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# Performing the Past: Salamis, Naval Contests and the Athenian *Ephebeia*

Zahra Newby

## Abstract

A number of ephebic reliefs displayed in Athens during the late 1st to 3rd centuries AD feature references to a *naumachia* in either words or images. This article explores the history to these reliefs by looking at the roles played by Athenian ephebes in naval displays during the late Hellenistic period, and at the changes which occurred in both terminology and display under the Roman Empire. In both the late Hellenistic and the Roman period there is a clear association made between naval activities and the memory of the battle of Salamis in 480 BC. The rituals performed by the Athenian ephebes during festivals and at sites associated with this famous sea-battle ensured its continued remembrance throughout this period. Yet we also find an increased emphasis on the martial nature of the ephebes' activities, through use of the term *naumachia*, during the Roman period, which made the link to Salamis increasingly specific, perhaps in relation to the sponsorship and interests of Roman emperors.

*Keywords:* ephebeia, festivals, naumachia, Salamis, Athens, Persian Wars

## 1. Introduction

One of the concerns of this volume is the way in which cities and individuals adopted various strategies to keep alive the memory of the past in the Roman period. Almost as soon as they had ended, the Persian Wars cast a long and glorious shadow. As a symbol of Greece's great fight against the barbarian, the Persian wars acted as an example of Panhellenic unity and co-operation, though this memory could also be manipulated to create divisions and hierarchies between individual Greek city-states. In this article I examine the inscriptions and reliefs set up to commemorate the activities of Athenian ephebes, to explore one aspect of the ways in which the enduring legacy of the Persian Wars was experienced and re-performed from the Hellenistic to Roman periods.

The Persian Wars are a *leitmotif* in Greek history, cropping up repeatedly in cultural discourse from the 5th century BC well into the late Roman period. The memory of the famous victories in which the Greeks came together to defeat the barbarian Persians was kept alive through both verbal and visual means, recorded in speeches and histories, and

recalled through physical monuments.<sup>1</sup> They could also be used for a variety of purposes, both to draw together the Greek city states by appealing to the common Panhellenic cause, but also to enhance the reputation of individual poleis through reference to victories in which they had played the major role, such as Thermopylae for the Spartans, or Salamis and Marathon for the Athenians. In this article I investigate the resonance of Athens' naval victory at Salamis in 480 BC as it was experienced and re-performed through the activities of the Athenian ephebes. While there may have been continuity of practice between these periods, the commemoration of ephebic actions clusters around two specific periods, the late 2nd century BC, and the late 1st to early 3rd centuries AD.

In a paper on the mechanisms of memory in Ancient Greece, Simon Price distinguished two key ways in which memories were constructed, which he termed 'Inscribed Memory (objects and texts), and also performative Embodied Memory (ritual and other formalized behaviour)' (Price 2012, 17). In this article I wish to explore how different forms of remembering worked together, by examining the symbiotic relationship between monuments, words and ritual actions in the context of memories of Athens' victories against the Persians. I am interested in thinking about how recalling the past can help to shape social identities in the present.<sup>2</sup> Rather than adopting one particular theoretical approach to this, I seek to explore the material with the following questions in mind: how did the actions of the Athenian ephebes keep the memory of the past alive, and whose interests did this serve? The self-image of the ephebes and the wealthy families they came from, a wider sense of communal civic identity, and the interests and enthusiasms of external powers are all factors at play here. Through examination of the activities of the Athenian ephebes we can see how rituals, monuments and evocative places helped to keep alive the memory of Athens' military past, and re-embody her victories in the performances of the gilded youth of the city.

Permanent physical memorials for the battles at Marathon and Salamis seem to have been set up in the course of the 5th century BC and are recorded in oratorical texts from the 4th century BC where they serve as evidence of Athens' past prowess (West 1969; Rabe 2008, 101-110). Xenophon (Xen. *An.* 3.2.13) cites the

trophies as proofs (*tekmeria*) of the victories which the Athenians had won over Xerxes by both land and sea, but also cites the freedom which the city enjoys as the chief sign of these victories. In Plato's *Menexenus* (Plat. *Menex.* 245a) the trophies at Marathon, Salamis and Plataea seem to hold a didactic function, since we are told that the Athenians refrained from giving direct aid to the Persians against the Spartans (in the 390s BC), lest they bring shame upon these trophies. The value of the victory at Salamis as a model to live up to is also expressed in an inscription commemorating a soldier killed fighting at Salamis c. 250 BC, who is said to recall the excellence of the ancestors who slayed the Persians (Moretti 1967, 50-51, no. 24). In his account of the Syracusan campaign at the end of the 5th century BC, the 1st-century BC historian Diodorus Siculus also suggests that the Athenian commander, Nicias, spurred on his troops by reminding them of the trophies erected at Salamis and urging them not to betray the reputation of their fatherland (13.15.2). These victories were clearly used as a paradigm of courageous behaviour, and served to encourage emulation of this in the current generation.<sup>3</sup>

The enduring importance of Athens' Persian war history, and especially her naval victories, in the Roman period can be seen in the works of Philostratus, who presents the sage Apollonius of Tyana rebuking the Athenians for dancing away their reputation as the victors of Salamis (Philostr. *VA* 4.21). In the *Lives of the sophists* (Philostr. *VS* 2.9, 584) Philostratus also records a speech by Aelius Aristides in the mid-2nd century AD on the theme 'Isocrates tries to wean Athens from the sea'. These texts suggest that Athens' naval victories, as well as the land victory at Marathon, were still keenly remembered in the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.<sup>4</sup> As we shall see, this naval heritage is evoked in the texts and monuments commemorating the activities of the Athenian ephebes from the late 3rd century BC until the 3rd century AD, but also undergoes important changes of emphasis. Both continuity and change can be seen in the strategies by which the Athenian ephebes remembered their past.

## 2. Celebrating the Persian Wars in the Hellenistic ephebeia

The Athenian ephebeia is often seen as experiencing its peak in the 4th century BC, during which it lasted for two

1 Jung 2006; see Loraux 1986, esp. 155-171, on funerary orations; West 1969, Hölscher 1998, 163-169 and Rabe 2008, 101-110 on victory monuments. On memorials to the Athenian war dead more generally see Stupperich 1977; Low 2010 and Arrington 2015. For discussion of the use made of the Persian wars in the Roman period see Spawforth 1994 and 2012, 103-141; Alcock 2002, 74-86.

2 For a discussion of the theoretical approaches to this question, and the issues at stake, see Alcock 2002, 1-35, especially 1, n. 1 on the theories of Jan Assmann and others.

3 Compare Roller 2004 on the use of monuments and narratives to encourage emulation of famous *exempla* in a Roman context.

4 On the role Marathon played in discourses of the past during this period see Jung 2006, 205-224; Gomez 2013; Bowie 2013 and Athanassaki 2016. I propose to return to the potential tensions between Athenian commemorations of Marathon and Salamis in a future paper.

years and involved the majority of the city's youths, paid for at public expense. In contrast, the Hellenistic epebeia has been viewed in terms of decline (Pélékidis 1962, 155-182). Reforms at the start of the 3rd century made participation voluntary, reduced the term to one year, and gave epebes the responsibility for paying for their own armour. These changes seem to have led to a drastic reduction in the size of the epebeia from around 600 youths per year in the 4th century to a low of c. 20-60 per year from 229-167 BC, and can also be associated with an oligarchization of the institution (Perrin-Saminadayar 2007, 31-58). While the numbers may have been small, however, the institution itself gained increased visibility at this time. A number of lengthy epigraphic texts were set up in the Athenian agora during the course of the 3rd and 2nd centuries at the instigation of the demos, publicly praising the epebes and their instructors. These show that while the epebes continued to train in military exercises they also played a visible role in the religious and civic life of the city, marching in religious processions and attending meetings of the assembly (Perrin-Saminadayar 2007, 50-52).<sup>5</sup> Prosopographic analysis also suggests that a high proportion of the epebes came from notable families, and that many went on to hold a political career after their service in the epebeia (Perrin-Saminadayar 2007, 63-89). In the course of the 2nd century the epebeia was also opened up to youths from non-Athenian families, attested as *xenoi*, and later *epengraphoi*, on epebic decrees from 123/2 onwards, and leading to a corresponding increase in the overall number of epebes (Perrin-Saminadayar 2007, 248-253).

Amongst their many religious duties were a number of sacrifices and processions in honour of Athens' ancient war dead. The epebic decree in honour of the epebes of 123/2 BC (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1006, lines 22-23) praises them for running a race in armour from the *polyandrion* (the communal tomb in the Cerameicus) at some point during the Epitaphia festival; they also paraded in armour both at this festival and at the Theseia. Literary references to an *agon* commemorating the war dead go back to the 4th century BC (*Lys.* 2.80; Pl. *Menex.* 249b), while vases labelled as 'prizes at the games for those killed in the war' dating to the 5th century suggest that these games had a long history (Vanderpool 1969).<sup>6</sup> A few lines later the same epebic decree also praises the epebes for visiting the tomb at Marathon to offer a crown and a sacrifice in honour of those who had died in the war for freedom (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1006, lines 26-27). It is within this wider context of honouring the warriors of the past, as well as showcas-

ing their own military readiness, that we should see the actions discussed below.

During the late Hellenistic period Athenian epebes were extensively involved in activities on the island of Salamis in honour of the hero Ajax, and in memory of the famous naval battle here. Ajax's cult seems to have had a long history on the island; according to Herodotus the Athenians had called on him for help in the battle of Salamis (*Hdt.* 8.64.2) and it is likely that a festival in his honour was celebrated after the victory here, if not before (Mikalson 1998, 184). This festival was probably revived after the return of Salamis, along with other possessions, to Athenian ownership in 229 BC though the actions of Diogenes, who hitherto had acted as Macedonian governor of Attica. For his role in securing Athens' freedom Diogenes was honoured as a benefactor, and the epebes seem to have played an important role in perpetuating his memory. A new 'Diogeneion' gymnasium in which the epebes trained was named after him, while decrees from the end of the 2nd century BC show that the epebes celebrated a festival named after him and offered sacrifices to him (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1011, lines 14-15; 1028, lines 23-24; 1029, line 14; Habicht 1997, 179-180).

A decree of 214/3 BC, honouring the epebes of the previous year, gives us a brief glimpse of ritual activities taking place on Salamis, referring to the epebes' presence on Salamis, a procession in honour of Democratia, a long race in honour of the eponymous hero, and a fragmentary reference restored as an allusion to a *hamilla*, or contest (*SEG* 29.116, lines 17-21). Much fuller references come around a century later, in a series of decrees dating to the years from 127/6 to 96/5 BC.<sup>7</sup>

These decrees list a variety of activities, though not all in the same order or with the same details. *SEG* 15.104, lines 21-23, of 127/6 BC (T25) refers to the epebes making a voyage to Salamis for the contest of the Aianteia, sacrificing to Zeus of the Trophy, sacrificing to Ajax and Asclepius and running a torch race. A fragmentary word starting alpha mu at l. 132 in the decree honouring the epebes for their activities on Salamis is restored as a reference to a contest of the boats, ἄμ[ιλλαν τοῖς πλοίοις, but more concrete references to naval contests appear a few years later. A number of decrees describe the epebes participating in the festivals Mounichia, Diisoteria and Aianteia, which all took place in the vicinity of Mounichia and Salamis.

*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1006 + 1031 is dated to 122/1 BC (T26) and describes the epebes of the previous year. At lines 28-32 their activities at Salamis and Mounichia are described:

5 On the epebes' military role, see Kennell 2009b.

6 Compare Diod. Sic. 11.33.3, associating the *epitaphios agon* with the aftermath of the Persian Wars.

7 Perrin-Saminadayar 2007, 199-248 collects the epigraphic evidence, providing texts and translations for many, though not all. I follow his dates here and indicate his catalogue numbers by T, but follow the texts as given in *IG II<sup>2</sup>*.

ἀνέπλευσαν δ[ὲ καὶ] ἐπὶ τρόπαιον καὶ ἔθυσαν τῶι  
 Διὶ τῶι Τρο- | [πα]ίῳ καὶ τῆι πομπῇ τῶν μεγάλων  
 θεῶν ἐποίησαντο τ[ῶν πλοίων τὴν ἄμιλλαν· π]  
 ερίεπλευσαν δὲ καὶ [τοῖς Μου]νιχίοις εἰς τὸν λιμένα  
 τὸν ἐμ Μου- | [νικίαι ἀμ]ιλλώ[μεν]οι. ὁμ[ο]ίως δὲ  
 καὶ τοῖς Διῖσωτηρίοι[ς]· ἀπ[έ]πλευσαν δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ  
 τὰ Αἰ[άν]τεια κάκεῖ [π]οιησάμ[ενοι ἄμ]ιλλαν τῶν  
 πλοίων καὶ πομπεύ- | [σαντε]ς καὶ θύσαν[τες τ]ῶι  
 Αἴαντι ἐπηνέθησαν ὑπ[ὸ τοῦ δήμου τοῦ Σαλαμινίω]  
 ν καὶ ἔστεφ[αν]ώθησ[αν] χ[ρ]υσῶι σ[τεφά]νῳ ἐπὶ  
 τῶι εὐτάκτως καὶ | [εὖς]χημόνως πεποιῆσθ[αι] τὴν  
 ἐπιδ[η]μίαν

*They sailed up to the trophy and sacrificed to Zeus Tro[pa]ios, and in the procession of the great gods they made [the contest of the boats].<sup>8</sup> They sailed around into the harbour of Mounichia for the Mounichia festival and competed; likewise for the Diisoteria. They [sailed] away [for the Ai]anteia and there, having made a contest of the boats and having processed and sacrificed to Ajax they were praised by [the people of Salamis] and crowned with a golden crown for having completed their stay in good order and in a becoming fashion.*

IG II<sup>2</sup> 1008, lines 17-24 of 118/7 BC (T28) has a similar order of events: the ephebes sailed to the trophy and sacrificed to Zeus Tropaios, competed in the harbour during the procession of the Great gods, then sailed to Salamis to take part in the Aianteia where they took part in a naval contest, sacrifices and processions. The boats are said to have double rows of oars (line 76), while another decree calls the boats 'the sacred ships', ταῖς ἱεραῖς ναυσίν (IG II<sup>2</sup> 1011, line 16, T31), and later praises the ephebes for bringing the boats into dry dock (line 19, cf. IG II<sup>2</sup> 1028, line 37 of 101/0 BC, T32). In this inscription (IG II<sup>2</sup> 1011, lines 15-18) the ephebes are praised for sailing around to Mounichia, sailing to Salamis and performing a contest of boats, ἄμιλλαν τῶν πλοίων, winning a long race in Salamis against the inhabitants and sacrificing to Ajax and Asclepius.

Most of the inscriptions have the same order for the events, depicting a series of rituals in which the ephebes first sailed to the trophy, then came back to Mounichia, sometimes for naval contests, before returning to Salamis for the Aianteia, which again sometimes includes naval contests. The prefixes applied to the verbs in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1006 strongly suggest that there was a set itinerary for these activities, which here include naval contexts both in the harbour at Mounichia and at Salamis (lines 28-32). Here we are told that the ephebes sailed out to the trophy (ἀνέπλευσαν), then sailed around (περιέπλευσαν)

8 The restoration is justified by the reference to the contest again later in the inscription at lines 71-72.

into the harbour of Mounichia before they sailed off (ἀπέπλευσαν) to the Aianteia, where they performed a naval contest. Other contests, presumably also naval, took place at the Mounichia and the Diisoteria festivals.<sup>9</sup> The attention to the geographical itinerary here strongly suggests that the description follows the actual order of events closely. Others, which mix up the order of the rituals, may do so in order to group them together geographically, putting all the actions on Salamis together, and all those on the mainland together (e.g. IG II<sup>2</sup> 1009 + 2456 + 2457, lines 21-24).

The festivals and rituals referred to here all have close connections with the celebration of the victory over the Persians at Salamis in 480 BC. The festival of Artemis Mounichia took place on 16 Mounichia, the anniversary of the battle of Salamis. Plutarch (Plut. *de glor. Ath.* 349f) tells us that this day was dedicated to the goddess Artemis because it was then that she shone on the Greeks as they were conquering at Salamis.<sup>10</sup> The festival of Ajax at Salamis seems to follow immediately after that at Mounichia, and would also appear to be associated with the victory at Salamis. Indeed, it took place in the very area where the victory was won, and honoured a hero who was believed to have given his support to the Athenians on the day of the battle, as Herodotus attests (Hdt. 8.64.2). The dating of the trophy ceremony is less clear, but perhaps occurred on the day before the Mounichia festival, if we follow the order set out in IG II<sup>2</sup> 1006.<sup>11</sup>

The trophy itself was located on the island of Salamis on the tip of the Cynosoura promontory, where there is a cutting of around 1.8 m<sup>2</sup> in the rock (Wallace 1969, 301-302; Culley 1977, 296-297; Rabe 2008, 104-106). This seems to be the remains of a monument which was still visible from Athens in the eighteenth century (Stuart & Revett 1762, ix). Wallace (1969, 302) noted other cuttings on the island of Leipsokoutali, which lies across the strait from Cynosoura, and suggested that they may have been the foundation for another trophy mentioned by Plutarch (Plut. *Arist.* 9.2), identifying this island as Psyttaleia. The fact that the so-called Attic restoration decree, discussed further below, locates the trophy on Salamis, along with the sanctuary of Ajax and the *polyandriion*, shows that the trophy visited by the ephebes was the structure located on the Cynosoura promontory (IG II<sup>2</sup> 1035, lines 28-30; Culley 1975; 1977, 285-286; Rabe 2008, 105). Herodotus (Hdt. 8.121) records that

9 Note that Perrin-Saminadayar 2007, 208 punctuates the text at line 30 differently. In either case, however, contests are said to take place at both festivals.

10 The same date appears in Plut. *Lys.* 15, but in *Cam.* 19 he gives the date as 20 Boedromion. See Bowie 2013, 245.

11 For discussion of the dating of these festivals see Mommsen 1898, 452-3; Deubner 1932, 204-5, 228; Pélékidis 1962, 247-249.

a captured trireme was dedicated to Ajax at Salamis, alongside two others dedicated at the Isthmus and Sounion respectively. West (1969, 16-17) suggests that the stone monument on Salamis was a permanent replacement for this initial trophy. It seems to have taken the form of a marble column on a square limestone base, sharing a similar form to the Marathon trophy (Vanderpool 1966, Rabe 2008, 101-104). That it carried a replica of a trireme as a visual reference to the ship which had preceded it, and the naval victory it commemorated, as Culley (1977, 297) suggests, is an attractive idea, but cannot be confirmed. While the date at which the stone monument was set up is uncertain, references to a trophy here in 4th-century BC texts (Pl. *Menex.* 245a, Xen. *An.* 3.2.13, Lycurg. *Leoc.* 73) suggest that it was probably erected in the course of the 5th century BC, along with the trophy at Marathon. It was still surviving in the 2nd century AD, when it was seen by Pausanias (Paus. 1.36.1).

At the end of the 2nd century BC, then, possibly in a continuation of practices revived after the return of the island in 229 BC, the ephebes were a very visible presence in the religious rituals in the area of Salamis, participating in sacrifices, processions and contests. These activities included naval voyages along the coast and between the mainland and Salamis, and some form of naval contest. The inscriptions use a variety of terms to refer to the boats. In *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1011, line 16 the boats used for the voyage around the coast are referred to as sacred ships, ταῖς ἱεραῖς ναυσίν, while the contest is referred to as ἄμιλλαν τῶν πλοίων, the contest of the boats. A little later (line 19) the ephebes appear bringing into dry dock boats described as ἀφρακτῶν, boats without hatches. This may suggest that special boats were reserved for the activities during these festivals. In *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1008, line 76 the boats are described as having two banks of oars, πλοίοις δικρότοις, and it is possible that they were reduced size replicas of warships.

The nature of the naval contests is similarly vague. They are usually referred to as *hamillai ploion*, contests of the boats, which most scholars gloss as races or regattas. A similar term is used in a list of prizes for the Panathenaia festival which is dated to the 380s BC (*SEG* 53.192, 139-42; Shear 2003). Here the term νικητήρια νεῶν ἀμίλλης, 'prizes for the contest of the ships' heads a list of prizes awarded to victorious teams. This shows that the contest at the Panathenaia was performed in teams made up of various Athenian tribes. This is the only secure reference to naval contests at the Panathenaia and we do not know how long they formed part of the Panathenaic contests. A reference in Plato the Comic Poet, which is cited in Plutarch's *Life of Themistokles* (Plut. *Them.* 32.4-5) via Diodorus the Periegetes' work *On Tombs*, gives the tomb of Themistokles on the coast of Piraeus as being a good place to watch the 'contest of the ships' (ἄμιλλα τῶν νεῶν). Since Plato the Comic Poet dates to the end

of the 5th century BC, a few decades before the Panathenaic prize list, this might refer to contests during the Panathenaia. It is interesting, however, that Plutarch cites it as part of his discussion of the location of the tomb of Themistokles, famous for his role in the naval victory at Salamis. For Plutarch's later audience, the reference to naval contests in this area might instead have evoked the contests performed as part of festivals honouring the memory of Salamis, and not those of the Panathenaia.

### 3. Salamis and naval activities under Augustus

References to ephobic activities on Salamis appear on the ephobic decrees until the mid-90s BC but then disappear until the later 1st century AD. On the basis of this, and Dio Chrysostom's report that 'those who disparage their city and the inscription on the statue of Nicanor are accustomed to say that it actually bought Salamis for them' (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 31.116), earlier scholarship accepted the idea that Athens had lost Salamis in the wake of the First Mithradatic War (see Habicht 1996 for details). It was assumed that it was subsequently returned to the city by the agency of one C. Julius Nicanor, who is acclaimed on four Athenian statue bases as a new Homer and new Themistokles (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 3786-3789). More recent scholarship has cast doubt on this, suggesting that there is no positive evidence that the island was ever lost, and suggesting that Nicanor's role may instead have been to buy back certain private lands for public use (Habicht 1996, 86; Bowersock 2002, 11-16; Jones 2005, 169-72).

These activities are usually placed in the Augustan period, along with the restoration decree, *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1035, which describes the restoration of Attic sanctuaries and sacred lands to public use (Culley 1975, 1977; Schmalz 2007-8). As already mentioned, the restoration decree references places on the island of Salamis, including the sanctuary of Ajax and the promontory where the trophy and mass tomb (*polyandrion*) were located. It also mentions a number of sites at Piraeus, including one associated with 'the voyage of the sacred [ships]', as well as dry docks in the Grand Harbour (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1035, lines 31-37, 45-46; Culley 1977, 285-6, 291-298). The dry docks are mentioned after reference to a shrine 'founded by Themistokles before the sea-battle of Salamis', which situates them in relationship to that famous battle. This concern for the restoration of spaces closely associated with the events of the Persian Wars suggests that the enduring or revived memory of those events played an important role in the communal self-image of Athens at this period. Yet, the promotion of the past at this time can also be closely associated with the interests of the emperor Augustus. As Hölscher (1984) and Spawforth (2012, 103-105) have shown, Augustus used the battle of Salamis as a parallel

to his own naval victory over Antony at Actium. Athens' keenness to restore sites associated with the memory of the Persian wars might then have been provoked in part by the emperor's own interest in reviving the memory of this past, as a glorious precedent for his own victories (Spawforth 2012, 107-111). The use of the past to gain attention and favour from Rome can be seen elsewhere a little later, in the claims of various Asia Minor cities recorded in Tacitus' reports of debates in the senate under Tiberius (Tac. *Ann.* 3.60-63; 4.55-56).

Ephobic decrees and honorific inscriptions give no details of ephobic naval activities between 96 BC and the late 1st century AD. However, the reference in the restoration decree to the voyage of the sacred ships (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1035, lines 36-37: τὸν παράπλου τῶν ἱερῶν | [νεῶν]) shows that some ritual naval activities were still taking place in this period. In earlier years the ephobes had performed voyages in sacred boats around the area, and so it seems reasonable to assume that they were involved in this voyage too. Whether they also performed in naval contests is less clear. There is no specific reference to *hamillai* at this time, though it is possible that contests were still occurring but were not recorded in the ephobic decrees, which underwent a change in form now.

One tantalising question is what possible relationship there might be between ephobic naval activities at Athens and the mock naval battle between Greeks and Persians which Augustus held in Rome in 2 BC (*Mon. Anc.* 23; *Ov. Ars am.* 1.171-172; Dio Cass. 55.10). Graindor (1927, 128-129) long ago suggested that the emperor might have been influenced by seeing the ephobic naval contests at Athens, and that it was in this period that they changed from a regatta to a naval battle, though in fact the word *naumachia* does not appear in ephobic inscriptions until the end of the first century AD. Raubitschek (1954, 319) even suggests that Nicanor played a role in the contests, earning him the name 'the new Themistokles'. The evidence is patchy and we can only draw inferences from what survives. It is clear that the restoration decree strengthened the memory of and spaces associated with Athens' Persian War past, perhaps under the impetus of Augustus' interest in linking his own victories with this venerable history. Given that the ephobes were earlier involved in sacred voyages and naval contests as part of festivals commemorating the Persian Wars, it seems quite plausible that some form of naval contests took place in Athens at this time too. It is less clear whether they now took the form of mock naval battles, inducing Augustus to copy this at Rome, or whether instead it was the emperor's innovation to convert naval manoeuvres alluding to the past into a full-blown recreation of a famous battle. I suspect the latter, and that it was this crystallisation of the link between naval supremacy and a re-enactment of the past which encouraged later ephobic contests to include

more direct references to battle skills and the memory of the famous sea-battle at Salamis.

#### 4. The ephobic *naumachia* of the 1st to 3rd centuries AD

Finally, we turn to the performance and celebration of Athens' naval victories in the activities and monuments of the Athenian ephobes of the later Roman period.<sup>12</sup> As Perrin-Saminadayar (2004) and others have noted, during the Roman imperial period the epigraphic habit of the Athenian ephobes underwent a significant change in form.<sup>13</sup> In place of public decrees honouring the ephobes and their leaders and giving detailed accounts of their activities, which we have hitherto been drawing on, we find ephobes or ephobic officials setting up lists of the ephobes for a particular year. The place in which these lists were displayed also differed. While the Hellenistic decrees were set up in the public space of the agora, many of the later lists of the 1st to 3rd centuries AD have been found clustered around the area of the church of St. Demetrios Katephoris, built into the post-Herulian wall, and are thought to have been displayed within the Diogeneion gymnasium, which was the seat of the ephobia in the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Wiemer 2011, 501).<sup>14</sup> A series of portrait herms was also found here, many set up by the ephobes in honour of their leaders (Lattanzi 1968; Krumeich 2004). Perrin-Saminadayar (2004, 103) characterizes this shift in representation as marking a form of privatization of the ephobia in which it became dominated by wealthy families and their concerns; yet, as Wiemer notes (2011, 512-514), while the institution was certainly dominated by elite families in this period, it still acted as a miniature mirror of the state and should not be characterized purely as an elite club. Instead, the military and civic functions of the ephobia remained strong, with the ephobes playing a continued role in religious processions, and presenting themselves both as military protectors of the city and as its future magistrates and leaders (Wiemer 2011; 506, 510-514; cf. Kennell 2009a, 331-336).

12 This section draws on my earlier discussion of the Athenian ephobia in Newby 2005, 168-201, esp. 179-92 on the *naumachia*. For other discussions of the Athenian ephobia in the Roman period see Perrin-Saminadayar 2004 and Wiemer 2011, whose discussion of the ephobia's military associations at 490-499 reaches similar conclusions to Newby 2005, apparently separately. See also Kennell 2009a for a broader discussion of ephobic institutions in the Roman period. The inscriptions relating to the period are collected in the unpublished PhD-thesis of Wilson 1992.

13 Reinmuth 1955: 226-228 gives an earlier overview of the changing pattern of ephobic inscriptions. See also Wiemer 2011, 501-506.

14 *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1079, lines 41-43 specifies that the decree should be set up in three copies, one at the Eleusinion, one in the Diogeneion and one at Eleusis. Further see Frantz 1979, 200-201.

As we will see, one very public role which the ephebes continued to fulfil in the religious life of the city was their involvement in civic festivals. A detailed list of festivals appears in *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2119*, dated to AD 180-191.<sup>15</sup> Interwoven into this list are some events which seem to have been performed on a civic level, and not purely within the ephēbeia. Indeed, the very first victory mentioned is that of all the ephebes in the race to Agras (lines 127-129: τὸν | πρὸς Ἄγρας δρόμον ἅπαν-|τες οἱ ἔφηβοι). Graindor (1922, 214-215) identifies this as the race in armour held as part of the festival of Artemis Agroteria, and suggests that the ephebes may have competed against those of the previous year. A reference to the torch race contest 'to the heroes' (ἐπι τοῖς ἥρωσι) in line 227 also suggests involvement in the Epitaphia festival (Graindor 1922, 214). Here, however, we shall investigate the evidence for their involvement in naval contests held as part of the Aiantea and Mounichia festivals.

References to naval contests appear in both textual and visual form on ephēbic stelai from the late 1st century AD and are marked by a change in vocabulary from references to *hamillai* (contests) to use of the verb *naumacheo* (fight at sea). They were discussed by Follet (1976, 339-343) who saw a reference to a *naumachia* in either word or image as a reference to the Great Panathenaia festival and thus as evidence of dating to a Panathenaic year. This means of dating has been accepted by others, but deserves challenge. As both Shear and I have argued (Newby 2005, 179-180; Shear 2012, 165-166), there is no persuasive link between the *naumachiai* referred to in these stelai and the *neon hamilla* which appeared on the list of prizes for the Panathenaia in the early 4th century BC (*SEG* 53.192, lines 139-142). Follet based her argument on one of the latest stelai which shows the head of Athena and two Panathenaic amphorae at the top of the stele, and a sketch of a boat with the labelled figure 'naumachos Herennius Dexippos' at the bottom (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 2245*, line 477, fig. 1). Yet while this particular stele can thus be dated to a year in which the Great Panathenaia was held, there is no reason to link the *naumachia* image itself with that festival, or to assume that other references to *naumachiai* must come from Panathenaic years. Instead, there is persuasive evidence to link them with the festivals at Salamis and Mounichia which helped to keep alive the memory of the victories won during the Persian Wars (Newby 2005, 179-192).

15 Below I give the dates in *IG II<sup>2</sup>* and Follet 1976, 341-342. Note that many of the latter rely on Follet's association of scenes or references to a *naumachia* with a Panathenaic year, an association which I reject (she is followed by Byrne 2003, 530; 523-524). See further below and Shear 2012 on the implications of this for the wider dating of Athenian inscriptions.



Figure 1. Ephēbic stele of AD 255/6 showing the *naumachos* Herennius Dexippos in a boat at the bottom. *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2245*, Athens Epigraphic Museum 10038. After: Graindor 1924, pl. 82.



References to a naval contest appear on 14 reliefs or inscriptions, in either visual or verbal form.<sup>16</sup> One of these is an uninscribed relief dated to the Hadrianic period, showing a scene of the crowning of the kosmetes at the top with a boat holding eight men at the bottom (Athens National Museum 1468; Rhomiopoulou 1997, 46; Newby 2005, fig. 6.2). Here all the youths are calmly seated and the overall impression is that they are commemorated for involvement in a rowing race or perhaps even simply a sacred voyage. Elsewhere, however, texts and images tell a different story. The earliest references to a naval contest appear in two inscriptions from the reign of Domitian, *IG II<sup>2</sup> 1996* and *1997*. Both inscriptions carry visual images of boats, roughly scratched at the bottom of *IG II<sup>2</sup> 1996*, and only partially preserved on *IG II<sup>2</sup> 1997*. The textual references to the *naumachia* are likewise fragmentary. On *IG II<sup>2</sup> 1996* τὴν ἐν Σ[αλαμῖνι ναυμαχίαν ἐνί]κων has been restored at l. 9. The line seems to refer to a victory of the two sons of the kosmetes, Straton son of Straton and Menandros son of Straton, both of the deme Epikhepsia. This relief comes from the year of the archonship of Domitian. The other inscription, *IG II<sup>2</sup> 1997*, was indentified by Wilson as referring to the *naumachia* (1992, E125). He suggests that ναυμάχ in line 5 should be restored as ναυμάχ[ο]ν or ναυμάχ[ί]αν, i.e. as a reference to the *naumachia*, rather than as ναυμάχ[ο]ς, son of Naumachos, a suggestion followed by Byrne (2003, 523-4) who follows Wilson in dating the inscription to AD 91/2.

Further evidence comes from the Hadrianic period. In addition to the uninscribed relief NM 1468, which is dated stylistically, two other inscriptions from this period refer to the *naumachia*. The first is *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2024*, an inscribed herm portrait which is dated to the archonship of Hadrian, and was set up by M. Annius Thrasyllus to his fellow-ephebes. He singles out for particular mention his fellow-ephebe Titus Flavius Philathenaios. Both hold Athenian as well as Roman citizenship. Thrasyllus is from the Cholleidai deme while Philathenaios is from the Eupyridai deme. They thus come from the same tribe, Leontis (Whitehead 1986, 370). While the front of the herm is taken up with lists of the ephebes enrolled for the year, on the right hand side of the shaft a brief inscription identifies a number of victors. We are told that in the Germanikeia T. Claudius Thrasesas of Melite won the encomium, while Annius Thrasyllus won the torch race. After a space, the inscription goes on to mention the *naumachia* and the names of M. Annius Thrasyllus of

Cholleidai and T. Flavius Philathenaios of Eupyridai (lines 133-137). We are not told of the festival in which this victory occurred, but given that the Germanikeia does not include a *naumachia* in other inscriptions it seems to have been during a separate event.

It may be significant that two of these pieces of evidence come from periods when the emperors Domitian and Hadrian were acting as archon for the city. As we have already seen, Augustus took a particular interest in the Athenian past, setting his own foreign policy in the long tradition of struggles against the East (Spawforth 2012, 103-106). Roman visitors were often keen to experience the relics and monuments attesting to the past. Festivals which recalled that past might, then, have received a particular boost from the presence of the emperor in the city, especially in the case of Hadrian who had a profound impact on Athens' religious life (Shear 2012).<sup>17</sup>

While these early references to the *naumachia* are somewhat fragmentary and elusive, more detailed evidence comes from mid-2nd to mid-3rd centuries AD. A vivid visual rendering of the contest is found on a relief set up by two ephebic team captains in 163/4 (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 2087*, Oliver 1971, 69-70, no. 4; fig. 2). In turn the names of the ephebes making up each team (*systemma*) are listed, followed by the victories of its members in various ephebic competitions. The *naumachia* is not explicitly mentioned in the text, but the bottom of the relief is dominated by a vividly carved image of a boat, containing five youths who are naked except for a chlamys around their shoulders. The central three are shown seated and rowing, while the other two stand on the prow and the stern, carrying their oars on their shoulders. There is a great sense of action in the scene; the figure to the left of the relief, who stands on the prow, looks to the left as if keeping watch, the seated rower next to him looks up to the other standing ephebe for a command, while he in turn strides towards the back of the boat and brandishes his oar as if he might use it to repel boarders. We are clearly in the midst of the contest here, in contrast to the other images which tend to show the team at rest, holding the prizes of victory. This scene is also the most detailed depiction of the boat used in the *naumachia*. On the prow of the boat, to the left of the relief, appears a three-pronged ram, similar to those which equipped Athenian warships (Morrison *et al.* 2000, 167; 221-223; a surviving example is in the Piraeus archaeological museum). A similar ram also appears on the boat guided by Herennius Dexippos shown at the bottom of *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2245* (fig. 1).

This suggests that the boats used in these contests may have been smaller replicas of a warship, equipped with a bronze ram for attacking other ships. The teams

16 Text only: *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2024*, line 136; 2119, line 223; 2198, line 18. Text and Image: *IG II<sup>2</sup> 1996*, line 9; 1997, line 5; 2130, lines 48-49; 2167, lines 17-18; 2208, line 146; 2245, line 477. Image only: *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2087*; 2106; 2124; 2248; National Museum 1468 (uninscribed relief).

17 It is unclear whether Domitian actually visited Athens, but he certainly promoted its interests: Oliver 1981, 417-418.



Figure 2. Relief set up by two ephebic team captains. IG II<sup>2</sup> 2087, National Archaeological Museum, Athens 1466. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports / Archaeological Receipts Fund and National Archaeological Museum.



Figure 3. Ephebic list showing the *naumachia* at the bottom. IG II<sup>2</sup> 2130, National Archaeological Museum Athens 1470. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports / Archaeological Receipts Fund and National Archaeological Museum.

themselves consisted of 12 ephebes and it is likely that all would have participated in the *naumachia*. The relief condenses this to fit the space, but still gives a vivid sense of the team-work necessary for the contest. Whether these teams competed in other ephebic events as well is unclear – the fact that the *naumachia* dominates this relief may suggest that it was the most important event in which they participated (Oliver 1971, 73).

Elsewhere other images of boats appear on some of the ephebic lists, and where the victors are named they can sometimes be identified with the team captains of the various *systemmata*, as in IG II<sup>2</sup> 2208, discussed below. IG II<sup>2</sup> 2130, dated to AD 192/3 or 195/6, is one of the most impressive and detailed ephebic lists (fig. 3). At the top of the relief, beneath a pediment holding the remains of a flying figure, is a well-carved relief panel showing from left to right a runner in the torch race, a pair of athletes wrestling and the remains of a standing figure who can be identified as Herakles, standing in the pose of the Farnese type (Newby 2005, 183-186). Beneath this is a neat inscription, listing the officials in charge of the ephebes, and the ephebes who undertook specific roles, before listing all

the ephebes by tribe. The inscription is laid out over four columns, but at the bottom of the two left-hand columns a space was left which was subsequently carved with an image of a ship, facing right.

The boat carries three ephebes. The one at the stern is shown rowing, while the central one brandishes a crown and holds a palm over his shoulder. The figure at the front holds up his oar. This relief is now divided into two parts, with the right-hand section conserved at the Ashmolean in Oxford. This section preserves the prow of the ship, here too equipped with a protruding ram (Graindor 1924, pl. 66). Immediately above the boat is a labelling inscription, which runs as follows (lines 48-49):

Φιλιστείδ[ης Ὁ Πειρ]αιεύς καὶ Πῶ Αἰῶ  
Κορνήλιος Παλ ναυμαχ[ήσαντε]ς Μουνίχια  
συνεστεφανώθησαν

*Philisteides*, [son of Philisteides of Pir]aeus and  
*Publius Aelius Cornelius of Pallene*, having competed in  
the naval battle at the Mounichia, were jointly crowned.



Figure 4. Ephebic list with a scene of the *naumachia* at the bottom. IG II² 2208, National Archaeological Museum Athens 1465. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports / Archaeological Receipts Fund and National Archaeological Museum.

As Kapetanopoulos (1992-1998, 217) and Shear (2012, 166) show, there is no compelling reason to read *Mounichia* here as a locative (as Follet 1976, 341), and instead it should be understood as a reference to the *Mounichia* festival. This, then, is evidence that naval competitions continued to be held as part of the *Mounichia* festival in the imperial period. The change in terminology, however, from references to a *hamilla* to use of the verb *naumacheo* suggests a change in emphasis in these competitions, focussing more strongly on their martial character. As we have seen above, the visual depictions also reinforce this sense of an allusion to battle, through the active poses of the figures, and the prominence in some of the images of rams, similar to those which adorned warships.

Another ephebic list, IG II² 2208, further testifies to the importance which this competition was given within the many activities in which the ephebes participated (fig. 4). This list is dated to AD 215/6 by Byrne (2003, 533) and like IG II² 2130 is notable for its monumentality. The main text is flanked by two columns while above a scene

of the crowning of the kosmetes is flanked by crowns, indicating the mutual honouring of the kosmetes and the ephebes (Newby 2005, 174, 186-187). At the bottom of the relief, below the lists of names, is a heading, carved in the same size of letters as were used in the initial heading identifying the ephebic officials (line 146). Though fragmentary, this can be confidently restored as reading οἱ [να]υ[μαχ]ήσαντε[ς], ‘those who competed in the naval battle’. Beneath this heading are images of two boats; a further two probably occupied the space to the right of the panel. Above each is a name label (col I. line 77, col II, line 147, col III, line 168). From left to right we find Aurelius Dositheos, son of Thales; Aurelius Herakleides, son of Thales and Aurelius Anthos, son of Teimon. The first two are the sons of the kosmetes for the year, named in lines 6-7 as Aurelius Dositheos, son of Dositheos, also called Thales, of Pambotadai. All three ephebes played an active part in the running of the ephebeia. All are listed as gymnasiarchs while Aurelius Herakleides and Aurelius Anthos both acted as *systemmatarchai*, and the sons of the kosmetes also acted as agonothetes of various festivals (lines 80-2, 95-6, 103-5).

It seems likely that it was their role as captains of the teams which competed in the naval battle which led to them being hailed here as *naumachesantes*. The images which lie beneath these names further this impression of the importance of these individuals. In each boat we see only two figures; one rows, while the other stands holding up his oar. Here it is the active figure of the *systemmatarches* who is praised, with the contribution made by the rest of the team reduced to a single rower. The type of boat, however, is very similar to that shown on IG II² 2130, having a similar plume at the stern and a pointed ram on the prow.

The visual evidence suggests that this *naumachia* was indeed some kind of naval battle. The tactics used in sea battles were primarily ramming and boarding of the enemy ships. The presence of sharp rams on these boats, and the active pose of the ephebes who stand brandishing their oars, suggests that these contests might have showcased those skills. Perhaps the aim was to board a rival boat, and to prevent yourself being boarded. The extent to which this was an actual contest, with winners and losers, is harder to ascertain. The majority of the inscriptions referred simply to competing in the event (using the verb *naumacheo*), but one inscription may refer to a victory here (IG II² 2198, lines 18-20):

[ναυμ]αχῆς ἐνί  
-ς Ἀχαρνεύς  
[συστρεμματᾶ]ρχαι

Kirchner expands the text to read ναυμαχῆσ(ας) ἐνί(κα), ‘having competed in the sea-battle, he won’,

which would credit the unnamed ephebe from Acharnai as winning a victory in the *naumachia*, rather than just competing in it.<sup>18</sup> A list of the *systemmatarchai* then follows. This suggests that the ephebic teams were closely associated with the *naumachia*, and that winners may have been identified in the contest. The overall impression from the other inscriptions, however, is that it was taking part in the sea-battle which was of primary importance. While the imperial reliefs are elusive about the context in which this type of contest took place, with only one referring to the Mounichia and another plausibly restored to read ‘at Salamis’, it seems reasonable to assume that these *naumachiai* are the later successors to the Hellenistic *hamillai* which took place within the context of festivals commemorating the battle of Salamis: the Aianteia, Mounichia and the voyage to the trophy on Salamis. The change in terminology seems to suggest a change in focus, from a race to a display of fighting skills, perhaps involving boarding or warding off other ships. Whether the *naumachia* was a precise re-enactment of the battle of Salamis is less clear. I suggest that it was probably a display of naval military skills within the context of festivals recalling the Persian wars, and in the space where the Battle of Salamis had occurred. This would have evoked the memory of that famous battle and shown that the Athenian ephebes were the rightful heirs of their famous forefathers.

It is worth dwelling briefly here on composition of the Athenian ephebeia in this period. From the late Hellenistic period the ephebeia was opened up to non-Athenians, named on the inscriptions first as *xenoi*, then *epengraphoi*, and in many periods these youths actually seem to dominate (Perrin-Saminadayar 2007, 248-53; Baslez 1989). In the *systemmata* relief discussed above, one team is made up entirely of Athenians, while the other includes non-Athenians too. If the *naumachia* was a team event, it seems inevitable that non-Athenian citizens would also have competed in it, which might have diluted the message suggested here, namely that the *naumachia* was used as a way of keeping alive the memory of Athenian naval prowess and its most famous achievement. However, it is notable that when particular individuals are mentioned as *naumachos* they can overwhelmingly be identified as Athenian citizens. Both the ephebes named as *naumachesantes* on *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2130* are Athenian citizens, and they include the son of the ephebic antikosmetes; on *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2208* two sons of the kosmetes, from the deme Pambotadai, appear as naval victors, while on *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2245* the *naumachos* Herennius

Dexippos is the son of the famous Athenian historian P. Herennius Dexippos, whose role as agonothetes of the Panathenaia is alluded to in the imagery at the top. While non-Athenians certainly participated in the ephebeia in large numbers (Baslez 1989), and must have played a role in the naval contests, it was predominantly the sons of leading Athenian families who advertised their role in the *naumachia* on stelai and used it to present themselves as true Athenians, reliving the values and glories of the past in the Roman present.

## 5. Conclusions

From the 5th century onwards Salamis always seems to have played an important role in Athenian self-identity, alongside the memory of the Battle of Marathon, and trophies celebrating both battles could be used to urge the Athenians to emulate their heroic forefathers. From the 3rd century BC onwards, the role of commemorating Salamis seems to have been handed especially to the Athenian ephebes, who participated in a number of naval events during festivals associated with the victory, including voyages and contests. These displays reasserted the memory of the Athenian tradition of naval supremacy and situated it within the specific context of the memory of the Battle of Salamis. What happened to these activities in the 1st century BC is unclear, but it seems as though they were given a new lease of life in the restoration decree, which mentions the sacred ships as well as the sanctuary of Ajax and the trophy on Salamis. This seems to show some form of naval activity occurring in the period of Augustus. Whether this influenced Augustus’ decision to recreate the sea-battle at Rome, or was in its turn influenced by Augustus’ actions cannot be reconstructed. It is possible that the influence went both ways, and that Augustus had seen the displays at Athens and crystallized the implicit link of naval prowess with the battle at Salamis when he decided to recreate this battle in Rome. The more overtly military character which the contests take on later might then have been encouraged and prompted by the use to which Salamis and other Persian war battles were put in the services of imperial ideology.

In the changing history of ephebic naval contests at Athens we can see both continuity and change between the Hellenistic and Roman periods. In both periods the memory of Salamis continued to be important, and the ephebes were given the chief role in embodying and keeping alive the symbolism of Salamis through their ritual activities. Yet the increased focus on military skills which is implied by the use of the word *naumachia*, the very word used to describe the battle of Salamis in the restoration decree (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 1035*, line 46), and the visual portrayal of boats with rams on Roman-period reliefs also suggests that the link between ephebic displays and

18 *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2198*, p. 589. Follet 1976, 418, line 122 restores the line differently as [καὶ ἐναυ]μαχησε Νι-, seeing Νι as the start of the ephebe’s name. *IG II<sup>2</sup> 1996*, line 9 may also refer to a victory in the *naumachia*, if the restoration as τῆν ἐν Σ[αλαμῖνι ναυμαχίαν ἐν] κων is correct. See above.

the past was made more concrete and explicit in this period. This change is parallel to the increased violence shown in the ephebeia at Sparta in this period, with its famous whipping contest (Kennell 1995, esp. 78-84; Newby 2005, 150-167), while the more explicit link to the sea-battle at Salamis fits into Roman desires to see old Greece as a place of the past, to be enjoyed as touristic 'theme-park' celebrating 'the glory that was Greece'.

At the same time the memory of Salamis was not just a means to attract Roman attention. The fact that wealthy ephebes and officials put their resources into advertising their involvement, or that of their offspring, in such contests shows that it brought them prestige and pride amongst their peers. Thus the memory of the past, and the re-performance of the past in ritual activities were also means to ensure elite self-representation, helping to assert an individual's claims to be a true Athenian citizen and a rightful inheritor of Athens' naval supremacy. We cannot disentangle these two strands: memories of the past helped

to shape contemporary civic identities for the cities of the eastern Roman provinces, but commemoration and recollection was always done in the awareness of a number of different audiences, comprising both one's fellow citizens and incomers from the wider Roman world. Together, rituals, monuments and inscribed records helped to keep alive the memory of the past, and assert its continued relevance both to the citizens of Athens and to its foreign visitors.

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