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**Athenian ‘amateurs’? Greek war preparation and the Classical
Athenian *polis* (479-323 BCE)**

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Abstract

By using classical Athens as its case study, this article argues that hoplites benefitted from various forms of physical and civic ‘war preparation’ that prepared male citizens for classical warfare. The initial section of this article critiques the problematic use of the term ‘amateurism’ in the context of classical society. The following section then analyses the nature of classical campaigns and argues physical ‘war preparation’ was a necessary undertaking in order to prepare for this reality. The final section argues that experience in battle, the Athenian system of recruitment and ephebic institution were means through which military discipline was enforced; aided through a local military command system.

Introduction - 'Amateurism' in the classical Greek world

A period of economic growth between 650-550 BCE had profoundly altered ancient Greek armies.¹ Male citizens from lower economic backgrounds were becoming able to 'buy-into' the hoplite phalanx by acquiring the shield and spear necessary for service, profoundly reducing the archaic elite's monopoly of the 'hoplite class'.² Rather than small units of full-time mercenaries; classical hoplites now represented a large proportion of the male citizen body – a body consisting of farmers and labourers as well as the leisured and elite citizens.³ Hanson had initially suggested these new hoplites were part-time 'yeoman-farmer citizens' who disregarded military training due to their agricultural lifestyle and fought according to a series of ritual *agonal* rules aimed at making battle 'amateur friendly'.⁴ This interpretation has since been debunked,⁵ yet the 'amateur' view still prevails in recent studies. For example, van Wees argues that a 'spirit of amateurism' remained a fundamental element of classical Greek warfare.⁶ Additionally, the recent study by Konijnendijk claims a conscious 'aversion to military training' existed that prolonged the 'amateurism of the hoplite levy'.⁷

However, there is a lack of explicit definition of what 'amateur' connotes and how it is applied in an ancient context. For the most part, it appears that ancient Greek hoplites are compared against our modern understanding of 'professionalism', where individuals undergo periods of institutionalised training and experience to then be considered competent to perform specific occupations.⁸ However, this was a period in which the average citizen's exposure to military service was substantially higher

¹ Hanson 1995: 36-38; Finley 1985: 85.

² Foxhall 1997: 129-31; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1289b.

³ Van Wees 2013: 223-4.

⁴ Hanson 1995: 41.

⁵ Foxhall 2013: 216.

⁶ Van Wees 2004: 70.

⁷ Konijnendijk 2017: 39, 225.

⁸ Larson 1977: 36. Rises in production and labour markets led to an increased demand for occupations that required specialist training necessary to perform specific occupations. Post-industrial European states began to develop 'professional' soldiers by introducing standing armies who were paid and even trained into specialised corps to perform specific functions in combat.

than by modern standards.⁹ It seems implausible that *poleis* failed to offer its hoplites a classical version of ‘military preparation’, that male citizens consciously decided to not prepare for a real and potentially life-threatening occupation and that, even after experiencing and surviving campaign, they remained ‘amateur’ soldiers.¹⁰ As Ridley states ‘we have forgotten to ask what it was like to be an ordinary – or wealthy and important – citizen called upon to serve in the phalanx’.¹¹

Therefore, this study will argue that citizen hoplites – contrary to the assertions of a number of scholars – were not military ‘amateurs’ but benefitted from various forms of ‘military preparation’ in an effort to prepare for warfare. This will be achieved by analysing the nature of ancient Greek warfare and how stresses of campaign required male citizens outside of a heavily laboured occupation to be under a practical and civic responsibility of physical fitness. The article will then discuss what it defines as civic ‘war preparation’ in which the Athenian militia recruitment system, alongside institutions such as the *ephebia* (the training of young male citizens around the age of 17-18), enforced military discipline via a local command system and their experiences on campaign.

Physical ‘War Preparation’: ‘Physical fitness’ and the Realities of Classical Campaign

The military campaigns of the classical period were doubtlessly physical and psychologically strenuous periods. Both the campaign and equipment caused considerable physical exertions that hoplites, young and old, had a responsibility to prepare for. We must be reminded that the physiology of ancient society is often considered comparable with the modern individual, despite obvious changes in biological conditioning over this time.¹² This section will show that Athenian attitudes

⁹ Pritchard 2005: 17-20.

¹⁰ Crowley 2012: 39.

¹¹ Ridley 1979: 508.

¹² Schwartz 2013: 167; Angel 1945: 285; Henneburg and Henneburg 1998: 521; Carter 2006: 41. Although admittedly limited in sample size, osteological analysis from Attica and Metaponto suggests classical individuals to be on average shorter and lighter than by modern standards with a male average height of around ‘162-5cm’ and weight of ‘60-65kg’.

towards physical 'war preparation' suggests that wealthy and urban citizens were under a social and practical, rather than legal, obligation to maintain physical fitness that was necessary for Greek campaign.

Although requiring a critical approach, Thucydides claims authority to recite speeches by adhering to a 'general sense of what [the speaker] said' and their thematic structure.¹³ By using Pericles as an authoritative mouthpiece, Thucydides prides Athenian 'military policy (*μελέταις*)' in opposition to the Lakedaimonians:¹⁴

'We throw open our city to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing...trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens; while in education, where our rivals from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness, at Athens we live exactly as we please, and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger...while we Athenians advance unsupported into the territory of a neighbour, and fighting upon a foreign soil usually vanquish with ease men who are defending their homes...and yet if with habits not of labour but of ease, and courage not of art but of nature, we are still willing to encounter danger, we have the double advantage of escaping the experience of hardships in anticipation and of facing them in the hour of need as fearlessly as those who are never free from them'.¹⁵

For Thucydides, Athenian citizens were socially encouraged through 'courage...of nature' and by 'living exactly how they please' to prepare for war, rather than legally

¹³ Thuc. 1.22.1; Goldhill 2002: 41; cf. Hornblower 1991-2008. 'With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said'.

¹⁴ Thuc. 1.22.

¹⁵ Thuc. 2.39.

obligated through 'painful discipline'.¹⁶ It suggests that from the late-fifth century Athenian citizens underwent the *polis* system of 'war preparation' for this duty and Pritchard argues that by the 450s, Athenian citizens had come to perceive military service as 'the duty of every citizen'.¹⁷

Athenian 'war preparation' appears to focus on the pursuit and maintenance of physical fitness.¹⁸ As Aristotle presents, 'good health (*εὐεξία*)' was characterised by a 'firmness of flesh' whilst those who were 'physically unfit (*καχεξίαν*)' exhibited a 'flabbiness of flesh'.¹⁹ Thucydides claims that the sound of flutes allowed the Lakedaimonians to march in 'even step', however his mention that this was not with any 'religious motive' suggests that flutists were present in Greek processions during religio-civic festivals, perhaps also for the purpose of marching in-step.²⁰ Plato suggests that citizens were able to build physical strength, as well as practise marching, through dancing and processions at religious festivals. He notes that dancing aimed at 'physical soundness (*εὐεξίας*), agility and beauty...directed towards strength and health (*ὑγιείας*)'.²¹ To further increase its application to warfare, he recommends this to be practiced 'vested in *panoplia* (*πανοπλία*)' and children from the 'age of six until they reach war age' should be equipped with 'shield and *hiplon*' for processions to aid them in their eventual service in 'war (*πολέμου*)'.²² Equipping dancers with a *hoplon* is significant as it refers to the shield necessary for service in the hoplite phalanx.²³ Although Plato's recommendations are often

¹⁶ cf Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 3.8.4. This may be an Athenian view of 'military policy' as it finds comparison in the mid-third century when Aristotle claims 'citizen soldiers (*πολιτική μάλιστα*)' fought with more courage when not 'forced into battle by their kings (*ἀρχόντων*)'. This is also likely made in a similar comparison to the Lakedaimonian system given the connotations of the term *archonton* for 'overlord' or 'ruler'.

¹⁷ Pritchard 2005: 17.

¹⁸ cf Xen. *Cons. Lac.* 5.8-9. Xenophon claims the Lycurgan system was focussed on physical fitness: 'it is [every man's] duty to...[be] in good condition (*σῶμα ἔχων*)'.

¹⁹ Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 1129a20.

²⁰ Thuc. 5.70.

²¹ Plat. *Laws.* 795e. *εὐεξίας* is used again by Plato (*Rep.* 559a) when speaking of: 'eating to keep in health and condition'. *ὑγιείας* is used to mean 'health and good bodily condition' by Plato (*Prot.* 354b); Herodotus uses the term *ὑγιηρέστατοι* to describe the Egyptians as 'the healthiest men of all' (*Hdt.* 2.77.3).

²² Plat. *Laws.* 796c.

²³ cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1297b 18. The shield was considered by Aristotle to be 'for the sake of the battle-line'.

considered 'good primarily for thinking with, not acting upon',²⁴ evidence suggests these festivals could be performed in armour and were prominent religious rituals – Plato's suggestions are therefore likely indicative of established Athenian practice.²⁵ Aeschines rhetorically questions whether one would rather have 'ten-thousand hoplites like Philon, so fit in body (*σώματα οὔτω διακειμένους*)...or thrice ten-thousand lewd weaklings'.²⁶ Therefore, physical fitness was considered to have a direct military application and a necessity for one to consider themselves prepared for war.

Although we witness criticism of the attitudes of leisured Athenian citizens to war, these disputes appear to suggest internal 'political dissent' against Athenian style democracy rather than a critique of Athenian 'military preparation'.²⁷ The dissenters (or the 'oligarchs') argued that the increasing role of the navy had given political precedence to the *demos*, or 'the many',²⁸ who used their enfranchisement to manipulate assemblies and neglect the traditional wealthy hoplite class – who in turn neglected their military service and physical condition.²⁹ As early as 420BC, the Old Oligarch claims the 'rabble' visited the gymnasia and baths more 'than the well-to-do members of the upper-class' resulting in 'Athenian hoplites' having 'the reputation of being very weak (*ἥκιστα*)...weaker (*ἥττους*)...than their enemies'.³⁰ However, what this 'rabble' was composed of is unclear - it may refer to urban citizens such as potters, artisans and resident 'aliens' who could 'buy-into' the Athenian militia and navy.³¹ He further claims this reputation was 'deliberately constituted' when in fact 'they are stronger (*κρατιστεύουσι*)' than their enemies and therefore 'think their

²⁴ Cartledge 2009: 99.

²⁵ cf. *Ath. Cons.* 42.4. *Ephebes* performed a 'display of drill' in arms 'before the people' of the *polis* upon completion of the *ephebia*.

²⁶ *Aes. Sp.* 2.151.

²⁷ Ober 1998: 62; Cartledge 2009: 91.

²⁸ *Cons. Ath.* 1.2, 10. The Old Oligarch claims it was illegal for freemen to hit slaves at Athens as one would 'often hit an Athenian citizen by mistakes on assumption that he was a slave'.

²⁹ Cartledge 2009: 57, 60-1, 64.

³⁰ *Cons. Ath.* 2.1; Cartledge 2009: 140. Aside from the Old Oligarch, the term *ἥκιστος* is used mostly as an adverb meaning the 'least' or 'worst at' rather than weakness in a physical sense cf. *Hdt.* 4.170; *Thuc.* 1.91; *Soph. Philo*, 427; *Ael, Nat. Anim*, 4.31. However, *ἡσσων* appears related to inferiority in a military context cf. *Hdt.* 9.62.3; *Thuc.* 4.72.3; *Xen. Anab*, 5.6.32; *Aesch. Supp. Wom.* 489.

³¹ *Cons. Ath.* 1.2-3.

hoplites (ὀπλιτικὸν) sufficient'.³² By the mid-fourth century, Aristotle suggests several oligarchies had made it mandatory for leisured wealthy citizens to regularly visit the gymnasium and the Oligarch's complaint suggests a failed attempt to enforce this requirement at Athens also.³³ Xenophon expresses this criticism through his tutor, Socrates, who orders an unfit Athenian citizen to 'be in as high a state of physical fitness (σῶμα ἔχειν) as possible' despite the fact 'military training is not publicly recognised' at Athens.³⁴ This statement remains a clear indication of Xenophon's political view as mandatory military training for the leisured *homoioi* (Spartan citizens) was fundamental to the Lycurgan system.³⁵ He claims that being 'unfit (σώματος καχεξίαν)' caused death 'in the perils of war and bodily weakness (σώματος ἀδυναμίαν)' meant hoplites were more likely to flee.³⁶ However, the Athenians still imposed 'no fine upon the well-to-do for abstaining' from visits to the gymnasium by the late fourth century.³⁷ Therefore, contemporaries understood physical fitness had a direct military application and, although not being legally enforced at Athens, we can suggest it was a societal expectation that male citizens of service age kept fit.

An analysis of classical Greek warfare would suggest why physical fitness was part of Athenian 'war preparation'. By the end of fourth century,³⁸ campaigns could be sustained for up to four or five months with social and economic class varying access to slaves (for the purpose of carrying equipment), obtaining better provisions,

³² *Cons. Ath.* 2.1. We must be reminded that the Oligarch aims to show how the Athenians accomplished feats despite their political system for 'which the rest of the Greeks criticise them' cf. *Cons. Ath.* 1.1.

³³ *Arist. Pol.* 1297a 29.

³⁴ *Xen. Mem.* 3.12.1.

³⁵ Cawkwell 2004: 48-50; Lee 2005: 58-60. Xenophon's view of Athenian democracy had certainly been affected by the execution of Socrates in 399. Later he would nurture a close friendship with the Spartan king Agesilaus, even acting as the patron for his eulogy. For his service, his sons were said to be the only two non-Spartans to receive a Spartan education.

³⁶ *Xen. Mem.* 3.12.5.

³⁷ *Arist. Pol.* 1297a 29.

³⁸ *Dem. Third. Phil.* 47-50. Millet 2013: 46. However, we must be critical of Demosthenes' maximum as he moralises that Philip II of Macedon broke the 'Greek rules of war' by campaigning longer and through the winter. Later, he recommends the army sent to defeat Philip could be sustained via 'booty' which suggests that campaigns could last for longer than a five-month period.

lodgings, equipment and diet.³⁹ Hoplites were subjected to the weight of their equipment during this period with recent estimates of 22-31kg for hoplites equipped with a helmet, cuirass, shin guards, shield, spear and sword.⁴⁰ However, Krentz offers a more convincing 'moderated' estimate of '18-22kg', dropping down to just '9kg' for those with a cuirass and shield alone.⁴¹ Economic conditions allowing a larger proportion of citizens to serve as a hoplite is likely to have led to the adoption of more affordable and widely-available equipment, such as the linen-corselet.⁴² A similar pattern appears for shields with reconstructions made from poplar weighing around 6.2kg with 3kg due to bronze facing.⁴³ Therefore, Krentz suggests that 'hoplite shields could weigh 7-9kg' with more affordable shields weighing 'half as much' of that total.⁴⁴ After the sixth century, dedications at Olympia appear to 'fall off' which suggests the adoption of 'lighter materials', rather than a change in dedicatory practice.⁴⁵ Thucydides suggests armour was an important internal marker of social class between hoplites,⁴⁶ therefore it is likely that a majority of hoplites would have been subject to weights at the lower end of this maximum.⁴⁷

The physically challenging nature of campaign and hoplite equipment was subject to contemporary regard. Although in a study of Athenian society we must be cautious of Xenophon's sympathy for the Lycurgan system at Sparta, his participation in the *Anabasis* validates his status as a veteran soldier with experience of classical Greek

³⁹ Van Wees 2004: 104-8; Rawlings 2007: 73-5.

⁴⁰ Hanson 2009: 56; cf. Rustow and Kochly 1852. Rustow estimated the full weight of the *panoply* at around 36kg.

⁴¹ Krentz 2013: 135.

⁴² Krentz 2010: 50; Cartledge 2013: 78. Traditional metal pieces (the helmet and greaves) appear to have been 'thinner' at this time perhaps in response to demand.

⁴³ Snodgrass 1964: 64; Schwartz 2002: 57; cf. Pliny. *Nat. His.* 16.209. Although Pliny is a much later commentator, he suggests it was made from soft wood (such as poplar or willow) due to their ability to dent rather than split and shatter. Considerable weight was added by bronze facing as shown by the Spartan army cf. Xen. *Cons. Lac.* 11.4.

⁴⁴ Krentz 2013: 136; Snodgrass 1964: 64. Snodgrass notes that a majority of the shields dedicated at Olympia do not appear to have been bronze-faced.

⁴⁵ Snodgrass 1980: 105; 2013: 88.

⁴⁶ Thuc. 6.31.3. Thucydides claims hoplites engaged in 'intense rivalry...in the matter of equipment and dress' before the Sicilian expedition.

⁴⁷ Krentz 2007: 72; van Wees 2004: 186-188; Viggiano 2013: 117.

campaign.⁴⁸ Xenophon remarks that hoplites grow weary of ‘picking up and walking...running and carrying’ arms also ‘being in line...standing guard and fighting’ on campaign.⁴⁹ Socrates is made to chastise an unfit Athenian citizen by claiming he could not ‘endure’ the rigors of campaign in his current physical state.⁵⁰ He even claims disobedient Lakedaimonian hoplites were disciplined by standing to attention dressed in full *panoply*.⁵¹ This is also witnessed in comic plays such as Euripides’ *Heraclidae* where an elderly hoplite is advised to ‘go unarmed for the present’ to spare him ‘the weight of’ his armour.⁵² Although Euripides’ play and Xenophon’s history cannot be compared as having similar historical value, Boswell correctly identifies that ancient plays involved a certain degree of accurate social commentary to engage the audience.⁵³ Military service was a reality for a majority of male citizens and these comments suggest that the *panoply* reflected a real and intense burden for hoplites. Whether it is considered small by modern standards, it certainly would have been more significant for physiologically smaller individuals.⁵⁴

The realities of campaign alongside the burden of the hoplite equipment, despite being not as intense as is sometimes suggested, required citizens to be in a state of physical fitness. On campaign hoplites were expected to carry their equipment, whether through slaves or themselves, and procure provisions, march, charge and fight, at times donned in a considerable weight for a period of up to four to five months. The ability to sustain this exertion would have been seriously hampered if one was physically unready. Therefore, it is understandable that contemporaries appear to have regarded an active or laboured life-style as ‘military preparation’ enough in peace-time and as a means of keeping citizens physically prepared for their frequent military obligations which, within Athens, appears to have been adhered to.

⁴⁸ Buzzetti 2014: 40.

⁴⁹ Xen. *An.* 5.1.2.

⁵⁰ Xen. *Mem.* 3.12.3.

⁵¹ Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.9. cf. Xen. *An.* 3.4.47. He also refers to the weight of the shield when a subordinate hoplite, Soteridas of Sikyon, exclaims he was ‘wearing [him]self completely out’ by carrying his shield.

⁵² Eur. *Her.* 720.

⁵³ Boswell 1988: 99.

⁵⁴ Schwartz 2013: 167.

Civic 'War Preparation': The Social Selection and Military Expectations of Hoplites

We have explored how physical fitness was a critical part of Athenian 'war preparation' that was necessary to cope with the strenuous nature of campaign, however we must also consider battle itself. Although Hornblower correctly claims that 'only an unusually arrogant scholar... [would claim to know] what kind of thing went on in hoplite battle',⁵⁵ hoplites were doubtlessly subjected to extreme conditions on the battlefield that required personal discipline and experience as well as recognised command within the phalanx.⁵⁶ Hoplites were expected to charge, fight and withstand multiple attacks before eventually routing the enemy or fleeing *en masse*, all whilst equipped with armour.⁵⁷ At Koroneia, Xenophon describes the horror of hoplite fighting: 'their shields together they pushed, they fought, they killed...when the fighting ended, one could see where they met one another' - as the first few ranks engaged in *othismos* (pushing), the following ranks entered holes caused by fatigue or casualties.⁵⁸ Lysias considered hoplite battle to be far more dangerous than service in the cavalry and declared it 'shameful...to go on campaign...organising my own safety [in the cavalry] while the [hoplites] will be in danger'.⁵⁹ The nature of this combat was clearly both exhausting and demoralising which explains why commentators regarded experience as key to discipline, allowing hoplites to fight in formation longer.⁶⁰ During the Sicilian expedition, Thucydides remarks that the Sicilians had not lacked 'discipline' but had fought 'against [the Athenians] who were the foremost among the Hellenes in experience (*ἐμπειρία*)'.⁶¹ Aristotle claims 'ξένοι' or mercenary troops were 'efficient in inflicting loss on the

⁵⁵ Hornblower 1991-2008: 2.306.

⁵⁶ This article cannot discuss the intricacies of battle in detail due to word limits, however see: On the 'hoplite scrum' see: Hanson 1998: 139-40; Lazenby 1991: 97. Recently on the 'hoplite scrimmage' see: Viggiano 2013: 128 n.41. For 'revised' models see: Goldsworthy 1997: 10; Krentz 1994, 2013; Matthew 2009.

⁵⁷ Cartledge 2013: 80. At Delium, the Athenians were pushed back 'step-by-step' by an '*othismos* of *aspides*', before fleeing after beating back 'two or three attacks', cf. Thuc. 4.96, 5.10.

⁵⁸ Xen. *Ages.* 2.12; *Cyr.* 6.3.21-2, 6.4.17; *Hell.* 6.4.5-15; Plut. *Pelo.* 23.1; Lazenby 1985: 98. It was the Thebans at Leuktra who were able to fully utilise a deep phalanx formation effectively and, although outnumbered, defeated the Spartan frontline through sustained pressure.

⁵⁹ Lys. 16.13; Spence 1993: 220.

⁶⁰ Keegan 1976: 100.

⁶¹ Thuc. 6.72.3.

enemy without sustaining it themselves' because of their experience in battle making them comparable to 'trained athletes against amateurs'.⁶² This section will now analyse the civic nature of Athenian 'war preparation' that imparted experience and military discipline through institutions such as the *ephebia*, as well as a command structure composed of local leaders that prepared hoplites for battle.

The Athenian *polis* appears to have both legally and socially reinforced a military hierarchy in an effort to instil battlefield discipline.⁶³ The Plataean oath suggests a rudimentary Athenian chain of command existed in the early fifth century.⁶⁴ The Athenians claim to 'do whatever the *stratego*i (general)...may command' and not desert their '*taxiarchos* (captain)...whether he is alive or dead'.⁶⁵ By the mid-fourth century, the *stratego*i were 'elected by a show of hands' into political office in the assembly and also subject to popular tribunal if they lost a vote of satisfaction on completion of their term.⁶⁶ In the late fourth century, Aristotle describes ten *taxiarchoi* were elected to 'lead their fellow-tribesmen (*φυλετῶν*)' and their hoplites into battle, but their authority was below that of the *stratego*i.⁶⁷ *Taxiarchoi* were also responsible for enlisting age-appropriate *demesmen* (tribes-men) for expeditions with collaboration from the board of *stratego*i.⁶⁸ Plato's remark that citizens, whether in war or peace, should have their eyes 'fixed constantly on his general (*ἄρχοντα*) and following his lead', suggests that the *stratego*i and *taxiarchoi* were individuals that Athenian citizens recognised as members of the *deme* (tribe) or *polis* and understood their authority on and off the battlefield.⁶⁹

⁶² Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 3.8.2-8; Miller 1984: 153; Trundle 2004: 72.

⁶³ Pritchett 1974: 213.

⁶⁴ Tyr. fr 19.11 West; van Wees 2004: 244. Although loyalty is proclaimed to the '*hegemones*' (the Spartan term for king), the inscription is considered to be an Athenian version of a universal oath taken before the battle of Plataea.

⁶⁵ *Tod* II.204, Lines 24-31, Line 25; Rhodes 2005: 440.

⁶⁶ *Cons. Ath.* 61.1-2.

⁶⁷ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 61.5, 61.3, 61.4.

⁶⁸ *Cons. Ath.* 21.2-22.2; van Wees 2004: 103.

⁶⁹ Plat. *Laws*, 942b.

Crowley is correct to note the *deme* was central to Athenian Military organisation, however it can be suggested to have instilled this military expectation and experience on subsequent generations, rather than contributing to an 'amateurism'.⁷⁰ Citizen families appear to have become synonymous with particular *demes* by acting as their hoplites and *taxiarchoi*. Thucydides claims that the Athenian general Nicias was able to address his captains 'one by one, addressing each by his father's name and by his own, and by that of his tribe'.⁷¹ Learning from the past and ancestral precedent functioned as a key theme in Athenian rhetoric but it is likely to have had a practical aspect. Aeschines affirms this in his denunciation of Demosthenes citing his cowardice not only as a 'source of shame...[to] be associated with your ancestors', but 'most important of all', a bad example for 'the younger men...by what model should they live their lives'.⁷² Lysias claims that punishing breaches of military discipline was in an attempt to 'improve the discipline of many among those who have to face danger in the future'.⁷³ Demosthenes even claims that *demes* had heroes and revered ancestors that inspired the citizens and at Chaeronea in 338, the hoplites were said to have attempted to match these exploits.⁷⁴ Therefore we can suggest that experience was considered an important aspect of educating young citizens and the experiences of their ancestors and fellow-*demesmen* acted as preparation for subsequent generations for warfare.

This military hierarchy was also reinforced in institutions such as the *ephebia*, a two-year period of 'civic military service' undertaken by male citizens at the age of 18.⁷⁵ Aristotle describes that 'three members' of each *deme* over 'forty years of age' were elected to 'supervise the *ephebes*' - their age was to ensure those elected had participated in active military service.⁷⁶ The instructors were paid 'one drachma...for rations' (the *ephebes* earned 'four obols a day' which was given to the instructor for

⁷⁰ Crowley 2012: 70-2.

⁷¹ Thuc, 7.69.2-4.

⁷² Aesch. 3.245-7.

⁷³ Lys, 15.9.

⁷⁴ Dem. Or. 60.29-30. Crowley 2012: 72.

⁷⁵ Vidal-Naquet 1986: 108.

⁷⁶ Arist. Ath. Cons. 42.2.

mess-dues) and taught the *ephebes* 'drill as heavy-armed soldiers' including the 'use of the bow, the javelin and the sling'.⁷⁷ *Ephebes* appear to have performed services for the state during this time and Thucydides mentions that in the late fifth century the 'youngest men' would be tasked with patrolling the walls as *peripoloi*, even serving in conflicts.⁷⁸ In 370, Aeschines speaks with pride that as soon as he passed out of 'boyhood' he 'became one of the patrolmen (*περίπολος*)...for two years'.⁷⁹ The *ephebes* were paid from the central *polis* funds and considered property of the *polis* who would in turn serve this community with military service.⁸⁰ The fact *ephebes* were granted a 'shield and spear from the state' and take an oath to not abandon 'the man who stands next to [him] in the battle-lines' indicates these male citizens were prepared for hoplite battle through this service,⁸¹ gaining from the experience of their overseers and the Athenian command structure.⁸²

The selection of Athenian hoplites into the citizen-militia suggests conscription was a public affair and service was made mandatory with severe penalties for draft-dodging. By the classical period, lists detailing citizens who were to serve on campaign (likely to have been formulated to cope with the stresses of the Peloponnesian war) were produced to muster citizens who were to serve in the militia.⁸³ In the late fifth century, Thucydides remarks that the *taxiarchoi* would produce these 'useful lists' and Lysias claims the system was to 'enrol those who had not served' but also suggests that experienced hoplites could be selected individually - he even names his selector as one Orthoboulos.⁸⁴ By the late fourth century, the names of the *ephebes* were inscribed on copper-pillars located 'in front of the council chamber' detailing their *deme* and used to 'regulate military service;

⁷⁷ Arist. *Ath. Cons.* 42.3.

⁷⁸ Thuc., 2.13.6-7, 1.105.4. For *περίπολος* in conflicts, cf. Thuc. 4.67, 8.92.2, 5.

⁷⁹ Aes. 2.167.

⁸⁰ Van Wees 2013: 105.

⁸¹ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 42.4; Tod, II.204, lines 7-8; Rawlings 2000: 239; cf. Siewert 1977: 102-103.

⁸² cf. Vidal-Naquet 1986: 109-122. This is in contrary to Vidal-Naquet's interpretation to the *ephebe* as the 'anti-hoplite'.

⁸³ Van Wees 2004: 104; Rawlings 2013: 13. Hand-picking hoplites into service fell out of practice for large scale campaigns as growing economic conditions (as well as the late fourth century establishment of *ephebia*) 'brought most citizens up to roughly the same basic standard'.

⁸⁴ Thuc. 6.31.3; Lys. 9.15, 20, 16.13.

when soldiers of a certain age' were sent on campaign.⁸⁵ The location of the lists is significant as it represents the centre of the Athenian *polis* where the assemblies gathered and were utilised to enrol entire age-groups in both large and small campaigns.⁸⁶ Aeschines labels this as 'division service' which he served 'with other men' of his age and claims one expedition levied 'all citizens up to the age of forty years' - Demosthenes was 'enrolled among the men' of his '*deme*'.⁸⁷ After the Peloponnesian war, Lysias accused Alcibiades of serving 'in the cavalry...without passing scrutiny' after being enrolled to serve as a 'hoplite',⁸⁸ a service he considered safer given that hoplites were 'at risk'. Even the comic Aristophanes remarked that some names were added to 'the list' whilst they were 'erasing the names of others' suggesting these lists clearly caused controversy.⁸⁹ These lists would have outlined those levied to serve in the militia and their central placing would have offered a constant reminder of military and social obligations.

Kennel suggests that Athenian society was one in which power was 'diffused among various age groups' rather than concentrated in a 'hereditary ruling elite'.⁹⁰ He argues that Athenian male-citizens belonged to one of three 'age-classes' in their life: 'first, examination and enrolment as a member of a *deme* at age eighteen; then, examination in Athens by the *boule*; finally, selection of ephebic officials by the *ephebes*' fathers' – each of these age-classes were expected to perform 'a socially useful function' the pinnacle of which was service in the military after the *ephebia*.⁹¹ Aristotle's remark that citizen troops 'endured more danger' due to 'legal penalties' and 'reproach attaching to cowards' suggests laws making it criminal offence to desert from service were common by the late fourth century.⁹² He regarded these penalties to be severe enough that 'citizen troops (*πολιτική μάλιστα*)' would 'stand

⁸⁵ Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 53.4, 7.

⁸⁶ Van Wees 2004: 103.

⁸⁷ Aes. 2.133, 2.168, 2.150.

⁸⁸ Lys. 15.11.

⁸⁹ Aristoph. *Peace*, 1180.

⁹⁰ Kennel 2013: 1-3.

⁹¹ Arist. *Ath. Cons.* 42.1-2; Kennel 2013: 8.

⁹² Arist. *Rhet.* 3.8.1. cf. Xen. *Cons. Lac.* 9.1. Xenophon claims the Lycurgan system as causing 'his people to choose an honourable death in preference to a disgraceful life' as a trembler.

their ground and die fighting...because citizen troops think it disgraceful to run away'.⁹³ Lysias suggests 'a court-martial for anyone who...has deserted the ranks [or] retreated whilst the rest were fighting' and Pritchard theorises that convicted Athenian citizens could be stripped of 'political' as well as economic rights.⁹⁴ Crowley considers the willingness for male citizens to participate in warfare came from the 'alienative...coercive power' and 'moral commitment' of the Athenian system - its expectations and its penalties.⁹⁵ Due to this social-power diffusion, military service remained a critical function of a key demographic in the Athenian *polis* with draft-dodging and cowardice in the ranks considered a criminal offence against the entire *polis*.⁹⁶

The severity of cowardice and desertion is suggested by the fact that the *strategoí* appear to be part of the tribunal process. Accusations were socially damaging enough that Lysias implored the *strategoí* to be 'impartial...in suits for evasion of military duty'.⁹⁷ Aristotle notes the *strategoí* have the 'power to punish breach of discipline with imprisonment, exile or...a fine' when in command of a force.⁹⁸ Plato claims those 'enrolled or put on some rota must perform military service',⁹⁹ and if a citizen is found guilty of 'desertion (*ἐκλείπη*)' he is to be judged by the *strategoí* who shall 'summon hoplites before hoplites (*ὀπλίτας μὲν εἰς τοὺς ὀπλίτας*)' or 'soldiers of their own class'.¹⁰⁰ This would suggest that trials for cowardice were conducted in the presence of the accused fellow *demesmen* (given the nature of Athenian recruitment through *deme* lists) who were likely reliable witnesses. The potentially damaging legal recourse for draft-dodging and cowardice suggests it was to enforce military discipline as well as the social expectation their age-group.

⁹³ Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 3.8.1, 9.

⁹⁴ Lys. 15.11. Pritchard 1999: 84-6.

⁹⁵ Crowley 2012: 105.

⁹⁶ Lys. 14.5.

⁹⁷ Lys. 15.1.

⁹⁸ Arist. *Ath. Cons.* 61.2.

⁹⁹ Plat. *Laws*, 943a.

¹⁰⁰ Plat. *Laws*, 934b.

Athenian civic 'war preparation' was in an attempt to ready hoplites for Greek battle which required personal discipline and command to enable an effective fighting force. The Athenian system enforced this through institutions such as the *ephebia* and its public means of recruiting into the citizens militia that surrounded Athenian hoplites with members of their *deme* and local leaders. The Athenian hoplite was consciously prepared for warfare; he was held in formation by his officer and fellow-hoplites and, for the most part, with his discipline enforced through the social expectation of his age-class and his legal requirement to serve.

Conclusion

This study has argued that Athenian citizens undertook several key means of 'military preparation' that functioned as military training for phalanx warfare and suggests hoplites were more than mere 'amateurs'. Thucydides shows us that Athenian military policy was built on a societal expectation of civic duty to serve in the militia. Although contemporary commentators suggested wealthier citizens had taken advantage of this system and neglected this conditioning, this appears to have been a critique of the direction of Athenian democracy rather than military policy. Male citizens focussed upon physical conditioning to alleviate the stresses of the *panoply* and campaign, which cannot be dismissed as inconsiderable due to comparative logistics and the disparity in diet, slaves and lodgings. Depending on their economic and social background, hoplites were subjected to the weight of their arms and armour as well as physical exertions on and off of the battlefield in campaigns that could last up to half a year. Therefore, physical exercise and religio-civic dancing or marching in festivals can be suggested to have been 'military preparation' for the wealthy leisure-class and city-dwelling hoplites, whose non-agriculturally based occupations meant that exercise was necessary. Athenian citizens were educated into understanding a military hierarchy that was comprised of their local leaders and fellow demes-men, their social obligation to serve in the militia was reminded through service in the *ephebia* and their names inscribed upon lists in the assembly – making their individual pursuit of physical fitness more visible. This regulated discipline in the midst of hoplite battle and legislation against cowardice,

that brought economic and social ramifications, would have held a majority of hoplites in position until a general rout.

The male citizen approaching forty, who had entered the *ephebe* at the age of eighteen and served for two years as a *peripolos*, who was physically fit and enrolled as a hoplite in the citizen-militia for service in numerous conflicts, was at the peak of his preparation for war. Through benefitting from physical and civic 'war preparation', the Athenian male citizen was no 'amateur'.

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