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NOTES ON THE DISARRAY IN THESSALY



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NOTES ON THE DISARRAY IN THESSALY

Abstract: This article focuses on several problems concerning the advancement of the Persian army through Thessaly in 480 BC.: the ill-advised departure from Tempe and the role played by Alexander of Macedon; the paralel tradition recorded in Damastes of Sygeum and Diodorus; the political fracas between the Aleuadai and the rest of Thessaly; and finally, the nature of the alleged message that Alexander gave the Thessalians. A careful analysis of the events, as well as of the way they are presented in our extant sources, testify that Alexander did indeed play a role in the events in Thessaly, and that the Tempe episode ought to retain its place in the traditional narrative; however, the content of his message to the Hellenes remains elusive, undoubtedly until the discovery of another source, different from those we have had up to now.

1. When it became known in Thessaly that Xerxes was planning to cross into Europe, the Thessalians sought and received help from the united Hellenic forces, who sent an infantry regiment to Halos by sea. This regiment, consisting of 10,000 soldiers, was accompanied by Thessalian cavalry; Herodotus claims that the soldiers ensconced themselves in Tempe and assumed strategic positions, from where they could control matters all the way to Heracleion. At that time, Xerxes was still in Abydos.¹

The Hellenes, however, remained there for only a couple of days, after which they returned to Halos, and soon afterwards sailed homewards. Herodotus credits this turnabout to the advice given by Alexander I:

“[...] They remained there for only a few days, for messengers came from Alexander son of Amyntas, the Macedonian. These, pointing out the size of the army and the great number of ships, advised them to depart and not remain there to be trodden under foot by the invading host. When they had received this advice from the messengers (as they thought their advice was sound and that the Macedonian meant well by them), the Greeks followed

¹ Hdt. 7.174.1.

their counsel. To my thinking, however, what persuaded them was fear, since they had found out that there was another pass leading into Thessaly by the hill country of Macedonia through the country of the Perrhaebi, near the town of Gonnus; this was indeed the way by which Xerxes' army descended on Thessaly."²

That was allegedly the reason why the Council of the united Hellenic forces decided to position the troops on the ground in Thermopylai, while keeping the fleet in Artemision. All Hellenes to the north of that line had to subject themselves "by force" to the enemy, and in anticipation of that moment, pro-Persian forces undoubtedly rose to power.

This episode presents a classic impasse among contemporary historians: it arouses a number of conflicting opinions, both concerning the reason that troops were sent to Tempe, as well as the cause for their withdrawal.³ Yet, if there is one historiographer or historian who is truly perplexed as to this development of events – the withdrawal from Tempe a fair amount of time before the arrival of the Persians – then that is Herodotus, who himself is not convinced by the reason he provides.⁴ Indeed, the content of the message does not seem very convincing; if nothing else, the Hellenes were in a position to ascertain the size of the approaching army, perhaps even more so than Alexander could;⁵ even had they been made privy to some secret information by the king of Macedonia, that would sooner have led the Hellenes to hold on to and secure the passage even more rigorously – something they certainly had ample time to do – rather than withdraw in such a hurried fashion.

2. Yet, Herodotus' narrative is not the only one where this episode is made reference to. The same can be found in Damastes of Sygeum, who wrote not much later than Herodotus and, in this

² Hdt. 7.173.2-4. Translated by A. D. Godley, Harvard University Press, 1920.

³ *V.*, for example, N. G. L. Hammond, „The expedition of Xerxes“, in *The Cambridge Ancient History vol. IV, Persia, Greece and the western Mediterranean c.525 to 479 B.C.*, Cambridge University Press 1988, p. 545; H. D. Westlake, „The Medism of Thessaly“, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 56.1, 1936, pp. 12–24; Robertson, N. „The Thessalian Expedition of 480 B.C.“, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 96, 1976, pp. 100–120.

⁴ Hdt. 7. 173.4: “To my thinking, however, what persuaded them was fear, since they had found out that there was another pass leading into Thessaly by the hill country of Macedonia through the country of the Perrhaebi, near the town of Gonnus; this was indeed the way by which Xerxes' army descended on Thessaly...”

⁵ Hdt. 7. 146.

case, most probably had an equally reliable source of information. In one of the so-called “Socratic Letters”, addressed to Philip II in 342 BC, Speusippus offers a brief description of the role Alexander I played in the political fracas in Thessaly, naming Herodotus and Damastes as his sources. According to Speusippus, Alexander informed the Hellenes in Heracleion about the betrayal of Aleuas (sic) and the Thessalians.⁶ In itself, a passing reference by Speusippus would not hold any significant importance – but in this case it gains significance since the facts do not correspond with what is presented by Herodotus, and as such, in all likelihood, he opted for Damastes.

Thus, both Herodotus and Damastes make reference to an intervention of some kind, staged by Alexander; both depict the king of Macedon as carrying some kind of an urgent message; however, neither the content of the message, nor the location where the message is delivered coincide. This may cause a serious problem.

Let us commence from Heracleion. Unlike the alleged message that Alexander was carrying, which could very well have remained undisclosed and never been divulged to the general masses, the position of the Hellenic forces was a publicly known fact, open to everyone – and, as such, there should be no disagreement with regards to this. And yet, one of the sources claims that the Hellenes positioned themselves in Tempe, while the other opts for Heracleion. Now, it is obviously impossible that two bases were in existence at the same time – not so much for strategic reasons, as for the fact that the Hellenic forces remained in Thessaly for only a couple of days, so they barely had enough time to set up one base. Taking into account the configuration of the terrain, as well as the procedures of military tactics and strategy, it may be claimed that the version offered by Speusippus seems to be more probable than the one offered by Herodotus. Heracleion is located on the border between Pieria and Thessaly, several kilometres to the north of Tempe, and its strategic location is such that it enables hindering movement along the coastal road leading to Olympus; bearing all this in mind, it is far more likely that a base would have been set up there, rather than at Tempe.⁷

⁶ *FGrH* 5, Damastes fr. 4. (= Damast. *apud* Speus. *Ad Phil.* 30). *V.* The analysis by Westlake 1936, as well as A. F. Natoli, *The Letter of Speusippus to Philip II. Introduction, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2004.

⁷ *Cf.* S. Sprawski, "Wąwóz Tempe i jego militarne znaczenie", in B. Berdowski, B. Błahaczek (eds.), *Haec mihi in animis vestris templa*. *Studia Classica in Memory of Professor Lesław Morawiecki*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2007, pp. 137–149.

In any case, it becomes obvious that Damastes (and through him, Speusippus) made use of some other, independent source of information, at least as well informed as Herodotus. We must not be deluded by Herodotus' reputation as the father of history, or perhaps the fact that his work has been preserved in its entirety; if we contend one basic fact against another, both must be afforded equal significance, and the configuration of the land suggests that it is more plausible that the Hellenes were stationed in Heracleion.

To further complicate matters, the unfortunate undertaking by the Hellenes in Thessaly is also dealt with by Diodorus,⁸ whose version diverges from that of Herodotus with regard to several significant details. Whom should we believe? As a result of various inaccuracies in terms of chronology, and especially concerning events that occurred in the V century BC, contemporary historians tend not to take Diodorus' version of events too seriously; this tendency has further gained strength bearing in mind that Diodorus has noted down second-, and even, third-hand accounts. On the other hand, precisely this might be the reason why his writings should receive more attention. As Grundy warns, there is no reason to think that a bad historiographer is also a bad copyist;⁹ regardless of what we may think of Diodorus as a source, his facts were taken from historiographers who were either first-hand witnesses, or had solid and well-founded information.

The differences that exist in the texts of Diodorus and Herodotus indicate that, not only was Herodotus not Diodorus' first source, but that there were two parallel versions concerning this event, which in all certainty did not have the same starting point. In some aspects – especially taking into account Damastes' facts – it is almost easier to believe Diodorus than Herodotus. For instance, the scant Hellenic army is explained away with the fact that the Athenians and the Lacedaemonians had hoped that the other Hellenes would also deploy troops; the size of the Persian army, which the Hellenes had already known about,¹⁰ is seen as a reason for their instalment in Tempe, not for their withdrawal from the barricades. Finally, no fact in Herodotus refutes the subsequent version of Diodorus, nor challenges his stories about meadism. In one segment, not only does Herodotus' narrative move along the same lines, but it furthermore serves to confirm the facts presented by Diodorus – that the Aleuadae passed over to the

⁸ Diod. 11.2.5-3.2.

⁹ G. B. Grundy, *The Great Persian War and Its Preliminaries; a Study of the Evidence, Literary and Topographical*, John Murray, London 1901, p. 312.

¹⁰ cf. Hdt. 7.174.

Persian side, although most of their subjects did not approve of this. All of this might indicate a glimmer of the real reason behind the withdrawal of the Hellenic forces; it appears that this had nothing to do with the advice given by Alexander I, but was rather due to the Thessalians themselves, their internal disputes, as well as their divided opinions concerning medism.

3. Who, then, are the Thessalians that medised, and does this refer to all Thessalians or just to some of them?¹¹ Herodotus makes mention of “Thessalians”, a term that encompasses the whole population in the Thessalian plain; Diodorus, on the other hand, claims that the Ainianes, the Dolopes, the Malians, the Perrhaibians and the Magnetes medised while the Hellenes were still in Tempe, while the inhabitants of Achaia Phthiotis and Thessaliothis switched allegiance only after the Hellenic forces had left. Much has been written about how well-grounded and authentic this information by Diodorus actually is, but even today it would be difficult to reach a well-founded conclusion. The five groups that hastened to medise were settled in the mountainous region of Thessaly, while the phthiotid Achaians and the inhabitants of Thessaliothis lived in the plain. It would not be difficult to imagine the conditions under which the mountain tribes medised; in fact, the note regarding Perrhaibian medism will suit each and any reconstruction of events which sets off from the hypothesis that the Hellenes withdrew as a result of the political inclination of the local population.

Nevertheless, we cannot simply do away with scepticism, for the simple reason that we do not know Diodorus’ original source concerning this episode. Should this piece of information have originated from Ephorus, then we ought to allow for the possibility that Ephorus, as on numerous other occasions, has expanded and developed the information provided by Herodotus.¹² Furthermore, an excerpt from Aelius Aristides¹³ suggests that the Hellenes had to withdraw due to a betrayal – however, the author does not mention who the traitor was. In the midst of confusion, the only thing that is clear is that the reasons for this withdrawal, as well as the alleged betrayal, have served as continuous topics of discussion and debate from ancient times; Aristides could afford to deal with this indefinitely, whether regarding the identity of the traitors (a point refuted by Ephorus and Damastes), whether a betrayal did in fact occur, or whether the withdrawal occurred as a

¹¹ Detailed analysis in Robertson 1976, who deals with this issue in a more thorough manner than Westlake.

¹² *E.g.*, Hdt. 7.132.1; 7.185.2.

¹³ Ael. Arist. 2.254, Dindorf.

result of some other unfortunate event (a point refuted by Herodotus and Ephorus).¹⁴

Contemporary historians place great significance on the political situation in Thessaly at this time. At first glance, modern opinions seem to be based on facts from ancient sources; it appears, however, that they are not in concord with what is presented by Herodotus and Damastes – who write about various plots and schemes carried out by the Aleuadai, yet never explicitly claim that all of Thessaly was divided and in great disharmony. On the other hand, Herodotus' notes regarding the appeal sent to the Hellenic allies, as well as the petition for an army are put aside almost without exception. Instead of taking the Thessalians' appeal as a sincere cry for help, Thessaly is promptly marked as a region with serious political divisions, even uncompromisingly supporting Persia, and as such, it can be seen from the very beginning that the attempt by the Hellenes is doomed to failure. It is generally claimed that the appeal was issued by a small number of Thessalians; according to some, they made up a democratic opposition that fought against the power held by the aristocracy;¹⁵ others mention a scant number of aristocrats who could not obtain obedience from the peasants;¹⁶ furthermore, mentions are made of local dynasties that clashed with the Aleuadai from Larissa, mainly the Echekratidai from Pharsalos;¹⁷ or, a group carrying some political

¹⁴ Two other pieces of information, bearing uncertain historical significance, are also provided by Plutarch. In the biography of Themistocles, Plutarch writes that the undertaking in Thessaly was to have tricked the opponents about the naval strategy of Themistocles (*Them.* 72); this is either a personal opinion of the author, or too simplified a version of the motives and events. Of course, it might be that this point of view did exist in some of the sources that he made use of, but this can neither be checked nor proven, and as such, we cannot allow ourselves to speculate on this issue. On the other hand, Plutarch also notes that the Thebans deployed a regiment of 500 soldiers to Thessaly, under the leadership of Mnamias (*Mor.* 864E), a fact which just might be authentic. In all probability, Plutarch took this piece of information from Aristophanes of Boeotia, whose work was published towards the end of the V or the beginning of the IV century BC; it is absolutely possible that he, like Herodotus, made use of the fact that the events were still fresh at that time. More on this in Tarn, 1908. On the other hand, cf. the caveat of R. J. Buck (*A History of Boeotia*, The University of Alberta Press 1979, p. 130): "It is quite possible that the Boeotian League began to think again about its position after the expedition to Tempe failed in its purpose to hold Thessaly for the Allies."

¹⁵ Meyer, 1937, p. 365; Toepffer, *RE* II (1893), 1373, s.v. Aleuadai.

¹⁶ J. A. R. Munro, „Xerxes' Invasion of Greece“, in *The Cambridge Ancient History vol. IV, The Persian Empire in the West*, Cambridge University Press 1926, p. 282.

¹⁷ Westlake 1936, pp. 16–17.

influence, branded as being “nationalist”.¹⁸ All of these hypotheses refer to a segment of Thessalian society, allegedly too weak to bring about changes in the “official” policy of practicing medism – due to which even the Thessalian representatives could not say that they spoke in the name of Thessaly during the convention on the Isthmus. There is no need to point out that none of this is in concord with the original facts, especially those found in Herodotus. According to another theory, which took into account these shortcomings, the appeal made to the Hellenic forces was indeed issued by the Thessalian “authorities” – in all probability the Aleuadai – who had a leaning towards medism, but needed an alibi in the case of victory by the Hellenes.¹⁹ Yet, this also misses the objective, since a clear distinction is made in the sources between the Aleuadai and those who issued the appeal.

A possible explanation to this issue might be that we are, in fact, in the wrong concerning the division of government in Thessaly, and that we are assigning the Aleuadai control over Thessaly, even the designation of tagos, for no apparent reason; in fact, if the tagos was to be detached from the house of the Aleuadai, clarifying everything would be fairly simple. The sources provide no reason whatsoever to think that, in the first half of the V century BC, the tagoi were chosen from amongst the family of the Aleuadai of Larissa;²⁰ quite contrarily, ancient evidence suggests that the tagoi most often came from Pharsalos, further south. The sole undisputed tagos before Iason is Daochos from Pharsalos; regarding those who are believed to have carried out this function, Cleomachos was from Pharsalos, as was probably Latamias,²¹ all tetra-

¹⁸ A. R. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks*, second edition with a postscript by D. M. Lewis, Stanford University Press 1984, p. 34f.

¹⁹ M. Sordi, „La Tessaglia dalle guerre persiane alla spedizione di Leotichida“, *Rendiconti dell’Istituto Lombardo* 86, 1953, pp. 309–310.

²⁰ The sections from Pindar and Herodotus that are most often cited to prove this point of view do not in any way imply that the Aleuadai usually assigned a tagos. Herodotus describes the Aleuadai as “basileis of/in Thessaly” (7.6.2), and he obviously believes exactly what he claims – that the Aleuadai ruled by succession, and nothing more than that; even if the Aleuadai really did provide a tagos on one or two occasions, that would in no way justify their being branded “basileis”. Pindar’s words (10.71-2), on the other hand, point out that the Aleuadai controlled the area, but this in no way implies that they had control over all of Thessaly. On the contrary, it needs to be proven that Pindar, who calls the Aleuadai “descendants of Heracles”, sets the function of the Thessalian tagos on the same level as the Spartan basileis. On this, v. J. H. Jr. Finley, “Pindar and the Persian Invasion”, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 63, 1958, pp. 121–132.

²¹ Cf. detailed information and analysis of the original locations can be found in Robertson 1976.

rchs attested to – Acnonios, Daochos' grandfather, his grandson Daochos the Younger, as well as their associate Thrasidates, also hailed from Pharsalos. In his attempt to become tagos, Iason sought support from Pharsalos, and he became one only after the city had granted him support through the representative Polydamas.²²

If we were to set off from the hypothesis that Thorax, the infamous son of Aleuas, was not acting tagos of Thessaly during the last Persian campaign, then interpreting Herodotus' version of events becomes a reasonably simple matter. We do not know who was acting tagos during the campaign, but it is certain that he had no intention of medising, neither personally, nor in the name of the Thessalian diet – otherwise, the Aleuadai would have no role in the original texts. On the contrary, it may be reckoned that this very tagos was behind the appeal made to the united Hellenic forces, perhaps even backed by a resolution from the Thessalians; Herodotus suggests that the appeal was sincere and that the Thessalians participated in the joint efforts. When the Hellenic forces abandoned the northern line of defence, the Thessalians subjected themselves to Xerxes without hesitation, and Herodotus affords himself the liberty of saying that this was a natural and absolutely inevitable measure. He makes no attempt to conceal the significance of Thessaly in supplying Xerxes with provisions, and some details imply that the region never fully surrendered to the Persian cause. For example, even upon entering Thessaly in 480 BC, and leaving it the following year, the Persians did not trust the local population;²³ anti-Persian Hellenes would enter Thessaly even when it was occupied by the Persian forces;²⁴ and finally, it is entirely possible that the Thessalians played a part in the disloyal behaviour of the Hellenic soldiers in the Persian front in Plataea.²⁵

The time has now come to summarise what has been said thus far. Based on the original sources, we can conclude there is great probability that: 1) the opinions and the political beliefs in Thessaly were neither unified, nor concordant;²⁶ 2) the tagos (in

²² Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.8, 18; 6.4.28.

²³ Hdt. 7.191.1: "...and so great was the loss that the commanders of the fleet, being struck with fear lest the Thessalians should attack them now that they had been brought into an evil plight, threw round their camp a lofty palisade built of the fragments of wreck"; cf. 9.89.2.: "[Artabazus]... knowing that if he should tell them [*sc.* the Thessalians] the whole truth about the fighting, he would run the risk of being destroyed, both himself and the whole army which was with him, for he thought that they would all set upon him if they were informed of that which had happened), he had told nothing of it...".

²⁴ Hdt. 7.132; cf. 7.182.

²⁵ Hdt. 9.67.

²⁶ On similar sentiments in Boeotia, especially Thebes, v. Finley 1958, p. 123 sqq.

all likelihood from Pharsalos) and all of south Thessaly sided with the Hellenic united forces; and 3) the Aleuadai, and none other, were fanatic in their medism, a fact confirmed by all sources without exception.²⁷ All this is rather simple to understand and explain; however, the problem lies in that, according to Damastes, he who revealed the medising tendencies of the Aleuadai was their very own ally and Persian relative, Alexander I, with Herodotus claiming that the Aleuadai sought Xerxes out from the time he came to power, and implying that their plots and schemes were well known to the other Thessalians. There would be nothing contradictory here had not the “betrayal” by the Aleuadai been made up of their medism, but rather of some specific threat towards the other Thessalians, as well as the Hellenic forces. In fact, it is here that the greatest problem lies; if everyone had been aware of the size of the Persian army, as well as the side the Aleuadai were on – what could have been the role of Alexander I in this whole episode?

4. Though it has been pointed out on numerous occasions that some details presented in Damastes’ version of events appear more probable than those presented by Herodotus, this is where matters start becoming more complicated, and these distinctions that exist in the sources start to fade. We are able to assess the authenticity of our sources with regards to generally known events, defined in terms of geography and topography, which make up the big picture of the events that were taking place; yet, Alexander’s message is something that was probably never made public, and as such was subject of much speculation and conjecture from ancient times, which serves to complicate our dilemma.

The popular version is that Alexander I advised the Hellenes to withdraw, and since he appeared to view them, and their cause, with sincere fondness, they decided to take his advice; however, as we previously stated, it has been excluded that the Hellenes did so because Alexander revealed the size of the Persian army to them. Firstly, as it is well known, Herodotus exaggerates when he talks about the size of the Persian army, and the comparison with later instances suggests that there could not have been more than 80,000 active soldiers; furthermore, even had that number been significantly higher, the Hellenes had been informed as to the size of the Persian army months before Xerxes arrived in Thes-

²⁷ *Contra* Burn 1984, pp. 343–344, who, for example, speculates that “... there was an unknown number of Persian agents... the whole place was rotten with enemy propaganda, which had been going on for a long time...” *etc.* It is unclear as to what he bases these claims on, which, as can be seen, do not in any way correspond with the general timeline of the events, nor with the events that occurred later.

saly. The majority of the soldiers had already been gathered together in Sardis, and regardless of whether we believe the story about the Hellenic spies,²⁸ the details concerning Xerxes' great undertaking quickly reached Greece. Thus, it is difficult to believe that Alexander could have informed the allies regarding this matter.

The second impression that seems to arise from the sources is that the Hellenes were upset by the news that the Persians had discovered the other available roads leading to Thessaly, this playing a large part in their decision to withdraw.²⁹ This hypothesis concerning the events creates a number of chronological problems in regards to when the enterprise took place, and especially in regards to the exact moment Alexander's message was received. Taking into account the Thessalian conditions, the Hellenes had at their disposal a proportionally large army, strategically positioned. Even had they not known the configuration of the land, even had they been taken by surprise by what Alexander had revealed to them, they still had a copious amount of time to seek reinforcements from the south, to reposition their soldiers, and even to take over the other points of access; all of this could have been over in a matter of weeks, while the Persians were still months away. In any case, neither an attack carried out through Gonnos, nor through Petra or Volustana would have been able to penetrate a well-planned and strategically positioned line of defence which had been established for a while and was ready and waiting for the enemy. We need not even mention the fact that the other side seemed to be behaving rather erratically; in Herodotus' writings, the Hellenic campaign in Thessaly ended a long time before Xerxes started pondering how to enter this region, or more precisely – while Xerxes was still crossing the Hellespont. Then, there was the journey along the Thracian and Thraco-macedonian coast, all the way up to the kingdom of the Argeadai, then the assembling at Therme, the scouting of Tempe, and the pressing through the mountains in Pieria. According to the most conservative of estimates, the moment the Persians began to conquer the gentle slopes behind Dion, no Hellenic troops could be found in Tempe for at least two months previously – and yet, the Persians did not take the coastal road, but rather decided to press forward along the peaks in the direction of Perrhaibia and Tripolitis.³⁰

²⁸ Hdt. 7.146-147.1.

²⁹ *Cf.*, for example, the opinion held by Bury & Meiggs 1978, p. 171, who claim that this was the main reason why the Hellenes abandoned their defense of the entrance into Thessaly. Incidentally, the authors make no mention whatsoever of Alexander I.

³⁰ Nevertheless, taking into consideration the width of the road passing through Tempe, this might not be opposed to logic. Judging from its present-

Taking all these issues and dilemmas into consideration, it becomes clear that it is extremely challenging to define the role Alexander I played in all of this. The simplest explanation is to say that the Hellenes withdrew as a result of their own unresolved issues, and that there was no reason for Alexander to appear in this story; and were we to assume that the episode with the king of Macedon never took place, this matter would be settled very quickly. However, we can hardly do this with a clear conscience; no matter what explanations are presented in the three sources we have at our disposal concerning the withdrawal of the Hellenic forces, a common factor that appears in all three accounts with reference to the events is precisely Alexander and his message. This cannot be merely a coincidence, especially as we have seen that here we are most likely dealing with two different historical versions, and Alexander is present in both. Thus, the fact that he did indeed play a role in this incredibly tangled up episode cannot and should not be ignored.

In order to venture as to what Alexander might have had to say, we ought to take a closer look at his connection with this whole situation. We can categorically claim at least that, regardless of the fact whether the Hellenes had decided to defend Tempe or Heracleion, the Hellenic defence on the slopes of Olympus did not suit anybody. This would have caused a bottleneck and would have hindered the Persians' advancement, precisely on the territory of Pieria, which would have depleted the not very ample supplies of Alexander. Apart from this, had the Hellenes taken up positions in Heracleion, they would have already been located to the north of Olympus, on Macedonian territory. Bearing in mind that all of this was taking place at a time when Thessaly, though divided, still enjoyed military strength, and the Macedonian kingdom was still rather removed from its peak, it may be assumed that the Hellenes neither asked his permission, nor sought his support – which means that there must certainly have been points of conflict deep on his territory.

This clarifies Alexander's position: he had absolutely no need for the presence of the Hellenes, nor did he need a clash in lower Pieria, in Tempe, or even in Thessaly, points which made

day state (a section of the road and the railway is cut into the mountainside, as there is no sufficient space for them by the bank of the river), it is absolutely possible that Tempe presented a bottleneck for the Persian army, and that advancement along the side slopes of Olympus and Ossa was faster and posed fewer logistical problems. On this problem, v. esp. W. K. Pritchett ("Xerxes' Route over Mount Olympos", *AJA* 65/4, 1961, pp. 369–375) with a thorough review of previous opinions, theories and possibilities.

up the borders of his state.³¹ The Hellenic forces had to go – but how the king of Macedon managed to bring this about, presents a real enigma, achievement even. Is there any truth to the claim made by Damastes, that Alexander made the betrayal by the Aleuadai public knowledge? As we saw previously, at that time the medism of the Aleuadai would have hardly surprised anyone – and if everything we have said thus far is even partially true, the Thessalians from the south and the Thessalian tagos were indeed deficient in worldly wisdom, if they expected no opposition from them. An even bigger problem is the fact that, despite the relations they had with Larissa and Pharsalos, the Aleuadai were traditional friends to the royal house of Macedon, that friendship lasting to the very end of the Argeadai; we cannot and should not ignore the fact that the Aleuadai maintained their alliance to the Argeadai from the reign of Perdiccas II to the reign of Philip II, when Thessaly completely lost its political independence. It is incomprehensible how Alexander would benefit by revealing to the Hellenes that his supporters and future loyal allies were planning to medise – especially if we bear in mind that he did the very same thing; furthermore, he suffers no consequences from this disloyal move, while the Aleuadai continue their collaboration with the Argeadai with no bad blood between them, or sentiments of injustice. Therefore, this resolution as regards the message is purely technical, since it appears neither feasible, nor very logical. If Alexander had shared the political ground with anybody on the territory of Greece, that would certainly have been the Aleuadai, and it is not very realistic to expect that he would have undermined and judged their (and his own) political beliefs.

By and large, that is how things stand at present regarding the role Alexander played in Thessaly. Regardless of what he told the Hellenes, his advice obviously paid off, as most of the fighting shifted to the south, away from the borders of his kingdom. And what is even more important, even had the Hellenes not been as grateful as Herodotus tries to convince us, they displayed absolutely no remorse for having listened to him, nor did they afterwards find a reason to seek revenge or settle matters. Alexander did indeed play a role in these events, and this episode ought to retain its place in the traditional narrative;³² nevertheless, the content of his message to the Hellenes will continue to elude us, undoubtedly until the discovery of another source, different from those we have had up to now.

³¹ Cf. Проєва 1997, p. 85; Проєва 2004, pp. 154–156.

³² Cf. Borza 1990, p. 108.

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