

## NOTES

### Hoplites and heresies: a note

A. J. Holladay has effectively reasserted the traditional view of the hoplite phalanx—that it was a dense mass of men, relying on the weight and cohesion of the whole rather than on the prowess of individuals in order to break the enemy's line.<sup>1</sup>

Further evidence in his support is provided by Plato's *Laches*,<sup>2</sup> where Nicias is made to praise the art of fighting (that is, single combat) in hoplite armour, as a fitting part of a liberal education. But when it comes to its utility in warfare he is less enthusiastic. 'This science will help somewhat even on the actual battlefield, whenever one has to fight ranged in order with many others. But its chief benefit will be when the ranks are broken, and one has to fight singlehanded against a single adversary, and either, in pursuit, attack someone who is defending himself, or else, in retreat, protect oneself from the attack of another.' Nicias clearly has in mind a situation like that from which Socrates extracted himself so handsomely at the Battle of Delium, as the speakers in the dialogue have just recalled,<sup>3</sup> though Socrates of course made his retreat without benefit of the newfangled art of fencing.

Laches, replying to Nicias, is much less favourable, and, in dismissing the art of single combat altogether, particularly stresses that the Lacedaemonians have no use for it. Clearly neither Nicias nor Laches even envisages the possibility that the battle may begin with a series of single combats.

This imaginary conversation does not of course carry the same historical weight as the Thucydidean passage, quoted by Holladay, that describes the advancing hoplites edging to the right to gain the protection of their neighbours' shields. Here are revealed not merely the movements but the feelings of front-rank soldiers going into battle.<sup>4</sup> But Plato, like every Athenian of his class and time, understood the basic facts of hoplite warfare, and he and Thucydides bear one another out. Not only was the front rank too closely packed for individual skill to be of much account as the armies closed, but the following ranks, being made up of files whose duty was to follow their file-leader closely,<sup>5</sup> would have been equally packed. There was certainly no room for front-rank men to fall back between the files (whether by mutual consent or not) after they had had enough.

To conclude, Holladay rightly notes that, after the Athenians had defeated the Syracusans on the Anapus, some of the victorious hoplites did break ranks and run out in pursuit, until they were checked by the enemy's cavalry.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, even Spartan hoplites regularly met attacks of peltasts and other light-armed troops by ordering the younger men to run out against the

enemy.<sup>7</sup> Such actions might certainly explain the description of a fallen hoplite as *promachos*.<sup>8</sup> But it is perhaps as probable that *promachos* is simply a poetic substitute for the technical *protostates*—a front-rank soldier, not one who fights in front of the ranks. In either case, the word lends no support to the suggestion that it was usual for hoplites to break ranks and come forward to individual combat when one phalanx was advancing against another.

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<sup>7</sup> Thuc. iv 127; X. *Hell.* iii 4.13–15; iv 4.15–17 and elsewhere; Anderson (n. 5) 117–26.

<sup>8</sup> Holladay (n. 1) 94 n. 4.

### The Lamian War—*stat magni nominis umbra*<sup>1</sup>

For the uprising of 323 and 322 BC by the Greek states against the Macedonian domination, the name 'The Lamian War' has universal currency, identifying the overall conflict through reference to the siege of Lamia in the winter of 323/2. Given the relative insignificance of that particular event in determining the outcome of the war, the name does not seem to be particularly appropriate. Yet there is ample ancient evidence to indicate that the term *ὁ Λαμιακὸς πόλεμος* was used also in antiquity to signify this struggle. The full catalogue, in chronological order, is:

<i>ὁ Λαμιακὸς πόλεμος κληθεὶς πόλεμον . . . τὸν ὀνομασθέντα Λαμιακόν</i>	(D.S. xvii 111.1) (D.S. xviii 8.1)
<i>κατὰ τὸν Λαμιακὸν πόλεμον ἐν τῷ Λαμιακῷ πολέμῳ μετὰ τὸν Λαμιακὸν πόλεμον ἐν τῷ Λαμιακῷ πολέμῳ ὁ Λαμιακὸς . . . πόλεμος περὶ τὸν Λαμιακὸν πόλεμον τοῦ Λαμιακοῦ πολέμου</i>	(D.S. xviii 19.1) <sup>2</sup> (D.S. xviii 24.1) (D.S. xviii 66.5) (D.S. xx 46.3) <sup>3</sup> (Strabo ix 5.10) <sup>4</sup> (Plut. <i>Pyrrh.</i> 1.6) ([Plut.] <i>Mor.</i> 849f=X <i>or. vii.</i> 'Hyperides')
<i>κατὰ τὸν Λαμιακὸν πόλεμον ὁ Λαμιακὸς πόλεμος Λαμιακὸς πόλεμος</i>	(D.L. iv 9) (Euseb. <i>Chron. Oly.</i> 114.2) (Steph. Byz. s.v. 'Λάμια')

There is also a possible reading of *ἐν τῷ Λαμιακῷ*

<sup>1</sup> Lucan i 135. The argument of this paper formed the basis of a talk to the faculty and graduate students of the Department of Classics at Stanford University on 22nd January, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> A variant reading *Λαλαμιακόν* occurs in MS F.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Argumentum* to D.S. xviii πόλεμον . . . τὸν ὀνομασθέντα Λαμιακόν is found in §vi and τὸν Λαμιακὸν πόλεμον in xiv.

<sup>4</sup> At x 1.6 the text of Strabo reads: *κατεστράφη δὲ τὰ Στύρα ἐν τῷ Μαλιακῷ πολέμῳ ὑπὸ Φαίδρου τοῦ Ἀθηναίων στρατηγού.* A. Meineke, in his edition (Leipzig 1866), emended *Μαλιακῷ* to *Λαμιακῷ* on the basis of a conjecture by Casaubon. A scribal error in transposing the *lambda* and *mu* is not difficult to envisage, and as all extant MSS are descended from the so-called archetype, the one original transposition would explain the constant MS reading *Μαλιακῷ*. Given what is known of the activities of Phaedrus, the Athenian *strategos*, it is highly probable that the MS reading should be so emended. On the career of Phaedrus see J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families 600–300 B.C.* (Oxford 1971) 524–5 no. 13964.

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Holladay, 'Hoplites and heresies', *JHS* cii (1982) 94–7.

<sup>2</sup> Pl. *Lach.* 181d–182b.

<sup>3</sup> Pl. *Lach.* 181b.

<sup>4</sup> Thuc. v 71.1; Holladay (n. 1) 94.

<sup>5</sup> X. *Cyr.* ii 2.6–9, 3.21; *Lac. Pol.* 11.4–6; J. K. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (Berkeley 1970) 94–110 (with further references).

<sup>6</sup> Thuc. vi 70.3; Holladay (n. 1) 96.