The Historicity of Homeric Warfare: Battle in the 'Iliad' and the Hoplite Phalanx, c. 750 to 480 BCE

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Battle in the *Iliad* and the Hoplite Phalanx, c. 750 – 480 BCE

By

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Chapter One: Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the nature of battle in Homer’s *Iliad*, and its relationship to the actual practices of the Archaic period. In particular, it aims to focus on the roles of foot soldiers in Homeric battle, and how their features compare to those of hoplites, who first emerged during the poet’s own era. The renowned *epos* of war relates the story of Achilles’ wrath against his fellow Greeks during the final year of the Trojan War, and as such, contains innumerable scenes of combat. Though the epic tends to underscore the *aristeia* (‘excellence’) of its heroes, who are often engaged in single-combat with one another, the same episodes also illustrate the participation of the masses on the battlefield. I shall argue that these scenes of battle, and their representations of infantry combat, when examined with supplementary literary and archaeological evidence, are essential tools in interpreting eighth- to sixth-century BCE warfare, particularly the roles of the average citizen and the development of the hoplite phalanx.¹

Background: The Dating of a ‘Homeric Society’

The *Iliad* has been rigorously analyzed in the resurgence of ancient warfare scholarship over the last few decades. This is not unexpected, despite the controversial nature of the epic’s historicity, due to its omnipresent influence during the Archaic and Classical periods. As such, it is sensible to turn to Homer for a definitive insight on ancient Greek fighting practices, especially those of the hoplite phalanx, which have been debated with fervor in recent years.

¹ N.B.: All translations from the original Greek and Latin texts are my own, and abbreviations are drawn from the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. The majority of the Greek names listed have been Hellenized from their common Latinized forms, e.g. ‘Polyainos’ versus ‘Polyaenus,’ with the exception of noted Anglicized forms, e.g. Homer, and of the use of the Latin ‘y’ versus the Greek ‘u,’ e.g. ‘*dory*’ versus ‘*doru*.’
However, there is a challenge in using Homer as a historical source, since the *Iliad* contains elements of several historical periods without a clear distinction between each. Though set during the Late Bronze Age, c. 1300 to 1100 BCE, the epic was likely composed in the mid-to late eighth-century BCE, c. 750 to 700 BCE.² This interval between the dramatic date and the date of composition is troublesome, and raises the question as to which period the conditions reflected in the epic belong.³ Decidely, the poem’s amalgamated nature and collective tradition inhibit a clear solution.

Homer presents features undeniably reminiscent of the Bronze Age, such as the boar’s tusk helmet (Il. 10.260-65), the presence of chariots (Il. 7.13-6; 8.105-8; 15.352-5; 17.56-65), and the palatial structures of Creto-Mycenaean kingdoms (e.g. Odysseus’ palace, Od. 17.29-30; 22.132-41). Moreover, funerary scenes include rather grand observances (e.g. Patroklos’ funeral, Il. 23.24-45, 128-84, 216-225), burial mounds (Il. 7.81-91; 23.44-5, 255-7), and grave *stêlai* (‘stones’ or ‘pillars’) (Il. 11.371-2; 16.456-7), which suggest a Late Bronze Age setting for the epic.⁴ Conversely, and unlike the historical Mycenaens, the Homeric heroes were cremated (Il. 23.166-9).


³ If the authorship of the *Odyssey* is credited to Homer, or at the least, granted a homologous date of composition, it will aid in the analysis of the ‘Homeric society.’ See Scott 1920: 337-9.

⁴ These episodes also feature the “occasional use of horse sacrifice” (Snodgrass 1974: 123). However, animal remains do not necessarily indicate sacrifice. Animal fat was used to urge cremation (Il. 23.166-9), and horses and dogs may have been interred as the symbolic possessions of their owners (Il. 23.173-4) (Mylonas 1948: 59). See Hamilakis 1996: 161-2, 165-6.
Athenian burial practices show that cremation replaced inhumation by the mid-tenth-century BCE, and as such, point instead to an Early Dark Age, or a Proto- to Early Geometric, setting for the epic’s funerary customs.

Alternatively, the Iliadic episodes may reflect a later date, and more than likely, one contemporaneous with Homer. The references to plumed-helmets (Il. 4.459; 6.9, 498-9; 16.137-8), bronze-laden armor (Il. 4.199-201, 285, 419-21; 6.503-5), round shields (Il. 4.448-9; 13.405-7), and naios (‘temples’) (Il. 1.39; Od. 6.10) are characteristic of the Archaic period. It seems rather natural for the poet to have drawn from the realities of his own time to compose his epics. In fact, while it is clear Homer knew of the existence of Late Bronze Age, Dark Age, and Geometric features, it is equally apparent he did not fully understand their respective functions.

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5 Inhumation was the traditional rite of the Mycenaeans, and not cremation (Mylonas 1948: 67-8), though there are exceptions (Musgrave 1990: 272-3). The burial mounds, a memory of the Mycenaen ‘beehive tombs,’ are often erected over the pyres of cremated heroes (Il. 23.255-7), though not always. (Mylonas 1948: 62, 65, 71).

6 For scholars who favor an Early Dark Age or Proto- to Early Geometric date for the practices reflected in the Iliad, see Finley 1970: 72, and Kurtz and Boardman 1971: 186. Morris challenges Finley’s claims on the lack of eighth century BCE institutions, e.g. kingless communities and iron weapons, in Homer (Morris 1986: 95-104). For cremation versus inhumation, see Liston 2007: 58-9, 69, and Musgrave 1990: 272-3. Musgrave briefly details a survey at the Kerameikos cemetery at Athens, which reveals a 97% increase of cremations from the Sub-Mycenaean period, when cremations are 3% of the total, to the Early-Geometric period, when they make up 100% of all burials (Musgrave 1990: 273).

7 Though bronze armor was often used throughout the eighth- to fifth-centuries BCE, organic materials, such as linen and leather, were also implemented, e.g. the linothorax (Il. 2.529-530, 828-33; 5.529) (Schwartz 2009: 66, 70-5). It is worth noting the Mycenaeans also used bronze armor, e.g. the ‘Dendra panoply’ (Snodgrass 1965: 110-2). On the authorship and the date of composition of the Odyssey, see n. 3 above. For rectangular-shaped temples, see Snodgrass 1971: 408-13, in which he states temple architecture appears no earlier than c. 750 BCE.

8 As Finley rightly states, “[Homeric] poems retain a certain measure of Mycenaean ‘things’ – places, arms and weapons, chariots – but little of Mycenaean institutions or culture” (Finley 1970: 81). Furthermore, Grethlein suggests the poems’ pre-Archaic features provide information
Any material remains, such as the Cyclopean walls of Mycenae, would have garnered the attention of the Greeks, and must have evoked a distant ‘Heroic Age.’ As such, these elements, which were passed down by the *aoidoi* (‘bards’) of the collective tradition, were added to the Homeric epics as “special effects” (Raaflaub 2008: 483). Acknowledging the dramatic date of the epics, Homeric audiences were not likely dissuaded from recognizing the “realistic scenes[, which corresponded] to their own experiences,” and enjoyed these episodes (Raaflaub 2008: 483).

Though the ‘composite’ nature of the *Iliad* may seem troublesome, it is best to recognize the features atypical to the epic’s date of composition, such as chariot warfare, as consequences of the oral tradition. These characteristics are chiefly misunderstood in the poem, and simply augment the legendary backdrop of the epic. However, the elements not attested in Late Bronze Age, Dark Age, or Geometric period evidence, or not deemed patently fictitious, such as Achilles’ spear (*Il*. 16.140-4; 19.387-91), must be considered as belonging to the mid- to late eighth-century BCE, such as horsehair-crested helmets. In fact, several scholars now accept this view, and believe the *epos* can elucidate the practices of Archaic Greek warfare. The sentiments of J.V. Luce, which assert, “[the Homeric poems can be used] as evidence for the social

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9 Grethlein 2008: 44. Morris notes “total situations,” which are elements of the poem with a visual referent, e.g. the Bronze Age palaces of the Catalogue of Ships (*Il*. 2.494-759) (Morris 1986: 90).


conditions [of his own day], roughly 750 [to] 700 [BCE],” now seem almost universally shared (Luce 1978: 14).

An analogous model, whereby visual artists projected features of their own time onto their works, which were often set within the past, may be reflected in the Italian Renaissance. Two key examples are Vittore Carpaccio’s Sant’Agostino nello Studio (‘Saint Augustine in His Study’), in which Augustine’s attire and study are more illustrative of the artist’s era than the saint’s own, and a fresco in the Palazzo dei Santissimi Apostoli, which focuses on the juxtaposition of the layered memories of its subject, the Piazza di Campidoglio, respectively:

“[Saint Augustine is] no doubt a historical figure[, but] Carpaccio made no attempt to show him in a fifth-century setting, which is why the painting is often claimed to be a very accurate depiction of the characteristic studiolo of a Venetian humanist cleric[. The room is complete with the] furnishings, books, astronomical equipment, and even [the objets d’art of the fifteenth- to sixteenth-century]” (Dempsey 2005: 417-8).

“[It is] therefore a composite portrait of the square, presenting not an objective depiction of the site’s actual topography, but rather a network of symbolic associations played out between the visible reality and known history of the place that would have resonated with a learned sixteenth-century Roman” (Ribouillault 2008: 213).

This is but a small selection, and further examples include Sandro Botticelli’s own Sant’Agostino nello Studio, Domenico Ghirlandaio’s San Girolamo nello Studio (‘Saint Jerome in His Study’),

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12 See also Ferrill, who states, “[Homeric] accounts of battle were shaped more often than not by the practice of warfare in his own day” (Ferrill 1997: 91), and Humble, who comments, “[The Iliad is] so far from being a romance with little or no historical relevance, [and serves as] the master-key for understanding the [Hellenes] and their military tradition” (Humble 1980: 100).
and Carpaccio’s *San Giorgio e il Drago* (‘Saint George Slaying the Dragon’), in which the saint and his horse are adorned with up-to-date armor and harnessing.\(^\text{13}\)

These comparative examples from Renaissance Italy illustrate how an artist, such as Homer, could have drawn from his daily surroundings, and incorporated these features into his works, which were set in a distant past. As such, it is quite natural to imagine a contemporary setting for the Homeric *epos*, and thus, it is advantageous for the *Iliad*, which is “by far the richest [illustration of combat] we have” (van Wees 2004: 154), to aid in the interpretation of eighth- to sixth-century BCE warfare, since the epic’s society is likely founded in the same era.

**Objectives and Structure**

With this background in mind, this thesis aims to answer several key questions, chiefly concerning the historicity of the battle scenes of the *Iliad*, the contribution of the average citizen in combat, and the development of hoplite warfare in the Archaic period. For example, did the practices of Homeric warfare reflect those of the eighth- to sixth-centuries BCE? Did combat, in both the *Iliad* and in actual, historical practice, consist of open, fluid formations of mixed-combat, or of a massed, close-order *synaspismos* (‘locked shield deployment’)? Furthermore, is the *ôthimos* (‘push’), which is said to be a feature of developed hoplite warfare, to be interpreted literally, as a collective, physical shoving of opposing forces, or figuratively, as a metaphorical advance to drive, and possibly rout, the enemy?

Following this introductory segment, this thesis will examine these questions in a series of separate chapters. It will commence with a chapter on Archaic Greek warfare, in which this

\(^{13}\) Dempsey 2005: 418.
thesis shall detail the arms and armor, tactics, and battle accounts of the period. A third chapter will focus on the combat scenes of the *Iliad*, in which this thesis shall analyze whether the Homeric illustrations of warfare are, in fact, representative of the practices found in the Archaic period. Finally, a concluding chapter will summarize the presented information and offer some additional suggestions for future research.

**Chapter Two: Archaic Greek Warfare**

The aim for this chapter is to elucidate the practices of Archaic Greek warfare, from c. 750 to 480 BCE, in order to establish a framework for the analyses of the *Iliad*'s scenes of battle in the following chapter. This chapter will begin with a brief discussion on the rise of the *polis* (‘city-state’), and subsequently, the rise of hoplite warfare. Then, it will detail the arms and armor of the hoplite panoply. Finally, this will be followed by a comprehensive survey of the fighting practices of the era.

**A New Age: Hoplite Warfare**

The Creto-Mycenaean kingdoms suffered tremendously during the twelfth- and eleventh-centuries BCE, and with the exception of a few material relics, nearly every feature of Late Bronze Age society and culture had vanished by the mid- to late-ninth-century BCE.¹⁴ What remained were small, isolated communities, which were largely illiterate until the adoption of the

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Phoenician alphabet in the mid-eighth-century BCE.\textsuperscript{15} Unlike previous palatial institutions, these nucleated settlements were often clustered around the \textit{agora} (‘place of assembly’).\textsuperscript{16} The circumstances of the period prompted the rise of the \textit{polis}, a novel societal model, which ultimately characterized the Greek world during the forthcoming Archaic and Classical periods.\textsuperscript{17}

The age of the \textit{polis} also witnessed the emergence of hoplite warfare, which fundamentally defined the battlefield from the eighth- to the fourth-century BCE.\textsuperscript{18} With an undoubtedly clear emphasis on massed hand-to-hand fighting, this style of combat encouraged the engagement of heavily armed infantrymen in close-order formations.\textsuperscript{19} It is generally accepted the hoplite panoply was in development by the mid- to late eighth-century BCE, succeeding the arms and armor of the earlier Dark Ages.\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{18} N.B.: The term \textit{hoplitēs} (‘hoplite’) does not appear prior to the fifth-century BCE (Pin. Isthm. 1.23), though \textit{hopla} (‘tools,’ ‘arms’) (\textit{Il.} 10.254; 18.614-5) and \textit{hoplizein} (‘to equip’) (\textit{Il.} 8.55-6; \textit{Od.} 24.495) had occurred previously (Echeverría 2012: 194-5, 313).

\textsuperscript{19} N.B.: It seems unlikely that all hoplites were heavily equipped (see n. 46), and “the distinction made by [the Hellenes] between hoplites [...] was even sharper than our distinction between [the] heavy- and light-armed[, i.e. the] ‘equipped’ [versus] the ‘unequipped,’ ‘naked,’ or ‘light’” (van Wees 2004: 47-8).

The defining features of the hoplite panoply were the *aspis* (‘shield’) and the *dory* (‘spear’).\(^{21}\) The shield was a round, concave ‘bowl,’ with a tough, pliable wooden core, typically measuring three feet across and weighing between fourteen and seventeen pounds.\(^{22}\) The ‘face’ of the shield was most likely coated with a thin sheet of bronze, its *itys* (‘rim’) was secured with a bronze band, and its interior was often padded with leather.\(^{23}\) The shield was fitted with an adjustable double-grip: the *porpax*, a central band to secure the bearer’s left forearm, and the *antilábê*, a handle to be grasped near the rim of the shield.\(^{24}\) Unique to the hoplite *aspis*, this double-grip distributed the shield’s weight along the bearer’s shoulder, elbow, and wrist, which significantly reduced any generated strain.\(^{25}\)

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\(^{21}\) For the use of the terms *hopla* or *aspides* to denote the hoplite shield, see Echeverria 2012: 291-6, esp. 293-4, Lazenby and Whitehead 1966: 27-33, and Schwartz 2009: 25-7.

\(^{22}\) Hardwood, such as willow and poplar, was commonly used (e.g. the Bomarzo and Basel shields, Eur. *Hera.* 375-6, Plin. *NH.* 16.209, et al.) (Schwartz 2009: 28-9, esp. n. 70). The core was constructed “from laths fastened to the rim[, possibly] interconnected by grooves and tongues,” while others may have had “very thin laths in layers[, with] the grain of the wood cross[ing] at right angles from layer to layer,” which reminds Schwartz of modern plywood (Schwartz 2009: 29). For dimensions, see Bradford 2001: 65, Ducrey 1985: 47, Schwartz 2009: 31, and van Wees 2004: 48. For weight, see Bradford 2001: 65, Schwartz 2009: 28, van Wees 2004: 48.

\(^{23}\) Cartledge 1977: 13, Schwartz 2009: 30-1, Snodgrass 1964: 61. The shield was also adorned with a blazon, often of an emblem of personal design, e.g. a ram (Schwartz 2009: 127, fig. 17-8), or of the city-state, e.g. ‘Λ’ for Λακεδαίμων (‘Lakedaimôn,’ i.e. Sparta) (van Wees 2004: 53-4).


The dory was the hoplites’ primary weapon, measuring between six and eight feet in length, and weighing less than five pounds. The spear’s shaft was often made of ash or cornel, which were preferred over other hardwoods for their density and durability, and was fitted with a leaf-shaped, iron spearhead. The bottom end of the spear was also equipped with a metal fitting, the saurôter or styrax (‘butt-spike’), which primarily served as a counter-weight or, if the front end snapped during combat, as an improvised weapon.

In addition to the spear, the hoplite’s offensive array also included the sword, either the xiphos or the kopis, which normally served as a secondary weapon. The xiphos was a leaf-shaped, double-edged iron sword, which typically measured two feet in length, and was

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27 Cartledge 1977: 15, Schwartz 2009: 81-3, van Wees 2004: 48. Other words for spear include aichmê (II. 6.319-20, 12.43-5), enchos (II. 6.318-9, 11.349-51), and mēliê, the last of which literally translates to ‘ash-tree’ (II. 19.390-1, 22.224-5). Post-Dark Age arms, e.g. spears, were typically made of iron on account of the metal’s durability and availability. On metallurgy, Snodgrass comments, a “culture[, in which combatants’ primary arms were made of bronze,] never existed after the end of the Bronze Age” (Snodgrass 1974: 122). However, sixth- and fifth-century BCE bronze spearheads have been found (Schwartz 2009: 30, 55-6, 66-8, 75, 82). For the ‘Iron Age paradox,’ see Ducrey 1986: 47, in which the popularity of bronze during the Iron Age is discussed.

28 Camp II 1978: 192, Runciman 1998: 732, Schwartz 2009: 83, 89, van Wees 2004: 48. For broken spears, see Hdt. 7.224.1: “Δόρατα μέν νυν τοῖσι πλέοσι αὐτῶν τηνικαῦτα ἢδη ἐτύγχανε κατεηγότα […]” (‘By this time, the spears of many of those [Spartans] were now shattered […]’). See also van Wees 2004: 178-9, fig. 21 (B), in which the spears of six of the nine fallen warriors are broken Even a broken spear would have had a greater range than a sword (Schwartz 2009: 93), and stresses the importance of the butt-spike’s versatility.

29 Runciman 1998: 732, Schwartz 2009: 85-6, van Wees 2004: 48. See also n. 28, Hdt. 7.224.1: “[…] οἱ δὲ τοῖσι ξίφεσι διεργάζοντο τοὺς Πέρσας” (‘[…] and [the Spartans] were killing the Persians with their swords[, after their spears broke]’). For xiphê and kopeis, see Schwartz 2009: 87-8, fig. 12-4.
primarily used for thrusting.\textsuperscript{30} The blade’s hilt was balanced with a cylindrical pommel, and the sword was sheathed at the hoplite’s left side.\textsuperscript{31} The \textit{kopis} was a curved, single-edged iron sword, which also measured around two feet in length, and was primarily used for slashing.\textsuperscript{32}

The headgear of the hoplite panoply can be divided into two main groups, most notably those of the Greco-Illyrian and the Corinthian varieties.\textsuperscript{33} Developing from earlier, conical models, the Greco-Illyrian helmet was a bronze cap with integrated cheek- and rear neck-guards, and the Corinthian helmet, which was characterized by its ‘T-shaped’ visor, was further strengthened with elongated cheek- and neck-guards, a nose-guard, and a chinstrap.\textsuperscript{34} Both

\textsuperscript{30} Schwartz 2009: 85-6. As a thrusting weapon, it seems the \textit{xiphos} would have been most effective when used within the phalanx, though still inferior to the \textit{dory} (Schwartz 2009: 92-4).

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid. The scabbard, which was “draped over the right shoulder and across the body,” allowed for the “quickest [draw] possible” (Schwartz 2009: 86).

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 86. The \textit{kopis} is likened to a “butcher’s cleaver,” and may explain its alternate name, \textit{machaira} (‘knife’) (Schwartz 2009: 86). As with the “forward-heavy[,] single-edged [sabers]” of the modern age, e.g. eighteenth-century Mameluke swords, the \textit{kopis}’ design suggests it was better suited for cavalrymen, or “mopping up” a battlefield, cf. the \textit{xiphos} (see n. 30) (Xen. \textit{Eq.} 12.11) (Krentz 2002: 30-1) (Schwartz 2009: 86, 93-4).

\textsuperscript{33} Helmets: \textit{korê} (\textit{Il.} 11.349-51), \textit{kranê} (Hdt. 1.171.4, 4.180.4), and \textit{kuneai} (\textit{Il.} 10.257-9; Hdt. 4.180.3). N.B.: By the late-fifth century BCE, \textit{piloi} (‘skull-caps’), which only covered the user’s crown, were rather common, and were made from either felt or bronze (Schwartz 2009: 57-9, esp. 58, fig. 8) (van Wees 2004: 48). For additional models, e.g. Cretan and Ionian helmets, see Snodgrass 1964: 28-34.

models typically weighed between four and five pounds, and the helmets’ crowns were often
grooved or ridged to fasten “high, narrow crest[s] of dyed horsehair” (Schwartz 2009: 59).

The *thórax* (‘breastplate’) was either made from bronze, e.g. bell-shaped and muscular
cuirasses, or from organic materials, e.g. composite corselets. The bronze cuirass, which
weighed between five and twenty-two pounds, was most likely fastened together by joining its
front- and back-halves at the sides and shoulders with hinges, which left openings for the
bearer’s arms and head. The composite corselet, which weighed between seven and twelve
pounds, was characterized by its *epómites* (‘shoulder-strap[s]’ and its *pteruges* (‘winged-
feathers’). The former were fastened at the chest, which were often reinforced with “bronze
scales, discs, or plates” (Schwartz 2009: 72), and the latter were a series of “overlapping flaps

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35 Runciman 1998: 732, Schwartz 2009: 59, 63-4. Earlier crests, e.g. the ‘Argos panoply’ (see
Schwartz 2009: 67, fig. 9), were “raised on a stilt and placed in a metal holder” (Schwartz 2009:
59).

36 For bronze cuirasses, see Ducrey 1986: 52-4, fig. 35-6, Jarva 1995: 20-32, Schwartz 2009: 66,
71-2. N.B.: There were linen corselets, i.e. the *linothórax* (see n. 7), and leather corselets, i.e. the
*spolas* (Xen. Ana. 3.3.20, 4.1.18). Additionally, the corselet was often layered, and may have
been cured with salt and vinegar for added protection (Schwartz 2009: 70-1). N.B.: Whether or
not a hoplite could afford a breastplate (see n. 46), he would have always worn a *chitón* or
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spear arm could have been protected by upper and lower arm-guards (Jarva 1995: 72-7, fig. 34)
(Schwartz 2009: 78).

38 Since composite corselets have all but perished, their approximate weight is difficult to assess
(Schwartz 2009: 70, 73). The inclusion of metallic scales could have increased the corselet’s
weight up to thirty-five pounds (Schwartz 2009: 95-6). N.B.: The *pteruges* were not exclusive to
composite corselets (Jarva 1995: 20, 29-31, fig. 7-8). For composite corselets, see also Schwartz
2009: 69-71, fig. 10-1.
[of] metal or reinforced leather” (Schwartz 2009: 72), which covered the lower abdominal and groin area.39

The knémides (‘greaves’), which were made from thin sheets of bronze and typically weighed between two and five pounds a pair, often extended from the kneecap to the bridge of the foot, and were manually fastened around the calf muscles.40 The greaves were likely padded with organic materials, e.g. leather, and later models were ornately decorated at the knee-guard and sides.41 Additional pieces of bronze armor, such as thigh-, ankle-, and foot-guards, could have supplemented the greaves, notwithstanding their rarity, as attested by the lack of archaeological and artistic evidence.42

Although scholars have debated whether the hoplite panoply preceded or followed the development of the hoplite phalanx, it can be convincingly argued that the invention of the double-grip aspis, which is generally believed to have occurred during the mid-eighth-century


BCE, marked the emergence of a new close-order, hand-to-hand style of warfare. The presence of massed combat presented a newfound need for increased protection, and the hoplite panoply was repeatedly redeveloped as a direct response to these practices. With the exception of greaves, nearly every feature of the panoply was in existence prior to c. 750 BCE, but each was improved to fit the changing demands of warfare.

While these are the features of the quintessential panoply, it is important to note the serious unlikelihood of a fully furnished hoplite. Prior to the centralized military institutions of the mid- to late Classical period, in which arms and armor were provided by the state, the armies of the eighth- to the mid-fifth century BCE were militia levies of citizens and slaves, and the exorbitant costs of the panoply limited the average hoplite’s selection to just a few pieces of equipment, most notably the shield and the spear. Undoubtedly, these armed forces would

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44 Prior to this innovation, it has been rightfully posited that earlier Dark Age warriors engaged in “fluid[,] long-range skirmishing” (van Wees 2004: 152). These soldiers were normally equipped with lightweight shields, swords, javelins, and bows and arrows (van Wees 2004: 48-9, 166-7) (see n. 20). For this view on the development of the phalanx, see Schwartz 2009: 143-6.

45 Snodgrass 1965: 110. Some notable improvements include the frontal reinforcement of the Corinthian helmet (Schwartz 2009: 56-7), and the shift from heavy, isolative metallic cuirasses to lightweight, breathable organic corselets (Schwartz 2009: 74-5).

46 The aspis and dory were the most important elements of the hoplite panoply (see p. 9), and “were all that one strictly needed to be [considered] a hoplite” (van Wees 2004: 48). For centralized military institutions, see Bertosa 2003: 361-79. For militia levies, see Runciman 1998: 732-3, and van Wees 2004: 46, 87-101. For the costs of the panoply, see van Wees 2004, 52. For Solonian timocracy, i.e. the ‘bushel-census,’ see Schwartz 2009: 141-3, and van Wees 2004: 55-6. For the myth of the ‘middle-class’ hoplite, see van Wees 2004, 55-60.
“have presented a motley appearance, ranging as they did[,] from soldiers who could afford no more than the cheapest mass-produced spears and shields [to those with] ornate, custom-made panoplies” (van Wees 2004: 54). Nevertheless, with a general understanding of the features and characteristics of the hoplite panoply, as well as the overall appearance and furnishings of the average hoplite, the development and nature of Archaic Greek warfare can be better illustrated.

The Hoplite Phalanx

The hoplite often fought as part of a formation known as the phalanx. This was a cohesive unit, which was “deep” (Xen. Hell. 2.4.37, 4.2.13), “dense” (Xen. An. 2.3.3), and “solid” (Xen. Ages. 6.4.6), and in order to maximize its strength and solidarity, often waged pitched battles on the “fairest and smoothest ground” (Hdt. 7.9.2).

As opposing phalanxes neared for battle, and as the term synaspismos suggests, hoplites formed a compact shield-wall, “lean[ing] shield against shield” and “plac[ing] foot against foot” (Tyr. 11.31 ff.). Assuming a

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48 Hdt. 7.9.2: “καίτοι γε ἐὁθάσι Έλληνες, ὡς πυθάνομαι, ἀβουλόταται πόλεμον προεύρωσι, ἐξειρόντες τὸ κάλλιστον χωρίον καὶ λειοτατὸν, ἐς τοῦτο κατάντες μάχονται, ὥστε σὺν κακῷ μεγάλῳ οἱ νικῶντες ἀπαλλάσσονται: περὶ δὲ τὸν ἐσσουμένον οὐδὲ λέγω ἀρχήν· ἐξώλεες γὰρ δὴ γίνονται.” (“Yet, the Greeks, as I learn, are accustomed to waging war, most ill-advisedly, from both their folly and foolishness, for whenever they declare war, they fight one another, after they discover, and set upon, the fairest and smoothest ground, so that the victors are free from great harm; but concerning the defeated, I do not say a word, for they have been utterly destroyed.”). For pitched battles, see Krentz 2002: 27-8.

49 Tyr. 11.31-4 ff: “[…], καὶ πόδα πάρ ποδὶ θεῖς καὶ ἐπ’ ἀσπίδος ἀσπίδ’ ἐρείσας, ἐν δὲ λόφον τε λόφῳ καὶ κυνέῃ κυνέῃ καὶ στέρνων στέρνων πεπληγμένος ἀνδρὶ μαχέσθω, ἢ ξίφεος κόπην ἢ δόρυ μακρὸν ἐλών.” (“[…], and let [each man] fight, after he has seized either the hilt of his sword or his long spear, after he has placed foot against foot, leaned shield against shield, and after has pressed crest against crest, helmet against helmet, and breast against breast.’”). See
sideways stance, they inched forward by driving off their right foot, and as they “smashed their shields [against the enemy], they [pushed], [fought], [killed], and [died]” in intense hand-to-hand combat (Xen. Hell. 4.3.19). As men in the front ranks fell in battle, “their places were filled up by the men immediately behind them” (Cawkwell 1989: 388), and as these new file-leaders “held the phalanx together” (Askl. 3.6), the rear ranks continued to press forward against the “shoulders and sides” of their comrades (Arr. Tact. 16.13). These battles, which were brutal and exhausting, were concluded once a phalanx managed to push for “one [more] step” (Polyai. 2.3.2), and rout the enemy.

Although the hoplite phalanx gradually evolved over the course of the mid-eighth- to the late fourth-centuries BCE, the quintessence of hoplite warfare, and the significance of close-order

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50 Xen. Hell. 4.3.19: “καὶ συμβαλόντες τὰς ἀσπίδας ἐωθοῦντο, ἐμάχοντο, ἀπέκτεινον, ἀπέθνῃσκον.” (“And as they smashed their shields together, they were pushing, fighting, killing, and dying.”). For a sideways stance, see Cawkwell 1989: 385, Krentz 1985b: 53, Luginbill 1994: 53-4, Schwartz 2009: 160, van Wees 2004: 168-9, fig. 17. These movements echo those of a boxer, e.g. shadowboxing, which are illustrated by K.T. Frost, “[The] left fist is driven straight from the shoulder […] by a lunge forward with the left foot and a strong drive from the floor with the right leg[… and the feet] must never crossed[,] or even in a straight line[,] nor must the right foot ever been in advance of the left. Thus[,] […] the weight is distributed evenly on both feet [for better balance]” (Frost 1906: 218).

51 Askl. 3.6: “[…] ἵνα πεσόντος τοῦ λοχαγοῦ ὁ παρεδρεύων προελθὼν εἰς τὸ πρόσω συνέχῃ τὴν φάλαγγα.” (“[… so that whoever was attending the fallen file-leader was able to hold the phalanx together, after he has moved to the front’). Arr. Tact. 16.13: “[…] καθάπερ ἐκεῖ κατὰ τοὺς ὄμοις καὶ τὰς πλευρὰς αἱ ἐνερείσεις γίγνονται τῶν πεζῶν […]” (“[…] just as there, the pressures of the infantry are against [their] shoulders and sides […]”). Luginbill 1994: 53, n. 8.

52 Polyai. 2.3.2: “ἐν βῆμα χαρίσασθε μοι, καὶ τὴν νίκην ἔξομεν.” (“Give me one [more] step, and we shall claim victory’). For the duration of hoplite battles, see Schwartz 2009: 201-25. For the pursuit of enemies, see Krentz 2002: 30-1. For hoplite casualties, see Luginbill 1994: 59, n. 31.
combat, remained unchanged. As such, while it would seem fallacious to presume the Archaic phalanx was homogenous with the fully developed models of the Classical and Hellenistic periods, there is no reason to doubt it was as dense, compact, and cohesive as later phalanxes.

As previously noted, the mere presence of the double-grip aspis implied that massed, close-order combat had become the established norm, and thus, governed the fighting practices of the Archaic period.

The Deployment of the Hoplite Phalanx

Notwithstanding the evidence of close-order combat, the paucity of literary sources on mid-eighth- to late sixth-century BCE warfare has been troubling, and as such, the existence of this massed style of warfare has been challenged. However, it is unlikely the Archaic phalanx was deployed as a loose, open-order formation. Though a Hellenistic author, Asklepiodotos detailed a one-half foot interval between each hoplite in the “most compact” order of the phalanx (Askl. 4.1), which was more often implemented than the three- and six-foot intervals during

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53 Schwartz 2009: 144-6, van Wees 2004: 49-52. While Schwartz rightfully states, “phalanx fighting did not evolve in any fundamental respect over the next [four] centuries” (Schwartz 2009: 144), he refers strictly to the nature of hoplite warfare, and there were indeed a few minor changes, e.g. the organization of the phalanx.

54 Matthew rightfully asserts, “[w]ith the reference by Tyrtaeus of the use of the shield wall in the seventh century BC, and Plutarch’s description of its use in the third century BC, it can be seen that this type of [compact] formation was in use by hoplite armies for at least four centuries” (Matthew 2009: 408).


Following this one-foot interval model, and unlike the ‘shield-to-shield’ model proposed by some scholars, hoplites would have overlapped their aspides, which strengthened the solidarity of their shield-wall. Since the aspis “cover[ed] the bearer from chin to knee” (Schwartz 2009: 146), where it effectively merged with the helmet and the greaves, no area was left “unprotected” (Hanson 1991: 70), and the phalanx paralleled an impenetrable wall of bronze. As such, the close-order phalanx was able to remain dense and cohesive, which was of the upmost importance in mid-eighth- to late fourth-century BCE warfare.

Therefore, it seems mistaken to suggest the earliest hoplite phalanxes fought in loose, open-order formations. While these prototypical hoplites did carry throwing-spears into battle, this alone does not warrant the claim “[that] hoplites must have fought in a quite open formation[. since spear throwing] require[d] a good deal of room for manoeuvre” (van Wees 2004: 169). As attested by iconographical evidence, hoplites would have normally been armed

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57 Askl. 4.1: “[…] τὸ πυκνότατον, καθ’ ὅ συνησπικώς ἑκαστος ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων πανταχόθεν διέστηκεν πηχυαῖον διστήμα […]” ([…] the most compact [formation], and each man, after he has locked shields, stood a cubit’s interval [c. one-half foot] away from all others on every side […]). (See also Ael. Tact. 11.1-5, Arr. Tact. 11.1-6). Krentz 1985b: 51, Schwartz 2009: 157-8.

58 For overlapped shields, see Schwartz 2009: 125-7, fig. 17, cf. the ‘shield-to-shield’ model (Schwartz 2009: 157-60) (van Wees 2004: 168-9, fig. 17). Though Krentz and van Wees’ six-foot interval models are too loose for a close-order phalanx (Krentz 1985b: 53-4) (van Wees 2004: 168-9, fig. 18, 185-6), Schwartz’s three-foot interval model also needs further modification. Schwartz challenges the six-foot interval model since “it cannot explain the difficulties of [constantly] standing in this position [during combat]” (Schwartz 2009: 160), yet his own model, in which hoplites are ‘shield-to-shield,’ is equally flawed, since hoplites are just as exposed as they move in combat.

59 Cf. Hanson 1991: 70, who argued the aspis’ lack of straight, rectangular edges weakened the effectiveness of the hoplites’ shield-wall.

60 Unlike the javelin throwers of the modern Olympics, distance throwing was unlikely the hoplites’ objective, and they would have cast their spears once within close range of the enemy phalanx. As such, the hoplites would not have required a large amount of space to throw their spears, and could have done so without sacrificing the solidarity of their line; the ankylai
with two to three throwing-spears, which was, by no means, a quantity substantial enough to have governed the fighting practices of an entire course of battle. Additionally, the burdensome weight of the hoplite panoply, most notably the double-grip *aspis*, would have certainly encumbered even the fittest of men in an open-order formation. The practice of spear throwing within the hoplite phalanx was simply a continuation of a previous tradition, which lost its significance by the late seventh-century BCE, and thus, could not have dictated an open-order style of combat.

**The Hoplite Phalanx in Action**

While the solidarity of the close-order phalanx has been demonstrated, it is befitting to understand the actual elements of hoplite warfare. As such, this section will detail the course of

(‘throwing-loops’) would have certainly facilitated in this respect. For throwing-loops, see Schwartz 2009: 125-6, fig. 16, and van Wees 2004: 169-70.

61 For throwing spears, see Schwartz 2009: 125-6, fig. 16, van Wees 2004: 179, fig. 22. For a comparative analysis with Roman *pila*, see Liv. 28.2.5-6: “Cum ita instructos educeret e castris, vixdum in egressos vallo eos Romani pila coniecerunt. Subsidunt Hispani adversus emissa tela ab hoste, inde ad mittenda ipsi consurgunt; quae cum Romani conferti, ut solent, densatis excepissent scutis, tum pes cum pede conlatus et gladiis geri res coepta est.” (“While [Mago] was leading [his troops] out of the camps, whom were drawn up in this way, they barely made way from the rampart [when] the Romans hurled javelins at them. The Iberians crouch[d] before the [enemy volley], and then, they themselves [rose] to [cast their own missiles]. As was customary, the tightly packed Romans had received these [javelins] with their locked shields, and then, [with] foot joined with foot and with [drawn] swords, [combat] was received.’). A. Zhmodikov describes, “[the] Roman heavy infantrymen of the front two lines (*hastati* and *principes*) threw their distinctive [*pila*] for a short time[,] and then fought with swords […][; the former] took much less time than the [latter]” (Zhmodikov 2000: 67). N.B.: The nature of Roman *pila* throwing is itself somewhat controversial (Zhmodikov 2000: 67-78).

62 Schwartz 2009: 95-101. For the weight of the hoplite shield, see n. 22. The full panoply would have weighed between thirty-three and eighty-eight pounds (Schwartz 2009: 95-6), and although few hoplites were ever wholly equipped (see n. 46), even the ‘less-furnished’ panoplies were rather cumbersome (Schwartz 2009: 96-8). For a convincing, analogous comparison with modern riot shields, see Schwartz 2009: 53-4, 155-7.
an average hoplite battle, and will examine its key features, which, due to their obscurity and ambiguity in the literary corpora, have been the prime topics of scholarly debate. The following analyses will elucidate the nature of the initial *dromos* (‘course,’ ‘speed’), which has been deemed as evidence for a running charge, of the resulting *ðthismos*, which has been interpreted literally and figuratively, and finally, of the hoplite spear-grip, i.e. over-versus underarm, within a phalanx.

The famous charge of the Athenians at Marathon (490 BCE), where they “threw themselves [against] the [Persians] at a run” (Hdt. 6.112.1), was likely a heroic exaggeration, though several other accounts have led scholars to believe that hoplites often “charge[d] at a run” (van Wees 2004: 188). As such, the *dromos* of an advancing phalanx has been misinterpreted. While some armies may have occasionally charged “with [reckless] fury” (Thuc. 5.70), it is well-known the Lakedaimonians “advanc[ed] slowly [to the music] of many flute-players” (Thuc. 5.70), which allowed their phalanx to remain “in line and in position” as they marched in close-order (Cawkwell 1989: 379), and this ‘slow-and-steady’ model appears to have been the norm for hoplite warfare. It does not seem logical for a phalanx to march “step by step” with a

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63 Since contemporary audiences were familiar with the experience of warfare, the majority of our textual evidence was likely to have omitted ‘obvious’ details from their combat narratives. For example, Thucydides’ “unusually richly detailed narrative [on Sphakteria] here indicates that [he] was trying very hard to convey to his audience the unusual nature [of the battle]” (Thuc. 4.34.2-35.4) (Schwartz 2009: 221).

64 Hdt. 6.112.1: “ὡς δὲ σφι διετέτακτο καὶ τὰ σφάγια ἐγίνετο καλά, ἐνθαῦτα ὡς ἀπείθησαν οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι δρόμῳ ἐντὸς ἐς τοὺς βαρβάρους. ἦσαν δὲ στάδιοι οὐκ ἐλάσσονες τὸ μεταίχμιον αὐτῶν ἢ ὠκτώ” (‘And as [the Athenians] had arranged themselves for battle and their offerings were auspicious, they were sent forth there, [where] they were throwing themselves toward the [Persians] with haste. There were no less than eight stades between the two armies [i.e. 4,500 feet, or just over four-fifths of a mile.’).

65 Thuc. 5.70: “καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἡ ξύνοδος ἢ, Ἀργεῖοι μὲν καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι ἐντόνως καὶ ὀργῇ χωροῦντες, Λακεδαιμόνιοι δὲ βραδέως καὶ ὑπὸ αὐλητῶν πολλῶν ὀμοῦ ἐγκαθεστώτων, οὐ τοῦ
compact shield-wall, if hoplites were ultimately expected to break ranks and charge at the enemy. This is further supported by the notion that “[a phalanx] without order […] is worthless” (Arist. Pol. 1297b 20-1), since “no loose formation could hope to resist [a close-order shield-wall]” (Luginbill 1994: 55).

The accounts that have been interpreted as support for a hoplite charge actually lack the verb *trechein* (‘to run’), and instead use the phrases, “with haste” or “with speed,” which seem more reasonable in the context of a close-order phalanx. Nevertheless, these phrases have been misunderstood as evidence for running, although a passage from Xenophon’s *Hellenica* may suggest otherwise. If this phalanx was already charging at a run, it seems unlikely that any

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66 Variants of *βαίνω* and *βραδύς*, e.g. *βάδην* and *βραδέως*, suggest a slow, gradual “step-by-step” model (Schwartz 2009: 197, n. 851).

67 Arist. Pol. 1297b 20-1: “*tên γὰρ ἵσην καὶ τὴν ὑπεροχὴν ἐν τοῖς ἵππεσιν ὁ πόλεμος εἶχεν: ἄνευ μὲν γὰρ συντάξεως ἁχρηστόν τὸ ὀπλιτικὸν […]*” (‘For war [of the earliest Greek constitutions] had its strength and superiority in the cavalry; for without order, the heavily-armed were useless’).

68 “Δρόμω”: Hdt. 6.112.1, Thuc. 4.96.2, Xen. Hell. 4.3.17. “Ταχῦ”: Xen. Hell. 2.4.34.

69 Xen. Hell. 4.3.17: “*Συνιόντων δὲ τέως μὲν σιγὴ πολλῆ ἀπ’ ὁμοφόρων ἤν· ἥνικα δὲ ἀπείχων ἄλλῃ ὡς τῶν στάδιων, ἀλαλάξαντες οἱ Θηβαῖοι δρόμῳ ὁμόσε ἐψερόντο. ὡς δὲ τριῶν ἐπὶ πλέθρων ἐν μέσῳ ὄντων ἀντεξόμον ἀπὸ τῆς Λασιλαύος φάλαγγος ὁν Ἡριπιδάς ἐξενάγει καὶ σὺν αὐτοῖς Ἰονεῖς καὶ Αἰολεῖς καὶ Ἑλλησσόντιοι, καὶ πάντες οὕτως τῶν συνεκδραμόμενων τε ἐγένοντο καὶ εἰς δόρυ ἁφικόμενοι ἔπετην τὸ καθ’ αὐτοίς.” (‘And as [the armies] were coming together, there was a great silence from both of them; but when [one] was as much as a stade away from the other [i.e. six-hundred feet], the Thebans, who let out their war-cry, were carrying themselves together with haste. And as there were still three plethra in between them [i.e. three-
individual hoplites, no matter how lightly armed, would have outrun the other contingents at such a short distance. However, if the phalanx was instead advancing “with haste,” and thus, marching with brisk, rhythmical steps, and not “at a run,” it is much easier to imagine a select few, especially those less disciplined, breaking their ranks to rush at the enemy. Thus, the *dromos* of hoplite warfare is best understood as a “brisk advance” (Luginbill 1994: 57), and since hoplites “massed [their ranks] together” just before collision (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.18), a phalanx could have remained cohesive as it “[attempted] to break through [the enemy shield-wall] with “maximum impetus” (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.18) (Schwartz 2009: 197).

Quite possibly the most extensively debated element of hoplite warfare, the *ôthismos* has been interpreted literally, as a massed, physical shove between opposing phalanxes, and figuratively, as a metaphorical effort to repel the enemy. If maintaining the solidarity of the hoplite phalanx was of the utmost importance, then it naturally follows that it was just as important “to break the enemy ranks at all costs” (Schwartz 2009: 184). This often occurred once a phalanx, which fought “with the shoving of their shields” (Thuc. 4.96.2-3), was “pushed back by the mass” of the enemy ranks (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.14). The nature of hoplite warfare would

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70 N.B.: The Battle of Koronea (394 BCE) was itself “a battle […] like no other” (Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.16), which further suggests that a hoplite charge was not the norm.

71 Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.18: “[…] διαπεσεῖν βουλόμενοι πρός τοὺς ἑαυτῶν, συσσειραθέντες ἐχώρουν ἔρρωμένως.” (‘[…][The Thebans.] wishing to break through [to join] their own [allies], and after they were massed together in close-order, were advancing powerfully’).


73 Thuc. 4.96.2-3: “τὸ δὲ ἄλλο καρτερά μάχη καὶ ὀθισμὸ ἄσπιδων ξυνειστήκει” (‘But the other
suggest a phalanx was only driven back by a physical shove, and was defeated once its ranks, which were “pushed little by little” (Thuc. 4.96.4-5), were overpowered and shattered.\(^74\)

While the òthismos could be interpreted as a figurative push, it seems unlikely that a phalanx “fell back” as it fought “within spear range” (Xen. Hell. 4.3.17), only “giving ground” when it was repelled by an opposing phalanx.\(^75\) Given the length of the dory, a phalanx could fight both ‘shield-to-shield’ and “within spear range,” and it would be odd for hoplites to “ground to a halt” several feet before an opposing phalanx, where they could not maximize the use of their shields and manpower (van Wees 2004: 188).\(^76\) Additionally, the verbs enklinein (’to bend’) and anachôrein (’to go back’) have been misunderstood as “fall back” or “give ground,” and are often better translated as “withdraw” or “retreat” in the context of hoplite warfare.\(^77\) As previously noted, a phalanx would not willingly give way to the enemy, and had to be physically

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\(^{74}\) Thuc. 4.96.4-5: “[...] τὸ δὲ δεξιὸν, ἣν Θηβαῖοι ἦσαν, ἐκράτει τῶν Ἀθηναίων καὶ ὅσαμένοι κατὰ βραχὺ τὸ πρῶτον ἐπηκολούθουσι” (‘[...] but the right [wing], where the Thebans were, was stronger than the Athenians[’left wing], and having pushed them little by little, they closely followed them at first’).

\(^{75}\) Xen. Hell. 4.3.17: “[...] ἐγένοντο καὶ εἰς δόρυ ἀφικόμενοι [...]” (‘[...] and when they arrived within spear range [...]’). See also Xen. Hell. 7.1.31.

\(^{76}\) Matthew 2009: 396-8.

\(^{77}\) Xen. Hell. 6.4.14 (n. 73): If the Lakedaimonian Right only saw that the Lakedaimonian Left was giving ground, they would not have compromised the cohesion of their phalanx by completely withdrawing from the battlefield (“ἐνέκλιναν”). However, since the Right did withdraw, it is more likely that they saw the Left in flight (“ἀνεχώρουν”), and thus, abandoned their positions in defeat.
“driven back” until its ranks “withdrew” from the battlefield (Xen. Hell. 2.4.34). Thus, the ὀθήσμος is best interpreted as a massed, physical shove.

Since the dory was the hoplites’ primary weapon, it has been debated whether hoplites held their spears with an over- or an underarm grip. While most scholars concur with the former, it has often been assumed that the front ranks of a hoplite phalanx had thrust their spears across a one-hundred-and-eighty degree plane with parallel strikes. Since the front ranks were often fully furnished and protected by their shield-wall, these jabs would not have easily wounded or killed the enemy, and would have also injured their own comrades with the “back and forth [blows of their butt-spikes]” (Schwartz 2009: 91). However, hoplites were more likely to have instead struck at their opponents at a forty-five degree angle with successive, downward thrusts, which would have been aimed over the enemies’ shields, and driven into their necks.

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78 Xen. Hell. 2.4.34: “ἐκεῖ δὲ συνταξάµενος παντελῶς βαθείαν τὴν φάλαγγα ἔγεν ἐπὶ τοὺς Ἀθηναίους. οἱ δὲ εἰς χεῖρας μὲν ἐδέξαντο, ἐπειτὰ δὲ οἱ μὲν ἔξωσόθησαν εἰς τὸν ἐν ταῖς Ἀλαῖς πηλὸν, οἱ δὲ ἐνέκλιναν·” (‘And there, [Pausanias] was driving the phalanx, which he arranged absolutely deep, against the Athenians, and they accepted close-quarters [combat], but then some were pushed back toward the marsh of the Halai, and others retreated’). N.B.: As with n. 73, there is a clear distinction between “giving ground” due to physical shoving (“ἔξωσόθησαν εἰς τὸν […] πηλὸν”), and “falling back” in retreat (“ἐνέκλιναν”), cf. Matthew 2009: 399.


80 For the notion of a fully furnished front rank, see Jarva 1995: 125-6.

81 Since hoplites were often most exposed at the neck and groin areas, this use of the overarm grip allowed hoplites “to strike at the vulnerable part of his opponent, i.e. above the shield and below the helmet” (Cawkwell 1989: 381). While this use of the overarm grip would have exposed the attackers’ spear arm, hoplites valued the shelter of their shields, which offered a “maximum of protection [with their] hollow[,] bowl-shape concave, [where they] could [tuck] almost all of [their] upper bod[ies]” (Schwartz 2009: 192), and thus, were likely to have only occasionally raised their spears to strike at opportune moments (see Eur. Phoen. Wom. 1382-87).
Nevertheless, the underarm grip has been supported by an archaeological survey, which detailed the damage to “over [four-hundred] helmets, greaves, shields[,] and breastplates” (Matthew 2009: 404, n. 43), and revealed the presence of “shallow[, upward] angle[s] of impact[, which correspond] to blow[s] delivered from the underarm position” (Matthew 2009: 404). As previously noted, the front ranks, which consisted of the strongest and the most skilled hoplites, would have struck at their opponents with downward thrusts, and thus, could not have been responsible for these signs of impact. However, the second ranks, which were “in no way inferior [to the first]” (Askl. 3.5-6), and were “[only] second to the file-leaders in valor” (Arr. Tact. 12.3), were known to have also used their spears in combat. While the overarm grip limited the spears’ effective range to the front ranks, the underarm grip allowed the second ranks to “project [their spears] almost [five feet] forward of the front of the [phalanx]” (Matthew 2009: 405), and it is not difficult to imagine the use of both grips in this manner.

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82 C. Matthew also includes iconographical evidence as support for the underarm grip, but these are images of heroic scenes, and thus, are not representative of actual phalanx warfare (Matthew 2009: 402-3, fig. 3-4, n. 36 and 38).

83 Askl. 3.5-6: “[5] […] τοὺς μὲν πρόσω τῶν ἀνδρῶν κατὰ τὴν ρώμην, τοὺς δ’ ὄπισθω κατὰ τὴν φρόνησιν διαφέροντας, αὐτῶν δὲ τῶν πρόσω τοὺς λοχαγοὺς μεγέθει τε καὶ ρώμη καὶ ἐμπειρία προφήτης τῶν ἄλλων […]; [6] Δεῖ δὲ καὶ τὸ δεύτερον ζυγὸν μὴ πάνυ χείρον εἶναι […].’ (‘[5] […] and in the front, [we shall draw up] those in accordance with might, and behind them, those with judgment, and of those men in front, the file-leaders, with both strength and might, and experience […]; [6] but even the second rank must be in no way inferior […]’). Arr. Tact. 12.3: “δευτέρους δ’ ἐπὶ τούτως κατ’ ἄρτην χρῆ εἶναι τοὺς τῶν λοχαγῶν ἐπιστάτας: καὶ γὰρ τὸ τούτων δόρυ ἑξικνεῖται ἐστε ἐπὶ τοὺς πολεμίους, […]’ (‘But those who stand behind [the front ranks] must be [only] second to the file-leaders in valor; for their spear[s] reach the enemy, […]’).

84 For the dory’s point of balance, see Matthew 2009: 400.
Conclusion: Archaic Greek Warfare

This chapter has examined the equipment, the formation, and the tactics of the standard hoplite of the Archaic period. The mid-eighth-century BCE witnessed the emergence of a novel style of warfare, which consisted of massed, hand-to-hand combat between opposing hoplite forces. While individual panoplies varied significantly, these combatants were always equipped with a double-grip shield and a thrusting spear, and mobilized their ranks in a dense, close-order phalanx. After locking their shields, hoplites inched across the battlefield with tight, rhythmical steps. As each phalanx neared, these hoplites smashed their shields against the enemy, and there followed a strenuous, physical bout of shoving. While the masses pressed forward, the front ranks struck at their opponents with downward jabs, and the second ranks with extended thrusts. The course of hoplite battle was often concluded once a phalanx, which relied heavily on its solidarity and cohesion, was driven back, and its ranks were shattered.

Chapter Three: Homeric Warfare

While the preceding chapter detailed various features of hoplite warfare in the Archaic period, from c. 750 to 480 BCE, the aim for this chapter is to examine several battle scenes in the Iliad, and their relationship to the actual, fighting practices of the era. Notwithstanding the epic’s emphasis on heroic duels, these scenes also illustrate massed, close-order phalanx combat, which is consistent with the hoplite style of warfare. Thus, and in light of the historical framework outlined in the previous chapter, they are able to elucidate several aspects of the nature of hoplite warfare during the mid- to late-eighth century BCE.
The Homeric Panoply

As previously noted, and as detailed between the heroes, Idomeneus and Meriones, the primary features of the hoplite panoply were the double-grip shield and the thrusting spear.\(^85\)

Although the *Iliad* presents varying shield models, such as Ajax’s tower shield (*Il.* 7.219), the common “[round, bronze-faced]” shields (*Il.* 12.294), which were often decorated with a blazon, e.g. the apotropaic “Gorgon” (*Il.* 11.36), and whose interiors were padded with organic materials, e.g. “ox-hides” (*Il.* 12.296-7), appear to be suggestive of the archetypal hoplite *aspis*.\(^86\)

Additionally, while Homeric heroes often wielded “two spears” in combat (*Il.* 11.43), which was likely a representation of the earlier practice of hoplite spear-throwing, the *anchimachêtaï* (‘spear-fighters,’ i.e. ‘hoplites’) fought by thrusting their spears, especially at the exposed “neck, below the [helmet]" (*Il.* 7.11-2).\(^87\) This use of thrusting spears, along with the omnipresence of

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\(^{85}\) *Il.* 13.264-5: “[Idomeneus to Meriones] [...] ‘τῶ µοι δούρατά τ’ ἔστι καὶ ἄσπιδες ὀµφαλὸςκοιλώτα, καὶ Κύρυθας καὶ θώρηκες λαµþρον γανόντωνες.’” (‘Thus, there are spears and bossed shields for me, and helmets and breastplates, glittering brightly.’).

\(^{86}\) For round, bronze shields, see *Il.* 7.250-1: “[...] καὶ βάλε Πριαµίδαο κατ’ ἄσπιδα πάντος’ ἔισην. διὰ µὲν ἄσπιδος ἤλθε φαεινῆς ὀβρίον ἐκχος. [...]’ (‘and [Ajax] struck through the shield of Priam’s son, which was equal on all sides; and through the radiant shield did the powerful spear pass’), and also *Il.* 5.299-302 (‘ἄσπιδα πάντος’ ἔισην’), *Il.* 11.434-6 (‘ἄσπιδα πάντος’ ἔισην; ἄσπιδος [...] φαεινῆς’). For shield blazons, see *Il.* 11.36-7: “τῇ δ’ ἐπὶ µὲν Γοργῶ βλοσυρῶπις ἐστεφάνωτο δεινὸ δερκογνόντα ἐισην ὁπρὸν δεῖχναι νεκρομενη, περὶ δὲ θεῖος τε Φόβος τε.” (‘And upon this shield, the grim Gorgon was crowned, glaring terribly, and by her, were Terror and Fear.’), and also Achilles’ shield (*Il.* 18.478-608). For organic interiors, see *Il.* 12.294-7: “αὐτίκα δ’ ἄσπιδα µὲν πρόσθ’ ἐσχετο πάντος’ ἔισην, καλῆν καλκείνην εξήλατον, ἢν ἄρα καλκεύς ἔλασεν, ἐντοσθεὶν δὲ βοείας βάφεν θαμείας χρυσείης ράβδοισι διηνεκέσιν περὶ κύκλων.” (‘And at once, [Hektor] held his [rounded] shield in front, a beautiful [sheet of] beaten bronze, which the bronze-smith forged, and all throughout, he sewed tightly packed ox-hides around the [rim] with frequent stitches of gold.’).

\(^{87}\) For two spears, see *Il.* 11.43: “ἐξεῖλετο δ’ ὄλκενα δούρε δῶο [...]” (‘[The son of Atreus] seized two stout spears [...]’), and *Il.* 12.298: “[...] δῶο δούρε τινάσσων [...]” (‘[...] brandishing two spears [...]’). For spear thrusts to the neck, see *Il.* 7.11-2: “𝑬 któρ δ’ Ἦιονη βάλ.’ ἐγχεί ὀψίσσειαν αὐχέν ὑπὸ στεφάνης εὐχάλκου, λύσε δὲ γυία.” (‘And Hektor struck Eioneus with his sharp-
the double-grip *aspers*, reflects the presence of both in the Archaic period, and implies their historical importance was such that they were often represented in the *Iliad*.

Throughout the *epos*, the Greeks and the Trojans are often referred to as “bronze-clad” warriors (*II. 4.285, 5.180*), which reflects several features of hoplite armor. These combatants were equipped with “gleaming helmets [of bronze] (*II. 6.263*), which were often furnished with “horsehair crests” and “cheek-guards” (*II. 4.459-61; 12.182-3*), and were also described as “well[- or] bronze-greaved” (*II. 4.414; 7.41*). While hoplites always wore a *chiton* or *exomis*, they were often fitted with breastplates, either a “bronze cuirass” (*II. 17.314*), or an organic pointed spear at the neck, below the [helmet], and he loosened his limbs.’), and *II. 17.47-50*: “ἀψὶ δ’ ἀναχαζομένιοι κατὰ στομάχιον θέμεθλα νῦς’, ἐπὶ δ’ αὐτὸς ἔρεισε βαρεῖς χειρὶ πιθήσασ’ ἀντικρὺ δ’ ἀπολοῦ δι’ αὐχένος ἦλυθ’ ἀκωκή, [...]” (‘And drawing [his spear] back, [Menelaus] pierced the lowest part of [Panthous’ son’s] neck, and he himself, trusting in his heavy hand, pressed firmly against [the wound]; and the point went completely through his tender neck, [...]’). For prototypical hoplite spear throwing, see n. 60-1.

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88 *II. 4.285*: “[…] Ἀργείων ἠγῆτορε χάλκοχιτῶν […]” (‘[…] leaders of the bronze-clad Argives […]’). *II. 4.537*: “[…] ὁ δ’ Ἐπειῶν χαλκοχιτῶν […]” (‘[…] [the other was the leader] of the bronze-clad Epeians’). *II. 5.180*: “[…] Τρώων βουληφόρε χαλκοχιτῶν […]” (‘[…] counselors of the bronze-clad Trojans […]’).

89 For bronze helmets, see: *II. 6.263*: “[…] μέγας κορυθαίολος Ἐκτωρ’ […]” (‘[…] great Hektor [of] gleaming helmet […]’). *II. 6.342-3*: “[…] κορυθαίολος Ἐκτωρ’ […]” (‘[…] Hektor [of] gleaming helmet […]’). For crested helmets, see: *II. 4.459-61*: “τόν ῶ ἐβαλε πρώτος κόρυθος φάλων ἰπποδασεί̂ς, [...]” ([Antilochos] first struck the ridge of [Echepolos’] horsehair-crested helmet […]’). *II. 5.182*: “[…] ἀσπίδι γιγνώσκων αὐλώπιδι τε τρυφαλείῃ […]” (‘[…] knowing [Tydeus] by his shield and the plume of his helmet […]’), *II. 6.9*: “[…] κόρυθος φάλων ἰπποδασεί̂ς […]” (‘[…] ridge of horsehair-crested helmet […]’), *II. 11.41-2*: “κρατὶ δ’ ἐπ’ ἄμφιθαλων κυνέης ἄδεια τετραφάληρον ἰππουριν’ δεινὸν δὲ λόφος καθύπερθεν ἐνευεῖν.” (‘And upon his head, [the son of Atreus] placed a double-crested helmet [with] four-bosses; and the crest was sloping terribly from above.’), and also Hektor’s son (*II. 6.467-70*). For cheek-guards, see: *II. 12.182-3*: “Ἐνθ’ ἀδ’ Πειριθόου ὕδω, κρατερός Πολυποίτης, δουρὶ βάλεν Δάμασον κυνέης διὰ χαλκοπαρῆμα χλαρ’ […]” (‘There again, the son of Peirithous, powerful Polympoetes, struck Damasos with his spear, through his bronze-cheeked helmet; […]’). For greaves, see: *II. 4.414*: “[…] ἐυκρνημίδας Ἀχαιοῦ […]” (‘[…] well-greaved Achaeans […]’), *II. 7.41*: “[…] χαλκοκρνημίδες Ἀχαιοι […]” (‘[…] bronze-greaved Achaeans […]’), and also *II. 5.324; 6.528; 13.401*. 
corselet, which was often “[layered] with [metallic discs]” (Il. 11.24-5). This variation of individual panoplies between heroes and hoplites supports the militia culture, and consequently, the “motley appearance[s]” (van Wees 2004: 54), of the Archaic period, which appear to have been such common features of the era to be represented in the Iliad.

The Homeric Experience of Combat

The Iliad’s representation of phalanx warfare is often strenuous and gruesome, and war is described as “tearful” and “dolorous” (Il. 8.388; 13.535). These battles, which “[brought death to men] with [bristled] spears and sharp sword[s]” as they “toil[ed] in intense combat” (Il. 5.84; 13.338-9), reveal the quintessence of massed, close-order combat. In the epic, a phalanx often

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90 For bronze plate cuirasses, see: Il. 17.314: “[...] ῥῆξε δὲ θώρηκος γύαλον, [...]” (“[...] [Ajax] shattered the plate of [Phorcys’] cuirass’). For organic corselets, see Il. 4.431-2: “[...] ἀμφὶ δὲ πάσι τεῦχα ποικὶλ’ ἐλαμπὶ, [...]” (“[...] and the embroidered armor was shining around all of them [...]”), Il. 6.503-4: “Οὔδὲ Πάρις δῆθυνεν ἐν ὑψηλοῖσι δόμοισιν, ἀλλ’ ὅ γ’, ἐπεὶ κατέδυ κλυτὰ τεῦχα, ποικίλα χαλκῷ, [...]” (“Nor did Paris delay in his lofty home, since he instead put on his renowned armor, which was embroidered with bronze [...]”), Il. 11.24-5: “τοῦ δ’ ἦ τοι δέκα οἶμοι ἐσαν μέλανος κινάνιο, δώδεκα δὲ χρυσοῦ καὶ εἴκοσι κασσιτέροι [...].” (“And truly, [on the corselet] were ten layers of dark cyan, twelve of gold, and twenty of tin; [...]”). For evidence of underlying chitónes, see Il. 5.98-100, 113: “[...] καὶ βάλ’ ἐπάσσοντα τιχών κατὰ δεξιῶν ὤμον, θώρηκος γύαλόν· διὰ δ’ ἔπτατο πικρὸς ὀιστός, ἄντικρυ δὲ διέσχε, παλάσσετο δ’ αἵματι θώρηξ. [...] [113], αἶμα δ’ ἀνηκόντιζε διὰ στρεπτοῖο χιτῶνος.” (“[...] and [the son of Lycaon], chancing upon [the son of Tydeus] at a rush, struck him [with an arrow] through his right shoulder, through the plate of his cuirass; through this did the bitter arrow fly, and completely through it; his breastplate sprinkled with blood. [...] [113], and blood [dripped] through his pliant tunic.’).

91 Il. 8.388: “[...] ἐς πόλεμον θωρῆσετο δακρυόεντα [...]” (“[...] Hera was arming herself for tearful war [...]”). Il. 13.535: “[...] πολέμου δυσηχέος [...]” (“[...] of dolorous war [...]”). As affirmed by P. Wilson, “the nineteen Homeric epithets, listed in Liddell and Scott, for the word polemos, war, [...] [include]: savage, bloody, ruthless, [tearful], destructive, man-wasting, loathsome, baneful, ruinous, causing bitter pain” (Wilson 1952: 269).

92 Il. 5.84: “Ὡς οἱ μὲν πονέοντο κατὰ κρατερῆν ύσμίνην...” (“As such, the [men] were toiling all throughout in intense combat’). Il. 13.337-44: ὃς ἄρα τὸν ὀμόσ’ ἦλθε μάχη, μέμασαν δ’ ἐνι
“strengthened” itself with “thick” ranks, and “fence[ed] spear with spear, [and] shield with overlapping shield” (Il. 5.93; 11.215; 13.130). The anchimachētai, who strove to maintain the solidarity of their shield-wall, “fought vigorously” and “trust[ed] in the might [of their own ranks]” (Il. 12.152-3). These Homeric phalanxes were also compared to “walls” (Il. 4.28-9), “towers” (Il. 4.346; 12.43-5), “bridges” (Il. 4.371; 8.553-4), and “[tightly packed] stones” (Il. 16.210-7).

93 Il. 5.93-4: “[…] πυκιναὶ […] φάλαγγες Τρώων, […]” (“[…] the thick phalanxes of the Trojans […]”). Il. 11.215-6: “[…] Ἀργεῖοι δ᾿ ἐτέρωθεν ἐκαρτύναντο φάλαγγας. ἀρτύνθη δὲ μάχη, στὰν δ᾿ ἀντίοι […]” (“[…] and the Argives strengthened their phalanxes from the other side [of the battlefield]; the battle was set, and they stood against one another; […]”). Il. 13.128-35: “οἱ γὰρ ἀριστοί κρινθέντες Τρῶας τέ καὶ Ἑκτόρα διὸν ἔμιμον, φράξαντες δόρυ δουρί, σάκος σάκεϊ προθελύνῳ· ἀσπὶς ἀρ᾿ ἀσπίδ᾿ ἔρειε, κόρυς κόρυν, ἀνέρα δ᾿ ἀνήρ· μισόν δ᾿ ἰππόκομοι κόρυθες λαμπροίσθη φάλοισι νευόντων, ὡς πυκνοὶ ἐφέστασαν ἀλλήλοισιν, ἔγχεα δὲ πτύσσοντο ἐρείπων ἀνεράδ᾿ ἀσπίδη τοῖς σειόνσιν· οἱ δὲ ἒθις φρόνεον, μέμισαν δὲ μάχεσθαι.” (“For they, who were distinguished as the best, awaited both the Trojans and divine Hektor, fencing spear with spear, shield with overlapping shield; shield was leaning against shield, helmet against helmet, and man against man; and the horsehair crests were touching each other on the bright ridges of the moving men, as they were [tightly packed] with one another, and they were overlapping their spears, brandishing from their bold hands; and they were [focused], and yearned to fight.’). For close-order formations, see also Il. 5.497-8; 12.105-7; 13.145-8; 14.24-6; 16.563-6; 17.266-8.

94 Il. 12.152-3: “[…] μάλα γὰρ κρατερῶς ἐμάχοντο, λαοῖσιν καθύπερθε πεποιθότες ἢδε βήψιν.” (“For they really fought vigorously, trusting in the men from [the battlements] above, and in their own might.’).

95 For walls, see Il. 4.298-9: “[…] πεζῶν δ᾿ ἐξόπιθε στήσει πολέας τε καὶ ἐσθλοῦς, ἔρκος ἔμεν πολέμων · […]” (“and the foot-soldiers, many and brave, stood behind [the cavalry], to be the wall of war’). For towers, see Il. 4.346: “[Agamemnon to Odysseus] […] καὶ εἰ δέκα
While the preceding paragraph details the presence of close-order combat, the importance of a cohesive phalanx is also explicit during the Trojan assault of the Greek camp in *Iliad* 8. As the Greeks deliberated in counsel, Nestor advocated for the construction of a defensive wall of “lofty towers” and a “deep trench” to “curb” the Trojan advance (*Il. 7.337-8, 341-3*). In the subsequent assault, the trench was filled with cavalry and *hypaspists* (‘shield-bearers’), but not with hoplites, who awaited across the plain. As expected, a phalanx relied heavily on its

πύργοι Ἀχαίων ὑμείων προσπάροιθε μαχοῖατο νηλεὶ χαλκῷ.” ([…] even if ten towers of Achaean should fight in front of you with pitiless bronze.), and *Il. 12.43-5:* “[…] οἱ δὲ τε πυργηδῶν σφέας αὐτοὺς ἀρτύναντες ἀντίοι ἱστανται […]” (‘[the Trojans, as the huntsmen and their hounds, who surround a lion or wild boar], stand opposite [the enemy], after arranging themselves like a tower […]’), and also *Il. 4.334, 13.151-3.* For bridges, see *Il. 4.371:* “[Agamemnon to Diomedes] […] τι πτώσσεσι, τί δ’ ὀπιπεύεις πολέμιο γεφύρας; […]” (‘Why do you cower, and why do you gaze at the enemy lines of war?’,) and the files were arranged, since they heard their chief; and just as when a man constructs a wall of a lofty house with thick stones, avoiding the might of the winds, so, too, 

was their helmets and bossed shields joined together; shield was leaning against shield, helmet against helmet, and man against man; […]”).

96 *Il. 7.337-8, 341-3:* “[…] δεῖμομεν ὁκα πύργους υψηλοὺς, εἴλαρ […] [341] ἐκτοισθεν δὲ βαθεῖαν ὀρύξομεν ἐγγύθι τάφρον, ἢ γὰρ ὅπως αἱ λαὸι ἐρυκάκιοι ἁμβολεῖσθαι, μὴ ποτ’ ἐπιβρίσῃ πόλεμος Τρώων ἄγερῳ.Ó (ÔThen, none of the Greeks, although there were many around, boasted even if ten towers of Achaean should fight in front of you with pitiless bronze.”

97 *Il. 8.213-5:* “[…] τῶν δ’, ὡς ὅποι τὸν πυργοῦ τάφρος ἔρρηξε, πλῆθεν ὁμοῖς ὅπως ὁ πυργὸς τε καὶ ἄνθρων ἀσπιστάων εὐλομένων: […]” (‘And as much the trench enclosed from the wall and the ships, filled with both [Trojan cavalry] and shield-bearers, [whom were now] shut in; […]’). *Il. 8.253-6:* “Ἐνθ’ οὐ τις πρότερος Δαναῶν, πολλῶν περ ἐόντων, εὔξατο Τυδεῖδος πάρος σχέμεν ὁκέας ὅπως τάφρος τ’ ἔξελάσασθαι καὶ ἐναντίβιον μαχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρῶτος Τρώων ἔλεγ ἄνθρα κορυστήν, […]’ (‘Then, none of the [Greeks], although there were many around, boasted that he, before the son of Tydeus, [guided] his swift horses, and both to drive [across] the trench and to fight the [enemy] opposite; rather, he was the first [by far] to [kill] a helmed-Trojan, […]’). *Il. 8.278-9:* “τῶν δὲ ιδίων γῆθησαν ἀναζ ἄνθρων ἄγαμέμνον, τόξου ἄποι κρατεροῦ Τρώων
cohesion and solidarity, and any attempt to cross the trench would have broken its ranks, and as such, would have rendered it useless in combat. Additionally, and as later referenced in Herodotos, these phalanxes preferred to fight on flat, level ground, such as the epic’s “plain” of Ilion (Il. 6.1-4; 8.491), which further supports the resemblance of the epic’s style of combat to the close-order nature of hoplite warfare.

As previously detailed, it was imperative for a hoplite phalanx to break through the enemy ranks, which almost always required a massed, physical bout of shoving, and this feature is further illustrated in the Iliad. Once a Homeric phalanx, which “advanced step-by-step” and “under the cover [of its shield-wall]” (Il. 13.156-8, 806-7), inched across the battlefield to meet the enemy, there arose a “great din [of bronze]” as hoplites “smashed their shields” and “pressed forward” with all their weight (Il. 4.446-51; 17.233-4; 20.156). There was “little room to

\[\text{Il. 8.336: \"οἱ δ᾿ ἑιθὸς τάφροιο βαθείης ὄσαν Ἀχαιοὺς· \[É\]Ó (\"And \[the Trojans\] pushed the Achaeans straight toward the deep trench; \[É\]\")}

\[\text{Il. 6.1-4: \"Τρώων δ᾿ οἰώθη καὶ Ἀχαιῶν φύλοπις αἰνή· πολλὰ δ᾿ ἀρ’ ἔνθα καὶ ἐνθ’ ἵψε μάχη πεδίου ἀλλήλων ἵθυμομένων χαλκήρεα δούρα, μεσημηύς Σιμόνεντος ἰδὲ Ξάνθοιο ρώαν.\" (\"And the terrible war-din of the Trojans and the Achaeans was left alone; and here and there, the battle often surged \[over\] the plain, as each of their bronze-tipped spears were pressed forward, in between the Simo•s and Xanthos.\‘), and Il. 8.491: \"[…] ἐν καθαρῷ, ὅθι δὴ νεκύων διεφαίνετο χῶρος.\" (\[\ldots\\] in open \[ground\], where the land indeed showed of \[the dead\].\‘) \text{See Hdt. 7.9.2 (n. 48).}

\[\text{Il. 4.446-51: \"Oi δ᾿ ὃτε δὴ ῥ’ ἐς χώρον ἕνα ἑμνιόντες ἱκοντο, σὺν ρ’ ἔβαλον ρίνους, σὺν δ᾿ ἔγχεα καὶ μὲνε’ ἀνδρῶν χαλκεοθωρήκηκον· ἀτάρ ἀσπίδες ὑμφαλόλεσσα εἶπλην’ ἀλλήλησι, πολὺς δ᾿ ὀρυμαγόδως ὅρωρεί. ἔνθα δʾ ἕμ’ ὀμογιή τε καὶ εὐχολή πέλεν ἀνδρῶν ὀλλύτων τε καὶ ὀλλυμένων, ἤδε δʾ ἀματι γαία.\" (\"And indeed, when they arrived, coming together at one place, they threw together their \[ox-hide shields\], and together the spears and the might of the bronze-armored men; then, they filled each other with bossed-shields, and there had arisen a great din; and here, at the same time, there was wailing and boasting, as men were both killing and being killed, and blood was flowing \[upon\] the earth.\‘). Il. 13.156-8: \"Δηήφοβος δ᾿ ἐν τοίσι μέγα
breathe” as each phalanx “held its ground” (II. 5.527; 11.801; 16.43), and as hoplites struggled to “[kill or be killed]” (II. 4.446-9). Additionally, the Homeric epithet, “breaker of ranks” (II. 7.228), indicates a close-order phalanx could be shattered, and the imperfect usage of the verb pelein (‘to exist,’ ‘to be’) suggests a continuous strain of massed, physical shoving (II. 4.450).

Conclusion: Homeric Warfare

Thus, the Iliad presents several scenes of battle that are quite representative of the practices found in mid- to late eighth-century BCE warfare. Although the term hoplites never appears in the epic, the majority of the combatants were often, in fact, heavily armed spearmen, who fought in a dense, compact fighting formation, much like the Archaic and Classical phalanx. These warriors were equipped with a round shield and thrusting spear, short swords, bronze helmets with horsehair crests and cheek-guards, both metallic cuirasses and organic corselets, and bronze greaves. Additionally, the Homeric phalanx fought best on flat, level ground to

101 Il. 5.527: “ […] ὡς Δαναοὶ Τρώας ἐνον ἐμπέδον οὐδ’ ἐφέβοντο. ( […] So the [Greeks] were remaining firm-set [against] the Trojans, and were not put to flight’). Il. 11.801 (Nestor) and 16.43 (Patroklos to Achilles): “ […] ὀλίγῃ δὲ τ’ ἀνάπνευσις πολέμου.” ( […] and there is little room to breathe [in war’).

102 Il. 7.228: “ […] Ἀχιλλῆα ῥηξήνορα θυμολέοντα […]” ( […] Achilles, breaker of ranks, lionhearted […]’).
maximize the solidarity of its shield-wall, and strove to physically drive the enemy from the battlefield. While the epic underscores the aristeia of its heroes in single combat, the actions of the masses in battle clearly mirror those of the Archaic period.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to show that the Iliad illustrates several features of hoplite warfare of the Archaic period, and therefore, can aid in the interpretation of mid-eighth- to sixth-century BCE warfare, particularly in terms of the roles of the average citizen and the development of the hoplite phalanx. As previously noted, the renowned epos of war most likely found its final, written form c. 750 to 700 BCE, and as such, its representation of hoplite warfare was likely drawn from the poet’s own society. While a few elements are reminiscent of the distant Bronze and Dark Ages, such as chariot warfare and the boar’s tusk helmet, the presence of massed, close-order combat between opposing Homeric foot soldiers was based on an early to mid-eighth-century BCE setting.

The invention of the double-grip aspis, which is believed to have occurred during the mid-eighth-century BCE, reveals the emergence of this novel style of warfare. While hoplite panoplies varied significantly between individuals, and gradually evolved throughout the Archaic and Classical periods, the quintessence of hoplite warfare remained unchanged. These hoplites fought in dense, compact formations, and as each phalanx marched across the battlefield, they pressed against their shields, physically drove forward, and fought vigorously in hand-to-hand combat to shatter the enemy ranks. These features are all reflected in the Iliad, and as such, its scenes of battle most closely represent the historical elements of the hoplite style of
combat. Thus, the epic can be used to better understand the nature of hoplite phalanx warfare in the Archaic period.

Conclusion: Future Research

Since the *Iliad*’s battle scenes are highly representative of the actual fighting practices of hoplite warfare, the epic can also help solve several questions, concerning other features of mid-to late eighth-century BCE warfare. For example, what were the roles of cavalrymen and skirmishers on the battlefield? How were Greek armies organized, i.e. did separate battalions exist? Who were the officers, e.g. *lochagoi* (‘file-leaders’) and *ouragoi* (‘file-closers’), and how did they interact with their men? What was the framework of a Greek encampment and fortification? As previously noted, the *Iliad* is an essential tool in interpreting Archaic Greek warfare, and can elucidate the nature of these key elements.
Bibliography

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