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Author(s): W. R. Connor

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EARLY GREEK LAND WARFARE AS SYMBOLIC EXPRESSION*

The Greeks had little love for wild Ares. His temples and statues were sparse. Athena always came out the victor in battles between the two of them. His hair filled with dirt as he fell to cover seven acres with his body. The artisans accepted him only in naked form; they denied him his helmet; his spear off to one side, abandoned on a chair, diagonally placed, no longer a symbol — more a bit of decoration.¹

These lines from Yannis Ritsos' "Expiation" stand in sharp contrast to the assessment of the role of war in ancient Greek society offered by leading ancient historians over the past few decades.² Beginning in the 1950s, and increasingly in the 1960s and 1970s, many classical scholars concluded that ancient Greece was a war culture: it derived its values from war, it accepted war as something inevitable and natural, its citizens went out to fight every spring with the same regularity that blood-red cyclamens brighten the Greek hillsides.³ Arnaldo Momigliano, speaking in 1954 at the second International Congress of Classical Studies, was one of the first to argue this view:

War was an ever present reality in Greek life; it was a focus for emotions, ethical values, social rules . . . War was the centre of Greek life. Yet the amount of attention that Greek political thinkers gave to causes of war is negligible in comparison to the attention they paid to constitutional changes . . . The reason, I suspect, is that the Greeks came to accept war as a natural fact like birth and death about which nothing could be done.⁴

* This essay was originally presented in lecture form in the Spenser Trask series at Princeton University. I am especially grateful to Bruce Frier, Jack Kroll and Lawrence Stone for help and encouragement.

¹ Yannis Ritsos, *Exile and Return: Selected Poems, 1967-1974*, trans. Edmund Keeley (New York, 1985), pp. 85 f.

² Ritsos' view about the cults of Ares, however, matches that of the leading scholar of ancient Greek religion, Walter Burkert. See Burkert's *Greek Religion*, trans. J. Raffan (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), pp. 169 f.

³ Behind the movements of the last generation, to be sure, is a long tradition including Max Weber's definition of the Greek polis as "a community of warriors": *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, 1921), p. 558.

⁴ A. Momigliano, "Some Observations on Causes of War in Ancient Historiography", *Acta Congressus Madvigiani: Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Classical Studies, 1954*, i (Copenhagen, 1958), pp. 199-211; reprinted in his *Secondo* (cont. on p. 4)

The idea of controlling wars, like the idea of the emancipation of women and the idea of birth control, is part of the intellectual revolution of the XIX century and meant a break with the classical tradition of historiography about wars.⁵

In his Vanier lectures, published in 1972, Eric Havelock helped support this view by providing a more secure conceptual basis. He drew on the work of psychologists and social biologists and his own studies devoted to literacy. The title of the lectures reveals much of the approach — “War as a Way of Life in Classical Culture”.⁶ Havelock owed much to studies of aggression and territoriality by Konrad Lorenz and others; the idea of “cultural programming” was especially important in his thinking. He applied that idea to Homer, Herodotus and Thucydides, whose texts he believed “yield up the secret of a joint partnership in a literary enterprise, one which proved decisive in placing organised warfare at the heart of the European value system”.⁷ In Havelock’s view these authors not only exalted war, they legitimized it and encouraged its persistent prominence in European civilization.

Later Jacqueline de Romilly, Sir Kenneth Dover and others joined in emphasizing the universality of war among the Greeks.⁸ The late Sir Moses Finley also lent his support to this view — “War was a normal part of life . . . hardly a year went by without requiring a formal decision to fight, followed by a muster and the necessary preparations, and finally combat at some level”⁹ — and in recent

(n. 4 cont.)

contributo (Rome, 1960), pp. 21 ff.; and *Studies in Historiography* (London, 1966), ch. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, in *Secondo contributo*, p. 25. Cf. Y. Garlan, *War in the Ancient World*, trans. J. Lloyd (London, 1975), pp. 16 f. The analogy to contraception is misleading: Geneva, for example, had already entered “the age of contraception” by the end of the seventeenth century: see P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (New York, 1965), pp. 101, 132; and the Greeks of antiquity did not regard birth as something about which nothing could be done: see E. Eyben’s survey, “Family Planning in Antiquity”, *Ancient Soc.*, xi-xii (1980-1), pp. 5-82.

⁶ The lectures were published in E. Gareau (ed.), *Classical Values and the Modern World* (Ottawa, 1972), pp. 19-78.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁸ J. de Romilly, “Guerre et paix entre cités”, in J. P. Vernant (ed.), *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (Civilisations et sociétés, xi, Paris, 1968), pp. 207 ff. Note the criticisms of P. Ducrey, *Le traitement des prisonniers de guerre* (Écoles françaises d’Athènes, xvii, Paris, 1968), p. 3.

Dover commented in *Greek Popular Morality* (Oxford, 1974), p. 315, “It being taken for granted that there must be wars (Xen. *Hell.* vi 3.15), just as there must always be bad weather, the practical problem was always a problem of when, where and how”. From such a comment one might forget that the passage under discussion (“wars are forever breaking out and being concluded”) is part of an argument for settling a war and arranging peace as quickly as possible.

⁹ M. I. Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 67, cf. p. 60: “there were . . . few years in the history of most Greek city-states (of Sparta and Athens in particular) and hardly any years in succession, without some military

(cont. on p. 5)

years showed a disposition to carry the argument one stage further. Not only was war “normal”, it was unopposed: “No one in the city-state world, and certainly no social class, was opposed to war, conquest and empire”.¹⁰ Behind these comments a radical re-evaluation of Greek civilization was under way, and entering a wider intellectual discourse. In Hannah Arendt’s *On Revolution*, for example, we find a similar view of the Greeks: “Since for the Greeks political life by definition did not extend beyond the *polis*, the use of violence seemed to them beyond the need for justification in the realm of what we today call foreign affairs”.¹¹

These scholars and critics are the best of their generation; yet, as we shall see, they are wrong or seriously misleading in several major respects. They have, moreover, slipped into the old habit of treating the various periods of Greek civilization and the various forms of warfare as a unity. They have thereby encouraged the view that the Greeks were as monolithic in their acceptance of the inevitability of war as they were ferocious in its conduct. As a result diversities, tensions and perplexities that were extremely important to ancient Greek civilization are reduced to a cliché which has the Greeks tell:

. . . with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.¹²

This approach obscures much of the diversity of view to be found among various Greeks about war — their disagreements and dissensions, the diversity of practice and the inner division between a

(n. 9 cont.)

engagements”. A similar argument is presented by Garland, *War in the Ancient World*, p. 18. He argues that the alleged failure of the ancients to think deeply about the causes of war may be “because it was so widespread and perennial that it appeared to be outside human initiative and to fall within the domain of nature or the realm of the gods”. A passage that is often adduced as support of this view (Plato, *Laws*, 625 e ff.) is in fact a statement that one individual, Plato’s Cretan lawgiver, “condemned the stupidity of the mass of men in failing to perceive that all are involved ceaselessly in a lifelong war against all states . . . for . . . ‘Peace’ . . . is nothing more than a name”. It does not establish that most Greeks thought war was the normal or natural state of affairs.

¹⁰ Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World*, p. 113, citing R. Meiggs, *Athenian Empire* (Oxford, 1972), ch. 21, and W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* (Oxford, 1979), ch. 1. To show unanimity on questions of war among the Greeks Finley adduces only the Athenian decision to invade Sicily, by no means a typical event.

¹¹ H. Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York, 1963), p. 2.

¹² Wilfred Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est”, in *Poems*, ed. E. Blunden (London, 1933), p. 66.

recognition of the inevitability of war if independence is to be maintained and horror at some of its consequences.

To explore the full complexity of the role of war in Greek society would be a lengthy task. Within the confines of this essay, however, it is possible to ask what was the role of land warfare among the Greeks in the sixth and early fifth centuries B.C. What was it like? How common was it? Above all, how did it function and relate to other aspects of their society? This is but a small part of a larger story, but it may help clarify some important questions about the Greeks.

First, was war really as endemic as we have been told? It certainly seems so as we read through the pages of Greek literature: the battles of the *Iliad*, the marching songs of Tyrtaeus, Aeschylus' tragedies "full of Ares",¹³ and above all the historians — Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius — for whom war defined the opportunity for historical writing. Surely war was an extremely important fact for that culture and its writers. But to gauge its frequency by its prominence in literature would be to commit the historiographical fallacy — mistaking literary representation for historical fact. That fallacy obscures two important differences in warfare among the Greeks: first, a difference over time; and secondly, a difference by type of state.

This is well illustrated by Frank Frost's recent study of Athenian warfare from the late seventh until the late sixth century B.C.¹⁴ Volunteer expeditions, freebooting, civil strife, the use of mercenary troops are all well attested in this period, but an official call-up of the citizens for a real war is hard to find. Frost concludes that his "catalogue of Athenian military ventures . . . is surprisingly modest for a people who are supposed to be so fond of fighting" and that "no regular mobilization seems to have taken place".¹⁵ The average Athenian male of military age was not marching out to war every spring in the sixth century B.C. If he chose, he could probably have lived out his modest life expectancy without ever having joined in a battle.

His descendants in the next century, the era of Athenian hegemony, could not lead such a quiet life. The shift was a dramatic one,

¹³ Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1021.

¹⁴ F. Frost, "The Athenian Military before Cleisthenes", *Historia*, xxxiii (1984), pp. 283-94.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 292 f. Cf. H. van Effenterre, "Clisthène et les mesures de mobilisation", *Revue des études grecques*, lxxxix (1976), p. 4. The Solonian law cited by Gaius *apud* Justinian's *Digest*, 47.22.4, hints at the role of societies formed for profit from booty in early warfare.

coinciding with the fall of the Pisistratid tyranny, the increasing threat from Persia and Cleisthenes' restructuring of civic institutions, many of which, recent scholarship has pointed out, were designed to make the city more effective militarily.¹⁶ The reorganization of Athens into ten tribes, for example, provided a more effective basis for Athens's military power. That new system enabled Athens to take the leadership against the Persians and eventually to dominate many Greek states. At this time Athens was developing a new sense of itself and of its place in the Greek world. Soon it took on a hegemonic role among the Greeks. As it did so, it naturally found itself drawn with increasing frequency into warfare.¹⁷ Thus Athens illustrates both the distinctions alluded to earlier in this discussion: the extent of warfare changes over time and by type of state — hegemonic ambitions were far from universal among the Greeks, but their occurrence regularly led to an increased frequency of war. The case of Athens provides, therefore, a warning against the generalization that the Greeks were constantly at war throughout their history. Even Athens was not always at war. Nor was Sparta, as Finley himself pointed out some years ago, especially eager to engage in warfare.¹⁸ Often commercial states (for example, Corinth), festival centres (for example, Elis) or states with few hegemonic ambitions and relatively restrained neighbours (for example, Megara, Sicyon, Phlius and many of the islands) could enjoy protracted tranquillity.¹⁹

Some of what has now become orthodox doctrine about war among

¹⁶ On the military significance of Cleisthenes' reforms, see P. Siewert, *Die Trityten Attikas und die Heeresreform des Kleisthenes* (Vestigia, xxxiii, Munich, 1982). For a criticism of Siewert, see G. R. Stanton, "The Tribal Reforms of Kleisthenes", *Chiron*, xiv (1984), pp. 1-41.

¹⁷ Under these circumstances one would expect a shift in the way the protecting goddess of the city was represented — an increasing emphasis on her warlike aspects would be a likely reflection of the new concerns of the polis. It is not surprising, then, to find that while the veneration of the old olive-wood, probably seated, Athena Polias continued, the goddess's iconography in the fifth century presented her in warlike aspect, both in the bronze Promachos and in the chryselephantine Parthenos. Cf. C. J. Herington, "Athena in Athenian Literature and Cult", *Parthenos and Parthenon*, supplement to *Greece and Rome*, x (1963), pp. 61-73.

¹⁸ M. I. Finley, "Sparta", in Vernant (ed.), *Problèmes de la guerre*, p. 154: "After the Second Messenian War and the sixth-century revolution, Sparta was, if anything, less willing to join battle than many other Greek states".

¹⁹ On Elis, see Diodorus Siculus, 8.1.3. There is evidence for frequent warfare between Thebes and opponents such as Tanagra, Corone and Thespieae (Herodotus, 5.79.2) and between Sparta and Arcadian cities such as Tegea (Herodotus, 1.67). Note, however, that it is by no means clear that these conflicts were always official state action. The example of Attica reminds us of the activities of groups of private citizens joined together for the acquisitions of war. See Frost, "Athenian Military before Cleisthenes", pp. 286-9.

the Greeks needs, therefore, to be modified. Yet, although we need to be more cautious in assessing the frequency of war, its importance in ancient Greek civilization is not in dispute. A proper assessment of its role, however, depends on the recognition that historians cannot rely on what the ancient Greeks *said* about war, but must examine closely how war was conducted and how it related to other parts of civic life.²⁰ At the same time scholarly developments in other historical periods where stimulating work has been done on the connection between war and economic, social and cultural setting provide useful analogies and methods. A close examination of land warfare among the Greek city-states of the archaic and early classical periods shows that for the Greeks war was more than tactics, strategy and gore; it was linked to almost every aspect of their social organization and to their rich imaginative life. The significance of war in early Greek civilization, it can be seen, is not to be measured by its frequency but by its symbolic power.

But when we ask what a land war was like for the city-states of continental Greece during this period, it is surprising, after all the attention classicists have paid to military history, how hard it is to find a comprehensive description of a typical land campaign.²¹ The next section of this essay pieces together as vivid a picture as possible — in effect, as “thick” a description as possible — in order to clarify the symbolic and cultural role of warfare among the Greeks.²²

I

A provocation has taken place that a city regards as a *casus belli*. Whatever the ultimate roots of the dispute, each party often presents its action as justified self-defence or as a legitimate response to an act of hubris, that is, some overreaching that the other state thinks it can

²⁰ Greek literature constantly deplures war, as has often been pointed out, most recently by Peter Karavites, “Greek Interstate Relations in the Fifth Century B.C.”, *Parola del passato*, ccxvi (1984), pp. 163-5. See also P. Ducrey, *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, trans. J. Lloyd (New York, 1985).

²¹ Classical scholarship has clarified many individual points in Greek military procedure in recent years. Especially valuable are the volumes by W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, four of which have now been issued by the University of California Press. The first of these originally appeared as *Ancient Greek Military Practice* (Univ. of California Publications in Classical Studies, vii, Berkeley, 1971).

²² The description in the text is a composite drawn from sources that apply to several Greek cities, especially Athens, during the archaic and early classical periods. Since Spartan military and social practices differed in important respects, evidence relating to Sparta has been used very sparingly. On Spartan military matters, see most recently J. F. Lazenby, *The Spartan Army* (Warminster, 1985).

get away with. The ancient sources, although they are often from later periods, probably replicate the widespread Greek practice of playing down questions of political ideology, economics or long-range shifts in the balance of power among states. These issues are often masked as a dispute over some border land, as a response to an offence arising out of some ritual matter or as the obligation to be loyal to some friendly state.²³ Whenever possible war is presented as a matter of honour rather than of economic or strategic interest.²⁴

Before war is undertaken an oracle will probably be consulted, most likely at a major pan-Hellenic centre such as Delphi. The response of the oracle will be discussed in the city's assembly before a final vote on war is taken. After that a herald should be sent forward to the enemy to declare war. All subsequent intercourse between the states will require the presence of a herald.²⁵

Before an expedition can take place, however, two further measures are needed. First, sacrifices must be made, to the protecting divinities of the town of course, but also in some states to Eros or to virgins, such as the Hyakinthidai in Athens, famed in myth for their devotion to the city.²⁶ Secondly, a decision must be made about which citizens are to take part in the expedition.²⁷ In fifth-century Athens ten

²³ Border disputes: the Cynourian land between Argos and Sparta, the *hiera orgas* dispute between Athens and Megara or the Oropus question between Athens and Boeotia.

Ritual matters: the obligations owed to the Athenians by the Aeginetans based on their possession of the figures of Damia and Auxesia (Herodotus, 5.82 f.); the Corcyreans' failure to allow the proper role for a Corinthian representative in matters of sacrifice (Thucydides, 1.25.4).

²⁴ The *hiera orgas*, for example, so prominent in the common ancient view of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, was almost surely not prime farmland but a woody, mountainous tract, significant more for its links to the Eleusinian cult than for its economic value. See W. K. Pritchett, "The Attic Stelai", *Hesperia*, xxv (1956), p. 256.

²⁵ On declarations of war, see Thucydides, 1.29.1, and the discussion in Ducrey, *Traitement des prisonniers de guerre*, p. 3. In times of especially intense warfare a state might refuse to send heralds to or accept them from its opponent. This would result in an "undeclared war", an *akeruktos polemos*, and might also preclude the usual truces for pan-Hellenic festivals such as the Olympic games (cf. Philostratus, *Peri Gymn.*, 7), rule out most forms of negotiated settlement and even prevent the truce for the taking-up of the dead after a battle. See J. L. Myers, "AKERUKTOS POLEMOS", *Classical Rev.*, lvii (1943), pp. 66 f.; Garland, *War in the Ancient World*, p. 48.

²⁶ Some of these sacrifices were purificatory ones: see Onasander, 5. On sacrifices to Eros in Sparta, Crete and Thebes, see Athenaeus, 13.561e. On the Hyakinthidai *et al.*, see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 267; Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans*, trans. P. Bing (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 64 f., who notes the parallel to the sacrifice of Makaria in Euripides, *Heraclidae*.

²⁷ Was there also a norm of sexual abstinence before war? See Burkert, *Homo Necans*, p. 61 n. 12.

commanders, elected annually, one from each tribe, saw that a list of names was posted by the Eponymous Heroes, that is, by the monument with the statues of the ten mythological figures after whom the Athenian tribes were named.²⁸ Those whose names are listed know that they are to appear on a certain day, with equipment and their own provisions for food supply.²⁹

For the main body of troops the equipment is heavy armour, *hopla* — shield, breastplate, helmet, greaves, an eight-foot thrusting-spear, sword or dagger. These heavy-armed troops — the hoplites — take their name from that armour; the investment is considerable: these men are not necessarily aristocrats, but they are certainly not poor. Their weapons would require an expenditure equivalent to several months' wages at the rates for moderately skilled craftsmen.³⁰

²⁸ See A. Andrewes, "The Hoplite Katalogos", in G. S. Shrimpton and D. J. McCargar (eds.), *Classical Studies Presented to M. McGregor* (Locust Valley, 1981). The system in theory provided that all hoplites would serve in turn, but it is likely that in practice provision was made for volunteers and for the generals to select individuals they knew would be especially valuable. Aristophanes shows us the reactions of a citizen who found his name on the list when he had not expected it. In the Athens of Aristotle's day this was done by calling up certain age groups, each of which was associated with a hero; for example, the call might be for all hoplites from twenty to forty years old. Each annual group had a hero whose name could also be used to call up the troops. Thus the marshalled army was not simply an array of men of various ages but a network of protecting heroes. The system is described in the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*, 53; see P. Rhodes's commentary ad loc.; C. Habicht, "Neue Inschriften", *Athenische Mitteilungen*, lxxvi (1961), pp. 143-6; Vernant (ed.), *Problèmes de la guerre*, p. 163.

Exemptions from military service were extended to members of the boule, the annual magistrates, choreutai and a few others.

²⁹ On problems of food supply caused by the absence of an adequate commissariat, see J. K. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (Berkeley, 1970), pp. 43-66.

³⁰ The price of armour is hard to determine but may be estimated in two ways. U. Kahrstedt, *Staatsgebiet u. Staatsangehörige* (Studien zum öffentlichen Recht Athens, i, Göttingen, 1934), pp. 359 f., argued that at the end of the archaic period Athens sometimes subsidized the cost of purchasing armour by making a grant of approximately 30 drachmae to qualified individuals. This figure may not have covered the full cost of armour, to judge from estimates of the cost of bronze and workmanship. The price of bronze in fifth-century Athens may be derived from the material in M. Price, "Early Greek Bronze Coinage", in C. M. Kraay and G. K. Jenkins (eds.), *Essays in Greek Coinage Presented to Stanley Robinson* (Oxford, 1968), p. 103. This suggests that at the level of 85 per cent copper and 15 per cent tin, bronze would cost approximately 65 drachmae per talent or about 2.6 drachmae per kilo. Such armour would surely weigh at least 10 kilos, perhaps a good deal more if a shield alone weighed 7.5 kilos, as estimated by P. Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War* (Englewood Cliffs, 1981), pp. 47 f.; cf. P. Krentz, "The Nature of Hoplite Battle", *Classical Antiquity*, iv (1985), p. 52 n. 14. 10 kilos of bronze would cost about 26 drachmae, and the workmanship might well double the cost. In addition one would need a sword of high-quality iron, probably a dagger as well, and a strong wooden shaft for the thrusting-

Since rations are not supplied by a quartermaster corps, some food would be brought along and the rest purchased at special markets *en route*. A slave, and perhaps a mule, to help carry tent, bedroll and miscellaneous equipment would be very welcome.

The appointed time for departure is normally an early summer morning after the quarter moon, for the Greeks — the enlightened rational Greeks — waited until the moon and the omens were auspicious.³¹ After individual vows and farewells, the army moves out, and with it a large percentage of the population. Athens sent nine thousand hoplites against the Persians at Plataea, probably almost all its available land troops. Fifty years later, at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the city could dispose thirteen thousand citizen hoplites of military age plus sixteen thousand older citizens and metics who could guard the walls and do garrison duty.³² Even smaller cities would find that with allies, cavalry and light-armed troops a fighting force of well over ten thousand could often be mustered. In addition, heralds, traders who aim to buy the booty and perhaps jugglers, dancers, singers, whores — anyone who thinks a profit could be turned by going along — each with gear and noise form a great audience for the coming spectacle.³³ Sacrificial animals, especially goats, accompany them, with shepherds of course to keep them together. But the army itself need not be herded in very close order. There was a tacit understanding among Greek poleis that you did not

(n. 30 cont.)

spear. These very crude calculations suggest 75-100 drachmae as a conservative estimate.

The second method of calculation is to work from the prices given to actual pieces of armour. This method is no less hazardous than the other, for the examples are so few and problematic. The most explicit evidence comes from mid-fourth-century Thasos: J. Pouilloux, *Recherches sur l'histoire et les cultes de Thasos*, i (Etudes Thasiennes, iii, Paris, 1954), no. 141, pp. 371-80. This implies a full suit of armour would cost not less than 3 *mnai*, or 300 drachmae — a high figure by comparison to those derived above and the (admittedly rather poor) evidence for classical Athens: see Pritchett, "Attic Stelai", pp. 306-8. If we estimate a spear at between 2 and 3 drachmae and a shield at 20 drachmae, the range of 75-100 drachmae per outfit seems plausible. For an army of five thousand, the total cost of such armour would be between 60 and 80 talents; if the Thasian figures are correct, the armour for such an army would cost not less than 250 talents.

³¹ Pritchett, *Ancient Greek Military Practice*, p. 119. H. Popp, *Die Einwirkung von Vorzeichen, Opfern und Festen auf die Kriegführung der Griechen* (Erlangen diss., Würzburg, [1957]), showed that omens, etc., were taken very seriously. See also M. G. Goodman and A. J. Holladay, "Religious Scruples in Ancient Warfare", *Classical Quart.*, xxxvi (1986), pp. 151-71.

³² Herodotus, 9.28 (Plataea); Thucydides, 2.13 (Peloponnesian War). The Spartans at Plataea brought seven helots with every hoplite plus heavy-armed Perioikoi, a total of forty-five thousand men.

³³ On the presence of prostitutes, see Alexis of Samos, quoted in Athenaeus, 13.572 f.

ambush or otherwise try to surprise a hoplite force.³⁴ Non-Greeks, Greeks who were not organized in true poleis, poleis that were fighting with light-armed troops might try to gain an advantage in that way — but the heavy-armed troops of a self-respecting city would regard such a surprise attack as *apate*, deception, legitimate in some military situations but not in hoplite battles.³⁵

Indeed when they finally draw close to the other city some agreement, tacit or explicit, determines when and where the two forces will engage.³⁶ The reliance on heavy armour dictates a plain — good agricultural land, usually on the periphery of the invaded territory.³⁷ The attackers, after making suitable sacrifices at the border, might ravage the enemy's territory for some while if he hesitated to engage them, mocking and taunting at any opportunity.³⁸ But at last the two armies, ritually purified, armour polished, are grouped in tribal regiments, ready to fight. Each hoplite straps a circular shield on the left arm, and carries a thrusting-spear in his right hand.³⁹

The best fighters are stationed in the front and to the rear.⁴⁰ Behind the front rank, another and then another, regularly eight of them, in later times sometimes sixteen, even fifty. If we allow 6 feet per man and eight men deep, a phalanx of ten thousand men would reach approximately 7,500 feet in length — the full width of many small

³⁴ Stratagems came to have a very important role in ancient warfare, even if many of them seem naïve or clumsy to us. But in this period hoplite armies would not normally try to surprise other hoplite armies. See Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, ii, p. 160. Such measures were for light-armed troops, barbarians and the semi-civilized. There were, however, exceptions to the norm: for example, Diodorus Siculus, 12.6.2 (447 B.C.).

³⁵ Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, ii, pp. 156 ff., discusses surprise attacks. These might be expected in sieges, in attacks by light-armed troops or as a result of naval operations (cf. Herodotus, 6.88), but among hoplite armies are unusual in this period.

³⁶ Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, ii, pp. 147 ff.

³⁷ Did they invoke the enemy's gods as they crossed the border through an *epitheiasmos*? The evidence is gathered *ibid.*, iii, pp. 322 f. Thucydides, 2.74 f., applies to the undertaking of a siege, not to an army's crossing of the border. Thucydides, 4.87, is only slightly better evidence, and Onasander, *Strat.*, 4.1-3, is late.

³⁸ On these sacrifices, the *diabateria*, see Burkert, *Homo Necans*, p. 40 n. 22; Popp, *Einwirkung von Vorzeichen*, pp. 42-6. On taunts, see Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, ii, p. 153.

³⁹ On ritual purification, see Onasander's treatise, *The General*, 5. The extent of hoplite training was probably quite low in most Greek cities. See most recently E. Wheeler, "Hoplomachia and Greek Dances in Arms", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, xxiii (1982), pp. 223-33; Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, iv.

⁴⁰ This was Nestor's advice in *Iliad*, 4.297-300. Cf. Hesychius, s.v. *laurostatai* (Lambda 25, Latte); cf. Pollux, 4.106. Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 3.1.8, speaks of putting the best troops in the front and the rear and the weaker in the middle, but he seems to be thinking of the order of troops during a march.

Greek plains.⁴¹ On the flanks, light-armed troops and cavalry are stationed to prevent encirclement and to move in for the kill when one of the two armies gives way. Just before, the engagement omens are taken;⁴² sacrificial animals are slaughtered in the sight of all.⁴³ Under other circumstances the sequel to such killing would normally be a sacrificial meal with its correlative the strengthening of communal ties among those bound together by the ritual and the fellowship of the meal.⁴⁴ But in war the immediate sequel is the shedding of more blood.⁴⁵

Each commander now gives a short speech of encouragement, and then most likely takes his place in the front ranks. Since there is now little room for manoeuvring or brilliant strategy, the commanders have no reason to stand aside from the fray. A trumpet sounds or someone from one army moves forward carrying a lighted torch and casts it into the ranks of the enemy.⁴⁶ The two armies are now moving forward, sometimes on the double.⁴⁷ This is the moment for the

⁴¹ On the distance between hoplite fighters, see especially George Cawkwell, *Philip of Macedon* (London, 1978), pp. 150-3; A. J. Holladay, "Hoplites and Heresies", *Jl. Hellenic Studies*, cii (1982), pp. 94 ff.; J. K. Anderson, "Hoplites and Heresies: A Note", *Jl. Hellenic Studies*, civ (1984), p. 152; and most recently Krentz, "Nature of Hoplite Battle", pp. 50 ff.; Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, iv. The tactical manual of Asclepiodotus, although written later than our period, provides a useful hint that practice varied: if an army charged it might draw itself into "compact spacing", that is, about a yard from right shoulder to right shoulder; an army that was about to receive such an attack might draw in even closer to "locked shields" — half that distance. But the most common pattern seems to have been "an interval of four cubits" — that is, about six feet from right shoulder to right shoulder.

⁴² Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 60. On the role of omens, etc., see Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, iii, chs. 1-4; Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World*, pp. 94 f.; and the works cited in n. 31 above. The Persians and the Greeks delayed ten days before the battle of Plataea, each waiting for favourable omens.

⁴³ Porphyry, *de abstinentia*, 2.56, cites Phylarchus to show that human sacrifice was regularly performed before battle. See the discussion in M. P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste* (Leipzig, 1906), p. 406 n. 1.

⁴⁴ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 267, citing *Homo Necans*, pp. 46-8, 64-6.

⁴⁶ On the Pырphoroi, see Euripides, *Phoenissae*, 1377 f., and the scholia ad loc. The principal modern discussion is F. Schwenn, "Der Krieg in griechischen Religion", *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, xxi (1922), pp. 58 ff. Schwenn also discusses the sacral role of the trumpet.

⁴⁷ The Dorian Greeks, especially the Spartans, had somewhat different practices: they used music extensively at this point, with *auloi*, instruments like a recorder, playing loud and the troops singing: Thucydides, 5.69-70, describes a battle between Argives and Spartans and suggests that the use of *auloi* was distinctive of the Spartan army. The Spartans, we are told, sang verses from Tyrtaeus. The use of the paean as a battle hymn was also primarily Dorian: Thucydides, 7.44.6. On the pace at which the two armies drew near together, see J. A. S. Evans, "Herodotus and Marathon", *Florilegium*, vi (1984), p. 5 n. 16.

battle-cry, whose name, *alalai* or *alalalai*, gives an onomatopoeic hint of its chilling sound.⁴⁸

The pattern of the fighting itself has been much disputed in recent years, perhaps because the actual pattern varied from battle to battle or even from hour to hour.⁴⁹ Sometimes there seem to have been individual engagements, perhaps for an extended period of time. In these each soldier's dexterity and agility were crucial. But a characteristic feature of the hoplite battle is the *othismos*, the thrust, compelling the enemy to give ground, often by locking shield against shield and driving the opposing force backward.⁵⁰ Eventually one side gives way, turning, running, every man for himself. The break is called the *trope*, "the turning" — a physical turning, but also the transformation of collective anonymous combat into hand-to-hand fights with sword or dagger, scenes of supplication, armour thrown away, headlong flight to the hills or to some local shrine for safety, the closing-in of the light-armed troops and pursuit by the cavalry — deaths, more deaths.⁵¹ Anonymous, narrativeless combat is suddenly turned into a replica of the Homeric battle scenes.⁵²

Pursuit would not go very far, nor would the victorious army move rapidly to follow up on its advantage.⁵³ The battlefield remains the focus of attention, for much work is still to be done. The enemy dead must be stripped of their armour; the victor's dead gathered, identified and readied for burial.⁵⁴ The victorious commanders now

⁴⁸ The words for "battle-cry", however, are not restricted to war contexts. It was also a shout of joy or ecstatic release: see Liddell, Scott and Jones, *Greek Lexicon*, s.vv. They were probably also used in a *komos* when the victorious army returned home: see Aristophanes, *Birds*, 1763. As Burkert, *Homo Necans*, p. 48 n. 49, points out, Pindar, fr. 78, makes explicit the link between the war-cry and sacrificial aspects of warfare.

⁴⁹ See the bibliography in n. 41 above.

⁵⁰ Note especially Thucydides, 4.96.2.

⁵¹ The *trope* was not inevitable: Thucydides, 1.105. The fight that followed could be terrible, and one must assume that despite supplication many were killed in the heat of the moment. But if a person were taken prisoner he was not to be put to death: Euripides, *Heracleidae*, 961-74, 1017-55. Nor was the body of an enemy to be mutilated.

⁵² This phase of the battle is often neglected by those who wish to emphasize the anonymous, collective nature of hoplite warfare. See, for example, M. Detienne, "La phalange", in Vernant (ed.), *Problèmes de la guerre*, p. 125. The *trope*, however, is not merely a break in the ranks, it is a transformation of the type of fighting and the role of the individual warrior.

⁵³ On the limitation of pursuit, see P. Krentz, "Casualties in Hoplite Battles", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, xxvi (1985), p. 20.

⁵⁴ According to Diodorus Siculus, 8.27.2, Spartan soldiers wrote their names on a small stick which served as a bracelet, so that if they died they could be readily identified. Athens in the classical period and some other Greek states normally brought the ashes of the fallen warriors back to the home city for burial, individual or collective.

(cont. on p. 15)

garland themselves and their troops in celebration of the victory and in honour of the gods.⁵⁵ The troops construct a victory marker, called a *trophaion*, a word related to the term for the “turning” (*trope*). The *trophaion* should be located “at the spot where the battle had turned about: weapons looted from the enemy, armour, helmets, shields and spears are hung about an oak post . . . the *trophaion* is an image of Zeus, the lord of victory”.⁵⁶

When the defeated had regrouped they would send a herald asking for a truce to take up their dead. Under Greek custom the victor could not honourably refuse such a truce — called the *spondai*, the pouring of libations.⁵⁷ But the request combined with the control of the battlefield is the definition of victory and the request for the bodies a sure mark of defeat.⁵⁸ This is true no matter what the strategic implications of the battle might be.

Before long the captives would be ransomed by friends or relatives; fixed amounts govern the ransom and a strong cultural norm, sometimes violated by the Greeks and sometimes misunderstood by modern scholars, discourages the enslavement of Greeks captured in a hoplite battle.⁵⁹ Enslavement could be expected in some other situations, but not in land battles waged by hoplites.⁶⁰

(n. 54 cont.)

See the exchange between Noel Robertson, “The Collective Burial of Fallen Soldiers”, *Echos du monde classique*, new ser., ii (1983), pp. 78-92, and Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, iv, pp. 94-259.

⁵⁵ Xenophon, *Agésilas*, 2.15; the evidence applies to Sparta, but the practice was probably pan-Hellenic.

⁵⁶ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 267. See also Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, ii, pp. 246 f.; Garland, *War in the Ancient World*, p. 62; W. C. West III, “The Trophies of the Persian Wars”, *Classical Philology*, lxiv (1969), pp. 7-19.

⁵⁷ For a mythological precedent for the practice: Diodorus Siculus, 3.71.6.

⁵⁸ In Herodotus, 1.82.5, it is holding the field and stripping the armour from the dead that defines victory. Cf. Thucydides, 4.44.

⁵⁹ On the treatment of captives, see above, n. 51; Ducrey, *Traitement des prisonniers de guerre*; Pritchett, *Ancient Greek Military Practice*, p. 81; Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, ii, p. 173; P. Karavites, *Capitulations and Greek Interstate Relations* (Hypomnemata, lxxi, Göttingen, 1982). The evidence seems at first glance to conflict. Certainly on many occasions Greeks killed other Greeks taken in war. But part of the difficulty is created by a conflict between two norms — one enjoining ransoming rather than killing or enslaving of Greeks taken in battle (for example, Euripides, *Herakles Mainomenos*, 961, 1019), the other allowing the victorious besieger of a city to treat the captives as he saw fit (for example, Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 1.6.14). This could result in the death of military-age males and the enslavement of women and children. Much of the evidence used to suggest that the Greeks enslaved other Greeks after battles in fact applies to sieges. Siege warfare too was governed by a code, but a radically different one from that which applied to hoplite battles.

⁶⁰ Among the Peloponnesians there was a fixed sum, 2 *mnas* (200 drachmae) for each soldier captured: Herodotus, 6.79.1. This is approximately twice the amount calculated as the value of a set of bronze armour. 1 *mna* per person is mentioned as the ransom collected by Dionysius of Syracuse in 384 B.C.: Diodorus Siculus, 14.111.4.

Next the spoils of battle must be divided. These may be substantial, given the vast wealth that moves with such an army. The taking of booty was perhaps the largest movement of capital in Greek civic life.⁶¹ Figures easily reach into the hundreds of talents, and in later periods thousands are not uncommon.⁶² The allocation of this booty is understandably a major matter of concern. First, “the top of the pile”, the *akrothinia* is set aside as a tithe, a real tenth, for the gods — usually through a dedication at Delphi or another pan-Hellenic sanctuary where all could see it.⁶³ Here war and poetry intersect: some Simonides should be found to write a suitable epigram for the victory. The remaining bronze armour and the proceeds from the ransoming normally go to the city, perhaps with a specified share for the commanders.⁶⁴ In addition, of course, there are purses and small pieces of booty taken by individual soldiers.

As a result of a hoplite battle, in other words, wealth moves from the private into the public realm, often through public-work projects — temples, parks or fortifications.⁶⁵ Commemoration through these projects and through dedications is extremely important, perhaps even more so than following up on the strategic advantage, if any, of the battle. Greek commanders sometimes seem much more concerned with the proper commemoration of their victory than in anything Clausewitz would tell them to do. Apart from the anomalous seizure of Messenia by the Spartans, territorial acquisition, for example, appears primarily in the change of sovereignty over marginal border lands. Each state retains control over its main agricultural land. Nor do we often find in this period a victorious

⁶¹ It was not solely an exchange between states. Since the invading state often pillaged for a while before the hoplite battle, considerable wealth could be gathered. If the invader were then defeated, much of this wealth would then be recycled by the victorious army into other segments of the society.

⁶² See the figures in Pritchett, *Ancient Greek Military Practice*, pp. 75 ff. Even allowing for exaggeration by the victorious party, the amounts are huge when compared to other items in the state's budget. The total cost of the Parthenon, for example, is estimated at 469 talents: R. S. Stanier, “The Cost of the Parthenon”, *Jl. Hellenic Studies*, lxxiii (1953), pp. 68-76.

⁶³ On tithes from booty, see Pritchett, *Ancient Greek Military Practice*, pp. 93-100. The Athenians often made a dedication in their own land, as in the monument commemorating the victory over the Boeotians and Euboeans discussed in Herodotus, 5.77, or the temple to Eukleia, Good Fame, from the spoils at Marathon. On Eukleia, see H. A. Shapiro, “*Ponos and Aponia*”, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, xxv (1984), pp. 108 f.

⁶⁴ On prizes to generals, see Pritchett, *Ancient Greek Military Practice*, pp. 83 f. The amounts could be very substantial: Demosthenes' three hundred panoplies mentioned in Thucydides, 3.114, might well have been worth 3-5 talents.

⁶⁵ For example, Plutarch, *Cimon*, 13.

hoplite force attempting to change the form of government of a state whose hoplite army has been defeated — to substitute a democracy for an oligarchy, for example. The ideology of ancient Greek land warfare, the representation of war as a matter of honour, affects its conduct and results. Underlying the violence and destruction of war is a logic based not on the use of war as a means to certain ends but on its effectiveness as a way of self and civic representation.

The dramatic change at the moment of the *trope* — the shift from collective to individual fighting — reappears at the end of the battle through the censure of those who left the expedition at some point (*lipostratia*) and through awards to those who distinguished themselves in courage (*aristeia*).⁶⁶ There follows the return home with due festivity; some evidence indicates the existence of victory processions in early Greece, although nothing like the Roman triumph or the Byzantine ceremony of *adventus*.⁶⁷ Surely much festivity and revelry follow a victory — happy celebrations, but also a way of re-establishing the unity of the community.⁶⁸

That unity is demonstrated above all in the honouring of the war dead. By the late fifth century the Athenians cremated the dead on the battlefield in tribal pyres; the ashes of the fallen were then brought back to Athens, kept in tribal caskets for civic burial.⁶⁹ And at the end of the campaigning season would be held a public funeral ceremony consisting of an oration in honour of the fallen, funeral games and a funeral feast for the relatives of the dead.⁷⁰ The final

⁶⁶ See Herodotus, 9.81; Plutarch, *de fato*, 569 e; Pritchett, *Ancient Greek Military Practice*, pp. 82 ff. Plato, *Symposium*, 220 d (cf. Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 7), indicates that in Athens the generals awarded the *aristeia*. Some of the difficulty involved in the awarding of *aristeia* might be avoided by using athletic competitions to determine the winners of prizes: Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 3.4.16, 4.2.5; Agesilaus, 1.25. On *lipostratia* and related charges, see G. Busolt and H. Swoboda, *Griechische Staatskunde*, ii (Munich, 1926), p. 1127 n. 2.

⁶⁷ On arrival ceremonies in Greek times, see S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony* (Berkeley, 1981), pp. 19, 281 n. 14. On other major points of contrast between this pattern of warfare and that used by the Romans, see Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World*, pp. 129 f.

⁶⁸ In the fourth century there were banquets in the agora celebrating victories: Theopompus, *FGrHist*, 115 F 213, *apud* Athenaeus, 12.532 d.

⁶⁹ Thucydides, 2.34, describes the Athenian “ancestral custom”. On the practice, see the discussions cited in n. 54 above; Nicole Loraux, *L'invention d'Athènes* (Paris, 1981).

⁷⁰ The evidence for the funeral orations is well set forth in Loraux, *Invention d'Athènes*. On funeral games, see Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, iv, pp. 106-24. On the funeral feast (the *perideipnon*), see Demosthenes, *de corona*, 288; and, more generally, D. Kurtz and J. Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs* (London, 1971), pp. 146 f.; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 193 and n. 28.

commemoration, however, is a memorial consisting of names, just names, name after name after name, arranged by tribe. Once again we have a movement from the private to the public realm. Naming for the Greeks, as for us, is a family matter; but in war the polis controls the names, not only in conscription, but in the award of honours at the end of the battle, in regulating what display a commander may make of his success and above all in the tribal monuments honouring the dead.⁷¹ These, unlike the battlefield *trophaion*, are intended to be permanent. As the impermanence of the trophy marks the transitoriness of human relationships, especially interstate ties of all sorts, the inscribed names of the dead mark the endurance that comes from the merging of the individual into the community.⁷²

II

The peculiarities of this pattern of warfare are evident to us, as they were to some critics in antiquity. Herodotus, for example, has Mardonius, the Persian commander, say:

And yet, I am told, these very Greeks are wont to wage wars against one another in the most foolish way, through sheer perversity and doltishness. For no sooner is war proclaimed than they search out the smoothest and fairest plain that is to be found in all the land, and there they assemble and fight; whence it comes to pass that even the conquerors depart with great loss: I say nothing of the conquered for they are destroyed altogether.⁷³

Herodotus has Mardonius give expression to a reaction that many Greeks of the fifth century are likely to have shared. Yet, as the historical Mardonius found out, the system was highly effective, especially against the Persians. Yet its military effectiveness did not prevent extensive codification and thorough ritualization. Both features demand comment.

⁷¹ Athens, for example, denied Cimon the right to put his name upon the Herms set up to commemorate his victory: Aeschines, 3 (Against Ctesiphon), 183-6; Plutarch, *Cimon*, 7.4. Detienne, "Phalange", p. 128, notes the Spartan parallel in Thucydides, 1.132. Note also the apparent taboo against the naming of individuals or the recounting of individual exploits of heroism in the Attic funeral orations prior to that given by Hyperides.

⁷² The impermanence of the trophy corresponds to the Greek habit of often making treaties for a fixed period of time, rather than for ever, as the Romans did. Cf. de Romilly, "Guerre et paix entre cités", p. 208. Greek alliances, however, are sometimes made "for ever": *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, ed. R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis (Oxford, 1969), nos. 10, 63, 64.

⁷³ Herodotus, 7.9 beta, trans. Rawlinson. Walbank in his commentary on Polybius, 13.3.4, follows Jacoby in suggesting that this passage may reflect a democratic criticism of archaic battle techniques. One can well imagine it appealing to an intelligent light-armed soldier.

First, codification. It is now widely recognized that systems of warfare are often encoded, in two senses of the word. Military conduct in many cultures is governed by elaborate codes or standards of behaviour; it can also be encoded in another and more interesting sense — as an encapsulation of social roles and values. Such codes may represent relationships within the society and sometimes help resolve conflicts and tensions between social groups or values. In early Greek land warfare the tensions between the possessors of heavy armour and other groups within the society, between individual and collective action, between glory and advantage, mercy and severity, guile and openness, are all encoded within the system of land warfare.

The code was incorporated in a series of unwritten “laws of the Greeks”, widely recognized, although not universally followed, in antiquity.⁷⁴ Polybius calls attention to the code when he contrasts the warfare of his own era with that of earlier times. The Greeks of those days, he wrote:

would not even consent to get the better of their enemies by fraud, regarding no success as brilliant or secure unless they crushed the spirit of their adversaries in open battle. For this reason they entered into a convention among themselves to use against each other neither secret missiles nor those discharged from a distance, and considered that it was only a hand to hand battle at close quarters which was truly decisive. Hence they preceded war by a declaration, and when they intended to do battle gave notice of the fact and of the spot to which they would proceed and array their army. But at the present they say it is a sign of poor generalship to do anything openly in war.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ The norms governing hoplite warfare were not always observed even in the good old days. Herodotus, 6.75-84, for example, tells a story about Cleomenes of Sparta that makes him an almost paradigmatic inversion of the warrior code. When Cleomenes received bad omens at the crossing of the River Erasinus, he recognized that the local divinities were opposed to him. He withdrew but vowed that the Argives would not escape him. He then by-passed the local divinities by moving his troops by sea to Nauplia, defeated the Argives by a stratagem, and when they took refuge in a sacred grove, gathered their names by interrogating his captives, and then sent a herald to call them out one by one, on pretence of having received their ransoms. He massacred about fifty of them before the others found out what was happening. He then had brushwood piled up around the grove and set it on fire. The hoplite class of Argos was virtually wiped out by this atrocity: Herodotus, 7.148, estimated the losses at six thousand. (For a lower estimate, see W. G. Forrest, “Themistocles and Argos”, *Classical Quart.*, x (1960), p. 221.) But Cleomenes was not through. He proceeded to attempt to offer a thanksgiving sacrifice at the Argives’ most-esteemed temple, and when the priest would not allow him to sacrifice had him scourged. Herodotus makes of this story a warning tale about the dangers of violating the warrior code — much as the story of Croesus in the first book becomes a paradigm of how not to consult an oracle.

⁷⁵ Polybius, 13.3.2-6, trans. Patton. See Walbank ad loc.; Livy, 42.47.5. Polybius is probably alluding to a document that Strabo (10.1.12) reported — an agreement between Chalcis and Eretria that outlawed “missiles”, that is, the use of the sling, in the so-called Lelantine War, perhaps in the eighth century B.C.

Polybius may be mistaking the existence of a code for its effective operation. But even so, he points to a phenomenon of great interest in the study of early Greek history.⁷⁶ Three aspects are especially relevant to the present enquiry. First, the practical effects of such a code. There is some evidence that the code of warfare and its related practices occasionally diminished or eliminated some of the violence in warfare. When an oracle was consulted, it sometimes warned against the war or urged postponement — even for a full generation.⁷⁷ Omens taken before battle might encourage delay or even cause a temporary withdrawal of the enemy's force. The resolution of conflicts by combat between one or more champions from each side was not an especially effective device, but its recurrent use points to another possible way of minimizing violence. More common, and perhaps more effective, was the supplication ritual and the conventions governing the ransoming of prisoners — a counterbalance to some of the fury and slaughter of the battle. We can begin to see why, then, the concern with supplication was so central in the literature of the archaic and classical periods of Greece. The destructive effects of ancient warfare were, as will shortly be seen, intense, but to some small degree the code may have served to prevent even greater violence.

A second and more significant aspect of its operation, however, was its validation of a social hierarchy. Excessive concentration on the practical effects of the code may obscure this important effect. The agreement to which Polybius called attention in the passage cited above prohibited the use of certain types of projectiles in an early Greek conflict, probably the Lelantine War.⁷⁸ The agreement has often been seen as a proto-Geneva Convention aimed at making warfare more humane. This may indeed have been one of its effects, but a more immediate purpose may have been to minimize the role of the slingers and other light-armed troops and to ensure the central role of hoplites. Similar considerations may have been behind agreements to resolve issues by single combat or by a battle of champions, and the reluctance of hoplite armies to overthrow the governments

⁷⁶ The code is often referred to as the *nomima ton Hellenon*, "the conventional practices of the Hellenes". See R. von Scala, *Studien des Polybios*, i (Stuttgart, 1890), pp. 299-324; F. Kiechele, "Zur Humanität in der Kriegführung der griechischen Staaten", *Historia*, vii (1958), pp. 129-56; and the bibliography cited in n. 59 above.

⁷⁷ Herodotus, 5.89.2; the advice, however, was not taken.

⁷⁸ See the document cited in Strabo, 10.1.12. On the scale of the Lelantine War, see S. D. A. Lambert, "A Thucydidean Scholium on the 'Lelantine War'", *Jl. Hellenic Studies*, cii (1982), pp. 216-20.

of enemy cities in which the hoplite classes dominated.⁷⁹ The code, in other words, reflects a degree of interstate solidarity among hoplites.

Thirdly, the code of warfare is closely connected with pan-Hellenic values and with the major pan-Hellenic sanctuaries. The logic behind this development can readily be surmised. Such codes are most effectively promulgated when the warriors share across country lines some sense of class identity. For the Greeks that contact came primarily through visits to the pan-Hellenic sanctuaries. Thus it is not surprising to find pan-Hellenic motifs both at the beginning and at the end of a campaign — first through the consultation of Delphi, and later through dedications at this or another pan-Hellenic sanctuary. Nor is it surprising to find wars postponed or special truces for the observance of pan-Hellenic festivities. These three aspects of the code — its practical effects, its validation of social ranking and its connection to pan-Hellenic identity — all point to its centrality in early Greek culture.

The second characteristic of such land warfare is its elaborate ritualization. The term “ritualization” may require explanation: it does not imply that the violence of war was unreal or perfunctory. Xenophon’s description of a hoplite battlefield of the fourth century B.C. should dispel that notion even for an earlier period: “the earth stained with blood, friend and foe lying dead side by side, shields smashed to pieces, spears snapped in two, daggers bared of their sheaths, some on the ground, some embedded in the bodies, some yet gripped by the hand”.⁸⁰ Xenophon’s picture is confirmed by a recent study of the figures for battle casualties in such battles during the period 472-371 B.C. Peter Krentz estimates that on average the victorious side lost about 5 per cent of its force in a hoplite battle in this period; the losing side approximately 14 per cent.⁸¹ Picture the effects of such casualties on a cadre of twenty-year-olds after ten years of fighting one hoplite battle a year. By the time they reached thirty, fewer than forty of the original hundred would be alive. These figures

⁷⁹ On single combat, see Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, iv, p. 16. The practice goes back to the archaic period, for example Pittacus of Mytilene: Diodorus Siculus, 9.12.1; cf. Frost, “Athenian Military before Cleisthenes”, p. 287; see also Herodotus, 1.82, 6.92.3; a further instance is contemplated in the Argive-Spartan treaty of 420 cited in Thucydides, 5.41. On the reluctance to overthrow a hoplite-based government, note the results of the Spartan proposal in Herodotus, 5.91.

⁸⁰ Xenophon, *Agésilas*, 2.14-16, trans. Marchant.

⁸¹ Krentz, “Casualties in Hoplite Battles”, pp. 13-20. Civil war was often bloodier, but the statement that the Thirty killed more in eight months than were killed in ten years of the Peloponnesian War (Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 2.4.21) is probably exaggerated. On casualties, see also Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, ii, p. 261.

should be taken seriously by those who think that most Greek cities were annually engaged in one or more hoplite battles. Given the high rate of mortality in antiquity from other causes, the hoplite class under such circumstances almost certainly could not reproduce itself.⁸² The figures are also a reminder that the code governing early Greek land warfare was far from eliminating its destructiveness.

Although the violence in such battles was real enough, its structure conformed to and conveyed cultural norms, and corresponded to other ritual acts of great importance to the culture. In that sense it was "ritualized". Walter Burkert has provided a useful key to understanding this ritualization by observing that in Greek antiquity "war may almost appear like one great sacrificial action".⁸³ This is not mere simile. Many of the elements in such warfare are correlatives of those in ritual sacrifice among the Greeks: the sequence of procession, violent blow, the spilling of blood, the burning of flesh and the pouring of libations that stands at the centre of the sacrificial ritual is paralleled by the sequence in the land battle: the march into battle, the blood spilled in the fighting, the funeral pyres and the truce (called the *spondai*, the "libations"). Furthermore the cry of the women at the moment of sacrifice, the *ololugmos*, has its echo in the soldiers' battle-cry, the *alalagmos*.⁸⁴ The garlanding after the battle adapts to warfare another practice from sacrificial ritual.

The sacrificial pattern helps explain some of the structure of ancient land warfare: an abortive sacrifice before battle (sacrifice without the burning of the animal flesh and without a ceremonial meal) is replaced by another form of sacrifice in the battle itself. Once the battle is over, the sacrificial pattern is reasserted in the garlanding, libations and eventually in the funeral feast. The significance of this pattern is not to be found in the persistence of neolithic or earlier hunting rituals, as Burkert sometimes suggests, but in the usual outcome of

⁸² States that did engage in frequent warfare might be expected to find their hoplite class declining over time. This may have been the case in Sparta in the classical period and part of the explanation for what Aristotle observed about Athens after the Peloponnesian War: *Politics*, 5.1303 a 8 ff.

⁸³ See n. 45 above.

⁸⁴ The battle-cry is personified in Pindar, fr. 78:

Hear me, Alala, daughter of Polemos,
Pour forth the proemium, for with you
Men offer the sacrifice of the most upstanding death
For their city.

Auloi, oboe-like instruments, were also used both in sacrifice (Burkert, *Homo Necans*, p. 4) and in the march into battle; but it is not clear that the Athenians used *auloi* in war. See above, nn. 47, 48.

sacrifice in the ancient world — community-building through a shared meal.⁸⁵ As often in ancient ritual the community divides, projects an image of itself that illuminates its inner relationships, and then converges in festivity and unity.⁸⁶ Yet there is a further aspect: the ambiguity of emotion at animal sacrifice — the division between exultation in the offering and delight in the meal on one side, and the horror of the deed on the other, so well brought out in Burkert's *Homo Necans* — is the perfect expression of the ambiguity of Greek reactions to war.

These ritual elements helped make the Greek pattern of hoplite warfare a very powerful symbolic system. We can best understand this by looking more closely at the division and reunification of the community in such warfare. The polis is divided at first into two groups, each of which may become engaged in fighting before the campaign is over. The first group, largely military-age males and their logistical support, leaves the city in order to do battle. The second group, consisting of older men, women and children, remains at home but, if need be, will fight on the walls, from the roof-tops and from street to street to defend the city. The first group receives the greatest attention, both in antiquity and in modern times, but the second is strategically no less important. It has, moreover, the prerogative of judging the conduct of the first group, praising and honouring valour, and condemning individuals or even whole expeditions for cowardice, as the Corinthians did when their expeditionary force returned claiming victory over the Athenians but without having set up a trophy in the Megrid.⁸⁷

Warfare, then, represents division within the community and a potential for inner as well as external strife. This is perhaps hinted at before the departure of the expedition by sacrifices to Eros or to legendary maidens who gave their lives to ensure the success of the community in war.⁸⁸ Such sacrifices, for example to the Hyakinthidai at Athens, mark, as Walter Burkert puts it, “the turning away from love to war”.⁸⁹ At the end of the campaign the community is

⁸⁵ So Burkert, *Homo Necans*, pp. 48 ff., esp. p. 50: “the ritual meal functioned as a bond within the community”.

⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 102.

⁸⁷ Thucydides, 1.105.4. Thucydides alludes to the taunts of the elders in this case. Women also played an important role in the assessment of military conduct. Along with the old men they served as repositories of civic praise and blame and sometimes of physical attacks on soldiers who seemed to have acted as cowards.

⁸⁸ On sacrifices to Eros before battle, see especially Athenaeus, 13.561 e. Cf. n. 26 above.

⁸⁹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 267.

reintegrated through festivities and celebrations, if victory has been achieved, or in any event, by the commemoration of the war dead.

The campaign, in other words, becomes a closed system. This is evident in several further respects: at an early stage there is the consultation of Delphi, at the end the dedication of spoils at this or some other pan-Hellenic shrine. In these dedications themes such as retaliation against hubris, the involvement of the gods, the importance of personal and civic honour that are prominent at the beginning of a campaign reappear, often given expression through verse on dedications or other monuments. They are prominent, for example, in the Athenian epigram on the occasion of their defeat of the Boeotians and Euboeans around 506 B.C.:

When Chalcis and Boeotia dared her might,
Athens subdued their pride in valorous fight;
Gave bonds for insult; and, the ransom paid,
From the full tenths these steeds for Pallas made.⁹⁰

The power of such a symbolic system derives in large part from its ability to provide a coherent way of looking at the world, of seeing and interpreting experience. In war, where grief and horror can so readily overwhelm human understanding, fragment communities and shatter individual personality and the willingness to contribute to civic goals, the coherence of such a ritualized system is consoling and compelling.

At the same time it may have wider implications. Although it is no more effective than the elaborate codification in minimizing the destructiveness of war, it too has important effects on society. The ritual elements provide a powerful way of representing the central place of the hoplite class within the polis and of strengthening the institutions whereby it governed. It has long been recognized, of course, that a Greek hoplite army is a stylized, selective representation of the social and political system of the archaic and early classical polis.⁹¹ It shows the structure of the city — its social patterns,

⁹⁰ Herodotus, 5.77, trans. Rawlinson. On the inscription and the textual problems, see *Epigrammata graeca*, ed. D. Page (Oxford, 1975), p. 9. Note a similar theme in the dedication mentioned in Herodotus, 5.102.

⁹¹ See, for example, the often quoted comment of G. Glotz, "the people under arms always lived as a reflection of the Cleisthenic city": *Histoire grecque*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1925-38), ii. Cf. van Effenterre, "Clisthène et les mesures de mobilisation", p. 3. See also Frank Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War* (Berkeley, 1957), p. 67: "No form of combat could so plainly exhibit the community solidarity that was of the essence of the Greek city-state". Burkert, *Homo Necans*, p. 47: "War is ritual, a self-portrayal and self-affirmation of male society. Male society finds stability in confronting death, in defining it through a display of readiness to die, and in the ecstasy of survival".

religion, age-ranking, etc. But it is also a very selective representation. In classical Athens, for example, special emphasis was placed on the importance of the Cleisthenic tribal system. The call-up notice is posted by the monument of the ten tribal heroes; the army fights by tribal divisions; normally ten commanders, one from each tribe, serve as its general staff; the bodies of the fallen are cremated in tribal pyres, their ashes mixed in tribal caskets, their names inscribed on tribal lists. Sometimes the funeral orations pronounced at the time of state burial use the example of the tribal heroes to commend the sacrifice of the soldiers who had fallen in the year's campaigns and thereby to hold up a model of the relationship between individual and state. For the tribal heroes were not mere names; they were examples of individual sacrifice for common good, and hence models for the new Athenian civic order that flourished through the involvement and contributions of a large portion of its citizens. This is well illustrated by passages in various funeral orations, including the encomium of the war dead of the Erechtheid tribe included in the funeral speech ascribed to Demosthenes:

those from the Erechtheid tribe knew that their eponym Erechtheus had let his daughters, who are called the Hyacinthidae, go to a conspicuous death in order to save his country. They felt it would be disgraceful if one who had descended from the immortals did everything possible for the freedom of the country, while they placed greater value on a mortal body than on undying glory.⁹²

The selectivity of the representation of civic order is evident throughout. The emphasis on bronze armour, for example, through its display in musters and parades, its use on trophies and the later practice of presenting suits of armour to the orphaned boys of those who had died in war, etc., validates the pre-eminence of the hoplite class. The massed use of such armour, moreover, defines this type of combat and the individual's role in it. Its use is also presented as a mark of the contrast between Greek and barbarian.⁹³ Owning such armour is required if one is to march out of the city as a hoplite; retaining the armour is essential if you are to return from war in honour. "With your shield or on it", said the Laconic mother — and if she did not mean it, the culture did.⁹⁴ The use of this type of armour determined the choice of the "smoothest and fairest place" for the battlefield; the stripping of this armour from the dead was a mark of victory, selling it was the principal way wealth was acquired

⁹² Demosthenes, 60 (*Epitaphios*), 27.

⁹³ Aristagoras, in Herodotus, 5.97.1.

⁹⁴ The comment is reported in Plutarch, *Moralia*, 241 f *et al.*

in warfare, setting up the trophy involved transforming such armour into a sacred memorial. And the culmination of the campaign was the dedication of armour — especially shields — in the sanctuaries of the gods. Ancient Greek land warfare revolves about bronze armour, just as it revolves about the hoplite class.⁹⁵ By attaching such significance to the armour its possessors are themselves given a central role in society and its survival. Light-armed troops and cavalry — not to mention the fleet and its “naval rabble”, the *nautikos ochlos* — however great their military potential, are made to seem quite peripheral.⁹⁶

The Attic war memorials sometimes provide a further indication of the relative social status of hoplites and of other groups of warriors. Some of these inscriptions list the fallen and then add, as if an afterthought, the names of the archers who had also given their lives in the campaigns of the year.⁹⁷ The pattern, however, is not the result of carelessness; it reflects the attitude that denied full civic status to the lowest economic class, the *thetes*, and that, even in Aristotle's day, viewed citizenship as a function of service in the hoplite ranks.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Bronze is often linked to the sacred realm — it was bronze that was used for the inscribing of sacral laws, bronze that was dedicated in temples and kept safe in a special storage spot on the Acropolis in Athens, bronze that sheathed the temple of Athena at Sparta. Note also its association with Zeus Polieus: E. Simon, *Festivals of Attica* (Madison, 1983), p. 9; and with Athena: M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant, *Les ruses de l'intelligence* (Paris, 1974), pp. 172 f.

⁹⁶ The differentiation of roles is likely to have been a gradual one in Greek society; early tombs, for example, sometimes contain both spears and arrows — an indication that the same individual might be both spearman and archer. By the late archaic period, however, the spearmen had asserted a primacy for themselves in the civic structures of many Greek city-states. This may also be reflected in the fact that Athenian naval activity was not normally organized in tribal fashion. The evidence is to be found in B. Jordan, *The Athenian Navy in the Classical Period* (Berkeley, 1975), pp. 205 f., 225-30. Cf. also E. L. Wheeler, “The Prohibition of Missiles”, in *Abstracts of the 1986 Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association* (Decatur, Georgia, 1986), p. 7.

⁹⁷ *LG*, i² 79, 929. On these lists, see D. W. Bradeen, *The Athenian Agora: Inscriptions: Funerary Monuments* (Agora Publications, xvii, Princeton, 1974). On the role of archers in the Athenian military, see A. Plassart, “Les archers d'Athènes”, *Revue des études grecques*, xxvi (1913), pp. 151-213; Jordan, *Athenian Navy*, pp. 203-10.

⁹⁸ On the social status of *thetes*, *I.G.*, i³ 138, is especially revealing: the most recent discussion of the inscription is by David Whitehead, *The Demes of Attica* (Princeton, 1986), p. 35 n. 130. There was, of course, a strong counter-current, pressing the claims of light-armed troops and of the citizens who served in the navy. C. W. Fornara has provided a useful discussion of the fifth-century treatments of the relative contribution of hoplites and the fleet at the time of the Persian invasion: “The Hoplite Achievement at Psytaleia”, *Jl. Hellenic Studies*, xcvi (1966), pp. 51-4. This article cites many of the literary texts that reflect the devaluation of naval service; there are also hints of this in the inscriptions: the order of groups in *I.G.*, ii² 1951, for example,

(cont. on p. 27)

Again, as was apparent in the discussion of the codification of warfare, the structure works across city lines, and tends to exclude certain patterns of warfare that might otherwise be expected. It helps explain, for example, why many Greek cities were slow to exploit the advantages of peltasts and other comparatively light-armed troops, and when at war with another Greek state avoided the obvious strategy of holding the mountain passes and waging wars of attrition.⁹⁹ Twentieth-century history amply establishes how effective these techniques can be in a Greek setting. If we understand that hoplite warfare was in large part a way of representing and validating social relationships within and between poleis, it becomes easy to recognize the problems this form of warfare would pose. For it would tend to devalue the status of the hoplite class. As modern guerrilla warfare shows, the successful application of such techniques entails the use of highly mobile troops, men the Greeks would call *psiloi*. And these — slingers, archers, javelin-hurlers — were traditionally drawn from those classes in society that could not afford the investment in heavy armour. To put them at the centre of a campaign, however effective it might prove tactically, would be to elevate their civic status at the expense of the hoplite classes, and risk eventual political repercussions.¹⁰⁰

A similar consideration may help clarify why for a long time no Greek state encouraged slave revolts or defections or tried to exploit the grievances of marginal groups denied full civic status, for example those who dwelt in outlying regions of certain poleis. Nor did Greek states in this period use the rhetoric of ideology or social revolution. All these would be heard, loud and strong, in later decades, but not in our period.

For Athens a great change took place during the Peloponnesian War, when a desperate strategic situation required every possible effort for survival. The armour of Athenian hoplites was modified for lightness and manoeuvrability, and increasing use was made of light-

(n. 98 cont.)

may reflect the low political status of archers and sailors. Unlike the land army the navy relied only minimally on the tribal structure, as the evidence gathered in Jordan, *Athenian Navy*, pp. 130-4, 164 ff., 225-30, indicates.

⁹⁹ See A. W. Gomme, *Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, i (Oxford, 1945), pp. 12-15; Pritchett, *Greek State at War*, ii, pp. 173 f.; Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice*, ch. 2; J. G. P. Best, *Thracian Peltasts* (Groningen, 1969), esp. p. 95.

¹⁰⁰ On the connection between military and political power in the ancient polis, see Aristotle, *Politics*, 4.1297 b 22: "as the states grew and the wearers of heavy armour had become stronger, more persons [sc. than merely the cavalry] came to have a part in the government" (trans. H. Rackham). The same principle would, of course, apply to the growing role of light-armed troops in the fifth century B.C.

armed troops.¹⁰¹ The general Demosthenes seems to have made some especially significant innovations in the use of light-armed troops.¹⁰² Inevitably these innovations were controversial and thereby had political as well as military implications. They might be used to validate the claims of non-hoplite groups for even greater power in a society that some thought had already become an excessively radical democracy. The emergence of new patterns of political leadership in this period, often associated with Cleon, is likely to be linked to these military changes.

The intensity of feeling associated with these changes is reflected in one of the most popular media of the day — Attic tragedy. The rituals and codes of hoplite warfare had long had analogues in the recurrent themes of Greek tragedy — supplication, oracles and their interpretation, the willingness to risk war, the burial of the dead, especially war dead, devotion to the common codes of the Greeks.¹⁰³ These themes are not purely mythic or literary; they reflect matters of life and death for every military-age male in the audience. Similarly, the social tensions behind the political and military changes can also be detected in Athenian drama. In Euripides' *Heracles Driven Mad*, for example, the heavy-handed tyrant Lycus belittles Heracles by calling him:

A man who, coward in everything else,
Made his reputation fighting beasts,
Who never buckled shield upon his arm,
Never came near a spear, but held a bow,
The coward's weapon, handy to run away.
The bow is no proof of manly courage;
No, your real man stands firm in the ranks
And dares to face the gash the spear may make.

These are the claims of the unregenerate hoplite fighter put in the mouth of one of Euripides' most melodramatic villains. Old Amphitryon gives him the lie:

Your spearsman is the slave of his weapons;
Unless his comrades in the ranks fight well,
. . . he dies, killed by their cowardice;
And once his spear, his sole defense, is smashed,
He has no means of warding death away.
But the man whose hands know how to aim the bow,
Holds the one best weapon: a thousand arrows shot,

¹⁰¹ See the works cited in n. 99 above, esp. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice*.

¹⁰² See especially Thucydides' account of the Pylos campaign and the explication by W. R. Connor, *Thucydides* (Princeton, 1984), pp. 108-18.

¹⁰³ See now J. Winkler, "The Ephebes' Song", *Representations*, no. 11 (summer 1985), pp. 26-62.

He still has more to guard himself from death.
 He stands far off, shooting at foes who see
 Only the wound the unseen arrow plows,
 While he himself, his body unexposed,
 Lies screened and safe. This is best in war:
 To preserve yourself and to hurt your foe

 Such are my arguments, squarely opposed
 To yours on every point at issue here.¹⁰⁴

Passages such as this remind us once again of the extraordinary changes that were taking place in fifth-century Athens. The forms of political life, cultural expression, religion, economics, philosophy were all being radically transformed, and with them land warfare and the codes governing it.

In Thucydides' work, in the plays of Euripides and in much of the literature of the age war has a central role.¹⁰⁵ But, as we have seen, the significance of war in Greek culture is not measured by its frequency or intensity, or even by its literary prominence. Land warfare for the early Greeks was an elaborate and stylized system; it constituted a code, functioned as a ritual, especially in its echoes of the Greek pattern of animal sacrifice, and as a representation of social reality. Its true significance is to be found in its close links to almost every major feature of the culture, including its religion, social structure and literature, and in its symbolic power and implications.

Princeton University

W. R. Connor

¹⁰⁴ Euripides, *Herakles Mainomenos*, 157-204, excerpted, trans. W. Arrowsmith. The date of the play cannot be precisely fixed, but the decade 425-415 seems secure. On the passage, see most recently Richard Hamilton, "Slings and Arrows", *Trans. Amer. Philol. Assoc.*, cxv (1985), pp. 19-25.

¹⁰⁵ See the discussion of S. Saïd and M. Trédé, "Art de la guerre et expérience chez Thucydide", *Classica et mediaevalia*, xxxvi (1985), pp. 65-85. Cf. Saïd's earlier article on Herodotus: "Guerre, intelligence et courage dans les Histoires d'Hérodote", *Ancient Soc.*, xi-xii (1980-1), pp. 83-118.