Saaif Ahmed

Author: Hanson, Western Way of War, part II.

Reflection: The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece Part II

Ancient Greece has always been a topic that I loved to explore, understand, and analyze. Many aspects of modern life would not be the same, or simply not exist, with Greek civilization. One of those aspects of modern life would be the way we wage war with each other. That is why Victor Davis Hanson has decided to analyze battle in ancient Greece and show just how much the modern world depends on the past. While the first part began to analyze the simple concept of warfare in Greek society, Part II delved deeper into the physical and emotional effects of war.

This section of the book contained many facts that I did not know about Ancient Greek warfare. Most people know about Greek battles from the works of Homer and Plato. It is interesting to note the distinction between the glorified tales of victory in stories, and the harsh, grueling struggle that was actual war in Ancient Greece. Prior to reading, I was unaware of the intensive struggle that was wearing the armor as a Greek hoplite. It amazes me how inefficient the armor was for the Ancient Greeks considering their advancements in mathematics and science. However, Hanson was able to use this idea to show that the desire to make lighter yet stronger armor came from the Greeks. I was also unaware of the presence of the elderly in the ranks of hoplites. Usually, people hear tales of young boys going off to war in ancient times. Hanson then connected this idea to how it provided a sub-conscious motivation for soldiers to take the battle, and the larger war, seriously.

Hanson was able to clearly state, and support his arguments in this section of the book. Many claims were made such as Greek infantry being ready to flee at a moment’s notice, and elderly providing soldiers with motivation. All of Hanson’s claims were well supported and explained in the end, however. Hanson utilized historical records and quotes from Greek military leaders to support his arguments and provide examples. In addition, he used analyzations of ancient pottery that a consensus of scholars agreed upon. The foundation for his argument during Part II of this book was solid.