

REMARKS ON ARISTOTLE'S *THETTALON POLITEIA*

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Abstract: This article attempts to make a critical assessment of the preserved fragments of *Thettalon politeia* as a source on the history of early Thessaly. The traces of the existence of this text come from the second half of the 2nd century CE at the earliest, but even then it was seen as one of the *Politeiai* recorded by Aristotle. As a result of this attribution, information from this text is treated as a reliable source of knowledge on the *koinon* organization of the Thessalians and their joint army. There are, however, important reasons to treat this source with the greatest caution: we have only six short quotations from the work available, and the part which refers to Aleuas' supposed reforms is very much damaged and has been subjected to a number of emendations by its various publishers. The description of the system of mobilization of the Thessalian army from *Thettalon politeia* seems anachronistic, and probably arose under the influence of information about the reorganization of the army conducted in the 370s BCE by Jason of Pherae and the propaganda that accompanied these changes.

Keywords: Aristotle, *Thettalon politeia*, Thessaly, Aleuas the Red, Jason of Pherae, peltast.

Among the most important sources concerning the history of Thessaly in the Archaic and Classical period are the preserved fragments of *Thettalon politeia*. We can assume that it may have come about as one of the studies of political systems, *Politeiai*, written around 330 BCE by Aristotle himself or one of his pupils. Aristotle's authority is such that this information is treated as a reliable source of knowledge on the organization of the Thessalians' *koinon* as well as their joint army. There are, however, important reasons to treat this source with the greatest caution. Firstly, all quotations from *Thettalon politeia* are very fragmentary. Secondly, the text of the most important one, referring to Aleuas' supposed reforms, is very much damaged and has been subjected to a number of emendations. Thirdly, the description of the system of mobilization of the Thessalian army appears to be anachronistic.

Thettalon politeia

It is worth beginning any analysis of the information provided by *Thettalon politeia* by reflecting on the state in which this source is preserved. We are in possession of just three quotations which mention the work's title and unambiguously point to its origin.

Unfortunately, the titles they give, while similar, do differ somewhat. In his *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, K.O. Müller includes only the three mentioned extracts, concluding that the work was entitled Κοινή Θεσσαλῶν πολιτεία, since this is the title given by Harpocration. However, in his publication of extracts of the unperished works of Aristotle, Valentin Rose identifies six passages which were preserved in quotations by 15 authors. He concludes, based on Photius, that the work was entitled Θεσσαλῶν πολιτεία.¹ Rose complemented his selection by adding to them quotations referring to Thessalian affairs, although the title of the work they come from does not crop up. A short list of the issues to which his selected extracts refer is as follows:

F 495: mention of the origin of the vine name *Aminaeos*;

F 496: explanation of the origin of the names of the place Korakas – The Crows;

F 497: information about the division of Thessaly carried out by Aleuas into four regions called moiras or tetrads;

F 498: information about the division of Thessaly carried out by Aleusas into kleroi, each of which has to provide 40 horsemen and 80 hoplites;

F 499: a mention of the wine vessel which the Thessalians called *lagynos*;

F 500: deliberations on the topic of the difference between two types of clothes: *chlamis* and *chlaina*.

The passages identified by Rose mostly do not concern political matters. This might come as a surprise to those who know the content of *Athenaion Politeia* and arouse suspicion as to whether all the quotations cited in fact come from *Thettalon politeia*. However, for some time the view has been dominant that the description of Athens's political system – the only one completely preserved from the whole collection – cannot be treated as a model when reconstructing the content of other descriptions. This doubt is also to a certain degree dispelled by the testimony of Athenaeus. Explaining the term *lagynos*, he clearly indicates that he took it from *Thettalon politeia*.² The situation is similar with analysis of most of the preserved extracts from other Aristotle's *Politeiai*. Research on these passages has shown that their content was very diverse, and could to a great extent contain information far from descriptions of political institutions and their evolution. Hence the conclusion that *Athenaion Politeia* in the collection *Politeiai* was rather the exception than a typical case. Such a diversity of contents makes it difficult to define what these *Politeiai* actually were. There is no information to prove that Aristotle or his pupils travelled to collect information on various cities. They must have based their conclusions on various texts available in Athens, both historiographical and geographical works as well as poetry. This may have been complemented by oral information provided by the numerous foreigners coming to Athens.³ The content of the various works must have been very diverse, but we can say for sure that few of the books were on a par with *Athenaion Politeia*. It is hard to imagine there being a comparable amount of information in Athens on the political systems and history of any other city as the information on local history. We hear that a work called *Thettalika* was written by Hellanicus, to which Harpocration refers when explaining the division of Thessaly into

¹ Harpocration, s.v. τετραρχία; Photius, *Bibliotheka* 161, 104 B.

² K.O. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, Paris 1878, vol. II, 151 F 145 (= Harpocration, s.v. τετραρχία); F 145 a (= Athen. 11.499b) and F 146 (= Philargyrius in Virgil. *Georg.* 2.97).

³ Toye 1999: 235–253.

tetrads. We also have evidence of interest in its political system in the form of information that Critias, the later leader of the so-called Thirty Tyrants, stayed in Thessaly and was the author of a description of its system. Athenaeus refers to this work when writing about the Thessalians' exceptional wealth.⁴ We do not know the nature of Critias' work. The evidence on his stay and activities in Thessaly are very limited and conflicting. They may, however, bear witness to Critias' interest in the social relations and political system that prevailed in Thessaly. We can assume that his work was not a systematic description of the Thessalian constitution, but rather a political pamphlet in the style of the pseudo-Xenophonic *Constitution of Athens*. It is also difficult to determine what the literary form of Aristotle's *Thettalon politeia* was. We can do this only with reference to the example of *Athenaion Politeia*, although, as mentioned earlier, this cannot be treated as a mode. Plutarch, reading the collection of *Politeiai* of unknown titles, was delighted by the pleasures this brought. These pleasures might have just been the type enjoyed only by an eccentric man of letters enamored of the distant past.⁵ However, we cannot rule out the possibility that, if it was not Aristotle who was the author of all these works, then the various authors of the texts could have given them a very diverse stylistic form. Among these there may have been works which were very accomplished in literary terms. Unfortunately it is not clear whether the description of the Thessalian system was among these.

Information on *Thettalon politeiai* comes relatively late. Above all, this work is not mentioned in *Heraclidis Epitome*, the 13th century manuscript containing short summaries of descriptions of the political system. The author of these abstracts is identified as Heraclides Lembos, an Alexandrian scholar from the 2nd century BCE.⁶ The catalogue of works of Aristotle passed on by Diogenes Laertius refers to 158 *Politeiai*, yet *Heraclidis Epitome* contains short extracts from just 44 descriptions of the systems. If the figure given by Diogenes is correct, then Heraclides' *Epitome* features (approximately) fragments of only a quarter of the total number. The selection of descriptions appears to have been done without any particular reason, which is why it is justified to assume that *Epitome* mentions only those which were known to Heraclides. *Thettalon politeia* was clearly not among these. Unfortunately, we do not know whether this work was one read by Plutarch. However, a summary of it was included in the 12th book of *Eklogai diaphorai* by Sopater of Apamea, writing at the beginning of the 4th century CE. Sopater's work is known to us only from a review written by Photius, who claimed to have found summaries in it: *the Constitutions of Aristotle, dealing with those of the Thessalians, Achaeans, Parians, Lycians, Chians, and of all the peoples whom he has mentioned in his political writings*.⁷ The selection of the aforementioned works is a little surprising, as is the inclusion of *Thettalon Politeia* in first place. Thanks to this evidence, however, it is possible to state that at the time of Sopater a work with this title was still available. The last trace of this text's being used appears to be the Latin commentary to Virgil's

⁴ Hellanicus: *FGrH* 4 F 52; Critias: *FGrH* 244 F 222 = Athen. 14.663a. On Critias' activities in Thessaly see Sprawski 1999: 31–34; Jordovic 2008: 37–46.

⁵ Plut. *Mor.* 1093c.

⁶ Bloch 1940: 27–39.

⁷ Phot. 161 104b–105a (translated by J.H. Freese).

Georgics written in the manuscript as a work of Philargirius, an author of whom we do not know any more, but writing in Late Antiquity.⁸

The earliest traces of the use of *Thettalon politeia* seem to lead only to the second half of the 2nd century CE. It was at this time that Diogenianos' dictionary was produced, and the authors of the scholia on Plato put together in Late Antiquity were able to use this.⁹ The work of Athenaeus of Naucratis and Harpocration, who mention the title of this work, is dated to the late 2nd century CE. The usual explanation for the clear similarities between the works of these two authors is that Athenaeus made use of the lexicon of his colleague, or that both authors, working in Egypt, may have had access to the lexica and commentaries still existing during their lifetimes and later lost.¹⁰ It may be that the text of *Thettalon politeia*, which previously had not aroused a great deal of interest, was only noticed by Harpocration. We know that he studied the texts of ancient historians. There is no doubt that he used *Athenaion politeia*, which he cites some 50 times in his lexicon. Even if Harpocration had the text of *Thettalon politeia* to hand, we cannot be entirely sure that it was the text produced in Aristotle's school. After the philosopher's death, his library was partially dispersed. Ptolemy II Philadelphus is said to have bought Aristotle's manuscripts from various owners, accumulating a collection in Alexandria numbering over 1000 scrolls. It is entirely possible that among them were works whose authorship was only attributed to Aristotle because of the subject matter, or those which just came from his library. This is made all the more likely by the assumption that the works had not one, but many authors.¹¹

Aleuas' reforms

A description of the reforms said to have been carried out in Thessaly by Aleuas seems to be the most interesting of the preserved passages from *Thettalon politeia*. Information on this subject is provided by two quotations. The first of these (F 497 Rose) comes from the explanation of the word *tetrarchia* in Harpocration's lexicon. With reference to Timaeus, the author states that Thessaly was divided into four parts (*mere*), i.e. tetrads. The second quotation (F 498 Rose) comes from anonymous *scholia* on Euripides' tragedy *Rhesus*:

πολλὰ πελταστῶν τέλη· πέλη ἀσπίς ἐστὶν ἴτυν οὐκ ἔχουσα, καθάπερ φησὶν Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν τῇ Θεσσαλῶν πολιτείᾳ γράφων οὕτως· διελὼ δὲ τὴν πόλιν Ἀλόας ἔταξε καὶ κληρὸν παρέχειν ἕκαστην ἰπέας μὲν τεσσαράκοντα, ὀπλίτας δὲ ὀγδοήκοντα ... – ἦν δὲ ἡ πέλη ἀσπίς ἴτυν οὐκ ἔχουσα ἐπίχαλκος αἰγὸς δέρματι περιτεταμένη – καὶ τριάκοντα οἱ καὶ μακρὸν δόρυ πάντες ἐφόρουσαν ὃ σχέδιον ἐκαλεῖτο (*Schol. Ad Eurip. Rhes. v 307*)

The author of the *scholion* concentrates on the description of *pelte* – a particular type of shield distinguished by goatskin padding and the lack of a rim reinforcing its edges.

⁸ Daintree 1990: 68–69.

⁹ Dickey 2007: 46–47.

¹⁰ Zecchini 2000: 153–160.

¹¹ Sprawski 2008: 107–116. On the subject of Harpocration's knowledge of Aristotle's works see Zecchini 2000: 156. On the fate of Aristotle's library see *Diog. Laert.* 5.51–2; *Athen.* 1.4.3 a–b; *Strab.* 13.1.54; *Plut. Sull.* 26; Keane 1963: 58–63; Lindsay 1997: 290–298.

He refers here to a passage taken from Aristotle's *Thetallon politeia* concerning Aleuas' reforms. We learn from this that Aleuas divided a *polis* into *kleroi*, each of which was to provide 40 horsemen and 80 hoplites.¹²

Almost every sentence of the scholion triggered discussion and led to attempts to make emendations to the text. Even at first glance it is not hard to notice that the mention of Aleuas' reforms does not particularly fit the remaining parts of the scholion, that is the description of the *pelte* and offensive weapons worn by unspecified warriors. There is no explanation of what connects this type of weapons with the mounted units and hoplites which the Thessalian *kleroi* were supposed to provide.

This incoherence in the text of the *scholion* has long bothered scholars. One of the first commentators on this passage, the German scholar Ludwig Preller, reached the conclusion that the text is damaged, and part of it must have been lost.¹³ C.G. Cobet, meanwhile, who published *Scholia on Euripides* (1849), opted for another solution, making an emendation to the text. He replaced the expression "eighty hoplites" with "eighty peltasts,"¹⁴ thus referring to the obvious association of the name of the shield with the name of a type of light infantry. However, Cobet's emendation was not recognized by later editors of the *scholia*.

Half a century later, the scholion became the subject of analysis of Eduard Meyer, who also reached the conclusion that the problematic part required an emendation. Evidence for this in his opinion was the fact that the Thessalian hoplites are very rarely mentioned in sources in comparison with the cavalry or light infantry. He therefore proposed two solutions. The first of these was based on the assumption that the text of the scholion was complete but damaged. In this case Cobet's emendation should be acknowledged as correct. According to the second the text is not damaged, but just incomplete, and originally – following the reference to the size of the hoplite contingent – contained information about the size of the peltast contingent. These soldiers, analogically to the army of Jason from the 370s BCE described by Xenophon, were provided by *hypekooi* or *symmachoi*, that is the neighbors of the Thessalians.¹⁵ A proponent of the latter solution was H.D. Wade-Gery, who concluded that after the words "eighty hoplites" and before the explanation of the word *pelte* there must have been the claim that the lands belonging to the Thessalian *perioikoi* (ἐκ δὲ τῆς περιουκίδος), Aleuas had given the instruction to provide peltasts.¹⁶ This complementation of the text has been accepted by many scholars. The only reservation has been the uncertainty as to whether the *perioikoi* at the time when this reform was conducted were subordinate to the Thessalians.¹⁷ According to Bruno Helly, the Thessalians took control over the *perioikoi* immediately after Aleuas' reforms. Based on this assumption, he arrived at the belief at the Thessalian army could not do without the light infantry, who, as with Jason's army, constituted an inseparable

¹² Helly 1995: 153–154.

¹³ Preller 1848: 138.

¹⁴ *Scholia antiqua in Euripidis tragoedias ex recensione C.G. Cobeti*, Lipsiae 1849, Rhesus v. 307 – πελταστὰς δὲ ὀγδοήκοντα.

¹⁵ Meyer 1909: 222 n. 1.

¹⁶ Wade-Gery 1924: 58–59.

¹⁷ Among those who have supported the acceptance of an emendation is Marta Sordi (1958: 67 and 319 n. 4); a more critical approach was maintained J.A.O. Larsen (1960: 237; 1968: 17).

part of it, offering crucial support to the cavalry and the hoplites. If the army could not do without the light infantry, the Thessalians could not have only comprised units provided by their neighbors. In Helly's opinion, the extract from *Thettalon politeia* cited in the scholia must have referred to the appointment of the peltasts from Thessaly itself among the *penestes* – the people of lower status who lived there. Although we do not have any direct mention of *penestes* serving as light infantry, we do hear that they were summoned for military service. Xenophon mentions that in the 370s Jason of Pherae wanted to use them as crew for warships. Demosthenes, meanwhile, invokes the example of Menon of Pharsalos, who he says provided the cavalry unit from his own *penestes*, then sending it as support for the Athenians fighting for Eion in 476/475.¹⁸

The above examples show the extent to which the scholion we are analyzing was the subject of the emendations of editors. Some of these corrections seem very obvious, such as Pflugk's proposal to change the name "Aloas" appearing in the manuscripts to "Aleuas." A more detailed analysis of the changes introduced by the various publishers was conducted by H.T. Wade-Gery, and it is therefore only necessary to point to a few of them here. Wade-Gery was struck in particular by the unusual use of the word *polis*. The context of the sentence suggests that the word was used with reference to the whole of Thessaly, although it would be more natural to use *ethnos* or *chora*. Here, according to him, we can make the emendation of τὴν πόλιν to τὴν πόλι<τικῆ>ν, by analogy with the description of the Spartan state in Polybius (6.45.3), where the wording ἡ πολιτικὴ χώρα appears. As he interprets it, *politike* (ἡ πολιτικὴ), i.e. land (γῆ, χώρα), means the land in the lowlands belonging to the citizens, that is the Thessalians, comprising the tetrads, as opposed to the *perioikis* (ἡ περιουκίς), that is the lands of the Achaeans, Perrhaebians and Magnetes. Although we do not have any evidence of the use of the term *perioikis* in reference to the lands of the Thessalian neighbors, Wade-Gery refers to the example of Elida and Sparta, in which cases they were used to describe the lands occupied by a population dependent on citizens.¹⁹ Earlier editors such as Schwartz suggested emendations to the form τὴν πόλιτείαν, but the most widely accepted is the form τὰς πόλεις, which is supported by Rose. The use of the word *polis* to refer to the whole of Thessaly, which was hard to accept for earlier scholars, no longer arouses such resistance, as proven by the opinion of M.H. Hansen that this is a rare example of use of the term *polis* in a wider sense to designate a state. Helly, however, employed strong arguments to reject the emendations and return to the original form, assuming that the text refers to the division not of the whole of Thessaly, but only of the city of Larisa.²⁰

Also unclear is the last sentence of the *scholion*. The numeral τρίακοντία has been corrected by Preller as τριᾶκοντία. This is supported by Xenophon's statement that the Thessalian peltasts were excellent spearmen – *akontistai*. Finally, there is a lack of clarity in the explanation that they carried a long spear (καὶ μακρὸν δόρυ πάντες ἐφόρου) called a *schedion*. The name of this spear suggests that it was used for giving thrusts in direct skirmishes. However, Pflugk's emendation has gained recognition, correcting this

¹⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.11; Dem. 13. 23; Helly 1995: 184–186.

¹⁹ Wade-Gery 1924: 58–59.

²⁰ Helly 1995: 153–154; Hansen 1997: 14; Decourt/Nielsen/Helly 2004: 667.

passage to the form καὶ μικρὸν δόρυ πάντες ἐφόρου, which is based on the conviction that the spear in question was a short one used for hurling.²¹

The above remarks demonstrate how hard it is to reconstruct an extract from *Thettalon politeia* on the basis of a scholion. The scholia on *Rhesus* are not a homogenous text, and it is very difficult to determine their date of origin. It is thought that the *scholia vetera*, in contrast to later, Byzantine *scholia*, had their beginnings in the works of Aristophanes of Byzantium. This Alexandrian scholar of the second century BCE produced a critical publication of the text of the tragedy with comments. The next comments on the text were written by Didymus at the end of the first century BC as well as Dionysius, who is difficult to identify. We do not know which of these commentaries the *scholia* available to us are based on, but it is generally assumed that they took on their form before the mid-3rd century CE.

The information collected above shows that the *scholion* analyzed here may have been produced over a long period, of even 400 years, during which it was copied and corrected on a number of occasions.²² Modern editors have considered this text to be so damaged that they have introduced a series of changes to it, guided by their own ideas on the subject of the political organization of Thessaly on the threshold of the Classical period as well as the organization and arming of its military. Since we know very little about this subject, each attempt to make use of this extract must be connected with the need to again decide on the correctness of the emendations made in it.

This is not the end of the problems, however. Even if it were possible to reconstruct the text of the extract of *Thettalon politeia* cited by the scholiast, there remains the question of how reliable the information about the history as well as political and military organization of Thessaly was. An analysis of such a well preserved text as *Athenaion politeia* must be accompanied by caution. Although the author without doubt possessed a considerably greater knowledge on the political system of Athens than was available at the time on the subject of any other Greek state, the reliability of the information passed on by him is still questioned. An example might be the alleged system reforms of Draco. The anachronistic nature of the solutions described there, as well as the lack of references to these reforms later on in the text, has led scholars to believe that this passage is a later interpolation.²³ This example shows that the interpretation of a text like *Thettalon politeia* requires that particular caution be exercised, especially as we know only a few short quotations from it, without any wider context. Doubts as to the historicity of the reforms of Aleuas mentioned in this work were raised as soon as the late-19th century by Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen, who suspected a later fabrication.²⁴

There are several reasons to question the reliability of the extract from *Thettalon politeia* referring to Aleuas' reforms.

First, it is very hard to pinpoint the time of Aleuas and his reforms. Marta Sordi identified this figure as Aleuas, son of Simos, said to have been the patron of the poet

²¹ Harpocration, s.v. σῆδρον.

²² Dickey 2007: 31–32.

²³ *Athen. Polit.* 4. This discussion is covered by Rhodes 1981: 53–56.

²⁴ A critical approach to the *scholia* was expressed by Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen (1890: 1–16), who suspected that the description of Aleuas' reforms may have been a later fabrication. See also the review of Bruno Helly's book written by Jeremy Trevett (1999: 213). Cf. Hose 2002: 159–161.

Simonides in the late 6th century BCE. He was identified as the father of Thorax and his brothers, mentioned by Herodotus, who led the Thessalians at the time of the invasion of Xerxes. These were also the reasons for which Sordi pointed to the end of the 6th century BCE as the probable time when the reforms were carried out.²⁵ However, we cannot rule out the possibility that Aleuas was a fictitious figure who was only attributed with the introduction of these reforms. This position makes it possible to shift the time of the reforms rather freely between the beginning of the 6th and beginning of the 5th century BCE.²⁶

Each of the above proposals for dating Aleuas' reforms places them in the period prior to Xerxes' invasion of Greece. If they really were introduced at the end of the 6th and start of the 5th century, they had no great significance for the consolidation of the Thessalians' military power. On the contrary, according to tradition, the Thessalians enjoyed their greatest successes at the time before the period when the reforms may have happened. The era before Xerxes' invasion must have been the time of their expeditions to central Greece, tough battles with the Photians and intervention in Attica against the Spartans.²⁷ In the 5th century the Thessalians did not play much of a role on the political stage in Greece. Shifting the moment of these reforms to the early 6th century makes them even less likely, as the organization of the Thessalian army described by *Thettalon politeia* appears to be anachronistic.

The information available to us making it possible to imagine how the Thessalian army must have looked in the Archaic and the Classical period is very fragmentary. Although in most of the Greek states heavily armed infantry were the core of the army, in the case of Thessaly horsemen assumed such a role; most of our sources are silent on the issue of the role of the hoplites. Without doubt, cavalry was the formation that was most closely associated with the Thessalians, and the one most often mentioned by sources. Even in the early 5th century, Thessalian horses enjoyed the reputation as the best in all of Greece. In the 4th century, apart from its excellent cavalry, Thessaly was also renowned for its outstanding peltasts, as stressed by Xenophon and Isocrates.²⁸ Against this background, the scantiness of information on the Thessalian hoplites is striking.

The Thessalian hoplites are mentioned sporadically in sources, and only the information of Xenophon about Jason's army confirm their large numbers. In his excursus devoted to Jason, Xenophon described the forces which he planned to accumulate as well as those which he in fact had at his disposal after acquiring power over the whole of Thessaly and his election as *tagos*. In the former case, Jason expected that after the unification of the Thessalians under his leadership he would be able to gather up to 6000 horsemen as well as over 10,000 hoplites. He was convinced that his army would have an advantage over his rivals in terms of number of peltasts. He was led to this conclusion by the observation that almost all the inhabitants of the regions around Thessaly were excellent javelinmen – *akontistai*. Referring to Jason's true forces, Xenophon claims that he had 8000 of his own and allies' horses available, not less than 20,000 hoplites and

²⁵ Pind. *Pyth.* 10; Herod. 9.58.1; *Schol. in Theoc.* 16.34–35 p. 327 (Wendel); Sordi 1958: 65–84.

²⁶ Larsen 1960: 236–237; 1968: 16–18; Helly 1995: 181–191.

²⁷ Herod. 5.63, 7.130, 8.29–35; Plut. *Mor.* 244 E–245 C, 706 E–761 A, 866 E; Plut. *Cam.*, 19.2; Paus. 9.14.2, 10.13–2.1; Polyaeus 6.18.1–2.

²⁸ Herod. 7.196; Xenoph. *Hell.* 6.1.8–9 and 19; Isoc. 8.118.

sufficiently numerous peltasts (*peltastikon*) to oppose every other army.²⁹ It is not hard to notice that the proportion between the number of hoplites and the number of cavalry correspond approximately to that which was foreseen by Aleuas' reform. On closer inspection, however, this impression of similarity may be erased. We must remember that Xenophon may have included in these numbers Jason's mercenaries, which numbered around 6000. We can only speculate as to how many of these were mounted and how many infantry. We do not know whether – speaking of allies – Xenophon has Thessalian cities in mind, or other states that were joined by alliance with Jason. We also do not hear of Jason at any point making use of all the forces which he had at his disposal. Xenophon only says that after the Battle of Leuctra in 371, on the request of the Thebans Jason came to Boeotia, leading his mercenaries and cavalry.³⁰ Without doubt, though, Jason's army is the first example known to us in the history of Thessaly of the use of hoplites on a grand scale. Most evidence speaking of the Thessalian infantry refers to peltasts. It is therefore difficult to explain why Aleuas' reforms refer to the mobilization of a large number of hoplites, since we do not find proof of this formation – with the exception of Jason's army – in practice playing any greater role on the battlefields trodden by the Thessalians.

The question of the use of the word “hoplites” in *Thettalon politeia* is also problematic. There is much to suggest that the term became widespread in the Greek world during the 5th century. We do not find its first usage until the *First Isthmian Ode* by Pinar, dated around 470 BCE.³¹ It is therefore very unlikely that the term was used in Thessaly at the end of the 6th century to describe a contingent of foot warriors. It is a similar case with the peltasts. The first mention of warriors armed with shield named *pelte* appears in Herodotus in a description of the contingents constituting Xerxes' army in 480 BCE. Describing the weaponry of the Thracians, the historian mentions that they possessed *pelte* and javelins (*akontia*).³² Meanwhile, the description “peltasts” was first used by Thucydides in reference to Thracian units who together with the cavalry were apparently sent as support from Sitalces for the Athenians in 431 BCE, as well as in reference to the Thracian mercenaries from the year 413. The peltast units, provided by various Greek cities lying in Chalkidiki, were also part of Brasidas' army in 423 and 422.³³ Most information on the Thessalian peltasts was given by Xenophon. However, he uses this term with a somewhat different meaning from Thucydides, for example, referring to all light infantry. He uses the term regardless of whether a shield was an element of the weaponry or not. Moreover, he makes no mention in his works about javelinmen (*akontistai*) as a military formation, let alone as a formation differing from the peltasts.

Identifying the peltasts with ordinary javelinmen does not solve the problem of interpretation of the extract of the *scholion* quoting passages from *Thettalon politeia*. The text of this *scholion* makes reference not to peltasts, but to *pelte*. Although the name of this shield is associated with the lightly armed peltasts, they are mentioned for the first time by Thucydides, as Thracian warriors, only at the time of the Peloponnese war. For-

²⁹ Xen. *Hell.* 6.1.8–9 and 19; Best 1969: 124–126.

³⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.22.

³¹ Pind. *Isth.* 1.23; Rey 2008: 152–158.

³² Herod. 7.75.

³³ Thuc. 2.29.5, 4.129.2, 5.6.4, 7.27.1.

mations of warriors armed following their model became widespread in the Greek world after this war ended. If we were to accept the thesis that the peltasts appeared a hundred years earlier in Thessaly, and Aleuas ordered their mobilization, this would lead to the conclusion that a feature of their weaponry must have been the *pelte*. Otherwise, it would be hard to understand why there was a description of it in *Thettalon politeia*. The question arises as to whether the army of Archaic Thessaly needed both hoplites and peltasts. An analysis of iconographic evidence shows that the hoplites from this era did not always possess complete defensive weaponry, did not fight in closed ranks and, like the light infantry, could hurl spears³⁴. As a result, the hoplites at the close of the Archaic period were very similar to the peltasts armed with shield and javelins known from the later period.

It is hard to resist the impression that the so-called reform of Aleuas does not fit with the reality of Thessaly in the late 6th and early 5th century. It is tempting, however, to connect the foundation of the tradition of Aleuas' reforms with Jason of Pherae, as proposed a century ago by Hiller von Gaertringen.³⁵ Only in the case of Jason do we hear of attempts to conduct a mobilization of the Thessalian army efficient enough to fully exploit the demographic potential of the country. It is not without significance that only in this case was there a mobilization of such a large number of hoplites. Jason also sought the support of all Thessalians and the appearance of legality for his actions. Xenophon mentions that he referred to another figure from the past, Scopas, imposing the requirement to pay tributes on neighbors. Making reference to the past was a method for justifying the need to introduce reforms. Perhaps in order to gain greater acceptance for the introduction of a system for mobilization of the army, he invoked the past, and the alleged reforms of Aleuas. Such a paradigm could justify in particular the mobilization of the armed infantry as well as the heavily armed hoplites. This type of infantry was dominant on 4th century battlefields, and it would be hard to imagine joining a war for hegemony in the Greek world, of which Jason dreamed, without having such a formation at one's disposal. However, military service in the form of hoplites conflicted with Thessalian customs, and may also have been linked with the need to make a greater outlay to individual weaponry.

The author of *Thettalon politeia* may therefore have taken from Jason's propaganda information about Aleuas' supposed reforms. He complemented this information with his sparse knowledge on the organization of Thessaly and its army in the distant times from before Xerxes' invasion. Further confusion may have been caused by the information that the Thessalians were willing and able, at least until the mid-5th century, to make use of different shields than typical Greek hoplites. This type of shield was probably depicted in the stele of Theotimos preserved in the Archaeological Museum in Larisa recalling his death in the Battle of Tanagra in 457 BCE. Without the roundness and wide metal rim characteristic of hoplite shields, it was more similar to the shield used by the peltasts. We can assume that this may have been the reason for which the description of the *pelete* was included in *Thettalon politeia*.³⁶

³⁴ Van Wees 2000: 155–156.

³⁵ Hiller von Gaertringen 1890: 14–16.

³⁶ For more on this subject see my forthcoming paper "Who is represented on Theotimos' stele? Remarks on the Thessalian foot warriors."

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