



## G. The Aristocratic Warrior

*The close connection between political privilege and military service is evident at the very beginning of classical Greek history and literature in the Iliad. In this work Homer depicts the societies of both the Greeks and the Trojans as dominated by a warrior elite of great landowners he calls "heroes" and "kings." These aristocratic warriors claimed to be descendants of the gods, and, because of their central role in battle, they alone had the right to take an active role in the governance of their communities. This relationship between military function and socioeconomic and political position is placed in a positive light in this speech, assigned the Lycian hero Sarpedon.<sup>11</sup>*

### 1. THE WARRIOR IDEAL

Still the Trojans and brave Hector would not yet have broken down the gates and the great bar, had not Zeus turned his son Sarpedon against the Argives as a lion against a herd of horned cattle. Before him he held his shield of hammered bronze, that the smith had beaten so fair and round, and had lined with ox hides which he had made fast with rivets of gold all round the shield; this he held in front of him, and brandishing his two spears came on like some lion of the wilderness, who has been long famished for want of meat and will dare break even into a well-fenced homestead to try and get at the sheep. He may find the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks with dogs and spears, but he is in no mind to be driven from the fold till he has had a try for it; he will either spring on a sheep and carry it off, or be hit by a spear from some strong hand—even so was Sarpedon fain to attack the wall and break down its battlements. Then he said to Glaucus son of Hippolochus, "Glaucus, why in Lycia do we receive especial honor as regards our place at table? Why are the choicest portions served us and our cups kept brimming, and why do men look up to us as though we were gods? Moreover we hold a large estate by the banks of the river Xanthus, fair with orchard lawns and wheat-growing land; it becomes us, therefore, to take our stand at the head of all the Lycians and bear the brunt of the fight, that one may say to another, 'Our princes in Lycia eat the fat of the land and drink the best of wine, but they are fine fellows; they fight well and are ever at the front in battle.' My good friend, if, when we were once out of this fight, we could escape old age and death thenceforward and for ever, I should neither press forward myself nor bid you do so, but death in ten thousand shapes hangs ever over our heads, and no man can elude him: therefore let us go forward and either win glory for ourselves, or yield it to another."

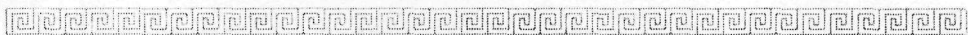
*The real (and sometimes arbitrary) power that the archaic warrior aristocrats could exercise over the rest of their society by virtue of their military preeminence is vividly expressed in the scolon, or drinking song, ascribed to a Cretan warrior named Hybrias.<sup>12</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> Homer, *Iliad* 12, lines 290–328. From *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Samuel Butler (London, 1914).

<sup>12</sup> From Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 15.695–696.

## 2. THE WARRIOR AND SOCIETY: THE DRINKING SONG OF HYBRIAS

My great wealth is my spear and sword and fine animal hide shield, the defense of my flesh. For it is with this that I sow, with this that I reap, with this that I tread out the sweet wine from the grape. Because of this I am called lord of slaves. As for those who do not dare to bear spear and sword and fine animal hide shield, the defense of flesh, they all bend their knee in fear and do me reverence, addressing me as lord and great king.



### H. The Hoplite Revolution and the Citizen Soldier

*The link between community leadership and the achievement of personal glory in battle evident in Sarpedon's speech was severed in the seventh century B.C. with the adoption of the phalanx tactics typical of hoplite warfare by the poleis of the Greek mainland. Composed of anonymous masses of similarly armed soldiers, the phalanx was the ideal military expression of the communal ideal of the polis.*

*The earliest literary evidence for the redefinition of the relationship between the military and the community is provided by the poem of the mid-seventeenth-century B.C. Spartan poet Tyrtaeus. In this poem Tyrtaeus clearly states for the first time the idea that the willingness to endure the horrid reality of hoplite battle was the primary obligation of a citizen. Tyrtaeus expresses this idea in negative terms by highlighting the scorn of the community for a coward.<sup>13</sup>*

#### 1. THE REALITY OF BATTLE

It is a fine thing for a good man to fall in the front line fighting on behalf of his country; but it is a grievous fate for a man to leave his city and rich fields and wander begging with his dear mother, aged father, small children, and wedded wife. For he will be met with hostility by those to whom he comes, humbled by need and awful poverty. He shames his family and ruins his noble beauty, and every form of disgrace and evil follows him. If, therefore, there is no concern or respect or regard or pity for a wandering man, let us fight with all our heart for this land and let us die for our children without ever a thought for our lives. Make the heart in your chests great with courage and do not hesitate to fight with the enemy.

O Young men, stand beside each other and fight. Do not begin shameful flight or fear. Do not leave behind, fallen to the ground, the old men whose knees are no longer agile, for this, indeed, is disgraceful, that an old man, already white haired and gray of beard, lie fallen in the front line, breathing out his brave soul in the dust while holding his bloody genitals in his dear hands. It is a disgraceful sight and one foul to see: his naked flesh. But for a young man all is in order while he has the beautiful bloom of beloved youth. While he is alive, he is admired by men and desired by women and beautiful when he falls in the front line. So let each man set his feet firmly on the earth and wait, biting his lip with his teeth.

<sup>13</sup> Tyrtaeus Fragment 10. From *Elegy and Iambus*, Vol. 1, ed. J. M. Edmonds (Cambridge, 1931).



**Figure 1.5** Departure scenes were common subjects on many Greek vases. Here a hoplite with shield, greaves, helmet, and spear takes his leave of an elderly man, perhaps his father. Warrior departing. Red-figure column crater, ca. 470 B.C. By permission of the Ashmolean Museum.

*The positive side of the hoplite ideal is illustrated in this selection, where the Athenian statesman Solon offers the Lydian king Croesus the case of the Athenian Tellus as the exemplar of the idea that a happy life is one that ends well: Tellus died in battle defending Athens, received from his fellow citizens the honor of a civic funeral, and was survived by sons who would fill his place in the citizen body.<sup>14</sup>*

## 2. A GOOD CITIZEN: TELLUS OF ATHENS

28. Croesus afterwards, in the course of many years, brought under his sway almost all the nations to the west of the Halys. The Lycians and Cilicians alone continued free; all the other tribes he reduced and held in subjection. They were the following: the Lydians, Phrygians, Mysians, Mariandynians, Chalybians, Paphlagonians, Thynians, and Bithynian Thracians, Carians, Ionians, Dorians, Aeolians and Pamphylians.

29. When all these conquests had been added to the Lydian empire, and the prosperity of Sardis was now at its height, there came thither, one after another, all the sages of Greece living at the time, and among them Solon, the Athenian. He was on his travels, having left Athens to be absent ten years, under the pretence of wishing to see the world, but really to avoid being

<sup>14</sup> Herodotus, *The History of the Persian Wars* 1.28–31 (selections). From *The History of Herodotus*, Vol. 1, trans. George Rawlinson (New York, 1859–1860).

forced to repeal any of the laws which, at the request of the Athenians, he had made for them. Without his sanction the Athenians could not repeal them, as they had bound themselves under a heavy curse to be governed for ten years by the laws which should be imposed on them by Solon.

30. On this account, as well as to see the world, Solon set out upon his travels, in the course of which he went to Egypt to the court of Amasis, and also came on a visit to Croesus at Sardis. Croesus received him as his guest, and lodged him in the royal palace. On the third or fourth day after, he bade his servants conduct Solon over his treasures, and show him all their greatness and magnificence. When he had seen them all, and, so far as time allowed, inspected them, Croesus addressed this question to him, "Stranger of Athens, we have heard much of your wisdom and of your travels through many lands, from love of knowledge and a wish to see the world. I am curious therefore to inquire of you, whom, of all the men that you have seen, you consider the most happy?" This he asked because he thought himself the happiest of mortals; but Solon answered him without flattery, according to his true sentiments, "Tellus of Athens, sire." Full of astonishment at what he heard, Croesus demanded sharply, "And wherefore do you deem Tellus happiest?" To which the other replied, "First, because his country was flourishing in his days, and he himself had sons both beautiful and good and he lived to see children born to each of them, and these children all grew up; and further because, after a life spent in what our people look upon as comfort, his end was surpassingly glorious. In a battle between the Athenians and their neighbors near Eleusis, he came to the assistance of his countrymen, routed the foe, and died upon the field most gallantly. The Athenians gave him a public funeral on the spot where he fell, and paid him the highest honors."

31. Thus did Solon admonish Croesus by the example of Tellus, enumerating the manifold particulars of his happiness. . . .

32. . . . Croesus broke in angrily, "What, stranger of Athens, is my happiness then, valued so little by you, that you do not even put me on a level with private men?"

"Croesus," replied the other, "you asked a question concerning the condition of man, of one who knows that the power above us is full of jealousy, and fond of troubling our lot. A long life gives one to witness much, and experience much oneself, that one would not choose. . . . For yourself, Croesus, I see that you are wonderfully rich, and the lord of many nations; but with respect to your question, I have no answer to give, until I hear that you have closed your life happily. For assuredly he who possesses great store of riches is no nearer happiness than he who has what suffices for his daily needs, unless luck attend upon him, and so he continue in the enjoyment of all his good things to the end of life.

*On the other hand, a man's inability to fulfill the warrior role was always considered grounds for potentially excluding him from the ranks of the full citizens, as can be seen in this selection, where the fourth-century B.C. Athenian historian and essayist Xenophon claims that, unlike farmers, tradesmen cannot be good citizens because the conditions of their work render them unfit for hoplite service.*

### 3. ONLY FARMERS CAN BE GOOD CITIZENS<sup>15</sup>

v.—All this I relate to you (continued Socrates) to show you that quite high and mighty people find it hard to hold aloof from agriculture, devotion to which art would seem to be thrice blest, combining as it does a certain sense of luxury with the satisfaction of an improved estate, and such a training of physical energies as shall fit a man to play a free man's part. Earth, in the first place, freely offers to those that labor all things necessary to the life of man; and, as if that were not enough, makes further contribution of a thousand luxuries. It is she supplies with sweetest scent and fairest show all things wherewith to adorn the altars and statues of the gods, or deck man's person. It is to her we owe our many delicacies of flesh or fowl or vegetable growth; since with the tillage of the soil is closely linked the art of breeding sheep and cattle, whereby we mortals may offer sacrifices well pleasing to the gods, and satisfy our personal needs withal.

Earth, too, adds stimulus in war-time to earth's tillers; she pricks them on to aid the country under arms, and this she does by fostering her fruits in open field, the prize of valor for the mightiest. For this also is the art athletic, this of husbandry; as thereby men are fitted to run, and hurl the spear, and leap with the best.

For myself, I marvel greatly if it has ever fallen to the lot of freeborn man to own a choicer possession, or to discover an occupation more seductive, or of wider usefulness in life than this.

But, furthermore, earth of her own will gives lessons in justice and uprightness to all who can understand her meaning, since the nobler the service of devotion rendered, the ampler the riches of her recompense. One day, perchance, these pupils of hers, whose conversation in past times was in husbandry, shall, by reason of the multitude of invading armies, be ousted from their labors. The work of their hands may indeed be snatched from them, but they were brought up in stout and manly fashion. They stand, each one of them, in body and soul equipped; and, save God himself shall hinder them, they will march into the territory of those their human hinderers, and take from them the wherewithal to support their lives. Since often enough in war it is surer and safer to quest for food with sword and buckler than with all the instruments of husbandry.

But there is yet another lesson to be learnt in the public school of husbandry—the lesson of mutual assistance.

"Shoulder to shoulder" must we march to meet the invader; "shoulder to shoulder" stand to compass the tillage of the soil. Therefore it is that the husbandman, who means to win in his avocation, must see that he creates enthusiasm in his workpeople and a spirit of ready obedience; which is just what a general attacking an enemy will scheme to bring about, when he deals out gifts to the brave and castigation to those who are disorderly.

Nor will there be lacking seasons of exhortation, the general haranguing his troops and the husbandman his laborers; nor because they are slaves do they less than free men need the lure of hope and happy expectation, that they may willingly stand to their posts.

<sup>15</sup> Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 5–6.10 (selections). From *The Works of Xenophon*, Vol. 3, trans. H. G. Dakyns (London, 1890).

It was an excellent saying of his who named husbandry "the mother and nurse of all the arts," for while agriculture prospers all other arts alike are vigorous and strong, but where the land is forced to remain desert, the spring that feeds the other arts is dried up; they dwindle, I had almost said, one and all, by land and sea.

*Soc.* Well, then, we agreed that economy was the proper title of a branch of knowledge, and this branch of knowledge appeared to be that whereby men are enabled to enhance the value of their houses or estates; and by this word "house or estate" we understood the whole of a man's possessions; and "possessions" again we defined to include those things which the possessor should find advantageous for the purposes of his life; and things advantageous finally were discovered to mean all that a man knows how to use and turn to good account. Further, for a man to learn all branches of knowledge not only seemed to us an impossibility, but we thought we might well follow the example of civil communities in rejecting the base mechanic arts so called, on the ground that they destroy the bodies of the artisans, as far as we can see, and crush their spirits.

The clearest proof of this, we said, could be discovered if, on the occasion of a hostile inroad, one were to seat the husbandman and the artisans apart in two divisions, and then proceed to put this question to each group in turn: "Do you think it better to defend our country districts or to retire from the fields and guard the walls?" And we anticipated that those concerned with the soil would vote to defend the soil; while the artisans would vote not to fight, but, in docile obedience to their training, to sit with folded hands, neither expending toil nor venturing their lives.