

Wars in Ancient Greece

In this lesson we will be focusing on all aspects of war in Ancient Greece this includes: Wars the ancient Greek have fought in, tactics, weaponry, armor, and the military ranks.



Wars

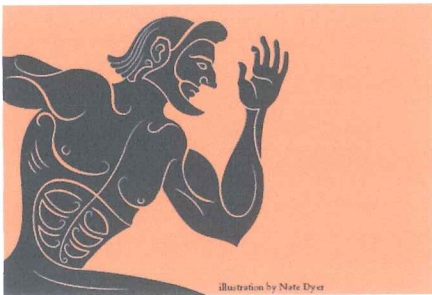
Definitions

BC- Before Christ

The first Persian invasion on Greece was called the **Battle of Marathon**; the time of this battle was around 490BC.

This battle took place when king Darius attempted to invade Greece starting in Ionia. King Darius was angered

when the Athens came to aid Ionia, but the Persian army managed to defeat them. After the Persian army defeated Ionia king Darius moved his attention to the rest of Greece. First the Persian army captured Eretria because they assisted the Athenian and Ionian. The Persian army then sailed to Marathon. Thought the Greeks army was considerably smaller than the Persian army, after five days of stalemate the Greeks won the battle and king Darius and his army left. Over time king Darius worked on building his army for a second invasion however this invasion did not happen until after his death.



Fun Fact

A legend about the battle of marathon created marathon running.



Ships fighting in the Battle of Salamis

King Darius's son Xerxes led the second invasion; this invasion was called the **Battle of Salamis** it occurred in 480BC this battle took place in the strait between Piraeus and Salamis Island and was one of the more significant naval battles in Ancient Greece. The Greek navy led by Themistocles engaged the Persian navy. Even though they were outnumbered. The Persian army sailed into the strait in attempt to block both entrances but this worked against them. The cramped space made it hard for the Persian fleets to maneuver and soon the Persians became disorganized.

The Greek navy used this to their advantage; the Greeks formed a line with their ships and sank or captured most of the Persian fleets. The defeat of the Persians at Salamis influenced the growth and preservation of the Athenian democracy and influenced Western civilization's core idea of freedom and individual rights.

The **Battle of Thermopylae** took place in 480BC and was fought against Greeks common enemy the Persians. The Greeks fought under the guidance of the Spartan king Leonidas and the battle took place at the same time as the **Battle of Salamis**. The heavily outnumbered with only 7,000 Greek forces against 100,000 to 300,000 Persian forces. Two days into battle the Greeks were betrayed by some local residents who told the Persians about a passageway that led behind the Greeks line. When the Spartan king became aware that the Persians knew of the passageway he led a small group of fighters to block the passage from the Persian army. However in the end the Persian army won.

he decline of the Greek empire and the rule of the Macedonian Alexander the Great were direct results of the **Battle of Chaeronea**. This battle took place in 338BC and was a battle between the Greek allied city-states and Phillip the second of Macedonia. Originally Phillip had come to Greece and brought peace to the internally warring Greece. He claimed that he was the leader of Greece. This displeased the Greeks and the Athens tried to break away from Phillips leadership. The Athens then formed an alliance with a city-state that Phillip was trying to take control of. Phillip then declared war on the Athens, several months the battle was at a standstill the Macedonian leader's forces advanced and attempted to take the Athens and their allied city-state Thebes. The large Macedonian army easily beat the Greek forces; with the Greek city-states defeated the Athens power reduced and the country came under the rule of the Macedonians for centuries.

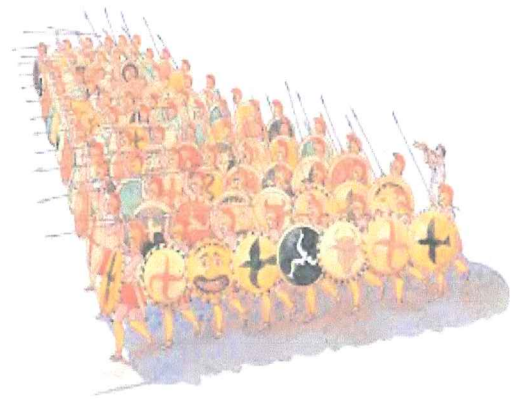


Phillip II of Macedonia

Tactics & Military Ranks

The most commonly used Greek tactic was the **phalanx**. This formation was made by overlapping their shields to create a wall of shields so that the left side of one hoplite's shield covered the right side of another hoplite.

Do you know what a Hoplite is? Try to find the definition in the text.



The phalanx formation

Why do you think the phalanx formation was such an effective tactic?

In the **phalanx** the front row did all of the fighting, the first three rows were close enough to stab the enemy. While the back rows job was to push the formation forwards and keep it in shape this was not as easy as it sounds. Depending on the situation the depth of men in the **phalanx** could vary from 4 to 50 in some extreme cases. The back row of the phalanx was a safe place to be but for an honor driven Greek the front row was the place to be and a general placed his best men in the front row.

In the military there are nine ranks: Supreme Commander, General, and Brigadier, Colonel, and Battalion leader, Captain, Hoplite, Regiment Commander Cavalry and Horse Archers.

The highest rank is Supreme Commander also known, as a Polemarch. The Polemarch is a rank given to senior military officials; the main job of a Polemarch was to command army officers. Another job of a Polemarch was to strategize and monitor army operations. The rank of General was also known as Strategos; the job of a General was organizing, maintaining and commanding military operations, on or off the battlefield. Generals also attended court trials as magistrates.

The rank Brigadier also known as Taxiarchos their job was to strategize. The rank of a Colonel also known as Syntagmatarchis was assigned to the leader of a regiment. The job of a Battalion leader was to direct their appointed battalion during military operations. In the rank of a Captain also known as a Lochagos an officer was appointed leader of the Lochos. Hoplite soldiers were often armed with spears called dorus and shields known as Hoplons this is how the Hoplite soldiers got their name.

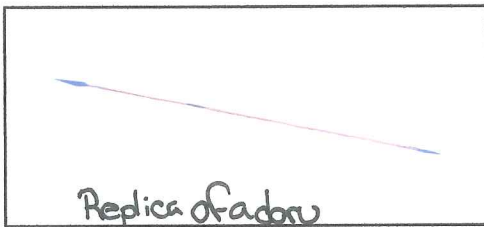
Hoplites were usually recruited from the wealthier and fitter middle classes. The shield the Hoplites carried was how they got their name. The second to last rank was Regiment



Commander Cavalry also known as Hyparchos they were soldiers, a regiment of cavalry. The last rank is Horse Archers in Ancient Greek military some soldiers were no considered a direct part of the military. The Horse Archers were one of the groups of soldiers that this applied to.

Weaponry & Armor

Two of the most commonly used weapons in Ancient Greece were the **doru** and the **xiphos**. The **doru** is a spear measuring about 2.7m (8.8ft) in length. The **doru** is the Ancient Greeks



main battle weapon and is held in one hand. The spearhead of the **doru** was leaf shaped and made of iron and at the end of the shaft was a sharp spike, called a **sauroter** meaning lizard killer in Greek. The **sauroter** could be thrust into the ground for added stability. If the spearhead was broken off the stick could be flipped around and the **sauroter** could be used as a weapon.

The other commonly used weapon was the **xiphos**. A sword used as a second weapon when the **doru** was lost in battle. The **xiphos** sword was introduced to Ancient Greece around 800BC-400BC, and had a leaf shaped blade around 65cm (25.6in) long.

The mounted Greek cavalry used a curved sword called a **makhaira** meaning to fight. The blade was large and had a slightly curved blade.

The army did not provide the armor and weaponry that Hoplites wore so the Hoplites had to buy their own this includes armor, swords, spears and shields. The shields that Hoplite used were called hoplons and were bronze covered wood, spanned

bronze covered wood, spanned from chin to knee and were 3 to 3.5ft in diameter. The hoplons shields were very heavy weighing from 17-33 pounds!

The armor that hoplites wore was extremely expensive and usually passed down through families. The amount of armor a hoplite wore varied and mainly depended on how much money they had. Richer upper class hoplites were covered from head to toe in armor and usually had the works: a bronze breastplate in bell or muscled style, a bronze helmet that protects the face, greaves for the shins. A bronze breastplate alone could weigh 50-60 pounds.

A less well off hoplite wore linothorax armor. Linothorax armor was made out of stitched and laminated linen fabrics and sometimes reinforced with bronze scales and/or animal skins. Linothorax armor was the most common armor and gave decent protection at a reasonable cost.

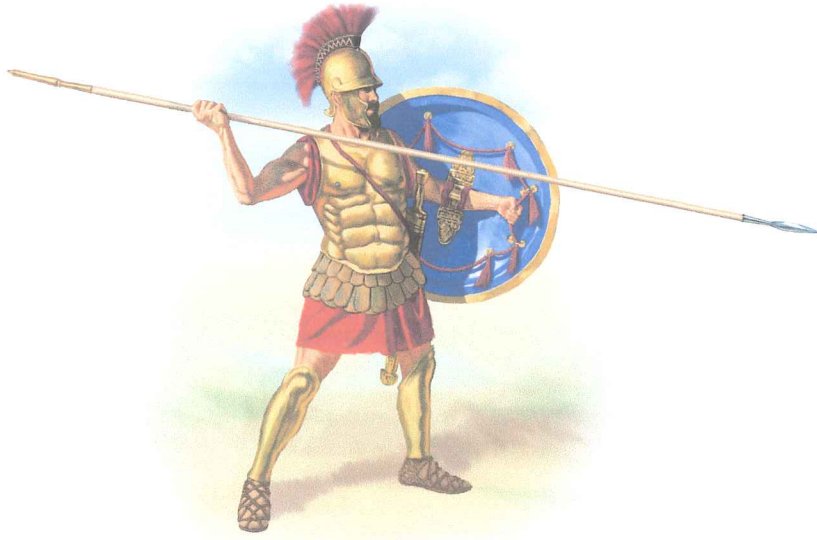
The helmet design varied overtime and offered varying amounts of protection with improvements like more face coverage. Each city-state had its own design on the crest of their helmets.



A Corinthian helmet

Chapter Summary

There are many aspects of war in Ancient Greece. We learned Greeks used tactics such as the **phalanx** and had two main weapons called the **doru** and **xiphos**. The Greeks also had many wars against their enemy the Persians some of which they won. Some of these battles are: the **Battle of Marathon 490BC**, the **Battle of Salamis 480BC**, the **Battle of Thermopylae 480BC** and the **Battle of Chaeronea 338BC**. We also learned the military in Ancient Greece had nine ranks: Supreme Commander, General, Brigadier, Colonel, and Battalion leader, Captain, Hoplite, Regiment Commander Cavalry and Horse Archers.



A hoplite soldier

Test Your Knowledge

- What does BC stand for?
- Name two of the battles the Greeks had with Persia.
- How was marathon running created?
- What is the phalanx?
- List all nine of the military ranks.