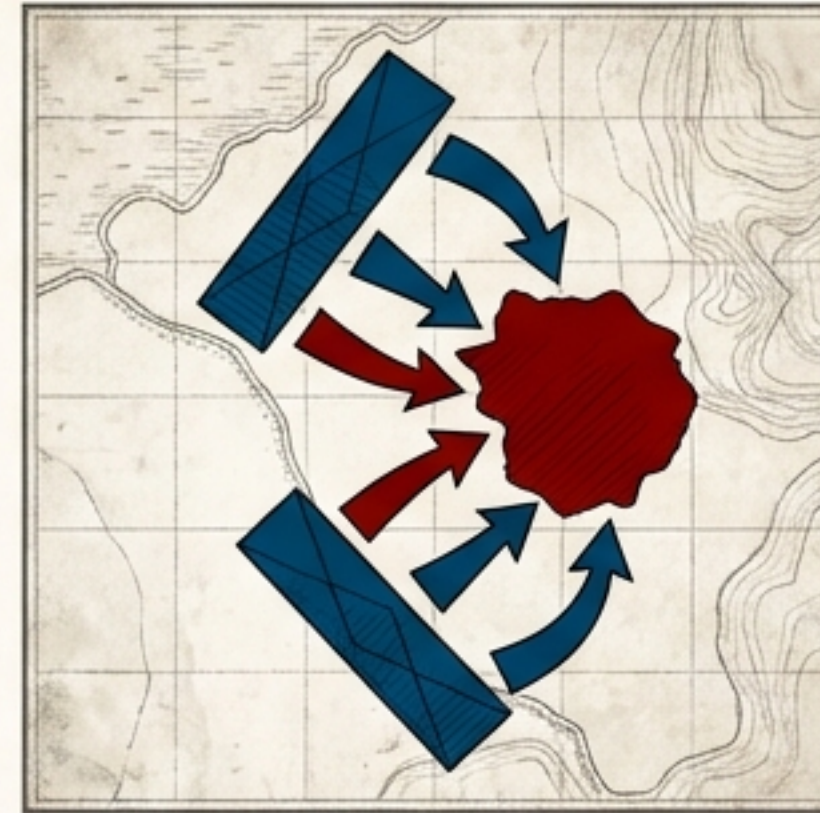
The Persian center pushes through the weak Athenian center, pursuing them inland.

II. THE TURN



The strong Athenian/Plataean wings crush the Persian wings, then rotate inward.

III. THE TRAP



The Greek wings attack the Persian center from the rear.

CASUALTY MATRIX

Persian Losses: ~6,400

Athenian Losses: 192

NOTABLE INCIDENTS



- **Callimachus (Polemarch):** Slain in the final assault.



- **Cynaegirus:** Hand axed off while grabbing a Persian ship.



- **Epizelus:** Struck blind by a "gigantic warrior" phantom.

THE SHIELD SIGNAL: TREASON IN THE HILLS?



THE CONSPIRACY

As the Persians fled, they **picked up the Eretrian prisoners** and sailed for **Cape Sunium**. The goal: Catch Athens undefended.

The Signal: A **shield** flashed from the hills, allegedly by the **Alcmaeonidae** clan.

THE COUNTER-MOVE

The Race: The **exhausted Athenian army** marched “with all possible speed” back to **Athens**, arriving at **Cynosarges** before the fleet could land.

Result: The Persian fleet saw the army waiting and turned back to Asia.



THE FALL OF THE HERO: MILTIADAES



VICTORY



DISGRACE

TIMELINE OF HUBRIS



The Promise: Miltiades asks for 70 ships and funds, promising "gold in abundance" without naming the target.



The Failure: Attacks Paros over a personal **grudge**. The siege **fails**.



The Crime: **leaps** the fence of the temple of Ceres, panics, and **injures his thigh**.



The Judgment: Impeached by Xanthippus for deceiving the people. Escapes death due to Marathon, but fined 50 talents.



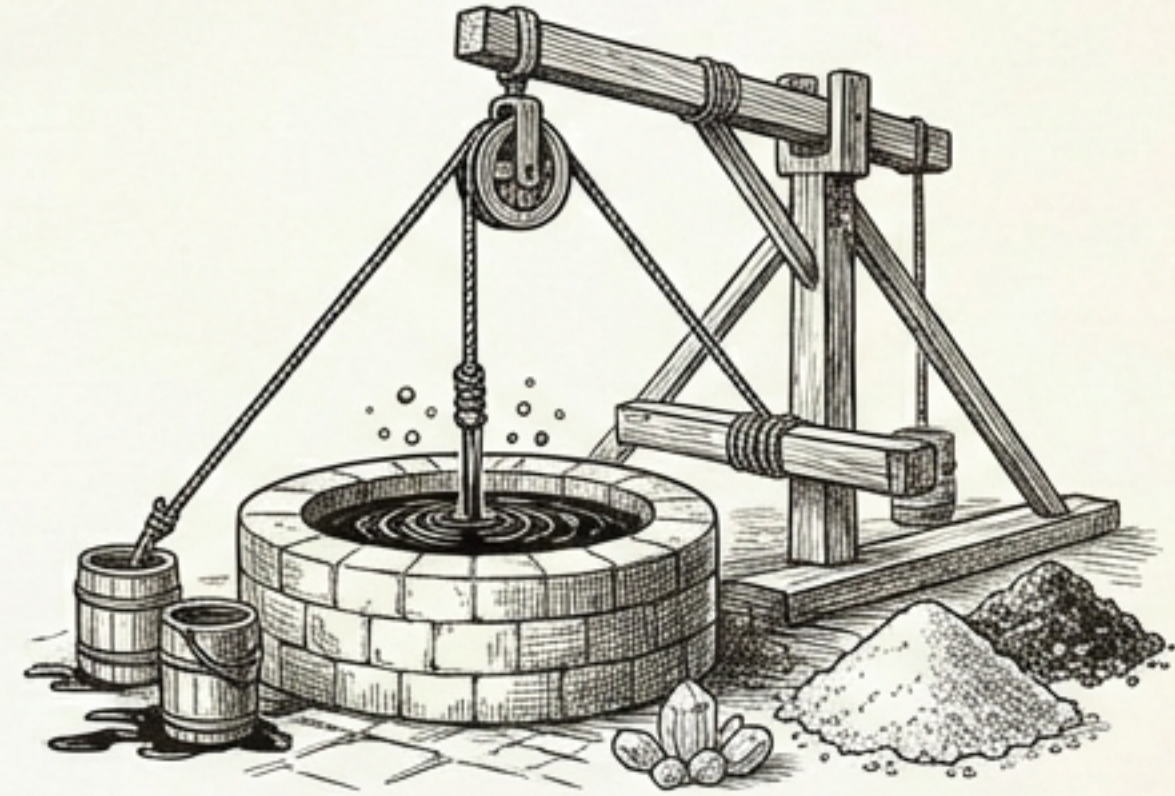
The End: **Dies** of gangrene. His son Cimon pays the debt.

ECHOES OF THE INVASION



THE SPARTANS

Arrived after the full moon (3 days march).
Viewed the **Persian corpses**, praised the
Athenians, and returned home.



THE ERETRIANS

Settled by **Darius** at Ardericca (Cissia).
Located near a well producing asphalt, salt,
and oil. They retained their Greek language.

Datis returns a stolen **golden statue of Apollo** to Delos, shaken by a vision.

THE RAZOR'S EDGE SURVIVES



THE EXTERNAL THREAT

Repelled momentarily.
But **Xerxes** is coming.

THE INTERNAL THREAT

The cracks in the Greek alliance
(**Spartan delay**, **Aeginetan feud**,
Alcmaeonidae plots) remain
unhealed.

THE LEGACY

The gamble at Marathon
preserved the seed of **Western**
democracy against total erasure.

"They were the first of the Greeks... who dared to look upon the Median garb."