

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution:	The University of Nottingham
Unit of Assessment:	UoA 31 Classics
Title of case study:	Transforming Classical Sparta and Influencing Modern Audiences
1. Summary of the impact	<p>Revision of standard views of Sparta towards a less exceptional, more civic-oriented, society has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transformed curricula, teaching and student learning on Sparta in HEIs worldwide • enriched teaching and inspired pupils' educational ambitions in UK schools and FE colleges • altered the modern Municipality of Sparta's depiction of its ancient legacy and enhanced its cultural heritage policies • helped a comics author respond to <i>300</i> with a more authentic depiction of Spartan-helot relations • enabled a U.S. gun control activist to counteract Sparta's appropriation by the pro-gun lobby.
2. Underpinning research	<p>The main underpinning research was conducted by Stephen Hodkinson since his appointment as Professor of Ancient History in 2003. This develops aspects of his pre-2003 work on Sparta, but takes it in new directions, especially comparative perspectives on helotage and on the agency of Spartan women, the relation between Sparta's military and civic elements, its alleged exceptional character, and its appropriations in modern thought. The last strand includes research by Lynn Fotheringham (Lecturer in Classics since 1999) on recent novelistic treatments of Thermopylae.</p> <p>Much of this research has been conducted within two collaborative contexts in which Hodkinson assembled teams of scholars to produce edited books on the above themes:</p> <p>(i) International Sparta Seminar meetings, which he co-organised in 2004 and 2006 (cf. 3.3 & 3.5)</p> <p>(ii) His AHRC project, "Sparta in Comparative Perspective", 2004-10, conducted in the context of Nottingham's Centre for Spartan & Peloponnesian Studies, which he co-founded in 2005 (3.4; 3.6).</p> <p>The main insights stem from revision of standard interpretations of Sparta as an exceptional polis in favour of a more civic-oriented society operating within the range of Greek norms; and a deeper understanding of the intellectual and political roots of modern interpretations. More specifically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comparative study of helotage (3.1; cf. 3.3 & 3.4) sheds new light on the Spartiates' exploitation of the helots, especially the varying nature of their intervention in helot life and the opportunities for helot families and communities to exercise some degree of agency over their everyday affairs. 2. Comparative study of female possession and use of property (3.2) challenges views of Spartiate women as exceptionally 'liberated' <i>en bloc</i>, suggesting instead varying and changing class-based effects upon the status and capacities of different women in diverse contexts of Spartiate life. 3. Study of ancient accounts of Sparta's military characteristics and analysis of their actual social impact (3.3) subvert the view that contemporary writers uniformly presented Spartan society as primarily oriented towards military values and suggest that its military features, though significant, were not dominant over either the civic or the private aspects of Spartiate citizen life. 4. Comparison with other Greek city-states (3.4) suggests that, though Spartan society presented certain unique features, it was not qualitatively different overall; nor was it quasi-totalitarian in character. Sparta's exceptional aspects stemmed from its success in achieving socio-economic and political goals shared by many other Greek poleis, but to which most of them could only aspire. 5. Studies of Sparta's appropriations in modern thought (3.5; 3.6) reveal the contingent intellectual and political roots of its predominantly negative images, especially its identification with militaristic and totalitarian regimes like Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Fotheringham's chapter in 3.6 explores one exception to such negative images: Sparta's portrayal in recent fictional accounts of the battle of Thermopylae, which depict its alleged military focus in positive terms, whilst downplaying problematic aspects of Spartan society such as the exploitation of the helots.
3. References to the research	<p>3.1. Hodkinson, S. (2003/2008) "Spartiates, helots and the direction of the agrarian economy", in S.E. Alcock & N. Luraghi eds. <i>Helots and their Masters in Laconia and Messenia</i>, 238-75; revised version in E. dal Lago & C. Katsari eds. <i>Slave Systems, Ancient and Modern</i>, 285-320. [Chapter in edited book; available on request.]. Positive reviews: K.-W. Welwei, <i>Sehepunkte</i> 4, 2004, nr.12; J. Ducat, <i>Classical Review</i> 56, 2006, 391-2; B. Garstad, <i>BMCR</i> 2008.12.33; P. Temin, <i>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</i> 40, 2009, 74-6; M. Klein, <i>Journal of Economic History</i> 70, 2010, 532-4.</p> <p>3.2 Hodkinson, S. (2004) "Female property ownership and empowerment in classical and hellenistic</p>

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Sparta” in T.J. Figueira ed. *Spartan Society*, 103-36 [Chapter in edited book; available on request.] Positive reviews: M. Whitby *Classical Review* 56, 2006, 152; M. Meier *Sehepunkte* 6, 2006, nr.9.

3.3. Hodkinson, S. & Powell, A. eds. (2006) *Sparta and War*. [Edited book; available on request.] Includes Hodkinson’s own chapter, “Was classical Sparta a military society?”, pp. 111-62. Positive reviews: M Meier, *Sehepunkte* 7, 2007, nr.9; C. Falkner, *Classical Review* 59, 2009, 190-1.

3.4 Hodkinson, S. ed. (2009) *Sparta: Comparative Approaches*. [Edited book; listed in REF2] Part V is a debate on Spartan exceptionalism between Hodkinson and M.H. Hansen, pp. 383-498. Positive reviews: M. Meier, *Sehepunkte* 11, 2011, nr. 3; J. Lynn, *Classical Review* 63, 2013, 156-8.

3.5. Powell, A. & Hodkinson, S. eds. (2010) *Sparta: The Body Politic*. [Edited book; listed in REF2]. Includes own chapter, “Sparta and Nazi Germany in mid-20th-century British liberal and left-wing thought”, pp. 297-342. Positive review: N. Pavlides, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2011.06.13.

3.6. Hodkinson, S. & Macgregor Morris, I. eds. (2012). *Sparta in Modern Thought*. [Edited book; listed in REF2] Includes chapters by Hodkinson (“Sparta and the Soviet Union in U.S. Cold War foreign policy and intelligence analysis”, pp. 343-92) and Fotheringham (“The positive portrayal of Sparta in late-20th-century fiction”, pp. 393-428). Positive review: E. David, *BMCR* 2012.09.51.

4. Details of the impact

(i) Transforming curricula, teaching and learning on Sparta in HEIs worldwide.

The revisionist insights of Hodkinson’s research have transformed teaching and learning on Sparta in HEIs worldwide. Evidence of its influence since 2008 has been received from 30 HEIs (5.1).

These span 14 countries from the UK to China and six continents, especially Europe, Australasia and above all North America, including Ivy League institutions (Cornell; Dartmouth; Princeton); public universities (e.g. Berkeley; Calgary; Rutgers); and liberal arts colleges (Reed). To quote one Princeton academic, “**the work of no other scholar, living or dead, has had a greater impact on the research of my students... or on my ability to teach these two courses [in 2008 & 2012]**”.

This influence stems from Hodkinson’s own writings and his edited books (3.4-3.6), which “provide in depth study for my students beyond any single-authored book” (Emory). “Their examination of wider themes means their implications extend beyond teaching on Sparta alone” (Napoli II).

Several academics stated **how the research had influenced the form and content of curricula**: “Hodkinson’s work had a profound influence on the content and design of that course” (Dartmouth); “Hodkinson’s recent work informed not only much of the teaching, but also the redesign of the course” (Winnipeg); “in devising this course, I had Prof. Hodkinson’s research directly in mind” (Adelaide). **The debate on Spartan exceptionalism in 3.4 has had an especially major impact**: “*Sparta: Comparative Approaches* (2009) enabled me to create a new overarching framework for the course” (Calgary); “Hodkinson’s work was particularly influential in the course design, including the title [Sparta: An Extraordinary City] drawn from Hodkinson 2009” (Lampeter). Similar comments were received from HEI teachers at Adelaide, Berkeley, Dartmouth, Princeton and Winnipeg.

Several testimonies highlighted **major influences on student learning**: “my students have been strongly influenced by his research” (Reed); “you had a profound impact on the class” (Princeton). A PhD student at Warsaw described how during his UG studies Hodkinson’s research had “had a deep influence... for direction of my academic development”. A current MA student at Rio wrote: “Your work is a reference for me and my academical experience.” A former MA student (2009) at Kwazulu-Natal commented on “the methodological paradigms it provides”. At Nanjing the impact extended beyond the curriculum: “Between 2010 and 2012 some students... formed a voluntary study group, where they read Hodkinson’s 2006 paper and discussed wider problems such as the criteria for a military society [and] comparisons between Spartan and modern Japanese militarism”.

One result has been **greater numbers studying Sparta**. At Adelaide, from 29 in 2006, “the new Hodkinson-inspired course had 51 students in 2008, and 88 in 2010”. At Lampeter numbers rose annually from 15 in 2009/10 to 94 in 2012/13; at Winnipeg from 47 in 2010/11 to 63 in 2012/13.

(ii) Enriching UK secondary teaching and learning, and inspiring pupils’ aspirations.

Hodkinson’s research engagement with schools has enriched secondary teaching and learning, inspiring pupils’ educational ambitions. Initially, this took place through talks on Sparta’s modern receptions (cf. 3.5-6) at the East Midlands Association of Classical Teachers 6th form days and an

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article in the national schools magazine *Omnibus* 52, 2006. **For one pupil, his Feb 2008 EMACT talk on ‘Spartan Militarism in 20th-century International Politics’ proved a career-changing event.** In 2011, when inviting Hodkinson to give the inaugural lecture of Clare College Cambridge’s History Society, he recalled, “It still ranks among the best I have ever attended... I remember leaving filled with ideas about why I should study History” (5.2). After Cambridge, the student went on to PG study of international politics in 2012/13 through an MA in International Relations at Yale.

Recently Hodkinson used his research on ancient Sparta (3.1-4) to assist schools taking OCR’s AS & GCSE Sparta options (units AH1 & A353). In September 2012 he spoke on “New Approaches to Classical Sparta” to 50 teachers at the Joint Association of Classical Teachers INSET day. **Several testified to the talk’s major influence on their teaching** (5.3). It “was centrally important to the approach I took” (modern history re-trainee, Grey Coat Hospital, London); “as an NQT,... this has influenced how I approach my teaching” (Simon Langton Girls’ Grammar, Canterbury); “I had more insight when discussing historical viewpoints of Sparta with my own students” (OCR exam marker, Queen Mary’s College, Basingstoke). “Hodkinson’s talk and publications... have given me greater confidence in questioning the nature of evidence presented in standard textbooks” (Bancroft’s School, Essex). The talk’s impact led JACT’s *Journal of Classics Teaching* to solicit its publication in *JCT*’s Spring 2013 issue “as an effective way to improve teacher subject knowledge” (5.4).

During 2012/13 Hodkinson then liaised with teachers to give follow-up research-led talks at several schools (state, grammar, independent & 6th form college). **His talks greatly enhanced the pupils’ performances and raised their aspirations.** “The materials... helped the students to perform strongly on this unit” (Leicester Grammar School). “[The talk] clearly moved the students’ analytical development forward... the speech had a profound and very positive impact” (QMC). At Grey Coat, an inner London girls’ comprehensive, teaching Ancient History for the first time, “the talk ... significantly improved pupils’ understanding of how to approach the study of Sparta”. “The AS results [were] significantly above the school average” and pupils “did better on the Sparta paper” than on other modules “with an average of 77% - high B grade”. “A large majority... have continued ... on to A2 and there are two who are planning on applying to university to study the subject” (5.3).

(iii) Influencing and enhancing cultural heritage policies in the modern city of Sparta.

Hodkinson’s account of a civic-oriented, less militaristic and less exceptional Sparta (3.3-4) has **altered the Municipality of Sparta’s depictions of its ancient legacy.** According to the Mayor of Sparta (5.5), his “publications over the last 10 years have changed how the Municipality presents its cultural heritage from ancient Sparta... His research has led the Municipality to present ancient Sparta as a civic-minded culture with important lessons to offer Greece in its current situation.”

These new understandings have been communicated by engaging with local government agencies (Office of the Mayor; Department of Culture, Sports & Environment; Central Public Library) through Nottingham’s Centre for Spartan and Peloponnesian Studies (CSPS), of which Hodkinson is co-director. He has also disseminated his research in the city through personal lectures (April 2005; June 2006; April 2009; Sept 2010; March 2012) in Greek and English to audiences including local officials, teachers and the wider public (5.5); and by donations of his publications, academic and popular, to the Library’s local history collection, much-used by local teachers and students (5.6).

He has also **helped the Municipality fulfil the cultural heritage policy objectives in its current business plan:** (a) enhancement of the local cultural heritage; (b) the quantitative and qualitative improvement of its cultural services; (c) an increase in visitors (5.7). This has been achieved by linking his research dissemination to public international conferences co-organised by CSPS with the Municipality and held in the Central Public Library. Statements by the Mayor & Library Director attest how these research events have greatly assisted local cultural heritage policies: enhancing public understanding of the city’s ancient past, providing an important new cultural service, bringing in Greek and foreign visitors, and extending the Library’s cultural and educational outreach (5.5-6). CSPS’s research activities are now embedded in the Municipality’s 2012-14 Business Plan, whose action points include further joint conferences supported by €5K annual funding (5.7).

Finally, Hodkinson’s publications and international research collaborations **have greatly aided the Municipality’s promotion of the city in Greece and abroad.** His contributions were recognised in 2010 by the award of Honorary Citizenship. According to the award citation, “his scholarly research has made the history of ancient Sparta and Lakonia known throughout the world” (5.8).

(iv) Responding to 300: enabling authenticity in comics writing via historical consultancy.

Nottingham research has enabled a comics author to achieve a more authentic fictional portrayal of Spartan society in the comics series, *Three* (Image Comics, Oct. 2013-Feb. 2014): a story of three helots set during Sparta's 4th-century crisis. In the author's own words (5.10), **"without recent Nottingham research, THREE would have been a different and much poorer work"**.

Three was written as a response to Frank Miller's graphic novel and Zack Snyder's film *300*. The author's initial research was influenced by Fotheringham's paper (3.6) and podcasts on Miller's *300* (www.nottingham.ac.uk/videos/2008/march/bloodandthunderpart1.aspx) and by Hodkinson's paper on helotage (3.1). On Fotheringham's advice, he asked Hodkinson to act as consultant. From July 2012 to July 2013 Hodkinson supplied in-depth 'authenticity critiques' throughout the production of both text and images, drawing on his research on helotage, Spartiate military and civic culture, and female roles (3.1-3). The author also visited Nottingham to consult other Classics and CSPA staff.

The author's published interviews and factual statement (5.9-10) stress **the depth of Hodkinson's influence**. "Some of it was purely factual... Other areas were larger and more conceptual, with him bringing something from his original work which added to what I was already exploring. There's a section about a particularly rich Spartan mother... which was distinctly aided from that." "I had high hopes for the *Three* project. They would undoubtedly be dashed without Stephen's assistance."

In particular, Hodkinson's input helped the author to **counter-balance 300's over-glorification of the Spartiates and neglect of their exploitation of the helots**, thereby enabling the author to **draw out modern socio-political connections**. "His help makes both Spartans and helots... truer to our best knowledge of them and... more resonant with how we perceive class today" (5.10).

The **ground-breaking impact of the consultancy** is shown (5.11) by Hodkinson's unprecedented naming in pre-release 'solicits' (noted by comics news sites and prospective readers: "the first time I've ever seen a historical consultant accredited in a comic book": 'King's Gambit', 07.13.13) and by the credits to Hodkinson, Fotheringham and the Department of Classics in the comic's prelims.

(v) Countering Sparta's (mis)appropriation in U.S. gun control debates.

Hodkinson's research (3.3) has helped improve the quality of evidence in U.S. gun control debates, **enabling an activist to counter Sparta's appropriation by the pro-gun lobby**. In May 2013, the activist, aware of *Sparta in Modern Thought* (3.6), asked whether the gun lobby's use of Leonidas' saying "Molon labe" as a rallying-cry against gun control matched the reality of Sparta's policy on bearing arms. Hodkinson supplied a detailed 'academic opinion' that the Spartiates normally went unarmed in everyday life and that the "Molon labe" saying was of dubious historical authenticity.

On 9 June 2013 the activist posted Hodkinson's academic opinion on the *Ceasefire Oregon, New Trajectory* blog, followed by his own interpretative post, in which **he was able to argue that the academic opinion showed that historical Spartan practice formed a poor precedent for and even undermined gun lobby arguments** (5.12). By 16 July 2013 the posts had over 1600 direct hits and the blog site as a whole had a much higher than normal hit rate in the week of posting.

The posts were also advertised in the online newsletter of *States United to Prevent Gun Violence*. Many of the direct hits came via *The Gun Wire* news clearing-house, much-read by the gun lobby. Explicit gun lobby discussion has not been traceable, owing to their practice of hiding discussions of awkward evidence from public view: silent testimony perhaps to the posts' effectiveness (5.13).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Dossier of testimonies and course materials from HEIs worldwide (available on file)
2. Inaugural invitation letter from President of Clare College History Society (available on file)
3. Dossier of testimonies from UK secondary teachers (available on file)
4. Article in *Journal of Classics Teaching* 27, Spring 2013, pp. 16-25 (available on file)
- 5-6. Factual statements: (i) Mayor of Sparta; (ii) Director, Central Public Library (available on file)
7. Municipality of Sparta Business Plan 2012-14, pp. 33-4, 100, 294, 345 (available on file)
8. Honorary Citizenship award, Municipality of Sparta (available on file)
9. Dossier of published interviews by comics author (available on file)
10. Factual statement by comics author (available on file)
11. Dossier of credits in pre-release solicit, reader comment and comic prelims (available on file)
12. Academic opinion and activist's interpretative post on *New Trajectory* blog (available on file)
13. Factual statements from gun control activist (available on file)