

## HOW MANY COMPANIONS DID PHILIP II HAVE?

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**Abstract:** This paper deals with a famous passage by Theopompus concerning the *hetairoi* of Philip II. Athenaeus, one of the three authors who transmitted this fragment to us, states that Philip had 800 *hetairoi* in 339, which seems to be too low a number for the last years of the reign. In search of a solution which would match Athenaeus' quotation from Theopompus with other data about Macedonian cavalry under Philip and Alexander, I consider a textual corruption in Athenaeus.

**Keywords:** Theopompus, Athenaeus, Philip II of Macedon, Alexander the Great, *hetairoi*.

Modern scholars unanimously credit Philip II with making the Macedonian armed forces an efficient instrument of conquest. However, whereas they agree in general terms in this regard, they vary greatly in details. One such much discussed detail is the strength of the Macedonian cavalry in the reign of Philip.

The most important piece of evidence in this respect is a version of Theopompus' insulting portrait of Philip's *Friends/Companions* preserved in Book VI of Athenaeus' *Learned Banqueters* (Athen. 6.77 p. 260 D – 61 A = *FGrH* 115 F 225b). This fragment of Theopompus was notorious in Antiquity for its abusive language. A slightly differing version of it may be found in Polybius (Polyb. 8.11. 5–13 = *FGrH* 115 F 225a), and the opening sentences of the same passage are also cited by Pseudo-Demetrius of Phalerum, the author of *On Style* (Demetr. *De eloc.* 27 = *FGrH* 115 F 225c). The almost verbatim similarity between the texts transmitted by Polybius and Athenaeus makes it clear that both authors used the same original with the intention of reproducing it in the original wording. Polybius' version is the longest one, but it is Athenaeus, who – having removed some content preserved in Polybius – closes his quotation with a sentence suggesting that Philip II had 800 Companions or Friends, whom he awarded with land, which normally would have been cultivated by the 10,000 richest Greeks:

οἶομαι γὰρ τοὺς ἑταίρους οὐ πλείονας ὄντας κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον ὀκτακοσίων οὐκ ἔλαττω καρπίζεσθαι γῆν ἢ μυρίους τῶν Ἑλλήνων τοὺς τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ πλείστην χώραν κεκτημένους.

I think that these companions, who numbered at the time not more than eight hundred, enjoyed the profits of as much land as any ten thousand Greeks possessing the richest and the most extensive land.

A problem with this fragment is that the term *hetairos* was used by ancient authors for both the king's courtiers (advisers, guests and most trusted commanders and fighters or simply *court hetairoi*) and Macedonian heavy cavalrymen. We do not know who Theopompus actually meant: court *hetairoi* or cavalrymen. Since he uses the word *philo* as a synonym for *hetairoi* in F 225, there are some scholars who tend to think that Theopompus meant the court *hetairoi*. Theopompus' figure of 800 is obviously too large for the inner circle of Philip's advisers or court *hetairoi*, and another explanation must be sought. Therefore, Michael Flower assumes that 800 might be a corruption of a smaller number, such as 80.<sup>1</sup>

Admittedly, Theopompus' wording is unclear (and deliberately so, I suspect) and any interpretation of who the Companions or Friends actually were may seem arbitrary.<sup>2</sup> However, since the historian from Chios alludes to the Companions as would-be killers (*andraphonoi*), I am tempted to agree with those scholars who think that this passage refers to the Cavalry Companions. The figure of 800 *hetairoi* must therefore be dealt with as an important piece of information about the organization of the Macedonian cavalry under Philip II.

Unfortunately, it must be said that this statement poses some problems. The digression on *hetairoi* comes from Book XLIV of *Philippika*, which focused on the events of the year 339.<sup>3</sup> Although it is not necessarily so that the number of 800 cavalrymen mentioned by Theopompus referred to this year, we should assume that in this highly rhetorical passage the historian from Chios gave the highest number that Philip's cavalry had ever reached. Thus this figure must be valid for 339. The "800" is a number slightly higher than the 600 horse mobilized against Bardylis in 358 (Diodorus 16.4.3). It is also significantly lower than the figures for Alexander's cavalry on the crossing to Asia in 334 (1800 Macedonian cavalrymen according to D.S. 17. 17. 4) or the overall number of Macedonian horse (3300, also including the 1500 cavalry of Antipater – Diodorus 17.17. 5).<sup>4</sup> This discrepancy was not overlooked by modern scholars. Some believe that the figure of Theopompus refers to the earlier years of Philip's reign, and perhaps to the time when Philip was reforming his armed forces.<sup>5</sup> Some others argue that the 800 were the only *hetairoi* in the strict sense of the word, and that there were other Macedonian heavy cavalrymen without that name or prestige.<sup>6</sup> George Cawkwell assumed that this figure

<sup>1</sup> Flower 1994: 111–112, n. 35.

<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that this passage is a piece of exaggerated rhetoric. Still, we may assume that Theopompus based his harangues on some real facts.

<sup>3</sup> Shrimpton 1991: 63.

<sup>4</sup> There are a few diverging attempts at understanding the organization of Alexander's mounted forces. The most influential reconstruction is by P. Brunt (1963: 27–46), but see also J. Rzepka (2008: 39–56), arguing for six-partite division of both the Macedonian horse and foot.

<sup>5</sup> Hammond 1989: 141.

<sup>6</sup> Momigliano 1934: 136–137; Griffith 1979: 404.

referred to the *Companions settled by Philip in newly conquered lands* only.<sup>7</sup> The fourth and most courageous suggestion is that the number of Macedonian cavalry grew rapidly between 338 and 334, in the last months of Philip and the opening years of Alexander.<sup>8</sup>

The first of these solution is the easiest one, but at the same time not satisfactory at all. The second one seems unlikely, if we agree that a mass force of *pezetairoi* already existed under Philip. Regardless of controversies over the proper interpretation of Anaximenes (*FGrH* 72 F 4), another passage of Theopompus concerning female foot-prostitutes led by the Athenian general Chares makes it almost certain.<sup>9</sup> If the *pezetairoi* were already a mass army in the mid-340s,<sup>10</sup> we can hardly imagine a restriction of the name of *hetairoi* to a narrow elite only. Thus the most appealing solution might be a dramatic growth in both Macedonian manpower and prosperity in the early 330s. However, it is not easy to imagine how Alexander could enhance the Macedonian cavalry so quickly without becoming famous as a donor of land estates,<sup>11</sup> whereas Philip, who was repeatedly praised as the man who had resettled Macedonians and divided the territory of the kingdom, would have been unable to strengthen this army.

Therefore, we should look for another explanation. My guess is that perhaps the text of Theopompus in Athenaeus is corrupted. Numerals are well known to disappear from the hand-transmitted texts easily and with no trace of corruption.<sup>12</sup> A textual corruption

<sup>7</sup> Cawkwell 1978: 38. An alternative answer by Cawkwell is that *it was the number of the Greek adventurers who had gone to Macedon to share in Philip's largesse, which would have been in new lands*. This is, however, not likely. Theopompus underscores in F 224 that Philip's Companions or Friends were a multi-ethnic band: «εἰ γὰρ τις ἦν ἐν τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν ἢ τοῖς βαρβάροις» φησί «ἀλάσταυρος ἢ θρασὺς τὸν τρόπον, οὗτοι πάντες εἰς Μακεδονίαν ἀθροιζόμενοι πρὸς Φίλιππον ἐταῖροι τοῦ βασιλέως προσηγορεύοντο, where *barbaroi* may well refer to the Macedonians.

<sup>8</sup> Sekunda 2009: 330, where he states that *Alexander III is alleged to have alienated nearly all crown lands to the Companions prior to the Asian campaign* (Plut. *Alex.* 15.3–4). Plutarch's passage may be well an allusion to the second, stage, this time Alexander's, of enhancing the Macedonian cavalry, which perhaps provided 1500 fresh horsemen's estates of Antipater.

<sup>9</sup> ὅς γε περιήγετο στρατευόμενος ἀλχητρίδας καὶ ψαλτρίας καὶ πεζῶς ἐταίρας – *while waging war he led flute-girls, female harpists and female foot-companions* (Athen. 12.43 p. 532 C = *FGrH* 115 F 213 from Book XLV of *Philippica*). Andrew Erskine assumes that *the joke here is that Chares had a footguard of ἐταῖραι* on the basis of his argument that Philip's *pezhetairoi* were an elite army (Erskine 1989, 388). However, this pun introduces a tripartite division of prostitutes in Chares' army, which should reflect some structure in the army having *pezhetairoi*. The "foot hetairai" are introduced as the last, and so occupy the least prestigious place in Chares' female army. This may indicate that Theopompus was not so consistent in depicting *pezhetairoi* as an elite unit, as Erskine and also E. Anson (1985: 246–248) insist. They may still be the bulk of the Macedonian foot-soldiers. Anson and Erskine may overestimate the meaning of *epilektos/apolektos* used to describe *pezhetairoi*, for the use of the term *epilektoi* in the sense of a well-trained mass army as opposed to a simple levée en masse; see Rzepka 2009: 18–30.

<sup>10</sup> Goukowsky (1987: 243–248) argues that *asthetairoi* were a subclass of *phalangitai*, next in rank to *pezhetairoi*, virtually equal to the foot *agema*, and seems not to have appreciated the real meaning of Curtius Rufus 3.9.7 presenting a *taxis* of Amyntas as *peregrini milites* who were *in societatem nuper adsciti*. Philip II used to resettle various peoples in order to merge them into one nation (Iust. 8.6.1). In the case of Amyntas' unit a mass naturalization in Macedonia was meant, and an admission *in societatem* must be equal to making them *hetairoi* of a kind, i.e. *pezhetairoi*.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander was, of course, active in this field, too, as a letter to Philippi and the Kallindoia dedication prove (both texts were re-edited conveniently as Hatzopoulos 1996: nos. 6 and 62).

<sup>12</sup> Robert Develin (1990: 31–45) tried to show that numerals were transmitted in the manuscript tradition with special care, so in manuscripts mistakes in numerals are quite rare. This, however, seems to be in discord

has already been considered by Flower,<sup>13</sup> but his hypothetical figure of 80 would not explain satisfactorily how the text had been corrupted.

If we look closer at the crucial sentence in *FGrH* 115 F 225b, we must notice that the number of *hetairoi* is exactly one thousand less than the actual Macedonian mounted force in the army of Alexander (800 + 1000 = 1800). I would pursue the hypothesis that we should add the numeral *thousand* in the phrase *though these companions numbered at the time not more than eight hundred*. Thus we would obtain:

οὐ πλείοναζ ὄνταζ κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν χρόνον <χιλίωv> ὀκτακοσίωv.

The possible loss of χιλίωv from our manuscripts may be not so difficult to explain if we remember that the preceding word was χρόνον, which begins and ends with the same letters as χιλίωv (χ, ν). Since from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD onwards the letters ο and ω may have been pronounced in the same way,<sup>14</sup> the possibility that a copier lost one χ-word after another χ-word, both ending with οv/ωv, is even more appealing.

According to this suggestion Alexander would in Asia have had the same number of Companion cavalry as his father in the last year before Chaeronea.<sup>15</sup> The 1500 cavalrymen left to Antipater might not have been included in Theopompus' figures because they had not been elite soldiers, as were 1800 people in Alexander's army. It is obvious that a cavalryman's military education demanded much more time than a footman's training, and perhaps, 1500 horse of Antipater were Alexander's addition to Philip's army. During Alexander's campaign the Macedonians were unable to muster cavalry in the ideal 1:10 proportion to infantry,<sup>16</sup> and this shows that – contrary to popular opinion – the Macedonian cavalry lacked manpower, and that this army was always developed when possibilities appeared. It is possible, therefore, that the number of Alexander's Macedonian cavalry was reflected in the description of *hetairoi/philoi* in Theopompus.

These premises may perhaps for many be insufficient to prove that we should conjecture Philip's 800 *hetairoi* in Theopompus to 1800. However, this solution seems worth considering, and as such is proposed to the scholarly community.

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with the opinions of most modern students of textual criticism and with what the ancient Greeks themselves thought about textual corruption of numerals; see Renehan 1969, 58.

<sup>13</sup> See n. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Blass 1890: 37; Sturtevant 1940: 47 (stressing that the pace of changes towards the identical pronunciation of both vowels varied depending on the region of the Greek world).

<sup>15</sup> We should also note that if there were just 800 *hetairoi* of Philip with estates more valuable than estates of 10,000 Greeks possessing the richest soils, the financial resources of an average Companion would be 12.5 times greater than those of the wealthy Greeks of that time. This is rather unbelievable, when we consider that usually horsemen were paid between two and three times better than heavy or elite infantrymen – there is no difference between mercenary armies and citizen ones in this respect (see the estimates of *sitarchiai*, Launey 1949, 757). The Hellenistic data of Launey cannot be misleading for the Late Classical period). The proportion of financial resources available to Philip's cavalrymen and average Greek hoplites, which we reach by assuming 1800 *hetairoi*, is far more likely, if still unusually high.

<sup>16</sup> Rzepka 2008: 52–53.

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