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Main content

Article Preview :

Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity. By J. E. Lendon. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005. 315 pages. \$35.00. Reviewed by Dr. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr., Professor of Military History, US Army War College.

J. E. Lendon, an Associate Professor in ancient history at the University of Virginia, has written a major reinterpretation of classical warfare. While recognizing a great many factors that influence change in military affairs, he believes the most important one for understanding the Greek and Roman ways of war was the relationship of the two societies with their respective pasts. Much of the thesis rests on analyzing warfare from an individual level. This is a refreshing approach and produces a revision of more standard interpretations that stress technology, politics, or other factors. Like traditional interpretations, however, Lendon's thesis cannot stand alone as the authoritative explanation of ancient warfare. It is thus a welcome addition to our understanding of the ancients rather than a replacement for outdated thinking.

The Greeks conceived of their past in terms of epic heroism. Lendon believes their intimate connection with that past, as viewed through the lens of Homer's Iliad, influenced the Greek conduct of war throughout the classical period. In fact, the Greeks so revered Homer that they copied him directly, often regardless of circumstances. Homer gave legitimacy--whether...

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J. E. Lendon's book *Soldiers and Ghosts*, a far cry from a fairy tale or an ad campaign, gives the reader a very thorough appreciation for why these two cultures' military forces became what they read. Across the pages of both Greek and Roman history, he decisively shows us that neither culture suffered from a shortage of reading and that both had ample opportunity to employ what they read. This mind-set

plays throughout Greek military history-from the Spartan philosophy and culture of conduct in warfare-and culminates with a discussion of Alexander the Great's campaign to the Middle East (itself Homeric in proportion and deed). It also plays into the use and evolution of Greek military formations from 500 BC into early 200-300 AD. Soldiers and Ghosts book. Read 37 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. What set the successful armies of Sparta, Macedon, and Rome apa... Not so much a history of battle in classical antiquity as why and how it developed as it did. Covers the millennium from the Age of Homer until Julian in Persia and Valens at Adrianople [300s A.D.] Author makes surprising leaps in his perceptions of the development of land warfare and psychology of the warriors. Apparently, it went slower at first, then picked up speed. Today it seems that methods of fighting change every time you turn around. The author intended this for the beginner to the ver Not so much a history of battle in classical antiquity as why and how it developed as it did.