

This paper explores the role of experience abroad in effecting military change in ancient Athens. Not only were new tactics and technologies encountered in foreign lands, but the generals most prone to service abroad also tended to be less tied to traditional methods of warfare and thus open to innovation. The great tactician Iphicrates has been viewed by many as representative of a new type of soldier for the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, one tied to barbarian troops and demonstrating little regard for the wishes of the *polis* (W. Lengauer 1979). But there is remarkably little in the career of this alleged renegade that was not prefigured by others who spurned Athens in favor of foreign lands, beginning as early as the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century with the family of Miltiades. A willingness to step outside the confines of Athenian politics and society was matched by an ability to transcend fixed Greek military practices.

Scholars such as Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1968) and Victor Davis Hanson (1995; 1998; 2000) have argued that the tactics of the hoplite phalanx were linked to politics. The middling farmers who fought side by side as free citizens in defense of the *polis* also formed the backbone of a new type of participatory government. By this model, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century the system broke down. Generals, who were once conceived of as citizens leading fellow citizens at the behest of the state, came increasingly to be professional soldiers out for their own gain. This was concomitant with the replacement of the citizen-soldier by the soldier-for-hire (L. A. Burckhardt 1996). Mercenaries were often more skilled than hoplite volunteers, and their style of fighting – predominantly light-armed – did not encourage the same kind of social and political cohesion as did the phalanx.

This paper will suggest that even at the Battle of Marathon – that triumph of the citizen hoplite and the fledgling democracy – Miltiades did not operate within the confines of the citizen phalanx but rather applied useful lessons he learned from his lengthy period of rule in the Thracian Chersonese. Though he would be remembered as a hero of the democracy, Miltiades was no more a democrat than he was a middling farmer. His family controlled the Chersonese as tyrants for decades, and Miltiades himself maintained hundreds of mercenaries to safeguard his power (Hdt. 6.39.2). It was in Thrace, not from his fellow citizens in Athens, that he seemed to learn his most valuable military lessons. By urging the Athenians to close quickly with the Persian archers (Hdt. 6.112.1; see Hammond 1968), he demonstrated knowledge of foreign styles of warfare. And by taking the unprecedented step, ignored by Herodotus, of posting light-armed emancipated slaves on his flanks (Paus. 1.32.3; 7.15.7; see Delbrück 1975; Lazenby 1993), he was a pioneer in the use of variegated infantry tactics. Other Athenians, including Hagnon and Diitrephes, would show a similar willingness to lead non-hoplite, and even foreign, troops in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, which led to further innovation. Even the activities of Alcibiades abroad were nothing new or extraordinary. As Iphicrates was not the first to lead and derive military inspiration from foreign troops (Best 1969), by finding an outlet abroad he was also following a long line of notable Athenians. Such figures were often the harbingers of military change.