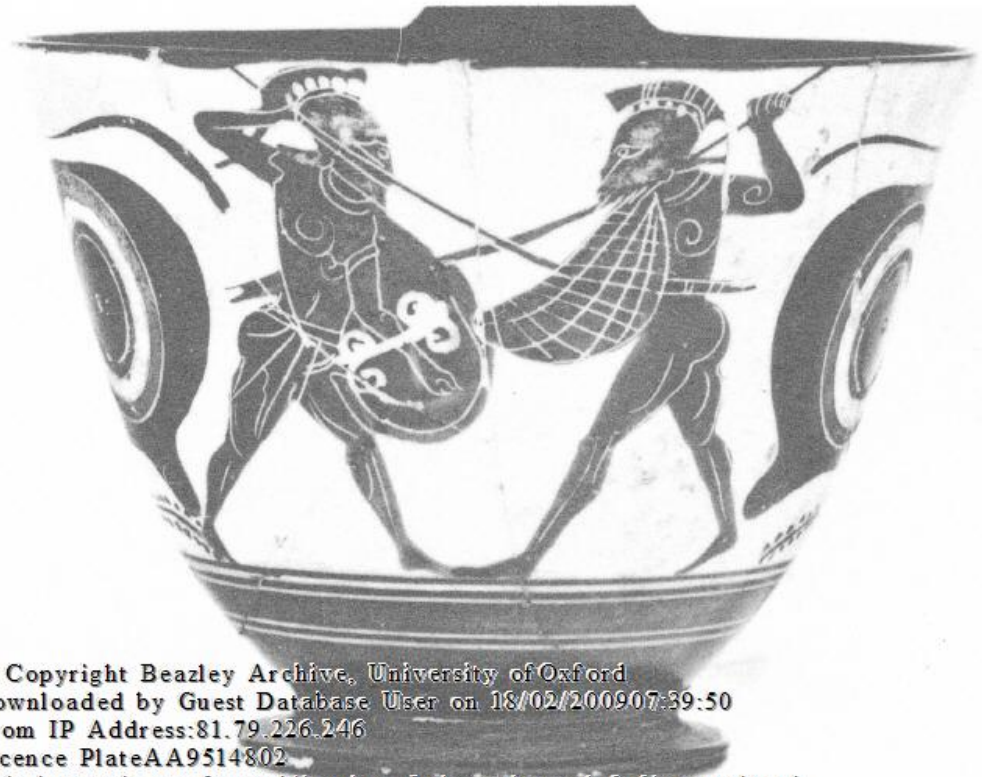


ARMIES AND NAVIES

Light Troops

Peltasts

- The peltasts are named by their shield, the pelte.
- This is a crescent shaped light shield.
- The peltast's main weapon was the javelin.
- The peltasts were originally Thracian mercenaries



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Light Troops: An Asiatic Custom

- The Paphlagonians in the army had woven helmets on their heads, and **small shields** and short spears, and also **javelins and daggers**; they wore their native shoes that reach midway to the knee. Herodotos 7.72



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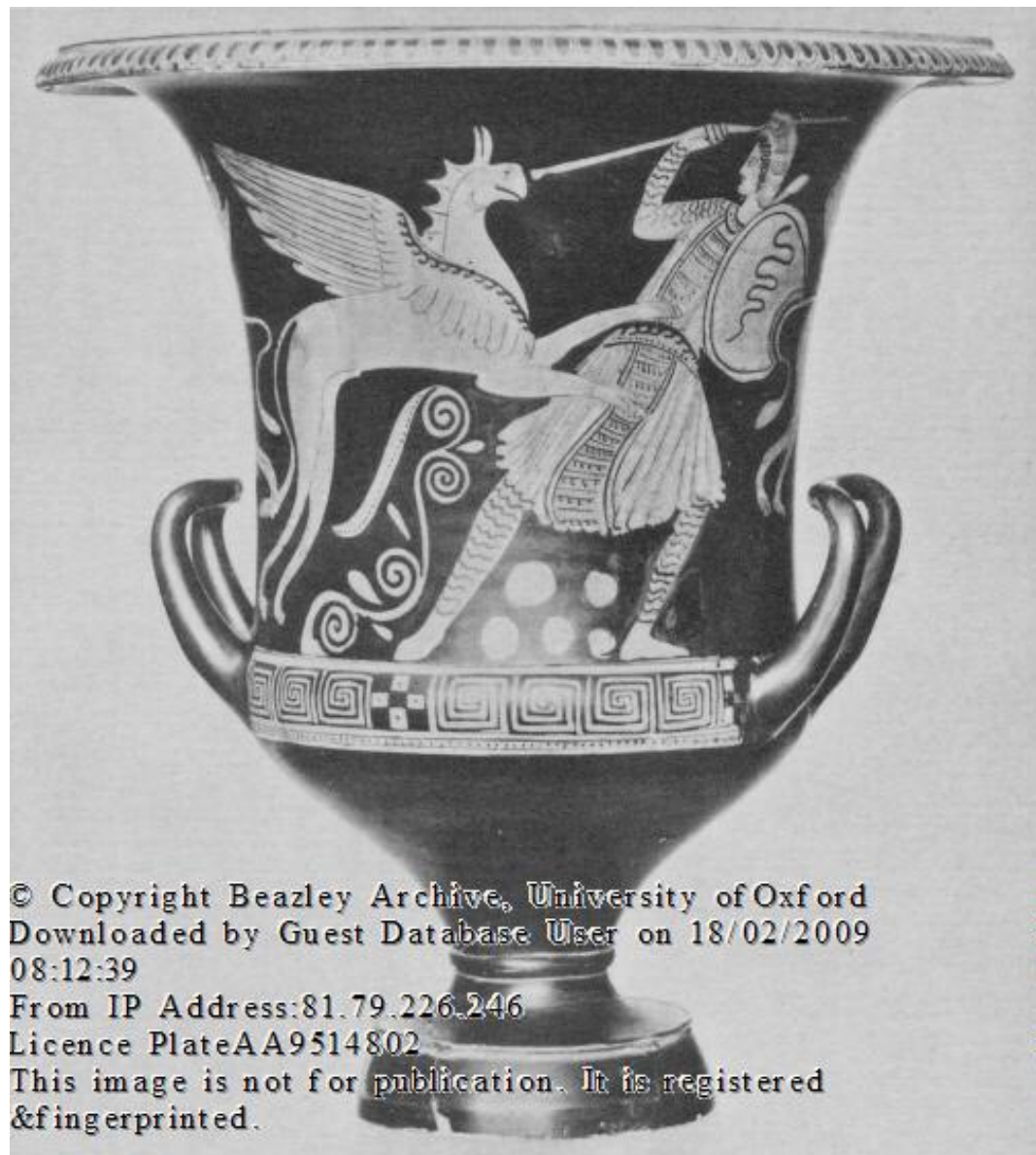
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The Pelte as sign of Otherness



First Recorded Instance: Pylos

- At last, not knowing how to get out of his words, he undertook the expedition, and came forward and said that he was not afraid of the Lacedaemonians, but would sail without taking any one from the city with him, except the Lemnians and Imbrians that were at Athens, with some targeteers that had come up from Aenus, and four hundred archers from other quarters. With these and the soldiers at Pylos, he would within twenty days either bring the Lacedaemonians alive, or kill them on the spot. [5] The Athenians could not help laughing at his fatuity, while sensible men comforted themselves with the reflection that they must gain in either circumstance; either they would be rid of Cleon, which they rather hoped, or if disappointed in this expectation, would reduce the Lacedaemonians. Thucydides 4.28

The necessity of light troops

- But those in the city of the Corinthians, both Callias, the son of Hipponicus, commander of the Athenian hoplites, and Iphicrates, leader of the peltasts, when they descried the Lacedaemonians and saw that they were not only few in number, **but also unaccompanied by either peltasts or cavalry**, thought that it was safe to attack them with their force of peltasts. For if they should proceed along the road, **they could be attacked with javelins on their unprotected side and destroyed; and if they should undertake to pursue, they with their peltasts, the nimblest of all troops, could easily escape the hoplites.** Xenophon *Hellenika* 4.5.13

Against hoplites in a narrow space

- As soon as day broke, the rest of the army landed, that is to say, all the crews of rather more than seventy ships, except the lowest rank of oars, with the arms they carried, eight hundred archers, and as many targeteers, the Messenian reinforcements, and all the other troops on duty round Pylos, except the garrison on the fort. [3] The tactics of Demosthenes had divided them into companies of two hundred, more or less, and made them occupy the highest points in order to paralyze the enemy by surrounding him on every side and thus leaving him without any tangible adversary, exposed to the cross-fire of their host; plied by those in his rear if he attacked in front, and by those on one flank he moved against those on the other. [4] In short, wherever he went he would have the assailants behind him, and these light-armed assailants, the most awkward of all; arrows, darts, stones, and slings making them formidable at a distance, and there being no means of getting at them at close quarters, as they could conquer flying, and the moment their pursuer turned they were upon him. Such was the idea that inspired Demosthenes in his conception of the descent, and presided over its execution. Thucydides 4.32

Against hoplites in a running battle

- The Athenian right made a better stand, and though Cleon, who from the first had no thought of fighting, at once fled and was overtaken and slain by a Myrcinian targeteer, his infantry forming in close order upon the hill twice or thrice repulsed the attacks of Clearidas, and did not finally give way until they were surrounded and routed by the missiles of the Myrcinian and Chalcidian horse and the targeteers. [10] Thus the Athenian army was all now in flight; and such as escaped being killed in the battle by the Chalcidian horse and the targeteers, dispersed among the hills, and with difficulty made their way to Eion.
Thucydides 5.10

Tactics in battle

- But when they pursued, they caught no one, since they were hoplites pursuing peltasts at the distance of a javelin's cast; for Iphicrates had given orders to the peltasts to retire before the hoplites got near them; and further, when the Lacedaemonians were retiring from the pursuit, being scattered because each man had pursued as swiftly as he could, the troops of Iphicrates turned about, and not only did those in front again hurl javelins upon the Lacedaemonians, but also others on the flank, running along to reach their unprotected side. Indeed, at the very first pursuit the peltasts shot down nine or ten of them. And as soon as this happened, they began to press the attack much more boldly. Xenophon *Hellenika* 4.5.15

Use in Sieges

- Brasidas meanwhile came a little nearer and then halted with his main body, **sending on one hundred targeteers to be ready to rush in first, the moment that a gate should be thrown open and the beacon lighted as agreed.** [2] After some time passed in waiting and wondering at the delay, the targeteers by degrees got up close to the town. The Toronaeans inside at work with the party that had entered, had by this time broken down the postern and opened the gates leading to the marketplace by cutting through the bar, and first brought some men round and let them in by the postern, in order to strike a panic into the surprised townsmen by suddenly attacking them from behind and on both sides at once; after which they raised the fire-signal as had been agreed, and took in by the market gates the rest of the targeteers. Thucydides 4.111

Potential against Cavalry (1)

- And now that the best men had already been killed, the horsemen joined them, and with the horsemen they again undertook a pursuit. But when the peltasts turned to flight, at that moment the horsemen managed their attack badly; for they did not chase the enemy until they had killed some of them, but both in the pursuit and in the turning backward kept an even front with the hoplites. And what with striving and suffering in this way again and again, the Lacedaemonians themselves kept continually becoming fewer and fainter of heart, while their enemies were becoming bolder, and those who attacked them continually more numerous. Xenophon *Hellenika* 4.5.16

Potential against Cavalry (2)

- For Tissaphernes had not taken to flight in the first encounter, but had charged along the river through the Greek peltasts; he did not kill anyone in his passage, but the Greeks, after opening a gap for his men, proceeded to deal blows and throw javelins upon them as they went through. The commander of the Greek peltasts was Episthenes of Amphipolis, and it was said that he proved himself a sagacious man. Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.10.7

In support of hoplites

- When Dercylidas learned of all this, he told the commanders of divisions and the captains to form their men in line, eight deep, as quickly as possible, and to station the peltasts on either wing and likewise the cavalry—all that he chanced to have and such as it was; meanwhile he himself offered sacrifice. Xenophon *Hellenika* 3.2.16

Poor Man's Hoplites

- In the next year—in which was celebrated the ninety-third Olympiad, when the newly added two-horse race was won by Euagoras of Elis and the stadium by Eubotas of Cyrene, Euarchippus being now ephor at Sparta and Euctemon archon at Athens —the Athenians fortified Thoricus; and Thrasyllus took the ships which had been voted him, **equipped five thousand of his sailors so that he might employ them as peltasts also**, and set sail at the beginning of the summer for Samos. Xenophon *Hellenika* 1.2.1

QUESTIONS?
