Early Greek Warfare in its Mediterranean Context

Prof. Benjamin Sullivan  
History  

Hours required p/week: 3  
Credits anticipated: 1

This URE focuses on warfare and state-formation in Greece during the formative period 750-550 BCE. Stateless Greeks fighting abroad in the Near East and Egypt—rather than in a still depopulated and socioculturally backward homeland—perfected the signature Greek way of fighting, the hoplite phalanx. Archaeological evidence from the community of Eretria on the island Euboia, rather than the more famous but heavily mythologized Sparta, reveals that Eretria’s first phalanxes were not patriotic citizen armies, as has usually been supposed, but roving bands of marauders loyal to charismatic leaders, like those in the contemporary Homeric poems. Early Euboians and other Greeks also traveled widely throughout the Mediterranean during this period. Contemporary Egyptian and Near Eastern records include exciting new evidence, which indicates that the phalanx technique was perfected not in mainland Greece, but among stateless Greeks who fought on the peripheries of the great established kingdoms of the eastern Mediterranean, where they had to struggle to survive and to negotiate their ethnic identities.

Research assistant’s duties:
The Research Assistant (RA) will be expected to devote several hours per week toward checking both primary and secondary sources (e.g., ancient written sources in translation, excavation reports; books, scholarly articles, and book chapters) for factual accuracy. The RA will also read and criticize drafts of book chapters for clarity and cohesiveness. These practices will culminate in the writing of a final paper, in which the RA will develop an original thesis based on primary sources, on a topic of his/her choice, but which will be related to the larger research project in question. Also included will be smaller assignments, for example exercises that will familiarize the RA with ancient source criticism, with ancient source-citation conventions, and with using archaeological evidence as a primary source.

Required skills or qualifications:
The RA will have excellent organizational, written, and communication skills; a background in the general history of the period is also desirable.

Skills student will acquire:
The ability to read scholarly writing critically; the ability to write a research paper based on primary sources; the ability to assemble a scholarly bibliography; an enhanced ability to write good and clear English prose; the ability to use ancient primary sources for historical purposes; the ability to employ the methods of ancient historical source criticism.