



Rome and the Sword: How Warriors and Weapons Shaped Roman History

By Simon James

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A pathbreaking study that integrates military theory with the historical account to explain how the Roman armies functioned, triumphed, and ultimately failed.

The story of Rome and its military seems a familiar one, told often through books and movies and games, yet it is a modern myth obscuring a different reality. As this groundbreaking study demonstrates, Rome's military was no war machine made up of mindless cogs. There was not even an ancient term for the Roman army; rather, Romans spoke of "the soldiers" of men, not institutions.

Simon James provides a striking new perspective on Roman history by focusing on the soldiers and their actions. Rome's soldiers were less sentinels of civilization than enforcers for aristocrats and autocrats against foreign foes and internal dissent. They were brutal and unruly, prone to mutiny and rebellion. How, then, to account for their sustained success and their eventual failure?

Rome's dominion was achieved through soldiers' ferocity and excellent weaponry, but to maintain it the conquered were integrated, as diplomacy accompanied the threat of the sword. Millions of allies and subjects became Romans themselves through military service. Nevertheless, the aggression of Rome's soldiers precipitated the creation of a new Sasanian superpower in Iran and great barbarian confederations in the North. 106 black-and-white illustrations

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Review

“[The author is] at his best when he discusses weapons of various types and their development over the long span of Rome’s rise to dominance in the Mediterranean and Europe.” (Choice)

About the Author

Simon James is Senior Lecturer in the School of Archaeological Studies at the University of Leicester and an authority on the Roman military.

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