

# THE BATTLE WITHIN

## SELF-CONSCIOUS EMOTIONS IN THE BELGIAN ARMY DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

### INTRODUCTION

This research analyses self-conscious emotions like honour and shame with regard to behaviour, feeling, expression and practice in the Belgian Army during the First World War.

The circumstances at the front proved to be a fertile ground for these emotions, and were important for the functioning of the army. The aim of this research is to study the role and workings of self-conscious emotions in the context of the military and the war.

### SELF-CONSCIOUS EMOTIONS

Self-conscious emotions are social emotions that relate to one's own consciousness and the awareness of the reactions of others. These emotions are formed through social interaction and arise through mutual evaluation and judgments.

- Positive evaluation contributes to emotions like honour and pride.
- Negative evaluation leads to shame, guilt and embarrassment.
- Awareness of norms and values concerning expression, behaviour and characteristics.
- Honour and shame relate to the self-esteem, the personality and identity of individuals and social groups.

### INDIVIDUAL SOLDIER



ARMY COMMAND

OFFICERS

SOCIAL GROUPS

### RESEARCH APPROACH

The hierarchical structure of the army, the various social groups, their interests and experiences meant a dynamic interpretation of norms, behaviour and emotions.

I approach these in relation to:

#### I. MILITARY HIERARCHY

The Army Command dictated behavioural and emotional norms and values via officers to soldiers.

SOURCES:

- Orders of the day
- Guidelines on morale and discipline
- Rewards and sanctions

#### II. SOCIAL GROUPS IN/OUTSIDE ARMY

The mutual evaluation of norms and behaviour within social groups in the army (e.g. Flemish/Walloon soldiers) and outside the army (e.g. deserters, internees).

SOURCES:

- Judicial archives
- front newspapers
- ego-documents

#### III. INDIVIDUAL SOLDIER

The inner world and perceptions of the soldier. What was qualified as honourable and shameful on a personal level and how reflected this on his self-esteem and behaviour?

SOURCES:

- Letters
- Diaries
- Memoirs