

ABSTRACT

TADLOCK, STEPHEN KYLE. *Poor in Life, Naked in Battle: Athenian Thetes as Psiloi in the Classical Age.* (Under the direction of Dr. S. Thomas Parker).

Most military and ancient historians have assumed that in Classical Athens the poor of the city, the *thetes*, served as light-armed troops (*psiloi*) or rowed in the fleet. A closer look at the available evidence, however, suggests that too many practical and social barriers hindered *thetes* from organized *psiloi* service until the introduction of the ephebic program in the fourth century. Before then, Athens deliberately neglected the training of *thetes* as *psiloi*, leaving these men with no means to learn how to use their weapons. Additionally, the prevailing military ethos extolled hoplites and, to a lesser extent, cavalry as the true protectors of the city. Neglecting to equip their own poorer citizens as *psiloi* required the Athenians to look elsewhere for light infantry. These alternative sources included mercenaries and allies from outside the city and resident aliens and slaves from within. The *thetes* of the city, unable to serve as effective *psiloi*, often followed the army anyway in hope of plunder and from loyalty to the city. These men, often called *psiloi* by the ancient sources, usually had little effect on the outcome of the battle and instead were used more effectively to plunder enemy land and forage for the army. *Thetes* were also instrumental in rowing the ships on which Athens' naval superiority depended and thus gained many advantages. *Thetes* were finally trained in the use of *psiloi* weaponry during the fourth century, but usually served as hoplites instead, while mercenaries continued to fill the need for light-infantry.

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Poor in Life, Naked in Battle:
Athenian *Thetes* as *Psiloi*
In the Classical Age

by
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to Annie, whose loving support made this possible, and to Hal, who I hope will one day understand why Daddy had to spend so much time at home working instead of playing with him.

BIOGRAPHY

Kyle Tadlock is originally from Hattiesburg, Mississippi and currently misses his home town. He graduated from the University of Mississippi in 2006 and then spent the next three years as a men's clothing salesman and househusband. He is looking forward to graduating from North Carolina State after his extended stay and pursuing his doctorate. He is married to the lovely and hard-working Lee Anne Tadlock and has one son and another child on the way. He also does not enjoy talking much about himself, except perhaps in the third person.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Aesch.	Aeschylus
<i>Ag.</i>	<i>Agamemnon</i>
<i>Per.</i>	<i>Persae</i>
Andoc.	Andocides
Ar.	Aristophanes
<i>Ach.</i>	<i>Acharnenses</i>
<i>Lys.</i>	<i>Lysistrata</i>
<i>Plut.</i>	<i>Plutus</i>
<i>Ran.</i>	<i>Ranae</i>
<i>Thesm.</i>	<i>Thesmophoriazusae</i>
Arist.	Aristotle
<i>[Ath. Pol.]</i>	<i>Athenaion Politeia</i>
<i>[Oec.]</i>	<i>Oeconomica</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politica</i>
Arr.	Arrian
<i>Tact.</i>	<i>Tactica</i>
Dem.	Demosthenes
Diod. Sic.	Diodorus Siculus
Eur.	Euripides
<i>Andr.</i>	<i>Andromache</i>
<i>Hel.</i>	<i>Helena</i>
<i>HF</i>	<i>Hercules furens</i>
Hdt.	Herodotus
<i>Hell. Oxy.</i>	<i>Hellenica Oxyrhynchia</i>
Hom.	Homer
<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
Isoc.	Isocrates

<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
Lycurg. <i>Leoc.</i>	Lycurgus <i>Against Leocrates</i>
Lys.	Lysias
<i>OCD</i> ³	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> , 3 rd edition
Paus.	Pausanias
Pl. <i>La.</i> <i>Leg.</i> <i>Prt.</i>	Plato <i>Laches</i> <i>Leges</i> <i>Protagoras</i>
Plut. <i>Alc.</i> <i>Ages.</i> <i>Sol.</i> <i>Thes.</i> <i>[X orat.]</i>	Plutarch <i>Alcibiades</i> <i>Agesilaus</i> <i>Solon</i> <i>Theseus</i> <i>Vitae decem oratorum</i>
Thuc.	Thucydides
Xen. <i>An.</i> <i>Cyr.</i> <i>Eq. mag.</i> <i>Hell.</i> <i>Mem.</i> <i>[Ath. Pol.]</i> <i>Vect.</i>	Xenophon <i>Anabasis</i> <i>Cyropaedia</i> <i>De Equitum Magistro</i> <i>Hellenica</i> <i>Memorabilia</i> <i>Respublica Atheniensium</i> <i>De vectigalibus</i>

Chapter 1: Introduction, Definitions, and Sources

Until the last few decades, history has largely been written by and concerned primarily with the deeds of men of status. Ancient Greece was no exception and the historians of that period concerned themselves mostly with the deeds of the leading politicians, thinkers, and generals. Modern historians, both ancient and military, have largely followed that tradition. The military nature of hoplites, their status, their limitations, and their origins, for instance, have been endlessly debated over the centuries. Similarly, most work on Athenian society and government focuses largely on these same “middle-class” men who held the majority of the offices and largely set the agenda of the state.¹

In both of these cases, the *thetes*, those Athenians citizens who were too poor to be hoplites, have been largely ignored by modern scholarship in terms of their military contributions to land warfare. Most scholars simply accept the prevailing view that *thetes* served either as *psiloi* (light-armed troops) or in the fleet. The Athenian navy and those who rowed its ships have received a fair share of scholarly attention, although few historians have examined the contributions of light infantry to Classical Greek warfare.² Those few who have, such as van Wees, have swung too far in the opposite direction by positing that every “hoplite” battle had large swarms of *psiloi* on both sides that were deliberately omitted from

¹ The term “middle-class,” although anachronistic, is a convenient way to denote the economic status of the hoplite class. The class system of Athens will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. All dates are BC unless otherwise noted.

² Notable exceptions are Best 1969 and Parke 1981 [1933], both of whom discuss light-armed troops, namely mercenaries.

the record by historians because of social prejudices.³ He also overstates the contributions of these soldiers by arguing that they often fought effectively against enemy hoplites.⁴

This thesis seeks both to address neglect of the *thetes* and to clarify their role in the land forces of Athens. The traditional view that *thetes* served their city as light infantry presupposes several unproven assumptions, since the evidence suggests that, with few notable exceptions, they were unable to serve effectively as organized *psiloi* until at least the fourth century. Before this, professional training in light weapons did not exist in Athens and, even if it had, it is likely that the *thetes* lacked the time to invest in such extensive drilling.⁵ Social and cultural pressures also mitigated against *thetes* serving as light infantry since such soldiers were deliberately marginalized by the hoplite class and were often associated with barbarians. Finally, service in the Athenian navy, which was both held in higher esteem and remunerated, provided an outlet for military service to these poor citizens. Athens instead used mercenaries and allies as light troops.

This thesis primarily focuses on developments in Athens between the Battle of Marathon (490 BC) and the establishment of a formal military training program (the ephobic program) in the fourth century. The former date marks the first clearly identifiable hoplite battle and the latter the introduction of a program that undermined many principles of the hoplite *ethos* that the former upheld. This could thus be seen as the period when the hoplite ideal, after cresting at Marathon, began a gradual descent that eventually ended in the

³ van Wees 2004: 62-65. The contribution of *thetes* to battles and their combat limitations are discussed below in Chapter Five. In brief, although mercenary light infantry in conjunction with allied hoplites could be effective against hoplites, the untrained *thetes* who followed Greek armies into the field were much less so.

⁴ van Wees 2004: 64.

⁵ An exception is discussed in detail in Chapters Two and Three.

professional armies of the Hellenistic age. It will also consider some earlier evidence from the Archaic age (c. 750-480) and some later evidence between the possible introduction of the ephebic program in the mid-fourth century and the Battle of Chaeronea in 338. The Archaic age marks the rise of the phalanx and the processes by which both *thetes* and *psiloi* were marginalized in Athens. The events preceding Chaeronea may suggest the results of training *thetes* as *psiloi*.

For reasons discussed above, this thesis does not follow any secondary work too closely. It does, however, owe a great deal to Hanson's *The Other Greeks*. This monograph combines many threads of Hanson's thought into one large work, particularly the relationship between Greek warfare and agriculture. I basically accept his view that the hoplite *ethos* and way of combat came out of the experiences and goals of middling Greek farmers who were in turn able to propagate those ideas through the institutions of the rising polis. They thus created a system that marginalized both *psiloi* and the poor. Hanson is also one of the most vocal defenders of the traditional model of a class-based military in Athens, which I believe to be essentially correct and which forms the cornerstone of this thesis.

Hanson is not without his critics, however, and many of the arguments raised against his work concern issues which directly affect this thesis. The idea of a class-based military particularly has been assaulted from many directions and by many scholars in recent years, most noticeably by van Wees, but also by others such as Rosivach, Gabrielsen, and Krentz.⁶ Hanson's argument concerning the unfeasibility of long-term agricultural destruction as a goal of war has been largely unopposed, but some such as Foxhall have argued that the short-

⁶ For a thorough overview of the historiography on this issue, see Wheeler 2011: 87-94. The arguments of most of these scholars will be discussed in Chapter Three.

term damage would have been widespread and damaging to individual farmers.⁷

Proper understanding of how the *thetes* of Athens were prevented from serving as effective *psiloi* requires a review of the basic elements of Greek armies during the Classical age (c. 479-323). At the most basic level, such armies could contain hoplites, *psiloi*, peltasts, and cavalry. Hoplites (fig. 1) were the primary fighting units of Athens. This heavy infantry soldier wore and carried a seventy pound panoply consisting of a breastplate, greaves, helmet, spear, sword and shield.⁸ Not every hoplite may have carried this full panoply, but would have at least had the heavy round shield (*hoplon*) and the long thrusting spear.⁹ Because of the heavy nature of their armaments, hoplites relied on discipline and tight formation instead of mobility and individual prowess as they fought in a phalanx.¹⁰ The phalanx was a close-order formation which protected each soldier on his left side by his own shield and on his right side by the shield of his neighbor.¹¹ Additional protection was provided by the depth of the formation, which varied according to the tactical situation and the available manpower but was usually eight men deep.¹² The dependence of each warrior on the man next to him necessitated trust, unit cohesion, and discipline to stand and fight. This was the greatest strength of both the hoplite and the phalanx.¹³ When hoplites were ready to engage their enemy, they would advance, protecting themselves and their neighbors with their shields as they probed with their thrusting spears at any exposed areas of their

⁷ Foxhall 1993.

⁸ Hanson 1989: 57.

⁹ Hanson 1989: 65, 83.

¹⁰ Hanson 1989: 119.

¹¹ Hanson 1989: 28.

¹² Hanson 1989: 27.

¹³ Hanson 1989: 119.

enemy, usually another phalanx.¹⁴ This tight formation and the use of spears made the hoplite effective against both cavalry and other infantry as long as the formation held. The primary limitations of this formation was the need for level terrain due to the lack of maneuverability, the vulnerability of the individual hoplite should the integrity of the phalanx be broken, and the weakness of the flanks to attack by faster, more mobile soldiers.

At the opposite end of the military spectrum were the *psiloi* (“bare”). These skirmishers did not come into close contact with their opponents, but instead used bows (fig. 2), slings, javelins, or even rocks to assault their foes from a distance.¹⁵ Their actual role in the Classical age is uncertain but, according to the one account in Thucydides, they usually fought their opposite numbers, running to attack and then retreating, as a sort of prelude to the clash of hoplite phalanxes.¹⁶ At least in Hellenistic times, they would be deployed either behind their heavy-infantry compatriots for safety, or on the flanks to prevent encirclement of the phalanx during the hoplite battle.¹⁷ Their primary tactical role was to provide missile support for the hoplites and also to act as screens and scouts for an army on the move.¹⁸ Many soldiers labeled as *psiloi* by ancient writers were also used to plunder, ravage, and forage enemy land in conjunction with the phalanx.¹⁹

The peltasts, in terms of both equipment and tactics, occupied the middle ground between hoplites and the *psiloi* (fig. 3).²⁰ The peltast was a light-infantry soldier carrying a

¹⁴ Hanson 1989: 84.

¹⁵ Thuc. 6.69; Tyrtaeus fr. 11 West.

¹⁶ Thuc. 6.69.

¹⁷ Arr. *Tact.* 9, 13. Perhaps also in Tyrtaeus fr. 11 West, although the meaning of the passage is debated.

¹⁸ Arr. *Tact.* 14.

¹⁹ This practice will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

²⁰ Best 1969: 4.

smaller, crescent-shaped shield (*pelte*) and either a pair of javelins or a single long thrusting spear as his primary weapon.²¹ The *pelte* was light, rimless, and likely constructed of wickerwork covered with a variety of materials.²² Unlike the *hoplon*, the *pelte* could only provide protection for one person, indicating that the peltast was meant to operate as an individual, rather than as part of a formation.²³ In addition to the javelin or thrusting spear, peltasts might also carry a dagger or a slashing sword known as a *macharia*.²⁴ Peltasts served as both skirmishers and melee combatants and could even be effective against hoplites where terrain and/or heavy infantry support gave them an advantage.²⁵

The majority of Greece, Attica included, was not suitable for raising large numbers or large breeds of horses due to the mountainous terrain and poor soils.²⁶ Thus cavalry was usually relegated to role similar to that of light infantry, including harassment of enemy troops, flank protection, scouting flat land, and outflanking opposing hoplites.²⁷ Greek cavalry frequently used javelins in the same manner as *psiloi* or peltasts, but there was no specialized or standardized equipment for them, unlike hoplites.²⁸ The primary advantages cavalry had over infantry were speed and mobility, useful for outflanking a phalanx or running down fleeing hoplites.

With the main terms defined, it is time to turn to the primary sources. The narrative of this thesis mostly comes from two ancient historians, Thucydides and Xenophon.

²¹ Ducrey 1986: 112; Griffith 1981: 162.

²² Arist. fr. 498 Rose, cited in Sage 1996: 43; Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.25; Xen. *An.* 7.4.17; Best 1969: 3; Anderson 1970: 112-3.

²³ Anderson 1970: 112.

²⁴ Hdt. 7.75; Ducrey 1986: 112.

²⁵ Xen. *Hell.* 4.6.10-11, 5.1.12; Arr. *Tact.* 14; Thuc. 4.32, 5.10

²⁶ Sage 1996: 46-47.

²⁷ Ducrey 1986: 102; van Wees 2004: 66.

²⁸ Rawlings 2007: 87-88.

Thucydides (c. 460-395) wrote *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, which narrates the conflict from 431 to 411. Thucydides, an Athenian, participated in the war as a general until his exile after the loss of Amphipolis in 422.²⁹ His account thus contains much information about the military events of that conflict, although he also omits much that his audience would have already known. His participation and presence in many events makes him both a reliable witness and presents the possibility of bias because of his experiences and subsequent exile.

Xenophon (c. 430-354) is the main source for the rest of the Peloponnesian War (411-404), the Corinthian War (395-387), and beyond. Throughout his long life a writer, soldier, and mercenary, Xenophon traveled throughout the Greek world and the Near East. He wrote several works, although the main one of interest to this study is his *Hellenica*, a history of the Greek world from 411 to 362. It picks up where Thucydides left off to narrate events from the final years of the Peloponnesian War to the victory of Thebes at Mantinea. Most scholars consider Xenophon to be a good historian, although observing a pro-Spartan bias in his work. In addition, historians have also noted some odd omissions in his narrative.³⁰ Overall, however, his work remains vital for understanding the events during the important period from the last years of the Peloponnesian War to the conclusion of the Corinthian War.

The remaining holes in this thesis will be filled by Aristotle (384-322), whose works provide a wealth of information about events both in his own century and in the more distant past of Athens. Unlike Thucydides and Xenophon, Aristotle was not an historian, and one must be careful to note where his philosophy, including his oligarchical tendencies, might

²⁹ Thucydides 1998: xxi.

³⁰ Xenophon 1947: ix.

affect his interpretation of events. It is also important to note that there is much debate about his sources for events before his time and his treatment of these sources.³¹ In any case, however, one must remember that he preserved much unique material and that he tried to reconcile conflicting accounts as best he could.³² Thus his work remains vital to understanding events both in his own day and in the sixth and fifth centuries.

Another problem with Aristotle as a source is authorship. He is credited with so many works that it is unlikely that he could have possibly written them all.³³ Of particular importance to this thesis is the *Constitution of the Athenians*. Scholars have debated for the century since its discovery whether Aristotle or one of his students actually wrote the work.³⁴ It is now customary, following Rhodes, to credit the work to an anonymous author and not to Aristotle himself. As Rhodes maintains, however, the work is still valuable to the historian no matter its authorship.³⁵

Supplementing these more elite views are a few authors whose works can provide a sense of the more “popular” values and ideals in Athens during their times, such as the Athenian playwrights Aeschylus (c. 525-456), Aristophanes (c. 460-386), and Euripides (c. 485-406). Although all these men belonged to the cultural and social elite themselves, their work appealed to a large cross-section of the population of Athens and thus highlighted the shared culture of the city. Similar in scope are the Athenian orators Isocrates (c. 436-338)

³¹ Rhodes 1981: 15-29.

³² Rhodes 1981: 29-30.

³³ Rhodes 1981: 62.

³⁴ Rhodes 1981: 61.

³⁵ Rhodes 1981: 61-62.

and Demosthenes (c. 384-322).³⁶ Their surviving speeches, despite pro-Macedonian and pro-Athenian biases, respectively, are essential for reconstructing what some Athenians thought about current events, or at least what a portion of the elite wanted the people to think.

In addition to literary evidence, I will also draw upon epigraphic and archeological evidence where appropriate. In many cases the archeological record can provide important clues when the literary record is absent or fragmentary (such as the Archaic age) or even correct the literary record. Similarly, epigraphic evidence, particularly in the case of inscriptions on public monuments, preserves unique details omitted from other sources. The problem with all these kinds of evidence is that they require careful interpretation, especially where only part of the evidence survives or the date is uncertain.

The remaining major problem with the sources as a whole is that they primarily reflect the views of the social and economic elite of Athens. Thus the authors of these works were partakers in the same hoplite ethos that left *psiloi* and *thetes* marginalized for so long. Therefore, their opinions on *psiloi* and other non-hoplites would have been shaped by the same cultural prejudice as the hoplite class. The poor of Athens left no literary records, so we have only what the elites chose to tell us about how the lower classes lived and what they thought about their lot in life.

In order to present the evidence and my conclusions most clearly, I have divided this thesis into six chapters arranged primarily in a topical rather than narrative fashion. This introduction defines the key terms as well as briefly evaluates the main sources. Chapter Two provides the overarching historical narrative from the Archaic age to the introduction of

³⁶ *OCD*³ s.v. "Demosthenes," "Isocrates."

the ephebic program. The heart of the argument against *thetes* as *psiloi* lies in Chapter Three, which discusses who the *thetes* were, what their lives were like, and the practical and social pressures that prevented them from serving as effective *psiloi*. Chapter Four considers the alternative sources of *psiloi* available to Athens such as mercenaries, allies, metics (resident aliens), and slaves. Chapter Five considers the *thetes*' contributions to warfare, such as ravaging and plundering on land and serving as rowers in the navy. Chapter Six summarizes the arguments and considers what led to *thetes*' acceptance into the land forces of Athens. This chapter also evaluates how this service affected both the *thetes* and Athens up to 338.



Figure 1: Modern rendering of a fourth-century hoplite. Image by J. Shumate. Used by permission.

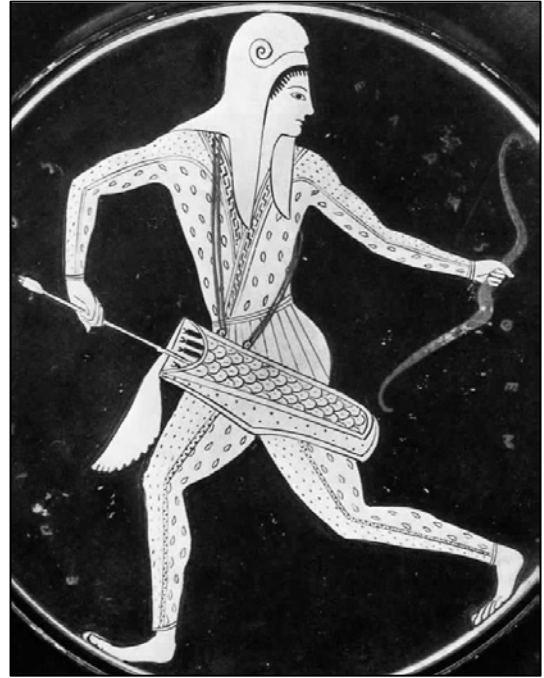


Figure 2: Archer in eastern costume. Early sixth-century Attic plate. Ducrey 1986: 111 fig 80



Figure 3: Thracian peltast with long spear. Attic red-figured *kylix* (drinking cup), c. 480. Best 1969: fig. 3.

Chapter 2: Historical Outline

In order to understand why the poor of Athens were prevented from serving as *psiloi*, one must first consider the state of Greek warfare in the Archaic and Classical periods. This chapter will examine the evolution of Greek warfare in two sections. The first will look at the development of the classical phalanx in the Archaic age, since the phalanx and its hoplite ethos marginalized both the poor socially and light infantry militarily. The second section examines the developments of the fifth and fourth centuries, which served to undermine the hoplite ethos as well as the phalanx, and which led to a resurgence of both *psiloi* and the poor's military relevance.

There is little concrete evidence for the origin of the phalanx. The first mention of the “classical” phalanx (as described in the previous chapter) comes in Herodotus’ account of the Battle of Marathon, written c. 430. Although he does not use the word *φάλαγξ*, the formation he describes has the characteristics of the phalanx, especially when combined with the later speech of Mardonius describing Greek warfare.³⁷ From this account, some scholars have argued that the exclusively hoplite phalanx first appeared at or even after Marathon.³⁸ Others have taken this argument further and argued that the “ideal hoplite republic” only existed at Marathon.³⁹ Supporters of this interpretation insist that before Marathon, the Greeks fought in open order with *psiloi* interspersed with the hoplites. Thus in their view,

³⁷ Hdt. 6.108-117, 7.9. The formation described in Herodotus has both a closed front and depth, the latter of which was not clearly attested before this.

³⁸ Krentz 2010: 60.

³⁹ Vidal-Naquet 1986: 90.

the phalanx was an invention of the Classical age and the product of a relatively mature polis society.

What little evidence survives from the Archaic period casts doubt on both of these theories, however, for one can find the beginning of the phalanx and the hoplite ethos in this period. The seventh-century Spartan poet Tyrtaeus, for instance, spoke of men standing their ground and holding the line while wielding long lances or swords and being covered by their shields.⁴⁰ These are the weapons and equipment of a hoplite and his exhortation to hold the line regardless of personal danger is one that would be familiar in the classical phalanx, although he does not mention anything about depth. Tyrtaeus also advised the light-armed soldiers to hide behind shields and throw rocks and javelins at the enemy.⁴¹ Some have argued from this passage that Tyrtaeus is describing the same open phalanx used until after Marathon.⁴² Such an interpretation, however, depends on assumptions that cannot be proven definitively by the text. Anderson, for instance, postulates that Tyrtaeus might be describing a transitional stage between an older system of warfare and the closed phalanx or even guerilla or primitive siege warfare in the mountains of Messenia, meaning his account may not reflect at all how the phalanx generally operated in his day.⁴³ Schwartz similarly makes the case that the light-armed soldiers mentioned may be using their own shields and thus are not a part of the phalanx at all.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Tyrtaeus fr. 10-11 West.

⁴¹ Tyrtaeus fr. 11 West.

⁴² Krentz 2010: 59-60.

⁴³ Anderson 1991: 16.

⁴⁴ Schwartz 2009: 121-2.

Whichever argument one wishes to accept, it seems that Sparta in the seventh century was using a formation with some hallmarks of the phalanx. The battle Tyrtaeus describes depicts men armed with hoplite weapons fighting in close quarters in a manner which deemphasized the individual and made the formation more important. Unlike the classical phalanx, however, *psiloi* were apparently still considered vital elements of the force and worthy of being exhorted.

Although the poems of Tyrtaeus do not provide definitive proof of a closed phalanx, his contemporary Archilochus (c. 680-645), does seem to show that prejudices against missile troops were already developing in the early seventh century. In one surviving fragment, he spoke disdainfully of bows and slings, saying that they would be put away when the sword-wielding “lords of Euboea” (δεσπότες Ευβοίας) came to battle.⁴⁵ Although this passage seems straightforward, there are some caveats that must be considered. Archery had been common on the island of Euboea since the Dark Ages and there is reasonable doubt that the Euboean nobility were hoplites.⁴⁶ Our concern here, however, is not what the Euboeans thought of missile weapons, but what Archilochus did. Evidence from other fragments indicates that he was a hoplite, as he often wrote about both his spear and shield.⁴⁷ Thus his views about missile weapons and those who bore them might better reflect the emerging hoplite class.

Archaeological evidence greatly supplements this scant literary record. Dedications of armor from Olympia show a marked increase in the number of shields from the eighth

⁴⁵ Archilochus fr. 3 West; Pritchett 1991: 6; Wheeler 1987: 158 n5. The Greek is taken from Plut. *Thes.* 5.3 and the translation is my own.

⁴⁶ Wheeler 1987: 167-171.

⁴⁷ Archilochus fr. 2, 5, 98 West.

century to the seventh, perhaps reflecting the growing adoption of the shield and thus of hoplite tactics.⁴⁸ Hoplites also begin to appear in contemporary vase-paintings. The most famous example is the Chigi vase (fig. 5), a proto-Corinthian vessel of the mid seventh-century.⁴⁹ The vase clearly demonstrates two opposing forces equipped and fighting as hoplites, along with a flute player.⁵⁰ Some scholars have argued that this vase actually depicts a loose formation of soldiers preparing to throw javelins at each other in an unorganized manner.⁵¹ As Lormier has argued, however, the same grip portrayed on the vase would have been used to make a downward stroke at the throat of an opponent once the two lines met.⁵² Lorimer also explains away the “extra” spears that those favoring the loose phalanx interpretation maintain were extra javelins: she argues that these were added to give the sense of extra depth.⁵³ Even if Lorimer is wrong and the artist intended the spears to be javelins, that does not completely invalidate her claims. Javelins are clearly portrayed in other works of Archaic art and one explanation is that some early hoplites may have carried javelins in addition to their thrusting spears, much as Roman legionaries would later carry two *pila*.⁵⁴

A lesser known but equally important work is the Near Eastern Amathus bowl (fig. 4), a silver vessel of c. 710-675 of uncertain provenance found on Cyprus.⁵⁵ One scene depicts warriors armed like hoplites moving in formation against a besieged tower defended

⁴⁸ Rawlings 2007: 49. Jarva (1995: 112) notes that were 280 shields found, most of which were dedicated from the seventh century onwards.

⁴⁹ Lorimer (1947: 81) gives c. 650 and Wheeler (2007b: 197) gives c. 640.

⁵⁰ Lorimer 1947: 82-83.

⁵¹ van Wees 2004: 170-2; Krentz 2010: 52.

⁵² Lorimer 1947: 82-83.

⁵³ Lorimer 1947: 83.

⁵⁴ Schwartz 2009: 126.

⁵⁵ Schwartz 2009: 130-1.

by a mixed group of soldiers, including other hoplites.⁵⁶ The scenes on this bowl are perhaps best imagined as illustrating a series of events rather than one.⁵⁷ The hoplites, portrayed in a manner that attempts to represent a formation with both depth and length, represent a heavy infantry battle in which at least one side (and most likely both) used Greek mercenaries.⁵⁸ After the battle came a siege which the attacking hoplites sat out while the remaining defending hoplites guarded the walls. If this reading of the bowl is correct, it would indicate that both sides in the conflict had hired Greek mercenaries.⁵⁹ If Greek mercenary hoplites were already a familiar sight in the Near East at such an early date, it would indicate that the phalanx was developed perhaps even earlier than the seventh century. Unfortunately, it is hard to say what this interpretation might mean for the overall adoption of hoplite weapons and tactics in the Greek homeland. Mercenaries would have had the incentive and the means (through plunder or even gifts) to adopt the new form of warfare early and origin of the mercenaries depicted on the bowl is uncertain.⁶⁰

This literary and pictorial evidence suggests that the hoplite phalanx was adopted in at least some parts of Greece by the seventh century. Wherever it began, it spread slowly and unevenly throughout the mainland.⁶¹ The more mountainous areas of Greece never adopted hoplite armor and tactics, largely useless in that terrain. In these places light-armed infantry remained the standard and would become important in the Classical age. On the other hand, the flat areas of Greece, such as Thessaly, maintained aristocratic governments controlled by

⁵⁶ Schwartz 2009: 132-3, fig. 19.

⁵⁷ Schwartz 2009: 133.

⁵⁸ Schwartz 2009: 132-3.

⁵⁹ Schwartz 2009: 134; Luraghi 2006: 38.

⁶⁰ Luraghi 2006: 24.

⁶¹ Wheeler 2007b: 199.

nobles fighting as cavalry. Also, hoplite warfare only became truly dominant on the mainland. Although the phalanx was exported to the Greek colonies around the Mediterranean, hoplites there often fought alongside *psiloi* against the natives.⁶² Combat between phalanxes according to the “rules” of hoplite combat was reserved for contests between Greeks, whereas anything was permissible in fighting barbarians.⁶³

The transition to the hoplite phalanx was far more than just a military matter. The story of the elevation of the hoplite to a dominant position in Greece is also the story of the rise of the “middle class” in Greek cities. In the Dark age most of Greece was controlled by various aristocrats whose wealth was based on animal herding.⁶⁴ During the Archaic age, however, their power was slowly broken and their large tracts of grazing land replaced with a system of more or less equally-sized farms owned by a growing class of middling farmers.⁶⁵ These agriculturalists also came to control the governments of the nascent *poleis*, replacing many of the old aristocratic governments with timocracies, where power was determined by wealth. This helped the further conversion of old estates into smaller farms through legislation and social pressures.⁶⁶ These farmers in turn had the drive, capital, and initiative to invest in the new hoplite arms and armor that were spreading throughout Greece.⁶⁷ Once so armed, they had both the military and political means to enforce their position of prominence, especially by reserving power to those who could provide hoplite arms.⁶⁸ Thus

⁶² Wheeler 2007b: 199.

⁶³ Wheeler 2007b: 199.

⁶⁴ Arist. *Pol.* 2.1266a-1274b; Hanson 1995: 191.

⁶⁵ Arist. *Pol.* 2.1266a-1274b; Hanson 1995: 191.

⁶⁶ Hanson 1995: 191, 202.

⁶⁷ Hanson 1995: 231.

⁶⁸ [Arist]. *Ath. Pol.* 4.2; Hanson 1995: 203.

the hoplites came to control the government, the majority of the land, and the military of many city states.

In Athens this process occurred by degrees but was eventually partially undermined by the introduction of democracy. Solon in the early sixth century codified the timocracy and shifted power from a system based on birth to one based on wealth.⁶⁹ Under his system, the poor citizens who could not afford to fight as hoplites were still were allowed to vote, but not hold office.⁷⁰ The redistribution of land from the aristocrats to the hoplites and *thetes* was carried out by the tyrant Pisistratus (546-527), who seized power with the help of the hoplite class.⁷¹ In 508 Cleisthenes completed the transition to democracy by dividing all Athenians into tribes and demes and setting up the government so that all positions except the archonship could be held by anyone from any property class. He did, however, leave the Areopagus, one of the major strongholds of the aristocracy, mostly intact.⁷² In 462, Ephialtes stripped that body of most its powers and responsibilities.⁷³ He and his successors also lowered the qualifications of the archonships in 458/7 so that hoplites could participate as well.⁷⁴ Thus in Athens, the hoplite class never achieved complete dominance, since the poorest Athenians had just as much power and the richer had more.

Despite their gains in political power, the rich and the poor in Athens were still left militarily marginalized by the hoplites. Athens maintained a cavalry corps manned by its

⁶⁹ Hansen 1991: 30.

⁷⁰ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 7.3; Hansen 1991: 30.

⁷¹ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 16.2-3, 9; Hansen 1991: 32.

⁷² [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 8.4; Hansen 1991: 37.

⁷³ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 25.2; Hansen 1991: 37.

⁷⁴ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 26.2; Hansen 1991: 37. Ephialtes was murdered c. 461, before the legislation took effect. See [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 25.4; Hansen 1991: 38.

wealthier citizens, but in order to defend their courage in the eyes of the hoplites, many of these instead fought in the phalanx.⁷⁵ The poor similarly had no formal role in warfare until the advent of the Athenian navy in the fifth century. They could also follow the army out to ravage and plunder, but such actions were individual initiatives, not part of the organized military of the city.

Turning again to Marathon, another view holds that this was the last hoplite battle.⁷⁶ Supporters of this view argue that the Persian Wars caused an immediate breakdown of the hoplite ethos and the phalanx. Hanson, for instance, argues that the Greeks endured a kind of culture shock after Marathon in regards to the politics and military styles of those beyond their borders and this exposure began to undermine the hoplite's predominance.⁷⁷ According to Hanson, although the Greeks did walk away with the immediate notion that hoplite warfare was superior in battle, they also saw that it and the ethos behind it had limited strategic potential.⁷⁸ It was, for instance, difficult for a hoplite state to cultivate alliances and to project its power abroad.⁷⁹ Additionally, he argues, the Greeks began to see warfare as a way of protecting the people of the polis and not its land.⁸⁰ This new attitude coupled with the search for a way around these limitations, Hanson argues, fatally undermined the agricultural and moral underpinnings of the system.⁸¹ Vidal-Naquet similarly argues that

⁷⁵ Lendon 2005: 44, 55-56.

⁷⁶ Vidal-Naquet 1986: 90.

⁷⁷ Hanson 1995: 329-338.

⁷⁸ Hanson 1995: 331.

⁷⁹ Hanson 1995: 331.

⁸⁰ Hanson 1995: 334.

⁸¹ Hanson 1995: 334.

after the battle, the city's increasing reliance on the navy and on mercenaries undermined the hoplite dominance and the citizen nature of the army established by Cleisthenes.⁸²

There are some notable problems with this argument. The main one is that Greece, and Athens in particular, was not as insular as Hanson portrays. Greek mercenaries, traders, and colonists had spread out throughout the Mediterranean in the previous centuries, and must have brought back news of the larger world. Certainly the survivors of the Battle of Ephesus would have brought back information on what they had seen of Persian warfare.⁸³ Also, as mentioned previously, the Greeks were experienced with fighting non-hoplite battles on the colonial periphery. Thus, while the scale and intent of the Persian invasion was unique, it did not mark the first time that Greeks had fought an enemy not using hoplite tactics, or even the first time that they had fought Persians. That the Greeks chose to fight them at Marathon and Plataea as hoplites and won only reinforced the superiority of hoplite combat. Hanson's argument thus fails because Marathon was not the novel experience he suggests. Also, although the changes Hanson and Vidal-Naquet speak of did happen, they did so very gradually. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that these processes were the result of conscience decisions rather than the outcome of many minor actions. It is also important to remember that whatever weakness in the hoplite ethos that Marathon revealed, the latter still maintained a great deal of cultural currency.

Nevertheless, the Persian Wars had their effect. Athens in particular changed greatly as a result of her naval mastery and the foundation of the Delian League. The fifty years between the Battles of Plataea and Mycale and the opening of the Peloponnesian War

⁸² Vidal-Naquet 1986: 87-93.

⁸³ Hdt. 5.102.

especially were times of prosperity as Athens became an imperial city. Wealth from both the overseas empire and growing trade and industry allowed Athens to further expand its navy and also allowed the state to subsidize part of its military. The navy also permitted poor citizens to serve as rowers. The rich similarly received some state funds to help defray the costs of owning and feeding their horses.⁸⁴

The empire also provided Athens with the funds and impetus to create a standing corps of archers, a novel undertaking at the time. This force contained sixteen hundred foot archers and an unspecified number of mounted archers at the opening of the Peloponnesian War.⁸⁵ Epigraphic and literary evidence indicates that some members of this force were Athenian citizens.⁸⁶ Archers had also been present at Salamis and Plataea but it is unknown whether these were citizens, mercenaries, or some combination of the two.⁸⁷ The full implications of this corps will be discussed in the following chapter, but it is enough to say for now that it was a minor innovation that seems to have been brought about by the Persian Wars and the increasing importance of the Athenian navy.

The mixed archery corps in Athens would remain an anomaly for many years, perhaps even until the end of the fifth century. The Peloponnesian War saw peltasts and *psiloi* being used frequently by both Sparta and Athens, especially in Thrace and Chalcidice. In almost all known accounts, however, these troops were either allies or mercenaries, since the poor of Athens were generally prevented from serving as *psiloi*, as will be discussed in

⁸⁴ Kroll 1977: 97-98.

⁸⁵ Thuc. 2.13.8.

⁸⁶ Thuc. 2.13.8, when combined with [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 24.3, provides clear evidence for citizen involvement. The epigraphic evidence is discussed in the following: Trundle 2010: 149-152; Jordan 1975: 204; Loraux 1986: 34 and n124.

⁸⁷ Trundle 2010: 148.

the following chapter. Thucydides even states clearly in connection with the Battle of Delium in 424 that Athens did not possess and never had possessed citizen *psiloi*.⁸⁸ Many scholars contend, however, that Athenian citizens were routinely used as organized *psiloi* after this date. Advocates of this view generally single out one of three incidents during the Peloponnesian War as evidence. We will now examine the validity of these examples to determine whether Athens developed a citizen force of *psiloi* and/or peltasts during the Peloponnesian War.

In 411 and 410 Spartan forces attacked Athens and were repulsed by mixed troops from the city. On both occasions, the historians mention *psiloi*, who in 410 are credited with killing several of the Spartan rearguard as they retreated.⁸⁹ Many modern scholars have thus concluded that Athens had developed a citizen force of light infantry between 424 and 411.⁹⁰ But these scholars failed to make the crucial distinction between troops present at a battle, as opposed to those organized to fight in a coherent unit as part of an overall force. Xenophon and Thucydides attest the presence of *psiloi* at Athens in 411 and 410 and their testimony should be accepted as proof of these soldiers' presence. These troops, however, were volunteers who rushed out to defend their city with whatever weapons were at hand, as was common in battles in the ancient world.⁹¹ A similar explanation can be proffered for those troops at Delium who had left before the battle. Another possibility is that the *psiloi* in 410 may not have been citizens at all, but part of the "others" whom Thucydides mentions.⁹²

⁸⁸ Thuc. 4.94. What this statement means for the archery corps will be discussed in the following chapter.

⁸⁹ 411: Thuc. 8.72. 410: Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.33-34.

⁹⁰ Trundle 2004: 47 (see, however, his self-contradictory statement at p.51); Hanson 2005: 91; Best 1969: 36.

⁹¹ van Wees 2004: 62.

⁹² Best 1969: 36.

Although such a conclusion may seem to assume too much based on a single word, there may be a similar instance later in the war.

The next incident often cited is the overthrow of the Thirty Tyrants in 403 by democratic forces. During the pivotal battle at Munychia and the later standoff, peltasts and other missile troops played an important role.⁹³ Once again, however, it is important to consider the light infantry more carefully before assuming their presence indicates that Athenian citizens routinely served as *psiloi*. Although some *psiloi* present were Athenian citizens, these were refugees forced out of Athens and had probably also had lost their hoplite weapons.⁹⁴ Many of them also were likely too poor to have belonged to the hoplite class. Both groups would have been forced to use whatever weapons they could find or make, thus precluding hoplite arms at least in the beginning. This state of affairs is confirmed by Xenophon, who recorded that after Munychia the democrats made light shields and took weapons from the dead soldiers of the oligarchs.⁹⁵ Not all these *psiloi* and peltasts were Athenians, however, and there may have been a strong Thracian contingent from Piraeus that joined Thrasybulus and his men.⁹⁶ Xenophon called those making shields “men of all sorts” (*παντοδαποί*) and noted that the foreigners among them were promised privileges if they were victorious.⁹⁷ A monument celebrating those who helped restore democracy may indicate that some of these participants were Thracian metics, induced to fight by such

⁹³ Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.12-19.

⁹⁴ Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.1.

⁹⁵ Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.15, 19; Middleton 1982: 299.

⁹⁶ Middleton 1982: 299.

⁹⁷ Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.15; Middleton 1982: 303.

promises.⁹⁸ Thus the Athenians who fought as peltasts to restore the democracy were motivated by necessity for lack of any other equipment. The Thracian component of the force would have provided expertise in the ways of *psiloi* combat and likely also helped to make the necessary weapons.⁹⁹

A further incident during the war merits examination. In the war's final years the Athenian general Thrasyllus led a naval force, including five thousand Athenian sailors doubling as peltasts, to Samos to reinforce a contingent under Alcibiades.¹⁰⁰ These peltasts, while at Pygela in Asia Minor, rescued a company of *psiloi* under attack by a force from Miletus.¹⁰¹ When preparing for battle against Ephesus and its allies, however, Thrasyllus separated his hoplites from the peltasts and other light troops and only took the former.¹⁰² His hoplites were defeated in the ensuing battle and his other troops were subsequently hunted down and defeated as well.¹⁰³

The sailors equipped as peltasts were likely *thetes*, since they often served as rowers.¹⁰⁴ Before deducing standard procedures from this incident, one should note how these citizen peltasts were used subsequently. Although beneficial in rescuing the *psiloi* from the Milesian attack, they were not deployed in any useful manner during the actual battle with the Ephesians and their allies.¹⁰⁵ Thus the troops in question were probably an

⁹⁸ Middleton 1982: 299-300, 303.

⁹⁹ Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.13; Middleton 1982: 299.

¹⁰⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.1.

¹⁰¹ Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.2-3.

¹⁰² Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.7.

¹⁰³ Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.9.

¹⁰⁴ Xenophon provides no further information on the *psiloi* that were rescued.

¹⁰⁵ Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.7-10.

improvisation meant to exploit men who could not otherwise contribute to a land battle.¹⁰⁶ It is also possible that this was a failed experiment in arming the lower classes.¹⁰⁷ Xenophon never speaks again of Thrasyllus' Athenian peltasts and indeed Alcibiades, for whom Thrasyllus' troops were destined, later obtained Thracian troops, likely peltasts, for his operations in the Hellespont.¹⁰⁸ Thus Thrasyllus' arming of sailors as peltasts was both atypical and unsuccessful.

Athenian use of *psiloi* and peltasts in the Peloponnesian War, remarkable in its frequency, in many ways conforms to the previous pattern of agonal warfare. Except for the Sphacteria campaign (425), utilization of organized *psiloi* and peltasts mostly occurred outside of the Greek mainland in the same areas where conflicts between Greeks and barbarians were frequent and hoplite tactics had never fully replaced other methods of war. Most of these light troops were either allies or mercenaries recruited in or near the theaters of war in which they were to be used. Further, in the case of both the invasions of Attica and the Battle of Munychia, necessity drove Athenian citizens to serve as *psiloi*. Thrasyllus' peltasts represented a more calculated use of poor Athenian citizens as light infantry, but (as argued) the whole experiment, if that is indeed what it was, apparently failed.

Like the Persian Wars, however, the Peloponnesian War did change the way in which Athens fought. During the war, Athens began to pay its soldiers and sailors a set rate per day for their services. The payment of wages was a response to the war's lengthy campaigns far from Athens in contrast to the short, sharp battles of hoplite warfare. Pay and lengthy

¹⁰⁶ Best 1969: 40-41.

¹⁰⁷ Anderson 1970: 114-5.

¹⁰⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.11, 1.3.10; Diod. Sic. 13.66.4; Plut. *Alc.* 30; Best 1969: 38-40.

campaigns also produced an increasing *de facto* professionalism among Athenian hoplites, although many in Athens probably would not have seen this as a positive development. Another noticeable consequence was the rising prominence of the city's poor, who continued to serve as rowers. Their efforts became even more important as Athens became more dependent on the sea both to supply the city and to fight the Spartans. Their contributions were increasingly noted and their achievements celebrated, if sometimes begrudgingly, by the elite of the city.

The increasing use of light infantry in the Peloponnesian indicates a growing awareness of their utility in combat. This is shown by the Corinthian War (395-387), during which both sides immediately began to employ light infantry. This war also redefined their use in a radical way: both sides deployed large, standing forces of mercenaries on the Greek mainland itself, not just the fringes. Agesilaus returned from his Asian campaigns in 394 with many Asian and Thracian mercenary *psiloi*, who remained with him until after the Battle of Coronea that same year.¹⁰⁹ Athens responded with the more permanent and more famous mercenary peltast corps of Iphicrates, which first saw action in Greece in 392.¹¹⁰ Despite other major hoplite battles during that war, light-armed troops did much of the actual fighting.¹¹¹

Yet even at this point, most *psiloi* and peltasts were still mercenaries. The famous "Athenian peltasts" of Iphicrates, for example, were merely peltasts employed by Athens, and not Athenian citizens. Parke argues that Conon originally raised this force in the

¹⁰⁹ Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.2-5; 4.1.3, 15-23. Parke 1981 [1933]: 44; Best 1969: 81-85; Anderson 1970: 120-1.

¹¹⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.9-13; Dem. 4.24; Andoc. 3.18; Diod. Sic. 14.86.3.

¹¹¹ Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.14; Parke 1981 [1933]: 47-50.

Hellespont and brought them to the Peloponnese perhaps as early as 393, whereupon Iphicrates took command to spare Conon the shame from leading such an unimportant force.¹¹² The exact ethnicity of these peltasts is still unknown and some may have been Hellespontine Greeks who had either adopted the native form of warfare or had never taken up hoplite arms.¹¹³ In either case, they were certainly not Athenians, who referred to them as foreigners and mercenaries.¹¹⁴

During the fourth century, perhaps as a result of the Corinthian War, Athens finally gave up on some of its old anti-professionalism. Aristotle, writing sometime before 322, described a program for training Athenian youth for war in the *Constitution of the Athenians*.¹¹⁵ Under this program, boys at the age of eighteen were placed under the instruction of teachers selected by the tribes and were taught to use not only hoplite arms, but also bows, javelins, and catapults.¹¹⁶ After a year of training, they were presented with a hoplite shield and spear and spent the next two years patrolling the border of Athens.¹¹⁷ Subsequently these ephebes were admitted as full citizens and were liable for regular military service until the age of fifty-eight.¹¹⁸

As straightforward as the program sounds, scholars have argued for the better part of a century over various specifics that Aristotle fails to mention in his summary. One major disagreement is the date of the program. All that can be certain is that the program described

¹¹² Parke 1981 [1933]: 50-51.

¹¹³ Anderson 1970: 121.

¹¹⁴ Dem. 4.24; Ar. *Plut.* 173; Trundle 2004: 49.

¹¹⁵ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.2-5.

¹¹⁶ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.2-3.

¹¹⁷ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.4-5.

¹¹⁸ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.5.

by Aristotle existed by the 320s. Some have postulated that the program began even before Marathon, others after the Peloponnesian War, and yet others after the battle of Chaeronea in 338.¹¹⁹ The first and last dates seem unlikely, although the frequently suggested possibility of reform after 338 is entirely plausible. Most who place the ephebic program in the fifth century rely on equating the ephebes with the mysterious *peripoloi*, who seem to have been a force tasked with manning the border forts of Attica.¹²⁰ Although this duty was also undertaken by the ephebes for two years as part of training, this does not mean that both groups were the same. Indeed there is evidence for mercenaries in the *peripoloi* as early as 411 and at least as late as the end of the third century.¹²¹ Perhaps the most convincing argument is that the *peripoloi* were a pre-existing mercenary force to which the young ephebes were sent to live and train so that they could experience the life of a professional soldier for a time.¹²² At any rate, the existence of the *peripoloi* in the fifth century should not be taken as proof of the existence of ephebes at the same time.

Eliminating a fifth-century origin still leaves the question of when the ephebic training program appeared. Those scholars who believe in a late date do so based upon the evidence of inscriptions which do not predate 334/5.¹²³ While these inscriptions do provide a *terminus ante quem* for the foundation of the ephebic program, they do not preclude the earlier existence of some form of military training.¹²⁴ A speech by Aeschines may provide

¹¹⁹ Before Marathon: Flacelière 1965: 249. After Peloponnesian War: Christ 2001: 416. 335: Wheeler 2007a: xl

¹²⁰ Hanson 1995: 350 n34.

¹²¹ Griffith 1935: 88.

¹²² Griffith 1935: 88; Reinmuth 1952: 39.

¹²³ Siewert 1977: 102.

¹²⁴ Kent 1941: 348; Rhodes 1981: 507-8; Vidal-Naquet 1986: 97; Hansen 1991: 109; Raaflaub 1996: 157; Christ 2001: 416; *contra* Wheeler 2007a: xl.

evidence of an earlier foundation. Defending himself in court, he noted that he became a “*peripolos* of this countryside” (περίπολος τῆς χώρας ταύτης) as soon as he left boyhood, which scholars date c. 370.¹²⁵ He also mentions having served this time in the company of mercenaries, which would make sense if, as noted above, the ephebes were sent to the *peripoloi* for seasoning.¹²⁶ Thus Aeschines apparently served in a program that, if not identical to that described by Aristotle, could be an early model. Even if the training described by Aristotle was a later addition, it still seems that Aeschines’ program was already military in nature. The only reason to send young men to live with mercenaries was to learn about war.

Even more importantly, one could also assume (despite the lack of direct evidence) that these ephebes were taught the weapons and tactics of light infantry by these mercenaries. As argued above, the *peripoloi* manned the Attic border forts. Hoplite troops would have been ill suited for this task for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the range limitations of their spears. That the *peripoli* were mercenaries also lends credence to the idea that these men were light-armed soldiers, since Athens was loathe to hire mercenary hoplites and only sent citizens out for specific campaigns and not garrison duty. If the military training described in Aristotle was a later reform, as many scholars have suggested, it would have merely formalized what was already being taught to the youth and given the Athenians more direct control of their instruction.

Whether or not the ephebic training program was open to all citizens or just those of hoplite status will be discussed in the next chapter. That the program existed at all shows the

¹²⁵ Aeschines 2.167; Vidal-Naquet 1986: 97.

¹²⁶ Aeschines 2.168; Vidal-Naquet 1986: 97.

Athenian's realization that its own citizen soldiers needed to be trained in the "new" ways of light-infantry combat if they were to be effective on the battlefield. This training thus marks the point where it can be said with certainty that Athenian citizens were given the necessary tools to act as effective *psiloi*. How this change came about and what effect it actually had on the city and on the *thetes* will be discussed in the conclusion.

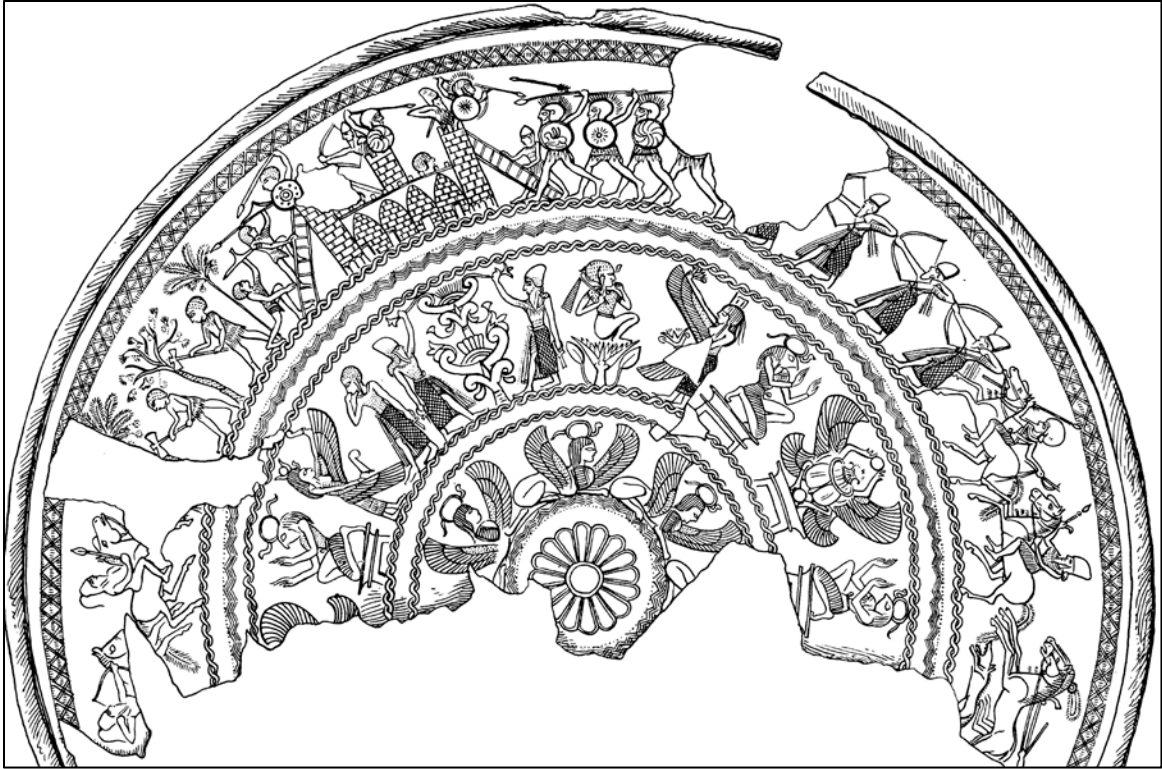


Figure 4: Drawing of the Amathus bowl. Myres 1933: 25, plate 1.



Figure 5: Detail of Chigi vase showing hoplites. Proto-Corinthian *olpe* (pitcher), c. 650-640.

CHAPTER 3: *Thetes as Psiloi*

Before one can talk about the military role of the poor in Athens, it is necessary first to understand who the poor were and to reconstruct, as much as possible, what their life was like. The primary difficulty in doing so is that the poor of Athens left little evidence about themselves. Most of what we know about them comes from the writings of Athenians of higher economic and social status, whose views would have been filtered through their own preconceptions. How much of what these ancient authors say about the poor is biased and how much is true has become an issue of almost endless debate among modern scholars. What follows below is an attempt at a sketch based upon the limited evidence and taking into account the nature of that information.

The Greek elite, and perhaps others as well, thought of the poor as being divided into two groups. The first group consisted of the *penates* (πένητες), a term which has traditionally been translated as “poor.”¹²⁷ In recent years, however, many scholars, most notably Finley, have argued that a better translation would be “those who have to work for a living.”¹²⁸ This definition would greatly expand the scope of the *penates* to include the majority in ancient Athens, including farmers, craftsmen, and any others who could not rely solely on the labor of others for their maintenance.¹²⁹ Aristophanes described these men and women as thrifty, hardworking, and possessing the necessities of life, if not much else.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ See *Intermediate LSJ*, s.v. “πένης.”

¹²⁸ Finley 1999: 40-41. For similar definitions, see. De Ste. Croix 1981: 115 and Strauss 1987: 4. See also Ar. *Pax* 632-647 and [Arist.] *Oec.* 1347a for examples where *penates* is provided in some context.

¹²⁹ Finley 1999: 41.

¹³⁰ Ar. *Pax* 550.

The *penates* were often contrasted with those who did not have to expend their own energy in earning their income, the *plousioi* (οἱ πλούσιοι), or “wealthy.”¹³¹ These “idle rich” would have been a small percentage of the population, but it was they who shaped the discourse about wealth and poverty in their city, both in their own day and today.¹³²

Below the *penates* in both wealth and social standing were the *ptochoi* (πτωχοί) or “beggars.”¹³³ These were the truly destitute Athenians, whom Aristophanes described as being always without anything.¹³⁴ In more practical terms, the *ptochoi* owned little to no land and were unable to ply a trade.¹³⁵ Instead, they hired themselves out as day laborers, the most contemptible kind of work for a citizen, as it made them dependent on others and thus not truly free.¹³⁶ Indeed, the rest of society generally looked down on the *ptochoi* with a contempt that the *penates* generally avoided. Demosthenes compared a *ptochos* to a servant and described such men as being scum and nobodies.¹³⁷ A man thought to be a *ptochos* in Aristophanes’ *Archonians* is chastised for daring to speak to the chorus and to other characters.¹³⁸ Unlike modern beggars, these *ptochoi* most likely would not have asked for money but rather for work. Charity in ancient Greece was aimed at the community and not the individual, and the *ptochoi* aroused little pity in their fellow Athenians.¹³⁹ An estimate of the number of *ptochoi* within the Athenian population has not been made and such an effort is not really possible.

¹³¹ *Intermediate LSJ*, s.v. “πλούσιος;” Finley 1999: 41; De Ste. Croix 1981: 115.

¹³² De Ste. Croix 1981: 115.

¹³³ *Intermediate LSJ*, s.v. “πτωχός;”

¹³⁴ Ar. *Plut.* 550; Finley 1999: 41.

¹³⁵ Burford 1993: 1981.

¹³⁶ Flaccière 1965: 117.

¹³⁷ Dem. 18.131; 21.185.

¹³⁸ Ar. *Ach.* 557-59, 593.

¹³⁹ Finley 1999: 39.

The above descriptions, while they say much about the attitude of wealthy Athenians toward the poor of their city, do not provide much information about the poor themselves. Thus most scholars discussing the Athenian poor rely on Solon's establishment of classes in the early sixth century. This system ranked the citizens of Athens by income and gave each of the four groups varying rights and privileges. The *thetes* (θητες, sing. θής) occupied the lowest tier and were citizens who produced less than a combined total of two hundred measures of oil, wine, and/or grain a year.¹⁴⁰ The class above them, the *zeugitai* (οἱ ζευγῖται “the yoked men”), have traditionally been considered the “middle class.” The two remaining classes, the *pentekosiomedimnoi* (“five-hundred-bushel men”) and the *hippeis*, (“horsemen, knights”) were the wealthiest Athenians. The relative percentage of *thetes* is, like all issues of Greek demography, a hotly debated one. It is generally agreed, however, that the *thetes* composed between half and two-thirds of the Athenian citizen body.¹⁴¹ Estimates of the number of *thetes* based on figures in Thucydides vary from 21,000-30,000 on the eve of the Peloponnesian War.¹⁴²

Accurate assessment of the *thetes* requires understanding their relationship to the land, the most important source of wealth and security in ancient Greece. The ambiguous ancient evidence has allowed differing conclusions. Some scholars argue that *thetes* did not own land and served as hired laborers (the original, non-legal meaning of *thes*) or in small-scale manufacturing and retail jobs in the city, both considered lowly occupations for a

¹⁴⁰ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 7.3-4; Plut. *Sol.* 18.1-2; van Wees 2001: 46 and n4.

¹⁴¹ Hanson 1995: 208; Hunt 2007: 138.

¹⁴² Strauss (1987: 73) gives the lower number and Rawlings (2007: 115) the larger.

citizen.¹⁴³ Others have argued more convincingly that at least some *thetes* did indeed own farms, but that these were too small or poor to provide enough surplus to qualify as a *zeugites*.¹⁴⁴ The line between a poor *zeugites* and a relatively wealthy *thes* would have been thin at the best of times according to the classification system and almost unnoticeable in practical terms the rest.¹⁴⁵ It has even been argued that by working his smaller holdings more intensely with human labor, a thetic farmer could match the yields of a larger hoplite farm that employed animal labor.¹⁴⁶ The farmer would have used his own family as labor, since slaves would have normally exceeded the means of a *thes*, although there could have been exceptions.¹⁴⁷

Combining the legal definition of *thetes* with the more practical, if broad, ideas of the *penates* and the *ptochoi* provides a better understanding of what it meant to be a poor citizen in Athens. Not all *penates* would have been *thetes*, since all but the wealthiest *zeugitai* would have worked beside their slaves and other laborers.¹⁴⁸ Almost certainly, however, all *thetes* were either *penates* or *ptochoi*. The life of a *thes* would have thus revolved around working either for himself or someone else to supply his needs and those of his family. Those with land would have worked it with the aid of their families, while those without would hire themselves out as day laborers or practice a trade. Even a *thes* with land would

¹⁴³ Ehrenberg 1962: 321, 115. Hanson (1995: 129) states *thetes* rarely if ever farmed.

¹⁴⁴ Burford 1993: 67; de Ste. Croix 1981: 281.

¹⁴⁵ Burford 1993: 80-1, Xen. *Mem.* 4.2.37.

¹⁴⁶ Burford 1993: 67-68.

¹⁴⁷ Burford 1993: 80; Arist. *Pol.* 6.1323a 5-6.

¹⁴⁸ Strauss 1987: 4; Hanson 1995; *contra* Garland 2009: 232-3; de Ste Croix 1981: 115, 281; Flacelière 1965: 128.

likely hire out himself and perhaps his family as well during slower times in order to make extra money.

Thetes could acquire some money from the Athenian state in return for civic duties, although such income would have been neither steady nor plentiful. Pay for jurors was introduced by Pericles in the late 460s and ranged from one to three obols a day until 322.¹⁴⁹ Six thousand jurors were selected every year by lot from the whole citizen population of the city, but it is generally accepted that the poor took the most advantage of the opportunity.¹⁵⁰ Members of the *ekklesia* were similarly offered three obols a day starting in the 390s.¹⁵¹ Although these payments would have helped the poor, such pay was only given when the courts or the *ekklesia* was in session and could not be a steady source of income.¹⁵² Three obols per day compared unfavorably with the pay of soldiers during the first half of the Peloponnesian War and workers on the Erechtheion in 409, both of whom received a drachma per day—twice as much.¹⁵³

Under such circumstances, employment as a rower in the large Athenian navy would have likely appealed to many *thetes*. Athens began paying rowers one drachma a day just before the Peloponnesian War and the rate dropped to three obols by 411.¹⁵⁴ Despite the strenuous labor and extended absence from Athens, the chance to make twice as much (at least in the beginning) as could be earned by staying home was attractive besides the pride in

¹⁴⁹ Loomis 1998: 9-12, 16-17.

¹⁵⁰ Strauss 1987: 43-44, 51-52; Ehrenberg 1962: 161.

¹⁵¹ Loomis 1998: 20-22.

¹⁵² Loomis 1998: 10.

¹⁵³ Loomis 1998: 39-44, 120, 234-6; Rhodes 1981: 691.

¹⁵⁴ Loomis: 39-44. There is no concrete evidence for state pay of rowers before this date. See Loomis 1998: 37-38.

serving the city. Rower pay, almost always equal to that of hoplites, would have also made the *thetes* feel more valued.¹⁵⁵

However the *thetes* made their living, the key point is that it required a considerable investment in time. Jury duty and service in the *ekklesia* required no physical labor, but one had to be selected for jury duty and neither institution convened on a daily basis. Rowers were in much higher demand, but ships did not sail in the winter, thus leaving a whole season in which the *thetes* had to find other work. Rates for seasonal farm labor (or indeed, for most private transactions) have not survived but they were probably low, considering the prominence of slave labor.

The lives of the Athenian *thetes* reveal a portrait of hard but rewarding work. The land-owning *penates* among the *thetes* spent the majority of their time working their farms alongside their families to produce what they needed. The landless worked as seasonal laborers on farms or plied trades in the urban center. Others, including perhaps the *ptochoi*, took whatever jobs were available for the day in the city or worked for the city itself as jurymen, rowers, and later, as members of the *ekklesia*.

Now that we have examined the lifestyle of the *thetes*, it is time to see how it affected their ability to provide military service to the state. It is necessary first, however, to both briefly outline and defend the traditional class-based model of the Athenian military. According to this model, Solon's class system tied military service to individual wealth. The two richest classes, the *pentakosiomedimnoi* and the *hippeis*, provided the cavalry and performed expensive liturgies such as outfitting and commanding ships. The *zeugitai*

¹⁵⁵ This topic will be more fully discussed in Chapter Five.

“middle-class” served as hoplites, along with any of the two higher classes who chose to do so, since they could afford to purchase the required panoply. Finally, the *thetes* served as light-armed troops and rowed ships in the navy. This model provides a place for all citizens in Athens to serve their city according to their means.

In recent years, however, this model has come under attack. Two charges in particular merit consideration. First, Rosivach contends that the whole model is a modern invention began by the German historian August Böckh and that the Solonic property classes were entirely agricultural with no relevance to military service.¹⁵⁶ The main weakness of this argument, however, is the origin of the names of the classes. Although the highest and lowest classes may reflect an agricultural origin, the *hippies* and the *zeugitai* do not. Whitehead has convincingly refuted the traditional view that the term *zeugitai* denoted those wealthy enough to own yokes of oxen to plow their land. Instead, he suggests that *zeugitai* referred to those (figuratively) yoked together as hoplites in the phalanx.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, as will be shown below, it is possible that most *zeugitai* did not even own oxen and instead used intensive human labor. Similarly, *hippies* must surely signify those who could afford the high cost of owning and maintaining horses.

Other scholars similarly argue that hoplite service actually cut across the Solonic classes and that *thetes* often served as hoplites, either voluntarily or by conscription. Van Wees, for instance, contends that both *zeugitai* and *thetes* served as hoplites, the former conscripted mostly for service on long campaigns far from Athens and the former

¹⁵⁶ Rosivach 2002.

¹⁵⁷ Whitehead 1981: 282, 285-6.

volunteering for shorter ones closer to home.¹⁵⁸ By using estimations of crop yields in ancient Attica and of the buying power of those yields, van Wees concludes that a minimum farm size of twenty-one acres would have been required to produce enough surplus to outfit a hoplite and maintain him on campaign and that Attica lacked sufficient arable land to support a *zeugitai* population equal to the number of hoplites given in Thucydides.¹⁵⁹ Other scholars contend, however, that van Wees' estimates are too high. Burford calculates that fourteen acres would be enough for a hoplite farm and Hanson argues that with sufficient intensive farming of varying crops and the use of slave labor, hoplite farms could be as small as five to ten acres.¹⁶⁰ Obviously more of these smaller hoplite farms could exist on the same amount of land, thus allowing for a much larger *zeugitai* population than van Wees allows. Also, such a farm, at least by modern estimates, would be too small for oxen to be needed for plowing purposes.¹⁶¹ If so, the argument gains support that the title of the third property class denotes not "those who yoke," but rather those "who are yoked together," that is, in a phalanx.¹⁶²

Similarly, Gabrielsen argues that *thetes* could not only serve as hoplites but were also liable to conscription both in the army and the navy.¹⁶³ Although it is generally accepted that most Athenians hoplites were indeed conscripted, conscription of *thetes* remains heavily

¹⁵⁸ van Wees 2001 is the most succinct argument of this position, repeated at van Wees 2004: 47-60 and van Wees 2007: 272-281.

¹⁵⁹ van Wees 2001: 48-54.

¹⁶⁰ Burford 1993: 67-68; Hanson 1989: 29. For the agricultural processes required to make a farm that productive, see Hanson 1995: 127-180.

¹⁶¹ Burford (1993: 67) suggests that thirteen acres is the minimum that would be economically feasible to plow with oxen.

¹⁶² Whitehead 1981: 285-6.

¹⁶³ Gabrielsen 2002a: 207, 2002b: 87.

debated.¹⁶⁴ In Athens, the generals (aided by other officials) posted lists (καταλόγοι) of draftees, traditionally seen as lists of hoplites, in the agora.¹⁶⁵ The thin case for thetic conscription is directly contradicted in the sources. Both Thucydides and Harpocration state explicitly that *thetes* did not fight as hoplites and were excluded from the conscription lists.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, most Athenian rowers were volunteers; conscription of rowers was very rare before the fourth century and even then generally produced poor results.¹⁶⁷

The inability of the *thetes* to afford hoplite weapons has long been one of the arguments advanced by those upholding the traditional view and it too has come under attack. Its opponents usually argue that weapons were cheaper than previously believed, that hoplites only needed the spear and shield, that the state or individuals provided weapons, or some combination of these arguments. Minimal evidence (often not very explicit) on the costs of armor and arms precludes any scholarly consensus. The most common estimates, however, usually range from 100 to somewhere between 150-200 drachmas.¹⁶⁸ A surviving inscription from Thasos in the mid-fourth century mentions that full panoplies worth at least three hundred drachmas were to be given to war orphans, although many scholars consider this sum to be unusually high.¹⁶⁹ With one drachma per diem as the common wage in the late fifth century, even a one hundred drachma panoply would be a considerable investment for a *thes*.

¹⁶⁴ Conscription of hoplites: Hansen 1991: 45; Christ 2006: 49, Raaflaub 1996: 155; Andrewes 1981.

¹⁶⁵ Christ 2001: 400; Raaflaub 1996: 156. The existence of a central catalogue of potential draftees is irrelevant to this discussion.

¹⁶⁶ Thuc. 6.43.1; Harpocration s.v. “ἠῆτες καὶ θητικόν;” Hansen 1991: 45.

¹⁶⁷ Strauss (1996: 317) and esp. de Ste. Croix (1981: 207 n8) collect the evidence.

¹⁶⁸ Connor (2004: 18 n30) gives 75-100 drachmas as a conservative figure; Hanson (1995: 68; *cf.* 245) gives both 150-200 drachmas and 100 drachmas.

¹⁶⁹ Jarva 1995: 150; Pritchett 1979: 259 n79.

Those who believe that *thetes* served as hoplites, such as van Wees, argue that service required only a shield and spear at a cost of only thirty drachmas.¹⁷⁰ This figure, however, comes from Jarva, who dates the document to the Archaic period (*i.e.*, before 480) and concedes speculation that it included a helmet, spear, and shield.¹⁷¹ Certainly the shield and spear defined the hoplite and these men also elected over time to discard certain pieces of armor, but it is doubtful that any hoplite ever entered battle without some kind of bodily protection.¹⁷² In any event, no matter what pieces he chose to wear, the hoplite felt considerable pressure to spend as much as possible, since his arms and armor served as a status symbol even within the hoplite ranks.¹⁷³ As for others supplying armor to *thetes* so they could fight as hoplites, the evidence is thin as well. The two recorded instances of men supplying money for provisions and/or weapons to the poorer of their deme both come from Lysias and both speakers are trying to establish their own credentials as good citizens.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, both offers come after the soldiers have already been mustered by deme and reported for service without their weapons. Moreover, both incidents postdate the overthrow of the Thirty Tyrants, who had previously confiscated weapons, thus leaving some *zeugitai* without their arms. Finally, although certain individuals donated supplies of shields at Athens in the fourth century, the surviving inventories indicate that surprisingly few of them were ever used.¹⁷⁵ Out of 956 shields inventoried in 362/1, for instance, all were accounted

¹⁷⁰ van Wees 2001: 59-60; van Wees 2004: 62.

¹⁷¹ Jarva 1995: 148.

¹⁷² Shield and spear as defining weapons: Hanson 2001: 65, 83. Dropping of armor: Hanson 1991: 57-58.

¹⁷³ Pritchett 1979: 242; Wheeler 1991: 140-1.

¹⁷⁴ Lys. 16.4, 31.15; Ehrenberg 1962: 215.

¹⁷⁵ Pritchett 1979: 258-9.

for in 350, even after the introduction of the ephebe program.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Pasion donated 1000 shields to the city (presumably) during the Corinthian War and all but 222 are accounted for in 369/8.¹⁷⁷

A *thes*'s lack of a slave would have also hindered him from serving as a hoplite. In addition to their economic contributions, slaves also played an important part in war by carrying the heavy arms and armor of a hoplite so that the latter would be in fighting shape when he reached the battlefield. A *thes* would have had to either carry his own armor or worn it to the battlefield. Either alternative would have left him lagging behind the rest of the phalanx and in no condition to fight when he did arrive.¹⁷⁸

We cannot, however, say that *thetes* never served as hoplites. Perhaps some did on occasion from either personal initiative or necessity. Conceivably, given the thin line between the *thetes* and the *zeugitai* as defined by law, a relatively well-to-do *thes* could have saved sufficient money to buy the weapons he needed after a few years if he so desired, although not enough to afford both a panoply and a slave at the same time.¹⁷⁹ Indeed a *zeugites* on the low end of the scale, like Socrates' friend Eutheros, might find himself reduced to a *thes* after a bad harvest or the loss of overseas land.¹⁸⁰ In such a case, the former *zeugites* would still have possessed his panoply despite his reduced legal status.

Again, there is no consensus on what would happen if a *thes* did show up for the hoplite muster. Some have argued that he would be legally barred from marching, but this

¹⁷⁶ *IG*² 120.33-34, 1440.16-47; Pritchett 1979: 258-9.

¹⁷⁷ *IG*² 1424a.128-9, 139-140; Dem. 45.85; Pritchett 1979: 258-9.

¹⁷⁸ Hanson 1995: 249.

¹⁷⁹ van Wees 2001: 48; Hanson 1995: 296-9.

¹⁸⁰ Xen. *Mem.* 2.8.1-5; Strauss 1987: 56. This process could of course work the other way as well: Gabrielsen 2002a: 212.

seems highly unlikely.¹⁸¹ Fighting in defense of one's city was a moral obligation for every citizen, and it is unlikely that one class would actively try to prevent another from exercising this imperative with legal constraints.¹⁸² Social constraints, however, could have been a strong factor. Hanson has convincingly argued that the hoplites themselves (that is, those of *zeugitai* status) would have used social pressure to "discourage" *thetes* from joining their ranks, although not to the point of actually stopping a determined *thes* from doing so.¹⁸³ Even though the hoplite class was not as monolithic as Hanson thinks, there is merit to his suggestion, particularly given the high status that hoplite warfare held among the Greeks. Such a method of self-sorting among the hoplites would also allow greater flexibility in cases such as a former hoplite who fell below the mark for a short time or when manpower mattered more than social standing. The practical barriers between *thetes* and hoplite service, however, render it unlikely that such occasions arose often or that *thetes* were ever a common part of hoplite armies until the fourth century.

If the *thetes* were, for all practical purposes, barred from hoplite service but were obligated, nonetheless, to defend their city in times of crisis, what could they do? The traditional view offers two possibilities: serving as light-armed troops or in the fleet. *Thetes* as rowers in the Athenian fleet (already mentioned) will be revisited in greater detail later. Most scholars who claim that *thetes* served as light-armed soldiers fail to consider a number of important factors that would have kept them from making truly effective *psiloi*. The *thetes* served as *psiloi* on a numerous occasions, but they did so by just grabbing whatever weapons

¹⁸¹ See, e.g., Bertossa 2003: 362-3.

¹⁸² Gabrielsen 2002b: 87; Hunt 1998: 122.

¹⁸³ Hanson 1995: 296.

they had on hand and rushing out to battle. Undisciplined, untrained, unorganized, without leadership, and unable to truly affect the outcome of a battle, these *thetes* were more of a mob than an effective body of soldiers until the fourth century.

One factor hampering the *thetes* of Athens from being useful *psiloi* is their lack of training with the weapons of those soldiers, namely the bow, sling, and javelin. It is usually accepted by scholars that these weapons would have required significant training as well as some natural skill to be effective in combat.¹⁸⁴ With the exception of the archer corps, such training would have been generally unavailable to the *thetes* of Athens, and, even if it were, it would have required a commitment of time that most would surely have chosen to use earning a living.

The bow, the most commonly mentioned missile weapon, has the most complicated history. Athens had an archery corps at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War that included at least some citizens and was funded by the city by income from its empire. This corps continued to exist into the fourth century but, judging by the inscriptions, the number of citizens it contained declined during that time.¹⁸⁵

Training of these archers is not mentioned but, as a standing force supported by state funds, it is hard to imagine what purpose such payments would serve if not to free up the men so they would be able to practice with the weapon.¹⁸⁶ Vase-paintings and other sources suggest that most citizen archers used the simple (sometimes called European) bow, as

¹⁸⁴ Hanson 1998: 88 and 1995: 248-9; Hunt 2007: 135; Spence 1990: 95; Lendon 2005: 96; Ducrey 1986: 120, among others; *contra* Jameson 1980: 219; Strauss 1996: 317.

¹⁸⁵ Trundle 2010: 152.

¹⁸⁶ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 24.3; Aeschines 2.174; Andoc. 3.7. The latter two refer to a corps of 1,200 archers at an earlier date—most likely the same corps later reinforced.

opposed to the composite bow of Cretan and Scythian mercenaries. This bow was simpler to make and to use, if less powerful, than the composite bow, which could only be effectively used by those raised with it.¹⁸⁷ The choice of the simple bow might also indicate that men entered the program at a relatively late stage in life, since long familiarity was not necessary for them to use it effectively. The distinctive character of the archers is also indicated by their organization under their own officers, the *toxarchoi*.¹⁸⁸

Such a force was a novelty in Greece, since the usual practice was to hire mercenaries from regions where archery was an integral part of the culture.¹⁸⁹ Athens' unique position fifty years after the Persian Wars afforded the opportunity to establish such a force: the Athenian Empire provided the funds for the archers and the large Athenian navy gave them a place to serve. Most ships regularly carried at least four archers since they were useful for killing enemy sailors and sailors on the decks and in the water.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, Trundle has convincingly argued that the formation of the citizen archery corps is directly tied to the rise of the Athenian navy.¹⁹¹

Thucydides, however, complicates a simplistic view of the Athenian archery corps. Pericles mentions the archers in a speech listing Athenian assets at the beginning of the war, but later, in reference to the battle of Delium, Thucydides asserts that Athens did not have and had never had a trained force of citizen *psiloi*.¹⁹² Thucydides obviously knew about the archer corps mentioned in Pericles' speech, so why would he apparently deny its existence,

¹⁸⁷ Lorimer 1947: 115-7

¹⁸⁸ Snodgrass 1999: 98; Trundle 2010: 150.

¹⁸⁹ Trundle 2010: 149.

¹⁹⁰ Trundle 2010: 148; Hunt 2007: 123.

¹⁹¹ Trundle 2010: 148.

¹⁹² Thuc. 2.13, 4.94.

especially to an audience who would have known better? Many modern scholars argue that ancient historians deliberately neglected light-armed troop but if that were case here, Thucydides would not have mentioned the archers at all.

Can this apparent contradiction be resolved? Neither Thucydides nor any other ancient source explicitly states that citizens belonged to the archery corps. Indeed, the evidence for citizen inclusion in the archery corps is circumstantial, but convincing as a whole. Thus one cannot explain away Thucydides' remark by saying that the corps did not contain citizens. One could perhaps argue instead that the corps was no longer in existence in 424, but the funerary monuments still list citizen archers into the fourth century and that would still not explain why Thucydides would claim it never existed in the first place. A better explanation, perhaps, is that in making the statement Thucydides was referring to citizen *psiloi* who were trained for combat on land or that he did not consider the trained, professional archers to be the same as the untrained *psiloi* in the traditional sense.¹⁹³

If the archery corps was intended primarily to serve in the Athenian navy, a possible solution presents itself. If all three hundred ships mentioned by Pericles had its full complement of four archers (for a total of twelve hundred archers), that would have still left four hundred free who could have been deployed at Delium. It is important to remember, however, that between 431 and 424 plague had twice ravaged Athens. Thucydides does not say how many *thetes* died (and probably did not himself know), but one scholar has estimated that six to seven thousand *thetes* of rowing age died in the epidemics.¹⁹⁴ Since it is

¹⁹³ These archers did seem to enjoy a status slightly above that of the untrained *psiloi*, see below.

¹⁹⁴ Thuc. 3.87; Hanson 2005: 79-81. Diodorus Siculus (12.58.2) states that over 10,000 citizens below hoplite status died.

likely that most of the citizen archers would have come from this same pool of manpower, a dramatic decrease in the number of citizen archers can be inferred. Those remaining would have certainly been placed on ships, especially since Athens was still able to launch 250 triremes as early as the summer of 428.¹⁹⁵ As summer was a time for both sailing and marching, these trained archers would have been away from Athens at the time of the battle, and thus not available.

Such a theory does not totally resolve the issue, of course, but it does provide a reasonable working hypothesis. The naval character of the archery corps also prevents its existence from undermining the overall argument concerning *thetes* as *psiloi*. This hypothesis allows conjecture that at least some *thetes* were being trained professionally by the state and also suggests how limited the innovation of an archery corps really was. The archers were destined primarily for the Athenian navy and paid for by the revenues brought in by the overseas empire the navy secured. Given that most rowers were also *thetes*, their inclusion in the program is not as revolutionary as it might otherwise seem. The program also underscores the point that the only way *thetes* could be made into effective *psiloi* was by state-subsidized training and that Athenian officials were aware of this reality. As the program was not extended to other branches of the *psiloi*, it seems the Athenians were not concerned with light-armed troops outside the navy.

The role of slingers at Athens is less problematic. As the sling was recognized even in Antiquity as a difficult weapon to master, it is highly unlikely that Athens would have attempted to raise a local force proficient in its use. The sling itself was the cheapest weapon

¹⁹⁵ Thuc. 3.17; Hanson 2005: 32.

available to a potential soldier and the ammunition essentially costless, but the level of skill required would have discouraged its use among *thetes*.¹⁹⁶ To effectively hit a target with a sling required the user to be so extensively trained that its use became instinctual, since releasing the stone even two milliseconds too early or too late would cause the projectile to miss the target by a wide margin. Such training usually required instruction from childhood— something not available to the average Athenian.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, even when military training became mandatory in Athens, the use of the sling was not taught.¹⁹⁸ It would have perhaps been possible to teach inexperienced and otherwise untrained slingers how to fire a mass volley at the beginning of a battle, but such an attack, likely aimed at other light infantry in loose formation, would hardly have been effective.¹⁹⁹

The javelin, generally considered the easiest of the *psiloi* weapons to use effectively, required the least training.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, javelin throwing, an accepted part of Greek athletics, was taught to Athenian youth as part of their education. Thus it should not have been difficult for Athens to field a force of proficient javelin throwers. Such a force did not exist, however, because all education in the city was private and carried out in stages. Gymnastics was one of the last subjects taught and thus only the children of wealthier Athenians likely stayed in school long enough to learn to throw a javelin.²⁰¹ These youth were far more likely to become hoplites than *psiloi* and so their training was of little use to them in combat. *Thetes*, on the other hand, seem to have sent only their children to teachers

¹⁹⁶ Cost: Pritchett 1991: 53.

¹⁹⁷ Dohrenwend 2002: 41, 44.

¹⁹⁸ Ducrey 1986: 67.

¹⁹⁹ Mass volleys: Dohrenwend 2002: 44.

²⁰⁰ Lendon 2005: 96; Lorimer 1947: 127; Hunt 1998: 127

²⁰¹ Pl. *Prt.* 326c; Flacelière 1965: 94, 103.

long enough for them to learn to read and so the latter would have never trained with javelins.²⁰²

If a *thes* could not gain the weapon training needed from private sources, what of the state? The basic outline of the ephebic training program has already been discussed, as has the possible date of its establishment. Yet it remains unclear whether *thetes* were a part of the program or not. Some scholars have argued that the ephebic program as described by Aristotle was created exclusively to train hoplites, as evidenced by the presentation of a shield and spear at the end of the first year's training.²⁰³ Others have argued that *thetes* were included in the program from the beginning, while others claim they were only included as part of reforms undertaken after Chaeronea.²⁰⁴

There is no clear answer to this question, but it seems that those who favor an all-inclusive ephebic program have the stronger argument. The distribution of shields and spears can be seen as a way of eliminating one of the main practical barriers for *thetes* to become effective soldiers for Athens. That the state was giving equipment to many ephebes who could have afforded it anyway may indicate a shift toward complete state supply of military arms or that the Athenians were simply not concerned with the Solonic classes anymore. The latter certainly seems to be the case in civil magistracies and it would make sense if the old classes were losing their military distinctions as well.²⁰⁵

The question still remains of why the state would teach these future soldiers how to use the weapons and tactics of *psiloi* if they were intended to fight as hoplites. Hansen has

²⁰² Pl. *Prt.* 326c; Ehrenberg 1962: 286; Flacelière 1965: 93-94; Garland 2009: 155.

²⁰³ Rhodes 1981: 503; Raaflaub 1996: 157.

²⁰⁴ From beginning: Vidal-Naquet 1986: 86, 97. After Chaeronea: Hansen 1991: 109; Bertossa 2003: 371-3.

²⁰⁵ Ehrenberg 1962: 321; Hansen 1991: 88.

argued that the graduates were taught both forms of combat so that they could fight in whatever manner they could afford.²⁰⁶ This view is reasonable, especially given that even with the shield and spear being provided to them by the state, the *thetes* would have had a difficult time coming up with the rest of the panoply.²⁰⁷ Others have argued that Athens was trying to make more versatile hoplites.²⁰⁸ Although both of these arguments might be true, they do not preclude the possibility that Athens was actively trying to train their *thetes* to become effective *psiloi*. If this was the goal, it ultimately failed, as will be shown below, but that does not mean that the Athenians did not try.

If, however, one maintains that *thetes* were not included in the ephebic training program and that it was intended solely for the training of hoplites, then the idea that *thetes* could not have received training in light-armed tactics there remains valid. Indeed, if such was the case, the existence of such a program even before the Peloponnesian War would have no bearing on the *thetes*, since they would not have been admitted anyway. However one wishes to look at the program, it seems highly unlikely that *thetes* received any military training from the state before the conclusion of the Corinthian War.

The existence of any other form of training for Athenian soldiers is another heavily debated issue that once again centers on hoplites and I know of no attempt to include the *thetes* in the discussion. The ancient evidence seems to indicate clearly that the Greeks in general, and Athenians in particular, had a great mistrust of both professional soldiering and those who purported to teach those skills until the realities of the Peloponnesian and

²⁰⁶ Hansen 1991: 109.

²⁰⁷ Bertossa 2003: 363-4.

²⁰⁸ Rawlings 2000: 238-241.

Corinthian Wars forced them to reconsider. Hoplite combat was generally thought to rely far more on courage and discipline than training, although this idea began to change in the mid-fourth century among philosophers and others.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, the training and keeping of troops would have required resources and organization that the polis was unwilling or unable to provide until forced by necessity.²¹⁰ An Athenian who wanted to improve his skill with his weapons or learn unit drill would have to hire a private instructor.²¹¹ This service was usually provided in Athens by traveling teachers of hoplite tactics known as *hoplomachoi* who were especially active between 424-404 and in the early fourth century.²¹² No surviving evidence mentions any such instructors for *psiloi* until the establishment of the ephebic program and it is unlikely that the *thetes* could have afforded their services even if they did exist.

Many scholars argue that just moving and fighting in formation would have required some kind of drill for hoplites.²¹³ No clear evidence of this training remains although the argument that it was so common as to not be worth mentioning has some merit.²¹⁴ Most of the attempts by scholars to outline specific means of training or to demonstrate maneuvers that could not have been accomplished without training fall flat from lack (or even misuse) of evidence. Matthew, for instance, provides a seemingly impressive list of ancient authors to back up his claim that hoplites received some kind of training and cites Greek armies

²⁰⁹ See, for instance Pl. *La.* 192e-194a, Xen. *Mem.* 3.12.5; Thuc. 2.39; Arist. *Pol.* 8.1338b 25-30.

²¹⁰ Anderson 1970: 5

²¹¹ Wheeler 1983: 4.

²¹² Wheeler 1983: 3-4.

²¹³ Matthew 2009: 408 and esp. n52; Ridley 1979: 530ff; Anderson 1970: 87ff.

²¹⁴ Ar. *Pax* 355-360 mentions training with spears and shields in the Lyceum, but there is no context or further information provided. Ridley 1979: 543.

marching in formation and organizing themselves into different formations.²¹⁵ His evidence, carelessly thrown together from a variety of time periods, cites Spartans, mercenaries, or the reformed Theban army under Epaminondas in the 360s, all of which were considered exceptional in antiquity for their tactical abilities. The only complex formation credited to an Athenian army is the hollow-square, which Thucydides mentions twice in his account of the Sicilian expedition. My own belief is that hoplites were trained in unit drill sometime between muster and deployment. This would be least disruptive and give all men a chance to practice with each other before battle, although there is no evidence to support this view.

Some scholars also argue that Athenian men were trained for war by indirect means, such as athletics and dancing. Although the discussion usually centers on hoplites, dancing and athletics would have been of even more benefit to the *psiloi* than to the former, given that speed and flexibility were the key to fighting and surviving as *psiloi*. These arguments about athletics are not always convincing, however. Many rely on evidence relating to the ephebic training, which, as noted above, is only applicable to a certain time period.²¹⁶ Even then, however, the evidence suggests that the Greeks knew that athletics was not a suitable substitute since, as Miller notes, there would have then been no need for specialist instructors in these matters if such were the case.²¹⁷ That being said, athletics could have provided a good supplement to any formal training an Athenian might have picked up. In any event, it is unknown how much the poor of Athens would have been able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the *gymnasia*, especially since the *gymnasia* and *palaestrae* of the

²¹⁵ Matthew 2009: 408 n52.

²¹⁶ See for example, Ducrey 1986: 67

²¹⁷ Miller 2004: 189-9.

city were, in the time before the Athenian empire (and perhaps even after), the haunts of the rich and their children.²¹⁸

Some scholars have also maintained that, in addition to athletics, dances were also used to teach valuable combat skills to Athenian soldiers.²¹⁹ The pyrrhic dance, in particular, is often cited as an effective tool in teaching hoplites how to move their shields to avoid incoming missiles.²²⁰ Leaving aside the question of how one could easily move a heavy hoplite shield in the midst of a phalanx, there are other serious problems with the argument. As Wheeler has pointed out, the actual pyrrhic (as opposed to the examples found in Plato and Euripides) was a nude dance connected with the cult of Athena with no evidence of mock combat.²²¹ Additionally, the pyrrhic dance was also taught to women and children, who would have obviously gained nothing if the dance was a form of military drill.²²² There is also no evidence that learning that dance was required, although some have speculated that it may have been part of an initiation rite to mark the passage of a boy into manhood.²²³ In any event, it is unlikely that the dance would have done anything except keep a dancer in good physical shape.²²⁴

It would seem from the evidence detailed above that before the fourth century, the Athenian state cared little for training any of their soldiers, even hoplites. There was no state-mandated training and the informal training that many scholars claim made up for it

²¹⁸ Morison 2000: 141.

²¹⁹ See, e.g. Ducrey 1986: 67; Anderson 1970: 92.

²²⁰ Ducrey 1986: 67.

²²¹ Pl. *Leg.* 796a; Eur. *Andr.* 1120-1155; Wheeler 1982: 227, 231-2.

²²² Schwartz 2009: 50, 53.

²²³ Wheeler 1982: 232.

²²⁴ Schwartz 2009: 53

would have required private initiative and means, as well as being useful only for keeping fit. Even if an otherwise unattested program of training hoplites did exist, it would have been cursory and focused mostly on teaching soldiers to move and fight in formation and not on the use of their weapons.²²⁵

If so little attention was spent on training hoplites, it is likely that even less was spent on *psiloi*, given their standing in the hierarchy of military forces, and there is even less evidence for the training of *psiloi* than that of hoplites. It is also important to consider that the training needs of the *psiloi* would have been exactly the inverse of hoplites: mastery of their individual weapons was far more important than knowing how to keep in formation. Thus, in order to have a trained citizen body of *psiloi* and hoplites, Athens would have had to provide two parallel training systems that have left almost no trace in the record. Given that this is highly unlikely, it would thus seem that there was no program in Athens to train citizen *psiloi* and no real way to gain necessary weapon training outside such a program.

In addition to the practical barriers that could keep Athenian *thetes* from serving as *psiloi*, there were social and cultural ones as well. The use of social pressure to keep *thetes* out of the phalanx was mentioned above and there were other such forces at work that also provided a disincentive for any citizen wishing to fight as *psiloi*. There were two primary forms of this pressure: a deliberate marginalizing of light-armed troops by the hoplite elite to increase their own importance in society and a less intentional, if no less effective, cultural tendency to link Hellenicity to hoplite combat, causing all other forms of warfare to be considered barbaric and even unmanly.

²²⁵Cursory: Ducrey 1986: 120. Unit drill: Ridley 1979: 545; Anderson 1970: 84.

If it was true that *psiloi* could not win wars or even battles on their own, what contributions they did make were usually ignored in the ancient sources such as Thucydides.²²⁶ He dismissed light-armed troops as a kind of side-show before the main battle and, when describing hoplites killed by Aetolian peltasts, he called the former “the best of the men who died in the war,” no doubt in contrast to the peltasts who killed them.²²⁷ The Spartans who died at Lechaeum at the hands of mercenary peltasts were similarly eulogized, and their opponents denigrated, by both Xenophon and Plutarch.²²⁸ When speaking of the forces of Thessaly and Cyprus, Isocrates immediately dismisses as worthless their large contingents of peltasts.²²⁹ Archers were similarly denigrated, if less consistently. Homer, for instance, made disparaging remarks about archers in the *Iliad*, labeling them as cowards, effeminate, and generally unsavory.²³⁰

Psiloi had worse to contend with than mere words, however, and their inferiority was on display throughout Athens from the agora to the homes of her people. Athenians killed in battle were generally celebrated collectively on monuments placed in the agora that listed the dead by tribes.²³¹ Who exactly were on these lists is a matter of some debate. Some have contended that *thetes* were not included on these lists, which only honored hoplites.²³² A strong argument in favor of this interpretation is that one means of compiling the lists of the war-dead was by comparing the muster rolls with the soldiers who came back. In the

²²⁶ van Wees 2004: 62-64 is perhaps the best discussion of this tendency among ancient authors, although the conclusions he draws from the bias are incorrect.

²²⁷ Side show: Thuc. 6.69. Battle with the Aetolians: Thuc. 3.98; Trundle 2010: 146.

²²⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.10; Plut. *Ages.* 22.2.

²²⁹ Thessaly: Isoc. 8.118; Cyprus: 4.141.

²³⁰ See, e.g., Hom. *Il.* 11.370-395, 4.242; Trundle 2010: 145. Homer’s attitude toward archers was not entirely hostile: see Trundle 2010: 144-5 and Skinner 2006: 167-8.

²³¹ Osborne 2010: 246.

²³² Raaflaub (1996: 156) presents the evidence, although he himself is unsure.

absence of such a roll for the *thetes*, it would have been difficult to compile a list of their dead with any certainty.²³³ Also, when these lists are decorated with images of battle, they always portray either hoplite or cavalry combat, never the operations of *psiloi*.²³⁴ This view is not universal, however, and others have argued that *thetes* were included since the word “hoplite” is only mentioned once and foreigners were also included, although without any seeming regularity in practice.²³⁵

Whatever the case might be, scholars do agree that the lists distinguish hoplites from other soldiers: citizen archers (usually distinguished from barbarian ones), when mentioned, were placed under the heading of archers and separated from their fellow tribesmen.²³⁶ In addition to being isolated from the hoplites, these men were always listed below them as well, a placement that reflects their standing in both the military and social hierarchy of Athens.²³⁷ This would indicate that the Athenians in charge of these monuments felt that these non-hoplites did not deserve the honor of having their names placed beside those of their tribe who died fighting for the city as hoplites.²³⁸ What is perhaps even more telling is that only hoplites and archers are mentioned on the monuments. The logical conclusion would seem to be that archers, because of their relatively high status and state-sponsored training, were considered worthy of being commemorated along with their betters, while other *psiloi* were not. The fact that rowers, despite their overall greater importance to the

²³³ Raaflaub 1996: 156.

²³⁴ Osborne 2000: 33.

²³⁵ Loraux 1986: 32-34; Vidal-Naquet 1986: 88

²³⁶ Loraux 1986: 32-34; Vidal-Naquet 1986: 88.

²³⁷ Connor 2004: 97.

²³⁸ Connor 2004: 97; Raaflaub 1996: 156.

city, were similarly neglected also lends credence to this view.²³⁹ In both literature and in public memory, it seems, hoplites and cavalry were considered more important than anyone else.²⁴⁰

Perhaps even more demoralizing than this public neglect, however, was the intrusion of the hoplite ethos into the very homes of those who could literally not afford it. Osborne has argued persuasively that even in the decorations of their utensils, Athenian citizens were reminded of the gap between hoplites and *psiloi*.²⁴¹ Athenian pottery produced for social functions in the late sixth and fifth centuries, particularly for the symposium, were usually decorated with scenes of hoplites or cavalry.²⁴² Peltasts, however, appear on mugs, which were cheap vessels intended for private use by the young, and on perfume jars intended for women.²⁴³ This creates a strong contrast: the hoplite belongs to the world of the well-to-do and the masculine while the peltast belongs to that of women and youth.²⁴⁴ Peltasts largely disappear from pottery after the Persian Wars but, given the strengthening of the hoplite ethos following those wars, it can be safely assumed that the message did not.²⁴⁵ Osborne concludes that it was the poor themselves who insisted on using pottery decorated with peltasts, because they knew that they would never be hoplites and thus chose to mark out themselves in private.²⁴⁶ The imposition of hoplite values from above would seem a more likely scenario, however, especially given the possibilities of social mobility mentioned

²³⁹ Hanson 1996: 306; Strauss 1996: 313, 320-1; Raaflaub 1996: 156. Loraux (1986: 34) and Pritchard (2010: 34) argue rowers were included.

²⁴⁰ Raaflaub 1996: 156.

²⁴¹ Osborne 2000: 34.

²⁴² Osborne 2000: 35.

²⁴³ Osborne 2000: 38.

²⁴⁴ Osborne 2000: 38.

²⁴⁵ Osborne 2000: 39-40.

²⁴⁶ Osborne 2000: 42.

above. Also, as Hanson has argued, it seems that most *thetes* did aspire to *zeugitai* status, even if after they achieved it, the welcome was not always very warm.²⁴⁷

The direct reminders of the elevated place of the hoplite in Athenian society were accompanied by the more nebulous, if also more ubiquitous, connection between Greek identity (Hellenicity) and hoplite warfare at this time. Ideas of what meant it to be Greek fluctuated over time and space throughout the Archaic and Classical ages. But encounters with the peoples of the Near East, in particular during the Persian Wars, seem to have created, at least for a time, a unified idea of what it meant to be Greek that was largely oppositional in nature. Indeed, the Persian Wars created an intense fascination with “the other” and how they and their virtues compared to Greeks and their virtues.²⁴⁸ The main focus of this obsession was the Persians, whom the Greeks found to be servile, emotional, effeminate, and unable to curb excesses in their conduct and thoughts.²⁴⁹ Additionally, they either did not speak Greek at all or spoke it badly, thus earning the label of *barbarphonoï*, or “speakers of gibberish.”²⁵⁰ Thus the differences between Greek and barbarian were primarily language and culture. Encounters with the Persians and other non-Greeks reinforced in the Greek mind the idea that they were distinct from and in most ways better than these foreigners.

This sense of cultural superiority also carried over into the realm of warfare. The victories against disproportionately large Persian land forces at Marathon and Plataea and even the naval battle at Salamis had shown to the satisfaction of the Greeks that their courage

²⁴⁷ Hanson 1996: 306.

²⁴⁸ Hall 2002: 175-8; Cartledge 2002: 54.

²⁴⁹ Hall 2002: 176-7.

²⁵⁰ Hall 2002: 112.

and heavy-infantry tactics were superior to the combined-arms tactics and numerical advantages of the Persians.²⁵¹ This sense of superiority also carried over to hoplite weapons as well.²⁵² The spear and *hoplon* were seen as uniquely Greek and thus came to reflect all these virtues that the Greeks valued. Indeed, the spear became a synecdoche for battle itself early in Greek literature and many Athenian writers and orators frequently referenced the idea of objects and even people won by conquest as “spear-won.”²⁵³ Thus the Greeks felt that the weapons and tactics of the hoplite were the only real way of fighting after the Persian Wars.

This singular focus on the hoplite spear as the only true weapon caused other weapons to be reviled. The bow, sling, and javelin were thus considered servile, cowardly, and unbecoming for a true Greek warrior.²⁵⁴ The bow, despite being valued and frequently used for its military utility, was often reviled on moral grounds by the Greeks. The bow also suffered by its association with foreigners and barbarians, especially Persians. Indeed, Aeschylus even went as far as to cast the Persian Wars as a conflict between Greek spearmen and Persian archers.²⁵⁵ It has even been suggested that the image of the archer was deliberately used to stand in for everything that was the opposite of the hoplite ethos before the war and as a sort of cultural shorthand for the Persian enemy afterwards.²⁵⁶

The sling also had a poor reputation and was looked down on as the least even among missile weapons. Despite the skill the weapon required, slingers were considered the

²⁵¹ Ferrill 1985: 122-3.

²⁵² van Wees 2004: 65.

²⁵³ Archilochus fr. 2 in West 1993: 13; Eur. *Andr.* 155, *Hel.* 41, *HF* 155-60; Aesch. *Ag.* 1441; Isoc. 4.121.

²⁵⁴ Ducrey 1986: 108.

²⁵⁵ Aesch. *Per.* 84-85. See also 237-8.

²⁵⁶ Skinner 2006: 167, 169.

meanest of all missile troops, perhaps due to the cheapness of the weapon.²⁵⁷ Even as open a military mind as Xenophon considered the sling a weapon only fit for slaves and even stated that a man who could not use a sling was not fit for soldiering. Using a sling was a cause for shame, and when the Ten Thousand needed slingers to combat Persian missile troops, considerable concessions had to be made to get the Rhodians present to come forward to serve as slingers or even to make slings.²⁵⁸ Similarly, Demosthenes was able to criticize an opponent because the latter had used a sling in his youth.²⁵⁹ The disparaging commentary on the sling carried over to artwork as well, where slingers are most noticeable for appearing even less often than archers or javelin-throwers.²⁶⁰

The javelin, despite its place in athletics, was similarly reviled in war, perhaps by its association with mercenaries and barbarians. The use of the javelin by Thracian peltasts, the light infantry par excellence during our time period, likely caused the two to become linked as well. This would be to the weapon's detriment, as the Greeks found the Thracians to be slavish and cowardly. This association was commonplace in Athens and can be found in art, plays, and even Herodotus.²⁶¹ Thracians were furthermore associated with greediness and savagery as attested by Thucydides and other writers.²⁶² No good Greek citizen would want to be associated with such traits and so the appeal of the javelin as a weapon was reduced.

²⁵⁷ Dohrenwend 2002: 31.

²⁵⁸ *Xen. An.* 3.3.6-20; Pritchett 1991: 9.

²⁵⁹ *Dem.* 23.148.

²⁶⁰ Korfmann 1973: 36-37.

²⁶¹ Art: Cartledge 2002: 153-5. Plays: Cartledge 2002: 45-46, 154-5; See e.g. *Ar. Thesm.* 266, *Ach.* 263; *Dem.* 59.35. *Hdt.* 5.6

²⁶² *Thuc.* 7.29; *Ar. Lys.* 561-64; *Plut. Alc.* 30, *Xen. Hell.* 3.4.24, *Ages.* 13.32; Cartledge 2002: 67- 69; Best 1969: 129-130.

The association of light-armed troops with mercenaries also did not help their status. In addition to the association between peltasts and Thracians discussed above, there were others as well. Thracian and Scythian archers were often found in Athenian armies, serving as light infantry.²⁶³ These foreign soldiers carried the double stigma of being both non-Greeks and mercenaries, which reduced their status greatly in the eyes of the hoplites. Also, as far as the Greeks were concerned, the very fact that they fought as *psiloi* and not as hoplites showed their inferiority.²⁶⁴ This circular reasoning also explains why even other Greeks could not escape the accusation of barbarism if they did not fight as hoplites. Thucydides clearly demonstrated this line of thought when he equated the Greeks inhabiting the mountainous areas of the mainland with barbarians because they preferred light infantry weapons and tactics.²⁶⁵

Light troops were also considered unmanly. The use of peltast imagery on items destined for use by youth and women has already been noted and Osborne concludes that the placement of such imagery would have served to question the masculinity of peltasts.²⁶⁶ If such questions are merely implied in art, they are stated outright in the literature. In Thucydides, a Spartan calls an arrow a spindle, comparing it to a women's tool.²⁶⁷ A similar disdain can be found in Aristophanes, who twice in his *Thesmophoriazusae* linked *psiloi* with youthfulness and effeminacy by comparing beardless and cross-dressing men to *psiloi*.²⁶⁸

²⁶³ Trundle 2010: 142.

²⁶⁴ Trundle 2010: 143.

²⁶⁵ Thuc. 1.5-6, 3.94; Hall 2002: 195

²⁶⁶ Osborne 2000: 38.

²⁶⁷ Thuc. 4.40; Trundle 2010: 146.

²⁶⁸ Ar. *Thesm.* 210-232, 582.

Not just the weapons of the *psiloi* earned derision, but also their tactics. Hoplites were expected to stand firm and fight or die beside their comrades. Light-armed troops, however, would run away from the fight if enemy soldiers got too close before turning around to renew their assault. Despite the necessity of these tactics, hoplites and other commentators considered such a method of fighting to be an indicator of cowardliness.²⁶⁹ It is interesting to note, however, that even in this consideration status played a role: Greek cavalry, lacking stirrups, often fought in the same manner as light-armed troops and yet were not considered with the same opprobrium.²⁷⁰ One can only assume that their wealth and status shielded them from such reproach.

When placed together, this mosaic of stereotypes, images, and cultural references creates a clear picture of the social and cultural status of light-armed troops. While hoplites represented Greek virtues such as freedom, courage, and masculinity, *psiloi* represented the exact opposite: slavery, cowardliness, and effeminacy. The weapons, tactics, and, if the playwrights are to be believed, the very appearance of *psiloi* were different, opposed, and inferior to those of the hoplite. Even other Greeks, if they chose to fight as *psiloi*, risked being considered barbarians themselves. The message that *psiloi* were in every way inferior was surely received by the *thetes*, coming as it did from so many sources (and likely many more that have not survived). They would have to understand that if they took up the weapons of a *psilos* on any sort of permanent basis, their status in the community would have been severely diminished and they would find themselves considered by their fellows as an outsider to at least some degree.

²⁶⁹ Trundle 2010: 142.

²⁷⁰ Cavalry tactics: Rawlings 2007: 87-88.

The forces aligned against the *thetes* to keep them from becoming *psiloi* were many. With the exception of the small corps of archers maintained by Athenian funds, there was no way for *thetes* to become proficient with their weapons until the fourth century, at which time their impact was minimal for reasons that will be discussed later. Formal training of any kind was essentially non-existent in Athens until the fourth century and this was especially the case for light-armed troops. Informal training, such as dance and athletics, would have been especially useful for *psiloi* in terms of increasing agility, speed, and fitness, but they required individual motivation and means to pursue and furthermore would have not have been helpful in teaching the use of their weapons.

In addition to these practical barriers, there were also social and cultural ones that would have made the choice to take up the weapons of the *psiloi* a difficult one. The actions of *psiloi* were deliberately marginalized by the hoplite elite of Athens in order to maintain their own sense of superiority. Literature, public monuments, and even household items all reinforced the idea that the only way to properly fight and die for one's city was as a hoplite (or a cavalryman). Everyone else was marginalized, forgotten, or portrayed as less than Athenian, or even less than a man. The linking of Greek identity with hoplite warfare in the aftermath of the Persian Wars sent a similar message to all would-be citizen *psiloi*. Hoplite warfare and its attendant weaponry became a symbol of all that it meant to be Greek and all other weapons and forms of warfare became a symbol of "the other," taking on inferior qualities such as cowardliness, effeminacy, and savagery. The association of these weapons with foreign mercenaries only increased the disdain for these other styles of fighting and even made fellow Greeks who used them suspect. The very tactics of *psiloi* made them less

than desirable and all these images were reinforced in literature by both historians and playwrights. Thus a *thes* wishing to become a *psilos* had much to give him pause before taking up a weapon.

Chapter 4: Alternative Source of *Psiloi*

The absence of citizen light-armed troops from Athens during the fifth and first half of the fourth century does not mean that the city did not recognize the value of such troops or simply ignored them. The emergence of the hoplite in Archaic times may have severely marginalized *psiloi* on the Greek mainland but in the fifth century the role of light infantry in warfare began to expand once again. This trend continued into the fourth century and eventually culminated in the armies of Philip II and Alexander III, who fully integrated light infantry into their combined-arms approach to war. The rising prominence of light infantry created a problem for Athens and other Greek states. As previously discussed, the city was already heavily invested socially and culturally in the hoplite ethos and significant factors prevented the raising of native *psiloi*.

This essentially left Athens with only two options: eliminate or reduce the practical, social, and cultural restrictions that kept the *thetes* from being effective *psiloi* or turn to other sources. The ephebic training program discussed previously was a means of accomplishing the former by making sure that all citizens who entered the program were fully trained as hoplites and *psiloi*. This relatively late solution, however, seemed to quickly lose its military character and produced indifferent soldiers.²⁷¹ Previously, Athens had largely turned to outsiders, especially mercenaries and allies, to provide *psiloi*. Athens also recruited from its non-citizen population of slaves and metics, although their participation in warfare was less remarkable. This chapter will examine the use of mercenaries, allies, and resident non-

²⁷¹ Reinmuth 1952: 39, 49; Miller 2004: 189.

citizens in Athens to see how they benefitted the city and why Athens chose them instead of training her own citizens as *psiloi*.

Before discussing mercenaries in Athens, it is necessary to consider them generally. For the purposes of this thesis, a mercenary will be defined as someone who fights for material advancement on behalf of a city-state of which he is not a citizen, slave, ally, or resident alien.²⁷² Mercenaries offered certain common advantages enjoyed by all who hired them. The first and most important was that mercenaries were professional soldiers in a Mediterranean dominated primarily by amateur citizen militias.²⁷³ The mercenaries' most valuable assets were familiarity not just with their weapons but also their experience gained in different kinds of battles. Mercenaries could also be away from home longer than citizens, making them more suitable for distant or long campaigns. Finally, mercenaries could easily be hired when needed and released from service when not, thus sparing the state the ongoing expense of a standing army. The disadvantages of mercenaries included lack of any ties of loyalty, difficult relationships with civilians, and expense.

Mercenary light infantry were familiar in Athens well before the changes in fifth-century warfare that made them common in Greek armies. When Peisistratus returned to Athens to become tyrant for the final time in 546, he brought foreign mercenaries with him as a bodyguard.²⁷⁴ Although Aristotle does not mention what type of mercenaries these were, he does say that the tyrant had been recruiting around Pangeaus in Thrace. This

²⁷² This short definition is intended to convey the essence of mercenary service in ancient Greece. The issue is rather more complicated.

²⁷³ Parke 1981 [1933]: 235-8. "Amateur" is meant here in the sense of being non-professional. The average Athenian man in the time in question was no stranger to war.

²⁷⁴ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 15.2; Best 1969: 6.

assertion, combined with the sudden appearance in Athens over the next decade of multiple vase paintings depicting soldiers dressed as Thracians and armed with javelins and *peltes*, has led Best to conclude that these were most likely peltasts hired in Thrace.²⁷⁵ These mercenaries, along with followers recruited from the hoplite and lower classes in Athens, allowed Peisistratus to stay in power until his death in 527. Thus mercenary peltasts were present in the city at least as early as the mid-sixth century, although it is unknown how long the mercenaries remained in Athens. Assuming that Peisistratus kept them after he had safely assumed control, they certainly would have been either killed or fled with Hippias when he was deposed in 510.

After c.490 peltasts disappear from Athenian art. One could assume that this reflects their actual absence, perhaps because the Persian conquest of their homeland made recruitment difficult.²⁷⁶ Mercenary archers continued to be hired during this time, however, even after the formation of the citizen archery corps, as were slingers and other specialist light infantry. Peltasts returned to prominence in the closing years of the Peloponnesian War, as both Athens and Sparta began to recruit them frequently after learning their value in battles such as Aegitium and Sphacteria.²⁷⁷ Indeed, peltasts became the most common mercenaries employed by Athens and were frequently seen on the battlefields of the later fifth and the fourth centuries.²⁷⁸ Their ubiquity was likely due to both their usefulness in combat and the business and diplomatic ties which many Athenians had in Thrace, facilitating their recruitment. Besides *psiloi*, mercenary rowers of unknown provenance were

²⁷⁵ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 15.2; Best 1969: 6 and plates 1a-c, 2.

²⁷⁶ Best 1969: 7 and n26.

²⁷⁷ Thuc. 3.94-98; 4.32-38; Parke 1981 [1933]: 17.

²⁷⁸ Trundle 2004: 51; Best 1969: 134.

common in the fleet, although it is difficult to say which rowers were mercenaries, since all of them were paid.²⁷⁹

Light-armed mercenaries became so prevalent that Athenians formed an explicit connection between *psiloi* and mercenaries. The Athenian speechwriter Lysias (c. 445-380), defending the inheritance of Aristophanes, noted that the man in question had provided large sums of money for hiring peltasts and outfitting of ships for both the ill-fated Sicilian expedition and an expedition to Cyprus against the Persians.²⁸⁰ That these soldiers were mercenaries is later established when Aristophanes is said to have turned down a request to make a loan for the further outfitting of triremes because he had already used all of his accessible wealth to pay mercenaries (*xenoi*).²⁸¹ This explicit linking of peltasts, mercenaries, and large sums of money clearly suggests that Athenians typically equated *psiloi* with mercenaries.

Athens obviously fully embraced the use of mercenaries throughout the fifth and fourth centuries despite the large body of native *thetes* who could have served as effective *psiloi*, if provided with the means to do so. Some scholars have argued that the availability of so many mercenaries was one factor that impeded citizen *psiloi* service.²⁸² Although this may be true to some degree, it is more likely that the absence of a corps of citizen *psiloi* led to the city's widespread use of mercenaries—a cause rather than an effect. After all, the prevalence of hiring mercenary light infantry long postdates their marginalization. Thus, in a circular effect, the hiring of so many mercenary light infantry caused *psiloi* service to

²⁷⁹ Trundle 2004: 40.

²⁸⁰ Lys. 19.21, 22, 43.

²⁸¹ Lys. 19.26.

²⁸² Trundle 2010: 140.

become linked with barbarians and even less desirable than before. Similarly, the easy availability of mercenaries may have delayed the creation of a program to train citizen light infantry.

Even the availability of mercenaries, however, does not completely answer the question at hand. The existence of the Athenian archery corps shows that the city knew how to create a successful corps of light infantry. The city could have similarly trained other light-armed infantry and attracted *thetes* with promises of pay. Such a program would also have erased some of the social stigma attached to *psiloi* service, if the relatively elevated status of archers in Athens is any indication. Money might have been one objection but, as Thucydides noted, Athens had a substantial treasury from its empire and already employed a standing force of twelve hundred cavalry in addition to sixteen hundred archers at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War.²⁸³ These figures do not include the cost of building and maintaining three hundred triremes and the other expenses of keeping up the fleet upon which the city's power rested.²⁸⁴ In short, Athens, already having invested so much capital in its military, surely would not have hesitated to spend more on equipping and training citizen *psiloi* if money were the only issue involved, especially as Thucydides recorded that mercenary peltasts received the same one drachma (per day) as civilian hoplites and all rowers.²⁸⁵

Thus it seems that there were more than just financial concerns behind the Athenian decision to use light-armed mercenaries. One of strongest of these other motives may have

²⁸³ Thuc. 2.13.

²⁸⁴ Thuc. 2.13; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 24.3; Loomis 1998: 40.

²⁸⁵ Thuc. 7.27; Loomis 1998: 44.

been the Athenians' aversion to professional soldiering. Although they made an exception for the archery corps, perhaps because of its relationship to the navy, the Athenians may have drawn the line at creating a corps of *psiloi* who would mainly be used on land. Also, it is important to remember that the very tactics of light infantry were distasteful to Greek notions of hoplite warfare. This also may have influenced their decision to leave the barbarian way of fighting to the barbarians for so long. Geography also initially favored mercenaries over native *psiloi*. During the Peloponnesian War most light-armed troops were deployed close to where they were recruited, especially in the case of the mercenary peltasts used by both sides in Thrace and Chalcidice. This was a practical decision by the Athenian generals, especially given the difficulties of transporting large numbers of soldiers on ships. By recruiting mercenaries closer to the theatres of war the generals could focus on transporting the more valuable hoplites. Indeed, it was not until the Corinthian War that large bodies of *psiloi* mercenaries were brought over to mainland Greece for service there.

Besides any practical and fiscal issues, social considerations heavily influenced the decision to favor mercenaries over native light infantry. Although formal training might have helped to increase the status of citizen *psiloi*, it cannot be assumed that Athenian authorities actually wanted to do so. The increasing influence the *thetes* were gaining from their role in the fleets may have made many of the hoplite class and above nervous about anything that would enable more *thetes* to gain even more status.²⁸⁶ By hiring outside mercenaries who were of no social consequence, Athens could avoid the issue entirely. Hiring mercenary *psiloi* may have even helped to bridge the military and social divide

²⁸⁶ Hunt 1998: 27.

between *thetes* and their betters by giving both groups someone to look down upon from their shared platform of Athenian citizenship.²⁸⁷ Similarly, the hiring of mercenary *psiloi* would have occasioned little jealousy from the *thetes*, since the latter had the ability to earn the same wage by rowing for the fleet, which carried a slightly higher status besides.²⁸⁸ Furthermore, the presence of mercenaries did not stop *thetes* from serving as untrained *psiloi* in large numbers. Thus it seems that socially speaking, hiring mercenaries benefited all involved: the hoplite class got needed *psiloi* without elevating the *thetes* to a higher position; the *thetes* were still able to go to war; and both were brought closer together by having a common barbarian on which to look down.

There was of course a metaphorical and literal price to pay for using mercenaries. Their wages of one drachma a day quickly added up, especially as they were usually hired in groups of at least a thousand.²⁸⁹ The burden of their wages would be especially onerous when added to those being paid to citizen hoplites and sailors. It is also important to note that this expense was one unique to mercenary *psiloi*, since there is no evidence that light-armed citizens, as ineffective as they may have been, were ever paid. Also, as is always the case with mercenaries, the loyalty of these hired soldiers was always suspect. No accounts remain of any of Athens' mercenaries ever betraying the city, although that may be because Athens mainly recruited from peoples with whom they already had other relationships. Another problem with mercenary troops is that they might not always be available when needed. Thrace provided a large recruiting ground for Athens but just getting the soldiers to

²⁸⁷ Hanson 1996: 307. Thus they would have served a similar role to slaves: see Hunt 1998: 126.

²⁸⁸ See the next chapter for the status and monetary advantages of rowing.

²⁸⁹ Thuc. 5.62.2, 7.27.1; Gabrielsen 2007: 266

Athens could be difficult, as evidenced by the sixteen hundred Thracians who arrived too late to participate in the Sicilian expedition.²⁹⁰ Given the distances involved, this may have been a common occurrence not remedied until the establishment of the foreign corps of peltasts under Iphicrates in 393.

Allies were another important source of both hoplites and light-armed troops for Athens, and it was uncommon during the Peloponnesian and Corinthian Wars for either that city or Sparta to fight without their respective allies being present. Allies could come from either the mainland or from the various colonies around the Mediterranean with whom Athens had trade and diplomatic relationships. Even non-Greeks could be allies, such as the various tribes of Thracians whom the Athenians often courted to provide mercenaries as well as allied soldiers.

The use of the same Thracians as both allies and mercenaries highlights the often negligible difference between the two groups. This confusion is only made worse due to the tendency among some Greek authors to use euphemisms and broad terms to refer to mercenaries, thus leaving some doubt as to whether or not the soldiers in question were allies or mercenaries.²⁹¹ Other authors, such as Thucydides, simply mention various peoples without indicating of their status, presumably because his audience would know. Further complicating the issue, even allies might be expected to provide some money to help with the upkeep of joint forces. A mutual defense treaty between Athens, Argos, Mantinea, and Elis in 420 included a provision that after thirty days, the state being aided was to contribute

²⁹⁰ Thuc. 7.27.

²⁹¹ See Trundle 2004: 10-11; van Wees 2004: 71-72; Parke 1933: 20-21.

money for the provisioning of troops.²⁹² Interestingly, the amount to be paid was more than strictly necessary for food alone and approximated the amount paid to Athenian soldiers and mercenaries during the same period.²⁹³ This treaty, and perhaps others that have been lost, shows that the line between allied soldiers and mercenaries could vanish in wartime. It is therefore not always possible to know with certainty whether a particular contingent was made up of allied or mercenary soldiers. Nor does it likely even matter in many cases, since there was nothing to prevent an ally from hiring mercenary light infantry and sending them to aid Athens along with their native hoplites.

The ancient authors often mentioned allied contingents of hoplites in battles, detailing their place in the phalanx and their performance as a unit. Light-armed troops, on the other hand, if noted as present, were generally not scrutinized as closely. The exceptions to this trend are the *psiloi* provided by Plataea, Imbros, and Lemnos, all of whom appear relatively frequently in the sources and/or merited special attention. Light-infantry from Imbros and Lemnos are often jointly mentioned by Thucydides, who seems to take their presence in Athens on multiple occasions for granted.²⁹⁴ Little is said about these peoples other than that they followed Athenian laws and spoke Attic Greek.²⁹⁵ Their role in Cleon's expedition to Pylos and the subsequent battle of Sphacteria has led many scholars to conclude that they usually served as light-armed troops and were skilled *psiloi*.²⁹⁶ The Plataeans are more interesting in that they bridged the gap between allies and resident aliens. After Spartan

²⁹² Thuc. 5.47.6; Loomis 1998: 41-42.

²⁹³ Loomis 1998: 42.

²⁹⁴ Thuc. 7.57, 4.28.

²⁹⁵ Thuc. 7.57; White 1944: 21.

²⁹⁶ Flower 1992: 40-45; Gomme 1923: 39.

forces destroyed their city in 427, two hundred Plataeans moved to Athens and were given most of the rights of citizenship.²⁹⁷ Although they were apparently meant to integrate into Athenian society, they chose not to do so and remained a distinct group. More importantly for our purposes, they seem to have formed a unit of light-armed specialist troops, if their performance in a night raid on Nisaea in 424 indicates their regular service.²⁹⁸ Such a role makes sense, since they likely came to Athens with little property and could not afford to be hoplites.²⁹⁹

Allies provided Athens with many of the same advantages and disadvantages of mercenaries. The greatest advantage was that unlike mercenaries, they would not have to be paid, barring an arrangement like that in the treaty of 420. Despite the sources' silence, one would assume that allied *psiloi* were at least more experienced with their weapons than their Athenian counterparts, if not actually trained. If they lacked the professionalism of mercenaries, to judge from the few remaining accounts, their performance was usually sufficient.³⁰⁰ Allies in theory were also more loyal, since there were ties other than money, although it was also possible for an ally to ignore a call to arms. In Athens' case, however, it is unlikely that many would do so. As unpopular as Athens might have been with most cities in the Delian League, fear of its naval might and the manipulation of Athenian officials in those cities would have usually made them compliant.³⁰¹ If unspoken threats and cajoling failed, Athens could point to the fate of Mytilene in 427 as an example of what could happen

²⁹⁷ Dem. 59.104; Osborne 1981-83: 1.28, 2.11.

²⁹⁸ Thuc. 4.67; Rawlings 2007: 51 and n20.

²⁹⁹ Rawlings 2007: 51.

³⁰⁰ Thuc. 4.32-37, 69.

³⁰¹ Bradeen 1960: 262, 269; Quinn 1964: 266; Legon 1968: 201-205.

to those allies who proved unfaithful.³⁰² Another advantage of allies was their proximity, especially when fighting on the mainland. In Thucydides, the Lemnians and Imbrians seem to be present at Athens whenever needed.³⁰³ This may reflect omission of their summons or perhaps a body of these soldiers remained in Athens throughout the war. In either case, Athens could usually rely on allies to provide the light-armed troops it needed.

In addition to outside aid, Athens could also call upon its internal non-citizen population, namely metics and slaves. Metics, as resident aliens, could live and conduct business in the city, but had no political or legal rights and could not own land. Metics in the Classical age seldom achieved full citizenship status, although some received *isoteleia*, or equal rights.³⁰⁴ Despite these disadvantages, many metics came to Athens because of the city's dominant role in trade and some became quite wealthy.³⁰⁵ Slaves in Athens were usually foreigners and often prisoners of war, although a few were likely fellow Hellenes.³⁰⁶ Thus the slave population in Athens was a varied one, which in many ways helped to limit the danger posed by them. Slaves had no formal legal or political rights and were owned either by individuals or by Athens itself.

Turning first to metics, one finds that they had the same military obligation as citizens and all who could afford the equipment were expected to join the phalanx.³⁰⁷ How these metics were recruited is unknown, but Xenophon indicates that they were obligated to serve

³⁰² Thuc. 3.36-50.

³⁰³ Thuc. 3.5, 4.28; Flowers 1992: 44-45.

³⁰⁴ Hansen 1991: 119.

³⁰⁵ Hansen (1991: 93) estimates 80,000 metics compared to a citizen population of 100,000 in the fourth century.

³⁰⁶ Garland 1988: 46.

³⁰⁷ Thuc. 2.13, 31; Xen. *Vect.* 2.2; Hanson 1995: 350 and n13; Cartledge 2002: 231; Hansen 1991: 100, 118.

as infantry, so presumably they were also conscripted.³⁰⁸ As metics were subject to a special tax and were registered in the deme of their residence, their names would have been easily available to those in charge of the muster rolls.³⁰⁹ According to Thucydides, metics called up by conscription were usually deployed with older citizens to defend the city.³¹⁰ If called up by general levy, however, they usually marched out with the citizen hoplites, as in the invasion of the Megarid in 425 and the Delium campaign of 424.³¹¹ Wealthier metics were also liable to the same liturgies as citizens.³¹²

Not all metics served in the phalanx. Some metics, presumably those who could not afford armor, served as light-infantry.³¹³ In this role they served in the same capacity as citizens, although perhaps with more skill depending on their origin. The Plataean exiles at Athens previously mentioned may have formed a standing *psiloi* unit and perhaps others did also but were neglected because of their barbarian origin. Also, like *thetes*, metics could row in the fleet and many did so.³¹⁴

Of all potential sources of non-citizen manpower, metics offered the fewest disadvantages. Despite being non-citizens, most metics had a vested interest in defending Athens, even if only to protect their own livelihoods and families. It is unlikely that metic soldiers were paid because of their ineligibility for other kinds of state aid, but no direct evidence remains. Unlike mercenaries and allies, metics were omnipresent in Athens and

³⁰⁸ Xen. *Vect.* 2.2.

³⁰⁹ Xen, *Vect.* 2.1; Hansen 1991: 117.

³¹⁰ Thuc. 2.1.3; Conner 2004: 19; Vidal-Naquet 1986: 94.

³¹¹ Thuc. 4.90, 94. Conner 2004: 19; Vidal-Naquet 1986: 94.

³¹² Hansen 1991: 119.

³¹³ Ridley 1979: 510.

³¹⁴ Jordan 1975: 211, 223.

immediately available for service when needed. No record remains of what metics themselves thought of fighting for Athens, but it seems they did not resent it. An unknown number aided in the overthrow of the Thirty Tyrants in 404, indicating some loyalty to the city.³¹⁵

The people of Athens recognized this loyalty and some offered praise, such as Lysias and Xenophon. Lysias, himself an *isoletes*, on at least two occasions mentioned metics who had performed services to the city in order to contrast them with the citizens he was prosecuting, who, he argued, had neglected those same duties.³¹⁶ Xenophon felt that the metics were unfairly burdened by having to pay a special tax and fight in the phalanx, although he may have been motivated more by his desire to have an exclusively citizen phalanx than by altruism.³¹⁷ On the other hand, he felt that metics should be allowed to serve as cavalry, since they ably fulfilled their other duties.³¹⁸

Slaves, the final source of potential manpower, seldom served as soldiers. The number of slaves in Athens during the fifth and fourth centuries is unknown and it is likely that even the Athenians themselves never knew, since slaves were not taxed and there were no records.³¹⁹ Hansen has estimated there were over 150,000 slaves in fourth-century Athens, making them more numerous than citizens and the largest single “class” in Athens.³²⁰ Although the numbers are uncertain, the ratio is likely correct, given how

³¹⁵ Xen, *Hell.*, 2.4.12-16; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 40.2; Garland 1988: 171; Middleton 1982: 299-300, 303.

³¹⁶ Lys. 6.49; 31.29

³¹⁷ Xen. *Vect.* 2.2-5.

³¹⁸ Xen. *Eq. mag.* 9.6.

³¹⁹ Hansen 2006: 109.

³²⁰ Hansen 1991: 93.

prevalent slave ownership was in Athenian society. No matter the exact numbers, slaves represented a vast potential pool of military manpower at Athens' disposal.

Despite not being combatants, slaves frequently served on the battlefield as hoplite attendants, carrying the armor and weapons of their masters as well as any other necessary supplies.³²¹ Only desperate times would cause the Athenians to run the perceived risk of arming slaves for combat.³²² Marathon (490) may have been the first known use of slaves in warfare by Athens, if a late account by Pausanias (mid-second century AD) can be trusted. According to this testimony, the slaves who fought and died were buried in a separate grave that was visible in his time.³²³ He also later mentioned that the slaves who survived were freed.³²⁴ Pausanias did not record how the slaves fought but they likely did so as *psiloi* since fighting as hoplites would have presented too many practical and social problems.³²⁵ The next reference to slaves being used in land combat does not come until c. 403, when the politician Archinus defeated a measure to grant citizenship to slaves who apparently had joined the democrats and metics at Piraeus in the overthrow of the Thirty Tyrants.³²⁶ The Athenians considered a plan to enlist slaves into the army and give them their freedom following Chaeronea in 338 but ultimately rejected it.³²⁷

Slaves may have played a bigger role in the Athenian navy, where there was less to fear from them. A slave with an oar was not much of a threat surrounded by a predominantly

³²¹ Hanson 1995: 69.

³²² Garlan 1988: 173.

³²³ Paus. 1.32.3; Hanson 1995: 360 n30.

³²⁴ Paus. 7.15.7

³²⁵ Garlan 1988: 174, *contra* Hunt 1998: 27.

³²⁶ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 40.2; Garlan 1988: 171; Strauss 1987: 97.

³²⁷ Lycurg. *Leoc.* 41; [Plut.] *X orat.* 9; Garlan 1988: 171.

citizen crew.³²⁸ Unlike slaves fighting on land, it seems that most slave rowers were not granted their freedom and it is likely that their pay went to their masters.³²⁹ On at least one desperate occasion, however, slave rowers were offered their freedom. For the Battle of Arginusae in 406 all inhabitants of Athens who could row served in a fleet of 110 triremes regardless of class or status.³³⁰ The slaves among them were subsequently freed and given additional rights above those of most metics. Why the Athenians made an exception in this case is not mentioned, unless more slaves were needed than usually “volunteered.”³³¹ How many slaves served in the Athenian navy is unknown and the number likely varied over time depending on manpower needed and the number of available *thetes* and metics.

That Athenians rarely armed their slaves as *psiloi* is not remarkable, with fears of revolt or flight being the most obvious reasons. Slaves could also not be expected to fight without an incentive, the most enticing of which would have been freedom. Slaves, however, could only be freed once. The resulting economic loss to the owners had to be made up at state expense, thus making their use an expensive and temporary solution to a manpower problem.³³² Athenians also considered slaves to be cowards and ineffective fighters, seeing as they were slaves and barbarians.³³³ Thus, they saw little gain in handing weapons to men who at worst could not be trusted and at best could not be expected to do much with them.

Social issues also prevented the frequent use of slaves in warfare. Slaves, an easily visible "other" in Athens, united Athenians of various statuses by giving them someone to

³²⁸ Arist. *Pol.* 1327b8-11; Hunt 1998: 84

³²⁹ Slave rowers not free: Hunt 1998: 83.

³³⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.24

³³¹ Ar. *Ran.* 687-705f; Cartledge 2002: 148-9; Garlan 1988: 165.

³³² Hunt 2007: 139.

³³³ Hunt 1998: 3.

look down upon.³³⁴ Furthermore, going to war in any manner was considered the prerogative of a free man, citizen or not. Allowing slaves to fight as *psiloi* would thus threaten the social order in one of two ways. A slave fighting among *psiloi* was a contradiction in status, since he would be engaging in an act restricted to free men, in addition to the practical problems this would create. To allow him to fight enslaved as a hoplite was practically unthinkable because of the difference in status between the two stations. If he was freed in order to fight, this would blur the important social distinction between the free Greek and the slave "other."³³⁵ The use of slaves as *psiloi* might also risk angering the *thetes*, since now militarily and socially speaking the former slaves might be considered the same as themselves.

Despite these precautions, there was little for the Athenian to fear from their slaves and there is no evidence that they did so. This lack of concern was well founded, since most Athenian slaves chose to run away rather than fight when given the opportunity, as the large number of slaves who deserted to the Spartan fort at Decelea attests.³³⁶ Also, it is important to remember that slaves also had a vested interest in the welfare of Athens: if the city fell, they would still be slaves but with new masters, assuming, of course, that they were not killed by the victors.³³⁷ If the Old Oligarch is to be believed, the latter possibility might have been particularly likely in Athens, since there was nothing to visually distinguish a slave from a freeman.³³⁸ When slaves were used in combat, Athens avoided many of these social

³³⁴ Hunt 1998: 3, 126.

³³⁵ Hunt 1998: 122, although he seems to forget that metics also fought in addition to citizens.

³³⁶ Thuc. 7.27.5. See Hanson 1992 for a discussion of these slaves.

³³⁷ Garlan 1988: 173

³³⁸ [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.10-12.

ramifications by giving them low-status military roles, such as rowing in the navy and (presumably) serving as light infantry, and by denying freedom except in very rare cases.³³⁹

In sum, Athens had many alternative sources of *psiloi* besides its *thetes*. Athens frequently hired mercenaries in the fifth and fourth centuries, as they were the easiest and most common source of *psiloi* available. These mercenaries provided Athens with professional soldiers but at a high price. Allies also frequently provided Athens with light infantry. Unlike mercenaries, allies generally worked for free (with some exceptions), but their willingness to aid Athens depended on various factors that required diplomatic solutions. Athens could also draw upon its own non-resident population, especially metics, who fought for the city under the same compulsion and in the same manners as citizens and performed their duties well enough to earn the praise of some contemporaries. Slaves could also be used in desperate times, although a number of practical and social factors limited their ability to be used frequently. With all these sources of *psiloi* available, Athens could afford to suppress the role of its own poor to provide light-armed service.

³³⁹ Garland 1988: 173.

Chapter 5: *Thetes* at War

Although the previous chapters suggest that there was no place for the *thetes* of Athens to serve militarily, this was not the case. Despite all the obstacles that barred them from serving as *psiloi* or as hoplites, there were still roles for them in the Athenian military, even as their contemporaries largely neglected or denigrated them. The most effective ways in which *thetes* could aid Athens was by serving as ravagers on land and as rowers in the fleet; both provided more benefits to the state and to the *thetes* than untrained *psiloi* service. This chapter will examine how the *thetes* performed as ravagers and rowers, the benefits and disadvantages to *thetes* serving in such capacities, and how this service benefited Athens. Before examining these two opportunities, however, it is instructive to look at what happened when *thetes* *did* serve as *psiloi* to show the minimal advantage to both the *thetes* and the city. Historians such as Thucydides and Xenophon often indicate the presence of light-armed troops in battles fought near Athens. Although some of these troops were probably mercenaries or allies, there were likely many untrained *thetes* among them.³⁴⁰ But *thetes* were also willing to go further from Athens if needed. For example, the Athenian army that marched on Delium in 424 was followed by a large number of unarmored Athenians who left before the battle.³⁴¹

Thetes would have had little trouble finding missile weapons in Athens. A land-owning *thete* would surely have already had some kind of weapon to protect his family and

³⁴⁰ Attack of 411: Thuc. 8.72. Attack of 410: Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.33-34.

³⁴¹ Thuc. 4.94

property against the depredations of men and beasts.³⁴² A missile weapon would have been well suited to this purpose, even more so than the spear and shield of the hoplite panoply that a *thes* could not have afforded anyway.³⁴³ Defending a fenced-in farmstead would not have required much skill with a *thete*'s weapon of choice.

A day laborer, particularly one living in the city, would have had less need for a weapon and might not have had one when the army marched out. Obtaining arms in the city would have been easy, however, especially with the advance notice given when the muster rolls were posted. According to van Wees, a bow and quiver full of arrows would have cost fifteen drachmai and one of the Attic *stelai* from 415 shows a used javelin being auctioned off in Athens for two drachmai, with three drachmai perhaps the cost of a new one.³⁴⁴ No figures survive for the sling, but it was considered cheap even in antiquity and so would have cost even less. The javelins, likely purchased in pairs, might have to be replaced after a battle, making them more expensive than might first appear; whereas the bow, despite its much higher initial cost, could be reused after the archer obtained more arrows. Since it is unlikely that an untrained slinger would be using standardized ammunition, the stones for the sling would have been available for the taking. If a *thes* was too poor or too rushed to arm himself with any of the above weapons, he could simply pick up rocks and throw them at the enemy, as was common in Greek warfare.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Dangers facing a rural farmer: Hanson 1995: 140-5.

³⁴³ See Hanson 1995: 144 concerning the difficulties in using hoplite arms to defend farms.

³⁴⁴ Bow: van Wees 2004: 62. Javelin: van Wees 2004: 62 and n3; Attic *Stelai* 2.226 in Pritchett and Pippin 1956: 307; Snodgrass 1999: 107.

³⁴⁵ van Wees 2004: 64. Pritchett (1991: 1-67) collects the ancient evidence for slingers and stone throwers.

Although surviving sources mention two different shield factories and a knife (or sword) factory in Athens, no such record exists for makers of *psiloi* weaponry in the city.³⁴⁶ This does not mean, however, that *psiloi* were expected to make their own weapons. Shields were a high-end article, while knives were a more common item produced for the masses. If there was enough business to support a knife factory, surely a javelin factory could exist as well, especially given the common athletic use of the weapon. The Athenian archery corps also would have required the services of bowyers, since manufacture of even a simple bow required specialized skills. Even if there were no such factories in Athens, the volume of trade in the city suggests the probability that such weapons were available. Slings might have been the exception, since anyone who could use a sling effectively could probably make one. In most cases, however, it seems that a *thes* wishing to go to war could easily purchase his weapon in the city.

Despite their presence in large numbers, the impact of these *ad hoc psiloi* was so limited in this period that their exact role in battle is uncertain. Thucydides, when describing a battle between Athens and Syracuse, noted that the light-armed forces of both sides, namely archers, stone-throwers, and slingers, fought each other while the hoplites watched.³⁴⁷ This is the only time this type of fighting between light-armed contingents is mentioned in a Classical source, although it was common in the Hellenistic period.³⁴⁸ Although most scholars accept that Thucydides' account reveals the usual method of operation for light-

³⁴⁶ Dem. 9, 36.4; Lys. 12.8, 19; Hasebroek 1965: 72-75.

³⁴⁷ Thuc. 6.69; Wheeler 2007: 203.

³⁴⁸ Wheeler 2007b: 203

armed troops, there is some room for doubt.³⁴⁹ Given that Thucydides spoke of skirmishing as something expected of light-armed troops, however, it seems most likely that this was their usual contribution to battle.

If fighting their opposite number was all the untrained *psiloi* were expected to do, then the negative impact of their inexperience with their weapons would have been considerably ameliorated. Since their actions did not truly affect the outcome of the hoplite battle, it would not matter if they handled their weapons well or missed every target at which they aimed. Of course, a javelin, arrow, or stone fired into a mass of unarmored *psiloi* had the potential to cause significantly more damage than one fired into a phalanx, although the presumably looser formations of the former would have lessened the chance of striking an opponent. In any event, the key point is that these untrained *psiloi* fought their just as poorly trained opposite numbers. It is unknown if professional light-infantry took part in these skirmishes but, given their expense and professionalism, it would have made more sense to use them where their skills could actually affect the outcome of the battle.³⁵⁰

The social stigma attached to light-armed combat also would have been lessened or perhaps altogether avoided in the opening skirmish. After all, there would have been considerable difference between using a barbaric weapon often enough to become proficient versus occasional use to support the war effort. Also, although these untrained *thetes* were never officially organized on the battlefield, they likely deployed together with others of their kind, if only for protection and mutual support. Such a grouping would have made any individuals hard to pick out, assuming any hoplites cared to try. Thus, the *thetes* were

³⁴⁹ Wheeler 2007b: 203-4.

³⁵⁰ Hanson 1998: 23.

protected from the judgment of his betters by anonymity. If a *thes* felt any private shame about using a barbarian weapon, it was likely quieted by the knowledge that he was doing his part to defend his city, no matter how little that contribution might be counted by others.

As Wheeler as argued, the primary purpose of the *psiloi* skirmishing seems to have been ritual, since their overall impact was minimal.³⁵¹ Given their weapons and inexperience with them, this is not surprising. There were other ways, however, in which the *thetes* could have a greater impact on land campaigns. Perhaps the most important of these was ravaging enemy farmland, a job for which these men were eminently suited.³⁵² The destruction of crops and homes would have required few combat skills and could have been potentially safer, since it seems that ravagers were not deployed in the face of defending cavalry or light infantry.³⁵³ Indeed, Hanson states that ravagers did not carry weapons at all but instead bore the tools of agricultural and structural destruction, such as axes, scythes, and shovels.³⁵⁴ Although some ravagers might have carried weapons, most would have instead focused on the tools needed for the task at hand and/or containers to carry booty.³⁵⁵

Ravaging was not without risks. Xenophon records an incident when *psiloi* ravaging around the city of Pygela were surprised by troops from Miletus and had to be rescued by a force of peltasts and hoplites.³⁵⁶ It is unlikely that this was a unique event. Indeed, it may have been common, especially in the later fifth and fourth centuries as light-armed troops and cavalry became increasingly prominent on the battlefield. Hoplites could easily be avoided

³⁵¹ Wheeler 2007b: 203-4.

³⁵² Hanson 1998: 24.

³⁵³ Hanson 1998: 22.

³⁵⁴ Hanson 1998: 30.

³⁵⁵ It should be noted, however, that these troops are still often referred to as *psiloi* in the ancient sources.

³⁵⁶ Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.2-3.

or outrun, but cavalry could swiftly overtake light infantry and mercenary *psiloi* and peltasts would have been highly effective against their untrained counterparts. The only recourse for ravagers caught unarmed and surprised would be flight to their hoplite base or rescue by other troops. Thus many *thetes* probably died while ravaging, unnoted both by the historians and by those commemorating the dead of Athens.³⁵⁷

The purpose of ravaging enemy cropland is debated. In the traditional view its aim was to harm the enemy economically. Hanson has convincingly argued, however, that it was essentially impossible to inflict long-term economic damage by even yearly raids, and this idea has gained a measure of acceptance.³⁵⁸ According to Hanson, grain crops were vulnerable to destruction only during a short window of time each year and olive trees could only be killed by uprooting, a time-consuming and labor-intensive process.³⁵⁹ Only one year's grain harvest could be affected at a time and Hanson argues that an olive tree "destroyed" by raiding armies could be productive again within six to seven years.³⁶⁰ Obviously the loss of a year's grain or six years' worth of olives would have been a severe blow to the individual farmer, but the city as a whole would feel little ill effect.³⁶¹ Thus the goal of agricultural devastation was not to starve out a city, but to force a hoplite battle that would thus decide the conflict.³⁶² If so, then the irregular *psiloi* who accompanied Greek

³⁵⁷ Ravaging as integral to warfare: Hanson 1998: 19-25. Vulnerability of ravagers: Hanson 1998: 126-7.

³⁵⁸ Hanson 1998: 129-174 is the most effective treatment of this theory, although it appears frequently in his other works.

³⁵⁹ Grain: Hanson 1998: 54-55. Olives: Hanson 1998: 56-57

³⁶⁰ Hanson 1998: 67.

³⁶¹ Foxhall 1993: 142-3.

³⁶² Hanson 2005: 34-42.

armies did play an important, if self-defeating, role. The actions of the ravaging *thetes* were responsible for instigating the very kind of battle that left them marginalized.³⁶³

Provoking battle was not the only service that light-armed ravagers could provide. Most hoplites armies, planning to forage in the countryside, only carried enough food for a few days. The same light-armed troops dispatched to destroy crops and houses would also be expected to bring anything back to the camp that could be immediately consumed.³⁶⁴ After a few days in enemy territory, the ravagers probably would have been providing a large share of the food for the army. Similarly, foraging parties might also plunder any farms or homes they came across. The Greeks viewed anything that could be carried or led away as plunder, including roof tiles, wooden beams, livestock, and slaves.³⁶⁵ The Athenians plundered so much during the fifth century that, according to the author of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, Attica was more “lavishly furnished” than any other area in Greece, a fact most appreciated by the Boeotians who carried off much of this wealth during the last years of the Peloponnesian War.³⁶⁶

How long these irregular soldiers could stay in the field was an individual matter, since they were volunteers and presumably under no compulsion to stay any longer than they wished. Furthermore, even if they were expected to stay for the duration, there would have been no way to enforce such a policy given the lack of a muster roll. Nonetheless, the only remaining evidence that speaks to this matter shows volunteer *thetes* remaining with the

³⁶³ Hoplites could also ravage, but because they had to stay in proximity to one another, their destructive capability was limited. See Hanson 1998: 19-21.

³⁶⁴ Hanson 1998: 127.

³⁶⁵ Trundle 2004: 30; Hanson 1995: 144.

³⁶⁶ *Hell. Oxy.* 17.3-5; Hanson 1995: 144.

army until the work was complete and then leaving as a group. Thucydides noted that the light troops who had accompanied the Athenian army to Delium, all of whom were untrained, remained for five days while the temple there was fortified and then left along with the rest of the army (minus those left behind as a garrison).³⁶⁷ The hoplites stopped a short distance from Delium, while the light troops continued on toward Athens.³⁶⁸ No reason is given why they went on, although one might assume that they felt their job was finished and that they could reach Athens faster than the more encumbered hoplites.

It is difficult to say, however, if the behavior of the *thetes* was typical in this case, given the unusual circumstances of the expedition. Due to some organizational issues that made the previously planned invasion untenable, the rather limited goal of the expedition was to fortify Delium, a purpose for which a large number of *thetes* was ideally suited.³⁶⁹ In addition to their usual duties as skirmishers and foragers, they would have been good labor for demolishing existing structures, gathering supplies, digging trenches, and building towers.³⁷⁰ Thus there may have been more for them to do on this occasion than on most others, when the pre-battle skirmish might be the conclusion of their obligations. It is also important to note that the army that left for Delium had been called up by general levy and, according to Thucydides, included not only citizens but also metics and foreigners. This too may have affected the length of their stay, although enforcement would have again remained a critical issue.

³⁶⁷ Thuc. 4.90.

³⁶⁸ Thuc. 4.90.

³⁶⁹ Thuc. 4.89. The original goal was for a sea-borne force under Demosthenes to attack at Siphae while the force from Athens attacked Delium. The attacks were not properly synchronized, however, and the Boeotians were alerted to the surprise attacks by treachery.

³⁷⁰ Thuc. 4.90; Hanson 1998: 24.

Balanced against the evidence of the Delium campaign are the practical issues of volunteering. Even after the institution of pay for soldiers and sailors, no evidence exists that citizen *psiloi* were ever remunerated for their service. Thus a *thes* on campaign would not have been compensated for lost civilian wages, although food and other plunder from foraging may have counterbalanced this loss. Even then, however, there was no guarantee that foraging would provide enough food or that a *thes* would receive a share of any loot. The rules concerning the division of plunder among Athenians are unknown, but Pritchett argues that the method of division in Xenophon's *Anabasis* may have been taken from usual Athenian practice.³⁷¹ According to these rules, plunder taken by any member when the whole army was active went to a general fund to be redistributed.³⁷² When the army was camped, however, soldiers could go on their own to plunder and keep anything they gathered.³⁷³ If so, these rules would give the *thetes* accompanying the army ample opportunity for private plunder, since they often went out on their own. This assumes, of course, that anything worth taking remained: when the rural population of Attica fled to Athens, many took their valuables into the city, including even the woodwork of their houses.³⁷⁴ Surely any rural settler who was able would have likewise taken everything they could from their houses before the Athenian army arrived, although the army might arrive earlier than expected.

The question still remains what the *thetes* got from untrained *psiloi* service. As noted earlier, the *thetes* were not conscripted for *psiloi* duty and presumably were only obligated to

³⁷¹ Pritchett 1991: 388.

³⁷² Xen. *An.* 6.6.2; Pritchett 1991: 388.

³⁷³ Xen. *An.* 6.6.2; Pritchett 1991: 384

³⁷⁴ Thuc. 2.14.1; Hanson 1998: 107.

appear on the rare occasion of a general levy, although even that is not certain. Despite this lack of obligation, it seems that *thetes* showed up regularly enough and in sufficient numbers to become an important, if generally ignored, part of Greek warfare, which begs the question why they went at all.

No remaining evidence records the motivations of *thetes* for this service, so what follows is speculation. The invasion of neighboring *poleis* would have provided ample opportunities for *thetes* to be useful, as well as providing a chance for personal enrichment through plunder, of which many Athenians took advantage of according the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*.³⁷⁵ When defending against invasion, the moral imperative to protect the polis as well as the desire to defend their own homes would have provided the *thetes* with a powerful motivation. In both cases, the *thetes* seem to have been able to put aside any feelings of resentment over their secondary role in warfare.

Another area in which the *thetes* could contribute to the military power of their city was the navy. Athens depended on its navy and the *thetes* provided much of the vast manpower needed. The *thetes* never had a monopoly on naval service, however, and crews were drawn from diverse sources.³⁷⁶ The Athenians were proud that anyone in the city, no matter their rank, was capable of taking their turn at the oar if needed. Indeed, in extreme emergency rowers were conscripted regardless of class or even citizenship status, although this mainly occurred in the fourth century.³⁷⁷ Despite this caveat, it can be safely said that

³⁷⁵ *Hell. Oxy.* 17.3-5.

³⁷⁶ Jordan 1975: 211.

³⁷⁷ De Ste Croix 1981: 207 and n8.

during the period in question, volunteer *thetes* and metics of similar status manned most ships.³⁷⁸

The large Athenian fleet thus employed many *thetes*. A trireme, the most common naval vessel of the day, usually had a crew of 200, of whom 180 were rowers. The remainder were officers and fighting men, some from the higher classes. The exact size of the Athenian fleet is unknown and likely fluctuated over time. Thucydides recorded that Athens deployed 250 triremes to the Aegean in the summer of 428 and some estimates place the total number of ships available at the onset of the war as high as 380.³⁷⁹ Assuming that the fleet of 428 represents a sustainable naval presence, then Athens would have needed 42,500 rowers each sailing season. The one hundred triremes that operated in 431-430 perhaps represented a more typical naval force, but even it would have required the labor of seventeen thousand rowers.³⁸⁰ Given that the total estimated number of *thetes* in 431 was only thirty thousand and may have dropped by as many as six or seven thousand after the plague hit Athens in 430, the Athenian fleet could have absorbed a large percentage of these men.³⁸¹ Slave, metic, and mercenary rowers were also used in Athens, although it seems that they supplemented rather than replaced citizen rowers in most circumstances. Even a ship rowed primarily by non-citizens would still have had a complement of citizen officers, most of whom were likely *thetes*.³⁸² In any event, the Athenian navy would have served as a stable source of employment in both times of peace and war for many *thetes*.

³⁷⁸ Jones 1986 [1957]: 211.

³⁷⁹ Thuc. 3.17; Rawlings 2007: 114; Hanson 2005: 32.

³⁸⁰ Rawlings 2007: 115.

³⁸¹ Rawlings 2007: 115; Hanson 2005: 81.

³⁸² See below for *thetes* as officers.

A primary benefit of rowing over service as untrained *psiloi* was that rowers only had to provide their labor.³⁸³ A combination of state and private money paid for the oars and provisions for the sailors as well as the ship itself and all its equipment.³⁸⁴ Athens paid for the hulls and at least some equipment but trierarchs bore the cost of the repairing, crewing, and restoring any missing equipment out of their own funds.³⁸⁵ Just as helpful to the *thetes* as the free provisions and oar was the training provided to the rowers. Merely moving a ship with the oars required timing and teamwork, not to mention the skill needed to perform the complex maneuvers for which the Athenian navy was famous. All rowers thus had to be trained to the satisfaction of the Athenian generals and trierarchs. Whether this training was undertaken before campaigns or while triremes traveled to their destinations is debated. Although the ancient evidence is ambiguous, the case for training during the expedition is more convincing, mainly because each ship had a different crew every time and it would make sense to drill them altogether.³⁸⁶ Such drilling and experience could have easily transformed a dedicated *thes* into a master rower after a few seasons without more specialized training.

This training not only benefitted the state but also the rowers financially and socially. The trierarchs were greatly concerned with outfitting their ships to the best of their abilities, both as a matter of personal pride and to avoid the appearance of shirking their civil duties.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ Gomme 1945-1956: 1.14.

³⁸⁴ Provisions: Gabrielsen 1994: 120.

³⁸⁵ Gabrielsen 1994: 108, 136.

³⁸⁶ Pritchard 2010: 18 and n103 makes the arguments for specialized training. Gabrielsen 1994: 111 and n13 makes the case for on-the-job training. Xen. *Hell.* 6.2.27-30 shows how Iphicrates conducted on-the-job training for the rowers under his command

³⁸⁷ Gabrielsen 1994: 121

There was much competition for skilled and experienced helmsmen, who could charge a premium for their services.³⁸⁸ An experienced and skilled crew of rowers could also demand higher wages than the state-mandated minimum. If the trierarchs agreed, this extra pay would come directly from their pockets.³⁸⁹ The lure of extra pay would have motivated *thetes* to volunteer for rowing duty, since they could not only earn a standard wage at once but could also work toward higher pay in the future.

The Athenian navy also provided *thetes* with a chance for promotion. It appears that most officers aboard a ship were *thetes* who had usually started out as rowers.³⁹⁰ As already noted, skilled officers, especially helmsmen, could make more than even experienced rowers. Thus, the navy could provide not only training, food, and a good wage, but also the chance of promotion with its higher status. Obviously, only a few rowers could become officers but the opportunity may have enticed many *thetes* to volunteer repeatedly.

Rowers also faced less danger from combat than soldiers on land. Despite what some scholars have argued, it is unlikely that rowers were commonly used as *psiloi*.³⁹¹ As Gabrielsen points out, this would have put the entire ship at risk, since any losses would have to be replaced on the spot for the ship to return home.³⁹² Although the fighting men could row if the need arose, they would lack the training required to properly synchronize with the other rowers and the performance of the whole ship would suffer. Using marines or archers as rowers also reduced the fighting complement of the ship, weakening it in two ways. The

³⁸⁸ Gabrielsen 1994: 121.

³⁸⁹ Gabrielsen 1994: 122.

³⁹⁰ Jordan 1975: 216-220.

³⁹¹ van Wees 2004: 62-64.

³⁹² Gabrielsen 2002b: 86.

operations of Thrasyllus, mentioned previously, would seem the exception that proves the rule; there is no other mention of rowers outfitted in like manner.

Rowing also carried somewhat less stigma than untrained *psiloi* service, although how much less is debatable. Scholars have argued that the *thetes* began rowing because that job was despised and because hoplites did most actual fighting onboard early ships.³⁹³ When new tactics emerged that increasingly relied on the skill of the rowers and the officers onboard, however, the prestige of these men began to increase.³⁹⁴ Although some like Plato despised the contributions of the *thetes* because they used skill rather than courage and were “not altogether noble men” (οὐ πάνυ σπουδαίων ἀνθρώπων γιγνομένης), many poets and public officials took a more positive view and chose to acknowledge their courage.³⁹⁵ It is difficult to say, however, how much of this praise was sincere, as opposed to a calculated attempt by officials and poets to win favor with the poorer Athenians. Pritchard argues that the acceptance of sailors by these officials was partly because many of the upper classes identified themselves as sailors who spent time on ships and might occasionally row.³⁹⁶ This argument seems dubious and overly analytical, given the stratifications of class and warfare in Greece. Poets, politicians, defendants, prosecutors, and many others all needed the goodwill of the *thetes* to be successful in their respective endeavors and honoring them like hoplites would have curried that favor.³⁹⁷ Their sincerity is debatable and perhaps Plato’s view was not unusual, just unusually vocal. On the other hand, the speakers may have been

³⁹³ Gomme 1945-56: 1.15; Pritchard 2010: 18-19.

³⁹⁴ Pritchard 2010: 19.

³⁹⁵ Pl. *Leg.* 4.707a-b; Pritchard 2010: 37; Hanson 1996: 295; Raaflaub 1994: 139.

³⁹⁶ Pritchard 2010: 37.

³⁹⁷ Pritchard does mention this possibility, but in the context of upper-class Athenians serving in the fleet.

sincere while Plato was simply displaying his oligarchic tendencies. In any event, the *thetes* likely gained more respect by rowing than by *psiloi* service, which is perhaps more important than the motives of those giving praise.

In addition to receiving the praise normally due hoplites, *thetes* received the same pay as their social superiors. Athens paid both rowers and hoplites one drachma a day for their services by at least 432 and reduced pay to both groups equally after 412.³⁹⁸ Since pay rates were presumably public knowledge, it is likely that the *thetes* were aware of the equality of their wages. No surviving source explains why both groups were paid the same wages and it seems especially odd considering that hoplites had to pay their own expenses with their wages but sailors did not.³⁹⁹ *Thetes* would thus net more from their base pay even before adding any potential bonuses from the trierarch. The equal pay may have thus served as a tacit acknowledgment that the contributions of the *thetes* were just as valuable as those of the hoplites or as a deliberate policy by city officials to keep the *thetes* happy.

With all these advantages, one might wonder why *thetes* would choose untrained *psiloi* service over rowing at all. Perhaps the greatest issue was time and availability. A *thes* who had a farm or some other trade might be reluctant to leave for an entire sailing season, especially if the expedition involved a lengthy overseas campaign such as Sicily or the siege of Potidaea. Accompanying an army, however, might only take a few days or weeks, assuming the *thes* did not simply leave when ready. Also, rowing may have been too physically demanding for some *thetes*. Similarly, a trierarch had final authority over the composition of his crew and could dismiss anyone he saw as unfit. Indeed, they sometimes

³⁹⁸ Loomis 1998: 39-46, 55-57.

³⁹⁹ Loomis 1998: 33-36.

rejected entire crews of conscripts because none met their standards.⁴⁰⁰ Finally, rowing did involve physical risk. Whether or not most Athenian sailors could swim, a trireme sank fast when rammed and the crew might not escape in time.⁴⁰¹ If they did survive the sinking of their ship, the sailors might be picked off by enemy archers or taken as slaves. A naval battle could thus result in tremendous casualties, although in the years of her ascendancy Athens lost few such battles.

In sum, the *thetes* played an important role in the Athenian military, but not as dedicated *psiloi*. Indeed, one should question whether the ancient historians were correct in calling the large mobs of *thetes* that often accompanied the Athenian army “*psiloi*” at all, despite the instance of modern scholars. This terminology seems misleading since, as fighters, these men contributed little to battles and campaigns. They better served the army in the important roles of ravagers, plunderers, and laborers, all of which required different tools than the weapons of war. Indeed, most *thetes* who undertook such tasks probably did not carry weapons at all but rather the implements of the farmer or builder. Such work, although perhaps less dangerous than combat, had its own risks, and many *thetes* probably perished while performing these duties and were forgotten. Service as a ravager was voluntary and unpaid, with any remuneration coming from plunder.

The most important way a *thes* could support the Athenian military was serving in the navy. Ships required rowers and officers, most of whom were volunteer and *thetes*. The Athenian fleet served a vital role in protecting Athens’ maritime commercial empire, projecting its power abroad, and protecting the city itself by securing the flow of goods that

⁴⁰⁰ Dem. 50.7.

⁴⁰¹ Hanson 2001: 22, 28. Hanson (p.28) says most Greeks could not swim, but see Hdt. 8.89.

kept the city fed during times of war. In return for their services, rowers were given food, employment, wages, and training. The navy also provided a means of advancement, either through promotion to the ranks of officers or by acquisition of enough skill to demand additional pay as an expert rower. Finally, rowers were given at least the appearance of equal respect with hoplites, even if the praise was insincere.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has laid out the practical and social factors that excluded Athenian *thetes* from service as trained *psiloi*, how Athens made up for their absence, and the roles that *thetes* did play in defending their city. As argued, this state of affairs ended sometime in the fourth century with the establishment of the ephebic training program. This program was open to all citizens and trained them in both hoplite and *psiloi* tactics. After a brief summary of the salient points, two vital questions remain: what eventually made Athens relent and teach *psiloi* warfare to its citizens and what effect did this have on both the *thetes* and on Athens?

The emergence of the hoplite phalanx in the Archaic age left the *thetes* of Athens militarily marginalized because they could not afford to join that body. The only other possibility available to them before the development of the Athenian navy during the Persian Wars was service as *psiloi*, but a number of practical and social factors prevented them from such service. On the practical level, *thetes* had to spend most of their time providing for their own needs, leaving little time to master difficult missile weapons. Even with time, there were no public nor perhaps even private training programs available. This absence was deliberate since, as the archery corps demonstrates, the Athenians could have created a professional *psiloi* force if desired. Informal training, such as dancing and athletics, required personal initiative and investment of time by the *thetes*. Even if followed, such regimens would have only served to keep the *thetes* fit and would have not have provided them with vital weapons training.

In addition to these practical factors, a number of social issues kept *thetes* from becoming effective *psiloi*. The hoplite elite used a variety of public and private means, both literary and material, to remind *thetes* that the hoplites (and, to a lesser degree, the cavalry) were the true defenders of the city. Additionally, the cultural superiority of the hoplite following the Persian Wars led to the denigration of most other weapons and styles of fighting. The use of mercenaries further tarnished the image of light infantry, since their weapons could be associated with undesirable attributes of barbarians: cowardliness, effeminacy, and servility.

Having effectively suppressed its own native source of *psiloi*, Athens turned to other sources for such troops. Mercenaries were a popular external source of light infantry and were used with increasing frequency and in increasingly large numbers over time. Allies were another potential source, although they presented unique challenges. Athens could also call on its own metics and slaves. Metics were frequently used in the Athenian army, mostly as hoplites or rowers. Athens rarely used slaves in a fighting capacity due to the inherent difficulties and a mistrust of them.

Bereft of the opportunity to serve as effective light infantry, many *thetes* instead followed the hoplite armies as untrained ravagers and laborers. Although the ancient sources often referred to these as *psiloi*, their fighting ability was minimal and of little consequence. Their main use was in foraging for the army and providing any labor needed in the field. During and after the Persian Wars many *thetes* joined the fleet as volunteer rowers, which provided them with training, “guaranteed” wages, and a chance of promotion within the fleet.

Rowers eventually gained some respect from Athenian politicians and poets, who acknowledged the importance of the navy to the security of the city and its empire.

This state of affairs changed in the fourth century with the introduction of the ephobic training program. This program trained young Athenian men to use both hoplite and *psiloi* weapons. If one accepts the argument that *thetes* were allowed in the program, then this may be the point when they were finally offered the opportunity to become effective *psiloi* and serve their city. Even more dramatically, they were also given both the training and tools to become hoplites, should they be needed in such a capacity. This program thus marked a dramatic break from the hoplite ideal and the class-based system of warfare that had been in effect for so long.

The question still remains why this change took place. There is no definitive answer from the extant sources, so the following is speculation. The easiest answer is that the cause was military necessity but, as shown below, this was not the case. In fact, there seems to be no compelling explanation why *thetes* were allowed to take more active roles in the defense of their city in the fourth century. Indeed, there may have never been a sense that the *thetes* were suddenly more “worthy” than before. The inclusion of *thetes* in the Athenian army seems to have resulted from various gradual forces rather than any one event.

It was argued above that none of the changes wrought by the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars led to any immediate change in Greek warfare, as some scholars have assumed. Instead, the accumulated weight of minor changes began to have a major impact in the Corinthian War. One of the most important was that war, by degrees, was becoming more professional. The payments provided to sailors and hoplites shortly before the

Peloponnesian War can perhaps be seen as the beginning of this trend, although it is likely the Athenians merely saw it as an extension of the payments already being provided to jurors and others in government service. The increasingly common practice of hiring light-armed mercenaries was another way in which war was becoming dominated by professionals. Another factor was the rising interest in strategy and tactics and the emergence of more flexible military minds such as the general Demosthenes, Xenophon, and Iphicrates. They saw the value in armies made up of more than just hoplites. Such attitudes accelerated the professionalism of war.

One of the most subtle changes brought about by this professionalization was the gradual divorce of war from its social and agrarian base, especially in Athens.⁴⁰² The hoplite model was built around the ideal of a group of more or less equal citizens marching out to defend the agricultural land of a city from a similar body of enemy hoplites. Although the Persian Wars reinforced the notion of hoplite warfare, it in many ways also undermined its reality. In the following years Athens needed both light infantry and rowers but the mercenary *psiloi* and peltasts which it hired were not citizens and the *thetes* who rowed in the fleets were not the equals of the hoplites, nor perhaps even of each other.⁴⁰³ The goals of warfare were also shifting. It was no longer enough to fight off the enemy in Attica; the Athenians now had to protect their interests and project their power abroad in places such as Thrace and Sicily.⁴⁰⁴ The enlarged geographical scope of war meant soldiers had to spend

⁴⁰² Hanson 1995: 350.

⁴⁰³ Vidal-Naquet 1986: 90-92. It is easy to imagine the *penates* among the *thetes* seeing themselves as distinct from the *ptochoi*, for instance.

⁴⁰⁴ Hanson 1995: 331.

more time away from home.⁴⁰⁵ This expansion thus undermined the agrarian basis for war and transformed war away from the short, sharp battles for which hoplite warfare had been intended. Despite their eventual impact, these changes were initially subtle. It took over a century for these changes to enable *thetes* to serve in the city's land forces.

Amidst this backdrop of transforming priorities and ways of warfare, the *thetes* were changing as a class. As noted, although the *thetes* had been granted political rights in Athens by the reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes, they were left militarily marginalized until the creation of the Athenian fleet before the Persian Wars. They quickly took advantage of this new opportunity to serve. The early victories at Salamis and Artemisium gave them a source of pride, even if later writers tried to belittle their accomplishments.⁴⁰⁶ Even more importantly, as part of the navy, they received training that likely exceeded anything offered to hoplites.⁴⁰⁷ Additionally, they received pay at least equal to that of hoplites and also garnered public praise for their actions. Finally, by serving in the fleet *thetes* developed a sense of themselves as a class that allowed them to turn their military power into increased political power.⁴⁰⁸

Thus, even during the Persian Wars, the *thetes* could serve their city militarily in large numbers as rowers or through the more selective archery corps. In both cases they received training, experience, and a sense of their worth as soldiers and citizens. Despite these opportunities, their ability to fight on land in an effective manner was still being suppressed

⁴⁰⁵ Hanson 1995: 334.

⁴⁰⁶ Strauss 1996: 315, 317, 318-9.

⁴⁰⁷ Strauss 1996: 317

⁴⁰⁸ Strauss 1996: 315-17.

by the same practical and social factors that had marginalized them in the Archaic age. Nonetheless, the foundation was being laid for their acceptance in the fourth century.

At the same time that the *thetes* were gaining more respect and self-awareness of their importance, the remaining vestiges of timocracy that lurked behind the democracy of Athens were disappearing. Sometime before the Peloponnesian War the city began using cash equivalences instead of actual produce as measures for the Solonic classifications.⁴⁰⁹ This change allowed non-agriculturalists from the city to participate in the phalanx alongside the landed *zeugitai*, although apparently the generals still felt the latter were better soldiers.⁴¹⁰ The *thetes* still would have been excluded by their poverty, but such a move did open the phalanx to more participants. Furthermore, the fluctuating prices of produce relative to money might have necessitated a readjustment of property requirements, perhaps as often as yearly.⁴¹¹ Such readjustments might have allowed wealthier *thetes* the opportunity to serve in the phalanx once they had acquired a panoply.

The old classification system eventually lost its power in other areas as well. According to Aristotle, the laws about *thetes* being ineligible for some state offices were still on the books in his day but were not enforced.⁴¹² By his account, any *thes* on whom the lot fell for a particular office was expected to take up the office and would simply deny being a *thes* if asked.⁴¹³ He also noted that some of those chosen to be treasurers of Athens (who were ostensibly exclusively *pentekosiomedimnoi*) were quite poor but still expected to fulfill

⁴⁰⁹ Hanson 1995: 349.

⁴¹⁰ Ar. *Pax* 1181-90; Hanson 1995: 349.

⁴¹¹ Arist. *Pol.* 5.1308a 35-40; Hanson 1995: 349 Unlike Hanson, I do not see this passage as proof that adjustments were made, merely that Aristotle felt doing so was wise.

⁴¹² [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 7.4, 47.1; Hansen 1991: 88.

⁴¹³ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 7.4, 47.1; Hansen 1991: 88.

their duties.⁴¹⁴ It is unclear from the passage if this was because some men were incorrectly classed as *pentekosiomedimnoi* or because that requirement was being ignored altogether.⁴¹⁵ In either case, the evidence indicates that the system was considered so broken that it could be safely ignored.⁴¹⁶ If qualifications for political offices were being ignored, perhaps these were also being ignored for military service, although it must have begun before Aristotle's time to be relevant to the current discussion.

Despite these changes in their favor, the *thetes* were up against demography; this may be a major reason why it took forty years after the end of the Peloponnesian War for them to be considered as fully equal citizens. The *thetes* suffered more than the other classes from the war and plague. Strauss estimates that ca. 12,600 of perhaps 20,000 *thetes* died in during the war.⁴¹⁷ Equally important, more of them died at the end of the war than at the beginning, while the opposite was true of the hoplites.⁴¹⁸ Such a disparity meant that after the war hoplites actually outnumbered *thetes*, even taking into account those hoplites who had fallen into the thetic class due to loss of property, etc.⁴¹⁹ Their lack of numbers limited the political power of the *thetes* severely, although not entirely.⁴²⁰

The reconstitution of the Athenian navy during the Corinthian War also delayed the introduction of more *thetes* into the land armies of Athens. The fleet was a gift from the Persian satrap Pharnabazus, which the Athenian Conon brought to Athens in 393 along with

⁴¹⁴ [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 47.1.

⁴¹⁵ Rhodes 1981: 551.

⁴¹⁶ Rhodes 1981: 145-6.

⁴¹⁷ Strauss 1987: 80-81.

⁴¹⁸ Strauss 1987: 80. After 413, only about 980 hoplites died, as opposed to 6,600 *thetes*.

⁴¹⁹ Strauss 1987: 81.

⁴²⁰ Strauss 1987: 81, 114.

Persian money.⁴²¹ Xenophon does not say how many ships were in the fleet (other than simply “many”), but given that the number of able *thetes* would have still been low in 393, a fleet of even fifty triremes should have been able to accommodate all willing *thetes*.⁴²² The Persian money would have also paid Athenian rowers, since Conon used his own crews as labor to rebuild the Long Walls at Athens.⁴²³ Loomis estimates that their wages were at least four obols per day and may have even returned to the previous level of one drachma.⁴²⁴ Rowing would have thus held the same draw for *thetes* as before, especially given their reduced political influence due to their decreased numbers.

Even after overcoming all of these obstacles, the *thetes* and the rest of the Athenians still had to contend with the notion that on land at least, free men should fight as hoplites. It seems, however, that they could not jump this final hurdle and instead chose to circumvent it: most trained *thetes* took their state-issued shield and spear and joined the phalanx instead of serving as *psiloi*.⁴²⁵ Unfortunately, the newly militarily enfranchised *thetes* were still not were not given much chance to show their worth on the battlefield. By the time the ephebic training had been put into place, the professionalization of war had come so far that most battles were mostly conducted by mercenaries, not by citizens. In 349 Demosthenes complained that the citizens of Athens did nothing in wartime except wait for news of how their mercenaries were faring.⁴²⁶ While this statement might be dismissed as an orator’s hyperbole, the Athenian campaigns against Philip II seem to validate his statement. In 358,

⁴²¹ Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.9; Best 1969: 94.

⁴²² Fifty triremes would have needed a crew of ten thousand men.

⁴²³ Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.10.

⁴²⁴ Loomis 1998: 157.

⁴²⁵ Hanson 1995: 149-150.

⁴²⁶ Dem. 3.35; Parke 1981 [1933]: 143.

when Athens sent a force of 3,000 soldiers against Philip, it was not composed of graduates of the ephebic program but rather of mercenary hoplites, the first the city had hired.⁴²⁷ After this campaign failed, a peace was reached which lasted until 355/6, when the Athenian mercenary commander Chares was placed in charge of the campaign.⁴²⁸ He conducted the campaign poorly and eventually turned to piracy. This finally prompted the Athenians to send a citizen army to Thermopylae to hold the pass against Philip in 353, which was successful.⁴²⁹ After this victory, Athens continued to use mercenary peltasts against Philip until 349, when two thousand citizen hoplites were dispatched to aid the city of Olynthus.⁴³⁰ This force never arrived due to bad weather and the next hoplite battle fought by the citizen armies of Athens was at Chaeronea in 338.⁴³¹ This defeat for Athens and the rest of the alliance against Philip essentially marks the end of Athens as an independent polis.

As the above historical sketch indicates, the newly trained and equipped citizen army of Athens was not given many chances to prove itself on the field of battle. There were only two major hoplite battles following the introduction of the program. The peltasts and *psiloi* used by the Athenians in the interim seem to have all been mercenaries. Thus the ephebic training program seems to have been too little, too late, coming when most Athenians were not eager to fight in lengthy campaigns far from home. Those *thetes* who did fought as hoplites and not as light infantry.

⁴²⁷ Diod. Sic. 16.3; Parke 1981 [1933]: 143-4.

⁴²⁸ Parke 1981 [1933]: 144.

⁴²⁹ Aeschines 2.71; Diod. Sic. 16.38; Parke 1981 [1933]: 144-6.

⁴³⁰ Parke 1981 [1933] : 146-8.

⁴³¹ Parke 1981 [1933]: 154.

The results of this present work suggest that the commonly held notion that Athenian *thetes* often served as *psiloi* is incorrect. The evidence collected here instead indicates that Athens never in fact properly utilized its large population of *thetes* effectively on land. There were too many practical and social barriers and too many alternatives to acquire these troops that required fewer social risks. By the time the social and practical factors had diminished sufficiently to the point where it was thought safe to include *thetes* in the organized military of the city, warfare had changed to such a degree that their presence was no longer necessary. Mercenary light infantry were now so important that Athens continued to hire them to fight its battles instead of its own trained citizens.

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