in a permanent state of undeclared war against all other cities" (Plato, Laws 680A).

In writing his history of the Peloponnesian war, Thucydides begins with the archaologists, his own quick survey of major events in the Greek past, a former general's non-confrontational "ode to man": from earliest times to the opening of the Peloponnesian war, the progress of man is the progress of military power and the acquisition and control of resources to maintain it. War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval World shows how and why Thucydides's vision prevailed above all others. His forecast of the temporary nature of the Mediterranean and elsewhere. Because of the omnipresence of war or its spectre with ancient Greece and Rome — culture, editors Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein recognize the need to explore in theoretical terms how war (including military technology and organisation) affected ancient societies and the modern world, and how the origins of that system were.

The papers in War and Society, stemming from a colloquium organised by the editors in June 1996 at the Centre for Hellenic Studies in Washington, DC, explore elements of the interaction between war and society in the ancient Greek and Roman world and in selected pre-industrial societies that offer cross-cultural perspectives. Four chapters take up Archaic- Classical and Hellenistic Greece, Republican Rome, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine period, early medieval Europe, the early Islamic world, the ancient Maya and Aztecs. The histories of actual wars and battles — and, we should also point out, analyses of cultural ideologies as reflected in mythology, religion, literature and iconography — are subordinated to the purpose of understanding, for each cultural period, "how the military sphere was organised, to what extent it was embedded in other structures of society, and what the origins of that system were."

The papers work well independently as serious treatments of their cultural periods, but are unified by careful attention to the underlying critical themes and concerns raised by the editors. As might be expected, approaches vary according to the kinds of data available for the different periods and the different interpretative methodologies used by individual contributors. Archaeologists write the two chapters on pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, historians the other nine-period chapters. This imbalance is righted by the symbolic chapter of anthropologist R. Brian Ferguson. "A paradigm for the study of war and society."

Ferguson interprets the other 13 contributions according to the categories of intra- and inter-political infrastructural, structural and superstructural connections between war and society, and uses his own work with winning non-state peoples for added perspectiveness. His sections on superstructure conveniently extract what can be said about the ideological basis for supporting and pursuing war in the cultures under examination. His analysis is pertinent, because ancient Greek and Roman warfare only encompasses cultural developments from tribal to city state to empire, from agricultural subsistence to massive agricultural surplus generated by imperialism, acquisition of land and resources. Readers might well want to begin with Ferguson's contribution. Victor Davis Hanson and Barry Strauss contribute an epilogue with reflections on the modern period, many of them "quite disturbing."

Indeed, Egyptians, Byzantine and Roman justification of war through the ideology of "enemy provocation" reminds us of Orwell's "two minutes hatred. The difficulties of the Japanese Tabo military with "guerrilla-style" mounted archers remind us that well-equipped, technologically advanced fighting forces are not guaranteed success. Just ask the American grunts in Vietnam who "humphed" 50-lb pounds of modern defensive armour, high-tech fire power, water, food and personnel. One such grunt, Mitchell Sanders in Tim O'Brien's Vietnam novel The Things They Carried, looks at a typical enemy corpse, a Vietcong boy in shorts and sandals, carrying as standard issue a pouch of rice, a rifle and three magazines of ammunition, and sizes up the lesson this way: "You want my opinion, there's a definite moral here. The moral is universal and timeless, and makes me wonder if the ancient Maya, Aztecs, Chinese or Egyptians had a word with the same ambiguities as deinon."

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