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Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby, ed., *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*. Vol. 1: *Greece, the Hellenistic World and the Rise of Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007. Pp. 663. ISBN 978-0-521-78273-9.

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The Cambridge University Press assembled a team of prominent ancient historians in the U.S., U.K., Canada, and Europe to produce a comprehensive two-volume study of war in the ancient Mediterranean world.¹ The first volume, discussed here, focuses on Greek history in the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods, while also including the rise of the Roman Republic and its expansion in the Mediterranean through the second century B.C. The authors start with valuable overviews of the state of scholarship for each topic, then methodically address the major themes and controversies in various aspects of Greco-Roman military history, from diplomatic, economic, and social factors to the technicalities of campaigns, battles, and sieges, and the human costs of conflict.

The book opens with three provocative meditations on the historiography of ancient warfare. Victor Davis Hanson (Hoover Institution, Stanford) begins with a survey of trends in modern scholarship, moving from early, “positivist” scrutinies of ancient battle accounts and military vocabulary to the social-anthropological studies of culture and ritual that rose in prominence in the 1960s and 70s. Hanson criticizes the latter for a tendency to remove the study of combat from its central position in military history, and causing a “relative decline in traditional ancient military history” (13). The chapter concludes, though, with comments on the revitalization of the field. Promising developments include new archaeological evidence, computer resources like the electronic *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* for the study of ancient texts, and growing attention to under-studied periods like the Hellenistic age. Especially important is the “Face of Battle” approach pioneered by the modern military historian John Keegan, which includes much of Hanson’s own scholarship, and focuses on the common soldier’s experience of war as a corrective to earlier concentration on the priorities of commanders and states.

Hanson is followed by Simon Hornblower (London), who discusses the presentation of war in ancient literature. He offers a startling thesis, that ancient authors (above all Greek) exaggerated war’s frequency and importance for their societies. Hornblower evaluates the contrast between canonical sources’ portrayal of warfare as “a fact of life” (23) and the variety of non-military activities that excited Greeks, from farming to athletics to exploration. The argument becomes somewhat strained in its extended attempt to demonstrate that neither Spartan nor Roman society was “militaristic” (27-38), without offering a counter-example of a society that does fit Hornblower’s strict criteria for militarism. There

¹ The second half, covering the late Roman Republic and the Empire has been reviewed by Rose Mary Sheldon—see *MWSR* 2008.09.02 <www.miwsr.com/rd/0902.htm>.

is some useful discussion of the limits of military authority and the primacy of civic institutions in both Sparta and the Roman Republic, but the denial of “militarism,” alongside the concession that “on a sliding scale the Romans are further towards the militaristic end” (27), feels purely semantic. More convincing are later sections on problems of omission in ancient texts, particularly the infamous neglect of women in wartime, contrasted with epigraphic evidence such as a Hellenistic memorial to female casualties at Messene (45). The conclusion suggests a number of tentative explanations for problems of exaggeration and distortion in Greek military narratives, ranging from “male ideology” (50) to “delight in technicality” (51) to the disproportionate survival of texts with a military slant.

The final historiographical essay, by Michael Whitby (Warwick), turns to the difficulty of reconstructing ancient battles, offering an array of admonitions and reminders of the impossibility of certainty. After discussing problems in the ancient sources, Whitby reconstructs certain types of siege and battle through archaeological excavation, with Alesia and Varus’s Teutoburg Forest disaster as prominent examples, but reminds readers of the lack of good evidence for other types of engagement, such as naval battles. His caution extends to the use of comparative evidence from modern wars, singling out specific examples of recent scholarship for critique, arguing that “such comparisons can only be illustrative rather than conclusive” (80).

After these introductory chapters, Part One comprises six chapters on Archaic and Classical Greece from the eighth to fourth centuries B.C. The first, by Jonathan Hall (Chicago), covers Greek international relations, beginning with a careful theoretical framework that avoids exclusive emphasis on the *polis* and recognizes the role of leagues, monarchies, and individual elites in a variety of diplomatic relationships. Hall discusses the Archaic ethos of “agonistic” competition as a driving force in interpersonal rivalries and interstate conflicts, and the importance of honor and reciprocal acts of vengeance as causes of war. After a detailed survey of different types of diplomatic contacts and agreements, both formal and informal, he sketches the rise of hegemonic alliances in the Classical period, connecting the dominance of Sparta and Athens to a decline of the earlier “agonistic spirit in international relations” (105).

Peter Hunt (Colorado), writing in the next chapter on “Military Forces,” admits a heavy focus on Athens due to the nature of the evidence. He starts with the best known but most controversial type of Greek warrior, the hoplite infantryman, introducing the orthodox view of the hoplite’s rise in the seventh century and decline in the fourth, then noting revisionist approaches which argue a slow development of phalanx tactics in coordination with missile weapons through the Archaic period, and a continuing dominance of the hoplite despite light infantry challenges in the fourth century. Hunt provides excellent reference material on the arms, equipment, and costs associated with hoplite service, then treats other types of soldiers (cavalry, peltasts, archers, slingers, and naval personnel); these sections are accompanied by well-chosen illustrations. Later sections lay out the evidence for unit organization, officers’ roles, training, and recruitment (including the employment of mercenaries as well as amateur citizen soldiers, and an insightful section based on Hunt’s previous scholarship on the military roles of slaves).²

² See his *Slaves, Warfare, and Ideology in the Greek Historians* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), with the review at *MWSR* 2005.09.01 < www.miwsr.com/rd/0903.htm >.

Next, Peter Krentz (Davidson) deals with the broad topic of “war” itself, and analyzes the typical stages of a Greek military campaign from recruitment to demobilization. Like Hunt, he provides a wealth of reference information, covering recruitment techniques, supply statistics, departure dates, marching rates, and details of camp life. The discussion of agricultural ravaging is useful, noting Victor Hanson’s work on the limits of long-term damage, but recognizing that destruction of crops and trees might have a crushing immediate impact on the local farmers.

Avoiding battle itself so as not to overlap with the next chapter, Hunt continues by taking up the aftermath of battle, discussing trophies and battle practice, the role of sieges later in Classical campaigns, and the distribution of plunder and prisoners before an army’s homecoming. Four charts compile evidence on seaborne invasion forces, land battles in the Peloponnesian War, length and results of sieges, and prisoner treatment; these are mostly helpful, although the second is not as comprehensive as might be hoped, with surprising omissions including Sphacteria and the Athenian night attack on Epipolae in the last stages of the Syracuse siege (Thuc. 7.43-5; earlier battles on the Epipolae are noted).

The chapter on battle is divided into two halves, with Everett Wheeler (Duke) covering land engagements and Barry Strauss (Cornell) discussing naval battles and siege operations. Wheeler’s treatment of land battle begins with the revisionist approaches mentioned by Krentz, criticizing the “military revolution” model of a clear-cut rise and fall of the phalanx. Instead, he argues for a gradual development of Archaic hoplite tactics, initially with fewer ranks than the later Classical phalanx and integrating archers and horsemen with the heavy infantry; the stereotypical phalanx formation developed in the late sixth-century Greek mainland, but flexible mixing of hoplite and non-hoplite troops continued in other areas of the Greek Mediterranean and returned to the mainland *poleis* in the later fifth and fourth centuries. On Classical hoplite battle, Wheeler suggests that order and coordination in the ranks were more important than frontage or depth. He discusses controversies over the nature of the *othismos*, or “shoving,” referred to in battle narratives, and suggests that small pressure points and shoving matches could break out at different points along a battle line rather than a deliberate, rugby-like push forward by the entire line. Wheeler concludes by discussing generalship, arguing that deception and ambush were alternatives to open battle even before the Peloponnesian War, and that “the ‘military revolution’ of the period was in strategy more than tactics” (222).

In his presentation of naval battle, Strauss focuses on the importance of command as well as the experience of rowing, noting the necessity of an effective “coach” like the Athenian Phormio for rowers’ training and performance in action. He surveys the less well-known aspects of naval service, including raiding and blockade, before offering a detailed treatment of maneuver and ramming tactics in battle; the discussion combines attention to tactical detail with moving evidence on the experience of the trireme rower, from the noise and smells and terror of battle to the recovery and disposal of the dead. On sieges, Strauss discusses technological advances, but once again emphasizes the human element, from the role of traitors and fifth columns in the outcome of sieges to life inside the walls of besieged city-states.

Vincent Gabrielsen (Copenhagen) turns to “Warfare and the State,” with particular focus on finance and the efforts of polis governments to exert some control over the em-

ployment of violence. Critical of evolutionary models of early Greek warfare that contrasted “primitive” and “civilized” stages of military behavior, Gabrielsen argues that private acts of war such as piracy might co-exist with state-sponsored deployments of military force in the Archaic and early Classical periods. Athens is seen as the most successful in asserting state control over military operations, which leads Gabrielsen into a discussion of the economic foundations of Athens’ naval power. Despite the revenues generated by its Aegean empire, he argues, even Athens was unprepared for the financial challenges of long-term conflict like the Peloponnesian War.

Hans van Wees (London), closes Part One with an essay titled “War and Society”; picking up some of the themes addressed by Hornblower, he discusses the cultural importance and the limitations of war, arguing that Greek social norms shaped military attitudes rather than vice-versa. Returning to the topic of agonistic culture discussed by Hall, van Wees sets the pursuit of profit and territorial expansion squarely within the wider context of Greek competitiveness. For van Wees, however, the greatest object of competition shifted from profit to honor between the Archaic and Classical periods. The chapter provides a nuanced treatment of Greek hoplites’ social roles, arguing (*pace* Aristotle) that the infantry warrior formed neither a “unified social group” nor a “middle class” (294).

Part Two covers Macedonian expansion under Philip and Alexander, the Hellenistic kingdoms, and the Roman military from the fourth through the second century; the organization into six thematic chapters is identical to that used in Part One. Richard Billows (Columbia) leads off with Hellenistic and Roman international relations, noting that many of the basic Greek concepts remained the same, if applied on a larger scale between Hellenistic “super-states” (303). He surveys contacts and agreements between states, distinguishing between secular and sacred as well as formal and informal relationships (307-12). Turning to Rome, Billows discusses the importance of the “just war” in Roman expansionist thought, and traces the roots of Greco-Roman conflicts in Greek misunderstanding of Roman diplomatic concepts like *amicitia* (not so much simple friendship as an unequal relationship with Rome as dominant partner).

The chapter on Hellenistic and Roman military forces is divided between a land-based section by Nicholas Sekunda (Gdansk) and a naval section by Philip DeSouza (Dublin). Sekunda splits his formidable topic into three chronological phases (Philip and Alexander, Hellenistic kingdoms, Roman Republic), and, for each period, gives detailed surveys of recruitment, troop types, organization, and weaponry. His commentary on “military demography” (325-6, 333-6) is important for all three periods: the increased numbers involved in the wars of the late fourth through second centuries mark a striking difference from the Classical period, and Sekunda makes it clear that Macedonian and Roman power depended on the cultivation of large bases of manpower. His discussion of equipment and weaponry shows a mastery of technical detail, and offers a number of interesting suggestions on the origins of tactical developments. Particularly striking is the connection between Iphicrates’ experimentation with heavier peltasts in the early fourth century and the development of Philip’s Macedonian phalanx, although such conclusions on Philip are hampered by the scarcity of evidence beyond Diodorus’s brief passage on the army reform of 359/8. Despite Sekunda’s attention to technological detail, he resists the temptation to assign responsibility for Roman success against the Macedonian phalanx to mere superiority of weaponry,

emphasizing the importance of training and discipline as well as the critical role of centurions. His discussion of the early legions features careful commentary on organization, noting a tactical flexibility in practice that might have broken from the standard battlefield procedure described by Polybius; the chapter concludes with brief comments on the shift from maniple to cohort as the principal tactical subunit around the end of the second century, which Sekunda associates with the Marian reforms.

De Souza's comparatively brief handling of naval forces also makes considerable use of Polybius. It begins by discussing the new, larger "polyremes" of the fourth century and Hellenistic period, seeking a rationale for larger warships in their greater ability to accommodate marines and catapults. Some naval practitioners continued to value speed over carrying power, though, as de Souza points out in the case of smaller warships like the Rhodian *trihemioliai*. From the ships themselves, de Souza goes on to discuss construction costs and resources, pointing out the importance of access to Near Eastern timber for Hellenistic dynasts; finally he takes up naval recruitment, commenting on Hellenistic states and Carthage as well as Roman methods for manning the giant fleets of the Punic Wars.

Jonathan Roth (San Jose State) writes the "War" chapter. His first topic is the development of strategic thinking in the Hellenistic period, when the planning of military campaigns grew more sophisticated. He notes, for example, that the middle and later fourth century saw increased use of an "indirect approach," striking an enemy outside the principal theater of operations. Even more important was the longer duration of military campaigns, and Roth's discussion of supply shows how enormous armies and fleets created logistical nightmares for the Hellenistic rulers who employed them; it becomes clear on the other hand that mastery of logistics was a major factor in the success of Roman campaigns. Roth also compares Macedonian and Roman marching and camping techniques, discussing Roman willingness to "trade speed for security" (392). The final section turns to casualties and wartime suffering, contrasting the Greeks' cultural disapproval of violence against noncombatants with their occasional committing of atrocities, a well-known feature of Roman military victories also.

Philip Sabin (London) and Philip DeSouza treat land and naval battle, respectively. Sabin offers an explicitly "Face of Battle" analysis of Hellenistic and early Roman combat, but includes detailed investigation of command ("Grand Tactics") as well as a soldier's eye view of the battlefield. Sabin believes that a general's most important responsibilities came before the battle began, in intelligence, choice of ground, and deployment of forces; he also argues, though, for the increasing propensity of generals to exercise some influence during combat, a change from the front-line service of Classical generals who all too often died in the early contact with the enemy. One factor that command could take into account in planning Hellenistic and Roman Republican battles was a lengthy "battlefield clock" (411), with combat between larger forces lasting longer than Classical hoplite battles, as a result giving more time for maneuver on the flanks to affect the fighting in the center of a battlefield. The resulting casualties, as in the Classical period, were often skewed heavily against the side that broke first, but lengthy battles might result in substantial losses for the winner as well. Discussing the soldiers' experience of battle, Sabin highlights elephants and cavalry as decisive factors in a number of actions; while he admits elephants' real ability to cause havoc among enemy forces and agrees with Hunt (119) on the value of cavalry as a shock

force despite the lack of stirrups, he contends that both were effective mostly for psychological reasons. Psychology is presented as the key factor in the outcome of infantry combat as well; but Sabin concludes that good generalship, by fostering high morale on the winning side, was the most important factor in securing battlefield victory.

De Souza's discussion of sea battles offers a fascinating treatment of Hellenistic tactics, particularly the advanced ramming techniques of the Rhodian navy and the dimensions and use of the Roman *corvus*. As in Strauss's earlier chapter, de Souza also covers sieges, which "were probably more typical ... than pitched battles" (448). The advantage seems to have been with the besieger as long as sufficient supplies and equipment were available. The discussion of (expensive) siege machinery and artillery strikes a common chord with Sabin's reflections on battle by suggesting that their psychological effect was paramount.

John Serrati (McGill) focuses on "Warfare and the State," with explicit emphasis on "imperialism, finance, and in particular the links between the two" (461)—this is one of the most fascinating and original portions of the volume, on a topic that has not received sufficient attention in prior scholarship. Serrati outlines how states paid for their expansionist campaigns, from Alexander to the later Successor States: while Alexander's windfall seizures of Achaemenid treasuries facilitated his own campaigns and those of a few of his immediate successors, third-century states ran into increasing economic constraints on their ability to wage successful warfare. Vis-à-vis state economies and methods of revenue-production, Serrati argues that the major Hellenistic kingdoms "had few if any actual fiscal policies" (478) beyond supporting the military. Effective economic measures were necessary because rulers' legitimacy depended on successful and frequent military activity. Serrati then explains how the Romans used their alliances and political system, as well as exploitation of financial resources, to facilitate their rapid Mediterranean expansion. He maintains that the acquisition of such resources often preceded (and required) the establishment of provincial government.

The final chapter, drawing together a number of themes from the earlier sections, is a discussion of war and society by John Lendon (Virginia). Lendon considers the broad differences between Greek and Roman attitudes towards war, especially the Hellenistic Greeks' view of military activity as a skilled craft (*technē*) versus the Romans' stress on manly courage (*virtus*). These divergent cultural outlooks had profound consequences for the practice and outcome of wars. Greek emphasis on professional skill drove the amateur citizen soldier from the military sphere, a phenomenon that Lendon calls the "'civilianization' of Greek society" (507); Roman belief in the importance of *virtus*, regardless of socioeconomic status, accounts for the long-term commitment of high percentages of the population to military service (one of four citizen men during the Second Punic War and one of six during the Macedonian Wars that followed: 511-2). Lendon's eloquent and readable prose makes this a strong final essay. The volume concludes with detailed chronological tables, a most helpful glossary, and an extensive, up-to-date bibliography.

The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare will be an invaluable research tool for academic historians, including those who work on the politics and society of the ancient world as well as military specialists. Unfortunately, as noted in the review of the second volume, their prohibitively high price will make the books inaccessible outside of

academic libraries. They will, nonetheless, stimulate further research and writing by historians who may then present their findings to a broader public.