

THE ARCHERS OF CLASSICAL ATHENS*

1. Four problems

The armed forces that Athens took into the Peloponnesian War had four distinct corps. The two that have been studied the most are the cavalry corps and the navy. The same level of focus is now paid to the hoplite corps. In contrast to these three branches, the archers continue to be largely unstudied. Indeed, the last dedicated study of this corps was published in 1913. This neglect of the archers by military historians is unjustified. The creation of the archer corps in the late 480s BC was a significant military innovation. For the rest of the fifth century, Athens constantly deployed archers in a wide range of important combat roles. In the late 430s the state spent as much on them as it did on the cavalry.

Nevertheless, this neglect explains why four problems about them remain unresolved. The first problem is why the Athenians took the unprecedented step of creating such a corps. Very few military historians recognize this as the problem that it is. The second problem is that many military archers were actually Athenian citizens. It is likely that poverty had ruled out their service as hoplites. But this leaves unexplained why they did not choose the navy, because naval service was cheaper still and earned, as we shall see, a lot more esteem. The third problem is the role that the ten tribes played in the archer corps' organization. Certainly horsemen and hoplites fought in tribal units. But there is ongoing debate about whether the rest of the armed forces were organized by tribes. The fourth problem is this branch's disappearance after only eighty years. A. Plassart attempted to explain it more than a hundred years ago. Since his study, epigraphy has hugely increased what we know about the archers corps. This new

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evidence shows that Plassart's explanation is no longer valid. This article's main goal is to resolve these four problems. In doing so it seeks to redress the archer corps' unjustified neglect in military history.

2. The history of the archer corps

On the eve of the Peloponnesian War, Pericles reassured the Athenian *dēmos* ('people') that they had the required armed forces to win. The third corps of which he spoke were the 1,600 archers (Thuc. 2.13.8). Forty years later, Andocides negotiated a peace treaty for ending the Corinthian War (Andoc. 3.33–5). On his return from Sparta he spoke in favour of it. The treaty that had ended the Peloponnesian War led to the overthrow of Athenian democracy (e.g. Lys. 2.61–4; Xen. *Hell.* 2.2–4). Andocides thus had to convince the *dēmos* that this would not happen again (Andoc. 3.1). Consequently he argued that there had been three earlier treaties with Sparta and that each had strengthened the state's armed forces (2.4, 6, 10). After the second, he claimed, their forebears had created a 1,200-strong corps of *toxotai* ('archers') at the same time as they had massively expanded the cavalry (Andoc. 3.7; cf. Aeschin. 2.174). It is tempting to combine these two sources.

Together Thucydides 2.13.8 and Andocides 3.7 would suggest that the archer corps, while the newer of the two branches, was also developed in two stages.¹ Nevertheless the account that Andocides gave of fifth-century history contains 'remarkable historical and chronological errors'.² Admittedly *IG* i³ 511's discovery on the Acropolis corroborated his claim about the cavalry's two-stage creation.³ This branch's expansion can be independently dated to the later 440s.⁴ Yet Andocides manifestly got a lot more wrong about the archers. Aeschylus noted how *toxotai* had fought alongside hoplite *epibatai* ('marines') in the naval battle of 480/79 at Salamis (*Pers.* 454–61; see also Plut. *Vit. Them.* 14.1). There is no reason to doubt that the

¹ E.g. D. M. Pritchard, 'The Symbiosis between Democracy and War: The Case of Ancient Athens', in D. M. Pritchard (ed.), *War, Democracy and Culture in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 2010), 19, 50.

² A. Plassart, 'Les archers d'Athènes', *REG* 26 (1913), 152.

³ G. R. Bugh, *The Horsemen of Athens* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), 49–50; I. G. Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece. A Social and Military History with Particular Reference to Athens* (Oxford, 1993), 14–15.

⁴ I. G. Spence, 'Cavalry, Democracy and Military Thinking in Classical Athens', in Pritchard (n. 1), 119–23.

Athenians had recruited these archers locally.⁵ Ctesias wrote that they had summoned them from Crete (*FGrH* 688F13.30). Against this is Herodotus' clear evidence that the Cretans collectively decided to reject Greek calls to join the anti-Persian alliance in the late 480s (7.169).⁶ The Athenian archer corps distinguished itself at Plataea in 479/8 (Hdt. 9.22.1–23.2; *Anth. Pal.* 6.2). During this land battle the Spartans even asked for this corps' help (Hdt. 9.60.3). Athenian *toxotai* were still fighting the Persians in the late 460s (*IG* i³ 1147.1–3, 67–70, 127). In the 450s they formed part of the garrison that Athens installed in Erythrae after its attempted revolt (*IG* i³ 14.42; 15.23–4).⁷ *Toxotai* would have been no less helpful against the Persians at Marathon in 490/89. However, as the Athenians deployed no archers in this battle (Hdt. 6.112.2), the modern consensus is that they only created this branch in the 480s.⁸

The earliest evidence for the archer corps is the so-called decree of Themistocles. This inscription recorded the decision of the *dēmos* to evacuate their families from Attica and to fight at sea that had been taken immediately before the Second Persian War. The decree had only been known from literary references.⁹ Demosthenes, for one, noted how it was read out to assembly-goers in the 340s (19.303), while post-classical writers quoted from it (e.g. Plut. *Vit. Them.* 10.3–4). In 1960 M. H. Jameson set the world of Greek epigraphy on fire, when he published what he claimed to be an ancient copy of the original decree.¹⁰ He had found it at Troezen on the opposite side of the Saronic Gulf to Athens.¹¹ This was where many of Attica's evacuated families went (Hdt. 8.41.1; Plut. *Vit. Them.* 10.3; *ML* 23.6–8). In the third century the Troezenians decided to commemorate the sanctuary that their forebears had given these evacuees

⁵ Plassart (n. 2), 196.

⁶ K. W. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War. Volume IV* (London, Los Angeles, CA, and Berkeley, CA, 1985), 150–1. As part of their efforts to avoid Persia's wrath, Crete's *poleis* ('city-states') presumably stopped private citizens from volunteering to join the Greek alliance.

⁷ Plassart (n. 2), 196–7.

⁸ E.g. Bugh (n. 3), 13; B. Jordan, *The Athenian Navy in the Classical Period* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London, 1975), 203; Plassart (n. 2), 195, 212–13; Pritchard (n. 1), 50; M. Trundle, 'Light Troops in Classical Athens', in Pritchard (n. 1), 148; M. F. Vos, *Scythian Archers in Archaic Attic Vase-Painting* (Groningen, 1963), 59–60. *Contra* P. Krentz, *The Battle of Marathon* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2010), 151–2.

⁹ M. H. Jameson, 'A Decree of Themistokles from Troizen', *Hesperia* 29 (1960), 201–2.

¹⁰ On the immediate debate that ensued, see e.g. R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Documents to the End of the Fifth Century BC* (Oxford, 1969), 48–52.

¹¹ Jameson (n. 9), 199.

(e.g. Paus. 2.31.7).¹² Erecting a copy of Themistocles' decree was part of this commemoration. Some epigraphers immediately objected that the decree was based on a fourth-century forgery. The first reason that they gave was the inclusion of phraseology in it that appeared only in Attic inscriptions from 350.¹³ But Jameson and others replied that such anachronisms need not be the work of a forger.¹⁴ Fourth-century speeches quite often included decrees from the previous century. When the original decrees survive, it is clear that the speeches paraphrased them.¹⁵ In so doing, public speakers regularly introduced anachronisms.¹⁶ Therefore third-century Troezenians could well have copied a reworded version of the original decree from a fourth-century Athenian speech.¹⁷

The second reason that some gave for why the decree was a forgery was Herodotus' 'clear, coherent and logical' evidence.¹⁸ The decree ordered the immediate evacuation of Attica and the sending of 100 triremes to Artemision and another 100 to Salamis (ML 23.4–8, 40–4). By contrast, Herodotus wrote that the evacuation was carried out in 480/79, only after the battle of Artemision and just before Salamis (8.40). The response of N. G. L. Hammond was that the decree better fitted with 7.144.3, where Herodotus described how the Athenians, one year earlier, had passed a decree to fight the Persians at sea.¹⁹ In 481/0 Athens was still at war with Aegina (Hdt. 7.144.1; Plut. *Vit. Them.* 4.1; Thuc. 1.14.3). Keeping half of the Athenian fleet within the Saronic Gulf therefore made good sense. But in the course of this year a lot changed: Athens and Aegina reconciled (Hdt. 7.145.1), Attica's evacuation became less urgent the longer the Persians took to arrive, and a new strategy had to be found after Sparta's failure to stop them at Thermopylae. This was the different situation that Hdt. 8.40 described. This heated debate among epigraphers initially made ancient historians reluctant to use

¹² N. Robertson, 'The Decree of Themistocles in Its Contemporary Setting', *Phoenix* 36 (1982), 1–44.

¹³ E.g. C. Habicht, 'Falsche Urkunden zur Geschichte Athens im Zeitalter der Perserkriege', *Hermes* 59 (1961), 1–59.

¹⁴ E.g. M. H. Jameson, 'The Provisions of Mobilization in the Decree of Themistocles', *Historia* 12 (1963), 385.

¹⁵ A. J. Podlecki, *The Life of Themistocles. A Critical Survey of the Literary and Archaeological Evidence* (Montreal, 1975), 162–3.

¹⁶ R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1989), 84–5, 91.

¹⁷ Jameson (n. 9), 206; Meiggs and Lewis (n. 10), 50.

¹⁸ M. Chambers, 'The Significance of the Themistocles Decree', *Philologus* 111 (1967), 161–2.

¹⁹ N. G. L. Hammond, 'The Narrative of Herodotus VII and the Decree of Themistocles at Troezen', *JHS* 102 (1982), 82–7.

the decree of Themistocles.²⁰ Yet over the decades the case for its authenticity seems to have won the day. It is now widely seen as reliable evidence for Athenian military history.²¹

The decree told the Athenian generals how they should mobilize the 200 trireme crews (ML 23.18–40). For the ten marines and the four archers on each ship it instructed them to use *katalogoi* or conscription lists (23.23–6).²² That they had to specify which *toxotai* would be conscripted shows that the archer corps already had more than 800 members. For the rest of the fifth century an Athenian trireme would normally have four archers on board (e.g. Thuc. 2.23.1–2).²³ In 481/0 the triremes on which they served were mostly new. Two years earlier the *dēmos* had agreed to spend unanticipated high income from local silver mines on building new warships (e.g. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 22.7; Hdt. 6.87–93, 7.144).²⁴ Themistocles had convinced them to do so for the sake of both the war against Aegina and the expected return of the Persians (Thuc. 1.14.1–2). Before his proposal, in the early 480s, Athens had owned only seventy warships (Hdt. 6.89, 92, 132). While some of these vessels probably were triremes, the majority were smaller penteconters.²⁵ The 200 triremes that Athens had after its shipbuilding was Greece's largest state-owned navy.²⁶

Thus it appears that in 483/2 the *dēmos* had agreed to a massive expansion and upgrading of their naval forces. Archers had a lot to

²⁰ E.g. H. van Effenterre, 'Clisthène et les mesures de mobilisation', *REG* 89 (1976), 10–11.

²¹ E.g. G. Bakewell, 'Trierarchs' Records and the Athenian Naval Catalogue (*IG* i³ 1032)', in E. A. Mackay (ed.), *Orality, Literacy and Memory in the Ancient Greek and Roman World* (Leiden, 2008), 144–5; J. S. Morrison and J. F. Coates, *The Athenian Trireme. The History and Reconstruction of an Ancient Greek Warship* (Cambridge, 1986), 108; Trundle (n. 8), 148.

²² On such lists, see e.g. M. R. Christ, 'Conscription of Hoplites in Classical Athens', *CQ* 51 (2001), 398–402.

²³ P. Hunt, 'Military Forces', in P. Sabin, H. van Wees, and M. Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare. Volume I. Greece, the Hellenistic World and the Rise of Rome* (Cambridge, 2007), 123.

²⁴ V. Gabrielsen, *Financing the Athenian Fleet. Public Taxation and Social Relations* (Baltimore, MD, and London, 1994), 31–6; Pritchard (n. 1), 16.

²⁵ This is the consensus: see e.g. P. de Souza, 'Towards Thalassocracy? Archaic Greek Naval Developments', in N. Fisher and H. van Wees (eds.), *Archaic Greece. New Approaches and Evidence* (London and Swansea, 1998), 285; Gabrielsen (n. 24), 19–20; C. J. Haas, 'Athenian Naval Power before Themistocles', *Historia* 34 (1985), 43–6; Pritchard (n. 1), 9–10, 16. In contrast, G. G. Aperghis, 'Athenian Mines, Coins and Triremes', *Historia* 62 (2013), 4–7, and H. van Wees, *Ships and Silver, Taxes and Tribute. A Fiscal History of Archaic Athens* (London, 2013), 34, 64–6, argue that these seventy ships were already triremes. Yet the two fifth-century sources go against their argument. Thucydides explicitly stated that most Athenian warships before 483/2 were penteconters (1.14.3), while Herodotus, it appears, believed the same (5.99, 7.144, 8.1, 14).

²⁶ De Souza (n. 25), 286.

contribute on trireme decks: they could kill another fleet's rowers by targeting them from a distance, help to prevent the enemy's boarding of their own ship, and, failing that, fight alongside the *epibatai* to save their fellow sailors.²⁷ 'Archers at sea were also probably useful for killing the crews of rammed, half-sunk triremes or for enforcing their surrender.'²⁸ In view of such potential, the *dēmos* probably saw placing archers on deck as a good way to increase the naval advantage that they sought.²⁹ Their naval expansion would also require many more of them to serve as sailors. Consequently, individual Athenians had a real interest in the extra safety that *toxotai* could give trireme crews. Likewise, the *dēmos* realized that archers would also help to protect those serving as hoplites from the Persian archers that they would soon be facing. Greek states normally recruited *toxotai* by hiring mercenaries among peoples that already practised archery (e.g. Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.16, 7.6).³⁰ This method was normally adequate for a one-off war. But it was slow and could be unreliable (e.g. Hdt. 7.169; Thuc. 3.3.2). To have an ongoing capacity to embark *toxotai* quickly, the Athenians decided that they must have their own archer corps. Assembling and training this force would have taken quite a lot of time. Therefore it is likely that they took the decision to establish their archer corps as part of the naval reform of 483/2.³¹

IG i³ 138 shows that the members of the archer corps did not share the same legal status. This decree created a treasury to finance the upkeep of Apollo's Lyceum (*IG* i³ 138.9–19).³² It was passed before 434/3, when such sacred treasuries, excluding Athena's, were amalgamated into one (*IG* i³ 52).³³ Jameson plausibly dated it between the mid-440s and 434/3.³⁴ Athens' archers, hoplites, and horsemen most often used this athletics field for musters before going on a campaign (*Ar. Pax* 354–5).³⁵ Consequently, the decree levied an annual poll tax

²⁷ Jordan (n. 8), 208–9; Trundle (n. 8), 148.

²⁸ Hunt (n. 23), 123.

²⁹ It is a possibility that other *poleis* had already shown the value of archers in a fleet. For example, Samos' tyrant, Polycrates, in the 540s, had both a large fleet and 1,000 archers (Hdt. 3.39.3; van Wees [n. 26], 26).

³⁰ Hunt (n. 23), 110, 136; Pritchard (n. 1), 19.

³¹ Trundle (n. 8), 149, 160.

³² D. M. Pritchard, *Sport, Democracy and War in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 2013), 102; Trundle (n. 8), 150–1.

³³ D. M. Pritchard, *Public Spending and Democracy in Classical Athens* (Austin, TX, 2015), 18.

³⁴ M. H. Jameson, 'Apollo Lykeios in Athens', *Archaiolognosia* 1 (1980), 216, *pace* van Effenterre (n. 20), 8.

³⁵ Christ (n. 22), 407; Pritchard (n. 32), 159.

on them (*IG* i³ 138.1–7). It ordered the commanders of the archer corps to collect this tax from ‘both the *astoi* and the *xenoi* archers’ (3, 6–7). Their ability to do so presupposes that they had a central record of corps members.³⁶ The Athenian used *astos* as a synonym for citizen (e.g. *Ar. Pax* 32–4; [*Xen.*] *Ath. Pol.* 1.12).³⁷ *Xenos* described either a foreigner, a metic, or an ally (e.g. *Dem.* 49.22; *Xen. Vect.* 2.2).³⁸ Obviously corps members had to base themselves in Athens. Critically the state required any foreigner who lived there for more than a month to become a metic (e.g. *IG* ii² 141.30–6).³⁹ He or she did so by registering an Athenian as his or her *prostatēs* (‘patron’) and starting to pay the metic tax (e.g. *Aesch. Supp.* 605–10, 963; *Lys.* 31.9). Failure to do either could result in enslavement (e.g. [*Arist.*] *Ath. Pol.* 59.2; *Dem.* 25.57; [*Dem.*] 35.48).⁴⁰ It is therefore certain that the *xenoi* of the archer corps were metics.⁴¹

We will see that acute poverty drove citizens to join this corps. This meant that Athenian archers were certainly *thētes*. Yet there is no evidence whatsoever that their membership of Solon’s lowest-income class made them liable for archer service. We simply do not know how the corps’ commanders recruited its members. *Toxotai* presumably volunteered to join the corps just as rowers certainly did for naval campaigns.⁴² Plassart argued that the sharp decline in thetic numbers that the Peloponnesian War had caused led to the disbandment of the archer corps.⁴³ For Plassart the corps was no more by 413/12. But subsequent epigraphical discoveries proved him wrong. A casualty list of 412/11 included an Athenian *toxarkhos* (*IG* i³ 1186.80).

IG i³ 1032 originally recorded the names of trireme crews from 405/4.⁴⁴ In the 1960s D. R. Laing brilliantly assembled it from eleven fragments that had mainly been found near the Erechtheum on the

³⁶ Jameson (n. 34), 222; Trundle (n. 8), 150.

³⁷ D. W. Bradeen, ‘The Athenian Casualty Lists’, *CQ* 19 (1969), 150; Jameson (n. 34), 117, n. 5; D. R. Laing, ‘A New Interpretation of the Athenian Naval Catalogue, *IG* ii² 1954’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cincinnati (1965), 60; D. Whitehead, *The Ideology of the Athenian Metic* (Cambridge, 1977), 60–1, *pace* Jordan (n. 8), 205; Plassart (n. 2), 201.

³⁸ Whitehead (n. 37), 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7–10, 152–4.

⁴⁰ J.-M. Roubineau, *Les cités grecques (VIe–IIe siècle av. J.-C.)*. *Essai d’histoire sociale* (Paris, 2015), 306–7.

⁴¹ Trundle (n. 8), 150–1; van Effenterre (n. 20), 9.

⁴² E.g. *Ar. Ach.* 545–7; *Lys.* 21.10; *Thuc.* 6.31.3; [*Dem.*] 50.7–8, 18–19, 23; Gabrielsen (n. 24), 107–10.

⁴³ Plassart (n. 2), 199, 213.

⁴⁴ On its date, see especially K.-W. Welwei, *Unfreie in antiken Kriegesdienst* (Wiesbaden, 1974), i.83–8.

Acropolis.⁴⁵ His editing suggests that the original inscription, which was over 2 metres high and 1 metre wide, displayed the complete crew lists of eight triremes.⁴⁶ The lists of four triremes, which he numbered from 1 to 4, partially survive. While the extant inscription only preserves data on the legal status of three archers (1032.168–71), each of them was an Athenian. Yet this naval catalogue does point to a smaller corps, because there were only two or three archers on each ship (47–9, 168–71, 303–4).⁴⁷ An assembly speech of 403/2 also claimed that many *toxotai* were still citizens (Lys. 34.4). This is the last reference to the Athenian archer corps.⁴⁸ Clearly the decline in the number of *thētes* was not the reason for this corps' disappearance.

3. The popular prejudices against archers

The Athenian *dēmos* clearly understood the military benefits that their archer corps gave them (e.g. Andoc. 3.7; see also [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.3). Yet this understanding did not raise the standing of *toxotai* in their eyes. The first reason why non-elite Athenians continued to esteem them lowly was that they judged them to be cowards. Classical Athenians usually defined *aretē* ('courage') in terms of what hoplites needed to do for victory in their land battles.⁴⁹ Therefore courage required a soldier to remain steadfast (e.g. Ar. *Pax* 1177–8; Eur. *El.* 388–90). The brave man 'stands beside a shield' (Eur. *Phoen.* 1003) and does not 'flee from the spear' (Aesch. *Pers.* 1025; cf. Lys. 14.14–15). In standing his ground he accepted the risk of personal injury or death (e.g. Eur. *HF* 163–4; Eur. *Phoen.* 999–1002; Lys. 2.14–15; Thuc. 2.42.2). The cowardly soldier, by contrast, ran away from battle (e.g. Ar. *Nub.* 354–5; *Pax* 1186–90; Pl. *Menex.* 246b). He refused to risk his personal safety (e.g. Eur. *Supp.* 914–19; *IG* i³ 1179.6–13). Archers, of course, did not fight like hoplites.⁵⁰ In land battles they ran away, when the other side got too close, only returning to attack

⁴⁵ Laing (n. 37), esp. 1–51.

⁴⁶ Bakewell (n. 21), 141.

⁴⁷ Trundle (n. 8), 152.

⁴⁸ L. A. Burckhardt, 'Söldner und Bürger als Soldaten für Athen', in W. Eder (ed.), *Die athenische Demokratie im 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr. Vollendung oder Verfall einer Verfassungsform? Akten eines Symposiums 3.–7. August 1992, Bellagio* (Stuttgart, 1995), 121–2.

⁴⁹ Pritchard (n. 32), 179–84.

⁵⁰ Pritchard (n. 1), 49–50; H. van Wees, *Greek Warfare. Myths and Realities* (London, 2004), 64–5.

after it had abandoned its pursuit (e.g. Thuc. 2.79.6, 3.97.1, 4.43.1–2, 6.69.2). Because they could shoot their arrows from a safe distance (e.g. Thuc. 4.32.4, 8.71.2; Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.12), they faced lower personal risks (e.g. Eur. *HF* 195–203).

Against the hoplite-based definition of *aretē*, archers simply fell far short. Athenian playwrights and public speakers continued to point this out (e.g. Ar. *Vesp.* 1082–6; Dem. 9.49; cf. Thuc. 4.40). As their performance contexts forced them to confirm non-elite perceptions, it is clear that the *dēmos* considered archers to be cowards.⁵¹ For his part, Sophocles had one character dismiss the threats of another because he was not a hoplite but an archer (*Aj.* 1120–4, 1142–6; cf. 1012–16), while Aristophanes made out that a single courageous Athenian could defeat thousands of *toxotai* (*Ach.* 703–12; cf. *Lys.* 433–62). In his *Heracles*, Euripides famously made Lycus question the eponymous hero's *aretē* on the grounds that he 'never held a shield on his left arm nor came near a spear, but, armed with a bow, which is the most cowardly of weapons, he was ready for flight' (*HF* 158–61). He concluded (162–4): 'The bow is no proof of a brave man, who, instead, upon entering his unit, remains steadfast and looks unflinchingly at the spear's sudden wound.' Lycus is, of course, a villain, but other characters support his criticisms: Amphityron agrees that *toxotai* face less danger than hoplites (187–204), while Heracles himself understands courage as remaining steadfast (1350).⁵²

In putting the Second Persian War on stage, Aeschylus heavily relied on this dichotomy between the brave hoplite and the cowardly archer. His *Persians* of 473/2 notoriously condensed this war into a naval victory of the Athenians over the Persians (e.g. *Pers.* 278–9, 482–3, 490–1, 495–507, 728).⁵³ It thus had a lot to say about sailors (e.g. 39–40, 374–81, 396–7). The Persian land forces included many archers (e.g. 54–5; see Hdt. 7.61.1, 62, 64–66.1; 7.70.2, 77, 80). But Aeschylus acknowledged

⁵¹ For these performance dynamics, see e.g. Pritchard (n. 32), 9–20. For the low regard in which the classical Greeks generally held archers, see e.g. E. M. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian. Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford, 1989), 139; F. Lissarrague, *L'autre guerrier. Archers, peltastes, cavaliers dans l'imagerie attique* (Paris and Rome, 1990), 16–20; D. M. Pritchard, 'The Fractured Imaginary': Popular Thinking on Military Matters in Fifth-Century Athens', *AH* 28 (1998), 49; Roubineau (n. 40), 53–4; Trundle (n. 8), 145; Spence (n. 3), 170.

⁵² R. Hamilton, 'Slings and Arrows: The Debate with Lycus in the *Heracles*', *TAPhA* 115 (1985), 19–25.

⁵³ E. M. Hall, 'Asia Unmanned: Images of Victory in Classical Athens', in J. Rich and G. Shipley (eds.), *War and Society in the Greek World* (London and New York, 1993), 129; R. Lattimore, 'Aeschylus on the Defeat of Xerxes', in *Classical Studies in Honour of William Abbott Oldfather* (Urbana, IL, 1943), 91–2.

that Xerxes also brought large numbers of other soldiers (e.g. *Pers.* 26, 31, 39–40, 54–7, 129–31, 320–1, 999). All this makes it striking that his tragedy actually characterized the Athenians as hoplites and the Persians as archers.⁵⁴ One way in which he did this was by making Persian leaders the commanders of archer corps (e.g. 26, 29; cf. 1020–1). Indeed he called Darius, the Great King's father, a *toxarkhos* (556). But the main way was his use of the spear and the bow as metonyms of the two sides (e.g. 147–8, 278–9, 926, 1020–2, 1025). For example, at the play's opening the chorus sing of Xerxes leading 'the bow-wielding Ares against men famous for the spear' (85). Later, when Atossa, his mother, asks whether the Athenians fight with 'the bow-stretching arrow' (237), they reply that their weapons are actually spears and shields (238).

This dichotomy was an important part of the moral contrast that Aeschylus drew between the two sides.⁵⁵ His Athenian sailors remain steadfast in spite of facing terrible odds (e.g. *Pers.* 337–47, 357–60, 386–401). They mount repeated attacks 'with courageous daring' (394). They quickly cause the Persians to flee (e.g. 422–3, 470). Aeschylus' tragedy repeatedly returns to the latter's flight or to Xerxes' cowardice (e.g. 480–1, 510, 755–6, 1029). Clearly he sought to contrast Athenian courage and Persian cowardice. The hoplite and the archer were already strongly linked with such behaviours.⁵⁶ Therefore Aeschylus was able to use the dichotomy between them to reinforce this contrast.

This contrast between the two sides strongly associated archery with a barbarian people. For fifth-century Athenians this was reinforced by the fact that they regularly encountered barbarian archers in Athens or on a campaign. This association is the second reason why the *dēmos* held archers in low regard.⁵⁷ We shall see that in the middle of the century Athens purchased Scythians for a new police force. These *dēmosioi* ('public slaves'), who had conspicuous public duties, were armed as archers. Athenians also came across barbarian *toxotai* serving in their expeditions. Four casualty lists from the Peloponnesian War clearly attest this.⁵⁸ On each of them there was inscribed the title *barbaroi toxotai* ('barbarian

⁵⁴ D. Rosenbloom, *Aeschylus. Persians* (London, 2006), 48–9.

⁵⁵ On this contrast, see e.g. Hall (n. 51), 56–101; Hall (n. 53), 116–17.

⁵⁶ S. Farron, 'Attitudes to Archers in the *Iliad*', in A. F. Basson and W. J. Dominik (eds.), *Literature, Art, History. Studies in Classical Antiquity and Tradition. In Honour of W. J. Henderson* (Frankfurt, 2003), 169–84.

⁵⁷ Pritchard (n. 51), 49; Pritchard (n. 1), 50; Trundle (n. 8), 145.

⁵⁸ On their dating, see D. W. Bradeen, *Inscriptions. The Funerary Monuments. The Athenian Agora. Volume XVII* (Princeton, NJ, 1974), 18, 21, 27.

archers'), which was followed by a handful of names (*IG* i³ 1172.35–7, 1180.26–9, 1190.136–41, 1192.152–7). N. Loraux and W. K. Pritchett suggested that these war dead had served in, not the archer corps, but other forces that Athens had hired.⁵⁹ Thucydides and Xenophon often wrote about such mercenaries. But they never described them as barbarian archers. Admittedly the Athenians hired eighty Cretan *toxotai* for the Sicilian Expedition (Thuc. 6.25.2, 43.2; 7.48.9; cf. Paus. 1.29.6). Yet in Greek eyes Cretans were not barbarians (see e.g. Thuc. 7.48.9–49.11).⁶⁰

Thucydides mentions barbarian archers only in his account of the Athenian oligarchy's fall in 411/10. He writes that one of its leaders successfully got away because, as a general, he could trick some *toxotai* into accompanying him to the border (8.98.1–2). Those whom he so tricked were *hoi barbarōtatoi* ('the most barbarian ones'). Far from being mercenaries, they were among the regular members of the archer corps who formed part of the home guard (8.71.2). Thucydides' comment suggests that the corps included many barbarians from different lands. It is most likely that the *barbaroi toxotai* of the casualty lists came from this group. Therefore many – possibly even most – of the metics who served in the Athenian archer corps were barbarians.

4. The full-time employment of the corps

The archer corps' members clearly faced popular prejudices. Fifth-century Athenians saw them as cowards and their combat mode as barbarian. In light of this low regard M. Trundle rightly asks why some Athenians chose to join the archer corps.⁶¹ The *dēmos* apparently thought the *toxotai* to be the poorest wing of their land forces, because they asked them to pay only half the tax that the hoplites paid for the Lyceum's upkeep (*IG* i³ 138.3–4). Possibly, then, what attracted citizens to this branch was its *misthos* ('pay') and the fact that it cost significantly less than service as a hoplite.⁶² But the same was the case with the navy, because rowers, who were also paid, only had to supply their own rowlocks and cushions (e.g. Isoc. 8.48; Thuc. 2.93.2; Eup.

⁵⁹ N. Loraux, *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*, tr. A. Sheridan (Cambridge [Mass.], 1986), 32–3; Pritchett (n. 6), 150.

⁶⁰ Hall (n. 51), 169.

⁶¹ Trundle (n. 8), 143–4.

⁶² On its lower cost, see e.g. Trundle (n. 8), 151; van Wees (n. 50), 62.

fr. 54 Kassel and Austin). Sailors, moreover, were held in much higher regard than archers. It is true that elite Athenians generally ‘despised the so-called naval mob’, because the philosophers who wrote specifically for the elite criticized sailors.⁶³ Significantly, however, playwrights and public speakers did not repeat such criticisms. Indeed, their works suggest that the *dēmos* esteemed sailors highly.⁶⁴ In their eyes a citizen could equally meet his duty to fight for the state by serving as a hoplite or as a sailor (e.g. Ar. *Vesp.* 1117–20; Lys. 7.41, 30.26; [Lys.] 6.46). Non-elite Athenians judged that sailors displayed *aretē* in battle no less than hoplites.⁶⁵ Importantly, the archer corps and the navy did offer different employment conditions. Archery was difficult to master.⁶⁶ A great deal of training was required to learn and to maintain this skill (e.g. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.3; Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.16).⁶⁷ Consequently, Athens probably asked its *toxotai* not only to be ready for immediate deployment but also to train constantly. To meet comparable requirements Athenian horsemen were paid year-round (Xen. *Eq. mag.* 1.19).⁶⁸ Some assume that archers were employed on the same full-time basis.⁶⁹

Such employment would explain what is found on IG i³ 1032. Two of the three citizen *toxotai* on this naval catalogue were actually quite prosperous men, because they had each brought a slave on board (168–72, 264, 270–1).⁷⁰ It seems that archer corps membership had given them a good livelihood. Naval service, by contrast, never offered as much, for sailors were only paid when they were on a campaign (e.g. Thuc. 6.31.3). This surely is the answer to Trundle’s question: some Athenians chose to serve as archers for the sake of full-time employment. Yet offering such generous conditions did not come cheaply.

⁶³ E.g. Arist. *Eth. Eud.* 1230a6–10; Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1115b1–5; Arist. *Pol.* 1327a–b9; Isoc. 8.79, 12.115–16; Pl. *Leg.* 706b–d, 707a–b. Quotation from van Wees (n. 50), 200.

⁶⁴ E.g. R. K. Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis. Ideology and Critique in Classical Athens* (Oxford, 2014), 179–99; V. Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes. A Sociology of Old Attic Comedy*, second edition (Oxford, 1951), 300–1; Pritchard (n. 51), 53–6; Pritchard (n. 32), 206–8; J. Roisman, *The Rhetoric of Manhood. Masculinity in the Attic Orators* (Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London, 2005), 127, n. 69. Contra F. Bourriot, ‘La considération accordée aux marins dans l’antiquité grecque: époques archaïque et classique’, *Revue d’histoire économique et sociale* 1 (1972), 7–41.

⁶⁵ E.g. Aesch. *Pers.* 337–47, 357–60, 386–401; Ar. *Eq.* 563–73; Lys. 2.24, 33, 40, 42–3, 47–8, 12.136; [Lys.] 6.46; Pl. *Menex.* 240e–1a; cf. Thuc. 2.89.3.

⁶⁶ Hunt (n. 23), 135–6.

⁶⁷ Vos (n. 8), 59.

⁶⁸ J. H. Kroll, ‘An Archive of the Athenian Cavalry’, *Hesperia* 46 (1977), 93–9.

⁶⁹ E.g. Hunt (n. 23), 136; Trundle (n. 8), 149. Contra P. J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford, 1981), 303.

⁷⁰ With Laing (n. 37), 139.

Archers and hoplites earned the same *misthos* (Thuc. 5.47.6).⁷¹ Before 412/11 their pay-rate was 1 drachma per day (e.g. Thuc. 3.17.4; 6.8.1, 31.3; 7.27.1–2).⁷² Therefore the annual cost of the 1,600-strong corps of archers was 96 talents. In 432/1 this was ten per cent of the state's annual budget (Xen. *An.* 7.1.27).⁷³ Post-war Athens initially struggled to pay such fixed operating costs (see e.g. Lys. 30.22; fr. 6.73–81 Gernet and Bizos).⁷⁴ Therefore the most likely reason for the corps' disappearance after 403/2 was financial. The treaty ending the Peloponnesian War allowed the *dēmos* to keep only twelve triremes (e.g. Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.20). As a big navy had, of course, been the main reason for the archer corps' creation, this reduction made disbanding the *toxotai* an even more obvious budget cut.

Pseudo-Aristotle's treatise on Athenian democracy explicitly states that the *toxotai* earned their livelihood from corps membership. It claims that, in 478/7, Aristides advised the Athenians to seize the Delian League's leadership and to migrate from Attica to the *astu* ('urban centre'), where everyone could earn a living by serving in the armed forces or the government ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 24.1–2). According to the treatise, they followed his advice and so used tribute to pay 'more than 20,000 men' (24.3). Among the thirteen different groups that the treatise identifies as recipients of this *misthos* were 6,000 jurors, 1,200 horsemen, 1,600 archers and up to 1,400 magistrates. As evidence for the 470s this chapter is clearly unreliable: for example, the Athenians moved together to the *astu* for the first time only in the Archidamian War (e.g. Thuc. 1.143.4–5; [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.16).⁷⁵ The cavalry corps was only expanded to 1,200 in the later 440s. Yet Pseudo-Aristotle did convey some reliable information about the later fifth century, because Athens, at this time, did appoint 6,000 jurors each year (Ar. *Vesp.* 660–3) and have a 1,600-strong archer corps. Indeed, what we find in his chapter parallels comedies from the 420s (e.g. Ar. *Vesp.* 701–11; Eup. frs. 99.35–9, 78–120; 105). Much of the chapter might well have come from a lost work of old comedy.⁷⁶

When other evidence exists for the different groups that this chapter identifies, we find that each could have earned their living by serving

⁷¹ Plassart (n. 2), 202.

⁷² Pritchard (n. 33), 13.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁷⁴ R. S. Stroud, 'Theozotides and the Athenian Orphans', *Hesperia* 40 (1971), 298.

⁷⁵ Pritchard (n. 1), 20–1.

⁷⁶ Rhodes (n. 69), 25, 301–2.

the state. In the 420s the sheer number of lawsuits made it easy for the 6,000 jurors to get on a jury whenever they wished.⁷⁷ The 1,200 horsemen were paid year-round, probably at the rate of 2 drachmas per day.⁷⁸ The 1,400 or so magistrates that Athens had in the 420s were likewise paid for every day of the year.⁷⁹ Most of them worked on a full-time basis.⁸⁰ There is no reason to think that what this treatise states about the employment conditions of *toxotai* is less reliable.

5. The non-tribal organization of the corps

Athens clearly put its full-time archers to good use during the Peloponnesian War. The expeditions that were sent out to fight frequently included *toxotai* in their hundreds (e.g. Thuc. 3.98.1, 107.1; 4.129.2; 5.52.2, 84.1).⁸¹ Hundreds more at a time continued to serve on the decks of Athenian triremes (e.g. 2.23.1–2). We have seen that the toxarchs had a central record of corps members. They probably drew on it to create their list of conscripts for each of these deployments. Certainly such a *katalogos* ('conscription list') was used to mobilize archers in 481/0 (ML 23.23–6). Consequently, conscription for a campaign appears to have been a practice that the three branches of the Athenian land forces shared.⁸² Yet in other respects the archer corps was organized differently.⁸³ In classical Athens, membership of a *phulē* ('tribe') was a prerogative of citizenship.⁸⁴ The archer corps' inclusion of metics thus ruled out its organization by tribes. Indeed, there is no evidence that the corps had regular units.⁸⁵ Unlike a taxiarch or a phylarch, therefore, a *toxarkhos* was not a commander of a regular unit (Thuc. 3.98.1).

Athens sometimes recruited allied or mercenary archers to fight alongside its own *toxotai* (e.g. *IG* i³ 60.17–18). On Sphacteria in 425/4, for

⁷⁷ Pritchard (n. 33), 56–7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 74–6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 63–6, 74–80.

⁸¹ Plassart (n. 2), 197–9.

⁸² For conscription for a campaign as standard for hoplites, see e.g. Ar. *Eq.* 1369–72; [Dem.] 50.7; Lys. 9.4, 15; 15.7; 16.13; Thuc. 6.43.1. For cavalrymen, see Lys. 16.13.

⁸³ In fifth-century Athens the free archers were the only *psiloi* ('light troops') who had the attributes of a regular corps: uniform equipment, commanders, enrolment records, and a procedure for calling up a fixed number of them (Thuc. 4.94.1; Trundle [n. 8], 140–1).

⁸⁴ E.g. Ar. *Av.* 30–4; Dem. 59.104; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 53.2–3, 58.2; Lys. 23.2–3.

⁸⁵ *Pace* Plassart (n. 2), 197, 199–200.

example, Cleon commanded 400 corps members and 400 archers from elsewhere (Thuc. 4.28.4, 32.2, 36.1). In 416/15 Athens supplement the 400 archers that it had conscripted for the Sicilian Expedition with eighty Cretan *toxotai*.⁸⁶ In coalition armies Athenian hoplites continued to fight exclusively alongside fellow citizens (e.g. Thuc. 6.101.3–4; Lys. 16.15; Xen. *Hell.* 4.2.17, 19, 21). This, it seems, was not the case with Athenian archers, because Thucydides, in his account of the fighting of the abovementioned campaigns, made no distinction between the different archer corps (see e.g. 4.36.1 and 6.59.2). Athenians who served as *toxotai* always fought beside metics. At times they may also have had non-resident foreigners as comrades-in-arms.

For some ancient historians, *IG* i³ 45 suggests that Athenian archers were occasionally mobilized by tribes. The purpose of this decree, which the *dēmos* probably passed in the 440s, was to stop robbers and runaway slaves from entering the Acropolis (2–5).⁸⁷ It ordered that a guardhouse be built at its entrance (6–13). Lines 14 to 17 spell out who would stand guard: ‘There will be as guards 3 archers (*toxotai*) from the tribe serving as the executive committee (*ek tēs phulēs tēs prutaneuousēs*).’ As only Athenians were tribesmen, Jameson and Plassart, among others, argued that these three guards must have been citizens serving in the archer corps.⁸⁸ This would be an example of the tribal mobilization of *toxotai*. Their argument assumes that the inscription’s *hē phulē hē prutaneousa* refers to a tribe. But it might refer instead to the executive committee of the *boulē* (‘council’). Each of the fifty councillors from the one tribe took it in turns to serve as this committee.⁸⁹ Usually committee members were called the *prutaneis* or presidents (e.g. Andoc. 1.46; Ar. *Ach.* 54; *IG* i³ 71.28, 52). Yet sometimes Athenians used the same phrase as in *IG* i³ 45 to refer to them (e.g. Dem. 18.105; Pl. *Grg.* 473e).

For Jameson and Plassart, the *toxotai* of line 15 came from the archer corps. This assumption is no less questionable. Often the Athenians simply called their police force ‘the archers’ (e.g. Ar. *Eq.* 65). Significantly, these Scythian *toxotai* were commanded by the executive committee.⁹⁰ Their main duty was to help it to run the

⁸⁶ See above, p. 96.

⁸⁷ For the date, see e.g. P. Foucart, ‘Décret athénien du V^{me} siècle’, *BCH* 14 (1890), 178–9.

⁸⁸ E.g. Jameson (n. 34), 217, n. 3; Plassart (n. 2), 194; Rhodes (n. 69), 304.

⁸⁹ P. J. Rhodes, *The Athenian Boule* (Oxford, 1972), 16–30.

⁹⁰ P. Ismard, *La démocratie contre les experts. Les esclaves publics en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 2015), 76.

assembly, ‘where they seemed to act a bit like nightclub bouncers’.⁹¹ They moved citizens who were in the *agora* (‘civic centre’) towards the assembly when it was about to commence (e.g. Ar. *Ach.* 20–2; Poll. 8.114).⁹² When the executive committee commanded them, they ejected unruly assembly-goers (e.g. Ar. *Ach.* 54; Ar. *Eccl.* 143, 258–9; Pl. *Prt.* 319c). On other occasions *prutaneis* ordered archers to make arrests or, as we find in *IG i³ 45*, to stand guard without their supervision (e.g. Ar. *Lys.* 387–475; Ar. *Thesm.* 929–46). All this suggests that this inscription’s *toxotai* came from the police force. Other ancient historians have more plausibly argued that *IG i³ 45* ordered the council’s executive committee to put three of its Scythian archers at the entrance to the Acropolis.⁹³

The Athenians first bought these Scythian archers in the mid-fifth century (Aeschin. 2.172–3; Andoc. 3.4–5).⁹⁴ In classical-period sources these *demosioi* always numbered 300. Nonetheless the *Suda* (s.v. *toxotai*) and the scholion on Aristophanes *Acharnians* 54 gave their number as 1,000. The Athenians did not require so many public slaves to carry out the limited duties that they gave them.⁹⁵ This higher number was probably due to confusion between this force and the archer corps in post-classical sources. Therefore the lower figure is the more reliable.⁹⁶ The Athenians wisely decided not to use armed slaves in land battles (e.g. Xen. *Eq. mag.* 2.6).⁹⁷ The last mention of Scythian archers occurs in a comedy of the late 390s (Ar. *Eccl.* 143, 258–9). By the mid-fourth century a group of unarmed citizens had taken over the duties that these *toxotai* had once performed in the assembly (Aeschin. 1.26, 33–4; 3.4; [Dem.] 25.90).⁹⁸ The consensus is that this police force had ceased to exist by the early 370s.⁹⁹

⁹¹ E. M. Hall, *The Theatrical Cast of Athens. Interaction between Ancient Drama and Society* (Oxford, 2006), 234.

⁹² Pritchard (n. 33), 60.

⁹³ E.g. Foucart (n. 87), 180; Lissarrague (n. 51), 126; Trundle (n. 8), 151–2.

⁹⁴ On this police force, see e.g. V. J. Hunter, *Policing Athens. Social Control in the Attic Lawsuits, 420–320 BC* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), 145–9; Ismard (n. 90), 76–9; Lissarrague (n. 51), 125–7; A. Jakobson, ‘Political Stability and Public Order: Athens vs. Rome’, in G. Herman (ed.), *Stability and Crisis in the Athenian Democracy* (Stuttgart, 2011), 139–42.

⁹⁵ O. Jacob, *Les esclaves publics à Athènes* (Liege and Paris, 1928), 64–73.

⁹⁶ M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes. Structure, Principles and Ideology*, trans. J. A. Crook (Cambridge, MA, and Oxford, 1991), 124; Jakobson (n. 94), 141, *pace* Hall (n. 91), 233; Plassart (n. 2), 188.

⁹⁷ Welwei (n. 44), i.88.

⁹⁸ Hansen (n. 96), 137; Rhodes (n. 89), 146–7.

⁹⁹ E.g. Hunter (n. 94), 147–8; Jacob (n. 95), 76–8; Plassart (n. 2), 195. *Contra* Ismard (n. 90), 78–9.

6. Conclusion: resolving the four problems

The impetus for the archer corps' creation came from the navy's massive expansion in the late 480s. The *dēmos* judged that putting archers on their triremes increased the military advantage that a larger fleet gave them. With *toxotai* on board they knew that they would be safer when fighting at sea. To have the capacity to embark such *toxotai* quickly they decided to create their own archer corps. Membership of a Cleisthenic tribe was a prerogative of citizenship. As Athenians fought alongside metics in the archer corps, it could not be tribally organized. Indeed, there is no evidence that this branch even had regular units. The Athenians generally held archers in low regard, because they saw them as cowards and their combat mode as a barbarian one. This contrasts with the positive esteem that they gave sailors and hoplites. It is therefore surprising that some citizens who were too poor to be hoplites chose to be archers instead of sailors. What attracted them to the archer corps was the better pay. Athens paid the archers year-round, since it required them always to be ready for deployment and constantly practising their perishable skill. Sailors only got pay for their days on a campaign. Consequently, the archer corps was the better choice for those poorer citizens who had to be certain that their military service would provide a livelihood. Yet employing the archers on a full-time basis did not come cheaply. In the late 430s the state spent ten per cent of the annual budget on them alone. Post-war Athens found it enormously difficult to pay for such fixed operating costs. By the time of the Corinthian War the Athenians no longer had military archers. After eighty years, budget problems had forced them to disband their archer corps.

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