

ARMIES AND NAVIES

Lecture: Who were the hoplites?

Arms and Armour: The Ephebeia

- They go on with this mode of life for the first year; in the following year an assembly is held in the theater, and the cadets give a display of drill before the people, **and receive a shield and spear from the state**; and they then serve on patrols in the country and are quartered at the guard-posts. [Aristotle] *Athenian Constitution* 42.4

The Ephebeia information

- The ephebeia was not instituted in Athens until the 330s BCE.
- That means that for the archaic period and the greater part of the classical period, the hoplite had to provide his own arms and armour.
- Even after the institution of the ephebeia, the state only provided part of the equipment.

Wealth and Hoplites

- In order to provide for the arms and armour, it is logical that the hoplite had to be reasonably wealthy.
- Someone who did not have enough to eat could not have bought the arms and armour necessary to be a hoplite.
- Also being a hoplite assumes a regular flow of money, thus the hoplites had to be reasonably wealthy.

The Middle-Class Army

- The hoplites have generally been thought to be a “middle class” in the ancient world.
- By middle class it is generally meant wealthy farmers.
- This of course stems from our understanding of Athenian social structure.

The Solonian Classes (1)

- he divided the people by assessment into four classes, as they had been divided before, **Five-hundred-measure man, Horseman, Teamster and Laborer**, and he distributed the other offices to be held from among the Five-hundred-measure men, Horsemen and Teamsters—the Nine Archons, the Treasurers, the Vendors of Contracts, the Eleven and the Paymasters, assigning each office to the several classes in proportion to the amount of their assessment; while those who were rated in the Laborer class he admitted to the membership of the assembly and law-courts alone. [Aristotle] *Athenian Constitution* 7.3

The Solonian Classes (2)

- Any man had to be rated as a **Five-hundred-measure man the produce from whose estate was five hundred dry and liquid measures jointly**, and at the **cavalry-rate those who made three hundred**,—or as some say, those who were able to keep a horse, and they adduce as a proof the name of the rating as being derived from the fact, and also the votive offerings of the ancients; for there stands dedicated in the Acropolis a statue of Diphilus on which are inscribed these lines: “Anthemion Diphilus's son dedicated this statue to the gods
. . . having exchanged the Laborer rating for the Cavalry—
” and a horse stands beside him, in evidence that 'cavalry' meant the class able to keep a horse. Nevertheless it is more probable that the cavalry were distinguished by their amounts of produce as the Five-hundred-measure men were. **And men had to be rated in the Teamster class who made two hundred measures, wet and dry together**; while the rest were rated in the Laborer class, being admitted to no office: **hence even now when the presiding official asks a man who is about to draw lots for some office what rate he pays, no one whatever would say that he was rated as a Laborer.** [Aristotle] *Athenian Constitution* 7.4

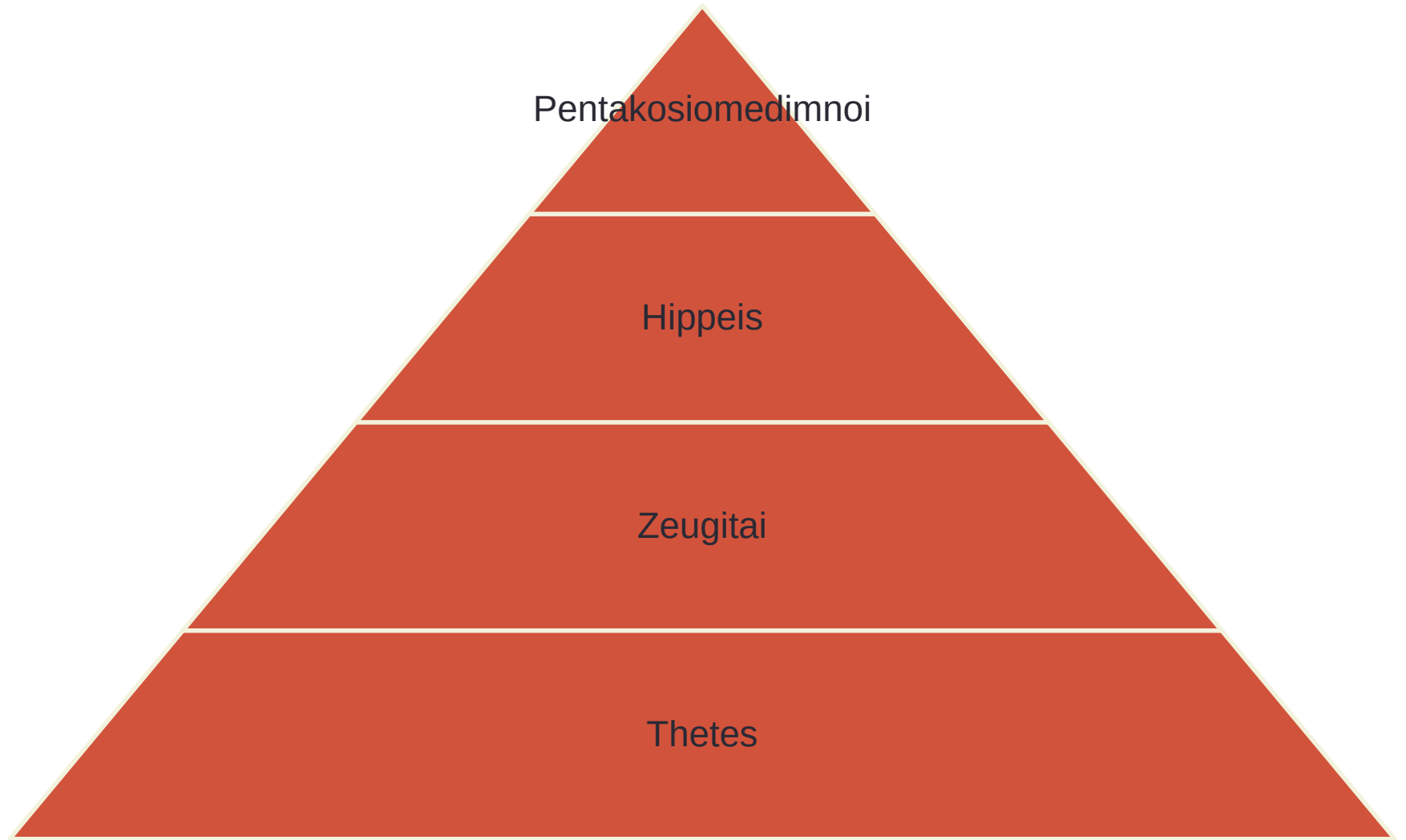
The Solonian Classes (3)

- Pentakosiomedimnoi = 500+ medimnoi
 - Hippeis = 300-499 medimnoi
 - Zeugitai = 200-299 medimnoi
 - Thetes = 0-199 medimnoi
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- **SO** it is assumed that the hoplites were the Zeugitai or as scholarship often calls them the Athenian “middle-class”.

The numbers game: 29,000 Hoplites

- Then they had an army of **thirteen thousand** heavy infantry, besides **sixteen thousand more** in the garrisons and on home duty at Athens. [7]
This was at first the number of men on guard in the event of an invasion: it was composed of the oldest and youngest levies and the resident aliens who had heavy armor. Thucydides 2.13.6-7

A Society's Class Structure



Athenian Population

- There are no exact figures on Athenian population in the classical period.
- The size of Athenian population, total as well as citizen only, is a matter of debate.
- The citizen male population has been estimated variously with numbers ranging from 20,000 to 30,000.

Population, Hoplites and Zeugitai

- The numbers of hoplites provided by Thucydides are impossible to work if hoplites were only of the zeugitai class (and higher).
- A different issue is whether we are being deceived by the pyramid structure of the Solonian classes and their supposed relationship to military classes.

Zeugitai, Hoplites and Land

- For the 29,000 hoplites of Thucydides to be zeugitai, then they should all have a minimum property producing 200 medimnoi a year.
- 200 medimnoi of barley a year needs 12 hectares
- So the 29,000 hoplites would need 348,000 hectares.
- Attika is only 240,000 hectares in total (not all of it cultivable).

200 medimnoi a year

- 200 medimnoi a year is the minimum property qualification for the zeugites.
- The estimated consumption of grain per year by a person is 6.3 medimnoi.
- That would mean that the household of a zeugites could feed 30 people.
- Since the average non-elite household is estimated to be less than 10 people, the zeugites household should be counted as a lesser elite household rather than a non-elite household.

Hoplites and Thetes?

- The only way to compromise Thucydides' figures of hoplites in 431BCE and what is known of the Athenian class system is to assume that a great number of hoplites belonged to the class of thetes.

QUESTIONS?
