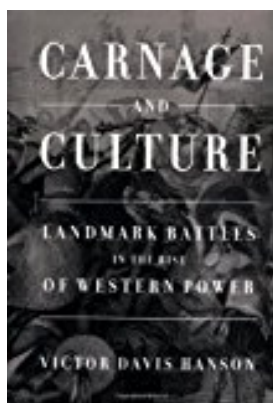


[PDF] Carnage And Culture: Landmark Battles In The Rise Of Western Power

Victor Hanson - pdf download free book



Books Details:

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Author: Victor Hanson

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Description:

Many theories have been offered regarding why Western culture has spread so successfully across the world, with arguments ranging from genetics to superior technology to the creation of enlightened economic, moral, and political systems. In *Carnage and Culture*, military historian Victor Hanson takes all of these factors into account in making a bold, and sure to be controversial, argument: Westerners are more effective killers. Focusing specifically on military power rather than

the nature of Western civilization in general, Hanson views war as the ultimate reflection of a society's character: "There is a cultural crystallization in battle, in which the insidious and more subtle institutions that heretofore are murky and undefined became stark and unforgiving in the finality of organized killing."

Though technological advances and superior weapons have certainly played a role in Western military dominance, Hanson posits that cultural distinctions are the most significant factors. By bringing personal freedom, discipline, and organization to the battlefield, powerful "marching democracies" were more apt to defeat non-Western nations hampered by unstable governments, limited funding, and intolerance of open discussion. These crucial differences often ensured victory even against long odds. Greek armies, for instance, who elected their own generals and freely debated strategy were able to win wars even when far outnumbered and deep within enemy territory. Hanson further argues that granting warriors control of their own destinies results in the kind of glorification of horrific hand-to-hand combat necessary for true domination.

The nine battles Hanson examines include the Greek naval victory against the Persians at Salamis in 480 B.C., Cortes's march on Mexico City in 1521, the battle of Midway in 1942, and the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam. In the book's fascinating final chapter, he then looks forward and ponders the consequences of a complete cultural victory, challenging the widespread belief that democratic nations do not wage war against one another: "We may well be all Westerners in the millennium to come, and that could be a very dangerous thing indeed," he writes. It seems the West will always seek an enemy, even if it must come from within. --*Shawn Carkonen*

From Publishers Weekly "The Western way of war is so lethal precisely because it is so amoral shackled rarely by concerns of ritual, tradition, religion, or ethics, by anything other than military necessity." Ranging from Salamis in 480 B.C. to the Tet offensive in Vietnam, Hanson, a California State at Fresno classics professor, expands the scope of his *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece*, offering a provocative look at occidental aggression as illustrated by nine paradigmatic battles between Western and non-Western armies. Hanson sheds the overly romanticized view of battles as nationalist or ethnic honorifics and vividly portrays the deadly killing machines Western powers evolved for the destruction of non-Western opponents. Throughout, Hanson stresses the technology based lethality of Western warfare, and the role of individual initiative as opposed to the more collectivist strategies of the Persians, Carthaginians, Arabs, Turks, Aztecs, Zulus, Japanese and Vietnamese opponents who get a chapter apiece. The single Western defeat chronicled in these pages, of the Romans in Cannae in 216 B.C., shows a victorious Hannibal unable to capitalize on his win. (The idea of the citizen/soldier, the role of civic militarism and the republican ideals of Rome seem to be the reasons why not.) A number of Hanson's conclusions will engender debate, such as his claim that America won in Vietnam, but failed to recognize it, as well as the larger claim that "free markets, free elections, and free speech" have led directly to superior forces. The book's last few chapters are fairly driven by that idea, which, along with precise, forceful writing, sets it apart from the season's secondary-sourced, battle-based military histories. (Aug.) Forecast: Hanson's direct, literate style and his evenhandedness should appeal to the liberalist middle of the left and right alike. By isolating the ingredients of military success via elaborate examples, the book can potentially draw on two separate military-history readerships: those looking for theory and those for action.

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