

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Cretan way of war: status, violence and values from the Classical period to the Roman conquest

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## Abstract

The tactics of Cretan citizen armies differed markedly from those utilized in most regions of the Classical and Hellenistic Greek world: instead of fighting in phalanxes, Cretans fought in open order, specializing in archery, skirmishing, ambushes and night actions. These tactics (and the cultural attitudes that went with them) were disparaged by mainland Greeks such as Polybios and explained in terms of moral deviancy: a sign of the duplicitous nature of the Cretans. This article demonstrates that these descriptions of Cretan tactics and behaviours are factual, but argues against the idea that they derive from moral deviancy. Rather, they represent the outcome of a different line of historical development than that followed in mainland Greece. Cretan tactics and attitudes stand far closer to those described by archaic poets (especially Homer, Archilochos and Kallinos); in this regard, Cretan city states displayed strong continuities with archaic social practices and values, detectable in other areas of Cretan society and culture. The stability of Cretan sociopolitical organization from the late seventh century down to the Roman conquest fostered the endurance of such practices and attitudes, leading to cultural divergence from mainland Greece and, accordingly, a generally hostile representation of Cretans in our main historiographical sources.

**Keywords:** Crete; warfare; ethics; archery; piracy

## I. Introduction

According to the *Kretika* of the Hellenistic historian Dosiadas (BNJ 458 F2), one of the functions of the mess groups at Lyktos was the socialization of citizen boys through the inculcation of martial values. After an elaborate description of how the common meals functioned, including the allocation of choice portions to men who were considered outstanding in war or sagacity, Dosiadas writes:

After the meal it is their custom first of all to deliberate about public matters; then, after that, they recall the deeds of war, and praise those who showed themselves to be courageous men, exhorting the young men towards bravery.

Dosiadas' remarks align with those of various writers who claim that the Cretans brought up their boys to be brave.<sup>1</sup> A very different view of Cretan bravery, though, is offered by another Hellenistic historian, Polybios (4.8.10–11):

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<sup>1</sup> Ephoros, BNJ 70 F149, apud Strabo 10.4.16–22, at §16; Herakleides Lembos *fr.* 15 Diltz = [Arist.] *fr.* 611.15 Rose; Ael. VH 2.39. Although a very late source, Aelian does sometimes draw on reliable early material: cf. Hodkinson (2000) 355–56. Viviers (1994) 244–49 suggests that at Afrati the *andreion* may have been adorned with armour

Θετταλῶν γοῦν ἰππεῖς κατ' Ἴλην μὲν καὶ φαλαγγηδὸν ἀνυπόστατοι, χωρὶς δὲ παρατάξεως πρὸς καιρὸν καὶ τόπον κατ' ἄνδρα κινδυνεύουσαι δύσχηστοι καὶ βραδεῖς; Αἰτωλοὶ δὲ τούτων τάναντία. Κρήτες δὲ καὶ κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλατταν πρὸς μὲν ἐνέδρας καὶ ληστείας καὶ κλοπὰς πολεμίων καὶ νυκτερινὰς ἐπιθέσεις καὶ πάσας τὰς μετὰ δόλου καὶ κατὰ μέρος χρείας ἀνυπόστατοι, πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐξ ὁμολόγου καὶ κατὰ πρόσωπον φαλαγγηδὸν ἔφοδον ἀγενεῖς καὶ πλάγιοι ταῖς ψυχαῖς; Ἀχαιοὶ δὲ καὶ Μακεδόνες τάναντία τούτων.

The cavalry of the Thessalians, for instance, is irresistible in troop and column; but when their formation is dispersed and each man has to run risks according to timing and location, they are unmanageable and slow; the Aitolians are the opposite in this regard. And the Cretans both by land and sea, when it comes to ambushes, raids, stealing the advantage, night attacks and everything involving tricks and separate action, are irresistible; but when it comes to an open and front-facing phalanx assault they prove ill-bred and irresolute; and again the Achaians and Macedonians are the opposite in this regard.<sup>2</sup>

The irresolute, wavering mind of the Cretan (the Cretans are πλάγιοι ταῖς ψυχαῖς) is contrasted with the faculty of the Achaian to remain steadfast and resolute in a phalanx clash. And Polybios has plenty of other criticisms of Cretan conduct: they are liars, they are cruel, they are addicted to plunder.<sup>3</sup> In Polybios' eyes, as Paula Perlman puts it, 'the kind of warfare for which the Cretans were suited was devious and underhanded, not even fit for the light of day. The Cretans themselves were morally ill-equipped to fight as hoplites because they lacked the civic virtues of bravery and stout-heartedness'.<sup>4</sup>

These differing appraisals of Cretan bravery (and conduct in war more generally) could be explained in several different ways. One would be to impugn Dosiadas' testimony by arguing that such literary sources on Cretan society are unreliable and merely a philosophical confection.<sup>5</sup> However, Link's recent re-evaluation of the reliability of the literary sources for Crete and their compatibility with Cretan epigraphy, convincing in my opinion, makes this an unattractive option.<sup>6</sup> Another approach would be to impugn Polybios' testimony, or that of his sources, as hopelessly biased, and claim that he misrepresented the realities of Cretan behaviour in war. Yet although a distinct hostility towards Cretans on Polybios' part is undeniable, his remarks about Cretan tactics align well with what we know from a wide range of sources (see further *infra*). There is a third, more satisfactory explanation; and that is what this article aims to articulate: a contrasting set of cultural evaluations related to particular tactics in war. The Cretans, I will argue, never underwent the historical processes that led their mainland peers to fight in phalanxes, and the Cretan practice of running away rather than standing their ground, as

captured from enemies, for the purpose of socializing boys similarly to Dosiadas' description; cf. Whitley (2018). On Pyrgion's description of Cretan messes (BNJ 467 F1) see Strataridaki (2009).

<sup>2</sup> On the phrase κλοπή πολέμου and its variants see Whitehead (1988).

<sup>3</sup> For example, 4.53.5; 6.46.3; 6.47.5; 7.11.9; 8.16.4–7; 18.15–20; 28.14; 33.16. See Remy (2015).

<sup>4</sup> Perlman (1999) 138.

<sup>5</sup> Perlman (1992) and (2005). On Dosiadas, who was very probably a Cretan himself, see Bertelli's recent commentary at BNJ 458.

<sup>6</sup> Link (2002); (2008). Cf. Gehrke (1997) 45; Chaniotis (2005a); Seelentag (2015) 93–117; Fisher (2017) 111, and Genevrois (2017) 9 for similar positions. The literary sources for Cretan society are, to differing degrees, affected by a *mirage crétois*; but this does not justify the wholesale rejection of, for example, Aristotle or Ephoros as sources for Crete any more than the existence of a *mirage spartiate* requires us to reject wholesale Herodotos or Xenophon as sources for Sparta.

well as ambushes and the tactical use of deceit, can be paralleled abundantly from archaic poetry. Dosiadas' view reflects this tradition. Polybios' stance, on the other hand, reflects a set of values that emerged in close relation to phalanx warfare. My argument falls in three parts. Section II will sketch the style of fighting pursued by the Cretans on land and sea. Section III shows that this is distinctly similar to the style of fighting on land and sea in archaic texts, and suggests that Cretan tactics evolved along a very different trajectory to that followed in much of the Greek mainland. Section IV turns to ethics, and argues that although Polybios and Dosiadas were referring to the same forms of behaviour, their standards of evaluation differed markedly: tactics that counted as ignoble in Polybios' eyes were fair game, indeed admirable, in the eyes of the Cretans. Picaresque tales of such actions probably constituted much of what Lyktian men told their sons after dinner.

## II. Cretan tactics

The Cretan interlocutor in Plato's *Laws* (625c–626a) connects the fighting style of Cretans to the nature of the terrain: whereas Thessaly is dominated by level plains and suited to breeding horses and fighting from horseback, Crete is predominantly rough, mountainous country, and is therefore a land of mobile, light-armed archers. The Cretans are runners.<sup>7</sup> Plato's geographical determinism in explaining the origins of Cretan tactics may seem a little overwrought today, but his description of those tactics does at least dovetail with what we know from other sources.<sup>8</sup> Ephoros (*BNJ* 70 F149, apud Strabo 10.4.16–22), writing in the generation after Plato, provides a comparable but more detailed picture. Cretan boys were raised to fight from an early age: younger boys attended their fathers' mess hall (*andreion*), sitting at their feet, and would fight with each other and with boys from other messes. Older boys joined a band (*agelē*, lit. 'herd'; or *agelā*, to give the local Doric);<sup>9</sup> members of an *agelā* would hunt and run races together; and *agelai* would engage in mock battles. These involved not just punch-ups, but the use of blunt (?) iron weapons too (§20).<sup>10</sup> In general, Cretan education involved training from boyhood in archery, war dances, the endurance of blows within and outwith the gymnasium, forced marches over rough ground and uphill, as well as learning military music, songs and basic literacy (§16).<sup>11</sup> Ephoros, then, repeats Plato's emphasis on archery, fleetness of foot and the ability to fight in rough terrain, but adds further important details.<sup>12</sup> An excerpt of Herakleides Lembos' epitome of the contemporary Aristotelian *Constitution of the Cretans* (*fr.* 15 Dilts = [Arist.] *fr.* 611.15 Rose) corroborates Ephoros on several points, adding that the mock battles involve boxing and stick-fighting, and are fought to the music of the *aulos* and *kithara*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This aligns with the terminology of the inscriptions, where one term for citizen is *dromeus*, 'runner'. See Tzifopoulos (1998); Kennell (2013) 53–61; Genevrois (2017) 123–29.

<sup>8</sup> See Craven (2017) 85, 104. Kelly (2012) 275–76 follows Plato's reasoning, but the idea that phalanx warfare could only take place on flat plains, a stereotype based largely on Hdt. 7.9β1, is contradicted by various real battles: Konijnendijk (2018) 72–94.

<sup>9</sup> Genevrois (2017) 13–16.

<sup>10</sup> For the blunting of weapons in mock battles see Pl. *Leg.* 8.830e with Sekunda (1981) 143.

<sup>11</sup> On the *purrichē*, see Ceccarelli (1998). Konijnendijk (2018) 65 cogently argues that dancing the *purrichē* would have had no practical benefit for hoplites. However, for the tactics employed by Cretans, the sort of *purrichē* described at Pl. *Leg.* 815a–b and Eur. *Andr.* 1135–36 would have been eminently useful, as Sekunda (1981) 237 notes. On these passages see Borthwick (1967) = Borthwick (2015) 91–98, with Cairns (2012).

<sup>12</sup> On this much-discussed fragment of Ephoros, see most recently Chaniotis (2005b) 47–48, 54–55; Link (Link 2009); Kennell (2013) 43–51; Seelentag (2015) 446–503; Fisher (2017) 113. On the age at which boys joined *agelai*, Hesychios s.v. ἀπάγγελος: ὁ μὴ δέπω συναγελαζόμενος παῖς, ὁ μέχρι ἐτῶν ἑπτακαίδεκα. Κρήτες.

<sup>13</sup> On mock battles involving stick-fights, Matteo Zaccarini pointed me also to Xen. *Cyr.* 2.3.17–18 and Plut. *Alex.* 31.1–2. Stick-fighting was practised in Crete as early as the Minoan period: Koehl (2022).

One might wish to pass off such passages as part of an idealized imaginary constructed by outsiders; but there are good reasons to take them seriously.<sup>14</sup> Xenophon served in a mercenary army that included Cretan archers; he noted how, under the command of a man named Stratokles, they proved particularly valuable when the Ten Thousand were being harassed by barbarian bowmen during a march through rough country: a situation that called for the Cretan contingent's expertise in skirmishing amid mountainous terrain and skill at chasing down the enemy (*Anab.* 4.2.27–28).<sup>15</sup> Philip V of Macedon used Cretan archers specifically for skirmishing actions, and Livy (deriving his account at this point from Polybios) claimed that they were so swift of foot that they could even keep up with the cavalry (31.35.3, 31.36.8–9, 31.39.12–13). References abound in our historiographical sources to contingents of Cretan mercenary archers serving as light troops in Greek armies of the Classical and especially the Hellenistic period, displaying exactly the kind of skill set that the system of training Ephoros described might be expected to instil.<sup>16</sup> At the end of an exhaustive review of the sources for Cretan mercenaries of the Hellenistic era, Marcel Launey concluded thus: 'Incorporated into a foreign army, the Cretans were not merged into the robust mass of the army – the heavy infantry, the phalanx, the cavalry. From the accounts of campaigns given by historians, it appears that a Cretan unit was a light unit – mobile, perfect for reconnaissance, surprise, harrying, ambushes, night operations'.<sup>17</sup>

The Cretan style of warfare spawned a well-worn stereotype. 'Bow-carrying' (τοξοφόροι) Cretans appear in passing already in Pindar's *Pythian* 5 (39–42) as dedicants of a wooden statue at Delphi. Mnesimachos, a poet of Middle Comedy, refers offhandedly to Cretan arrows as a typical feature of the mayhem of war (*fr.* 7 KA). Kallimachos (*Hymn* 3.81–3) refers to Kydonian bows after the Cretan city of that name, and at *Anth. Pal.* 13.7 (= Callim. *Epigr.* 37 Pf.) presents Menitas of Lyktos' dedication of a bow and an empty quiver to Sarapis with a wry quip: 'the men of Hesperis have the arrows' (τοὺς δ' οἰστοὺς ἔχουσι βέβηται).<sup>18</sup> In another Hellenistic epigram, Antipater of Sidon uses the simile of a Cretan archer shooting straight at his target to characterize a direct and decisive solution to a puzzle (*Anth. Pal.* 7.427). Diodoros (5.74.5) refers to the bow as a characteristically

<sup>14</sup> See *imprimis* the works cited in n.6. We may concede, of course, that the literary sources often generalize, admitting few differences of detail between the various Cretan *poies*.

<sup>15</sup> Unsurprisingly, given Plato's and Ephoros' emphasis on running, over 60 of these Cretans enthusiastically entered the *dolichos* or long-distance run when the returning mercenaries later held games at Trapezous: Xen. *Anab.* 4.8.27. Gunnar Seelentag pointed out to me that the Knossian exile Ergoteles praised in Pind. *Ol.* 5 was also a *dolichos* winner, in 472 BC. Cf. Sekunda (1981) 82–83.

<sup>16</sup> For discussion of the extensive evidence see van Effenterre (1948) 173–200; Launey (1949) 248–86; Willetts (1955) 241–48; Spyridakis (1977); Sekunda (1981) 251–488; Kvist (2001) 67–106; Karafotias (2007); Craven (2017) (the latter includes useful tables of references at pp. 70–81). As Launey (1949) 275 notes, the numerous references we have are probably the tip of the iceberg: 'de combien d'exemples supplémentaires disposerions-nous si l'œuvre de Polybe était intacte?' On Ctesias' claim (*BNJ* 688 F13) that Cretan archers were present at the Battle of Salamis in 480, see Cagnazzi (2003). On the notion that Baitinger type IA5 arrowheads, which have been found widely in the eastern Mediterranean, belonged to Cretan mercenary archers, see Mazis and Wright (2018).

<sup>17</sup> Launey (1949) 279: 'Incorporés dans une armée étrangère, les Crétois ne sont généralement pas fondus dans la masse la plus robuste de l'armée, dans l'infanterie lourde, dans la phalange, pas davantage dans la cavalerie. Des récits de campagne que donnent les historiens, il ressort qu'une troupe crétoise est une troupe légère, mobile, parfaite dans la reconnaissance, la surprise, le harcèlement, les embuscades, les opérations nocturnes'.

<sup>18</sup> The imagined context is North African: Cretan mercenaries were active in the Ptolemaic kingdom (Fischer-Bovet (2014) 160–95); Hesperis is an alternative name for Euesperides, and the dedication to Sarapis is probably concerned with the Alexandrian cult of Sarapis. See further Selden (1998) 307–09. For Cretan scenes in Hellenistic poetry, Chaniotis (1995) 70–72. Vertoudakis (2000) is a veritable treasure trove, especially pages 29–36 (archery), 61–87 (hunting), 101–06 (piracy), 106–12 (lying).

Cretan weapon, and to a tradition that Apollo taught the Cretans its use.<sup>19</sup> At 37.18 he presents one of the most well-crafted vignettes of a Cretan archer in ancient literature; the context is a meeting with L. Julius Caesar, consul of 90 BC:

A Cretan, coming to the consul Julius with an offer of betrayal, said, ‘If through my help you should overcome your enemies, what reward will you give for this service?’ The general said, ‘I will make you a Roman citizen, and you will be honoured in my house’. But the Cretan cracked up in laughter at this remark, and said, ‘Citizenship, among the Cretans, is just a fine-sounding gimmick. For we shoot our bows for profit, and as we range over every land and sea, every arrow of ours is shot for the sake of money. And I have come now for the sake of money, so confer the honours of citizenship upon those who are currently quarrelling over it, and who are buying with bloodshed this squabbled-over gimmick’. The consul laughed and said, ‘When this enterprise comes to pass, I will give you a thousand drachmas’.

As we have seen, this stereotype draws on a real Cretan specialism in archery. But it was not simply a stereotype imposed on Cretans by outsiders. Bow imagery is unusually common on Cretan coins, showing that prowess with the weapon was part of a projected emic Cretan identity, not just an ascribed, etic one.<sup>20</sup> Grave stelae provide further evidence of this, a number of which depict Cretan men as archers.<sup>21</sup> But the best evidence for Cretans emphasizing their shooting skills comes from inscriptions. One example is a Cretan mercenary’s epitaph from the third century BC (fig. 1), currently ensconced in a wall of the Church of the Holy Apostles on the island of Tilos (*IG XII.3 47 = GVI 1811*):

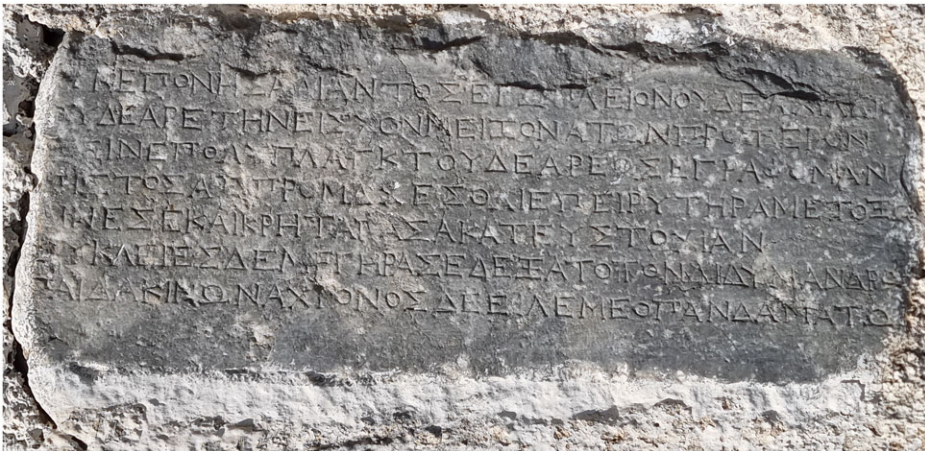


Fig. 1. Cretan sepulchral epigram from Tilos, in the wall of the Church of the Holy Apostles (*IG XII.3 47 = GVI 1811*). Photo courtesy of Ian Hogg.

<sup>19</sup> For an association between Cretan bows and Artemis, see *FD III* 2,138 line 35. Shrine of Artemis the Archer at Gortyn: *IC IV* 72 III 7–9.

<sup>20</sup> For bow/arrow imagery on Cretan coins, Le Rider (1966) pl. I nos 4–7; pl. III nos 14–22; pl. VI nos 17–19; pl. VIII nos 13, 21–24; pl. IX nos 1–6, 18–24; pl. X nos 1–8; pl. XXI nos 7–18; pl. XXII nos 25–31; pl. XXX nos 1–10; pl. XXVI nos 8, 10; pl. XXVIII nos 4–7, 11–18; pl. XXX nos 8, 15; pl. XXI nos 3–6, 10–15; pl. XXXII nos 15–18; pl. XXXIII nos 2, 6, 8–11, 13–15, 19, 21, 23–24; pl. XXXIV nos 5–6, 13–14, 18, 23; pl. XXXV no. 39.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix (supplementary material). On Cretan hunting scenes involving archers, see n.58, *infra*. Detailed discussion of iconography in Sekunda (1981) 199–230.

- 1 [ο]ὐκ ἐπόνησα Αἰάντος ἐγὼ πλεῖον οὐδὲ Ἄχιλλεῖο[ς],  
οὐδὲ ἀρετὴν εἶσχον μείζονα τῶν πρότερον,  
ξεῖνε. πολυπλάγκτου δὲ Ἄρεος ἐγραφόμαν  
πιστὸς αἰεὶ προμάχεσθαι, ἐπεὶ ῥυτῆρά με τόξ[ων]
- 5 [α]ἴνεσε καὶ Κρήτα πᾶσα κατ' εὐστοχίαν·  
εὐκλειὲς δέ με γῆρας ἐδέξατο τὸν Διδυμάνδρο[ν]  
παῖδα Κίμωνα· χρόνος δὲ εἶλέ με ὁ πανδαμάτω[ρ].

I did not suffer more than Ajax or Achilles, Stranger; nor did I have greater virtue than men of former times. But I enlisted under wide-wandering Ares, ever dependable to fight in the forefront of battle, since as a drawer of bows all Crete praised me for accuracy. And honourable old age welcomed me, Kimon, the son of Didymandros. But Time the all-subduer took me.<sup>22</sup>

Another example is this epigram from the sanctuary of Isis and Sarapis at Gortyn recording a dedication of weaponry (which addresses the viewer), from the second century BC (IC IV 243 = Martínez Fernández (2006) no. 6):

- 1 ὁ Κρής εὔρε Πύροος με καὶ ἀμφ' ὤμοις διφά<ρ>ετρον  
τόξον ἐλὼν Ἄρεος ἤπτετο φυλόπιδος.  
εὔρε δ' ἄρα πρόβλημα χροὸς καὶ τεύχος οἴστῶν  
ὁ θρασὺς, Ἐρταίων φέρτατος ἐν προμάχοις,
- 5 ἐξ οὗ πᾶσα φοβεῖ με νέων ὠκύδρομος ἦβη.  
σοὶ δὲ Σάραπι καὶ Ἴσι δῶρον ὑπὸ προδόμῳ  
θῆκε μνημόσυνον με Πύρωσ σοὶ τόνδ' ἐπὶ νίκης  
πολλάκις ἐκ πολέμων κῦδος ἀηράμενος.

The Cretan Pyroos invented me, and having grasped his bow with a double quiver for both shoulders he cleaved to the battle din of Ares. And then he devised a shield of skin and an arrow-case, he the daring one, the bravest of the Ertaians in the forefront of battle; since then the whole swift-running youth of *neoi* fears me. And as a gift to you, Sarapis and Isis, Pyrōs [*sic*] put me under the porch, this memorial to you of victory, since often he carried off glory from wars.<sup>23</sup>

Reality, of course, was more complex than the stereotype allows: Cretans made use of other missile weapons than the bow: Amanda Kelly's excellent recent study of Classical and Hellenistic Cretan sling bullets illustrates yet another missile weapon in the Cretan warrior's kit.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Plato's claim (*Leg.* 625c–d) that Crete was no place for cavalry is belied by a range of sources. Horses and horsemen are a common feature of archaic Cretan art, and provision of cavalry is also mentioned in a Hellenistic treaty between Eumenes II and several Cretan *poleis* (IC IV 179).<sup>25</sup> Cretan horsemanship is captured far

<sup>22</sup> On the final line of this epigram, Douglas Cairns pointed out to me a parallel at Simonides 531.4 *PMG* = 261.4 *Poltera*.

<sup>23</sup> On the meaning of *neoi* see Kennell (2012). *Ertaioi* is a synonym for 'Cretans', not a city ethnic: Bile (1988) 163. On this inscription see Magnelli (1994–1995) 34–40; Martínez Fernández (2006) 73–79.

<sup>24</sup> Kelly (2012). At p. 301 n.48 Kelly identifies the subject of a grave stele relief from Hellenistic Itanos as a javelineer, but I take Lebessi's view ((1971) 500–01 with pl. 517δ) that the warrior is armed with a spear and shield.

<sup>25</sup> Archaic art: D'Acunto (1995); Chaniotis (1991) 98 n.41 (also discussing *hippos* onomastics); Prent (2005) 278, 317, 346, 381, 427, especially 395–97, 490–91. Ephoros (*BNJ* 70 F149 §18) states that unlike the *hippeis* in Sparta, the Cretan *hippeis* own horses; see Willetts (1955) 155; cf. *Pl. Leg.* 834d. See further Sekunda (1981) 166–69.

more vividly, though, in an epitaph from Knossos (IC I viii 33 = Martínez Fernández (2006) no. 4, second or first century BC):

- 1 Θαρσύμαχος Λεοντίω.  
οὐδὲ θανὼν ἀρετᾶς ὄνυμ' ὤλεσας, ἀλλὰ σε φάμα  
κυδαίνουσ' ἀνάγει δάματος ἐξ Αἴδα,  
Θαρσύμαχε· τρανὲς δὲ καὶ ὄψαγόνων τις αἰεῖσει  
5 μνωόμενος κείνας θού[ριδ]ος ἵπποσύνας,  
Ἐρταίων ὅτε μόνος ἐπ' ἠ[νε]μόεντος Ἐλαίου  
οὐλαμὸν ἱπείας ῥήξαι φοιλόπιδ<ο>ς,  
ἄξια μὲν γενέταιο Λεοντίου, ἄξια δ' ἐσθλῶν  
ἔργα μεγαυχίτων μηδόμενος προγόνων.  
10 τοῦνεκ[ά] σε φθιμένων καθ' ὀμήγ<υ>ριν ὁ κλυτὸς Ἄδης  
ἶσε πολιτισσοῦχφ σύνθρονον Ἴδομενεῖ.

Tharsymachos son of Leontios. You did not lose your virtuous name when you died, but the reputation that does you honour raises you up out of the House of Hades, Tharsymachos; and someone of those as yet unborn will sing clearly, recalling that furious cavalry troop when you alone of the Ertaians on windy Elaios broke the troop of the cavalry cry, devising deeds worthy of your father Leontios and worthy of your noble, much-praised forebears. And for that reason, among the assembly of the perished, glorious Hades has enthroned you alongside Idomeneus, protector of the city.<sup>26</sup>

Equally at odds with Plato's stereotype is the plentiful evidence that some Cretans, at least, fought hand to hand.<sup>27</sup> For instance, in 272 BC King Pyrrhos of Epeiros had his horse shot from under him by a Cretan archer (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 29.4), and lost his son Ptolemaios to a Cretan, Oryssos of Aptera. This man, described by Plutarch as ἀνὴρ πλῆκτης καὶ δραμεῖν ὀξύς, 'a swift-footed bruiser of a man', closed with the prince amid the chaos of battle and killed him, presumably with a hand weapon (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 30.4). Interestingly, Plutarch says that he struck ἐκ πλαγίου παραδραμών: that Oryssos, rather than attacking the prince head-on, blindsided him at a run, sprinting in obliquely and catching his victim unawares.<sup>28</sup> A similar case concerns the Argive tyrant Aristippos: when his forces were routed at Kleonai in 235 BC, he fled as far as Mykenai before being run to ground by a Cretan named Tragiskos ('Little Goat'), who slit the tyrant's throat (Deinias of Argos, *BNJ* 306 F5).<sup>29</sup>

Earlier and later evidence fleshes out the picture over the long term. An inscription from Axos, ca. 500, recently joined by Perlman from two previously known but hitherto unassociated fragments, mentions dedications of spearheads as spoils of war.<sup>30</sup> Archaic iconography from Praisos, Prinias and Palaikastro shows various examples of Cretans armed with spears, and finds of armour show that light-armed archers represent only part

<sup>26</sup> For an excellent photograph of this inscription see Kotsonas (2018) 8.

<sup>27</sup> In contrast to Plato, note Ephorus' emphasis on mock battles with fists and iron weapons, and Herakleides' mention of stick-fighting and boxing. For further discussion of heavy arms see van Effenterre (1948) 175–84; Launey (1949) 280; Spyridakis (1977); Sekunda (1981) 169–70; Craven (2017) 86–89.

<sup>28</sup> If, as seems likely, the prince was wearing a helmet, this will have further restricted his peripheral vision and made him vulnerable to Oryssos' attack.

<sup>29</sup> Tzifopoulos (1998) documents the importance of long-distance running to Cretan culture and the astonishing feats of Crete's foremost runners, which makes Tragiskos' pursuit (of about 15 kilometres) wholly credible. See also Sekunda (1981) 81–83.

<sup>30</sup> Perlman (2010); Gagarin and Perlman (2016) A5+6.

of the picture.<sup>31</sup> In the ‘Song of Hybrias’ (PMG 909) the eponymous Cretan warrior boasts that it is his sword, spear and shield that guarantee his privileges and dominion over his slaves.<sup>32</sup> Several centuries later, an epitaph from Gaza, written in elegiac couplets for a Cretan mercenary named Charmadas, boasts of how he had raised up his home city of Anopolis when it was subdued by the enemy spear (SEG 8.269, lines 11–12).<sup>33</sup>

Some Cretans, then, fought with heavy arms; but did they fight in phalanxes? James Whitley has recently drawn attention to the lack of shields in the archaeological record as an indication that they did not.<sup>34</sup> Shields do appear in the literary record, however: witness Hybrias (*supra*); and Xenophon (*Anab.* 5.2.29) mentions Cretan archers who fought among the Ten Thousand carrying bronze-covered shields. Significantly, though, Xenophon uses the term *peltē*, implying a light buckler rather than the larger and heavier hoplite *aspis*; and Hybrias uses the rare term *λαισήϊον*, a hide-covered shield, which he describes as a *πρόβλημα χρωτός*, a shield of skin, the same words that Pyroos later used of his shield (*πρόβλημα χροός*).<sup>35</sup> It is unsurprising that such objects have not survived in the archaeological record. The examples of Pyroos and the Cretans among the Ten Thousand show that Cretan warriors might go into battle armed with both bow and shield.<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Sekunda puts it thus: ‘Cretan archers, unlike other Greek archers, were trained to use the shield alongside the bow, which offered them some protection from enemy missiles, and which allowed them to skirmish as well as to shoot.’<sup>37</sup> As noted above, some Cretans like Hybrias or the warriors depicted in archaic Cretan plaques will have fought differently, favouring shield and spear; however, one ought not to suppose that such shields were necessarily bronze-covered, or that the presence of hoplites *ipso facto* implies phalanxes, rather than heavy-armed warriors fighting as soloists in the archaic manner (on which see *infra*).<sup>38</sup> There is therefore sufficient evidence to show that the Cretans, through particularly noted for their skill with the bow, were all-rounders in the arts of war; but there are good reasons to suppose that the open-order skirmishing tactics which we find

<sup>31</sup> Iconography: see, for example, Lebesse (1976); Driessen-Gaignerot (2011); Whitley (2018) 243. On Cretan armour see Canciani (1970) 125–33; Hoffman (1972); Prent (2005) 383–88; and on the inscribed armour from Afrati, Neumann (1974). On Cretan bronze belly-guards (nowadays called *mitrai*, but not necessarily the same as the item of that name in Homer), Seelentag (2015) 529. Quite what kind of armour the *skuteus* mentioned in an archaic inscription of Eleutherna manufactured is unclear (Gagarin and Perlman (2016), Eleutherna 3, with Chaniotis (1995) 51). Reader II makes the important point that most of the early material shows hoplites, not archers, and asks whether archery was a later development. Two points may explain this pattern without the need to posit a fundamental shift in tactics: (a) in terms of armour, we are probably looking at a matter of survival as the lighter kit of archers does not survive as well archaeologically; (b) in terms of iconography, heavier arms are more prestigious and more likely to be depicted (*cf.* Seelentag (2015) 529). But archery does still occur in archaic iconography: see n.58 (*infra*) and for an early plaque from Gortyn showing an archer, Sekunda (1981) pl. 29.

<sup>32</sup> On the *skolion*’s date, see Page (1965) 65 (any time from the late sixth to the late fourth century); Bile (1988) 156 n.347 (fifth century).

<sup>33</sup> For similar remarks about spears in Cretan epitaphs, *IC* I xvi 48 + SEG 28.479 = Martínez Fernández (2006) no. 15; *IC* II xxiii 22; III iv 39.

<sup>34</sup> Whitley (2009) 284–85: ‘This warfare may not have been of the standard hoplite type. Crete had a reputation for archery, and Cretan equipment lacks one crucial element—the shield. To be sure, votive miniature shields have been found at Gortyn and Praisos, and there are representations of hoplites with shields on the terracotta frieze from Palaikastro. But it is odd that no shield turned up in the Afrati deposit, and no bronze shield has been traced to Crete’.

<sup>35</sup> Mangelli (1994–1995) 37. *Λαισήϊον*: Page (1965) 65.

<sup>36</sup> The insight that Cretan archers normally carried and fought with shields is Sekunda’s: Sekunda (1981) 174–97.

<sup>37</sup> Sekunda (2001) 20–21.

<sup>38</sup> For the Hellenistic period *cf.* *Anth. Pal.* 6.126. Hoplites not necessarily phalanx fighters: Rawlings (2000); van Wees (2004) 166–77; Echeverría (2012). *Aspides* not necessarily bronze-covered: *cf.* *IG* I<sup>3</sup> 354, where some shields are labelled *ἀσπίδες ὑπόχυσλοι*, others *ἀσπίδες ἐπίγαλκοι*. Reader II further pointed me to archaic miniature votive shields from Gortyn (SEG 52.859).



Cretan mercenaries using in our historiographical sources represent the standard Cretan way of war.<sup>39</sup>

Another well-known stereotype of Cretans is that they were liars and tricksters, and writers from Kallimachos to the pseudo-Pauline author of the *Epistle to Titus* and beyond repeated the accusation.<sup>40</sup> Some writers relate specific instances of Cretan duplicity in war. Diodoros (31.45) recounts a Cretan raid on Siphnos where they gained entry to the city by deception, and having pledged to do no wrong, reneged and plundered the city and its temples. During the Lyktian War in the late third century, the Knossians waited until the Lyktians had sent out a force of a thousand men against enemy territory, using the opportunity of their absence to sack Lyktos and enslave its women and children (Polyb. 4.54). In the following century, the Kydonians treacherously seized Apollonia even though it was an allied city, and having killed its men, enslaved the women and children (Polyb. 28.14.5). Livy (42.15; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 489d–e) writes of a Cretan mercenary hired by Perseus of Macedon to assassinate his rival Eumenes II; this Cretan sprang an ambush in a narrow defile at Delphi by rolling boulders onto the king's party below, badly wounding Eumenes. But there is no better example of the Cretan facility for double-dealing and springing traps than Bolis, the mercenary captain who captured the renegade general Achaios and delivered him to Antiochos III (Polyb. 8.15–20). Bolis contrived an elaborate plan, ostensibly to help Achaios escape to safety on a moonless night; Achaios, weighing up his options, decided that Bolis was playing it straight and went along with the rescue. But he was duped, ambushed by Bolis' men and delivered to his enemy in return for a hefty reward; as Polybios (8.19) put it, in thinking he was in control of the situation, Achaios was *πρὸς Κρήτα κρητιζῶν*.<sup>41</sup> Whilst deceit was hardly unusual in Greek warfare, Cretans, such as the archer who approached the consul Julius, seem to have been regarded as particularly expert at it.<sup>42</sup>

Siege warfare was also utilized on Crete, and here local practices aligned with mainland ones. Most Cretan cities were walled by the Classical period; some cities also had forts and watchtowers within their territories, with a particular concentration in the east of the island around the Gulf of Mirabello.<sup>43</sup> Literary sources attest to sieges and the use of siege machinery in Hellenistic times.<sup>44</sup> Archaeological remains complement the picture. Kelly, for instance, notes large numbers of projectile finds discovered along stretches of the wall of Aptera; these probably attest to barrages of missiles used to clear the walls and provide cover for engines and scaling ladders, surely surmounted by more heavily armed warriors of the sort noted above.<sup>45</sup> Even when betraying their own city, Cretans could display characteristic ingenuity: in 67 BC, during the Roman conquest of Crete by Metellus, insiders in Eleutherna betrayed the city by saturating a strongly built brick tower with vinegar during the night, rendering this key strategic point vulnerable to the Roman engines (Cass. Dio 36.18).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Whitley (2009) 284–55; (2018) 227; Link (2014) 170–71; Seelentag (2015) 529. Sekunda (1981) 235–36 makes the ingenious suggestion that the 'Cretan countermarch' mentioned in Asklepiodotos, *Taktika* 10.13–15 involved archers, not hoplites.

<sup>40</sup> Callim. *Hymn* 1.8–9; Polyb. 4.8.11, 6.47.5, 8.19.5; *Anth. Pal.* 7.275, 7.273, 11.371; Diod. Sic. 5.46.3; Titus 1:12; Plut. *Aem.* 23.11, *Lys.* 20.2; Nonnus, *Dion.* 8.117–18; *Suda* κ2407 Adler, s.v. Κρητιζειν. See Perlman (1999) 138–39.

<sup>41</sup> That is, he was 'playing the Cretan' with the genuine article and was well out of his depth.

<sup>42</sup> For deception in Greek warfare see Wheeler (1988); Krentz (2000). On Cretan cunning, Kvist (2001) 124–27.

<sup>43</sup> Coutsinas (2013); the sites and fortifications are usefully tabulated and mapped on pp. 62–63. For non-walled cities, see pp. 292–99, and for the financing of defences, Coutsinas and Stefanaki (2023). See also Craven (2017) 97–101.

<sup>44</sup> Diod. Sic. 16.62–63; Polyb. 4.54–5, 28.14–15, 30.23; cf. Plut. *Cleom.* 21.3 for Cretan archers clearing the streets of enemies once Argos' walls had been surmounted.

<sup>45</sup> Kelly (2012) 288; Craven (2017) 91, 121.

What of violence at sea? ‘The Cretan doesn’t know the sea’, says Ephoros, is a proverb about those who pretend to be ignorant about that which they know thoroughly; and the Cretans did not earn this reputation as peaceful merchants.<sup>46</sup> Ephoros goes on to say that the Cretans in his day had no fleet, true enough if we take this as referring to a publicly owned fleet of large warships. Like those of archaic elites, Cretan warships were small, light, fast and (very probably) privately owned.<sup>47</sup> Diodoros (31.38) describes how in one encounter, small Cretan galleys called *μύδια* (‘mice’) and *τραγώδια* (‘goats’) ran rings around the larger Rhodian vessels sent after them. Ranging by sea in such vessels allowed Cretan pirates, who, as Strabo (10.4.10) noted, were drawn from the same social background as Cretan mercenaries, to strike at settlements across the Aegean, plundering and kidnapping at will.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, some cities contracted *asulia* agreements with Cretan cities, thereby making their territories ‘no-go’ zones for Cretan citizens abroad on the waves in search of plunder.<sup>49</sup> Miletos even contracted agreements with various Cretan cities that guaranteed that they would not buy or sell Milesians as slaves (*IC I viii 6, xxiii 1; IV 161*).<sup>50</sup> Like Cretan archers, Cretan pirates became a literary trope; and eliminating piracy was a key justification for the Roman conquest of the island.<sup>51</sup>

The stereotypes of Cretans as fast-paced archers and sea-raiders contain a good deal of truth, then, though like many stereotypes they tend to overemphasize certain traits and omit all nuance.<sup>52</sup> They probably reflect the style of warfare that Cretans specialized in abroad: foreign paymasters could source heavy infantry and cavalry from various places, but expert archers and skirmishers were less common, and it was for this niche specialism that Cretans were typically hired. However complex war on Crete was, then, when Cretans went abroad, most fought as archers: it was in this guise that Cretan warriors were encountered by the non-Cretans who perpetuated the stereotype. At any rate, a few closing remarks will round off this section of the discussion. One important point to emphasize in relation to recent debates is the level of military expertise among Cretan citizen-soldiers. In most of the Greek world, citizen militias of the Classical era were composed predominantly of amateurs. Plato’s vignette (*Resp.* 556c–e) of a wiry, working-class Athenian standing in the formation beside an overweight rich man provides some sense of the varying quality among Athenian hoplites; but as the vignette indicates, the tougher soldiers were those who were used to hard physical labour. Athens had no formal military instruction for its citizens until the introduction of the *ephebeia* in the later fourth

<sup>46</sup> ὁ Κρής ἀγνοεῖ τὴν θάλατταν: *BNJ* 70 F149, apud Strabo 10.4.16. Most Cretan cities were located inland but maintained links to port settlements on the coast: Coutsinas (2013) 155–56. Of course, the stereotype obscures a more nuanced reality; there were indeed peaceful Cretan merchants: Perlman (1999) 146–51; (2004); cf. *Anth. Pal.* 7.254b, and the regulations for merchant ventures in *IC IV 72 IX 43–54*. For a Gortynian bronze-smelter in Classical Athens, see *JG II<sup>2</sup> 8464* (Louvre inv. MA 769).

<sup>47</sup> The Cretans who attacked Halasarna on Kos ca. 200 BC are described as ἐπιβαλομένων λέμβοις τε καὶ ἄλλοις πλοίοις, ‘attacking with *lemboi* and other boats’ (*SIG<sup>3</sup> 569* lines 18–19). These were typical pirate vessels: Lewis (2019).

<sup>48</sup> On Cretan piracy see Willetts (1955) 241–48; Brulé (1978); Petropoulou (1985) 35–45; Perlman (1999); Kvist (2001) 89–91; Chaniotis (2005b) 134–37; Sekunda (2014). On the sociology of Greek piracy, Gabrielsen (2013) is fundamental. On piracy and the slave trade see Gabrielsen (2003); Lewis (2019). On *sulē* (‘spoils’) as an onomastic element in Crete, Chaniotis (2005b) 137.

<sup>49</sup> Kvist (2003).

<sup>50</sup> Kvist (2001) 33.

<sup>51</sup> Vertoudakis (2000) 101–06, especially on *Anth. Pal.* 7.654. Roman conquest: Flor. 1.3.7; Plut. *Pomp.* 29.

<sup>52</sup> For sensible remarks on Cretan stereotypes, see Kvist (2001) 107–12. It is regrettable that the state of our evidence precludes granular knowledge of local divergences within Crete; for example, cavalry is rather less likely for smaller *poleis* with mountainous *chōrai*, whilst piracy required access to the sea. The evidence discussed above shows broad trends and generally reflects practices across the island, but local divergences should not be ruled out.

century, and even that only involved a couple of years' training.<sup>53</sup> As for Sparta, Roel Konijnendijk has underscored the implications of Xenophon's remark (*Lac.* 11.6–10) that the formation manoeuvres which the Spartan army was able to execute in the field were rudimentary and easily learned: the main advantage that Spartan armies enjoyed in the Classical period was that they practised such manoeuvres whereas their adversaries did not practise formation drill at all (*cf.* Arist. *Pol.* 1338b25–30).<sup>54</sup> Other than that, Spartan training was of a general, not specialized, sort. An emphasis on enduring hunger and exhaustion and the tactical use of deceit were key parts of the *paideia*, and adults kept fit in the gymnasium and by hunting (*Xen. Lac.* 5.8, 6.4); but there is no explicit mention of weapons drill in Sparta.<sup>55</sup> Stephen Hodkinson has, furthermore, pointed out that the Spartan habit of hunting with dogs may have kept citizens fit, but was not a particularly specialized method of training for phalanx warfare.<sup>56</sup>

Crete, however, followed a different pattern. Cretan education as described by Ephoros *did* involve practical military education: forced marches, mock battles and weapons drill, including archery practice, since the bow is only effective if handled by an expert and takes years to master.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the relation between hunting and warfare on Crete must be viewed differently, too: here we have an exact instance of 'transferable skills', since Cretan hunts typically involved venturing on foot into the mountains and bringing down wild goats with the bow, an ideal apprenticeship in the shooting and ambush skills for which Cretan warriors were famed.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, hunting with the bow is mentioned prominently in an epitaph from late Hellenistic Itanos (*IC* III iv 39 = Martínez Fernández (2006) no. 45, first century BC). The first part of the inscription identifies the dead man as Leon son of Thennas and proclaims that 'the Water Nymphs and their companion in the mountains, Echo, seek out your shout and the barking of your hounds, archer' (Νύμφαι δ' Ὑδριάδες καὶ ὀμέστιος οὔρεσιν Ἀχώ, τοξότα δίζηνται σὰν σκυλάκων τε βοάων). Leon then replies (B.1–6):

οὐ δορί με δμα[θέ]ντα [κατὰ κλόνον] ἔκτανε[ν] Ἄ[ρης],  
 φοίνιος ἀντιπάλους εἰς ἔριν ἐρχόμενον,  
 ἀλλὰ Τύχη μ' ἔσφηλε νόσῳ παραδοῦσα κραται[ά]  
 καὶ λείπω θαλάμους ὀρφανικοῦς γονέων,  
 5 κούκέτι τοξοσύναισι χαρεῖς διὰ λισσάδα πέτραν  
 θωῶξω σκυλάκων τερπνὸν ἀγαλλόμενος

Bloodstained Ares did not kill me with the spear: (I was not) laid low in the battle rout while coming to strife with enemies. Rather, mighty Fate toppled me, having given me over to a disease; I leave the chambers of my parents orphaned, and no longer will I cry aloud, taking pleasure in shooting my bow whilst ranging among the bare rocks, exulting in the pleasure of dogs ...<sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> On the amateurism of hoplite militias, Konijnendijk (2018). On the Athenian *epēbeia*, Henderson (2020).

<sup>54</sup> Konijnendijk (2018) 46.

<sup>55</sup> Hodkinson (2006) 130–46; (2020a). On the Spartan education system see Kennell (1995) and Ducat (2006).

<sup>56</sup> Hodkinson (2006) 136; (2020a) 354.

<sup>57</sup> Cretan archery experts were occasionally hired by Hellenistic Athens to train ephebes: Aristokrates of Crete: *IG* II<sup>3</sup> 1.1062 lines 13–16; Sondros of Crete: *IG* II<sup>3</sup> 1.917 lines 28–29 and 71–72.

<sup>58</sup> As discussed in detail in Sekunda (1981) 119–24. The most striking visual evidence includes the goat hunters in the archaic bronze plaques and figurines from Syme Viannou (Lebessi (1985); (2002); Prent (2005) 587–91), the archaic graffiti of goat hunts from Dreros (Marinatos (1936) 279, fig. 44) and the Skordollákia cave (Hood (1974)); and the legends of certain Cretan coins (Le Rider (1966) pl. VIII nos 12–13; pl. XXVI no. 21; pl. XXI no. 1; pl. XXXIII no. 18). Much literary evidence exists, too: see Eiring (2004); Monbrun (2015). Furthermore, wild goat remains are very prominent in the Cretan archaeological record: Whitley and Madgwick (2018). The chronological spread of this material suggests long-term continuities. On the connection between bow-hunting and warfare see *Xen. Cyr.* 1.6.28–29 and 1.6.39–41; *Anth. Pal.* 6.188.

<sup>59</sup> Assertions of prowess in the hunt can also be found in the epitaphs at *IC* III iv 36 and 37.

In sum, Cretan citizen boys were trained more thoroughly in the techniques of warfare, at least, their particular style of warfare, than those of any other Greek region, though the widespread introduction of ephebic training from the fourth century onwards somewhat addressed the disparity.<sup>60</sup>

A second point is the frequency and intensity of warfare on Crete. As Konijnendijk has shown, mainland Greek citizen militias of the Classical period saw battle very infrequently; but when pitched battle occurred, losses could be horrific.<sup>61</sup> Warfare on Crete, though, was proverbially frequent, endemic, even.<sup>62</sup> But absent the massed phalanx, casualties were probably rather lower per encounter. In other words, Cretan citizens probably engaged in (and survived) more violent encounters on average than the hoplites of Athens, Thebes or even Sparta.<sup>63</sup> Thirdly, unlike most Classical armies, where a fairly clear distinction between amateur hoplite militias and professional mercenary forces can be maintained, the number of Cretans who served as mercenaries in foreign wars during the Classical and Hellenistic periods was unusually large.<sup>64</sup> A band of Cretan citizen soldiers taking the field, then, probably included an unusually large number of seasoned fighters. It is no wonder that, seeking to broaden his experience in the art of war, the Achaian *stratēgos* Philopoimen headed to Crete, ‘perhaps the hardest and toughest school of rough-and-ready fighting that the ancient world could afford’,<sup>65</sup> and fought for Gortyn in its local wars, adopting Cretan tactics (Plut. *Phil.* 7.1–2; especially 13.6) which he later put to good use against Nabis (Plut. *Phil.* 14.6).<sup>66</sup> Hunting and endemic *petite guerre* in Crete therefore fostered among citizen soldiers a level of expertise in warfare that exceeded by some margin even that of their Spartan counterparts; ‘since to prefer this weaponry’, as Launey remarked, and ‘this style of combat to that of the other Greeks, and above all to succeed, it was vital to have been born and raised on the great island, to have hunted wild goats in its mountains, to have led a simple, rough life, and fought against other Cretans in the wars of one town against another, ever being reignited’.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>60</sup> For the *ephebeia* see Kennell (2006); Chankowski (2010); Fisher (2017) 119–27; Henderson (2020). Note, however, that this was entered into at a much later age than when Cretan boys entered the public *paideia*, and in general lasted for a much shorter period. Athens’ brief programme of *hoplomachia*, javelin-throwing, archery and catapult-firing ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.3), followed by garrison duty (42.5), will have hardly turned out warriors of Cretan calibre. In writing this I do not mean to imply that Cretan citizens were full-time, professional warriors (at least when they were not abroad as mercenaries). They had their farms and slaves to manage, as well as buying, selling and socializing in the *agora*, participating in assemblies, watching trials and dining at the *andreion*, much like their Spartan counterparts: cf. Hodkinson (2020a): 338–40, 346–48.

<sup>61</sup> Konijnendijk (2018) 141, 178–215.

<sup>62</sup> Chaniotis (2005b) 9–12, 21–22, 44–48, 130–36. Van Wees (2004) 4 is right to reject generalizations about Greek warfare based on Pl. *Leg.* 626a, but, uttered by the Cretan speaker Kleinias, Plato may be articulating what he thought to be a specifically Cretan sentiment. Polybios’ remarks on Crete’s exceptional violence and fractiousness (22.15.1–6; 24.3; 28.14) are echoed in the oath of Dreros (IC II ix 1 = Chaniotis (1996) no. 7; see also Chaniotis (2005b) 46–47). Cf. Livy 37.60.1–7, 41.25.7; Plut. *Mor.* 490b. Craven (2017) 142–88 attempts to explain away this reputation as based on an ‘uncritical’ reliance on fourth-century literary sources and Polybian rhetorical bias. But her rejection of the former is itself based on an uncritical acceptance of Perlman’s arguments (n.5, *supra*): she engages with none of the works (listed in n.6, *supra*) that have countered Perlman’s thesis.

<sup>63</sup> On the limited time spent in the field by Spartan hoplites see Hodkinson (2020a) 343–45. On Cretan assertions of having been in many battles, see IC I xvi 48 + SEG 28.749 = Martínez Fernández (2006) no. 15; IC IV 243.

<sup>64</sup> For the disparity in competence between citizen hoplite militias and professional mercenaries see Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1116b7–8 with Konijnendijk (2018) 63. For the prominence of Cretans as mercenaries *vis-à-vis* other groups, Craven (2017) 46–81 supersedes all previous discussion.

<sup>65</sup> Griffith (1935) 103.

<sup>66</sup> Errington (1969) 27–48.

<sup>67</sup> Launey (1949) 286: ‘Car, pour préférer cet armement, ce genre de combat à celui des autres Grecs, et surtout pour y réussir, il faut être né et avoir vécu dans la grande île, il faut avoir chassé la chèvre sauvage dans ses montagnes, mené là-bas une vie primitive et rude, lutté contre d’autres Crétois dans ses guerres de ville à ville, toujours rallumées’. On these various inter-polis wars, Kvist (2001) 31–39 provides a useful outline.

### III. The historical evolution of Cretan tactics

Why did the Cretans of the Classical and Hellenistic periods fight in a manner so different to that of the mainland Greeks? Much work by military historians has considered the evolution of tactics over the long term, and in particular the timing and causes of the emergence of the hoplite phalanx. Hans van Wees' discussion of the 'Homeric way of war' provides, in my opinion, a robust starting point for understanding the style of warfare practised ca. 700 BC, and from which further developments (including but not limited to the phalanx) can be traced.<sup>68</sup> Despite glamorization of the equipment of the Homeric heroes, exaggeration of their strength and prowess, and focus on their deeds *vis-à-vis* their Trojan opposite numbers (to the detriment of a broader view of the course of battles and the role of non-elite warriors), some clear patterns of practice emerge from the *Iliad*. Homeric warriors fight on foot (though they may have a chariot to bring them to the field, and to help them escape posthaste). Numerous war bands, each constituted by a *basileus* and his *hetairoi*, range at will across the battlefield, the more eager (*promachoi*) vigorously engaging the enemy at the forefront of the battle, the less eager holding back; but it is normal for the Homeric hero to retreat if outnumbered, dashing away to preserve his own life. Heavily armed warriors operate alongside lighter-armed archers; and many heavily armed warriors carry javelins which they cast at their enemies before closing in to fight with them at close quarters. Indeed, there are no distinct divisions specializing in particular forms of fighting, such as the units of heavy and light infantry, archers and cavalry of classical battles. This is the style of fighting described by Archilochos and Kallinos.<sup>69</sup> Looking beyond the battle itself, Homeric warriors engage in a wide range of violent activities: they capture and pillage towns; they engage in night attacks and subterfuge; and when no war is going on, *basilēes* take their *hetairoi* on plundering voyages aboard low, sleek galleys. Van Wees has made a strong case that these texts reflect forms of violence typical of the Archaic era.

What bearing has this on Cretan warfare? Thucydides makes a fundamental point, and one that underscores the importance of taking regionalism seriously both from a synchronic perspective (Greek societies of the late fifth century were a very mixed bag) and a diachronic one (some of these societies had changed a good deal more than others from the kind of society depicted in Homer). He describes war and raiding in early Greek society thus:

Falling upon unwallled *poleis* that were just clusters of villages, they plundered them, and from this they made the bulk of their livelihood, as at that time this practice did not have any shameful connotations but instead conveyed some honourable reputation; and some of the mainlanders illustrate this even today, among whom it is thoroughly creditable to do such a thing, and the old poets likewise ask tidings of voyagers, inquiring if they are pirates, as though they would not ask this question of those who would deny it, and that the questioner would not reproach them for it. They also used to raid one another on the mainland. And right up to the present, many parts of Greece follow the old ways, such as the Ozolian Lokrians, the Aitolians,

<sup>68</sup> The paragraph that follows depends on the evidence and discussion in van Wees (1992), (1994a) and (1994b); I will not repeat the details here for reasons of space. I take it as proven by van Wees' 1994 articles that the view of Latacz (1977), that Homer described actual, Classical-style phalanx battles, is incorrect. Even still, a furious debate rages over when phalanx tactics emerged, with traditionalists arguing for an early 'hoplite revolution' ca. 700–650 BC, and 'heretics' arguing that there is no clear evidence for phalanx tactics before the Persian Wars, and that almost all the evidence shows open-order fighting down to the late sixth century BC. For the heretical view, followed here, see van Wees (1994a); (1994b); (2000); (2004) 166–83; Krentz (2002) 35–37; Rawlings (2007) 52–58; Echeverría (2008) 78–148; (2012); Konijnendijk (2018) 216.

<sup>69</sup> Van Wees (1994b) 141–42; (2000) 146–52; (2004): 172–74.

the Akarnanians and this region of the mainland. These mainlanders continue to carry arms, after the old raider fashion. (Thuc. 1.5)

Certain archaic practices and attitudes therefore lingered on in parts of Greece long after the more ‘advanced’ regions had given them up. Indeed, to describe ‘mainland’ Greek warfare as predominantly a matter of hoplite phalanxes (as I have done above) is rather too selective. The Aitolians also practised the old open-order skirmishing right down to Thucydides’ day, and to great effect too, as the Athenian general Demosthenes’ invasion of Aitolia in 426 shows (Thuc. 3.97–98). The Ozolian Lokrians were armed and fought in the same manner (Thuc. 3.95.3), whilst the Akarnanians excelled at bombarding their enemies with sling-stones (Thuc. 2.81.8). As for raiding and kidnapping, the same ‘raid mentality’, as Vincent Gabrielsen puts it, still existed in Aitolia two centuries after Thucydides’ day, and drove much predatory activity by members of the Aitolian League.<sup>70</sup> Gabrielsen has shown that by the Classical period, two kinds of state had developed in Greece:

In certain states, organized violence had become the absolute monopoly of the central political authority, which accordingly had taken all such activity under its purview, legally restricted its usage to the pursuit of ‘national’ objectives, and claimed for itself the exclusive rights to any material proceeds (*laphyron, leia*) that might accrue therefrom ... By contrast, the central political authority of the Illyrians, the Aitolians, the Cretan city-states and other communities was willing to share the right to exercise violence with the private entrepreneur.<sup>71</sup>

The core regions of southern Greece that occupy centre stage in our historiographical sources had, by Thucydides’ day, undergone a long process of state formation and de-escalation of private organized violence, and are typical of Gabrielsen’s first sort of state; in such states citizens typically did not carry weapons in daily life.<sup>72</sup> Phalanx warfare emerged as part of the long-term shift that produced this sort of state. As Konijnendijk has cogently shown, phalanxes were a practical solution to the problem of deploying a state’s available military-age manpower in war when the vast majority of citizens had little or no experience of armed combat.<sup>73</sup> Far from representing the pinnacle of Greek achievement in the art of killing, phalanxes were a response to the growing unfamiliarity of most southern Greeks with warfare: by bunching together to present a wall of shields and spears, they could mount a formidable challenge to enemies whilst nullifying the problem of individual inexperience. In the phalanx, what counted was collective morale, co-operation and the ability to hold one’s station. Of course, even those states that fielded citizen hoplite militias as their main force also made some use of cavalry, archers and skirmishers; but the key point is that the tactics of the citizen militia in most mainland Greek cities became oriented chiefly towards phalanx fighting.<sup>74</sup>

The Cretan way of war is perhaps best understood as the product of a very different trajectory of historical development. Crete did not undergo the de-escalation in private organized violence characteristic of mainland city states, and is instead a good example of Gabrielsen’s second kind of state. Like the Aitolians, bearing arms remained a Cretan custom.<sup>75</sup> In many respects Cretan warfare in the Classical and Hellenistic periods

<sup>70</sup> Gabrielsen (2013) 137–38; Scholten (2000).

<sup>71</sup> Gabrielsen (2003) 403.

<sup>72</sup> Van Wees (1998); Fisher (2017). Sparta: Hodkinson (2020b) 21.

<sup>73</sup> Konijnendijk (2018).

<sup>74</sup> For other troop types, van Wees (2004) 61–76.

<sup>75</sup> Even in Aristotle’s day, it was a marker of citizen status to own arms (Arist. *Pol.* 1264a) which, according to Ephoros (apud Strabo 10.4.16), were the most valuable gifts. (Nikolaos of Damascus, *BNJ* 90 F103aa2 makes the same claim; but he is obviously dependent on Ephoros.) A late fifth-century law from Gortyn lists arms alongside

resembles the forms of warfare and violence typical of the Archaic age.<sup>76</sup> Like the Homeric war band of a *basileus* and his *hetairoi*, the citizenry of Cretan *poleis* was arranged in *hetaireiai*, bands of *hetairoi*. These *hetaireiai* were formed in part during the public upbringing, by the gathering of poorer citizen boys in an *agelā* led by a wealthier boy. Ephoros (BNJ 70 F149 §21) states that after a kidnapping ritual this leading boy was given special clothing by his older lover, was known as *kleinos* ('renowned') and continued to wear this costume into adulthood, distinguishing him from his companions, all of whom 'graduated' together and apparently joined the older man's *hetaireia*.<sup>77</sup> These *hetairoi* dined together in an *andreion*, and the meal had certain features in common with the Homeric feast, such as sitting rather than reclining, and boys serving the men (however, the special restrictions on portions of food and drink represent a modification of earlier practices).<sup>78</sup> As we have seen, Cretan war bands fought in the old open-order manner and with a mixture of troop types. Their special relationship with archery is probably also an archaic holdover, for skill with the bow was quite common across Greece in the Archaic era but declined during the Classical period. It may be this that explains why archery, though found to a limited degree right across the Classical Greek world, became associated so strongly with Crete: here the old ways not only persisted, but were actually institutionalized as a mandatory aspect of the citizen upbringing, whilst the local habit of goat-hunting in the mountains provided extra practice in hitting a living target.<sup>79</sup> (The story is not one of straightforward continuity, though, for Cretans innovated by developing shields for archers to use in battle; in Homer, archers do not carry shields but may share the shield cover provided by a heavily armed companion (e.g. *Il.* 8.269–72).) Finally, Cretan piracy (in essence, raids led by elite galley owners along with their *hetairoi*) was another holdover from the Archaic age, when such activities were widespread in Greece, though they increasingly disappeared from the more 'advanced' states after the late sixth century. It is this strong continuity with the Archaic era, out of kilter with changes in core regions of the Greek mainland, that justifies Gunnar Seelentag's periodization of a 'long Archaic period' on the island, overlapping with the Late Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic eras of the rest of Greece.<sup>80</sup> That is not to say that Cretan society remained fossilized: the Gortynian laws, particularly the Great Code, show an ongoing process of legislative tinkering, not a one-off enactment followed by cultural homeostasis; and during subsequent centuries the island underwent changes in terms of dialect, epigraphic habit, dress, religion, art and interstate relations both at home (for example,

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several other crucial items that are forbidden to be pledged as security for a loan: *IC IV 75B* = Gagarin and Perlman (2016) *G 75*; cf. Hekataios of Abdera, *BNJ 264 F25*. Reader II believes these [ὄ]πλα ἀνδρὸς ἐλευθέρου ὅττ' ἐνς πόλεμον to be hoplite arms, but I see no difficulty in viewing [ὄ]πλα as an unspecific reference to any sort of kit needed for war, and the law states ὅττ' ἐνς πόλεμον because the meaning of [ὄ]πλα is broad and requires specification (there are indeed agricultural tools mentioned later in the document); the subsequent words πλάν φέμας κ' ἀπιδέμας can be understood as parts of the war kit that are excluded from this list (see the commentary of Gagarin and Perlman (2016), who must be right about the meaning of πλάν): this supports a generic and broad meaning for [ὄ]πλα. Ephoros (*BNJ 70 F149 §16*) mentions military clothes, shoes and weapons together; obviously one can go into battle without the former two, but not without the latter, hence the exclusion of the former two from this list of necessities.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Sekunda (1981) 162–66.

<sup>77</sup> Link (2009); Seelentag (2015) 454–55, 495–500.

<sup>78</sup> Seelentag (2015) 387–97.

<sup>79</sup> Archery skills widespread in archaic Greece: Davis (2013). Cf. Perlman (2010) 100 n.87: 'The ubiquity of dedicatory arrowheads in the Archaic period perhaps belies any earlier particular association of Cretans and archery'. On the other hand, the figure of Meriones in the *Iliad* may represent a very early sign of Crete's association with archery: Kotsonas (2018).

<sup>80</sup> Seelentag (2015) 16–17. Cf. Chaniotis (2018) 1–9, who refreshingly argues for a 'long Hellenistic period' stretching down to the time of Hadrian to encompass cultural continuities in much of the Greek world. Such shake-ups of time-honoured periodizations are a worthwhile reminder of their modern, heuristic nature.

the establishment of a Cretan *koinon* and new interstate judicial arrangements) and abroad. All the same, certain structural features of sociopolitical organization and their attendant values persisted in Crete when they were abandoned elsewhere.<sup>81</sup>

#### IV. Violence and values

This brings us full circle to our initial discussion of Dosiadas and Polybios and the subject of values. I have argued so far that, although Polybios' judgement of Cretan conduct in war (and peace for that matter) is largely negative, his description of Cretan tactics is accurate and is corroborated by many other sources, not least the Cretans themselves in inscriptions, coins and funerary reliefs. Were the Lyktians, then, simply deluding themselves in thinking that this sort of conduct was courageous?

Let us consider some unwarranted aspects of Polybios' critique. First, it is selective. As noted above, it is simply not the case that warfare on the Greek mainland only meant phalanx warfare in pitched battle: even states like Athens used archers, skirmishers and cavalry; warfare involved much more than pitched battle; and as Peter Krentz has shown, no Greek state was above the use of dirty tricks in war.<sup>82</sup> What set the Cretans apart was that they never (as far as we know) fought as hoplites in massed phalanxes, but in the open order of the archaic battle, and they were particularly accomplished as archers, at deception, night attacks and ambushes. Yet Polybios' Achaians had only adopted Macedonian-style phalanx tactics in the days of Philopoimen (Plut. *Phil.* 9); and as Frank Walbank pointed out, the 'Cretan' tactics and qualities that Polybios so disparaged could equally be applied to Polybios' hero Aratos.<sup>83</sup> Besides, Polybios' own sense of the 'good old days' of pre-arranged, gentlemanly phalanx warfare (13.3.2–6) does not correspond to any real, documented phase of Greek warfare, and his point that such good manners linger on among Roman commanders may in part be a way of flattering his Roman friends.<sup>84</sup>

What is really at play here, though, is the ethical correlate of those diverging regional trajectories of historical development noted earlier. Classical Athens is a case in point. Since the phalanx's effectiveness depended on hoplites holding their place in the line, the faculty of so doing became a moral virtue. Athenian ephebes swore in their oath to hold their station in the phalanx: 'I will not disgrace the sacred weapons, nor will I leave the man beside me, wherever I am stationed in the line' (RO 88, lines 6–8: οὐκ αἰσχυνῶ τὰ ἱερὰ ὄπλα οὐδὲ λείψω τὸν παραστάτην ὅπου ἂν στετήσῃ). To do so counted as *lipotaxion* ('deserting the formation'), and was liable to prosecution under the *graphē deilias*: those found guilty suffered total loss of citizen rights and were debarred from the sacred area of the *agora* and from participating in public rituals.<sup>85</sup> Looking back at archaic poetry with this classical Athenian outlook could pose problems: one of the criticisms that Kritias levelled at Archilochos was that he had, by his own admission, thrown away his shield, but Kritias failed to recognize that in an era of open-order skirmishing, Archilochos had committed no great fault (88B44 DK; Archilochos *fr.* 5 and 98 West).<sup>86</sup> Likewise, Plato (*Leg.* 4.706b–c) could make sniffy comments about the courage of Athenian *epibatai* (naval hoplites) who fought as soloists and utilized hasty tactical retreats, though perhaps this relates to Plato's general discomfiture with anything to do with the proletarian Athenian navy.<sup>87</sup> In sum, states that practised phalanx fighting, even as just part of a more complex

<sup>81</sup> Some vestiges even survived into the Imperial era: Guizzi (1999).

<sup>82</sup> See n.42, *supra*.

<sup>83</sup> Walbank (1957) 457.

<sup>84</sup> Van Wees (2004) 115–17; Konijnendijk (2018) 76–94.

<sup>85</sup> Harris (2013) 217–21. See also Canevaro (2019) 198–99.

<sup>86</sup> Van Wees (2000) 147 and 160 n.35.

<sup>87</sup> Zaccarini (2015); Herzogenrath-Amelung (2017).



military that involved skirmishers, archers, cavalry, raids and deception, could always congratulate themselves for the moral virtue of holding the formation alongside their citizen comrades, and reproach those who fought differently (Pl. *Lach.* 190e; cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1115b–1117b).<sup>88</sup>

Like Kritias looking askance at Archilochos, viewing Cretan tactics from a Polybian perspective only shows us an etic, outsider's view, and not the emic value system of the Cretans themselves. For such a viewpoint, we might consider the possibility that Cretan martial values, like their tactics, had not changed much from those of the Archaic age; and indeed the evidence dovetails neatly at all points in support of this hypothesis. The brave warrior in Homer is not one who holds the line alongside his comrades in a phalanx formation, but the *promachos*: the man who stays at the forefront of the open-order fray, risking his neck to do the utmost damage to the enemy. This is exactly what the archer Kimon claims to have done in his epitaph from Tilos (*IG* XII.3 47 line 4: προμάχεσθαι), and exactly what Pyroos claims to have done in his dedication from Gortyn (*IC* IV 243 line 4: ἐν προμάχοις). Presumably the latter's double quiver enabled him to spend twice as long at the forefront, inflicting twice as much damage before he had to retreat and 'reload'.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, Oryssos of Aptaera (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 30.4) and Tragiskos (*BNJ* 306 F5) are excellent examples of *promachoi*, running great risks in chasing down and killing enemy leaders in the midst of their own troops. Even to envisage carrying out such feats required remarkable confidence and audacity, founded on experience and formidable athletic prowess. These men evidently were not πλάγιοι ταῖς ψυχαῖς, but cast in the mould of the Homeric warrior Meriones, a Cretan who fights at the forefront and is prodigiously skilled with the bow and spear (*Il.* 5.65–67; 13.567–75, 650–55; 23.850–83).<sup>90</sup>

There are many other direct correspondences. In Homer (*Il.* 12.310–21) and Archilochos (*fr.* 2 West), warriors justify their social pre-eminence by their prowess with arms. So does Hybrias in his *skolion*. The various Cretan behaviours which Polybios reproaches (running away in the face of a phalanx charge, the predilection for ambushes, night actions and trickery) likewise, from an archaic viewpoint, create no contradiction with Cretan assertions of courage. The Cretans behaved thus against a phalanx charge *not* because they had wavering, irresolute souls, but because they had always fought in open order: to stand one's ground singly against a massed charge would have been perfectly idiotic, and as open-order fighters the Cretans never developed the idea of holding one's position in a phalanx as a moral virtue in the first place. Ambushes, far from being a coward's tactic, are regarded in Homer as particularly dangerous: when springing an ambush, it was seen as a mark of extreme bravery to be the first to fall upon the enemy (*Il.* 13.276–87; *Od.* 11.523–30). Successful ambushes were a thing to brag about (*Od.* 13.256–71; 14.217–21, 459–502), and

<sup>88</sup> For discourse on whether or not the bow is a coward's weapon (an idea already aired in Homer: see *Il.* 11.385–95, but cf. Krentz (2000) 173) see Eur. *HF* 140–69, with the counter-argument at 188–203. At any rate, the argument that archers are cowards because they hang back and fire arrows at infantry from a safe distance does not follow for war on Crete, where the enemy could fire back, and accurately too. Sekunda (1981) 96–100, 107–11, Kvist (2001) 79–80 and Craven (2017) 111–12 show that Cretans used relatively large, heavy arrowheads whose ability to cause serious haemorrhaging necessitated a trade-off in terms of range. These were the weapons of close-range skirmishers, not those of archers such as late medieval longbowmen, who could fire on their targets from long to medium range. On Cretan bows, see Sekunda (1981) 86–96.

<sup>89</sup> It should be noted that *promachos* terminology was widely used in Hellenistic military epitaphs, and although in Homer it relates to the open-order fray, it could equally be applied later to front-rank fighters in ordered formations. My point here is not that the term only ever applies to open-order fighting (which would be false), but merely that the Cretan usage aligns with the Homeric. See more generally Barbantani (2014). According to Hesychios (s.v. πρόμαχος), seven-day-old Cretan children were given a ritual barley cake called a *promachos*. Socialization for war apparently began early. See Sekunda (1981) 139.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Kvist (2001) 109–12; Kotsonas (2018).

night actions were dangerous, too, requiring skill to pull off successfully (*Il.* 10.295–579, 21.35–40).<sup>91</sup>

As for tricks (*doloi*), Odysseus often openly boasts of his pre-eminence as a trickster (*Od.* 3.118–23, 4.19–20, 11.405): it is his ruse that breached the walls of Troy after ten years of inconclusive fighting (*Od.* 8.493–95), and even before that he had penetrated Troy disguised as a badly beaten slave (*Od.* 4.240–64). He plays a similar trick on Polyphemos (*Od.* 9.316–470), and his eventual triumph over the suitors is brought about through trickery (*Od.* 21.228–380). And no wonder, since he was the grandson of Autolykos, who ‘surpassed all men at thievery and oaths’ (*Od.* 19.396).<sup>92</sup> Homeric ethics place high value on intelligence and ingenuity. The Cretan reputation for lying and deceit can therefore be explained in terms of archaic cultural continuities and need not be explained away as some rhetorical fantasy or ethnic prejudice with no basis in reality. One of Odysseus’ most remarkable traits is his ability to extemporise stories as and when needed, all the while maintaining his poker face and suppressing any emotions that could give the game away (*Od.* 13.254–55, 19.203; cf. 4.265–89).<sup>93</sup> The Cretan mercenary Bolis exercised the same talent for deception in arranging the capture and betrayal of Achaïos whilst stringing him along with the story that he was really arranging his escape. Note again that the men who were honoured in the messes of Lyktos were those accomplished either in war or sagacity (*BNJ* 458 F3, §6: κατὰ πόλεμον ἢ κατὰ σύνεσιν), whilst in Plato’s day the Cretans had a reputation for thoughtfulness (πολύνοια: *Pl. Leg.* 641e). And various Cretan epitaphs stress virtues of the mind.<sup>94</sup> Again, the point is not that Cretans played tricks in war and mainlanders did not; tricks occurred in Greek warfare more generally. The point is that the Cretans made more frequent and ingenious use of this kind of warfare than others, and openly admired such tactics.

What of the alleged Cretan obsession with acquisition and plunder? It is worth pointing out that this stereotype is not groundless ethnic prejudice either, but is confirmed by the Cretans’ own words; for in a number of Cretan interstate treaties where joint military ventures are envisaged, the correct division of booty appears as a leitmotif. The earliest example of this is the fifth-century treaty between Knossos and Tylissos (*IC* I viii 4 = *ML* 42B); but the issue remained a preoccupation throughout the Hellenistic period.<sup>95</sup> One Cretan term for slave, *klārōtās* (‘allotted person’), was derived from the practice of allotting captives as war booty.<sup>96</sup> To understand the Cretan concern with booty, we need to place it first in its proper diachronic context, and secondly in its local Cretan context.

Regarding the former point: archaic elite society across Greece, as represented not just by Homer and Hesiod but by a wide array of lyric poetry, was in general highly acquisitive; if Cretan culture during the Classical and Hellenistic periods displayed strong continuities in values with the Archaic period, then obsession with material gain ought not to come as a

<sup>91</sup> Krentz (2000) 172; cf. Haft (1984) 298; Kvist (2001) 109. Cretan ambushes as continuity of Homeric practice: Sekunda (1981) 161–64.

<sup>92</sup> Anti-deceit clauses are particularly common in Cretan treaties: Wheeler (1984) 264–65; Chaniotis (1996) 77.

<sup>93</sup> Haft (1984) and Kotsonas (2018) draw links between Odysseus’ bowmanship and false stories told in the guise of a Cretan, and the later reputation of Cretans as archers and liars.

<sup>94</sup> *IC* III iv 36 lines 3–4: Damatrios of Itanos was ἐσ[θλὸν ἐν ὀπλοῖς κ]αὶ βουλᾷ. *SEG* 39.972: Kletonymos of Lato was a veritable eighth member of the canon of sages; *IC* II xxiii 22 praises Theagenidas of Polyrrhenia’s exceptional σωφροσύνα; in *IC* III iii 50 the same virtue is ascribed to Panson of Hierapytna; *IC* III iv 39: the deceased is described as Λέων Θέννα κούρος ἀρπυραδέος.

<sup>95</sup> See *IC* I xix 1 (Chaniotis (1996) no. 11); III iii 3B (Chaniotis (1996) no. 26); III iii 4 (Chaniotis (1996) no. 28); IV 180 (Chaniotis (1996) no. 46); IV 182 (Chaniotis (1996) no. 44); *SEG* 26.1049 (Chaniotis (1996) no. 59); *IC* I xvi 5 (Chaniotis (1996) no. 61). See also the treaty between Rhodes and Hierapytna, *IC* III iii 3A.

<sup>96</sup> Luraghi (2009) 267. Reader II writes that I am certainly wrong on this point, arguing (a) that the *klārōtai* were a dependent farming population like the Helots, and (b) that the etymology derives from the *klāros* to which they were bound. I agree with point (a); but the Helots were slaves, too (Lewis 2018: 125–46), and there is no evidence that they were ‘bound to the soil’. Further discussion in Lewis (forthcoming a, b).

surprise. Alain Duplouy has shown how elite status required the continual investment of resources and energy in various competitive contexts: prowess in war, of course, but also in athletics, display via dress, votives, symposia, showy sacrifices, weddings and funerals, as well as gift-giving to secure choice marriages and the best *xenia* ties.<sup>97</sup> This constant demand for resources meant that status competition drove acquisitive behaviour; but this could rebound upon the *dēmos* of one's own community if leading men were tempted to steal, intimidate, take bribes in legal processes or raid a neighbouring community whose reprisals might fall on the *dēmos* rather than on the perpetrator.<sup>98</sup> The *dēmos* in turn might riot or lynch bad actors among the elite, whose proper role was to lead and protect the community, not exploit or endanger it.<sup>99</sup> The result was a highly unstable mix, always vulnerable to entropy and *stasis*. The way this problem was surmounted across the Greek world varied.<sup>100</sup> At Athens, Solon aimed to achieve the archaic ideal of symbiotic yet unequal relations between the *dēmos* and the elite through processes of institutionalization that limited social mobility whilst placing the economic and political rights of the *dēmos* on a much firmer footing than it had previously enjoyed; this later evolved into the democratic system of the Classical era.<sup>101</sup> Despite some setbacks, Athens' system proved remarkably stable.<sup>102</sup> In Sparta, the various forms of elite display that had so destabilized archaic society were restricted or taken over by the state: funerary ostentation was banned, dress became uniform and commensality was regulated through the mess system.<sup>103</sup> Sparta, though, did little to interfere with the underlying economic structures of society, and therefore behind the uniform, austere veneer lurked many of the old problems of mushrooming inequality and acquisitiveness, exacerbated by a rule that removed the citizenship of anyone who failed to maintain their mess payments (Arist. *Pol.* 1271a26–37). 'Love of wealth, and it alone', so the saying went, 'will be the downfall of Sparta' (Diod. Sic. 7.12.5). Prescient words: Sparta's system proved less durable, and its nosedive into decline, already well underway long before Leuctra in 371, proved irreversible.<sup>104</sup>

Cretan cities achieved stability over the long term with greater success than the Spartans, and without losing their thoroughly elitist government. We owe much to German historical sociology, especially the work of Stefan Link, Hans-Joachim Gehrke and Seelentag, for clarifying the inner workings of the classical Cretan *poleis*.<sup>105</sup> Like Sparta, the Cretans gave up the antisocial practices of conspicuous consumption; indeed, the Cretans were quite possibly decades ahead of the Spartans in initiating austerity.<sup>106</sup> Symptotic pottery and fine votives disappear from the Cretan archaeological record at the end of the seventh century, to be replaced with plain wares; messes come in, and with them serious restrictions on drinking and feasting, a public *paideia* and so forth. Unlike the Spartans, whose elite continued to foster private *xenia* ties abroad, Cretan elites accepted the usurpation of this by the state: *xenoi* were hosted at public expense, and private entertainment of foreigners was banned.<sup>107</sup> Sparta made few redistributive demands on its

<sup>97</sup> Duplouy (2006); cf. Seelentag (2014) 125–26.

<sup>98</sup> Van Wees (2008).

<sup>99</sup> Van Wees (2008). On the political role of the *dēmos*, Allan and Cairns (2011); Seelentag (2014) 124–28.

<sup>100</sup> Seelentag (2014) 123–24; cf. 135: 'We need to bear in mind that the development from the Homeric Epics to the polities of Central Crete was by far not the only one possible. Of course, other Greek societies went different ways. But the epics depict an early-state society from which many different roads of development were possible'.

<sup>101</sup> Canevaro (2022).

<sup>102</sup> Simonton (2017).

<sup>103</sup> Van Wees (2017).

<sup>104</sup> Hodkinson (2000) *passim*.

<sup>105</sup> For example, Link (1994); (2001); (2002); (2008); (2009); (2014); Gehrke (1997); Seelentag (2013); (2014); (2015).

<sup>106</sup> Seelentag (2015) 37–52; Whitley (2015); cf. van Wees (2017). Cretan austerity is not just detectable archaeologically; it was noted by other Greeks: Leukon fr. 5 KA; Ephoros BNJ 70 F149.

<sup>107</sup> Sparta: Hodkinson (2000) 337–52. Crete: Link (2014) 173–74; Seelentag (2015) 291–95.

elite's wealth, letting it hoard lucre in peace while inequality mushroomed and the citizenry dwindled in number. In Crete, the elite sacrificed this privilege and allowed a system of redistribution where citizens typically paid a tithe of their harvest, the elite's large surpluses therefore being placed at the service of the *dāmos*, whose leisure was thus funded.<sup>108</sup> This 'aristocratization of the *dāmos*', as Seelentag puts it, fostered social cohesion among citizens whilst legitimizing elite dominance in politics.<sup>109</sup> Where, then, in Crete was there an outlet for status competition among citizen males? This drive was never nullified: rather, it was channelled into personal prowess at the racetrack, at feats of arms and those feats of intelligence that enabled warriors to succeed against a wily enemy.<sup>110</sup>

This also explains the predilection for booty and material wealth: in a society where the chief arena for status competition is war, and where booty is shared out proportionally among combatants, plunder is a proxy for bravery, skill and intelligence. It is the material correlate of the values inculcated into Cretan citizens from boyhood. And it is not dissimilar to what we find in the *Iliad*, where the row over booty that sets the plot in motion is about far more than mere material goods, but what they say about a leader's worth, merits, deserts and rank relative to others.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, in a society such as that of the Cretan *poleis*, where elite wealth was placed at the service of the *dāmos*, acquisitiveness allowed one to accumulate monetary capital that could be translated into political capital. In this respect, Crete was similar to Athens, where ambitious men typically virtue-signalled about how many liturgies they had undertaken on behalf of the people in order to stake a claim to political power.<sup>112</sup> But there was a major difference: in Athens and Sparta the state absorbed all war booty into the public coffers; the same was true of the Achaian League.<sup>113</sup> Not so in Crete, where booty appears to have been shared out among combatants in the old archaic manner.<sup>114</sup> Such structural differences from the 'advanced' kind of Greek state were reflected in values and behaviours, and drew the ire of writers like Polybios.<sup>115</sup>

This helps to explain the prominence of Cretans in foreign mercenary service in the Classical and especially the Hellenistic period: however much poverty or overpopulation may have pushed Cretans into mercenary service, the prospect of material gain and the status this could translate into at home pulled them into it, too.<sup>116</sup> And it helps to explain the higher levels of violence in Crete. In a world where the avenues for status competition were heavily restricted, violence, whether directed at foes at home or the enemies of foreign paymasters, enabled Cretan men to jostle for status in the honour arena of their

<sup>108</sup> Gehrke (1997) 39, 41; Link (2014); Seelentag (2015) 374–443.

<sup>109</sup> Seelentag (2014) 135; (2015) 374–443.

<sup>110</sup> Gehrke (1997) 35.

<sup>111</sup> Allan and Cairns (2011) 113–21. Cf. van Wees (1992) 299–310. See also the remarks of Chaniotis (2005b) 135–36.

<sup>112</sup> See Harris (2013) 387–99 for a conspectus of passages from the orators.

<sup>113</sup> Sparta: Hodkinson (2000) 169–70. Athens: Pritchett (1971) 85–92. Achaian League: Polyb. 5.94.9 with Pritchett (1971) 87.

<sup>114</sup> Brulé (1978) 106–15, regarding the treaties cited in n.95, *supra*; Chaniotis (2005b) 135–36; Lewis (forthcoming a).

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Polyb. 2.2: the Aitolians are on the brink of capturing a town, but the general's term of office may expire first; he argues that since all the work was done during his term, he, not his successor, ought to have the honour of distributing the booty and having his name inscribed upon armour dedicated to the gods. Cf. Pritchett (1971) 98–100; note the trend in most 'advanced' mainland *poleis* of *dekatai* being dedicated under the name of the state, not individuals.

<sup>116</sup> On poverty and overpopulation there is much debate: cf. Brulé (1978); Petropoulou (1985); Chaniotis (1996); (2005b) 132; Kvist (2001); Karafotias (2007); Craven (2017).

choosing, whether that was their natal polis or indeed the whole island.<sup>117</sup> This fractiousness could of course rebound on Cretan *poleis* to their own disadvantage: not only did they face the threat of annihilation by or subordination to rival *poleis* in the rough-and-tumble neighbourhood of their own island; Cretan towns might also be ruptured by *stasis* caused by inter-tribal rivalry, but also by age-group rivalry, such as the Gortynian *stasis* of the late third century, where the citizenry split between the *neōteroi* (who favoured alliance with Lyktos) and the *presbuteroi* who held political power (and favoured alliance with Knossos), an episode that ended in a bloodbath (Polyb. 4.53).<sup>118</sup> The issue of age is particularly germane, because with the older citizens dominating politics, the range of ways in which younger men could gain status was even more restricted.<sup>119</sup>

We may conclude with some observations on courage, the problem with which we began. On one recent view, ancient Greek courage was only possible in a democratic context; in oligarchies like Sparta and the Cretan cities, but also in ‘Homeric’ society, behaviour was fuelled by irrationality and the primitive impulses of traditional Mediterranean masculinity enforced by shame.<sup>120</sup> As Douglas Cairns and Mirko Canevaro have shown, though, such societies were far more sophisticated than that: the individual’s duty to himself was always in tension with his duty to the community; values of honour and shame were fully internalized; and correct action was the subject of rational deliberation and reflection, both internally and in dialogue with others.<sup>121</sup> The Spartans, Cretans and Athenians all implicitly agreed on what courage was: acting for the good of the community in the face of personal danger, experiencing fear and proceeding in full knowledge of this after due consideration.<sup>122</sup> What differed cross-culturally between these different Greek societies was the value system that set the goals towards which the faculty of courage was applied. The Athenian value system viewed bravery in terms of phalanx warfare among citizen militias fighting for their homeland. But the way of war in Crete was different, and Cretans granted status and fame for actions that were no longer seen as decent in the more ‘advanced’ parts of Greece. Status warriors of the archaic stamp, then, remained at large in the eastern Mediterranean right down to the days of the Roman conquest.

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<sup>117</sup> On honour arenas, Rabbás (2015). All Crete as honour arena: *SEG* 8.269 (also noting that the deceased was honoured by the kings of Egypt); *IG* XII.3 47; *IC* I viii 33 and IV 243; II x 19. Polis as honour arena: *IC* I xvi 48 and *SEG* 28.749 = Martínez Fernández (2006) no. 15; *IC* II xxi 2; II xxiii 22; III iv 36; III iv 37; III iv 38; III iv 39; III iv 42; III iv 43; *SEG* 39.972; Martínez Fernández (2006) no. 19. Unspecific references to the fame of the deceased: *IC* I xvi 49; II v 52; II xxiii 20; III iii 50; III iv 41. Probably the most honoured men in Crete’s epigraphical record are the Itanian brothers Damon, Phaidon and Ammonios, who jointly received a hero cult: *IC* III iv 38. The most gushing and flamboyant epitaph, though, is Exakon’s: *IC* III iv 37.

<sup>118</sup> Tribal *stasis*: Seelentag (2013) 345–52. Age-based *stasis*: Chaniotis (2005b) 44–45; Kennell (2012) 223–24. Subordinate *poleis*: Perlman (1996).

<sup>119</sup> Kennell (2013) 42–61; Seelentag (2015) 212–30.

<sup>120</sup> Balot (2014) 245–46.

<sup>121</sup> Cairns (2011); Canevaro (2019).

<sup>122</sup> Canevaro (2019) 194.

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