

NICHOLAS VICTOR SEKUNDA

HARE-HUNTING AND CAVALRY TACTICS¹

It seems to have been Jacoby (*FGrH* 328 F 71) who first established that *hamippoi* were a type of Greek infantry trained to operate alongside cavalry, as the very name indicates: for it literally means 'together with the cavalry'. Jacoby thought the *hamippoi* to have been a Boeotian speciality. In fact the first reference to the employment of troops of this type seems to be in Herodotus (7.158) who mentions that in the army of Gelon the tyrant of Syracuse there were 2,000 cavalry accompanied by an equal number of *hippodromoi psiloi* or 'psiloi who run alongside the cavalry'. *Psiloi* is the normal Greek word used for light infantry. The context of this passage is the events of 480 BC, leading up to the Persian invasion, which gives us a *terminus ante quem* for the establishment of infantry of this type in Greek armies. It is, indeed possible that Gelon himself was responsible for raising a unit of such troops for the first time. It is a well-known fact that in Greek history military innovations were most frequently implemented by totalitarian governments who had the adequate financial resources available to implement reform. However the uneven and generally poor quality of the evidence for Greek history before the Persian wars does not allow us to reach a firm conclusion on this matter.

Jacoby had restricted himself to the literary evidence alone, and I believe I was the first to identify *hamippoi* in the representational evidence, in Nick Sekunda, colour plates by Angus McBride, *The Greeks. Armies of Classical Greece 5th and 4th Centuries BC*, Osprey, London 1986, pp. 53-6. The most important piece of evidence is the Athenian marble funerary lekythos of Kephisodotos son of Konon of the deme Aithalidai (fig.1: Athens, National Museum 3620; the inscription is published as *IG* ii² 5391).

Fig. 1 Here Kephisodotos is shown on a horse, unarmoured but for his Boeotian helmet, aiming his spear at an enemy hoplite kneeling on the ground. This relief, incidentally, is evidence that the Boeotian helmet was introduced into the Athenian army shortly after Xenophon had recommended their adoption in his book *On Horsemanship*. Behind Kephisodotos stands a male figure shown with legs apart, wearing a tunic, but apparently not a cloak. On his head he

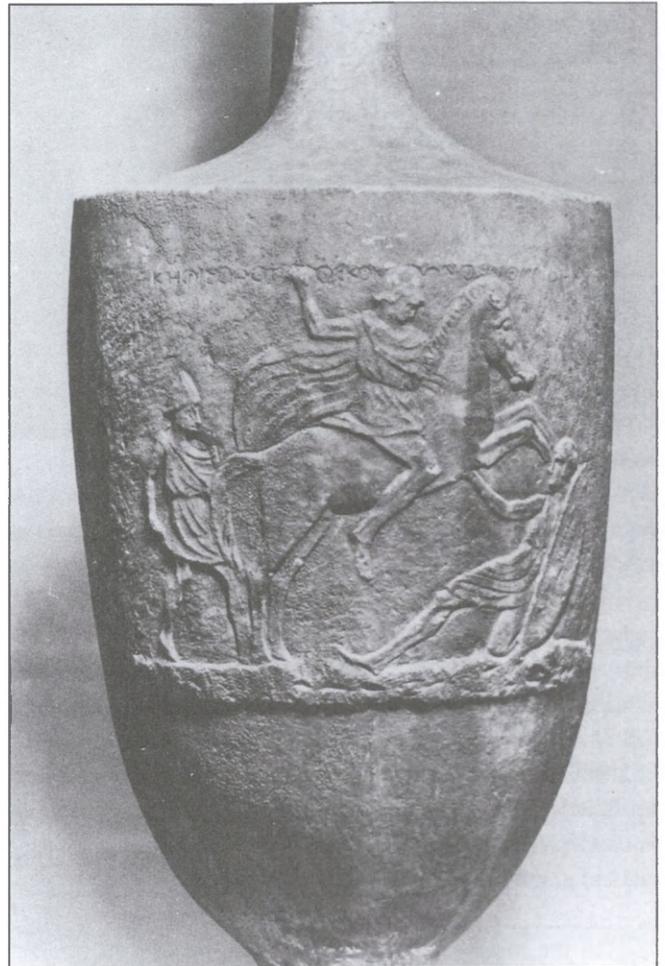


Fig. 1.

has a helmet with cheek-pieces. He has a narrow sword-belt hanging cross-wise from his right shoulder, and a scabbard under his left armpit. In his right hand he seems to be holding a dagger, while his left hand clutches the tail of the horse.

Fig. 2 The date of the lekythos can be roughly dated to the middle of the fourth century stylistically, but can, I believe, be more firmly dated thanks to the shield blazon of the kneeling hoplite. When Xenophon wrote his book *The Cavalry Commander*, which he is believed to have done on the eve of the outbreak of war between Athens and the Boeotians in 365 BC, Athens did not possess a force of *hamippoi*, for at 5.13 he states that it is another duty of the *hipparchos* is to show the

¹ The layout of the article as required by the author (ed.).



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

city the weakness of cavalry without infantry compared to cavalry with ‘*hammipoi* light infantry’. The infantry who fight with the cavalry are also mentioned at 9.7.

His words were, it seems, prophetic, for Diodoros (15.85.4) tells us that at the second battle of Mantinea in 362 BC the Athenian cavalry on the left flank were defeated by their Theban opponents, not because of inferior mounts or horsemanship, but because of the better equipment and better tactical of the *psiloi* fighting for the Thebans.

On the other hand it is known that *hamipoi* were in service in the Athenian army later on in the fourth century, for in the pseudo-Aristotelian, *Athenian Constitution*, written between 332 and 322 BC, we read that the *boule* also holds a scrutiny of the *prodromoi* (scout cavalry) to see which men appear capable of serving, and if it rejects anyone his service is at an end. Likewise it holds a scrutiny of the *hamipoi*, and if it rejects anyone that is the end of his paid service’.

In my book I reconstructed the shield-blazon of the fallen warrior (fig. 3) as a garlanded bull’s head (fig. 4), the canting arms of the island of Euboia (fig. 5). The only battle fought between the Athenians and the Euboians at this time where the cavalry are known to have taken part was fought at Tamynai in 349 BC. So it would seem that Kephisodoros died at the battle of Tamynai, and that *hamipoi* were in service in Athens by the middle of the fourth century.

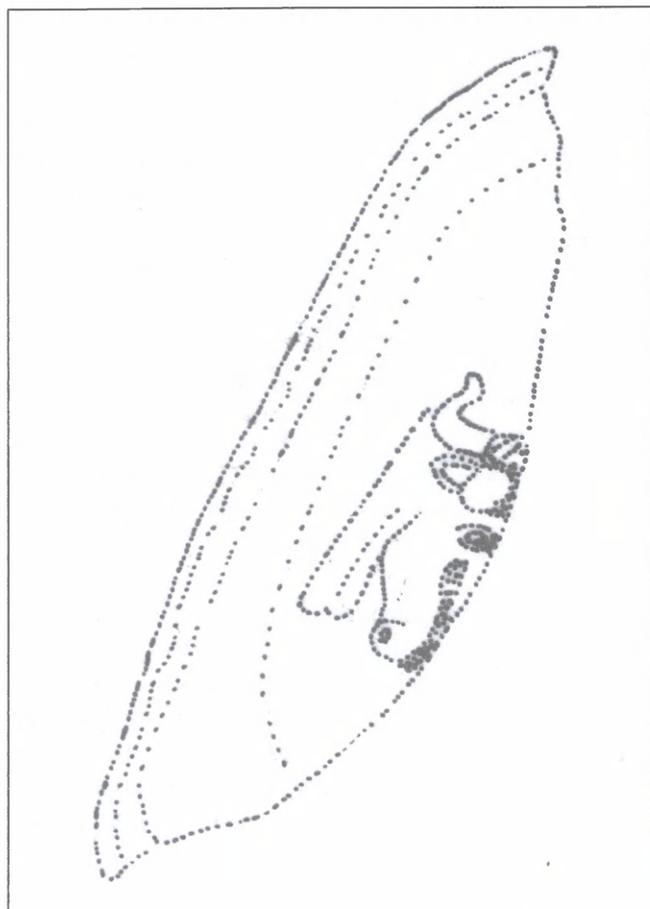


Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

Why is the *hamippos* shown behind Kephisodotos holding onto the tail of his horse? Evidently it would be a problem for infantry operating with cavalry to manage to keep up with the horses. One solution to this would be for the *hamippoi* to hold onto the tails of the horses. This might at first seem to be an extremely dangerous practice, but there is comparative evidence. This most striking is a description of an incident which happened to the British soldier Lieutenant-Colonel F.G. Peake, who served under Lawrence in Arabia, and had been tasked with the demolition of a railway line used by the Turks. As this passage is a crucial piece of evidence, I quote it in fair fullness (Major C.S. Jarvis, *Arab Command. The Biography of Lieutenant-Colonel F. G. Peake Pasha etc.* (1942) p. 36-7).

‘On Peake’s way he was joined by a Bedu on a horse who was going from Tafileh to Abu Lissal to see Feisal and, as time was of no particular object to him, he fell in with Peake’s suggestion that he should join the demolition party. The lighting of the fuse, the heavy thudding explosion, and the resulting damage has an enormous appeal to the desert mind’.

[They blow up the track but are surprised by a train full of Turkish troops which arrives unexpectedly on the scene].

‘his own camel, frightened by the excitement, refused to *barrak* to allow Peake to mount him. During the struggle to get him down the head collar broke, and the next moment the animal was lumbering off to the rest of the troop in the particularly idiotic gait the camel adopts when he has succeeded in doing something particularly silly.

The Turks seeing what was had happened, began to dismount from the train and run across the desert to cut off Peake’s retreat, and at this moment the invited guest came galloping back, calling on Peake to mount behind him. Unfortunately the horse was as excited as the camel had been and refused to stand still to enable Peake to clamber up. Meanwhile the Turks were closing in rapidly and the situation was becoming hopeless. “Take a hold of the horse’s tail and run,” shouted the Arab, and Peake, getting a firm grip and doing fifty yards running as fast as he could and the next fifty swinging in the air, behind the flying hooves, made the half-mile to safety in a good bit less than record time. It was, as Peake said, one of those occasions when he was extremely glad he had with him a bag of gold, and a full-sized handful of coins constituted an adequate and instant reward for a very gallant action’.

Therefore the fact that if you grasped hold of the tail of horse, and ran as fast as possible, you could keep up with the horse, was known to the Arabs early in the twentieth century and to the ancient Greeks alike.

The practice of a man on foot holding onto the tail of a horse is known from other Greek representational evidence, but here the context is clearly not military. Below I give a list of representations I have been able to assemble over the years, but it does not pretend to be representative.

Fig. 6 Uninscribed grave stele originally from Tanagra and now in Athens (National Museum 1386). Stylistically I would suppose it to date to the fourth century BC. It shows a husband returning home from the hunt. In the centre the husband is shown riding his horse. At the left his wife offers him a cup. To the left is shown a male figure with legs stretched apart (but walking not running). He holds onto the tail of the



Fig. 6.

horse with his left hand. Over his right shoulder he holds a club, and from this club hangs a small animal, almost certainly a hare. So the context is clearly one of hare hunting.

(Salomon Reinach, *Répertoire de Reliefs grecs et romains* II, Paris 1912, p. 419, 1).

The club can be clearly identified as a *lagobolon*, or 'hare stick'. The word is a compound of *λαγῶς* (hare) and *βάλλω* (something thrown). It was the hare which was most commonly hunted in ancient Greece. Rabbits were confined to the western Mediterranean at that time. The normal practice was to chase the hare into nets using hounds, but the *lagobolon* would be thrown at the hare to stun or kill it if the opportunity arose. Xenophon uses the word club (*ropalon*), and nowhere is the word *lagobolon* not mentioned.

Nevertheless, if we follow Xenophon's treatise on hunting, the hunting team consisted of two: the hunter and the net-watcher. The hunter should go to the hunt wearing casual, light clothing and footwear, with a club (*ropalon*) in his hand, and the man in charge of the nets should follow him (6.11). The man in charge of the nets should be a hunting enthusiast and a Greek speaker, about twenty years of age, lightly built but strong (2.3). The man responsible for the purse nets should go out for the hunt in light clothing (6.5).

Clearly in this representation and the others that follow the man on the horse is the hunter, and the man on foot is the net-watcher; usually lightly clad as Xenophon recommends. The fact that the net-watcher carries a *lagobolon* does not cause a problem in this case, as one could argue that the hunter has given him the *lagobolon* to carry when they returned home. This presumes that the nets have been left out somewhere in

the countryside. A greater problem is that Xenophon nowhere mentions the hunter riding to the hounds. From chapter 20 of Arrian's book *On Hunting* it would seem that Xenophon does this because he is what Arrian called a 'do it yourself' hunter, who prefer to go out on foot, but this did not reflect the common practice, which was to look for the hares on horseback. My former solution to this problem, which came to me during a walk in the Vale of Belvoir in February this year has proved, on examination, to be quite false.

Fig. 7 Uninscribed Funerary stele. Similar shape and theme to the previous one. The mounted hunter returns home from the hunt, and one of his hounds runs beside his horse. Behind him strides the net-watcher, lightly clad in only a tunic. With his right hand the net-watcher holds on to the tail of the horse, while over his left shoulder he carries a staff on which is hung the body of an animal, perhaps a hare, but more probably, to judge by the size, a fox. I have been unable to locate this relief in Clairmont.

(Salomon Reinach, *Répertoire de Reliefs grecs et romains* II, Paris 1912, 164, 2).

In this case the staff which the net-watcher carries over his shoulder is too long and straight to be a *lagobolon*. It must be a *stalyx*. *Stalyx* was the name given to a stake to which the nets are fastened. According to Xenophon (2.7) these should be somewhat less than a metre high. The *stalyx* and *lagobolon* were associated articles. In an epigram by Agis in the *Greek Anthology* (6.152) one Meidon dedicated to Phoibios 'both these *stalikai* and winged *lagobolo*'.

Fig. 8 Grave stele of Aristokles son of Menon of the Piraeus. This relief, once in the Elgin collection, is now in the British Museum (638). The inscription at top runs 'after many sports with my companions I, who sprang from earth, am earth once more. I am Aristokles of Piraeus, son of Menon'. The hunter is riding a rearing horse. Behind him walks the net-watcher, holding a *stalyx* over his left shoulder. The relief is worn, and it is not possible to distinguish whether an animal hangs from the *stalyx*, or whether the net-watcher is holding the tail of the horse. Clairmont dates the relief to the first quarter of the fourth century, soon after 400 BC.

(Salomon Reinach, *Répertoire de Reliefs grecs et romains* II, Paris 1912, p. 508, 1; Christoph W. Clairmont, *Classical Attic Tombstones*, Kilchberg 1993-, C24 nr. 24 with further bibliography).

Fig. 9 Relief of Klaudianos, Pyrrhos and Pyrrhos. This relief was brought to Salonika in 1895 from the ruins of an old church at Melnik SW of Perim (ancient Orbelos in eastern Thrace). It was sent to Royal Museum in Brussels by M. Cuyppers, Belgian consul in Salonika, and is now in the *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* (inv. A. 1091). The inscription tells us that the relief was executed in AD 215 and allows us to identify the mounted Thracian deity in the

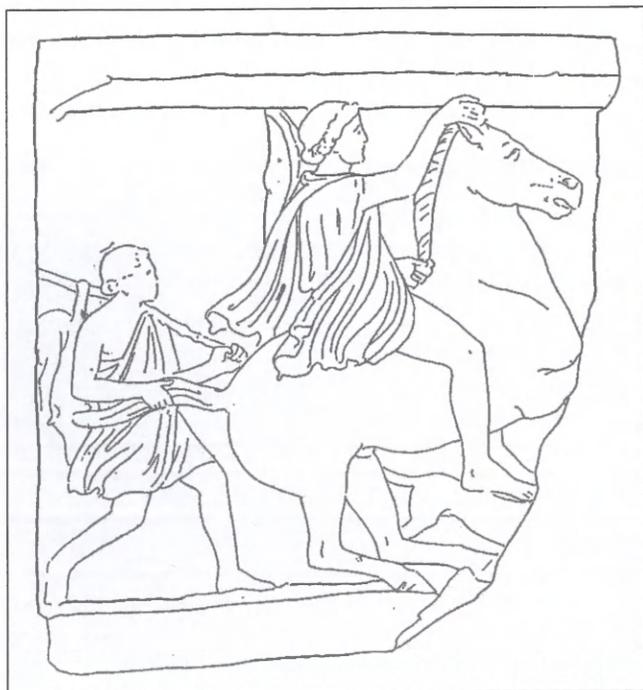


Fig. 7.



Fig. 8.

centre as Asdules, behind him Pan holds the tail of his horse. The context is not one of hunting, but this relief is another example which displays the practice of holding onto the tail of a horse.

(Paul Perdrizet, 'Relief du Pays des Maedes representant un Dionysis Thrace' *RA* 1904, 1 pp. 19-27 pl. I; *Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria Repertae* IV pp. 274-5 no. 2319 with further bibliography).

Fig. 10 Unepigraphic relief. It is now quarter to three in the morning, and I still have several pages of this article to finish this morning, and I cannot find my notes as to where this photograph was taken, but I am fairly certain it is in the Museum at Kavalla. Here the context is not hunting, but rather a scene of adoration, under the influence of the 'Thracian Rider' image, as is indeed the image previously discussed. Although the attendant behind the horseman does not hold the tail of the horse, it is clear that at some point previously he would have run alongside the horse.

Fig. 11 a, b Attic black-figure amphora belonging to the Group of Vatican G 52, dated to 530-20 BC. Gela, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (Ant. inv. 153/B). On the main body



Fig. 9.



Fig. 10.

of the vase we have a rider, with a figure on foot both in front of the horse and behind it. The figure standing behind the horse could be holding the tail, but this is uncertain.

(*Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum, Italia*, fasc. 55, pl. 2476-7)

Fig. 12 Attic lip-cup, in the *Rijksmuseum van Oudeheden*, Leiden (PC 61) from Vulci, 530-20 BC. Two pairs of



a



b

Fig. 11. a,b

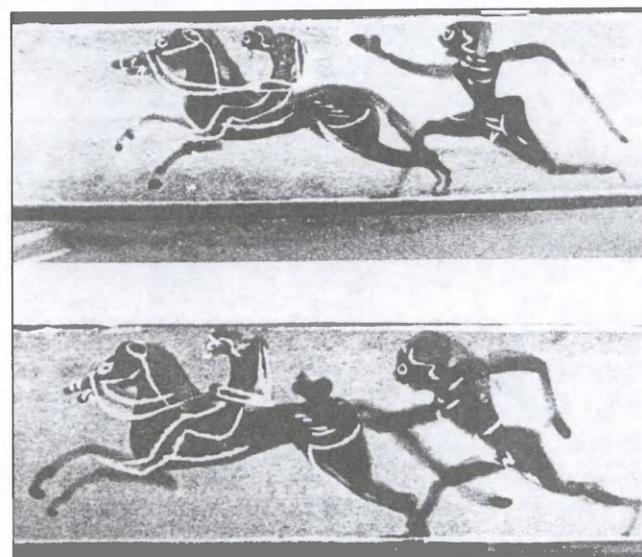


Fig. 12.

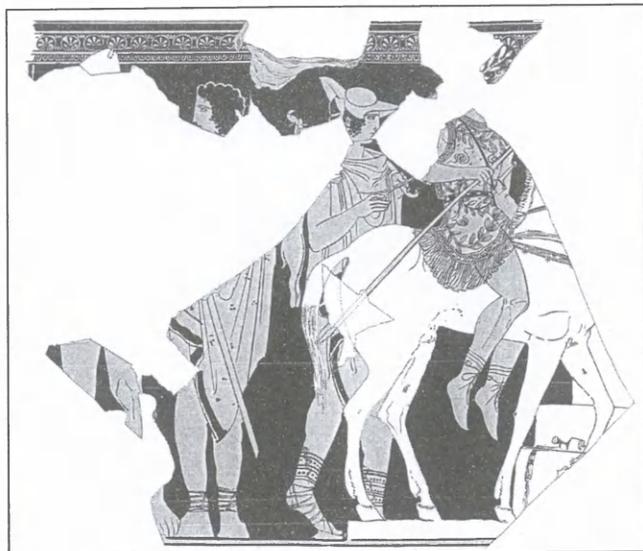


Fig. 13.

hunters are shown on either side of this lip-cup one mounted, the other on foot. Although the figure on foot is not actually shown holding on to the tail of the horse, in both scenes the hand is shown in such a position that it might well do at any moment.

(*Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum, Netherlands 4*, pl. 153, 1-4).

Fig. 13 *Loutrophoros* fragment. Athenian red-figure work from the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries, decorated in the manner of the Talos Painter. On a set of joining fragments are shown a rider in a richly-decorated tunic, wreathed and wearing a pushed-back *petasos*, armed with a spear and a sword. He stands before a tomb. The context of this figure is military. Behind his stands an 'attendant' wearing a cloak, boots and *petasos*. Over his left shoulder he carries an animal, perhaps a hare, balanced on a yoke. The evidence for yolks of this type has been partially gathered by the article by Jacques Chamay, 'Autour d'un vase phlyaque. Un instrument de portage' in *Antike Kunst* 20, 1977, 57 taf. 14. The context of the attendant is hunting, and this is at first sight puzzling. The context is a *loutrophoros*, however, and the scene is essentially funerary, so perhaps we see a mixture of scenes of military service and hunting experienced in life shown together. The attendant does not hold the tail of the horse, but is clearly positioned so as to be able to do so.

(I have reproduced the drawing of E. Gilliéron, published in the article Paul Wolters, 'Rotfigurige Loutrophoros' *AM* 16, 1891, 371-405 taf. viii. Full bibliography available on the Beazley Archive Website, as vase number 5280).

In conclusion then, it can be stated that hunting scenes where an attendant holds onto the tail of the horse ridden by the hunter are more numerous, and perhaps in some cases older, than scenes showing *hamippoi* doing this in military contexts. One can certainly conclude that this was common practice among hunters. Therefore it seems probable that

this hunting practice inspired the introduction of *hamippoi* into Greek warfare.

Although the context of Kephisodotos is certainly military, in other cases where I have identified figures as *hamippoi* on Thessalian coins (*Cambridge Ancient History. Plates to Volumes V and VI*, Cambridge 1994, no. 202c) or Attic reliefs (Nick Sekunda, colour plates by Angus McBride, *The Greeks. Armies of Classical Greece 5th and 4th Centuries BC*, Osprey, London 1986, pp. 57, 58 – with *stalyx*?) it is also possible that the context is one of hunting, and that the figures are net-watchers.

Streszczenie

W Grecji klasycznej, zarówno literatura, jak i ikonografia, zaświadcza o istnieniu pewnego rodzaju lekkiej piechoty zwanej *hamippoi*, która była szkolona do walki u boku kawalerii. Jeden *hamippoi* był związany z jednym kawalerzystą i podążał za nim, trzymając koniec końskiego ogona.

Jednym z ćwiczeń starożytnych Greków, pochodzących z klas zamożnych, było polowanie na zające i odbywało się to często w parach. Polującym był człowiek zamożny, który często udawał się na polowanie konno. Natomiast tropicielem-naganiaczem był często człowiek biedny (lub niewolnik). Antyczne wyobrażenia często ukazują taką parę wracającą z polowania, gdzie myśliwy jedzie konno, a towarzyszący mu tropiciel-naganiacz idzie z tyłu, trzymając koński ogon.

Wydaje się, że taki rodzaj polowania przygotowywał pieszego do współdziałania z jeźdźcem i był inspiracją dla *hamippoi* wojskowych.

