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Greek Warfare from the Dark Age to the Macedonian Takeover

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ABSTRACT

While ancient Greek weapons and military tactics changed dramatically over their long history, the one feature that remained constant was the Homeric ideal of heroic warfare. Individual heroism embodied Greek identity through 800 B.C. In the eighth century B.C., Greek military tactics evolved. The highly successful hoplite phalanx required foot soldiers to fight collectively in the service of city-states. As a result, collective heroism replaced individual heroism. However, Greek success in the Greco-Persian wars in the fifth century B.C. came at a price. Contact with the Persians would profoundly change the dynamics of hoplite warfare. The Persians employed combined-arms tactics, which for cultural pride, the Greeks never fully embraced or mastered. This gave rise to the one city that would: Macedon. King Philip II eventually conquered all of Greece and brought a definitive end to classical Greek warfare forever.

Keywords: Polis, Synoecism, Hoplite, Phalanx, Combined-Arms, Peloponnesian League, Delian League, Sarissa, Phalangites

La guerra terrestre griega desde la Edad del Hierro hasta la toma de poder de Macedonia

RESUMEN

Si bien las armas y las tácticas militares de la antigua Grecia cambiaron drásticamente a lo largo de su larga historia, la única característica que permaneció constante fue el ideal homérico de la guerra heroica. El heroísmo individual encarnó la identidad griega

hasta el 800 a. C. En el siglo VIII a.C., evolucionaron las tácticas militares griegas. La falange hoplita de gran éxito requería soldados de infantería para luchar colectivamente al servicio de las ciudades-estado. Como resultado, el heroísmo colectivo reemplazó al heroísmo individual. Sin embargo, el éxito griego en las guerras greco-persas del siglo V a.C. tuvo un precio. El contacto con los persas cambiaría profundamente la dinámica de la guerra hoplita. Los persas emplearon tácticas de armas combinadas, que por orgullo cultural, los griegos nunca abrazaron o dominaron por completo. Esto dio lugar a la única ciudad que sería: Macedonia. El rey Felipe II finalmente conquistó toda Grecia y puso fin definitivo a la guerra clásica griega para siempre.

Palabras clave: Polis, Sinoecismo, Hoplita, Falange, Armas combinadas, Liga del Peloponeso, Liga de Delos, Sarissa, Falangitas

从铁器时代到马其顿接管政权时期的希腊土地战争

摘要

尽管古希腊的武器和军事战略在其悠久历史中发生过巨大变革，但一个不变的特征则是荷马式英雄战役理念。个人主义式英雄主义体现了公元前8世纪的希腊认同。在公元前8世纪，希腊军事战略得以发展。装甲步兵方阵的大获成功要求保卫城邦的步兵以集体形式发起进攻。结果则是，集体形式的英雄主义取代了个人主义式英雄主义。不过，公元前5世纪希腊-波斯战中，希腊的胜利付出了代价。与波斯人的接触将深刻改变装甲步兵战的动态。波斯人使用了联合作战策略，这是依仗文化骄傲的希腊人从未真正拥护或掌握的。一个拥护和掌握该策略的城市得以崛起：马其顿。腓力二世最终征服了整个希腊，并永久终结了古典希腊战役。

关键词：城邦，村镇联合（Synoecism），装甲步兵，方阵，联合作战，伯罗奔尼撒同盟，提洛同盟，长矛，方阵兵

While military tactics and the weapons the Greeks used changed dramatically between the end of the Mycenaean civilization around 1100 B.C. and the Classical Age (500-336 B.C.), the one overriding feature that bound the periods together and sustained the ancient Greeks was the Homeric ideal of heroic warfare. Individual heroism on the battlefield became part of Greek cultural identity through the end of the Iron Age (around 750 B.C.).¹ By the Archaic Age in the eighth century B.C., military combat had evolved to a new and very regimented style: the phalanx and hoplite system of warfare. Foot soldiers no longer sought individual honor, glory, or heroism. They fought collectively in the service of the newly established city-states. As long as the Greeks fought amongst themselves, this new heroic ideal remained indomitable. It took a formidable foreign threat in the fifth century B.C. to introduce the Greeks to a very different style of fighting: the Persians' combined-arms strategy. Although the Persian combat system proved to be no match against the Greek phalanx during the Greco-Persian wars, they laid the groundwork for radical changes in tactical warfare that the Greeks, out of cultural pride, refused to embrace, and gave rise to the one city that not only championed these changes, but improved upon them: Macedon.

While the navies of ancient Greece were an important element of defense against enemy invasions, this article focuses on land warfare to determine why the Greeks resisted modifying their land-based combat strategies,

thus paving the way for Macedon to take over. In doing so, the Macedonians brought a definitive end to Classical Greek warfare forever.

The Mycenaeans were the first characteristically Greek civilization of mainland Greece. They prospered between 1600 and 1100 B.C. An association of palace-centered states, the Mycenaeans were a wealthy, warrior elite society. The importance they placed on hegemonic rule over the Aegean is apparent in the evidence excavated at Mycenae and other surrounding locations. These include painted pottery, which illustrate battle scenes and types of weapons used, Linear B tablets² which record, among other things, the construction and use of the composite bow, and hundreds of battle armor and weapons buried with their respective warriors. This evidence offers an overwhelming impression of a fierce, warlike people.

By 1200 B.C., archaeological evidence indicates that a wave of devastation had befallen the Mycenaeans, leaving behind vacant palaces, evidence of mass migrations, and abject poverty. The details for this fall are lost to history, but the fiery destruction of the palaces precipitated the downward spiral.³ The absence of written evidence in the aftermath of this period suggests that this society had lost their technical and writing skills. Trade declined, making the natural resources necessary to create bronze scarce.⁴ This forced Greek craftsmen to cultivate the technology of iron making, since iron-ore was plentiful throughout the Mediterranean.⁵ But the complete shift to iron, which would

give rise to the Iron Age (1200—700 B.C.) in this region, would take a few hundred years. Eventually it would trigger more rapid material development in the Aegean around 900 B.C.

It was within this period of recovery that the Greeks began to look back to the glorious Mycenaean culture, redefining it as a heroic age to emulate. Small settlements began to take shape with simple governing procedures. Renewed contacts with the outside world enabled the Greeks to regain many of the skills they had lost. Most significantly, the Phoenicians provided them with a new alphabet. In all likelihood, it was around 800 B.C. that Homer composed his epics—tales of valor and glory in warfare.⁶

Although the Homeric poems represent tales of heroic warfare, they are not, by themselves, the proper source to determine what kind of armor, combat techniques, and weapons the Greeks were using at this time. The intention of these poems was to re-introduce the glory of Bronze Age warfare to the Greeks, but they seem to illustrate a rather confused combination of Bronze Age and early Iron Age weaponry and combat strategies. The poet's main objective was likely to illustrate heroic prowess, not battlefield tactics. However, historian Michael M. Sage asserts that the heroic style of the Homeric poems would have a lasting impact on Greek notions of combat. "[T]he dominant warrior on the battlefield," he says, "was the heavily armed infantryman who was also to be the determining factor in Classical warfare."⁷

In the meantime, scholars can more safely reconstruct warfare of the early Iron Age from painted pottery and compared with the Homeric epics to determine what kinds of weapons and battle tactics warriors were using during this period. Between 900 and 700 B.C., artistic representations on vases show an early stage of massed fighting although not necessarily a specific type of battle formation. In the *Odyssey* Homer comparably reveals that, "[m]eanwhile the Cicones went and called to other Cicones who were their neighbors, at once more numerous and braver than they—men that dwelt inland and were skilled at fighting foes from chariots, and if need were, on foot."⁸

Iron Age weapons sometimes show contrasting evidence with the Homeric poems. Vase illustrations and Homer's epics both demonstrate the use of javelins and swords, but only vases depict the practice of archery.⁹ Homer deemed archery shameful, since the archer, being able to shoot from a distance, avoided the bravery involved in close hand to hand combat. In the *Iliad*, Homer states, "blunt is the dart of one that is a weakling and a man of naught."¹⁰ This suggests that Homer's epics are in part responsible for the subsequent rejection of this weapon and puts Homer right at the threshold of societal change brought about by the extraordinary recovery of the Iron Age. Referred to as the Greek Renaissance, these changes brought about the heroic revival of Greece and ushered in the Archaic Age (750-480 B.C.).

Around 750 B.C. Greeks began to feel like they belonged to a shared heri-

tage of language, customs, and religion.¹¹ This cultural rebirth encouraged unity among the Greeks and led to the creation of city-states: social and political organizations known as *polis*. The Greeks referred to this kind of unity as *synoecism*. However, the city-states had no common version of *synoecism*; each had their own interpretation of unity, so cultural and political concord never fully developed. While they were economically interdependent, politically they remained independent. The political independence of the polis created much social unrest and would eventually generate the biggest change of the early Archaic Age: new military tactics and weaponry which would give rise to the hoplite soldier and the phalanx formation.

Raising an army was a costly affair that many city-states could not afford. The hoplite armor was very expensive, hence only wealthy men could afford it. To make up for the shortage of wealthy hoplite soldiers, citizen-farmers—albeit the more affluent ones—joined the ranks. The poorest citizen-farmers could not join the army since they did not have the means to pay for their own armor.¹² Once the city-states raised their armies, they took to the fields and battled each other over the plains, trade routes, and their borders.

The hoplite army clearly exemplified the polis ideology of the “citizen as slave for the common good.” Once on the battlefield, wealth and cultural ranks disappeared. The Greek poet Callinus stated: “for by no means may a man escape death, nay not if he come of immortal lineage.”¹³

Hoplite soldiers fought in tightly packed lines several rows deep called the phalanx. Protected by their shield (known as the *hoplon*), they pointed long spears (their main offensive weapon) overhead while charging toward their enemy. The objective in hoplite warfare was controlling the plains, which contained the most wealth.¹⁴ Herodotus says, “[w]hen they have declared war against each other, they come down to the fairest and most level ground that they can find and fight there.”¹⁵ Phalanx warfare made level fields necessary; the warriors could only form an unbreakable, tight line and storm an enemy on even terrain. It is probable that hoplite phalanx warfare—also called shock warfare—developed and became successful because of this. All hoplites charged their enemy in tight formation to break the opposing ranks.

While Greek culture among the city-states was not unified, their battle tactics were identical throughout most of Greece. The hoplite soldiers had to be well-trained. Any soldier who fell or mishandled his spear during a charge caused confusion and mayhem in such tight ranks. To keep up their morale, and to encourage and motivate each other, they sang war songs.¹⁶ Heroism was no longer a singular affair, the way Homer exemplified it in his epics. Warriors sought courage and valor as a group in the service of the city-states. They may have been fighting for control of the plains, but each city-state ultimately fought for the preservation of their respective culture and way of life. Indeed, the hoplite system was synonymous with citizenship. Fleeing the bat-

tle brought the contempt of the whole *polis*.¹⁷

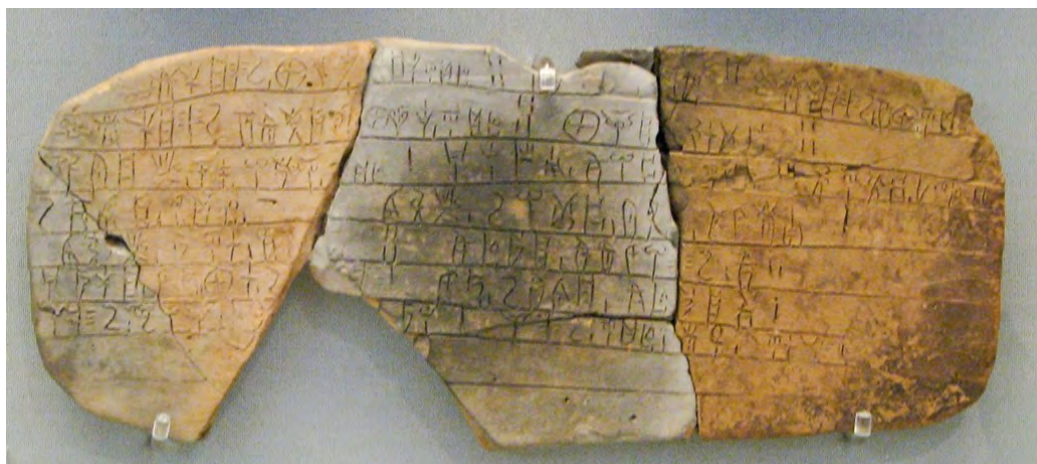
Archery continued to be shameful since it lacked the courage demanded by the soldier to fight in close hand to hand combat. The Greeks also did not have an effective cavalry unit because their breed of horses was much smaller and less adept in battle than, for example, the Persian horses. This forced the unit to limit the armor carried by both horse and rider. These are likely the reasons heavy infantry evolved into such a formidable fighting machine. Both the breastplate and the concave wooden shield provided corporal protection. With the shield, says historian Victor Davis Hanson, the soldier effectively “became a human battering-ram.”¹⁸ The front ranks had the more dangerous position since they faced the enemy up close. Their job was to stab the foes with their spears, aiming at enemy body parts that were unprotected by armor. All ranks behind the first line shoved up against those in front of them and used their weight to disrupt the enemy ranks. While the battles were aggressive, they were usually very brief, sometimes lasting no more than an hour. Large massacres were rare because the main objective was to break and scatter the enemy line and force them to flee.¹⁹

No matter how effective the shield was at physically protecting the hoplite warrior, culturally it had a more significant meaning—it was more important than the breastplate. Socially, the Greeks did not even regard it as an element of protection for the individual warrior. In observing their collective

approach to warfare, Plutarch said they wore the breastplate “for their own sake, but the shield for the common good of the whole line.”²⁰ As such, it became unlawful to discard the shield. Indeed, they risked punishment by disenfranchisement.

This approach to warfare—heavy infantry against heavy infantry—is what sustained the Greeks from the eighth century B.C. through the fifth century B.C. The developments of the fifth century B.C. ushered in the Classical Age of Greece, which refers to the period between the Greco-Persian Wars (499 B.C.-449 B.C.) and the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. The classical period was an era of war and conflict—first between the Greeks and the Persians, then between the Athenians and the Spartans—but it was also a time of extraordinary political and cultural achievements: Greek tragedy, written history, the practice of medicine, and philosophy. The Classical period also witnessed Greece’s most lasting contribution to the modern world: the system known as *demokratia*, or “rule by the people.”

The Greco-Persian Wars introduced the Greeks to a very different type of combat. The Persians made use of a combined-arms military, which included a cavalry unit and light infantry, both armed with bows and spears. Their cavalymen were experienced archers and javelin throwers. The role of the Persian cavalry was to charge the enemy. In the mad rush of horses, cavalymen and light infantry would discharge a barrage of arrows to cause confusion,



Clay tablet (PY Ub 1318) inscribed with Linear B script from the Mycenaean palace of Pylos. This piece contains information on the distribution of bovine, pig and deer hides to shoe and saddle-makers. Linear B was the earliest Greek writing, dating from 1450 B.C., an adaptation of the earlier Minoan Linear A script. The script includes of 90 syllabic signs, ideograms and numbers. This tablet is on display at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens. Licensing: This file is licensed under the Creative Commons.

after which the heavy infantry would step in for fierce hand to hand combat.²¹ Persian combined-arms tactics meant that all units had to play their part at the right time to be effective.

At the Battle of Marathon (490 B.C.), the Persians outnumbered the Greeks with an army that totaled roughly 20,000 in infantry and cavalry. On the Greek side, the Spartans were a no-show because of a law that required them to wait for the full moon. Fortunately, roughly 1,000 hoplites from Plataea joined the Athenians. This raised their total number to 9,000 or 10,000.²² Despite their sizable disadvantage, Greek tenacity and bravery in the face of a much larger adversary, helped them win the battle.

In the *Histories*, Herodotus introduces the Persian cavalry to the reader,

but subsequently neglects to give them a significant role in the actual battle, leading some scholars to believe that the Persian cavalry was only partially present—that unknown circumstances may have caused a delay. “The consequence of Herodotus’ silence,” says historian Harry C. Avery, “is that we cannot know for certain the whereabouts of the cavalry.”²³ Nevertheless, certain passages in *Histories* can provide evidence to assume that the Persian cavalry was indeed present in its entirety. Herodotus mentions that when the Persians saw the Greeks charging at them, they thought they were “absolutely crazy.”²⁴ Only a fully present Persian cavalry would watch a fast-moving wall of long spears coming at them at full human speed and feel confident enough to believe that the Greeks had lost their



Armour of an ancient Athenian Hoplite Licensing: This file is licensed under the Creative Commons.

minds. Since the Persian cavalry's role was to break the enemy line, it is unlikely that they would have left themselves so vulnerable as to arrive for battle with only a portion of their men. As historian Richard Billows states, the Persian cavalry was "very important to the Persian system of battle."²⁵ Herodotus also mentions that the Persians chose Marathon as the battleground because the earth was level and thus "most suitable for riding horses."²⁶ Neither the Persian cavalry nor the Greek phalanx could storm an enemy on uneven terrain.

The wicker shields carried by the Persian infantry were less effective than the heavy wooden ones used by the Greeks. The Persian heavy infantry's short spears were also less efficient than the Greek spears, which were six and a half to ten feet in length and which they could thrust to inflict deadly damage while preventing the enemy from getting too close. The 15-pound weight of the hoplite shield along with its double grip might have increased the burden of the wearer, especially since it was not possible to switch arms as easily as it had been with the earlier single grip shields. However, the revolutionary concave design resolved this issue—it allowed the warrior to occasionally rest the shield on his shoulder.²⁷ Deflecting the enemy arrows was more feasible since the warrior would not need to repeatedly change his shield's position, which would have left him momentarily vulnerable each time. Protected also by metal helmets the hoplites became one enormous, cohesive, well-protected and confident fighting machine that rendered the Persian cavalry nearly

useless. The frightened horses would have likely been incapable of breaking the hoplite line, since horses will not readily run into a wall of spears, particularly a charging one.

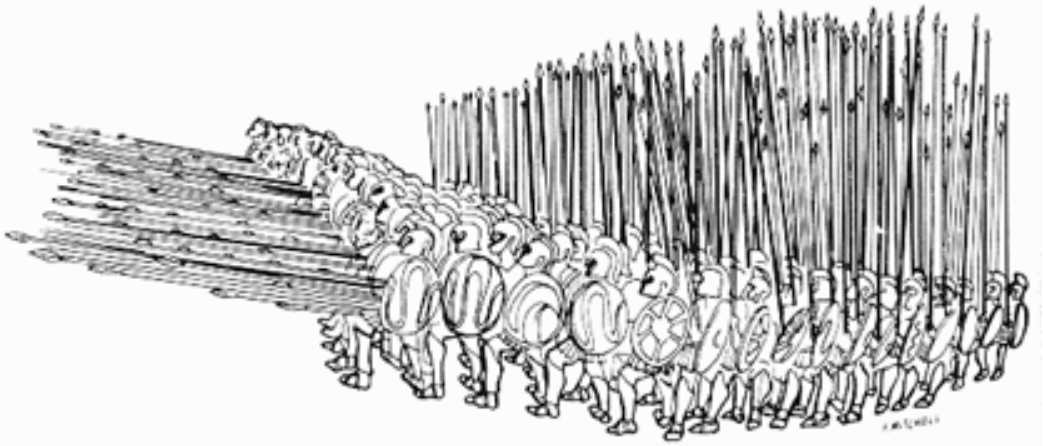
Greek victory, says historian Everett L. Wheeler, “vindicated Greek belief in heavy infantry’s superiority to mobile combat with the bow, cavalry and light infantry.”²⁸ According to Herodotus, “[i]n the battle at Marathon about six thousand four hundred men of the foreigners were killed, and one hundred and ninety-two Athenians.”²⁹ Eventually the Greeks went on to vanquish the Persians altogether.

However, it is necessary to keep in mind that Herodotus tended to exaggerate. Indeed, all throughout antiquity, ancient writers tended to fabricate and embellish their accounts—each for their own specific reasons. Anthony J. Spalinger, observes that no matter how reliable the sources are, scholars need to be wary of the “numbers of dead enemy, captured soldiers, and booty (chariots and horses in particular) unless the account appears logically reasonable.”³⁰

Herodotus’ exaggerations were two-fold in significance. The first was to teach future Greeks the value of heroic courage despite all odds. The second was to advocate democratic rule over tyranny.³¹ By mentioning that Sparta (a monarchy) set out to join Athens (a democracy) to help them fight the Persians, only to arrive *after* the Athenians won the battle, Herodotus put Sparta in an ignominious position. According to Herodotus, democracy’s anti-aristocratic arrangement promoted cooperative decision-making in the interest of the community. This freedom encouraged soldiers to become willing participants in warfare. Victory was not always in Athenian hands since the Spartans were, as Sage states, “the most fully articulated of any Greek state.”³² But to Herodotus—a staunch supporter of democracy—fighting in the interest of the community rather than for the pursuit of one self-serving monarch promoted a collective commitment to a cause.³³ No matter what the sizes of the armies were, what history does confirm is that the Greeks did, indeed, win the war against the Persians.

Greek hoplite and Persian warrior fighting each other. Depiction in ancient kylix. 5th c. B.C. National Archaeological Museum of Athens. Licensing: This work is in the public domain in its country of origin and other countries and areas where the copyright term is the author’s life plus 70 years or fewer.





Macedonian Phalanx. Licensing: As a work of the U.S. federal government, this image is in the public domain in the United States.

However, Greek success in the Greco-Persian wars came at a price. Contact with the Persians unavoidably and profoundly changed the time-honored dynamics of Greek warfare. For centuries, the Greeks had fought each other—hoplite against hoplite, phalanx against phalanx. As long as they fought each other it was easy to perfect and preserve their military tactics, which had helped them to maintain their culture and way of life for centuries. But growing Athenian wealth and supremacy in the wake of Greek victory over the Persians became a threat to Spartan hegemony. In the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides states, “the growth of the Athenian power, which putting the Lacedaemonians into fear, necessitated the war.”³⁴ That necessity came to fruition in the Peloponnesian War (431—404 B.C.), which pitted Sparta and their allies—a confederation of city-states known as the Peloponnesian League established in the sixth century B.C.—against Athens and their

newer confederacy known as the Delian League, established in fifth century B.C.³⁵ Athens was aware of the difference in military might between them and their Spartan rivals. Sparta was a monarchy—a militaristic society with a very large slave population. To keep their slaves, the helots, under control, Sparta needed to militarize boys from a very young age, in the event of a slave revolt. Boys joined military school at around seven years of age and attended until they were twenty, at which time they joined the Spartan army where they remained active until the age of sixty. The Spartan *agoge*³⁶ trained their warriors well. In *Moralia*, Plutarch writes that when someone asked King Agesilaus why the city of Sparta had no city walls to protect against enemy invasions, the king pointed to his army and said, “[t]hese are the Spartan walls.”³⁷

The Athenian hoplite force, on the other hand, was not as specialized as that of Sparta.³⁸ Athens had been a democracy since the sixth century B.C.

and since their slave population was much smaller, the need for militaristic control was not nearly as vital. Boys went to school until eighteen years of age, at which time they could choose to go to the military for two years or pursue another career. Hence, to beef up their strength against Sparta, Athens reluctantly included a limited combined-arms infantry.

The introduction of light infantry required the need for changes in hoplite armor. Hoplite agility on the battlefield became more important than corporal protection to fight alongside (or against) the very nimble light-armed troops. Consequently, the linen corselet replaced the bronze torso guard and shin guards fell out of use. Athenian commanders began to deploy light-armed troops along with the traditional phalanx.³⁹ Special forces such as archers and slingers were among those included on the battlefield. Many of these weapons inflicted devastating damage to the enemy hoplites. One of the first recorded battles of Greek combined-arms tactics was the battle at Sphacteria in 425 B.C. An exceedingly mobile light infantry of over 1,000 warriors accompanied the Athenian hoplite army—mainly archers, slingers, and javeliners. When the Athenian forces killed the Spartan commander, the Spartan infantry abandoned their post and ran for the hilltops. The constant barrage of arrows, slings, and javelins came at them from all sides causing numerous casualties.⁴⁰ Thucydides states “the light-armed soldiers kept them off with shot from either side, and the men of arms advanced not.”⁴¹ Since the

hill grounds were not level, the Spartan phalanx was at a serious disadvantage. Thus, they surrendered. Athenian victory at Sphacteria reinforced their belief that phalanx warfare was not the only effective military tactic.

After the battle, both leagues agreed to a truce. Thucydides writes, “[t]he peace shall endure between the Athenians with their confederates and the Lacedaemonians with their confederates for fifty years, both by sea and land, without fraud and without harm-doing.”⁴² Six years later, however, Athens broke the terms of the truce. General Alcibiades convinced the Athenians to attack Syracuse in a battle known as the Sicilian Expedition (415—413 B.C.), but the destruction of statues of the *hermai* and the profanation of the *Eleusian Mysteries* resulted in charges against Alcibiades.⁴³ Hence, they removed him from his post. After fleeing to Sparta, Alcibiades requested assistance from the Persians and joined forces with the Peloponnesians against Athens. In the end, Athens was not able to vanquish the Spartans—not by land, not by sea. The crushing defeat, which incurred heavy Athenian losses, had immediate consequences on the strength of their democracy. In 405 B.C. at Aegospotami on the Hellespont, backed again by Persia, Sparta delivered a crushing blow to the Athenian fleet, thus finally bringing an end to Athenian hegemony and the Peloponnesian War.

The Spartans won the Peloponnesian War at a time when Greece was at its most vulnerable. Despite the introduction of light infantry, the Greeks

rejected the full implementation of a combined-arms tactical system. Although the Greeks began to see the strategic efficiency of combined-arms warfare, the phalanx, particularly on the Spartan side, continued to dominate.⁴⁴ Sage states, “[i]ntegrated large-scale forces of difficult arms were not to evolve until the rise of Macedonia.”⁴⁵

By the fourth century B.C. introducing further changes into Greek warfare seemed futile. Many of the city-states were gaining power and clamoring for independence from their respective leagues. Any hope for Greek solidarity faded. The cultural ties associated with hoplite warfare proved to be too strong. They were rooted in the very fiber of their being and were what made the Greeks Greek. A complete adoption of combined-arms warfare was tantamount to renouncing their citizenship. They had never really learned to separate their long-established successful phalanx tactical system from their citizenship and their culture. For centuries, they had only fought each other; only one type of system, which had given them ample time to sharpen their skills, but Persian combined-arms tactics jeopardized Greek hoplite skills. As a result, Greek morale plummeted paving the way for Macedon to take over.

The fourth century Macedonian army was the creation of King Philip II of Macedon (r. 359–336 B.C.). His art of war mixed military power with diplomacy. In his effort to maintain relationships with foreign rulers, he engaged in a string of marriages with foreign women, one of whom was Alexander’s mother, Olympia of Epirus.

Army and battle tactics under Philip combined the best features of Greek warfare with those of the Near East. These included light infantry, heavy infantry, and cavalry units. While the light infantry unit experienced few modifications, the heavy infantry would undergo a pronounced transformation. However, the most important contribution to Greek battle tactics was the heavy cavalry. These horse-mounted warriors carried nine-foot spears with a double point called a *sarissa* and a single-edged sword known as a *kopis*. Once the foot infantry had created a gap in the hoplite ranks of the enemy, the cavalry stepped in to break through. For this reason, Philip gave them a significant role in the Macedonian army. Philip also employed light cavalry as scouts and flank guards armed with javelins to aid and protect the larger, more invaluable units.

Groups of mercenaries called *phalangites* made up the foot soldiers of the heavy infantry phalanx. Protected at its flank and rear by light infantry as well as heavy and light cavalry, the heavy infantry phalanx was able to concentrate all its efforts on frontal attacks. This new approach required changes in weaponry and armor. The biggest difference with the Macedonian phalanx was the thrusting spear (also called a *sarissa*). While the spear of the Classical Greek hoplite was six to eight feet in length (and the *sarissa* of the Macedonian cavalry, was nine feet in length) the spear of the Macedonian hoplite was between fifteen and eighteen feet in length and weighed fifteen pounds. The length and weight of the spear required

the warriors to grasp it with both hands. This meant that they could not carry a shield. To keep their upper bodies protected, they suspended smaller rimless shields around their necks. Breastplates and helmets made of leather and other composite materials replaced the heavier bronze ones. Sometimes they abandoned them altogether. Thus lightened, the warriors were able to march faster and operate their weapons with greater ease. The first five ranks extended their spears past the bodies of the men in the first rank, each row holding their pikes gradually higher than those in front of them. This created a dense, jagged hedgerow of *sarissas*—difficult for the enemy to penetrate.

Philip also significantly improved the mobility of his army by replacing oxen with horses and camels as beasts of burden. Horses were more agile over all kinds of terrain and needed only half as much food as a team of oxen did. This helped them to move from one location to another more quickly and easily. Philip also put an end to the custom of allowing soldiers to take attendants, wives, and concubines with them on missions of war. He permitted only one porter for every four soldiers. Each soldier also had to carry his own weapons, personal belongings—even some of his own food and water. These changes required a great deal of training prior to engaging in war on the battlefield. Second Century CE author Polyaeus writes,

Philip accustomed the Macedonians to constant exercise, as well in peace, as in actual service: so that he would frequently make them march three hundred furlongs, carrying with them their helmets, shields, greaves, and spears; and, besides those arms, their provisions likewise, and utensils for common use.⁴⁶

Greek *synoecism* had never been singular in design and the lack of a central jurisdiction to draw the Greeks together further weakened the population. This helped King Philip as he marched south and defeated polis after polis in the mid fourth century B.C. The army that he had designed not only changed the history of Macedonia, but that of Greece as well. His military successes laid the groundwork for Macedonian supremacy over Greece that lasted almost two hundred years and would eventually allow his son Alexander the Great to conquer the Persian Empire, Africa, and parts of Asia. Phillip's conquest of Greece marked the end of Greek hoplite honor and glory. These endeavors exemplified the historic, cultural tradition of phalanx combat techniques, but the profound changes in tactical warfare that the Greeks, for cultural pride, refused to adopt cost them their freedom. The era and greatness of phalanx and hoplite warfare came to an end and when it did, so did classical Greece.

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Endnotes

- 1 Sarah B. Pomeroy et al., *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 97-99.
- 2 Linear B is a syllabic script—the earliest form of Greek used by the Mycenaeans; it predates the Greek alphabet by several centuries and descends from the older Linear

A, an undeciphered script that the Minoans used for writing.

- 3 Pomeroy et al., *Ancient Greece*, 51.
- 4 Copper and tin create Bronze. While copper was plentiful in Aegean, tin was not. To complicate matters, the two metals did not exist near each other, which was why trade during the Bronze Age was so important.
- 5 Pomeroy et al., *Ancient Greece*, 60.
- 6 Although scholarship regards Homer as the *presumed* author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, for convenience sake this article will refer to him as the actual author. These poems were composed at the moment of delivery to an audience of aristocrats who already knew the summary of the stories.
- 7 Michael M. Sage, *Warfare in Ancient Greece: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2.
- 8 Homer, *Odyssey*, 9.47-50, The Perseus Catalog, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.
- 9 Sage, *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, 21.
- 10 Homer, *Iliad*, 11.390, The Perseus Catalog, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.
- 11 Pomeroy et al. *Ancient Greece*, 97.
- 12 Charles Freeman, *Egypt, Greece, & Rome: Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 163; Pomeroy et al., *Ancient Greece*, 126.
- 13 Callinus, *Elegy and Iambus*, 1.1.2, The Perseus Catalog, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.
- 14 Brian Todd Carey et al., *Warfare in the Ancient World* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2006), 37.
- 15 Herodotus, *Histories*, 7.9B.1, The Perseus Catalog, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.
- 16 Freeman, *Egypt, Greece, & Rome*, 165.
- 17 Pomeroy et al. *Ancient Greece*, 125.
- 18 Victor Davis Hanson, "Hoplites Technology in Phalanx Battle," in *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*, ed. Victor Davis Hanson (London: Routledge, 2002), 69.
- 19 Pomeroy et al. *Ancient Greece*, 125.
- 20 Plutarch, *Moralia*, 220.2, Vol. III, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 317. Archive.org, <https://archive.org/details/plutarchs-moralia-vol.-3-loeb-245/page/316/mode/2up>.
- 21 Sage, *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, 90-92.
- 22 Lloyd W. Watkiss, "The Battle of Marathon: 490 B.C.," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*

- 3 (1881): 383.
- 23 Harry C. Avery, "Herodotus 6.11.2," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 103 (1972): 21.
- 24 Herodotus, *Histories* 6.112.2.
- 25 Richard Billows, *Marathon: How One Battle Changed Western Civilization* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2010), 135.
- 26 Herodotus, *Histories* 6.102.1.
- 27 Hanson, "Hoplites Technology in Phalanx Battle," 69.
- 28 Everett L. Wheeler and Barry Strauss, "Battle," in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, ed. by Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 186.
- 29 Herodotus, *Histories* 6.117.1.
- 30 Anthony J. Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 39.
- 31 Mary Jo Davies, "A Democratic Consideration of Herodotus's Histories," *Saber and Scroll* 4.3 (2015): 105.
- 32 Sage, *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, 39.
- 33 Davies, "A Democratic Consideration of Herodotus's Histories," 105.
- 34 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.23.6, The Perseus Catalog, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.
- 35 In antiquity, Sparta was known as Lacedaemon and the people as Lacedaemonians.
- 36 A rigorous education and training program mandated for all male Spartan citizens, apart from the firstborn son in the ruling houses, Eurypontid and Agiad.
- 37 Plutarch, *Moralia*, 210.29.
- 38 Carey et al., *Warfare in the Ancient World*, 52.
- 39 Sage, *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, 135-136.
- 40 Carey et al., *Warfare in the Ancient World*, 55.
- 41 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 4.33.2.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 5.18.4.
- 43 *Hermai*: statues of the heads of the god *Hermes*; the *Eleusian Mysteries*: initiations held every year for the goddesses *Demeter* and *Persephone*. The destruction and profanation of these were scandalous and illegal, and a bad omen for the mission.

- 44 Carey et al., *Warfare in the Ancient World*, 55-57.
- 45 Sage, *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, 142.
- 46 Polyaeus, *Stratagems in War*, 4.2.10, trans. R. Shepherd, F.R.S (London: George Nicol Bookseller to His Majesty, Pall-Mall, 1793), 136.