

Event B: The Ionian Revolt



In 546 B.C.E., the Persians conquered Ionia, a prosperous Greek settlement in Asia Minor. The Persians were not the first to invade this area. In 1000 B.C.E., the Ionians themselves had displaced non-Greeks living in the region. Like the Ionian-Greeks, the Persians realized that the rich farmland and the accessible harbors in the area could be used to create a profitable trade network.

After conquering Ionia, the Persians set up Greek “puppet rulers,” or local leaders whose nations were controlled by the Persians, to govern the area. They also forced the Ionians to pay tribute and

to serve in the Persian army during times of need. Many Ionians were unhappy about having to pay taxes to the Persians. They particularly resented the Persians for taking over the trade routes the Ionians had once controlled.

In 499 B.C.E., the Ionians rebelled against Persian rule. The Ionians asked for help from Sparta, the strongest Greek city-state. However, the Spartan king refused to help, because he realized his troops would have to march for three months just to reach the Persian Empire. Instead, two other city-states from mainland Greece, Athens and Eretria (pronounced eh-REH-tree-ah), agreed to offer assistance to the Ionians. They sent ships and troops to support the small Ionian army.

When the Persian king, Darius, learned about the revolt, he immediately ordered his troops to sail to Greece and attack the rebellious city-states. In the face of the powerful Persian army, many of the Greeks lost their nerve. Many of their troops surrendered, or changed sides to join the Persians, in the hope of avoiding harsh punishment. The Ionian and Athenian troops, however, fought a difficult battle to resist Persian rule. After five years, the Persian troops defeated the Ionians. They stormed into the Ionian city of Miletus (pronounced mill-EE-tuss), burned one of its holy sites, and transported the people to Persia to sell them as slaves.

The Ionian Revolt, which ended in 493 B.C.E., marked the beginning of the Persian Wars. Even after the revolt was crushed, Darius was determined to make the Ionians pay for the losses his army had suffered. However, he was more furious with the Athenians who had assisted the Ionians. According to legend, he ordered one of his servants to repeat “Master, remember the Athenians,” to him three times a day, to ensure that he did not forget to punish them for their part in the rebellion.