

Sociétés méditerranéennes antiques en mutation

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La considération accordée aux marins dans
l'Athènes démocratique
(The standing of sailors in democratic Athens)

David M. Pritchard

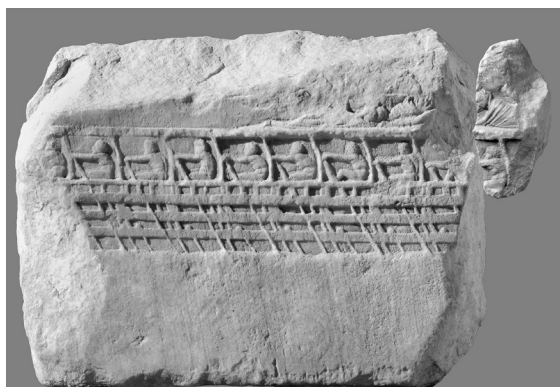
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Dans l'Athènes démocratique, les marins étaient tout aussi importants culturellement que les hoplites. En effet, il était clair pour le *dēmos* que son État était une importante puissance maritime. Athènes était consciente qu'il était crucial de préserver ses forces navales, puisqu'elle menait avant tout ses combats en mer. Pour le peuple, combattre en tant que marin profitait autant à l'État que le faire en tant qu'hoplite, et les Athéniens n'appartenant pas à l'élite étaient convaincus qu'un citoyen honorait de la même manière ses devoirs en servant dans la marine ou dans l'armée de terre. Il leur tenait donc à cœur que les Athéniens combattant en mer obtiennent la même reconnaissance de leur bravoure.

Traditionnellement, l'*aretē* (le courage) était définie en fonction de ce que les hoplites devaient accomplir en se battant sur terre. Or la manière de combattre des marins était nettement différente. Par conséquent, les reconnaître comme courageux posait problème, puisqu'ils ne répondaient pas strictement à la définition de l'*aretē* telle qu'appliquée aux hoplites. Les orateurs publics et les dramaturges identifièrent deux manières de contourner ce problème : parfois, ils mettaient en exergue les aspects des combats en mer par lesquels les marins répondaient aux critères traditionnels du courage, ou tout au moins s'en approchaient. Plus souvent encore, ils utilisaient tout simplement une nouvelle définition de l'*aretē*, considérant que le courage consistait à braver les dangers du champ de bataille malgré les risques.

Puisque cette nouvelle définition n'était plus liée aux hoplites, elle pouvait facilement s'appliquer aux marins. Tout cela différait grandement de la vision négative des marins que les Athéniens classiques avaient héritée de leurs ancêtres, et c'est ainsi que le *dēmos* est parvenu à redéfinir les valeurs aristocratiques traditionnelles dans le domaine militaire.



1ère séance

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De 15h à 18h

Salle 404
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Lyon 7e

Légende illustration :
Top-bench rowers and the three levels of rowing benches on a trireme are depicted on fragments of a victory monument for the ship race at the Great Panathenaea. Attic marble relief, c. 410-400. Athens, Acropolis Museum, inv. no. 1339. Photograph courtesy of H. R. Goette.

David M. Pritchard (Lyon/Queensland)

‘La considération accordée aux marins dans l’Athènes démocratique’

Résumé

Dans l’Athènes démocratique, les marins étaient tout aussi importants culturellement que les hoplites. En effet, il était clair pour le *dēmos* que son État était une importante puissance maritime. Athènes était consciente qu’il était crucial de préserver ses forces navales, puisqu’elle menait avant tout ses combats en mer. Pour le peuple, combattre en tant que marin profitait autant à l’État que le faire en tant qu’hoplite, et les Athéniens n’appartenant pas à l’élite étaient convaincus qu’un citoyen honorait de la même manière ses devoirs en servant dans la marine ou dans l’armée de terre. Il leur tenait donc à cœur que les Athéniens combattant en mer obtiennent la même reconnaissance de leur bravoure. Traditionnellement, l’*aretē* (le courage) était définie en fonction de ce que les hoplites devaient accomplir en se battant sur terre. Or la manière de combattre des marins était nettement différente. Par conséquent, les reconnaître comme courageux posait problème, puisqu’ils ne répondaient pas strictement à la définition de l’*aretē* telle qu’appliquée aux hoplites. Les orateurs publics et les dramaturges identifièrent deux manières de contourner ce problème : parfois, ils mettaient en exergue les aspects des combats en mer par lesquels les marins répondaient aux critères traditionnels du courage, ou tout au moins s’en approchaient. Plus souvent encore, ils utilisaient tout simplement une nouvelle définition de l’*aretē*, considérant que le courage consistait à braver les dangers du champ de bataille malgré les risques. Puisque cette nouvelle définition n’était plus liée aux hoplites, elle pouvait facilement s’appliquer aux marins. Tout cela différait grandement de la vision négative des marins que les Athéniens classiques avaient héritée de leurs ancêtres, et c’est ainsi que le *dēmos* est parvenu à redéfinir les valeurs aristocratiques traditionnelles dans le domaine militaire.

Biographie

David M. Pritchard est professeur associé d’histoire grecque à l’université du Queensland en Australie. Il a obtenu 13 bourses de recherche en Australie, au Danemark, en France, au Royaume-Uni, aux Pays-Bas et aux États-Unis. Il est également l’auteur de *Athenian Democracy at War* (Cambridge University Press: 2019), *de Sport, Democracy and War in Classical Athens* (Cambridge University Press: 2013) et de *Public Spending and Democracy in Classical Athens* (University of Texas Press: 2015). D. M. Pritchard a également édité *War, Democracy and Culture in Classical Athens* (Cambridge University Press: 2010) et coédité *Sport and Festival in the Ancient Greek World* (Classical Press of Wales: 2003). Il intervient à la radio et régulièrement dans la presse. Une trentaine de tribunes ont été publiées dans, parmi d’autres, *Le Monde*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Kathimerini*, *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* et *The Conversation* (France).

‘The Standing of Sailors in Democratic Athens’

Abstract

Ancient historians regularly argue that the Athenian *dēmos* (‘people’) held sailors in much lower esteem than hoplites. They cite in support of this the extant funeral speech of Pericles. Certainly this famous speech said a lot about courageous hoplites but next to nothing about sailors. Yet it is also clear that this was not a typical example of the genre. Funeral speeches usually gave a fulsome account of Athenian military history. In 431 Pericles decided to skip such an account because of the difficult politics that he faced. In rehearsing military history funeral speeches always mentioned naval battles and recognised sailors as courageous. Old comedy and the other genres of public oratory depicted sailors in the same positive terms. Their sailors displayed no less courage than hoplites and both groups equally benefitted the state. All these non-elite genres assumed that a citizen equally fulfilled his martial duty by serving as either a sailor or a hoplite. They used a new definition of courage that both groups of combatants could easily meet. In tragedy, by contrast, characters and choruses used the hoplite extensively as a norm. In epic poetry heroes spoke in the same hoplitic idiom. By copying this idiom the tragic poets were setting their plays more convincingly in the distant heroic age. In

spite of this, tragedy still recognised Athens as a major seapower and could depict sailors as courageous. In Athenian democracy speakers and playwrights had to articulate the viewpoint of non-elite citizens. Their works put beyond doubt that the *dēmos* esteemed sailors as highly as hoplites.

Biographical Note

David M. Pritchard is Associate Professor of Greek History at the University of Queensland (Australia). He has obtained 13 fellowships in Australia, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the United States of America. He has authored *Athenian Democracy at War* (Cambridge University Press: 2019), *Sport, Democracy and War in Classical Athens* (Cambridge University Press: 2013) and *Public Spending and Democracy in Classical Athens* (University of Texas Press: 2015), edited *War, Democracy and Culture in Classical Athens* (Cambridge University Press: 2010) and co-edited *Sport and Festival in the Ancient Greek World* (Classical Press of Wales: 2013). Associate Professor Pritchard speaks on the radio and regularly writes for newspapers around the world. His 30 op-eds have been published in, among other outlets *Le Monde*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Kathimerini*, *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Conversation* (France).

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SLIDE 1

The Standing of Sailors in Democratic Athens

David M. Pritchard

SLIDE 2

1. The Striking Paradox

Historians of classical Athens usually argue that sailors were less prominent culturally than hoplites. This would be a striking paradox because the Athenian state's military power came, of course, from a **SLIDE 3** really big navy. This paradox is usually attributed to the low standing of naval personnel. The common view is that the Athenian *dēmos* ('people') viewed sailors as inferior to hoplites. As a result – it is argued – the Athenians preferred to use this heavily armed soldier as a norm in public discourse. Public speakers and playwrights regularly reflected on the relationship that different social groups had to war. In doing so some of them did focus on the hoplite. The discursive use of this soldier could lead to defining *aretē* ('courage') in terms of what hoplites had to do for victory. Certainly courage was so defined by the tragic poets. For them a courageous man primarily had to remain (*menō*) 'by his spear' or 'beside his shield'. While cowards ran away, **SLIDE 4** the brave man – to quote Euripides – did not 'flee from the spear', but accepted the risk of 'the spear's sudden wound'. This steadfastness was a precondition for winning a land battle. In the front ranks hoplites **SLIDE 5** took comfort from knowing that others could relieve them. With a mass of hoplites standing behind them, they could not easily run away.

In order to be victorious each front-rank hoplite also had to keep on striking until his opposite number fell or fled. Therefore tragedy made 'great exploits' **SLIDE 6** a secondary requirement for a brave man. Obviously the way in which sailors fought was really different. In sea battles **SLIDE 7**, they could not act individually because their ship was a collective weapon. Significantly they employed flight as a tactic. Consequently sailors could not strictly meet a hoplite-based definition of *aretē*. It is often argued that this resulted in the *dēmos* questioning their courageousness.

The classic study of the standing of sailors in ancient Greece is by Félix Bourriot **SLIDE 8**. Bourriot puts beyond doubt that rating sailors below soldiers was common before Athenian democracy. In epic poetry the elite heavily armed soldier clearly was the masculine norm. Often Homer represented the relationship of each social group to war by depicting how this soldier interacted with his father or wife. In his poems **SLIDE 9** *aretē* consisted of what society expected such elite figures to do in land battles. Only they were depicted as fighting courageously. Certainly they never fought

sea battles. ‘The Greeks’, Bourriot writes, ‘who disembarked at Troy had not encountered any squadron that tried to oppose their armada nor to sink their heavily laden ships.’ Homer did not think favourably either of the non-elite sailors on these ships **SLIDE 10**; for he regularly depicted them displaying cowardice or other moral shortcomings.

The heavily armed soldier also served as the norm on the pots of sixth-century Athens. Archaic Athenians who purchased them clearly wanted to think about war in the same hoplite-centred terms. A good example **SLIDE 11** is the common painting of divination before a soldier’s departure. In this scene the hoplite studies most closely the viscera because he is the one who is about to risk his life in war. The old man, who is next to him, may no longer be a hoplite. But he once was and so can give advice to the younger man. When a female relative is depicted, she stands passively. She leaves the discussion of war to men who wage it.

In classical Athens sailors had the opportunity to change this traditional rating of their military service. Under Athenian democracy the main fora for developing the popular culture that the *dēmos* shared were the theatre **SLIDE 12**, the assembly and the law-courts. Playwrights, politicians and litigants may have belonged to the elite. But their audiences were predominantly non-elite citizens. Formally ten judges voted on who would win the dramatic *agōnes* (‘contests’). But they took their cue from the noisy responses that the thousands of theatregoers made to each play. This meant that playwrights needed to reproduce the perceptions of non-elite theatregoers.

Politicians **SLIDE 13** and litigants were under still more pressure to articulate this non-elite viewpoint because the outcomes of their debates and trials came down to the actual votes of their audiences. In 432/1 only one third of Athenians fought in the land army. The other two thirds regularly served in the navy **SLIDE 14**. Consequently there would have been large numbers of sailors in the theatre, the assembly and the law-courts. It would indeed be a striking paradox if such audience-members could not ‘stamp their image on Athenian public culture’. This would confirm the commonly made argument that the *dēmos* never redefined the aristocratic values that they had inherited. It would support the bold claim of the great Nicole Loraux **SLIDE 15** that ‘democracy never acquired a language of its own’.

That sailors continued to be discredited in Athenian democracy may be the predominant view. But this view has always faced challenges. Seventy years ago Victor Ehrenberg **SLIDE 16** argued that in the wake of the Persian Wars ‘the navy claimed for itself military valour and virtue’. For Ehrenberg the Athenians therefore appreciated the ‘military virtue’ of their sailors. More recently, Joseph (‘Yossi’) Roisman **SLIDE**

17 writes that for fourth-century orators the hoplite was an important norm. But Roisman cautions that ‘the oratorical corpus provides no evidence for the inferior ranking of rowing in comparison to hoplite or cavalry service’. Ryan Balot **SLIDE 18**, among others, has likewise argued that the classical Athenians viewed sailors as just as courageous as hoplites.

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2. The Funeral Oration

The funeral oration is vitally important for studying the rating of sailors. Admittedly funeral orators were not competing for the support of audience-members. Consequently their performance-context **SLIDE 20** was different from what playwrights and other public speakers faced. Nevertheless the democratic council still chose funeral orators from among the leading politicians. They were required to deliver praise that met the expectations of a large crowd. Such constraints probably encouraged them to articulate no less the non-elite viewpoint. Parallels between their speeches and the genres that were part of democratic *agōnes* confirm that they did.

It was a commonplace of the funeral oration that the focus was on the war dead **SLIDE 21** being buried. The mourners, however, clearly expected the genre’s praise to go well beyond them. Plato’s Socrates **SLIDE 21** notes, correctly, how the speakers ‘praise the state by all means, those who died in war, our ancestors, indeed all those who went before as well as we who are still alive’. Indeed funeral speeches offered the fullest account of military history that non-elite Athenians ever heard. If, then, the *dēmos* preferred to give less praise to sailors than hoplites, we would expect to find clear evidence in this genre.

In her great study of the funeral oration **SLIDE 23** Loraux claimed to have found this evidence. For Loraux this oration concealed the navy and always used the hoplite as the norm for *aretē*. Those who believe in the low rating of sailors have naturally seized on her claims. The extant funeral speech of 431/0 seems to bear out both claims. Pericles praised Athenian *aretē* in **SLIDE 24** Thucydides 2.39. This chapter presented a long list of reasons why the Athenians were more courageous than the Spartans. One reason was that they relied on, not Sparta’s ‘preparations and tricks’, but an innate courage. This concealed the careful ‘preparation’ before a fleet’s launch. Another reason concerned the training of Spartan hoplites. Even though, Pericles said, the Athenians did none whatsoever, they were no less courageous. Here Pericles failed to mention the regular training that Athenian sailors undertook. Indeed Athenian hoplites were the only branch of the armed forces that did not train. Pericles’s list is really only

about Athenian hoplites. It seems that courage could be discussed only in terms of them.

For generations students have read this famous speech of Pericles **SLIDE 25**. It is the best known of the genre's 5 surviving examples. There is a temptation to take it as a typical funeral oration. Yet it was strikingly different from the 2 other examples to which it is closest in date. Lysias and Plato spent over half of their funeral speeches cataloguing exploits in mythical and historical times. Thucydides 2.36 was all that Pericles said about such exploits. In the fourth century this catalogue was the standard means for praising the Athenians. Each military exploit revealed the same: the Athenians waged just wars and were always courageous.

Herodotus 9.27 **SLIDE 26** implies that such exploits were already standard in 431/0. At the battle of Plataea, 50 years earlier, a debate occurred about *aretē* on the Greek side. Herodotus's chapter **SLIDE 27** records, supposedly, what proofs the Athenians gave that they were more courageous. They spoke of 4 'ancient' exploits and the land battle of Marathon. Three of these exploits were standard myths in fourth-century funeral speeches. The funeral oration likewise drew the line between mythical and historical exploits at Marathon. Herodotus's Athenians repeatedly fought alone. Funeral speeches characterised them in the same way. In the Herodotean debate victory was credited only to the Athenians as a collective. Such anonymity was a commonplace at the public funeral. Therefore clear parallels existed between these 2 catalogues. Herodotus, it seems, who was writing in the 430s, drew on an epitaphic tradition that already included a stock catalogue of exploits. In Thucydides 2.36 **SLIDE 28** Pericles gave an excuse for not speaking about the creation of the Athenian empire: he did not want to go through *erga* ('exploits') that were well known. Other funeral orators used the same excuse for skipping exploits. Pericles's funeral speech thus also implies that this catalogue was standard in 431/0.

Lysias and Plato show what kinds of historical *erga* were included. Their catalogues spent just as much time on sea battles as on land battles. Indeed Lysias's account of Salamis **SLIDE 29** was twice as long as what he said about Marathon. He made the Athenians who fought this naval battle surpass all others in *aretē*. Plato praised the *aretē* of every Athenian who had fought in the Persian Wars. Plato also introduced *erga* **SLIDE 30** that Pericles could have used in an account of the empire's creation. They were all naval campaigns: Eurymedon, Cyprus and Egypt. Plato praised no less the *aretē* of Athenian sailors in the Peloponnesian and Corinthian Wars. In both speeches victories at sea benefitted Athens no less than those on land.

Bourriot, however, **SLIDE 31** rightly reminds us of ‘the depth of the contempt’ that Plato actually had for sailors. Plato saw them as generally immoral and the navy in which they served as a cause of moral corruption. Athenian intellectuals, clearly, who wrote only for elite readers, were able to keep alive the older negative view of sailors. In his *Menexenus*, though, **SLIDE 32** Plato was parodying a non-elite genre. A parody works only if it contains a lot of what it is criticising. By giving sailors *aretē*, despite his low regard of them, Plato confirmed that this was one of the funeral oration’s commonplaces.

This genre generally did not conceal the Athenian navy. Loraux’s other claim **SLIDE 33** that it defined courage in hoplitic terms looks no more secure. In his funeral speech **SLIDE 34** Lysias repeatedly characterised the Athenians as courageous. His catalogue always described the same behaviour in battle: the Athenians bore *kindunoi* (‘dangers’). In bearing them they accepted the risk of death. His catalogue suggests that a brave man simply takes on dangers in spite of the personal risk. In several chapters Lysias explicitly defined *aretē* in this way. The same definition is found in other funeral speeches. For Hyperides **SLIDE 35**, for example, ‘those willing to run a risk with their bodies’ exhibited *aretē*. This was a simplification of the traditional definition of courage in terms of the hoplite. Because this new definition was no longer linked to this soldier, sailors could meet it just as easily as hoplites.

There are two plausible explanations why the funeral speech of 431/0 lacked martial *erga*. The first sees it as solely the work of Thucydides **SLIDE 36**. In the catalogue of exploits Athens simply never changed: it always had been Greece’s leading power. In his book 1 Thucydides, indisputably, challenged this historical view. In mythical times, he argued, other leading powers had existed. Thucydides showed how Athens had become Greece’s leading power only after the Persian Wars. In book 2 he thus skipped the catalogue of exploits because its view of the past was what he had just challenged.

The second explanation assumes that the speech is based on what Pericles **SLIDE 37** actually said in 431/0. Months earlier the *dēmos* accepted his policy of abandoning Attica in the face of Sparta’s expected invasion. Opposing it would simply be too dangerous because Sparta’s coalition army would be several times larger. When, however, the Athenians saw their farms being pillaged, the hoplites among them demanded that they be led out to fight. Not doing so was now branded as cowardice. Pericles, according to Thucydides, managed their anger carefully. This careful management continued into his funeral speech. The catalogue included stock *erga* in which the Athenians defeated invaders who had much larger forces. Rehearsing them

now ran the risk of re-kindling the anger against Pericles's policy. Therefore Pericles skipped the catalogue and gave a list of reasons why Athenian hoplites could still feel braver than the invaders.

Either explanation plausibly accounts for this speech's lack of a catalogue. If the majority view were that the speech was solely Thucydidean, it would be easy to choose the first. This, however, is not the case; for historians, now, are returning to Loraux's view **SLIDE 38** that a lot of this speech is Periclean. Today I would choose the second explanation because it explains more: both explanations account for no catalogue but only the second accounts for Thucydides 2.39.

SLIDE 39

3. Old Comedy

Old comedy used the hoplite as a norm in two different ways. We can see these uses clearly in the fantasies that Aristophanes wrote about ending the Peloponnesian War. In *Acharnians* **SLIDE 40** Dicaeopolis expresses his war-weariness in terms of hoplites: the war's outbreak is 'the clash of shields', while his desire for peace is for the Athenians 'to hang up their shields'. In *Lysistrata* **SLIDE 41** Aristophanes made the women similarly express their desire for peace: they wish to stop their husbands using against each other 'shield', 'spear' or 'sword'. This comedy also shows how the hoplite was employed on stage as the norm for defining gender roles. In *Lysistrata* a magistrate claims that Attic women have no relationship to war. Lysistrata replies that they certainly do because they 'bear sons and send them out as hoplites'. Aristophanes made the hoplite a metonym for war the most in his *Peace*. This comedy's chorus **SLIDE 42** are sick and tired of going to the Lyceum 'with spear, with shield'. Athenian hoplites frequently mustered on this athletics field before departing for a battle. Their response to the war's fantastical ending is no less hoplitic: they rejoice at being freed from shields, helmets and the food-rations that hoplites had to bring with them on a campaign.

Aristophanes may have used the hoplite as a norm for generalisations about war and gender-roles. But he never concealed that Athens was predominantly a naval power. In *Acharnians* Aristophanes had Dicaeopolis choose between different peace-treaties. Dicaeopolis rejects the five-year one because it smells of naval pitch and the 'preparation' of warships. Later he argues that Sparta was not solely to blame for the Peloponnesian War because it was responding to an Athenian trade-embargo against a Spartan ally. The Athenians, Dicaeopolis points out, would do the same; for, at the smallest provocation, they would prepare three-hundred triremes **SLIDE 43** for

launching. In *Peace* Aristophanes made Hermes explain that the Peloponnesian War broke out when Athens carried out such a launch. In *Lysistrata* **SLIDE 44** the Spartan woman fears that the sex strike will not stop the war as long as there are Athenian triremes. Therefore these anti-war comedies fully acknowledged that Athens waged war primarily on the sea. In tune with this, Aristophanes generally depicted the maintenance of the Athenian navy as unambiguously good. Themistocles is thus praised for creating the Piraeus, while regular shipbuilding and protecting the shipsheds are ideal public policies.

For Bourriot **SLIDE 45** the *dēmos* were ‘proud of their harbours, their triremes and their dockyards’. Nevertheless Bourriot still claims that ‘this high regard did not extend down to the sailors’. The comedies of Aristophanes completely disprove Bourriot’s last claim. They repeatedly esteem sailors as highly as hoplites. For Aristophanes the *kindunoi* that each group bore equally benefitted the state. He recognised the *aretē* of sailors no less than the funeral oration did. On stage his Athenians equally met their duty to fight for the state by serving as hoplites or sailors. In discussing this duty Aristophanes did not feel obliged to use the hoplite as a norm.

Aristophanes made sailors as courageous as soldiers in *Knights* **SLIDE 46** of 425/4. This comedy’s chorus wish to praise (*eulogēsthai*) their courageous fathers **SLIDE 47**, since ‘in land battles and in a fleet (*en te naupharktōi stratōi*) they were always victorious and adorned this state’. Here fighting at sea benefits Athens no less than doing so on land. Their fathers always won ‘because no one of them, when he saw the enemy, counted their number’. In funeral speeches courageous Athenians likewise disregarded the enemy’s numbers. Rather, the chorus continue, ‘their *thumos* straightaway was on guard’. Athenian authors used *thumos* as a synonym for *aretē*. Consequently this passage is making sailors as courageous as soldiers. The chorus draw their eulogy to a close by describing the courage of their fathers. Here Aristophanes avoided a hoplite-based definition of *aretē* just as much as funeral orators did. In contrast to them, however, he did so with, not a simpler definition, but a sporting metaphor **SLIDE 48**. The Athenians thought that athletes required the same virtues as combatants. Consequently they used the actions of one group to describe the other. ‘But if ever’, the chorus conclude, ‘they fell on their shoulder in battle, they would wipe clean this fall, deny that they had fallen and resume their wrestling-bout’.

In his *Wasps* **SLIDE 49** Aristophanes depicted sailors benefitting the state as much as hoplites. This comedy is about a son’s efforts to get his father to retire from jury service. The son points out that their imperial subjects give the *dēmos* nothing, even though their service in the army *and* the navy created the empire. Instead the

politicians get all the perks and the jurors only 3 obols. What makes it worse, he adds, is that the jurors had ‘acquired’ the tribute that paid their jury pay ‘by bearing many *ponoi* (‘toils’) while rowing, fighting infantry battles and besieging’. There ‘is no social restrictiveness here’: the *ponoi* of sailors no less than hoplites created the empire. Later in their interlude the chorus claim that their service as hoplites and as sailors greatly benefitted Athens. For them what is ‘most painful’ is ‘if someone who dodged the draft gulps down our pay, although he has not, for his country, taken up an oar, a spear or even a blister’. Here Aristophanes made out that an Athenian could meet his martial duty by serving in either branch of the armed forces.

SLIDE 50

4. Forensic and Deliberative Oratory

Old comedy’s positive depiction of naval matters parallels what we find in contemporaneous speeches. Athenian litigants **SLIDE 51** always tried to win over non-elite jurors by listing the *agatha* (‘benefits’) that they had given the state. When they could, such public speakers explained how they or their forebears had done *agatha* for the navy **SLIDE 52**. Politicians, too, made comparable arguments. Both groups never missed the chance to say that their opponents had destroyed the shipsheds **SLIDE 53** or, simply, warships. These speakers assumed, as Aristophanes did, that the *dēmos* viewed the navy’s maintenance as unambiguously good. In law-court speeches lists of *agatha* invariably mentioned military service. The *dēmos* made the trierarchy one of the liturgies that the wealthy were required to perform. As most litigants were wealthy, they often described what they had done as such trireme-commanders. One speaker **SLIDE 54** thus narrated the *erga* that he had performed as a trierarch after Athens’s final defeat in 405/4. In recognition of them, he added, the *dēmos* had rewarded him for his *aretē*.

Other law-court speeches detailed battles without reference to trierarchies. One defendant asked to be acquitted because he had ‘fought many sea battles for the state and many land battles’. When there were no land battles, litigants simply listed the sea battles in which they had fought. In doing so one speaker characterised his risk taking in sea battles as courage. All these lists depicted fighting at sea as no less of a benefit to the state than fighting on land. Litigants also attacked the service-records of their opponents. In a genuine prosecution speech against Andocides, for example, the speaker asked whether his service ‘as a courageous combatant’ warranted his acquittal. It did not, the prosecutor argued, **SLIDE 55** because this elite defendant had never campaigned ‘either as a horseman, a hoplite, a trierarch or a hoplite marine’. Here it

was assumed that *aretē* was not confined to hoplites and that military service could take different forms.

This positive depiction of naval service was not limited to elite Athenians. In a law-court speech that he personally delivered Lysias gave *aretē* to the Athenian sailors of a battle in 406/5. Later in the fourth century public speakers regularly did the same. In a speech from 399/8 **SLIDE 56** the prosecutor asked whether the defendant, who, unusually, did not belong to the elite, could be acquitted because ‘as a courageous man he had participated in many land battles and sea battles’. He could not, the prosecutor continued, because the defendant had stayed at home, while the non-elite jurors had faced dangers as sailors. Here the prosecutor assumed that non-elite sailors displayed *aretē*, which he defined simply as the bearing of *kindunoi*. Litigants regularly spoke of sailors facing such dangers in sea battles. Because this was enough to meet the simplified definition of courage, these speakers were implying that sailors were courageous.

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5. Tragedy

Tragedy used the hoplite as a norm in four different ways. The sheer number of these uses set it apart from the other non-elite genres. Two of them matched what old comedy did. Tragedy likewise based generalisations about war on the hoplite. In *Phoenician Women*, for example, **SLIDE 58** Euripides mentioned several different soldiers. In spite of this, his characters, when making generalisations, focussed only on one of them: the hoplite. Jocasta thus described the battle’s outbreak as ‘touching the spear’ and the enemy’s army as ‘the shield of the Argives’. For Eteocles, Thebes’s king, battle was simply ‘the *agōn* (‘contest’) of the spear’. Tragedy, too, made the hoplite the norm for gender roles. A famous example **SLIDE 59** is Medea’s explanation why women have hard lives: ‘They say of us women that we live a life without danger, while they fight with the spear. They are badly mistaken. I would prefer to stand three times beside a shield than to give birth once.’

Yet the two other discursive uses to which tragedy put hoplites were unique. When tragedians described the military obligations of a citizen, they regularly focussed on such soldiers. Aeschylus, for example, in his version of the Argive attack **SLIDE 60**, made Eteocles explain that the Thebans must defend their motherland because she raised them ‘as *aspidēphorous* inhabitants’. *Aspidēphoros* (‘shield-bearing’) is a common tragic neologism for a hoplite. Tragedy, of course, also defined *aretē* in terms of what the hoplite had to do in land battles.

These tragic uses of the hoplite did not reflect general features of the popular culture that the *dēmos* shared. The hoplite **SLIDE 61** was simply not the norm in the funeral oration and the other genres of public oratory. The comic poets shared the stage with tragedy, often made their characters talk like tragic ones and parodied specific tragedies. Therefore their use of the hoplite as a norm is, probably, best understood as another of their tragic appropriations. Yet old comedy still appropriated only half of tragedy's uses of the hoplite. Consequently the extensive employment of this soldier as a norm looks like a unique feature of tragedy.

Today I would understand it as an important part of what Pat Easterling **SLIDE 62** describes as 'heroic vagueness'. By this term Easterling means the 'heroic setting' that the tragedians carefully created in order 'to evoke a distinctively different world from that of the original audiences'. Getting this heroic setting right was vitally important because tragedies were usually disturbing. Without such distance, theatregoers found them hard to bear. Tragedy created this heroic world by reproducing some of its widely imagined features and avoiding jarring anachronisms.

The *dēmos* apparently imagined heroic battles as little different from contemporary land battles; for the tragic poets explicitly called elite heroes 'hoplites' and had them command armies of 'hoplites', who essentially fought as hoplites did in classical times. In light of this equivalence, tragedy's use of the hoplite as a norm simply reproduced the major features of Homer's depiction of the elite heroes. In epic poetry **SLIDE 63**, as you will recall, heroes fought only in land battles and were the central figure for social differentiation. *Aretē* consisted of what they were required to do in battle. In order for the *tragic* hero, who was now a hoplite, to exhibit these epic features, he, along with his interlocutors, had to discuss war, the relations of different groups to it and the requirements of *aretē* only in hoplitic terms. These discussions often contained neologisms **SLIDE 64** that were based on 'spear' or 'shield'. Homer had used a few examples of such compound words. Yet the fact that tragedians invented so many more suggests that this hoplitic idiom was an important means for creating the heroic setting.

Yet the discursive use of this soldier by the tragic poets did not prevent them from acknowledging Athenian seapower. This matches what we found in old comedy. Many tragedies concerned the sea voyages to and from Troy. These plays faithfully reproduced another epic feature: there were *no* Greek sea battles. Nevertheless they still described ordeals that contemporary Athenian sailors knew **SLIDE 65**, landmarks that they had sailed passed and sea deities that classical Athens worshipped for the sake of their safety. Tragic poets made it easier for theatregoers to identify with all this by

calling Agamemnon's force a **SLIDE 66** *nautikos stratos* or a *nautikon strateuma*. Both terms were common contemporary terms for a fleet.

Tragedians also invented new myths about warships. In these tragedies, the heroes may have sailed on **SLIDE 67** old-fashioned penteconters. But the personnel on them were essentially the same as that of an Athenian trireme. Tragedians even implied that Athens had always been a major naval power. On stage mythical Athenians praised their own seapower. They were described as a people who had good naval skills. Athenian heroes commanded fleets. Athenian sailors could appear next to them. Tragedy therefore reflected contemporary Athenian seapower in a wide variety of indirect ways. Athenian sailors, it seems, had succeeded in pushing themselves 'into the magic circle of the Iliadic heroes'.

In his *Persians* **SLIDE 68** of 473/2 Aeschylus praised them directly. This historical tragedy notoriously reduced the Second Persian War to the battle of Salamis. Plataea thus became 'an insignificant mopping-up operation'. The other battles were completely ignored. Aeschylus characterised Salamis as a naval victory of the Athenians. His battle-narrative attributed this success to the *aretē* of their sailors. As they were outnumbered four to one, Xerxes believed, initially, that 'they would not remain (*ou menoion*)' but would try to save their lives'. Although a brave man, in both definitions of *aretē*, had to risk his life, the *menō*, here, shows that Aeschylus was using the hoplite-based one. The morning of the battle proved Persia's king wrong; for, instead of running away, the Athenians advanced **SLIDE 69** 'with courageous daring'. Sailors struggled to meet the secondary requirement of this traditional definition of courage: individual *erga*. Aeschylus got around this in two ways. The first was to describe how individual triremes 'struck' their opposite numbers. Collectively, at least, sailors had performed 'great deeds'. The second way was to zoom in on moments when Athenian sailors had acted individually. Triremes-crews had done just this on Psyttaleia **SLIDE 70**. Aeschylus emphasised how, after disembarking on this island, they gruesomely killed Persian soldiers in a land battle.

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6. Conclusion

In democratic Athens sailors had just as much prominence culturally as hoplites. The *dēmos* fully recognised that their state was a major seapower. They judged that it was vitally important to maintain their naval forces because Athens primarily waged war on the sea. In their eyes fighting as a sailor benefitted the state no less than fighting as a hoplite. Non-elite Athenians believed that a citizen equally met his martial duty by

serving in the navy or the army. They insisted that Athenians fighting sea battles be equally recognised for their courage. Traditionally *aretē* had been defined in terms of what hoplites had to do in land battles. The way in which sailors fought was really different. Recognising them as courageous thus ran into the problem that they did not strictly meet a hoplite-based definition of *aretē*. Public speakers and playwrights got around this in two ways. Sometimes they emphasised those aspects of fighting at sea in which sailors met or, at least, came close to meeting the traditional criteria for courage. Yet more often than this they simply used a new definition of *aretē*. This defined courage as bearing battlefield dangers in spite of the personal risk. Because this simplified definition was no longer tied to the hoplite, sailors had no difficulty in meeting it. All this was very different from the negative view of sailors that the classical Athenians had inherited from their archaic forebears. In the military realm the *dēmos* had thus succeeded in redefining traditional aristocratic values.