THE IONIAN REVOLT*

BY

H. T. WALLINGA

1. Introduction.

The importance of the Ionian revolt as a stage in the development of the relations between Persia and the Greek world is generally recognized in modern studies of these relations and of the history of the Greeks. The bibliography of the revolt is accordingly extensive, that of recent years in particular (Tozzi enumerates some 125 titles, more than half of which date from the years after 1945). The lack of a full monograph, up to 1978 at least, is in that light rather curious: Tozzi's book is very welcome for that reason alone.

Interpretations of the revolt are very divergent, both with regard to its causes and with regard to the part played by the leading politicians. The reasons for this divergence are not far to seek: not only were the traditions concerning it recorded at a late moment, at least two generations after the event, but the recording took place in a situation which radically differed from that obtaining at the moment the revolt broke out. In the meantime the Ionians and the other Greeks in Asia Minor and those of the islands¹) had been freed from the Persian domination. They owed their freedom not to their own exertions, but to the failure of the Persian attempt of 480/79 to conquer continental Greece (if indeed that had been the Persian objective), and this failure was entirely due to the continental Greeks themselves. In so far as the Ionians had contributed

Anonymous quotations are all from Herodotos. For abbreviations of Greek authors' names I have followed Liddell-Scott-Stuart Jones. All dates are B.C.
Modern literature is quoted by author's name and page: for titles see the bibliography at the end of the article.
¹) Henceforth I shall speak of Ionians, meaning all these Greek subjects of Persia.
anything in 480, it had been—with few exceptions—on the Persian side (VIII 85, 1). No wonder therefore that Herodotos' spokesmen disapproved of the Ionians, considered their resistance to Cyrus futile, scorned the motives of their revolt, disparaged their achievements and felt contempt for their leaders; no wonder either that they viewed the revolt in the first place as the cause of the disasters (ἀρχή κακῶν: V 97, 3) Xerxes' expeditions brought over the European Greeks.

In view of the contrast between the success of the latter and the failure of the Ionians, and in view of the power constellation of the middle of the fifth century, to which the Ionians owed their precarious freedom, it is understandable that in their account of the revolt Herodotus' spokesmen and Herodotus himself gave so much room to the Ionian efforts to enlist the services of Sparta and Athens and to the recent history of these poleis. Indeed, the situation of the later fifth century and especially the principal part played by Athens in the repulsion of the Persians could not but suggest that the Ionians on their own did not stand a chance and that their revolt for that reason was an irresponsible adventure. Hence too the strong and somewhat self-excusing emphasis on the part of Aristagoras and Histiaios, which was represented as being decisive.

This emphasis continues in modern studies of the revolt, of which Tozzi's book is the culmination: the ancient evaluation of the chances of the revolt is accepted and as a consequence hardly any notice is given to the problem of the relative power of the Asiatic Greeks and the Persians at the moment of the revolt, notwithstanding the utter implausibility of the current view of this matter.

2. Persian sea-power: an auxiliary system?

This current view is that in 500 at the start of the Naxian expedition very considerable naval forces were in the hands of the Ionians. They possessed at least 200 triremes (V 31, 4, cf. van Groningen's commentary and Macan's remark on V 32) and put them at the disposal of the Persian satrap. This strength is considerable indeed: it is comparable to the largest Delian league fleet commanded by the Athenians (200 triremes: Meiggs, 77) and much larger than the peace-time patrols of 60 ships at most, with which Athens