



Ancient Siege Warfare

Paul B. Kern, Paul Bentley Kern

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Siege warfare was the most brutal form of war in the ancient world. Typically involving whole urban societies, ancient siege warfare often ended in the sack of a city and the massacre or enslavement of entire populations. Assyrian emperors, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and the future Roman emperor Titus all commanded great sieges that ended in fearsome slaughters. This book examines the origins of such unleashed violence and shows how the methods of siege warfare devalued the skills of traditional warriors as well as the shared values of honor and prowess that limited the violence of traditional field battles.

Siege warfare was the only form of war in the ancient world in which the presence of women was common. This book pays major attention to their role in sieges, as both participants and victims, and to the way their presence affected the nature of siege warfare. The book also examines the social and moral chaos of siege warfare as the major theme in its representation in ancient literature. The Bible, Assyrian palace records, and Greek and Roman literature contain horrifying accounts of siege warfare. Ancient Hebrew prophets and Greek poets such as Homer and Euripides described it as a world without limits or structure or morality, in which men violated deep-seated taboos about sex, pregnancy, and death.

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