

ARMIES AND NAVIES

Lecture 23: The Soldier in Society I

War and Peace

- ▣ Today's western society is geared towards peace, not war.
- ▣ The soldier is set apart from society.
- ▣ Often wars after WWII are accompanied by anti-war protests.



Military Pride and Militarism

- ▣ Today most western nations do not exhibit their militaries or militaristic tendencies.
- ▣ Military parades are generally confined to army occasions and military schools.
- ▣ Such parades are considered signs of militarism rather than pride



Mourning and Grief

- While mourning for the fallen is considered part of social interaction in the modern western world, in the UK as much as the US, such mourning is confined to occasions rather than have a national character or a high profile.



The Soldier as instrument of war

- ▣ The anti-war movement often looks at the soldier as either victim or perpetrator of war.
- ▣ The fundamental division between people and state means that the soldier is seen as the pawn of the state at best or willing accomplice at worst.

- ▣ But without him,
How would Hitler have
condemned him at Dachau?
Without him Caesar would
have stood alone,
He's the one who gives his
body
As a weapon of the war,
And without him all this
killing can't go on.

He's the Universal Soldier and
he really is to blame,
His orders come from far away
no more,
They come from here and there
and you and me,
And brothers can't you see,
This is not the way we put the
end to war.

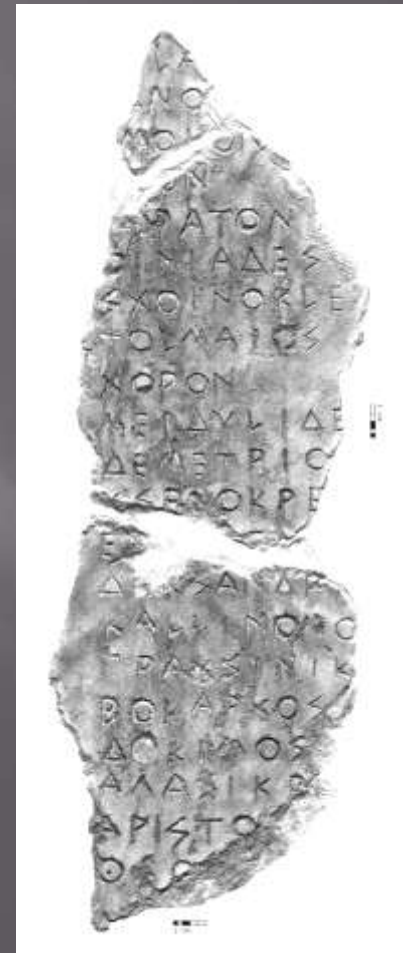
- ▣ Donovan *Universal Soldier* 1967

The Ur-Hero

- ▣ The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus' son, Achilles, that destructive wrath which brought countless woes upon the Achaeans, and sent forth to Hades many valiant souls of heroes, and made them themselves spoil for dogs and every bird; thus the plan of Zeus came to fulfillment, [5] from the time when first they parted in strife Atreus' son, king of men, and brilliant Achilles. Homer *Iliad* 1.1-7

The Fallen as heroes of the polis

- ▣ Commemoration of fallen soldiers was made officially in lists of casualties by tribe.
- ▣ These were usually annual in Athens during the fifth century, and particularly the Peloponnesian war.



The Public Funeral

- ▣ In the same winter the Athenians gave a funeral at the public cost to those who had first fallen in this war. It was a custom of their ancestors, and the manner of it is as follows.
- ▣ [2] Three days before the ceremony, the bones of the dead are laid out in a tent which has been erected; and their friends bring to their relatives such offerings as they please. [3] In the funeral procession cypress coffins are borne in cars, one for each tribe; the bones of the deceased being placed in the coffin of their tribe. Among these is carried one empty bier decked for the missing, that is, for those whose bodies could not be recovered. [4] Any citizen or stranger who pleases, joins in the procession: and the female relatives are there to wail at the burial. [5] The dead are laid in the public sepulchre in the most beautiful suburb of the city, in which those who fall in war are always buried; with the exception of those slain at Marathon, who for their singular and extraordinary valor were interred on the spot where they fell. [6] After the bodies have been laid in the earth, a man chosen by the state, of approved wisdom and eminent reputation, pronounces over them an appropriate panegyric; after which all retire. [7] Such is the manner of the burying; and throughout the whole of the war, whenever the occasion arose, the established custom was observed. [8] Meanwhile these were the first that had fallen, and Pericles, son of Xanthippus, was chosen to pronounce their eulogium. When the proper time arrived, he advanced from the sepulchre to an elevated platform in order to be heard by as many of the crowd as possible, and spoke as follows. Thucydides 2.34

Questions?

Follow-Up Reading

- ▣ Rice, E. 'The glorious dead' in Rich, J. & Shipley, G. *War and Society in the Greek World* (London, 1993), pp. 224-257