

Hoplites and the role they played in society from social standpoint, and how their role changed over time.

Hoplites were the heavy infantry of the Classical Greek Military. Their weapons changed over the years, but the most well-known armament was a large bronze shield, spear and sword. The hoplites were consisted of citizens of the city state (Polis). What really made this unit of infantry so dangerous in battle was their Phalanx formation. A move that promoted working as one unit rather than individually. In society the Hoplites were made of up men who were from the middle class as the ranking system for the military was organized by how rich you were. Training was obviously a big part of the day to day life of the Hoplite soldier, however considering that Hoplites, especially Athenian, were not a necessarily professional military, the exception to this being Sparta. The role of the hoplite is what is most interesting, especially from a social perspective, as they were mostly citizen middle class army. Who were eventually displaced by the City States hiring Mercenaries to replace them as they were better trained, better armed, and more than likely very ruthless in battle? Due to this, Mercenaries were better option due to the speed of which they could be sent from the city to the battlefield. But this left the Hoplites displaced and sort of phased out.

W.G Runciman's *Greek Hoplites, Warrior Culture, and Indirect Bias* (1998), goes more into the displacement of the citizen hoplites being replaced by Mercenaries and how the lack of any form evolution of hoplite warfare throughout the mid seventh to the mid fourth century BC. However, he also comes at this from an anthropological perspective. The next part he goes into how the teamwork of the hoplites came from the soldiers being pulled from the same villages, so they knew each other. "The individual hoplites were adult citizen males drawn from local communities where they were linked to each other as friends and kin, knew each other by name, ate and (more importantly) drank together in clubs" (Runciman, 1998, *Greek Hoplites, warrior culture and indirect bias*, pg. 732)¹. The teamwork was formed from already existing friendships, so the soldiers were able to easily work together in the formation of the Phalanx and move like a gear in a well-oiled machine. Runciman further goes in how the Greek city states were able to lure and force its male citizens into bloody wars with both Persia, and eventually other Greeks in the Peloponnesian war. "the fighting capacity of young males was controlled by elders with ritual or shamanistic authority whose own lives are not at risk and whose authority is legitimated by a cosmology of witchcraft" (Runciman, *Greek Hoplites, Warrior Culture, and Indirect Bias*, 1998, pg. 734)². He presents the argument that young Greek men were pretty much controlled by the elders of their respected communities by use of more religious means for their fighting ability to be more controlled, and maybe as well as to make it easier to get men to join the military. Religious elders doing this would make sense as the Greeks are known to be very superstitious when it comes to religious beliefs. This also paints a rather disturbing image upon which it seems that the Greeks wanted to always be ready for war. The argument ends with Runciman's ending statement on how some of the evidence (literary) for Hoplite warfare is rather unreliable. Considering that Thucydides is a big part of this source material and he has track record for being inaccurate with various subjects he writes about.

Another piece is Matthew R. Christ's *Conscription of Hoplites in Classical Athens* (2001). In which Christ talks about military service in Greek City States being mandatory. This is seen in Athens where men aged eighteen and above had to serve at least two years in military service. In Sparta, the

¹ Runciman, 1998, *Greek Hoplites, warrior culture and indirect bias*, pg. 732

² Runciman, *Greek Hoplites, Warrior Culture, and Indirect Bias*, 1998, pg. 734

men were trained from a very young age to be soldiers in the Agoge. However, the main point of the article puts forward the subject matter of conscription in Greek city states, however in his article he puts the focus on the various forms of conscription used by Athens especially during military campaigns. "During the Classical period, Athenians used two different methods of conscription of which we know. At the time of the Peloponnesian War, the generals exercised considerable discretion in selecting whose names to post on the ten conscription lists (katalogoi), one for each tribe, that were compiled whenever a campaign was planned" (Christ, Conscription of hoplites in Classical Athens, 2001, pg. 398)³. Conscription here was a big part of the war effort during the Peloponnesian war, however which war it is never specified, but it is safe to assume that it is the second one being talked about. It is within this first section that Christ breaks down the main form of conscription used in Athens. The first being the lists known as the Katalogoi, a list created by military officials used to get soldiers from the citizen tribes across the Polis. In order to build the Hoplite part of the army. However, this would evolve into the mid-fourth century, in to a list based upon the age of men. generals would then call upon the groups based upon the age group. he delves deeper in to the Katalogoi, arguing that the way conscription was implemented, would have altered when Cleisthenes introduced the reforms (508-7 B.C), which reorganized the Hoplites by tribe, meaning that the soldiers were most likely taken from the tribes as well, "was administered. Henceforth, hoplites served within ten tribal contingents (Hdt. 6.111.1; Thuc. 6.98.4, 6.101.5; Lys. 16.15), and they were probably conscripted as well on the basis of these tribes" (Christ, Conscription of Hoplites in Classical Athens, 2001, pg. 399)⁴. however, the tribal form of conscription was carried out by the Cleisthenic tribe.

However, Christ digs deeper in his reasoning for why eventually in 386 to 366 B.C, where there was significant reform to the process of conscription. It changed from katalogos to a system as stated earlier based upon the age of the men who were hoplites. But Christ believes that this change was brought about by a team up of both the military and the assembly. "While we do not know the circumstances in which the Assembly approved this reform, its most striking features suggest that military and ideological considerations worked together to bring about the change" (Christ, Conscription of Hoplites in Classical Athens, 2001, pg. 416)⁵. The benefits for this new system are then laid to be that it allows for a speedier period of mobilization, as well as being far more equitable in the eyes of the assembly. however, it is then argued that this change more than likely would have been a result of mainly the Athenian defeat during the second Peloponnesian War. Athens would have also been worried about the rise of other possible threats. Christ further points out that it would have around this period that Athenians ended up in military service for more than two years. As preparation for the looming threats that were more than headed our way, "reform of how hoplites were trained and conscripted. It was probably during this period that Athenians made two years of military service and training obligatory for eighteen-year-olds of Hoplite status" (Christ, Conscription of Hoplites in Classical Athens, 2001, 416)⁶. He ends his piece by saying that The Assembly viewed the conscription of the different age groups was very important and detrimental to their success in warfare, but also in helping

³ (Christ, Conscription of hoplites in Classical Athens, 2001, pg. 398

⁴ Christ, Conscription of Hoplites in Classical Athens, 2001, pg. 399

⁵ (Christ, Conscription of Hoplites in Classical Athens, 2001, pg. 416

⁶ Christ, Conscription of Hoplites in Classical Athens, 2001, 416

to understand the role that Hoplites played and their civic duties to the Polis, especially regarding the military and the Hoplites.

Hans Van Wees in his work, *Citizens and Soldiers in Archaic Athens*, taken from *Defining Citizenship in Archaic Greece* (2018), discusses the military obligations of the Athenian citizen, in his first section of the article he recalls two different examples of military campaigns in which the Hoplites were conscripted from the citizens of Athens. These examples were Myronides for the invasion of Boiotia (), and then Tolmides and his attack on Spartan territory., specifically Laconia and the dockyards (). However, he focuses in on the citizen response to the conscription itself. "These two anecdotes not only represent the earliest campaigns about which we are explicitly told that they relied on selective conscription, but also neatly illustrate complex attitudes towards compulsory military service" (Wees, *Citizens and Soldiers in Archaic Athens*, 2018, pg. 104)⁷. To elaborate, When Myronides used conscription to build his army, a lot of people did not show up, however Myronides claimed that those who showed up would do better in battle, so he left. The invasion was a success. On the other end, Tolmides used conscription as well, but said that he would make it seem as if he is not forcing the citizens to join up, but instead accepting them as volunteers ready for war. He uses these examples in the beginning to outline the rules regarding both military and citizen. "Classical Athens struck a delicate balance in imposing military (and fiscal) obligations on its citizens by law while relying to a large extent, not on coercion, but on willingness to 'perform' one's roles as a citizen, and indeed on the eagerness of some citizens to go the extra mile and outperform their peers" (Wees, *Citizens and Soldiers in Archaic Athens*, 2018, pg. 104)⁸. In his conclusion he asks himself what the answer to his argument is, "to what degree was the archaic citizen body a formal juridical 'order' with legally enforceable rights and duties, or rather an informal 'status group' defined by peer judgement of one's 'performance', with moral but not legal obligations and privileges?" (Wees, *Citizens and Soldiers in Archaic Athens*, 2018, pg. 143)⁹. His following reasons for his argument start with Wees saying the above statement is very true for the top classes within Athens who were able to constitute an order for, but not necessarily for the lower classes who were not able to do so. However, everyone who made up the lower classes you would not be able to serve in the army if you did not already have citizenship. Only those with citizenship were able to join the military as well other important details. However, for the lower class this placed a heavy emphasis on the Athenian citizenship with regards to the army and military service for the Polis.

Hans Van Wees also writes, *Demetrius and Draco: Athens' Property Classes and Population, I And Before 317 B.C* (2011). This Article looks at the evidence needed to understand the size of the Athenian population and then claims that it has been misunderstood. To which he elaborates on and explains that the original census categories were not purely made up of non- Athenians, slaves, and residents from other lands. But simply made from citizens based on property qualifications. Most of the evidence used to discuss the population involves Demetrius' time in rule. Who served as governor of Athens from 317-307 B.C. In the beginning of his governorship, Demetrius introduced new laws based on talks with Cassander. One of these was the economic qualification for citizenship in Athens, to gain it one had to have a qualification amount of a thousand drachmas or more. So, anyone who had met this, also counted as being available to purchase and own arms and armour, allowing military conscription and

⁷ Wees, *Citizens and Soldiers in Archaic Athens*, 2018, pg. 104

⁸ Wees, *Citizens and Soldiers in Archaic Athens*, 2018, pg. 104

⁹ (Wees, *Citizens and Soldiers in Archaic Athens*, 2018, pg. 143

service in Athens. But he has a different look on this, “The obvious implication is that many hoplites owned less than 1,000 drachmas and that there was a Defacto property qualification below 1,000 drachmas which consisted of having enough wealth to own hoplite equipment” (Wees, Demetrius and Draco: Athens' property classes and population in and before 317, 2011, pg. 97)¹⁰. His argument is that any Hoplites who served in the army more than likely were under the needed amount to serve as a Hoplite, at least in the eyes of the law. he even uses this as way to argue that those who became citizens would have most likely not been at the proper amount needed to gain citizenship but would have in fact been lower. Further, one thousand drachmas were the amount needed to qualify for the top civilian offices. “317, in which the property qualification for citizenship was very low and 1,000 drachmas was the requirement for the highest (civilian) offices” (Wees, Demetrius and Draco: Athens' property classes and population in and before 317, 2011, pg. 97)¹¹. In relation to Hoplites in society, this puts forth the idea that maybe the Hoplites were not made up of what the modern day would call, the middle class and above, but maybe some the lower-class citizens as well. At least by 317.

In Conclusion the articles spoken about above, all make interesting points about Greek culture and society within the scope of the army, specifically the Hoplites. In the first article it is explained how Hoplites were conscripted from the same villages so that the groups of Hoplites knew one another making training and trust much easier. As well as having the elder's control who faught by effectively luring the younger men into the army. With regards to how Hoplites were in relation to society, this means that Hoplites were a way to achieve glory in battle. This idea would more than likely stir a few younger men looking to make a name for themselves. Within the context of Athens, a polis who did not put an extreme emphasis on military service in the same vain as Sparta, who trained soldiers from a very young age. Athens required two years' service for those eighteen and above. The second article focuses on conscription in Athens during the classical period. This article talks about the forms and evolution of conscription, the main form being the Katalogoi, which eventually faced many changes. Which ended up separating the army based on tribe. To then later just being organized by age. The article made a big emphasis on Athens having citizens serve for two years, leading this idea that the military was vitally important in the eyes of the assembly and was a civic duty to participate in when needed. The following article takes the stage by discussing citizenship across the board with regards to Athens. Citizenship was according to the author only available to those could afford it, but this would be then slightly argued differently by the next article, but it helped to shade some light on what types of economic standing were possibly in the Hoplite section of the army. The last article focuses on primarily economic standing and property in Athens, however there is not much emphasis or discussion on the military. But it does argue unintentionally against the previous article about the economic standing of the serving Hoplites based on laws set in 317, when Greece was in the hands of Macedonia. Over all these pieces provide little windows into understanding the role that Hoplites played in society, they were held to be very important as military service was a civic duty especially when the two-year rule was applied. Hoplites were also made up citizenship holders and those who could afford it as well, placing emphasis on the army only wanting their countrymen to serve. As it would have been spoken of as a matter of pride to be serving the Polis.

¹⁰ Wees, Demetrius and Draco: Athens' property classes and population in and before 317, 2011, pg. 97

¹¹ Wees, Demetrius and Draco: Athens' property classes and population in and before 317, 2011, pg. 97

Bibliography:

Runciman, W.G., 1998. Greek Hoplites, Warrior Culture, and Indirect Bias. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 4(4), pp.731–751.

Christ, Matthew R., 2001. Conscription of hoplites in classical Athens. *Classical Quarterly*, 51(2), pp.398–423.

Van Wees, H., 2011. Demetrius and Draco: Athens' property classes and population in and before 317 BC. *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 131, p.95.

Sabin et al., 2007. *The Cambridge history of Greek and Roman warfare. Vol. 1, Greece, the Hellenistic world and the rise of Rome*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kagan, D. & Viggiano, G., 2013. *Men of bronze hoplite warfare in ancient Greece*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rich et al., 1993. *War and society in the Greek world*, London: Routledge.

Wees, H.van, 2018. Citizens and Soldiers in Archaic Athens. In *Defining Citizenship in Archaic Greece*. Oxford University Press, pp. Defining Citizenship in Archaic Greece, Chapter 4.