POLITICAL HOPLITES?

1. INTRODUCTION

IT was once a commonplace of early Greek history that a major factor involved in the demise of the aristocratic regimes of the dark ages was the adoption of the hoplite form of warfare:[1] that the rise of the early tyrants and other contemporary political developments were brought about at least in part by the inability of aristocrats to maintain their monopoly of privilege in the face of demands from non-aristocratic hoplites for political power commensurate with their new military importance.[2] But in an important article in this Journal (lxxxv [1965] 110–22) Snodgrass challenged this view. He first argued that the hoplite phalanx was unknown in Greece before c. 650, and that its adoption can therefore not have affected the rise to power of the earliest tyrants.[3] Similarly, if the Spartan *rhetra* is to be dated to the early seventh century,[4] it cannot have been the result of demands made by a hoplite class. His case was not, however, merely chronological, for he suggested that it is in any event difficult to believe that the hoplite reform had immediate political consequences. The reaction to his case has been mixed,[5] but his arguments have not been subjected to the careful examination they deserve.

Snodgrass has shown (pp. 110–13) that there were two separate elements in the 'hoplite reform': the adoption of the various individual items which made up the hoplite panoply; and the introduction of the new phalanx form of tactics. The reform as a whole took place over a considerable period: at first, new items of equipment were adopted by

An earlier draft of this paper was read by Mr J. Boardman, Dr P. Cartledge, Dr J. K. Davies, Professor W. G. Forrest and Professor G. L. Huxley. I am grateful to them all for their helpful criticism, the more so because the version I showed them was far more long-winded than that which is printed here. Theirs is the credit for what I hope is an improved presentation and for the elimination of many of my mistakes; for all remaining errors the fault is mine alone. A version of what follows was read to the Hibernian Hellenists in November 1975; I am grateful to all those who took part in the subsequent discussion, and especially to Professor H. W. Parke.

[1] This paper is primarily intended as a chronological and political study, and I do not therefore consider the question of why the phalanx was introduced. Cartledge argues elsewhere in this Journal (above, 23) that political considerations were part of the reason for the introduction of the phalanx; but I am not persuaded that they were relevant, and am prepared to believe that the new mode of fighting was developed for essentially military reasons. Cartledge views the adoption of the phalanx as a paradox; he rightly points out (following Gomme and others) that the mountainous terrain of Greece is ill-suited to phalanx warfare, and adduces political reasons to explain why this unsuitable method of fighting was invented. The paradox, however, is merely apparent. The phalanx was evidently superior to an aristocratic rabble (which will also have fought on a plain and not on rough ground); the invention can therefore be explained on purely military grounds. The paradox is not the adoption of the phalanx but its continued use; and Cartledge shows that it was social and political considerations which prevented, for a long time, the development of the light-armed forces which could have been an extremely effective answer to the phalanx (see also below, n. 49). I am much indebted to Paul Cartledge for allowing me to see his paper before it appeared in print.

[2] *Cf.* e.g. Nilsson, *Klio* xxii (1928) 240–49; Andrewes, *Probouleusis* 13–15; *id.*, *Tyrants* esp. 34–8; Forrest, *Emergence* 88–97.

[3] The chronology for most of the tyrannies in question here is disputed, but this is not the place for a discussion. See below, 92–3 (Pheidon); Oost, *CP* lxvii (1972) 16 n. 26 with references (Cypselus: *c.* 657); Leahy, *Historia* xvii (1968) 1–23 (Orthagoras: *c.* 655). The date of Theagenes of Megara is not disputed but vague: he must have been tyrant before providing help to his son-in-law Cylon for his unsuccessful attempt on tyranny at Athens in, at the earliest, 636 (Cadoux, *JHS* lxviii [1948] 91).

[4] *Cf.* especially Forrest, *Phoenix* xvii (1963) 157–79; see below, p. 93.

[5] *Cf.* e.g. Sealey, esp. 249–50; Greenhalgh, 71–4, 150–5; Detienne, *La Phalange;* Pleket, *Talanta* i (1969), 35–6; Zörner, *Kypselos und Pheidon von Argos,* 104–7.

the aristocratic warriors of the time; then this more advanced technology may have enabled aristocratic soloists to fight at closer quarters than had been normal. It was only at a yet later stage that the second element of the reform was introduced: the massed tactics of the phalanx.[6]

We should therefore begin by trying to identify the precise stage in this long development at which political consequences are conceivable. The essential change was that which altered the personnel of war, so that not only aristocrats but also a wider spectrum of society performed a vital military function; and the adoption of new items of equipment will not have had this effect, but will merely have enabled more aristocratic warriors to survive into old age. It must be recognised that in theory the breaking of the aristocratic monopoly of military effectiveness might also have been independent of the introduction of the phalanx. This may seem to make the present discussion futile, for it would be a hopeless task to identify the time at which the phalanx, having been invented for aristocrats alone, was opened to others; or to determine when non-aristocratic soloists first took the field. But fortunately such questions do not arise in practice. It is formally possible that when Cypselus gained power in Corinth the phalanx existed but was made up of Bacchiads alone; but it is only a formal possibility, since Cypselus' revolution cannot have succeeded if the only force in Corinth at the time was a Bacchiad phalanx.[7] The same argument can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to all other cases. The second possibility, that aristocrats might have been joined by others on the battlefield before the introduction of the phalanx, is impossible to disprove; but the most economic reconstruction is that new fighters were admitted at the time of the adoption of massed tactics, which could not be effectively employed without more man-power than aristocrats alone could provide. The adoption of the phalanx must therefore be dated as closely as possible.

2. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE PHALANX: VASE PAINTING[8]

For this question two different types of evidence have been used hitherto: the literary and the archaeological. Much energy has been spent in trying to determine the methods of warfare implied by contemporary or nearly contemporary poets, especially Homer, Archilochus and Tyrtaeus; but such efforts cannot provide a precise answer. Homer is especially problematic, since it is possible neither to fix the date at which the poems reached something like their present form nor to isolate and then date later interpolations. But

---

[6] Snodgrass (p. 111) has refuted the old argument that the double grip shield implies (and therefore dates) the phalanx; cf. also *EGAW* 197. The old view, however, has not yet been abandoned. Greenhalgh 73 argues that the inability of the hoplite shield to protect the rear will have prevented its use 'until the phalanx was invented specifically in order to prevent attack from the rear; while Cartledge (above p. 20) suggests that the adoption of the new shield implies that 'a change in tactics in the direction of more organised, hand-to-hand fighting was *already* in progress' (his italics; cf. also Cartledge p. 13). There is no denying that the hoplite shield did have disadvantages for soloists; but its advantages over single-grip versions—larger size and greater rigidity, both made possible by the double grip—will have outweighed its drawbacks at least for the more self-confident solo fighters, for it was more especially in flight that it became a liability. Cartledge overestimates the difficulty of manoeuvring the double grip shield for a solo fighter, who could protect his right flank against missiles (or even sword thrusts, though in close combat between right-handed soloists it is very difficult to attack an

opponent's right side) not only by moving his shield to the right but also by a body swerve to the left. There can be no doubt that *some* soloists *might* have preferred the double-grip shield; that alone makes it impossible to date the phalanx by reference to the date of the shield.

[7] Oost (*CP* lxvii [1972] 10–30) has argued that 'Cypselus the Bacchiad' claimed to be restoring orthodox Bacchiad government after the excesses of the last years of their regime. His case is in my view overstated; but however that may be, it can hardly be argued that a majority of Bacchiad hoplites supported Cypselus in view of the tradition that his coup involved the wholesale slaughter or exile of the Bacchiads (*FGH* 90 F 57, 8; cf. Hdt. v 92 ε 2).

[8] Detienne suggests an unorthodox chronology for the phalanx, on the ground that the Spartans were already fighting in this manner in the First Messenian War c. 715 (*La Phalange* 139); but his evidence is the romance that passes for Messenian history in Pausanias iv, and cannot be taken seriously (Pearson, *Historia* xi [1962] 412–6, 425).

Archilochus and Tyrtaeus are no less difficult to use as evidence for fixing an exact date, since the chronological information they provide is far too imprecise.

The only possible direct evidence for chronology is therefore archaeological. Even this has its limitations. In the first place, the style-periods of pottery on which almost all dates in classical archaeology are based are themselves only approximately dated. The Late Protocorinthian (LPC) style, in the commonly accepted scheme,[9] begins *c.* 650; but this cannot be pressed as an accurate date, and Corinthian potters may well have started
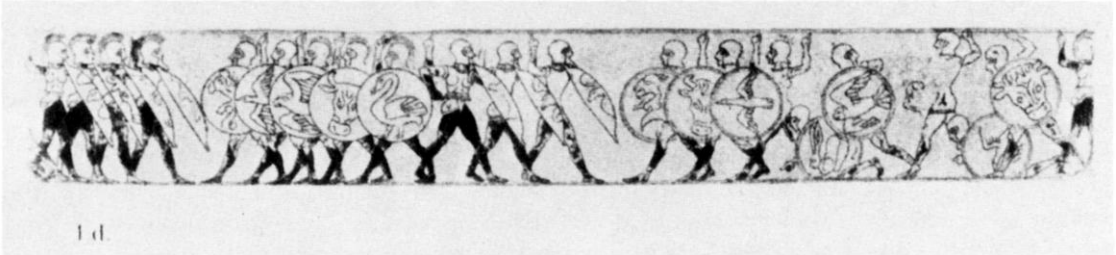

FIG. 1. Aryballos from Rhodes: from Johansen, *Vases Sicyoniens*, pl. 32.

to make LPC pots in 660 or even earlier, or in 640 or even later.[10] Secondly, it is difficult to be sure of the precise point in the stylistic development to which any given pot belongs. Some potters were conservative and others adventurous; and a conservative potter will have continued to make vases of a given type perhaps 25 years longer than his more progressive fellows. But this source of error is unlikely to affect the vases we are considering a great deal. Our vases are all carefully painted pieces, and almost all of them can be attributed to individual painters whose stylistic development can be traced through a comparatively large number of works; the phalanx vases can be securely placed within these series.[11]
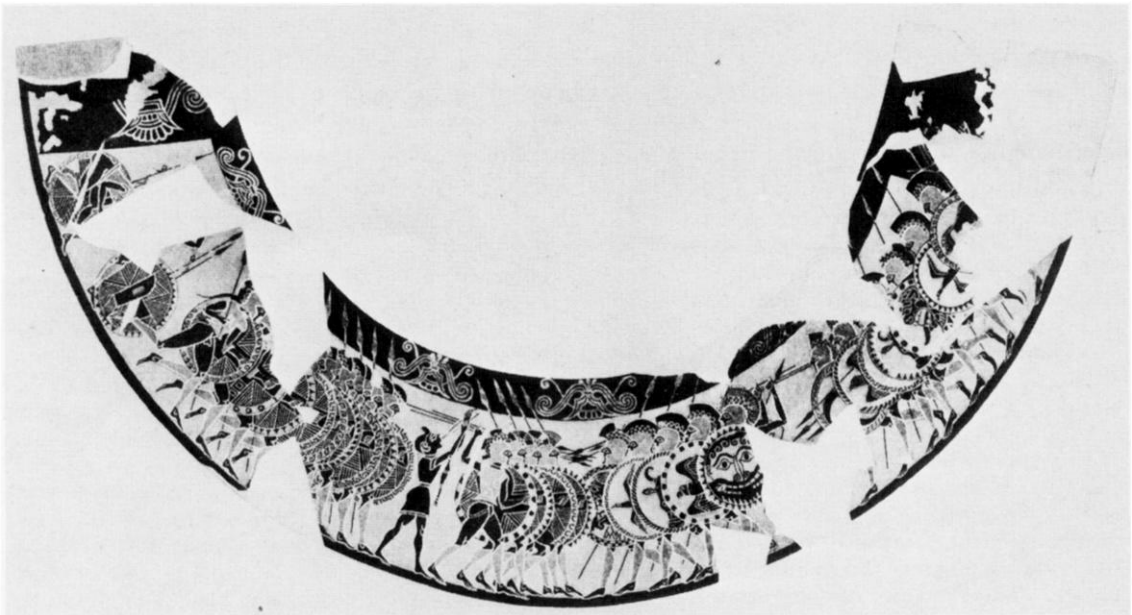

FIG. 2. Olpe from Veii: from Payne, *Protokorinthische Vasenmalerei*, pl. 27

[9] Payne, *Protokorinthische Vasenmalerei* 20, with *Necrocorinthia* 16; modified slightly by Coldstream, *Greek Geometric Pottery* 326–30.

[10] Cook, *BSA* lxiv (1969) 13–15, esp. 14.

[11] For the order of the phalanx vases, *cf.* Dunbabin and Robertson, *BSA* xlviii (1953) 179: Macmillan Painter nos. 10–12. There seems to be general agreement that the crucial vase, no. 11 (FIG. 1 above), belongs to the time when MPC II was giving way to LPC; that is, on Payne's scheme, *c.* 650. The magnificent vase from Samos (Walter, *AM* lxxiv [1959], 60–3, pl. 54, 102–3, 114.2, fig. 1) gives no help. It does not clearly depict phalanx fighting; and although it belongs to the mid-seventh

The earliest undoubted representations of phalanx warfare occur on Protocorinthian vases of about the mid-seventh century; the earliest is on an aryballos in Berlin (FIG. 1). The difficulty—perhaps rather the impossibility—of representing a phalanx in side view means that the representation is by no means accurate: the two opposing battle lines of reality are separated into three groups, each of which contains men from each army. But the massed tactics of the phalanx are none the less unmistakable; within two of the three groups, the members of each army march against each other in massed formation, while in the third the men of the army advancing from the left are already either wounded or in flight (cf. Lorimer, 84–5). Not long afterwards the same artist, named the Macmillan Painter by Dunbabin and Robertson,[12] painted an even more successful phalanx vase: the olpe known as the Chigi vase (FIG. 2). By choosing a slightly earlier moment during the proceedings of a hoplite battle, he made the massed formation of the opposing armies even clearer. On the Berlin aryballos the armies have already met in one of the three groups, and the rout of one force has just begun; but on the Chigi vase the same artist depicts the two armies just before they make contact. Each force has its own side of the field; and it is therefore unnecessary for the composition to be broken into separate groups, each containing part of each army. The representation is still inaccurate; but by choosing the moment before battle was joined, the artist has maintained the cohesion of his opposing forces, and thus depicts very effectively the essential nature of hoplite tactics. It is difficult to imagine a more successful method of representing massed formation in a pleasing manner.

Phalanx tactics had therefore been adopted, at least in Corinth, by c. 650. But this argument merely provides us with a *terminus ante quem*, and the essential question remains: how much earlier than this did phalanx tactics originate? Snodgrass does not attempt to answer this question, but it is a vital one. If the phalanx was in use a mere decade before 650, that will leave open the possibility that both Cypselus in Corinth and Orthagoras in Sicyon relied to some extent on support from hoplites; and if it can be pushed a little further back to c. 675 that will allow hoplites to come into the reckoning both for an early seventh century Pheidon and for even the earliest of the plausible dates for the Spartan *rhetra* (cf. below, p. 93).

No evidence can demonstrate formally that phalanx tactics were used before c. 650; but there are some pointers in that direction. Quite apart from the likelihood that vase painters very rarely witnessed phalanx warfare,[13] the technique of vase painting achieved by artists of the first half of the seventh century, at least in Corinth, simply was not advanced enough to enable them to depict a phalanx battle even if they had seen one. PC painting before the mid-seventh century almost never shows figures overlapping by more than a very small amount:[14] the painters did not have sufficient control over composition to draw the massed figures necessary to depict a phalanx in action satisfactorily. Thus, if the phalanx had existed c. 680 no vase painter would have been skilful enough to depict it. This shows only that a phalanx *might* have existed before 650; but a second, related argument can lead to a more positive conclusion. Even assuming a high degree of skill in the painter, the problem of depicting the phalanx in action accurately is almost insuperable. Any attempt to show two lines in action from the side view cannot but have failed—especially on the small scale of Protocorinthian: any such painting will have been confused and confusing—perhaps an accurate representation of the realities of hoplite warfare, but hardly what an artist will have striven to achieve.[15] No Attic vase painter ever depicted a

century (Walter, op. cit. 61) it stands outside the main development of PC and cannot be given a precise date.

[12] *BSA* lxviii (1953) 179. He is named the Ekphantosmaler by Benson, *Geschichte der korinthischen Vasen* 18–9. Dunbabin and Robertson attribute far more vases than Benson to this painter's hand; but all are agreed that he painted the three phalanx vases I discuss here (the Macmillan aryballos: below, 88).

[13] *Cf.* Snodgrass, *EGAW* 198.

[14] The overlapping of the figures on the Lechaeum aryballos (below p. 89 with n. 20) is inconsistent; see also Lorimer, 101 n. 2, on the Perachora aryballos (below, p. 89 with FIG. 4). An early example of successful overlapping: Johansen, *Vases Sicyoniens* pl. 34.2 (not much before the Macmillan aryballos, which I argue below is the first recognisable attempt at depicting a phalanx).

[15] *Cf,* Cartledge's excellent description, above, pp. 15–16.

phalanx as successfully as the Macmillan Painter on the Chigi vase; indeed, very few painters even attempted to represent a phalanx as such.[16] An advance on the methods of the Macmillan Painter could only have been made by showing the phalanx from above;[17] but as far as I know such a device is unknown in Greek vase painting. If then a PC painter had achieved such a remarkable degree of success in this extraordinarily difficult field by c. 650, it seems only reasonable to suppose that he or other painters had made a number of less successful earlier attempts at depicting the same subject; and therefore that their model, the phalanx of real life, had already existed by 650 for an indeterminate but significant length of time.

We should therefore expect to be able to trace some of these earlier attempts, and one can be identified in the Macmillan aryballos (FIG. 3), painted some time before the Berlin

FIG. 3. Aryballos from Thebes: from Johansen, *Vases Sicyoniens*, pl. 31

aryballos and the Chigi vase, and by the same artist. At first sight there is no sign that the battle on this vase is intended as a hoplite encounter: it is merely a series of duels, usually between single warriors but once between pairs. There is nothing which definitely proves that this is phalanx warfare; but with one possible exception (FIG. 3, the 5th and 6th warriors from the left), in every duel it is the man advancing from the right who is victorious. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the vase is intended to show the clash of two hoplite armies when the battle is almost over. The artist has not overcome the difficulties involved in painting a phalanx, since it is not immediately clear that he is trying to depict that subject; but despite the limitations of his method he has succeeded in maintaining, in a sense, the cohesion of the phalanx: the men of the right-hand force are victorious, while those of the left are either fallen or in retreat (*cf.* Lorimer, 102–4).

It is significant that a single painter was responsible for all three of the vases I have discussed: there is little doubt that the Macmillan Painter gave much thought to the problem of depicting the phalanx. The three vases show a consistent development in the solution of the difficulties, and they also show development in other respects. As far as tactics are concerned, the process is clear enough. The Macmillan aryballos is not at all successful in showing the massed formation of a phalanx, for each force is broken up and the battle appears as little more than a series of individual duels. But the part of this painting in which two pairs fight each other may have suggested to the artist his next preserved attempt at showing the phalanx, on the Berlin aryballos. Here, the same technique has been considerably advanced (perhaps implying vases intermediate in method between the two): we find groups in which three, four or even five men from each side are ranged together against their opponents; but the battle has been split into a number of different

[16] The C Painter, however, seems to have had as great an interest in the problems of depicting the phalanx as the Macmillan Painter (for whom see below), and to have devised similar methods; *cf.* Beazley, *Development of Attic Black-Figure* 23–4.

[17] Compare the extremely effective Assyrian relief illustrated by Myres, *Homer and his Critics* pl. 6 d; even here, however, the battle is not yet in progress. On the difficulty of depicting phalanx fighting, *cf.* Fittschen, *Untersuchungen zum Beginn der Sagendarstellungen bei den Griechen* 34.

sections, so that the cohesion of the whole army on each side still has to be left to the imagination. The final solution, seen on the Chigi vase, is yet again a development along the same lines, and is again related to part of the scene on its predecessor. On the Berlin aryballos, one section of the painting shows warriors already in combat, and here the cohesion even within the small group between the individual members of each phalanx has been lost, as on the Macmillan aryballos; the cohesion has been shown clearly only on those parts of the picture in which the opposing forces have not yet joined battle. So on the Chigi vase there is no fighting actually in progress: the two forces have not yet clashed, and the essential unity of each phalanx is clearly shown for the first time. Minor details of the technique show how the artist developed greater skill in handling his material in one other respect. The fallen warriors on the Macmillan aryballos all have level shield blazons, as if they were still standing upright; but on the Berlin aryballos the blazons are tilted. Not only is that more realistic; it also enables the positions of the animals on the blazons to symbolise the fall of the owners of the shields: the bird diving to destruction on the ground reflects all too clearly the doom of the man to whom the shield belongs.[18] The progression in the manner of treatment shows that the Macmillan Painter attempted different ways of solving the same basic problems; the three phalanx vases we have from his hand allow us to trace in some detail the development of his artistic technique.

If the Macmillan aryballos is an attempt at representing the phalanx, then massed tactics must have been developed before the Berlin aryballos. That only helps to push the phalanx back to c. 655; but we are now getting very close to the seizure of the Corinthian tyranny by Cypselus, and it would clearly be rash to deny at least the possibility that phalanx tactics were already in use during the last years of Bacchiad supremacy. But it is impossible to discover any signs in the earlier work of the Macmillan Painter that he knew the phalanx. Some time before he painted the Macmillan aryballos, he decorated another with a battle scene which according to Miss Lorimer (p. 99, no. 3) 'definitely indicates two confronted lines of soldiers'; but the painting merely shows four unfinished duels between individuals. If the artist's intention was to depict the phalanx (as is possible), he failed to suggest it in any concrete way. The earliest preserved battle scene from the Macmillan Painter's hand gives no indication of phalanx tactics either, and is probably to be interpreted as a scene from myth: Paris shooting Achilles.[19] One contemporary of the Macmillan Painter also drew at least one battle scene; but he probably had something quite different from phalanx tactics in mind. His vase has three duels between individuals, one of them over a fallen fighter whose body two further men are trying to drag away; as Miss Lorimer justly remarks (p. 100, no. 4), 'the struggle for the possession of the body of a fallen man, an epic commonplace, can hardly have been a feature of hoplite fighting'.

We possess two earlier battle scenes. The earlier of the two, found at Lechaeum, is unclear in composition: the scene is not a series of duels between individuals, but it is difficult to see which warrior is fighting against which other, and no attempt at interpreting the scene as a whole can be made.[20] The second aryballos, however, from Perachora, is more interesting (FIG. 4). It was painted c. 675, and the battle scene itself shows no sign of phalanx tactics even though two pairs of warriors fight against each other; the subject is probably again the myth of Paris and Achilles, for the arrow is clearly (if awkwardly) shown about to enter Achilles' shin, though not his heel. There is, however, a flautist present, who is clearly connected with the battle, for he turns his head back to look upon it. As Miss Lorimer has noted (pp. 81–2, 94–5), music was useful in phalanx warfare, for it helped the maintenance of proper order; there is a flautist on the Chigi vase who fulfilled exactly this function. No flautist played any part in the story of Paris and Achilles, and none can have figured in the individual warfare of the Geometric period either. The best explanation of this curious figure on the mythological battlefield is therefore that flautists

[18] Cf. Benton, BSA xlviii (1953) 340 n. 546: the blazon of a lion's head with lolling tongue symbolises the death of the owner of the shield.

[19] Dunbabin in Perachora ii 16; cf., however,

Fittschen, op. cit. (above, n. 17), 179.

[20] C. W. J. & M. Eliot, Hesperia xxxvii (1968) 348–50.

played a role in warfare among the vase painter's contemporaries;[21] and that implies the existence of a phalanx when the Perachora aryballos was made. I would therefore suggest that the postulated time-lag between the adoption of massed tactics in reality and their successful representation in vase painting can be—to a degree—quantified by this vase; and that the phalanx therefore existed by c. 675.

The least that can be concluded on the basis of this evidence is that the phalanx *might* have existed before c. 655; but Snodgrass has argued (pp. 112–13) that differences can be
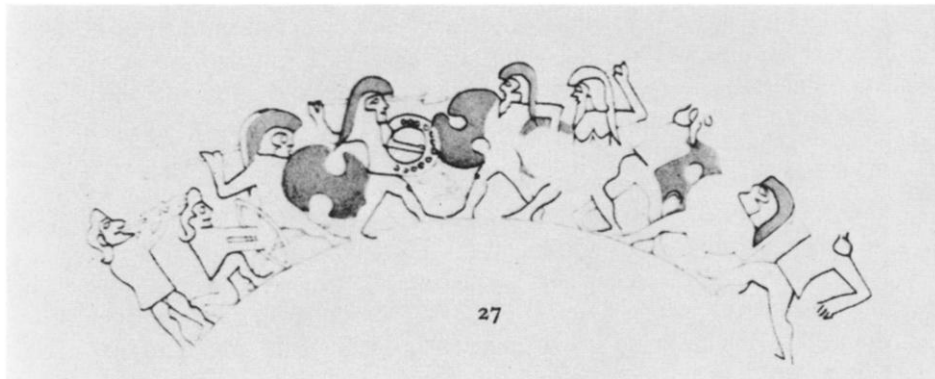

FIG. 4. Aryballos from Perachora: from *Perachora* ii, pl. 57.

isolated between normal hoplite practice and the methods of warfare revealed by vase painting before c. 650 which demonstrate that the phalanx did not yet exist. Differences there certainly are; but I doubt whether they are significant. Snodgrass shows that the equipment which appears on vases of the first half of the seventh century differs from later hoplite practice in three respects especially: warriors frequently carry two spears, they sometimes use swords as primary weapons, and they are often not equipped with the full panoply. He may well be right to conclude that these paintings 'are the documentary evidence of a transitional stage in the development of Greek warfare' (p. 113); but to take the further step of concluding that massed tactics were as yet unknown is unwarranted. The phalanx was not yet known in its later form; but early phalanx warfare might well have taken a slightly different form without being different in nature. A phalanx has two essential features: its cohesion and its relatively large size; both can be achieved without following the later canonical pattern closely.

It is possible, as Snodgrass himself shows (*EGAW* 198–9), to prove that one of the differences he notes survived the invention of hoplite tactics. The still life arrangement of a hoplite panoply painted c. 650 or later on an alabastron from Berlin shows that a hoplite might carry two spears: one of them longer than the other, and the shorter equipped with a thong for throwing. A rather later plaque from Perachora shows a single hoplite carrying two spears, one of them far longer and heavier than the other;[22] two spears are carried by at least some of the members of the phalanxes on the Chigi vase,[23] and representations of hoplites with two spears in this period and later are not at all uncommon. By this time, the phalanx certainly existed; yet hoplites might throw javelins in addition to using a longer spear for thrusting. Presumably the shorter spear was thrown before the opposing armies met hand to hand;[24] and the technique went out of use eventually because such missiles

[21] Fittschen, *loc. cit.* (above, n. 19) supposes that this vase depicts contemporary and not mythological warfare; we are agreed, at least, that the flautist figured in contemporary battles.

[22] *Perachora* ii, pl. 79, no. 2269; the date is uncertain, but is probably after the end of PC and therefore no earlier than c. 640 (Dunbabin in *Perachora* ii 236).

[23] Snodgrass, *EGAW* 198. It is, however, impossible that *both* spears would have been thrown, as

seems to be implied by the fact that a loop is attached to each of the spears (one longer than the other) fixed in the ground beside the man arming to the left of the scene. For another possible case of hoplites with two spears (this time from Sparta), see below, n. 40.

[24] The obvious conclusion (despite the mistakes on the Chigi vase), already drawn by Snodgrass, *EGAW* 198–9.

did little damage to heavily armed hoplites or because they could be thrown back too easily.

The case is not so clear on the question of the use of swords as primary weapons; but there is no reason in principle why hoplites fighting in a phalanx should not have used swords. It is doubtless true that a careless or over-enthusiastic member of a phalanx might well have decapitated his fellow rather than his enemy if he had fought with a slashing sword; but that will be why the thrusting spear was finally preferred, and does not prove that the sword is incompatible with massed tactics. There is some specific evidence which suggests that mid-seventh century hoplites might have used swords. Archilochus, who almost certainly lived to see true phalanx warfare,[25] refers to hard fighting with swords (*fr.* 3 West, line 3); and more than one scholar has been happy to identify this with hoplite warfare.[26] Other interpretations of this fragment are possible;[27] but a passage in Tyrtaeus has similar implications. In a poem in which there can be no doubt that phalanx warfare is in question—the classic hoplite virtues of the rigid maintenance of position are commended[28]—the poet appears twice to suggest the spear or the sword as alternative weapons:

$$
\begin{aligned}
&\text{ἀλλά τις εὖ διαβὰς μενέτω ποσὶν ἀμφοτέροισι}\\
&\quad\text{στηριχθεὶς ἐπὶ γῆς, χεῖλος ὀδοῦσι δακών, . . .}\\
&\text{ἀλλά τις ἐγγὺς ἰὼν αὐτοσχεδὸν ἔγχεϊ μακρῶι}\\
&\quad\text{ἢ ξίφει οὐτάζων δήϊον ἄνδρ᾽ ἑλέτω,}\\
&\text{καὶ πόδα πὰρ ποδὶ θεὶς καὶ ἐπ᾽ ἀσπίδος ἀσπίδ᾽ ἐρείσας,}\\
&\quad\text{ἐν δὲ λόφον τε λόφωι καὶ κυνέην κυνέηι}\\
&\text{καὶ στέρνον στέρνωι πεπλημένος ἀνδρὶ μαχέσθω,}\\
&\quad\text{ἢ ξίφεος κώπην ἢ δόρυ μακρὸν ἔχων.}
\end{aligned}
$$

Tyrtaeus *fr.* 11, lines 21–2, 29–34 West.

Now Tyrtaeus may envisage a situation in which his hoplite has lost his spear; but the natural interpretation is that he sees thrusting spear and sword as alternative weapons for the phalanx he is encouraging.[29] Uniformity of weapons and of methods of warfare may therefore not yet have been thought vital for the phalanx: what mattered was its cohesion and the unflinching maintenance by its members of their ground.

Finally, these early paintings do not always show warriors equipped with the full hoplite panoply. There is no evidence to suggest that the earliest phalanxes might have differed from later practice in this respect; but it will hardly be surprising if some members of a phalanx fought without greaves and others without corselets—especially as Tyrtaeus shows that even major differences between members of the same formation might be tolerated. One passage in the evidence is probably to be taken to mean that at least one whole phalanx fought—and very effectively—without the full panoply: if the Argive 'stings of war' mentioned in the Delphic oracle have been correctly identified as seventh century hoplites, they were not hoplites of the regular type, for they wore linen corselets.[30]

Thus a second transitional stage must be added to that already identified by Snodgrass in which new items of equipment were developed and taken up by aristocratic soloists. The phalanx was then invented, and there followed a further stage in which the new style of fighting saw the gradual development, through experiment with throwing spears, swords

[25] This view is not beyond question; but *fr.* 2 West (the spear as the poet's most important possession) and *fr.* 5 West (the shield thrown away) almost clinch the case.

[26] Forrest, *Historia* vi (1957) 163–4; Donlan, *TAPA* ci (1970) 131–42, esp. n. 22; Greenhalgh 73, 90–3.

[27] Snodgrass, *EGAW* 179–80.

[28] This conclusion will stand even if Tyrtaeus encourages his listeners to remain foot to foot, shield to shield etc. with their enemies, and not (as seems to me far more likely) with their comrades; 'bite your lip and stand your ground' is exhortation addressed to a hoplite, not to a soloist.

[29] *Cf.* Donlan, *TAPA* ci (1970) 138–9, n. 22. Cartledge (above pp. 25–6) suggests, perhaps too cautiously, that Tyrtaeus should not be interpreted so precisely as I have done here.

[30] On the oracle, see below, p. 93. For linen corselets, see Snodgrass, *EGAW* 183 with references in n. 54; add Törnquist, *Opusc. Rom.* vii (1967/9) 81–2.

and various items of body armour, of the canonical version. The Macmillan vase shows that this second transitional stage had begun by c. 655 at the latest; and the difference in time between the first appearance of a rudimentary phalanx on a battlefield and its first recognisable representation on a vase should mean that the invention took place significantly before 655, probably at least as early as the flautist on the Perachora aryballos c. 675. These dates are all archaeologically derived and therefore subject to the usual uncertainties of archaeological chronology; but the uncertainties are not so great that they would allow the revolution of Cypselus to have occurred before the first Corinthian phalanx. Thus hoplites were in a position, from a chronological point of view, to play a part in at least three revolutions: those of Cypselus, Orthagoras and Theagenes.

3. The Chronology of the Phalanx: Pheidon of Argos

It will doubtless seem eccentric to base any chronological conclusions on the controversial Pheidon of Argos; but his case is, I believe, a fruitful one. Two dates for Pheidon can be supported: either c. 750 or c. 675.[31] In my view, it is impossible to choose between these two except on general grounds; and c. 675 is by far the more probable date. We know that Pheidon increased the hereditary power of the Argive kings (Ar. Pol. 1310b16–28), and in the circumstances of the time the conclusion is inevitable that the royal powers were enhanced at the expense of Argive aristocrats. Now the successful army which Pheidon led must either have been an army of aristocratic soloists or a phalanx; but if he led an aristocratic army it is almost impossible to explain how he achieved his political success in Argos. His personal prestige as leader of the army will have counted for something; but the fighting had, ex hypothesi, been undertaken by aristocrats, who will certainly have been reluctant to allow Pheidon to exceed the traditional royal privileges. On these grounds alone the mid-eighth century date seems most improbable; but other general arguments indicate that it was a phalanx which gained Pheidon his military success, and that he led it against states which still fought in the traditional aristocratic manner—or at least had not yet adapted to phalanx tactics so efficiently as the Argives.

First, the area covered by his reported operations is so large that his success is not likely to have been achieved by traditional methods, which were far more suitable for rapid raids for booty than for war as a means of territorial aggrandisement.[32] In addition, the achievement of Pheidon was so spectacular that it is difficult to believe that he did not have some special advantage over his opponents. Second, there is the tradition—though there were rival views[33]—that Argos saw the invention of the double grip shield,[34] and the fact that such a shield could be identified by the adjective 'Argive' (Paus. viii 50.1; Dion. Hal. Rom. Ant. iv 16.2). If the shield was invented at Argos, that would not by itself demonstrate that the phalanx was an Argive invention; for the shield and the phalanx are separable, and need not have been invented in the same place. But the shield may have been connected with Argos in the tradition because Argives were the first to use it to devastating effect in the phalanx.[35] A final argument concerns the famous oracle from the Palatine Anthology (xiv 73):

[31] c. 750: especially Huxley, BCH lxxxii (1958) 588–97. c. 675: especially Andrewes, CQ xliii (1949) 74–7.

[32] Ephorus (FGH 70 F 115) wrote that Pheidon 'restored the lot of Temenus'. Whatever that may mean in territorial terms, and however much imagination Ephorus exercised in his reconstruction of Pheidon's career, it is unreasonable to carry scepticism so far as to doubt the general view of Pheidon as a conqueror.

[33] See especially, on the attribution to Caria, Snodgrass, JHS lxxiv (1964) 107–18.

[34] For references, see Snodgrass, EGAW 262 n. 65.

[35] Snodgrass (EGAW 64) suggests that the reason was that Argives won a near monopoly in the manufacture of the hoplite shield; but the production of such a vital piece of military equipment cannot have been monopolised by any one city after its general adoption. See in general Kunze, Olympische Forschungen ii 215–30; when Kunze wrote, all identifiable inscriptions on shield bands were in the Argive script (op. cit. 212–14), but Corinthian lettering has turned up since then (AD xvii (1961/2) B, 120).

γαίης μὲν πάσης τὸ Πελασγικὸν Ἄργος ἄμεινον,
ἵπποι Θεσσαλικαί, Λακεδαιμόνιαί τε γυναῖκες,
ἄνδρες δ' οἳ πίνουσιν ὕδωρ καλῆς Ἀρεθούσης·
ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ τῶν εἰσὶν ἀμείνονες οἳ τὸ μεσηγὺ
Τίρυνθος ναίουσι καὶ Ἀρκαδίης πολυμήλου,
Ἀργεῖοι λινοθώρηκες, κέντρα πτολέμοιο·

It has often been argued before that there are two chronological layers here; if so, the most likely explanation of them is that Chalcis was hailed as the city of the most effective fighting men in the age of aristocratic warfare, and that alteration became necessary when Argos invented the phalanx. It is then natural to equate that time with the reign of Pheidon.[36]

Thus the case of Pheidon corroborates the evidence of vase painting. Pheidon's phalanx was in operation, at the latest, in 669 at the battle of Hysiae; and that is not an archaeologically derived date, but is based on Olympic victor lists, and so is probably reliable.[37] We may therefore add the revolution of Pheidon to the list of those which the hoplites were in a position to affect. The only case which remains open is that of Sparta. Clearly those who take the date given by Thucydides (i 18.1) for *eunomia* at Sparta as giving a rough date for the *rhetra* cannot entertain the possibility of a connexion between the hoplite and the 'Lycurgan' reforms. This early dating still has its adherents;[38] but it seems to me difficult to defend, since on any interpretation of the *rhetra* it implies that Sparta was unbelievably more advanced in political development than the rest of Greece.[39] Even the earliest of the alternative dates that have been proposed for the reforms is close enough to the *terminus ante quem* of 669 for the Argive phalanx to make it impossible to deny, on chronological grounds alone, that a Spartan phalanx existed when the reforms were passed. We may therefore dismiss at once Snodgrass' argument that if the wording of the *rhetra* is taken to guarantee that a full hoplite assembly is envisaged, the date of the *rhetra* suggested by Huxley and Forrest (*c.* 675) may have to be ruled out.[40] Chronological arguments cannot be used to deny a connexion between the hoplite reform and seventh century revolution.

4. HOPLITES AND REVOLUTION

In the second part of his article, Snodgrass attempts to show that the introduction of the phalanx, whatever its date, is most unlikely to have had the profound political effects

[36] *Cf.* Andrewes, *Tyrants* 39–40. The view I have adopted in the text depends on the existence of two chronological layers in the oracle. As Professor Parke points out to me, it is possible that the Delphic preference for riddles might have been responsible for the lack of logic in the reply; if so, the reign of Pheidon will remain the most likely context for the oracle, but the connection with the phalanx will be lost (*cf.* Parke and Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* i 82–3). Riddles, however, are appropriate to predictions, but not to the type of utterance in question here (for the full evidence, see Parke and Wormell, *op. cit.* ii 1–2); only the assumption of two separate stages in composition can explain the pointlessly illogical expression.

[37] *Cf.* Wade-Gery, *CQ* xliii (1949) 79–81. I am not persuaded by Kelly (*AJP* xci [1970] 31–42) to doubt that the Argives (whoever led them) defeated the Spartans at Argive Hysiae in 669. On the general reliability of the early Olympic victor lists, see Kiechle, *Messenische Studien*, 10–3; any one date may of course be questioned even if the list as a whole is reliable, but I see no special reasons for scepticism in this case.

[38] Especially Hammond, *Studies in Greek History*

46–103, esp. 85–90; Kiechle, *Lakonien und Sparta* 255.

[39] Inevitably many of the arguments against the early dating—which is supported by the agreement, more or less broad, of the ancient evidence—are general (e.g. Forrest, *A History of Sparta* 55–6); but they are none the less persuasive for that. If the *rhetra* was a written document, as I believe (*contra*, Sealey 253–6), it cannot be dated before the arrival of writing in Greece *c.* 750 (Jeffrey, *Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* 12–21), and is most unlikely to have been as early as that.

[40] Snodgrass, 116. He is followed, less cautiously, by Toynbee, *Some Problems of Greek History* 225–6; he argues that the 'objective evidence' for the chronology of the phalanx is enough to refute the 'acute trains of reasoning' by which Forrest attempts to establish *c.* 675 as the date of the reform. For a possible depiction of a Spartan phalanx before 650, see now Cartledge, above, p. 27 with his FIG. 1. If this seal does depict a phalanx (which is not certain), it provides a further case of the use of two spears by members of a phalanx, for the hoplites to left and right both seem to be carrying two spears (see above, p. 90).

often claimed for it.   First, he suggests (p. 115) that there can have been no 'enthusiastic rush to arms on the part of the more substantial property owners, the future 'hoplite class'. Even if the bait of political power had been held out from the first—which is perhaps improbable—this would hardly be enough to launch a voluntary movement which ran so entirely against historical precedent'.   Second, he argues (pp. 116–22) that since the adoption of hoplite tactics took place both in Etruria and in Rome without immediate political consequences, the likelihood is that the same military development occurred in Greece without having any effect in the political sphere.

It is most suitable to consider the arguments from analogy first.   Snodgrass is probably right to argue that the adoption of massed tactics had no political consequences in Etruria, though there is very little evidence to go on.   His suggestion that the reform was equally without political results in Rome may also be valid, though this is far more doubtful.   I have neither the desire nor the ability to enter into the controversy which surrounds the centuriate reform; but one point must be made none the less.   Roman tradition credited Servius Tullius not only with the military reform, but also with the organisation of the centuriate assembly: the two reforms are inseparable in the tradition (Livy i 43; Dion. Hal. *Rom. Ant.* iv 16–20).   It is therefore dangerous to assert that the Roman hoplite reform had no political repercussions, for contemporary reform of the assembly is explicitly attested.   It is true that some scholars have argued that the centuriate assembly was falsely attributed to Servius; but others have taken the tradition as correct at least in claiming a connexion between the military and the political aspects of the centuriate reform.[41]

Even if Snodgrass' view of events in Etruria and Rome is accepted, his analogy is far from showing that the introduction of massed tactics did not have a political result in Greece.   It is not at all difficult to suggest one factor which renders the analogy false: in Greece there is independent evidence for discontent with aristocratic government (below, p. 98), and if the hoplite reform took place against a background of political unrest the results can easily be imagined.   Comparatively wealthy men with a grievance were given, for the first time, major military importance; it would hardly be surprising if they used their new strength to set their grievance right—or if ambitious men like Cypselus took advantage of this new pressure group to achieve their own ends.   There are no reasons in principle to deny that the invention of hoplite tactics had an effect on political development solely because of the analogy with what may have happened in Etruria and in Rome.

Snodgrass argues that there can have been no enthusiastic rush of numerous farmers to take their places in the phalanx (pp. 114–5), and he seems to suggest (p. 122) that the view he rejects is that some men wanted to be hoplites precisely in order to gain political influence for themselves.   He is certainly right to argue against such a view; but it is doubtful whether it has ever been held, and it is impossible that a volunteer hoplite could see far enough into the future to realise the political implications of his offer of military service.   Snodgrass justly emphasises that a place in the phalanx was restricted, on purely economic grounds, to a relatively small class,[42] and this will mean that the first phalanxes were far smaller than we have evidence for in the fifth century, and were to be numbered in hundreds rather than in thousands.   In addition, the unpleasant character of hoplite warfare (though *all* warfare is, of course, unpleasant), along with the analogy of the Capitularies of Charlemagne adduced by Snodgrass (pp. 121–2), is enough to make it at least possible that the hoplite reform was in the first instance imposed on unwilling shoulders.[43]

[41] For a discussion and bibliography, see Staveley, *Historia* v (1956) 75–84.   Add (e.g.) Momigliano, *JRS* liii (1963) 117–21; Drummond, *JRS* lx (1970) 201–2 with references.

[42] Thus Mossé (*La tyrannie dans la Grèce antique* 8) cannot be right in referring to hoplites as 'en proie à une grave crise agraire, lourde de menaces pour sa liberté et son indépendance' (*cf.* also *op. cit.* 29); see Zörner, *Kypselos und Pheidon von Argos* 106–7.

[43] The reluctance is no more than possible, for Cartledge (above p. 21–2) makes the at least equally plausible suggestion that since warfare in this period, like all hoplite warfare, was largely a matter of defending (or threatening) crops, wealthy non-aristocrats would have been keen to enlist; they would, after all, have been defending their own substantial plots.

Unwilling shoulders, however, do not necessarily carry unpolitical heads; and it is here that Snodgrass' argument is at its weakest.   He finds it 'difficult to see in the hoplite class a driving force for military or political innovation, let alone revolution', and argues that the new members of the phalanx 'are not likely to have become, all at once, a revolutionary force in politics, even in Greece' (p. 115).[44]   The new hoplites may not have been enthusiastic for military adventure, for they had better things to do with their time; but Snodgrass offers very little argument for his conclusion that they were politically conservative as well.   His main case seems to be (pp. 114–15) that they were necessarily wealthy; but wealthy men have never been slow to press what they see as their own interests, and that has often made them support revolution, from the non-Eupatrid wealthy who supported Solon through the great plebeian families of Rome who fought the struggle of the orders to the members of parliament in the time of Charles I and the leaders of the American revolution.   Examples could be multipled, and there are some circumstances in which the wealthy may be more strongly in favour of change—even more revolutionary—than any other members of society.   Precisely such circumstances existed in the more advanced Greek city states when phalanx tactics were developed and aristocrats gave up their monopoly of fighting skill.   The aristocracy within each state maintained a monopoly on political life; but aristocratic methods of government were beginning to arouse discontent. In such a situation it was the wealthy who were *most* likely to attack the *status quo;* they were doubtless contented enough with their economic position, but they felt a stark contrast between that and their social and political poverty.[45]   For the less well off there was no such contrast, and therefore no such impulsion to political change.

That complaints of this kind existed is clear enough, for they are reflected, however dimly, in our evidence for the political changes that took place in the mid-seventh century. Two significant passages in earlier evidence, however, clarify the picture a good deal, for they show complaints *before* the adoption of the phalanx.   Hesiod, about 700, rails against the corrupt aristocrats of Boeotia, the δωρόφαγοι βασιλῆες (*Erg.* 38–9); but he merely complains, and has no hope of putting matters right, for he does not have the strength which was given to his successors by their membership of the phalanx.   A second episode is even more revealing.   Thersites in the *Iliad,* almost certainly before the invention of the phalanx, has the audacity to express his own view on a matter of public policy, and receives what Homer's audience of aristocrats is clearly expected to believe is a well deserved beating (*Il.* ii 211–77).   Not only does this show that the inferior Thersites might wish to voice his own opinion in opposition to aristocrats like Odysseus; it also shows how such an expression of private views could be ruthlessly suppressed at a time when Thersites and men like him had none of the strength that was shortly to be given to the members of the phalanx.   Thus the adoption of phalanx tactics did not create a revolutionary situation, in the sense that contented men were turned into revolutionaries by being made to fight in a phalanx; rather, it turned potential revolutionaries, with deeply felt grievances but little opportunity to satisfy their demands, into actual revolutionaries by giving them new military strength.   The introduction of massed tactics was the catalyst in an already explosive situation.

In the state of our evidence no formal proof of this view is possible.   A passage in Aristotle's *Politics* (1297b16–25) has often been quoted in this connection; but I doubt whether it has any value as evidence.   Aristotle states that after the fall of the kings political power was held by those who dominated military affairs; and that since at first cavalry was the most important military force—for τὸ ὁπλιτικόν was ἄνευ συντάξεως—it was those who fought as cavalry who exercised political control.   Later, as the strength of the hoplites increased, a wider spectrum of society achieved influence, and the constitutions were known as δημοκρατίαι.[46]   Both Andrewes and Snodgrass have claimed this text as

---

[44] Followed by Greenhalgh, 150–5.

[45] *Cf.* Cartledge, above, p. 22; despite disagreement over details, we are in accord on this central issue.

[46] This passage is closely related to others in

Aristotle, in which the same connection between military and political influence is made: *Pol.* 1321a5–14, *cf.* 1274a12–5; *Ath. Pol.* 27.1 (the ναυτικὸς ὄχλος at Athens).   See also Ps.-Xen., *Ath. Pol.* 1.2.

support for their views: Andrewes (*Tyrants* 34–6) because Aristotle holds that political influence depended on military functions; and Snodgrass (p. 121) because he supposes that Aristotle preserves a memory of a period when 'hoplites existed, but had not yet been organised, either tactically as a phalanx, or politically as a party'. It is, however, very difficult to believe that Aristotle had any evidence for his view. He knew that the distribution of power had become wider since the monarchies, and he might have known that cavalry warfare was important before hoplite fighting became general;[47] but he could hardly have had evidence for the chronological relationship between the two developments. In particular, he is most unlikely to have found evidence to show that there was a time when τὸ ὁπλιτικόν existed, but was as yet ἄνευ συντάξεως. Aristotle was therefore theorising: if his view that military role and political control were connected was to stand, he had to explain why monarchies were not replaced by 'hoplite democracies', for he knew that they were not; he did so by positing a phase in which the hoplites were too disorganised to take political advantage of their numerical strength.

No other direct evidence exists for a connexion between the hoplite reform and political change; but strong arguments can be urged in favour of one. The entrenched aristocracies which succumbed or made concessions must have been subject to some pressure; and since the hoplite reform gave greatly increased strength to the non-aristocrats who fought in the phalanx, the most economic explanation of the pressure is that it was the new hoplites who exerted it. A related argument is that the mid-seventh century saw many revolutions in Greece—probably more than we have evidence for; and while such a rash of revolutions might be ascribed to mere coincidence, it is preferable to look for an explanation. The power of example should not be discounted: one successful coup will have been a strong incentive to ambitious men elsewhere. But personal ambition can only have been part of the story, since it only explains why the attempts were made, and not why they were so often successful.[48] One factor common to all the states concerned was that they all adopted the new style of fighting, for it would have been suicide not to do so;[49] the consequential broadening of military responsibility and (at least potential) political strength will provide the explanation we are seeking.

Various arguments based on events within individual states can be used to corroborate this general case. The most obvious concerns Sparta, for even Snodgrass accepts that the reforms were passed in favour of the hoplite class, which enjoyed such rights as were given by the *rhetra* into the fifth century and beyond;[50] and it is now unnecessary to date the

---

[47] Andrewes (*Tyrants* 34–5) and Cartledge (above, pp. 18–19 n. 60) are both rightly sceptical about Aristotle's phase of cavalry supremacy; see, however, Alfoldi, *Festschrift Schefold* 27–8.

[48] Drews (*Historia* xxi (1973) 129–44) has emphasised the personal ambition of the early tyrants, and scorned explanations which 'meet the specification of the social sciences, and duly present the tyrants as the necessary consequence of external, objective conditions'. In so far as he attempts to demonstrate more than the self-evident fact that tyrants were ambitious, I am out of sympathy with his conclusions; society in the tyrants' cities had reached a stage at which conditions could be exploited—though in Athens they had not, as the equally ambitious Cylon found to his cost.

[49] Snodgrass 121 suggests on the evidence of Paus. viii 50.1 that Achaea did not adopt the new methods until the third century (cf. *EGAW* 184); this would cast grave doubt on the view I have taken in the text, but the conclusion seems most unlikely. Pausanias refers to Achaea not as a geographical entity but as the Achaean League; the member cities of that organisation (including by now, among others, Corinth and Argos) cannot

have waited until the time of Philopoemen to become true hoplite armies (though the League itself might have given up using hoplites in favour of light-armed troops in the circumstances of the third century). Pausanias must refer either to the *re*adoption of phalanx fighting, or to the adoption of a particular style of it (presumably the Macedonian: Anderson, *BSA* xlix (1954) 85 n. 119); he cannot be taken to imply that the states of the Achaean League had not employed true hoplites in the seventh century. See in general Anderson, *loc. cit.*; Errington, *Philopoemen* 63–4, however, is much less sceptical. I have taken it that Pheidon's neighbours quickly developed their own phalanxes; but Cartledge (above, p. 18) justly points out that it was not inevitable that they should do so, since the new mode of fighting was ill adapted to the mountainous Greek terrain. Some means of defence, however, had to be found, for the phalanx could put paid to any aristocratic rabble; and it is hardly surprising that (as future development shows) the states under threat failed to devise light-armed forces but adopted the new methods themselves instead.

[50] For a different view, cf. Sealey, esp. 262–9.

rhetra no earlier than 650 because of its generally admitted connexion with the hoplite *damos*. Pheidon and Argos provide less direct evidence, but it is still strong. I have argued that Pheidon's military success was won by a phalanx; if so, it is natural to suppose that his political achievement was gained with the help of those same hoplites. His personal prestige alone cannot have been enough, whatever his military reputation, to enable him to reverse the contemporary trend against traditional monarchies, so he must have been able to put something in the balance against the strength of his aristocrats; the hoplites who made up his phalanx are the obvious candidates.

If Pheidon was a seventh century figure, he certainly led the Argive phalanx, and he may be presumed to have taken advantage of his inherited position of military leadership to exploit the support of his hoplites in the political sphere; late sources credit both Cypselus and Orthagoras with magistracies before their attempts on power in Corinth and Sicyon which might have been similarly exploited. Nicolaus of Damascus (*FGH* 90 F 57) reports that Cypselus was polemarch in Bacchiad Corinth; and although the duties he performs in the story are exclusively civil, the polemarchate at that time cannot have been so far removed from its origins that its holder no longer performed any military function.[51] Orthagoras also acted as polemarch before his successful coup in Sicyon, if an anonymous fragment ascribed to Ephorus is to be trusted.[52] It is perhaps worth noting that Cypselus found it unnecessary to maintain a bodyguard when he achieved power;[53] that makes it as good as certain that he could rely on hoplite support, which in turn makes it more than likely that they had given him help in the revolution itself.

Finally, an argument which applies only to Corinth, Sicyon and Megara, where the changes were only carried through as a result of violence. Since the phalanx had already been adopted by the time of these coups, the non-aristocratic hoplites who made up a majority of its members must have played *some* part in the events, at least in the negative sense that they failed to come to the rescue of aristocratic regimes which were under attack.[54] Of itself this proves no more than that the hoplites were neutral; but in the circumstances of the time even mere neutrality implies the far more positive conclusion that the hoplites had rejected the central assumption of aristocratic society, that the aristocrats had an inborn right to rule. More careful examination of the implications enables us to go further. Since obedience to the aristocrat is automatic in aristocratic society, a willingness to question the aristocratic right to command needs explanation; and that is not easy to offer unless there was some specific issue on which disagreement arose. Disagreement with an aristocrat over a particular issue might in time lead to questioning of the general duty of obedience; and unless specific disagreement had arisen the aristocratic right to obedience would never have been questioned. Thus the mere neutrality of the hoplites implies that they had rejected total obedience to their aristocrats; and that, in turn, implies some positive and specific opposition to aristocrats from hoplites. It is but a short step from here to conclude that the hoplites gave positive support to the tyrants. I am prepared to make such a step; but even those who are not must accept that the hoplites had to some degree rejected aristocratic government. The question at issue is merely the extent of the rejection.

I end by attempting to define more precisely the role played by the hoplite reform in the revolutionary ferment of the mid-seventh century. I have suggested that changes were made because they were supported by hoplites; but that will allow the possibility of far more positive and well articulated contributions from a 'hoplite class' than I am prepared to believe in. The role of the hoplite reform was probably as small as is consistent with the view that the changes were accomplished with hoplite support; and while more wide-ranging claims have been made, they seem to me most unlikely. The suggestion

---

[51] Andrewes, *Tyrants* 46, is sceptical about the value of this evidence; *contra*, Oost, *CP* lxvii (1972) 18–9 with n. 38. It is most unlikely to be pure invention, for no imaginative reconstruction would have given civil functions to a magistrate with a military title.

[52] *FHG* 105 F 2; ascribed to Ephorus by Jacoby *ad loc.* I have far less faith in the worth of this evidence than in that of Nic. Dam. on Cypselus (above).

[53] Ar. *Pol.* 1315b27–8; *FGH* 90 F 57, 8.

[54] *Cf.* Forrest, *Emergence* 112.

has been that the adoption of the phalanx created, of itself, at least some momentum for revolution: that non-aristocratic hoplites, when they entered the phalanx, felt their increased military importance and demanded a commensurate political role. In detail, it is claimed that a non-aristocratic hoplite who fought alongside aristocrats in the phalanx might have come to see that they were no more militarily valuable than he was, so he might have questioned their greater political influence; and that a common obligation to obey orders imposed on all members of the phalanx might have induced a non-aristocratic hoplite to resent his political inferiority.[55] The length of time required for such feelings to develop is perhaps greater than the longest possible gap between the introduction of the phalanx and its political consequences; and there are important general considerations to be urged against this view.

First, none of the explicit evidence we have for the motives that lay behind change in the mid-seventh century relates to factors which affected hoplites as such. Two factors in particular recur in our evidence frequently enough for it to be clear that they were of general importance, and they are both exemplified in the Cypselid propaganda contained in the oracle recorded by Herodotus (v. 92 β 2):

'Ηετίων, οὔτις σε τίει πολύτιτον ἐόντα.
Λάβδα κύει, τέξει δ' ὀλοοίτροχον· ἐν δὲ πεσεῖται
ἀνδράσι μουνάρχοισι, δικαιώσει δὲ Κόρινθον.

The exclusive nature of Bacchiad rule and their failure to provide δίκη clearly contributed to their fall, and similar complaints were voiced in most of the states which underwent change;[56] but in neither case are there any grounds for supposing that whether a man made a complaint or not depended on whether he was a hoplite. It is likely enough that only the relatively wealthy men outside the charmed circle would resent the exclusive nature of aristocratic power; if so, since only men of substance could become hoplites, many of those who shared this grievance will in fact have been hoplites.[57] But that is not to say that nobody who was unable to join the phalanx wished to take part in politics; nor that all, or even most, of the hoplites wished to compete with the aristocrats in political life. It is even more unlikely that complaints about δίκη were restricted to the hoplites alone. The precise meaning of the word is uncertain, and the specific issues which gave rise to demands for δίκη may well have differed considerably from case to case;[58] but it is quite certain that concern about δίκη did not depend on whether a man fought in the phalanx.

Second, if the phalanx method of fighting had of itself led to positive demands from hoplites for greater political power, it is curious that there is only one case in which there are any grounds for supposing that such demands were met. At Argos the only change for which there is any evidence is one in the balance of power between aristocracy and king. In this case, indeed, the Argive hoplites need not have felt resentment against their aristocrats at all, even though they supported Pheidon. What happened in Argos differs from all other cases in that while elsewhere the break between aristocratic past and new future was more or less sharp, in Argos the shift may have been gradual, and need not have rested on any formal redistribution of power. The hoplites might have been un-

---

[55] Andrewes, *Tyrants* 34; especially Forrest, *Emergence* 94–7.

[56] Full references cannot be given here. Already Hesiod attacked the δωρόφαγοι βασιλῆες of Boeotia (above, p. 95); cf. the δίκα εὐρυάγυια of Sparta after the reforms, referred to in hexameters attributed to Terpander (*fr.* 4 Diehl; cf., however, Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* 363). Solon broke the Eupatrid domination in Attica; and cf. Ar. *Pol.* 1311b26–30 on seventh-century Lesbos.

[57] There is some evidence that Theagenes gained support in Megara from the poor, since he

'slaughtered the flocks of the wealthy' (Ar. *Pol.* 1305a24–6); but I do not trust this information, for it seems more than likely that Aristotle has interpreted a tradition concerning Theagenes' attacks on Megarian aristocrats in the light of his own experience of fourth-century struggles between rich and poor. Cf. Oost, *CP* lxviii (1973), 188–90.

[58] On δίκη in this period, see now Gagarin, *CP* lxix (1974) 186–97; the order, and the existence of rules, however, which δίκη denotes should not be restricted to the narrowly legal sphere (cf. Cartledge, above, p. 22 n. 85).

witting instruments of change, for although they must have been enthusiastic enough about Pheidon to allow him to put their strength to his own advantage, they need not have known what they were being used for. In Corinth, Sicyon and Megara control passed out of the hands of traditional aristocracies into those of tyrants; so as in Argos there is little room for satisfaction of political demands made by hoplites. In Corinth at least, when the tyranny eventually fell, it was replaced by a system of government in which the hoplites probably had very little importance;[59] it is not easy to believe that one generation of Corinthian hoplites raised Cypselus to the tyranny in order to gain influence for themselves through him only for a succeeding generation to acquiesce in its effective exclusion from political power.

Only in Sparta is there any indication that there may have been positive demands from hoplites for an increase in their political power. The interpretation of the *rhetra* is of course controversial, and I do not wish to enter the controversy here;[60] but even the view of Forrest, which in general makes the role of the hoplites as important as is reasonable (and with which I am in broad agreement), by no means implies that Spartan hoplites made up an organised pressure group, that they made spontaneous demands for political control, or that there was a class war between hoplites and aristocrats which ended in the defeat of the latter and the satisfaction of demands for power made by the former. Such a reconstruction is wildly improbable, even though hoplites probably provided the strength behind the reform. The mass-produced lead figurines of hoplites dedicated in enormous numbers from *c.* 650 do not prove the existence, as even Snodgrass believes, of a 'unified and self-conscious hoplite class' (p. 116). They merely prove that it became normal at Sparta to dedicate hoplite figurines, and the reasons for the fashion are beyond our recovery, even if one plausible explanation is the growth of a feeling of common identity among hoplites. The hoplites may well have demanded, for example, land redistribution;[61] but it is not easy to imagine any politically inexperienced group—and the hoplites were *ex hypothesi* inexperienced, for the *rhetra* gave them rights they had not enjoyed before— making spontaneous political demands of a positive kind such as might have resulted in the *rhetra*. It is easy to suppose that they expressed spontaneous discontent of a negative kind; but for discontent to be turned into positive demands for power some sophistication and direction, which can only have been provided by the politically experienced, will have been necessary. Hoplites were probably incapable of formulating even a coherent statement of their grievances; but they were sufficiently discontented for an aristocratic faction to attempt to turn their discontent to its own advantage. With their political experience, aristocratic leaders would have been capable of formulating hoplite demands, channelling their energies and hoping, in the end, to ride to power on hoplite backs—much as Cleisthenes hoped to ride to power on the backs of the Athenian *demos* which benefited from his reforms.[62] Some support would be given to this view if it were possible to identify the faction which tried to exploit the hoplites; and I believe that can be done. The *rhetra* was almost certainly said by Tyrtaeus to have been brought back from Delphi by the kings Theopompus and Polydorus;[63] and there are independent indications of their involvement in reform at Sparta.[64] By the early seventh century royal powers in Sparta must have been on the wane; and a Spartan king, perhaps after observing Pheidon's success in Argos, might well have attempted to enhance his declining political influence by harnessing the

[59] It is uncertain whether the Corinthian oligarchy was narrow or moderate; but effective power was probably in the hands of few men. The only direct evidence is Nic. Dam. *FGH* 90 F 60, as restored by Will (*Korinthiaka* 609–15): there was a council of 80, 8 of whom were *probouloi*. The small council indicates strongly that the oligarchy was not widely based.

[60] The bibliography is endless; for a useful selection, *cf.* Sealey, 250–1 n. 7.

[61] *Cf.* Ar. *Pol.*. 1306b37–1307a2, where the authority of Tyrtaeus is claimed for Aristotle's view that land redistribution was demanded as a result of τὸν Μεσσηνιακὸν πόλεμον. Forrest (*Phoenix* xvii (1963) 171) identifies the Messenian War as the First; this is the most plausible, though not the only possible, explanation, and it would mean that land redistribution was an issue at the time of the *rhetra* (*cf.* Cartledge, above, p. 27).

[62] *Cf.* Hdt. v 66.2: τὸν δῆμον προσεταιρίζεται.

[63] Tyrtaeus *fr.* 4 West; the text as we have it does not name the kings, but *cf.* Forrest, *Phoenix* xvii (1963) 158–60.

[64] Forrest, *Phoenix* xvii (1963) 170–1.

support in political life of the hoplites whom he commanded in war. Some support can be found for this conjecture in the text of the *rhetra* itself, where it is laid down that the *gerousia* shall consist of 28 elders and the two kings *ex officio;* by enshrining royal participation in the *gerousia* within the *rhetra* the kings ensured that they could not be removed without bringing the whole *rhetra* scheme into question. On any view of the *rhetra* other than Forrest's, the problem of hoplite involvement does not arise; for the *rhetra* will then not have been devised in order to give an increased role to the hoplite *damos*, and it will be impossible to use the *rhetra* as evidence that hoplites had demanded greater political power.

Third, Snodgrass' argument from analogy is more helpful in this context than in that in which he uses it. The fact that Etruria did not suffer political consequences after adopting the phalanx makes it unlikely that the hoplite reform had direct consequences for political development of itself. There must either have been special circumstances in Etruria which prevented political change, or special circumstances in Greece which brought development on the heels of the hoplite reform. Since we can identify at least some of the factors in Greece which encouraged change (above, p. 98), it is best to conclude that the new tactics did not of themselves create discontent with the patterns of aristocratic government.[65]

Fourth, and perhaps most important, there is a powerful psychological factor to be considered. Any view which supposes that the mere fact of fighting in a phalanx might make a hoplite politically ambitious can at best only explain half the thought patterns involved; for a man will only learn to resent aristocratic control if there is at least one concrete issue on which he recognises that his interests differ from those of aristocrats. Natural acceptance of aristocratic primacy will only have been questioned as a result of a specific disagreement over a particular issue; for in an age when political theory was as yet unborn, no abstract principles about the distribution of power can have led to revolutionary thoughts.[66] Without a specific issue which led a man to question his traditional loyalty he would never have compared himself with an aristocrat. The fact that a man fought in the phalanx was therefore only a secondary factor. It could show him, if he already had a grievance, that his own political role might be no less than his military importance; but it could not do so unless he was already willing to make a comparison between himself and an aristocrat, and his willingness to do that shows that he had already passed beyond the stage of traditional obedience.

There is but one issue which might have caused the interests of aristocrats and hoplites as such to clash: service in the phalanx might have been (but *cf.* above, n. 43) imposed at first on unwilling men; and even if that did not create discontent, hoplites might well then have been required to fight in a war they did not believe in (though that in itself implies a willingness to question aristocratic decisions). Thus in Sparta the hoplites might have been persuaded that the only way to prevent bad decisions in future was to ensure that wars were subject to a vote of the *damos;* while elsewhere men like Cypselus might have induced hoplites to support them by promising that they would not go to war for frivolous reasons. But considerations of this kind cannot have been solely responsible for the developments we are concerned with—and there is no evidence that they were relevant at all; the questioning of the patterns of aristocratic society was brought about by a far wider range of issues than this.

With this one exception, there are no grounds for supposing that it was a man's role as a hoplite that made him welcome the new political developments; rather, men who wanted change for quite separate reasons were given the strength to insist on it when they first fought in a phalanx. It is therefore most unlikely that the hoplites (aristocrats excluded) made up a united class, ranged in support of revolution in each state. The

[65] Perhaps this is the explanation of the apparent curiosity noted by Momigliano, *JRS* liii (1963) 119: it was only when other factors were added to the hoplite reform that political changes ensued, and those other factors did not exist to a significant extent in Etruria.

[66] A similar point is made about the far more developed society of England in the 1920s by A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914–1945* 334: 'Other things being equal, those who rule go on ruling, and those who are ruled acquiesce.'

grievances against aristocratic government had little if anything to do with the hoplite reform, and the extent of the involvement of each hoplite will have depended on his individual circumstances. The solidarity of the hoplite class is therefore seriously to be doubted. All that we can be sure of is that a significant majority of the hoplites had grievances (in Argos, not even this: above, pp. 98-9), and that all the disparate groups which must have existed among this discontented majority were induced to agree on at least one thing: in Corinth, Sicyon and Megara to follow Cypselus, Orthagoras and Theagenes in attacks on the traditional aristocracy, and in Sparta to force the aristocracy to give up some of its traditional power to a hoplite assembly. Equally, since it was not the hoplite reform itself which created discontent among hoplites, many men who did not belong to the phalanx may have wanted change; but they had no strength to turn their wishes into reality, just as Hesiod and Thersites were too weak to make significant impact on Odysseus and the δωρόφαγοι βασιλῆες before the adoption of the phalanx.

There is therefore no simple explanation of the role played by the hoplite reform in the development of Greece away from traditional aristocracies. The immediate consequence of the new technique of warfare was to extend the social range from which those who played a military role came; but that, of itself, need have made little difference to the distribution of political power. What the reform did do, however, was to give political weight to those who had lacked it before; and where there was a motive and a will for using their newly acquired weight, hoplites did so to great effect. The situation may be compared with that created by an equally momentous change in military affairs in Ptolemaic Egypt. Large numbers of native Egyptian *machimoi* were drafted by Ptolemy IV into his army, and although they won the battle of Raphia for him, Polybius (v 107.3) remarks that they were also 'no longer disposed to obey orders'; and their disobedience seems to have begun the long agony of dislocation and rebellion suffered by the later Ptolemies. The discontent of the *machimoi* cannot have been created by the requirement to perform military service; it was merely that men who had numerous grievances before were given the strength to make effective complaint, and Ptolemaic Egypt was never the same again.[67]

Nor was Greece ever the same again after the introduction of the phalanx; but we cannot look to the hoplite reform for a simple explanation of the political upheavals of the mid-seventh century, for the essential causes will have been different in each case. The issues over which aristocrats and others differed cannot have been the same in Sicyon as in Corinth, and they will have been different again in Sparta; but whatever the issues were the hoplite reform had little, if anything, to do with them. In the course of development away from a fully aristocratic society, it is a far greater step for a man to challenge the right to be obeyed which an aristocrat enjoys by the weight of centuries of tradition than it is for him to devise some means of making his challenge effective. It was only in the second, and far shorter, of these steps that the hoplite reform played any important part; it supplied the weapon for change, but not the will for it.

JOHN SALMON

Queen's University, Belfast

[67] On all this, see especially Préaux, *Chronique d'Égypte* xi (1936) 522-52.