Ancient Warfare

An Overview

Lecture goals

- Identify ancient technological innovations related to warfare.
- Explain which innovations were associated with which groups and time periods.
- Understand how economic, political, social, cultural and intellectual technologies overlapped with and influenced military technologies.

Ancient technologies of war

- Iron
- Slings
- Javelins
- Spears (example: Macedonian sarissa)
- Swords (example: Roman short sword)
- Bows and arrows
- Armor
- Artillery (examples: ballistas, repeating crossbow)
- War animals (horses, elephants, bees)
- Chariots
- Trireme
- Sound instruments (example: Roman cornu)

Tactical technology

- Formal training
- Phalanx
- Siege warfare
- Military units (example: Roman legions)

Political developments and warfare

- Growing states → growth in armies, professionalization of armies, stronger organization of armies.
- Complex political and social hierarchies require new ways to motivate soldiers.
    - As well as new considerations for political leaders: Will a war profit a leader personally?
- Political and social hierarchies are mirrored in military hierarchies.
    - Distinction between officers/commanders and common soldiers.

Professionalization of soldiering

Citizen-soldiers vs. professional soldiers

Transition exemplified by ancient Rome

- But repeated in more modern times

Ancient philosophy and ancient warfare

- Plato: Civil society is distinct from the military realm
- Aristotle: No it's not!

- Formalization of the soldierly spirit and the idea of "glory"

Ancient economies and warfare

Complex economies → New strategies of war

- Sieges, paying off enemies, disrupting maritime supply routes
- Financial exhaustion can end wars

Culture and warfare

Cultural differences become a driver of warfare.

Warfare and conquest can lead to cultural displacement.

- Example: Roman empire

Big question

Should there be a distinction between civil society and military affairs? Is such a distinction "natural," or is culturally constructed? Relatedly, should military authorities distinguish between civilian entities and other military entities?