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Estandart Reyau d'a Cheneralísma, prencipal bandera carlista d'a primera guerra bordada por María Francisca de Braganza em 1833 Royal Standard of the General in Chief, main Carlist flag of the First War embroidered by Maria Francisca de Braganza in 1833). Wikimedia Commons

“The human heart is the starting point for all matters.”

Charles Ardant du Picq as a pioneer of combat psychology

by MICHAŁ N. FASZCZA

ABSTRACT: Charles Ardant du Picq gained military experience on three continents: European, Asian, and African. The encounter with other military cultures prompted him to reflect on the significance of fear in the reactions of soldiers displayed on the battlefield. He opposed imposing strict discipline, instead promoting internal cohesion and personal initiative. His literary work was aimed not only at making officers aware of soldiers' emotions but also at stripping war of its false aura of romanticism. Initially, Ardant du Picq's work did not generate much interest. The situation changed after his death, when *Études sur le combat* became required reading at French, British, and American military academies. He also inspired John Keegan to write the groundbreaking book *The Face of Battle*, which is one of the cornerstones of the “new military history.” Over time, he became one of the most influential military theorists of the 19th century, permanently introducing the psychological factor into the research discourse.

KEYWORDS: ARDANT DU PICQ, FEAR, COMBAT STRESS, COMBAT PSYCHOLOGY, THE NEW MILITARY HISTORY, THE FACE OF BATTLE

The work of Charles Ardant du Picq left a significant mark on the reflection dedicated to combat psychology, becoming the catalyst for serious changes in the perception of a soldier's role on the battlefield. Although he was a professional officer himself, he had no illusions about the devastating impact of wars on the human psyche; he also opposed naive notions of participating in battle as a “true male adventure.” He was the first to dare to write about fear as the fundamental emotion guiding every human during combat. Considering the significance of Ardant du Picq's observations for the development of military psychology and historiography of the 20th and 21st centuries, his life and literary work have surprisingly received very few analyses. It is enough to say that editions of his work are a multiple of the studies dedicated to him.

Reconstructing the biography of Ardant du Picq indeed encounters many serious difficulties. During World War II (1939–1945), his personal file at the Ministry of War, as well as the family archives, was destroyed.¹ Only a portion of the letters written to his wife between 1860 and 1861 have survived, but their value in understanding the sources of his interest in combat psychology is unfortunately minimal.² Even the only widely known photograph of Ardant du Picq comes from the insert attached to the collected edition of his works from 1903 (fig. 1),³ while the second one has been preserved in the family's collection and was published only once (fig. 2).⁴ Consequently, we must fully rely on the source materials included as an appendix to the 1903 edition, including the valuable yet brief recollections of his younger brother, written in the form of a letter addressed to the editor.⁵ Supplementary information is provided by the official regimental histories, particularly regarding the circumstances of Ardant du Picq's capture during the Crimean War (1853–1856) and his subsequent death.

In this way, the short biography prepared by Lucien Nachin in 1948 takes on primary importance.⁶ He conducted an archival inquiry while preparing two articles on Ardant du Picq in 1925.⁷ They formed the basis of a more extensive post-war publication. Nachin had access to Ardant du Picq's lost personal file, including opinions expressed about him by superiors, documents written in connection with the promotion procedure, and awarded decorations. Nachin also maintained written correspondence with Ardant du Picq's family, which allowed him to enrich his arguments with information from conversations and private documents. An obvious inconvenience in depending on the selection made by Nachin is his interest almost exclusively in the course of Ardant du Picq's military career. He

1 F. GUELTON, «Qui est Ardant du Picq ?», *Revue Historique des Armées*, 184, 1991, p. 3.

2 V. PETIT, *A la recherche d'Ardant du Picq. Lettres inédites de Syrie*, Berger-Levrault, Paris 1954.

3 Quoted reissue of the 1903 edition: Ch. ARDANT DU PICQ, *Études sur le combat*, Economica, Paris 2004 (hereinafter cited as «ADP»).

4 V. PETIT, *A la recherche d'Ardant du Picq, cit.*, fig. 1.

5 C. ARDANT DU PICQ, «[Lettre du 12 octobre 1903]», in ADP, pp. 25–27.

6 L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», in *Ardant du Picq*, présente et annoté par ID., Berger-Levrault, Paris 1948, pp. XIII–LXXXV.

7 ID., «Ardant du Picq», *Revue militaire française*, 51, 1925, pp. 358–371; ID., «Ardant du Picq (Suite)», *Revue militaire française*, 52, 1925, pp. 54–67. Due to Nachin's repetition of the content of both articles in the 1948 publication (see ID., «Introduction», in ADP, p. VI), they will not be referenced in the further part of my paper.



Fig. 1. Charles Ardant du Picq around 1868.
Wikimedia Commons, <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/0/07/DuPicq.jpg>

also does not usually include references to the used materials, making it impossible to identify them more closely.

The establishment of a detailed chronology is, however, the work of Ernest Judet,⁸ a journalist for the magazine *Le Petit Journal*, who was deeply involved in preserving the memory of Ardant du Picq and corresponding with his brother. Almost all the daily dates included in my article come from Judet's compilation, showing complete agreement with the dates provided by Nachin.

Despite the efforts made by the aforementioned authors, the biography of Ardant du Picq is full of question marks, sometimes even in the most basic matters. Above all, little is known about the readings that, along with his personal experiences, inspired him to write about psychological issues. Equally limited is the information regarding his social circle or family connections. The assumption of Ardant du Picq's intellectual isolation would be simply indefensible.

The aim of my paper is to supplement the current state of knowledge about the French colonel by identifying the sources of some information and developing the threads signaled by Nachin. I have also made efforts to demonstrate his influence on the directions of the evolution of military psychology and psychiatry, as well as on military historiography. So far, Ardant du Picq has primarily been described in the context of the tactical development of European armies at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and his influence on the French offensive doctrine. Without a doubt, tactics were at the center of his interest, but their emphasis in studies dedicated to Ardant du Picq cannot push the issue of psychology to the margin. At the initial stage of his work, it was even the most important. Although the author does not always have control over the later reception of his work, which may even contradict his intentions, understanding Ardant du Picq's concepts and influence requires engaging with the psychological theories.

Life, work, and course of service

Charles Jean-Jacques Joseph was born on October 19, 1821, in Périgueux to a family of a lower-ranking civil servant.⁹ His family hailed from Limoges (Lim-

8 [E. JUDET], «États de service», in ADP, p. 29.

9 L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, p. XVI.

ousin region),¹⁰ where years later a monument was to be erected commemorating the death of Ardant du Picq and other soldiers who fell in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871). After finishing school, on November 15, 1842, at the age of 21, he joined the Special Military School of Saint-Cyr (*École spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr*). He was ranked 218th out of 316 admitted, presenting to the commission a written work on the military campaigns of Hannibal Barca.¹¹ Besides history, he showed particular abilities in mechanics, algebra, and geometry.¹² He didn't feel very comfortable among the cadets, where general knowledge was not highly valued and many of them were focused only on the exact subjects.¹³ Ultimately, in 1844, he graduated from Saint-Cyr with a rank of 158th out of 292 graduates.¹⁴ In the opinion issued in 1843 by the school's commandant, General Adolphe de Tarlé, it could be read that Ardant du Picq has a difficult character and his behavior may be considered somewhat eccentric.¹⁵ In the future, his unconventional way of thinking would result in the writing of works that would become the second most popular reading among French soldiers fighting in the trenches of World War I (1914–1918); only Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (Война и мир) achieved greater popularity.¹⁶

The newly appointed second lieutenant was assigned on October 1 to the 67th Line Infantry Regiment (67^e *régiment d'Infanterie de Ligne*) stationed in Lyon. On May 15, 1848, he was promoted to lieutenant, and on August 15, 1852, to captain. When the Crimean War broke out in 1853, he was initially disappointed because his regiment was not included in the expeditionary forces. The desire to participate in war prompted him to apply for a transfer to one of the units designated for transport to the Crimean Peninsula by the end of the year. He managed

10 J. DECOTTIGNIES, «Ardant du Picq. Un penseur militaire périgourdin (1821–1870)», *Bulletin de la Société Historique et Archéologique de Périgoud*, 115, 1988, p. 361.

11 C. ARDANT DU PICQ, «[Lettre du 12 octobre 1903]», *cit.*, p. 25; L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, p. XVI. Initially, Ardant du Picq intended to enlist in the navy, which would have better suited his youthful temperament.

12 L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, p. XVI.

13 *Ibid.*, p. XVII.

14 *Ibid.*, p. XIX.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. XVII–XVIII.

16 S.T. POSSONY, É. MANTOUX, «Du Picq and Foch: The French School», in E.M. EARLE (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1943, p. 207. Generally about the great interest in the work of Ardant du Picq during World War I and II see L. NACHIN, «Introduction», *cit.*, pp. X–XI.

to obtain permission, and on December 25, he was assigned to the 9th Battalion of Foot Chasseurs (*9^e bataillon de chasseurs à pied*), which was part of the 1st Division. In its ranks, he participated in the siege of Sevastopol, but on September 8, 1854, during the assault on Russian fortified positions, he was captured and remained in captivity until December 15, 1855.¹⁷

After returning to France and a brief convalescence at a family home in Limoges, with the support of General Louis J. Trochu, under whose command Ardant du Picq had served in Crimea, on February 15, 1856, he was promoted to battalion chief (the French equivalent of the rank of major) and assigned to the 100th Line Infantry Regiment (*100^e régiment d'Infanterie de Ligne*) of Aurillac. However, on March 17, he was transferred to the 16th Battalion of Foot Chasseurs (*16^e bataillon de chasseurs à pied*) stationed in Toulouse.¹⁸ In the report from the inspection conducted in the battalion in 1858, he was characterized as an introverted officer with a difficult personality,¹⁹ which broadly corresponds to the opinion given by the commander of Saint-Cyr.

In 1860, Ardant du Picq's unit was sent to Syria to fight against the local inhabitants, who employed guerrilla warfare tactics. The low-intensity war lasted from August 6, 1860, to June 18, 1861.²⁰ Probably at that time his interest in soldiers' emotions was born; to some extent, the letters to his wife, in which he occasionally mentioned discouragement and a decline in morale caused by the overwhelming climate and monotony, may support the correctness of such a conclusion.²¹ Before returning to France, Ardant du Picq received a dispatch informing him that as of December 29, 1860, he had been made a Knight of the Imperial Order of the Legion of Honor (*Ordre impérial de la Légion d'honneur*;

17 C. ARDANT DU PICQ, «[Lettre du 12 octobre 1903]», *cit.*, pp. 25–26; L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, pp. XIX, XXI–XXV. Regarding the circumstances of Ardant du Picq's capture: [L.C.L.N.] DE MERCOYROL DE BEAULIEU, *Historique du 9^e bataillon de chasseurs à pied*, Stanislas Haumé, Rocroi 1888, pp. 65–66; C. ARDANT DU PICQ, «[Lettre du 12 octobre 1903]», *cit.*, p. 26.

18 C. ARDANT DU PICQ, «[Lettre du 12 octobre 1903]», *cit.*, p. 26; [E. JUDET], «États de service», *cit.*, p. 29; L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, pp. XXV–XXIX.

19 L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, p. XXIX.

20 *Ibid.*

21 E.g. V. PETIT, *A la recherche d'Ardant du Picq*, *cit.*, pp. 22–23 (letter from September 9, 1860), 23–24 (letter from September 13, 1860), 27–28 (letter from October 4, 1860), 34–36 (letter from December 2, 1860).

the 5th class).²²

Sources are silent about his activities until 1863; he may have simply been serving garrison duty in Toulouse. The significant event turned out to be the inspection conducted by General Julius de Marguenat in January 1863. The conclusion of the report stated that the 16th Battalion of Foot Chasseurs was the worst unit the general had had to inspect in the last 30 years, and one of the culprits of this situation was Ardant du Picq, who did not apply himself to the duties associated with the tedious daily routine of peacetime service. The humiliated officer reacted emotionally and, on January 10, wrote a protest letter to Marshal Bernard Magnan, the commander of the Paris Military District. He demanded to be transferred to another unit, which would allow the verification of Marguenat's opinion. In his point of view, the battalion is well-trained and has properly maintained weapons, even if in other aspects it does not maintain order at an adequate level. As a result, on January 23, he was assigned to the 37th Line Infantry Regiment (37^e régiment d'Infanterie de Ligne) of Lyon.²³

Later the same year, Ardant du Picq underwent another inspection, this time under the direction of General Charles N. Vergé. He received a positive review; Vergé considered Ardant du Picq to be an honorable man, somewhat inflexible, firmly defending his opinions, and above all, a good front-line officer.²⁴

It seems that the incident of 1863 could have been a typical example of differing visions of how the army should function. Ardant du Picq's response suggests a belief in the crucial importance of the combat effectiveness of the unit, rather than the appearance of soldiers; it may have been influenced by his previous experiences of military service outside the borders of France. The light infantry (*chasseurs à pied*) were required more to use the terrain conditions and conduct fire efficiently than to have an appropriate presence on parades. Later on, he more broadly expressed his conviction about the harmfulness of suppressing the personalities of soldiers through excessively harsh discipline aimed at turning them into a uniform mass, which was contrary to the "French national spirit." Instead, he advocated for reducing meticulous control in favor of building trust in the

22 [E. JUDET], «États de service», *cit.*, p. 29; L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, p. XXIX.

23 L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, pp. XXX–XXXII. Nachin had the opportunity to see the letter from Ardant du Picq to Magnan and reprinted it on pp. XXX–XXXII.

24 *Ibid.*, p. XXXII.

commander and placing greater emphasis on combat training.²⁵

On the other hand, the French army was struggling with serious discipline issues, particularly concerning veterans.²⁶ To some extent, Ardant du Picq fit this pattern, apparently disregarding some of the duties imposed on him by the regulations. In the letter to his wife dated May 24, 1861, he also wrote about problems with recognizing formal military hierarchy.²⁷

On January 16, 1864, Ardant du Picq was promoted to lieutenant colonel and transferred to the position of deputy commander of the 55th Line Infantry Regiment (55^e *régiment d'Infanterie de Ligne*). Soon, on February 24, his unit was sent to Algeria to suppress the local unrest. Ardant du Picq remained on the African continent until April 14, 1866. He participated in some battles and skirmishes, which left a significant impression on him due to the incompatibility of European tactics with local conditions. He paid particular attention to the locally recruited Zouave units, which he was periodically tasked with commanding.²⁸ Muslims and Senegalese instilled fear among their French comrades-in-arms even during World War I.²⁹ Most likely, it was in Algeria when Ardant du Picq's first sketches on psychology were created, enriched with observations regarding cultural differences affecting attitudes towards fighting and killing.³⁰ It seems that between 1864 and 1866 he also noted preliminary observations about human reactions to various stimuli appearing on the battlefield.³¹

Service in Africa turned out to be a crucial experience in the life of Ardant du Picq. Since then, his attitude towards military service had clearly changed; as

25 ADP, pp. 36–37, 102, 114–115, 128–129. On the “national spirit” of the French: *ibid.*, pp. 36, 122–125, 174–183.

26 [L.J.] TROCHU, *L'armée française en 1867*, Amyot, Paris 1867, pp. 63–80 (about negative phenomena related to the socialization of recruits), 99–103 (about the problems with properly establishing and enforcing formal hierarchy), 131–136 (about the specifics of garrison life).

27 V. PETIT, *A la recherche d'Ardant du Picq, cit.*, pp. 62–63. Ardant du Picq once again expressed criticism towards the excessive hierarchy prevailing in the French Army: ADP, p. 101.

28 L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, pp. XXXV–XXXVI.

29 See the most famous French description of African soldiers contained in the fictionalized memoirs: H. BARBUSSE, *Le feu (Journal d'une Escouade)*, Flammarion, Paris 1917, pp. 47–49.

30 ADP, pp. 39, 56 n. 5, 60, 94, 143, 153.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 95, 97.

late as September 13, 1860, in a letter to his wife, he wrote about the readiness to leave the army at any moment, as it was glaringly different from his expectations from Saint-Cyr.³² In Algeria he prepared his first article, in which he proposed modifications to tactical training. It was the beginning of a series of texts published in the French military press between 1865 and 1869.³³ They were of a classical analytical nature and did not yet foreshadow the innovations of the first book. Probably, Ardant du Picq began working on it shortly after returning with his regiment to Besançon in 1866.³⁴

An additional impetus for Ardant du Picq to take up the pen was the Prussian victory over Austria and its allies in 1866. Among French officers, it sparked a lively discussion about the optimal model for organizing armed forces and tactical solutions. Two main factions emerged: one advocated for the introduction of a conscript army, while the other expressed the belief in the greater effectiveness of a professional military due to differences in training and morale. The most influential proponent of the first view was Marshal Adolphe Niel, Minister of War from 1867 to 1869. Despite numerous protests, he initiated a far-reaching reform of the mobilization system, to which Ardant du Picq responded with criticism.³⁵ If one were to point to a second inspiration, after his service in Algeria, for tackling the issue of combat psychology, closely related to preparing soldiers for participation in armed conflict, it would indeed be the system designed by Niel under the influence of the Prussian success of 1866.³⁶ Moreover, Niel's reforms clashed with the worldview of Ardant du Picq, who was a patriotically inclined conservative deeply attached to the ethos distinguishing officers from the general public.³⁷

In 1868, a modestly sized work by Ardant du Picq titled *Études sur le combat d'après l'antique* was published by Veuve Valluet et fils from Besançon.³⁸ The

32 V. PETIT, *A la recherche d'Ardant du Picq*, cit., p. 24.

33 The list of mentioned articles: J. FRÉMEAUX, «Préface», in ADP, p. IX.

34 L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», cit., p. XLI.

35 ADP, pp. 79–86, 108–110.

36 S.T. POSSONY, É. MANTOUX, «Du Picq and Foch», cit., p. 208; L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», cit., pp. LXV–LXVI; A. GAT, «Ardant du Picq's Scientism, Teaching and Influence», *War & Society*, 8, 2, 1990, pp. 9–10; J. FRÉMEAUX, «Préface», cit., pp. 9–11; R.J. SPILLER, «Introduction», in [Ch.] ARDANT DU PICQ, *Battle Studies*, trans. & ed. R.J. SPILLER, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence 2017, pp. XXX–XXXII.

37 L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», cit., p. LIII.

38 [Ch.] ARDANT DU PICQ, *Études sur le combat d'après l'antique*, Veuve Valluet et fils, Be-

low print run and somewhat sluggish distribution initially led the author to send it to selected individuals on his own, which has resulted in the mistaken belief that it was a work intended for internal use within the French army.³⁹ Ardant du Picq, under the pretext of describing Greco-Roman military tactics, conducted an analysis of human emotions on the battlefield, using examples drawn from antiquity and the 19th century. The choice of such a distant era was probably not dictated solely by personal preferences, which had already manifested during his efforts to gain admission to Saint-Cyr. Antiquity still represented an idealized model close to every thoroughly educated European, which was difficult to challenge in military terms due to the unprecedented achievements of the Roman legions. In this way, Ardant du Picq could smuggle in his own observations under the pretext of their partial alignment with the tone of ancient works; on the one hand, it made his conclusions easier to accept, and on the other, it suggested to the reader the author's broad horizons.⁴⁰ It was the first study on combat emotions in the world, opening a new chapter in human psychological reactions in the face of the threat of death.

Besides the publication of the book, the year 1868 brought Ardant du Picq another reason for satisfaction. On September 10, he became an officer of the Legion of Honor (the 4th class) in recognition of his service to date, with particular emphasis on his conduct in Algeria.⁴¹

Taking advantage of the period of peace, Ardant du Picq began working on the next book, this time focusing exclusively on the specifics of current conflicts. He considered his personal experiences insufficient, so he sent out surveys to fellow officers containing questions about their feelings as well as thoughts regarding the emotions displayed during battle and the ways to cope with them. Fortunately, Judet managed to obtain one of the questionnaires from General Ernest Lafont de Villiers⁴² and subsequently publish it.⁴³ The particular focus of Ardant du Picq's

sançon 1868.

39 S.T. POSSONY, É. MANTOUX, «Du Picq and Foch», *cit.*, p. 206.

40 Cf. S.T. POSSONY, É. MANTOUX, «Du Picq and Foch», *cit.*, p. 209; L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, pp. LVI–LX.

41 [E. JUDET], «États de service», *cit.*, p. 29.

42 ID., «Introduction», in ADP, p. 6.

43 ID., «Un penseur militaire», in ADP, pp. 12–14. Reprint: F. GUELTON, «Qui est Ardant du Picq ?», *cit.*, pp. 14–15. Unfortunately, it is not known how many responses Ardant du



Fig. 2. Charles Ardant du Picq around 1861.
V. PETIT, *A la recherche d'Ardant du Picq. Lettres inédites de Syrie*,
Berger-Levrault, Paris 1954, fig. 1.

interest was the reactions of soldiers to gunfire from various types of firearms and the influence of commanders' attitudes on their behavior. Considering the fact that the first study focused on hand-to-hand combat, the author's intention was most likely to show the evolution of weaponry and tactics under the necessity of minimizing the stress of subordinates and amplifying it in the opponent. However, he was unable to complete this work.

From February 27, 1869, Ardant du Picq served in his hometown of Limoges as a colonel and commander of the 10th Line Infantry Regiment (*10^e regiment d'Infanterie de Ligne*). In the opinion expressed about him by General Ernest de Cisse, there were remarks about oddities and eccentricities, but without specifying whether they referred to unusual habits, mannerisms, or perhaps unconventional thinking. The final conclusion, however, was flattering: Ardant du Picq was described as a competent front-line officer, and his regiment received a high rating.⁴⁴

The Franco-Prussian War, which broke out in 1870, was the last armed conflict of his life. On July 15, he received orders to march with his regiment to Metz. On August 15, near Longeville-lès-Metz, his unit came under artillery fire. Ardant du Picq ordered a retreat to a nearby forest and to lie down on the ground. Unluckily, one of the shells hit him in the lower back, buttocks, and thighs, causing serious injuries. In critical condition, he was transported to the hospital, where he died on August 18.⁴⁵

A few years later, fragments of *Études sur le combat d'après l'antique* were republished in the journal *Bulletin de la Réunion des Officiers de terre et de mer*.⁴⁶ The anonymous editor clumsily removed some sections of the arguments, thereby modifying the author's original thoughts. It may therefore seem paradoxical that it was precisely then – perhaps under the influence of the recent defeat in the

Picq received, what they contained, and to what extent they proved useful in further exploring the issue.

44 L. NACHIN, «Avant-propos», *cit.*, p. XLIX.

45 *10^e Régiment d'infanterie. Historique des corps qui ont porté le n° 10*, L. Venot, Dijon 1897, p. 139.

46 [Ch.] ARDANT DU PICQ, «Nécessaire, dans les choses de la guerre, de connaître l'instrument premier qui est l'homme», *Bulletin de la Réunion des Officiers de terre et de mer*, 6, 1876, pp. 829–832; ID., «Étude sur le combat moderne», *Bulletin de la Réunion des Officiers de terre et de mer*, 7, 1877, pp. 802–806.

war with Prussia – Ardant du Picq's reflections garnered greater interest among the officer corps than ever before.⁴⁷ The family also took care to promote his work, resulting in the joint publication by Hachette of his first book and its unfinished continuation under the common title *Études sur le combat*.⁴⁸ The family was assisted by Colonel Edouard A. Letellier.⁴⁹ The continued interest in the book soon prompted Judet to compile all of Ardant du Picq's publications into a single volume and enrich them with unpublished notes and numerous source additions. The new version of *Études sur le combat* appeared in the catalog of the Librairie Chapelot in 1903.⁵⁰ Thanks to numerous reprints, this is currently the most frequently used edition, although it is unclear whether the French colonel intended to include these notes in his works. Fortunately, the additions made by Judet are found in the footnotes, so those who have doubts about the validity of this step (especially given the uncertainty regarding the completeness of the transmitted notes⁵¹) can simply treat them as curiosities.

As I have mentioned before, these efforts contributed to a sharp increase in interest in the work of Ardant du Picq during World War I; however, attention was drawn to it earlier. General Douglas Haig ordered his book to be included on the reading list for students at the British Staff College in 1896.⁵² General Louis de Maud'huy did the same in 1899 regarding the courses conducted at the Superior School of War (*École supérieure de guerre*).⁵³ In 1938, French Minister of Defense Édouard Daladier ordered the introduction of Ardant du Picq's book into all military libraries.⁵⁴

Interestingly, Ardant du Picq has been commemorated not only through numerous reprints of *Études sur le combat* or translations into other languages, including English, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish. In Limoges,

47 S.T. POSSONY, É. MANTOUX, «Du Picq and Foch», *cit.*, p. 206.

48 [Ch.] ARDANT DU PICQ, *Études sur le combat*, Hachette, Paris 1880.

49 L. NACHIN, «Introduction», *cit.*, p. VII; V. PETIT, *A la recherche d'Ardant du Picq*, *cit.*, p. 5.

50 See n. 3.

51 S.T. POSSONY, É. MANTOUX, «Du Picq and Foch», *cit.*, pp. 206–207.

52 R.J. SPILLER, «Introduction», *cit.*, p. XXXVII.

53 L. NACHIN, «Introduction», *cit.*, p. IX. The psychologizing perspective of Ardant du Picq is, moreover, clearly visible in his book dedicated to infantry: [L.] DE MAUD'HUY, *Infanterie*, Henri Charles Lavauzelle, Paris 1912.

54 V. PETIT, *A la recherche d'Ardant du Picq*, *cit.*, p. 5.

there stands a monument called the “Monument in memory of the children of Haute-Vienne who fell in defense of the Fatherland in 1870–1871” (*Monument à la mémoire des Enfants de la Haute-Vienne morts pour la défense de la Patrie en 1870–1871*), created by Martial A. Thabard. Its solemn unveiling took place in 1899. The face of the officer on the right with the broken saber⁵⁵ is modeled after a photo provided by the Ardant du Picq family (fig. 3).⁵⁶ Also in this city, at the de Louyat cemetery, his body was laid to rest.

Views on soldiers' emotions

In seeking the sources of Ardant du Picq's interest in psychology, the most important would be the observations gained from the military service. His participation in the wars conducted by France in Syria and Algeria proved to be groundbreaking, allowing him to encounter non-European military cultures. Confirmation can be found in numerous examples from the “colonial period,” used during the writing of *Études sur le combat*, while also indicating where he might have drawn conclusions about human reactions to hand-to-hand combat.⁵⁷ It is not known whether Ardant du Picq himself had the opportunity to gain personal experience in this area. Certainly, participating in the Second Italian War of Independence (the Franco-Austrian War) of 1859, particularly the battles of Magenta and Solferino, would have been a serious experience and thus an inspiration for him. His unit, however, remained in France.

The perspective presented by Ardant du Picq significantly goes beyond the simple desire to improve training methods that could give French soldiers an advantage over opponents. In his reflections, one can clearly discern the deep mark left on him by encounters with extreme experiences: fear and killing.⁵⁸ The attempt to use examples relating to peoples inhabiting other continents suggests perceiving them in terms of representatives of earlier stages of civilizational

55 A photo taken in 1914 proves that the saber was originally undamaged: Le monument des Mobiles, <https://bnl-bfm.limoges.fr/s/bibliotheque-virtuelle/item/5370#lg=1&slide=0> (access: January 30, 2025).

56 «Le monument de Limoges», in *Limougeauds dans une guerre oubliée. Une exposition des Archives municipales*, Archives municipales de Limoges, Limoges 2022, p. 46.

57 See n. 31.

58 The most characteristic example is the emotional description of a panic outbreak: ADP, pp. 42–43.

development, helpful for understanding the epochs preceding the advent of the “gunpowder revolution.” In the context of nineteenth-century reflection, similar tendencies could be observed in the works of Edward B. Tylor⁵⁹ and Lewis H. Morgan,⁶⁰ but in theoretical-military treatises, they remained a rarity.

The long-standing fascination of French officers with the morale, so strongly emphasized in the works of Napoleon Bonaparte, was not without significance.⁶¹ For years, Ardant du Picq remained under the influence of the writings of Marshal Thomas Bugeaud, a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars who promoted the idea of offensive and maneuver warfare.⁶² Undoubtedly, he was also familiar with the famous book by Trochu,⁶³ which included themes related to personal experiences of combatants, with particular emphasis on cases of panic outbreaks.⁶⁴ Trochu was also part of the circle gathered around Bugeaud, which suggests the existence of similar reflections within a broader group of officers, even if in a limited form. However, Ardant du Picq was not satisfied with the existing approach, which was heavily “tainted” by the glorification of French military tradition, intended to inspire future generations to follow in the footsteps of the “heroic ancestors.” He rather sought universal principles useful for enriching the existing knowledge about human nature.

Ardant du Picq did not hesitate to criticize those who believe in the decisive importance of technological superiority for the outcome of wars.⁶⁵ Indeed, its significance is hard to underestimate, but in every era the fundamental “tool of war” remains human; for understanding the essence of armed conflict, it is necessary to focus precisely on him.⁶⁶ The participants in battles are not will-less, unthinking executors of orders but people endowed with emotions, which, to a greater

59 E.B. TYLOR, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*, John Murray, London 1865; ID., *Primitive Culture*, 1–2, John Murray, London 1871.

60 L.H. MORGAN, *Ancient Society*, Henry Holt and Company, New York 1877.

61 See NAPOLEON, *On War*, ed. B. COLSON, trans. G. ELLIOTT, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, pp. 124–129, 141–142.

62 S.T. POSSONY, É. MANTOUX, «Du Picq and Foch», *cit.*, p. 207.

63 *Ibid.*

64 [L.J.] TROCHU, *L'armée française en 1867*, *cit.*, pp. 245–252, 253–267.

65 ADP, pp. 35, 91, 94.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

extent than all other aspects, determine the outcome of the conflict.⁶⁷ In this way, Ardant du Picq opposed the phenomenon of the “geometrization” of war promoted by General Antoine-Henri Jomini, which involves the assumption of the existence of universal principles possible to express in the form of measurements and mathematical calculations. He thus unequivocally took a stance in the debate over the correctness of using the terms “military science” and “military art”: in his perspective, command was an art, but above all, an art of dealing with human emotions.⁶⁸

Ardant du Picq had no doubt about the fear as the strongest feeling accompanying a soldier during battle. Fear, which does not indicate cowardice but comes directly from nature imposing the will to survive on humans.⁶⁹ Its complete elimination is simply not possible; instead, learning to control fear becomes crucial. Only then will it be possible to apply the appropriate organizational model or tactics. Only to a certain extent can human nature be bent to someone’s will, which is why every officer should strive to understand the emotions driving soldiers’ behavior on the battlefield, as victory or even survival depend on this knowledge.⁷⁰

Even the birth of tactics Ardant du Picq attributed to the influence of fear. A human does not go into battle to kill but to survive and is ready to kill the enemy primarily if it ensures their safety. A natural human instinct in the face of danger is to band together, and the chances of its elimination increase when there is cooperation. Courage that involves disregarding dangers is granted only to individuals who rarely have the ability to influence the outcome of a battle on their own. The primary impetus conditioning the evolution of the military is, therefore, the fear of death or being injured.⁷¹

Today, it is hard to imagine the shock some readers might have felt upon encountering the main conclusion of *Études sur le combat*: the open admission that the primary emotion accompanying a soldier in battle is fear not only undermined the widely held naive notions of “brave defenders of the homeland,” but

67 *Ibid.*, pp. 35–37.

68 S.T. POSSONY, É. MANTOUX, «Du Picq and Foch», *cit.*, pp. 207–208; A. GAT, «Ardant du Picq’s Scientism», *cit.*, pp. 3–4.

69 ADP, pp. 39–43, 46–47, 73–74, 76, 79, 95, 99–101, 108.

70 *Ibid.*, pp. 35–37, 39–43.

71 *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 79–80.

it could also have exposed Ardant du Picq to social ostracism. Even if a significant portion of the officers were aware of the truth of his diagnosis, its repetition could have affected the public perception of the entire corps. Many people who perceive reality in a simplified manner – not least due to a lack of personal war experience – would only understand that soldiers openly admit to cowardice. To some extent, the barrier of social cognition may explain why Ardant du Picq's works gained popularity only over 40 years after his death and in the context of the traumatic experience shared by millions of participants of World War I.⁷²

All the more commendable is the author's courage in regularly emphasizing the omnipresence of fear and its decisive influence on behaviors exhibited on the battlefield. Ardant du Picq wrote directly: when there is a threat to life, instinct takes over, prompting a person to seek safety, which most often means an impulse to avoid fighting. As a result, courage becomes a triumph of will over instinct, which cannot be fully eliminated and in which there is nothing shameful to be found.⁷³

Ardant du Picq believed in the existence of a national spirit, which he quite generally associated with cultural specificity. He believed that tactics and the method of enforcing discipline should be adapted to it because otherwise not only would it be impossible to properly utilize the soldiers' potential, but it could even lead to internal conflicts resulting in a breakdown of discipline.⁷⁴ He perceived the French as individualists endowed with courage and a sense of improvisation but poorly tolerant of routine and strict subordination. The national spirit predisposed them to conducting fire combat in a dispersed formation, quick maneuvers, and bold use of cavalry.⁷⁵ Reading the above remarks, one might get the impression that Ardant du Picq largely relied on his own characteristics (dislike for hierarchy and the monotony of garrison duty) and his previous service record (foot chasseurs, Zouaves). He summarized the situation in the French Army with a bitter remark: some officers confuse the requirements expressed in regulations with reality,⁷⁶ especially if they have no idea about the emotions of the battle

72 S.T. POSSONY, É. MANTOUX, «Du Picq and Foch», *cit.*, p. 207.

73 ADP, pp. 81–82.

74 *Ibid.*, pp. 35–36, 87, 93, 115, 173–183.

75 *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 122–125, 174–183.

76 *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 37.

participants.⁷⁷

Ardant du Picq's sensitivity to human emotions corresponded with the criticism of strict adherence to formal discipline, which should not lead to the suppression of soldiers' personalities and the deprivation of their initiative. According to him, incomparably better results were ensured by internal cohesion, built on the basis of mutual trust, shared experiences, and recognition of the real competencies of officers.⁷⁸ It was one of his most important ideas, adopted and creatively implemented in many Western armies in the second half of the 20th century.⁷⁹ Thanks to internal cohesion, formal discipline could be largely replaced by group pressure, because the fear of disappointing comrades or putting them in danger is a stronger motivator than the fear of punishment by a superior. In this way, the sense of honor and pride, as well as the emotional bonds with comrades-in-arms, actually determined the level of discipline, which, according to Ardant du Picq, should ensure the proper performance of duties rather than rely on blind obedience.⁸⁰

It was not equivalent to a complete denial of the need to maintain formal discipline. Since the primary function of discipline is to tame the instinct that drives soldiers to seek safety in flight,⁸¹ ensuring it required the use of various means, as long as they were adapted to the temperament and value system of the soldiers.⁸²

In Ardant du Picq's view, overcoming fear was also possible thanks to appropriate training, which instilled a sense of confidence and automatic behaviors in soldiers. For this reason, it should be as close as possible to battlefield con-

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42, 46–47, 79–81, 84–85, 92, 96–98, 101.

⁷⁹ LORD MORAN, *The Anatomy of Courage*, Constable, London 1966, p. 184; F.M. RICHARDSON, *Fighting Spirit: Psychological Factors in War*, Leo Cooper Ltd, London 1978, pp. 6–13, 171–172; A. KELLETT, *Combat Motivation: The Behavior of Soldiers in Battle*, Springer, Berlin 1982, pp. 41–47, 92–93, 97–101, 320–322; J.G. GRAY, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*, Bison Books, Lincoln–London 1998, pp. 39–43, 90–91; S.L.A. MARSHALL, *Men against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command*, University of Nebraska Press, Norman 2000, pp. 22, 41–43, 65, 138, 148–150; R. HOLMES, *Acts of War: the Behaviour of Men in Battle*, Cassell, London 2003, pp. 141–142, 275–281, 283–285, 291, 294–297, 304, 332–333.

⁸⁰ ADP, pp. 80–81, 92–93.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 45–46.

ditions. The above conclusion applied to both individual and group training.⁸³ Highlighting the destructive role of surprise and disorientation fully aligns with later findings by military psychologists,⁸⁴ although it must have been common knowledge among officers not only during Ardant du Picq's time. Even if, *Études sur le combat* as the first contains a coherent vision of such targeted training to ensure combat effectiveness by stimulating cooperation and strengthening internal bonds.

Since, according to the French colonel's perspective, battles are won by those who can better manage stress, the key to victory is breaking the opponent's will to resist while maintaining one's own combat readiness for as long as possible.⁸⁵ In comparison to antiquity, where hand-to-hand combat was relied upon, modern battles are not as emotionally burdensome for soldiers because the use of firearms (and thus ranged weapons) reduces the tension caused by the necessity of killing a person.⁸⁶ Of course, both sides enter the battle on the same terms (Ardant du Picq focused on European armies), so the decisive factors for the advantage are indeed discipline and training. For Ardant du Picq, the more important issue was the psychological relief of the soldier caused by the widespread use of firearms, rather than the stress induced by the prospect of being shot. Such an emphasis, however, was justified by actual attitudes, as demonstrated by American experiences during World War II.⁸⁷

Ardant du Picq's observations on the fear of specific types of wounds (punctured, cut, torn) are very innovative. Among other things, he pointed out the psychological impact of the bayonet, causing mental pressure difficult to manage

83 *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 100–102.

84 F.M. RICHARDSON, *Fighting Spirit*, *cit.*, pp. 47–48; A. KELLETT, *Combat Motivation*, *cit.*, pp. 83–84, 225–229, 304–305; J.G. GRAY, *The Warriors*, *cit.*, p. 103; S.L.A. MARSHALL, *Men against Fire*, *cit.*, pp. 37, 40, 59–60, 71, 92–93; R. HOLMES, *Acts of War*, *cit.*, pp. 36–56, 166–167.

85 ADP, pp. 39, 43, 46–47, 76.

86 *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 96, 101.

87 S.L.A. MARSHALL, *Men against Fire*, *cit.*, pp. 50, 54, 56, 58. Regarding Marshall's exaggeration of the number of American soldiers feigning participation in combat due to moral objections to killing a human: R.J. SPILLER, «S.L.A. Marshall and the Ratio of Fire», *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute*, 133, 4, 1988, pp. 63–71. This does not change the fact that such a phenomenon does indeed occur, and Ardant du Picq likely encountered it during one of his military campaigns. Perhaps he even based this on personal experiences.

for inexperienced soldiers.⁸⁸ Sadly, he did not elaborate further on the topic of wounds; in his time, hand-to-hand combat occurred on the battlefield, but its realistic course was rarely described in nineteenth-century diaries and memoirs. This gives Ardant du Picq's arguments particular significance. Later studies fully confirmed the accuracy of his observations.⁸⁹

Surprisingly little attention was given by him to physical limitations, sometimes closely related to the emotions felt. However, it should be remembered that during his lifetime only the study on ancient combat was published; the second part, dealing with the specifics of nineteenth-century combat, was not completed, and moreover, it is not known whether he planned to write only two books.

In the narrative of Ardant du Picq, Roman solutions aimed at alleviating the physical burden on fighters play a significant role. He pointed out the limited time for hand-to-hand combat, after which the muscles prevent effective fighting.⁹⁰ The Roman solution – correctly reconstructed by Ardant du Picq – was to rotate the units in the front line.⁹¹ Before new units engaged in battle, it was necessary to hold the positions firmly, as breaking ranks meant defeat;⁹² the Romans had to control the soldiers' emotions through strict discipline.⁹³ In modern times, soldiers can no longer be treated so harshly, which is why the cohesion of units has become crucial, leading to the necessity of focusing on building group bonds.⁹⁴

Ardant du Picq placed great importance on the proper shaping of an officer's personality. He considered it essential to foster a sense of solidarity between the officer and soldiers, creating a sense of mutual trust;⁹⁵ faith in the competence of the superior should not be tested by issuing unrealistic orders.⁹⁶ The officer should consider himself particularly predisposed to lead due to his high social position re-

88 ADP, pp. 95, 101, 105, 119–123, 135.

89 D. GROSSMAN, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, Back Bay Books, New York–Boston 1995, p. 98; R. HOLMES, *Acts of War*, cit., pp. 377–379.

90 ADP, p. 46.

91 *Ibid.*, pp. 46–48, 180–181.

92 *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.

93 *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 180–181.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 82 n. 2.

95 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

sulting either from birth or education.⁹⁷ Although constant supervision lowers the morale of the soldier,⁹⁸ one of the main conditions for victory is maintaining control over his actions, which was easier in antiquity when they fought in close ranks with melee weapons.⁹⁹ The officer should therefore act appropriately towards the soldiers to avoid stifling their initiative while maintaining as much control as possible over the course of the battle. The unwavering authority of lower-ranking commanders cannot be replaced by the authority of high-ranking officers; from the soldier's perspective, personal trust in their superior is very important, just as the difference between the commands "advance" and "follow me."¹⁰⁰ If the officer does not adhere to these general guidelines, then he can expect obedience from the soldiers enforced by discipline, but not their genuine loyalty.

Ardant du Picq believed so strongly in the superiority of unit cohesion over formal hierarchy that he advocated for the restoration of the peer courts known from the Revolutionary Army of France.¹⁰¹ Considering his conservative disposition, his proposal seems unusual. Perhaps a partial argument in favor of adopting such a solution was his negative experiences with regimental inspections. He was certainly strongly attached to the vision of an army based on civic patriotism; he advocated the view of awareness of duties towards the state and the army as the foundation of military discipline.¹⁰² Properly shaping discipline was an extremely important issue for him because he realized its relieving impact on the level of combat stress.¹⁰³ Battle discipline is similarly described in contemporary psychological literature.¹⁰⁴ It's not just about the simplified theory of the necessity to instill in a soldier a greater fear of their officer than of the enemy. It would, moreover, contradict other arguments of Ardant du Picq. Thucydides already wrote that discipline is developed through training, while courage is developed through

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 79–81.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82, 95.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 99–101, 168.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 182–183.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 80–82.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47, 79–80, 92.

¹⁰⁴ LORD MORAN, *The Anatomy of Courage*, *cit.*, p. 176; F.M. RICHARDSON, *Fighting Spirit*, *cit.*, p. 134; A. KELLETT, *Combat Motivation*, *cit.*, p. 89; S.L.A. MARSHALL, *Men against Fire*, *cit.*, pp. 124, 148–150.

the awareness of mastering the art of war.¹⁰⁵ Discipline was therefore a sequence of learned behaviors, in some situations aimed at limiting the soldier's initiative for his own safety.¹⁰⁶

Études sur le combat is not one of the outstanding works in terms of literature, which leads some scholars to form less than flattering opinions about the author's intellectual preparation.¹⁰⁷ Such a judgment does not seem appropriate. First of all, Ardant du Picq addressed his work to officers and attributed to it a practical value, which to some extent determined the adopted form. He was able to concisely and clearly explain the difficult subject matter, avoiding excessive simplifications or clichés. Secondly, his undeniable merit was the open opposition to the phenomenon of romanticizing war, a trap from which even Marshal Helmuth von Moltke the Elder could not escape, despite his undeniable familiarity with the nature of armed conflicts.¹⁰⁸ Thirdly, capturing the relationship between fear and attitude during combat, even if sometimes based on typical simplifications of the era ("national spirit"), turned out to be one of the most inspiring interpretative currents in theoretical military literature, significantly influencing the evolution of military, psychological, and historiographical literature.¹⁰⁹ Fourth: in such cases, the main criterion for evaluation should be the author's insight against the backdrop of the prevailing trends of their time, rather than the pleasure derived from reading.

Impact on military psychology and psychiatry

Initially, considerations of Ardant du Picq were regarded at most as a subject of reflection for French officers interested in the optimal preparation for combat. *Études sur le combat* was primarily addressed to individuals who had chosen military careers, but the situation began to gradually change as a result of World

¹⁰⁵ Thuc. 6.72.4.

¹⁰⁶ ADP, pp. 46–47, 79–81.

¹⁰⁷ R.J. SPILLER, «Introduction», *cit.*, pp. XIV, XVI; L. BARDIÈS, «Le moral : un objet abandonné par les études militaires françaises», in J. BAECHELER, L. BARDIÈS (ed.), *Guerre et Psychologie*, Hermann, Paris 2018, p. 40.

¹⁰⁸ *Moltke in seinen Briefen. Mit einem Lebens- und Charakterbild des Verewigten*, Mittler und Sohn, Berlin 1902, pp. 252–253.

¹⁰⁹ J. FRÉMEAUX, «Préface», *cit.*, pp. XII–XVI; R.J. SPILLER, «Introduction», *cit.*, pp. XLIV–XLVII.



FIG. 3. French officer with the face of Ardant du Picq on the monument from Limoges. Wikimedia Commons, https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_des_monuments_historiques_de_Limoges#/media/Fichier:Monument_1870-1871_Limoges.jpg

War I. Traumatic experiences became a painful ordeal for an entire generation, which did not always manage to return to civilian reality; military psychology and psychiatry received a strong impetus for development.¹¹⁰ After a few years, some psychiatrists realized that treating mental injuries is just as important as minimizing the risk of their occurrence. The book by Ardant du Picq has gained a new context; first and foremost, the solutions he proposed to help soldiers cope with the extreme stress experienced during a battle were recognized. It was not a particularly wide-represented trend, but its advocates were widely cited in the contemporary professional literature. The most influential among them were Charles Coste, Louis Huot, and Paul Voivenel.

The author who probably drew the most from *Études sur le combat* and creatively supplemented Ardant du Picq's observations with aspects related to technological progress and traumas affecting veterans was Coste.¹¹¹ In 1929, he published a work titled *La psychologie du combat*; following in the footsteps of Ardant du Picq, he sought to find answers to the question of the most effective ways to break the opponent's will to resist while simultaneously protecting oneself from similar threats.¹¹² The assumptions he adopted clearly indicate inspiration from the works of the French colonel.¹¹³ Like his predecessor, he particularly emphasized the influence of group pressure, which in critical moments could transform into a sense of support, minimizing fear and facilitating decision-making.¹¹⁴ Coste combined the perspectives of a reserve officer, sociologist, and psychologist, but he lacked clinical trials;¹¹⁵ his perspective was actually the perspective of a soldier from the Great War era, deepened by appropriate readings.

In another context, the theories of Ardant du Picq were utilized by Huot and Voivenel, authors of *La psychologie du soldat*,¹¹⁶ they mainly continue the re-

110 R. GABRIEL, *No More Heroes: Madness and Psychiatry in War*, Hill and Wang, New York 1987, pp. 72–75, 97–112, 132; A. YOUNG, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1995, pp. 43–88; B. SHEPARD, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 2001, pp. 5–72.

111 L. BARDIÈS, «Le moral», *cit.*, pp. 45–50.

112 Ch. COSTE, *La psychologie du combat*, Berger-Levrault, Paris 1929.

113 *Ibid.*, pp. XVIII–XXII.

114 *Ibid.*, pp. 21–23, 79.

115 L. BARDIÈS, «Le moral», *cit.*, pp. 45–46.

116 L. HUOT, P. VOIVENEL, *La psychologie du soldat*, La Renaissance du Livre, Paris 1918.

flection dedicated to the relationship of various social groups to military service. Huot and Voivenel did not usually directly reference their inspirations, so capturing the similarities and differences compared to previously published works requires painstakingly compiling the arguments and examples they present. Their knowledge of *Études sur le combat* raises no doubts, although *La psychologie du soldat* certainly contains more observations on the differences regarding the mental resilience of men belonging to different social groups. It was an important voice in the discussion about the social composition of the army and the predispositions of individual recruits to serve in specific roles. In the work of Ardant du Picq, there is only a simplified division into aristocracy and common people, and even then, only the first category received a more detailed characterization.¹¹⁷

Another aspect concerned his influence on the American scientific community. In 1949, four volumes of the pioneering project titled *The American Soldier*, carried out by the team led by Samuel A. Stouffer, were published.¹¹⁸ The project aimed to gather the opinions of American soldiers who fought in World War II on dozens of topics related to the conditions of their service. The abundance of data from *The American Soldier* makes it possible to modernize the armed forces using the perspective of veterans. Volume 2 was subtitled *Combat and Its Aftermath* and contained descriptions of events drawn from battles fought in Europe and Asia. Stouffer decided to prepare survey sets based on a method well-known in the sociological environment of the time. Collecting information about battlefield experiences, including fatigue, communication problems, fear, and emotion-induced disorders, was, however, a significant novelty. As a result, *The American Soldier* quickly became a model emulated by analysts working for other armies.¹¹⁹ Many scholars overlooked the fact that the first person to decide on such an approach was Ardant du Picq, who was additionally interested in almost identical aspects. It is difficult to definitively determine whether Stouffer and his collaborators were aware of the 1903 edition of *Études sur le combat*, but even if the influence of the French colonel was indirect, the research method used

117 ADP, pp. 94, 174–177.

118 S.A. STOUTER et al., *The American Soldier*, 1–4, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1949.

119 On the methods of the Stouffer team and the reception of their achievements: J.W. RYAN, *Samuel Stouffer and the GI Survey: Sociologists and Soldiers during the Second World War*, University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville 2013.

was still his original idea.

The renaissance of Ardant du Picq's thought after 1945 occurred under the influence of the advancement of American studies in military psychology, focusing on the issues of cohesion and *esprit de corps*. A key role was played by General S.L.A. "SLAM" Marshall, the author of the first monograph based on the experiences of American soldiers participating in World War II.¹²⁰ Although he denied being familiar with the work of the French colonel, he actually regularly quoted his findings without citing the source and tried to create an impression of total originality in his arguments.¹²¹ It is worth mentioning that Marshall had access to at least some of the same materials as Stouffer's team. The unprecedented interest in his book caused a revival of the popularity of *Études sur le combat*, whose use by English-speaking scholars was facilitated by the availability of several translations. Moreover, since 1946, Ardant du Picq's study has been included in the reading list at American military academies.¹²² After some time, Marshall's book was granted the status of a classic, whose originality of perspective was ahead of its time and laid the foundations for a modern combat system based on the actions of well-integrated teams (the so-called "buddy system").¹²³

Since the best army in the world based its training system on Marshall's book, this immediately made it one of the primary reference points for further studies in combat psychology. The dynamically changing nature of the contemporary battlefield has excluded a return to the ideas advocated by the nineteenth-century classics, whose works could at best serve as the basis for general assertions.¹²⁴

120 Quoted reissue of the 1947 edition: S.L.A. MARSHALL, *Men against Fire*, cit.

121 R.J. SPILLER, «Introduction», cit., p. XLVI n. 121; R. SPILLER, R.C. ENGEN, A. ENGLISH, «The Marshall Paradigm: American and Canadian Perspectives», in R.C. ENGEN, H.Ch. BREEDE, A. ENGLISH (ed.), *Why We Fight: New Approaches to the Human Dimension of Warfare*, McGill/Queen's University Press, Montreal–Kingston–London–Chicago 2020, pp. 32–33. The far-reaching dependence of Marshall on Ardant du Picq requires a separate study supplemented by a table containing a compilation of quotes.

122 G. PHILLIPS, «Military Morality Transformed: Weapons and Soldiers on the Nineteenth-Century Battlefield», *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 41, 4, 2011, p. 571.

123 E.P. CHODOFF, «Ideology and Primary Groups», *Armed Forces & Society*, 9, 4, 1983, pp. 573–576; A. KELLET, *Combat Motivation*, cit., pp. 13–14; F.D.G. WILLIAMS, *SLAM: The Influence of S.L.A. Marshall on the United States Army*, Office of the Command Historian. United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe 1990, pp. 61–75; D. GROSSMAN, *On Killing*, cit., pp. XIII–XV.

124 R.C. ENGEN, «Introduction: The Human Dimensions of War», in R.C. ENGEN, H.Ch.

Among them, only Ardant du Picq is generally treated with the due reverence. Dave Grossman, probably the most influential American military psychologist, regularly refers to his work.¹²⁵ The merits of Ardant du Picq for studying combat effectiveness were also appreciated by Ben Shalit, who worked for Swedish military institutions.¹²⁶ Canadian Army officer Anthony Kellett identified the French precursor as one of the primary authors of the analytical model he adopted.¹²⁷ A similar stance to Grossman's was presented by Leo Murray (pseudonym), a former military psychologist of the British Army who frequently referred to *Études sur le combat*.¹²⁸ More examples could be multiplied, but the most important thing is to realize the vitality of Ardant du Picq's contributions in contemporary battlefield psychology. Clearly, no one is trying to train soldiers based on them; however, awareness of the intellectual roots of the conducted research requires at least a mention of him.

Intellectual currents emanating from the United States of America somehow reminded the French of their precursor, periodically pushed to the background due to the rise in interest in the nuclear threat. Unlike American authors, however, they did not focus on the tactical dimension of combat stress analysis but instead continued research initiated in the interwar period on psychological injuries and their treatment. In this context, Ardant du Picq became the first author to raise awareness about the dominance of fear and the necessity to limit its influence under the threat of serious consequences. While the most significant issue for him was the risk of a panic outbreak,¹²⁹ contemporary French psychiatrists are more interested in the health effects of high levels of stress. This is exactly how Claude Barrois, specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of post-traumatic stress dis-

BREDE, A. ENGLISH (ed.), *Why We Fight: New Approaches to the Human Dimension of Warfare*, McGill/Queen's University Press, Montreal–Kingston–London–Chicago 2020, p. 4.

125 D. GROSSMAN, *On Killing*, *cit.*; D. GROSSMAN, L.W. CHRISTENSEN, *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and in Peace*, Warrior Science Publications, 2008.

126 B. SHALIT, *The Psychology of Conflict and Combat*, Praeger, New York–Westport–London 1988.

127 A. KELLETT, *Combat Motivation*, *cit.*, pp. 13–14.

128 L. MURRAY, *Brains & Bullets: How Psychology Wins Wars*, Biteback Publishing, Hull 2013.

129 ADP, pp. 73–74, 79–80, 112.

order (PTSD), engaged in a dialogue with Ardant du Picq's arguments.¹³⁰ Louis Crocq acted similarly, although from his perspective, the main value of Ardant du Picq's work lay in identifying the factors that motivate people to fight, rather than its consequences.¹³¹

Nevertheless, Coste, Huot, and Voivenel have not found many followers among psychologists and psychiatrists over the years, who in France seem to place modest importance on the factors influencing a soldier's behavior on the battlefield.¹³² Much like at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, military officers still exhibit greater writing intensity in this matter. Currently, the French discourse on soldiers' emotions is primarily shaped by Michel Goya.¹³³ He does not hide the intellectual debt owed to Ardant du Picq, treating his work as a starting point for more contemporary analyses, similarly to Vincent Desportes.¹³⁴ Personal experiences and years of contact with other soldiers prove to be irreplaceable, despite the dynamic development of science and technology. Not without significance is also the strong barrier between civil society and the army, typical for most European countries. Ultimately, the work of Ardant du Picq became the most inspiring for representatives of the American cultural sphere and their followers.

Impact on historiography

Almost 100 years after the publication of Ardant du Picq's first work, his findings permeated historiography, becoming the spark of a true revolution in the study of military history. Despite the efforts of Hans Delbrück and his followers, who advocated for the analysis of military issues in close connection with political, social, economic, and cultural aspects,¹³⁵ the narrative was dominated by the achievements of individual commanders, as well as the course of campaigns and battles ("drum & trumpet history"); soldiers were usually reduced to emotionless

130 C. BARROIS, *Psychanalyse du guerrier*, Hachette, Paris 1993, especially pp. 240–257.

131 L. CROCQ, *Les Blessés psychiques de la Grande Guerre*, Odile Jacob, Paris 2014, pp. 15–41.

132 L. BARDIES, «Le moral», *cit.*, pp. 37–38.

133 Especially: M. GOYA, *Sous le feu : La mort comme hypothèse de travail*, Tallandier, Paris 2014.

134 V. DESPORTES, *Comprendre la guerre*, Economica, Paris 2001.

135 M.N. FASZCZA, *Hans Delbrück i narodziny nowoczesnej historii wojskowości. Twórczość – koncepcje – recepcja*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2024, pp. 74–92.

and worldview-less obedient executors of the officers' will, if their existence was even acknowledged within the dehumanized legions, regiments, or squadrons. The breakthrough came with the British research initiated by Michael Howard.

In 1953, Howard received an offer to take up the vacant chair of Military Studies at King's College London. Although he had not previously studied military affairs and had serious concerns about whether he could meet the challenge, he ultimately agreed.¹³⁶ His new academic position required him to undergo accelerated education in the new field; until then, he had not shown interest in traditionally understood "event history," so he turned to military thought and personal sources, with a small addition of sociology and psychology. One of his first readings was *Études sur le combat* by Ardant du Picq.¹³⁷ Howard ultimately never undertook writing a publication in which he would attempt to analyze soldiers' emotions,¹³⁸ but his influence became fully evident after collaborating with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1968.

From 1968 to 1975, he undertook the organization of historical studies in Sandhurst. He was responsible not only for developing the educational program but also for selecting and educating young lecturers in the innovative perception of military history.¹³⁹ Shortly after he left Sandhurst, two staff members published monographs largely inspired by Ardant du Picq's observations: John Keegan¹⁴⁰ and Richard Holmes.¹⁴¹ In British historiography, similar research endeavors have been lacking until now, which reveals Howard's intellectual influence. In

136 M. HOWARD, *Captain Professor: The Memoirs of Sir Michael Howard*, Bloomsbury, London–New York 2006, pp. 140–141.

137 *Ibid.*, pp. 130–131.

138 Howard preferred social history, which made him a precursor of the trend known as "war and society." He significantly contributed to expanding the narrative about the experiences of civilians and the connections between the army and social structures: H. STRACHAN, «Michael Howard and the dimensions of military history», *War in History*, 27, 4, 2020, p. 545; J.E. KITCHEN, S. MITCHELL, «Michael Howard and the Historian's Craft: An Introduction to the Michael Howard Special Issue», *British Journal for Military History*, 8, 2, 2022, pp. 13, 17; D. MORGAN-OWEN, M. FINCH, «The Unrepentant Historian: Sir Michael Howard and the Birth of War Studies», *British Journal for Military History*, 8, 2, 2022, pp. 59, 64.

139 M. HOWARD, *Captain Professor*, *cit.*, p. 186.

140 J. KEEGAN, *The Face of Battle*, Viking, New York 1976.

141 Quoted reissue of the 1985 edition: R. HOLMES, *Acts of War*, *cit.* Originally, the book was titled *The Firing Line*.

this way, one of the most important currents classified under the “new military history” was born, bearing the name taken from the title of Keegan’s book: the “face of battle.”¹⁴²

Keegan came to the conclusion that there are two main ways of studying military history: the model inherited from Delbrück, which requires a holistic approach and sensitivity to the specifics of the narrative sources, and the “Anglo-American school,” whose representatives focus on “decisive battles” and “great commanders.” In his opinion, only the first one fully met the standards of academic historiography.¹⁴³ Both, however, insufficiently accounted for the experiences of the combatants, which required a broader approach to ego-documents and psychological publications. Keegan therefore turned to the pioneering studies of Ardant du Picq and Marshall.¹⁴⁴ As a consequence, the work of the French colonel was discovered in Western historiography, even though Keegan usually placed greater emphasis on Marshall’s studies.¹⁴⁵

Keegan started from the seemingly obvious assumption: the purpose for which armed forces are created is combat, regardless of whether it ultimately occurs or not; as a result, all other aspects of military functioning remain directly related to it.¹⁴⁶ Military historians should therefore strive to understand the essence of battles as thoroughly as possible, because even if they prefer another research area, the battle determines many solutions related to conscription, training, logistics, or propaganda and educational activities. Each time, one must keep in mind the invention of history as a science about people living in the past, which means the

142 On the research assumptions and trends classified as the “new military history”: P. PARET, «The New Military History», *Parameters*, 21, 1, 1991, pp. 10–18; J.W. CHAMBERS II, «The New Military History: Myth and Reality», *The Journal of Military History*, 55, 3, 1991, pp. 395–398, 405–406; J. BLACK, *Rethinking Military History*, Routledge, London–New York 2004, pp. 35–37, 49–59; J. BOURKE, «New Military History», in M. HUGHES, W.J. PHILPOIT (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Modern Military History*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2006, pp. 258–280; R.M. CITINO, «Military Histories Old and New: A Reintroduction», *The American Historical Review*, 112, 4, 2007, pp. 1070–1073, 1079; S. MORILLO, M.F. PAVKOVIC, *What is Military History?*, Polity Press, Cambridge–Malden 2018, pp. 39–47.

143 J. KEEGAN, *The Face of Battle*, cit., pp. 54–57.

144 *Ibid.*, pp. 70–73.

145 *Id.*, *The Face of Battle*, cit., pp. 72–73; *Id.*, «The Historian and Battle», *International Security*, 3, 3, 1978–1979, pp. 145–147.

146 *Id.*, *The Face of Battle*, cit., pp. 16–18; *Id.*, «The Historian and Battle», cit., pp. 140–141.

impossibility of neglecting their value systems, social roots, or emotions.¹⁴⁷ In this way, the publications of Ardant du Picq and Marshall became a natural starting point for further, more in-depth considerations, transferred by Keegan and his followers to the field of history.¹⁴⁸

It would not be an exaggeration to say about Keegan as the historian who gave a new dimension to issues traditionally addressed by scholars focused on military history, namely the analysis of battles and tactical solutions. There was a prevailing belief that these were indeed exhausted areas, which should naturally give way to currents based on social and economic history, represented by Howard (who never supported such a view) and members of the so-called “*Annales* school.”¹⁴⁹ Under the influence of Ardant du Picq, Keegan adopted the view about fear as a primary emotion accompanying a soldier during battle and shifted the focus from the clash seen through the eyes of the commander (“commander’s battle”) to the battle experienced by the soldier (“soldier’s battle”¹⁵⁰).¹⁵¹ Such an assumption necessitated a different analysis of the preserved source materials than

147 ID., *The Face of Battle*, cit., pp. 46–78, especially pp. 46–54.

148 See R. HOLMES, *Acts of War*, cit., pp. 13–14; R.J. SPILLER, «Introduction», cit., pp. XL–XLI; I. BERKOVICH, *Motivation in War: The Experience of Common Soldiers in Old-Regime Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017, pp. 21–22; J.A. LYNN, «The Intersection of Military History and the History of Emotions: Reconsidering Fear and Honour in Ancien Régime Warfare», *British Journal for Military History*, 6, 2, 2020, p. 35.

149 W.E. KAEGI JR., «The Crisis in Military Historiography», *Armed Forces & Society*, 7, 2, 1981, p. 306; M. VAN CREVELD, «Thoughts on Military History», *Journal of Contemporary History*, 18, 4, Military History, 1983, pp. 552–555; L. HENNINGER, «La nouvelle histoire-bataille», *Espaces Temps*, 71–73, 1999, pp. 38–39; N. LABANCA, «Ascesa e declino di un classico della storia militare», *Contemporanea*, 7, 1, 2004, pp. 132–133; J. BOURKE, «New Military History», cit., p. 265. The attitude of the representatives of the so-called “*Annales* school” towards the military history was heterogeneous. Some of them even presented their own program for studying military issues: P. PIERI, «Sur les dimensions de l’Histoire militaire», *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations*, 18, 4, 1963, pp. 625–638; J.J. HÉMARDINQUER, «De l’histoire-bataille à l’histoire quantitative», *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 20, 4, 1965, pp. 836–840.

150 The term cited is a translation into English of the phrase once used by Ardant du Picq (ADP, p. 85): *batailles de soldats*.

151 J. KEEGAN, *The Face of Battle*, cit., pp. 36–46, 62–73. Under the influence of criticism from more traditionally oriented historians, who accused Keegan of neglecting the impact of commanders on the course of battles, 11 years later he published a new book, this time dedicated to various aspects of command: ID., *The Mask of Command*, Viking, New York 1987. It did not resonate as much as the previous one and did not have a strong impact on the evolution of the “new military history.”

previously and a greater focus on the cultural roots of the combatants. Over time, Keegan increasingly leaned towards the cultural history of the army and wars, resulting in a book, the core of which was the perception of armed conflicts and killing in various cultural circles.¹⁵² Thus, Keegan approached Delbrück, who, towards the end of his life, was even inclined to consider military history as a component of cultural history.¹⁵³

Just as Ardant du Picq enabled a closer understanding of the human aspect through theoretical military literature, so Howard's periodic employment at Sandhurst and Keegan's book helped scholars to "discover" soldiers' emotions and the often associated physical limitations on the battlefield. The "new military history" can be considered another stage in the "democratization" of history, while also posing a challenge to proponents of a quantitative approach to historical research. The perspective proposed by Keegan once again prioritized narrativity, making its subjective dimension a clear asset, even if it required particular sensitivity to the issue of reliability and changing genre conventions.¹⁵⁴ There was even an opinion about the decisive influence of Ardant du Picq's method of collecting and processing data on the emergence of research in the field of the anthropology of violence from a historical perspective.¹⁵⁵

In fact, his influence on the evolution of historiography does not stem from the accuracy of historical interpretations, which are either the result of a moderate understanding of the specifics of the described era (antiquity) or anecdotal selection of examples (modernity). Instead, he provided the necessary impetus to direct military history onto new interpretative tracks, allowing it to quickly catch up with the methodological distance to other historical specialties. From then on, it became possible to pose new questions regarding aspects determining the course of battles, such as the mechanisms of building *esprit de corps*, the way leadership is exercised at various organizational levels, the evolution of tactics and armaments under the influence of widespread fear (especially in armies formed on the basis of general conscription), the culturally rooted attitude

152 ID., *A History of Warfare*, Alfred A. Knopf, London 1993.

153 H. DELBRÜCK, *Weltgeschichte. Vorlesungen gehalten an der Universität Berlin 1896–1920*, 1, *Das Altertum (bis 300 n. Chr.)*, Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, Berlin 1924, p. 12.

154 J. KEEGAN, *The Face of Battle*, cit., pp. 62–73.

155 S. AUDOIN-ROUZEAU, «Vers une anthropologie historique de la violence de combat au XIX^e siècle : relire Ardant du Picq ?», *Revue d'histoire du XIX^e siècle*, 30, 2005, pp. 1–10.

towards killing, or reactions to noise, clatter, thundering, screams, etc. Recently, the “face of battle” has been expanded to include research in sensory history, and although it is still in the early stage, it may soon provide another intriguing interpretative dimension.¹⁵⁶ Thanks to the focus on the “soldier’s battle” perspective, the cognitive value of personal sources has largely been rehabilitated, which in earlier years were often treated with excessive skepticism and used solely for factual determinations.¹⁵⁷

The dissemination of research trends emerging from the creative use of Ardant du Picq’s writings occurs in different countries with varying intensity; nevertheless, they unequivocally demonstrate how harmful stereotypes can be, which leads to perceiving military historians as a group suffering from a peculiar “methodological atrophy” and interested in promoting a simplified vision of wars based on the idea of militarism and national myths. The evolution of historiography towards recognizing neglected and marginalized groups, as well as focusing on individual and collective emotions, has also included supporters of Keegan’s research approach. The “new military history” created at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s was not accidentally named in a way that evokes “new humanities”: it has remained closely linked to it for years, and the significant yet unintentional influence on the formation of this phenomenon was precisely exerted by Ardant du Picq.

The studies of Ardant du Picq are now considered fundamental by some historians focusing their research interests on the course of battles. However, the question arises whether such opinions are merely a form of respect paid to the precursor or stem from the ability to creatively apply his findings. The situation seems complex. Nowadays, many of Ardant du Picq’s groundbreaking statements seem like truisms because, in later years, they were developed by successive generations of historians and psychologists.¹⁵⁸ As a result, many researchers refer to the theses of the French colonel without mentioning his name or even knowing

156 M.M. SMITH, *The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege: A Sensory History of the Civil War*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014; C. WHATELY, *A Sensory History of Ancient Warfare: Reconstructing the Physical Experience of War in the Classical World*, Pen & Sword, Barnsley 2021.

157 Y.N. HARARI, *The Ultimate Experience: Battlefield Revelations and the Making of Modern War Culture, 1450–2000*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2008, especially pp. 1–25.

158 See H. STRACHAN, «‘Heroic’ Warfare and the Problem of Mass Armies: France 1871–1914», in S. SCHEIPERS (ed.), *Heroism and the Changing Character of War: Toward Post-Heroic Warfare?*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2014, pp. 55–56.

their sources. The question of the vitality of Ardant du Picq's works in contemporary literature thus becomes a question of the conscious use of his writings. Moreover, researchers of nineteenth- and twentieth-century warfare tend to interpret his theories in the strict context of the wars of the time, showing greater interest in his minor writings on the evolution of tactics; thus, his most important legacy, which is the emphasis on the psychology of the soldier, often takes a back seat.

Although Keegan's method largely relies on the use of personal sources, it is particularly favored by researchers of ancient military history. In this way, Ardant du Picq was "rediscovered" by classicists. At first glance, there is nothing strange about his connections with contemporary historiography dedicated to ancient military matters: he devoted a significant part of his first book to Greek and Roman warfare. The vast majority of Ardant du Picq's conclusions about ancient military affairs were, however, rejected; what interested some classicists were the psychological observations regarding hand-to-hand combat that he derived from his military service and conversations with other officers. The work of the French author serves as a convenient starting point for posing certain questions and seeking answers to them in preserved sources.¹⁵⁹ It is not an easy method of analysis, but it has significantly changed the perception of ancient battles, allowing for a greater consideration of the physical and psychological limitations of the

¹⁵⁹ Such an approach to the works of Ardant du Picq was presented, among others, by: A.K. GOLDSWORTHY, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC–AD 200*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1996; ID., «The *Othismos*, Myths and Heresies: The Nature of Hoplite Battle», *War in History*, 4, 1, 1997, pp. 1–26; Ph. SABIN, «The Face of Roman Battle», *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 90, 2000, pp. 1–17; G. DALY, *Cannae: The Experience of Battle in the Second Punic War*, Routledge, London–New York 2002; J. CROWLEY, *The Psychology of the Athenian Hoplite: The Culture of Combat in Classical Athens*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012; H. ELTON, *Understanding Ancient Battle: Combat in the Classical World from the Unit Commander's Perspective*, Pen & Sword, Barnsley 2023; L. RAWLINGS, «'... They Were Routed': Cohesion and Disintegration in Ancient Battle», in J.R. HALL, L. RAWLINGS, G. LEE (ed.), *Unit Cohesion and Warfare in the Ancient World: Military and Social Approaches*, Routledge, London–New York 2023, pp. 158–179. On the contrary, some classicists consider the use of Ardant du Picq's work to be harmful and distorting in the analysis of ancient sources: E.L. WHEELER, «Greece: Mad Hatters and March Hares», in L.L. BRICE, J.T. ROBERTS (ed.), *Recent Directions in the Military History of the Ancient World*, Regina Books, Claremont 2011, pp. 64–75 (the most important study criticizing the "face of battle"). In my opinion, overly loose analogies to the 19th and 20th centuries do not preclude the use of Ardant du Picq's findings, although applying the "face of battle" method to antiquity requires particular caution: M.N. FASZCZA, «A bridge too far? Military psychology and Roman Republican warfare», *Palamedes*, 13, 2019–2020, pp. 55–63.

combatants than ever before. Although not all classicists accept the “new military history,” particularly “the face of battle,” it is the most innovative research trend of the 2000s, and there is no indication that it will soon fade into the past.¹⁶⁰

Conclusions

It is difficult to consider Ardant du Picq's military career as spectacular, just as his combat experience. He was rather one of the typical representatives of the French officer corps during the reign of Emperor Napoleon III. His difficult character certainly posed some obstacles in achieving further promotions, although inspectors usually appreciated his good knowledge of military affairs. What set him apart from other officers, however, was his sense of observation and courage in writing about topics that could even be considered controversial in certain civilian circles. He became the author of the first book entirely dedicated to combat psychology, enriched with observations regarding other (non-European) military cultures. The originality of his work could only confirm the opinions about the eccentricity of Ardant du Picq. We can only regret his death in 1870, which prevented him from completing the second book devoted to the nineteenth-century battlefield.

According to him, the main emotion felt by soldiers during combat is fear. The correctness of his observation was fully confirmed several decades later. Since the soldier primarily fears and thinks about preserving his life, it is necessary to strive to alleviate his mental burden through appropriate military training and discipline. One of Ardant du Picq's most important observations was to draw attention to the significance of unit cohesion: trust, loyalty, and mutual support, in his opinion, ensured much better results than strict hierarchy and the limitation of soldiers' initiative. He even advocated for the reinstatement of peer courts. After World War II, his theories found practical application in the U.S. Army through the introduction of the so-called “buddy system.”

The work of Ardant du Picq influenced the development of military psycholo-

160 L. LORETO, *Per la storia militare del mondo antico. Prospettive retrospettive*, Jovene, Napoli 2006, pp. 191–210; V.D. HANSON, «The Modern Historiography of Ancient Warfare», in Ph. SABIN, H. VAN WEES, M. WHITBY (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, 1, *Greece, the Hellenistic World and the rise of Rome*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, pp. 17–19.

gy and psychiatry as well as military historiography. Initially, *Études sur le combat* attracted interest mainly among French readers. Thanks to the popularity of Marshall's book, in which he did not admit to being familiar with the findings of the French precursor, Ardant du Picq's ideas gained interest in the USA and then in other Western countries. Among historians, Keegan was the first to use it creatively as one of the co-founders of the "new military history." Today, it is hard to imagine writing about psychological factors in combat without referencing Ardant du Picq. Marshall and Keegan seem to be most strongly associated with him today. His main merit was drawing attention to the crucial importance of soldiers' emotions; yet currently, his name is mainly cited in the context of studies on French strategy from World War I. Ardant du Picq never dealt with strategy or military doctrine. Even his proposals for improving the tactical training of the French infantry are of secondary importance. A prominent place among military theorists was secured for him by the studies on the human in battle conditions, the limitations arising from emotions, and the ways of coping with combat stress.

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