HOPLITES

The Classical Greek Battle Experience

Edited by

Victor Davis Hanson

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HOPLITES

There are numerous books on ancient Greek warfare which focus on tactical and strategic problems. This book, however, concentrates on the experiences of the soliders who did the fighting, not on their generals, nor on logistics, tactics, or strategy, which were, after all, for much of Greek history deliberately secondary considerations.

The essays comprising *Hoplites* explore the pragmatic concerns of Greek infantry. In part two, 'The Men and their Equipment,' for example, three essays discuss the problems of wearing bronze arms and armour in battle conditions: why was the spear alone the favoured weapon of attack? How were armoured corpses identified, stripped, and returned? How did infantry maintain the great weight of the three-foot hoplite shield? In part three, 'The Environment of Battle,' scholars address the actual mechanics of phalanx advance and retreat, the atmospherics and role of battle music, and the place and activity of the hoplite commander. The fourth part, 'Hoplite Tradition and Practice,' covers fortification in Greek battle and the peculiar absence of artillery siegecraft. The dedication of spoils—and the effect of such trophies on the soldiers themselves—is treated in detail, as is animal sacrifice in the graphic context of the battlefield.

Hoplites is an important book, the first to give this topic comprehensive *scholarly* treatment.

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Edited by

Victor Davis Hanson

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To
John Keegan
for
The Face of Battle

It is wickedness to clothe
Yon hideous grinning thing that stalks
Hidden in music, like a queen
That in a garden of glory walks,
Till good men love the thing they loathe
Art thou hast many infamies,
But not an infamy like this.
O stop the fife and still the drum,
And show the monster as she is.

Richard Le Gallienne
(1866–1947)

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MAJOR GREEK BATTLES

Battle	*Date* (BC)	*Combatants*
Hysiae	669 (?)	Argive victory over Sparta
Sepeia	494	Spartan defeat of Argos
Marathon	490	First Greek conquest of Persia
Thermopylae	480	Persian defeat of Greeks
Plataea	479	Greek victory over Persia
Dipaia	471	Spartan defeat of Arcadians
Tanagra	458	Spartan-Theban defeat of Athens
Oinophyta	457 (?)	Athenian victory over Thebes
First Coroneia	447	Theban defeat of Athens
Delium	424	Theban defeat of Athens
Amphipolis	422	Spartan allied victory over Athens
First Mantineia	418	Spartan victory over Athenian allies
First Syracuse	415	Athenian defeat of Sicilians
Assinarus River	413	Final Sicilian defeat of Athens
Haliartus	395	Boiotian defeat of Spartans
Nemea River	394	Spartan victory over allied Greeks
Second Coroneia	394	Narrow Spartan defeat of Thebans
Tegyra	375	Theban defeat of Spartans
Leuctra	371	Dramatic Theban victory over Spartans
Second Mantineia	362	Theban-Spartan standoff
Crimesus	339	Sicilian defeat of Carthage
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THE CONTRIBUTORS

J.K.Anderson is well known as a classicist, historian and archaeologist and holds the Chair of Classical Archaeology at the University of California, Berkeley. Besides numerous journal articles on Greek art and history, Professor Anderson has written several books on topics as diverse as warfare, ancient horsemanship, hunting, and Xenophon. He is perhaps best known to military historians for his classic *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (California, 1970).

Victor Davis Hanson teaches Greek and Latin as a Professor of Classics at California State University, Fresno, and farms near Selma, California. He is the author of *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece* (Pisa, 1983), *The Western Way of War. Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (New York, 1989), and articles concerning Greek history.

Alistar H.Jackson, archaeologist and historian, teaches Ancient History at the University of Manchester. He has published various articles on Greek military history, piracy, the economics of warfare, and Greek arms and armor.

Michael H.Jameson, classicist, historian and archaeologist is Edward Clark Crossett Professor Emeritus at Stanford University. The discoverer of the "Themistocles Decree," he has written a wide variety of articles on Greek religion, history, agriculture, and epigraphy. Professor Jameson directed the excavations at Halieis for the University of Pennsylvania and initiated the Argolid Exploration Project.

Peter Krentz has written articles on Greek military, diplomatic, and political history in addition to Greek epigraphy. He is the author of *The Thirty at Athens* (Cornell, 1982), an editor of Xenophon's

Hellenika I–II.3.10 (Warminster, England, 1989), and is currently an Associate Professor of Ancient History at Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina.

John Lazenby, after taking "Greats" at Oxford in 1956, spent the better part of three years in Greece, researching on prehistoric topography, but also indulging his love of battlefields. In 1959 he was appointed Lecturer in Ancient History in what is now the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, and is currently Reader in Ancient History and Head of the School of Humanities. In addition to numerous articles, he is co-author of *The Catalogue of Ships in Homer's Iliad* (Oxford, 1970), and author of *Hannibal's War* (Warminster, England, 1978) and *The Spartan Army* (Warminster, England, 1985).

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PREFACE

Over twenty years ago *Le Centre de Recherches comparées sur les Sociétés anciennes* published a collection of seventeen essays on Greek warfare under the direction of Jean-Pierre Vernant, entitled *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne*. This present volume on hoplites differs in at least three fundamental ways from that earlier important study. First, our collection focuses primarily on the Archaic and Classical Periods, the great age of hoplite battle between 650 and 338 BC; Mycenaean, Dark Age and Hellenistic warfare are therefore *excluded* entirely. Those battles were among Greeks, and often in Greece, but otherwise they were quite different phenomena. Moreover, we have also deliberately ignored all types of conflict other than purely infantry battle; there is little here concerning cavalry, chariots, naval warfare, artillery, archers, or other missile troops. All such fighting presupposed specialized skills, where mastery of technology, rather than muscular strength and unshakeable nerve, was essential, not incidental, for military success. Lastly, whereas the former book studied Greek warfare from a variety of approaches—tactical, strategic, religious, and sociological—we have, as the title of this book suggests, a very narrow angle of vision: the view of fighting from the eyes of the Greeks who did the actual killing and dying. Our volume, then, is not merely an English updated version of earlier work; only by narrowing the confines of our military history can we hope to widen understanding of the true nature of Greek warfare.

Yet, it is also quite different from a number of recent illustrated accounts and anthologies published in the United Kingdom, France, and America, and primarily aimed at the so-called (and elusive) general audience. While we hope these essays are enjoyable for scholar and non-scholar alike, they seek to incorporate research found primarily

in academic journals and especially in ancient sources—literary, iconographic, epigraphic, and archaeological—not always accessible to most readers. Consequently, the success or failure of these articles will depend not only on their ability to interest the uninitiated in a legacy of the Greeks often either unknown or forgotten, but also in turning scholarly discussion on to the killing field itself.

My editorial intervention has been reasonably limited, mostly restricted to setting limits upon length, standard methods of citation, and the more mundane task of collecting the essays before a publisher's deadline. While I have selected the contributors, assigned the broad areas of investigation, read carefully these essays and made suggestions, all chose their own precise topics and exercised control over the final product. My chief contribution has been a plea at each stage to direct all investigation from the vantage point of the hoplite infantrymen; how else could there be justification for yet another study of Greek warfare? I have also provided an introduction, the notes on the contributors, a select bibliography of Greek battle, indices, and a brief epilogue. Citations in parentheses in the text or in the notes *may* refer to the secondary works listed in full in the bibliography by name (and date) alone; otherwise we have followed the stylistic guidelines present in the *American Journal of Archaeology*. Abbreviations of Greek and Roman authors and their works follow those found in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (second edition). Greek words and quotations have nearly all been translated and are not found in Greek script. No effort has been made to impose on the contributors consistency in the spelling of Greek names and places.

Following Part I, my brief introduction, the nine essays have been grouped into three thematic and sequential parts. J.K.Anderson introduces Part II, 'The men and their equipment', by reviewing various offensive arms in an effort to imagine how hoplite weapons were worn and employed under the actual conditions of shock battle. P.Vaughn follows, but now reverses the angle of vision: given the nature of such edged instruments, and the protective cover of bronze armor, wounds to the head were sometimes so hideous that the very identification of the dead—crucial to the Greeks—must have been difficult and therefore deserving of inquiry. I conclude with a description of the shield and butt-spike, suggesting that the unique attributes of the hoplite panoply for massed fighting must be seen as a technological *response* to improving *preexisting* phalanx tactics.

In Part III, 'The environment of battle,' J.Lazenby provides a proper introduction to the section (and, in some sense, the book) with a

synopsis of a 'typical' hoplite battle. He leads us from the initial charge to the final burial, but more from the viewpoint of those who actually fought than from a strategic or tactical approach. P.Krentz narrows that focus considerably, concentrating on the acoustics of the killing field—specifically, the use of the trumpet in battle and thus the nature of its usage in command and communication. E.L.Wheeler complements the previous two essays with a long and extensive account of generalship in battle. He does not, as is often done, trace the tactical vision of a few notables, but rather for the first time describes the situation that all the hoplite commanders were faced with and attempts to refine considerably the notion—argued by myself and others—that hoplite commanders customarily exercised leadership only through example.

The fourth section, 'The rules of the game,' despite its title, is really not a deviation from our stated intention of focusing on actual battle. J.Ober, for example, explains the peculiarly limited role of obstacles, fortifications, and siegecraft itself in set battle, but through a pragmatic understanding of the hoplite agonistic tradition. M.H.Jameson similarly discusses in explicit detail the mechanics of another rite, the prebattle sacrifice, its practical ramifications—and difficulty—for the armed men of the battlefield who were waiting to fight. A.H. Jackson concludes the section with an essay on dedications, not merely their visual spectacle, but the emotional and inspirational power of such symbols as well—understandable only through the minds of the hoplites who experienced the combat ordeal.

I should like to thank Richard Stoneman of Routledge. His initial interest in and real enthusiasm for the project made this volume possible. Professors Mark Edwards and Michael Jameson of Stanford University freely offered their characteristically valuable advice to a former student. I owe special gratitude to my four more established colleagues in this endeavor, Professors Anderson, Jackson, Jameson, and Lazenby, who all graciously allowed a junior scholar, one with less expertise and experience than they, to act as general editor. In a collective sense, all scholars of Greek military history owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor W.K.Pritchett; his five-volume study of the *Greek State at War*—as frequent references in this book illustrate—is now the cornerstone of all research concerning Greek warfare. Jennifer Heyne—now of University of California, Santa Cruz—and Kathleen Page of California State University, Fresno both helped with typographical responsibilities. My wife, Cara, read all the essays and

assured our three children, ages 3, 7, and 9, of the 'importance' of this work. Perhaps, it might seem presumptuous for an editor to offer an anthology to a specific individual, inasmuch as my own contribution has been so small. However, I believe that John Keegan's *The Face of Battle* has affected all classical military historians; it has taught us to look at Greek warfare in a novel and far more rewarding fashion. To his ingenuity, then, I offer this book as very small thanks.

V.D.H.
Selma, California
January 1, 1990

Part I

INTRODUCTION

> [War is] a sweet thing to him who does
> not know it, but to him who has made
> trial of it, it is a thing of fear
>
> Pindar

THE IDEOLOGY OF HOPLITE BATTLE, ANCIENT AND MODERN

Victor Davis Hanson

Here is a volume of essays about classical Greek battle, rather than warfare, a view of combat seen largely from the vantage point of the hoplite infantrymen who did the actual fighting. This approach is entirely sensible for three reasons, one of incidental importance, the other two fundamental to our very understanding of the Greeks. In the first place, few previous scholarly studies have been devoted exclusively to the military experience of the hoplite, the feel of armor, the manner of inflicting and receiving wounds, the occurrence of the atypical and bizarre in battle, the look of the dead, the pragmatics of hoplite sacrifice and commemoration. Thus, the essays in this book (none of them published previously) raise new questions and bring in fresh evidence. Secondly and more importantly, it is essential to remember that conflict between the classical Greek city-states for over two centuries (ca 650–431 BC) usually focused—at least on land—on one encounter, a day's collision between phalanxes of heavily armed infantry. It was a single battle, then, not war as we know it, and was so recognized by the Greeks themselves—thus 'battle' rather than 'war' in this book's title reflects more than the mere contents of the collection. Finally, no military history should ever avoid the human element: it is men, after all, who fight, wound, kill, and die; it is men alone who deserve our attention, incite our imagination, earn our empathy. True, often in classical scholarship—the nature of its evidence usually being fragmentary and circumstantial—there is a tendency to identify and then elevate a particular trend into 'The Trend,' Study of Greek battle, emphasis on the infantrymen who fought and the environment of their struggle, however, is not trendy and surely avoids

that danger: battle is not a mere truism of military history, but its central, its only truth.

The extended campaign where episodic fighting breaks out instantaneously, accidentally, or unknowingly between either soldier or civilian, in the guise of horseman, archer, skirmisher, guerilla, or terrorist, was relatively absent in Greece on a large scale from the rise of the city-state until the later fifth century. Many scholars believe this and are surely correct on this count to discuss the 'ritualized' nature of early and classical Greek battle—provided they refer primarily to its predictable sequence of action, often identically replayed, regardless of the place, or time, or the particular Greek combatants present. For example, after the ordered columns of armored infantry squared off, the 'general'—battlefield leader is a better term—gave his brief harangue, a sheep or goat was sacrificed before the front line, and then, as Xenophon said of Koroneia, the men charged, collided, pushed, collapsed, killed, and died. By Hellenic tradition, and also because of the rarity of skilled cavalry and the ubiquity of nearby rough terrain, real pursuit of the defeated was limited. Instead, there was usually a mutual acknowledgment, often unexpressed, to abide simply by the decision of the battlefield dead, to view and then exchange their corpses, to allow the victors to erect a battlefield trophy, and to permit the losers to mope home in defeat and dejection. In the mind of the hoplite, what would be the point of further hostilities, when the losing combatants had no grounds for complaint over the location, time, and circumstance of battle, nor over the number, equipment, generalship, and tactics of their foe, no complaint at all over the outcome other than their own failure of bodily strength and loss of nerve?

'Strategy' for the army of the invading hoplite landowners was largely the science of collecting and deploying the various contingents of the alliance, choosing the route and time of invasion, and, if need be, organizing a provocative, rather than a destructive, attack on the farms and agricultural installations of the defenders. For those attacked, it could occasionally be a case of riding it out safely behind the municipality's walls (siegecraft at this time still being in its infancy), thus wisely, but less courageously, allowing a brief, and usually relatively benign, ravaging of their farms, as the invader grappled with the myriad tasks of destroying cereals, vines, and olives on any wide scale. Yet, far more often men wished to fight. The decision was quickly made to assemble the farmers, to preserve their pride and the sanctity—rather than the viability—of their ancestral plots,

to march out in columnar formation and to meet the trespassers in a single, pitched battle.

In the battle's aftermath, permanent occupation of the defeated's prime lands, absolute destruction of his rural infrastructures, murder, rape, and enslavement of his people—the whole repetitious nightmare of the 'campaign' of modern warfare—rarely followed in the Archaic and early Classical Periods. That belongs more to those terrible, final years of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) when the agriculturalists' absolute monopoly and control over conflict vanished. Then much that was found tried and true by two prior centuries of landed amateurs—their arcane rules, their ethos of battle, which limited infantry conflict in a social, economic, chronological, and even spatial sense—was finally cast away, repudiated, through the steady and barbaric escalation of twenty-eight years of war. The combatants, Sparta and Athens, were, to employ a cliché, atypical societies; diametrically opposed in spirit, they were ironically similar in their relative independence from the dominance of free agriculture and thus immune both from the traditional requirements of farm work and from the confining regulations of hoplite battle, which was so agrarian in outlook and practice. They were 'free' instead, unlike most other smaller Greek *poleis,* to wage among themselves a new war so akin to the agony of our own. Butchery in the streets of Plataia and Mykalessos, skirmishing at Aitolia, Sphakteria, and Sicily, abject murder on Corcyra and Melos, all widened the scope of battle far beyond the old afternoon killing-fields of the past.

'Tactics', too, from 650 BC to the later fifth century were deliberately as banal and one-dimensional as strategy. They consisted mainly of determining the proper, albeit elusive, ratio between the breadth and depth of the phalanx, a few rudimentary flanking movements, and the placement, always somewhat political, of the particular allied troops on the proper wings. By design, little—very little—was left to chance. With the accompanying absence of reserves, specialized units, the surprise attack, the night engagement, and the concealed ambush as decisive encounters, there was no desire for elaborate, pre-battle tactical planning. Nor, then, was there reason for any other to enter infantry battle except the owners of small farms, the wearers of bronze armor. The landless, rootless poor who could act either as light-armed skirmishers or guerillas in difficult, mountainous terrain were unwelcome and thus they were relegated to rowing in the fleet or occasional harassment, mopping-up and scavenging before and after battle. After all, in the great age of the hoplite their presence on a

wide scale could only prolong war (and cost money), endangering the very economy, the very purpose of pitched battle, by blending D-Day into nightmarish Vietnamization, war into cold war, by creating an overall climate of farming, but no farming. Besides, the elevation of such 'trash' into real militiamen might bring along with it their dangerous ideas about land redistribution and the radicalization of democracy. And in the Greek mind—the landowning Greek mind at least—there was a somber pathos to the notion that skirmishers could kill from afar their social betters, without recourse to hand-to-hand combat and the burden of hoplite armor. Yet, hoplite snobbery was of a peculiar sort: on the other social extreme, chateau generals and indeed generalship itself, as we know it, were also virtually non-existent. Such plumed officers and other assorted military intellectuals and planners were not only unneeded, but disliked and unwanted as well. The elite cavalry likewise played an insignificant role, one more of mutual posturing and prancing than real charging into the ranks of armed men; whatever their claims to martial virtue, they were nearly as irrelevant in battle as their impoverished opposites on the social scale.

Consequently, the often noted 'paradoxes' of Greek warfare—the ravaging of cropland, but the accomplishment of little lasting agricultural damage; the decisive hoplite clash without extensive battle fatalities; the choice of level battlefields rather than the garrisoning of defensible, mountainous passes; the adoption of heavy, bronze armor under the summer, Mediterranean sun; the exclusion not merely of the very poor, but of the very rich as well—must not be seen at all as true incongruities. All are explicable in light of the small farmers' Utopian agenda: free men who arose out of the Dark Ages as independent landowners intent on creating and preserving an exclusive society, an *agrotopia,* in their own image. Hoplite battle—itself most often arising over a struggle for disputed borderlands—for over two centuries was real war in an artificial climate—the private domain of a rural, middle class where all of like circumstance could fight and yet never really endanger their mutual agricultural prosperity. For one of the few times in history, bloodletting served in the long run to spare, rather than to expend, lives. In short, Greek warfare for over two centuries was a wonderful, absurd conspiracy.

Although it was clear to the vast majority of the Greeks that the collision of men, always stumbling and grappling in the melée of infantry battle, was their only image of war, it has not necessarily been so in the minds of their modern successors. On the contrary, all

too little has been written about the environment of a Greek battle, unique though it surely was. Yet, we see fallen hoplites on the public panorama of extant monumental sculpture from many temples, spear-thrusting on a great number of red- and black-figure vases, and descriptions of fighting throughout all varieties of Greek literature; this suggests, does it not, that most Greeks were disinterested in the parade, the May-Day march, and things quasi-military, resigned instead to the notion that war was only the few minutes of fighting and dying? That the claim of modern scholarly 'neglect' of the Greek battle phenomenon is no exaggeration is clear from recent controversy over the very nature of hoplite fighting; some, for example, have sought to argue against the pushing of crowded ranks, as if phalanx combat was instead relatively fluid, characterized by individual skirmishing, not a concentrated, massed thrusting of shields. The significance of this 'controversy' is not the persuasiveness of the argument (it is demonstrably false), but rather, at this late date, its very existence, for its presence is surely symptomatic of our own intrinsic misunderstanding of the battlefield experience of the Greek hoplite, misunderstanding of what Greek battle was, and thus, too, what Greek battle was *for*.

Instead, scholars for over 150 years have concentrated on the very three areas of warfare which were not so important to the great class of small landholders who comprised the hoplite infantry of most Greek city-states. Strategy, tactics and the 'sociology' of Greek warfare tell us very little about the fighting experience in the life of these citizens of the *polis*. Nor can this lack of interest in battle reflect a scarcity of information in our written, pictorial, or archaeological sources. Ancient historians, it is true, concentrated mostly on the campaign. Even when they do turn to factual, rather than rhetorical, descriptions of key battles, there is more emphasis on rudimentary tactics and deployment than on the fighting itself. Nevertheless, because hoplite battle was a common, shared experience to most men of the city-state, bits and pieces of the true story emerge in nearly all Greek literature, from the poetry of Tyrtaeus to the comedies of Aristophanes. The constant finds of hoplite arms and armor and the frequency of battle scenes on Greek vases and in sculpture reinforce this picture drawn from literature. Consequently, if there is any interest, we can present a confident account of the nature of hoplite battle. True, recent scholarship devoted to most Greek social and economic history has often been less than positivist, in the sense that classicists long ago discovered what we could 'know' with certainty about the Greeks,

and left it to us to fill in the gaps through less certain testimonia and (sometimes faulty) modern analogy. Yet, the study of Greek battle is surely an exception; this volume, it must be confessed, could have been composed many years ago at the very dawn of Classical scholarship. The real reason for these traditional (and repetitive, if not misguided) approaches to Greek warfare that resulted in neglect of the battlefield is to be found *not* in the primary sources: the fault lies with the peculiar nature of classical scholarship in general, and with the predilections of military historians in particular.

Classicists have most often framed the study of Greek warfare from their own individual training and interests—uniformly originating out of the university and thus long study in archaeology, philology, and history. Battle was to be political history, battle was to be Greek philology, battle was to be historiography. And so, for example, they have chronicled the military 'strategy' of a Pericles, Agesilaos, or Epameinondas, but only as an ancillary to a larger, historical interest in the rise of Athenian, Spartan, or Theban hegemony. Even when individual battles were studied—their number always small and static—it was usually through the process of 'reconstruction': key Greek words were to be analyzed and re-analyzed, inferior, pedantic, tactical manuals of much later ages consulted, passages in original sources questioned and rejected, numbers of faceless combatants surmised, sterile wings and contingents of men moved and removed—all like chess pieces on some ivory board, as if this approach alone could ever explain why or how one group of men collapsed and fled the battlefield. Similarly, arms and armor, ironically the most tangible of all evidence for hoplite fighting, were discussed largely as an offshoot of archaeological excavation; that is, their shape, form, construction, and finish were seen (as other decorative bronzes and sculpture) as works of art, rather than heavy, cumbersome tools to protect real men from awful arrow, spear, and sword attacks. Usually, then, their actual weights, the effectiveness of their protection, and the difficulty inherent in their very construction and usage were less well studied. Instead, like pots and temples, discussion of arms, of tools of mayhem and slaughter, centered on date, origin, type, and aesthetic quality and was more often introduced in the manner of a museum catalog or the slide show of an art history class, than in the proper framework of frightful killing and dying.

The rise of sociology and psychology in the twentieth century as legitimate 'sciences' has also led the more creative in Classics to envision Greek infantrymen as everymen, primeval warriors or young adults

engaged in a universal rite of passage into manhood, thus seeing the undeniably ritualistic nature of Greek warfare as something other than a deliberate, contrived contest between small farmers. Their pitched battle, in this more recent and fashionable view, is the arena where society showcases these initiations—characteristic of all cultures and thus not unique to the classical Greeks—as part of larger religious and civic obligations; the hoplite dance, group war-cry, and trophy, are all, then, sure evidence for the predictable social expression of like individuals of roughly any time or place. Yet, there was something very real, very exclusively murderous to all involved in Greek battle which is often forgotten here by anthropologists and other social scientists, something more than a mere nexus for social and religious study. Does not such an effort to explain conflict in universally 'human' terms inevitably become inhuman? The Greeks' experience was always the bloody pit of the ugly cock fight, not the posturing of the banty rooster; in short, the battlefield of Greece was often a deliberate mini-holocaust, predicated on very precise physical and mental criteria and a moral imperative specific to hoplite infantrymen, and thus far removed from the tribal give and take found in other preindustrial societies.

Military historians of Greek warfare—originally an odd breed of nineteenth-century German nationalists—while out of favor now, have been far more pragmatic than classicists and, in that narrow sense at least, therefore more successful in revealing what ancient battle was 'like'. For example, in the work of Johannes Kromayer and his numerous associates, Greek strategy and tactics were at least predicated upon close attention to topography. They explored the Greek countryside and calibrated the size of ancient battlefields, always seeking to understand whether the armies of Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon might actually fit the physical conditions of the (albeit modern) landscape. Hans Delbrück went even further. His idea of *Sachkritik* (the effort to comprehend 'the reality of the thing') was all important, as if Greek warfare could not be understood unless drill, maneuver, and even equipment were explicable through analogy to the common practice of the German army. The fault, however, with these scholars, the first scientific military historians to categorize Greek warfare into neat compartments—arms, logistics, tactics, and strategy—was not their ethnocentric demand for practical references to the conditions of real, though contemporary, warfare. Indeed, that particular interest was their chief strength. Rather, it was their marked distance, not merely in time, but, more importantly, in spirit, from

the combatants of the ancient battlefields. Rife snobbery is present in their handbooks and at times obnoxious. In truth, most were either officers themselves or civilian 'consultants' who mingled intimately with the upper civilian and military strata of society. Either way, the result was predictably the same: they gazed down on the Greek battlefield from the 'proud tower' of their own privilege, naturally searching in vain for similar kindred spirits of an ancient officer class or military intelligentsia, who practiced 'operational control' and exercised 'articulation'—a class which they never realized did not exist. 'Theaters,' 'Fronts,' 'Flanks,' and 'Salients,' after all, are nonsensical terms when applied to the Greek battlefield.

Military historians' influence, then, on balance, also has been often detrimental, since it ignores most battle experience. It is a misreading of ancient realities by faulty modern analogy whose influence is still felt today; it has imposed an artificial, glamorized separation between hoplite and commander, fighting and tactics; it is an amoral view of the phalanx from without, which tells us very little, at the expense of the picture from within, which reveals so much more about the mind of the Greeks. Indeed, the very notion of a brief collision of uniformly armed equals—little tactics, little strategy, little generalship—must have disturbed these men and so they did their best to reinvent Greek warfare into something that it was not. Their legacy in some sense is the generation of 1914, when a classical education, drawing the wrong lesson from a selective reading of ancient texts, contributed to, rather than assuaged, that madness.

Clearly, classicists and professional military historians alike have not been so interested in the experience of Greek battle. The former have seen battle theoretically, as an intellectual exercise from the extremes of textual exegesis to psychoanalysis, dry and devoid of relevance to the how and why of killing and dying; the latter, pragmatists *par excellence,* squandered the capital of their military expertise, such as it was, by their social distance from, and careful disdain for, the great middle classes who invariably provide the landed infantry of any citizen combative force. The mind of these soldiers alone experienced, analyzed, and preserved for us the true (hideous) nature of pitched battle, and so inevitably became the sole repository of the Greek combat ordeal, and thus the key to Greek military history. In the past, we scholars have not done our job and so as a profession we bear no little responsibility for the promulgation of *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori,* for the corresponding neglect of Tyrtaeus, 'His white head and grey beard

breathing out his strong soul in the dust, holding in his dear hands his groin all bloody' (10.24–5).

This small collection, I believe, is part of a healthy trend, current in classical scholarship recently, to investigate the 'ordinary' in Greece; only this way can we appreciate the achievements of the extraordinary—the extraordinary who nearly all experienced frequently the horrors of a hoplite battle. On a variety of fronts, archaeological, epigraphic, and linguistic, be it through the use of field-surveys, computer techniques, or expanded prosopographical study, we are learning a great deal about farming, sexuality, food supply, demographics, the accumulation, use, and abuse of wealth, the ratios between rich and poor: life, then, as it was lived, among the vast majority of the Greeks. Whatever the conventional arguments for the need of each new generation of classicists to 'reinterpret' for us the traditional canon of Greek literature, the limits of literary theory—psychoanalytic, feminist, structuralist, deconstructionist, minimalist—surely have now been reached. It is not so much the sheer overabundance (and faddishness) of literary work on the major authors—although any brief look at current American Ph.D. thesis topics in Classics or casual perusal of the learned journals will bear this out—as much as their culpability for the subsequent neglect of the mundane and practical. Literary theorists' appropriation—confiscation, to use a better word—of a Greece, which was not and is not their own, has left us often with a counterfeit empty Greece, sophisticated as it is sterile, with little to offer any outside the university. Perhaps these few essays on the nature of hoplite battle will help to restore in a larger sense what the Greeks all along wished to instill as their sole military, their moral, legacy: that warfare is simply battle, that battle is only fighting, that fighting is always killing and dying, nothing more, nothing less.

Part II

THE MEN AND THEIR EQUIPMENT

It will be easier to defeat them
in battle than to strip away their
armor once they are dead.

Plutarch