
Infantry Reform in Hellenistic Boeotia

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ABSTRACT Recent research on Boeotia in the Hellenistic period has led to a better understanding of its military organization. A rich epigraphic record provides insight into the functioning and organization of the Boeotian federal army. Around 230 BC, the army was reorganized on the model of the Antigonid army, as evidenced by the appearance of a new type of infantry, the *peltophoroi*, replacing the hoplites and *thyreophoroi* attested previously. Two elite corps, the *agema* and the *epilektoi*, also appeared at this time, denoting a clear Macedonian inspiration. Compared to other powers of the period, this was an early adoption. This cultural transfer in turn allows us to date the introduction of peltasts in the Antigonid army more precisely: it must have taken place during the reign of Demetrios II or at the very beginning of the reign of Antigonos Doson.

KEYWORDS Military History, Hellenistic armies, Boeotia, *koinon*, Thebes, *agema*, Peltast, Infantry, *sarissa*.

When one thinks about the military history of Boeotia, one moment immediately comes to mind, the famous period of Theban hegemony of the Fourth century BC. The historical sources for this period are very developed indeed, giving a vivid picture of that moment. After that, the Boeotian League was still powerful enough to play a central role in the Third Sacred War. The Classical period ends in Boeotia with two well-documented events, the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC and the sack of Thebes by Alexander the Great three years later. To put it shortly, the military history of Boeotia is quite well documented for the Fourth Century BC.

For the Hellenistic period, however, our information is more difficult to handle. For this period, the Boeotian League, as a military and political power, almost vanishes from the historical record. The Boeotian army is involved in a few military operations, but they are only alluded to by our sources¹. This is the case, for instance, of a major engagement at Chaeronea, where the Boeotian army was heavily defeated by the Aetolians in 245 BC. This battle is mentioned by Polybius and Plutarchus, but they give no details about it². In fact, an important trend in the Hellenistic historiography of the region, expressed by Polybius and Strabo for instance, is that the Boeotians, after the

¹ The Boeotian army is involved, for instance, in a battle against the Athenians near Plataiai during the Lamian War (Hyp. *Epit.* 11; 17; D.S. 18.11; Plu. *Phoc.* 23.5). The inscription of Eugnotos of Akraiphia records a cavalry battle against Demetrios Poliorketes near Onchestos (*SEG* 55, 553). See LUCAS 2023, 215-218.

² Plb.20.4.4-6; Plu. *Arat.* 16.1.

time of Epaminondas, did nothing worth recording³, which may explain the silence of the sources about the region. There is even a strong anti-Boeotian bias in Polybius, who explicitly states that the Boeotians did whatever they could to defile their former glory⁴.

To study the army and the military policy of the Boeotian League, one has therefore to use sources of another kind. Fortunately, we have for the Hellenistic period a rich body of epigraphical evidence from the region that gives a lot of details about the federal army. This evidence is of course not of the same nature as a historical narrative, but it provides information about many aspects of the military organization of the Boeotian *koinon* –and in fact, it appears that we can say a great deal about the army of the Hellenistic League, much more than about the Boeotian army of the Fourth century BC. This is far more important than a strictly regional study: we have a very consistent picture of the army of the Hellenistic Boeotian League, which is a very good example to assess the evolution of the civic armies of the Greek states during the Hellenistic period. As such, it is not only a narrow, regional study, but rather a test-case for a wider military history of the Hellenistic world.

There are of course a few caveats. Epigraphical evidence is difficult to use, and by essence patchy. It certainly cannot lead to a factual narrative that could supplement for the lack of historical sources. The main problem, however, is a chronological one: the precise date of each document is far from certain⁵.

The aim of this paper is to focus on a particular point, the federal infantry and its evolution over time. The subject has been covered by the past in various studies in German by Beloch⁶, and more thoroughly in French, with the important contributions of Michel Feyel⁷, Roland Étienne and Denis Knoepfler⁸ or, more recently, Y. Kalliontzis⁹ and myself¹⁰. But outside of French scholarship, this topic has remained widely unknown if we except a few mentions, notably by J. Ma¹¹. One of my main aims here is therefore to propose a synthesis on the question in English, hoping that it will contribute to draw the attention of more researchers on the topic.

1. EPIGRAPHICAL SOURCES AND THE REFORM OF THE FEDERAL ARMY

Epigraphical sources provide us with information on several points of the Hellenistic Boeotian Confederacy. It seems that the Boeotian *koinon* was re-founded immediately after the destruction of Thebes by Alexander the Great in 335 BC¹². Thebes itself, after its re-founding by Cassander in 315 BC, joined the *koinon* in 287 BC¹³. After this date, we have a good picture of the political organisation of the *koinon*: it has been proved by D. Knoepfler that the region was divided into seven federal districts called *tele* in

³ Plb.20.4.1-2; Str. 9.2.2.

⁴ Plb.20.4.3. On this passage, see MÜLLER 2013.

⁵ The last version of the chronology is to be found in KALLIONTZIS 2020; however, see now the reservations I expressed in LUCAS 2021a.

⁶ BELOCH 1906, 45-46.

⁷ FEYEL 1942.

⁸ ÉTIENNE-KNOEPFLER 1976.

⁹ KALLIONTZIS 2020.

¹⁰ LUCAS 2023.

¹¹ MA 2000, 346-347; 2005.

¹² It is now admitted that the *koinon* reached its final phase with the reintegration of Thebes in 287 BC. For the transition phase between 335 and 287, see now LUCAS 2021b.

¹³ KNOEPFLER 2001a; see KALLIONTZIS 2020, 103-105.

the inscriptions, each providing a boiotarch and an hipparch¹⁴ (see fig. 1). Several districts were composed of two cities or more which contributed together to provide a military contingent. This shows that the principle behind the division of the territory was probably a division of the population into seven equal parts¹⁵.

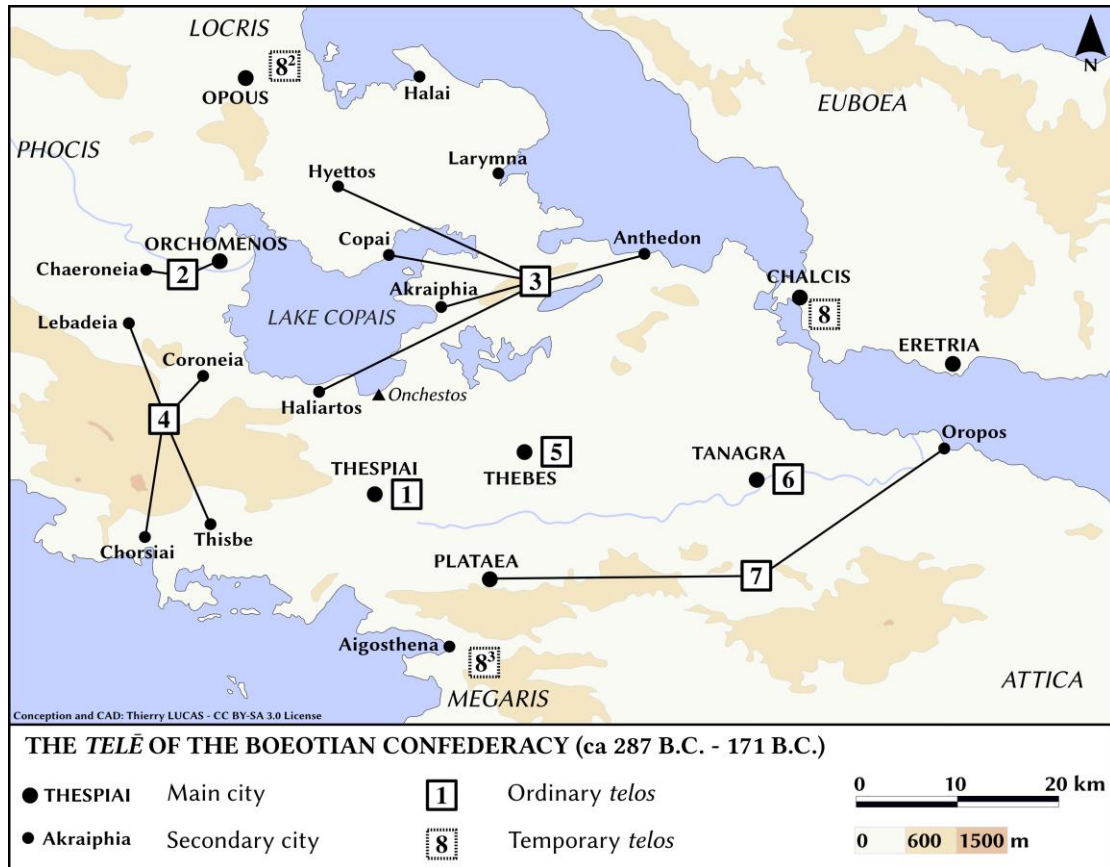


Fig. 1: The tele of the Boeotian Confederacy in the Hellenistic period.

Our main epigraphical source to study the army are the conscription lists: it seems that it was mandatory, for each city, to inscribe every year a list with the names of all the young men who completed their *ephebeia* and thus became regular citizen-soldiers. We have preserved a good number of these lists, from 287 BC to the dissolution of the league in 171 BC¹⁶—and the practice continued sporadically down to Roman times. The lists were inscribed on stelae but also, in many cities, on existing monuments, the most famous case being the city of Hyettos, where we know of at least twenty-six conscription lists inscribed directly on the wall of the acropolis¹⁷. Each city had its own habits concerning the title of these lists, and the variations observed here are very useful to understand the military formation of the young Boeotians. The term of ephebes, first, appears in many cities, in the second half of the third century: the conscripts passed from the ranks of the ephebes to the ranks of the army. Before that, other terms are used, like *neoteroi*—but the reality behind the term is quite the same. A small number

¹⁴ This point has now been stressed in numerous publications and does not need a demonstration here; see CORSTEN 1999, 38-44; KNOEPFLER 2000; 2001b; 2003; MÜLLER 2011; KALLIONTZIS 2020, 55-56; LUCAS 2023, 45-52.

¹⁵ This principle of a territorial division based on the population of each district is reminiscent to the organization attested in the Fourth century BC (see *Hell. Oxy.* 19.2-4).

¹⁶ For a full list of the conscription lists known to date, see KALLIONTZIS 2020, 75-84.

¹⁷ ÉTIENNE-KNOEPFLER 1976, 67-112.

of conscription lists from Hyettos, Thebes, and Lebadeia notably call the young men inscribed in the ranks of the army *wikatiweties*, “those aged twenty years old”¹⁸.

This gives a precious information on the age of the conscripts, and we can deduce that the corresponding *ephebeia* lasted two years, from 18 to 20, like the Late Classical – Early Hellenistic Athenian model¹⁹. The participation to the *ephebeia* was probably mandatory for all the citizens, or at least for a large part of the citizen body: compared to cities where *ephebeia* was restrained to a small elite, like in Hellenistic Athens, the number of conscripts per year is very high in Boeotia, and small cities like Akraiphia have up to thirty men inscribed at the same time²⁰, which is more than the total number of ephebes some years in Hellenistic Athens²¹. It is only after the dissolution of the Boeotian League that we see a drastic fall in the number of conscripts, or even in most of the cities the disappearance of the conscription lists²².

A last important point must be stressed here: in some cities the title of the list mentions the type of soldiers²³; three cases can be seen here:

— In some lists, the title specifies that the conscripts are to join the ranks of the hoplites –only in two cities, Thespiiai and Copai²⁴. These appear to be the older inscriptions of the series, and they have been dated to around 250-240 BC.

— A few list also record the inscription of the conscripts in the ranks of the *thyreaphoroi*, the infantry armed with the oblong *thyreos* shield. This is limited to a few cities, Akraiphia, Thisbe, and Chorsiai²⁵. These lists are somewhat later than the previous ones, and there is a chronological overlap with the following category, but they disappear very quickly²⁶.

— The term that is attested by the greatest number of inscriptions, lastly, is the term *peltophoroi*, infantry armed with the lighter *pelte* shield. This term is attested

¹⁸ The term, *ῥικατιφέτιες* (note the dialectal form with digamma), is attested in several lists from Lebadeia (*IG* VII, 3067; 3068; 3072 (?); in a single list from Hyettos (*IG* VII, 2817); and in a conscription list that may come from Plataiai (ROESCH 1970, 146-151, n° 3; see KALLIONTZIS 2020, 15 for the origin of this inscription).

¹⁹ On the Athenian *ephebeia*, see now FRIEND 2019; HENDERSON 2020.

²⁰ *IG* VII, 2716 (34 names); KALLIONTZIS 2020, 196-198, n°30 (37 names).

²¹ For the number of ephebes per year in Athens during the third century BC, see HENDERSON 2020, 359-360.

²² In the most important cities of the region, for instance Thespiiai, we do have conscription lists after the dissolution of the *koinon*, but they show a dramatic fall in the annual number of conscripts; see, for instance, the late Hellenistic lists from Thespiiai (*I. Thesp.* 111, 112, 113, 119), with sometimes less than 10 names. During the period 250-171 BC on the other hand, Thespiiai enrolls 47 to 135 conscripts per year. On this point, see now LUCAS–DUBACH 2023.

²³ This development does not take into consideration the more neutral formulae used in several cities; for instance, in Orchomenos, throughout the period considered here, the title of the lists only states that “the following young men made their first campaign” (τοῦ πρώτου ἐστροτεύαθη; see for instance *IG* VII, 3175, l. 6).

²⁴ Thespiiai: *I. Thesp.* 88, 89, 90, 91, 93; Copai: *IG* VII, 2781; TE RIELE 1975, 77.

²⁵ Akraiphia: *IG* VII, 2716; Thisbe: *SEG* 3, 351; Chorsiai: KALLIONTZIS–MÜLLER 2020, n°1, 2, 4, 7.

²⁶ This overlap is now well attested with the lists of Chorsiai that have been recently published by Kalliontzis and Müller (KALLIONTZIS–MÜLLER 2020): after two lists that explicitly mention *peltophoroi*, the name *thyreaphoroi* is used again in the last list of the series. Moreover, the year of the federal *archon* Hippias I, the new conscripts were enrolled in the rank of the *thyreaphoroi* in Chorsiai, while in Aigosthena they were that same year enrolled in the ranks of the *peltophoroi* (*IG* VII, 211). See now LUCAS 2023, 220-223.

in nearly all the cities for which we have conscription lists available: Thespiiai, Thisbe, Akraiphia, Hyettos, Copai, Chorsiai, Anthedon²⁷. It should also be noted that for all the cities with conscription lists mentioning hoplites/*thyreaphoroi* we have also later conscription lists mentioning *peltophoroi*. The *peltophoroi* are also attested in two other types of inscriptions: First, we have several dedications from the army; notably, there was in Boeotia an important festival, the Pamboiotia, which had an important military aspect: like for instance in the Theseia in Hellenistic Athens²⁸, there were team competitions between the forces sent by each federal districts that involved the different parts of the army. It seems that the competition opposed the armed forces of each districts in several categories, the cavalry and the infantry having both dedicated contests. We have two consecrations of the infantry from the *telos* of Coroneia and from Thespiiai mentioning the *peltophoroi*, as well as elite corps and auxiliary infantry²⁹. They appear in another important document, the Magistrate stele of Thespiiai; it is a stele recording all the magistrates of the city for two consecutive years, including a good number of military officers³⁰. This document gives a good idea of all the parts of the army of the city. From these inscriptions it appears that the main body of infantry were the *peltophoroi*, with up to three officers per district. The *peltophoroi* are thus well attested from the last third of the third century BC down to the dissolution of the *koinon* in 171 BC.

From all this evidence, it can be deduced that there was a progressive shift during the third century BC. Despite the uncertainties of the chronology of the federal archons, it is certain that the succession is a chronological one: this can be proven by the state of the dialect. Thus, there is a kind of progression, from the classical hoplites to the hellenistic *peltophoroi*. The few mentions of *thyreaphoroi*, however, are difficult to interpret. In the present state of our knowledge it is impossible to state if there was a first reform with the widespread adoption of the *thyreos*: as we have seen, there are only a few attestations of *thyreophoroi* in a few cities of the *koinon*, and they overlap with the first attestations of the *peltophoroi*.

On the other hand, it seems clear that the adoption of the *pelte* was a crucial moment: it has been described as a shift towards a Macedonian armament, the *pelte* shield, being lighter, allowing to hold the long sarissa³¹. Until very recently, this reform was dated to the middle of the third century BC, and it was interpreted as a reaction to the defeat of Chaeronea in 245 BC, or on the contrary as a preparation to the battle³². The Boeotians would then have been pioneers in the adoption of the Macedonian armament, as such reforms are only attested a few decades later for the case of Sparta and of the Achaean League. However, in the last revision of the chronology published recently, Yannis Kalliontzis has proposed to lower the date of the reform at around 230 BC³³. A lower date can in fact be confirmed with external elements, by putting the Boeotian reform within the general context of the evolution of the Hellenistic armies: Boeotian

²⁷ See KALLIONTZIS 2020, 75-84.

²⁸ For a parallel between these two contests, see LUCAS 2023, 288.

²⁹ Coroneia: SEG 3, 354; Thespiiai: I. Thesp. 201.

³⁰ I. Thesp. 84, notably l. 20-26 for the infantry.

³¹ See FOULON 1996, 58-60.

³² BELOCH 1906, 44; FEYEL 1942, 197; ROESCH 1982, 252-254 on the other hand, wanted to place the reform a few years before the battle, and saw the defeat as a consequence of an ill-prepared reform.

³³ KALLIONTZIS 2020; the new date proposed by Kalliontzis is far from clear, as he leaves open several possibilities in his book, but he dates it around 230 BC.

peltophoroi are certainly a local version of a well-known type of Hellenistic infantryman, the peltast. It is now widely recognized that the peltasts of the Hellenistic era are not to be confused with the classical light infantry of the same name, which is not attested after the period of the successors. By contrast, Hellenistic peltasts are a kind of elite line-infantry, attested first in the Antigonid army during the time of Antigonos Doso³⁴, and then in other armies such as the army of Ptolemaic Egypt or the army of the Achaean League³⁵. A reform of the Boeotian infantry in the middle of the third century would mean that the peltasts became attested in Boeotia two decades earlier than their first attestation in the Antigonid army, which is most unlikely. By contrast, a date a few years after 230 BC would place such a reform in a period of good relations with the Antigonids, that started in 227 BC³⁶; this would help to explain the reform.

Interestingly, the Macedonian question, in Boeotia, became a complex issue in the second century BC, with some cities (Coroneia, Haliartos) and part of the elites supporting the Macedonians, while some others, notably Thespiiai, gradually became pro-Romans³⁷. In this context, the titles used for the conscription lists may bring some information: in some cities, it seems that, in the second century BC, there was a clear tendency to avoid the term *peltophoroi* and use instead more neutral formulas; this is the case, for instance, at Thespiiai, where *peltophoroi*-titles were replaced in the second century by the expression “the following young men were integrated in the battalions”, or at Aigosthena, where the *peltophoroi* are mentioned only in the conscription lists of the 220’s, before switching to a formula only specifying that the young men “left the ephebes”³⁸. On the other hand, in Hyettos, *peltophoroi*-titles were used down to the dissolution of the *koinon*. At that time, the term may still have been perceived as reflecting a Macedonian reality, with which some cities wanted to distance themselves.

2. ELITE TROOPS

The reform was not only a simple change of equipment: for the infantry, alongside with the *peltophoroi*, two elite corps become attested, the *agema* and the *epilektoi*. Our attestation is much sparser, but still very consistent:

— On a single conscription list of Thespiiai, all the corps of the army are mentioned³⁹. This includes the cavalry and the three corps of line infantry, the *agema*, the *epilektoi* and the *peltophoroi*.

— A dedication made by the district of Coroneia mentions in a different order *agema*, *peltophoroi*, *epilektoi*, and also archers and slingers⁴⁰.

³⁴ See notably HATZOPOULOS 2001, 66-73 and JUHEL 2017, 113-125. Juhel notably stresses that the first attestation of the peltasts in the Antigonid army dates to the battle of Sellasia (222 BC).

³⁵ Egypt: adopted before the battle of Raphia (Plb. 5.65.2; see below). Achaean League: see WILLIAMS 2004; Sicily: Plb.3.75.7.

³⁶ See Plb. 20.5.7-10.

³⁷ For an overview, see LUCAS 2022.

³⁸ τοῖδε ἐξ ἐφήβων: See for instance IG VII, 215-218. Cf. IG VII, 27 and 28 (Megara).

³⁹ I. Thesp. 94.

⁴⁰ SEG 3, 354.

— On another dedication from Thespiiai, all the corps are mentioned with their officers: one officer for the *agema*, two for the *epilektoi*, three for the *peltophoroi*, and one more for the archers⁴¹.

— The stele of the magistrates at Thespiiai mentions the same officers, with only two differences: the officer of the *agema* is mentioned as a “*lochagos*”; and only one officer for the *peltophoroi* is listed, though a space has been left vacant on the stone to inscribe two more names⁴². In the same manner, the archers are attested again with one officer, and a space has been left vacant on the stone to inscribe an officer of slingers in case of need. This can be interpreted as a normal situation in a context of peace: in such a context a single officer was enough to organize the daily patrols; but in case of a full levy, for a military campaign or for the military contests of the Pamboiotia, three officers were needed for the *peltophoroi*.

— Lastly, a very lacunar inscription from Thisbe mentions the officer of the *agema*, with a different rank: he is named *taxiarchos* of the *agema*⁴³. Compared to the *lochagos* attested in Thespiiai, He may be the federal officer leading the *agema* formed by the troops of the seven districts, whereas the *lochagos* attested in Thespiiai would only be the commander of the forces of his district.

In some Hellenistic armies, notably in the Seleucid army, the *agema* was a cavalry squadron; but it is very clear that in Boeotia it belonged to the infantry: this can be deduced from the name of the officer, *lochagos* or *taxiarchos*, and from the fact that the *agema* is mentioned on the dedications made by the infantry and not in the dedications made by the cavalry. This in turn clearly shows, like the term *peltophoroi*, an Antigonid influence: in the Antigonid army, the *agema* was an infantry corps, and more precisely an elite inside the elite, as it was composed of chosen peltasts of a certain age⁴⁴.

What is more difficult for the case of Boeotia is to give a reason for the existence of two elite corps: *epilektoi* and *agema*. Michel Feyel thought that the *epilektoi* were not really an elite, professional troop, but rather a part of the ordinary *peltophoroi* who were kept on active duty at a given moment, the rest being held as a reserve, and the *agema* being the true elite corps⁴⁵; but we could imagine different solutions, such as a census condition coupled with a difference of age between the *epilektoi* and the members of the *agema*, as it is the case in Macedonia. At any rate, it seems clear that the *agema* was much less numerous than the *epilektoi*, as it has only one officer against two for the *epilektoi*, and that this officer is called a *lochagos*.

The creation of these two elite units allows us to better understand the reform itself: far from being only a change of armament, it went with an in-depth modification of the structure of the army, inspired by the Antigonid army. At the same period, we also see

⁴¹ *I. Thesp.* 201. In this inscription the officers are simply recorded as *hegemon*, ἀγεόμενος.

⁴² *I. Thesp.* 84, ll. 20-26.

⁴³ JAMOT 1894, 534, n°3.

⁴⁴ See the *diagrammata* of Cassandreia and Drama mentioned in HATZOPOULOS 2001, *App.* 2.i, side B, ll. 8-12 (Drama) and 2.ii, ll. 19-22 (Cassandreia): ordinary peltasts cannot be older than 35, while members of the *agema* may reach 45 or even 50. See also JUHEL 2017, 117-119; JUHEL-SEKUNDA 2009.

⁴⁵ FEYEL 1942, 202-204.

other changes: the creation of a squadron of tarantine cavalry is attested at Thespiai⁴⁶. The consecrations already mentioned are also a kind of evidence that is not attested before the reform, and it is therefore possible that the military competitions of the Pamboiotia were created at the same time as the reform of the army, to encourage a sense of emulation between the armed forces of the different districts and thus improve the quality of the troops. During the same period, another inscription records the military formation of the young men in Thespiai, mentioning a federal law on that aspect; Thespiai hired a professional instructor from Attica to teach the young men javelin-throwing, bow-shooting and military maneuvers⁴⁷. Lastly, we have much more conscription lists after the reform than before, which means that the reform was maybe also an occasion for the League to remind the cities of their military obligations. Thus, the apparition of the *peltophoroi* in the Boeotian epigraphical evidence should not be interpreted only as a change of armament, but as a large-scale political and military program, inspired by an Antigonid model. Even the term of *peltophoroi* adopted by the Boeotian *koinon* is not neutral: in the Antigonid army, the peltasts were an elite troop; in Boeotia on the other hand, the term is used for the ordinary levy. It is clear that the Boeotian army could not afford the complexity of a royal army, but the reform was inspired by the best units available in the Antigonid army. We see here the paradox of Hellenistic Boeotia: it is a period for which we have clear attestations of ambitious military policies attested by epigraphic evidence, showing a clear will to have functional military institutions and to implement a modern way of warfare; and at the same time it is a period described by contemporary sources, notably by Polybius, as a period of decline, during which Boeotia did not play any significant role on the international stage.

3. A PARALLEL: THE RE-ORGANISATION OF THE LAGID ARMY AT THE EVE OF THE BATTLE OF RAPHIA

The rationale behind this process largely escapes us, just like the process that lead to this important shift. The epigraphical sources only provide us with the results. To know the rest, we have to rely on comparisons with other cases. A possible comparison is the re-organisation of the Lagid army before the battle of Raphia, for which we have a detailed account by Polybius⁴⁸. This happened only a decade after the reform of the Boeotian army, in 219 BC. The re-organization of the Lagid army is conducted by a small group of officers who, according to Polybius, had served together in the Antigonid army under Demetrios II and Antigonos Doson. As far as the infantry is concerned, we can see a similar process as in the Boeotian army, with the creation of different corps, including peltasts and *agema*. An interesting point to note is that none of these officers is a Macedonian, but they all come from various parts of the Greek world; and among them, there is a Sokrates from Boeotia, who is more particularly in charge of the peltasts.

This is of course a detail, but this detail in fact provides us with information about the Boeotian reform. Quite obviously, such reforms, the Boeotian or the Egyptian, can

⁴⁶ On the Tarantine cavalry, see BUGH 2011; COUVENHES 2020. The Tarantine cavalry is attested by the mention of its officer in the list of magistrates already mentioned (*I. Thesp.* 84, l. 19) and in a dedication from the cavalry (*I. Thesp.* 201, mistakenly attributed to Thebes by Bugh and Couvenhes).

⁴⁷ *I. Thesp.* 29; see LUCAS 2023, 256-260.

⁴⁸ Plb. 5.63-65. See FISCHER-BOVET-CLARYSSE 2012.

be interpreted as cultural transfers⁴⁹: in the case of Egypt it is quite clear that after the battle of Sellasia in 222 BC the Antigonid army appeared as the benchmark of military performance, hence the recruitment of officers who had served together in the Antigonid army.

The presence in this list of Sokrates of Boeotia gives us an indication of how this cultural transfer may have happened in Boeotia a few years before. It is clear that there were in the Antigonid army quite a few Boeotian soldiers. We have another attestation, a Boeotian officer commanding the Macedonian garrison at Aigosthena during the reign of Demetrios II⁵⁰. I am not saying, of course, that Sokrates himself was responsible for the reform in Boeotia, but his mention in Polybius provides us with information about the potential actors of the equivalent cultural transfer in Boeotia: even before the political alliance between the Boeotian elites and the Antigonid dynasty in 227 BC, there were obviously Boeotians working in the Macedonian army, who were on the front line, I may say, to observe the improvements conducted there. It is probably these men who played a crucial role in the adoption of the Macedonian equipment in Boeotia.

Another implication of this reform is that it can help us to understand the evolutions of the Antigonid army itself: as we have seen, several elements, not the least the comparison with the Egyptian situation, show us that the adoption of the armament of the peltasts and the creation of an infantry *agema*, are derived from an Antigonid model. As Juhel underlines, the first, direct evidence we have for the existence of peltasts in the Macedonian army is the polybian narration of the battle of Sellasia, in 222 BC, which gives a *terminus ante quem*. The Boeotian evidence allows us to raise a little this *terminus ante quem*: if the Boeotian reform happened near 230 BC, this means that the creation of the peltasts in Macedonia happened some time earlier, which leads us to the very first years of the reign of Antigonos Doseon, or even, more probably, to the reign of Demetrios II. This is not a very large difference, but it is still a progress in our knowledge of Macedonian military institutions.

4. CONCLUSION

Very far from the image of decadence given by Polybius, the epigraphical sources of Boeotia therefore show us on the contrary a large scale diplomatic and military activity in the last third of the third century BC to improve the army and bring it to the standards of the armies of the Hellenistic Kingdoms. With such a reform, Boeotia claimed its ability to wage ‘superpower style warfare’, to take the words used by John Ma⁵¹. Despite the difficulties of this kind of evidence, we can also stress a few specificities: in other hellenistic armies, for instance, peltasts were generally an elite corps, representing only a minority of the total force, whereas this type of armament has been chosen in Boeotia as the equipment of the main force of infantry. This may be owing to the fact that the Boeotian League could not afford the complexity of the armies of the kingdoms and chose to restrain itself to one type of troops –the peltasts being maybe more versatile than heavier units, and therefore able to cover several duties, from the battlefield to simple patrols in the countryside or garrison duties.

⁴⁹ On this notion applied to Hellenistic armies, see notably the publication of the 3rd *Hellenistic Warfare Conference* (COUVENHES–CROUZET–PÉRÉ–NOGUÈS 2011).

⁵⁰ *IG* VII, 1. This document is frequently assigned in the bibliography to the reign of Demetrios Poliorketes (see notably CHRYSAFIS 2019). However, it has decisively been shown that the king mentioned in the text is Demetrios II, and not Demetrios Poliorketes (ROBU 2014, 98-100).

⁵¹ MA 2005, 168.

The new down-dating proposed for the *peltophoroi* reform keeps it nearly a decade before the re-organization of the Lagid army and two decades before the well-known reform of the Achaean army in 209 BC, who abandoned the *thyreos* shield for a Macedonian-like phalanx⁵². We can still talk about an early adoption, compared to other Greek cities or leagues, and even to kingdoms. The Boeotian League thus managed to reform its militia to bring it into line with the standards set by the royal army, and to maintain this new model army for more than half a century.

The study of the Boeotian army in the Hellenistic period is far more than a technical question reserved for specialists of Boeotia. Even though epigraphical evidence is by essence complicated and difficult to use, it is one of the few cases for which we have enough data to get an idea of the institutional organization, and even the day-to-day routine, of a Greek civic army. As such, it can work as a paradigm for a broader study of warfare in the Hellenistic Greek world.

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⁵² Plu. *Phil.* 9.

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