

**M0008718: The evolution of weapons from 350 B.C. to present day.**

**Publication/Creation**

10 December 1942

**Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/zv9ayj46>

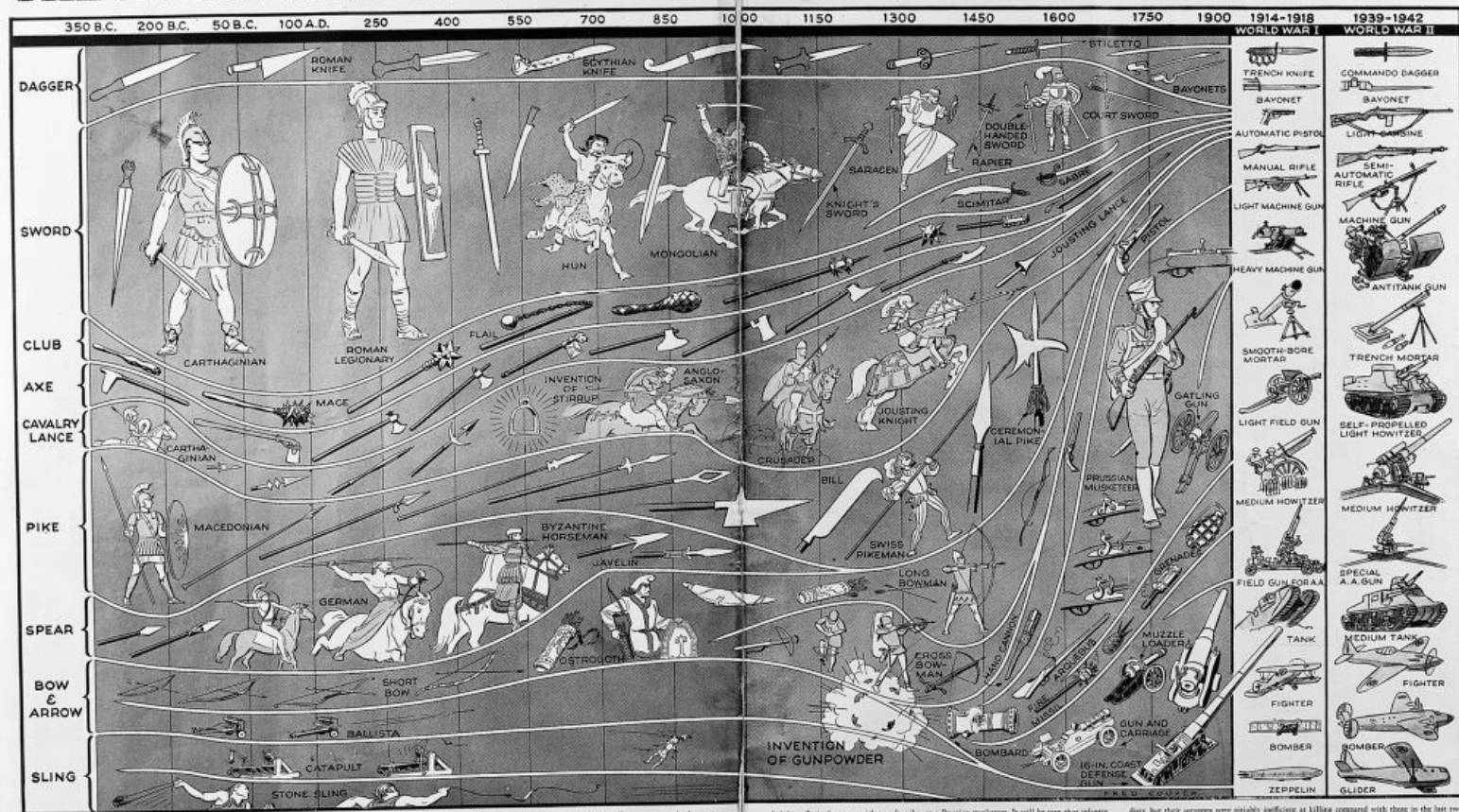


Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

ARMIES THAT WIN (continued)

# THE EVOLUTION OF WEAPONS

# FROM 350 B.C. TO PRESENT



THE TOOLS OF WAR, with which men have killed from earliest times, are shown above in a flow-chart of evolution. Each weapon's importance at a particular period is indicated by the width of the space devoted to it. The most important single first opponent in this warfare started with an overwhelming weight of shock weapons (sword, club, spear) and very few missile weapons (javelin, bow, sling). Beginning with the discovery of gunpowder in 1248 A. D., missile weapons rapidly took over the battlefield. Today the only shock (hand-to-hand) weapons are the bayonet, clubbed rifle, trench knife, commando blackjack and dagger and, occasionally, the tank. All the rest are missile weapons, including the plane and tank.

The figures on the chart are intended to show what was the dominant soldier in any given era, whether it was an infantryman with a sword, a half-clothed horseman with a javelin, an armored knight, a Swiss footman with a 12-ft. pike, or a Prussian musketeer. It will be seen that infantry dominates at the beginning and end and that cavalry has its day from 400 B. C. to 1500. Nearly all the ancient weapons remained in use until about 1500 when the chart shows them dying in dead ends of evolution, like the bow, pike and throwing spear.

The early fighters shown above may have looked more heroic in battle than the modern warriors, but their weapons were pitifully inefficient as killing compared with those in the last two centuries, from 1500 to 1945. Yet it should not be forgotten that the Mongol warriors of Genghis Khan 700 years ago might conceivably play back even today in the forests of eastern Germany or Manchuria.

Have the armies used these weapons to win victory is explained in article beginning on p. 104.