For centuries, many homosexual men have looked back to Ancient Greece and hailed it as a Paradise Lost wherein a man could “be himself” and love whom he chose.

*The isles of Greece! the isles of Greece!*
*Where burning Sappho loved and sung,*
*Where grew the arts of war and peace,—*
*Where Delos rose and Phoebus sprung!*
*Eternal summer gilds them yet,*
*But all, except their sun, is set.*

And so sang Lord Byron in *Don Juan*¹. For him, Greece in the early 19th Century was still a paradise of available young men and grand adventure, but this was Greece in the decadent days of the dying Ottoman Empire, not the Greece of Perikles and Plato.

Truth is, to hark back to Ancient Greece as a time and place for a homosexual free-for-all is to ignore what life was really like during that thousand or so years we hail as the Golden Age and, although men from

¹ *Byron, Don Juan* - canto 3, stanza 86
Byron to disco queens might envy it as a civilization which freely permitted, indeed encouraged, relations between adult men and nubile youths, the truth was that the Ancient Greeks did not licence lust.

For a start, to enjoy the kind of sexual relationships modern homosexuals believe would be their right in Ancient Greece, you would have to be a citizen of your city-state, and most probably, a reasonably wealthy one if you lived in the Athens of Plato. Ancient Greek society was rigidly structured, society being divided into citizens and non-citizens, free-born and slave, male and female, in which the divisions were jealously guarded. Even in those cities, such as Athens, in which radical democracy evolved, one had to know your place and relationships were clearly based on conventions which defined patterns of dominance and submission. The Portuguese-born ethologist Roger Abrantes wrote of dominance-submission that

\[
\text{It is perfectly conceivable that dominance and submission originated as an evolutionary necessity. They are probably the only viable options to establish an evolutionarily stable strategy for highly aggressive social animals.}
\]

Abrantes suggests that a social hierarchy is a dominance-submission relationship established and maintained by means of ritualized behaviour and thus becomes a means of controlling another without harming or injuring him, a way of diminishing conflicts which would otherwise threaten survival. Abrantes also suggests that dominance-submission evolved partially as a secondary sex characteristic and is directed at reducing or eliminating competition from a mate (a mate being defined as two or more individuals living closely together and mutually dependent for survival).

Abrantes’ comments are pertinent here despite the fact he was writing about dominance-submission in packs of dogs. They are pertinent because Ancient Greeks were unbelievably competitive and it is as a counter to the potentially destructive effects of such competitiveness — at least in part — we might view many of their sexual mores and institutions.

Regional diversity
But before we go any further, we need to define what we mean by “Ancient Greece”. First of all, “Greece” in this case was not the nation-state we know today but a region encompassing the geographical peninsula of modern Greece, Cyprus and the Aegean islands, the Aegean coast of Anatolia (then known as Ionia), Sicily and southern Italy and the scattered Greek settlements on the coasts of Illyria, Thrace, Egypt, Cyrenaica, southern Gaul, Iberia and Taurica.3

And, just as the term “Ancient Greece” included different regions, so too it assumes historical eras, referring to ways of life which developed over more than a thousand years. Historians divide the history of Greece into 9 major eras of which — as Table 1 shows — the period they call “Ancient Greece” covers about 500 years which traditionally dates from 776-323 BC. In a more popular sense, most people think of “Ancient Greece” as stretching from about the age of Homer or c.800 BC (the Ancient period), through the Hellenistic (323 BC to 146 AD) and ending with the Roman period in 330AD, this last date being when Byzantium supplanted Rome.

3 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece
The Dorian Invasion
From the late Neolithic at the end of the 4th millennium BC to about 2800 BC, contacts with the East led to the development in Crete of Minoan civilization among the characteristics of which seem to have been homosexual cult prostitution and homosexual components in tribal initiations. Later Greek myths perhaps reflect distant memories of these features, including gods who transform men into women (for example, Tiresias) and in the sacred insemination of youths in the cult of Apollo Carneius.

In the 2nd Millenium BC, two tribes, the Ionians and Aeolians, established what is called the “Palace Culture” centred in Mycenae, Tiryns and Pylos in the Peloponnese and at the Acropolis of Attica and Knossos in Crete. According to older text-books, fifty or so years after the fall of Troy, a third tribe, the Dorians, over-ran most of mainland, destroying the late Bronze-Age cultures which had existed there and enslaving the original inhabitants. More modern archeological research tends to indicate that the Dorian Invasion — or, Migration as it is now called in a more politically-correct age — took place several centuries later, probably around the first millennium BC by which time the older civilizations had decayed, leaving a power vacuum into which the Dorians moved.

5This is generally dated about 1250 BC
Whenever they came, these were a warrior people whose society was organised along patriachal lines, who spoke the “Doric” dialect of Greek, and who brought with them an Iron-Age culture which featured, among other characteristics, superior weaponry, a calendar which was reckoned in cycles of ceremonial events (two of the most important of which were the Carneia⁷ and the Hyakinthia⁸), and cremation or individual burial rather than the group burial in *tholos* tombs as had been the case in the Bronze Age Mycanean civilization.

Significantly for our study, the Dorians are also believed to have brought with them their custom of *paiderastia*, a master/apprentice form of homosexuality which eventually became so completely integrated into Ancient Greek society and so identified with Greece throughout the ages, that even today, in Gayspeak “*greek*” is code for anal intercourse. While little is known about pre-Dorian sexual customs in the region (Homer makes no mention of *paiderastia* although he — they — tell of many instances of great love between comrades), the practice was certainly adopted whole-heartedly throughout Greece although nowhere as strictly and religiously as in Sparta and Crete.

The immediate origins of these Dorian Greeks were somewhere in the north of the Balkans, probably around Macedonia and to the north-west of there, probably from what is now called Albania. They came in several waves, first occupying the west coast of the Peloponnese where it is said they destroyed the great Palace at Pylos, once ruled over by Nestor of *Iliad* fame, before moving on to Thessaly, Boetia and across the Isthmus to Argos and beyond. Eventually they crossed the Aegean Sea and occupied Crete and finally, turning their attention further afield, colonised Rhodes and even Sicily.

However, the new-comers never managed to defeat the Athenians and it was to Attica that Ionian and Aelonian refugees from elsewhere in Greece fled after their own homelands were taken by the Dorians. Later, the Aeolians settled in Lesbos and nearby regions while the Ionians colonised the coast of Asia Minor.

**A Note on Historical Sources:**
But first, a note on sources. Although now almost 30 years old and sometimes in dispute, the standard text for this subject is “*Greek

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⁷ held in honor of Apollo Carneios
⁸ held at Amyclae
Homosexuality” by K.J. Dover⁹. He says the major sources of information are

(1) “Vase” painting and other visual arts: for about a century, 570-470 BC, artists painted detailed images on what are generically called “vases” but which include drinking vessels, platters, jugs and jars. They used a form of proto-glaze called “terra sigillata” which, depending on how the potter fires it, turns out red or black. These beautiful vessels have told us much about this particular period which pre-dates the efflorescence of Attic literature.

(2) Literature: most of the literary sources are Attic, beginning with the Persians of Aiskhylos in 472 BC. This can be divided into several major sources: (i) late archaic and early classical homosexual poetry; (ii) Attic comedy, particularly Aristophanes and his contemporaries; (iii) Plato; (iv) Aiskhines’s speech during the prosecution of Timarkhos; and (v) homosexual poetry of the Hellenistic period. Of these, the “Prosecution of Timarkhos” deserves special mention because it is 45 printed pages long, the longest surviving Greek work devoted exclusively to homosexual themes. It is the written version of a speech given by Aiskhines when prosecuting an Athenian citizen, Timarkhos, in 346 BC. Timarkhos was prosecuted under a law which debarred a citizen from political life who had prostituted himself to another man. It began when Timarkhos charged Aiskhines with treason while on an embassy to the Court of Macedon. To defend himself, Aiskhines then prosecuted Timarkhos, arguing to the assembled citizens that Timarkhos, as a youth, had profited by giving his body to wealthy patrons but moved on when they could no longer afford

his demands. If convicted — and I believe he was — then, under Athenian law, Timarkhos forfeited his citizenship and was therefore unable to prosecute Aiskhines.¹⁰

(3) A third and interesting source of information is graffiti from all periods but probably the oldest of which were scratched into rocks during the Archaic period at Thera. Then, as in later times, they tended to follow a formula “so-and-so is beautiful” which Dover interprets as meaning “I love so-and-so”¹¹. When some youth’s name is mentioned, it is usually associated with the word “kalos”, meaning beautiful but with sexual nuances¹².

**A rose is not a rose – problems of vocabulary**

Dover raises two important issues in attempting to understand Greek homosexuality: one is the problem of how to interpret the words the Greeks themselves used for “love, sexual desire and the various acts and emotions which are related to love.”¹³ and other words, such as “kalos” “which means ‘beautiful’, ‘handsome’, ‘pretty’, ‘attractive’, or ‘lovely’ when applied to a human being…… and ‘admirable’, ‘creditable’, or ‘honourable’ when applied to actions or institutions”. In many cases of words such as this, only the grammatical form tells us whether the object is male, female or neuter gender and when the word is in the male plural, we cannot be sure at all!

The other problem with words is one already noted earlier in this course, viz. how do we refer to who does what to whom? Dover points out that in the Greek context¹⁴:

*Since the reciprocal desire of partners belonging to the same age-category is virtually unknown in Greek homosexuality, the distinction between the bodily activity of the one who has fallen in love and the bodily passivity of the one with whom he has fallen in love is of the highest importance.*

In homosexual relationships, the ‘passive’ partner was often called *pais* (plural, *paides*) which in general speech could mean variously ‘boy’, ‘child’, ‘girl’, ‘son’, ‘daughter’ and ‘slave’. Clearly it referred to someone

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¹⁰ See Dover, op. cit, II, pp19-109
¹¹ See Dover, op. cit, p111ff, although Dover reminds us not all refer to beautiful youths or even to humans.
¹² I am not certain if “cute” would suffice!
¹³ Dover, op. cit. p 15-16.
¹⁴ Dover, op. cit, p. 16
of inferior status to the speaker. In modern English we can use “boy” in the same way — in the southern states of the USA or in South Africa, ‘boy’ still implies inferiority. Here, we can talk about “a night out with the boys” without being derogatory. However, on gay porn sites on the Internet, “boy” can be ambiguous, referring to adult men or post-pubertal youths (“twinks”), and in some (almost certainly illegal) sites, even to pre-pubertal males....

To avoid this kind of confusion, most historians use the terms used by the Greeks themselves: the older and insertive man was called the erastes, while the junior partner (the insertee) was called the eromenos15 (which means the one to be in love with or to have a passionate desire for). Sometimes another word, paidika, was used more or less synonymously with eromenos, the loved one16.

**Problems of values**

There are several inter-twined values colouring the way in which the Greeks behaved sexually. In the first instance, they did not acknowledge — officially at least — that the eromenos, the “passive” partner, gained any sexual pleasure from the act. To acknowledge that he did, no matter that his prostate must have told him otherwise, would have meant he enjoyed being penetrated, and that implied he enjoyed submitting to another man, something the Greeks found not only shameful but alarming and even a threat to the security of the state!

To be “kalos” or desirably beautiful, an eromenos had to be smooth-skinned: for men so preoccupied with masculine virtues, they had an intense dislike for body hair. Hairy bodies — and large penises — were regarded as signs of a brutish and base nature. And so, in theory at least, when the eromenos reached the age of 18 or 20 and his body hair had grown and his beard had reached manly proportions (and for security reasons, when he reached an age to be a warrior), the sexual part of the relationship was ended even though, in most cases, the men remained life-long friends. In some cases, however, the partners did not stop having sex — the Stoics, for example, argued it was possible to continue until age 28, but only if eromenos shaved, not only his chin but also his backside!17

15 masculine passive participle of eran, to be in love with…. — Dover, op. cit p 16.
16 From the neuter plural of the adjective paidikos, having to do with paides, but constantly treated as a masculine singular — Dover, op.cit.
In Athens, their emerging democracy decreed that every citizen was equal to every other citizen, if not in wealth and other features, but at least before the law. A man’s body became in effect his sovereign property and any action which reduced it to the status of a slave, a woman or non-citizen was not only to be avoided, but in many instances, could be treated as a crime. For example, Timarkhas lost his citizenship because he debased his body by submitting it to other men (and in this case, because he accepted money — that is, acted out of greed — he was untrustworthy as a citizen-warrior).

**Women and Prostitution in Ancient Greece**

By far the most explicit evidence we have of the erotic encounters among Ancient Greeks in their daily lives is to be seen on the remarkable ceramics of the era, especially on those originating during the century 570-470 BC. These show men and women in a variety of combinations, especially youths with men, groups of men and youths together, and men with *Hetaera*. These *hetaera* were women rather like Japanese *geisha*, highly trained to entertain men for a price, not always including sex.

In Ancient Greece, prostitutes — male and female — were taxed by the city. Solon was said to have established the first brothel in the 6th Century BC and with the profits, built a temple to Aphrodites Pandemo, the patron deity of the *porne* as the sellers of sex were called. Prostitution was legal but procuring was in fact a capital crime. In the 6th Century BC, prostitutes usually charged about the equivalent of a day’s wage for the average worker in Athens.
There are vastly more literary sources than ceramics and they cover a much longer period of history, but there is a problem in that except for the writings of Solon, none of the records from the earlier period are from Athens and almost all of the later ones are, leaving us a rather unbalanced literary view of the Greek world. So we have a wealth of erotic poetry from the archaic period — for example, works by Anacreon, Ibycus, Sappho (the lone woman) and Theognis; among Classical writers, we have work by Aristophanes, Thucydides, and the father of history, Herodotus. If like me, you are a latter-day fan of Socrates, then you are well aware of Plato’s reports of his mentor’s views on Greek love in The Symposium and Phaedrus... But, remember, when you read Plato that Socrates was not popular, was regarded as a trouble-maker and executed for allegedly “corrupting youth”, but remember too, that this was not as it would mean in our modern media (ie, sexual corruption), but for turning the young men against the state….

**Romantic love and the role of women**

When we consider homosexuality in Ancient Greece, it is essential to remember that men who had sexual relations with other men, no matter what their age or status (ie, slave or free, citizen or foreign) were not usually exclusively homosexual. The norm, if norm there was, was for men to have sex with both sexes and a man who did not have a wife, or at least a known interest in women sexually, would probably have been considered unworthy to be an erastes into whose care an eronemos could be safely entrusted. That perhaps the most important experience of romantic love known to the Greeks was homosexual might seem strange to us but not to the Greeks; that they also experienced love and lust and domestic companionship with women was taken for granted. What the
Greeks did believe — as has been thought even in our world at various times — was that the ideal of friendship, the highest form of love, could exist only between men.

Many scholars have suggested that Greek homosexuality flourished at the expense of women, that the status of women was so low men turned instead to each other. There can be no doubt that for the most part, women were ranked inferior to men (for example, they did not vote or take part in civic events) but they were not mere chattels. John Addington Symonds made a good point when he wrote18

"This masculine love did not exclude marriage, nor had it the effect of lowering the position of women in society, since it is notorious that in those Dorian States where the love of comrades became an institution, women received more public honour and enjoyed fuller liberty and power over property than elsewhere."

In Sparta, for example, women had great influence and girls were
..... "trained by physical exercise for the healthy performance of the duties of motherhood; they were taught to run and wrestle naked, like the youths, to dance and sing in public, and to associate freely with men. Marriage was permitted only in the prime of life; and a free intercourse, outside the limits of marriage, between healthy men and women was encouraged and approved by public opinion."19

Not all Greek love — outside marriage or with one’s slaves — was either institutionalized in a paiderastic relationship or conducted commercially with prostitutes. In later periods and more especially in Athens, there arose a kind of fashion similar to the 19th Century European custom of “Stage Door Johnnies” in which wealthy gentlemen about town waited on actresses and singers of the time, attempting to seduce them with gifts and good times. In ancient Athens, many men similarly pursued the attentions of youth who had become famous for their beauty. Indeed, many of the ceramics which have come down to us were originally commissioned by wealthy men as gifts for such youths whose names are recorded on the pots.

The convention was that the suitor would approach the youth, bearing a gift. These gifts, at least according to the ceramics, included dogs, bags of walnuts, dead hares and best of all, a chicken! The youth was supposed to spurn the man’s attentions and his gifts, even when the man exposed his erection to him. If he relented, the youth pretended to be indifferent while he allowed the suitor to place his erect penis between his thighs and commit what is called “frottage”. The point of this substitute for anal intercourse and for the youth’s seeming indifference was to avoid shaming the lad and spoiling his chances of forming valuable alliances later in his career.

**Paiderastia**

Carved into the rock wall beside the Temple of Apollo Karneios on the island of Thera (known today as Santorini) is an inscription in the Doric dialect which reads:

INVOKING THE DELPHIC APOLLO, I, CRIMON, HERE COPULATED WITH A BOY, SON OF BATHYCLES”

There are many other inscriptions, all following more or less the same formula. The “boy” — *pais* — is not named, but his father is because that demonstrated that the union was a
worthy one. Proclaimed in such a sacred place and in the name of one of the gods most respected by the Dorian Greeks, this was far from being just a sex act but rather a highly spiritual, religious ritual whereby the arete of the older man, Crimon, was passed into the body of the son of Bathycles along with his semen.

Arete is hard to translate but understanding it is fundamental to appreciating fully the role of paiderastia in Ancient Greek society.20

There is no single modern English equivalent for the ancient Greek word, “Arete.” It means all of the following: Noble Manhood, Manly Virtue, The Genius of Masculine Skill, Power, Wisdom, Character and Dynamism.

The Dorian Greeks believed the way to impart “arete” — all the best qualities of manhood — to a youth was by performing anal coitus upon him. They believed — literally — that a man’s semen was a sacred fluid that had spiritual and magical properties quite apart from its procreative function. The semen of a “fine and honorable” man was to them as holy and as sacramental as communion is to some modern Christians. The act of penetration and resulting infusion of semen into the body of the youth constituted a religious “rite” whereby the senior partner imparted his nobility and virtue to the younger male.

The likelihood is that Crimon and Bathycles were friends and that Crimon had been chosen by Bathycles to give “arete” to his son. Incest in the first degree, both heterosexual and homosexual, was anathema to the ancient Greeks and so a father depended on an honorable friend for this service. Two fathers who were good friends could undertake this sacred obligation on behalf of one another and upon each others’ sons.

It is noteworthy that the boy’s name is not mentioned. It will only become important when he himself reaches noble manhood and is ready to pass on his “arete” to a still younger man.

Whether or not the Ancient Greek youths believed the more *arête* was inseminated into their bodies by as many men as possible was to their benefit, we simply don’t know, but the site on Santorini suggests a rather more orgiastic rite than the ritual insemination of the son of Bathycles by his friend Crimon.

This site was settled by people from Sparta after the cataclysmic eruption of the volcano in 1520 BC. They brought with them the worship of the “Horned Apollo” which they celebrated at a festival in the month of *Karneios* — August-September in our calendar.

*Coin showing the “horned Apollo*  
— note the ram’s horn bent back behind the god’s ear.

*The sanctuary to Apollo Karneios on Santorini*

At this time, young men performed ecstatic naked dances and various acrobatics and games (including a ritual form of volley-ball played with a bright purple ball). At the height of the Karneia — in the middle of the month when the moon was full — the *Gymnopaediae* or “naked boy ritual” was held. In a specially dedicated place on the cliff edge, the

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21 Perhaps the origin of the myths about the lost city of Atlantis and the Hebrew account of the plagues that befell Egypt in the time of Moses.
naked boys danced before the assembled citizens and sang songs in praise of Apollo.

That this was the time of the ritual insemination is recorded in inscriptions scratched into the boulders still surrounding the square on the cliff edge. They range from the polite "Barbax dances beautifully and he's given me pleasure" to the more blatant "Krimon, number one at 'dirty-dancing', has melted Simias" where “dirty dancing” means to dance like a satyr with a full erection!

![Image of Santorini boulders](image)

The boulders where these inscriptions are found on Santorini

Connel O’Donovan\(^{22}\), whose tour of the rock grafitti we have been following, goes on to add:

> However this is not the last we hear of the randy young Krimon! On a nearby rock we find the inscription, "By the Delphian god [i.e. Apollo], right here Krimon got fucked [oiphe], by the son of Bathukles, brother of..." (the rest broken off). And again on another boulder: “Here Krimon fucked Amotion". On this same rock is a list of other ephebes that Krimon had sex with: Isokarthus, Pasiwhos, Euaiswros, Kresilas, and the incomplete name [---]deleos...."

> Another boulder bears the lengthy inscription, "Pheidipidas fucked Timagoras. Empheres and I got fucked too." The "I" of this sentence is probably Enpulos who signed below this inscription with "Enpulos did this". Above his name, another young man has rather unkindly scratched the word pornos - whore! On the same rock another young man recorded, "Enpedokles did this. And he danced for Apollo."

\(^{22}\) [http://home.earthlink.net/~ekerilaz/theran.html](http://home.earthlink.net/~ekerilaz/theran.html)
O’Donovan summed up his description of the celebrations at ancient Thera — modern-day Santorini — by drawing a comparison with later Athenian customs:

This fascinating peek into early Greek ritual and sexuality shows a vibrant and unashamed community of homoerotically-inclined young men, somewhat at odds with the later "classical" Athenian society of Socrates and Plato, which did allow for intergenerational homoeroticism, but which far more emphasized and valued a "platonic" love over a more fleshly one, a split between the spirit and the flesh which the western world is still trying to mend some 2400 years later.

**Paiderastia in Bronze-Age Crete**

_Arete_ was central also, to one of the most revered forms of same-sex union in the Ancient world. Our knowledge of this comes from the Stoic philosopher, geographer and ethnographer known as Strabo\(^\text{23}\) (63 BC/64 BC - c. 24 AD) who gave a description in his _Geographica_ of the ancient custom of ritual abduction in Crete. Citing as his authority the 4\(^{th}\) Century BC scholar Ephorus, he said:

*They (the Cretans) have peculiar laws regarding love. For they acquire their lovers not by persuasion but by abduction. The lover advises friends three or more days beforehand that the abduction is going to take place. If they sequester the youth [pais] or he avoids the designated road it would be a considerable disgrace, as if they acknowledged he was unworthy of such a lover. When they encounter each other, if the abductor is the young man’s equal or superior in social class and other respects, they pursue and restrain him only a little, in observance of the law, and then willingly relinquish him. If [the abductor] seems unworthy, they take the youth away.*

*The pursuit is not over until the youth is finally brought to the abductor’s quarters. They regard as the most worthy of love young men who are outstanding not in beauty, but in character and attractiveness. After giving the youth a present, he takes him to the*

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\(^{23}\) Strabo meant “squinter” and was a name given to many men in Roman times with a squint — the father of Julius Caesar was named "Gaius Julius Caesar Strabo". The Stoic philosopher/geographer is the most famous.
country, to any spot he wishes. The witnesses to the abduction accompany them, and after feasting and hunting for a couple of months (for it is not permitted to keep the young man away longer than this), they return to the city.

The young man returns bearing as gifts a military outfit and an ox and a chalice (these are specified in law) and other things besides, so many that the friends must contribute to covering the expenses. He sacrifices the ox to Zeus and gives a feast for those who accompanied them, at which he states publicly in regard to his relationship with his lover whether he is pleased about it or not. The law prescribes this so that if any force was used in the abduction he can at this point seek redress and extricate himself [sc. from the relationship].

Pederastic warrior couple, Crete, 7th Century BC.

It is a disgrace for young men who are good-looking and from good families not to have lovers, as if this were the consequence of their own conduct. Those who have been abducted are called “partners” and enjoy special privileges: at dances and races they are given places of honour, and they are allowed to wear finer clothes than others — what their lovers have given them. Not only that, but even when they are older they wear distinctive clothing, which indicates that they are “special”. For they call the beloved “special” and the lover his ”friend”. These are their legal requirements regarding love.24

Origins of paiderastia

The “whence” and “why” of paiderastia will probably never be known, but the 19th-“sexologist” (to use an anachronistic term) John Addington Symonds\(^{25}\) said that:

*It has frequently occurred to my mind that the mixed type of παιδεραστία [paederastia] which I have named Greek Love, took its origin in Doris. Homer, who knew nothing about the passion as it afterwards existed, drew a striking picture of masculine affection in Achilles. Friendship occupies the first place in the hero’s heart, while only the second is reserved for sexual emotion. Now Achilles came from Phthia, itself a portion of that mountain region to which Doris belonged. Is it unnatural to conjecture that the Dorians in their migration to Lacedaemon and Crete, the recognised headquarters of the custom, carried a tradition of heroic παιδεραστία along with them? If so, the circumstances of their invasion would have fostered the transformation into a tribal institution. They went forth, a band of warriors and pirates, to cross the sea in boats, and to fight their way along the hills and plains of Southern Greece. The dominions they had conquered with their swords they occupied like soldiers. The camp became their country, and for a long time they literally lived upon the bivouac. . . . Fighting and foraging in company, sharing the same wayside board and heath-strewn bed, rallying to the comrade’s voice in onset, relying on the comrade’s shield when fallen, these men learned the meanings of the words Φιλήτωρ and παραστάτης. To be loved was honorable, for it implied being worthy to be died for. To love was glorious, since it pledged the lover to self-sacrifice in case of need."

Noting Strabo’s description of the custom of abduction of the loved one and the high level of social respect he later received throughout his life, another 19th century commentator, Professor E. Bethe\(^{26}\) suggested that this was a variation on a common practice anthropologists call “marriage by capture” and that this

“………… custom must date from a high antiquity, and since certain traces of it in Corinth and Boeotia coincide with the practice in Crete, I think the conclusion is not too rash that not only there but among all the Dorians these same forms once prevailed, and that


\(^{26}\) Bethe, Professor E.: *Die Dorische Knabenliebe*, Frankfurt, 1907 quoted in Carpenter op. cit.
therefore they date back even to the time before the Dorian immigration, or at any rate before their dispersal.

So, perhaps paiderastia, or some kind of less institutionalized form of it, was customary throughout the early Balkan world, but was honed into the much more precise and ritualized form practiced by the later Cretans and Spartans by their prolonged military existence during the migration of the Dorians?

**Paiderastia in Warfare**

There seems little doubt that the military structure of life in the Dorian-dominated world contributed to the evolution of paiderastia, but the name given to the relationship between man and youth does not seem appropriate in the way it came to be exploited in warfare. Again, as John Addington Symonds asserted,

> Clearly the younger had to be of sufficient age or physical stature to bear arms effectively; and his commonly used name παρασταθέως or παραστατής—the "stand-by" or "stander-by"—is a good indication of his function and utility. He corresponded in fact, in many respects, to the squire who attended on the mediæval knight; and while such a squire might often be quite youthful, we do not exactly think of him as a "boy."

Symonds goes on to conclude:

> The difference of age therefore in this military comradeship might be slight or negligible, or in cases it might be considerable.

This seems to have been the case: while a father might approve a paiderastic relationship between an older man and his son at about the same age he would approve the marriage of his daughter (that is, shortly after puberty), the Greeks generally did not approve of younger lovers joining their partners on the battlefield before the age of 16. There, it was argued by many, that the presence of lovers improved morale, encouraged bravery and over-all military efficiency.

The Greeks originally seem to have gone into battle organized along tribal lines, but — as Plutach reports Pammenes —

> "Homer's Nestor was not well skilled in ordering an army when he advised the Greeks to rank tribe and tribe... he should have joined lovers and their beloved. For men of the same tribe little value one
another when dangers press; but a band cemented by friendship grounded upon love is never to be broken."

Eventually, Pammenes’s advice was taken and even city-states which had been opposed to such an idea came to form up their lines with bands of lovers, influenced no doubt by the experience of the Chalcidians during the Lelantine War with the Eretrians. They called for help from a famous warrior, Cleomachus and he turned up accompanied by his lover. They charged the Eretrians, legend says inspired by love, and turned the tide of battle. Cleomachus himself was killed but remained a hero, even (according to Aristotle) inspiring a famous song for his sacrifice.

"Ye lads of grace and sprung from worthy stock
Grudge not to brave men converse with your beauty
In cities of Chalcis, Love, looser of limbs
Thrives side by side with courage"

Of course the best-known example of such bravery inspired by love is the Sacred Band of Thebes which was credited with making Thebes the most powerful city-state of its time until the Band of Lovers was defeated at Chaeronea by Philip II of Macedon. Plutarch, in his Life of Pelopidas27 wrote that:

".........when Philip, after the fight, took a view of the slain, and came to the place where the three hundred that fought his phalanx lay dead together, he wondered, and understanding that it was the band of lovers, he shed tears and said, "Perish any man who suspects that these men either did or suffered anything that was base."

Interestingly, Plutarch also claimed that it was not the poets, as many said, but the lawgivers of Thebes who encouraged the affections between warriors in this way, concerned to soften the otherwise harsh conditions of their lives. They made Harmony, the daughter of Mars and Venus, their tutelary deity, thus attempting to combine courage and manly force with grace and harmony. This, they conceived as the perfect consonance of all the elements of society.

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27 trans. John Dryden