

## The Psychology of Spartan Hoplites: Relationship Development in the Lakedaimonian Phalanx

The Spartan hoplite is a figure of never ending interest. Well educated and trained in the art of war, the Spartan hoplite of the Archaic and Classical periods exemplified Greek masculinity as well as a citizen's utter devotion to his *polis*. The *polis*, however, is not the only entity to which a hoplite is devoted. By using modern theories about socialisation in military groups as well as combat motivation, I explore the psychology of the Spartan hoplite in order to uncover the underlying motives that encouraged Spartan hoplites to face combat, fight in the phalanx, kill the enemy, and die on the battlefield. The Lakedaimonian phalanx, although diverse in composition, was closely monitored by a highly structured chain of command. y first examining the military system's organization as a whole, we are better able to understand the psychology of the Spartan hoplites who had to perform within such a diverse collection of individuals. The diverse nature of the system also adds complexity to our understanding of the system as a social entity, inevitably effecting our perception of individual socialisation and the development of relationships.

After briefly examining the structure of the phalanx, I explore the established chain of command within emphasising the relationship between individual hoplites and their *enomotarkhos*. I argue that the development of relationships between other ranks of officers, such as a *polemarkhos*, with individual hoplites formed similarly. By applying modern combat theory concerning the relationships between subordinates and superiors, we can better understand these relationships in relation to the overall psychology of individual hoplites within the phalanx as a whole. This study utilizes the theoretical frameworks constructed by Grossman (1995, 2004) and Crowley (2012) in order to cohesively incorporate modern combat theory with ancient primary material while recognizing social, cultural and political differences between a

modern military context and an ancient one. This study further illuminates the complex psychology working behind the scenes of one of the most famous *poleis* in the Greek world. In addition to the increased interest in scholarship on Sparta, there is precedence for this analysis in the ongoing research concerning both the lived experience of soldiers in Classical Greece (Hanson, 1991; Kagan and Viggiano, 2013) and the historical study of combat trauma in ancient Greece (Meineck and Konstan, 2014).

### Bibliography

Crowley, J. 2012. *The Psychology of the Athenian Hoplite*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grossman, D. 1995. *On Killing*. New York: Hachette Book Group.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *On Combat*. New York: Warrior Science Publications.

Hanson, V.D., ed. 1991. *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*. New York: Routledge

Kagan, D. and G. Viggiano, eds. 2013. *Men of Bronze: Hoplite Warfare in Ancient Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Meineck, P. and D. Konstan, eds. 2014. *Combat Trauma and the Ancient Greeks*. New York: Palgrave.