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Dory (spear)

The ***dory*** or ***doru*** (/ˈdɔːruː/; Greek: δόρυ) is a spear that was the chief spear of hoplites (heavy infantry) in Ancient Greece. The word "*dory*" was first attested by Homer with the meanings of "wood" and "spear". Homeric heroes hold two *dorata* (Greek: δόρατα, plural of δόρυ) (Il. 11,43, Od. 1, 256). In the Homeric epics and in the classical period the dory was a symbol of military power, possibly more important than the sword, as can be inferred from expressions like "Troy conquered by dory" (Il. 16,708) and words like "*doryktetos*" (Greek: δορικτητος) (spear-won) and "*doryalotos*" (Greek: δορυάλωτος) (spear-taken).^[1]

The spear used by the Persian army under Darius I and Xerxes in their respective campaigns during the Greco-Persian Wars was shorter than that of their Greek opponents. The *dory*'s length enabled multiple ranks of a formation to engage simultaneously during combat.

The *dory* was not a javelin. However, its aerodynamic shape allowed the dory to be thrown. Because it had evolved for combat between phalanges (the plural form of *phalanx*), it was constructed so as to be adequate against the defences of Greek infantry, which incorporated bronze in shield and helmet construction. Hoplites were generally more heavily armored than infantry of their non-Greek contemporaries.

Should not be confused with *Dorydrepanon* (δορυδρέπανον, from δόρυ (Dory) + δρέπανον (Sickle)) which was a kind of Halberd^[2] and was used for cutting off halyards in sea-fights and for pulling down battlements in sieges.

Details

The dory was about 2 to 3 m (6 ft 7 in to 9 ft 10 in) in length and had a handle with a diameter of 5 cm (2 in) made of wood, either cornel or ash weighing 0.91 to 1.81 kg (2.0 to 4.0 lb). The flat leaf-shaped spearhead was composed of iron and its weight was counterbalanced by an iron butt-spike.^{[3][4][5]} (cf Sarissa)

The point part of the spear was called αιχμή and ἀκωκή and λόγχη.^[6]

The rear of the spear was capped with a spike called a *sauroter* (Greek: σαυρωτήρ). It was also called ουρίαχος (οὐρίαχος) and styrax (στύραξ) or styrakion (στυράκιον).^[6] It functionally served as a counter-weight to give balance. This spike had several uses. It could be used to stand the spear up or used as a secondary weapon if the spearhead was broken off.^[7] If the shaft of the *dory* was broken or if the iron point was lost, the remaining portion could still function.^[8] Though its combat range would be reduced, the *dory*'s complete length would have lessened the chance of a single break rendering it ineffective. Additionally, any enemies that had fallen could be dispatched by the warriors marching over them in the back ranks of the phalanx who were holding their spears in a vertical position.^[7]

A dory was kept in a case which was called δορατοθήκη^[6] or δουροδοθήκη or δουροθήκη or δοροθήκη^[9] (meaning "dory case") and δουροδόκη^[10] or δορυδόκη^[9] (meaning "dory rack"). Homer called it σύριγξ, meaning pipe because of the form of the case.^[6]

See also

- Xyston

References

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 3. "The Dori" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080529000725/http://inet07sp.lccc.wy.edu/inet1580/61/riccardocastle/project/Weapons.htm#dory>). *Spartan Weapons*. Archived from the original (<http://inet07sp.lccc.wy.edu/inet1580/61/riccardocastle/project/Weapons.htm#dory>) on 2008-05-29. Retrieved 2008-04-10.
 4. "Newsletter (April 2007)" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20081007223500/http://www.the-aes.org/Newsletters/AES-April-2007-newsletter.pdf>) (PDF). *The Academy of European Swordsmanship*. 3 (2): 1. 2007. Archived from the original (<http://www.the-aes.org/Newsletters/AES-April-2007-newsletter.pdf>) (PDF) on 2008-10-07. "The primary weapon of the hoplite, the dory spear was 7 to 9 feet in length, weighing 1 to 2 kilograms, having a two inch diameter wooden handle, and tipped with an iron spearhead on one end and another iron tip on the other. The spearhead was often leaf-shaped, and the iron cap on the other end, called the sauroter (literally "lizard-killer") was often square in cross section, and was a counterbalance and a second deadly point on the weapon. This counterbalance function is essential, as the spear was handled with a single hand in the Greek phalanx formation."
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