

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Psychology of the Athenian Hoplite: The Culture of Combat in Classical Athens.*  
By JASON CROWLEY. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press,  
2012. Pp. x + 240. Hardcover \$95.00. ISBN 978-1-107-02061-0.

This study explores how untrained Athenian hoplites took on and withstood well-trained armies that were often larger. The question Crowley seeks to answer is a psychological one; what compelled Athenian hoplites to stand firmly in their ranks in the grind of war?

The first chapter discusses current theories of troop motivation and cohesion that the author will systematically flesh out in the rest of the book. He stresses, first and foremost, the importance of a close-knit primary group for morale. This view is bolstered by the experimental study of Schachter that demonstrates the strong desire of human beings to affiliate when under threat (8). Crowley also gives thoughtful discussion to the studies that downplay the centrality of attachment to one's immediate comrades in motivating soldiers. Westbrook's work on the "compliance relationships" that keep units together in combat forms the other theoretical foundation of the work. The willingness of a soldier to stand in battle (comply) is based upon how the state enforces its demands on the soldier as well as the attitude of the soldier toward the state.

In the final chapter, Crowley concludes that hoplites in Athens fit the normative/moral category of compliance relationship which is the most effective for motivating troops. That is to say, the demands of the state were socially normative, and the response of the citizen-soldier was to view them as both appropriate and imperative because of his moral commitment to the system. The intellectual thrust of the book then is first to explore of the concentric rings of group affiliation that formed the social world of the Athenian hoplite (from primary group, to military unit, to state); and second, to show how the demands of the state were expressed and reinforced in these various rings.

As Crowley demonstrates, the process of bonding began immediately with recruitment. Although war dead were listed by tribe on monuments, the lists of those eligible to go to war were likely provided locally by the demes which kept

up-to-date lists of their demesmen. Crowley notes that the deme's role in recruitment meant that "for the demesman the transition from peace to war did not require a radical disruption of his social and affective environment" (45). Rather, the soldier's social environment accompanied him into the ranks. In addition, the communal nature of mustering reinforced ties between the citizens when they came together as soldiers.

Chapters three and four look at affiliation by rank and file and include a useful digression on what ancient writers meant by *eutaxia* and *ataxia*, the good order or the disorder of a phalanx. Chapter four engages Hanson's suggestion that the Athenian *taxis*, mustered by tribe, functioned as the precursor to the modern regiment. Crowley systematically goes through the evidence that suggests strong social bonds between Athenian tribesmen and then in the second half of the chapter challenges the same evidence. This chapter is ready-made for classroom debate in a history class because it provides an excellent example of how the same evidence can be interpreted quite differently depending upon how one contextualizes the source material.

Perhaps the most controversial claim in the book is that there is no indication that Athenian hoplites suffered psychologically damaging revulsion to killing. Although they did not like war and peace was viewed as preferable and more beneficial, their society promoted a view of war as a rite of passage from youth to manhood and celebrated the glory of war and the warrior.

The Athenians glorified war, they accorded it, as an institution an unprecedented level of prestige, they surrounded themselves with monuments, images, inscriptions and dedications lauding their military achievements, they affirmed their status as a warrior community through civic, religious, dramatic and sporting events, and they endlessly expressed their martial virtues in oratory, comedy, tragedy, philosophy, and history. (91)

The chapter as a whole gives an excellent overview of how militarism was imbricated in Athenian democracy. Socialized as they were to help friends and harm enemies, and having so many around them involved in the experience of combat, Crowley argues—persuasively in my view—that psychological trauma was not a corollary of combat for these men.

Beyond classicists, this book has something to say to those actively serving in the military, to those who study military history, and to anyone concerned with issues of leadership. Because of the nature of the central question, it is of necessity

comparative, but offers a thorough and creative use of ancient source materials venturing beyond the expected, such as Xenophon and Thucydides, to include various Attic orators, Aristophanes and Theophrastus as well as citing material evidence such as vase painting and inscriptions.

Lavishly researched, there are over eighty pages providing relevant citations of ancient and modern sources. The work is useful as a model for how to think through complex issues that must be answered with only partial evidence. One will also find here the leading (and sometimes conflicting) opinions on the social context of the Athenian hoplite and, where relevant, on hoplite warfare in general. In short, this is a clearly presented and useful work.

AISLINN MELCHIOR

*University of Puget Sound*, amelchior@pugetsound.edu