



Nicholas Victor Sekunda (Gdańsk, Poland)

THE PTOLEMAIC GUARD CAVALRY REGIMENT *

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Following the death of Ptolemy Philopator (204 BC), his chief minister Agathokles wished to prolong his power by ensure his guardianship over his successor, the boy-king Ptolemy Epiphanes. The events surrounding this series of historical incidents provide us with a detailed account of the Ptolemaic royal court and the troops responsible for guarding it.

Agathokles first summoned “the *hypaspistai* and the *therapeia* as well as the officers of the foot and horse” (Polyb. 15.25.3). It would be extremely useful for our purposes to examine what precisely Polybius has in mind when he speaks of these groups of individuals.

I agree with Walbank’s interpretation of the role and function of the *hypaspistai*. “The hypaspists are most likely the equivalent of Alexander’s personal staff, as the were in the Antigonid court, a small group of individuals employed on special tasks”.¹ Ptolemaic *hypaspistai* are again referred to by Polybius at 18.53.5 in another passage concerning Ptolemaic affairs.

I cannot agree with Walbank’s conclusion as to the precise meaning of *therapeia* in this context, however, stating that the meaning in Polybius “is probably the royal bodyguard than the court”.² Polybius (15.25.17) later states that Agathokles intended to re-model “the household and the guard about the court” (θεραπεία καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν αὐλὴν φυλακεῖα) with replacements which he was to recruit in Greece. In this case it is evident that Polybius contrasts the *therapeia* to troops who were meant to guard them.

* A shorter version of the main text of this article, without the full academic apparatus, has appeared before in the popular journal *Ancient Warfare* V, 2 (2011) 14-19.

¹ Walbank 1967, 482. For the Antigonid army, see Sekunda 2010, 459 and Sekunda 2012, 8.

² Walbank 1967, 482.

By “the officers of the foot and horse” Walbank believes that Polybius means “the officers of the ‘Macedonians’, foot and horse”.³ This is likely, but it is possible that the assembly also included the officers of “the other regiments” which Polybius makes mention of at a later stage in drama unfolding in the Ptolemaic Court – Agathokles, he states, summoned a meeting of “the Macedonians” (15.26.1) and then (15.26.9) a meeting of the other regiments (συστήματα).

Events reached their bloody climax when Agathokles arrested one Moiragenes, one of the *sōmatophylakes* (15.27.6), literally “bodyguards”. Polybius, at a later point during the course of his narrative (15.32.6) mentions another one of these *sōmatophylakes* in Ptolemaic service, the younger Sosibios. They comprised the staff who administered the army. In the reign of Alexander there were seven, later eight of them, and they are found in the Seleucid and Antigonid armies.⁴

Agathokles had had Moiragenes arrested with the intention of torturing him, but Moiragenes escaped from the palace, and ran to a tent of the Macedonians not far from the palace (15.28.4). Moiragenes urged the Macedonians who were in the tent to help, and they in turn visited the tents of the other Macedonians, and then those of the other soldiers which were all close together (15.29.1).⁵

All modern historians are unanimous in their conclusion that by “the Macedonians” Polybius “seems here to mean the guard”.⁶ The conclusion seems inevitable, that at this period at least, the regiments of the guard, both foot and horse, were largely composed of native Macedonians and their descendants.

Ptolemy son of Lagos was presumably in Egypt for the first time as a general accompanying Alexander the Great. After the death of Alexander in 323 BC he received Egypt as a province in “the division of spoils” that took place. There could have been next to no Macedonians in the country at this time. According to Diodorus (18.14.1) Ptolemy soon after taking over Egypt “finding 8,000 talents in the treasury, began to collect mercenaries and to form an army. A multitude of his friends also gathered about him on account of his fairness”. It was presumably from these “friends” that Ptolemy formed his first élite cavalry formation.

We have some details of the army which Ptolemy led out of Alexandria in 312 BC to the battle fought against Demetrius Poliorketes at Gaza. According

³ Walbank 1967, 482.

⁴ Polyb. 8.20.8 and *ad loc.* Walbank 1967, 95. For the Antigonid army, see Sekunda 2010, 459 and Sekunda 2012, 7.

⁵ Launey 1950, 695, n. 3; endorsed by Walbank 1967, 489.

⁶ Walbank 1967, 448; cf. Griffith 1935, 129; Lesquier 1911, 3, n. 5 «le mot Μακεδόνες ne désigne alors que les réguliers de la garde. C’est dans ce sens qu’il est employé ... par Polybe».

to Diodorus (19.80.4). It consisted of 18,000 foot and 4,000 horse. “Of his army some were Macedonians and some were mercenaries, but a great number were Egyptians”. Ptolemy, and Seleucus who was fighting at his side at this battle, drew up 3,000 of what Diodorus (19.82.3) describes as the “strongest” of their cavalry, along with whom they themselves had decided to fight. During this battle, it is to be noted, that the “Companions”, who there were 800 present at the battle (19.82.3), still fought on the Antigonid side. Also on his left wing Demetrius drew up 200 picked “personal” cavalrymen (τούς περι αὐτὸν ἰππεῖς ἐπιλέκτους). These are presumably an élite squadron within the Companions, and are described as consisting of all the other “friends” of Demetrius.

After the series of wars following the death of Alexander the Great, the monarchs of the newly-formed Hellenistic world turned their thoughts to forming manpower recruiting bases within their various kingdoms. The system which obtained in Ptolemaic Egypt was the so-called “cleruch” system. By this word was meant a system by which, in return for being settled on a *klēros*, or “allotment” of various sizes, the settler, or “cleruch” was liable to mobilization in time of war.⁷ The size of the allotment varied according to the status of the grantee, which mainly depended on his nationality, or “pseudo-nationality”, and on his branch of service: for instance cavalrymen were settled on larger plots. In the third century cavalry and infantry of the guard were generally settled on plots of a hundred “arouras”.⁸ The system was established during the reign of Ptolemy I Soter, and was especially developed from the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphos onwards. “Ptolemy Soter’s original Macedonians, comparatively small though they can have been, may have formed the nucleus of the cleruch system”.⁹

At first, for example during the Third Syrian War, the system seems to have worked reasonably well, but by the end of the third century the system was already beginning to malfunction. In the preparations for the battle of Raphia (217 BC) Polybius (5.65.5) mentions that Polykrates of Argos undertook the training of “The Cavalry about the Court” (τούς ἰππεῖς τοὺς μὲν περι τὴν αὐλήν) about 700 strong. Walbank noted that “there is no evidence elsewhere for household cavalry cleruchs, but their mention along with Libyan and Egyptian cavalry suggests they were regulars and not mercenaries”.¹⁰ By ‘regulars’ in fact, Walbank means reservist ‘cleruchs’ which had been mobilized for the campaign.

⁷ On the cleruchic system see Crawford 1971, 55-85. For a complete bibliography see Van’t Dack 1977, 80-1.

⁸ Lesquier 1911, 291 seq.

⁹ Griffith 1935, 116.

¹⁰ Walbank 1957, 591.

It is difficult to decide whether or not “The Cavalry about the Court” (οἱ περὶ τὴν ἄσλὴν ἱππεῖς) might have been the official title of this regiment or not. The term is used elsewhere, seemingly in a general sense, by Polybius (4.67.6) of the élite Antigonid cavalry regiment.¹¹ It is true that Polybius, in a passage we have discussed already (15.25.17), refers to “the household and the guard about the court” (θεραπεία καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν ἀσλὴν φυλακεῖα) which Agathokles intended to replace with his own men, but this usage, too, could have a general meaning, and so is not to be treated as a precise regimental title.

Epigraphic evidence does little to help resolve the problem of what the official regimental title was. Fraser noted “that the Macedonian household troops are not recorded after the end of the third century, and that some time in the second century their place seems to have been by troops of varied provenance”. In this context he goes on to discuss an inscription recording a dedication by “The mass of the cavalry of the household in Alexandria” (τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ ἱππέωω τῆς θεραπείας). “The fact that these troops are not described by an ethnic connotation, such as was normal in military groups in this period is good reason for supposing that they were a racially mixed body”.¹² This inscription is late, dated as it is by a regnal year, to either 108/7 or 72/1 BC. The official title of the élite cavalry regiment of the guard could have changed from what it had been earlier on in the Ptolemaic period.

Two further inscriptions are also relevant to the problem. The inscriptions come from Paphos in Cyprus, and are both dated to the year 154 BC by their publisher Mitford.¹³ In the first inscription one Kallikles, son of Kallikles, an Alexandrian is mentioned as being “in command of the cavalry in Alexandria” ([ἐπι] τῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρεῖαι ἱππέων), and in the second he is called “squadron commander of the cavalry stationed in Alexandria” (ἐπι τῶν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ τεταγμένων ἱππέων). In addition Kallikles holds an assortment of other titles, but during the course of this article my discussion will be confined to those he holds as a commander of the élite cavalry of Alexandria.¹⁴ In his article Mitford simply drew attention to the reference in Polybius to “The Cavalry about the Court”, but in Mooren Kallikles has become “head of the περὶ τὴν ἄσλὴν ἱππεῖς” which is inaccurate to say the least.¹⁵

¹¹ Cf. Sekunda 2012, 11.

¹² *SEG* viii 532; Fraser 1972, II 168, n. 339, for the meaning of πλῆθος see Fraser 1972, II 232, n. 303 and quotation from Fraser 1972, I 88.

¹³ Mitford 1961, 20-22, nos. 53-4.

¹⁴ For a discussion of his other titles see Mitford 1961, 20-22 and Sekunda 2001, 59-60.

¹⁵ Mooren 1975, 21.

A papyrus in Milan (P. Med. Inv. 69.65) preserves a list of eight cavalrymen. At least the two first persons to appear on the list are designated as being “hundred aroura men” (ἑκατοντάρουροι). If the second time this word occurs on the list it is to be read in the plural, then the third person to appear on the list, or all eight indeed, are “hundred aroura men”. In my own opinion this is the most likely option, that the scribe tired of listing all people on the list as being “hundred aroura men” after listing the first two individuals as such. The fourth and fifth cavalrymen to appear on the list, are additionally designated as serving “in the royal squadron” (ἐν τῇ βασιλικῇ ἴληι). Each of the cavalrymen appearing on the list is accompanied by at least one other person who is designated as a “boy” (παῖς – or rather “page”) and in the case of the first person to appear on the list a groom (ἵπποκόμος). It is a matter of dispute, which, fortunately, does not concern us in this paper, whether these are of servile status or not. It is probable that they are not of servile status, however, as Heinen has pointed out that the normal word used in the papyri for slave is *akolouthos*.¹⁶

In my opinion it is probable that all eight cavalrymen appearing on the list belong to the Guard Cavalry Regiment, which, if Mooren’s conjecture is correct, may have been officially designated “The Cavalry about the Court” (οἱ περὶ τὴν αὐλὴν ἵππεις), while only the fourth and fifth persons on the list served in the royal squadron, which was an élite subunit within this élite regiment. This is, however, uncertain. The Milan papyrus seemingly confirms the Ptolemaic guard cavalry regiment was composed of cleruchs.

Despite the uncertainty which surrounds the correct regimental title, the dress of the élite cavalry regiment is easy to establish. In my first book on ancient military uniform, I established, on the basis of an analysis of the painted figures on the Alexander Sarcophagus, that the Companion Cavalry Regiment of Alexander the Great’s army, wore saffron-yellow cloaks with a sea-purple border.¹⁷ This is supported by a reference in Diodorus (17.77.5) that after the death of Darius Alexander distributed Persian cloaks with purple borders to the Companions. The emphasis in this reference should be on the word Persian cloaks.

¹⁶ Geraci 1979; Heinen 1983 (at p. 136); Straus 1983.

¹⁷ Sekunda, McBride 1984, 17. More than a quarter of a century ago the possibilities of publishing in colour were much more limited, and therefore the range of comparable examples colour in clothing published in colour were then not available. Furthermore, the pigments with which the marble of the Alexander Sarcophagus had faded over the ages, to leave a colour in which the blue hue predominates. This misled me in the reconstruction of the hue of sea-purple in the plates. This can now be corrected to a redder hue with the range of reproductions of ancient art that we have available nowadays.

This act was an early step in Alexander's attempt to create a dual Macedonian-Persian *archē*.

The Ptolemaic élite cavalry regiment, composed of Macedonians, were distinguished with saffron-yellow cloaks with purple borders just like their forerunners in the Companion Cavalry regiment. True 'sea-purple', extracted from the murex shell, was the most expensive dye known in Antiquity, and even the less expensive substitute purples were still costly. Its value led the Persian King to hoard purple cloth and to distribute it munificently as a mark of his power. Plutarch (*Alex.* 36.2) tells us that Alexander captured 5,000 talents' weight of purple from Hermione in the Royal Treasury at Susa, which had still kept its colour despite being stored there for 190 years. A talent weighed something over fifty pounds. Alexander, however, proved to be even more prodigal in his distribution of purple cloth, and some time later he was forced to write to the cities of Ionia, and first of all to the Chians, directing them to send purple dye to him, for he wanted to dress all his "Companions" in sea-purple clothes (*Athen.* 12.539f-540a). The Athenian comic writer Menander, in a fragment preserved in Athenaeus (11.484 D) has a mercenary boast of his loot, including gold seized from the treasury at Kyinda in 318, and Persian purple cloaks laid up in store.

After purple, the most valuable luxury dye in Antiquity was saffron. Saffron is harvested by hand from the three rusty-red pistils inside the petals of the crocus blossom. These then have to be carefully toasted dry: the saffron reducing to a fifth of its original weight in the process. Properly dried saffron will keep for a century. Although estimates vary from area to area, at least 20,000 blossoms have to be stripped to yield a single kilogram of dry saffron. In an hour a skilled female worker could separate 60 grams of stigmata from their blossoms. The crocus occurs spontaneously in Iran, and its cultivation is recorded in past times in a number of Iranian provinces, including Media.¹⁸

The following gives a catalogue of representations of cavalrymen in Ptolemaic service wearing saffron-yellow cloaks, on some of which are visible sea-purple borders. The bibliography prior to the catalogue of Blanche Brown (1957) is not cited – it has been supplemented by later published examples that have come to the attention of the author. I have not had the opportunity to see any of the representations with my own eyes, and so the descriptions given below are compiled from the descriptions of others, together with my own observation of published illustrations. The representations are given in what I believe to be their (approximate) chronological order.

¹⁸ Robert 1963, 181-4 with references.

(1) Stele of [Philo]xenos the Macedonian.



Figures 1-3. Alexandria, Greco-Roman Museum no. 10228. Found 1904 in the Sciathi cemetery (Brown 1957, no. 21, p. 26, pl xi).

There is sufficient space for approximately four letters in the space before the letters which have been preserved, which render the personal name [...]ξενος [Μακε]δών. There are many possibilities, but a restoration of [Φι]λοξενος [Μακε]δών seems probable from the traces of letters preserved on the stone. The personal name Philoxenos is attested reasonably frequently (five times) among the community of Macedonians later settled in Egypt.¹⁹ Any one of these individuals could have been homonymous descendents of the Philoxenos attested at the Sciathi cemetery. It is important that the inscription confirms the nationality of Philoxenos as a Macedonian, thereby confirming that, as a cavalryman, he belonged to the guard cavalry regiment.

The most detailed description of figures painted on the stele is given by Rostovtzeff,²⁰ based on his personal autopsy of the stele. The background of the stele is of a pinkish colour. The rider wears a saffron-yellow cloak with a purple border of a dark reddish hue. He is bareheaded, and dressed in what Rostovtzeff describes as a white chiton. The area of the stele around the torso of the figure is heavily damaged, and it is consequently difficult to decide whether he is armed with a composite cuirass or a muscle cuirass. Rostovtzeff, however, describes it as “a fine bronze cuirass” and from this description we conclude that the latter option is the more probable. Indeed, I believe traces of the musculature can be made out in the painting preserved on the front of the chest of the figure, but without personal autopsy it is impossible to be sure. Rostovtzeff confirms that the cuirass is furnished with shoulder-straps. The area of the upper arm is also heavily damaged, making observation difficult, but it seems that the cuirass is not equipped with a fringe of *pteruges* at the shoulder. It is certainly fitted with a double row of *pteruges* at the waist. These are possibly of bronze, but are more likely to be of yellow-coloured leather. The area of the upper thigh is also heavily damaged, making it difficult to decide whether a line of the white chiton is left showing beneath the *pteruges* of the cuirass. On his feet he wears medium brown boots of an indeterminate shape reaching to mid calf.

He is armed with a long spear which he carries in his right hand, and a sword which he wears on his left side, presumably slung on a baldric. The hilt seems to be of cruciform shape, although the details are difficult to establish. The pommel appears to be bronze and round in shape, the hand-grip itself appears to be modeled in two shades of grey, and the guard to be of white metal (presumably iron). The scabbard is of black leather, but white at its mouth presumably meant to represent bone. The chape is cannot be made out.

¹⁹ La’da 2002, E1554, E1646, E1647, E1786; cf. *SB* 1106; *LGN* IV 348, no. 13.

²⁰ Rostovtzeff 1941, Vol. I, 150, pl. XIX, 1.



(Fig. 4) Limestone form for the serial production of Boeotian helmets for the Ptolemaic cavalry, found at Memphis. It is currently in the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam.



(Fig. 5) Limestone helmet model from Mit-Rahineh/Memphis now in the Louvre.

The horse, a chestnut-coloured stallion, is shown in a rearing posture. Its horse furniture is of a medium tan leather, almost purplish-red in hue, consisting of a bridle with an iron bit, and a T-shaped breast band with the tine of the T passing between the front legs of the horse. The saddle-cloth is purple of a dark reddish hue, with a scalloped lower border and a rear border with longer flame-shaped projections.

A figure of probably what is best interpreted as a servant or groom runs behind (to the right of) the horseman. With his right hand he is holding on to the horse's tail, and in his left hand he is holding Philoxenos' helmet. The paint in this region is badly damaged, but the helmet appears to be bronze and of Boeotian type. The servant is bareheaded and barefooted, and he is wearing a tunic which is described as "yellowish" by Brown.

The Sciatbi cemetery is the earliest at Alexandria, dating to the last quarter of the fourth century. This would conform well with Philoxenos' Boeotian helmet. This form of helmet was at the height of its popularity during the second half of the fourth century, then went out of favour, enjoying a brief revival of popularity in Roman Republican times, at the turn of the second and first centuries BC.

A limestone form for the serial production of Boeotian helmets for the Ptolemaic cavalry was found at Memphis (Figure 4), and probably dates to the last quarter of the fourth century, like the stele from the Sciatbi cemetery. It is currently in the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam (*APM* 7864).²¹ A second limestone form for the production of Boeotian helmets, coming from Mit-Rahineh (Memphis) and now in the Louvre (Figure 5), is of the same shape, but, in contrast to the first example, richly decorated.²² The two limestone forms used in helmet production come originally from the same centre of production in Memphis. Memphis was a satrapal production centre in Achaemenid times, for vessels made of bronze and more precious metals, as is evident from the Tomb of Petesiris. Two of the walls of this tomb are decorated with paintings showing Petesiris inspecting a number of satrapal workshops producing goods in a mixed Egypto-Achaemenid style.²³ The Tomb of Petesiris, indeed, may be early Ptolemaic in date rather than late Achaemenid. Some scholars would ascribe it a date as late as the last decade of the fourth century.²⁴ Presumably the production of metal objects for state use continued at Memphis for several years, possibly even decades, before production was switched to Alexandria. Presumably the plain Boeotian helmet model was used in the production of helmets for the use of cav-

²¹ Ponger 1942, 87, nr. 179, pl. XL; Sekunda and McBride 1984, 20; Dintsis 1986, 18, 29, 172 n. 26, 200 cat. no. 5, pl. 3.6, suppl. 1.15; Moorman 2000, 192, no. 258, pl 90c.

²² Gagsteiger 1993, 27 fig 21.

²³ Lefebvre 1924, pls.vii-viii.

²⁴ Muscarella in Levine, Young (eds.) 1977, 193-4 n. 100.

alry units of the line, while the richly decorated example was used in the production of Boeotian helmets used by the Ptolemaic Guard Cavalry regiment.

(2) Anepigraphic Painted Grave-Stele from Hadra.



Figure 6. Alexandria Greco-Roman Museum no. 22116. Found 1925-26 in the Hadra cemetery (Brown 1957, no. 16, p. 24-5, pl. x).

The horseman is bareheaded. According to Brown “He seems also to wear a bowl-shaped head covering”, brown in colour. If Brown is correct, this will be a felt cap-comforter, but it might be simply a representation of his hair. He wears a saffron-yellow cloak, possibly with a purple border, but the details are difficult to

make out. Perhaps it is shown beneath the right arm of the horseman. According to Brown “the chlamys is brown-red”. He wears a muscle-cuirass which is described as “blue” in Brown’s description. It is probably iron or perhaps even silvered. It is difficult to decide whether the cuirass has shoulder straps or not.

Beneath his cuirass he either wears a dark red tunic, or a row of brown leather *pteruges* are shown. It is also hard to decide whether a dark red tunic is shown at the shoulder. According to Brown “The horseman’s tunic is dull yellow”.

He takes a helmet from his servant. According to Brown “The helmet is brown”. However, while brown lines are visible, and the inside of the helmet is brown, the brown lines seem to be dividing up areas of white. It is therefore possible that the helmet is silvered. The servant’s tunic is described as “yellowish” or off-white.

(3) The Mustafa Pasha Tomb I.



Figure 7. Mustafa Pasha Tomb I, doorway lintel above peristyle court leading to the burial chamber, horseman shown to the right (Brown 1957, no. 34, p. 52-3, pl. xxiv, 1).

The original colours were very faded when the tomb was discovered. It has been repainted relatively recently. Illustrations reconstructing the lintel in colour are also available.²⁵

There are three horsemen shown on the lintel. The horseman who interests us is on the right. I quote from the description of Brown. “The horse on the right is red-brown tending toward violet. The flesh of the rider is lighter red-brown. His cuirass was perhaps yellow originally. His long-sleeved tunic is red-violet and his chlamys yellow”.

The boots are a dark colour either dark brown or black. Again, if the saffron-yellow cloak originally possessed a sea-purple border, it has not been noticed, and therefore not been mentioned in any descriptions. It is also possible that the cloak worn by the elite regiment of the Ptolemaic army at some point in time lost its sea-purple border, but retained its basic colour of saffron-yellow.

(4) Cuirassed Cavalryman from “The Barberini Mosaic”.



Figure 8. The Nilotic mosaic from Praeneste called “The Barberini Mosaic”.

²⁵ Eg. that of Günter Grimm 1998, 95, abb. 93e.

A great amount of uncertainty surrounds the way in which the Nilotic mosaic from Praeneste, known as the “Barberini Mosaic” should be interpreted. As well as the Nilotic scenes themselves, a group of soldiers are also shown at a temple. Dates as far apart as *circa* 280 BC, the date of the expedition down the Nile sent by Ptolemy II Philadelphos under his general Pythagoras, and AD 131, the date of Hadrian’s visit to Elephantine.²⁶ Furthermore, the mosaic has been repaired repeatedly over the centuries since its discovery between the years 1588 and 1607, so one cannot be certain if any particular scene is original, or if it has suffered from inappropriate restoration. One thing of which we can be certain, however, is that the soldiers shown on the mosaic are Greek and not Roman. For the cavalymen wear Greek style cavalry boots, not Roman ones.²⁷ I would not bring the date as far forward as *circa* 280 BC, however, because the first and third figure from the right (with scorpion devices on their square shields) are cavalymen to judge by their boots, and according to current orthodoxy Greek cavalry did not start to use shields before the Galatian invasions which started in 279 BC.

The figure third from the right in the group of soldiers wears an elaborate pair of cavalry boots, seemingly grey in colour and with ornamental lappets. He wears a white tunic and over it a muscle-cuirass of white metal, presumably silvered. He wears a baldric slung at his left side. On his head he wears a wide-brimmed helmet, again of white metal presumably silvered, with a white plume. He probably carries a round shield in his left arm, a dark red-brown in colour, though it is difficult to make out in detail. He wears a saffron-yellow cloak but without a sea-purple border.

The date of these three last representatione are all later than the first: the painted grave stele of [Philo]xenos from the Sciatbi cemetery, dating to the last two decades of the fourth century. All the figures still wear a muscle cuirass, though in at least two cases, possibly all three, the cuirass appears to have been silvered or tinned, as does the helmet. The helmet also seems to be of a completely different shape than the Boeotian helmet on the grave stele of [Philo]xenos, closely fitted to the head, with a nape-piece and projecting visor and a comb-crest. Therefore it seems safe to conclude that the type of helmet has been replaced.

²⁶ Steinmeyer-Schareika 1978, 96

²⁷ Goette 1988, 451, fig. 35b.

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Abstract

The guard cavalry regiment of the Ptolemaic army, at least in its earlier existence was composed of ethnic Macedonians. It is not known for sure what the title of this regiment was. It might have been 'The Cavalry about the Court' (οἱ περὶ τὴν ἄσλὴν ἱππεῖς), but this is uncertain. At the battle of Raphia in 217 BC the regiment numbered about 700 men. It was organized into squadrons (*ilai*) of which the elite squadron was entitled 'the royal squadron' (ἡ βασιλικὴ ἄσλη). The regiment was formed of cleruchs. The soldiers of this regiment were distinguished by their saffron-yellow cloaks with sea-purple borders, as were their predecessors in the Companion cavalry regiment under Alexander. It was a heavy cavalry regiment, wearing cuirasses and helmets, and, in its later stages shields. At the end of the fourth century the helmets were of the Boeotian type, but later on these at first replaced by a type of comb-crested close helmet.