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THE HOMERIC WAY OF WAR: THE *ILIAD* AND THE HOPLITE PHALANX (I)

By HANS VAN WEES

Old warriors of the New Guinea highlands used to regale the anthropologist Margaret Mead with tales of battles they once fought. Their stories ran

something like this: 'We met on the mountainside near Wihun. A man of our side, named Maigi, threw a spear at a man of their side, named Wea. He missed. Then a man of their side threw a spear and hit my cross-cousin from Ahalaseimihi. Then I was angry and threw a spear at Wena, a big man of their side, and missed . . .', and so on.¹

The anthropologist was puzzled. 'I have often found the accounts of such warfare hard to credit . . . Listening to such a verbal account, one cannot help wondering what everybody else was doing.' Readers of the *Iliad* will recognize the problem: but for the names, the battle-narrative might have come straight from Homer, and many have doubted that Homeric battles make sense.

The common view used to be that Homer barely even attempts to offer a plausible battle-narrative. In 1977, however, Joachim Latacz published a monograph arguing that, on the contrary, the poet presents a clear and consistent picture of battle as it was fought in his own day, battle dominated by massed combat of the kind practised by the Archaic Greek hoplite phalanx. Latacz' ideas caught on and are now rapidly establishing themselves as the consensus view.² Yet, while Latacz' arguments against the older view are highly persuasive, his own reconstruction of Homeric battle is not without its problems, and we ought to look at the evidence again before accepting his views wholesale. I believe we may be able to come up with an even better reconstruction, which entails a reassessment of the historical date of Homeric combat and the development of phalanx-warfare.

In scrutinizing the battle scenes of the *Iliad* yet again, we may draw inspiration from our New Guinean analogy. Margaret Mead eventually found that her Papua warriors had, after all, been giving her perfectly accurate accounts of how they used to fight. In fact, as I hope to show, their way of fighting turned out to be not unlike that of Homer's heroes.

1. *Multitudes of champions: mass combat in open formation*

Before embarking on our reconstruction, we must pause to consider the nature of our source. It is commonly said that Homer, as a poet and as one who has inherited an oral tradition, cannot be expected to be consistent in his portrayal of the world of his heroes. The point has recently been made again by W. K. Pritchett and H. W. Singor with reference to the battles. They conclude that it is misguided even to look for consistency in Homer's battle scenes.³ That view is both wrong and dangerous. It is wrong, because poets surely *can*, consciously or unconsciously, create consistent images, even if they are not *required* to be consistent to the extent that, say, historians are. Again, a long oral tradition might well produce confused images, but we simply do not know enough about the nature of the Greek epic tradition to deny *a priori* that it *could* produce a consistent picture. It is, moreover, dangerous not to look for consistency, because it allows too much scholarly licence: if one assumes that a text is inconsistent, one can simply select evidence to suit one's purposes, and discard anything that does not fit.⁴

For methodological reasons, therefore, we should in this respect treat the *Iliad* as we would any other source, and attempt to reconstruct from it a meaningful, coherent picture, based, if possible, on *all* the evidence. Inconsistencies should not be taken for granted, but admitted only when there are compelling reasons to do so. Latacz, in his reconstruction, does aim to find a consistent image, and claims to have found it. I would argue that we must try again, because there is still too much that does not fit.

We may begin with an issue, and a crucial issue at that, on which Latacz is undoubtedly right. Everyone's first impression of the *Iliad* is of battles totally dominated by at most a dozen great champions. Latacz has shown that, contrary to appearances, the nameless mass of warriors does not remain passive, a mere backdrop to the exploits of a few heroes, as many have believed. The poet constantly hints and implies, and sometimes says outright, that the mass plays an active and decisive role.⁵ It so happens that this seemingly unspectacular conclusion has important historical consequences. If it is untrue that mass combat was introduced *after* Homer's day, in the seventh century, as used to be believed, then it cannot be true that the introduction of mass combat caused the emergence of tyrants and the development of the democratic *polis* at this time. This notion, originally formulated by Martin Nilsson and inspired by Aristotle, must be abandoned despite its pedigree and popularity; more recent theories which

posit similar, though subtler, connections between military and political change in Archaic Greece, are seriously affected, too.⁶

While it seems to me beyond question that the efforts of the mass of warriors do determine victory and defeat in a Homeric battle, Latacz' ideas on *how* the mass plays its part are unconvincing. He argues that, after preliminary skirmishing, a Homeric army proceeds to fight in exactly the same way as an Archaic or Classical hoplite phalanx: the men form up in dense formation and join massed hand-to-hand combat. I believe I can show that Homeric mass combat takes a quite different form.⁷

For a start: what evidence is there in the *Iliad* for a phalanx-style formation? In a few passages warriors are shown 'packing themselves together like a wall' (13.152; cf. 15.618; 16.212–14). 'Shield pressed against shield, helmet against helmet, man against man. The shining crestholders of their horsehair-plumed helmets touched when they nodded, so close together did they stand' (13.131–3 = 16.215–17). These, and several less explicit passages are indeed reminiscent of the phalanx, and for that very reason many a scholar has regarded them as late interpolations. Latacz, however, argues that such verses depict normal Homeric practice. The mass would always be drawn up in a tight formation, and at times would draw so close that each man actually touched his neighbours – a manoeuvre later known as 'locking shields' (*synaspismos*). He adds that the men stand in neat rows, called *stikhes* or *phalanges*, forming squares known as *purgoi*, 'towers'.⁸

A look at the context of the passages in question shows that the massed ranks described are in fact neither tidy formations nor permanent features of the battlefield. When on one occasion a contingent forms up 'shield against shield' before entering battle (16.212–17), it is *not* executing a manoeuvre to achieve a tighter formation. The crowd spontaneously grows denser because the men are keen to fight: excited by their commander's harangue, they jostle to get to the front (16.210–11). As for *stikhes*, *phalanges*, and *purgoi*, the meaning of these allegedly technical terms is disputed. It seems almost certain to me that *purgoi* – which occurs in one passage only – is in fact used metaphorically to describe contingents as 'towers of strength'. And whatever the precise meaning of *stikhes* and *phalanges*, there is nothing in their usage or etymology that necessarily indicates men standing in rows.⁹ Rather than a neat formation, then, we appear to find an amorphous mass which may appositely be compared to a dark cloud (4.274–82). Moreover, the 'dense, dark ranks, bristling with shields and spears' (4.281–2) which we see entering battle do not remain intact throughout the fight. When men are 'packing together like a wall' in

the midst of battle, they are not tightening an existing formation in a well-drilled *synaspismos*. What happens is that scattered and often dispirited warriors are called together to make a stand – as when the troops are roused to gather around the two Aiantes and face the Trojan onslaught (13.83–135).¹⁰ Evidently, the original massed forces no longer exist. They have dispersed and need to be reassembled.

The nature of Homeric battle and military organization, in fact, makes it impossible for any sort of massed formation to remain intact for long. In the *Iliad*, men frequently leave the field, not only when wounded, but also when tired or disheartened, or in order to fetch weapons or dispose of newly-gained spoils. Frequently it is small groups of warriors rather than individual men who leave battle. Army contingents consist of many bands, each comprising a leader and his retinue, and when the leader leaves, his followers go with him. When men return to the battlefield, they do not necessarily return to their previous station, but go where they please.¹¹ Such freedom of movement would of course play havoc with any formation in rows and columns, and any massing of troops could only be temporary.

Furthermore, when a breakthrough occurs, armies disperse in flight and pursuit. In later Greek warfare, in which maintaining a massed formation is essential, this means the end of battle, since there is no chance of regrouping in a close phalanx. In Homer, however, every breakthrough is followed by a rally, and combat is quickly resumed. This happens time and time again, until nightfall puts an end to fighting. Clearly, any formation that might have existed at the outset would be dissolved after the first breakthrough, if not sooner; and clearly, this does not matter in a Homeric battle.¹²

I conclude that, although certain passages in the *Iliad* may put one in mind of the hoplite phalanx, such passages are neither interpolations nor evidence that the presence of a phalanx-style formation is assumed throughout. They merely show that warriors stand together in dense crowds before battle, while during battle they tend to disperse but at times flock together again to form thick clusters of men.

We may now turn to the evidence for masses engaging in hand-to-hand combat. There are a few mass scenes which feature hand-weapons only. The fighting around Protesilaos' ship furnishes the most dramatic example:

Greeks and Trojans fought one another at close range. They did not stand far away under attacks of bows and javelins, but they stood near . . . They fought with sharp axes and hatchets and big swords and spears. (15.707–12)

One's first instincts are no doubt to read these verses as depicting, not merely a large number of individuals, but a massed body of men, fighting at close range; and so Latacz would have it. But this poses problems.

For one thing, mass scenes equally often feature only *missiles*. Latacz suggests that massed combat unfolds in two stages: battle begins with the armies exchanging volleys of missiles; not until later do the troops close in on one another and fight hand to hand. An attractive idea, but it does not work. The poet does not distinguish such phases. At the start of the second battle, for instance, the mass appears to fight at close range and long range *at the same time*.

When, moving towards one another, they reached the same ground, *shields met*, spears met, and the might of bronze-cuirassed men met, and embossed shields clashed together . . . All morning . . . *missiles* from both sides hit their mark and men fell. (8.60–7)¹³

There are two ways in which a large number of men could fight using hand-weapons and missiles simultaneously. Archers and slingers could fire at random into the hostile ranks, over the heads of their own men who are engaging the enemy at close quarters – in which case the men in front *could* be fighting in massed formation. Alternatively, the mass could be doing battle in *open* formation, with the warriors dispersed sufficiently widely to allow some men to fight their opponent from a distance, using javelins, arrows or stones, while others move in closer and strike their opponent with spear or sword. Now, launching volleys of missiles over the heads of fellow-warriors does appear to occur in one passage (13.701–21), but it is made clear that this is an exceptional tactic, adopted by a single contingent which, unlike the others, is equipped exclusively with bows and slings, and is therefore forced to remain in the rear while another contingent fights ahead of it. If this is the exception, we must assume that the rule is for the mass to fight with both types of weapon in open formation.

An even more conspicuous problem is that the great majority of battle scenes does not depict mass action at all, but the deeds of individual warriors who appear to fight in relative isolation. These 'champions' have enough freedom of movement to seek out particular opponents, and they can choose their means of attack, variously firing arrows, throwing rocks or javelins, or engaging the enemy at close range. Often they throw missiles first, then run forward to deliver a fatal blow or merely retrieve their weapon. Sometimes they manage to snatch a dead enemy's weapons and armour as well. When satisfied, or tired, or in danger, they run back to 'the multitude of their companions'. At any one time, no more than a few named warriors are shown 'duelling' in this manner, but Latacz has

demonstrated that Homer always implies the presence of a considerable number of anonymous warriors fighting close by. They are described as 'men who fight in front' (*promakhoi*).¹⁴ The apparent isolation of individual 'champions' is thus to some extent an optical illusion, produced by the poet's habit of focusing on the actions of a few famous heroes amidst the general *melée*. Nevertheless, their style of combat would not be feasible unless a good deal of space separated each man from his fellows and his enemies.

So how does this fit in with any form of mass combat? Latacz posits that champion combat takes place *before* the massed clash, during or after the mass exchange of missiles. The *promakhoi* are, in his view, the men stationed in the front rank of the formation. They step out of line to skirmish with enemy champions while the bulk of the army waits and watches. Eventually they return to their positions; then, finally, the commanders exhort their troops to commence a massed attack. Pritchett, by contrast, suggests that *promakhoi*-style fighting takes place *after* the initial clash, when the massed formations have broken up in flight and pursuit.¹⁵ These two notions too are attractive and plausible, but the very fact that *both* scholars are able to cite several passages which seem to support their views, shows that neither accommodates all the evidence. In fact, *promakhoi*-style combat is in evidence at all times during battle, and is not consistently assigned either to rout situations or to any single phase of battle. Narratives of *promakhoi* in action precede and follow images of general hand-to-hand as well as long-range combat without a break, without the transition somehow being marked.¹⁶

The only explanation I can see, apart from after all declaring Homer wholly inconsistent in his portrayal of battle, is that scenes of mass and of individual combat depict *one and the same thing* from different perspectives. Mass scenes featuring countless arrows flying, men 'rushing forward in throngs', or general slashing and stabbing, do not picture a massed, close formation in action. They describe simply a large number of men each shooting, striking, and running back and forth in the manner of the heroes in scenes of individual combat. Conversely, accounts of one-to-one clashes between heroes are simply close-ups of men doing battle amidst a dispersed mass of warriors who fight in just the same way.

It appears that not even the clusters of men which at times coalesce in the course of battle are designed for massed hand-to-hand combat. The men in the crowd 'raise' and 'shake' their spears, in order to *throw* them. When it comes to fighting, they 'jump' forward and run back again, rather than keep in line. Apparently, crowds form at certain spots purely to out-

number the enemy, not to pursue the massed tactics of the hoplite phalanx.¹⁷

In an open formation every single man in the army would have his chance to meet the enemy face to face, since any individual could find enough space within the ranks to allow him to go forward and attack. The distinction between *promakhoi* and 'the multitude of their companions' behind them does not imply two separate categories of soldier, those who do all the actual fighting and those who stand back and watch. Since there is no orderly, permanent formation, Latacz' idea that the *promakhoi* must be the men who stand in the front rank is unfounded. Nor is there anything in the *Iliad* to suggest that they are a distinct 'company or battalion', as Pritchett suggests.¹⁸ Singor argues that only those wealthy enough to afford a full set of bronze armour could fight as *promakhoi*, because the less well-protected would find it too dangerous to come within range of the enemy, but this is disproved by the appearance among the *promakhoi* of Paris and Teukros as light-armed archers.¹⁹ The *promakhoi* are simply that section of the mass which at any given moment is closest to the enemy, and engaged in actual combat, while the 'multitude' are those who at that particular moment are keeping their distance from the fight.

A man becomes a *promakhos* by moving close to the enemy, and becomes part of the multitude again by dropping out of range. Whether he spends his time mostly at the front or in the rear is up to him, but one is not expected to spend all one's time either among the *promakhoi* or among the multitude. Even the bravest and most active heroes need a break occasionally and retreat to recover 'among the multitude and out of the turmoil' (20.377). Conversely, army leaders continually appeal to those who 'stand off and do not fight, doing as they please' (14.132) to 'stand back' and 'shirk' no longer, but go forward. In other words, the men in the multitude are asked to take their turn in fighting among the *promakhoi* for as long as they can or dare.²⁰

A Homeric army, then, operates as follows. As the warriors, who form a dense crowd before battle, advance towards the enemy, they gradually disperse. Some men quickly advance right up to the enemy and from the very start fight hand to hand with opponents who have likewise ventured far forward, while other men more cautiously advance to barely within missile range, and yet others hang back out of danger altogether. The latter may go forward when the spirit takes them, and the former may drop back; the army is in a constant flux. When in the course of battle crises occur which require a concentration of forces, a larger proportion of men will be drawn into active combat, and troops may be called together from all along

the front. Thus the fighting may temporarily become more intense as denser crowds gather and then scatter again when the crisis has passed or a breakthrough has been achieved, but there will be no fundamental change of tactics. This is how the anonymous multitude and the famous heroes fight in Homer, and this is how the mass plays its decisive role in battle.

It is surely no coincidence that the warriors of New Guinea, whose stories of battle sounded like extracts from the *Iliad*, did in fact fight in essentially the manner reconstructed above. Equipment and tactics varied somewhat between tribes; most Homeric in nature appear to have been the battles of the Grand Valley Dani, which are also the best attested, having been captured on film by the Harvard-Peabody Expedition (1961).

Dani armies assemble at a leisurely pace during the morning.

Depending on his personal preference, a man is armed with spears or bows and arrows. The spearmen carry long, finely crafted jabbing spears and often a couple of cruder short spears which they can throw at an enemy . . .

Men also carry tobacco nets . . . for times of rest behind the front lines.

By noon, each side has several hundred men drawn up at a distance of some 400–500 metres from the enemy.

At first a few men run towards the enemy, who are still far beyond arrow range. For a few minutes they shout taunts . . ., wave their weapons and . . . then retire. Some of the enemy reciprocate. Gradually the lines get closer together and soon they are within firing range of each other.

The warriors, as photographs show, are widely dispersed, with irregular gaps of five metres or more separating most combatants.

Men move up from the rear, stay to fight for a while, and then drop back for a rest. Those on the front, in the most vulnerable positions, must keep in constant movement to avoid presenting too easy a target.

As men dance up to the front, they can take care of themselves. As they drop back, though, they have a blind side and many wounds are received then . . . Spearmen and archers work together, with the idea that the bowmen will bring someone down with an arrow so that he can be killed with a spear . . . The front continually fluctuates, moving backwards and forwards as one side or the other mounts a charge.²¹

As the early afternoon wears on, the pace of battle develops into a steady series of brief clashes and relatively long interruptions . . . An average day's fighting will consist of ten to twenty clashes between the opposing forces.²²

During the actual clashes, which last for about 10–15 minutes each, only a third or fewer of the combatants are actively engaged.²³

The similarities with Homeric warfare are plain. To my mind, they justify the conclusion that the reconstruction of Homeric battle outlined

above makes sense of the epic evidence in a manner that is not only comprehensive, but plausible as well.

2. *Show, speed and space: chariots in battle*

There is a curious consensus that Homer does not know what he is doing when he has his heroes drive around in war-chariots. Few would disagree with Sir Moses Finley's brusque dismissal of 'the nonsense we read in the poems about military chariots'. Even Latacz, trying harder than anyone to find coherence and realism in the battle scenes, draws the line at the use of chariots in the thick of the fight.²⁴ For most, the problem is that Homeric chariot-tactics allegedly offend against military common sense and historical precedent; for Latacz, the main problem is that they are incompatible with his views on Homeric infantry-combat.²⁵ We shall see, however, that there is nothing wrong with the way the heroes use their chariots, and that it easily fits our reconstruction of epic battle.

The heroes' chariots are light wooden structures, drawn by two horses; as a rule, they are manned by the owner of the chariot, who does the fighting, and a companion of lower status, who acts as charioteer.²⁶ When not actively engaged in battle, the warrior stands on his chariot somewhere 'outside the missiles, the killing, the blood' (11.163–4; cf. 198–211).²⁷ When he decides to join battle, he may tell the driver to move forward, and in rare cases he may bring his chariot near enough to the enemy to cast his spear from the car.²⁸ Normally, though, he at some point 'jumps off' and 'mingles with the *promakhoi*' on foot.²⁹ He will return to his chariot to store away his spoils or nurse his wounds, to move to another part of the field, and most importantly to escape or pursue the foe in a general rout. Depending on the situation he may either just mount the car and stay where he is, rejoin the mass, or leave the battlefield altogether.³⁰

While the fighter is on foot, his charioteer follows behind him. It is difficult to keep the right distance. For the fighting-man it is safest to have his horses 'near' and 'breathing on his neck' (13.384–6; 15.456–7; 17.501–2, 699), but for the horses and the driver it is of course safer to stay out of range. More than once, a man who has to 'run a long way back' (11.354–60) to reach his chariot is killed because 'his horses were not near enough' (11.339–42).³¹ On the other hand, charioteers and horses often get killed when they venture too far forward. While charioteers with outstanding horses may 'easily escape from the tumult . . . and easily rush forward, following far through the crowd' (17.461–2; cf. 8.106–7), most must strike a balance between going too near and not going near enough.

To complete the picture, it may be noted that the poet has envisaged all eventualities. Chariots are equipped with spare horses. Men who lose their drivers try to find others. When fighters are killed, their charioteers leave battle. A charioteer attempting to carry on fighting by himself is criticized for his 'unprofitable idea' (17.458–73). Most remarkably, whereas the usual course of events is for men to try to take immediate vengeance for the death of a companion, or at any rate to keep the enemy away from his corpse, charioteers and fighting-men often fail to respond to the death of their partner. They simply turn the chariot round and leave the body behind.³² The immediate safety of the horses appears to take precedence over obligations to the fallen friend.

It has gone largely unnoticed that the picture presented by Homer is in itself consistent and plausible, because scholars have been preoccupied with the idea that war-chariots *ought* to be used quite differently. It has been confidently asserted that the proper way of employing chariots is to unite them in a chariotry battalion, rather than allow them to fight in isolation. Also, chariots are not supposed to serve 'as taxis' for warriors who fight on foot. 'What we know of Late Bronze Age warfare in Egypt and the Near East tells us that the effective chariot weapon was the bow and that chariotry [was] used as a mobile platform from which to fire missiles, and as a fast flanking and pursuing arm.'³³ Alternatively, say some, chariotry could be armed with long thrusting spears and be employed in a 'massed, head-on attack at full speed'; it is thought that the Mycenaeans may have used it thus.³⁴ The conclusion generally drawn is that epic poets knew that war-chariots had once existed, but had no idea of how they operated. The picture we find in the *Iliad* is of the poets' own invention, although a few passages do reflect 'proper' Mycenaean practice.³⁵

It is, as I said, curious that such a broad consensus exists, for the reasoning behind it is fundamentally flawed. If it is true that chariots are most efficiently used in battalions, and either as mobile launch-pads or as a shock-force, that does not mean they cannot be used in other ways as well. It is a mistake to think that only considerations of military efficiency determine the ways of war in any society. Other considerations may be of overriding importance, and so they are in the Homeric world.

Homer's chariots do not fight in battalions for the very good reason that they belong to *leaders*, each of whom stays in the company of his own band of followers, who fight on foot. Of forty-one chariot-fighters mentioned, eighteen are commanders of contingents, while the others may well have been thought of as lesser leaders. For example, within the Trojan contingent, which has a number of unnamed leaders and Hektor as supreme

commander, we find seven chariots apart from Hektor's. Three are used by other sons of Priamos, two by sons of another elder, Panthoös, one by the sons of Dares, a rich priest of Hephaistos, and one by the sons of Antimakhos, a rich and influential friend of Paris. These would seem to be the sort of men who might occupy a leading role in the army, and on one occasion two of them are indeed called *hêgemôn*.³⁶ As leaders, they would be bound to fight alongside the foot-soldiers who form their personal retinues, leaving their men behind only during all-out flight and pursuit, rejoining them as soon as equilibrium is restored.³⁷ Hence they are unable to unite in chariotry battalions.

Nor is it hard to understand why chariots are 'improperly' used as mere means of transport. Unlike the chariots of the Near Eastern armies, the Homeric chariot is not designed specifically for use in war, but is an all-purpose vehicle used for peace-time travel and racing as well as in battle. It is also a great status symbol, since it is drawn by two or more expensive horses.³⁸ Not being made for exclusively military purposes, the chariot's role in battle is a simple extension of its role at home.

It retains its function as a means of transport – not only to and from, but also *within* battle. It can and does serve to transport warriors in the *melée*, despite the common objection that it is 'impractical' for a chariot to drive 'hither and thither through the thick of the battle' – an objection voiced most strongly by Latacz, who argues that chariots would have to be left in the rear, since at the front they would find no space to manoeuvre.³⁹ On our interpretation of Homeric battle, this problem vanishes. Once one recognizes that the masses in the *Iliad* fight in open formation, rather than in a massed phalanx, there is no longer any obstacle to the manoeuvres of single chariots: they can make their way through the considerable gaps between the combatants. The chariot, then, serves as a means of transport on all occasions, and its usefulness in this respect should not be underestimated: the speed of the horses not only increases a leader's range of action, but may save his life when he needs to make a quick get-away.

Moreover, the chariot's function as a status symbol is undiminished in war. When Nestor was once forced to go to war on foot – since his father had hidden his horses, in an attempt to keep him at home – he made it his business to capture and mount a chariot right away. 'I excelled among our horsemen, although I was a footsoldier', he proudly recalls (11.717–21, 737–44). The Trojan leader Asios refuses to dismount even when everyone else goes on foot, for he wishes to be 'made resplendent [*agallomenos*] by his chariot and horses' (12.114).

Prestige in combat and speed in flight are excellent reasons for those

who own a chariot to bring it from home. On the other hand, by bringing it to war, one is putting a valuable possession at risk (cf. 5.192–203). The use of chariots in Homer, therefore, constitutes a compromise: a man will go to war in his precious vehicle, but in order to keep driver and horses as much as possible out of danger, he will rarely actually fight from it. Instead, he dismounts and leaves it some way behind, thus minimizing the risk to the chariot without entirely losing the benefit of having one.

If the heroes do not use chariots in the theoretically most effective way, it is because their fighting habits are shaped by social, cultural, and economic conditions. The cultural pressure to attain prestige drives men to acquire chariots and use them even in battle; the social fact that these men are leaders forces them to use their chariots singly, rather than in battalions; and the economic fact that they can ill afford to lose their horses makes them employ their chariots with great caution. If Mycenaeans, Egyptians, or Hittites used chariots differently, that is because their societies were different.⁴⁰ One might add that cultures using chariots along Homeric lines are not unknown. Celts used to dismount from their chariots to fight hand to hand.⁴¹ Assyrians, as described by Xenophon, ‘left their chariots to fight as *promakhoi*’ until the bulk of the hostile army reached them; then they ‘remounted the chariots and withdrew towards the multitude of their own men’ (*Kyrou paideia* 3.3. 60).

This leaves us to examine the common view that a few passages in the *Iliad* inconsistently do describe chariot battalions in action. The main text is a speech made before battle by Nestor to his assembled troops:

He instructed the chariot-fighters [*hippêes*] first. He exhorted them to hold in their horses and not drive around wildly among the crowd. ‘Let no man think of fighting the Trojans alone, ahead of the others [*oios prosth’ allôn*], relying on his horsemanship and bravery, nor let him retreat, for you will be weaker. But whenever a man, from his chariot [*apo hôn okheôn*], reaches another chariot, let him lunge [*orexasthô*] with his spear, because it is much better that way. Thus, with this mind and spirit, earlier generations, too, destroyed cities and walls.’ (4.301–9)

The advice given here is usually taken to mean that the charioteers must maintain formation, neither advancing ahead of, nor falling behind, ‘the others’, i.e., the other charioteers. The fighting-man must not dismount, but fight ‘from his chariot’, i.e., standing on it, and he must not throw his spear, but ‘lunge’, i.e., thrust, with it.⁴²

The Greek text, however, is susceptible of more than one interpretation. One could take ‘the others’ (*alloi*) to mean, not the charioteers, but *all* the men, including ‘those on foot’, who have been mentioned just before as standing behind the chariots (4.297–8). In that case, Nestor’s first sentence

may merely mean that the men must neither attack too recklessly, nor display cowardice by retreating when attacked in turn. In the next sentence, the verb 'to lunge' (*oregô*) can mean *to throw*, as well as *to strike*; 'from [*apo*] his chariot' may mean *going forward from* his chariot, rather than *standing on* it.⁴³ If so, Nestor may simply be telling his men that, when they go forward from their chariots and encounter an enemy, they must *attack*, throwing or thrusting with their spear, rather than retreat. Thus, his advice may concern, not the proper technique of chariot-fighting, but the proper spirit to be displayed in combat. The closing words of the speech tend to confirm this interpretation: Nestor speaks of the *mentality* [*noôs kai thumos*] of earlier generations, not of their battle tactics.

The fact that Nestor places the chariots ahead of the troops (4.297) and singles out the *hippêes* for special exhortation – as does Hektor (11.289–90; 15.352–4) – does not mean that they form a distinct battalion. It is because they are leaders of men that they are drawn up in front and that their supreme commanders address them in particular when spurring on the army. So too, when Nestor assumes that chariots will fight chariots, and when it is said that in a rout '*hippêes* killed *hippêes*' (11.150–1), this does not imply a separate chariot engagement, but reflects a habit of seeking out opponents of equal rank – as when Hektor first slaughters nine Greek commanders, before falling on the masses (11.299–309).

The remaining evidence for massed chariot combat cannot stand by itself. It consists of references to chariots advancing and retreating, and shows only that large numbers of chariots are present. It does not show that these move across the battlefield in formation, rather than singly, and thus does not necessarily point to a use of chariots other than the well-attested one in which they operate primarily as a means of transport, and independently from one another.⁴⁴

Homer's portrayal of chariots in combat, then, is internally wholly consistent, as well as compatible with his image of battles fought in open formation, and plausible when seen against the social, cultural, and economic background of his heroic world.⁴⁵

Does the epic picture of battle, then, reflect the realities of warfare of some historical period? In some respects, it clearly does not. At times, divine intervention may make a warrior fly across the battlefield, or a spear fly back to its owner (20.321–9; 22.273–7). More mundane narrative conventions give us heroes who speechify to the enemy at inordinate length, and never need more than a single blow to despatch minor opponents. Some of the more gruesome wounds and the occasional death-dive off a wall or chariot remind one of nothing so much as a spaghetti Western.⁴⁶

Moreover, we shall encounter more than one fantastic feature in Homer's depiction of his heroes' arms and armour. Nevertheless, I hope to show that the basic patterns of armament and combat tactics are not only plausible, but have a close, though surprisingly late, parallel in history.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

NOTES

The following abbreviated titles will be used in the notes: **Greenhalgh EGW** = P. A. Greenhalgh, *Early Greek Warfare* (Cambridge, 1973); **Hoplites** = V. D. Hanson (ed.), *Hoplites: the Classical Greek Battle Experience* (London, 1991); **KC** = H. van Wees, 'Kings in Combat', *CQ* 38 (1988), 1–24; **Latacz KKK** = J. Latacz, *Kampfsparänese, Kampfdarstellung und Kampfwirklichkeit in der Ilias, bei Kallinos und Tyrtaios* (Munich, 1977); **LM** = H. van Wees, 'Leaders of Men?', *CQ* 36 (1986), 285–303; **Lorimer BSA** = H. L. Lorimer, 'The Hoplite Phalanx', *BSA* 42 (1947), 76–138; **Lorimer HM** = H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments* (London, 1950); **Pritchett GSW 4** = W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War, Vol. 4* (Berkeley, 1985); **Pritchett SAGT 7** = W. K. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography, Vol. 7* (Amsterdam, 1991); **Snodgrass AAG** = A. M. Snodgrass, *Arms and Armour of the Greeks* (London, 1967); **Snodgrass EGAW** = A. M. Snodgrass, *Early Greek Armour and Weapons* (Edinburgh, 1964); **SW** = H. van Wees, *Status Warriors: War, Violence and Society in Homer and History* (Amsterdam, 1992).

1. M. Mead, Introduction to *Gardens of War*, eds. R. Gardner and K. G. Heider (Harmondsworth, 1974; 1968¹), p. viii.

2. For the common view, see e.g. M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*² (London, 1977; 1954¹), p. 74. Latacz presented his view in *KKK*; a batch of largely enthusiastic reviews, and some of the earliest works to accept Latacz' central conclusions are listed in *KC*, 1–2 n.3. More recently, Latacz' reconstruction has been accepted by the various contributors to *The Iliad: a Commentary* (ed. G. S. Kirk; Cambridge 1985–93); by Kirk himself, in the introduction to *Books V–VIII*, pp. 21–2 (1990), by M. Edwards, *ad* 20.353–72 (1991), and especially, though often implicitly, by R. Janko, throughout the commentary on *Books XIII–XVI* (1992), as *ad* 13.126–35, 312–14, 330–44, 496–501, 502–75. Others who follow Latacz include: C. Ulf, *Die homerische Gesellschaft* (Munich, 1990), pp. 139–49; V. D. Hanson, *Hoplites*, pp. 80–1 (nn.11–12); and K. Raaflaub in *Zweihundert Jahre Homer-Forschung*, ed. J. Latacz (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1991), pp. 225–30.

Different interpretations of Homeric warfare: Pritchett *GSW 4*, pp. 7–33; Van Wees, *LM* and *KC*; H. W. Singor, *Mnemosyne* 44 (1991), 17–62; H. Bowden in *War and Society in the Greek World*, eds. J. Rich and G. Shipley (London, 1993), pp. 45–63.

3. Pritchett *SAGT 7*, pp. 182–3; Singor, *op. cit.* (n.2), 17–18.

4. See the discussion in *SW*, pp. 10–23. The dangers are perfectly exemplified by Pritchett and Singor themselves: Pritchett imposes a preconceived model of warfare upon Homer with scant regard for the evidence ('Before Homer and after Homer, men have fought battles in mass formations, and there is no reason to believe that the warfare of pitched battles was different in the period covered by the epic', *SAGT 7*, p. 188; cf. p. 183), while Singor proceeds to an overly arbitrary dissection of Homeric battles scenes into 'layers' and 'stages'.

5. Latacz *KKK*, esp. pp. 68–95; 116–212; cf. *LM*, 286 and *KC*, 15. This crucial point had in fact been made long ago by F. Albracht, *Kampf und Kampfschilderung bei Homer*, Part I (Naumburg, 1886), p. 28, but has since been much ignored.

In addition to Latacz' arguments to the effect that mass-participation in battle is continually assumed in the *Iliad*, I have suggested that, when Homer says that a leading hero stands 'alone', he means 'alone with his followers', i.e., without the company of other leaders (*LM*, 288–90). Moreover, while Latacz explains the focus on a few heroes as merely a literary expedient ('zooming in' on the action), I have suggested that the poet deliberately focuses on a few leaders and gives them a disproportionately large role in determining the course of battle in order to justify the hereditary high status and formal power of such men (*KC*, 15–22; *SW*, pp. 78–89).

Note that, whereas in *KC*, 23, I warned that the participation of large numbers of men does not necessarily mean that the lower classes are involved, I have subsequently argued that the multitude of warriors are in fact 'commoners', as opposed to the leading heroes who are aristocrats, 'princes' (*SW*, pp. 31, 78–80, 274–6).

6. As pointed out by Pritchett, *GSW* 4, p. 44; I. Morris, *Burial and Ancient Society* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 196–200; *KC*, 1 (cf. *SW*, p. 313 n.1). The theory had been formulated by Nilsson in *Klio* 22 (1929), 240–9; for recent theories, see Part II, *Conclusion*.

7. In the remainder of this section, I shall run through the main points of a reconstruction argued in greater detail in *LM* and *KC*, in order to explain and defend points which have been criticized or misunderstood by scholars. An important confusion to be cleared up at the outset is due to my apparently insufficiently clear usage of the phrases 'mass combat' and 'massed combat' in *KC*. Mass combat I used (and will use here) to mean strictly combat which involves a large number of men, regardless of the nature or density of their formation, while massed combat is meant to refer only to many men fighting in a close formation. Kirk, op. cit. (n.2), p. 21 n.8, cites me as claiming that there is no mass combat in Homer, and finds my argument inconsistent on the matter; what I actually wrote was there is no evidence for massed combat (*KC*, 12) and I think that my argument will be found consistent on this point. Similar misunderstandings presumably underlie the comments by E. L. Wheeler, *Hoplites*, p. 158 n.33 ('Denial of mass combat . . . is too extreme'), and Pritchett, *SAGT* 7, pp. 187–8 ('It seems strange to reject the evidence for mass battles').

The most extensive criticisms of *KC* have been advanced by Pritchett, *SAGT* 7, pp. 181–90: many of these are concerned with the inevitability, as he sees it, of inconsistency in epic warfare (pp. 182–3, 187–8; see above). His other criticisms will be tackled in due course, but at this point I should like to stress that *KC* was written, not as Pritchett claims 'in support of a theory of "hoplite democracy"' (pp. 181–2), but, if anything, against it (*KC*, 22–4).

8. Latacz *KKK*, esp. pp. 45–65, and cf. Pritchett *GSW* 4, pp. 21–5. It should be noted that some of the other passages regularly cited as evidence for a phalanx-formation (such as 4.446–51, cited by Pritchett *SAGT* 7, pp. 185–6) in fact show only that many warriors join battle; in other words, that there is mass, but not necessarily massed, fighting (see n.7).

9. Cf. *KC*, 8–9; *LM*, 292 with n.39, 293–5, 298–9 with n.66; Wheeler, *Hoplites*, p. 128 with n.35; R. Leimbach, *Gnomon* 52 (1980), 420–2. H. W. Singor has suggested that *phalanges* may originally have meant 'spears', and by extension 'a group of spear-men' (*Oorsprong en betekenis van de hoplietensphalanx in het archaische Griekenland*, Ph.D. dissertation, Leiden, 1988, pp. 16–19; also op. cit. [n.2], 26–31). This etymology is probably to be preferred to the one I had suggested (*LM*, 295), but it does not imply that a *phalanx* is a *line*, rather than merely a group, as Singor goes on to assume.

10. For more detailed discussion of this and similar passages, see *KC*, 8–9; *LM*, 294 n.51.

11. Cf. *LM*, 285, 288–92; *KC*, 5–7; Wheeler, *Hoplites*, p. 127 with n.32; Janko, op. cit. (n.2), ad 16.168–97. On the nature of Homeric war-bands, see also *SW*, p. 48 (esp. n.81). Latacz ignores the existence and mobility of such bands, which to my mind is a serious flaw in his argument. Singor acknowledges the warriors' mobility and suggests that, since it is incompatible with a tight formation, it is a poetic survival from a much older style of warfare (op. cit. [n.9], p. 73). Christoph Ulf, op. cit. (n.2), pp. 150–3, argues that strict formations are kept in the first two battles of the *Iliad*, but that lack of success then forces the Greeks to adopt different, more mobile, tactics and abandon formation altogether in the third battle; the *Umbruch* supposedly takes place at 11.91. Unfortunately for this theory, most of the evidence that has to some suggested a rank-and-file formation in the first place, appears after the alleged change of tactics.

12. Latacz analyses the course of Homer's third battle in great detail (see *KKK*, pp. 96–115) and discusses general patterns of flight and recovery (pp. 212–15), but does not appear to recognize that a constant scattering and rallying of troops is incompatible with maintaining a tight formation, until in a belated footnote, at the prompting of Erich Burck (*KKK*, p. 228 n.9), he rejects the repeated ebb and flow of battle as an 'unrealistic' element.

13. Latacz *KKK*, esp. pp. 116–19, also 119–29 and 178–209; cf. Kirk, op. cit. (n.2), p. 21, and Janko, op. cit. (n.2), e.g. ad 13.312–14; 15.318–19, 405–591; 16.772–5. Leimbach, op. cit. (n.9), 422, points out the difficulties with Latacz' view. My own interpretation, explained below, is argued at length in *KC*, 2–3, 7–12.

14. Latacz *KKK*, pp. 129–78; *KC*, 4–7.

15. Latacz *KKK*, esp. pp. 118, 140, 159–60; Pritchett *GSW* 4, pp. 14–15, 28–30 (based on A. Lang, *The World of Homer* [London 1910], pp. 55–6).

16. *KC*, 7–12, esp. nn.26, 32. Janko, op. cit. (n.2), regularly points out passages where the use of missiles and hand-weapons appears confused (e.g. *ad* 13.134–5, 177–8, 190–4, 554–5, 570–3), but he explains these away or merely expresses puzzlement.

17. *KC*, 9–10; *pace* Pritchett, *SAGT* 7, p. 186 ('Such scenes describe a situation which is deliberate and implies careful training').

18. Pritchett, *GSW* 4, pp. 25–6 and *SAGT* 5 (1985), pp. 18–19 = 26–7. *Contra*: *KC*, 12 n.40; Wheeler, *Hoplites*, pp. 127–8 with n.36.

19. Singor, op. cit. (n.2), 19; op. cit. (n.9), pp. 79–82. *Contra*: *KC*, 11–12.

20. *KC*, 12–14; cf. Edwards, op. cit. (n.2), *ad* 19.233–7; Wheeler, *Hoplites*, p. 127. Contrast Latacz' notion that such exhortatory speeches (*Kampfsparänesen*) are to be taken as a signal for the *promakhoi* to fall back into line and for the hitherto passive multitude to advance in formation and join massed hand-to-hand combat (*KKK*, esp. pp. 172, 177).

21. This account is based mainly on K. G. Heider, *Grand Valley Dani: Peaceful Warriors* (New York, 1979); quotations are from pp. 94–6; see next note.

22. Gardner and Heider, op. cit. (n.1), pp. 139, 141. This work provides excellent photos of the Dani at war; footage of Dani battles features in Robert Gardner's film *Dead Birds*.

23. According to Gardner and Heider, op. cit. (n.1), p. 138, about a hundred men out of 'several hundred' are active at any one time. Compare L. G. Vial on Chimbu battles in which about 65 to 75 out of 200 men are actively fighting (*Walkabout* 9 [1942], 1, 5–9, as quoted in P. Brown, *The Chimbu* [London 1973], pp. 58–9). For forms of combat among other New Guinea tribes, see L. Pospisil, *The Kapauku Papuans of West New Guinea* (New York, 1963), pp. 58–60; M. J. Meggitt, *Blood Is Their Argument* (Palo Alto, 1977), esp. pp. 17–21 (and 190 n.2). It may be noted that the Melpa (*Ongka. A Self-Account by a New Guinea Big-Man*, transl. A. Strathern [London, 1979], pp. 61–2) and the Chimbu (Vial. loc. cit.) also used an alternative tactic of forming a single line of men with locked shields.

24. Finley, op. cit. (n.2), p. 149; Latacz *KKK*, pp. 215–23.

25. On Latacz' view (as cited n.24), chariots would have to be left behind the lines, since a massed infantry formation would leave no room for them near the front. For the chariot-problem, see e.g. Singor, op. cit. (n.2), 112–18; G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: a Commentary. Books I–IV* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 360–3; Greenhalgh, *EGW*, esp. pp. 7–17; M. Detienne, 'Remarques sur le char en Grèce', *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne*, ed. J.-P. Vernant (Paris, 1968), pp. 313–18; E. Delebecque, *Le cheval dans l'Iliade* (Paris, 1951).

26. Wooden chariots: 4.486; 5.838; 21.37–8 (cf. J. Wiesner, 'Fahren und Reiten', *Archaeologia Homerica F* [Göttingen, 1968], p. 13). The wood is sometimes overlaid with metal foil ornaments (e.g. 23.503; Wiesner, op. cit., pp. 13–14), which adds an element of display (see n.38 below). For three- and four-horse chariots, see n.32.

The lower status of the charioteer is obvious in most cases, and this may explain why, when circumstances bring two leaders of roughly equal status together on a single chariot, a tactful discussion is required in order to settle which of them is to drive (5.221–38).

27. Cf. 4.365–6; 5.494–6, 794–5; 6.103–5; 13.749.

28. Advancing: 6.120–1 with 232–3; 8.312–15; 16.727–8. Fighting from chariot: 5.9–21, 217–443, 835–67; 8.118–29 (both sides mounted). To these cases one may add the instances – in battle as opposed to rout – where both fighter and driver are killed in their chariot: e.g. 5.608–9; 11.320–2, 328–35; cf. 16.810.

29. E.g. 3.29–31; 4.418–21; 5.106–34; 8.316–29; 11.423; 15.447–57; 16.426–7, 733, 755; 17.481–3.

30. Retreating to chariot with spoils: 17.129–30, 540–1; wounded: 5.106–34; 11.191–2, 206–7, 273–4, 399–400, 487–8; 13.535–7; 14.428–39; in flight: 5.249–50; 8.157–8; 11.354–60; 16.367–8, 657; in pursuit: 11.755–60; 16.684; 20.498–502 (cf. 394–5); to cross the field: 11.527–37; and, presumably, 8.105–8; 11.512–20; 17.609–25, too.

31. Men killed while mounting or turning chariot: 5.38–40, 43–7; 7.13–16; 8.256–60; 16.343–4. M. M. Wilcock, 'The Fighting in the *Iliad*' in *Spondes ston Omiro*, Proceedings of the Sixth Conference on the *Odyssey*, 1990 (Ithaki, 1993), pp. 141–7, points out that such incidents in Homer always indicate the beginning of a general rout.

32. Spare horses: 8.80–7; 16.466–76 (both killed); cf. Hektor's four horses (8.185); two spares? Charioteers leaving fighters: 5.9–21, 576–8; 13.384–96; 16.864–7; 20.487–9; fighters leaving charioteers: 8.118–29, 312–15; 15.447–57. In three cases, the survivor does unsuccessfully attempt to

defend the corpse (5.217–443 [Aineias]; 11.91–8 [Oileus]; 16.737–9 [Hektor]), and there is also the case of Sarpedon, who had already dismounted and continues his fight (16.462–5). Aineias loses his chariot, Oileus and Sarpedon lose their lives as well.

33. M. A. Littauer and J. H. Crowel, *Antiquity* 57 (1983), 189. Cf. nn.34, 40 below.

34. G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 124; Greenhalgh *EGW*, pp. 7–10, and id., *Antiquity* 54 (1980), 201–5. Such chariot tactics are rejected as physically impossible by Littauer and Crowel, op. cit. (n.33), 187–92, and Singor, op. cit. (n.2), 113.

35. So already P. Couissin, *Les institutions militaires et navales* (Paris, 1931), p. 19; also Finley, op. cit. (n.2), p. 45; Kirk, op. cit. (n.34), p. 124; Snodgrass *EGAW*, p. 162; Greenhalgh *EGW*, p. 7 ('No conception of the proper tactical role of massed chariotry'). The passages supposedly describing true Mycenaean practice will be discussed presently.

36. Unnamed leaders (*agoi*): 12.61; 17.335. Chariots: 5.159–60; 11.101–12; 13.535–7 (Priamos); 15.447–57; 16.809–11 (Panthoös); 5.9–13 (Dares); 11.122–42 (Antimakhos); *hégemones*: 12.87–9 (Poulydamas); 12.87, 94 (Deiphobos). See on lesser leaders: *LM* 287–8 (with unfortunately mistaken references to Trojan leaders in n.14: read 12.86–100); Janko, op. cit. (n.2), ad 16.168–97. Note that Pandaros was told by his father to 'lead from his chariot' (5.195).

37. At the start of the first battle, the chariots are 'held back at the mass' (3.113), and there is nothing elsewhere to suggest that chariots engage the enemy before the infantry does. In pursuit, the chariots go ahead of the mass, so that they have to turn and rejoin it when the enemy stops fleeing (5.502–5), and, in flight, Hektor in his chariot 'leaves the men behind' (16.367–9). Compare: 6.37–43; 8.177–9, 213–15, 253–5; 11.150–4, 289–90, 755–60; 15.258–9, 352–4, 385–7; 16.370–93; 21.16.

38. See Wiesner, op. cit. (n.26), pp. 11–29, on the construction and functions of the Homeric chariot, and esp. p. 28 on its role as a status symbol. Greenhalgh *EGW*, pp. 37–8, shows that chariots in Homer and in Greek vase-painting are no different from 'light, railed racing chariots'. He accepts that such chariots might hold an armed passenger as well as a charioteer when driven in processions, but denies that they were used thus in battle (*ibid.* p. 39), because a 'technical' vocabulary for two-man chariots is lacking. This is not, I believe, a tenable argument: see n.45 below.

Since the heroes do *not* use purpose-built war-chariots, the 'economic' argument against the historicity of Homeric chariots, viz. that in reality the Greeks would not have been able to 'afford the luxury of a "war"-chariot from which they would seldom if ever actually fight' (Snodgrass *EGAW*, p. 160 and n.6), falls down. The Greeks used the all-purpose chariots which they owned already, and did not have to spend an extra fortune on additional war-chariots. (Note that the *horses*, not the car, constitute the greatest expense.)

39. Latacz *KKK* pp. 215–23.

40. It has in fact been plausibly argued by both Wiesner, op. cit. (n.26), pp. 95–7, and Littauer and Crowel, op. cit. (n.33), 190, that Mycenaean chariot-fighters, too, descended from their chariots and fought on foot. It remains likely, though, that the Mycenaean operated in battalions rather than on single chariots (Wiesner, *ibid.*). On the general differences between Homer and Mycenae, see e.g. *SW*, pp. 53–8.

41. On the use of chariots by the Celts (and Cyrenaeans), see J. K. Anderson, *AJA* 79 (1975), 175–87, answering Greenhalgh's criticisms (*EGW*, pp. 14–17) of an earlier paper (J. K. Anderson, *AJA* 69 [1965], 349–52). Admittedly, Celtic usage differs significantly from Homeric practice, but the point here is that there are cultures which do not use chariots in the 'proper' manner. Greenhalgh's argument that they do not do so because they are not 'real chariot-powers' holds little water: if one accepts its validity at all, one can simply answer that Homeric society apparently does *not* represent a 'chariot-power'.

42. So e.g. Kirk, op. cit. (n.34), p. 124, and op. cit. (n.25), pp. 360–3; Wiesner, op. cit. (n.26), pp. 26–7; Greenhalgh *EGW*, pp. 1–9.

43. *Apo* is explicitly used with the meaning 'leaving' their chariots in Xenophon, *Kyrou paideia* 3.3. 60 (as cited above). This meaning would also be applicable to 15.386, where men are said to fight *aph' hippôn*, but none of the combatants is actually *on* his chariot. On the other hand, *aph' hippoim* in 5.13 must mean 'on the chariot'. For *oregô*, see H. Trümper, *Kriegerische Fachausdrücke im griechischen Epos* (Basle, 1950), pp. 118–19.

44. That Nestor, in his account of the battle against the Epeians (11.743–5), is not talking about massed chariot combat is clear from the fact that he takes his first chariot as a foot-soldier, and subsequently takes his place with it 'among the *promakhoi*'. In 3.115, *plêsion allêlôn* refers to the pieces of equipment, not to the charioteers (cf. 3.326–7 and 10.471–3). In 15.353, *sun autôi* may refer to

'shouting' with him or 'steering their horses' with him: even in the latter case this only means that they advance at the same time Hektor does, not necessarily that they do so *en masse*.

Chariots are fairly numerous: 11.748–9 (cf. 2.615–19); 2.775–8; 4.297; 10.473.

45. I should mention one more alleged inconsistency, first noted by Delebecque, *op. cit.* (n.25), esp. pp. 90–3, and followed up by Greenhalgh *EGW*, p.39 (cf. n.38 above). Both these scholars have said that Homer's lack of a technical vocabulary for chariot combat betrays unfamiliarity with the use of chariots in battle. The answer to this, however, is simple: there is no specialized vocabulary because there are no specialized chariot-fighters and no massed chariotry manoeuvres. Homer *does* have an ample vocabulary to describe jumping on to and down from chariots, or causing an enemy to crash from his car, and all the other actions that *do* feature in Homeric chariot combat (as is clear from Delebecque's own list of expressions and formulae, *op. cit.*, pp. 91–2). Note that, although the technical term *paraibatês* for the 'passenger' on the chariot occurs only once (23.132), as Delebecque stresses (*ibid.* pp. 166–7), the technical verb *parbainô* occurs thrice (3.262, 312; 11.522).

46. Shouting at and talking to the enemy is not in itself unrealistic: it is the *length* of some of the speeches that seems implausible. Gruesome wounds: e.g. 13.442–4 (spear fixed in heart, and shaking because heart continues to beat); 13.616–18 (blow on the head makes eyes pop out and fall to the ground). Spectacular falls: e.g. 5.584–8 (man crashes from chariot head first; corpse remains standing upside down, head in the sand); 12.394–6; 16.401–10 (man hauled out of chariot by spear stuck in his mouth); 16.736–50.

James Whitley points out to me that Sergio Leone once claimed that his spaghetti Westerns were in fact inspired by the *Iliad*!

NEW SURVEYS IN THE CLASSICS

The production of this year's Survey, *Greek Religion* by Professor Jan Bremmer, has been delayed. The editors hope to issue it with the October number of the journal.