

SALAMIS SLICING - SHIP NUMBERS AND ORGANISATION AT SALAMIS

Notes by A.T. March 2020

I went back to my more modern translation of choice (ease of use and providing geographic context), The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories. And wrote a list of Hellenic ships for the battle. Also with a mind to the ten of thirty ships and an extra special squadron from Aeschylus, The Persians. The detail from Herodotus falls fairly naturally into groups of 30 ships, geographically/tribal grouped, but also likely tactical groupings. The numbers also, somewhat, illustrate the multiples of five that I think are a tactical basis for intra-squadron organisation. Given the above reading (and elsewhere) it is interesting to note this is NOT the way the list on the Battle of Salamis wikipedia page is organised. Also notice the switch from the ships of the people listed in Herodotus to the cities enumerated in modern lists!!

Tactical Organisation for Hellenic Forces

From the Peloponese

16, Lacedaemonians. Listed first honouring commander of fleet and Spartan martial supremacy.

40, Corinthians. Western flank

15, Sicyonians

10, Epidaurians

5, Troizenians

3, Hermionians

If I add in the one Crotonian from Italy then we have 90 ships here. The Spartan's occupied the preeminent right flank position and the Corinthians the left flank so the forces need to be split. Keeping geographically near neighbours together I am minded to group Sparta, Hermione, Croton, Epidauros for 30 on the right and on the left Corinth, Sicyon, Troezen for two groups of 30 (or more naturally three 20s?). The later city just across the harbour from Poros where I've spent many a happy hour rowing Olympias.

180, Athenian. Some debate about whether they had all of them there. Anyway, an easily divisible number that could suit any tactical grouping (6 x 30). Later in the Delian League we get a lot of 60 ship deployments.

20, Megarians

7, Ambraciots

3, Leucadians

A group of 30 ships from north of the Isthmus but with Corinthian connections in their past.

30, Aeginetans. Specially selected subset of 30 fastest/best ships.

20, Chalcidians. Ships provided by the Athenians ahead of the Battle of Artemision.

7, Eretrians

2, Keians. Also two additional ships, penteconters, to fill out the numbers.

A group from Euboea and another island just south. 29 triremes here but with some make up penteconters. Is it tempting to add in an extra trireme from Kythnos, the next island south, to make up the numbers here. But you could also include one of the two from Styra, actually on Euboea as well. Those extra small numbers of ships from the islands are not obviously a part of the consciously arranged larger tactical groupings.

Some extras from the islands

4, Naxians. Were supposed, by their citizens, to join the Persians - but did not!

2, Styrians.

1, Kythnians. Also was accompanied by a penteconter.

Various penteconters : Seriphians, 1; Siphnians, 1; Melians, 2.

1, Crotonian. From Italy.

So 12 (or 10) groups of 30, mostly, neatly mirroring Aeschylus:

"in ten squadrons, each of thirty ships, Greece plough'd the deep;
of these one held a distant station."

"Know then, in numbers the barbaric fleet was far superior:"

OK, pick a number, any number, . . . I was working on this first. But, . .

Thoughts include:

Persian commander of "five times fifty vessels".

Four named commanders of the Persian fleet.

Like the parallel structuring with the infantry command within the article you have on the website. There are 5 division commanders for each higher corp commander. Although that has 6 top level commanders. The web article argues for six of four of 50 to get 1200 and an extra 7 for six generals and one for the King.

ARTICLES CONCERNING THE FORCES AT SALAMIS

Catherine Rubincan:

Herodotus and His Descendants: Numbers in Ancient and Modern Narrative of Xerxes's Campaign,
Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, 2008

<https://www.academia.edu/30334284/>

[Herodotus and His Descendants Numbers in Ancient and Modern Narratives of Xerxes Campaigns](#)

Awesome contrast of numbers for the Greek fleet at Salamis, all essentially based on one source. Original Greek, two translations, three histories by modern authors.