Saaif Ahmed

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

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

This part served the role of two conclusions. Not only did Hanson use it to describe the final part of warfare, but he also used this part to conclude his argument. In this section of the book, Hanson discusses the concept of the aftermath of war, and concludes his argument connecting ancient Greek warfare to western warfare. People talk about the price of war, and the first costly item would be human life.

Aftermath of warfare in general was something that I thought I was comfortable with. After reading this portion of the book I realized that the aftermaths of ancient warfare were much more complex than I had imagined. The first thing that I learned would be the sheer size and speed of Greek hoplite encounters. Tales of war in works by Homer always seemed to be long, drawn-out clashes between factions. In reality, according to Hanson they were an all-out and chaotic clash that ended relatively quickly. The next idea that was new to me was the sheer number of casualties. Hanson included records of Greek leaders describing the field of battle littered with corpses of men. The statistics that Hanson included were staggering to me. The fate of the wounded in battle was something that I was familiar with, but constantly overlook. Hanson made it very clear that death did not stop when the battle was over. Countless others died from unrecoverable wounds and disease. Hanson took these ideas and his previous arguments to create his epilogue section.

There was very little new information presented in the epilogue. It was an ordinary conclusion to the book and Hanson’s argument. However, one key difference that was in the epilogue was a clear explanation as to how the values and traditions associated with war in ancient times influence the traditions of modern warfare. The epilogue tied up the loose ends and allowed Hanson to finalize conclusions to prove his argument, and even synthesize a follow up argument with regards to nuclear warfare.

The evidence for Hanson’s description of the aftermath of ancient warfare was well implemented into the argument. Every claim that was presented was supported by numerous forms of evidence, from Homer’s poems to records of military leaders. Hanson’s usage of quoting poetry to describe specifically the aftermath of war was an excellent addition to the argument. The poems allowed for the reader to better visualize what truly happened immediately after a battle ended and what would follow. The epilogue was a synthesis of all of Hanson’s arguments and built upon by other solid forms of evidence throughout the book. Overall, this part was well founded and developed.