РЕЛИГИЯ И КУЛЬТУРА
RELIGION AND CULTURE

Hoplitodromos — the category of ancient Greek athletics

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Abstract. The purpose of the study is to find out whether the hoplitodromos, or hoplite race, was more of a military or sporting event, whether the nature of this agon was associated with its late introduction into the program of the Panhellenic games, and whether the rules for its organization differed in Panhellenic and local competitions. On the basis of written sources and data from Attic vase painting, the author shows that there were different types of weapons of the participants in the run — heavy and light, and also that over time the "full" weapons of the hoplite — helmet, greaves, shield — change, retaining only the shield. Despite the widespread opinion in the scientific literature that the hoplitodromos belonged to "military" competitions, the author comes to the conclusion that the nature of the run was determined by the type of games. And if at local games this agon was often associated with the *aition* of the festival, for example, with the military exploits of Athena on Panathenaia or the anniversary of the Battle of Plataea on Eleutheria, then at Panhellenic competitions, such as the Olympic Games, the military nature of the run was transformed into a reconstruction, thereby acquiring the nature of an entertaining spectacle.

Keywords: sprint race, double-stadion race, long-distance foot-race, Olympic Games, Pythian Games, Great Panathenaia, Philostratus

Гоплитодромос —
категория древнегреческой атлетики

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Аннотация. Цель исследования — выяснить, был ли гоплитодромос, или бег го-
плитов, в большей степени военным или спортивным мероприятием, связан
ли характер этого агона с его поздним введением в программу панэллинских игр
и различались ли правила его организация на панэллинских и местных состязани-
ях. На основе письменных источников и данных аттической вазописи автор пока-
зывает, что существовали разные типы вооружения участников бега — тяжелый
и легкий, а также что со временем «полное» вооружение гоплита — шлем, поножи,
щит — изменяется, сохранив только щит. Несмотря на распространенное в научной
литературе мнение, что гоплитодромос относился к «военным» состязаниям, автор
приходит к выводу, что характер бега определялся типом игр. И если на местных
играх этот агон часто был связан с *aition* праздника, например, с военными подви-
гами Афины на Панафинеях или годовщиной битвы при Платеях на Элевтериях,
то на панэллинских состязаниях, таких как Олимпийские игры, военный характер
бега трансформировался в реконструкцию, тем самым приобретя характер занима-
тельного зрелища.

Ключевые слова: короткий бег, двойной бег, длинный бег, Олимпийские игры,
Пифийские игры, Великие Панафинеи, Филострат

Introduction

Hoplitodromos, or race in armor hoplites (ὁπλιτῶν δρόμος) was one of the
popular contests in the Panhellenic and local games of ancient Greece (Paus.
III.14.3; Phil. Gym. 7; Artemidor. I.63; Plut. Quaest. Symp. II.5; Heliod. Aeth.
IV). It should be noted that running competitions were an integral part of the
athletic program of many festivals. Pausanias, in the story of the Olympic
Games program formation, begins it with different types of running. The first

competition at the Olympic Games was a "sprint" race (*stadion*) (776 BC), at the 14th Olympiad (724 BC) a "double-stadion" race (*diaulos*) was added, and at the 15th Olympiad (720 BC) — "long-distance" foot-race (*dolichos*) (Paus. V.8.6-7). The race in armor was the last competition in the Gymnic Agon of the Olympic Games; it was introduced into the program at the 65th Olympiad (520 BC) (Paus. V.8.30). Since the program of the Olympic Games subsequently became the basis of many Panhellenic and local festivals, it is not an exaggeration to say that running competitions were part of most of them.

Running competitions are mentioned in the heroic epic — at funeral games of Patroklos (Hom. Il. XXIII. 740–796), at the funeral games of king Amarinka (Nom. Il. XXIII. 635), at games arranged by Alcinous the king of the Phaiaiae (Nom. Od. VIII. 103; 120–125). However, early sources never mention running in armour. Was it part of military training or was it just a sports event? Did the organisation of this agon at the Panhellenic games differ from the rules of the local games? What is the reason for the late introduction of race in armor in the Olympics? In the article we will try to answer these questions.

According to Pausanias, the race in armor hoplites was included in the program of the Olympic Games at the 65th Olympiad; it was won by Damaretus of Heraea (Paus. V.8.30) [1]. Noteworthy is the fact that the inclusion of hoplitodromos in 520 BC was a relatively late addition to the program, almost 100 years after the rest of the Gymnic Agon was established, and almost 200 years after the introduction of the last race [1. P. 28; 2. 32]. The program of the Gymnic Agon, in addition to the three types of running, included pentathlon and wrestling (18th Olympiad — 708 BC), boxing (23rd Olympiad — 688 BC) and pankration (33rd Olympiad — 648 BC) (Paus. V. 8.7-8; VI.24.1). M. Golden notes that after the introduction of the race in armor hoplites into the Olympic Games program in 520 BC it remained virtually unchanged for almost 900 years [3. P. 144].

At the Pythian Games, the second most important Panhellenic games after the Olympics, musical competitions formed the basis of the program. However, from 586 BC influenced by the Olympic Games popularity, athletic and horse competitions were added to the Pythian Games program. The Gymnic Agon of the Pythian Games included three types of running (sprint, double-stadion and long-distance foot-race), already known from the Olympic Games, pentathlon and combat sports (wrestling, boxing and pankration) [4. P. 177]. The race in armor hoplites was introduced into the program of the Pythian Games only in 498 BC, i.e. as well as at the Olympic Games, later than other competitions (Paus. X.7.3) [5. P. 272; 6. P. 84; 7. C. 121]. The first winner of the Pythian

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[1] Damaretus repeated his success and became the first Olympic champion to win the hoplitodromos twice at the Olympic Games. Pausanias writes of him as the most famous athlete of Arcadia (Paus. V.8.10; VI.10.4; VIII.26.2; IG II^2 2326).

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Games in armored race was Timenetus of Phliuntus. He won this race five Olympiads after the victory of Damaretus of Heraea (Paus. X.7.3) [6. P. 84].

The hoplitodromos, though, before it appeared in the Panhellenic games program, was known at the local games. Race in armor was a popular subject in vase painting, although, as E. Gardiner notes that scenes with running warriors were not always related to the participants in the race [8. P. 286]. However, the depiction of race in armor hoplites on prize Panathenaic amphorae suggests that it was part of the program of the Panathenaic Games in Athens already in the 2nd half of sixth century BC. J. Shear admits that the race in armor on the Great Panathenaic was introduced in 566 BC, in the year of the reorganisation of the festival, turning it into a four-year celebration of the Great Panathenaia, following the model of the Olympic Games, and increasing its program primarily due to the Gymnic Agon expansion [5. P. 272; 9. S. 60].

Race in armor
at the Olympic Games

Some scientists suggest that the hoplitodromos completed the program of events at the Olympic Games [6. P. 85; 10. P. 83; 11. P. 79]. At the same time, S. Miller notes that he was not able to find in the sources any data that would confirm of the fact that the hoplite race in the Olympic Games program were the last [2. P. 37]. The competition was separated from other types of running in the program, and therefore from the sports facilities common to all running events. M. Golden suggests that this position of race in armor is explained by the fact that this event was included in the Olympic program later than all the others [6. P. 85]. E. Gardiner paid attention that in the vase painting the race in armor hoplites was often placed together with scenes of boxing and pankration, that is why he concluded that the race followed these competitions [8. P. 286]. If we accept his point of view, then it means that combat sports (wrestling, boxing and pankration) should have been completed before sunset in order to leave time for the hoplite race. D. Potter notes that since the sunrise in Greece in August[2] starts at 6.30, and the sunset at 20.30, then there should have been just enough time to hold all the competitions of that day. D. Potter gives an example of a case of the second century AD, when the organizers stopped the combat in pankration in a draw, because evening stars had already appeared in the sky. This could mean that the combat was stopped, because the final race hoplites was to take place (SIG[3] 1073 54, 24) [11. P. 81]. In the lists of Panathenaic prizes of the second

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[2] The Olympic Games were held every four years, on the first full moon after the summer solstice, which fell on the summer months of Apollonius and Parthenius according to the Elis calendar.

century BC (IG II² 2313; IG II² 2314 + SEG XLI 114; IG II² 2314+ SEG XLI 114; SEG XLI 115; IG II² 2316) competitions of athletes in three age groups[3] are listed — running, pentathlon, wrestling, boxing and pankration; however, the "men's" program differed from the young athletes' one as it ended with a race in armor. Thus, this type of running at the Panathenaic Games was after combat sports and was the last among athletic competitions. J. Shear says that the Gymnic Agon of the Great Panathenaia was being formed mainly in the 2nd half of sixth century BC — 1st half of fifth century BC and, apparently, remained practically unchanged [13. P. 181]. It is possible that the same position of race in armor hoplites was fixed in the program of the Olympic Games.

Organisation
of armored hoplites race

Before 520 BC only three types of races were known at the Olympic Games — sprint race, double-stadion race and long-distance foot-race. The starting line at Olympia was designed for 20 runners and was marked with special grooves. Athletes took a position "foot to foot" at the start-line in front of the running tracks, separated from each other by stone pillars. In the sprint race, the athletes ran a distance of 1 stadium along straight paths that were marked with lime; the width of the tracks could vary from 88 to 92 cm. The distance of the double-stadion consisted of 2 stadia. Since there were no oval tracks in Olympia, the athletes ran along a straight track, up to a pillar that marked the distance of 1 stadium. Participants of the *diaulos* had to go around the turning pillar counterclockwise and run back along the parallel track [2. P. 34; 6. P. 51–52; 14. C. 77–79]. S. Miller notes that each runner made a turn around an individual pillar [2. P. 46–47]. Thus, the *diaulos* consisted, as it were, of two segments of the track separated by a turning pillar. In a long-distance foot-race (*dolichos*), the distance of which could be from 12 to 20 stadia, all runners made a turn around one pillar [2. P. 47; 15. P. 27]. S. Miller notes that if the race in armor at the Olympic Games was 2 stadia long, like a *diaulos* (Paus. V. 8. 30), then perhaps the hoplites also ran along separate tracks, and each turned at his pillar [2. P. 46–47].

All running competitions at Panhellenic and local games were held according to the same rules, that cannot be said about the hoplite race, the order of which could differ from each other at games in different cities. Thus, there were many varieties of race in armor, which differed from each

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[3] The athletes in the Panathenaic Games competed in three age groups: boys (παῖδες), "beardless" youths (ἀγένειοι) and men (ἄνδρες) [12].

other both in distance and in the armament of hoplites, and in the rules of the races [8. P. 286; 6. P. 84].

The length of the running track for armored hoplites was not the same in different games. At the Olympic Games (Paus. II.11.8) and at the Great Panathenaia (Aristoph. Av. 291; schol. Aristoph. Av. 291–292) it was 2 stadia, as in a diaulos, while at the Nemean Games it was 4 stadia (Phil. Gym. 8; 24) [16. P. 214]. In the program of the Olympic and Pythian Games there was no race for 4 stadia, but in the program of the Nemean and Isthmian Games, as well as the Great Panathenaia, there was a so-called "*hippos*" race of 4 stadia long (Paus. VI.16.4). The longest armored race was at the festival of Eleutheria in Plataea (Boeotia), which was held every four years in August-September on the anniversary of the Battle of Plataea (479 BC). Participants in the race in armor had to run a distance of 15 stadia from the prize set up in honour of the victory (Paus. IX.2.6; Phil. Gym. 8; 24) [6. P. 51–52; 8. P. 286; 11. P. 75]. Philostratus believed that the length of the hoplite race in Plataea could be explained by preparations for war (Phil. Gym. 8), but D. Potter believes that this is only Philostratus's assumption [11. P. 76]. Thus, the length of the hoplite race at the Panhellenic and local games varied from 2 to 15 stadia.

Besides, it is worth noting that the accuracy of the distance in running disciplines, which is typical for modern sports, did not exist in antiquity. The distance measurement of the running tracks varied from game to game as stadium, which was a Greek measure of length, in Olympia was equal to 192.28 m, in Delphi — 177.5 m, in Nemea — 178 m, in Corinth — 165 m, in Athens — 177.6 m [6. P. 157–158; 15. P. 27]. Thus, the length of the armed hoplites race at different games could differ from each other not only in distance, but also in its length, which at the Olympic Games was about 384 m, at the Pythian Games and the Great Panathenaia — approximately 355 m, and at the Nemean Games — 712 m.

Hoplite race participant's armament

Similarly, depending on the time and games, the armament of the runner in armor also changed. It should be noted that in the running disciplines the athletes competed naked. According to Pausanias, runners first competed in loincloths, however, from the 15th Olympiad (720 BC) they began to compete naked. Pausanias attributes this tradition to Orsippus of Megara (Paus. I. 44, 1). All other athletes followed his example.

The participants of the race in armour hoplite competed naked, as well as in armour, which consisted of a helmet, shield and greaves [1. P. 28; 15. P. 27; 16. P. 214]. The first winner of the race in armour hoplites, Damaretus of Heraea, was given a statue in Olympia with a shield, a helmet on his head and greaves on his legs

(Paus. VI.10.4). On Panathenaic prize amphorae, middle sixth century BC, we see athletes in the "full armament" of hoplitodrome [5. P. 271; 522]. An amphora found on the Acropolis (c. 550–540 BC) depicts three men wearing helmets, greaves and with shields who are running to the left (Nation. Museum, Athens, Akropolis 921: Bentz 6.011). On the second amphora, dated 540–530 BC, there are fragments of images of three hoplites in helmets and greaves, with shields in their hands, running to the left (J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 81.AE.2Q3 A: Bentz 6.012) [5. P. 271].

However, over the years, the armament of the participants of the race in armor has changed. If, at first, the racers performed in a helmet, greaves and with round shields (Paus. V.12.8; VI.10.4), then later the greaves disappeared from the "uniform" of the hoplitodromos [8. P. 287; 16. P. 214]. E. Gardiner notes that before 520 BC the image of greaves in the race of hoplites in the vase painting was not obligatory, but after 520 BC they became a permanent element of the armament of the hoplitodromos. However, after 450 BC greaves disappeared completely [8. P. 287–288]. It is possible that in early competitions at local games, the armament of athletes could vary, but after 520 BC, i.e. after the introduction of armoured race at the Olympics, they were required to wear a helmet, shield, and greaves on their feet. However, after 450 BC the rules were changed and the athletes took off their greaves. Pausanias states that contemporary athletes ran only with helmets (Paus. VI.10.4).

The sources have no information whether the weapons for hoplites race were standard. S. Miller believes that the helmets could be made according to the size of the heads of the participants [2. P. 32]. As for the shields, Pausanias mentions twenty-five shields that were kept in the temple of Zeus at Olympia for the participants in the race (Paus. V.12.8; VI.10.4). Were the shields in different games of the same size and weight? The reference to Pausanias, as well as depictions of hoplitodromos shields on vases that had the same decoration or shape, suggest that the shields were standard. On the other hand, the change in the colour of the shields and the images on them can be explained both by the artist's manner and by the differences in the shields [2. P. 33].

The fact that the participants of the hoplitodromos never carried weapons — neither a spear nor a sword is of particular interest [2. P. 29; 16. P. 214]. E. Gardiner notes that running in armor in his hands, with a spear or sword, could be dangerous for athletes. He added that in vase paintings there were images of hoplites armed in this way, following one another, and that they were often mistaken for participants in the race, while it seems more reasonable to consider them simply as part of military processions [8. P. 288–289].

Also, the armament of the hoplitodromos could vary in different games. Philostratus wrote that the heaviest weapons of the athletes were at the festival of Eleutheria at Plataea in Boeotia because of the length of the distance and because runners wore heavier armour (Phil. Gym. 8). Plato in his "Laws" mentions different

types of weapons of participants in the run in armor — both heavily armed and lightly armed, as necessary for the preparation of a citizen in an ideal state (Plat. Leg. 833a-c). However, it is obvious that over time, the armament of the hoplitodrome became lighter — a helmet and a shield [6. P. 84].

In addition, there apparently could be some peculiarities in the organisation of the hoplite race. Philostratus separates race in armor hoplites at Eleutheria in Plataea partly due to the length of the distance, partly due to heavy armor, and partly due to the rule, according to which any participant, "who had already received the laurels of the winner, if he was going to continue to participate in the competition, had to present guarantors for his body, because in case of defeat, death expected him" (Phil. Gym. 8). E. Gardiner accuses Philostratus of being too inclined to accept without evidence information about the "Spartan severity of Greek athletics", which in his time was fashionable to exaggerate. E. Gardiner suggested that the rule referred to by Philostratus could mean that no previous winner was allowed to compete for the second time (Phil. Gym. 8; cf.: 24) [8. 286–287].

As in all other competitions held at the stadium, the participants in the hoplite race in armor were naked. The images of runners in vase painting emphasize their powerful legs and developed upper body (Phil. Gym. 8; Luc. Cal. 12) [11. P. 76]. Philostratus mentioned that an armored racer should have well developed shoulders; he must be stronger than the sprinters (Phil. Gym. 33). D. Potter notes that unlike the first three types of running, hoplitodromos was primarily an endurance competition [11. P. 75].

Sport or military training?

In the scientific literature, the question of Greek athletics is often raised — what is the reason for such a late introduction of race in armor into the program of the Olympic Games. The only source is the treatise of Philostratus "*Gymnastikos*", which gives such an explanation: "I have a different point of view about the origin of running in full armor: I argue that it was established for military purposes, but went into sports in order to announce the beginning of the war: the shield meant that the truce was over and we had to take up arms. And if you listen attentively to the herald, you will hear that he always announces that the manager of the competition stops the competition, and the trumpet means the arrival of Enialius and calls the young men to arms. This call also commands to take away the oil somewhere and not to anoint yourself with it anymore" (Phil. Gym. 7).

D. Romano believes that if we accept the statement of Philostratus that the hoplite race was introduced due to the growing hostility during sports games in different places (Phil. Gym. 7), then it can be assumed that the

organizers of the Olympic Games were aware of local political difficulties and tried to respond to a situation reminiscent of the earliest stages of the organization of the Olympic Games, associated with the establishment of *ekecheiria* [16. P. 218]. E. Gardiner argued that hoplitodromos is a military competition, and its introduction was an attempt to restore the practical nature of athletics, which was lost over time, and which Plato writes about, proposing to introduce running in heavy and light armor in his ideal state (Plat. Leg. 833a-c.). Therefore, in the program of the Olympic Games, hoplite running was a kind of "mixed type of athletics", which combined athletics and preserved the value of military training [9. 286]. D. Potter believes that there were two competitions in the program of the Olympic Games that could be classified as "military" — this is the race in armor hoplites and *kalpa*. However, in his opinion, they should rather be attributed to military reconstructions. According to D. Potter, the organizers of the Olympic Games introduced these competitions into the program of the games in order to make it more interesting and spectacular for the audience [11. P. 75].

S. Miller rightly notes that the interpretation of Greek athletics as preparation for war is possible, but it contradicts a clear distinction between the athletics of the Olympic Games and the athletics of local games. Whereas the athletics of the Panhellenic games, such as the Olympics, were more for the individual athlete, the athletics of the local games were more "civilian" in nature, i.e. to a greater extent had to meet the requirements of policies in the preparation of its citizens. The physical preparation of the athletes was common to both Panhellenic and local games, but there was no element in the Olympic Games program that could be called military (cf.: Eur. Autolyk. fr. 282). Therefore, local games were often of a "military" nature, which was not the case in Olympia, which, on the contrary, positioned itself as a "zone of peace" during the games [2. P. 29; cf.: 17].

Race in armor hoplites
at the Great Panathenaia

S. Miller's conclusion has great interest, especially in the context with the Great Panathenaic program. The dating of two early prize Panathenaia amphorae[4] allows J. Shear to suggest that the race in armor hoplites was part of the Great Panathenaia program middle of the sixth century BC, and it is possible that it was introduced in 566 BC, after the reorganisation of the festival, which meant turning it into a four-year Great Panathenaia and expanding the program of the

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[4] National Museum, Athens, Akropolis 921: Bentz 6.011–550–540 BC; J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, 81.AE.2Q3 A: Bentz 6.012–540–530 BC.

Gymnic Agon (Euseb. Chron. Ol. 53. 3 –4) [5. P. 271–272]. After 566 BC the new program of the Panathenaic Games included the following competitions for athletes of the older age group (*andres*): a sprint race, possibly a double-stadion race and a pentathlon, as well as a four-horse chariot race, an *apena*, and almost certainly an apobatic race. Wrestling, boxing, the long distance race (*dolichos*) and the hoplite race were probably also included around this time [5. P. 376]. In the Panathenaic Games, race in armour hoplite consisted of 2 stadia and only for the older age group of athletes — *andres* (Aristoph. Av. 291–292; schol. Aristoph. Av. 292a, c). Since the participants of the hoplitodromos were armed, as it was indicated by the image of athletes on the early Panathenaic prize amphoras, such a competition fully corresponded to the military nature of the Panathenaic festival [17].

The Great Panathenaia program included both athletic and equestrian events, as well as musical contests ones following the model of the Olympic and Pythian Games. This made it possible to attract to the Panatheniac Games non-Athenians, who could be sure that the type of competition they took part in the Panhellenic or local games would also be included in the program of the Athenian festival. But at the Great Panathenaia there were also competitions where only the Athenians could take part, for example, the *apobates* or team competitions. They were of a military nature and were dedicated to Athena's victories over her enemies [17]. It is interesting the hoplitodromos was probably the only Panathenaic military contest where non-Athenians were allowed to participate. The first known winner of the race in armor hoplites at the Great Panathenaia was the famous Thessalus from Corinth. The winner 504 BC (probably in *diaulos*), Thessalus became the won of the Panathenaic Games in the hoplitodromos, sprint race and double-stadion race at the same festival. His victory may be dated to either 506/5 BC or 498/7 BC (Pind. Ol. XIII.35–40; schol. Pind. Ol. XIII.37–38) [5. P. 532].

If J. Shear's reconstruction of the Great Panathenaic program is correct, then it can be concluded that some competitions were held in Panathenaia earlier than in the Panhellenic games, including hoplitodromos[5]. The race in armour hoplites was part of the Athenian program even before it was included in the Olympic Games program in 520 BC and in the Pythian Games program in 498 BC. It allows to suggest that the Great Panathenaic program influenced the programs of the two most important and prestigious Panhellenic games — the Olympic and Pythian. On the one hand, this is an evidence that the Great Panathenaic is gradually turning from a local festival into an event of general Greek significance, which attracted athletes and spectators from outside Athens and Attica. On the other hand, this explains the relatively late inclusion of the armored hoplite race in the program of the Panhellenic Games.

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[5] In addition the race in armor, there were competitions of *kitharoidoi* and *apene*.

Conclusion

Thus, at local festivals, such as the Great Panathenaia in Athens, or the Eleutheria in Plataea, the "military" character of the games is preserved. Panathenaia were dedicated to Athena, the patron goddess of the polis, who guarded it from the enemies. On the main day of the Panathenaic festival, people of the polis presented the goddess with a gift of peplos, embroidered with scenes of Athena's victories over the giants. Whereas Eleutheria was organised on the occasion of the great victory of the Greeks over the Persians at Plataea, as a commemoration of the victory in the war. It is possible that the race in armor hoplites was the most "heavy" on this festival as it was a form of military training in the war with the Persians. While the "military" nature of the competitions was never emphasized at the Olympic Games, moreover, during the games, the custom of the sacred truce was strictly observed, which makes it impossible to assume that the race was included in the program of the games as a "military" agon. The popularity of race in armour in the fifth century BC can be partly explained by the spirit of military enthusiasm that revived athletics after the Greco-Persian wars, and partly due to its attractiveness as a spectacle.

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