

# War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds eds. Raaflaub & Rosenstein Harvard (1999)



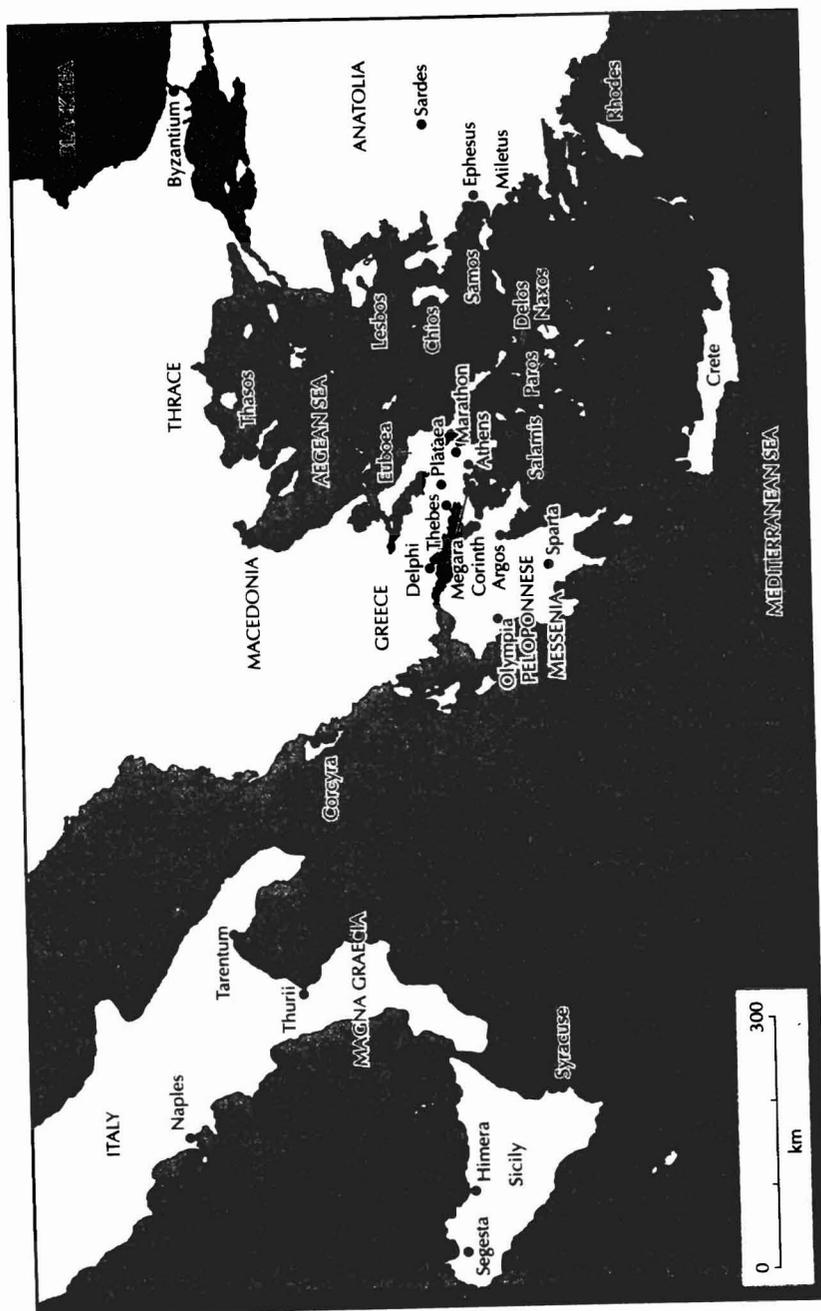
## *Archaic and Classical Greece*

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### Introduction and Background

This volume is concerned with the relationship between war and military organization on the one hand and, on the other, the economic, social, and political structures of the states or communities involved. This relationship can best be grasped in times of incisive changes on one side or the other. Scholars speak of three "military revolutions" in Greek history. Two of these are discussed in this chapter: the evolution of hoplite warfare and its connection with the rise of the polis in the eighth to sixth centuries and the emergence of naval warfare and its connection with imperialism and democracy especially in Athens in the fifth century. The third, the transformation of warfare in the late fifth and especially fourth century, will be analyzed in the subsequent chapter on the Hellenistic period.<sup>1</sup>

First, a brief sketch of the historical background. The Bronze Age "Mycenaean" civilization, centered in large palaces with hierarchical structures and centralized economies, perished by 1200. The extant evidence reflects a militaristic society and central organization of warfare but is too fragmentary to permit a clear reconstruction of military details.<sup>2</sup> The subsequent period, traditionally called the Dark Ages, was characterized in many areas by cultural decline, shrinking population, and increasing isolation. Small groups of families, led by their ablest member, a sort of chieftain, lived in scattered villages.<sup>3</sup> Warfare must have consisted of raids against neighboring lands and coasts, conducted by warrior bands under the command of local or regional leaders. Such raids are amply illustrated in the Homeric epics.<sup>4</sup>



The Greek World, 7th to 5th cent. B.C.E.

From the tenth to the eighth century, the population increased and contacts with other peoples broadened; the eighth century in particular was a period of rapid change. In the course of this process the "polis" evolved; in many parts of the Aegean and abroad, where Greek emigrants settled ("colonized") from the eighth to the sixth century, it became the typical form of community, different from the more loosely organized *ethnos* ("tribal state") that prevailed in other areas. Politically and culturally, the polis dominated the Greek world to the conquest of Greece by Philip II of Macedon in the late fourth century.<sup>5</sup>

In the archaic period (750–480) many poleis evolved through a phase of economic and social crisis toward a more balanced constitution. While private or semipublic raids for cattle or booty continued, wars in this period became increasingly communal. They were mostly local affairs, fought, on a fairly small scale and in long intervals, between neighboring poleis over the control of fertile border lands, and usually decided in a pitched battle between citizen armies. Such intercity rivalries, for example between Argos and Sparta, continued for centuries. Sparta was the first polis to form a system of regional power. Following the conquest of Lakonia and Messenia (eighth century), some communities became dependent poleis (*perioikoi*), while large parts of the subjected populations were enslaved (helots), cultivating the farms of the Spartan citizens (Spartiates) but also posing a constant threat. As a consequence, the Spartiates gradually developed a strictly regulated system of communal life. From about 550, Sparta dominated much of the Peloponnese through its hegemony, based on military supremacy, in a system of alliances (the Peloponnesian League). Despite its size, Athens played no major role before the late sixth century.<sup>6</sup> Until the middle of that century, the Greeks remained outside the power sphere of the Near Eastern empires, but then the Lydians under Croesus, followed by the Persians under Cyrus, expanded their empires to the shores of the Aegean, subjecting the Greek poleis of Asia Minor to their rule.

The nature of politics and warfare changed dramatically in the fifth century, as a consequence of developments triggered by the war between Greeks and Persians. This confrontation, highlighted by Greek victories in 490 and 480/79, continued for thirty years. When Sparta and her allies withdrew from the war in 478/77, a new alliance was established under Athenian leadership (the Delian League). Its activities resulted in several victories over Persian forces and a vast expansion of the Athenian sphere of influence. Within two decades the Delian League was transformed into a tightly controlled and centralized naval empire ruled by Athens, and, in Athens itself, democracy was fully realized.

Both the empire and democracy made conflicts with Sparta and her allies inevitable. These conflicts, with several short intermissions, dominated the second half of the fifth century, from the 450s to the Peloponnesian War of 431–404.

The outcome of these conflicts was heavily influenced by the disastrous outcome of two large-scale Athenian naval expeditions: one in the 450s in support of an Egyptian revolt against Persia, the other in 415–13 in Sicily. In 404 Athens capitulated and lost its fleet and empire.<sup>7</sup>

The “military revolution” of the fifth century consisted of the emergence of large-scale naval warfare, which completely transformed the character of war and made it permanent, professional, and total. Certainly, traditional wars for the control of land continued to be fought between citizen armies of neighboring poleis, but politics and wars now increasingly involved large alliance systems and empires.

Apart from “tyrannies” (short-lived rules by individuals seizing power), monarchies were virtually absent in the Greek world during most of this period. This offers us an exceptional opportunity to study the questions that are central to this volume in the social context of nonhierarchical citizen communities—a context that was crucial for the specific achievement of ancient Greek civilization.<sup>8</sup>

## Hoplites and Polis in Archaic Greece

### *Phalanx and “Hoplite Revolution”*

Some of the questions raised in this volume were anticipated by Greek political theory. In the *Politics*, Aristotle sketches the evolution of Greek society, connecting military systems and constitutions: small numbers, the lack of a middle class, and monopolization of military expertise by the elite initially favored an aristocratic system based on cavalry forces. “When, however, states began to increase in size, and infantry forces acquired a greater degree of strength, more persons were admitted to the enjoyment of political rights” (*Politics* 1297b16–28). Aristotle’s theories of constitutional change raise many problems.<sup>9</sup> Although horse breeding had long been a status symbol of the wealthy elites who dominated the early polis, and even in the classical period cavalries were largely an upper-class specialty, with few exceptions, such as Thessaly and Macedonia, Greece never witnessed a stage of true cavalry supremacy.<sup>10</sup> Aristotle’s linking of aristocracy and cavalry warfare thus cannot be generalized, and the evolutionary connection in his scheme between growth of states, increasing importance of infantry forces, and extension of political rights to nonaristocrats is likely to be theoretical rather than empirical as well, perhaps derived from the observation of a similar connection between naval power and democracy.<sup>11</sup> Yet here lies the origin of the modern theory of the “hoplite revolution.”

Phalanx fighting was a remarkable form of warfare, different from any other. Two armies met each other on level ground; they were arranged in dense formations, several ranks deep (the “phalanx”), the soldiers equipped uniformly

with the panoply consisting of helmet, corslet and greaves, spear and short sword, and the big round shield (*hoplon*, hence hoplites). Mounted or light-armed troops, if involved at all, played a minor role. After the two armies clashed, heavy fighting with spear and sword went on for a while before the soldiers in the front ranks locked shields and tried to dislodge each other by pushing and shoving (*othismos*), those in the front being pressed forward by those in the back. All thus depended on maintaining the formation; as soon as one side gave in, the ranks were broken and the battle usually was over.<sup>12</sup> Since the goal was to defeat, not to annihilate, the enemy, the fleeing losers usually were not pursued and casualties, though potentially serious, often were limited.<sup>13</sup>

Herodotus indicates that the Greeks themselves around 430 were fully aware of the peculiar nature of hoplite fighting.<sup>14</sup> How, when, and why did this system come about? A common view long held that in early Greece a “heroic” mode of fighting prevailed—as it *seems* to be depicted in the *Iliad*:<sup>15</sup> the battle was decided by the elite leaders whose status depended on demonstrations of fighting skills and courage, while the masses of the common people mostly stayed in the background.<sup>16</sup> From about 750, the elements of the hoplite panoply, of various origin, were gradually combined and adapted. By about 650, the equipment, formation, and fighting tactics of the phalanx were fully developed. This phalanx required the involvement of larger masses of equally equipped and trained soldiers. Thus the free farmers who could afford the panoply were integrated into the polis army and eventually achieved political integration as well. This process, often called the “hoplite revolution,” ended the phase of elite domination of the polis and ushered in an age of more egalitarian constitutions in which the free farmers played a decisive role.

Essentially, this model assumes that military change prompted political change. It has a venerable tradition, from Aristotle (above) to Eduard Meyer and Max Weber. In the 1960s it was strengthened by Anthony Snodgrass’s seminal work on the evolution of early Greek military equipment and its political consequences; with slight modifications, it has been restated several times even recently.<sup>17</sup> Yet battles in the *Iliad* are decided by the entire army, and the poet’s descriptions contain many references to mass fighting and egalitarian structures.<sup>18</sup> The hoplite equipment, appearing in tombs from approximately 725, shows unique characteristics that must have been developed for frontal fighting in dense mass formations. In particular, a double arm grip made it possible to carry the large round shield in a way that protected the left neighbor’s right side as well, and the shield’s extreme concavity allowed the fighter to let it rest on his left shoulder during the shoving match. The “Corinthian helmet” limited vision and hearing in exchange for maximum protection.<sup>19</sup> Mass fighting thus was common long before 725. In fact, to the poet of the *Iliad* it was so normal that he naturally incorporated it into his battle descriptions. It was then made more

effective by the development of specific fighting tactics and of equipment that supported these tactics.<sup>20</sup> Hence the priority of military change is uncertain and the question is how this development relates to contemporaneous forms of warfare and social, economic, and political structures.

Elsewhere I have proposed that the extant evidence can be explained better by a model of polis evolution that assumes the interdependence of military and sociopolitical change: the polis, the phalanx, and the sphere of "the political" in the polis evolved in an interactive process over a long time; the concepts of landownership and "territoriality" were inseparable components of this inter-related process; and polis aristocracies emerged as part of the same process. Furthermore, if mass fighting was essentially egalitarian, the polis must have evolved on a foundation of considerable equality.<sup>21</sup> This model raises questions that need to be addressed.

#### *Phalanx, Warfare, and Society*

Apart from private and semiprivate raiding expeditions, the Homeric epics pay much attention to communal wars between neighboring poleis—conflicts that coexisted with private raids and sometimes appear to have been caused by them.<sup>22</sup> The setting of the Trojan War itself—but of course not its heroic story—resembles such a war: Troy and the temporary Achaean city on the shore<sup>23</sup> lie on two sides of a fertile plain, a constellation conducive to war throughout Greek history. In fact, the earliest historical wars attested in Greece took place between neighboring poleis in the late eighth century—the time of "Homer." Such wars, continuing for centuries, were usually fought over control of contested land.<sup>24</sup> This thematic and chronological correspondence between history and epics enables us to connect the evolution of polis and communal warfare.

Under the conditions of the Dark Ages (above at n. 4), there probably was neither need nor opportunity for wars between massed armies. As the population increased and economic conditions improved, settlements multiplied, previously unoccupied lands were cultivated, and the polis emerged. The polis territories were filled up, land became precious, the notions of "territoriality" and fixed boundaries assumed increasing importance, and neighboring poleis began to fight about land. Massed fighting in communal armies thus was the consequence of increased population densities, increasing and widespread wealth sufficient to afford the necessary equipment, the new organizational structures of the early polis,<sup>25</sup> and, most important, the citizens' need to defend their fields collectively and fight for the territory, if not the survival, of their polis. Ways were then sought to improve the effectiveness of the citizen army: technological and tactical changes interacted with economic and social changes to produce, at the end of a long process, the hoplite phalanx. This process was largely completed by 650. What was its impact on the poleis involved?

A long-standing scholarly consensus holds that at the height of phalanx warfare hoplite fighting was strictly regulated: all soldiers wore the same equipment, which they had to provide at their own expense, and "membership" in the "hoplite class" was often tied to a census requirement, measured by agrarian property and income. In some way or other, in such "timocratic systems" political participation was linked to military and economic capacity. In Athens (as in Rome) citizens were divided into "horsemen" (*hippeis, equites* [those who could afford horses and used them in war as well]);<sup>26</sup> hoplites (*zeugitai* [those owning a yoke of oxen or fighting in a tight, "yoked" formation], *classis*); and those who were neither and counted for little socially, militarily, and politically (*thetes, infra classem*, including small and tenant farmers, craftsmen, and traders, some of whom sometimes supported the phalanx as light-armed skirmishers).<sup>27</sup>

At some point in the development, therefore, the distinction between the citizens who mattered and those who did not was fixed; the criteria determining such distinctions included "membership" in the "hoplite class." Solon's property classes of 594 (although perhaps refining an earlier system) offer a terminus ante. Sparta's earliest "constitution," based on the hoplite class, was enacted around 650. Several new phenomena that emphasize the importance of hoplites, including the dedication of hoplite figurines and equipment in sanctuaries and vase paintings illustrating hoplite fighting, are clustered around the same time. Snodgrass plausibly concludes that all this must reflect an important shift in public conscience connected precisely with the phalanx.<sup>28</sup> I have proposed that, since mass fighting and citizen armies were an integral part of war long before the phalanx was fully developed and in fact provided the impetus for its development, this shift was probably prompted by the perfection and formalization rather than the introduction of phalanx warfare. Even after a long evolution, such formalization must have brought about incisive changes in the polis, including the introduction of organizational structures and the definition of who qualified.<sup>29</sup>

"Timocratic systems," then, resulted from a long evolution, not a "hoplite revolution"; they formalized, but did not introduce, the linking of the triad of functions typical of Greek polis citizens: the landowners (above a minimal subsistence level) fought in the polis army and sat in the assembly to share in the polis's decision making.

#### *Phalanx and Exclusiveness*

The distinction between evolution and formalization seems helpful in other respects as well. Many scholars have emphasized the great importance of the principle of self-equipment, and rightly so. To own the—not inexpensive—panoply and be a hoplite determined status and "belonging" in the community. As Paul Cartledge puts it, the principle of self-equipment meant that not

only economic capacity but also the will to enroll was required—which turned the hoplites into a “civic corporation” and explains the apportionment of political prerogatives in accordance with military function.<sup>30</sup> But this principle, too, may have changed over time, handled differently by each polis. The equipment of the early citizen-soldiers must have been uneven and cheaper: shield, spear, and sword were essential, but the shield was simpler than the later hoplite shield, and many perhaps wore leather caps and corslets rather than metal ones.<sup>31</sup> Even after the panoply became the standard, it was perhaps often acquired through spoils or passed on through families and generations—fitting being cheaper than buying.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, since status and prestige were involved, citizens might have been willing to make sacrifices in order to qualify. All this suggests larger rather than smaller numbers. At least initially, economic capacity might have been a relative, not absolute, criterion; that is, all those naturally fought in the polis army who owned the (or some of the) equipment.

This raises several connected questions. (1) What was the ratio in the citizen body between those who qualified and those who did not? (2) Why did the polis not make better military use of its subhoplite citizens? (3) What was the purpose of defining the hoplite class in rigid economic terms, and were such definitions applied universally? Concerning the first question, scholars usually assume that throughout its history the polis was structured similarly, comprising a small minority of wealthy elite families, a much larger class (but overall still a minority) of farmers who qualified as hoplites, and a majority of subhoplites.<sup>33</sup> This is certainly true for poleis with a highly diversified economy and a developed secondary sector. But such conditions applied only from the late sixth and especially fifth century and only in exceptional cases, among which Athens was quite unique (below at n. 69). In the archaic period, when polis populations were almost completely agrarian and few other opportunities existed to earn a decent living, when the poor and dissatisfied often emigrated and thetes who depended on others for their livelihood were treated with utmost contempt, the proportion of small farmers and especially nonfarmers must have been much smaller.<sup>34</sup> If so, through most of the archaic period the hoplite-farmers would have represented the majority of polis citizens.

Historically, this would make sense. When poleis and polis territories were emerging and interpolis feuds began to be fought by citizen armies, it must soon have been obvious that numbers were decisive. Given the small size of the average polis, the general tendency must have been to field as large a proportion of the citizens as possible.<sup>35</sup> The view seems implausible, therefore, that the “will to enroll” was a major factor.<sup>36</sup> This view presupposes that hoplites might have been unwilling to serve in the phalanx; it is diametrically opposed to another, that hoplite fighting became so standardized because this proved a successful means to keep the despised lower classes out of the army and hence

out of politics.<sup>37</sup> Both assumptions ignore the nature and purpose of hoplite warfare. If the enemy attacked their fields, any farmer would want to help defend them: put simply, the hoplites fought on their land for their land.<sup>38</sup> This aspect determined the social and ideological implications of the phalanx. If the defense of the polis could be made more effective by involving more citizens, this would certainly have been—and probably often was—done.<sup>39</sup> If the archaic polis relied on hoplites and not on light-armed troops, this was not the result of political conspiracy and manipulation but of compelling economic and practical factors.

The second question involves two aspects. First, given that in most of Greece plains are rare and mountain ranges separate the poleis, and that hoplite warfare often aimed at forcing the opponents to fight or submit by threatening their crops,<sup>40</sup> why did the communities not defend the mountain passes and use the terrain to their advantage rather than allowing the enemy to penetrate their territory, risking their fields to be ravaged, and relying on pitched battles? The best answer is that a system of border defense would have required fortifications and, considering the relatively short distances, the maintenance of a standing corps of border guards. The resulting financial burden would have exceeded the capacity of almost all early poleis.<sup>41</sup> Before the fifth century, only Sparta could afford a professional army; it was supported by the enslaved Messenians—a system unsuitable for general imitation. The hoplites were a citizen militia; phalanx fighting was adapted to the possibilities of the early polis and the needs of warfare between these poleis. As possibilities and needs changed, the methods of warfare and the personnel involved in war changed too.

In addition, even if the bulk of the polis armies consisted of hoplites, it might still have been useful to support the phalanx with cavalry and light-armed troops. To some extent this was done but rarely in an organized and systematic way.<sup>42</sup> Although in later periods both types of troops proved their effectiveness, Athens, for example, created a substantial cavalry corps only in the mid-fifth century and never took full advantage of it, and by 424 still had no organized light-armed corps.<sup>43</sup> Why such reluctance? Here all indications indeed point to tradition, values, and social prejudice. Throughout the archaic and classical periods, *once the principle was established*, the hoplite's achievement was valued more highly than other forms of fighting: true valor (*aretē*) was seen in facing the enemy in man-to-man combat and holding one's position in the battle formation. Warrior ethics were closely linked with those of tilling the land: the true citizen was farmer and soldier.<sup>44</sup> The reason for the predominance and persistence of such values most likely lies precisely in the nature of the polis as a citizen community of farmer-soldiers who shared strong interests and learned solidarity and discipline when fighting in defense of their community. These virtues were cemented by the phalanx. Those who did not share

in them indeed did not matter. Hence there developed a tendency to stick to pure hoplite fighting, which—and this is crucial—was facilitated because the underlying values were generally accepted in the world of poleis and because hoplite fighting gradually changed its purpose.

This leads to the third question: Why, to what purpose, and how universally were definitions limiting the hoplite class to farmers above a certain property level used, and how restrictive were they really? One obvious explanation for such limitations, that the number of hoplites exceeded the level deemed necessary, would apply only to the largest poleis, if at all. Another may lie in the process of “ritualization” of hoplite warfare itself.

Before the fifth century, war among Greek poleis was endemic but not permanent (below at n. 61). Although such wars, fought in fairly regular intervals, were serious enough, their impact and function seem to have changed, once the polis system was in place and somewhat balanced (roughly by the late seventh century). Phalanx fighting was increasingly “ritualized,” in the sense of both playing an important ritual role within the community and following widely agreed-upon principles.<sup>45</sup> In fact, this type of warfare was only possible because the values and behavior codes involved were shared widely and reinforced regularly at interstate festivals and by the ethics promoted by the Panhellenic sanctuaries. As a result, the brutality immanent in war was somewhat reduced, and in the particular world of Greek poleis between the late seventh and early fifth century the function of war—normally—was to determine the prestige rather than the survival of the polis. This helps explain why later tradition remembered so few destructions and enslavements of cities in the archaic period.<sup>46</sup>

The custom of limiting the hoplite class to property owners above a certain level thus may have been a Panhellenic phenomenon, reflecting shared ideals.<sup>47</sup> The question of where the limit was set, and how exclusive it was, then becomes all the more important. The Athenian example, as so often, may be atypical—or simply wrong. The tradition about its property classes certainly poses serious problems.<sup>48</sup> In fact, close examination shows that the census figure of two hundred *medimnoi* for hoplites, only one hundred *medimnoi* less than the *hippeis*, although accepted by most scholars, is far too high. Accordingly, I consider it probable that at least well into the fifth century the Athenian hoplite class was far less comfortably propertied, less exclusive, and perhaps less rigidly defined than the tradition suggests.<sup>49</sup> This is certainly true for most other poleis, which were small in size and population and able to field a decent hoplite force only if almost every independent farmer was enrolled.<sup>50</sup> This, in turn, confirms the suggestion made earlier that during most of the archaic period the hoplite farmers represented the bulk of the citizen body and all the citizens who mattered.

### *Phalanx, Polis, and Equality*

If the polis citizens were militarily empowered from early on, the traditional view that these same citizens were essentially powerless poses difficulties. On the political side, this view is based on the assumption that early Greek assemblies were insignificant; this assumption, in turn, rests on a one-sided interpretation of several scenes in the Homeric epics that seem to describe the assembly as passive, depending on elite leaders, and easily manipulated. Recent studies, however, have refuted this assumption and made a strong case that even in the epics the assembly plays a crucial role and is communally indispensable.<sup>51</sup> On the social side, essential parts of archaic poetry (especially Hesiod and Solon) reflect elite predominance and various forms of dependence among the demos. Yet, why should this be incompatible in principle with the demos’ fighting in the polis army—or with their participation, in elementary but important ways, in communal decision making? Elite ideology, visible already in the *Iliad* (2.200–202), aimed at enhancing aristocratic domination and increasing the distance between elite and masses.<sup>52</sup> Continuing economic and social differentiation would have reinforced such trends, resulting in a sense of superiority and abuses of power on the part of the elite, and, among the commoners, in both real and perceived dependence and powerlessness. The commoners’ military involvement might not in itself suffice to stem this trend, especially if it predated the sketched developments by a long time. In other words, according to the interactive model proposed earlier in this chapter, Greek polis aristocracies emerged and rose to power as the polis evolved; their rivalries and abuses, amply attested in the poetry of the time, thus influenced and changed relations and structures that were in part long established, in part also still evolving. Such abuses, however, met with resistance precisely when they disturbed the egalitarian base on which the polis was built. Hence, not surprisingly, massive protest and resistance eventually forced the elite to compromise.<sup>53</sup> Dependence of parts of the demos thus was not identical with powerlessness of the demos as a whole.

Sparta provides an illuminating exception: here around the mid-seventh century an early constitution established regular meetings of the assembly and defined its place in the communal decision-making process, next to the kings and council of elders; eventually, the Spartiate citizen-hoplites were recognized as peers (*homoioi*).<sup>54</sup> In my view, this was less the result of the long and recurring war with Messenia itself than that of the continuous threat posed to the Spartiate community by the enslavement of the defeated (above at n. 6). The hoplites thus assumed permanent military responsibility for the security of their polis. The difference in warfare between “permanent and essential” versus “occasional and ritual” was decisive. Fifth-century Athens offers another example where the rise of citizen-soldiers to *permanent* and *essential* military significance had far-reaching political consequences.<sup>55</sup> In such cases the military

factor indeed seems to have been the primary agent of sociopolitical change. In poleis that were less permanently threatened and where the army played a less crucial role, the military factor probably had less of an impact.

Nevertheless, toward the end of the archaic period egalitarian structures were institutionally fixed in many poleis, thereby enhancing and formalizing more extensively the political participation of at least the hoplite farmers.<sup>56</sup> Such formalization of equality potentially went far beyond earlier timocratic systems; in Athens, the difference is expressed by Cleisthenes' "order of equality" (*isonomia*) of 508/7 versus Solon's traditional "good order" (*eunomia*) reaffirmed almost a century earlier.<sup>57</sup> If this development was in most cases not directly related to the hoplite phalanx, what brought it about? Since it resulted in incisive innovations, strong pressures must have been at work, from the outside or from within the polis. In most cases, the latter may have been decisive: infighting among elite families, their abuse of social and economic power, and severe social conflicts threatened the polis as well. The formalization of institutions, the enactment of written law, and the appointment of mediators and legislators with extraordinary power served as means, supported by the entire polis, to overcome such crises.<sup>58</sup> So, too, the increased and formalized political empowerment of the farmers served the purpose of stabilizing the polis that was in danger of complete destabilization. The fact that these farmers were hoplites was less the cause than the condition of their integration: fighting in the phalanx was one of three interconnected factors that were crucial in determining who belonged among the essential part of the citizen body.

### Conclusion

The evidence of Homeric and early Greek warfare leaves no space for a "hoplite revolution." The phalanx evolved with the polis and the emergence of communal warfare and represented the Greeks' response to the specific challenges of mostly localized and increasingly ritualized warfare in a fairly balanced system of poleis. From the very beginning, the landowning farmers formed an integral element, both militarily and politically, in the evolving polis. Their roles of landowners, soldiers, and assemblymen were interconnected and naturally made them the essential part of the citizen body. Although the early Greek polis was thus founded on essential elements of equality, economic and social differentiation continued and resulted in elite domination and abuse of power, which in turn provoked resistance and revolt. Eventually, the farmer-hoplites were formally integrated in egalitarian polis constitutions. Usually this happened not primarily as a result of their contribution to the phalanx but as a result of serious social crisis and in an effort, supported by the entire polis, to stabilize the community and set it on a broader base of citizen involvement and communal responsibility. In exceptional cases, especially that of Sparta, permanent outside pressure on the community resulted in a professionalization of the citizens' military function and, in close

connection with this development, in their enhanced and formalized political participation in a system that emphasized their status as "peers" (*homoioi*).



### Naval Warfare, Imperialism, and Democracy in the Fifth Century

The hoplites' significant role in fifth-century warfare should not be underestimated. Moreover, although political theorists included them among the supporters of oligarchy, the Athenian hoplites, with few exceptions, identified with and supported democracy hardly less than the lower-class "naval crowds."<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, what revolutionized warfare in the fifth century was Athens's reliance on large-scale naval warfare. Many scholars have postulated a direct connection between naval warfare and democracy, assuming, again, that military change prompted political change. Again, however, things might be more complicated. The main questions we need to discuss are, What exactly is the connection between naval power and empire, and between both and democracy? And how did all this affect Athenian society?

#### *The Nature of Naval Warfare*

Naval warfare was radically different from traditional Greek land warfare. In the fifth century, it was based on the trireme, a formidable man-of-war, long and narrow, manned by 200 men (of whom 170 were rowers, tightly packed in three tiers), propelled by oars and two sails, very fast and highly maneuverable. Although invented earlier, it was used relatively rarely before the Persian Wars. In the archaic period, naval encounters were mostly fought with smaller ships that served both military and trade or transportation purposes. Even early naval powers (such as Corinth and Corcyra) had relatively small fleets. The Phoenicians, providing the bulk of the Persian fleet, were the dominant naval power in the eastern Mediterranean: in 494 they defeated the combined navies of the Ionian and island poleis that had revolted from Persia. This was one of the first great sea battles in Aegean waters fought with triremes. The Athenians' decision in the late 480s to entrust the survival of their community against the Persians to a fleet of triremes thus was not novel but daring.<sup>60</sup>

Naval warfare contributed decisively to making war more permanent, comprehensive, and brutal. Unlike hoplite campaigns that usually were short and took place only in fairly long intervals, naval expeditions lasted weeks if not months or years. Naval warfare was highly technical and required constant training; hence a small squadron was almost constantly on sea for patrol and training missions. In the fifth and fourth centuries, the Athenians were involved in serious military actions in no less than two out of every three years. Relying on their navy to transport soldiers and resources, they soon became the foremost Greek experts in siegecraft. Henceforth, warfare was more intense and "total": economic blockades and ravaging of the enemy's territory became fre-