

WAR AND WARFARE IN ANCIENT GREEK MYTHOLOGICAL TRADITION

One of the most famous episodes of Homer's *Iliad*, the oldest work of Greek literature, is the scene of Achilles maltreating the body of the dead Hector. As part of his revenge for the death of his dearest companion Patroclus, Achilles dragged the corpse of the Trojan prince behind his chariot around the city of Troy and the Achaean camp, repeating this ritual daily until Zeus intervened. This gruesome episode, which constitutes the culmination of the entire epic, was a moment of greatest triumph for Achilles, who was widely seen as the ideal of a warrior by all generations of ancient Greeks. But this version of Achilles' revenge, which is usually dated to the beginnings of the archaic era in Greece (c. 750-479 BC), stands in radical opposition to the values championed in Greek literature of the classical period (c. 479-338 BC). Sophocles' *Antigone* or Euripides' *Suppliants*, for instance, highlight the moral and divine obligation to treat the bodies of the dead with respect. According to Herodotus (*Histories* 9.79), the maltreatment of dead enemies was a barbaric act, completely unbecoming the Greeks. Yet in the combat scenes of the *Iliad*, mutilating the dead is practiced *only* by the Greeks, including the main heroes of the poem (such as Achilles, Agamemnon and Ajax), and are therefore a paradox; one duly noted by Plato in his *Republic* (3.391b-c).

The subject of the *Iliad*, which relates the siege of Troy by the Achaean forces under king Agamemnon, is based on the wider mythological tradition of the Trojan War, which apart from the *Iliad* consisted of many other poems belonging to the so-called Epic Cycle. Greek mythology provides historians with one of the richest sources for the cultural, social and political life of the ancient Greek *poleis*. A substantial part of its contents concerned stories about war and its practices, rituals and ideologies. Greek myths were by their nature an extremely fluid form of cultural discourse which encompassed many artistic genres (literature, poetry, pottery, sculpture, architecture). Mythological stories were therefore constantly open to new interpretations, occupying a central place in the everyday life of the ancient Greeks. As a result, the many representations of mythical wars, such as the Trojan War or the expedition of Seven Against Thebes, hold significant potential for the study of the popular discourses related to the subject of war. Inspired by the ideals and expectations of their audiences, whose members could find their own experiences of combat in the stories about Achilles and Hector, Greek myths were modelled on the cultural values of their present day. These, in the case of Achilles' maltreatment of Hector, demonstrate the change in the practices and ethical standards of warfare between the archaic and classical eras in Greece. Such differences often led classical writers, artists and politicians to reinterpret the myths they inherited from the archaic period. A study of these changes will therefore be attempted in the proposed project.

The main objective of the project is to carry out a comprehensive survey of Greek mythology, in search of any episodes that depict all forms of military conflict. Despite their significant historical value, Greek myths have rarely featured in scholarly studies on the subject of war and warfare in ancient Greece. An investigation of new, previously unexplored sources in the form of archaic Greek war-related myths and their reception in the classical period, has the potential to offer a number of new opportunities overlooked by other scholars of ancient warfare, providing us with a unique insight into the practice and ideology of war in ancient Greece, and its historical development. The results of the proposed project will be of particular importance for deepening our understanding of the processes of cultural discourse and transmission, while also providing an important contribution to the scholarly fields of war, warfare and mythology, as well as ancient sociology, culture studies and politics.