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THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ART OF WAR AND THE MILITARY FUNCTIONS OF GREEK DIVINITIES

The divine functions in Greek religion have come to be regarded as static, invariable elements. The origins of particular local and Panhellenic cults have generally been sought in the most ancient times, demonstrating the continuity of their notional forms. It is well known that the Greeks ascribed to individual divinities the ability to manifest power in a specific domain, within a specific territory and in a specific manner¹. However, if we examine the structure of the world of the Hellenic gods, it turns out to be intentionally imperfect, as is particularly visible in the domain of war. It is found that, according to Greek notions, an enterprise of military nature is engaged in sometimes by *all the gods* (*pantes theoi*)² or by local divinities whose temples happen to be located in the vicinity of the battlefield³. The most interesting fact seems to be that the divinities or mythological figures might reflect the real changes taking place in Greek military custom. Artemis and the Amazons are two examples which clearly illustrate such a dependency. The transformations in the field of warfare that took place at the end of the archaic period altered existing notions concerning those figures.

It is hard to deny that Artemis is extremely strongly linked to the Persian wars. Indeed, surviving literary evidence indicates that in a military context that was the first occasion on which the goddess fired arrows. The Hellenes claimed that Artemis helped them to defeat the Persians, engaging in almost all of the great battles. This was certainly not merely the assistance of a local divinity. The Greeks attributed their victory at Marathon to Artemis Agrotera⁴. The grateful Athenians venerated the goddess at Agrai on 6th Boedromion every year at least until the second century AD, the celebrations having a

¹ E.g. Homer, *Iliad* V, 428–430, Hesiod, *Theogony* 885, Euripides, *Hippolytus* 1327–1330, Plato, *Critias* 109 B–E, Plutarch, *On Tranquility of Spirit* 12, Lucian, *Charidemus* 10, Lucian, *Astrology* 22.

² E.g. Homer, *Iliad* IV, 14–19, VIII, 1–27, VIII, 444–451, Hesiod, *Theogony* 8, 64.

³ E.g. Herodotus, *The Histories* 9, 61 & 9, 65, Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* 4, 116.

⁴ Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3, 2, 11–12, Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens* 58, *Scholia on Aristophanes' Knights* 660, Plutarch, *On the Malice of Herodotus* 27, Aelian, *Miscellany* 2, 25, Julius Pollux, *Onomasticon s.v. Ares* 8, 21, *Inscriptiones Graecae* (IG) II 2 1006, 8–9, 58, 1008, 7, 1011, 7, 1028, 8, 1029, 6, 1030, 5–6, 1040, 5–6; the shrine at Agrai: Pausanias, *The Description of Greece* 1, 19, 6.

markedly military setting¹. The Athenians themselves regarded Artemis Agrotera (the Huntress) as primarily a Spartan divinity, since it was to her the Spartans offered a goat as *sphagia* immediately prior to battle², although it is hard to establish how old this custom was³. It is said that from the plunder at Marathon there was raised a temple to (Artemis) Eukleia⁴. The Athenians offered to Artemis Proseoa a military votive offering together with the dedication of thanks placed on a temple column in connection with the battles at the Artemision⁵. At Salamis the Greeks were assisted by Artemis Mounichia⁶. Themistocles raised a temple to Artemis Aristoboule⁷. Between the battles of Salamis and Plataea, Artemis Soteira defended the land of the Megarians against the Persians⁸. A surviving epigram ascribed to Simonides, dedicated to the warriors of Megara, mentions a temple to Artemis *wielding a bow* (Ἀρτέμιδος τοξοφόρου τέμενος)⁹. In a mythological military context Artemis appears several times in the literature of the 5th century BC¹⁰. From a later period quite numerous items of information have survived concerning the military epiphanies of the goddess and the epigrams and inscriptions of a military nature which were dedicated to her¹¹.

Some researchers claim that the military cult of Artemis is older than the Persian wars, while others claim that the link between the goddess and war is superficial. All of them perceive in Artemis an eternal ruler of the uninhabited, and therefore dangerous, border territories, and on that basis link the divinity with military crisis – fighting getting out of control¹². It does not seem,

¹ P. J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia*, p. 650, W. Burkert, *Homo Necans*, p. 65, n. 31, W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, Part. III, pp. 174–175, M. H. Jameson, *Sacrifice Before Battle*, pp. 209–214, J. D. Mikalson, *Herodotus and Religion in the Persian Wars*, p. 30.

² Xenophon, *The Constitution of Lacedaemonians* 13, 8, Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4, 2, 20, Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 22, 4, Aristophanes, *Knights* 660–662, M. H. Jameson, *Sacrifice Before Battle*, pp. 209–210.

³ Surviving evidence comes from the classical period.

⁴ Pausanias, *The Description of Greece* 1, 14, 5.

⁵ Plutarch, *Themistocles* 8, Simonides XXIV, ed. D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Oxford 1962.

⁶ Herodotus, *The Histories* 8, 77, Plutarch, *On the Glory of the Athenians* 7, 349 F–350 A, Pausanias, *The Description of Greece* 1, 36, 1, Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromateis* 1, 24, 163, 1–4, *Inscriptiones Graecae* (IG) II 2 1011, 16, W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, Part III, pp. 176–177.

⁷ Plutarch, *Themistocles* 22.

⁸ Pausanias, *The Description of Greece* 1, 40, 2–3 & 1, 44, 4.

⁹ Simonides XVI, ed. D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Oxford 1962.

¹⁰ Bacchylides, *Epinikion* 5, 123, Pindar frg. 198/174 = Pausanias, *The Description of Greece* 7, 2, 7, Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes* 148, Aeschylus, *Suppliants* 1031, Euripides, *Phoenissae* 109–111 & 150–153.

¹¹ Epiphanies in battles, see: W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, Part III, pp. 35–37, Plutarch, *Aratus* 32, 1–3, B. Latysev, *Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini Graecae et Latinae*, St. Petersburg 1885–1901 (IOSPE) I, 2, 344, W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, Leipzig 1915–1924 (SIG), 3, 867, epigrams: *The Palatine Anthology* 6, 97, 6, 128, 6, 127, 9, 534, inscriptions: W. Dittenberger, *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* (OGIS), Leipzig 1903–1905, 18 (Egypt), *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Leiden 1923– (SEG), XXXV 1477 (Ikaros, Arabian Gulf), Artemis as *Mistress of* [Cretan?] archers – Callimachus, frg. 786, 1, ed. R. Pfeiffer, Oxford 1949.

¹² See P. Ellinger, *Le gypse et la boue*, P. Ellinger, *Les ruses de guerre d'Artémis*, P. Ellinger, *La légende nationale phocidienne*, J.–P. Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals*, pp. 195–206 & pp. 244–257, F. de Polignac, *Cults, Territory, and the Origins of the Greek City-State*, p. 46, I. Solima, *Era, Artemide e Afrodite in Magna*

however, that the evidence of Artemis' military activity prior to the period of the Persian wars is significant enough to consider it inexplicable by the potential engagement of all divinities in military conflict. This is confirmed by literary evidence, which tells us more than archaeological sources. It is true that Homer mentions Artemis as taking part in battles¹, just as it can be accepted that the formulae of Homer and Hesiod relating to all of the gods do not exclude this goddess from fighting². However the scene from the *Iliad* in which Hera deprives Artemis of her bow and arrows, pointing her to a place way behind that of Hera herself in the military hierarchy, does not provide evidence of the goddess's military potential³. Artemis did not come to help Skamandrios in battle, although she taught him the art of hunting⁴. The epithet *Agrotera* (ἀγροτέρη), which appears only once in Homer's poetry, may be an interpolation⁵. In Homer's *Hymn to Artemis*, composed at the end of the 7th or beginning of the 6th century BC, the goddess is described as *scattering arrows* (ἰοχέαιρα), but not in a military context⁶. Alcaeus is not aware of the military function of the goddess⁷. Anacreon speaks only of Artemis observing the valiant inhabitants of Magnesia⁸. This original conviction that Artemis is not among the divinities strongly intervening in the world of warfare can also be found in Lucian, who in a simplified manner describes the division of functions between Athena (the art of war) and Artemis (hunting), with the remark that Artemis conceded precedence to Athena in military matters⁹. How, then, is it possible to explain this complex picture of the divine functions?

It seems justified to link the notions of the goddess's military nature with the changes taking place in the field of warfare at the time of the Persian wars. Surviving evidence indicates that the introduction of a separate formation of lightly armed warriors took place in the Greek world in the period of the Persian wars¹⁰. Until that time, warriors armed with bows, slings and stones formed an integral part of the army, fighting in a compact mass alongside soldiers equipped with shields, spears and swords. Not only did the archaic Hoplite model of battle not exclude the use of long-range projectiles, but they even played a significant role in battle¹¹. Iconographic presentations from that

Grecia ..., pp. 392–402, S. G. Cole, *Landscapes, Gender, and Ritual Space* ..., pp. 198–201, R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, pp. 400–402.

¹ Homer, *Iliad* XX, 39.

² Homer, *Iliad* VIII, 5–10, Hesiod, *Theogony* 666–667.

³ Homer, *Iliad* XXI, 479–496.

⁴ Homer, *Iliad* V, 49–53.

⁵ Homer, *Iliad* XXI, 471; I. R. Danka, *Pierwotny charakter Apollina i Artemidy*, pp. 75–76.

⁶ *Homeric Hymn* 27, 2, 11.

⁷ Alcaeus 304, ed. E. Lobel & D. L. Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*, Oxford 1955.

⁸ Anacreon 3 (348), ed. D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Oxford 1962.

⁹ Lucian, *Charidemus* 10.

¹⁰ H. van Wees, *Greek Warfare. Myths and Realities*, pp. 61–65 & pp. 166–183, P. Krentz, *Fighting by the Rules*, p. 30 & pp. 34–37.

¹¹ H. van Wees, *Greek Warfare. Myths and Realities*, pp. 166–183.

period show figures of Greek warriors with combinations of elements of armour: helmet, shield, breastplate and bow¹. According to surviving accounts, a contingent of foot archers (from Athens) first appeared at Plataea in 479 BC², although Aeschylus describes archers on the ships taking part in the battle of Salamis a year earlier – at Psyttaleia near Salamis the Greeks fired at the enemy with a hail of arrows *from taut bows* (τοξικῆς τ' ἄπο θώμιγγος ἰοὶ προσπίτνοντες ὄλλυσαν)³. Herodotus reports that there were no riders or archers at Marathon⁴. It is nonetheless known from various sources that the Athenians progressed to mobilizing slaves, as is demonstrated by their graves, surviving until the times of Pausanias⁵. It can therefore be assumed that all types of arms were in use, and that the lightly armed formations played a greater role than is implied by the sources, which idealize battle⁶. After the period of the Persian wars lightly armed formations were in widespread use in the Greek states, although they did not obtain significance in military ideology, quite the reverse – bows, stones and slings were regarded as weapons inappropriate to a Hellenic warrior, through typical of foreign armies and the poor (a bow and arrows cost half the price of a shield and spear)⁷. The information, recorded in the works of Strabo and Polybius⁸, that the Greeks did not use long-range projectiles probably originate with the 4th-century historian Ephorus, fearing the dangers coming from the use of the new weaponry of catapults⁹. A prohibition on the use of long-range projectiles is supposed to have been placed on a column of the temple of Artemis (Amarynthia).

The ambiguous attitude to the *unarmed* (*aoploi*), as the Greeks called warriors who were not Hoplites, means that Artemis was seen rather as a divinity of war, not particularly the patron of archery divisions or lightly armed formations. The links between the goddess and armies of archers are revealed in mythology in association with the Amazons, who appear in the classical literature in the role of female archers. Iconographic depictions dated to approximately 500 BC show Artemis in the company of Amazons¹⁰. This is chronologically consistent with the first literary mention, by Pindar, who is supposed to have written that the Amazons raised a temple to Artemis of Ephesus during an expedition against Athens¹¹. Other iconographic evidence from the late 6th and early 5th centuries BC indicates that from the symbolic

¹ P. Krentz, *Fighting by the Rules*, p. 29.

² Herodotus, *The Histories* 9, 22, 60, P. Krentz, *Fighting by the Rules*, p. 30.

³ Aeschylus, *Persians* 454–464.

⁴ Herodotus, *The Histories* 6, 112, 2.

⁵ Pausanias, *The Description of Greece* 1, 32, 3–5, 7, 15, 7 & 10, 20, 2.

⁶ H. van Wees, *Greek Warfare. Myths and Realities*, p. 180.

⁷ H. van Wees, *Tyrans, Oligarchs and Citizen Militias*, p. 63, F. Lissarrague, *L'autre guerrier ...*, p. 20.

⁸ Strabo, *Geography* 10, 1, 12, Polybius, *The Histories* 13, 3, 2–6.

⁹ E. Wheeler, *Ephorus and the Prohibition of Missiles*, pp. 157–182.

¹⁰ J. Blok, *Early Amazons ...*, p. 314.

¹¹ Pindar frg. 198/174 = Pausanias, *The Description of Greece* 7, 2, 6.

standpoint it was war that encroached on the territory of hunting, not the other way round. Around 520 BC the Hoplite arms (shield, helmet, greaves, sword) appear in depictions of deer and wild boar hunts, even though they could not have performed any practical function¹.

Vernant, describing the manner in which Artemis acts, indicates that the goddess disoriented the fighters, surprised them, sowed panic, blinded them or placed them in darkness². This is not inconsistent with the functions of lightly armed formations, which were used to break the enemy's ranks, destroy the enemy's fields and hold the enemy army back at mountain passes. Forces with light weaponry constituted a significant threat during civil wars and riots³.

At the end of the archaic period there were also changes in notions concerning the Amazons. Iconographic evidence shows that, at first, the Amazons were generally ascribed Greek weapons. When an Amazon was depicted fighting a Hoplite, sometimes it is only her white skin that enables a researcher to distinguish the woman from the heavily armed Greek warrior⁴. The Amazons appear in the same thematic context as Hellenic fighters. They prepare for or engage in battle: carrying shields and helmets, wearing greaves, carrying off fallen comrades, mounting horses or riding chariots⁵. Regardless of the uncertain origin and multidimensional meaning of the myth of the Amazons⁶, we should most certainly reject the simple dependence of the birth of the myth on the Persian wars – the impulse for the barbarization of the clothing of the female warriors and the creation of the tale of their expedition to Greece world could not have come from the fighting between the Greeks and the Persians. As early as c. 530 BC, and maybe somewhat earlier, Greek painters began to depict the Amazons with elements of oriental weaponry: the Scythian bow, Thracian shield, pointed headwear, trousers, and later the battleaxe⁷. The Amazon invasion was probably described in the *Theseid*, dated in principle to the end of the 6th century BC⁸. Consequently there must exist another reason why the Amazons gradually lost their Greek character. It is

¹ J. M. Barringer, *The Hunt in Ancient Greece*, p. 21.

² J.-P. Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals*, p. 203.

³ Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens* 1321 a, V. D. Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece*, pp. 19–25, H. van Wees, *Tyrants, Oligarchs and Citizen Militias*, p. 63 & pp. 65–66.

⁴ J. Blok, *Early Amazons ...*, p. 407, A. Lindblom, *The Amazons: Representations of Male or Female Violence?*, p. 69.

⁵ L. Hardwick, *Ancient Amazons – Heroes, Outsiders or Women*, p. 29, J. Blok, *Early Amazons ...*, p. 395.

⁶ E.g. W. B. Tyrrell, *Amazons Customs and Athenian Patriarchy*, W. B. Tyrrell, *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking*, P. duBois, *Centaur & Amazons*, J. Blok, *Early Amazons ...*, K. Dowden, *The Amazons: Development and Functions*, L. Hardwick, *Ancient Amazons – Heroes, Outsiders or Women*, T. Hölscher, *Feindwelten – Glückswelten*.

⁷ B. Gräf in: Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Stuttgart 1894–1980 (RE), 1, 1984, 1773, P. Devambez in: *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC), 1981, 1, 1, 637, J. Blok, *Early Amazons...*, pp. 407–408, T. H. Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece*, p. 125, K. Dowden, *The Amazons: Development and Functions*, p. 104, L. Hardwick, *Ancient Amazons – Heroes, Outsiders or Women*, p. 29, A. Lindblom, *The Amazons: Representation of Male or Female Violence?*, pp. 69–70, *passim*.

⁸ W. B. Tyrrell, *Amazons Customs and Athenian Patriarchy*, p. 1216, K. Dowden, *The Amazons: Development and Functions*, p. 102.

notable that the process of barbarization of depictions of the Amazons corresponds chronologically to changes in military custom in the Greek world.

As van Wees has shown, between 530 and 500 BC the Hellenes broke with the tradition of carrying arms in public places, just as the custom of exhibiting weapons on the walls of the household lost its importance¹. Undoubtedly the elimination of arms from public life was a gradual process, and they disappeared slowly during the 6th century BC. At the beginning of that century men still carried spears with them, these replacing the sword that had been exhibited since Homer's times². In the Western colonies, between the 7th and 5th centuries BC, laws were introduced to prohibit appearing with weaponry at assemblies, in the bouleuterion and at the agora. It remains an open question whether such prohibitions existed within the Greek *poleis*³. One way or the other, appearing with weapon in hand at the agora in the 5th century BC was regarded as a battle alarm. The exhibiting of arms in peacetime (*sidērophoria*) was considered a Barbarian custom. Clear proof of this is provided by the accounts of Thucydides and Aristotle⁴, who reported that the Greeks *carried iron* in ancient times, when they had not yet emerged from barbarism. Thucydides states that the custom was maintained in the outer regions of Hellas⁵.

The Amazons are undoubtedly closely connected with weaponry, and not only in iconography. There are few literary accounts where in the context of the Amazons there is no mention of arms. This can be summed up in a short formula – there is no Amazon without weapons. Moreover, the warrior women can also be associated with burial customs, which is not surprising, since the Greeks very often depicted their death. The oldest mentions of the Amazons relate to their graves in Troas⁶. Later many of them were said to be buried within Hellas⁷. This is probably connected not so much with the heroic tradition as with the custom of placing elements of weaponry in graves. In central Greece this was still done at the end of the 8th century BC⁸. Hardwick is correct to see in the development of the myth of the Amazons a symmetrical relationship linking that development with the changing model of Hellenic culture⁹. If the Amazons originally represented the virtues of the Homeric warrior, and later functioned in connection with the culture of the *oikos*, then

¹ H. van Wees, *Greeks Bearing Arms*.

² H. van Wees, *Greeks Bearing Arms*, pp. 344–358, J. Whitley, *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece*, pp. 187–188.

³ S.-G. Gröschel, *Waffenbesitz und Waffeneinsatz bei den Griechen*, p. 80, H. van Wees, *Greeks Bearing Arms*, p. 335, N. Fisher, *Violence, Masculinity and the Law in Classical Athens*, p. 87.

⁴ Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* 1, 5–6, Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens* 1268 b.

⁵ Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* 1, 6.

⁶ Homer, *Iliad* II, 814, *The Aethiopsis* 1–3 = Proclus, *Chrestomathia* 2.

⁷ Plutarch, *Theseus* 27, Pausanias, *The Description of Greece* 1, 2, 1 & 1, 41, 7.

⁸ H. van Wees, *Greeks Bearing Arms*, pp. 338–343, J. Whitley, *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece*, pp. 187–188.

⁹ L. Hardwick, *Ancient Amazons – Heroes, Outsiders or Women*, *passim*.

the myth could all the more reflect the transformations in military custom. When it came to be believed that it was Barbarians who permanently carried arms, the Amazons were transposed to the world of the *barbaroi*. After transformation the Amazons existed outside the Greek World and their customs resembled those of the Greeks depicted by Thucydides in the *Archaeologia*. They remained in a *state of permanent war* – in the combat readiness with weapon at hand.

In summary it can be concluded that notions of the military functions of the divinities could undergo modification almost under the influence of current events, even though by assumption they remained static, because they assumed the continuity of the traditions of the ancestors. In this way Artemis became a divinity strongly associated with war at the time when lightly armed warriors achieved independent status, while the Amazons underwent barbarization at the time when the Greeks ceased to appear with arms in public places.

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