

ALEXANDER THE GREAT



Warfare before Alexander

Warfare before the time of Alexander (and his Father Philip II) was defined by the conflicts between the Greek City States.

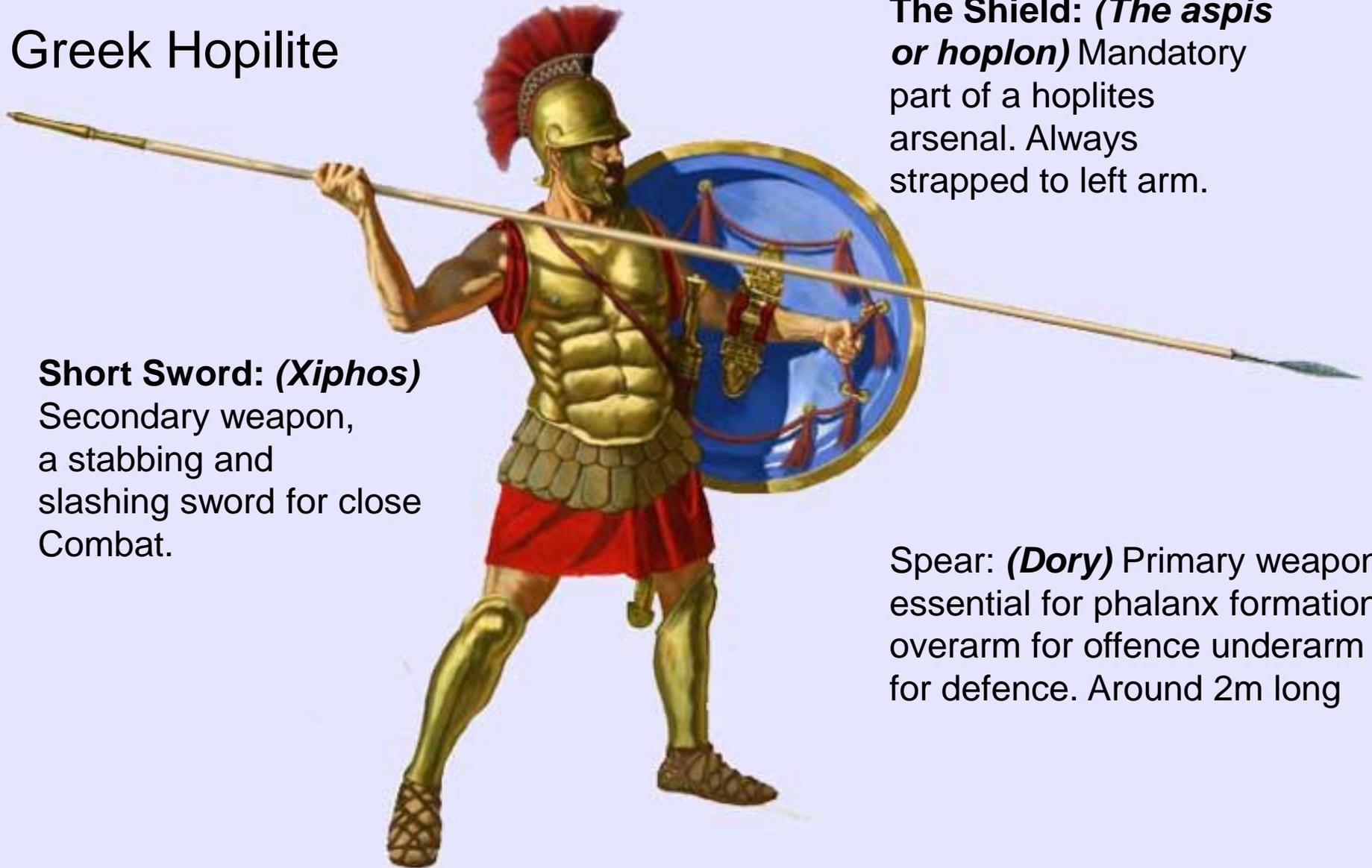
Conflicts lasted for long periods of time, as travel was slow as so was communication. Most wars were decided on single battles.

Tactics were more about making the enemy rout (flee) than total annihilation, and luck played a large part in battles (i.e. weather, co-operation of units)

The Hoplite was the core of any army at the time.

All soldiers citizen-soldiers and were expected to provide their own armour and weapons for battle as well as their own provisions (rations), which would have meant each soldier would be caring just as much as the modern soldier if not more

Greek Hoplite



Short Sword: (*Xiphos*)

Secondary weapon, a stabbing and slashing sword for close Combat.

The Shield: (*The aspis or hoplon*) Mandatory part of a hoplites arsenal. Always strapped to left arm.

Spear: (*Dory*) Primary weapon, essential for phalanx formation overarm for offence underarm for defence. Around 2m long



Actual picture of Alexander commanding his troops to cross the Danube against the Getae tribe. Nec minute...

Alexander Tactics

Left and Right Wings: The Macedonian army was based on the idea of holding and locking enemy troops with the left wing while the right wing, consisting of heavy cavalry, using flanking moves that dealt damage to the enemy flanks and decreases the morale of enemy troops.

Flying Wedge: One of the notable formations Alexander presented was the flying wedge formation, which was used to break into enemy lines. Also, in this formation, turning became more mobile, which means that the Macedonian cavalry can exploit multiple points of the battle when Alexander deceives them.

Phalanx formation: The phalanx formation was a creation of a Greek formation. King Phillip and Alexander adapted the formation with longer spears called sarissas, which are spears that reach up to 12-18 feet in length (5.5 metres). Also, the main infantry body (known as Sarissaphoros) however, due to the massive spears being cumbersome to carry, they phalanx can not turn as fast to counter flanking from the sides. However, Alexander made different decisions in arranging his army to prevent flanking:

Alexander Tactics Continued

One of the methods of preventing this flanking was to support the flanks with light and heavy cavalry. On the left wing, Thessalian cavalry were positioned here controlled by Parmenio. The right wing composed of Companion cavalry.

Another notable tactic Alexander used was in the Battle of Guagamela. In this battle, Alexander knew that he was outnumbered so he positioned his Greek mercenaries at the back so they can move and protect the flanks against the numerically superior Persian army.

Alexander used a range of physical and physiological tactic against the enemy. Such notable actions included engaging an army that was tired from a march or from forcing the enemy to put there army on stand by while Alexander rested his troops before the battle.

Typical Macedonian Formation

Composition of the Macedonian Army

Macedonian Army

Somatophylakes (Alexander's personal bodyguards)

Hetairoi (Companion Cavalry)

Hypaspists (Elite Infantry Guard)

Sarissaphoros

Mercenaries

Cretan Archers – Alexander used these extensively to deal with guerilla warfare and were known to be the best archers in the era.

Thessalian Cavalry

Greek hoplites

Greek allied cavalry

Agrian Skirmishers- Served the same purpose as Cretan Archers in dealing with guerilla warfare due to their mobility.

Phalanx

Each phalanx has its own commander. The phalanx line is generally 8 ranks deep. There are two leaders commanding the phalanx. One at the centre near the front to order the movement of the front and there is one at the middle to direct the troops if there are any gaps the phalanx needs to fill in. The phalanx was used to hold the enemy's infantry body while the cavalry served as the shock troops that demoralised the enemy troops. Alexander used a hammer and anvil tactic where he used the phalanx as the anvil while the cavalry forces are the hammer.

Companions

The Companion Cavalry (Hetairoi) are made up of higher class citizens and were able to afford most of their equipment. The Companion force is generally commanded by Alexander himself.

They were regarded as one of the best cavalry in the known world and they were the first shock cavalry deployed in the ancient world.

They were generally the troops that gave the decisive role in most of the battles during Alexander's campaign.

The companions were usually positioned in the right flank in a pitched battle beside the Hypasists.

They were equipped with a xyston (a type of lance) and a kopis. They wore a bronze cuirass, shoulder guards and a Boeotian helmet. The horses themselves had a thick drape over them and partial breast and head plating for protection against spears, swords, arrows etc.

Generals

Alexander has a range of generals that commanded different aspects of his army. These generals also served as governors (satraps) whenever Alexander conquered a town or city.

List of Generals

**Perdiccas (originally
commander of the heavy
phalanx infantry before
Alexander appointed him as
successor to Hephaestion)**

Hephaestion

Philotas

Ptolemy

Cleitus the Black

Antigonus

Lysimachus

Menander

Leonnatus

Meleager

Craterus

Seleucus

Polyperchon

Antigenes

Coenus

**Ptolemy (not to be confused
with the other Ptolemy who
later on became the founder
of the Ptolemaic Kingdom)**

Notable Men of Alexander's Army

Perdiccas: Successor of Hephaestion's position of commander of the Companion Cavalry and Chiliarch (commander of a thousand) after Hephaestion was killed.

Cleitus the Black: An officer of Alexander and saved Alexander's life. Several years later, he was killed by Alexander during a drunken argument.

Ptolemy: After Alexander's death, he became ruler of Egypt between 323BC-283BC and was the founder of the Ptolemaic Kingdom.

Antigonus I Monophthalmus: Declared himself king in 306BC and established the Antigonid Dynasty after Alexander's death.

Seleucus I Nicator: Founded the Seleucid Empire and the Seleucid Dynasty.

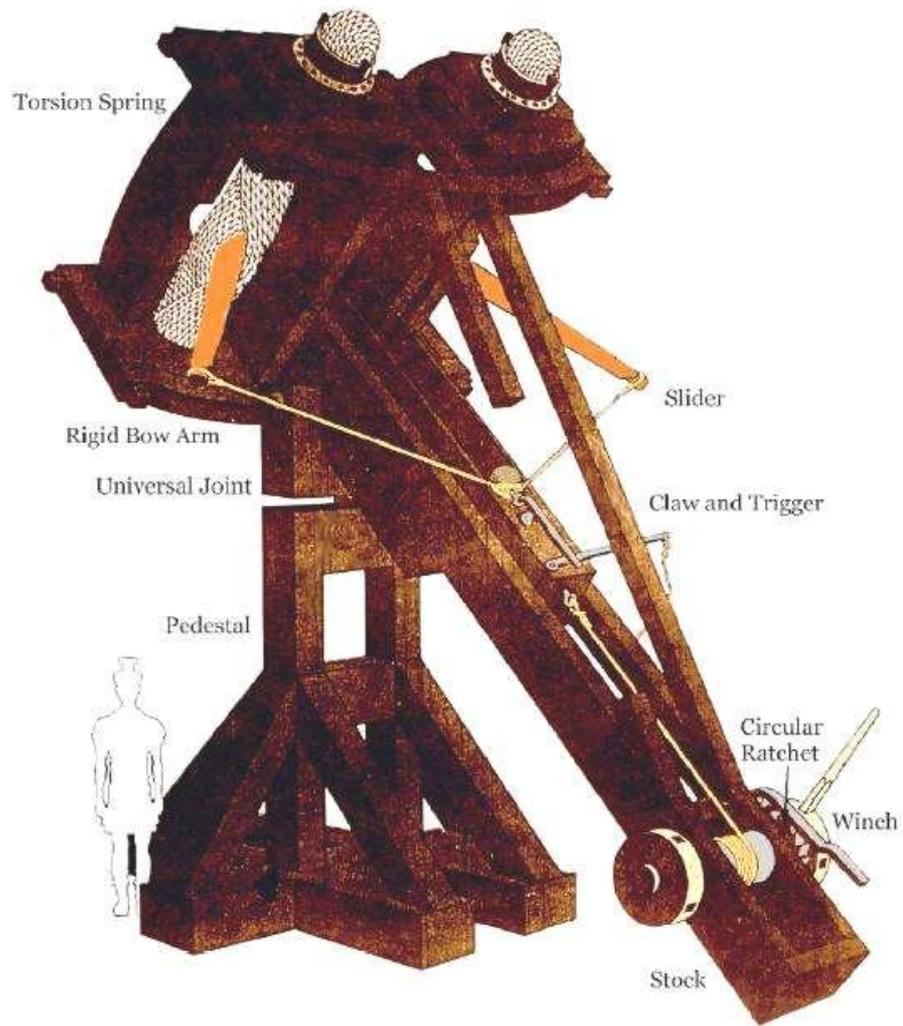
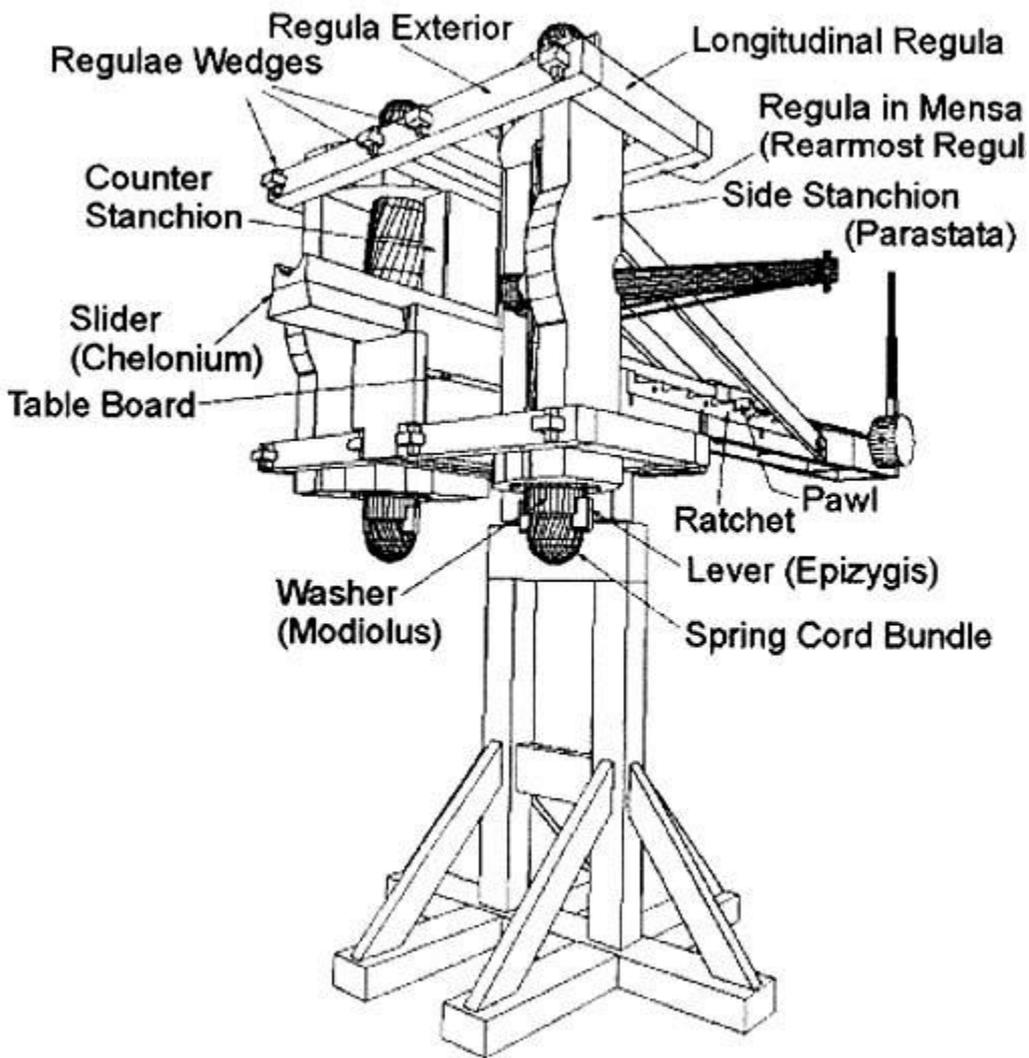
Siege Warfare

Recent development

Basic siege weapons like the ram, and sapping came about quickly after the development of fortifications (such as a stone wall instead of a Pallisade)

Weapons that fired projectiles were a later development, but we know Alexander used them (as in the Siege of Tyre, the two towers on the cause ways were noted to have siege weapons firing projectiles.)

Siege weapons were still cumbersome (slow and awkward to move) and a quite often a siege was actually a blockade.



Alexander's Leadership Qualities

He was **well educated**, with **Aristotle** (Greek Philosopher and student of Plato) being his personal tutor. He studied a broad range from medicine to art, he studied the works of Homer and the Iliad (which he apparently took with him throughout his campaigning) which would allow/give him a **clear and defined view** of the world something required by a leader to make quick decisions and be decisive and confident with the choices he does make. *In return to teaching Alexander Philip would pay Aristotle by rebuilding Aristotle's home village (which he had razed), and repopulating it.*

He was a **natural born leader** with his leadership determination, and maturity beyond his years. As his father **Philip often trusted him to look after Macedonia** when he was away on business, the first time at the humble age of 16.

Alexander's Leadership Qualities

His **military success** is an obvious example of his leadership, his innovative tactics and
He **adapted to the situation** and balanced his opinions so to **include all** Greek, Persian
“Arguably, there is no one else in history who could inspire and motivate his men like A

“An army of stags led by a lion would be better than an army of lions led by a stag.”

(un-referenced, and there are many variations of this quote)

“Sex and sleep alone make me conscious that I am mortal.”

(quoted in Alexander the Great (1973) by Robin Lane Fox)

“There is nothing impossible to him who will try.”

http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/alexander_the_great.html

I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.

http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/alexander_the_great.html

