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BOOK REVIEW

Classical Greek Tactics: A Cultural History. By ROEL KONIJNENDIJK. Mnemosyne Supplements 409. Leiden, NL: Brill, 2018. Pp. vii + 261. Hardback, $110.00. ISBN 978-90-04-35557-6.

This volume reflects the recent development of a revised view of ancient Greek hoplite warfare. It offers a clear and well-organized presentation of the results of this 21st-century reexamination. I found it challenging and enlightening.

The first section describes the 19th- and 20th-century view of hoplite warfare, which saw "the hoplite battle as a ritual process, in which armies consisting nearly exclusively of heavy infantry met at a prearranged time in an open plain. Their battle lines were always drawn up 8 ranks deep, with the general on the right. Light infantry and cavalry played no role in the fight. Battle unfolded according to a predictable sequence, and the result was accepted as decisive by both sides; the defeated enemy was not pursued or destroyed" (37-38). Konijnendijk concludes with a lucid account of how this "Prussian" model of ancient hoplite warfare, which bears little relation to our ancient sources, came to dominate all others.

He then offers the arguments for the revised view, discussing training, how armies chose a battle site, how armies formed up for battle, what tactics they employed, how victors behaved once they had the advantage and what happened after the battle was over; despite occasional over-confidence, Konijnendijk gives the new view of hoplite warfare a convincing and coherent presentation.

Chapter 2 offers detailed support for Isocrates' contention that "though we [i.e. we Athenians] undertake to make war on just about everyone, we do not train ourselves for it" (8.44; quoted on page 43), arguing that there is no evidence for drill or group training in cities other than Sparta until Athens introduced the *ephebeia* in the 330s. This led to severe tactical restrictions: "unfamiliar with unit drill and incapable of manoeuvre" (57) the hoplite phalanx could only charge forward (34). Likewise, no system of weapons training was adopted, so that "the typical Greek citizen hoplite knew no weapons drill, no formation drill, and understood only the simplest of signals … their initial deployment in a regular for-

mation was perhaps the only thing that distinguished the hoplite militia from a heavily-armed mob … " (70).

This revisionist view of the citizen hoplite, not entirely new but hardly ever so forcefully stated, is accompanied by a revisionist view of hoplite battles. Chapter 3 discusses how commanders chose battle sites (offering convincing evidence that Greek commanders did not agree with each other beforehand about where to fight, cf. 77), maneuvered for the most advantageous positions (79) and tried to outsmart their opponents with surprise or trickery (87-89).

Chapter 4 discusses the formation of armies on the battlefield. Konijnendijk shows that hoplites were vulnerable to light-armed and cavalry attacks unless they had these same supporting forces at their sides (103). Light-armed troops and cavalry therefore had essential roles to play in the "balanced army": ideally, "hoplites guarded mobile troops against direct assault, while cavalry and *psiloi* [light-armed troops] guarded hoplites against missile attacks and out-flanking manoeuvres" (115). As for the hoplite line itself, the available battle narratives show that the strongest troops could be placed on the right, center, or left of the line, and that the commanders led from the right in only a minority of the available battle descriptions (121-122). Finally, Konijnendijk discusses the depth of the hoplite line, which was variable (126-138).

Chapter 5 on battle tactics first stresses the difficulties of commanding an ancient infantry force. A phalanx was very hard to control once it had engaged, since there was hardly any way to transmit commands over its long front, particularly as battles were very noisy (140-141) and the hoplites largely untrained and inexperienced. All this explains why advance planning was so important: it was the general's only chance to direct most of what needed to happen (147). Specially trained contingents of hoplites or light-armed troops could however be redirected during a battle (154-155), and such forces gradually "became ubiquitous in classical Greece" (155). They provided "their armies with a reliable, readily available force of infantry capable of more than head on charges" (162).

Chapter 6 discusses the moment of victory/defeat. In nearly all known battles, once the phalanx was "turned", i.e. lost cohesion, it could not recover and the hoplites fled (179). After this, the losing side would be pursued, often by cavalry, and as many fleeing men as possible would be killed. Konijnendijk's descriptions of this moment are uncompromising: "The point of pitched battle was not to score a victory, but to create an opportunity for slaughter … the pursuit of a fleeing enemy was the very thing the Greeks hoped to achieve when they went into battle … " (194).

Konijnendijk presses this argument quite hard, arguing that "the breaking" and "turning" of the enemy line was only the opening phase of the battle: "Far from being reprehensible to the Greeks, the pursuit was a defining feature of their way of war" (205). He concludes that Greek armies were "butchers, seeking to do maximum damage to the enemy in his moment of weakness. This was their purpose when going into battle" (215). This is indeed a provocative argument, and attempts radically to reorient our view of the aims of hoplite battles. It also entirely ignores any political aims of a battle, as I suggest below.

The expository part of the book concludes with remarks on trophies and on the custom of having the defeated make a truce in order to reclaim their (stripped) corpses. The remarks in this section are consistent with Konijnendijk's focus on the violent conclusion of Greek land battles; [the trophy] "did not mark the successful completion of the battle, but the successful completion of slaughter" (211); asking for a truce and requesting the corpses further humiliated the defeated (213). The volume concludes with a useful summary into which the whole argument from start to finish is condensed (216-227); readers looking for a quick overview can profitably consult these pages. Finally, it includes a generous bibliography, index locorum, and thematic index.

I learned a tremendous amount from this volume and highly recommend it to all interested readers, but I am doubtful of Konijnendijk's concluding arguments that the violent slaughter of the defeated was the *telos* of Greek battles. I am sure that such pursuits and slaughters happened very frequently: for that the evidence seems solid. But were they the aim of the battles? What about the political aims of the victors? Were they always served by slaughtering the defeated enemy? For instance, in 424 the Athenian commander Nicias commanded a hoplite battle on Cythera. This battle had been preceded and was followed by negotiations (Thuc. 4.54.2-3). It was, however, a regular hoplite battle in which the Athenians and Cytherans lined up to fight (4.54.1-2). The battle was short: "the Cytherans briefly withstood the Athenian advance" (*oligon men tina chronon hypestēsan*), "were turned" (*trapomenoi*), and "escaped" (*katephygon*) into their city. Thucydides mentions no casualties on either side, and it seems likely that the Athenians, who had won and who enjoyed overwhelming numerical superiority (they had 60 ships and 2,000 hoplites, 4.53.1), could have pursued the Cytherans (and also besieged the city) if killing had been their aim. But the battle had political aims, as the subsequent negotiations and agreement also show (4.54.2, 4.57.4). In contrast, a few weeks later these same forces, also under Nicias, fell upon the Ae-

ginetans at Thyrea. They plundered and burned the town to the ground, killing whoever they could lay their hands on and taking the survivors to Athens, where they were executed as Spartan sympathizers (4.65.2 -57). In the Aeginetan case, the larger aims were far different than in the Cytheran example (cf. 4.57.4); at the least it should be admitted that political aims had important influence on how the Athenians treated the defeated.

One can fruitfully argue over many of this book's theses and ideas. The volume is exemplary for the clarity with which it takes on numerous questions without losing focus on its aim to introduce the reader to the "heretical" (6) analysis of ancient hoplite warfare, which has emancipated itself from the "Prussian" view and offers a new and more adequate consideration of the ancient evidence.

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