

# **Great Battles of the Ancient World**

**Part I**

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Professor Fagan has an extensive research record in Roman history and has held a prestigious Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship at the University of Cologne, Germany. He has published numerous articles in international journals, and his first monograph, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World*, was published by the University of Michigan Press in 1999. He has also edited a volume from Routledge on the phenomenon of pseudoarchaeology (2005). His current research project is on spectatorship at the Roman arena, and he is also working on a book on ancient warfare.

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# Great Battles of the Ancient World

## Scope:

It is strange to think that the fates of states, nations, and even far-flung empires could be decided by men armed with sharp implements clashing over the course of a few hours on a few square miles of land or sea. The ancient battle, in all its fury and violence, is the focus of this course. We study many great military engagements of the ancient Mediterranean world and address various historical issues raised by those engagements. We also consider wider issues pertaining to warfare in the ancient world, such as its origins and evolution in the prehistoric era, technological and tactical developments in early states, and the nature of battle as a cultural phenomenon and a human experience. Our focus is primarily on the military side of things, with somewhat less attention paid to the sociological, economic, or ideological aspects of warfare, though these topics do not go entirely ignored.

The course divides into three roughly equal parts. The first eight lectures chart the development of warfare from prehistoric times down to the glory days of the great states of the ancient Near East and Egypt. After seeking to define what warfare is exactly, we survey different models for the origins of warfare in the Upper Paleolithic (c. 37,000–12,000 years ago) and Neolithic (c. 10,000–5,000 years ago) and test them against the archaeological evidence, so far as interpretive limitations will allow. When written records first become available with the Early Dynastic city-states of Sumer (c. 3000–2350 B.C.), we already find warfare well developed and a staple of interstate relations. Armies of infantry and rudimentary chariotry clash over honor, irrigation rights, and boundary lands. We then travel to Egypt and survey the changing and evolving nature of warfare in the Old to New Kingdoms (c. 2700–1070 B.C.) and survey our first true engagements at Megiddo (c. 1479/68 B.C.) and Kadesh (1285/75 B.C.). The problem of the tactical use of chariotry is discussed. Finally, we examine the fearsome Assyrian war machine as it developed c. 900–612 B.C. and the sophisticated army that allowed the Assyrians to forge the largest empire yet seen in the region. The siege capabilities of the Assyrians come under particular scrutiny. In this section, we also briefly address the disputed matters of the Trojan War and Homeric warfare.

The next eight lectures focus on warfare among the Greeks. The prior consideration of Homeric matters sets the stage for contemplating hoplite battle in mainland Greece as it emerged in the period c. 700–600 B.C. The hoplite was a particular type of armored infantryman who fought in a close formation called the phalanx. The nature of hoplite battle and its supposed oddities are examined, and various scholarly camps on these difficult questions are outlined. Then, we turn to the Persian Wars (490–479 B.C.) and examine the Battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea that decided this titanic clash. Naturally enough, Persian arms are reviewed here as well. The Athenian expedition to

Sicily (415–413 B.C.) is the next matter for analysis, set against an appreciation of the limitations inherent in Classical Greek siege warfare. The military “revolution” in 4<sup>th</sup>-century Greece—which saw many attempts to modify traditional hoplite tactics and equipment—provides the backdrop for consideration of Philip II of Macedon (359–336 B.C.) and his creation of a new and formidable military machine, spearheaded by the cavalry and a reformed phalanx, in the early years of his reign. This new, integrated, and flexible army was then led by Philip’s son Alexander against the Persians. We survey the three great battles that made Alexander the king of Persia: the Granicus River, Issus, and Gaugamela.

The third and final part of the course addresses the legions of Rome. We first survey the origins and early development of the legion, down to its description (from personal observation) by Polybius, writing c. 150 B.C. Strangely, Polybius omits discussion of the legions’ tactical system, so some uncertainty accrues to the question of *how* exactly the Romans won the battles that gave them dominion over the whole Mediterranean basin. We discuss various models and scenarios to fill this gap in our knowledge, both ancient and modern. Rome’s colossal struggle with Hannibal precedes the great clashes of the legion and the Macedonian phalanx as they took place in Italy in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and in the Balkans and Asia Minor in the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Polybius’s analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each formation is assessed against the facts of these engagements. Jumping ahead, we consider Roman skill in siege warfare as exemplified by Caesar’s siege of Alesia (52 B.C.) and the siege of Masada in Judea (A.D. 72–73).

Our last two battles are Roman defeats and introduce us to the German tribal warrior. We examine the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in A.D. 9, which many consider one of the most important battles in European history. Here, three Roman legions under P. Quinctilius Varus perished in an ambush set by Arminius, a Cheruscan war leader. This defeat stopped Roman expansion east of the Rhine and established a lasting cultural boundary at the heart of Europe. Then at Adrianople in A.D. 378, another Germanic people, the Goths, inflicted a crushing defeat on the eastern emperor Valens, who lost his life on the field. Adrianople is widely considered the single most important battle in the “fall” of the Roman Empire, as it crippled the empire’s military resources beyond repair.

The course ends with a final lecture on the place of warfare in the ancient Mediterranean world and consideration of the proposal that the Greeks invented a peculiarly “Western way of war” that has been with us ever since the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

# Lecture One

## Why Study Battles? What Is War?

**Scope:** Why study battles? Does the study of battles promote militarism? Battles represent crucibles of intense change, where competing lines of historical development confront each other under the most intense circumstances. The point is made forcefully by positing counterfactual results for battles generally viewed as particularly decisive: What would have happened if Lee had won at Gettysburg or Hitler at Stalingrad? Whether we approve of it or not, the societies of the ancient Mediterranean placed a high value on war and warfare. Participation in battles was, in most cases, the defining feature of a man's worth, courage, and virtue. In this lecture, we address these basic issues and chart some of the different approaches thus far taken in the study of battles, from the orderly events depicted in E. Creasy's *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World* (first published in 1851) to the recent, influential, and very different approach of John Keegan in his seminal *The Face of Battle* (1976). The lecture ends with an attempt to define what exactly warfare is, because that question bears directly on the problem of war's origins, which is addressed in the next lecture. Two views are seen to dominate the discussion: the *operational* and the *social-constructivist* models of warfare.

### Outline

- I. There are several reasons why the study of battles is a useful, even essential historical exercise.
  - A. Battles represent intense nodes of historical change, where the fortunes of a people or a nation can be decided in a few hours and on a few square miles of land.
    - 1. Battles are, in many ways, the condensed essence of historical change.
    - 2. Counterfactual speculation about alternative outcomes to major battles in history illustrates the point well.
  - B. The objection that the study of battles and warfare promotes an unhealthy militarism, which is something we ought to be getting away from, is specious.
  - C. Whether we approve of it or not, the societies of the ancient Mediterranean placed a premium on warfare in the religious, political, social, and ideological spheres. Ignoring or downplaying that fact risks serious distortion in the study of antiquity.

- D. War can be studied from various angles, but considering warfare without considering battles is like a theology that does not mention God. Combat is the core of war, the point of the whole endeavor.
- E. In this course, we will focus on the ancient Mediterranean basin because this is my particular area of expertise and because this region stands at the root of the Western experience.
  - 1. The chronological limits of the course stretch from the later Old Stone Age (c. 12,000 years ago) to the Later Roman Empire.
  - 2. Its geographic focus is on the ancient Mediterranean basin.
  - 3. In the course, we first cover the origins of warfare and the earliest evidence of warfare in the ancient Mediterranean.
  - 4. We then move on to consider in a general diachronic order many of the greatest battles of the ancient world and the political, historical, and military background and consequences of each. Along the way, we will study how military tactics, techniques, organization, weaponry, and other aspects of warfare evolved over the ages.
  - 5. Points of contention between scholars or competing camps of scholarly opinion will be discussed.
  - 6. We will conclude with reflections on the importance of warfare in the ancient Mediterranean world.
- II. The battle narrative, as we understand it, first appears with the Greeks, thus leaving much room for scholarly disagreement in considering battles among the people of the ancient Near East, as we shall soon see.
  - A. The “great battle” format has a long pedigree, but historical approaches have changed significantly over the last century or more, transforming how battles are studied.
  - B. The format was born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where it was used largely in a sort of “triumph of the West/victory of civilization” cheerleading exercise.
    - 1. Sir Edward Creasy’s 1851 classic *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World* is emblematic of the style.
    - 2. Creasy introduced the notion of the “decisive battle,” which stressed the outcome and the results of the battle as its most important features.
    - 3. There is a certain ambiguity about the concept of decisiveness: it can be either strategic or tactical.
  - C. Studies such as Creasy’s and their descendants impose an order on battles, as if they are great chess games played with human pieces.
    - 1. The focus is on the command decisions, and troops behave like pawns, enacting the wishes of their commanders.



2. To a degree, this format is unavoidable; otherwise, the chaos of the battlefield would be unrepresentable.
  3. This “unit-focused” format has continued after Creasy down to our own day, but it always risks overschematization.
- D. John Keegan’s *The Face of Battle* (1976) transformed how battles were studied.
1. Keegan was critical of previous studies, especially those of the Creasy variety.
  2. He emphasized the human face of the battle experience. Thus, we might dub this approach *experiential*.
  3. The success of this approach is reflected in excellent recent works, such as Anthony Beevor’s *Stalingrad* (1998).
- E. Recently, Victor Davis Hanson has revitalized the genre partly by advocating a controversial thesis, which we will examine in detail as the course progresses.
- F. It must be remembered, however, that Keegan’s approach is just that: an approach, not a method.
1. For ancient battles, where the sources are so sketchy, it is often very difficult to reconstruct the human “face of battle.”
  2. We are unlikely to get more than a composite impression of the ancient experience.
  3. Whether such a composite picture ever accurately reflects ancient reality in a specific instance of battle is beyond establishing.
  4. The composite picture risks being seriously misleading, as we shall see.

### III. Central to this course is the problem of defining what warfare is.

- A. We all recognize that warfare is something different from other forms of human communal violence (such as rioting or capital punishment). But what is distinctive about it?
1. Human aggression is insufficient as an explanation, as it underlies all forms of violence, most of which are manifestly not war.
  2. Multiple combatants alone do not secure the definition of some violence as war.
  3. Nor does the consent of the community or prior planning.
  4. Warfare combines all of the above, and something else as well.
- B. One approach is to define war in *operational* terms. Warfare is what warfare does.
1. This approach was championed by anthropologist Harry Holbert Turney-High in 1949 and is favored by many military historians today.

2. Warfare is a social institution that adheres to universal principles, which are only partially applied (if at all) in “primitive” war.
  3. The most salient principle is that of tactical formations (which imply a command and control structure); thus, warfare occurs only when such formations can be demonstrated.
  4. The line separating a society that uses formations from one that does not constitutes a *military horizon*, below which falls most “primitive war” documented by anthropology.
  5. A good example of primitive war is that of the Yanomamo people of the Amazon forests.
- C. Another approach is to view war primarily in terms of social organization and identity.
1. Anthropologist Raymond C. Kelly identifies a handful of warless societies.
  2. He notes that these societies can be very violent internally (wife-beating and revenge murders), so that peacefulness and warlessness are not synonyms.
  3. This observation emphasizes the socially constructed nature of warfare among other forms of human violence.
  4. The key to war is the “calculus of social substitutability,” whereby any member of a rival community, not a particular malefactor or his relatives, becomes a legitimate target.
- D. As we shall see in the next lecture, which option you prefer greatly affects where in the past you locate the origins of warfare.

**Essential Reading:**

Ferrill, *The Origins of War*, pp. 9–31.

Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, especially pp. 14–78.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Cowley, *What If?*, especially pp. 1–91.

Hanson, *Carnage and Culture*, pp. 1–24.

Kelly, *Warless Societies and the Origins of War*, pp. 1–73.

Turney-High, *Primitive War*, pp. 5–137.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Is the study of battles retrograde, even reactionary? What justifications can you offer for studying warfare?
2. How can war be defined? What are the consequences of how warfare is defined?

## **Lecture Two**

### **The Problem of Warfare's Origins**

**Scope:** The definitional problem discussed at the end of the last lecture in no small measure shapes the possible responses to the issue of warfare's origins. Adoption, on the one hand, of an operational definition suggests that warfare is a late arrival on the stage of human history, a product of state organizations or their immediate predecessors, going back perhaps 8,000 years into the Neolithic period. On the other hand, if one subscribes to the social-substitution view of warfare, its origins can be pushed back tens of thousands of years into the Paleolithic period. Yet another possibility is the sociobiological proposition that warfare is a genetic inheritance. The archaeological evidence for warfare against which these propositions may be tested falls into three classes: human remains bearing evidence of trauma, artifacts that function solely or primarily as weapons (such as maces), or monuments (such as fortifications or iconographic depictions of warriors painted on cave walls). The interpretation of each class of evidence, however, is far from straightforward. We explore these difficulties through consideration of examples. Finally, the value of ethnographic comparanda to the interpretation of prehistoric evidence is addressed.

### **Outline**

- I. Locating the origins of war depends on how war is defined.
  - A. The operational definition favors the conclusion that warfare, as such, originated with state or immediately prestate organizations.
    - 1. The population level, command-and-control system, specialization, and social organization necessary for tactical formations require state organization.
    - 2. Large chiefdoms may reach this level of organization.
    - 3. This view would suggest an appearance of warfare within the last 8,000 years.
  - B. The social-constructivist definition allows for warfare far earlier in human history.
    - 1. Warfare so defined can be identified among simple preagricultural peoples, such as the Andaman Islanders of the Indian Ocean.
    - 2. This view would suggest a far earlier appearance of warfare in the Paleolithic, perhaps tens of thousands of years ago.
  - C. It might seem that these propositions can be tested against the prehistoric evidence, which by definition is entirely archaeological.
    - 1. If no convincing evidence for warfare can be found prior to state formation (c. 3000 B.C.), the operational definition gains strength.

2. If good archaeological evidence for prehistoric warfare can be found, the social-constructivist definition looks the more convincing.
  3. But how one defines war guides the identification of the evidence in the first place; there is a risk of circularity in reasoning.
- II.** The archaeological evidence for prehistoric warfare falls into three classes, but each presents serious difficulties of interpretation.
- A.** First, we have the discovery of human remains with evidence of trauma.
    1. Very ancient bones are known with evidence of trauma on them (breaks, fractures, cuts, and so on).
    2. It is unclear how this trauma was caused: warfare, animal attacks, accidents?
    3. Group finds seem more promising, such as Ofnet in Germany, where 37 severed human skulls were found carefully arranged in a cave; or Jebel Sahaba in the Sudan, where the remains of 57 individuals from infants to elders were found, some of them having suffered violent deaths.
    4. Problems of interpretation plague even these initially promising finds.
  - B.** Second, finds of weapons offer evidence for early war.
    1. Prehistoric deposits routinely yield potential weapons, including axes, javelins, and arrowheads.
    2. Such objects can also serve nonmilitary functions.
    3. Tools with exclusively military functions, such as maces and daggers, appear relatively late.
    4. Such weapons may have served as symbols of power and status.
  - C.** Finally, monuments and iconography reflect the practice of early war.
    1. Defensive walls and fortifications are known from prehistoric sites, such as Jericho in Israel, Çatal Hüyük in Turkey, or ring forts in Europe.
    2. Walls and fortifications have been interpreted in social, symbolic, and religious terms by some.
    3. Even if such structures were defensive, what threat were they warding off (human, animal, natural)?
    4. Cave paintings appear to show “warriors” en route to battle or on parade. One depicts a “battle” with a flanking movement in progress; another, an “execution” or gloating over a fallen enemy.
    5. How do we differentiate parading warriors from a hunting party? What were the conventions of depiction in prehistoric art?
  - D.** To an extent, these problems of interpretation stem from the mute nature of archaeological evidence, which gains meaning only through interpretation.

- III.** In the absence of written evidence for prehistory, one approach has been to use ethnographic accounts of “primitive” people as a lens through which to view the archaeological evidence.
- A.** Anthropology offers a treasure trove of data on the prosecution of conflict among numerous less complex societies.
    - 1. Perhaps the conventions of modern so-called primitive people can enlighten us as to prehistoric behavior.
    - 2. Turney-High, for instance, moves seamlessly between modern ethnographic records of Plains Indian, African, or Papua New Guinean war to historical records of war among the ancient Scythians, Gauls, or Germans.
    - 3. In this perspective, “primitive war” is essentially all of a kind, wherever or whenever it was practiced.
  - B.** A more thoroughgoing application of this method is found in Raymond Kelly’s *Warless Societies and the Origins of War*.
    - 1. Kelly first establishes what is truly distinctive about warfare (the social-substitution model).
    - 2. He charts warfare among the Andaman Islanders.
    - 3. From this, he formulates a model for conditions generating early war.
    - 4. He applies this model to the archaeological evidence and locates the emergence of warfare in the Upper Paleolithic (35,000–10,000 years ago).
  - C.** Critics condemn this whole approach as condescending to modern “traditional” societies; modern ethnography throws little or no light on ancient conditions.
    - 1. An extreme version condemns all ethnography to the dust heap by appealing to a sort of Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, whereby the social behavior of a particular people is altered by the very presence of anthropologists among them.
    - 2. Less extreme concerns are that modern traditional cultures have not been frozen in time; they, too, have evolved over the past 35,000 years.
    - 3. Influences from settled, more warlike societies may have corrupted the “purity” of the supposedly prehistoric behavior of modern traditional cultures.
    - 4. The response is that the comparison is between types of social organization, not precise patterns of combat.
- IV.** The generality of warfare demands convincing explanation.
- A.** The vast majority of known human societies, ancient and modern, simple or complex, practice some sort of identifiable warfare.
    - 1. On all continents, in nearly every time period, evidence of intercommunity violence can be found.

2. Peaceful and nonwarlike societies are the exception, not the rule, whether they are ancient or modern.
- B. The universality of warfare points to deep-seated roots, and culture-specific arguments begin to weaken in the face of the great diversity of communities practicing warfare.
  1. One approach has been ethological: The study of animals, particularly our primate relatives, implies an evolutionary origin for coalitional male violence.
  2. The sociobiological approach has met with stiff resistance from those, like Kelly, who insist that warfare is a cultural construct.
  3. It is important to be clear on the evidence and the issues it generates, however. Overt emotions or politics ought not to shape conclusions.

**Essential Reading:**

Guilaine and Zammit, *Origins of War*.

Keeley, *War Before Civilization*.

Kelly, *Warless Societies and the Origins of War*, pp. 75–161.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Dawson, *The First Armies*, pp. 22–73.

Keegan, *A History of Warfare*, pp. 76–126.

LeBlanc, *Constant Battles*, especially pp. 77–198.

Wrangham and Peterson, *Demonic Males*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. How does the definitional issue affect the interpretation of archaeological evidence? Can the physical evidence be interpreted unambiguously?
2. Is modern ethnography applicable to prehistoric evidence for warfare? Are criticisms of such a procedure justified?

## **Lecture Three**

### **Sumer, Akkad, and Early Mesopotamian Warfare**

**Scope:** Whatever the case with the origins of warfare, there can be little doubt that by the time the first cities appeared in Sumer in c. 3000 B.C., warfare was already an established fact of life. The nature of warfare in the Early Dynastic Period (c. 3000–2350 B.C.) is attested only through a light dusting of evidence, but that material now crucially includes written records. From a variety of sources, it seems that warfare was endemic among the city-states of early Sumer. We examine the evidence in an attempt to reconstruct the conventions and conditions of warfare among the first cities, as well as the nature of Sumerian armies, their weapons, and battle tactics. We also explore what this evidence suggests about the organization of Sumerian society. The prevalence of warfare in Mesopotamia led to the regional ascendancy of Akkad in the period 2350–2100 B.C., under the conqueror Sargon and his grandson, Naram-Sin, who appears to have been worshipped as a god. The connection between warfare and empire is thus made clear at the outset of recorded history.

### **Outline**

- I. The establishment of the first cities in Sumer in c. 3000 B.C. marked the beginning of recorded history, when written evidence first became available to the scholar of ancient warfare.
  - A. Cities provided several crucial requisites for the prosecution of wars.
    1. They had concentrated and settled populations to man the ranks.
    2. They provided complex political and social hierarchies to command armies.
    3. Their agricultural regions, boundaries, and surpluses were bases for dispute.
    4. Irrigation rights and water access were sources of competition.
  - B. The direct evidence of warfare for the first four centuries of the Early Dynastic period is nonexistent, perhaps due to the paucity of written evidence for this period.
    1. Yet the general considerations reviewed above make it unlikely that this very early period was warless, as some scholars like to believe.
    2. Resort to force was a common feature of later city-state polities (Greece or the Maya), when other forms of conflict resolution failed.
    3. By the time clear evidence of warfare did emerge (c. 2500 B.C.), weapons and military systems were already well advanced, suggesting a prior period of evolution through trial and error.

- II.** Evidence for warfare appeared indisputably in the Early Dynastic III period (2600–2350 B.C.). Four classes of evidence converge to attest warfare in this era.
- A.** First, we have the discovery of actual weapons in the Royal Burials of Ur (c. 2500 B.C. and later).
    - 1. Maces, socket axes, daggers, and swords have been found.
    - 2. Chariots (or warcars) are known from actual examples, models, and iconographic depictions.
    - 3. Chariots were already well-developed, two- or four-wheeled versions, but they were drawn by asses or onagers because domesticated horses were as yet unknown in the region.
    - 4. Bows are also known.
  - B.** Second, we consider iconographic evidence, in the form of figures, reliefs, or inlays.
    - 1. A sculpture fragment from Girsu in Iraq, dated to 2600 B.C., shows a bound victim being hit on the head with a mace. In all likelihood, he was a prisoner of war.
    - 2. The Royal Standard of Ur (2500 B.C.) depicts chariotry and infantry, the taking of prisoners, and their presentation to a leader and a council of his subordinates.
    - 3. Inlay figures from Mari (c. 2500–2400 B.C.) also attest to military developments.
  - C.** Third, military monuments in the form of city walls appear.
  - D.** Finally, and most crucially, there is now written evidence.
    - 1. The *Sumerian King Lists* or the *Epic of Gilgamesh and Akka* assume fighting between cities was unexceptionable.
    - 2. Despite uncertainties of interpretation, administrative texts distinguish different types of leaders, some of them sacred (*en*) and others apparently military (*lugal* or *ensi*).
    - 3. Cuneiform tablets refer to the slaughtering of enemies and the heaping of their bodies and skeletons on the battlefield.
    - 4. Boundary stelae both depict and record in writing disputes between neighboring city-states.
- III.** The combination of this evidence allows for a reconstruction of the conditions and circumstances of early Mesopotamian warfare.
- A.** The conflict between Umma and its southern neighbor Lagash over the borderland of Gu'eden between them offers the best attested example from this period.
    - 1. The Vulture Stela from Girsu in the territory of Lagash and later inscriptions from Lagash itself allow for a detailed reconstruction of events.



2. A very early arbitrated settlement, recorded on the stela of Mesilim, was disregarded by Umma, and Gu'eden was annexed by force.
  3. As recorded on the Vulture Stela, Eanatum of Lagash invaded Umma and retook Gu'eden, cut irrigation canals, built shrines, erected stelae, and exacted annual tribute from Umma.
  4. The dispute continued long after the establishment of the Vulture Stela and escalated to include other neighboring city-states.
- B.** Several features of this series of events are noteworthy.
1. Between them, these texts record the earliest battles of recorded history; they do so, however, in very general terms and offer no details about the armies' tactical maneuvering or the fighting itself.
  2. We must envisage the battles as fought in the open between armies of chariotry and heavy infantry equipped with shields, spears, and socket axes and deployed in a dense phalanx formation.
  3. The conflict was generational and indecisive in nature: It ended precisely as it began.
  4. Motives for fighting were a mixture of tangible concerns for borderlands and water rights and the restoration of honor tainted by past wrongs and defeats.
  5. Clearly, these battles were designed to decide a particular dispute, and despite their ultimate failure to do so, they can be classed as "decisive" engagements in a tactical sense.
  6. The language of the accounts is religious, in which gods are credited with direct ownership of the disputed lands and their products, as well as the prosecution of the battles.
  7. This language may reflect a genuine Mesopotamian conception of warfare as a religious activity, or the language may be attributable to the sacral nature of the records' context (as dedications to gods located chiefly in shrines or temples).
- C.** A recent suggestion that warfare in this period was not marked by field operations involving infantry and chariotry but was dominated by ineffectual sieges is untenable in the face of the evidence.
1. The Vulture Stela clearly depicts a formation of infantry in action.
  2. The infantry on the stela, as well as that depicted in Mari and on the Royal Standard of Ur, all have standard dress and equipment.
  3. The warcars of this era, to be sure, were rather clumsy looking in comparison to later true chariots, and they were not drawn by horses, but relative inefficacy does not entail utter uselessness.
- IV.** The rise of Sargon of Akkad (a.k.a. Agade) established the first empire in history over the whole of Mesopotamia (Sumer, Babylonia, and the northern reaches of the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates).
- A.** Sargon's life is known mostly from later romanticized accounts, but he was a genuine historical figure of great importance.

- B. His conquest of Mesopotamia by force (c. 2350 B.C.) and the continuation of his family's rule by dynasty over a period of two centuries established the essential pattern for imperialists for millennia to come.
- C. The Akkadian Empire, founded in war, set the pattern for later ages and demonstrated the inherent link between warfare and imperialism.

**Essential Reading:**

Cooper, *Reconstructing History from Inscriptions*.

Dawson, *The First Armies*, pp. 76–117.

Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1.19–73.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Van De Mieroop, *History of the Near East*, pp. 1–79.

Winter, "After the Battle Is Over."

Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands*, pp. 32–57.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. In what ways can the prosecution of warfare in early Mesopotamia be tied to our prior discussion of warfare's nature and origin? What specific benefits does the appearance of written evidence offer to our understanding?
2. If you were asked to choose five chief characteristics of early Mesopotamian warfare, what would they be? Justify your choices with reference to specific pieces of evidence.

## Lecture Four

### Egyptian Warfare from the Old to New Kingdoms

**Scope:** It used to be thought that Old Kingdom Egypt was relatively peaceful because overt evidence for warfare in this period was largely lacking: The tombs of Old Kingdom officials made scant reference to warfare, and military scenes rarely appeared in their decorative schemes. More recently, this somewhat utopian picture has changed as some crucial pieces of written evidence have been read against the background of the wider ideology of Old Kingdom Egyptians, particularly their view of foreigners and the outside world. Evidence of warfare for the Middle Kingdom is somewhat better and includes the massive fortress at Buhen in the south of Egypt, wall paintings on tomb walls, and even wooden models of soldiers. With the New Kingdom, the evidence becomes much more plentiful. The New Kingdom state was aggressive and imperialistic; pharaoh's role was increasingly that of a war leader; monuments, art, and texts extol the military virtues and achievements of pharaoh; and documents attest complex military organization and command structures. More than anything, however, Egyptian warfare was transformed by the introduction of the horse-pulled chariot. The precise way the chariot was used on the battlefield remains a matter of dispute.

### Outline

- I. Was the Old Kingdom a nonmilitary state?
  - A. The absence of fortifications, overtly military imagery in art, and military terminology in texts suggested to many that the Old Kingdom (c. 2700–2180 B.C.), geographically remote and isolated, was a nonmilitary state.
  - B. J. Keegan has suggested that depictions of Egyptian warriors imply highly ritualized, nonlethal warfare.
    - 1. Soldiers down to the New Kingdom are shown largely unarmored.
    - 2. Soldiers thus equipped will not rush into battle to face spear stabs and sword slashes.
    - 3. Depictions of the “smiting pharaoh” remain constant from the Old to New Kingdoms.
    - 4. All of this implies a highly ritualized form of warfare, perhaps like the later Aztec “flower wars.”
    - 5. But this model is probably incorrect.
  - C. On the other hand, the Predynastic Fortress Palette (3100 B.C.) and the Narmer Palette (c. 3000 B.C.) appear to depict assaults on fortified towns and warfare, respectively.

- D. There are other very strong indications, however, that point to a less utopian view of the Old Kingdom.
    - 1. Egyptian ideology was highly ethnocentric: Egypt and the pharaoh represented order and decency; foreigners represented chaos and vileness.
    - 2. Geographic isolation may insulate a country from outside attack, but it may also lead to extreme ethnocentricity.
  - E. The Tomb of Weni (or Uni), c. 2350 B.C., records five campaigns against Asiatics and contains several interesting details.
    - 1. Weni was the general of an army of units levied locally; there were also Nubians and Libyans, possibly mercenaries.
    - 2. Weni's title and that of many officers was innocuous: He was "Chief Domain Supervisor of the Palace"; subcommanders were bureaucrats and carried similar civilian titles.
    - 3. This suggests that military command may lie buried in such civilian titles as *nomarch* or "chief prophet of Upper Egypt."
    - 4. Thus, the absence of military titles cannot be taken as evidence for the absence of militarism in the Old Kingdom.
    - 5. Weni's campaigns, as presented in his texts, were not ritualistic and nonlethal encounters; on the contrary, they were total wars of genocidal intent.
    - 6. Weni described going back to put down rebellions among the Sand-Dwellers; it is not clear if this language was literal or ideological.
    - 7. Weni's motives were wholly personal: to earn the pharaoh's favor, presumably in material and career terms.
  - F. Four Old Kingdom tombs also include scenes of sieges, the technical details of which we will survey in Lecture Eight. There are also weapons to consider.
    - 1. Such stylized images are hard to "read" straightforwardly. What, exactly, are we looking at?
    - 2. Old Kingdom weapons included axes, maces, bows, daggers, and spears.
- II. The First Intermediate Period (c. 2180–2040 B.C.) and Middle Kingdom (c. 2000–1650 B.C.) were more openly militaristic in tone.
- A. Collapse of central power saw a regionalization of Egypt as local *nomarchs* rose to prominence. Internal fighting made war respectable to talk about; thus, it appears in Middle Kingdom records more clearly than in the Old Kingdom.
    - 1. Depictions of warfare on Middle Kingdom tombs are more numerous than on Old Kingdom tombs (10 as opposed to 4).
    - 2. Weapons improved in quality, especially the composite bow and the axe-head.

3. Model soldiers show us (possibly) what Egyptian warriors looked like.
  4. Known fortifications, such as Buhen in southern Egypt, show a high degree of sophistication
  5. There is mention in texts of a “Wall of the Prince” protecting the approaches to Lower Egypt across the Sinai.
- B.** The *Story of Sinuhe* (c. 1960 B.C.) and the Stela of Khu-Sebek from Abydos (c. 1880 B.C.) reflect a complex world of war, diplomacy, and mercenary engagements between Egypt and Syria-Palestine.
1. The *Story of Sinuhe* takes place against a backdrop of endemic warfare.
  2. Sinuhe, an official in the army of the dauphin Sen-Usert (r. c. 1971–1928 B.C.), goes into exile on the accession of his boss.
  3. Among the Asiatics, he becomes a mercenary general and fights a “duel of champions” with a rival Asiatic ruler.
  4. An emissary arrives from Egypt and recalls Sinuhe, who dies in honor at home.
  5. The Stela of Khu-Sebek records the career of a fighter/commander.
  6. Noteworthy is Khu-Sebek’s advancement and enrichment.
  7. Khu-Sebek’s activities were against the Nubians to the south, as well as the Asiatics to the north.
  8. The stela implies a military failure on the part of the pharaoh in Asia.
- III.** The Second Intermediate Period (a.k.a. the *Hyksos Invasion*, c. 1660–1570 B.C.) saw the Delta ruled by foreigners; the New Kingdom (c. 1570–1070 B.C.), forged in war, expanded its borders into Syria.
- A.** The collapse of pharaonic authority at the end of the Middle Kingdom saw Lower Egypt ruled by foreigners, the Hyksos, out of Avaris in the Delta.
1. The old belief that the Hyksos introduced chariots to Egyptian warfare no longer has much support.
  2. Most scholars now believe that chariotry came to Egypt during the New Kingdom.
- B.** Over several generations, Egyptians in Upper Egypt subjugated the Delta and drove out (or subjected) the Hyksos.
1. Accounts of these campaigns are scant; a schoolboy tablet from Thebes and tomb inscriptions help to fill out the picture.
  2. These texts contain interesting information about early New Kingdom warfare.
  3. Pharaoh had a council of advisors.
  4. Plunder and booty played a central role in the commemoration of warfare.

5. Chariots appeared on the Egyptian side and seem reserved for the upper classes; the rest fought on foot.
6. Long sieges are mentioned.
7. Finds of weapons fill out the picture.

IV. Evidence for New Kingdom military operations is the fullest yet; the chariot played a key, if problematic, role on the battlefield.

- A. Texts record a complex military organization with a substantial officer corps.
  1. The army was divided into chariotry and infantry, vaguely designated *hosts*.
  2. Infantry was divided into divisions named after gods (Seth, Ptah, and so on), subdivided into companies of 250, each with its own scribe.
  3. Infantry troops were conscripted locally and housed, fed, equipped, and trained by the state.
  4. Chariotry represented a separate division, organized into units of 10 up to a maximum of 50.
  5. Massive logistical effort was required to maintain this wing of the army.
- B. There are two views on how the chariot was used: It charged the enemy directly and took the main shock of battle, or it acted as a fire platform and screened infantry as it formed up.
  1. Egyptian chariots were light and two-horsed and carried a crew of two: a driver and a warrior armed with a composite bow and/or javelins.
  2. The nature of the chariot strongly suggests it was a fire platform, not a shock weapon.
  3. Chariots, then, were probably used in broad, mobile maneuvers to screen forming infantry units and to mop up enemy troops broken in combat.
  4. The chariot predominates in our accounts of New Kingdom warfare because it was the “prestige” weapon on the field and pharaoh rode in one.

#### **Essential Reading:**

Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 18–22 (“Story of Sinuhe”); pp. 227–228 (“Tomb of Weni”); p. 230 (“Stela of Khu-Sebek”); pp. 232–233 (“War against the Hyksos,” “Expulsion of Hyksos”); pp. 328–329 (“Execration of Asiatics”).

Gnirs, “Ancient Egypt.”

Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*.

Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands*, pp. 58–114.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Schulman, *Military Rank, Title and Organization in the Egyptian New Kingdom*.

Shaw, "Battle in Ancient Egypt."

**Questions to Consider:**

1. How does the nature of the available evidence limit our ability to understand Egyptian warfare? What specific issues are made more or less difficult by the paucity of evidence?
2. In what ways did Egyptian warfare differ from that practiced in Mesopotamia?

## **Lecture Five**

### **The Battles of Megiddo and Kadesh**

**Scope:** With the New Kingdom, we get the first fully recorded battle in history: the Battle of Megiddo between Pharaoh Thutmose III and a coalition of Syrian lords, fought outside the walls of a town in Palestine. Detailed accounts of the battle were carved into Egyptian monuments, and these accounts form the basis of our analysis. Such accounts, being royal propaganda, are not without problems of interpretation, but they reveal many interesting details about Egyptian warfare as practiced 35 centuries ago. The sophistication at all levels in this period shines through in the events of Megiddo. Thutmose III, victor at Megiddo, was a great conqueror and helped set New Kingdom Egypt on the road to empire. Once more, the connection between war and empire requires some consideration: Why did the New Kingdom Egyptians embark on wars? Were they motivated by greed, by religious devotion, by xenophobia, or a combination of all three? As seen in the last lecture, the chariot was central to warfare in this period. The Battle of Megiddo bears this out, as does the later Battle of Kadesh between Pharaoh Ramesses II (the Great) and the Hittite king Muwatallis. Once more, accounts of this battle are full and plentiful, but the use of chariots here is considered by some to be atypical.

### **Outline**

- I.** The background to Megiddo is New Kingdom imperial aggression against Asiatics; Thutmose III (r. c. 1504–1452 B.C.) was one of the empire's founders.
  - A.** Having ousted the Hyksos and Nubians from their territory and reunited Egypt, the pharaohs turned their attention to expansion abroad.
  - B.** Thutmose III, the first 20 years of whose rule had been usurped by his stepmother Hatshepsut, led yearly campaigns into Palestine for 17 years.
    - 1.** The motives for the campaigns are unclear: They could have been personal and political, expansionist, economic, religious, or a blend of all of the above.
    - 2.** In the first campaign, in year 23 of Thutmose's reign (he counted the 20 years of Hatshepsut's usurpation as his own), the Battle of Megiddo was fought.
    - 3.** This would put it in April or May, sometime between 1479 and 1468 B.C., depending on which version of Egyptian chronology one favors.



- II.** The events of Megiddo are instructive and worth considering in detail.
- A.** The battle was recorded in inscriptions, principally carved onto the temple walls at Karnak but also known from other places.
1. The different accounts are largely consistent with each other; it seems they came from scribes attached to the units involved.
  2. Consistency does not necessarily equal reliability; with royal records, we must be cautious about what we read.
  3. Pharaoh is everywhere dominant and decisive; this may reflect the realities of command by a despot, but it may also be pure propaganda.
- B.** The events of the battle are well documented, but uncertainties remain.
1. A coalition of Asian lords, numbered at 330 in one account, assembled under the chief of Kadesh, occupied Megiddo and waited for the Egyptians to come and fight.
  2. There were three approaches to Megiddo: a road through a narrow pass from the town of Aruna directly toward Megiddo and two more circuitous routes to the north and south.
  3. Egyptian intelligence showed that the Syrian coalition was arrayed before the town; the Syrians appear to have expected the Egyptians from the south.
  4. After a war council, Thutmose led the vanguard of his army into the plain; the rear was still at Aruna, some nine miles away.
  5. The Syrians were surprised, and Thutmose camped on the plain.
  6. The next day, both armies faced off in battle, and the Syrian army broke on the first Egyptian charge and fled to Megiddo.
  7. Thutmose's army devoted itself to looting the spoils of the battlefield and failed to follow up the victory.
  8. Megiddo was besieged for seven months, at the end of which it surrendered.
- C.** Several observations can be made about this battle.
1. The battle was mutually agreed: The Syrians specifically waited at Megiddo for a decisive engagement with the Egyptians.
  2. Intelligence was gathered by the Egyptians; little or no scouting was done by the Syrians.
  3. On two occasions, pharaoh acted after consultation with a war council.
  4. The marching order of the army was recorded.
  5. Thutmose's stated reason for taking the Aruna road was neither strategic nor tactical but personal—that he not lose face.
  6. The Syrians were remarkably complacent.
  7. The Egyptian camp illustrated the sophistication of warfare at this time.
  8. Strategic and tactical details are hazy.

9. The accounts do not cast clear light on the martial use of the chariots.
  10. Casualties can only be estimated. There is mention of 83 hands taken (hands were typically taken by soldiers as proof of a kill).
  11. There is great emphasis on loot taken and tribute exacted.
  12. This is the first properly recorded campaign and pitched battle in our historical records.
- D.** Thutmose III and his successors continued to fight in Syria-Palestine against local coalitions and foreign rivals.
1. Thutmose's campaigns established the Egyptian empire in Syria-Palestine, but total conquest was impossible and diplomacy was necessary.
  2. The Hittites were Egypt's main rival in the region. Conflict with them culminated in the Battle of Kadesh, c. 1285/1275 B.C.
- III.** Ramesses II (the Great) was the New Kingdom's greatest pharaoh and ruled for 66 years (c. 1279–1213 B.C.); the Battle of Kadesh is celebrated as his greatest achievement.
- A.** Ramesses's long reign ensured that his monuments are among the most numerous from ancient Egypt.
1. From the sheer profusion of accounts of the Battle of Kadesh, Ramesses clearly regarded it as his greatest achievement.
  2. As with Megiddo, therefore, we have plenty of evidence. Unlike Megiddo, however, we also have the outline of an account from the other side, the Hittites.
  3. It is clear from these accounts that Ramesses did not win a terrific victory but, rather, saved his army from total annihilation by a display of personal valor.
- B.** Kadesh stands as the greatest chariot engagement on record.
1. Ramesses approached from the south, with his army marching in four divisions.
  2. Duplicious Bedouins fed misinformation to Ramesses, who was deceived as to Hittite dispositions.
  3. The Hittite king, Muwatallis II, was hidden to the east of Kadesh, allegedly in command of some 2,500 chariots.
  4. Ramesses, at the head of the column, moved west of Kadesh and established a camp.
  5. As the second division approached, the Hittite chariots swarmed out around Kadesh and attacked the Egyptians unprepared.
  6. Ramesses saved the day by charging into the Hittites and driving them off.
  7. Clearly, our account is not credible as it is. Various scenarios have been constructed to make sense of it.
  8. The Hittites then attacked the Egyptian camp, but the arrival of another Egyptian corps put them to flight.

- C. Kadesh was a stalemate, as both sides claimed victory and the battle led to the signing of a nonaggression pact by the two realms.
- IV. These two battles lead to several important observations about military affairs at the very outset of full historical records.
- A. Pitched battles in the open field between well-organized forces were already a feature of warfare.
  - B. The battles were agreed upon by both sides and were intended to be decisive in that they aimed to settle an issue once and for all.
  - C. Infantry featured heavily in these armies, but our records focus on the prestige armament of the chariot, driven by the rulers in both cases.
  - D. Precise details of the actual fighting remain unclear, as do casualty figures.

**Essential Reading:**

Gabriel and Boose, *The Great Battles of Antiquity*, pp. 40–87.

Goedicke, *The Battle of Megiddo*.

———, *Perspectives on the Battle of Kadesh*, especially pp. 77–121.

Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2.29–35 (Megiddo) and 2.57–71 (Kadesh).

**Supplemental Reading:**

Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 234–241 (evidence for the Battle of Megiddo and Thutmose III's Asian campaigns) and pp. 199–203 (Egyptian and Hittite treaties after Kadesh).

Cline, *Battles of Armageddon*.

Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 83–100 (Megiddo) and 209–234 (Kadesh).

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Which features of the surviving records of Megiddo and Kadesh seem reliable and which do not? How can acceptance or rejection of specifics be justified in methodological terms?
2. What aspects of these battles do you find the most militarily impressive? Why? In what terms would you characterize these engagements: direct, shock battle; freewheeling fights of maneuver; or a combination of the two?

## Lecture Six

### The Trojan War and Homeric Warfare

**Scope:** The battle for Troy provided Greek mythology with one of its foundational themes. It is the background for the great Homeric epics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, and it served as inspiration for many later Greek tragedies and works of art. As illustrated by Virgil's *Aeneid*, the saga of Troy also occupies a central place in the mythical underpinnings of Rome. Given its importance, the reality of the Trojan War has been debated since ancient times. In this lecture, we address the so-called Homeric question and survey the archaeological evidence for Troy and for warfare among the mainland Greeks, called Mycenaeans. In particular, the heated scholarly debate surrounding the nature of Homeric warfare—whether even such a thing existed at all—is examined. Interpretations range from the purely literary (Homeric warfare, as described by the poet, is a literary fiction) to the more literal (Homeric portrayals of warfare are logical and plausible when the poet is properly interpreted). This discussion offers essential background for material to be covered in Lecture Nine.

### Outline

- I. The historicity of the Trojan War, as well as the practice of a distinctly Homeric form of warfare, is closely tied to interpretive uncertainties surrounding our chief source for both: the Homeric poems. Other sources are not terribly helpful.
  - A. The so-called Homeric question (or, more properly, the Homeric questions) affects all planes of interpreting the poems *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.
    1. Practically all aspects of the Homeric poems are controversial: whether Homer ever existed as an individual artist, whether the poems show the imprint of a single talent, when and where the poems took their current form, and so on.
    2. For the historian, two issues are paramount: Do the poems enshrine a historical reality (or realities)? If so, what is their chronological point of reference?
    3. There are no ready responses to these issues, but points of consensus are as follows:
      - a. The poems are a product of oral transmission, which preserved snippets of information about different eras as they were passed down by the generations of bards who sang them.
      - b. The oral process can be traced for several centuries back from the generally accepted time of final composition (c. 750–700 B.C.).

- c. What all this might or might not say about the historicity of the Trojan War remains moot, but confronting these interpretive difficulties must be the starting point of any analysis.
  - B. External sources are of limited usefulness in illuminating the supposed historicity of the Trojan War.
    - 1. The site of Troy was discovered in northwestern Turkey in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
    - 2. Yet excavations, although suggestive, have failed to demonstrate categorically the reality of the Trojan War; such a demonstration is a fundamentally unrealistic expectation of what archaeology has to offer.
    - 3. Discovery of the Hittite Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the reading of its extensive archives opened up some tantalizing possibilities, but again, none are decisive in establishing the historicity of the Trojan War.
  - C. Several ground rules can be established and must be borne in mind in assessing all this material.
    - 1. Homer was a poet, not a historian. Being historically accurate was not his main concern, nor that of the tradition to which he belonged.
    - 2. The poetic tradition clearly magnifies and glorifies the events it describes.
    - 3. If there really was a historical Trojan War, it was likely a rather minor event that, for whatever reason, obtained a towering cultural status among the Greeks.
- II. A major controversy swirls around the issue of Homeric warfare as a distinct and historical entity in its own right.
  - A. Battle scenes in the *Iliad* are of a type.
    - 1. Heroes fight in one-to-one duels.
    - 2. Missiles are thrown (and miss), warriors run about and clash with spear and sword, and chariots patrol the battlefield.
    - 3. Homeric warfare is, thus, loose and open-cast, apparently fought by heavily armed “fighters in front” (*promachoi*).
  - B. A terrific spectrum of scholarly opinion exists on how such scenes are to be read.
    - 1. Some argue that Homeric warfare is a poetic fiction, unreflective of any form of warfare ever actually practiced.
    - 2. The fact that Homer appears to be confused in some military details—notably, the proper use of chariots or heavily armed men running around an open field—suggests to some that his portrayal of battle is largely fictitious.

3. Even among those who accept that Homeric warfare did take place in reality, a wide variety of opinion is evident.
  4. Some accept Homeric descriptions at face value and seek to find parallels in ethnographic records of fighting among New Guinean tribesmen or *samurai* warriors in Japan.
  5. Another view emphasizes the massed ranks in Homer's battle descriptions to argue that the later form of Greek warfare—heavily armed infantry ranked into close formations—was already in place in Homer's day.
  6. The apparent inconsistency of Homeric battle descriptions, with massed ranks in some parts, individual fighters in others, and long-range missile exchanges in others, has been explained by some as a product of phases of battle.
  7. Others see Homeric warfare as consistently portrayed once a judicious interpretive stance with regard to the poems and what Homer sought to do is adopted.
- C. Given the performative nature of the Homeric tradition, it seems most unlikely that the style of warfare depicted therein is wholly fictitious; the descriptions of battle had to resonate with the audience to be effective.
- D. But it is much more difficult to determine which elements of Homeric warfare are real and which are elaborations.

**Essential Reading:**

Homer, *The Iliad* (a useful selection of passages is found in Sage, *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, pp. 1–18).

Latacz, *Troy and Homer*.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Powell, *Homer*, chapter 2.

Van Wees, “Homeric Warfare.”

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What chief obstacles, methodological or circumstantial, stand in the way of establishing the Trojan War as a historical reality? Can these obstacles be overcome?
2. Was Homeric warfare a reality or a figment of the poet's imagination? What are the deciding factors in leading you to decide as you do on this question?

## Lecture Seven

### The Assyrian War Machine

**Scope:** In the late Bronze Age (1350–1100 B.C.), the kingdom of Assyria, located in the northern reaches of Mesopotamia, emerged as a major regional power on the back of a powerful military machine. Its initial territorial acquisitions were washed away in the great upheavals that brought the Bronze Age to an end in c. 1100 B.C. The core of the Assyrian kingdom, however, survived when other states (the Hittites, Mitanni, and Mycenaeans) collapsed. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Assyrians began to expand their realm once more and eventually created the vast Neo-Assyrian Empire, which for the first time in history, united the Near East and Upper Egypt under a single polity. The military machine of the neo-Assyrian kings was a ferocious opponent, as revealed by the often brutal contents of the Assyrian Royal Records and reliefs carved onto the walls of palaces. Through these records, we contemplate the nature of the Assyrian army, the unique features of the empire it created, and the place of warfare in Assyrian imperial ideology. The Assyrian military model of multiethnic, highly mobile armies relying on missile weaponry and chariots was to be stock for major Near Eastern powers for centuries to come.

### Outline

- I. Assyrian history falls into two distinct phases: the so-called Middle Assyrian period (c. 1350–1100 B.C.) and the Neo-Assyrian Empire (c. 900–612 B.C.). Most of our military information derives from the neo-Assyrian period.
  - A. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the mountain kingdom of Assyria emerged as a regional power in Mesopotamia and Syria.
    - 1. A series of energetic kings expanded Assyrian control south into Mesopotamia and westward toward the Mediterranean.
    - 2. This proto-Assyrian empire was washed away in the widespread upheavals at the end of the Late Bronze Age (c. 1200–1000 B.C.).
    - 3. The Assyrian heartland remained intact, however.
  - B. Another series of energetic kings, beginning with Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 B.C.), re-extended Assyrian control over the Near East and expanded it into the first true imperial system in history.
    - 1. In the guise of reclaiming a lost inheritance, Ashurnasirpal II began conquering the Middle Assyrian lands. His successors extended the empire by annual campaigning.

2. The Assyrians distinguished between the homeland and the conquered territories, which were organized into provinces under governors appointed by the kings.
  3. This arrangement marks Assyria as the first genuine imperial system known to history.
- II.** The empire was forged by the Assyrian army, an awesome military machine deployed with utter ruthlessness by the kings.
- A.** Sources for the army are provided by written records and from the detailed relief sculptures found at the Assyrian cities of Nimrud, Nineveh, Assur, and Khorsabad.
1. Evidence for the Assyrian army comes from the Royal Records of Assyria and bas-reliefs carved on palace walls.
  2. The army was organized around units of 10 and 50, with a complex officer corps reaching up to the king.
  3. The organization of the officers suggests the existence of an elite unit, the Royal Guard (*sab sharri*), combined with units drawn from conquered and allied peoples.
  4. The bas-reliefs from royal palaces show us various contingents, armed differently and carefully identified as foreign auxiliaries by dress and equipment.
  5. The Assyrian army consisted of chariotry, cavalry (first developed systematically by the Assyrians), archers, slingers, heavy infantry, and light infantry. As we shall see in the next lecture, siege warfare was a specialty of this impressive fighting force.
- B.** There is disagreement among modern commentators about how this army functioned in the field.
1. In the long tradition of Mesopotamia, the Assyrian Royal Records are bombastic exercises in self-aggrandizement. There is little detail about how the army actually fought.
  2. This vagueness in the source material has left the tactical system of the Assyrian army a matter of uncertainty.
  3. There are three main proposals on the table.
    - a. The Assyrian army was primarily a chariot force, in the ancient tradition of Egypt and the Near East. The Assyrians were just particularly good at chariot warfare.
    - b. The Assyrian army was primarily an infantry army; in fact, it was the first true infantry army in history. This accounts for its success.
    - c. The Assyrians developed the world's first integrated operational army, which deployed multiple specialist troops in mutually supporting roles.
  4. Of these reconstructions, the evidence of the reliefs supports the latter best.



5. Reliefs of open battle and the hunt suggest that coordinated action among varied units was the key to the Assyrian tactical system.
- C. The Assyrians inflicted the most hideous cruelties on defeated rebels or recalcitrant enemies, as recorded with apparent relish by both the archives and the reliefs.
1. A deliberate policy of extreme violence was evidently in effect.
  2. A common reaction to such vileness has been to declare the Assyrians inordinately cruel by nature. Such judgments are valueless as historical explanations.
  3. A much more productive approach is to interpret such actions as acts of psychological warfare.
- III. In the stated reasons for their wars, we can discern the shape of Assyrian imperial ideology.
- A. The Assyrian Royal Records offer various reasons for warfare.
1. Of these, religious reasons were the most common. The king, as the representative of Assur and Marduk, was impelled to war by the oath-breaking disloyalty of dishonest enemies.
  2. In the neo-Assyrian period, the Bronze Age holdings of Assyria were used as justification for (re)conquest.
  3. Revenge featured heavily as a motif also, for wrongs actual, ancestral, or perceived.
  4. Economic motives are evident in the long lists of loot taken from conquered peoples, but they are rarely acknowledged as the *causes* of war; rather, they are presented as the natural *results* of success.
  5. This last point alone is reason to be cautious in accepting what the Assyrians themselves say about why they fought so much. The prospect of loot has long been a motive for aggression.
- B. In all this, aspects of Assyrian imperial ideology are to be discerned. A passage in Sargon's records describing his eighth campaign is particularly instructive.
- C. The Assyrians overstretched themselves in Egypt and, facing multiple revolts, finally succumbed to an alliance of Medes, Babylonians, and Scythians in 612 B.C.
1. Assyrian control over Egypt was never better than sporadic.
  2. Other parts of the empire took advantage of Assyrian troubles in Egypt to revolt.
  3. A major coalition of enemies, both internal (Babylon) and external (Medes and Scythians) finally overthrew Assyrian power by sacking Nineveh in 612 B.C.
  4. The name of Assyria passed from history and its homeland returned to being a realm of shepherds and goatherds.

**Essential Reading:**

Dawson, *First Armies*, pp. 158–209.

Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria*, various passages, especially in volume 2.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Oded, *Mass Deportations*.

———, *War, Peace, and Empire*.

Wiseman, “The Assyrians,” in Hackett, *Warfare*, pp. 36–53.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Which model of the Assyrian army’s tactical system seems the most convincing to you? Why?
2. What is the connection between warfare and empire in ancient Assyria? To what degree can we call Assyria a *militarized society*? What do we mean by *militarism* in the first place?

## Lecture Eight

### The Sieges of Lachish and Jerusalem

**Scope:** One aspect of warfare we have not closely examined thus far is sieges. The Assyrians, unlike any before them, were masters of this most demanding form of conflict. We examine first the background of ancient siege warfare, and then the Assyrian skill at it by considering two great sieges in the third campaign of Sennacherib (701 B.C.). The sources are particularly good for these events given that we have Assyrian written and iconographic records, the accounts in the Bible, and the evidence of archaeology to work with. The imposing Judean fortress of Lachish was a main target of Sennacherib's efforts in this campaign, as is reflected by the personal supervision of the siege by the king himself. So proud was he of his success at Lachish that he decorated a room of his palace at Nineveh with scenes from this battle. These scenes offer excellent evidence of the Assyrian army doing its deadly work. Meanwhile, Sennacherib's forces were also besieging the Judean capital of Jerusalem, described in passages of 2 Kings 18 and 19 and, to a lesser extent, 2 Chronicles 32. The Assyrian account of this conflict, naturally, differs considerably.

### Outline

- I. Before the Assyrians, the development of siege warfare in the ancient world is not terribly clear.
  - A. The Neolithic sites of Jericho and Çatal Hüyük were clearly constructed with defense in mind, but that does not demonstrate that sieges were prosecuted against them at this early date.
    - 1. Sieges are complex procedures, demanding advanced planning, command and control, technical and technological know-how, significant manpower, and sophisticated logistics.
    - 2. There is little evidence that Neolithic chiefdoms or proto-states deployed such resources in warfare.
    - 3. The first cities in Mesopotamia also had impressive walls.
  - B. Evidence for early siege warfare is sparse. The best material comes from Egypt.
    - 1. The Predynastic Fortress Palette shows walled cities with towers apparently being attacked by animals (representing gods? kings? regions?).
    - 2. The tombs of Inti at Deshasheh and Kaemheset at Saqqara (both c. 2300 B.C.) show Asiatic cities assaulted by Egyptians.
    - 3. The tomb of Khety at Beni Hasan (c. 2000 B.C.) shows the first definite siege engine, a hut covering three men who wield a long pole and approach a besieged town.

4. We have no comparable iconographic depictions from Mesopotamia until the Assyrian reliefs of the first millennium B.C.
- II. Whatever its beginnings, the neo-Assyrians took siege warfare to a high level of competence.
- A. The principles of siegecraft are easily appreciated. Essentially, a siege can be conducted actively or passively.
    1. Active prosecution of a siege involves going over the walls (*escalade*) or going under or through them (*sapping* and *battering*). Gates, ever the weakest spots, are ideal targets for assault.
    2. Passive sieges involve investing a town and starving it out.
  - B. Both siege methods are best employed in combination: A passive siege can be employed until such time as the attacker feels that the defenders are sufficiently weakened to succumb to an assault.
- III. The sieges of Lachish and Jerusalem, both conducted by the Assyrian king Sennacherib during his third campaign (701 B.C.) to crush rebels within his empire, are particularly well attested and can serve as templates for the sophistication of Assyrian siege techniques.
- A. The siege of Lachish is attested by written evidence from Assyria, archaeological discoveries at the site, and the remarkable reliefs from Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh.
    1. Two copies of cuneiform tablets record Sennacherib's official version of events.
    2. Although Lachish is not mentioned by name, it undoubtedly is among the "46 strong, walled cities" Sennacherib mentions as taking.
    3. There are details that can be checked by excavation at the site, where much confirming evidence has been found.
    4. Dramatic as the archaeological evidence is, perhaps even more so are the reliefs from Sennacherib's palace depicting this siege and the king's supervision of it. They reveal the intensity of the assault and its aftermath, with thousands of deportees led away to captivity.
  - B. The siege of Jerusalem is known mostly from Sennacherib's account and from that in the Bible.
    1. Sennacherib's account is interestingly disingenuous. It gives the impression of subjecting Jerusalem to his power, but clearly, he did not take the city.
    2. The Bible's account in 2 Kings 18 and 19 is rather different and gives a terrific insight into an otherwise unattested aspect of Assyrian siegecraft: psychological warfare.
    3. The level of sophistication in psychological warfare displayed by the Assyrians is remarkable. They used the carrot and stick in their

- communications with the defenders of the city: Come out to a comfortable deportation or resist and suffer.
4. What followed in this darkest of hours, of course, was divine intervention.
  5. There are several possibilities to explain what happened, but both the Assyrian and biblical accounts are clear that Jerusalem was not taken.
- C. From all this evidence, we may piece together a composite picture of Assyrian siege techniques.
1. A camp was set up within sight of the target city.
  2. Envoys threatened and cajoled the defenders to give up, using their native language.
  3. Passive siege techniques were employed to keep the defenders within the zone of operations.
  4. When circumstances were right, active siege techniques were employed.
  5. The Assyrians had a broad array of special assault methods and equipment at their disposal: specially trained assault troops who could climb ladders armed; sappers; siege engines, sometimes prefabricated; and missile troops.
  6. Overall, the Assyrians had achieved a degree of mastery in siege warfare that was to be unparalleled until Hellenistic and Roman times.
  7. Armed with these methods and given the complexity of their military system overall, it is little wonder that the Assyrians conquered the whole of the Near East.

**Essential Reading:**

Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, pp. 1–85.

Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish*.

Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands*, pp. 291–328.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Gabriel and Boose, *The Great Battles of Antiquity*, pp. 90–120.

Oded, *Mass Deportations*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What best explains the extreme violence meted out to Assyria's enemies? What examples can you locate in the Royal Records? Was such violence necessary in forging the world's first true empire?
2. In what ways was siegecraft an essential buttress of empire in the ancient world? Why do you think the Assyrians were so good at it?

## Lecture Nine

### A Peculiar Institution? Hoplite Warfare

**Scope:** The Greek *hoplite* was a heavily armed and armored infantryman who fought in a formation called the *phalanx* and who dominated the battlefields of the ancient world for almost four centuries (c. 700–338 B.C.). Two controversies swirl around hoplite warfare: (1) its origins or, indeed, whether it had origins at all and (2) the nature of the fighting in phalanx battles. The first two parts of the lecture, therefore, lay out the various positions of scholars on these two controversial topics. In the final section, we examine the notion of a peculiarly “Western way of war” that had evolved in Greece prior to the Persian Wars (490, 480–79 B.C.), which were to demonstrate the effectiveness of hoplites against the armed forces of the most powerful nation on earth at the time. In particular, the standard view about the peculiar nature of hoplite warfare is assessed.

### Outline

- I. The question of a “hoplite reform” in Archaic Greece has been hotly debated for decades and remains so today.
  - A. Older views deduced that a revolution in Greek fighting techniques had occurred in the decades around 700 B.C., and debate focused on its nature and sociopolitical ramifications.
    1. The hoplite’s panoply was centered on a large round shield; he also wore a bronze helmet and breastplate and carried a thrusting spear and short sword.
    2. Hoplites fought in a tight formation called a *phalanx*, arrayed into ranks and files, usually eight deep.
    3. Two views prevailed about how this new system of fighting emerged: sudden change and gradual change.
    4. Both agreed that the system had a major sociopolitical impact on Greeks.
    5. Arguments about the hoplite shield are emblematic of this controversy.
    6. The sociopolitical consequences of this change in fighting were also debated.
  - B. Recent opinion is more diverse; there is no consensus on all sorts of issues.
    1. An influential view today is that a hoplite phalanx is identifiable in Homer; thus, given that we have Homeric hoplites, there was no hoplite revolution at all.

2. Another view revitalizes and extends the gradualist position, disengages hoplite equipment from the phalanx, and redates Homer to the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
  3. A third view revives the sudden change position and recouples the connection between hoplite equipment and the phalanx; the process was over by 675 B.C.
  4. In all this, the sociopolitical consequences of hoplite battle have been reconsidered.
  5. All in all, the issue of the hoplite reform remains largely unsettled. In some quarters, it was a sudden process; in others, a slow process; and in the opinion of others, it never took place at all.
- II.** Whatever its origins, the hoplite phalanx appears to have been the predominant form of fighting in Greece by 600 B.C. (perhaps somewhat earlier, depending on one's point of view). What was hoplite battle like?
- A.** The standard view stresses the ritualized nature and physical intensity of hoplite warfare.
    1. Warfare was another arena for conducting the *agon* ("struggle") among Greek males. Hoplite warfare was heavily ritualized.
    2. Their form of warfare seems to fit this agonistic pattern, only on an interstate rather than an interpersonal level.
    3. The course of the actual fighting, in this view, was marked by intense, close-ordered combat and by the mass push (*othismos*) to force the enemy to yield.
  - B.** The standard view has its critics, and their objections are not slight.
    1. The arguments are technical and detailed; two are outlined as exemplars.
      - a. The very notion of a mass physical push is inherently implausible; othismos can refer to various types of fighting.
      - b. Greek hoplites engaged in weapons play; their battles were not affairs of dense, scrimmage-like shoving between packed masses of men.
    2. The critics offer their own versions of hoplite battle, not all of them mutually compatible.
- III.** Greek warfare in the Archaic and Classical periods is widely held to have been the sole preserve of hoplite infantry armies, a peculiar institution that can be designated as a truly unique "Western way of war." Some serious questions hang over the details of this view, however.
- A.** The standard view insists on several unique features of Greek battle.
    1. There was an exclusive reliance on heavy infantry.
    2. Hoplite warfare placed a premium on direct frontal assault. This limited the damage done by war but created fearsome contests on the battlefield.

3. From this raw material, the Greeks constructed a model of warfare that, for the first time in history, made the pitched battle the only valued form of engagement.
  4. These features are unique to Greece and are not found in other cultures' modes of fighting.
  5. Finally, this Greek way of war is a legacy we are living with in today's military culture in the West.
  6. This view, therefore, represents hoplite warfare as a peculiar institution, a unique development of Greek conditions that casts its shadow down to the present.
- B.** Despite its attractive simplicity, the standard model has some severe weaknesses.
1. Some of the main problems we shall review at the end of the course; here, it is sufficient to note the issue of evidence.
  2. The standard model is undermined by a very serious problem: the lack of contemporary sources for Archaic battles.
  3. Some of the main sources cited to support the standard model are ambiguous in their applicability.
  4. These difficulties with the evidence make the standard model much more questionable than it is often presented.

**Essential Reading:**

Hanson, *The Western Way of War*.

Sage, *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, pp. 18–35 for some (but by no means all) ancient literary evidence.

Van Wees, *Greek Warfare*, pp. 115–197.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Goldsworthy, “The *Othismos*, Myths and Heresies.”

Van Wees, *War and Violence in Ancient Greece*, especially pp. 125–232.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. If forced to choose, which of the various positions on the hoplite reform would you nominate as the most convincing? Why? What particular pieces of evidence are decisive in determining your decision?
2. Is the standard model of the Western way of war as invented by the Greeks convincing? If so, why? If not, why not?



## Lecture Ten

### The Battle of Marathon

**Scope:** Our first task is to establish the context of this historic and important confrontation. The rise of the Persian Empire, the Ionian revolt (499–494 B.C.), and the determination of Darius, Great King of Persia, to punish the Athenian involvement in the revolt form the backdrop to the battle. These events are briefly surveyed, as are the intentions of the Persians in striking against Athens: Were they aiming at a surgical, punitive strike, or did they want to establish a permanent foothold in Greece? Next, the ancient accounts of the battle, the main source being Herodotus, are summarized and their numerous interpretive difficulties outlined. Despite these problems, the importance of the battle is in no way diminished. Marathon saw Athens defended in the first major confrontation between Greek and Persian on the Hellenic mainland, and the forces of the Persian superpower were vanquished. Despite producing such a decisive result, the battle actually decided little in the geopolitical sphere and merely set the stage for the second, far more serious clash of Greek and Persian arms a decade later, which we will discuss in our next lecture.

### Outline

- I. Persian expansion to the shores of the Aegean provides the broad context for the Battle of Marathon, and the Ionian revolt of 499–494 B.C. is the immediate background to it.
  - A. The collapse of the Assyrian Empire in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century allowed the Persians to forge the largest land empire yet seen.
    - 1. The Persians have left us very little written information; most of their history has to be reconstructed from archaeology and the evidence of their enemies, the Greeks.
    - 2. The Assyrians had been laid low by a league of enemies, among them the Medes, one of whose vassal states was Persia.
    - 3. The Persians overthrew their Media masters, and Cyrus the Great (r. c. 559–530 B.C.) became the king of Persia and Media.
    - 4. Cyrus and his successors expanded the Persian realm in all directions, forging the largest land empire yet seen.
    - 5. The conquered Greek city-states in what is called Ionia were controlled by the installation of pro-Persian tyrants, answerable to a Persian governor.
    - 6. The Persian Empire was a huge, unified polity under the command of the Great King. The Persian army was an efficient and formidable fighting machine.

7. It is not exactly clear how this army functioned tactically in the field.
- B.** In 499 B.C., the Ionian Greeks rebelled against Persian rule. Only two mainland Greek states answered the Ionian call for help—and with grave consequences for themselves.
1. The causes and course of the Ionian revolt need not delay us.
  2. As help, Athens sent 20 ships and Eretria sent 5. The Athenians participated in the burning of the Persian satrapal seat at Sardis.
  3. After five major battles, four of which were won by the Persians, the revolt ended in defeat for the Ionians in 494 B.C.
  4. In 490 B.C., Darius sent an expedition against Athens and Eretria; whether his motives were entirely punitive or whether he entertained wider ambitions of conquest is unclear.
  5. The Persian force sailed across the Aegean, destroyed Eretria, and headed to Athens.
- II.** After destroying Eretria, the Persians landed in Attica at Marathon, where they were opposed by a force of Athenian hoplites. Stunningly, the outnumbered Athenians won.
- A.** The sources for the battle are confused, but the outline of its course is clear enough.
1. Our main source is Herodotus, but he can be supplemented by some other writers.
  2. When Eretria fell and the Persians were moving to Marathon, the Athenians sent for help to Sparta but received only cold comfort.
  3. At Athens, the hoplite army under Miltiades marched out to meet the Persians, who had landed at Marathon.
  4. The Athenians took up station at a sanctuary (*temenos*) of Herakles and were there joined by a small contingent of hoplites from the allied town of Plataea.
  5. There followed a stand-off while the Athenian generals debated what to do.
  6. Under Miltiades's command, the Athenians charged the Persian force and battle was joined.
- B.** The problems with this account are many.
1. Herodotus is perfunctory with details.
  2. Topographical details are unclear.
  3. Aspects of our ancient accounts are confusing or contradictory.
  4. There are puzzling aspects to both Persian and Athenian behavior as reported, such as why the Persians waited for the Athenians to attack, why the Athenians did not attack sooner, and why, during combat, the Persian breakthrough in the center did not secure a Persian victory.

- III. None of these problems diminishes the importance of Marathon in the history of Greece. Yet the battle itself was strategically indecisive in that it left Persians with unfinished business in the Greek peninsula.
- A. The aftermath of the battle saw the withdrawal of the Persians.
    - 1. After a lackluster attempt to take the city of Athens by stealth, the defeated Persians withdrew.
    - 2. The Spartans arrived.
    - 3. The Athenian dead were cremated and entombed on the battlefield, a signal honor in Greek times.
    - 4. Miltiades became a hero, but his success was short-lived.
    - 5. The battle took on legendary proportions within decades.
  - B. The importance of Marathon has to be seen in the right perspective.
    - 1. It demonstrated, in shocking fashion, the effectiveness of hoplite phalanxes against Persian arms.
    - 2. In terms of tactical decision, the outcome was nothing less than sensational.
    - 3. Too much should not be made of how this great victory was achieved, however.
    - 4. If we take a historical long view, the battle's outcome was of immense importance.
    - 5. Strategically, however, Marathon decided very little.

**Essential Reading:**

Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 6.

Nepos, *Miltiades*.

Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*, 1.32.

Green, *The Greco-Persian Wars*, pp. 3–40.

Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece*, pp. 1–80.

Lloyd, *Marathon: The Crucial Battle That Created Western Democracy*.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Gabriel and Boose, *The Great Battles of Antiquity*, pp. 138–150.

Hammond, “The Campaign and Battle of Marathon.”

Raaflaub and Rosenstein, *War and Society*, pp. 105–128.

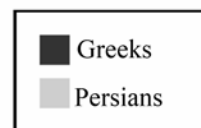
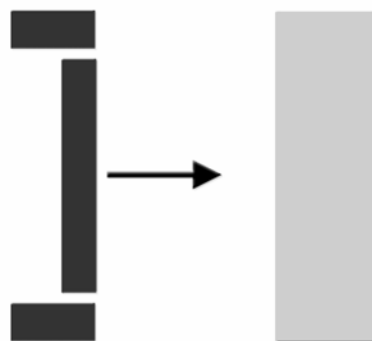
**Questions to Consider:**

- 1. Was the clash of Greek and Persian arms on the Greek mainland inevitable? If so, why?
- 2. Do the problems with the sources make incomprehensible this battle's course? Outline the five most likely outcomes that, in your view, would have followed a Persian victory.

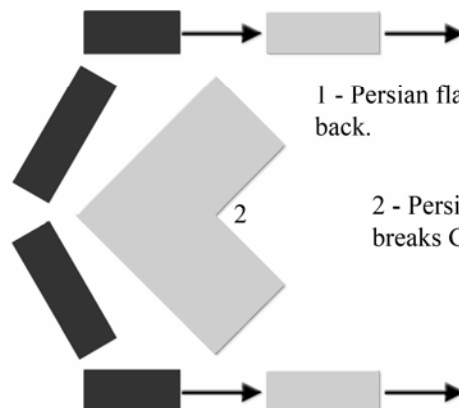
# **The Battle of Marathon (490 B.C.)**

**A**

Greeks advance  
on Persians.



**B**



1 - Persian flanks are pushed  
back.

2 - Persian center  
breaks Greek center.

**C**



Greeks flank Persian  
forces and destroy them  
by attacking from 3 sides.

## Lecture Eleven

### The Battle of Thermopylae

**Scope:** The events leading up to this dramatic confrontation are reviewed and the battle itself is examined. Xerxes, son of Darius I, had launched a full-scale land-and-sea invasion of the Greek mainland with an army so large that it dismayed the Greeks. The advent of this Persian host forced most Greek states in its path to surrender, or *medize*, given that none could seriously contemplate standing up to it. Yet a handful of Greek *poleis* in central Greece and the Peloponnese, led by Athens and Sparta, did just that. Facing insurmountable odds, a Spartan contingent of 300 warriors led by one of their two kings, along with allied troops, was charged with stopping the Persian invader at the narrow pass of Thermopylae, while the Greek armies mustered in the rear. The battle ended in a Greek defeat, following betrayal by a local with topographical knowledge. The Battle of Thermopylae can be viewed as the first in a great cultural tradition: the *Glorious Defeat*. The essence of this tradition is that a military defeat be converted into a moral victory, most commonly by claims that it manifests admirable national, cultural, or ethnic qualities.

### Outline

- I. In the period between the two Persian assaults on the Greek mainland (490–480 B.C.), two events are particularly noteworthy.
  - A. At Athens, the leader Themistocles grew in prominence and oversaw the construction of a formidable Athenian navy.
    - 1. Themistocles, one of the 10 generals at Marathon, emerged as a man of energy and vision following the death of Miltiades.
    - 2. He had been instrumental in convincing the Athenians to make providential use of metal deposits at Laurium.
    - 3. Athens became the major naval power in Greece in the decade between the wars, equipped with a fleet of the most modern ships.
    - 4. Otherwise, so far as our poor evidence allows us to see, life in Greece continued as it always had done in the decade between the Persian invasions.
  - B. In 486 B.C., Darius died and the Persian crown passed to his son, Xerxes. He began preparing for a major assault on Greece to avenge Marathon.
    - 1. Darius had prepared to invade Greece again, but preparations were not complete when he died.
    - 2. Xerxes's preparations for the invasion of Greece were delayed by his subjection of Egypt.

3. Herodotus presents the Persian force as ethnically diverse in composition and immense in scale.
  4. Messengers and mighty works preceded the Great King's arrival in Greece.
  5. Two shocking incidents illustrate the despotic nature of Xerxes's character and what Greece could expect from their new master, should he win.
- II.** The resisting Greeks decided to make an effort to stop the Persians before they reached central Greece and the Peloponnese. Thermopylae was selected as the site of the stand. After a three-day battle, the Persians emerged victorious.
- A.** Many Greek states medized (went over to the Persians). After consulting oracles, the defiant Greek states held a congress and settled on blocking the Persian advance at Thermopylae.
1. The size of the Persian host ensured that Xerxes's messengers demanding submission met with great success.
  2. An oracle from Delphi offered cold comfort to Athens until Themistocles came up with a brighter interpretation of its meaning.
  3. In the face of the threat, internal truces were agreed upon and messengers dispatched to unaligned Greek states.
  4. A congress was held at the Isthmus of Corinth, and an important strategic decision was made.
  5. After the Greeks had taken up position at Thermopylae, with their fleet at Artemisium, they awaited the arrival of the invasion force.
- B.** The fight at Thermopylae was intense and lasted three days; it ended in betrayal and death for all remaining Greek defenders.
1. Herodotus provides more detail for this battle than for Marathon.
  2. The charge of the small force under the Spartan king Leonidas is not immediately obvious.
  3. Xerxes drew near, camped outside the pass, and scouted the Greek position.
  4. With Xerxes watching from a throne set up on the heights over the pass, the battle commenced and raged for two full days without result for the Persians.
  5. The details of the combat are passed over in relative silence by Herodotus, but it must have been ferocious.
  6. Xerxes got his break when a local betrayed to him a mountain path that led down behind the Greek position.
  7. Despite fighting like madmen, the Greeks finally succumbed.
  8. Meanwhile, off Cape Artemisium, the Greek fleet fought three indecisive engagements with the Persian.
- III.** Thermopylae, though a blow to the Greek war effort, stands as the first in a great cultural tradition of the Glorious Defeat.

- A. Thermopylae was a serious blow to the Greek war effort; for the Athenians, it marked the certainty of their city's demise.
  - 1. The fall of Thermopylae allowed the Persians free rein in central Greece, which lay open to the invader.
  - 2. Athens was evacuated, in all likelihood before and during the Thermopylae campaign.
  - 3. With an uncertain future, with Athens abandoned to the barbarian, the Greeks awaited the Persian arrival on their doorstep.
- B. Once the war had been won, Thermopylae was quickly transformed into a Glorious Defeat, the first in a long tradition of romanticized military disasters.
  - 1. The Glorious Defeat reinterprets what is really an abject military disaster into something noble and valuable.
  - 2. There are several elements of a Glorious Defeat narrative, some of them optional.
  - 3. In this way, the actual circumstances of a Glorious Defeat are transformed into a moral victory that shows up the nobility of the defeated over the baseness of the supposed winners.
  - 4. The main elements of the Glorious Defeat were established in the Battle of Thermopylae.

**Essential Reading:**

Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 11.1–11.

Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 7.

Green, *The Greco-Persian Wars*, pp. 109–149.

Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece*, pp. 81–150.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Cartledge, *The Spartans*.

Clough, “Loyalty and Liberty.”

Pressfield, *Gates of Fire* (a novel).

Strauss, *The Battle of Salamis*, pp. 11–89.

**Questions to Consider:**

- 1. What were the major differences between Xerxes's and Darius's assaults on Greece? Was the intent of each manifestly different? On what evidence do you rest your assessment?
- 2. Reanalyze the Battle of Thermopylae in light of the Glorious Defeat tradition. What other examples of the tradition, not mentioned in the lecture, can you think of? What elements of the tradition are present or

absent in the examples you have chosen, and how do you account for these differences?



## Lecture Twelve

### Naval Warfare and the Battle of Salamis

**Scope:** Thus far, we have focused exclusively on land warfare. However, at least since the later Bronze Age, naval operations had also been a part of ancient military practice in the Mediterranean. We briefly survey naval developments in the region up to the emergence of the *trireme* in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The vital statistics of that unique and successful ship are then examined, with particular attention paid to the disposition of the oarsmen and the classic maneuvers of the *diekplous* and *periplous*. After a brief consideration of the imputed connection between naval power and democracy at Athens, we return to the course of the Persian Wars and the Battle of Salamis (September 480 B.C.). The various sources for these major engagements are examined, and problems of interpretation are outlined. We then address some of the difficulties surrounding the Battle of Salamis, survey the events of the battle, and assess its importance. The lecture ends with a short account of the Battle of Plataea (479 B.C.), the land engagement that finally denied any hope of Persian victory against Greece.

### Outline

- I. Naval warfare had been a part of military operations from early in the history of the Mediterranean basin.
  - A. Egyptians conducted naval operations, though not on a huge scale.
    - 1. The Old Kingdom tomb of Weni records a joint land-sea assault against Sand-Dwellers.
    - 2. Ramesses III's great fights with the Sea Peoples occurred partly on the sea.
    - 3. So far as we can tell, Egyptian naval capabilities were very limited.
  - B. In the Near East, naval warfare was minimally practiced, but the Phoenicians were regarded as the masters of the art.
    - 1. The Assyrians used boats and ships in campaigns up and down rivers, in marsh lands, and across rivers.
    - 2. Yet the Assyrian palaces do provide an early depiction of a warship with a ramming beak.
    - 3. The Persians employed the Phoenicians and Ionian Greeks more aggressively.
  - C. The Greeks were a maritime people, long accustomed to naval warfare.
    - 1. Minoan wall paintings show ships and, apparently, a sea battle.
    - 2. According to the Greek traditions of the Trojan War, Bronze Age Greece could muster large fleets.

3. Dipylon pots show naval actions.
  4. Sometime toward the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, a new form of ship emerged, the *trireme*.
  5. Among Archaic and Classical Greek states, Athens emerged as the foremost naval power in the years following the first Persian attack.
- II.** The adoption of naval warfare in Athens has been linked to the appearance there of radical democracy in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. We briefly examine this issue.
- A.** Aside from foreign-policy matters, the adoption of naval power has been argued to have had major effects on domestic politics in Athens.
    1. The need for rowers lent to the poorest members of Athenian society an importance they had previously lacked. They gained power in the citizen-assembly as a result.
    2. This is the view of the “Old Oligarch,” an anonymous pamphlet highly critical of Athenian democracy and dated to the late 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
    3. The model, then, proposes that naval power and democracy were inherently linked at Athens, with the former undergirding the latter.
  - B.** As always, this model is not without its problems.
    1. First, it requires taking a critic of the democracy at Athens at his word.
    2. Study of how the Athenian navy was crewed and who rowed the ships does not support the model.
    3. Any inherent connection between naval power and democracy is belied by other powerful Greek naval states (Syracuse, Corinth, or Corcyra), which were not democratic in nature.
- III.** After Thermopylae, the Persians continued their advance and met the allied Greek fleet at Salamis. The engagement decided the fate of Greece.
- A.** The Greek position after Thermopylae was not good. It was not helped by sharp strategic differences within the Greek high command.
    1. Athens was evacuated, and the city was taken, plundered, and burned by the Persians. The allied fleet gathered at Salamis.
    2. Strategic divisions emerged between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians.
    3. Themistocles orchestrated a fight with the Persians by stubborn diplomacy and a ruse.
    4. It is clear that this account of the prebattle situation in Herodotus, particularly the debates, is deeply flawed.
  - B.** The Battle of Salamis took place in late September 480 B.C. and was a decisive Greek victory.

1. The details in our sources are sparse, and the battle's course is hard to reconstruct.
  2. One of the major problems is the deployment of the fleets in the straits.
  3. The key to the Greek success was confusion in the Persian fleet.
  4. The fighting itself must have been horrendous.
  5. The victory was a huge moral blow to the Persians, but its importance can be easily overstated.
  6. A recent interpretation of the battle as illustrative of Greek cultural superiority over the Persians is questionable.
- IV. The defeat at Salamis was not the end of the Persian effort. The land army was still unbeaten and remained in Greece under the command of Mardonius until spring 479 B.C.
- A. Mardonius remained with hand-picked troops in Boeotia over the winter of 480–479 B.C. The final battle took place at Plataea.
    1. Persian strategy was to seek a decisive engagement.
    2. The Persian host moved into the flatlands of Boeotia and awaited the Greeks there.
    3. The Greek army arrived and a standoff ensued.
    4. After some confused maneuvering by the Greeks, battle was joined and the Persians were crushed.
  - B. On the same day as Plataea, an allied Greek army defeated the Persians at Mycale in Ionia. The Persian designs on Greece were at an end; they were now on the defensive.

**Essential Reading:**

Aeschylus, *The Persians*.

Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 11.11–37.

Herodotus, *The Histories*, Books 8–9.

Plutarch, *Life of Themistocles*, *Life of Aristides*.

Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece*, pp. 198–261.

Strauss, *The Battle of Salamis*, pp. 93–252.

Van Wees, *Greek Warfare*, pp. 199–231.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Green, *The Greco-Persian Wars*, pp. 153–287.

Hanson, *Carnage and Culture*, pp. 27–59.

McGrail, *Boats of the World*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What relationship, if any, do you see between the development of land and naval warfare in the period prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.?
2. Which battle, Salamis or Plataea, do you regard as the most important in determining Greek victory in the Persian Wars? Why?

## Timeline

1 million–c. 10,000 B.C. ....	Paleolithic (Old Stone Age). Humans evolve. Sporadic conflicts take place amid low population density.
35,000–10,000 B.C. ....	Upper Paleolithic. <i>Homo sapiens</i> are fully evolved, but population density is low; sporadic conflicts are ongoing.
10,000–8,000 B.C. ....	Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age). Beginnings of agriculture take place.
12,000–10,000 B.C. ....	Jebel Sahaba burials in Sudan.
8,000–3,000 B.C. ....	Neolithic (New Stone Age). Agriculture and settled communities appear. Population increases, and chiefdoms and proto-states appear.
c. 7000 B.C. ....	Jericho (Israel) is equipped with large stone walls and tower.
c. 6500 B.C. ....	Çatal Hüyük settlement in Turkey shows signs of defensive thinking.
c. 6000–4000 B.C. ....	Cave paintings from Spain show warrior bands, “execution,” and “army of four versus army of three.”
c. 5350 B.C. ....	“Skull nests” arranged in cave at Ofnet, Germany.
3500–2700 B.C. ....	Predynastic periods in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Egypt is unified into a monarchic state c. 2900 B.C., and Sumer sees appearance of city-states (Uruk, Ur, and others).
c. 3100 B.C. ....	Fortress Palette in Egypt shows possible attacks on walled towns.
3000–2900 B.C. ....	Narmer Palette in Egypt shows the pharaoh smiting enemies and headless corpses.
c. 3000–2350 B.C. ....	Early Dynastic period of Sumer, usually divided into three subphases: Early Dynastic I (c. 3000–2750 B.C.), II (2750–2600 B.C.), and III (2600–2350 B.C.). Rulers compete for the august title “King of Kish.”

- c. 2700–2180 B.C. .... Old Kingdom Egypt. Exclusivist state ideology evolves, and sieges are depicted in tombs.
- c. 2600 B.C. .... Umma-Lagash border dispute starts. Relief from Girsu shows “POW execution.”
- c. 2500 B.C. .... Royal Standard of Ur depicts uniformly equipped infantry, war carts, combat, ruler, officers, and POWs.
- c. 2450 B.C. .... Eanatum, king of Lagash, battles Umma. Vulture Stela depicts war carts and massed infantry, and text records open-field battles.
- 2350–2100 B.C. .... Akkadian (Sargonid) Empire.
- c. 2350 B.C. .... Sargon of Akkad conquers all of Mesopotamia. Wars with Asiatics are attested in biography of Weni (Uni) in Egypt.
- c. 2250 B.C. .... Naram-Sin, grandson of Sargon, ruler of Akkadian Empire, is deified.
- 2180–2040 B.C. .... First Intermediate Period in Egypt; much intra-Egyptian warfare.
- c. 2000–1650 B.C. .... Middle Kingdom Egypt. Weapons inventory increases. Sophisticated fortifications are attested (for example, “Wall of the Ruler” and Buhen).
- 1960 B.C. .... The *Story of Sinuhe* tells of Egyptian-Asiatic relations.
- 1880 B.C. .... Stela of Khu-Sebek implies standing army and royal guard.
- c. 1800–1200 B.C. .... Hittite state/empire in Anatolia.
- c. 1660–1570 B.C. .... Second Intermediate Period in Egypt (a.k.a. Hyksos Invasion).
- c. 1600–1100 B.C. .... Height of Mycenaean civilization on mainland Greece.
- c. 1570–1070 B.C. .... New Kingdom Egypt. This is an aggressive, militaristic state with pharaoh as war leader, a state army of infantry, and chariotry used extensively.

c. 1479/68 B.C. ....	Battle of Megiddo (April or May): The Egyptians defeat the Asiatic coalition. The first example of battle narrative appears.
c. 1350–1100 B.C. ....	First Assyrian Empire (a.k.a. Middle Assyrian Period).
c. 1285/75 B.C. ....	Battle of Kadesh (May): Egyptians and Hittites fight to a stalemate.
c. 1200 B.C. ....	Trojan War.
c. 1100–800 B.C. ....	Dark Age in Greece.
c. 900–612 B.C. ....	The Neo-Assyrian Empire dominates the Near East.
853 B.C. ....	Battle of Karkar (Assyrians versus Syrians).
753 B.C. ....	Traditional date for the foundation of Rome.
c. 750–700 B.C. ....	Accepted date range for composition of Homer's <i>Iliad</i> and <i>Odyssey</i> .
714 B.C. ....	Sargon II's eighth campaign in Urartu.
701 B.C. ....	Sieges of Lachish and Jerusalem by Sennacherib.
c. 650 B.C. ....	Chigi Vase depicts warriors in hoplite equipment.
521–486 B.C. ....	Darius I, king of Persia.
499–494 B.C. ....	Ionian revolt against Persia.
490 B.C. ....	Battle of Marathon (September): Athenians defeat Persians.
486–465 B.C. ....	Xerxes, king of Persia.
480 B.C. ....	Battle of Thermopylae (August/September): The Persians defeat the Greeks, thus establishing the great cultural tradition of the Glorious Defeat. Battle of Salamis (September/October): The Greek fleet defeats the Persian fleet.
479 B.C. ....	Battle of Plataea (early summer): The Greeks defeat the Persians.
478–431 B.C. ....	Athenian dominance grows in the Aegean.
431–404 B.C. ....	Peloponnesian War between the Spartans and Athenians.

421 B.C. ....	The Peace of Nicias is signed: A ceasefire is called in the Peloponnesian War.
415–413 B.C. ....	The Athenian expedition to Sicily.
414 B.C. ....	The arrival of the Spartan Gylippus energizes Syracusan resistance.
413 B.C. ....	The second Athenian expedition arrives: The entire Athenian force on Sicily is annihilated.
406–367 B.C. ....	Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse, makes great strides in the development of siege warfare.
404–338 B.C. ....	Period of great instability in mainland Greece. Experimentation with traditional hoplite phalanx continues.
401–399 B.C. ....	Cyrus’s “march up-country” and the March of the Ten Thousand.
401 B.C. ....	Battle of Cunaxa (September): Artaxerxes wards off a challenge to his throne by Cyrus.
399–398 B.C. ....	Siege artillery (catapults) invented at Syracuse.
c. 380–304 B.C. ....	Romans adopt manipular formations sometime during this period.
371 B.C. ....	Battle of Leuctra: Epaminondas of Thebes experiments with hoplite phalanx and defeats the Spartans.
362 B.C. ....	(Second) Battle of Mantinea: Epaminondas of Thebes defeats Spartans and allies.
359–338 B.C. ....	Reign of Philip II, growth of Macedonian power.
356 B.C. ....	Birth of Alexander the Great (late July or October).
338 B.C. ....	Battle of Chaeronea: The era of the independent Greek city-state ends, and Greece is made subordinate to Macedonian interests.
336 B.C. ....	Philip II assassinated; Alexander succeeds to the Macedonian throne.



334 B.C.	Alexander invades Asia. Battle of the Granicus (summer): Alexander defeats the Persians.
333 B.C.	Battle of Issus: Alexander defeats the Persians, led by Darius III.
332 B.C.	Siege of Tyre: Alexander captures the city after a seven-month siege.
331 B.C.	Battle of Gaugamela (1 October): Alexander defeats the Persians, led by Darius III.
323 B.C.	Alexander dies in Babylon (10 June).
305–304 B.C.	Unprecedented complexity is displayed in the siege of Rhodes by Demetrius Poliorketes.
280–274 B.C.	Pyrrhic War in Italy and Sicily.
280 B.C.	Battle of Heraclea: Pyrrhus defeats Romans but suffers huge casualties.
279 B.C.	Battle of Asculum: The result is unclear.
275 B.C.	Battle of Beneventum: The Romans defeat Pyrrhus.
264–241 B.C.	First Punic War.
218–202 B.C.	Second Punic (Hannibalic) War.
218 B.C.	Battle of Trebia (December): The Carthaginians defeat the Romans.
217 B.C.	Battle of Lake Trasimene (June): The Carthaginians defeat the Romans.
216 B.C.	Battle of Cannae (2 August): The Carthaginians defeat the Romans.
215–204 B.C.	Hannibal is ineffective in Italy.
213–211 B.C.	Siege of Syracuse by the Romans.
208 B.C.	Battle of Baecula (Spain): Scipio defeats the Carthaginians.
206 B.C.	Battle of Ilipa (Spain): Scipio defeats the Carthaginians and ends the Punic Empire in Spain.
202 B.C.	Battle of Zama (October?): Scipio defeats Hannibal.

197 B.C. ....	Battle of Cynoscephalae (April/May): The Romans defeat the Macedonians.
190 B.C. ....	Battle of Magnesia-ad-Sipylum (December): The Romans defeat the Seleucids.
168 B.C. ....	Battle of Pydna (22 June): The Romans defeat the Macedonians.
133 B.C. ....	The Romans take the Spanish stronghold of Numantia.
107–100 B.C. ....	Period of so-called Marian reforms in the Roman army. They probably extended before and after Marius's era of prominence. The process of professionalization begins.
102–101 B.C. ....	Battles of Aquae Sextiae (102 B.C.) and Vercellae (101 B.C.): The Romans defeat the German invaders in the first major clash of German and Roman arms.
55 and 53 B.C. ....	Caesar takes Roman arms across the Rhine into Germany for the first time.
52 B.C. ....	Siege of Alesia (July–October?): Caesar captures the Gallic stronghold and ends the revolt of Vercingetorix.
49–45 B.C. ....	Caesar's civil wars.
48 B.C. ....	Siege of Dyrrhachium (January–July): Caesar is forced to withdraw from besieging Pompey's forces.
48 B.C. ....	Battle of Pharsalus (9 August): Caesar defeats Pompey in Greece.
47 B.C. ....	Battle of Zela (2 August): Caesar defeats the Pontic pretender Pharnaces in Turkey.
46 B.C. ....	Battle of Thapsus (6 April): Caesar defeats the Pompeians in North Africa.
45 B.C. ....	Battle of Munda (17 March): Caesar defeats the Pompeians in Spain.
27 B.C.–A.D. 14 ....	Augustus reforms the Roman army into a standing force of volunteers. The process of professionalization is completed.
12 B.C.–A.D. 9 ....	Roman efforts to conquer German territory between the Rhine and Elbe Rivers.

A.D. 9 .....	Battle of the Teutoburg Forest (September): Three Roman legions are ambushed and massacred by Germans under Arminius.
A.D. 66–70 .....	Great Jewish revolt in Judea.
A.D. 72–73 .....	Siege of Masada (November?–16 April): The Romans capture the last holdout of Jewish rebels on the shores of the Dead Sea.
A.D. 235–280 B.C. ....	“Third-century crisis” in the Roman Empire marries internal instability with increased pressure on the frontiers.
A.D. 251 .....	Battle of Abrittus (1 July): The Goths defeat the Romans; Emperor Decius is killed on the field.
A.D. 255–257 .....	The Goths cross the Danube and ravage the Balkans.
A.D. 262–269 .....	The Goths cross the Black Sea and ravage Asia Minor and Greece.
A.D. 306–337 .....	Constantine, building on earlier developments, divides the Roman army into field troops ( <i>comitatenses</i> ) and border- garrison troops ( <i>limitanei</i> ).
A.D. 376 .....	Tervingi and Greuthungi Goths cross into Roman Thrace.
A.D. 376–382 .....	The Gothic War in Thrace.
A.D. 378 .....	Battle of Adrianople (9 August): The Goths defeat the Romans and kill Emperor Valens.

## Glossary

**Achaemenid:** Title of dynasty that ruled the Persian Empire from Cyrus the Great (r. c. 559–530 B.C.) to Darius III (336–330 B.C.).

***Acies triplex*** (tripartite battle formation): The set formation of the Roman Republican army in battle; employed throughout most of Roman history, though with variations.

***Agema*:** Royal guard in the Macedonian army, usually handpicked from among the *hypaspists*.

**Alans:** Originally a steppe culture of the horse, the Alans settled along the north coast of the Black Sea. In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., they joined the Huns in visiting depredations on the Roman Empire.

**Allies (*socii*):** Nonlegionary troops, either Italian or foreign, who fought with Republican-era Roman legions. Commanded by their own leaders (if foreign) or Roman prefects (if Italian).

***Antilabe*:** The rim-grip of a hoplite's shield.

**Asiatics:** Contemptuous label applied by Egyptians to their northern opponents, no matter what their ethnicity.

**Assur:** Chief city and deity of the Assyrian state.

**Assyrian Royal Records/Archives:** Inscriptions carved on clay and stone objects glorifying the king's annual campaigns.

**Auxiliaries:** Noncitizen troops in the Roman imperial army. They served 25 years and were granted citizenship and a pension on discharge. Organized into cohorts of 500 or 1,000, they were often commanded by their own leaders or Roman prefects.

**Barbarization:** Term for the growing presence and prominence of Germanic peoples in the western Roman Empire during the Late Empire, particularly in the army.

***Casus belli*** (lit. "occasion for war"): Latin phrase for a reason for going to war.

**Cataphract:** A type of heavily armored cavalryman developed in the east. The fully developed cataphract and his mount were encased in mail, but earlier versions may have been less comprehensively protected.

**Center:** The central portion of an ancient battle line.

**Century:** A subunit of the Roman legion that was nominally 100 strong but actually comprised anywhere from 30 to 80 men. Their commanders were called *centurions*.

**Chariot:** Popular horse-drawn war vehicle in the Bronze Age Near East and Egypt. War carts drawn by donkeys are attested as early as 2500 B.C. at Ur in Sumeria, but true chariots appeared only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Adopted by the New Kingdom Egyptians, the chariot became one of the twin pillars of the Egyptian army, the other being infantry. Uncertainty prevails as to how the chariot was used tactically, but its horses and light frame argue strongly against shock impacts. It was principally used as a mobile firing platform. Its popularity declined in the Assyrian Period, but it was retained as a prestige, if ineffectual, arm of Eastern armies into the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. Caesar faced chariots at Zela in 47 B.C.

**Circumvallation/contravallation:** Processes in passive siege warfare whereby a besieged location is walled in to prevent the inhabitants from escaping or from gaining access to food and other resources from without. Technically, *contravallation* refers to siege works facing the besieged place and *circumvallation*, to siege works facing in the opposite direction, to block relief forces.

**Cohort:** Administrative, then tactical unit in the Roman army. Italian allies were organized into cohorts in the republic, and after Marius's reforms, the cohort of 480 men replaced the maniple as the legion's principal tactical unit.

**Comitatenses** (sing. *comitatensis*, "escort"): Field-army soldiers of the Later Empire, often commanded by emperors in person. Formerly, they were thought to be predominantly cavalry troops, but in reality, they were a mixture of both cavalry and infantry units. Field armies were stationed in the hinterland to address successful barbarian incursions, bring relief to besieged fortifications, and act as a block on internal unrest. The name derives from the *comitatus*, the Late-Imperial court and, thus, means "Soldiers of the Court."

**Companions:** Term used to denote favored units in the Macedonian army. There were Companion cavalry about 2,000 strong around the king, and the phalangites, 10,000 or more strong, were termed Foot Companions.

**Consul:** Chief annually elected magistrate in Republican Rome. Two were elected each year and held top powers in the political, judicial, and military spheres. They had the greatest *imperium* in the state.

**Contubernium** (pl. *contubernia*): A group of eight tent mates in the Roman legion.

**Dictator:** Extraordinary Roman magistracy instituted in crises, often, but not exclusively, military in nature.

**Diekplous:** Meaning "sailing through and out," this was a Greek naval maneuver with triremes in which the attackers sailed through an enemy formation between ships, then wheeled around to ram from the rear or the side.

**Dominate** (< *dominus*, "master"): The term sometimes applied to the autocratic system of rule founded by Diocletian and to the period of its operation (A.D.

284–476). The term is used chiefly to distinguish it from the Principate, as established by Augustus.

**Early Dynastic Period:** Name assigned to the early period of Sumerian history, c. 3000–2350 B.C. It was marked by independent city-states in competition, often of a military nature. It is usually divided into three subphases: Early Dynastic I, II, and III.

**Equites:** Roman term for cavalry and for a social class parallel to, but larger than, the senatorial order.

**Glacis:** The sloping lower section of a fortification wall, designed to deter sapping and battering.

**Hastati** (sing. *hastatus*, “spearman”): Along with *principes* and *triarii*, these troops made up the heavy infantry of the pre-Marian Roman legion. Deployed as 10 maniples, they fought in the first line of the *acies triplex*. Armed with a large shield (*scutum*), helmet, mail shirt or pectoral plate, and greaves, they carried a short Spanish sword and two javelins (*pila*).

**Hegemon** (“leader”): The position aspired to by large Greek city-states, such as Athens, Thebes, Sparta, or Corinth. The struggle for hegemony helped generate the Peloponnesian War and the subsequent instability in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

**Hellenistic Period/Kingdoms:** Name given to the period after Alexander the Great’s death in 323 B.C.; it ended in 30 B.C., the year when Ptolemaic Egypt fell to Rome. The kingdoms into which Alexander’s eastern empire divided and that existed in this period are termed *Hellenistic*.

**Homeric warfare:** Disputed style of combat portrayed in the Homeric poems, particularly the *Iliad*. Scholars disagree over its nature or even if the poems reflect a genuine style of warfare at all.

**Hoplite:** The Classical Greek warrior, emergent in 700–600 B.C. and dominant from c. 600–338 B.C. The hoplite was armed with a large, round shield; breastplate; bronze helmet with crest; and greaves. His offensive armament was an eight-foot spear and short sword. The word derives from *hopla*, which means “equipment”; the hoplite was an “equipped man.”

**Hyksos:** Asiatic rulers of Lower Egypt (that is, the Nile Delta) in the Second Intermediate Period. They were formerly thought to have introduced the chariot to Egyptian warfare but are no longer held to have done so.

**Hypaspists:** Elite unit of Macedonian infantry, usually 3,000 strong, that could fight in various styles, either with the Macedonian *sarissa*, as regular hoplites, or even as light-armed. They were usually stationed on the right flank of the main body of the phalanx.

**Immortals:** Elite unit of Persian royal guard that was always maintained at its strength of 10,000 and, hence, given its special name.

**Imperial Period:** Habitual designation for the period of Roman history from Augustus to the “fall” in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, thus covering the period 31 B.C.–A.D. 476.

**Imperium:** Originally, this term meant the “power of command” in a military context and was conferred on kings and, later, on consuls and praetors (and dictators). It was also used to denote the area over which the Romans had the power of command and, hence, came to mean “empire” in a territorial sense.

**Invest:** Term used to describe the process of laying siege to a place, as in “Caesar invested Alesia.”

**Kardaka (or cardaces):** Form of Persian infantry introduced in the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century, prior to Alexander’s invasion in 334 B.C. The equipment and fighting technique of the *kardaka* are disputed; some see them as a Persian version of hoplites; others as a sort of *peltast*; others as a purely Persian form of light infantry.

**King of Kish:** Ancient honorific title, of uncertain origin, that Sumerian rulers competed for in the Early Dynastic Period. It seems that it was earned by achieving a recognized military dominance in the region.

**Komarch:** Headman of a village (*kome*) in the Persian Empire.

**Legate** (*legatus*, pl. *legati*): Roman term for a man sent (< *legare*, “to send, commission”) to represent someone, either an individual or a community. In military terms, it could denote (as *legatus*) a commander of an Imperial-era legion or (as *legatus pro praetore*) a governor or commander of a larger body of troops, who was sent out as a representative of the emperor’s *imperium*.

**Legion:** The basic infantry unit of the Roman army. It varied in size over time, starting out at about 4,200 strong, raised to over 5,000 under the emperors, then reduced to 1,000 in the Later Empire.

**Light-armed:** Refers to any sort of unit (infantry or cavalry) that was lightly armored, if at all. Good examples are the Persian infantry, who were almost wholly unarmored, lacking helmets and carrying only wicker shields. Light-armed were often used as skirmishers, scouts, and support troops for cavalry.

**Limitanei** (sing. *limitaneus*, “that at the border”): Garrison troops of the Late Roman Empire (contrast with *comitatenses*) who occupied fixed, often fortified positions. They were less prestigious than the field armies.

**Lugal:** Sumerian word for a ruler, often rendered as “king” but originally meaning something like “boss man.”

**Macedonian phalanx:** Variation on the Classical Greek hoplite phalanx developed by Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. The Macedonian phalanx was deeper than the traditional version, with files 16 men deep. Phalangites

were armed with huge pikes (*sarissae*) so long that the points of the first five ranks projected out in front.

**Maniple:** Basic tactical unit of the pre-Marian Roman legion. It was comprised of two centuries of 60 men each, commanded by the centurion of the “front/first maniple” (*manipulus prior*).

**Marduk:** Patron god of Babylon, adopted by the Assyrians as one of the main divine protectors of their empire.

**Medize:** Greek verb used to denote the decision by some Greek city-states in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century to submit to Persian rule rather than to fight the Persian invader. In Greek parlance, “Mede” = “Persia,” so “medize” = “to go Persian.”

**Military horizon:** A concept developed by anthropologist H. H. Turney-High to demarcate primitive war from genuine war. The military horizon is a matter of social organization rather than weapons development.

**Mycenaean Greece:** The Bronze Age period of mainland Greek history, from the late third millennium B.C. to the end of the second. The Mycenaeans were discovered by Heinrich Schliemann in the 1870s and 1880s. Their relationship to the Homeric corpus is debated.

**Nome:** An administrative district in ancient Egypt, headed by a *nomarch*.

**Ostraca:** Potsherds with writing on them commonly used in ancient times for casting ballots.

**Othismos:** The “push” in hoplite warfare. It is variously interpreted as a mass shove of close-ordered hoplites against their opponents (rather like a rugby scrum), individual pushes by hoplites fighting in a more open-cast formation, or a figurative term for the to-and-fro of combat.

**Paean:** Greek religious song, often to Apollo, that was usually sung as armies advanced.

**Panoply:** A collective term for all the armored elements worn by a warrior (helmet, body armor, shield, and so on).

**Peltast:** A form of light-armed Greek soldier named after the light, scalloped shield (*pelte*) he carried. Offensive weaponry was comprised of javelins and a short sword. The *peltast*, possibly adapted from Thrace, became prominent in the Peloponnesian War and remained popular for several centuries afterward.

**Pentekonter:** An older form of Greek warship rowed by 50 men.

**Periplous:** Meaning “sailing around,” this was a Greek naval maneuver, ill-understood, in which the attacker sailed around enemy ships to seek advantageous ramming opportunities.

**Phalangite:** The term for a member of the Macedonian phalanx. He was armed with a small, round shield; helmet; breastplate; and possibly greaves. He carried



an 18- to 20-foot pike called the *sarissa* and was deployed in units of 250 men arrayed 16 deep.

**Phalanx:** The mass formation adopted by Greek hoplites. In Classical times, it was usually eight ranks deep and as wide as the army could afford. Men stood close together, although how close is debated. Later, attempts were made to deepen sections of the phalanx. Ultimately, it was transformed in the Macedonian phalanx.

**Pilum** (pl. *pila*): The lethal javelin of the Roman legionary, about six to seven feet long. The upper third was a long iron-barbed spike for greatest penetration. Two types are attested, a heavy and a light version. Legionaries probably launched them in volleys for maximum effect.

**Porpax:** The central armband of the hoplite shield through which the carrier thrust his forearm to grip the *antilabe* on the rim. In this way, the substantial weight of the hoplite shield (perhaps 20 pounds) was distributed along the warrior's forearm.

**Praetor:** Second-highest annually elected magistracy in Republican Rome. Originally assistants to the consuls, six were elected each year by 150 B.C., with two more added by Sulla. They carried out judicial, political, and military functions. They had *imperium* and, thus, could command troops.

**Praetorian Guard:** Originally a special detachment of soldiers who guarded the commanding officer's tent (*praetorium*) in a Roman army's camp, the term was adopted for the imperial guard of the emperor in Rome. Formed by Augustus and discreetly billeted in towns around Rome, they were barracked in a single camp on the outskirts of the city by Tiberius before A.D. 23. They numbered from 9,000–16,000 men, depending on the emperor's inclination. They played some role in imperial politics, although it has often been exaggerated, killing some emperors (such as Gaius [Caligula]) and elevating others (including Claudius, Otho, and Didius Julianus). Their commander, a prefect of equestrian status, could be a person of great influence, as was the case with Sejanus under Tiberius or Macrinus, who himself became emperor in A.D. 217–218. They were disbanded by Constantine in A.D. 312.

**Prefect** (< *praeficere* “to put in charge”): Roman term for a military officer of equestrian status, usually appointed to command allied or, later, auxiliary troops.

**Primitive war:** Term applied to war fought by simpler social orders (clans, bands, tribes, and chiefdoms). It is marked by low-intensity conflicts, indecisive engagements, and a lack of clear-cut objectives.

**Principate** (< *princeps*, “first citizen”): Term used to describe both the imperial system established by the Roman emperor Augustus and the period of its operation. Its start can be variously dated to anytime between the Battle of Actium (September of 31 B.C.), which saw Octavian established as the

undisputed master of the Roman world, and the First Constitutional Settlement (13 January 27 B.C.), which saw Octavian installed as Augustus, the first emperor.

***Principes*** (sing. *princeps*, “front ranker”): Along with *hastati* and *triarii*, these troops made up the heavy infantry of the pre-Marian Roman legion. Deployed as 10 maniples, they fought in the second line of the *acies triplex* and were armed identically to a *hastatus*.

***Promachoi*** (sing. *promachos*): A Greek term, found in Homer, for “fighters in front.” Its application in Homer is disputed: Does it denote a socially superior class of bronze-clad warriors, or just anyone who happens to be at the front when the poet’s eye shifts its focus in that direction? Later, it was used to describe the front ranks of the hoplite phalanx.

***Quincunx***: Latin designation for the five-side of a die. The term is applied by modern scholars to the deployment of the manipular legion in three lines of 10 maniples each, with the gaps between the maniples of each line covered by the maniples behind. Note, however, that it has no ancient attestation in this sense.

**Regal Period**: The period when kings ruled Rome, traditionally dated 753–509 B.C.

**Republican Period**: Traditionally dated 509–31 B.C., this period of oligarchic rule by senate and magistrates is often subdivided into the Early Republic (down to 264 B.C. and the First Punic War), Middle Republic (264–133 B.C.), and Late Republic (corresponding to the Roman Revolution, 133–31 B.C.).

**Romanization**: Modern historians’ term for the process of making previously uncivilized regions into Roman ones, although it can also be applied to the adaptation of urbanized cultures to the Roman way.

**Sacred band**: An elite unit of Theban hoplites, 300 strong (allegedly 150 pairs of homosexual lovers), who occasionally intruded in battle narratives of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, notably Leuctra (371 B.C.) and Chaeronea (338 B.C.). They were slaughtered by Philip at Chaeronea, and 254 of them probably lay buried under the enigmatic Lion of Chaeronea monument.

**Sapping**: In siege warfare, the process of undermining a fortification by tunneling underneath it or attacking the lower regions of its walls or towers.

***Sarissa***: The Macedonian pike, 18 to 20 feet long with a long iron head and heavy counterweight at the butt end. It was possibly first developed exclusively for cavalry but then used by infantry in the mass formation of the Macedonian phalanx. Some *sarissae* came in two halves that, like a pool cue, could be joined together with a metal sheath in the middle.

**Satrap**: governors of provinces (satrapies) in the Persian Empire. They were remarkably independent of the Great King.

**Scutum** (pl. *scuta*): A large Roman legionary shield, sharply curved and held in the middle by a single handle. Originally oval in shape, the *scutum* became rectangular under the empire and reverted to an oval, though flat, shape in the Late Empire.

**Servian reform**: A military-political reform traditionally attributed to King Servius Tullius in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. but of unclear date. It ascribed citizens to different classes and types of military equipment according to relative wealth.

**Spanish sword** (*gladius Hispaniensis*): A short cut-and-thrust weapon about three feet long adopted by Roman troops, probably during the First Punic War (264–241 B.C.). It was a lethal weapon that inflicted horrible penetrating and slashing wounds.

**Spara**: Large wicker shields used by Persians. They appear to have been set up as a wall in front of infantry formations.

**Stela** (pl. *stelae* or *stele*): A freestanding stone monument of no fixed dimensions inscribed with images and/or text. *Stelae* can mark graves or boundaries or commemorate particular persons or events.

**Tartanu**: An Assyrian term for field marshals, the highest military officers below the king himself.

**Triarii** (sing. *triarius*, “third-liner”): Along with *hastati* and *principes*, these troops made up the heavy infantry of the pre-Marian Roman legion. Deployed as 10 maniples, they fought in the third line of the *acies triplex*. They were armed like a *hastatus* or *princeps*, only with a spear (*hasta*) instead of the *pilum*.

**Tribune of the Soldiers, a.k.a. Military Tribune** (*tribunus militum*): A mid-level legionary staff officer in the Roman army of the republic (when tribunes were elected) and empire (when they were appointed). In the Late Imperial army, *tribune* denotes a more senior officer, of both cavalry and infantry units.

**Trireme**: A warship of uncertain origin (possibly Phoenician), developed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and adopted by the Greeks. It was propelled by three banks of rowers and carried a crew of 200.

**Turma** (pl. *turmae*): A 30-strong squadron of cavalry attached to a legion.

**Velites** (sing. *velites*, “quick”): The light-armed skirmishers assigned to the pre-Marian Roman legion. They were not organized into maniples but screened the formation of the Roman battle line and harassed the enemy with javelins.

**War elephants**: Introduced to the West after Alexander encountered them in India, they became a favorite weapon of the Hellenistic armies. The Romans used them briefly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. The elephants could be armored and fitted with a tower on their backs, from which missile troops rained javelins and arrows down on the enemy. But despite their fearsome appearance, they rarely proved effective on the field.

**Wings:** The two portions of an ancient battle line on either side of the center, usually referred to as the “left wing” and “right wing,” from the perspective of soldiers in the line.

## Biographical Notes

These notes are divided into two groups: (1) ancient authors and (2) historical figures. Note that these two categories are *not* mutually exclusive.

All names are listed by the form used in common English currency (for example, Pompey for Pompeius) and by whatever name they are best known (Caesar for Gaius Julius Caesar and Tiberius for Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus).

### Main Ancient Authors:

**Cassius Dio** (c. A.D. 164–230). Lucius Cassius Dio was a Greek senator from Asia Minor who composed an 80-book history of Rome, all of which survives, in full or summary (*epitome*) form. More useful for imperial than republican history, Dio is especially illuminating when addressing contemporary events under the Severans.

**Cicero** (3 January 106 B.C.–7 December 43 B.C.). Marcus Tullius Cicero, a “new man” from Arpinum, was a moderately successful politician but a master craftsman of Latin prose. His huge corpus of surviving writings includes letters, treatises, and speeches. All are historical sources of unparalleled usefulness.

**Diodorus Siculus** (fl. c. 60–30 B.C.). This Greek writer from Sicily wrote a universal history in 40 books, of which 15 survive intact. Diodorus focuses on Greek and Sicilian affairs down to the First Punic War (264–241 B.C.) and thereafter on Roman affairs. He is particularly useful for Philip II and the Hellenistic era.

**Dionysius of Halicarnassus** (fl. c. 30–10 B.C.). Dionysius was a teacher of rhetoric who arrived in Rome at the beginning of Augustus’s reign and published his 20-book *Roman Antiquities* about 20 years later. The work covered Roman history from earliest times to the outbreak of the First Punic War, and the first 11 books have survived intact, taking the story down to 441 B.C., with fragments of the rest also known. As such, Dionysius’s work is a valuable resource for the early history of Rome. Rather like Livy, however, Dionysius’s work often reads like a eulogy of Roman virtues, as manifested among “the ancestors” (*maiores*).

**Herodotus** (fl. c. 450–400 B.C.). Herodotus is called the “Father of History” or the “Father of Lies,” depending on one’s viewpoint. He was the first writer to work out a theory of causality in human affairs. He wrote, in eight books, a history of Greece’s wars with Persia in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. His method was to interview (Greek) survivors personally. His presentation is conversational and discursive, with many digressions on matters he found interesting: ethnography, geography, topography, cultural history, and so on.

**Homer** (fl. c. 750 B.C.). Traditionally, Homer was a single blind poet who wrote the two epic poems that stand as the foundation stones of Greek

civilization, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Modern scholars dispute almost everything about Homer, right down to whether he existed. The consensus today is that two Homers wrote each of the poems, perhaps 30–50 years apart in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century. Both poems take as their subject matter events surrounding the Trojan War (c. 1200 B.C.), but both clearly draw on and refer to a tradition about this conflict that stood independent of their composition.

**Livy** (59 B.C.–A.D. 17). Titus Livius hailed from Patavium in Cisalpine Gaul and benefited from the explosion of literary culture in Augustan Rome. He composed a 142-book history of Rome called “*From the City’s Founding*” (*Ab Urbe Condita*), of which all but 2 books survive in full or summary form (the so-called *Periochae*). Taking Rome’s history to 9 B.C., Livy’s work is marred by overt moralization and patriotism.

**Plutarch** (c. A.D. 50–c. 120). L. Mestrius Plutarchus is an excellent example of the truly Greco-Roman culture that the Romans forged in the imperial period. Born and raised in Chaeronea in central Greece, he traveled widely in the empire, including to Egypt and Rome, but lived most of his life in Greece. Yet he considered himself “Roman.” His voluminous writings include his very useful series of *Parallel Lives* of famous Greek and Roman historical figures. He also wrote rhetorical and philosophical treatises, dialogues, and antiquarian investigations (“Greek Questions” and “Roman Questions”), mostly of a religious bent. Plutarch spent his last 30 years as a priest at Delphi in Greece. His biographies constitute his most useful contributions to this course.

**Polybius** (c. 200–118 B.C.). Polybius, son of Lycortas, was a prominent Greek politician in the Achaean League; after Pydna in 168 B.C., he was denounced to the Romans and interned as a hostage in Italy. Here, he was befriended by the Scipiones and wrote 40 books of *Histories* to document and explain Rome’s rapid rise to world dominion. Only 5 books survive intact; most others are known from excerpts, fragments, and summaries. Polybius, our earliest extant source for Roman history, provides a unique outsider’s view on the Middle Republic and, as such, can be used with great profit.

**Suetonius** (c. A.D. 70–130). Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus hailed from an equestrian background, probably from North Africa. He was a friend of Pliny the Younger and became a secretary in the imperial service of Hadrian but was fired in c. 120. Among other things, he wrote the biographies of *The Twelve Caesars* (Julius Caesar–Domitian), which are racy and entertaining to read but not the most reliable as historical sources.

**Tacitus** (c. A.D. 56–120). So little is known of Cornelius Tacitus’s life that his *praenomen* is not recoverable with any certainty (it may have been Publius or Gaius). He had a successful senatorial career under the tyrant Domitian and reached the governorship of Asia under Trajan. He wrote several monographs, but his masterpiece was the *Annals*, covering the reigns of the Julio-Claudian emperors; he also wrote the *Histories*, describing the civil wars of A.D. 69 and the Flavian dynasty. Neither work survives intact. Tacitus wrote in a clipped,

acerbic style and, possessed of an acute intelligence and republican inclinations, presents a dark and gloomy picture of life under the emperors.

**Thucydides** (c. 455–400? B.C.). Thucydides was an Athenian statesman and general, exiled after failure to protect Amphipolis from Spartan assault in 424 B.C. He wrote a history of the Peloponnesian War between power blocs led by Athens and Sparta respectively (431–404 B.C.). Considered more “scientific” in his approach than his contemporary Herodotus, his presentation is coldly factual but no less biased in its own way. His research methods differed in no significant way from those of Herodotus.

**Velleius Paterculus** (c. 20 B.C.–A.D. 31 or later). This provincial of equestrian and, later, senatorial status served in the Roman army under the later emperor Tiberius in A.D. 4–12. His *Compendium of History* in two books was published in A.D. 30 or early in 31 and is widely excoriated for its sycophantic praise of Tiberius (emperor at the time of publication) and poor Latinity. The date of his death cannot be established with any certainty.

**Xenophon** (c. 430–352? B.C.). Xenophon was an Athenian aristocrat who took part in and wrote about the expedition of the Ten Thousand (401–399 B.C.) and was elected one of its new leaders when the generals were treacherously murdered by the Persians during a parley. He was exiled from Athens and spent the rest of his life as a guest of Sparta and then of Corinth. Xenophon wrote other philosophical, biographical, and historical works, including the *Hellenica*, which documents Greek troubles in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, prior to the emergence of Philip II of Macedon as the dominant force in Greek affairs. The date of his death cannot be established with any certainty.

#### **Historical Figures:**

**Alcibiades** (451–403 B.C.). An immensely energetic Athenian aristocrat, Alcibiades was raised by Pericles and befriended by Socrates. He was an open advocate of Athenian imperial power and an implacable enemy of Sparta. He was largely responsible for urging the disastrous expedition to Sicily in 415–413 B.C., which he initially commanded with Nicias and Lamachus. Recalled to face charges of sacrilege as the expedition arrived in Sicily, he jumped ship and became an exile at Sparta and, ultimately, Persia. He was murdered by the so-called Thirty Tyrants, sponsored by Sparta.

**Alexander III of Macedon (“The Great”)** (356–323 B.C.). One of the towering giants of history, Alexander’s life was as short as it was action packed. The son of Philip II’s fourth wife, Olympias, he commanded the Macedonian cavalry at the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 B.C. After his father’s assassination in 336 B.C.—in which he may have had a hand—he became king and turned his full attention to the anti-Persian crusade Philip had been planning when he was killed. He crossed into Asia in 334 B.C., never to return. After 11 years of almost relentless campaigning that saw him enthroned as pharaoh in Egypt and

Great King over Persia, his armies revolted in the Punjab, and he was forced to return to Babylon, where he died of a fever on 10 June 323 B.C., aged 32.

**Antiochus III of Syria (“The Great”)** (c. 242–187 B.C.): Antiochus came to the throne of the Seleucid Hellenistic Kingdom in Syria in 223 B.C. and reigned as an energetic military commander in nearly every corner of his vast realm. He earned Roman suspicion by hosting the exiled Hannibal from 195 B.C. onward, and in 192 B.C., he foolishly answered a call to “liberate the Greeks” from the Romans. He was soundly defeated in the Balkans, then chased by the legions into Asia Minor (the first time the Romans crossed into Asia). At Magnesia-ad-Sipylum in 190 B.C., his army was defeated by the Roman legions (his navy, shortly thereafter), and he was forced to sign a humiliating peace in 188 B.C. He died, suitably enough, on campaign the following year.

**Arminius** (c. 19 B.C.–A.D. 21). Arminius was a chief of the Cherusci tribe, based along the Weber River in north central Germany. As a young man, he served as a Roman auxiliary officer, earned Roman citizenship on discharge, and was promoted to equestrian status. He returned to his people, however, and organized their resistance to Roman incursions then ongoing under Augustus. He was the architect of the ambush in the Teutoburg Forest in A.D. 9 that saw three full Roman legions massacred—the most crushing defeat ever inflicted by native troops on a disciplined army. Arminius earned great renown for this feat. When the emperor Tiberius was offered a chance to have him poisoned in A.D. 19, he refused on grounds of honor, but fractious tribal politics claimed Arminius’s life in A.D. 21.

**Artaxerxes II** (404–358 B.C.). Artaxerxes was the Great King of Persia, successor to his father, Darius II. In 401 B.C., his rule was challenged by his brother, Cyrus, then satrap of western Asia, at the Battle of Cunaxa, near Babylon. Cyrus was defeated and perished in the battle, but a corps of 13,000 Greek mercenaries he had hired remained undefeated. Artaxerxes, through representatives, threatened and negotiated with the mercenaries and finally chased them out of his realm. From this shaky beginning, the rule of Artaxerxes went to be one of the longest in Achaemenid history.

**Augustus, Emperor Caesar** (23 September 63 B.C.–19 August A.D. 14). Arguably the single most important and influential man in Roman history, he was born Gaius Octavius, of humble stock. His great-uncle, however, was Julius Caesar, in whose will he was adopted in 44 B.C. Despite being unknown and inexperienced, Octavius, now Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (Octavian), embarked on a bold and dangerous political career that showed daring and ruthlessness in equal measure. Along with Antony and Lepidus, he became of a member of the Second Triumvirate, a legally instituted board of military dictators, and competed with Mark Antony and the Liberators for the leadership of the Roman world. By 31 B.C., he had secured this goal and, renamed Emperor Caesar Augustus in 27 B.C., he became Rome’s first emperor, ushering in the Imperial Age and establishing the Principate, which remained



the institutional and administrative basis for the Roman Empire for 300 years. He died peacefully at a villa in Nola on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the month that bore his name.

**Caesar, Gaius Julius** (100 B.C.–15 March 44 B.C.). Gaius Julius Caesar was born into an ancient but eclipsed patrician family. Possessed of astonishing intellectual talents and great charisma, he rose through the ranks and became Rome's most powerful citizen. In 60 B.C., he joined former rivals Pompey and Crassus to form the so-called First Triumvirate, an informal agreement that the three work together. His consulship of 59 B.C. was marred by violence and intimidation. From 58–49 B.C., he conquered all of Gaul for Rome. During this time, the Triumvirate broke apart, and Pompey and Caesar were left to fight it out. An enormous civil war (49–45 B.C.), our main focus in this course, saw Caesar victorious on all fronts. Ensconced in the dictatorship and displaying no tact in the exercise of power, Caesar died at the hands of a conspiracy of noblemen calling themselves the Liberators.

**Clearchus** (c. 450–401 B.C.). This Spartan mercenary commander was contracted by Cyrus to command a huge force of hoplites to press his claim on the Persian throne. Xenophon, who knew Clearchus well, portrays him as rather dour but steadfast and courageous. Having led his men to victory at Cunaxa but then finding himself on the losing side, Clearchus was murdered by the Persians during a parley in 401 B.C.

**Cyrus the Great** (r. 559–530 B.C.). After the Persians overthrew their Media masters, Cyrus became king of Persia and Media. He established the Achaemenid dynasty, and he and his successors forged the largest land empire yet seen. He was killed in action while campaigning in the eastern part of his realm.

**Cyrus (the Younger)** (?–401 B.C.). Brother of Artaxerxes II and satrap at Sardis in Asia Minor, Cyrus resented his brother's accession to the throne and his near-execution on suspicion of plotting. He raised a large army, including some 13,000 Greek mercenaries, and invaded the Persian heartland in 401 B.C. to press his claim. He perished at the Battle of Cunaxa. The date of his birth cannot be firmly fixed, but he appears young and energetic in Xenophon's *Anabasis*.

**Darius I** (r. 521–486 B.C.). This Great King of Persia usurped the throne in 521 B.C. and, thus, became the successor to Cambyzes (r. 530–522 B.C.). Aside from various acts of consolidation, he was an active military commander and launched major campaigns to the east and west of the Persian heartland. His Scythian campaign saw him conquer Thrace. The Greek cities of Ionia (on the western shores of Asia Minor) revolted in 499 B.C., calling on the mainland Greeks for help. Only Athens and Eretria responded by sending small forces. Once the revolt was crushed in 494 B.C., Darius launched a seaborne attack on the upstart Greek mainlanders, thus initiating the Persian Wars. His expeditionary force met with unexpected and crushing defeat at the hands of the

Athenians at Marathon in 490 B.C. Darius died before being in a position to launch another expedition against the Greeks, but his son Xerxes attempted a general conquest of the peninsula in 480–479 B.C.

**Darius III** (r. 336–330 B.C.). Darius III was the last king of Achaemenid Persia. In the same year he came to the throne, his nemesis Alexander acceded in Macedon. Darius's reign, therefore, was dominated by his (unsuccessful) attempts to ward off his brilliant opponent. After failing to stop Alexander at the Issus in 333 B.C., he lost control of the Mediterranean regions of his realm. Retiring east, he raised a huge royal army and confronted Alexander again at Gaugamela in 331 B.C. on ground of his own choosing. He still lost. Fleeing east, he was treacherously murdered by members of his entourage the following year as the Macedonian pursuit closed in. Alexander is said to have wept over his body.

**Demetrius I of Macedon (“Poliorketes”)** (336–283 B.C.). Son of one of Alexander's leading generals, Demetrius gained fame for his ability at sieges and, thus, was named “Taker of Cities” (*Poliorketes*). His most monumental efforts went into the unsuccessful siege of Rhodes in 305–304 B.C., which saw the construction of the most monstrous siege engine on record from the ancient world, the nine-story Helepolis (“City-Destroyer”), which stood 150 feet high and moved on eight massive wheels. The siege ended in negotiated settlement. Demetrius went on to rule Macedon for seven years (294–287 B.C.). After other failed military adventures, he ended his days as a captive of his rival Seleucus of Syria, where he died a drunk.

**Eanatum I** (c. 2450 B.C.). Ruler of Lagash in Sumer, Eanatum fought two battles with the neighboring city-state of Umma over disputed borderlands called the Gu'eden. In the second battle, he was wounded by an arrow. These battles, recorded on the Vulture Stela, which is now in the Louvre, constitute our earliest written records of organized warfare.

**Eleazar ben Yair** (died the night of 15–16 April A.D. 73). Eleazar ben Yair was the leader of a Jewish rebel group called *sicarii* (“knifemen”) who occupied the stronghold of Masada during the Jewish revolt of A.D. 66–70. After resisting a determined Roman siege of several months' duration, ben Yair succeeded in persuading his command, which included women and children, to commit suicide rather than fall into Roman hands alive.

**Epaminondas** (died 362 B.C.). With the aid of his compatriot Pelopidas, this brilliant Theban general experimented with the way the hoplite phalanx was deployed to gain major victories over the Spartans at Leuctra in 371 B.C. and Mantinea in 362 B.C. At the latter battle, he was killed at the very moment of victory.

**Fabius Maximus Verrecosus (“Cunctator”), Q.** (c. 270–203 B.C.). This scion of a prominent Roman house was consul in 233 and 228 B.C. and censor in 230 B.C. After the defeat by Hannibal at Lake Trasimene in 217 B.C., he was made

dictator and instituted a strategy of “delaying” (hence the name *Cunctator*, “the Delayer”) by shadowing Hannibal’s movements and avoiding direct engagement. The strategy was not popular and was abandoned in 216 B.C., with disastrous results at Cannae that year. Fabius’s policy was rehabilitated, and as consul in 215, 214, and 209 B.C., he oversaw some successes in the field. He opposed the aggressive plan of Scipio to invade Africa but lost the argument. He did not live to see Hannibal’s final defeat by Scipio in 202 B.C.

**Flaminius, T. Quinctius** (c. 229–174 B.C.): This Roman aristocrat, general, and diplomat was elected consul for 198 B.C. to prosecute the Second Macedonian War against Philip V, which had been dragging on since 200 B.C. Flaminius proved an energetic commander and successfully brought the war to a conclusion with a victory at the Battle of Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C. The following year, he proclaimed the freedom of the Greeks in Europe and thereby caused a misunderstanding that plagued Greco-Roman relations for the next 50 years. He remained active in Roman eastern diplomacy for the rest of the 190s and 180s, after which he faded into obscurity.

**Flaminius, C.** (c. 265–217 B.C.). Flaminius was a Roman politician and general whose early career is shrouded in uncertainty but was reportedly marked by a strikingly populist stance with regard to the wedge issue of land distribution. He was elected consul for 223 B.C. and fought a battle against the Gauls of the Po Valley but was then forced to abdicate amidst claims of unfavorable prodigies. Elected to the consulship a second time for 217 B.C., he led his forces into Hannibal’s ambush at Lake Trasimene and perished with his army in the ensuing massacre.

**Fritigern** (died c. A.D. 380). Gothic leader of the Tervingi group, Fritigern orchestrated the migration into the Roman Empire in A.D. 376, as his people sought refuge from the oncoming Huns. Harsh treatment by local Roman commanders and a failed attempt to capture him led Fritigern to instigate a revolt, which led to the Gothic War of A.D. 376–382. His greatest achievement was the decisive victory at Adrianople, at which the eastern emperor Valens was killed. Fritigern was not heard from again after A.D. 380, suggesting either that he was eclipsed by political rivals or dead by that date.

**Gratian** (A.D. 359–383). Nominated co-emperor of the west by his father, Valentinian I, at the age of 8 in A.D. 367, Gratian became sole ruler of the west on the latter’s death in A.D. 375. A Christian, he accelerated the proscription of pagan cults, removing the celebrated statue of Victory from the senate house, for instance. He was an able general and dealt effectively with barbarian threats along the Rhine-Danube frontier. He was summoned to aid his uncle Valens against Fritigern’s Goths in A.D. 378, but the disaster at Adrianople took place before he could bring his forces to bear. He was overthrown and murdered in A.D. 383.

**Hannibal** (247–182 B.C.): Hannibal was a Carthaginian general who almost broke the back of Roman power in Italy during the Second Punic War. He

hailed from a prominent and militant Carthaginian family, the Barcids. Having commanded Punic forces in Spain in 221–219 B.C., Hannibal invaded Italy in 218 and inflicted three crushing defeats on the Romans at Trebia, Trasimene, and Cannae. Defeated at Zama in North Africa in 202 B.C., he was hounded by the Romans until he committed suicide in 182 B.C.

**Hezekiah** (r. 726–697 B.C.). The 13<sup>th</sup> king of Judah and son of Ahaz, Hezekiah rejected idolatry and mandated worship of Yahweh. He watched as his northern neighbor, the Kingdom of Israel, succumbed to Assyrian rule and sought to block further Assyrian expansion by an alliance with Egypt. This activity made his lands one of the targets of Sennacherib's third campaign in 701 B.C. Although successful at Lachish, Sennacherib's army failed to take Jerusalem. (It is possible the Assyrians were bought off.) Judah appears to have been a vassal state of Assyria thereafter.

**Miltiades** (c. 550–489 B.C.). An Athenian aristocrat, politician, and general, Miltiades was chief magistrate (*archon*) in Athens in 524 B.C. He engaged in military and political adventures in the Chersonese and on Lemnos but returned to Athens and the position of general (*strategos*) in 490/89 B.C. He was later credited, perhaps exaggeratedly, with orchestrating the Athenian victory at Marathon in 490 B.C. After leading a failed attack on Paros, he was put on trial and fined the huge sum of 50 talents. Shortly afterward, he died of gangrene from a wound received on Paros. His son, Cimon, was later an influential figure in Athenian politics, which might account for the inflation of Miltiades's role in the events at Marathon.

**Muwattalis II** (r. c. 1295–1271). King of the Hittites, Muwattalis presided over their empire during the height of its power. He led a large Hittite force to Kadesh in 1285/75 B.C. to confront the northward incursions of Ramesses II of Egypt. There, a great but inconclusive battle took place that paved the way for a lasting Hittite-Egyptian treaty.

**Narmer (a.k.a. Menes)** (c. 3000 B.C.). First king of the First Dynasty, Narmer united Egypt and initiated the Old Kingdom. Little can be said about Narmer in historical terms, and source material is scant. His most famous monument is the Narmer Palette, which depicts him subduing enemies, leading armies, and surveying the corpses of enemy soldiers.

**Nicias** (c. 470–413 B.C.). Nicias was an Athenian aristocrat, politician, and general. After the death of Pericles in 429 B.C., he opposed the more aggressively imperialistic and demagogic “new politicians” in Athens, such as Cleon and Alcibiades. He was a moderate who supported negotiating peace with Sparta, the Peloponnesian War being in full swing in these years. This he succeeded in bringing about in 421 B.C. with the Peace of Nicias. But both sides regarded it as a pause in their dispute rather than a definitive settlement of it. Nicias objected to the proposed expedition to Sicily but was appointed one of its three commanders. Through a series of unfortunate events, he found himself in sole command there and proved a vacillating and equivocating commander.

When the expedition collapsed, Nicias was captured and executed by the Syracusans.

**Paullus, L. Aemilius (1)** (c. 260–216 B.C.). This Roman politician and general was consul in 219 B.C. He was elected consul again for 216 B.C., with M. Terentius Varro, on a platform of taking a more aggressive stance with regard to Hannibal than the strategy of delaying favored by Q. Fabius Maximus had thus far allowed. He perished at the resulting disaster at Cannae. Our main sources (Polybius and Livy) are clearly well-disposed toward Paullus and try to pin the blame for Cannae squarely on Varro, but a close reading of the pertinent texts shows that Paullus and Varro disagreed only on the issue of when to engage Hannibal. The outcome would probably have been the same, regardless of who was in command on the day of the catastrophe.

**Paullus, L. Aemilius (2)** (c. 229–160 B.C.). Son of L. Aemilius Paullus (1), he was a prominent politician and general of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. He served in a variety of official positions before rising to the consulship for 182 B.C. Elected to a second consulship for 168 B.C., he campaigned against King Perseus of Macedon Thessaly and brought the Third Macedonian War to a successful conclusion with a decisive victory at Pydna in that year. A keen philhellene, he kept nothing of the riches of Perseus for himself, except for the king's library.

**Perseus of Macedon** (c. 213–c. 165 B.C.). Son of Philip V of Macedon, Perseus succeeded to the throne on his father's death in 179 B.C. He started off on a good footing with the Romans, but his diplomatic efforts in extending his influence in Greece soon earned their suspicion. It did not help that Rome's ally, Eumenes II of Pergamum, was an injured party in Perseus's success. Against a backdrop of Eumenes's denunciations, war was declared in 171 B.C. Perseus's reign—and Macedonian independence—ended at the Battle of Pydna in 168 B.C. Perseus was taken captive to Italy, where he died an exile.

**Pharnaces II** (r. 63–47 B.C.). Son of Rome's troublesome enemy Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus, Pharnaces ruled initially as a client of Pompey. He appears to have done little until he made his move while Rome was distracted by the Caesar-Pompey civil wars of 49–45 B.C. He then attempted to expand his realm by conquest and enjoyed some initial success. But he soon found himself confronted by Caesar at Zela in 47 B.C. Soundly defeated in this battle, he returned discredited to his kingdom and was murdered by a political rival.

**Philip II of Macedon** (382–336 B.C.). This king of Macedon and reformer laid the foundations for his son Alexander's empire and the subsequent Hellenistic Age. As a prince, Philip witnessed firsthand the military innovations of Epaminondas at Thebes, which may have inspired him as king to reform the Macedonian army radically. He united the kingdom, created the fearsome Macedonian phalanx, and elevated the cavalry to the role of decisive strike force. He also brought siege warfare to new heights. He expanded Macedonian influence in all directions, including southward to Greece, control of which he finally achieved after the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 B.C. He then planned an

invasion of Persia and sent an advance force over in 337 B.C. but was murdered at a festival in 336 B.C. His tomb may have been identified at Vergina in Greece.

**Philip V of Macedon** (238–179 B.C.). As a teenager, Phillip V succeeded to the throne of Macedon in 221 B.C. and embarked on a series of military campaigns. In the wake of Cannae, he made a pact with Hannibal (215 B.C.) but never acted on it in any concrete way, much to the Romans' fortune. He was also blocked by a Roman force sent across the Adriatic in 215 B.C., starting the so-called First Macedonian War (215–205 B.C.). Further military and diplomatic activity followed, leading to the Second Macedonian War (200–197 B.C.), which ended at Cynoscephalae. Until his death, Philip had to deal with constant Roman interference in his affairs, resulting in his having to execute his own son, Demetrius, in 180 B.C.

**Pompey ("the Great")** (106–48 B.C.). Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, the political ally and then archrival of Julius Caesar, was born of a prominent Picene family and entered Roman politics as an upstart supporter of Sulla in 83 B.C. Successful in military matters, most spectacularly against the pirates in 66 B.C., he became a popular hero. He formed the First Triumvirate with Caesar and Crassus in 60 B.C., but thereafter relations with Caesar deteriorated until civil war erupted in 49 B.C. Now posing as the champion of the republic against Caesarian tyranny, Pompey met defeat at Pharsalus in 48 B.C. and, on fleeing to Egypt, was ignominiously decapitated by a claimant to the Ptolemaic throne in that year.

**Pyrrhus of Epiros** (318–272 B.C.). Pyrrhus was king of Epiros, a Hellenistic kingdom across the Adriatic from Italy. An ugly man with great military skills and personal courage, Pyrrhus acceded at the age of 17. Frustrated in his aspirations for expansion in the Balkans, he accepted an invitation from the Greek colony of Taras (Tarento) to help in the disputes with the encroaching Romans. He invaded Italy with almost 25,000 infantry, 3,000 horses, and 20 war elephants. His first two encounters with the Romans—at Heraclea (280 B.C.) and Asculum (279 B.C.)—were victorious but costly. These encounters were the first time the Roman legions had faced a Macedonian phalanx. After an unsuccessful sojourn in Sicily, Pyrrhus returned to southern Italy in 275 B.C. and fought the Romans again at Beneventum. Having lost this battle, he withdrew back across the Adriatic. He was killed trying to invade Greece, when a woman threw a roof tile at him from her perch above.

**Ramesses II ("the Great")** (r. c. 1279–1213 B.C.). One of Egypt's most famous pharaohs and a prolific builder, Ramesses had one of the longest reigns on record, lasting some 66 years. Not long after his accession, he fought the Battle of Kadesh against the Hittites, which he clearly regarded as a moment of signal importance in his rule because scenes of it grace the walls of so many of his monuments.

**Sargon** (r. c. 2330–2280 B.C.). Sargon was the historical founder of the Akkadian Empire in Mesopotamia whose life later became quasi-legendary. His polity was the first to unite Babylonia and Sumer under a single ruler; it seems also to have stretched north toward Syria. Sargon's grandson Naram-Sin seems to have acquired divine status, as reflected in his inscriptions and monuments (for example, the Victory Stela of Naram-Sin in the Louvre).

**Scipio Africanus** (c. 236–183 B.C.). Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus was an eminent figure in the Scipionic family. He rose to prominence leading Roman armies to victory over the Carthaginians in Spain and defeated Hannibal at Zama in 202 B.C. He was involved in subsequent Roman campaigns in Spain and the eastern Mediterranean.

**Sennacherib** (r. 704–681 B.C.). Assyrian king and son of his predecessor, Sargon II, Sennacherib faced difficult times in the Assyrian Empire and spent much of his reign campaigning to put down revolts. He waged ferocious wars in Babylonia and, in his third campaign (701 B.C.), struck into Palestine and Judea to challenge an Egyptian-Judean alliance against him. It was during this campaign that he besieged both Lachish and Jerusalem. He was murdered in a palace coup by two of his sons.

**Themistocles** (c. 524–459 B.C.). An Athenian statesman, general, and admiral, Themistocles was instrumental in turning Athens into the supreme naval power in Greece in the decade 490–480 B.C. He fought at Marathon and convinced his fellow citizens to use funds from state silver mines to build a fleet. As commander of the Athenian contingent resisting Xerxes's invasion in 480 B.C., he orchestrated, by trickery, the Battle of Salamis that crushed the invading Persian fleet and sent Xerxes back to Susa. Following the Persian Wars, he helped Athens build its walls. In the late 470s, he was exiled from Athens and, after many travels, ended up at the Persian court. There, he was honored by the Great King, and he ended his life as a Persian governor of the city of Magnesia.

**Thutmose III** (r. c. 1504–1452 B.C.). One of the longest reigning kings of New Kingdom Egypt, Thutmose came to power as a boy, but his position was usurped for 22 years by his stepmother and regent, Hatshepsut. Whether or not Thutmose collaborated with Hatshepsut's rule is disputed. In c. 1479 B.C., he emerged as sole ruler and launched his campaign into Palestine within three months of accession, culminating in the Battle of Megiddo. Sixteen more campaigns north were to follow, so that Thutmose is sometimes dubbed the Napoleon of ancient Egypt.

**Valens** (r. A.D. 364–378). Valens was the younger brother of Valentinian I (r. A.D. 364–375), who proclaimed him emperor of the eastern empire. Very much the junior partner in this relationship, Valens faced difficult challenges in the form of external threats from Goths and Persians and internal dissension over doctrinal matters—he was a Christian of the Arian sect. When the scale of Fritigern's Gothic-led revolt in Thrace became clear, he marched to put it down and summoned aid from his nephew Gratian in the western empire. But before

Gratian arrived, Valens confronted the Goths at Adrianople; his army was crushed and he himself killed.

**Varro, C. Terentius** (consul 216 B.C.). Varro was a Roman politician and general of obscure and perhaps lowly origins. As consul with L. Aemilius Paullus, he commanded the army that Hannibal annihilated at Cannae in August of that year. While Paullus perished, Varro escaped with the cavalry, and on his return to Rome, he was thanked for not despairing of the state. Our sources' attempts to scapegoat him for the disaster do not meet with general acceptance, not least because he continued in public life down to 200 B.C. and, thus, was clearly not a pariah to his contemporaries.

**Varus, Publius Quinctilius** (c. 45 B.C.–A.D. 9). A Roman aristocrat, bureaucrat, and general, Varus had important connections with the house of Augustus, as his consulship with Tiberius in 13 B.C. and subsequent marriage to Augustus's grandniece demonstrate. He had administrative and (limited) military experience in Africa and Syria when, in A.D. 6, he was appointed to the command of Germany. His charge seems to have been to consolidate what many considered a completed conquest. While returning to winter quarters in the autumn of A.D. 9, his army was led into an ambush by Arminius the Cheruscan and slaughtered in a three-day massacre in the Teutoburg Forest. Varus did the honorable thing and committed suicide on the field. Ever afterward, he had the dubious pleasure of having this catastrophe named after him: the *clades Variana*, "the Varan Disaster."

**Vercingetorix** (?–46 B.C.). Chieftain of the Arverni tribe of Gauls, Vercingetorix led a great revolt against Caesar in Gaul in 52 B.C., the last attempt by the Gauls to throw off the tightening yoke of Roman dominance. He enjoyed some initial successes, notably at Gergovia, and attempted to implement a scorched-earth policy to starve the Romans out of his homeland. But after defeat in an engagement in the field, he retreated to the stronghold of Alesia, where Caesar initiated astonishing siege operations to defeat him. Captured after Caesar's efforts proved successful, he was held captive until 46 B.C., when he walked in Caesar's triumph in Rome and then, following custom, was executed.

**Xerxes** (r. 486–465 B.C.). Son of Darius I, Xerxes was the Great King of Achaemenid Persia who invaded Greece in 480–479 B.C. and met with crushing and astonishing defeat. Herodotus portrays him as one would expect a Greek to: weak, vain, despotic, and capricious. But he was not entirely unreasonable, nor unintelligent. He fell to a murderer in 465 B.C.



# **Great Battles of the Ancient World**

## **Part II**

**Professor Garrett G. Fagan**



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Professor Fagan has an extensive research record in Roman history and has held a prestigious Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship at the University of Cologne, Germany. He has published numerous articles in international journals, and his first monograph, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World*, was published by the University of Michigan Press in 1999. He has also edited a volume from Routledge on the phenomenon of pseudoarchaeology (2005). His current research project is on spectatorship at the Roman arena, and he is also working on a book on ancient warfare.

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# Great Battles of the Ancient World

## Scope:

It is strange to think that the fates of states, nations, and even far-flung empires could be decided by men armed with sharp implements clashing over the course of a few hours on a few square miles of land or sea. The ancient battle, in all its fury and violence, is the focus of this course. We study many great military engagements of the ancient Mediterranean world and address various historical issues raised by those engagements. We also consider wider issues pertaining to warfare in the ancient world, such as its origins and evolution in the prehistoric era, technological and tactical developments in early states, and the nature of battle as a cultural phenomenon and a human experience. Our focus is primarily on the military side of things, with somewhat less attention paid to the sociological, economic, or ideological aspects of warfare, though these topics do not go entirely ignored.

The course divides into three roughly equal parts. The first eight lectures chart the development of warfare from prehistoric times down to the glory days of the great states of the ancient Near East and Egypt. After seeking to define what warfare is exactly, we survey different models for the origins of warfare in the Upper Paleolithic (c. 37,000–12,000 years ago) and Neolithic (c. 10,000–5,000 years ago) and test them against the archaeological evidence, so far as interpretive limitations will allow. When written records first become available with the Early Dynastic city-states of Sumer (c. 3000–2350 B.C.), we already find warfare well developed and a staple of interstate relations. Armies of infantry and rudimentary chariotry clash over honor, irrigation rights, and boundary lands. We then travel to Egypt and survey the changing and evolving nature of warfare in the Old to New Kingdoms (c. 2700–1070 B.C.) and survey our first true engagements at Megiddo (c. 1479/68 B.C.) and Kadesh (1285/75 B.C.). The problem of the tactical use of chariotry is discussed. Finally, we examine the fearsome Assyrian war machine as it developed c. 900–612 B.C. and the sophisticated army that allowed the Assyrians to forge the largest empire yet seen in the region. The siege capabilities of the Assyrians come under particular scrutiny. In this section, we also briefly address the disputed matters of the Trojan War and Homeric warfare.

The next eight lectures focus on warfare among the Greeks. The prior consideration of Homeric matters sets the stage for contemplating hoplite battle in mainland Greece as it emerged in the period c. 700–600 B.C. The hoplite was a particular type of armored infantryman who fought in a close formation called the phalanx. The nature of hoplite battle and its supposed oddities are examined, and various scholarly camps on these difficult questions are outlined. Then, we turn to the Persian Wars (490–479 B.C.) and examine the Battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea that decided this titanic clash. Naturally enough, Persian arms are reviewed here as well. The Athenian expedition to

Sicily (415–413 B.C.) is the next matter for analysis, set against an appreciation of the limitations inherent in Classical Greek siege warfare. The military “revolution” in 4<sup>th</sup>-century Greece—which saw many attempts to modify traditional hoplite tactics and equipment—provides the backdrop for consideration of Philip II of Macedon (359–336 B.C.) and his creation of a new and formidable military machine, spearheaded by the cavalry and a reformed phalanx, in the early years of his reign. This new, integrated, and flexible army was then led by Philip’s son Alexander against the Persians. We survey the three great battles that made Alexander the king of Persia: the Granicus River, Issus, and Gaugamela.

The third and final part of the course addresses the legions of Rome. We first survey the origins and early development of the legion, down to its description (from personal observation) by Polybius, writing c. 150 B.C. Strangely, Polybius omits discussion of the legions’ tactical system, so some uncertainty accrues to the question of *how* exactly the Romans won the battles that gave them dominion over the whole Mediterranean basin. We discuss various models and scenarios to fill this gap in our knowledge, both ancient and modern. Rome’s colossal struggle with Hannibal precedes the great clashes of the legion and the Macedonian phalanx as they took place in Italy in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and in the Balkans and Asia Minor in the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Polybius’s analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each formation is assessed against the facts of these engagements. Jumping ahead, we consider Roman skill in siege warfare as exemplified by Caesar’s siege of Alesia (52 B.C.) and the siege of Masada in Judea (A.D. 72–73).

Our last two battles are Roman defeats and introduce us to the German tribal warrior. We examine the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in A.D. 9, which many consider one of the most important battles in European history. Here, three Roman legions under P. Quinctilius Varus perished in an ambush set by Arminius, a Cheruscan war leader. This defeat stopped Roman expansion east of the Rhine and established a lasting cultural boundary at the heart of Europe. Then at Adrianople in A.D. 378, another Germanic people, the Goths, inflicted a crushing defeat on the eastern emperor Valens, who lost his life on the field. Adrianople is widely considered the single most important battle in the “fall” of the Roman Empire, as it crippled the empire’s military resources beyond repair.

The course ends with a final lecture on the place of warfare in the ancient Mediterranean world and consideration of the proposal that the Greeks invented a peculiarly “Western way of war” that has been with us ever since the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

## **Lecture Thirteen**

### **The Athenian Expedition to Sicily**

**Scope:** Greek siege warfare down to the Hellenistic period was remarkably basic. Sieges were restricted to investments, and the only assaults we hear of were abortive. The Athenians' assault on the heavily fortified city of Syracuse in Sicily while they were already engaged in a major war against the Spartans represents one of the greatest military follies in recorded history. Despite almost total ignorance of what they were getting themselves into and despite an ongoing imminent threat on their doorstep in the Greek mainland in the form of an unbowed Sparta, the Athenians sent the flower of their military forces to conquer Sicily. There, instead of imperial glory, they met with complete destruction. This lecture charts the overall course of the expedition but focuses on the fateful decisions and turning points that crescendoed in disaster. The Athenian failure in Sicily was also a turning point in the wider Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.), which now became unwinnable for the Athenians.

### **Outline**

- I.** Siege warfare in Archaic and Classical Greece did not even approach the sophistication of Assyrian techniques.
  - A.** Sieges in the Bronze, Dark, and Archaic Ages are not well attested.
    - 1. A fragment of a Mycenaean silver cup depicts men assaulting a fortified position.
    - 2. The Trojan War, while nominally a siege, was not one at all.
  - B.** Some advances were made in the Classical era, but all sieges in this era were apparently investments.
    - 1. Blockade or circumvallation was standard Greek siege practice.
    - 2. Pericles's strategy for Athens during the opening phase of the Peloponnesian War assumed the enemy's incapacity at siegecraft.
    - 3. Classical hoplite armies were, therefore, not adept at sieges.
- II.** The Athenian expedition to Sicily was at heart an ill-conceived military adventure, founded in ignorance, badly planned, and poorly led and executed.
  - A.** According to Thucydides, the run-up to the expedition was an object lesson in how not to undertake foreign wars.
    - 1. The opening sentences of his two-book account of events on Sicily do not omen well for the outcome.

2. Thucydides roots the expedition in the very character of the Athenians; in a great irony, some of their greatest strengths here led them to a disastrous choice.
  3. Through set-piece speeches, Thucydides indicts the prowar lobby and the democratic institutions of Athens for allowing demagoguery to silence more reasoned voices.
- B.** After representatives from Egesta, a city in Sicily, arrived in Athens urging the Athenians to intervene in Sicilian affairs, debates took place, with the opposing viewpoints presented by the elder aristocrat Nicias and the young and clever Alcibiades.
1. Nicias attempted to scuttle the expedition with reasoned arguments.
  2. Alcibiades countered with passionate appeals to emotion and false promises.
  3. Alcibiades's argument carried the day, and the expedition set out in spring 413 B.C.
- C.** Serious mistakes were made at the outset of the action.
1. Decisive action was not taken when the expedition arrived in Sicily.
  2. Alcibiades was recalled to face charges of sacrilege in Athens on the eve of the expedition's departure.
  3. The Athenians allowed the initiative to slip away from them by hesitant and cautious actions in the opening year of the campaign.
- III.** The duration and complexity of the events of the Sicilian expedition prevent a thorough survey here; instead, we focus on three turning points.
- A.** The Athenians settled down to besiege Syracuse.
1. But the limitations of Classical Greek siege warfare placed them in a perilous position.
  2. Effort focused on Epipolae, a plateau overlooking Syracuse.
- B.** The first turning point occurred when the Spartan general Gylippus arrived and galvanized Syracusan resistance.
1. Gylippus landed on the north coast of Sicily and quickly acquired local allies.
  2. His arrival at Syracuse energized resistance.
  3. Nicias's reactions were inadequate and ill-conceived.
- C.** The second turning point occurred when, rather than authorizing withdrawal, the Athenians elected to reinforce a strategically disadvantaged force and leave Nicias in charge of the whole.
1. Nicias wrote to Athens in the hope of forcing the recall of the expedition.



2. The Athenians once more made the wrong choice or, rather, two wrong choices: not to relieve Nicias and to send reinforcements.
  3. A large force under Demosthenes and Eurymedon sailed for Sicily in 413 B.C.
  4. Meanwhile, the energetic Gylippus captured the Athenian base at the Great Harbor; Sicilian resistance stiffened.
- D. The third turning point came when the Athenian reinforcements failed to retake Epipolae from the Syracusans.
1. Demosthenes risked all on a night attack, an unusual move in ancient warfare.
  2. The inherent confusion of nighttime combat worked to the detriment of the Athenians.
  3. The failure at Epipolae guaranteed defeat for the Athenians; fate now stepped in to ensure their annihilation.
  4. After a breakout attempt failed, the entire expedition was annihilated as it fled overland.
  5. The land retreat turned into a massacre; the Syracusans treated the Athenian prisoners mercilessly.
- E. The Sicilian expedition carried grave long-term consequences for Athens.
1. The military power of Athens was almost broken.
  2. Athenian subjects in the Aegean revolted.
  3. While Athens had lost huge amounts of money in the disaster on Sicily, Sparta found limitless new sources of funds.
  4. Political divisions within Athens were exacerbated, and oligarchic revolution came to Athens after a century.
  5. The long-term effects on Greece of Athens's defeat in the wider war, traceable to the Sicilian expedition, were atrocious.

**Essential Reading:**

Plutarch, *Life of Nicias* and *Life of Alcibiades*.

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Books 6–7.

Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, pp. 90–162.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Kagan, *The Peloponnesian War*, pp. 251–490.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. After reading the sources, ancient and modern, where would you place the greatest culpability for the Sicilian disaster: on a particular person, on institutions, on chance, on historical contingency, or on a combination of interlinked factors?
2. What are the chief lessons taught us by the story of the Sicilian expedition?

## Lecture Fourteen

### The March of the Ten Thousand

**Scope:** In the summer of 401 B.C., Cyrus, satrap of western Asia and brother of the Great King Artaxerxes, hired 13,000 Greek mercenaries, ostensibly to fight against barbarian raiders on his eastern border. Leading the mercenaries deep into the heartland of Mesopotamia, however, Cyrus revealed his true intentions: to challenge his brother and seize the Persian throne for himself. At the bizarre Battle of Cunaxa, Cyrus's forces were defeated, but his Greek mercenary force, called the *Ten Thousand*, stood unconquered in their sector of the field. After their generals were treacherously murdered under a flag of truce, the Ten Thousand elected new leaders and resolved to fight their way back home. We examine this most extraordinary battle and fighting retreat, conducted over 1,500 miles through hostile territory. From a Persian perspective, it carried grave implications for the ability of the Great King's troops to defeat Greek hoplites, even on their home turf. These implications were to be fully realized, in modified form, by Alexander the Great.

### Outline

- I. An appreciation of the Persian Empire's administration and of the growth of mercenary service among the Greeks is a necessary prelude to the drama of the Ten Thousand.
  - A. The Persian Empire, for all its size and power, had some severe weaknesses.
    - 1. The Great King presided over a loosely organized administration.
    - 2. The king maintained control in a variety of ways.
    - 3. As a result of all this, Persian royal succession was fraught with strife.
  - B. The Greek mercenary had been a longstanding feature of the Aegean world, but he became more prevalent in the wake of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.).
    - 1. Conditions in Greece generated many willing mercenaries.
    - 2. Mercenaries came in various shapes and sizes.
- II. In 401 B.C., Cyrus challenged his brother Artaxerxes for the throne of Persia and hired 13,000 Greek mercenaries to join his expedition, though he kept its purpose a secret from them.
  - A. Cyrus was satrap of western Asia and had reason to distrust his brother; he began raising an army.

1. When Darius II died in 404 B.C., he left his kingdom to Artaxerxes over Cyrus.
  2. By bestowing favors and wealth, Cyrus made himself popular and powerful; he began to raise an army.
  3. A part of this army was a force of Greek mercenaries hired by an exiled Spartan named Clearchus. This group was dubbed the *Ten Thousand*.
  4. The Ten Thousand, as described by Xenophon, was a motley crew led by five generals.
- B.** Cyrus was not truthful about the purpose of this force.
1. On the one hand, Cyrus told his Greek forces that he was raising the army to drive out some raiders from the eastern part of his territory.
  2. On the other hand, Cyrus told the Great King that his muster was part of his fight with Tissaphernes, a demonstrated enemy.
  3. Xenophon reports that the large size of the force made both Tissaphernes and the Greek mercenaries suspicious.
- III.** What is perhaps the strangest battle in ancient history was fought at Cunaxa, north of Babylon, in the summer of 401 B.C. The outcome put the Ten Thousand in a perilous position.
- A.** While still within his satrapy, Cyrus held a parade charge for the pleasure of a queen he was hosting.
1. In the parade, the fearsome Greek soldiers terrified the queen, as well as their Persian hosts and allies.
  2. This humorous event proved an omen of the future.
- B.** Cyrus finally contended with his brother at Cunaxa, in one of the oddest battles on record.
1. Artaxerxes, with a vast Persian host, met Cyrus at Cunaxa, in Mesopotamia.
  2. Cyrus's smaller army took up a defensive position, with the Euphrates River on its right.
  3. Clearchus disobeyed an order from Cyrus and, thus, contributed to the strange outcome of the battle.
  4. The armies clashed, and the Ten Thousand swept all before them. Cyrus was killed and his camp plundered.
  5. A very strange situation now pertained: The victorious Ten Thousand was on the losing side.
- C.** The Greeks, victors on a losing side, were left in an unprecedented position.
1. Attempts were made to bully or cajole the Greeks into surrendering their arms.

2. Then, a truce was proposed with a guarantee of safe passage.
3. Treachery was the next Persian gambit, resulting in the execution of all of the Greeks' generals and most of their unit officers.
4. The Ten Thousand, however, could not be cowed and, over the course of following months, pulled off one of the greatest feats in military history.
5. After many tribulations, the force reached the sea near Trapezus at the eastern end of the Black Sea. The Ten Thousand had survived.
6. Their exploits quickly became famous.

IV. The March of the Ten Thousand has been believed since antiquity to hold numerous significant lessons about Greeks and Persians.

- A. Already in antiquity the tale of the Ten Thousand suggested an inherent superiority of Greek arms over Persian; the point is debatable.
  1. Panhellenists pointed to the Persian failure to stop the Ten Thousand as a sign of their essential weakness.
  2. The panhellenic arguments fell on deaf ears in Greece but not to the north in Macedon.
  3. Modern scholars have often toed this line.
- B. Other factors need to be taken into account.
  1. The decentralized nature of the Persian Empire also played into the hands of the Ten Thousand.
  2. Although troublesome, after Cunaxa, the Ten Thousand did not represent a serious threat either to the Persian Empire or to Artaxerxes's control over it.
  3. The Macedonian army of Alexander, which did conquer the Persian Empire, is hardly comparable to the Ten Thousand.
- C. The clearest lessons of the Ten Thousand, rather, lie in the cultural and political spheres.
  1. Consensus governed decision-making among the Ten Thousand.
  2. The divinely sanctioned will of the king governed Persian decision-making.

**Essential Reading:**

Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, pp. 1–20.

Xenophon, *Anabasis* (called *The Persian Expedition* in the Penguin Classics Series).

Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2.664–73.

Lane Fox, *The Long March*, especially pp. 154–183 (on the Persian Empire) and pp. 215–242 (on the Ten Thousand as a fighting force).

**Supplemental Reading:**

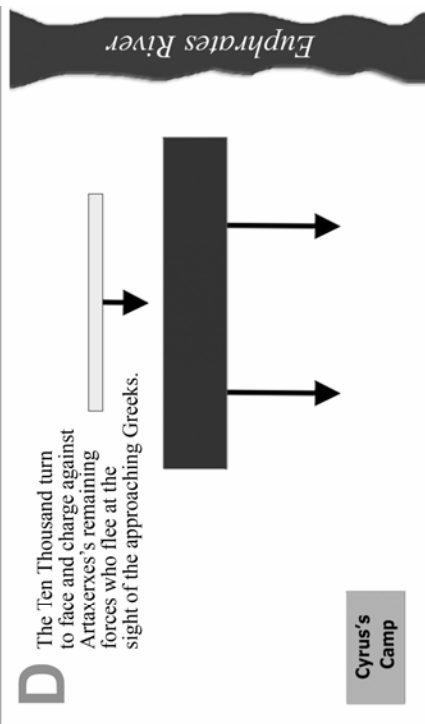
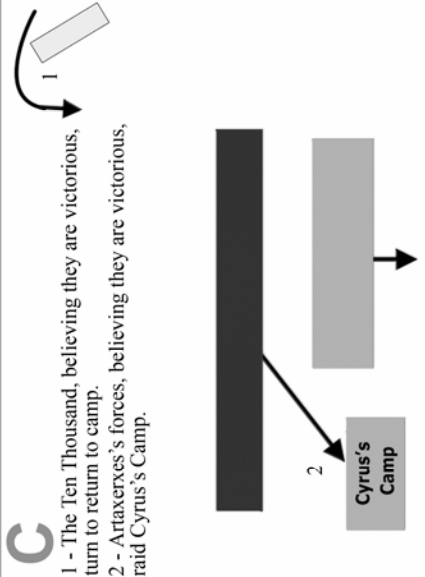
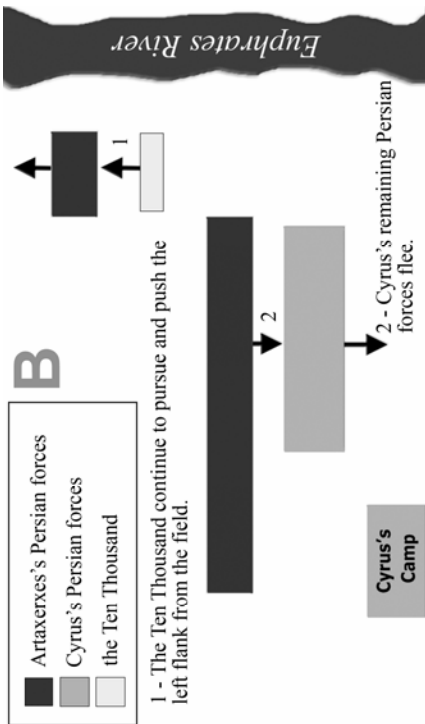
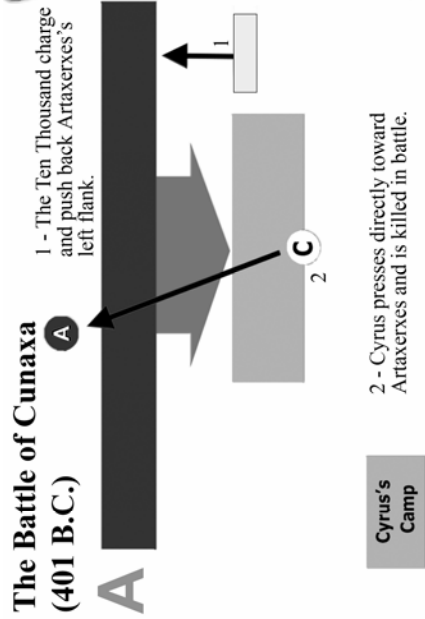
Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*.

Trundle, *Greek Mercenaries*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Who bears the most responsibility for what transpired at Cunaxa?
2. Why were the Persians unable to stop the Ten Thousand? What, if anything, can the experience of the Ten Thousand tell us about the relative strengths of the Persian and Greek military systems?

# **The Battle of Cunaxa (401 B.C.)**



## **Lecture Fifteen**

### **Macedonian Military Innovations**

**Scope:** The 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in Greece was a tumultuous and violent period. In the quest for overall hegemony, the Athenians, Spartans, and Thebans fought each other to a standstill. The military and political impasse provoked innovations in the deployment of the traditional phalanx, particularly at Thebes under the brilliant generalship of Epaminondas and Pelopidas. An eyewitness to their initiatives was a young prince, Philip, heir to the throne of the northern barbarian kingdom of Macedon. As king, Philip II would take the Theban desire to revitalize the phalanx to new lengths and, thereby, forge a fearsome military machine that was to dominate the eastern Mediterranean and Asia for more than two centuries. In this lecture, we examine Macedonian military innovations and Phillip's shrewd use of them in expanding Macedonian control over his neighbors, including the Greeks. Particular attention is paid to the Battle of Chaeronea (338 B.C.), which ended the era of the independent Greek city-state and saw Greece made subordinate to Macedonian interests. In the able hands of Phillip's son, Alexander III (a.k.a. "the Great") the new Macedonian army was to be the instrument of Achaemenid Persia's demise.

### **Outline**

- I. Macedon was a marginal kingdom to the Greeks, who considered Macedonians "barbarians" (non-Greeks). In the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., military innovations were afoot in Greece.
  - A. Macedon was a Hellenized but non-Greek kingdom.
    - 1. Macedon was a country of plains and mountains.
    - 2. Long after the Greeks had dumped kingship, Macedon remained a kingdom.
    - 3. The king and his nobles mostly controlled the plains, spoke a dialect of Greek, and considered themselves civilized.
    - 4. Until the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Macedonians held aloof from Greek affairs.
  - B. The Greek mainland at this time was hideously unstable.
    - 1. The Peloponnesian War left terrible uncertainty in its wake.
    - 2. Hegemony by a single city-state was unattainable.
  - C. Tactical developments in the Greek mainland helped inspire later Macedonian innovations.
    - 1. At Thebes, a great general began experimenting with traditional hoplite formations.



2. These tactical innovations are best illustrated by the Battles of Leuctra (371 B.C.) and Mantinea (362 B.C.).
  3. The 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. also saw an increase in the use of *peltasts* and, apparently, an experiment in modifying traditional hoplite equipment.
  4. One witness to all these innovations was a young Macedonian prince named Philip who, three years after Mantinea, became king.
- II.** Philip II and his immediate predecessors and successors forged a formidable Macedonian army based on adaptations to the Greek phalanx and the combined deployment of different armaments.
- A. The 4<sup>th</sup>-century-B.C. reforms of the Macedonian army are obscure in detail but clear in outline.
    1. The exact chronology of the reforms is disputed.
    2. The hoplite phalanx was transformed into the Macedonian version.
    3. Specialist infantrymen called *hypaspists* played a variety of roles on the battlefield.
    4. Cavalry, the royal arm, was given great prominence.
    5. Varieties of light-armed and support troops completed the muster.
  - B. The Macedonian army was, therefore, a large, flexible, fully integrated fighting force with specialized units fit for most contingencies.
  - C. The organizational and motivational logic unifying this multifaceted army was proximity to the king.
  - D. The Macedonian tactical system combined the hammer blow of the heavy cavalry with the anvil of the phalanx to annihilate the enemy.
- III.** Philip blooded his new army in the unification of Macedon and the subjugation of neighboring peoples, then began to insinuate himself into Greek affairs. The decisive clash came at Chaeronea in 338 B.C.
- A. Philip concerned himself initially with unifying Macedon and subjugating neighbors to the west, north, and east.
    1. Philip first secured the loyalty of the chiefs and kings of the Macedonian mountains.
    2. All the while, Philip led his new army against the Illyrians in the west, the Paeonians in the north, and the Thracians in the east.
    3. Interstate squabbling helped to lure Philip into Greek affairs.
    4. Greek reaction, as found in the writings of Isocrates (436–338 B.C.) and Demosthenes (384–322 B.C.) was mixed.
  - B. At Chaeronea in Boeotia, an allied Greek army led by Athens and Thebes finally confronted Philip in a last-ditch bid to preserve Greek independence.
    1. Both armies were large for this period.
    2. The Greeks took a strong defensive position on the road to Thebes.

3. The course of the battle is unclear in our sources; a late source provides a tantalizing key to Philip's victory.
  4. Two monuments on the field offer some physical relics of the battle.
  5. Philip organized Greece under the League of Corinth.
- IV. After more than 20 strenuous years on the throne, Philip fell to an assassin's blade in 336 B.C.
- A. He had planned to invade Persia, but his plans were obviated when he was assassinated just before departing for Persia.
  - B. Philip's tomb may have been uncovered at Vergina in Macedonia.
  - C. It was left to his son, Alexander, to take the Macedonian army into the heart of Asia.

**Essential Reading:**

Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 16.85–86.

Polyaenus, *Stratagems of War*, 4.2.2 and 4.2.7 (Chaeronea).

Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War*, pp. 64–83.

Gabriel and Boose, *The Great Battles*, pp. 150–172.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Ashley, *The Macedonian Empire*, pp. 22–54 (Macedonian army) and pp. 153–158 (Chaeronea).

Cawkwell, *Philip of Macedon*, especially pp. 13–49 and pp. 138–183.

Hammond, *Philip of Macedon*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Which of Philip II's military innovations do you consider the most important? Why?
2. Could the Greeks have beaten the Macedonians at Chaeronea? If so, what would have been the likely outcome?

## **Lecture Sixteen**

### **Alexander's Conquest of Persia**

**Scope:** Alexander the Great's invasion of the Persian Empire began in 334 B.C. In a mere three years, he had defeated the royal forces of the Great King Darius III twice in major battles, at Granicus (334) and Issus (333); besieged and captured the reputedly impregnable city of Tyre; and annexed most of the western realm of Darius for Macedon. Finally, in 331 B.C., he sought the decisive final confrontation, in which he hoped to kill or capture the Great King himself (he had already captured the king's family and baggage train at the Battle of Issus). Despite being vastly outnumbered and fighting on ground of the Persians' choosing, Alexander advanced to Gaugamela in Upper Mesopotamia and risked all on a single engagement. The battle, which is exceptionally well documented, is described and its importance is assessed. When the dust had settled, Darius was in flight for his life, and Achaemenid Persia, which had dominated Asia for more than 300 years, was at an end. Gaugamela is, thus, a perfect illustration of how a few hours of hard fighting can determine the fates of entire empires.

### **Outline**

- I.** After establishing himself on the throne, Alexander embarked on the invasion of Persia that his murdered father had already initiated.
  - A.** Alexander secured his rear before moving into Asia. He campaigned against barbarians to the north and west and crushed a Theban revolt.
  - B.** The Theban revolt forced Alexander to leave a substantial force behind in Macedon to look after Greece when he headed east.
  - C.** Meanwhile, the preparatory force sent to Asia by Philip in 336 had not fared well.
- II.** The first phase of Alexander's invasion focused on the western Persian Empire and included two major engagements.
  - A.** Alexander crossed into Asia in the spring of 334 B.C. at the head of 50,000 men.
    - 1.** The Persian king, Darius III, was secure on his throne.
    - 2.** Alexander's expeditionary force is variously numbered in the sources but stood at about 50,000 all told.
    - 3.** On the Persian side, there had been some changes since the great actions of the 5<sup>th</sup>-century invasion of Greece, the most obvious being the use of Greek mercenaries.
    - 4.** Alexander crossed to Asia in spring 334 B.C. and claimed the land by conquest.

- B.** The local Persian satraps met the invading army at the Granicus in the summer of 334 B.C.
    - 1. The Persians and their Greek mercenaries debated their options and decided to nip the invasion in the bud with a single engagement.
    - 2. At the Granicus River, the Persians contested with Alexander for the first time.
    - 3. Accounts of the battle are confused and confusing; thus, a reconstruction is possible only in broad terms. Suffice it to say that the Persians suffered enormous losses and the Macedonians, only a handful.
  - C.** Alexander next “freed” the Greek cities of Ionia, while Darius III raised a royal army and met Alexander at the Issus River in 333 B.C.
    - 1. Alexander moved down the Turkish coast, liberating Greek cities.
    - 2. Darius, meanwhile, levied an army and moved west to meet the invader.
    - 3. There was a standoff while each side waited for the other on chosen ground.
    - 4. In a bold maneuver, Darius moved north, threatening to cut the Macedonians off from their bases in Asia Minor.
    - 5. Near Issus on the Syrian coast, the two kings finally clashed.
    - 6. The victory at Issus handed the entire western half of the Persian Empire to Alexander. But the battle for the whole lot was still ahead.
- III.** The decisive engagement of the war took place at Gaugamela, not far from Cunaxa, on 1 October 331 B.C.
- A.** Between 333 and 331 B.C., Alexander busied himself along the Mediterranean coast and ventured into Egypt.
    - 1. Alexander moved down the Mediterranean coast to Egypt.
    - 2. In 332 B.C., he prosecuted a spectacular seven-month siege of Tyre.
    - 3. By April 331 B.C., the young king was ready to take on Darius in the final showdown. He marched toward Mesopotamia.
  - B.** Darius III met Alexander at Gaugamela in northern Babylonia. His army was vast and the stakes were as high as they could be: The winner would be the rightful king of Persia.
    - 1. Darius had spent two years raising a vast royal horde and now occupied a prepared field at Gaugamela.
    - 2. Alexander arrived in late September, and the battle was fought on 1 October 331 B.C.
    - 3. For an ancient battle, it is exceptionally well documented but still difficult to chart in detail.
    - 4. The outcome was that Alexander was now the Great King of Persia.

- IV. Although Gaugamela gave Alexander his primary objective, his personality inclined him to further conquests rather than administrative consolidation.
- A. Following his victory at Gaugamela, Alexander did not rest but campaigned relentlessly all the way to northern India; he would have gone further, had his army not mutinied.
  - B. Alexander's victories, for all their brilliance, brought little satisfaction to his restless spirit.
    - 1. Alexander's field-battle victories are marked by the maximally efficient use of the military tools at his disposal.
    - 2. For all his staggering success, Alexander comes across as an ultimately unsatisfied human being.
    - 3. On 10 June 323 B.C., he died at age 32 of a fever.

**Essential Reading:**

Arrian, *Anabasis*, 1–3 (3.8–15 on Gaugamela).

Curtius, *History of Alexander*, 3–4 (4.9 on Gaugamela).

Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 17 (17.56–61 on Gaugamela).

Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, pp. 32–33 on Gaugamela.

Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, especially pp. 74–85 and pp. 259–277.

Briant, "The Achaemenid Empire," in Raaflaub and Rosenstein, *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, pp. 105–128.

Hanson, *Carnage and Culture*, pp. 60–98.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Cartledge, *Alexander the Great*.

Gabriel and Boose, *Great Battles*, pp. 218–278.

Green, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 236–296.

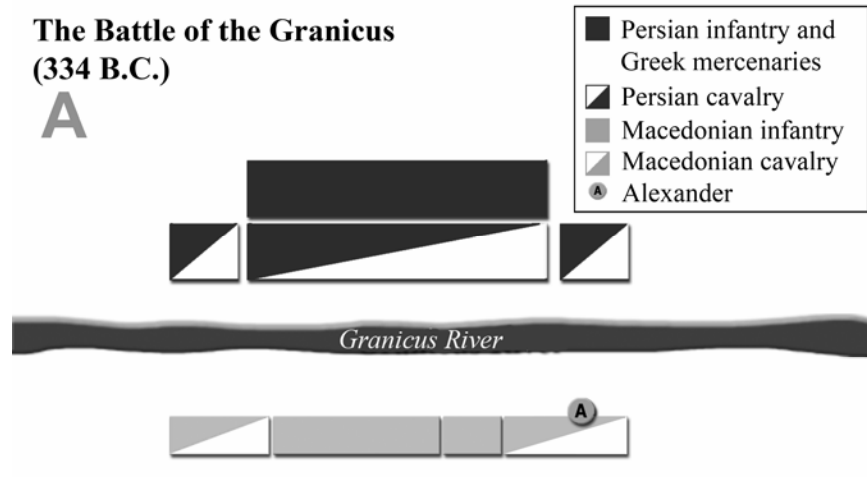
Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great*.

**Questions to Consider:**

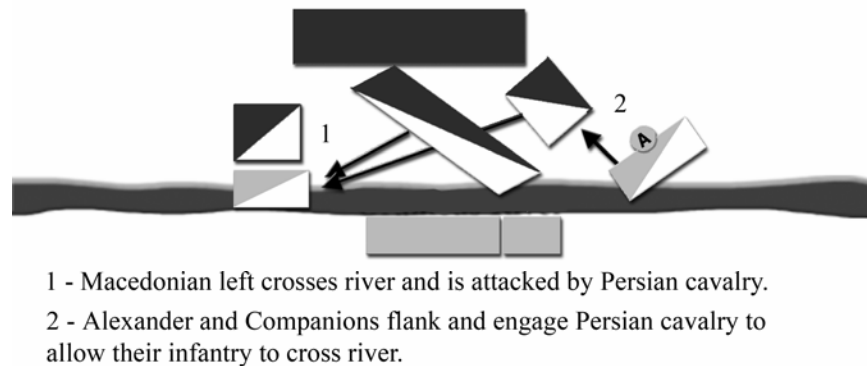
- 1. Was Alexander's success inevitable? What role had Philip played in this success?
- 2. What could the Persians have done, if anything, to protect themselves from Alexander's invasion?

## The Battle of the Granicus (334 B.C.)

A

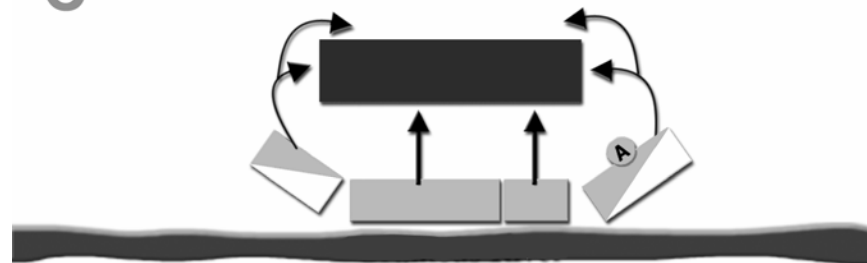


B



- 1 - Macedonian left crosses river and is attacked by Persian cavalry.  
2 - Alexander and Companions flank and engage Persian cavalry to allow their infantry to cross river.

C

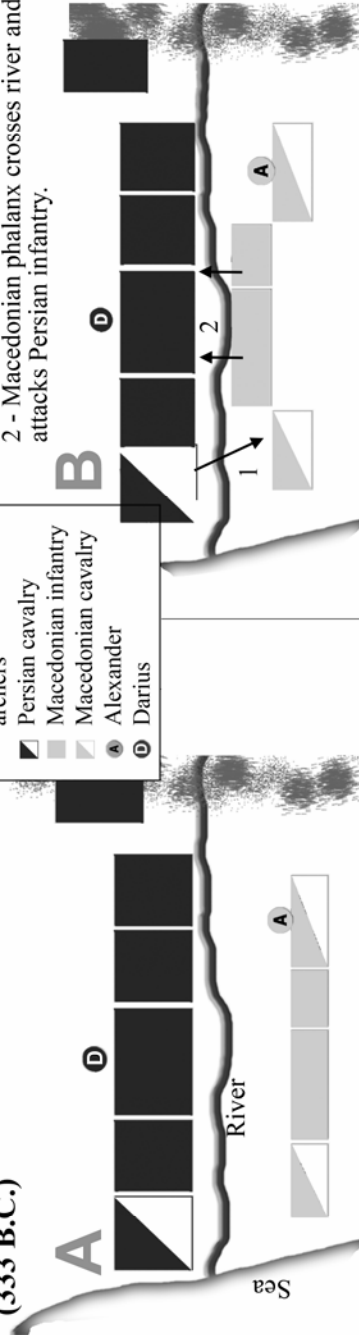


Macedonian infantry engages Greek mercenary forces from front while cavalry flanks and attacks from behind.

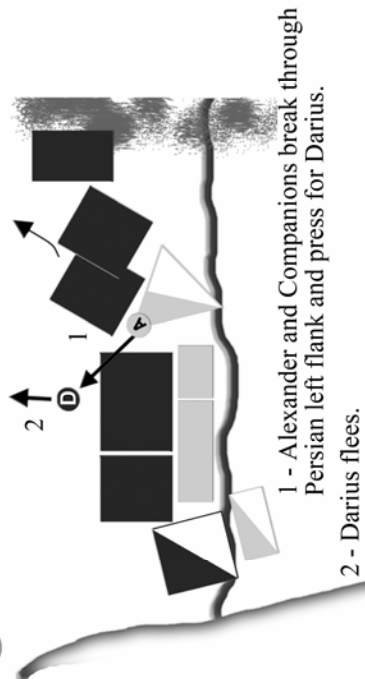
# **The Battle of Issus (333 B.C.)**



- 1 - Persian cavalry charges Macedonian left flank.
- 2 - Macedonian phalanx crosses river and attacks Persian infantry.

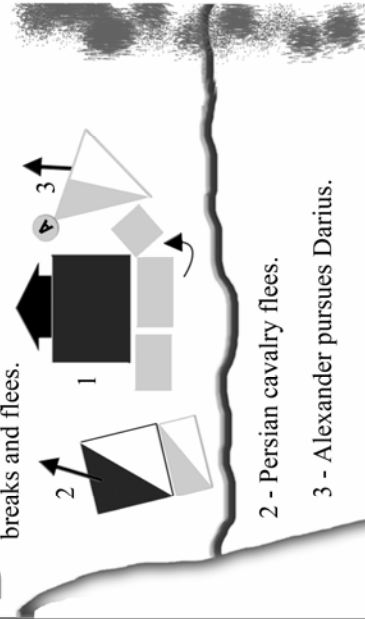


**C**



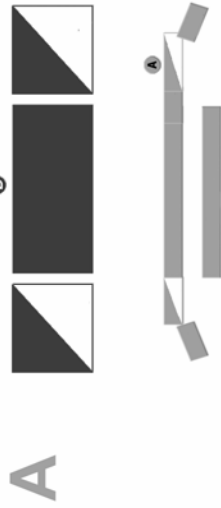
- 1 - Alexander and Companions break through Persian left flank and press for Darius.
- 2 - Darius flees.

**D**



- 1 - Macedonian infantry flanks Persian; Persian infantry breaks and flees.
- 2 - Persian cavalry flees.
- 3 - Alexander pursues Darius.

# The Battle of Gaugamela (331 B.C.)



Persian infantry

Persian cavalry

Macedonian infantry

Macedonian cavalry

A

Alexander

D

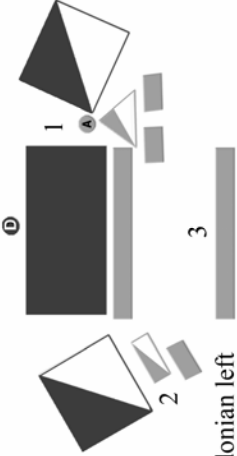
Darius

**B**

Macedonian troops advance and move to the right, throwing Persian forces off balance.

**C**

1 - Alexander and Macedonian right side split Persian forces and flank main infantry.



2 - Macedonian left engages and holds Persian cavalry.

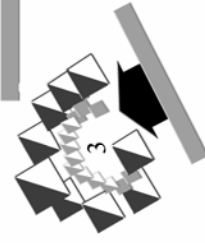
3 - Reserve phalanx hangs back.

**D**

1 - Persian left cavalry flees.

2 - Persian main infantry breaks and flees.

3 - Macedonian cavalry backed by reserve phalanx engages and drives off Persian cavalry.





## Lecture Seventeen

### The Legions of Rome

**Scope:** As Alexander was bringing Achaemenid history to an end in Asia, to the west, an unimportant central Italian city-state was engaged in a ferocious war against mountain warriors that would force it to rethink its military organization. Abandoning the Greek-style phalanx, the Romans created an army that would, within two centuries, conquer the known world. In this lecture, the essential elements of Roman legionary equipment and flexible manipular formations are examined. It is remarkable that, despite some detailed sources (notably Livy and numerous battle descriptions), it remains unclear *how* exactly a legionary army fought a battle. We explore the sources and assess the problems of interpreting them.

### Outline

- I. For all of Roman history, the legion was the basic military unit. On the backs of legionaries was the empire raised, defended, and lost.
  - A. The legions of Rome are rightly famous as one of the finest fighting machines ever to take to the field.
  - B. *Legio* merely means a “selection” or “muster” and originally referred only to the act of raising troops from among those eligible to serve.
  - C. By the Middle Republic (264–133 B.C.), the legion had become an independent tactical fighting unit comprised mostly of heavy infantry.
  - D. Under the Principate (c. 30 B.C.–A.D 284), the regiments were made permanent, transcending the generations of recruits who served in them.
- II. The early Roman military system can be reconstructed from some hints in the evidence, comparison with Greek practice, and general considerations.
  - A. The Roman army appears originally to have fought as a phalanx of hoplites.
    - 1. The sources for Roman history down to c. 300 B.C., as discussed in detail in my Teaching Company course *History of Ancient Rome*, are not good.
    - 2. The very earliest traditions of Rome record the ability of noble families to command their own warbands.
    - 3. Contact with the heavily Hellenized Etruscans likely introduced the Romans to hoplites and the methods of phalanx warfare, which they adopted.

4. The Servian reform offers one of our clearest glimpses into the army's early organization and equipment and suggests the centrality of the phalanx.
  - B. Subsequently, the Romans abandoned the phalanx in favor of a looser tactical deployment based around *maniples*.
    1. Although hard to date specifically, the transition to maniples occurred in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
    2. Whether or not the Romans invented them is not evident.
- III. The Greek historian Polybius offers an eyewitness account of Roman military organization c. 150 B.C., but despite a supplemental account in Livy, it remains uncertain how the legions actually fought a battle.
- A. Polybius describes various aspects of the Republican legion's recruitment, organization, and equipment in c. 150 B.C.
    1. Polybius provides us with an eyewitness account of what the Roman legion of the Middle Republic looked like.
    2. The legion was comprised of 4,200 infantry (5,000 in emergencies) and 300 cavalrymen.
    3. Polybius's account begins with the choice of officers and the process of recruitment.
    4. The different classes of soldiers were equipped differently, with each legion assigned five categories of troops, four infantry and one cavalry.
    5. Centurions were central to the legionary system.
    6. The cavalry was an adjunct wing of the legion; major cavalry contingents were provided by allied peoples.
    7. Polybius ends his account by describing the Roman marching camp.
  - B. The fighting methods of the Republican-era legions are laid out only in one questionable source, so it remains unclear exactly *how* the Roman legions fought a battle.
    1. Polybius fails to describe the legions' fighting methods, a curious and inexplicable omission.
    2. Under the year 340 B.C., Livy includes an account of how the legion fought; his account, however, is controversial.
    3. Given what we *do* know, there are three ways to make sense of Livy's account: to accept it as is, to accept it in a modified version, or to reject it entirely.
    4. It is likely that flexibility lay at the heart of the Roman system so that no one "battle deployment" fit all.
- IV. The experience of Roman infantry warfare had distinct characteristics.
- A. Roman infantry combat was different from hoplite or phalanx warfare in several respects.
    1. It lasted longer.

2. Missiles and swordplay played a more prominent part than in hoplite or phalangite warfare.
- B. It has been suggested that there was a tentativeness in Roman “battle mechanics.” The tentative model is enticing, but it has its problems.
- C. An important factor often overlooked was the fighting spirit instilled by small-unit cohesion.
- D. The harsh realities of close-proximity combat with edged weapons are difficult to dwell on.

**Essential Reading:**

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 4.16–19.

Livy, *The History of Rome*, 1.42–43 and 8.8–10.

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 6.19–42.

Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War*, pp. 86–142.

Daly, *Cannae*, pp. 48–80.

Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army*, pp. 14–56.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, pp. 173–197.

Rawson, “The Literary Sources.”

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What accounts for the remarkable success of the Romans in battle?
2. Which reconstruction of the manipular legion’s tactical system strikes you as the most likely and why?

## **Lecture Eighteen**

### **The Battles of Cannae and Zama**

**Scope:** Paradoxically, we begin our examination of specific Roman battles with the worst defeat in Roman history, the disaster at Cannae, inflicted by the Carthaginian military genius Hannibal. The events leading up to the battle and of the day itself are described and assessed. Ironically, despite being one of the most crushing defeats in recorded history, the battle decided nothing. The Romans did not negotiate a surrender, their confederation in Italy did not collapse, and Hannibal was unable to follow up his victory by attacking the city of Rome itself. The Romans turned their attention elsewhere, and Hannibal was reduced to the status of a domestic irritant. Then, in 211 B.C., the Romans found a young and dynamic leader in P. Cornelius Scipio, who persuaded the Senate to take the war to Africa. This move forced the recall of Hannibal from Italy, after a sojourn there of some 15 years' duration. On the plain of Zama, Scipio defeated Hannibal decisively in a closely fought battle.

### **Outline**

- I.** The Second Punic War (218–202 B.C.) was, in essence, a struggle for Rome's survival.
  - A.** The Carthaginians, under Hannibal, invaded Italy from the north in 218 B.C.
    - 1.** Hannibal entered Italy overland.
    - 2.** As a December storm raged, the Romans were lured unprepared by Hannibal into an ill-advised battle at the River Trebia and lost with heavy casualties.
    - 3.** The disaster at Lake Trasimene occurred the following year, 217 B.C.
  - B.** After these setbacks, the Romans initially adopted a cautious strategy but then abandoned it in favor of a more aggressive approach.
    - 1.** Hannibal's strategy appears to have been to break up the nexus of alliances in Italy that gave Rome its strength.
    - 2.** The Romans adopted a policy of containment toward Hannibal under the dictator Q. Fabius Maximus.
    - 3.** But new consuls in 216 B.C. abandoned caution and placed all hope on a decisive engagement. One of the darkest days in Roman history approached.

- II.** At Cannae in Apulia, Hannibal's outnumbered army succeeded in defeating the Romans by a combination of tactical brilliance and iron discipline.
  - A.** The Carthaginian army was quite a different animal from the Roman legions and their allies.
    - 1. Although our sources for Punic history are not good, the Roman sources tell us something about Hannibal's army.
    - 2. Carthage's was not a citizen militia.
    - 3. Hannibal's multinational force had no standardized equipment, and each group fought according to its traditional methods.
    - 4. Hannibal's army at Cannae apparently numbered around 50,000.
  - B.** The vast consular Roman army, numbering upwards of 80,000, arrived at Cannae, gave battle, and met with complete annihilation.
    - 1. After setting up camp at Cannae, the consuls argued about where was the best place to engage the enemy.
    - 2. Both commanders left garrisons at their camps; thus, the forces about to clash were slightly fewer than the overall totals reached above.
    - 3. The Roman deployment was unusual because of the unusual size of the army.
    - 4. Being vastly outnumbered, Hannibal deployed in a formation so famous (and effective) that it is still closely studied in military academies today.
    - 5. By means of his tactical deployment and the rigid discipline of his troops, Hannibal managed to encircle his numerically superior enemy.
    - 6. Once encircled, the Romans ceased to be an effective fighting force and were mercilessly butchered.
    - 7. The casualty figures in our sources, though enormous, are actually not that unlikely.
    - 8. At Cannae, maneuvers in the "grand-tactical" sphere united with the soldiers' localized experience of combat to produce a particularly harrowing nightmare.
  - C.** Despite its tactical decisiveness, Cannae decided nothing.
    - 1. Hannibal's greatest victory, while tactically masterful, had no serious strategic impact.
    - 2. The Romans continued to resist.
    - 3. In P. Cornelius Scipio, Rome found a leader equal to the great Carthaginian himself.
- III.** Under P. Cornelius Scipio, the Romans drew Hannibal out of Italy and engaged him at Zama in Africa.
  - A.** Scipio, an energetic and popular young figure, lured Hannibal to Africa.

1. Scipio (born in 236 or 235 B.C.) was a scion of one of Rome's noblest houses and a survivor of Cannae.
  2. Scipio succeeded to his father's command and cut his military teeth in Spain.
  3. Elected consul (underage) for 205 B.C., Scipio's invasion of Africa the following year finally drew Hannibal out of Italy.
- B.** At Zama in 202 B.C., Hannibal met his match in cunning and vision.
1. After defeating a Carthaginian army on the Great Plains in 203 B.C., Scipio faced Hannibal across the field at Zama, southwest of Carthage itself.
  2. The two armies deployed for battle, with Scipio at several apparent disadvantages: His forces were outnumbered and had no elephants.
  3. The battle appears to have been won primarily by means of the fighting quality of the Roman infantry, rather than by any tactical innovations.
  4. Unlike Cannae, Zama was decisive on both the tactical and strategic planes.

### **Essential Reading:**

Cannae:

Appian, *Roman History*, 7.19–26.

Livy, *The History of Rome*, 22.43–49.

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 3.106–107.

Zama:

Appian, *Roman History*, 8.40–47.

Livy, *The History of Rome*, 30.32–35.

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 15.9–16.

Daly, *Cannae*, pp. 25–47, pp. 81–204.

Lazenby, *Hannibal's War*, especially pp. 49–86 (Cannae) and pp. 193–232 (Zama campaign).

### **Supplemental Reading:**

Gabriel and Boose, *Great Battles*, pp. 280–318.

Goldsworthy, *Cannae*.

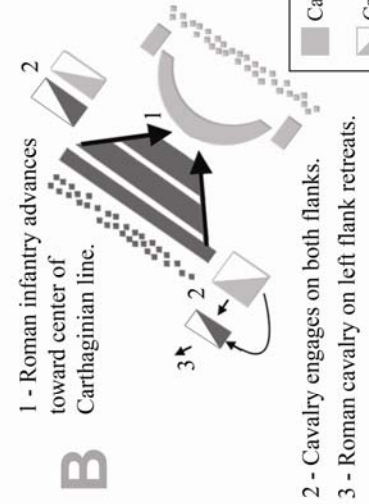
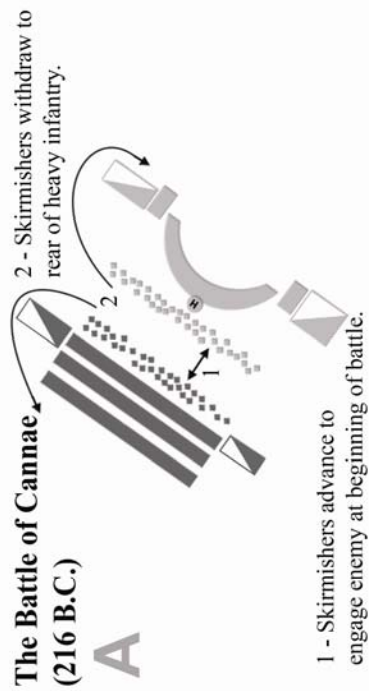
Hanson, *Carnage and Culture*, pp. 99–132.

### **Questions to Consider:**

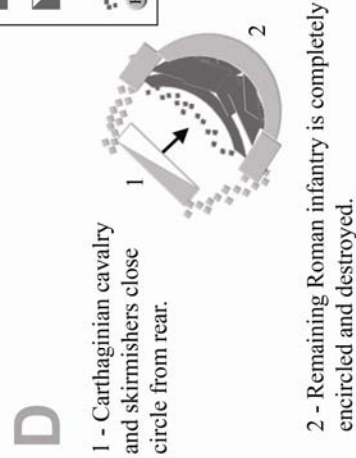
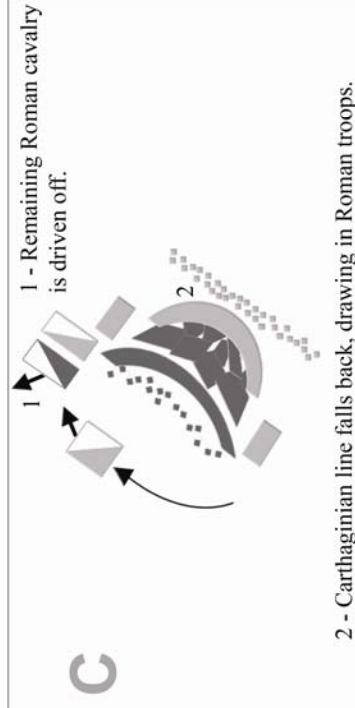
1. What four factors do you think were the most instrumental in Hannibal's great victory at Cannae?

2. Was the outcome at Zama an example of war's fickle fortunes, which Hannibal had discussed with Scipio during their prebattle meeting?

# **The Battle of Cannae** (216 B.C.)



	Carthaginian infantry
	Carthaginian cavalry
	Carthaginian skirmishers
	Roman infantry
	Roman cavalry
	Roman skirmishers
	Hannibal





## Lecture Nineteen

### Legion versus Phalanx—Six Pitched Battles

**Scope:** The two greatest tactical systems of the ancient Mediterranean were the Macedonian phalanx and the Roman legion. It is not surprising, therefore, that Polybius devotes a section of his *Histories* to considering the tactical strengths of the phalanx and assessing its weaknesses in the face of Roman manipular deployment. We survey this passage and consider its explanatory power initially through a consideration of Rome's first encounters with the phalanx led by Pyrrhus of Epirus between 280 and 275 B.C. But our main focus is on two well-documented case studies: the Battles of Cynoscephalae (197 B.C.) and Pydna (168 B.C.), both fought in the Balkans, and to a lesser extent, that of Magnesia (190 B.C.), fought in Turkey. These clashes represent the decisive engagements of the ancient Mediterranean world's leading military systems. In addition, the two battles in Greece decided the fate of Alexander the Great's ancestral kingdom of Macedon and demonstrated to contemporaries, such as Polybius, the supremacy of Roman arms in the Mediterranean basin. We close by considering an alternative explanation for these Roman successes, proposed by a modern commentator: The legionaries just got lucky.

### Outline

- I. Polybius assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the Macedonian phalanx and the Roman legion and concludes that the legion is the superior instrument of war for several reasons.
  - A. Polybius ascribes the strength of the phalanx to its denseness of formation and cohesion in battle.
    - 1. Polybius describes the phalanx of the later Hellenistic era.
    - 2. So long as the phalanx maintains its tight formation, it is invincible.
  - B. The strength of the legion rests in its looser formation and the fighting skills of its members.
    - 1. The legionary needs space to wield his sword; for this reason, a six-foot frontage is normal per legionary.
    - 2. If the phalanx kept its usual formation, each legionary would face 10 pike heads.
  - C. Polybius concludes that the legion is superior because of its flexibility in several areas of operation.

1. He insists that the phalanx can operate only on flat ground, unbroken by such encumbrances as woods, gullies, streams, and so on.
  2. The legion, in contrast, is not so hedged about with topographical requirements and can operate in most landscapes.
  3. The Roman system of reserves is also considered important, whereas the phalanx requires a total commitment of all troops.
  4. The phalanx, whether pushing forward or pushed back, loses cohesion; the legions do not.
  5. Polybius elsewhere ascribes a decisive role to the equipment and fighting skills of the Roman infantryman.
- D.** Polybius's analysis can be justly criticized.
1. It is overly schematic.
  2. His contention that the phalanx can fight only on one surface is erroneous.
  3. It is not the case that the phalanx required the simultaneous commitment of all units.
- E.** The strengths and weaknesses of Polybius's analysis are best tested by looking at the details of actual encounters.
- II.** We must backtrack chronologically somewhat, since the first Roman encounters with the Macedonian phalanx occurred on Roman turf in three great battles during Pyrrhus's invasion of Italy: Heraclea (280 B.C.), Asculum (279 B.C.), and Beneventum (275 B.C.).
- A.** Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, was invited to help the southern Italian-Greek city of Tarentum in its conflict with Rome in 280–274 B.C., but the battles are not well documented.
1. Pyrrhus invaded Italy with an up-to-date Hellenistic army, complete with war elephants (the Romans had not encountered these horrors before).
  2. According to some modern theories, the Romans had relatively recently gone over to the manipular system.
- B.** The three battles are not well documented.
1. At Heraclea (280 B.C.), legion and phalanx clashed for the first time. Pyrrhus carried the day but at terrible cost.
  2. The battle at Asculum the following year is so badly attested that virtually nothing can be determined about its course.
  3. Pyrrhus, slightly discouraged and given the cold shoulder by his southern Italian-Greek allies, turned his attention on Sicily for the next four years.
  4. In 275 B.C., he fought the Romans for the last time, at Beneventum. This time, the Romans won and Pyrrhus withdrew.

5. Pyrrhus's elephants, rather than his phalanx, appear to have caused the most difficulties for the Romans.
  6. The Pyrrhic battles are, therefore, of limited usefulness in testing Polybius's tactical assessment of phalanx and legion.
- III.** The great clashes of phalanx and legion, however, took place in the east, against powerful Macedonian kings.
- A. The Battle of Cynoscephalae (197 B.C.) was practically accidental but nevertheless illustrates the legions' advantages.
  - B. The fullest surviving accounts are found in Polybius and Livy.
  - C. Neither side had planned a major engagement.
  - D. The battle was fought on the summits and slopes of a ridge; a Roman tribune won the day.
  - E. Cynoscephalae showed the flexibility of the legion over and against the phalanx.
- IV.** The Roman legion and Macedonian phalanx clashed again at Magnesia in western Turkey and at Pydna in northern Greece.
- A. At Magnesia in Turkey in 190 B.C., a huge Seleucid army (an Asian-Macedonian hybrid) was decisively defeated by a Roman army, which was the first to carry Roman standards into Asia.
    1. King Antiochus III of Syria had answered the call to "free the Greeks" by invading the Balkans but now found himself on the defensive facing the first Roman army to cross into Asia.
    2. The army was under the command of L. Cornelius Scipio, brother of the great Scipio Africanus, who was also present but played no part in the battle because of illness.
    3. The battle was decided by cavalry action.
    4. Magnesia was no straight competition between phalanx and legion; the cavalry was decisive.
  - B. At Pydna, the cream of the Macedonian army was soundly defeated by the Roman legions in the final clash of the two competing military systems.
    1. The Third Macedonian War (171–168 B.C.) followed the pattern of the Second, until the armies clashed at Pydna.
    2. The forces arrayed against each other at Pydna were formidable.
    3. The nature of the terrain and tactical flexibility ensured a crushing victory for the legions.
- V.** The battles surveyed in this lecture tend to bear Polybius's analysis out in general terms; alternatives proposed by modern scholars are noticeably weak.

- A. Polybius's analysis of the phalanx's strengths and weaknesses cannot be dismissed.
- B. A countertheory argues that the Romans were just lucky; it is unconvincing.
- C. Aside from tactics, the fighting qualities of the legionary ought not to be overlooked.

**Essential Reading:**

Phalanx versus legion:

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 18.28–32; cp. 15.15 (fighting qualities of legionary).

The Pyrrhic battles:

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 20.1–3, 10–11.

Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, pp. 16–17, p. 21, pp. 24–25.

Cynoscephalae:

Livy, *The History of Rome*, 33.1–11.

Plutarch, *Flaminius*, pp. 7–8.

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 18.19–27.

Magnesia-ad-Sipylum:

Appian, *Roman History*, 11.30–36.

Livy, *The History of Rome*, 37.37–44.

Pydna:

Livy, *The History of Rome*, 44.40–42 (with a crucial gap).

Plutarch, *Aemilius Paullus*, pp. 16–22 (the fuller account).

Gabriel and Boose, *Great Battles*, pp. 320–342.

**Supplemental Reading:**

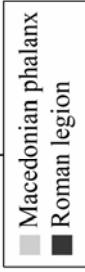
Hammond, “The Battle of Pydna” and “The Campaign and Battle of Cynoscephalae.”

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Polybius's analysis of the phalanx vis à vis the legion?
2. Which of the battles reviewed in this lecture strikes you as the most decisive in determining the relative merits of the two tactical systems under consideration here?



# **The Battle of Cynoscephalae (197 B.C.)**



Roman troops engage disorganized Macedonians who are still approaching from beyond ridge.

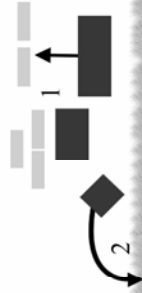
**A**

2 - Macedonian troops out of formation beyond ridge.

1 - Macedonian phalanx engages Romans at base of ridge.

**C**

1 - Roman troops break Macedonian line and force troops back.



2 - Small Roman force turns to engage Macedonians from behind.

**B**

(Ridge line)

**D**

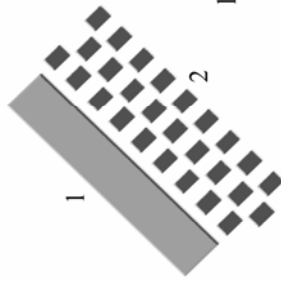
1 - Macedonians flee or surrender.

(Ridge line)

2 - Macedonians, sandwiched between two Roman lines, are destroyed.

# **The Battle of Pydna (168 B.C.)**

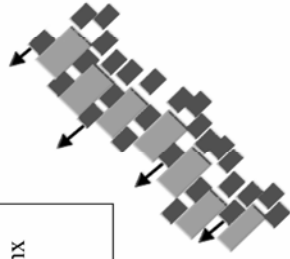
1 - Macedonian phalanx advances in tight formation.



2 - Romans adopt a more spread out and loose-knit formation.

■ Macedonian phalanx  
■ Roman legions

**B**



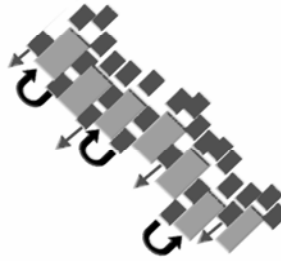
As Macedonian phalanx advances, formation loosens, and Roman troops break through gaps.

**D**



Macedonian phalanx breaks and flees, pursued and destroyed by Roman legions.

**C**



As Roman troops break through phalanx, they press their advantage by attacking from sides and behind.

## Lecture Twenty

### The Sieges of Alesia and Masada

**Scope:** We open with a brief survey of developments in siege warfare since the Assyrian period, particularly during the Hellenistic era, when *poliorketika* (“encircling of the polis”) became a virtual science. We then assess the growth of siegecraft among the Romans, who became masters of capturing apparently impregnable fortifications, such as Numantia in Spain (taken in 133 B.C.). The sieges of Alesia (52 B.C.) and Masada (A.D. 72–73) are illustrative of Roman determination and industry in prosecuting sieges. Both actions required titanic physical effort on the part of the besiegers, as enormous networks of camps, towers, moats, and palisades were constructed to seal the besieged off from the outside world. In the case of Alesia, Caesar had two sets of fortifications erected, one facing inward and the other outward to face a massive army of Gallic rebels intent on relieving their besieged compatriots. At Masada, the Romans constructed a vast ramp, the vestiges of which can still be seen to this day, and rolled siege engines up to the walls. Attempts to escape the Roman army behind even formidable fortifications were shown to be futile.

### Outline

- I. Great strides in Greek siegecraft were taken in the later Classical and early Hellenistic eras (c. 400–300 B.C.).
  - A. Advances began at Syracuse in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
    - 1. The Carthaginian campaigns in Sicily in the late 5<sup>th</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries introduced the Greeks to eastern-style siegecraft.
    - 2. The new methods relied more on active than on passive techniques.
    - 3. Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse (406–367 B.C.), learned from his Punic foes and became an expert besieger.
  - B. In the eastern Mediterranean, the Hellenistic era saw a great increase in the complexity of siege methods.
    - 1. Philip had been a dab hand at siege warfare.
    - 2. Alexander’s siege of Tyre was marked by remarkable complexity.
    - 3. Demetrius Poliorketes is the best example of how advanced Hellenistic siegecraft had become.
- II. The Romans may have been good besiegers relatively early in their history.
  - A. Early Roman sieges are mostly the stuff of legend.
  - B. As the empire expanded, Roman siege techniques improved.



1. Roman skills at sieges partly increased by exposure to the skills of opponents.
  2. The sieges of Syracuse, Carthage, and Numantia all provide examples of Roman abilities in siegecraft.
- C. The practical Roman mindset proved well suited to siege warfare.
- III. Caesar's siege of Alesia (52 B.C.) is an impressive and well-documented siege of the Late Republic.**
- A. By 52 B.C., Caesar thought he had conquered Gaul; a great rising told him otherwise.
1. The "pacification" of Gaul was a difficult task.
  2. When Caesar finally thought Gaul was conquered, a great rebellion broke out.
  3. Caesar reacted with characteristic swiftness and engaged the rebels aggressively.
  4. After a slight reverse, Caesar finally cornered Vercingetorix at the fortress of Alesia in central France.
- B. Caesar's efforts at Alesia were truly Herculean.
1. He first encircled the whole place with a series of camps joined together by a ditch and palisade.
  2. Vercingetorix sent his cavalry away to summon help.
  3. In reaction to this news, Caesar elaborated his siege works in order to block attempts by the enemy relief army to break in.
  4. The relieving army was vast and assailed the Roman lines fiercely.
  5. A battle over one of the camps, placed in a bad spot, proved the turning point in the struggle.
  6. Alesia is one of the greatest ancient sieges on record, as well as a contest of national strengths.
- IV. The Roman siege at Masada (A.D. 72–73) shows similar determination and perseverance, this time coupled with aggression.**
- A. Masada was occupied by holdouts from the Jewish revolt of A.D. 66–70.
1. Judea had risen in revolt in A.D. 66.
  2. Major operations ended in A.D. 70 with the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.
  3. Some holdouts retired to the mountain fortress of Masada and used it as a base for raiding the surrounding territory.
- B. Flavius Silva, in A.D. 72, took command and attacked Masada.
1. Flavius Silva became governor in A.D. 72 and determined to take Masada.

2. He came to the site with one legion.
  3. Our source for what transpired here is the contemporary Jewish turncoat Flavius Josephus.
  4. Camps and walls of contravallation were built.
  5. Unable to wait out a full blockade, Silva launched an assault.
  6. To facilitate his assault, he built a ramp and put siege towers and a ram on it.
  7. A breach was made in the wall, despite the defenders' best efforts; Masada was about to fall.
- C. Rather than surrender, the rebels took their own lives. Only seven survived.
1. When the Romans broke in, they found the place deserted.
  2. Seven survivors told them that the 960 other defenders had committed suicide rather than surrender.
  3. The Romans admired the resolve of the rebels.
  4. Excavations at the site in the 1960s apparently yielded dramatic evidence to support Josephus's account.
  5. Recently, these archaeological results have been forcefully challenged.

**Essential Reading:**

Caesar, *Gallic War*, Book 7.

Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 7.252–406 (Masada).

Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, pp. 25–27 (Alesia).

Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War*, pp. 274–303.

Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, pp. 163–351.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Ben-Yehuda, *Sacrificing Truth*.

Marsden, *Greek and Roman Artillery*.

Yadin, *Masada*.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What contextual features (economic, technological, social, and so on) are requisite for the prosecution of aggressive as opposed to passive siege warfare?
2. How do the sieges of Alesia and Masada exemplify Roman siege techniques? What had the Romans learned from Hellenistic developments?

## Lecture Twenty-One

### Caesar's World War

**Scope:** Between 49 and 45 B.C., Caesar fought four major engagements and two lesser ones against his Pompeian opponents and against native rebels. The major battles—Pharsalus, Zela, Thapsus, and Munda—were fought in Greece, Asia Minor, Africa, and Spain, respectively, and, thus, represent a sort of Roman world war. We examine these battles in sequence, paying particular attention to what allowed Caesar to win in each case, especially given that he was often outnumbered. Late Republican changes and developments in Roman legionary equipment, recruitment, and tactics are also assessed.

### Outline

- I. The civil wars opened with Caesar invading Italy, driving Pompey and the Republicans across the Adriatic, and besieging them there.
  - A. Our main source for what follows is Caesar himself in his *Civil Wars*.
    1. The events down to 48 B.C. were recorded by Caesar himself.
    2. Subsequent events down to 45 B.C. were covered by others.
  - B. Before proceeding further, a quick review of military developments in the Late Republic is in order.
    1. The general Marius is credited with many changes, but some seem to be more gradual developments rather than unitary reforms.
    2. There were some changes to the equipment of the legionary.
    3. Maniples were dropped as tactical units in favor of larger cohorts.
    4. The three-line battle order appears to have remained.
    5. Eagles were elevated as a standard symbol of the legion.
    6. After the Social War (91–88 B.C.), the distinction between Romans and allies disappeared.
    7. Overall, the Late Republic saw an increasing professionalization of the army.
  - C. Such was the character of the armies Caesar and Pompey now ranged against each other as Caesar invaded Italy and drove Pompey across the Adriatic to Dyrrhachium.
    1. Caesar's swift advance forced Pompey to abandon Italy.
    2. Caesar went first to Spain, then returned to Italy, before attacking Pompey at Dyrrhachium in Greece.
    3. Here, Caesar attempted Alesia-like siege operations but was forced to withdraw.
    4. The first round had gone to Pompey.

- II.** At Pharsalus in August 48 B.C., Pompey and Caesar finally clashed in the open field.
  - A.** At Pharsalus, Caesar outmaneuvered a numerically superior force to win a crushing victory.
    - 1.** Pompey had encamped on some foothills but initially refused Caesar's offers of battle.
    - 2.** When he did come down to contest the day, he placed his hopes on his cavalry, which outnumbered Caesar's by 7,000 to 1,000.
    - 3.** Caesar deployed in "normal" fashion but with two clever modifications: He held back his third line in reserve and formed a fourth line to counter Pompey's cavalry superiority.
    - 4.** Pompey's cavalry was driven off by this fourth line, which then attacked the main force in the rear.
    - 5.** Caesar threw in his third line for the coup de grâce.
  - B.** In the aftermath, Pompey was murdered in Egypt, and Caesar found himself embroiled in a local dynastic dispute.
  - C.** When Caesar finally emerged from Egypt in 47 B.C., events summoned him to Asia.
- III.** Caesar's Asian campaign turned out to be far shorter than he expected.
  - A.** A native rebel called Pharnaces was threatening to reignite the Mithridatic wars of the 70s and 60s B.C.
    - 1.** Pharnaces was the son of the infamous Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus.
    - 2.** In the early 40s B.C., he took advantage of Rome's distraction by civil strife to seize neighboring lands.
    - 3.** The danger was real that the conflict could escalate into something resembling the great Mithridatic wars.
  - B.** Caesar arrived in late July 47 B.C. and, in the space of five days, took stock, fought and defeated Pharnaces, made arrangements for his kingdom, and left.
    - 1.** Taking stock of the situation, Caesar aggressively marched on Pharnaces, whose envoys attempted to slow his advance.
    - 2.** At Zela, Pharnaces was in an advantageous position, on high ground.
    - 3.** Caesar seized a neighboring hill, across a narrow valley from Pharnaces's position.
    - 4.** As he was fortifying his camp, Caesar noted Pharnaces deploying his army in front of his camp.
    - 5.** He was amazed when Pharnaces advanced across the narrow valley between them.

6. The unexpected advance caught Caesar off guard, but his men rallied and crushed the Pontic army.
  7. In the space of five days, Caesar had arrived at Zela, fought and won a major engagement, and left.
- IV. Africa beckoned next because Pompeian forces had been massing there since their defeat at Pharsalus.
- A. Pompeian forces in Africa were considerable.
    1. Under able leaders, including M. Porcius Cato and both of Pompey's sons, the anti-Caesarians had amassed formidable forces on the ground.
    2. The field commander was Q. Scipio, who had commanded the Pompeian center at Pharsalus.
    3. Caesar crossed from Sicily but had only a handful of men in comparison.
  - B. Once reinforced, Caesar attempted to reach a decision quickly, but matters dragged on until April 46 B.C., when a major engagement at Thapsus decided the campaign.
    1. Scipio and Labienus—the latter a former officer in Caesar's command—were reluctant to risk all on a major engagement.
    2. Skirmishes were almost constant at various towns along the African coast.
    3. Finally, Caesar's investment of the Pompeian stronghold at Thapsus forced a pitched battle.
    4. Although outnumbered, Caesar's legions broke the combined Roman and native army on the first charge.
    5. Remarkably, Caesar lost control of his army, which ignored his orders in charging the enemy prematurely.
    6. Pompeian resistance in Africa was broken at Thapsus, but Spain offered a final redoubt for the cause.
- V. The last act in the great civil war played out at Munda in Spain in March 45 B.C.
- A. A large and mutinous army gathered in Spain, a country with longstanding connections to Pompey's family.
    1. The surviving account of the Spanish campaign is composed in rough, colloquial Latin, suggesting an author of low education, possibly a centurion.
    2. Caesar had settled matters in Spain already in 49 B.C.
    3. Mismanagement by his governor there in 49–47 B.C. caused some of the legions to mutiny.

4. When Cn. Pompey landed in Spain, these mutinous legions went over to him.
  5. Refugees from Thapsus swelled these ranks.
  6. Caesar would have to deal with this unforeseen Pompeian stronghold.
- B.** Caesar ended the civil wars at Munda in southern Spain.
1. Finally confronting the young Pompey at Munda, Caesar had to fight on ground not of his choosing.
  2. Working uphill, it was the steadfastness of his veteran troops that secured victory.
  3. Pompey's army broke and fled.
  4. About 30,000 were reported killed to Caesar's 1,000.
  5. In the wake of this victory, Caesar was left in control of the Roman state.
  6. His excessive behavior as its new head, however, proved lethal to himself.
- C.** Caesar's energy in the civil wars is remarkable.
1. Fighting so many engagements in so many different places around the Mediterranean basin, this was truly a Roman world war.
  2. But Caesar wanted more: He was planning to invade Parthia when he was killed in March 44 B.C.
  3. The man's energy was astounding.

**Essential Reading:**

Appian, *The Civil Wars*, Book 2.

Caesar, *The Civil War*, *Alexandrine*, *Spanish*, and *African Wars*.

Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, *Life of Pompey*.

Gabriel and Boose, *The Great Battles*, pp. 377–396 (Dyrrhachium and Pharsalus).

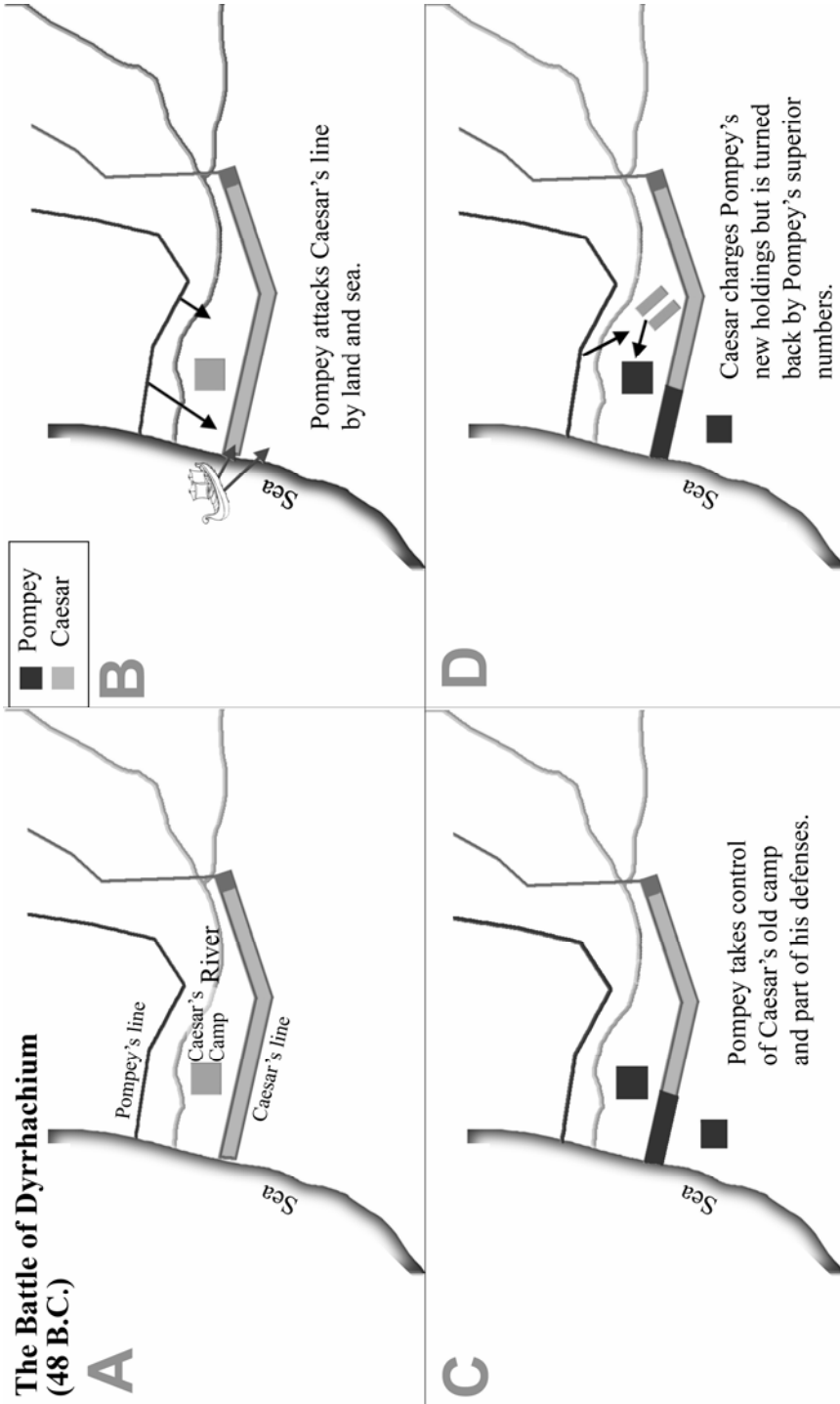
**Supplemental Reading:**

Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army*, pp. 57–131.

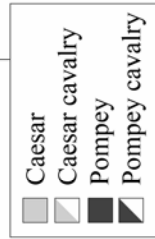
**Questions to Consider:**

1. Which of Caesar's civil war battles do you consider the most remarkable, and why?
2. If you were in Pompey's sandals in 49 B.C., what would you have done differently?

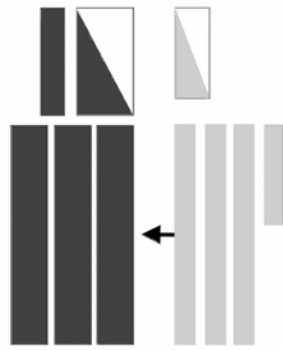
# **The Battle of Dyrrhachium (48 B.C.)**



# **The Battle of Pharsalus (48 B.C.)**

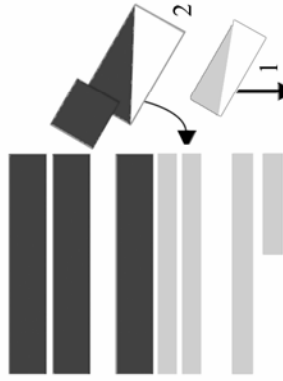


**A**



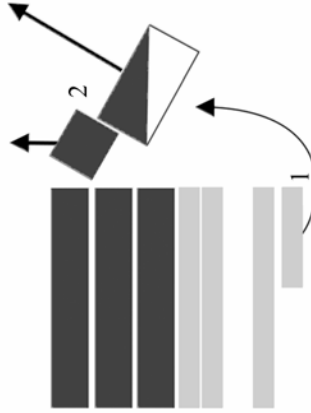
Caesar's infantry advances on Pompeian infantry.

**B**



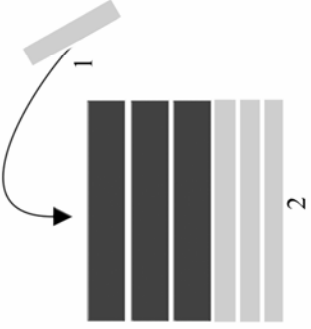
1 - Caesar's outnumbered cavalry is forced from field.  
2 - Pompeian cavalry attempts to flank Caesar's infantry.

**C**



1 - Caesar's hidden 6 cohorts advance.  
2 - Pompeian cavalry and archers flee.

**D**



1 - Caesar's 6 cohorts flank and attack Pompeian infantry.  
2 - Caesar orders third line of infantry to advance.



## Lecture Twenty-Two

### The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest

**Scope:** Augustus, the first emperor of Rome, was also its greatest conqueror. Central to his political position was his relationship with the army, now recast into a professional, standing force of volunteers. For the first decades of his 45-year reign, Augustus used this formidable armament to complete the conquest of Spain (ongoing since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.) and to bring Roman arms up to the Danube, which, along with the Rhine, was to form the northern frontier of the empire. The Rhine, it seems, was forced on Augustus because the conquest of Germany proper was blocked by a humiliating defeat involving the loss of three legions. Ironically, the German forces were led by a man who had benefited from Augustus's creation of a permanent army and had served in the Roman ranks as a noncitizen "auxiliary." We examine the literary accounts of this battle and the remarkable archaeological discoveries at Kalkriese in Germany that are related to it. Finally, we consider the wider historical significance of the Varan Disaster (*Clades Variana*), which some commentators have identified as a turning point in European history.

### Outline

- I. Augustus finalized the process of professionalizing the Roman army and used the new force to conquer large parts of northern and central Europe.
  - A. Augustus's 45-year reign saw many changes in the Roman army; they can be summarized under several rubrics.
    - 1. The army was first reduced to a standing force of 28 legions, each numbered and named.
    - 2. Volunteers to the legions served for 16, then 20 years, with a further period of 4 or more years on reserve.
    - 3. On discharge, they received a cash reward equivalent to 14 years' pay.
    - 4. The command structure was reformed.
    - 5. Noncitizen auxiliaries became increasingly systematized and professional.
    - 6. Their precise terms of service remain unclear for the Augustan period; later evidence gives some clues, however.
  - B. Augustus used his new force to expand the empire as no one else had; once established, the frontiers became the Augustan army's home.
    - 1. Augustus conducted campaigns in Spain, the east, and along the Rhine-Danube.
    - 2. The tendency was for the legions to stay in the more remote frontiers of the empire.

- II. In Germany, Augustus pursued an expansionist policy, the exact goals of which are debated still.
  - A. Roman relations with the Germans went back for more than a century.
    - 1. The attempted invasion of Italy by the Cimbri and Teutones caused panic in Rome in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.
    - 2. Caesar had crossed the Rhine as a show of force rather than as a serious attempt at incorporation.
  - B. To the Roman mind, the ancient Germans were the quintessential “barbarians.”
    - 1. Caesar’s accounts of them are some of the earliest, supplemented by the later monograph by Tacitus, *Germania*.
    - 2. In Augustus’s day, the Germans occupied the densely wooded habitat of central Europe.
    - 3. They lived in tribal communities, with a strong warrior ethos prevalent among the men.
    - 4. They were considerably less urbanized than their neighbors in Gaul.
    - 5. From Rome’s perspective, they were a serious security threat.
    - 6. Archaeology partly confirms but also corrects many of these impressions.
  - C. The Augustan policy toward Germany was aggressive, but its goals are debated.
    - 1. One camp of opinion sees the Romans pushing for a “natural” or “scientific” frontier along the Elbe-Danube line.
    - 2. The other sees only the habitual Roman quest for conquest.
    - 3. Roman operations in Germany 12 B.C.–A.D. 9 do not seem to have achieved much.
    - 4. Archaeology, however, attests to semipermanent military bases east of the Rhine, along the Lippe River.
    - 5. By A.D. 6, it seemed to many as if Germany had been conquered and could now be incorporated.
- III. P. Quinctilius Varus led three full legions to destruction at the hands of the Cheruscan prince Arminius.
  - A. Varus’s appointment suggests the complacency about Germany felt at Rome.
    - 1. Varus, with good political connections, was more a bureaucrat than a general.
    - 2. He alienated the Germans by imposing taxes and behaving arrogantly.
    - 3. Given that he was a scapegoat, we must be cautious about blithely accepting the worst charges leveled against him.
  - B. Arminius played Varus perfectly and orchestrated the ambush.
    - 1. Arminius had served as a Roman auxiliary officer.

2. The experience left him well versed in Roman military practice.
  3. He wormed his way into Varus's confidence; his experience among the Romans allowed him to do this.
  4. At the same time, he planned to destroy the Roman forces Varus commanded.
- C.** The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest was a regular ambush effected on a huge scale.
1. Iron Age German warfare was small-scale and low-intensity, very much on the "primitive" model (see Lecture Two).
  2. The Romans had encountered such guerilla tactics in their previous campaigns in the German forests.
  3. Larger barbarian armies generally vented their fury in the first onslaught; after that, they could be butchered.
  4. Arminius's plan was to keep the Romans on the defensive and allow his men to sustain their assault.
  5. Accounts of the actual battle vary, but the fullest account (in Dio) can be supplemented from other sources.
  6. The major disagreement is over duration: Was it a long, drawn-out, three-day affair or a single furious assault?
  7. Following the defeat, the bases east of the Rhine were abandoned, and the Rhine River became Rome's permanent northern frontier.
- D.** Remarkable discoveries at Kalkriese in Germany have pinpointed the scene of the massacre.
1. Several places were proposed over the years; Theodor Mommsen favored Kalkriese as early as 1885.
  2. His hypothesis was not vindicated, however, until 1987.
  3. Varieties of finds at the site are consistent with the Teutoburg Forest battle, particularly the coins.
  4. The discovery of a German-made wall surprised scholars and suggested the degree of preparation put into the planning of the ambush.
  5. To my mind, one find—an intact skeleton of a mule with a cowbell that had been stuffed with grass to silence it—favors Dio's scenario of a running-battle account over the short-fury scenario for the battle's course.
- IV.** The afterlife of the battle has been sustained.
- A.** Arminius himself died young but lives on in German lore.
1. Arminius continued to fight the Romans to his death, at the hands of his own people, in A.D. 21.
  2. Tacitus recognized his importance in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.
  3. Since the Renaissance, he has been a hero of the German people.
- B.** Counterfactual speculations about the battle's importance are sometimes overblown.

1. The battle has been claimed as the single most important moment in European history.
2. Although certainly important, many counterfactual speculations about alternative pasts are a little stretched.

**Essential Reading:**

Dio, *Roman History*, 56.18-23.

Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, 2.30.

Tacitus, *The Annals*, 1.59–62.

Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*, 2.95–122.

Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army*, pp. 132–170.

Wells, *The Battle That Stopped Rome*.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Gabriel and Boose, *Great Battles*, pp. 398–428 (this account mislocates the battle to the southeast of Kalkriese).

Lapham, “Furor Tuetonicus,” in Cowley, ed., *What If?*, pp. 59–69.

Schlüter, “Battle of the Teutoburg Forest.”

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Why could Rome conquer Gaul but not Germany?
2. Whom do you blame for the Teutoburg Forest disaster? Are you convinced that Kalkriese was the site of the main assault? Why?

## **Lecture Twenty-Three**

### **Catastrophe at Adrianople**

**Scope:** The last battle in our series is yet another Roman defeat that, for only the second time in Roman history, saw an emperor fall on the field of battle against a foreign foe. The events leading to the Battle of Adrianople are symptomatic of the problems besetting the Later Roman Empire along its northern frontier, as vast hordes of barbarians (in this case, Goths) were pushed onto and through its borders by easterly neighbors fleeing the oncoming Huns. Our consideration of the battle itself is preceded by a survey of the Goths and the threat they posed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and by an assessment of Later Roman military organization and equipment. The consequences of the disaster at Adrianople are also addressed.

### **Outline**

- I.** The Later Roman Empire was a very different place than the Augustan Principate.
  - A.** The turning point was the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.
    - 1. Internal dissension combined with external invasion to generate chaos.
    - 2. A remarkable series of emperors in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century restored unity and order.
  - B.** The restored empire was put on a permanent war footing.
    - 1. Among its most pressing problems was the threat of barbarian peoples pushing onto its northern frontier along the Rhine and Danube.
    - 2. Along the eastern Danube, the Goths were one such group.
- II.** The early history of the Goths can only be reconstructed with great difficulty; some salient points, however, are discernible.
  - A.** Working from the archaeological and written sources, the Goths appear to have originated in the Baltic zone of Poland.
    - 1. Sources for Gothic history are scarce and difficult to trace: The 6<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine writer Jordanes is the main written source, supplemented by some other Roman sources.
    - 2. Jordanes claims that the Goths originated in Scandinavia and moved progressively southward.
    - 3. They ended up on the northern banks of the eastern reaches of the Danube and the north shore of the Black Sea.
    - 4. Confirming written accounts by archaeology is difficult, especially when ethnicity is involved.

5. Two archaeologically attested Polish and Balkan cultures, however, appear to coincide sequentially with Gothic spheres of activity.
  6. However, we must conceive of “Gothicness” in broad terms as applying to distinct groups rather than describing a single, united nation.
- B.** The Goths exploded onto the Roman world in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century.
1. Their first raids started in the 240s and culminated in the defeat of the Romans at Abrittus in 251, where the emperor Trajan Decius was killed.
  2. In 255, they ravaged the Balkans for three successive years.
  3. In 265, a seaborne invasion struck Asia Minor and Greece; major sites were destroyed.
  4. After being repulsed in 268, Gotho-Roman relations settled down somewhat but were marked by mutual distrust.
- C.** Changes in Gothic 4<sup>th</sup>-century society are suggested by archaeology.
1. Contact with the Roman world increased wealth.
  2. Grave goods suggest increased prominence for warband leaders.
  3. Roman influence seems to have made them more dangerous to Rome.
  4. Gothic military techniques are not clear to us, but they were clearly effective and recognized as such even by the Romans.
  5. Organization by warbands made them difficult to tackle strategically; their tactical advantages are less clear.
  6. Roman recruitment of quasi-independent Gothic contingents speaks to their effectiveness and marks a change in Roman military practice.
- III.** The Later Roman army was quite different from that of the preceding Principate.
- A.** Changes came piecemeal, with Gallienus (254–268) being instrumental in some obscure way.
- B.** Sources include the odd *Notitia Dignitatum* (c. 390), Ammianus Marcellinus (mid-4<sup>th</sup> century), and Vegetius (c. 400).
- C.** Differences are clear in a number of categories.
1. Legions became smaller (c. 1,000 men) but more numerous.
  2. There were more small-scale actions and fewer major engagements.
  3. The army was divided into garrison troops (*limitanei*) and field armies (*comitatenses*), who cooperated to repel invaders making small or large incursions.
  4. The old notion that the field armies were dominated by cavalry is no longer widely held.

5. There was a greater reliance on conscripts; terms of service changed.
6. Barbarian contingents were more prominent.
7. Equipment changed and strategy and tactics were less aggressive and more defensive in both principle and practice.
8. The command structures also changed, with more professional officers and varieties of subordinates.

IV. In 376, two Gothic groups crossed the Danube and set in motion the events that led to Adrianople two years later.

- A. Under pressure from the Huns coming from the east, some Goths sought asylum inside the Roman Empire; distrust marked their agreement with the Romans.
  1. The Huns were pressing into Gothic lands from the east.
  2. Some Gothic groups fought them (and lost); others sought refuge inside the Roman Empire.
  3. In 376, the Tervingi and Greuthungi, two Gothic groups, asked to be admitted; only the former were granted official permission.
  4. Valens, emperor of the east, did not trust the Goths but was forced by circumstances to admit them as a quasi-independent entity.
  5. In the confusion of the Tervingi's crossing, the Greuthungi also came across and entered the empire illegally.
  6. Either by official policy or by the incompetence of the local commander, the Goths were maltreated and they revolted.
- B. Under Fritigern of the Tervingi, the Goths ravaged the Balkans; Valens sought assistance from Gratian, emperor of the west, to check them.
  1. The Greuthungi joined the revolt and the situation became serious.
  2. Roman operations in 377 were indecisive.
  3. Gothic enticement of Alans and even Huns from outside the empire widened the threat of the revolt.
  4. Gratian was held up by barbarian troubles of his own in Raetia.
  5. Gratian's military success made Valens jealous.
- C. Valens approached from the east and, at Adrianople, made a poor decision to attack without waiting for Gratian; disaster ensued.
  1. Estimating army strengths is difficult, but the Romans were probably outnumbered.
  2. Valens was given poor intelligence on Gothic strength, claimed to be only 10,000.
  3. He was also reluctant to share his imminent victory with Gratian, who was already covered in glory.
  4. On 9 August 378, Valens advanced to attack the Gothic camp outside Adrianople.
  5. A long march delivered a tired, hungry, and thirsty Roman army to the battlefield.

6. Last-minute negotiations appeared to have averted a confrontation, when fighting broke out spontaneously.
  7. As the fighting spread, the Gothic cavalry arrived and drove off the Roman horse; the Roman infantry was then surrounded and butchered.
  8. Valens himself fell at Adrianople, the second Roman emperor to die in battle and the second to do so at the hands of Goths.
- V. The ripples from Adrianople washed down the succeeding centuries.
- A. The Gothic War raged until 382, when a tentative peace settled the Goths along the Danube; there, they became Visigoths.
  - B. The loss of so many precious highly trained troops was a blow from which the empire never recovered.
    1. It was prohibitively expensive to train and replace so many elite troops.
    2. There was an increased reliance on barbarian troops.
  - C. Under Alaric, the Goths of 378–382, reinforced by other groups, put huge pressure on both the eastern and western empires and eventually sacked Rome itself on 24 August 410—a little more than 32 years after Adrianople.

**Essential Reading:**

Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, Book 31.

Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War*, pp. 249–261.

Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, pp. 320–367.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Gabriel and Boose, *Great Battles*, pp. 430–459.

Heather, *The Goths*, pp. 1–178, and *Goths and Romans*, pp. 122–156.

Stephenson, *Roman Infantry Equipment*.





**Questions to Consider:**

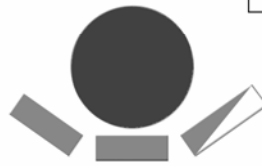
1. What could Valens have done differently to ensure victory or, at least, to avoid the crushing defeat at Adrianople?
2. Is it true that Adrianople marked the end of the Roman Empire in the west? If so, why? If not, why not?



## The Battle of Adrianople (378 A.D.)

A

Roman cavalry	
Roman infantry	
Gothic cavalry	
Gothic infantry	

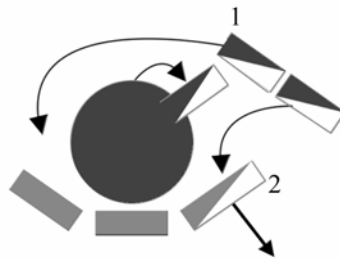


Outnumbered Roman forces approach and engage Goths.

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1 - Gothic cavalry arrives on field to join battle.

B

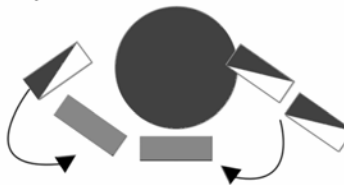


2 - Roman cavalry is routed by Goths.

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Gothic cavalry flanks remaining Romans and destroys encircled Roman infantry.

C



## **Lecture Twenty-Four**

### **Reflections on Warfare in the Ancient World**

**Scope:** To close the course, we address two important questions: (1) Why did warfare occupy so central a role in the societies of the ancient Mediterranean? An answer to this question is bound to be complex because it is highly unlikely that a single “answer” to so varied and long-lived a phenomenon as ancient war can even be found. Rather, it is more likely that several factors were operating at once. First, we establish the central place of warfare in the ancient Mediterranean through examination of some pertinent examples. Next, we propose a series of observable factors that may have generated this situation. Finally, we briefly contemplate what the basis of those factors might have been. (2) Was a so-called Western way of war invented in Archaic Greece (700–500 B.C.) and has it been continuously practiced up to the present, as a recent and prominent military commentator has argued? This extraordinary claim is examined critically in the light of what we have learned in this course.

### **Outline**

- I.** Two questions dominate this, the final lecture in our course.
  - A.** Why was war so central a phenomenon to the ancient world?
  - B.** Is there a Western way of war, invented by the Greeks and passed down to us from them and quite distinct from forms of warfare practiced by other peoples?
- II.** The centrality of warfare to ancient societies is readily discernible; explanations for it vary.
  - A.** It was a prominent feature of all the complex societies we have looked at, as well as many of the less complex ones on the periphery.
    - 1.** This phenomenon is not tied to any particular sociopolitical or cultural system.
    - 2.** Therefore, any answer to this first question will have to be multifaceted.
  - B.** Warfare served the interests of ruling elites.
  - C.** There was an implicit connection between war, power-holding, and legitimacy that can be traced in all ancient societies.
    - 1.** The despotic and imperial states naturally display this feature.
    - 2.** But even the Greeks, the least overtly warlike of the ancient peoples, admired and lionized martial virtues.
    - 3.** The Roman state was the most heavily militarized of the lot.

4. This connection serves to keep dependent populations in line and to justify rulers' positions of dominance.
  - D. Warfare offered many material and social benefits to the huge numbers of subsistence farmers or those who were otherwise less well off, who made up the vast majority of an ancient state's population.
    1. Looting was a standard practice in ancient warfare.
    2. Rewards conferred by commanders or rulers added social prestige to material gain.
    3. Warfare in most ages, including the modern era, can be an opportunity for the destitute and disenfranchised.
  - E. The ancient world was a harsher place, both physically and mentally, than the developed modern societies we are used to.
    1. Pain and death were more visible and more proximate.
    2. Death in war, at least, was honored and remembered.
  - F. Warfare was deeply embedded in the ancient state's value system and religions.
    1. Some examples from the Greeks best illustrate this.
    2. A passage in Polybius illustrates the harsh outlooks that seem to have dominated the ancients' perceptions of each other.
    3. Power inequities—clearly manifested in slavery—were the norm in these societies; power inequities were also the norm between states.
- III. Victor Davis Hanson's proposals for a Western way of war traceable from the Greeks to the modern age in the West are questionable.
- A. The argument deserves close scrutiny because it ties the subject of this course—ancient battles—directly to the modern experience.
  - B. There are two main features of Hanson's model:
    1. How the Greeks conducted warfare (see Lecture Nine).
    2. Why Western armies have proven historically superior to their non-Western opponents.
  - C. Hanson's model for how the Greeks fought their wars is not supported by the evidence.
    1. There is a problem with the applicability of the evidence he uses to the era of 700–500 B.C. that he sees as key (see Lecture Nine).
    2. Contemporary evidence from this era does not suggest that the Greeks were solely committed to heavy infantry phalanxes.
    3. There is plenty of evidence for deception in Greek warfare; they did not always seek out “open,” head-on collisions, as Hanson insists.
    4. Hoplite armies did attempt maneuvers, even if not very well.
    5. Decisive battles are found in non-Greek contexts, and they display much the same set of characteristics that Hanson insists were peculiarly Greek.

6. Attempts to redefine “decisive” battle in the wake of such objections lead to circular argumentation.
- D.** Hanson’s cultural explanation for why Western armies often fight better than non-Western ones is questionable and marred by a huge hole at its core.
1. Hanson argues that cultural traits, such as commitment to individual liberty, civic militarism, civilian audit of military commanders, rationality, and free markets, give Western armies an edge.
  2. To a degree, his position is uncontestable: All societies will conduct wars according to their cultural norms.
  3. But it is not at all clear that the cultural features Hanson emphasizes have been longstanding elements in the West since antiquity.
  4. His case studies show that, in many cases, the facts have to be forced to fit the culturally deterministic model.
  5. There is huge hole at the heart of Hanson’s model because he makes no effort to explain why Western culture is the way it is; regrettably, he also derides the attempts of others to do so.

**Essential Reading:**

Dawson, *The Origins of Western Warfare*.

Hanson, *The Western Way of War* and *Carnage and Culture*.

Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, pp. 1–104.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Diamond, *Germes, Guns and Steel*.

LeBlanc, *Constant Battles*, pp. 128–230.

Van Wees, *Greek Warfare*, pp. 3–43.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What features, other than those charted above, do you think contributed to the widespread militarism of the ancient Mediterranean world?
2. What is your view of Victor Davis Hanson’s culturally based arguments for a Western way of war? Do you think the objections raised to it here hold water? If so, why? If not, why not?

## Bibliography

**Important note:** This bibliography is perforce restricted to particularly pertinent and/or influential works. The notes and bibliographies of the titles below can readily lead the curious and the diligent to further landscapes of interest.

The centrality of warfare to Classical civilization lends the output of ancient historical writers an overwhelmingly military character. Most can, therefore, be consulted with profit. In particular, consult those listed below for the Greco-Roman battles discussed in this course.

\*Denotes essential reading.

### Ancient Works

(All references are to any editions of English translations in the Penguin Classics series, unless otherwise indicated.)

#### Sumer, Egypt, and the Near East:

Cooper, J. S. *Reconstructing History from Ancient Inscriptions: The Lagash-Umma Border Conflict*. Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1983. A short and technical but remarkably readable treatise that includes translations of all pertinent materials (the Vulture Stela included).

Lichtheim, M. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, 3 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973–1980. An assemblage of papyri and inscriptional texts in translation, including many pertaining to warfare.

Luckenbill, D. D. *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylon*, 2 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926–1927. Still a standard collection of Near Eastern inscriptions and tablets in translation. Volume 2 is especially useful for the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

Pritchard, J. B. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Classic collection of Near Eastern and Egyptian texts in translation, including those pertaining to the battles of Megiddo and Kadesh.

#### Greece:

\*Sage, M. M. *Warfare in Ancient Greece: A Sourcebook*. London: Routledge, 1996. A handy collection of some ancient sources, in translation, covering the “Homeric” to the Hellenistic periods.

\*Aeschylus. D. R. Slavitt and P. Bovie, eds. *Aeschylus 2: The Persians, Seven Against Thebes, The Suppliants, Prometheus Bound*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.

\*Arrian. *Anabasis*, a.k.a. *Campaigns of Alexander the Great*.

\*Diodorus Siculus. *Library of History*, 11 vols. Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library series, Harvard University Press, 1933–1967.

\*Herodotus. *The Histories*.

- \*Homer. *The Iliad*.
- \*Nepos. *Illustrious Lives*.
- \*Pausanias. *Guide to Greece*.
- \*Quintus Curtius. *History of Alexander*.
- \*Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian War*.
- \*Xenophon. *Anabasis*, a.k.a. *The Persian Expedition*.

### **Rome:**

Campbell, B. *The Roman Army, 31 BC–AD 337: A Sourcebook*. London: Routledge, 1994. A collection of pertinent sources in translation.

- \*Ammianus Marcellinus. *The Later Roman Empire*.
- \*Appian, *Roman History*.
- \*Caesar. *The Civil War*.
- . *The Conquest of Gaul*.
- \*———. *The Gallic War*.
- \*Dio. *Roman History*. The Penguin Classics feature *The Reign of Augustus* (Books 50–56 of the original work).
- \*Dionysius of Halicarnassus. *Roman Antiquities*. Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library series, Harvard University Press, 1974.
- \*Florus. *Epitome of Roman History*. Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library series, Harvard University Press, 1929.
- The *Historia Augusta*, a.k.a. *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*. Available in three volumes in the Loeb Classical Library series. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921–32.
- \*Josephus. *The Jewish War*.
- \*Livy. *The History of Rome from Its Foundation*, featuring *The Early History of Rome* (Books 1–5), *Rome and Italy* (Books 6–10), *The War with Hannibal* (Books 21–30), and *Rome and the Mediterranean* (Books 31–55).
- \*Plutarch. *Parallel Lives*, featuring *Makers of Rome* and *The Fall of the Roman Republic*.
- \*Polybius. *The Rise of the Roman Empire*.
- \*Sallust. *Jugurthine War and Conspiracy of Catiline*.
- \*Suetonius. *The Twelve Caesars* (Caesar–Domitian).
- \*Tacitus. *The Annals of Imperial Rome*.
- . *Germania*.
- . *The Histories*.
- \*Velleius Paterculus. *Compendium of Roman History*. Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library series, Harvard University Press, 1924.

Note also the curious corpus of the so-called tacticians, military handbooks of little literary merit and dubious historical value that usually collate de-contextualized anecdotes or offer overly systematized analyses. That said, they can be plumbed for useful tidbits. The chief tacticians are as follows:

Aelian. *Tactica*.

Frontinus. *Stratagems*.

Polyaenus. *Stratagems of War*.

Vegetius. *Epitome of Military Science*.

### Modern Works

#### General:

*Ancient World at War*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. A series of books by credited scholars, either published or in production, on various aspects of ancient warfare.

Anglim, S., P. G. Jestice, R. S. Rice, S. M. Rusch, and J. Serrati. *Fighting Techniques of the Ancient World, 3000 BC–AD 500: Equipment, Combat Skills and Tactics*. New York: Thomas Dunne, 2002. A useful and well-illustrated overview of the subject by unit type.

\*Connolly, P. *Greece and Rome at War*. London: Greenhill Books, 1998, rev. ed. An accessible survey of the subject, with excellent illustrations and reconstructions.

Cowley, R., ed. *What If? The World's Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*. New York: Putnam, 1999. Interesting assemblage of battle counterfactuals, including Jerusalem, Salamis, Alexander the Great, and the Teutoburg Forest.

Creasy, Edward S. *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World: From Marathon to Waterloo*. New York: Da Capo, 1994. Pioneering 19<sup>th</sup>-century work establishing the “great battle” genre.

\*Dawson, D. *The Origins of Western Warfare: Militarism and Morality in the Ancient World*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996. An erudite contemplation that does much to establish the centrality of warfare in the ancient Mediterranean, especially in the Classical world.

Delbrück, H. *History of the Art of War*. London: Greenwood, 1975. A seminal work, originally published in four volumes between 1900 and 1920. The first volume and the opening of the second concern antiquity.

Diamond, J. *Germs, Guns and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: Norton, 1989. Brilliantly argued case that geographic and biological circumstances have shaped the broad geopolitical demographics of the planet.

Du Picq, A. *Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern Battle*, trans. J. N. Greely and R. C. Cotton. New York: Macmillan, 1921. A 19<sup>th</sup>-century French colonel offers tremendous insights into the rigors of combat.

\*Ferrill, A. *The Origins of War: From the Stone Age to Alexander the Great*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997, rev. ed. The title is slightly misleading given that the book is less about the origins of warfare than it is a concise survey of military history from the Stone Age to Alexander.

Fuller, J. F. C. *A Military History of the Western World*, 3 vols. New York: Da Capo, 1954–1956. A classic treatment of the topic. The first volume concerns antiquity and discusses many of the battles treated in this course.

\*Gabriel, R. A., and D. W. Boose. *The Great Battles of Antiquity: A Strategic and Tactical Guide to Great Battles That Shaped the Development of War*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. Useful and detailed study that incorporates many of the battles covered in this course but is marred by a somewhat uncritical reading of sources. It tends, however, to impute uncritically some modern practices to ancient armies.

\*Hackett, J. *Warfare in the Ancient World*. New York: Facts on File, 1989. Excellent text by recognized experts; complemented by fine illustrations.

\*Hanson, V. D. *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power*. New York: Anchor Books, 2001. Extends the thesis of the Western way of war over an analysis of key battles from Salamis (480 B.C.) to the Tet Offensive (1968).

\*Keegan, J. *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme*. London: Cape, 1976. Although it does not address any of our featured battles, the book is essential reading for its methodology, which has influenced many succeeding studies of warfare.

———. *A History of Warfare*. New York: Knopf, 1993. A sweeping survey of the whole scope of warfare, from prehistoric origins to the modern age. Takes an anthropological long view of the subject.

\*Kern, P. B. *Ancient Siege Warfare*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999. This is the fullest and most systematic study of the topic in print thus far, although it is stronger on description than analysis.

London, J. E. *Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. Argues a provocative and thought-provoking thesis that ancient military affairs were molded by a reverence for a heroic and legendary past. While this central contention is unconvincing, the book is well worth reading.

Lloyd, A. B., and C. Gilliver, eds. *Battle in Antiquity*. London: Duckworth in association with the Classical Press of Wales, 1996. Collection of essays by scholars on various aspects of the topic. Excellent reading and well documented.

McGrail, S. *Boats of the World: From the Stone Age to Medieval Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Comprehensive and technical survey of maritime technology, including consideration of Egyptian, Assyrian, Phoenician, and Greek warships.



Montagu, J. D. *Battles of the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Chronological Compendium of 667 Battles to 31 B.C., from the Historians of the Ancient World*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000. The title is self-explanatory, and the book is very useful as a reference work, particularly as a guide to the relevant passages in ancient sources.

Neiberg, M. S. *Warfare in World History*. London: Routledge, 2001. A brief introduction to the topic.

*Osprey Warrior Series* and *Osprey Military Elite Series*. Oxford: Osprey, Warrior Series: 1994–2003; Elite Series: 1986–2005. Useful surveys of various ancient armies are included in these two series of short books, usually well illustrated and written by respectable scholars.

Parker, G., ed. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. A standard reference work with contributions by many scholars; only the first three chapters, all composed by V. D. Hanson, deal with Greek and Roman warfare.

Von Clausewitz, C. *On War*, trans. M. Howard and P. Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. In his classic 19<sup>th</sup>-century treatise, the Prussian officer lays out what might be called a “philosophy of war.”

Warry, J. *Warfare in the Classical World*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. A well-illustrated and readable general survey of the subject.

### **Prehistory and the Origins of War:**

Carman, J., and A. Harding, eds. *Ancient Warfare: Archaeological Perspectives*. Stroud, UK: Sutton, 1999. An excellent example of how theoretical modeling is applied to archaeological evidence in an anthropological paradigm.

\*Dawson, D. *The First Armies*. London: Cassell, 2001. A volume in the *Cassell History of Warfare* series. The chapters on the origins of war are thought provoking, but the subsequent text advocates an unconvincing and radical thesis. Excellent illustrations.

\*Guilaine, J., and J. Zammit. *The Origins of War: Violence in Prehistory*, trans. M. Hersey. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. An archaeologist and a medical doctor offer a comprehensive survey of the prehistoric evidence for organized violence.

\*Keeley, L. H. *War Before Civilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pioneering work that assembles and discusses all the material evidence for prehistoric warfare.

\*Kelly, R. C. *Warless Societies and the Origins of War*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000. A thorough, if rather technical, example of ethnographic modeling to investigate early warfare.

\*LeBlanc, S. *Constant Battles: The Myth of the Peaceful, Noble Savage*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003. An archaeologist lays out the case for widespread warfare throughout human history, with roots in simian behavior.

Turney-High, H. H. *Primitive War: Its Practice and Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1971. Groundbreaking anthropological study that has exerted great influence over the subsequent study of early warfare.

Wrangham, R., and D. Peterson. *Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996. The most thorough sociobiological argument for the genetic origins of warfare in print. Unfortunately, it is almost wholly unconvincing.

### **Sumer, Egypt, and the Near East:**

Cline, E. H. *The Battles of Armageddon: Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley from the Bronze Age to the Nuclear Age*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000. A stimulating transhistorical survey of a frequently contested battleground.

Faulkner, R. O. "Egyptian Military Organization," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 39 (1953): 32–47. Seminal article interpreting textual terms pertaining to warfare from the Old to New Kingdoms.

Gelb, F. "Prisoners of War in Early Mesopotamia," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 32 (1973): 70–98. Somewhat technical article that illustrates how cuneiform texts can be mined for military information. Disregard the Sumerian philology and trace the mode of argument.

\*Gnirs, A. "Ancient Egypt," in Raaflaub and Rosenstein, eds., *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, pp. 71–104. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999. Excellent overview with ample reference to prior work.

\*Goedicke, H. *The Battle of Megiddo*. Baltimore: Halgo, 2000. Comprehensive account by an expert on Egyptian military matters; somewhat technical in parts but very useful in its overview of the engagement.

\*———. *Perspectives on the Battle of Kadesh*. Baltimore: Halgo, 1985. A collection of essays that offer excellent and thoughtful analyses on various issues.

Hackett, J. W. *Warfare in the Ancient World*, pp. 15–35. New York: Facts on File, 1989. Combined survey of military developments in the ancient Near East and Egypt. Good illustrations.

\*Kuhrt, A. *The Ancient Near East, c. 3000–330 BC*, 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1995. Excellent survey and summary of current understanding about the period covered. Rich bibliography points to more specific studies.

Lawrence, A. W. "Ancient Egyptian Fortifications," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 51 (1965): 69–94. Surveys a series of forts and fortresses, notably the Middle Kingdom fort Buhen in Upper Egypt.

Oded, B., *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1979. Essential reading for those interested in the consequences of Near Eastern siege warfare. Elucidation of a core element in Assyrian policy.

———. *War, Peace, and Empire: Justifications for War in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1992.

Thorough study of the Assyrian texts documenting and analyzing the topic covered in the title.

Schulman, A. R. *Military Rank, Title and Organization in the Egyptian New Kingdom*. Berlin: Hessling, 1964. Major study of the officer class of the New Kingdom army.

Shaw, I. "Battle in Ancient Egypt: The Triumph of Horus or the Cutting Edge of the Temple Economy," in Lloyd and Gilliver, eds., *Battle in Antiquity*, pp. 239–269. London: Duckworth in association with the Classical Press of Wales, 1996. Excellent survey of Egyptian battle scenes in art; stresses the role of materialism in motivating Egyptian warfare.

\*Spalinger, A. J. *War in Ancient Egypt: The New Kingdom*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. One in the Blackwell series *War in the Ancient World*. A readable and well-documented overview of the subject.

\*Ussishkin, D. *The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Institute of Archaeology, 1982. Excellently illustrated survey and discussion of all the ancient evidence—archaeological, textual, and iconographic—for the siege of Lachish.

Van De Mieroop, M. *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000–323 BC*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. An up-to-date and very readable overview of the subject, with plenty of citations from primary materials.

Winter, I. J. "After the Battle Is Over: The Stele of the Vultures and the Beginning of Pictorial Narrative in the Art of the Ancient Near East," in H. L. Kessler and M. S. Simpson, eds., *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, pp. 11–32. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1985. Detailed but concise study of an essential piece of evidence for early Mesopotamian warfare, the Vulture Stela, with some consideration also of the Royal Standard of Ur.

\*Wiseman, D.J. "The Assyrians," in J. Hackett, *Warfare in the Ancient World*, pp. 36–53. New York: Facts on File, 1989. A readable overview complemented by fine illustrations.

\*Yadin, Y. *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in the Light of Archaeological Study*, 2 vols. London: McGraw-Hill, 1963. Although out of print and in need of updating, this remains a standard source, especially for finds of weapons. Excellent illustrations.

#### **Greece:**

Anderson, J. K. *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970. The title is self-explanatory.

Burgess, J. S. *The Tradition of the Trojan War in Homer and the Epic Cycle*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. A literary study that sets the story of the Trojan War against a wider context than Homer.

- Cartledge, P. *The Spartans: The World of the Warrior-Heroes of Ancient Greece*. Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2003. Comprehensive and readable survey of Spartan history by their leading modern historian.
- Clough, E. "Loyalty and Liberty: Thermopylae in the Western Imagination," in T. J. Figuera, ed., *Spartan Society*, pp. 363–384. London: Classical Press of Wales, 2004. Enlightening look at how the events at Thermopylae perform as cultural capital.
- Ducrey, P. *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, New York: Schocken Books, 1986. A concise overview and useful introduction to the subject.
- Goldsworthy, A. K. "The *Othismos*, Myths and Heresies: The Nature of Hoplite Battle," *War in Society* 4 (1997): 1–26. Sane and sensible discussion of a hotly disputed issue.
- \*Green, P. *The Greco-Persian Wars*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. Readable and up-to-date narrative and analysis by an eminent historian of Greece.
- Hammond, N. G. L. "The Campaign and Battle of Marathon," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 88 (1968): 13–57. Detailed analysis of the ancient sources and topography of this pivotal battle.
- \*Hanson, V. D. *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. An influential work, modeled in part on Keegan's *Face of Battle*, arguing that the Greeks of the Archaic Age invented the "Western" military ethic: massed confrontation in decisive pitched battle.
- How, W. W., and J. Wells. *A Commentary on Herodotus*, 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928, corrected version. An older but excellent source for the Battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea.
- Kagan, D. *The Peloponnesian War*. New York: Penguin, 2003. A leading historian of ancient Greece offers a readable, if debatable, survey of this great conflict.
- \*Lane Fox, R., ed. *The Long March: Xenophon and the Ten Thousand*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. Collection of papers exploring various aspects of this extraordinary event.
- \*Latacz, J. *Troy and Homer: Towards a Resolution of an Old Mystery*, trans. K. Windle and R. Ireland. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Brilliantly argued case for the essential historicity of the Homeric poems and the Trojan War.
- \*Lazenby, J. *The Defence of Greece, 490–79 BC*. Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips, 1993. Detailed military and political analysis of the Persian Wars with meticulous documentation, ancient and modern.
- Lloyd, A. *Marathon: The Crucial Battle That Created Western Democracy*. London: Souvenir Press, 1973; reprint 2004. An engagingly written, if undocumented, popular account of this vital battle.

Powell, B. B. *Blackwell Introductions to the Classical World: Homer*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004. A recent, readable, and comprehensive introduction to Homer, including analysis of his usefulness as a historical source.

Pressfield, S. *Gates of Fire*. New York: Doubleday, 1998. A novel of the Battle of Thermopylae that, while adhering strictly to the “orthodox” view of hoplite warfare, effectively conveys the horrors of edged-weaponed combat.

Pritchett, W. K. *Studies in Greek Topography*, vol. 2, *Battlefields*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. Useful guide to the battlefields of Greece, if now a little dated.

———. *The Greek State at War*, 5 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971–1991. A standard treatment of the topic. Particularly useful for its exhaustive collection of relevant ancient sources.

\*Strauss, B. *The Battle of Salamis: The Naval Encounter That Saved Greece—and Western Civilization*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004. Despite the title, the book is a readable overview of the Persian invasion of 480 B.C.

Trundle, M. *Greek Mercenaries*. London: Routledge, 2004. An up-to-date social, political, and cultural history of this institution.

\*Van Wees, H. *Greek Warfare: Myths and Realities*. London: Duckworth, 2004. Provocative reassessment of the nature of Greek warfare based on a critical evaluation of ancient sources.

. ———. “Homeric Warfare,” in I. Morris and B. Powell, eds., *A New Companion to Homer*, pp. 668–693. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1997. Excellent survey of various views on Homeric warfare by the leading scholar of Greek warfare, including his own sensible solution.

\*———, ed. *War and Violence in Ancient Greece*. London: Duckworth, 2000. Superb collection of essays on all aspects of Greek warfare, from the causes of Greek wars to the role of war in religious life.

#### **The Macedonians, Philip, and Alexander:**

Ashley, J. R. *The Macedonian Empire: The Era of Warfare under Philip II and Alexander the Great, 359–323 BC*. London: McFarland, 1998. A wargamer’s nuts-and-bolts exploration of the Macedonian army, battle techniques, and campaigns. A very useful resource, but Greek terminology is often misused.

Bosworth, A. B. *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. In a welter of Alexander biographies, this stands out for its concision, meticulous documentation, and clarity of exposition.

\*Briant, P. “Ancient Egypt,” in Raaflaub and Rosenstein, eds., *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, pp. 105–128. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999. Survey of the Achaemenid Persian army and the role of the military in Persian life by the world’s leading expert on the era.

Cartledge, P. *Alexander the Great: The Hunt for a New Past*. Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2004. A recent thematic life by one of the world's leading Greek historians.

Cawkwell, G. *Philip of Macedon*. London: Faber, 1978. Concise and readable account of Philip's life, with a strong focus on military matters.

Green, P. *Alexander the Great: A Historical Biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. A leading historian of the Hellenistic world surveys the essential life of this era.

Hammond, N. G. L. *Philip of Macedon*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. A thorough survey of Philip's life, replete with perceptive insight.

Lane Fox, R. *Alexander the Great*. New York: Dial Press, 1974. An eminently readable account by an insightful scholar.

#### **Rome:**

Ben-Yehuda, N. *Sacrificing Truth: Archaeology and the Myth of Masada*.

Amherst, MA: Humanity Books, 2002. A sociologist challenges the archaeological "verification" of the events at Masada, alleging nationalist bias and even deception among the archaeologists who excavated the site.

Cornell, T. J. *The Beginnings of Rome*. London: Routledge, 1995. Superb discussion of Rome's early history down to the eve of the Punic Wars. Includes useful discussions of military matters, especially the Servian reforms.

\*Daly, G. *Cannae: The Experience of Battle in the Second Punic War*. London: Routledge, 2002. Comprehensive study of the battle, written following Keegan's "battle mechanics" approach; includes useful surveys of the Roman and Carthaginian military systems.

Goldsworthy, A. *Cannae*. London: Cassell Military, 2001. Well-illustrated and readable account of the battle and its context.

———. *The Complete Roman Army*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2003. A useful and well-illustrated survey of most aspects of its subject; the book is hampered by a lack of precise references to its source material.

———. *The Roman Army at War, 100 BC–AD 200*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. An application of Keegan's *Face of Battle* approach to the ancient evidence leads to mixed results. Evocative in parts, but major changes in the Roman army during the period covered by the book make aggregate citation of ancient evidence in support of particular points hazardous.

Hammond, N. G. L. "The Battle of Pydna," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104 (1984): 31–47. Thorough analysis of this crucial confrontation.

———. "The Campaign and Battle of Cynoscephalae in 197 BC," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 108 (1988): 60–82. As with the preceding entry, a thorough analysis of a crucial confrontation.

Harris, W. V. *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327–70 BC*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979. Ingeniously argued reassessment of Roman imperial aggression that features an extensive discussion of militarism in Roman culture.

Heather, P. J. *The Goths*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. Overview of Gothic history and identity.

———. *Goths and Romans*, pp. 332–489. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. Careful analysis of Gotho-Roman relations that includes the background to Adrianople.

\*Keppie, L. *The Making of the Roman Army from Republic to Empire*, rev. ed. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998. Succinct and lucid account of the development of the Roman army to the principate of Augustus.

Lapham, L. “Furor Tuetonicus,” in Cowley, R. ed., *What If? The World’s Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, pp. 59–69. New York: Putnam, 1999. Entertaining counterfactual speculation about how different European history may have been, had Arminius been defeated in the Teutoburg Forest in AD 9.

\*Lazenby, J. F. *Hannibal’s War*, rev. ed. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998. As with the same author’s *The Defence of Greece*, a thorough and well-documented survey of this pivotal conflict.

\*Lenski, N. *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century AD*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. Thorough study of the period; includes an excellent chapter on Adrianople that challenges some of Heather’s arguments.

Marsden, E. W. *Greek and Roman Artillery*, 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–1971. The most comprehensive study of the subject available; includes text and translation of pertinent ancient treatises, as well as commentary.

Rawson, E. “The Literary Sources for the pre-Marian Army,” *Papers of the British School in Rome* 39 (1971): 13–31 (= Rawson, E. *Roman Culture and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 34–57). Excellent discussion of the topic.

Sabin, P. “The Face of Roman Battle,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 1–17. Extends the arguments of the previous entry into a model of Roman-era combat as a whole.

———. “The Mechanics of Battle in the Second Punic War,” in T. J. Cornell, N.B. Rankov, and P. Sabin, eds., *The Second Punic War: A Re-Appraisal*, pp. 59–79. London: School of Advanced Studies, 1996. Investigates the nature of Roman legionary combat.

Schlüter, W. “The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest: Archaeological Research at Kalkriese near Osnabrück,” in J. D. Creighton and R. J. A. Wilson, eds., *Roman Germany: Studies in Cultural Interaction*, pp. 125–159. Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Studies Supplementary Series 32, 1999. The main excavator lays out the case for locating the battle at Kalkriese. One of the few presentations of the case available in English.

Stephenson, I. P. *Roman Infantry Equipment: The Later Empire*. Stroud, UK: Tempus, 1999. A good study of the topic with plenty of illustrations; focuses especially on the transitional 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

\*Wells, P. S. *The Battle That Stopped Rome: Emperor Augustus, Arminius, and the Slaughter of the Legions in the Teutoburg Forest*. New York: Norton, 2003. An up-to-date account by a leading scholar of the Central European Iron Age that includes consideration of the recent archaeological finds at Kalkriese.

Yadin, Y. *Masada: Herod's Fortress and the Zealots' Last Stand*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966. Comprehensive and lively account of the excavations at the site and how they illuminate the written accounts.

### **War and Ancient Society:**

Garlan, Y. *War in the Ancient World: A Social History*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1975. As the title suggests, a social-historical approach to the role of warfare in ancient societies.

\*Raaflaub, K., and N. Rosenstein, eds. *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999. The book ranges widely over world cultures, including the Maya and medieval Japanese, for instance, and there are excellent essays by respected scholars on Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Also useful for its comparative approach.

Rich, J., and G. Shipley, eds. *War and Society in the Greek World and War and Society in the Roman World*. New York: Routledge, 1993. A collection of essays exploring various ways that war shaped the contours of Greek and Roman life.

### **Internet Resources**

*The Ancient History Sourcebook*. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook.html>. A good website with many original texts online.

*Ancient Warfare*. <http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlas/ancient%20warfare/ancient%20warfare%20index.htm>. This site is most useful for maps and plans.

*De Imperatoribus Romanis: An Online Encyclopedia of Roman Emperors*. <http://www.roman-emperors.org/startup.htm>. A comprehensive website that includes links to battle descriptions, battle maps, catalogues of Roman coins, and information about Roman emperors.

*The Perseus Digital Library*. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>. This is an excellent resource for all sorts of classics-related material.

*A Visual Compendium of Roman Emperors*. [www.roman-emperors.com](http://www.roman-emperors.com). An illustrated list of Roman emperors, along with links to other sites with information about individual emperors.