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### **The Depiction of Battle Scenes in the Writings of the Historical Authors of the First Century BC.**



07 DEC 2005

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b>	3
<b>Chapter 2 – Sources</b>	6
2.1 – The Main Sources	6
2.2 – The Peripheral Sources	23
<b>Chapter 3 – The Roman Army</b>	31
<b>Chapter 4 – The Battle Accounts</b>	58
4.1 – The Battle of the Cremera	58
4.2 – The Battle of Cannae	73
4.3 – The Battle of Zama	87
4.4 – The Battle of the Muluccha	104
4.5 – Caesar’s Campaign Against Ariovistus	119
<b>Chapter 5 – Conclusions</b>	132
<b>Bibliography</b>	138



**All quotations from Latin and Greek authors used in this work have been accompanied by a translation. Except when otherwise stated, translations have been taken from the Loeb library.**

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

Today, military literature is a well established genre: perusing the shelves of an average modern book-store, one would find a wide range of works of military history, covering events as diverse as the Battle of Hastings and Operation Desert Storm. Given the frequency, severity and importance of the wars in the First Century B.C., one would imagine that this would be reflected in the literature of the time and that we would find a high degree of interest in military matters and that the literary study of warfare would be in a highly developed state. It is my intention to prove that this was not the case.

Certainly, a cursory examination of some of the major literary works of the First Century B.C. would indicate that battles and military events play a major role in them. Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* describes what one sometimes feel like an endless procession of skirmishes, campaigns and battles. Caesar published his own campaign diaries. Battles play a major role in the works of other authors, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Sallust. However, as I shall endeavour to demonstrate, none of these authors can be considered "military historians". For history to be considered "military history" requires that the conduct of warfare should be the dominant theme of the work. I shall attempt to demonstrate that none of the major historical writers of the First Century B.C. saw this as the role of their work.

In order to achieve this objective, it shall first be necessary to lay down the foundations for a detailed investigation. Chapter 2 establishes a small background concerning the authors I shall focus upon, namely Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Sallust and Caesar. Chapter 3 establishes the background of their sources and influences, including Fabius Pictor and Polybius. The aim of these chapters is not to provide the reader with a thorough analysis of these authors, but rather to establish their military credentials, including their familiarity with military matters and the influences of the military upon their own personal history. These chapters shall also attempt to summarise existing critical opinion concerning the authors in question and their merits as sources of information upon military matters. Chapter 4 contains a brief study of the Roman military, charting its development over the course of the Regal and Republican periods and examining issues such as logistics and command.

This shall form the basis for an analysis of the extent to which First Century authors were familiar with or interested in the conduct of warfare.

Once this foundation is established, I shall examine five specific battles, taken from the works of the authors under investigation. These battles shall be presented in chronological order and most of them shall contain analyses of the accounts of more than one author. The first case study shall be upon the Battle of the Cremera. As a battle whose basis is more legendary than historical, this case study shall allow an exploration of Roman attitudes towards the military events of their distant past. The second and third case studies shall concern the battles of Cannae and Zama respectively. Here, the focus of the investigation shall be upon the historian's need to justify both Roman defeat and victory and differences in the manner in which these battles are identified shall be emphasised. The fourth case study shall be of the battle of the Muluccha, a rather little known event, of which an account today survives only in the work of Sallust. This battle, falling as it does within that span of history which has obvious and immediate relevance to the author's present, shall be used as a means to identify the role of Roman politics in shaping the depiction of military events. Finally, the fifth case study shall analyse Caesar's campaign against Ariovistus. Here, the focus shall be on the role of personal propaganda in military writing and also upon Roman justifications for warfare.

Although the balance of the focus shall vary between the case studies, there are three essential themes that I shall track throughout, in order to prove that the authors of the First Century B.C. had no conception of "military history" as we would understand it. These three themes shall be:

### **Personal Experience**

It is a prerequisite of military history that the author should be well versed in the military practices of the period he is describing. This knowledge may be a product of personal experience, as seen in war diaries, or else it may be a product of extensive research. I shall demonstrate that even where the authors could lay claim to either of these attributes, they played little or no part in shaping their literary output.

### **Justifying Rome**

Broadly speaking, there are two ways in which writings upon military matters might be used to justify Roman actions. The first, which is by no means completely incompatible with the modern concept of military history, lies in providing justifications for Roman defeats. This may relate to political factors, or else may focus upon specific elements of a battle that contributed to a Roman downfall. The second, and more troublesome aspect of this theme shall concern the use of military accounts to justify Roman foreign policy and expansionism. Where evidence of this trend is encountered, it may serve to illustrate the fact that the author is not concerned with the military events for their own sake, but rather with their significance as tools for the justification of the development of Rome into a Mediterranean super-power; a topic which caused no small amount of controversy at Rome.

### **Political Propaganda**

The use of literature as propaganda is a well-recognised trend in the works of First Century B.C. authors. Therefore, it shall be essential for me to monitor the extent to which accounts of battles and campaigns are used for factional or personal propaganda. Where sufficient evidence of this is encountered, it may form reasonable grounds for classifying the work as a primarily political, rather than military document.

## Chapter 2.1 – The Main Sources

My first task is to present the authors upon which my work will be focussed.

Although this does not cover the complete list of historians writing histories of Rome in the first century BC, I believe that it covers a broad enough spectrum for some useful analysis to be possible. The four authors with whom I am primarily interested are Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Sallust and Julius Caesar.

This group is difficult to describe using generalisations; they cannot be termed Latin historians, since Dionysius wrote in Greek and they cannot necessarily even be covered by the blanket-label of historian, since it is possible to argue that Caesar's commentaries did not constitute a historical work from the point of view of their author. Therefore, these four authors, with their distinct viewpoints, attitudes and agendas, are broadly representative of the whole range of prose writing on military matters in the First Century BC.

It would not be possible here for me to present a detailed discussion of these authors. Indeed, I would be hard-pressed to provide an exhaustive account of any one of them if they formed the main subject of my investigation. My purpose here shall be to provide a brief introduction to each of these authors and to provide references that the reader may use to find more extensive discussion.

### Livy

Of the four authors in question, it will be Livy who forms the largest part of my investigation. Indeed, given the bulk and range of Livy's historical work, the *Ab Urbe Condita*, this should come as no surprise. The one hundred and forty two books of Livy's history span from the myths surrounding Rome's foundation down to Livy's own day. Most of these books are lost today, with less than a third of the total, mostly from the first fifty books, surviving. Nevertheless, the contents of the lost books can



be discerned from the *Periochae* which survive for almost all of the lost books, furnishing us with a summary of their contents.<sup>1</sup>

Livy's history is written in the annalistic style, with the narrative proceeding on a year-by-year basis. Recent scholarship has noticed that the extant books can be divided into blocks of five, termed pentads.<sup>2</sup> Each year is described in turn, with the account beginning with the election of consuls. As we would expect, the account becomes progressively more detailed as the period under discussion moves closer to Livy's own time and his sources become more detailed. So while the events of the first pentad spans over hundreds of years, the Second Punic War alone fills two pentads, spanning from books twenty one to thirty.

The early books of Livy's history contain the stories surrounding the development of Roman society. A brisk pace is maintained during the first five books, with generally brief and terse narrative interspersed by more detailed accounts of specific episodes, concerning both the military exploits of the city and the jostling for position between the patricians and plebeians. There are frequent references to matters such as portents<sup>3</sup> and Livy's introduction to his sixth book, where he notes that from this point onwards, he is able to use more reliable sources and to talk about more certain matters,<sup>4</sup> seems to be an admission that he regards many of the incidents in his first five books as stories rather than accurate records of facts. As we would expect given the pace with which Livy moves through these early years, there are few characters who have a significant presence and there is little room for character development. Once Livy moves onto more recent events, such as the Second Punic War, numerous characters appear who remain prominent in the narrative for the space of several books.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Begbie, 1967, CQ 17, pages 332-338 and Stadter, 1972, *Historia* 21, pages 287-307 provide a more detailed look at the *Periochae*.

<sup>2</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 5-8

<sup>3</sup> For more on Livy's attitudes to portents and other "supernatural" phenomena, see Levene, 1993, especially pages 16-33

<sup>4</sup> Livy, 6.1.1-3

<sup>5</sup> Walsh, 1961, page 7 outlines Livy's treatment of the career of Marius, which appears to have spanned three pentads.

Livy's use of sources has attracted much criticism from recent scholarship, although there have been efforts to defend him. Walsh provides a detailed discussion of Livy's use of sources,<sup>6</sup> identifying the *annales maximi*, the *libri lintei*, private family archives, Valerius Antias, Claudius Quadrigarius, Licinius Macer, Aelius Tubero, Fabius Pictor, L. Calpurnius Piso, Coelius Antipater and Polybius as important sources. As Walsh points out, Livy does not generally present his audience with a variety of accounts, where discrepancies occur in his sources, but gives a single account, adding his own suggestions as to motivations and morality.<sup>7</sup> However, as Walsh also notes, there is good evidence to be found in Livy's use of Polybius that Livy read a variety of accounts of an event, where they were available and switched the source he used at whim. Walsh catalogues the errors that Livy made in following his source too uncritically and not taking adequate care with the translation of Greek sources.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Walsh further condemns Livy for the charge of allowing obvious "patriotic falsifications" from earlier Roman historians to pass unchallenged.<sup>9</sup>

There can be no doubt that Livy's own life experiences did not facilitate his interpretation of his sources. Modern scholars are universal in their acknowledgement that Livy's composition of his history must have occupied almost all of his adult life, leaving no time for travel or military experience.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, there is ample evidence for Livy's lack of understanding in matters of geography and tactics, since, as Walsh's examples prove, it is from these areas that his misunderstandings of his sources most frequently arise.

The final aspect of Livy that I will summarise is his motivation for the writing of history. Livy sets out his agenda in his preface to his work; in addition to wishing to take refuge in the past from the troubles of the present, he wishes to set out the whole of human experience for the education of his contemporaries, to provide *exempla* for the behaviour of individuals and states alike.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it should come as no

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<sup>6</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 110-172

<sup>7</sup> Walsh, 1961, page 141

<sup>8</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 143-144

<sup>9</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 144-145

<sup>10</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 2-4

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed discussion of Livy's use of *exempla*, see Chaplin, 2000. For discussion of Livy's morality as a tool for the distortion of history, see Walsh, 1955, *AJPh* 76, pages 369-383

surprise that Livy's work contains strong moral elements.<sup>12</sup> This extends beyond a simple preference for the past over the present and Livy's moral outlook is complicated in many ways. Indeed, while Livy often describes Rome's foreign conquests with relish, Walsh is correct when he demonstrates that Livy is by no means reluctant to express sympathy for those who are subjected to Roman conquest.<sup>13</sup> Although there is ample evidence for Livy's habit of using his history to celebrate Rome's achievements, he is amply aware that these achievements have not come without a price.

That Livy did not believe wholeheartedly in the traditional mechanisms of Roman religion seems to me to be beyond doubt. Levene presents a number of arguments both for and against Livy's belief in traditional Roman religion.<sup>14</sup> I believe that the arguments against his belief, which are based on Livy's own explicit statements of his attitude, must ultimately outweigh the arguments for his belief, which are largely based upon the key roles that religious events and omens often play in Livy's narrative. To me, it seems that Walsh offers the most feasible solution to this problem; Livy did indeed believe that the lapse of religious practice at Rome had been a disaster for the city, but that this belief was based upon his theories as to the social effects of religious practices rather than any personal belief in their immediate benefits. At the same time, this was balanced by a general conception on Livy's part of a dominating divine figure, which, although not necessarily concerned with the mechanisms of the Roman state religion, did expect a certain order to be maintained in the relationship between the human and the divine.<sup>15</sup>

Livy's attitude towards the divine has been critical to the growing trend in modern scholarship to see Livy in relation to the Stoic school of philosophy. Indeed, Walsh twice addressed this issue in detail.<sup>16</sup> Walsh associates Livy's depiction of the power of fate as an unavoidable, inescapable force with the Stoic doctrine of predestination. However, as Walsh rightly notes in his 1961 work, Livy's use of narrative techniques which parallel Stoic doctrines does not necessarily mean that he was an explicit

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<sup>12</sup> For a breakdown of these moral elements as applied to characters within the work, see Moore, 1989

<sup>13</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 191-194

<sup>14</sup> Levene, 1993, pages 16-37

<sup>15</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 47-49

<sup>16</sup> Walsh, 1958, *AJPh* 79, pages 355-375 and Walsh, 1961, pages 49-64

adherent of the Stoic school, whose morality had become current in a broader context at Rome by Livy's time.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, I believe that there is often the danger when analysing Livy's text that one might be tempted to see moral overtones in places where Livy is simply trying to tell an effective story.

Perhaps the most obvious places to find moral and philosophical overtones in Livy's history are his speeches. These are generally agreed to be Livy's own compositions<sup>18</sup> in many cases, although often modelled along the lines of speeches delivered in his sources.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, these speeches often fulfil another purpose of Livy's history, namely to provide enjoyment to the audience through the quality of the writing and rhetoric.<sup>20</sup> However, examples of Livy's interest in morality abound in the speeches<sup>21</sup> and there seems little room for doubt that he used these speeches to further express his moral arguments.

Running alongside his use of his history to set out a moral agenda, Livy was also concerned to demonstrate the superiority that the Roman people had enjoyed in the past.<sup>22</sup> Hence, moral lessons were tied in with Roman propaganda. That Livy wished to use the past to instruct people of his own day is clear from the instances cited by Walsh, but we must also bear in mind Miles's remarks that Livy by no means saw the past as a "utopian age".<sup>23</sup> Indeed, judging from the early conflicts between the patricians and plebs in the first five books of the *ab urbe condita*, it is clear that Livy also wished to demonstrate the first sprouting of the seeds that eventually blossomed into the civil discord that was to be the downfall of the republic. For Livy, the past, as with the present, contained flaws. These flaws were far less pronounced, and Walsh is correct to identify 4.6.12 as a passage intended to demonstrate the superiority of the past over the present with regards to the struggle of the orders,<sup>24</sup> but the broader intention, within the scope of the whole of the *ab urbe condita* is to demonstrate the

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<sup>17</sup> Walsh, 1961, page 50

<sup>18</sup> Walsh, 1961, page 219

<sup>19</sup> For Livy's adaptation of one speech related by Polybius, to which we shall return later, see Englund, 1967, *Latomus* 65, pages 146-168

<sup>20</sup> Walsh, 1961, page 229

<sup>21</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 223-224

<sup>22</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 64-81

<sup>23</sup> Miles, 1995, pages 114-115

<sup>24</sup> Walsh, 1961, page 65

escalation of these early matters of discord into crises which shook the very foundation of the state.

To conclude, when discussing military episodes in Livy's texts, we must be prepared to encounter a number of elements. First, we must be prepared for a severe lack of familiarity with military terms and procedures, and the consequent confusions and misunderstanding that may arise in his text. Next, we must be prepared for a general lack of identification of sources. We must also be prepared for strong moral elements, expressed through characters, speeches and Livy's own comments. Finally, we must expect to see a general bias towards the Roman perspective, but not to the extent that criticism of Rome or praise of her enemies is excluded entirely.

### **Dionysius of Halicarnassus**

Of the four main authors under consideration, Dionysius is the only one to have written his history in Greek. Born in Halicarnassus, the birthplace of his illustrious forbearer Herodotus, Dionysius travelled to Rome in the wake of Octavian's victory over Mark Antony.<sup>25</sup> Other than this, almost nothing is known of his life prior to the start of his literary career and we have no way of knowing if he had any military experience relevant to the military sections of his history. His *Roman Antiquities*, written in twenty books, ran from the earliest days of Rome's foundation down to the start of the First Punic War, thus forming a "prequel" to the older work written by another Greek living at Rome, namely Polybius. Roughly half of this work survives today, mostly sections from the first ten books. In modern times, a tradition of hostility towards Dionysius as a historian has been established, of which the most famous example comes from Schwartz's infamous article.<sup>26</sup> However, more recent years have seen a move towards the rehabilitation of Dionysius, particularly thanks to the efforts of Gabba<sup>27</sup> and Fox.<sup>28</sup>

Dionysius's history, concerned as it is with Rome's remote past, has not been investigated at as much length as Livy's with regards to its attitudes towards the

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<sup>25</sup> Gabba, 1991, page 1

<sup>26</sup> Schwartz, 1905, PW 5, pages 934-961

<sup>27</sup> Gabba, 1991

<sup>28</sup> Fox, 1993, JRS 83, pages 31-47

Augustan regime. Indeed, as Gabba notes, Dionysius seems to be generally optimistic with regard to the new political arrangement at Rome.<sup>29</sup> Dionysius's preface to his work devotes a considerable amount of space to Rome's supremacy over the Mediterranean world, with favourable comparisons to the great empires of the Classical and Hellenistic period of Greek history.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the comparisons with the Greek world continue as he sets out his objective to make the history of Rome both accessible and attractive to a Greek audience.<sup>31</sup>

Dionysius's model for his history is, as has been noted by modern scholars, far more Herodotean than Thucydidean.<sup>32</sup> Dionysius himself, writing on Thucydides, explicitly claims that his historical technique was inferior to that of Herodotus.<sup>33</sup> As such, Dionysius is producing a less politically and militarily oriented work than the Thucydidean historians, with more of an emphasis upon cultural events.<sup>34</sup>

Dionysius is far more explicit than Livy with regards to his use of sources. Indeed, his preface to his history makes reference to the necessity for the careful use of sources in compiling a historical work.<sup>35</sup> He uses a list of Roman sources that he has consulted<sup>36</sup> to enhance his own credibility as a historian and also emphasises the value of his own personal experience at Rome.<sup>37</sup> In practice, the focus upon sources results in a tendency by Dionysius to present the reader with all the available accounts of a specific incident, accompanied by his own explanation of which is most likely. Fox's example of Dionysius's accounts of the reasons for the rape of the Sabine women provides a good example of Dionysius's comparison and selection of sources.<sup>38</sup> Dionysius never cites Livy, but Gabba sees the potential for numerous uncomplimentary references to Livy's historical technique, particularly in the preface.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, it is easy to see Dionysius's criticism of those who write about worthy events but with an unworthy technique as a veiled attack upon Livy's quite

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<sup>29</sup> Gabba, 1991, page 212

<sup>30</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 1.2-3

<sup>31</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 1.4-5

<sup>32</sup> Gabba, 1991, pages 60-90, Fox, 1993, JRS 83.

<sup>33</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Thucydides*. For more discussion, see Pritchett, 1975.

<sup>34</sup> Gabba, 1991, page 62

<sup>35</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 1.1

<sup>36</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 1.6, summarised at Schultze, 2000, *Histos* 4, 3.2

<sup>37</sup> Discussed at Fox, 1993, JRS 83, page 33

<sup>38</sup> Fox, 1993, JRS 83, page 35

<sup>39</sup> Gabba, 1991, page 213

different attitude to the use of sources.<sup>40</sup> Of course, as Fox notes, Dionysius's application of this rigorous criteria to mythological events is often inappropriate, particularly in the first book of his history.<sup>41</sup> Dionysius does himself draw a distinction between myth and history, but this is generally a stylistic division and we must surely recognise that a good deal of what Dionysius terms history, we would term less interesting myth.<sup>42</sup>

Stylistically, Dionysius's history has often been categorised as "rhetorical". As we have seen, Dionysius is writing towards a specific goal, namely the promotion of Roman history and culture to the Greek world.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, it was Dionysius's wholehearted appreciation for Roman culture that was partly responsible for his fall from grace in the eyes of many modern critics, who saw him as a traitor to his own Greek culture, whose subjugation to the Roman powers he failed to appreciate properly.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, as Fox notes, many critics found it necessary to look for insincerity in Dionysius's praise of Rome.<sup>45</sup> Certainly, the desire for factual truth professed by Dionysius in his prologue is apparently incompatible with this rhetorical and ideological objective and it is easy to see how Dionysius could be accused of choosing a period of Roman history where factual evidence was scarce enough to allow for significant reinterpretation and even outright invention.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges to the factual accuracy of Dionysius's work comes from the speeches that he produces. These form a significant proportion of the work, particularly in the earlier books,<sup>46</sup> and are generally introduced only where Dionysius's sources had indicated that a speech should occur.<sup>47</sup> In Dionysius's history, the speeches are often used to explain the speaker's motivations behind events, particularly changes to the Roman constitution.<sup>48</sup> Clearly, Dionysius is using his speeches to further his objective of allowing his Greek audience to better understand the development of the Roman state and its institutions. However, in doing

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<sup>40</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*. 1.1.4

<sup>41</sup> Fox, 1993. JRS 83, page 44

<sup>42</sup> For more on Dionysius's relationship with myth and history, see Marincola, 1997, 122-123

<sup>43</sup> Gabba, 1991, page 3

<sup>44</sup> Gabba, 1991, pages 6-9

<sup>45</sup> Fox, 1993. JRS 83, page 31

<sup>46</sup> Gabba, 1991, page 153

<sup>47</sup> Gabba, 1991, pages 83-84

<sup>48</sup> Gabba, 1991, pages 48, 153

so, he loses any claim to be faithfully reproducing speeches that were actually delivered.

It seems to me that Dionysius's concept of factual accuracy extended not to the direct reproduction of material which, by his own time, was no doubt long lost, but was rather concerned with giving his reader an assessment of a probable accurate outline of events and providing a reasonable explanation for them.

When we come to examine the depiction of military events in the *Roman Antiquities* then, we must be prepared to find that we are often given numerous accounts of events, along with Dionysius's own explanation, possibly based on verisimilitude, of which of these he regards as most probable. The same level of explanatory material, particularly speeches, that we find in the political sections of Dionysius's work may not be apparent in his military passages, since these are not so crucial to Dionysius's objective of guiding his audience through the development of the institutions of the city of Rome. Nevertheless, we should be prepared to find more lengthy explanatory passages and more detailed reconstructions than we would in Livy. In particular, we should expect to see great efforts taken to exalt the Romans, explain their conduct and show them as being on an equal footing with the best of the Greeks.

### **Sallust**

Born in Amiternum in 86B.C.<sup>49</sup>, Sallust participated in a long political career, with decidedly mixed fortunes.<sup>50</sup> A "new man" in Roman political circles, with a well-off but provincial background and none of the benefits of belonging to a great political dynasty, Sallust was proud of the advancement he had achieved, but ultimately became disillusioned with politics following a series of setbacks. In circa 42BC,<sup>51</sup> following the effective collapse of his political career, Sallust turned his attentions to the literary world and the composition of history. Sallust is known today for having produced three historical works, of which two, the *Bellum Catiline* and the *Bellum*

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<sup>49</sup> Mellor, 1999, page 3

<sup>50</sup> Syme, 1964, pages 16-59 and Mellor, 1999, pages 30-32

<sup>51</sup> Syme, 1964, page 59



*Jugurthinum*, survive in their entirety. The third, the more ambitious *Histories*, was left uncompleted at the author's death and survives today only in fragments.<sup>52</sup>

Sallust's frustration with politics weighs heavily upon the introductions to his two surviving monographs. He vigorously denounces the political ambitions of his earlier years<sup>53</sup> and expresses the sentiment that he can be of as much use to the state through his literary endeavours as through political action.<sup>54</sup> Sallust's agenda, as he himself sets it out, is to enhance Rome's standing and inspire her people through the narration of her great deeds and by the analysis of her heroes and villains. Indeed, both of Sallust's monographs take villainous figures as their stated focus. However, as more recent scholarship has noted, Sallust's monographs are, in many ways, profoundly hostile to Roman society and Kraus and Woodman note the strong theme of disillusionment that dominates the introductions.<sup>55</sup>

Unlike both Livy and Dionysius, Sallust does not demonstrate great interest in the distant past. It is recent events that occupy his attention and, as such, we must surely envision that he intended to use his histories as commentaries upon his own time. Indeed, even the second-century Rome of the *Bellum Jugurthinum* is wracked by corruption and honest men in politics are the exceptions rather than the rule.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, a recurring theme in Sallust is the frustration of hopes at all levels,<sup>57</sup> no doubt a gloomy reflection upon the author's own disappointments.

If Dionysius took Herodotus as his model, then Sallust's technique is firmly Thucydidean. Politics and warfare are his favoured themes, with geographical and ethnographical digressions confined within strict bounds.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Scanlon, who unearths many parallel episodes and arcs of character development, has explored the extensive parallels between Sallust and Thucydides in depth.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> For a brief discussion of the *Histories*, see Mellor, 1999, pages 41-43. For a more detailed analysis, see Syme, 1964, pages 178-213.

<sup>53</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Catiline*, 3.3-5 and Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 4.7-8

<sup>54</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Catiline*, 3.1-2 and Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 4.1-6

<sup>55</sup> Kraus and Woodman, 1997, page 10

<sup>56</sup> For discussion of Roman politics in Sallust's day, see Syme, 1964, pages 16-28

<sup>57</sup> For detailed exploration of this theme, see Scanlon, 1987

<sup>58</sup> For more on geography in Sallust, see Green, 1993, *AncW* 24.2, pages 185-197

<sup>59</sup> Scanlon, 1980. Also see Mellor, 1999, 43-47.

Sallust's use of sources is highly obscure; he himself sheds little light upon it, failing to give any precise identification. No doubt the conspiracy of Catiline was recent enough that the events were still familiar to Roman population at large, but the war with Jugurtha was removed enough from Sallust's day that the consultation of literary sources would have been a definite necessity.

Perceived bias in Sallust's work has attracted much criticism over the last few centuries, as concepts of the impartial historian have become more dominant.<sup>60</sup> Sallust's affiliation with Caesar, which spanned at least part of his political career, gives cause for suspicion that his treatment of Caesar, his family (particularly his uncle Marius) and his political ideals may well be tinged with bias. However, Syme argues convincingly against the idea of Sallust as a devout follower of Caesar, demonstrating that Sallust did not by any means completely absolve Caesar of blame for the conspiracy of Catiline.<sup>61</sup> If Sallust expresses preference for the cause of the *Populares* over the *Optimates* (a division for which he was himself largely responsible for promoting), then we need not see anything more sinister at work than the sentiments that would doubtless have been provoked by Sallust's own rise as a New Man in Roman politics.

Sallust's monographs contain several remarkable features. Among the most striking of these are his character portraits. Usually, although not always, given at the point of a character's introduction into the narrative, these portraits are presented in starkly moral terms, which often tell us as much about the author as about his subject.<sup>62</sup> The portraits of Catiline<sup>63</sup>, Jugurtha<sup>64</sup>, Metellus<sup>65</sup>, Marius<sup>66</sup> and Sulla<sup>67</sup> are perhaps the best examples of this. The character portraits are rarely unambiguous; positive and negative traits are usually mixed together (even Catiline possesses a remarkable energy and vigour) and it is clear that Sallust's interest lay in watching the manner in which the various elements of a man's character shaped his life and his development.

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<sup>60</sup> Mellor, 1999, pages 46-47

<sup>61</sup> Syme, 1964, pages 92-94

<sup>62</sup> Mellor, 1999, page 45

<sup>63</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Catiline*, 5.1-5

<sup>64</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 6.1

<sup>65</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 43.1-2

<sup>66</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 63

<sup>67</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 95

Sallust does place speeches within his work, but, as Mellor notes, he does not attempt to reproduce the style of those who he attributes the speeches to, and the speeches in Sallust are most likely the author's own inventions.<sup>68</sup> Debates and political harangues, such as that which Marius delivers after his election, are used as vehicles for exploration of the social phenomena that had wrought such drastic effects on Roman society in Sallust's day.

Sallust's style has been the focus of considerable critical attention. Syme argues at length that Sallust introduced a new literary style for Latin prose,<sup>69</sup> while Kraus and Woodman, on the other hand, state that he drew his style from a number of Latin predecessors and that his eventual product is a combination of three distinct styles.<sup>70</sup> Mellor cites the influence of Thucydides and Cato the elder upon the development of Sallust's style and shows it as Thucydidean scope combined with Catonian morality..<sup>71</sup>

Sallust's structuring of his work as also attracted attention. Here, we may be more certain that Sallust was regarded as exceptional in antiquity, for, as Kraus and Woodman note,<sup>72</sup> Fronto commented that Sallust wrote *structe*.<sup>73</sup> Numerous balances and contrasts within the monographs contribute to their effect, while on a broader level, particularly in the *Bellum Jugurthinum*, numerous references introduced to events outside the scope of the monograph remind the reader of the place of the events described within the broader span of Roman history.<sup>74</sup>

However, despite this attention to detail with regards to literary structure, it is over his lack of attention to detail with regards to historical matters that Sallust is most often taken to task. Dates, numbers and distances do not hold any particular interest for Sallust and he often treats them with a lack of attention that would cause a modern historian to gasp in horror. The effort required on the part of critics such as Paul and

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<sup>68</sup> Mellor, 1999, page 45

<sup>69</sup> Syme, 1964, pages 240-273

<sup>70</sup> Kraus and Woodman, 1997, pages 11-12

<sup>71</sup> Mellor, 1999, pages 43-45

<sup>72</sup> Kraus and Woodman, 1997, page 12

<sup>73</sup> Fronto, 2.48

<sup>74</sup> For exploration of this concept, see Levene, 1992, JRS 82, pages 53-70

Syme to build up a workable chronology of the war with Jugurtha is indicative of the problems this can cause.<sup>75</sup>

In examining Sallust's portrayal of battles and the events that surround them, we will have to be conscious of several factors. We will need to be aware that Sallust's years of experience in politics and his subsequent fall from grace have left him with a number of deeply held political, ideological and personal prejudices. We must also be aware that Sallust was writing not merely to inform his audience of events that took place, or even, as with Livy, to offer them *exempla*, but rather so that he might give his own commentary upon the events that have shaped the present. As such, we may expect to find battle scenes represented in such a way as to further develop the portrayal of significant characters in the narrative. We should not expect any great degree of detail or precision with regard to military accounts. An active life as a politician had no doubt ensured that Sallust had at least a passing familiarity with military procedures, but there is no indication to be found in his introductions that such matters were of primary interest to him. Finally, we must accept that, for the most part, Sallust's tone will be negative and pessimistic, with no particular manifestation of patriotic feeling towards Rome.

## Caesar

For the purposes of this work, I shall mostly be concerned with examining Caesar as a military leader and an author. However, these were but two facets of one of the most famous, influential and, to many, notorious figures of antiquity. The amount of biographical work upon Julius Caesar, dating from antiquity, modern times and every intermediate stage, is too large to adequately summarise here. Grant's study of Caesar<sup>76</sup> remains one of the more useful modern scholarly works, but depictions of Caesar's life can also be found in sources as far removed as Suetonius and Shakespeare.

Born in 100B.C., with Rome under the sway of his uncle, Marius, it was perhaps inevitable that Caesar would eventually enter into politics. Having built his initial

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<sup>75</sup> Syme, 1964, pages 142-147 and Paul, 1984

<sup>76</sup> Grant, 1969

reputation as a lawyer and for his small-scale military actions against Mithridates, Caesar progressed for a while through the normal ranks of the Roman government, being quaestor in 68B.C. and aedile in 65B.C.. Eventually, after a controversial campaign in Spain in 61B.C. and an equally controversial consulship in 59B.C., Caesar became part of the so-called First Triumvirate, along with Crassus and Pompey. From 58B.C. to 51B.C., Caesar, acting as Proconsul, was responsible for the subjugation of Gaul to Roman rule. As the first Triumvirate dissolved following Crassus's death, Caesar found himself drawn into a civil war with Pompey, from which he emerged victorious, only to be assassinated in 44B.C., a few months after his final victory.

My concern, however, shall not be with the details of his career, although it shall be impossible to avoid these completely, but rather with his literary output. Caesar produced written accounts of his campaigns, known as *commentarii*, for publication, which survive intact for us today. His most significant works were the *De Bello Gallico* and the *De Bello Civili*. These works differ from the other works upon which I am focussing in that they were not specifically written as historical endeavours. Caesar was writing of his own experiences and therefore he did not need to concern himself with the usual mechanisms of historiography and historical research. Adcock presents a brief, but useful discussion of the nature of the *commentarius* as a literary form and contrasts it with *historia*.<sup>77</sup> For the most part, *commentarii* were notes designed for utility rather than artistry and not intended for publications. By contrast, a *historia* was a literary work, with a specific set of artistic expectations. As Adcock notes, Caesar's work challenges the constraints imposed by the definition of a *commentarius*, with the result that he produced a work of publishable quality while avoiding the rhetorical necessities of the *historia*.

The content of these works is largely what we would expect from a general's account of his campaigns. Much of the narrative is concerned with military procedures such as marches, troop dispositions and battles. There is also a significant level of interest in diplomatic manoeuvrings and political struggles, with the latter being, for obvious reasons, more apparent in the *De Bello Civili*.

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<sup>77</sup> Adcock, 1956, pages 7-13

Unlike the works of the other historians I have discussed, Caesar's works do not begin with introductions describing the author's intentions. The *De Bello Gallico* begins with a description of the geography and ethnography of Gaul,<sup>78</sup> while the *De Bello Civili* begins with the description of the reception of Caesar's letters in the Roman senate.<sup>79</sup> At the same time, our wealth of biographical information about Caesar and the fact that his works survive for us today virtually intact leaves us better placed to offer educated guesses as to his purpose than we find ourselves in many cases where we are forced to depend upon the author's own statement. Given the energy and vigour with which Caesar pursued his career, and the fact that the *commentarii* were apparently produced during some of its most critical years, it seems unlikely that Caesar was indulging in art for its own sake. For while such a focus literary endeavour was by no means disreputable in Roman society, the experiences of Sallust and Cicero indicate that it was very much the preserve of those whose political careers were foundering.

The obvious explanation for us to seize upon is that the *commentarii* were intended as a form of personal propaganda for Caesar; that by glorifying his exploits and, perhaps most importantly, ensuring that his own version of events was circulated in aristocratic circles, he could win much-needed support at Rome.<sup>80</sup> However, Adcock argued against an interpretation of the *commentarii*, particularly the *De Bello Gallico*, based on personal propaganda, seeing also a more national level of propaganda, with Caesar obligated to support enthusiastically the Roman expansionist agenda.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, the portrayal of Gauls within the *De Bello Gallico* is relevant to any examination of Caesar's motives. For the most part, the Gallic chieftains who oppose Caesar are depicted as greedy and unscrupulous. In the first book, the Helvetii are shown as migrating not through any pressing necessity, but rather out of an opportunistic desire to improve their fortunes,<sup>82</sup> while Ariovistus is driven by his greed for power and wealth. However, Caesar is also not reluctant to put stirring

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<sup>78</sup> Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.1 and Fridh, 1996, *Eranos* 94, pages 12-20

<sup>79</sup> Caesar, *De Bello Civili*, 1.1

<sup>80</sup> For the problems caused by Caesar's absence from Rome, see Wiseman, 1998, in Welch and Powell, 1998, pages 1-9 and Welch, 1998, in Welch and Powell, 1998, page 91

<sup>81</sup> Adcock, 1956, pages 19-25

<sup>82</sup> Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.30

words and valid arguments in the mouths of his enemies on occasion and, in particular, their assertions that Gaul has the right to be free seem to carry a particular weight, so that Caesar must devote considerable time to the justification of Roman activities in Gaul. Barlow argues that Caesar undercuts these arguments presented by the Gauls through his habit of portraying their leaders as greedy and unscrupulous.<sup>83</sup> Barlow also argues that the depiction of the pro-Roman Gauls is highly Romanised.<sup>84</sup>

If the content of and intentions behind the *commentarii* have been the subject of a certain amount of recent scholarship, this is nothing to the interest that has been lavished upon Caesar's literary style. Long dismissed as plain and workmanlike, there has been a recent advance in the understanding of the role Caesar's Latin in his works. The limited range of vocabulary used in Caesar's work is well attested; Hall identifies him as using fewer than thirteen hundred words<sup>85</sup> and Adcock assigns Caesar an important role in the contraction of the vocabulary of literary Latin.<sup>86</sup> Hall goes on to theorise that the tight control that Caesar exercised over his Latin was supposed to form a contrast between the precise rationality of the Romans and the chaos and superstition of the Gauls.<sup>87</sup>

Caesar's language also plays a role in his personal propaganda. Batstone demonstrates the manner in which Caesar uses repetition to build up the image of the inevitability of his march through Italy at the beginning of the civil war.<sup>88</sup> No doubt Caesar's avoidance of Graecisms, at a time when they were becoming increasingly common among the Roman elite, did much to enhance the picture that is given of Caesar as an upright and traditional Roman. The careful use of vocabulary would have been an effective method for the promotion of Caesar's virtues as a commander, presenting him as a man with no room for niceties, but accustomed to the harsh language of real wars.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Barlow, 1998, in Welch and Powell 1998, pages 139-170

<sup>84</sup> Barlow, 1998, in Welch and Powell 1998, page 144.

<sup>85</sup> Hall, 1998, in Welch and Powell, 1998, page 21

<sup>86</sup> Adcock, 1956, page 63

<sup>87</sup> Hall, 1998, in Welch and Powell, 1998, pages 11-43

<sup>88</sup> Batstone, 1991, *Mnemosyne* 44, pages 126-136

<sup>89</sup> For more on Caesar's Latin, see Bell, 1995, *Latomus* 54, pages 735-767, Gotoff, 1984, *ICS* 9, pages 1-18 and Damon, 1994, *CJ* 89, pages 183-195

Having considered all this, we must expect to find striking differences between Caesar's battle descriptions and those of our other authors. Caesar stands alone among them for having personally participated in most of the battles that he describes. Despite not entering into a life of military command until relatively late in his life, he demonstrated a remarkable aptitude for it and even if we dismiss his own accounts of his conquests, his achievements speak for themselves. At the same time, Caesar was faced with a much more urgent need to use his writings to influence his standing, and so his motivation use his work for political purposes is enhanced. This is balanced by the fact that he was writing about wars occurring in one of Rome's less distance provinces in his own time; no doubt there would have been plenty of witnesses on hand to discredit Caesar if he engaged in outright invention. From Caesar's battle reports, therefore, we should expect to see a far higher standard of accuracy than we would elsewhere, coupled with a more immediate, but less objective level of interpretation. From his accounts of the circumstances surrounding a battle, on the other hand, we should be expect to see numerous levels of reinterpretation at work.



## Chapter 2.2 – The Peripheral Sources

In addition to the main sources, it will also be necessary to mention other authors, in varying levels of detail. Although these authors are not central to my investigation, it will still be necessary to touch upon them during my discussion of the “primary” authors. As such, it will be productive for me to briefly examine these authors, so that we may be aware of the issues surrounding them when discussing their impact upon the authors in whom I am primarily interested.

### Polybius

Born in Megalopolis in around 200B.C., Polybius originally came to Rome as a hostage following the Roman victory at the battle of Pydna in 168B.C.. Polybius used his time at Rome to establish important connections among the Roman political elite and became intimate with the Scipios, whose influence at Rome had been extremely significant, following the victory of Scipio Africanus over Hannibal. Accompanying Publius Scipio the Younger to Carthage as a military advisor in 150B.C., he witnessed the eventual destruction of that city at the conclusion of the Third Punic War.<sup>90</sup>

Although he seems to have played no small role in the politics and military events of his time, Polybius is remembered today for the history of Rome that he wrote, apparently with the intention of explaining the reasons behind Rome’s rise to power to a Greek audience,<sup>91</sup> in a time when many Greeks were no doubt still baffled by the meteoric rise of Rome from an Italian power to Mediterranean domination. Originally written in forty books, only the first five of these survive fully intact today, with the rest being represented by fragments, most of which come from the earlier books.<sup>92</sup>

Although Polybius decided to take 220B.C. as the starting point of his history, he uses the first two books of his work to survey events prior to this, starting from 264B.C..<sup>93</sup> Marincola’s arguments that this represents an attempt to compete with Herodotus and

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<sup>90</sup> Walbank, 1972, chapter 1 and Marincola, 2001, pages 113-116 for details of Polybius’s life

<sup>91</sup> Marincola, 2001, page 116 and Walbank, 2002, pages 277-292

<sup>92</sup> Marincola, 2001, pages 116-117

<sup>93</sup> Marincola, 2001, pages 116-117

Thucydides, both of whom had included similar introductions, albeit on a smaller scale, seem generally convincing.<sup>94</sup>

There has been renewed interest in Polybian studies following the publication of Walbank's three-volume commentary on the *Histories*.<sup>95</sup> Polybius's historical technique has been discussed at length, with works by Walbank<sup>96</sup> and Sacks<sup>97</sup> being of particular interest.<sup>98</sup> Eckstein's recent survey of morality in the writings of Polybius has challenged the long-standing view of Polybius as a "Machiavellian" historian, judging his characters by the degree of success they experienced, and suggested instead a more "moral" interpretation of Polybius.

If Polybius has been accused of "Machiavellianism", it is perhaps easy for us to understand why. Despite the fact that the events of the earlier portions of his life could be expected to have instilled a strong dislike of Rome in Polybius's character, once at Rome, he becomes an enthusiastic supporter of the city, her constitutions and her policies. Polybius devotes almost the whole of the sixth book of his work to a lengthy and detailed description of Rome's political, social and military institutions. Although this description is perhaps overly enthusiastic at times and has a distinct tendency to idealise, it remains one of our most important sources of information upon the Rome of the middle-Republic. Although Eckstein offers a plausible alternative to the "Machiavellian" Polybius, the temptation to see Polybius's enthusiasm for Rome as a direct result of Rome's victories is highly obvious.

Polybius demonstrates a reasonable degree of awareness of the issues surrounding the sources that he makes use of. In particular, he devotes the twelfth book of his work to a critique of some of his historical predecessors, particularly Timaeus. Sacks's discussion of this section is particularly enlightening with regard to Polybius's attitude towards history.<sup>99</sup> Chapters 12.17 to 12.22 are of particular interest to me; here, Polybius attacks Callisthenes for his inadequacies as a military historian. These

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<sup>94</sup> Marincola, 2001, pages 117-118

<sup>95</sup> Walbank 1957, Walbank, 1967, Walbank 1979

<sup>96</sup> Walbank, 1960, Historia 9, pages 216-234 and Walbank, 2002, pages 178-192

<sup>97</sup> Sacks, 1981

<sup>98</sup> See Walbank, 2002, pages 1-27 for a far more comprehensive survey

<sup>99</sup> Sacks, 1981, pages 21-78

chapters demonstrate both Polybius's interest in military matters, and the relatively extensive experience that he had with them.

Although, as will become evident, Polybius is sometimes quite eager to condemn bias in other authors, he is by no means free from it himself. Although Polybius's loyalties to the Achean League did not prevent the development of a deep affection for Rome, Polybius remained hostile to the Aetolian League, a long-standing rival of the Achean League.<sup>100</sup> He was also, as we have seen, perhaps rather too ready to see Rome's actions with rather too sympathetic a perspective. In the field of Roman politics, his friendship with the Scipios lead to a natural tendency to treat them sympathetically, and although Eckstein cites examples of occasions where Polybius attacked members of the family,<sup>101</sup> all of these cases either concerned the relatively distant past, or else were offset by vast amounts of praise.

### **Fabius Pictor**

Born into a wing of the Fabian dynasty with a reputation for its interest in the arts (and the ensuing aura of eccentricity),<sup>102</sup> Fabius Pictor lived during the events of the Second Punic War. Although widely known in antiquity as the first of the Roman historians,<sup>103</sup> Fabius wrote his history of Rome in Greek, perhaps largely due to the lack of sophistication in the Latin of his day, which rendered it an unsuitable for employment as a literary language.<sup>104</sup>

Fabius's history spanned from the foundation of the city and the myths surrounding it down to the time of the Second Punic War. It is almost entirely lost for us today, with just a few fragments surviving for us. Chassignet's compilation of these fragments is the most recent<sup>105</sup> and before this, there had not been any particular treatment of them since Peter's 1914 work.<sup>106</sup> Although it is, of course, dangerous to attempt to reconstruct an ancient work on the basis of an extremely limited range of fragments, it

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<sup>100</sup> Eckstein, 1995, pages 212-214

<sup>101</sup> Eckstein, 1995, 9-10

<sup>102</sup> For more on Fabius's background, see Badian, 1979, in Dorey, 1979, page 2

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 1.6.2

<sup>104</sup> Badian, 1968, in Dorey, 1968

<sup>105</sup> Chassignet, 1996

<sup>106</sup> Peter, 1914

is commonly believed that Fabius dealt primarily with the early myths of Rome and with the Punic Wars and that much of the intervening span was largely neglected.<sup>107</sup> The surviving fragments certainly support this view, with many of them concerning Rome's early mythology or battles such as Trasimene,<sup>108</sup> but few relating to the Early Republican period.

Fabius's reliability as a historian has been called in to question by both modern and ancient scholars. Polybius attacked Fabius over supposed Pro-Roman bias in accounting for the causes of the Second Punic War.<sup>109</sup> More recent scholarship has accused Fabius of outright invention with regards to Rome's early past.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, he remained one of the more important sources for historians of Rome in the ancient world. Both Livy and Dionysius refer to their use of Fabius as a source on a number of occasions and even though many of Polybius's references to him are uncomplimentary, Mattingly argues that Fabius nevertheless remained an important source for Polybius. In support of this, he points to the transmission of a number of Fabius's personal biases into Polybius's work.<sup>111</sup> No doubt Fabius's work was attractive to a historian in the ancient world. For Fabius had lived through many of the events that he wrote about and, as such, would be perceived as the most reliable and authoritative source upon many of them.<sup>112</sup> Roman authors in particular may have been less inclined to be deterred by any pro-Roman bias in Fabius's work.

### **Porcius Cato**

M. Porcius Cato is generally regarded as the first to have written a history of Rome in the Latin language.<sup>113</sup> Although Cato participated in an active political and literary career,<sup>114</sup> it is in his historical work, the *Origines*, that I am primarily interested.

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<sup>107</sup> Badian, 1979, in Dorey, 1979, page 3 and Ogilvie and Drummond, 1990, in *CAH* 7

<sup>108</sup> Chassignet, 1996, page 54. Livy, 22.7.1-4

<sup>109</sup> Polybius, 3.8-9

<sup>110</sup> See, for example Momigliano, 1977, pages 99-105

<sup>111</sup> Mattingly, 1982, LCM 7, page 20

<sup>112</sup> eg. Livy, 22.7.4. See Marincola, 1997, pages 82-83 for discussion of the value of personal testimony, including Fabius's use of it.

<sup>113</sup> Badian, 1979, in Dorey, 1979, pages 7 and 30, discusses the issues surrounding this.

<sup>114</sup> See Chassignet, 1986, pages XXVIII-XXX for more on this. Also, Astin, 1978, pages 1-3 for more on Cato's background.

Composed in seven books<sup>115</sup> and surviving today only through a few fragments and references, this work must have been vital in shaping the development of a literary historical tradition at Rome.

Apparently concerned with the origins of Rome and of the Italian towns (perhaps a reflection of Cato's provincial origins), the *Origines* would appear to have been substantially different from most of the other historical works that I have discussed. Although Chassignet's recent work contains 116 fragments of Cato's work, many of these are no longer than a couple of words, having been preserved through the writings of the grammaticians.<sup>116</sup> Badian broke down the structure of the seven books of the *Origines* as follows: the first book was concerned with the foundation stories of Rome, the second and third with the foundations of the Italian towns, the fourth and fifth with the Punic Wars and the sixth and seventh with the events of Cato's own day.<sup>117</sup> Badian's argument here is based upon testimony given by Cornelius Nepos<sup>118</sup> and although Astin warns, with the convincing argument that Nepos's structure leaves no space at all for discussion of the early Republic, that we should not be too uncritical in accepting Nepos's word,<sup>119</sup> I still find Badian's explanation to be generally plausible.

Cato appears to have been deliberate in setting his work up in contrast to the annalistic histories. In a fragment preserved by Gellius, he rejects the subject matter of the pontifical chronicles, which was presumably an important feature of annalistic histories.<sup>120</sup> Sadly, our fragments do not preserve whether Cato stated what he intended to discuss instead of these things and, with this fragment apparently coming from the beginning of the fourth book of his work, there may even be cause to wonder whether or not it should be perceived as applying to the whole of the work, or rather as representing a change of emphasis in the middle of the work.

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<sup>115</sup> Badian, 1979, in Dorey, 1979, page 7

<sup>116</sup> Chassignet, 1986

<sup>117</sup> Badian, 1979, in Dorey, 1979, page 7

<sup>118</sup> Cornelius Nepos, *Cato*

<sup>119</sup> Astin, 1978, pages 213-214

<sup>120</sup> Gellius, 2.28.4, Chassignet, 1991, page 35

One of the more remarkable features that is attributed to Cato's work is the refusal to call military commanders by their names. This is attested by Nepos,<sup>121</sup> and the fragments that survive for us today broadly support it. Rawson suggests that this was due to an "old oligarchic tradition of distrust for individual ambition".<sup>122</sup> However, Astin argues that may be further misrepresentation of the *Origines* on the part of Nepos, drawing upon evidence from Gellius<sup>123</sup> to suggest that Cato was by no means unwilling to allow himself to be identified as a military commander. Of course, Cato's own activities as a commander are of interest to me, since they emphasise his familiarity with military affairs and hence enhance his probable standing as a military historian.

Finally, with regard to bias, numerous difficulties surround our understanding of Cato. He was to become proverbial for his staunch morality and did not shy from using his office of Censor to punish those senators who he believed had violated the rules of office.<sup>124</sup> However, there is no particular evidence of firm moral overtones in the *Origines*, at least, not in the fragments that survive for us today. Also well-attested is Cato's dislike of the influence of Greek culture at Rome. Again, aside from the strong interest in the Latin towns and a brief but scathing comment about the Ligurians<sup>125</sup>, Cato's *Origines* do not betray any particular traces of strong ethnic biases.

### **The Annales Maximi and the Pontifical Chronicle**

The issues surrounding the *Annales Maximi* and its predecessors are so numerous and the debate surrounding them is so extensive that I shall not have time to do more than touch briefly upon the more important issues of contention here.

Cicero tells us that the Pontifex Maximus used to keep a record of the events at Rome each year on a whitewashed board.<sup>126</sup> This practice was eventually put to rest in about 130B.C. by P. Mucius Scaevola. Servius<sup>127</sup> and Macrobius<sup>128</sup> also refer to these

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<sup>121</sup> Cornelius Nepos, *Cato*

<sup>122</sup> Rawson, 1991, page 382

<sup>123</sup> Gellius, 15.9.5 or Pater, 1914, Cato fragment 99

<sup>124</sup> As always, see Astin, 1978, for Cato's biographical details.

<sup>125</sup> Servius, *ad Verg. Aen.*, 11.700, Chassignet, 1991, page 21

<sup>126</sup> Cicero, *De Oratore*, 2.52

<sup>127</sup> Servius, *In Aen.*, 1.373

events, although the details of their accounts vary. The point at which these records, known as the Pontifical Chronicle, were transposed into the “literary” *Annales Maximi* is not known for certain, although it has been hotly debated. The theory that Scaevola himself was responsible for the publication of the “eighty book” *Annales* described by Servius, as promoted by critics such as Crake,<sup>129</sup> is convincingly rejected by Frier.<sup>130</sup> Frier’s arguments that Scaevola ended the practice of the keeping of the Pontifical Chronicle due to the proliferation of existing literary chronicles seem to be to be convincing.<sup>131</sup> Frier’s attribution of the “eighty book” *Annales Maximi* to Verrius Flaccus are too lengthy and complicated for detailed discussion here, but the scenario he outlines is in no way improbable, although Bucher has sounded a wise note of caution with regards to the overly credulous acceptance of Frier’s theories.<sup>132</sup>

The manner of the preservation of the Pontifical Chronicle is of great importance to the development of our ideas concerning the *Annales*. Clearly, whitewashed boards would not be able to survive long in the Mediterranean climate. However, Bucher lays down a generally plausible, although perhaps at times rather thin, argument that the Pontifical Chronicle was preserved in a more permanent form in a series of bronze tablets kept in front of the Regia.<sup>133</sup> Even if we reject the details of Bucher’s argument, the general case that it was possible for these records to have survived in a permanent manner remains strong.

Finally, the contents of the *Annales Maximi* have remained contravertial. Although the *Annales* are lost to us today, a large number of references to them in our ancient sources still survive.<sup>134</sup> Cato’s statement that the Pontifical Chronicle recorded events such as famines and eclipses provides one of our few definite comments from an ancient author upon their contents.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, Rawson discusses the presence of prodigy lists in the *Annales Maximi* in some depth, but warns that the contents of the

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<sup>128</sup> Macrobius. *Saturnalia*, 2.17

<sup>129</sup> Crake, 1940, in *Classical Philology* 35, page 386

<sup>130</sup> Frier, 1979, *passim*, especially pages 179-193

<sup>131</sup> Frier, 1979, pages 183-184

<sup>132</sup> Bucher, 1987, in *AJAH* 12, pages 4-6

<sup>133</sup> Bucher, 1987, in *AJAH* 12, pages 2-61

<sup>134</sup> For the most recent collection of these, see Chassignet, 1996

<sup>135</sup> Gellius, 2.28.4, Chassignet, 1991, page 35

*Annales Maximi* were not limited to these and that they did not form the sole source of information on such matters for later annalists.<sup>136</sup>

There are, of course, many other areas of controversy surrounding the *Annales Maximi*. For an introduction to many of the areas of controversy, see the works by Bucher,<sup>137</sup> Frier,<sup>138</sup> Rawson<sup>139</sup> and Crake<sup>140</sup>. Frier in particular provides a detailed history of the debates that have surrounded the *Annales Maximi* and the development of critical opinion over the last two centuries.

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<sup>136</sup> Rawson, 1991, pages 1-15

<sup>137</sup> Bucher 1987m in AJAH 12, pages 2-61

<sup>138</sup> Frier, 1979

<sup>139</sup> Rawson, 1991

<sup>140</sup> Crake, 1940, in Classical Philology 35, pages 375-386



### **Chapter 3 – The Roman Army**

My next task will be to examine, so far as is possible today, the realities of warfare in the Roman world. By combining this investigation with the examination of the authors that I conducted in the last chapter, it is my intention to build up a framework through which it will be possible to draw conclusions about the case studies that I am going to undertake.

It will be necessary to divide this survey of ancient warfare into several sections. First, I must examine the chronological development of the Roman army, from its inception through to its state in the time of Julius Caesar. This will involve a review of the developments that occurred in the fields of tactics, equipment and recruitment, as well as of the political and military factors that were responsible for them. Next, I must assess some of the practical matters that would have been involved in the maintenance and usage of an army, such as problems of supply, manpower and command. Finally, on a more abstract level, I must examine Roman attitudes towards war and towards their army.

#### **The Development of the Roman Army**

##### **The Early Army (The Cremera)**

Given the dramatic changes that Rome underwent between the end of her Regal period and end of the Republic, it is to be expected that her army would have undergone similarly dramatic development. Two of the more historians of the Roman army, Keppie and Parker, break the development of the Roman army down into several distinct stages.<sup>141</sup> The very earliest military force at Rome was most likely composed of the leading aristocrats and their attendants.<sup>142</sup> Keppie reports that archaeological evidence would seem to indicate that this early force would have used round shields, studded leather armour and bronze helmets, but confesses that there is, quite unsurprisingly, no evidence for the organisation of this proto-army.<sup>143</sup> In

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<sup>141</sup> Keppie. 1984, pages 14-79 and Parker. 1928. pages 9-46

<sup>142</sup> Keppie. 1984, page 14 and Parker. 1928. page 9

<sup>143</sup> Keppie. 1984, page 14

addition, Keppie points out that the initial clashes between Rome and her neighbours would have been little more than skirmishes between bands of raiders, with a couple of hundred men at most on each side.<sup>144</sup> This eventually expanded into a 3,000 strong infantry force, with 300 cavalry, apparently drawn up from the aristocracy of the three Roman tribes.<sup>145</sup> All of the soldiers in this primitive army were required to provide their own equipment, with the result that it was a heavily aristocratic force, particularly in its cavalry.

Our ancient literary sources ascribe the first major development in the Roman armed forces to the king Servius Tullius.<sup>146</sup> He apparently opened up the ranks to the plebeians and ended the practice of limiting military service to those from a few elite families. The Roman army was divided into layers, with distribution between them dependent upon wealth. The richest members of society formed the cavalry, while those below them made up the various ranks of the infantry. There were four levels of infantry, each with its own requirements for armour and weaponry. Keppie describes these in detail.<sup>147</sup> There was also a class below these, which owned no property and hence was not eligible for military service. Clearly, the army at this point was still restricted to wealthy citizens, even if the requirement of noble birth had been abolished. There was still no pay for military service and soldiers were required to provide their own equipment.

This neat picture of the development of the Roman Army and the manner in which it reflected the social structures of the time has recently been called into question. Goldsworthy puts forward the view that this system is in fact an invention of Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who were constructing what seemed to them to be a plausible model, on the basis of the structure of the *Comitia Centuriata*.<sup>148</sup>

Although some authorities have tried to suggest that the Roman army used its later system of *maniples* during these early years, Rawson argues convincingly against

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<sup>144</sup> Keppie, 1984, page 14

<sup>145</sup> Livy, 1.18.6, Keppie, 1984, page 14 and Parker, 1928, page 9

<sup>146</sup> Livy, 1.43, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 4.16, Keppie, 1984, pages 15-16, Parker, 1928, pages 9-10

<sup>147</sup> Keppie, 1984, pages 16-17

<sup>148</sup> Goldsworthy, 2003, page 25

this<sup>149</sup> and both Keppie and Parker state that the tactical unit in use at this time would have been the Hellenistic *phalanx*.<sup>150</sup> Perhaps adopted by the Romans from the Etruscans, the close-packed *phalanx* was the dominant formation in much of the Greek world.

Modern scholars have rightly argued against the attribution of all of these reforms to the Roman army to Servius Tullius, on the grounds that Roman society was not, by the time he is supposed to have lived, adequately advanced to have given rise to such a system and that it is more likely that these changes were the result of a more gradual evolutionary process.<sup>151</sup> Goldsworthy's argument, outlined above, seems especially plausible.

### **The Roman Army at the time of the Second Punic War (Cannae, Zama)**

With its close-packed ranks, the *phalanx* was a powerful defensive formation. However, the lack of mobility it afforded to individual soldiers translated into a broader tactical inflexibility. Traditionally, the next round of reforms to the Roman army has been ascribed to M. Furius Camillus, who was responsible for the final Roman victory over Veii in 396B.C.. Again, modern scholarship has recognised that it is somewhat incredible for such a wide range of reforms to be ascribed to a single man and has identified the changes as having occurred more gradually over a protracted period.<sup>152</sup> Indeed, Rawson even argues for the possibility that the supposed Camillian reforms were nothing more than a series of temporary measures designed to meet a specific crisis.<sup>153</sup>

That the reforms attributed to Camillus were significant is beyond doubt; besides numerous changes to the equipment and tactics of the Roman army, he also introduced pay for soldiers. Although we do not need to see the introduction of pay as being indicative of any lowering of the property qualification for military service,<sup>154</sup> Parker is no doubt correct when he states that it would have allowed the Roman army

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<sup>149</sup> Rawson, 1991, pages 34 and 53-54

<sup>150</sup> Keppie, 1984, page 17, Parker, 1928, pages 10-11

<sup>151</sup> Keppie, 1984, page 17

<sup>152</sup> Keppie, 1984, pages 18-19 and Parker, 1928, pages 11-12

<sup>153</sup> Rawson, 1991, page 52

<sup>154</sup> For a description of the development of property qualifications, see Gabba, 1976, pages 1-12

to engage in winter campaigning, which would have been a necessity as Rome's military undertakings increased in ambition and duration.<sup>155</sup>

The most significant of the tactical reforms attributed to Camillus was the replacement of the *phalanx* with the *maniple* formation. This represented a move away from the Greek tactical doctrines and the emergence of a more distinctive Italian manner of fighting. That the *maniple* was a uniquely Roman formation is by no means certain; Parker hints that it was adopted after the Romans had seen it used successfully against their own troops.<sup>156</sup> The new equipment that was introduced during this period complemented these tactical reforms; the *pilum*, or throwing spear, replaced the old *hasta*<sup>157</sup> and troops were expected to use their swords for close-quarters fighting. This allowed the troops to be effective at a greater variety of ranges, with the *pilum* being used to disrupt the enemy ranks before the Romans closed to sword-range.<sup>158</sup>

The *maniple* was a more complex system of tactical organisation than the *phalanx* and necessitated a further degree of categorisation of the troops involved. Division on the basis of age became more pronounced over the former divisions on the basis of wealth. The youngest (and presumably most agile) of the troops became *velites*; light-armed troops who were initially positioned in front of the other troops, with the expectation that they would retreat behind them once the engagement began in earnest. Equipped with a small shield and a throwing spear,<sup>159</sup> their task appears to have been mostly one of harassment. Their spear was designed to bend upon impact, so that the enemy could not then re-use it.<sup>160</sup>

The next age group formed the *hastati*. These were the front-line troops, equipped with a *pilum* and a double-edged Spanish sword.<sup>161</sup> These would be arranged in ten

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<sup>155</sup> Parker, 1928, page 13

<sup>156</sup> Parker, 1928, page 12

<sup>157</sup> For descriptions and depictions of the weapons of the Roman army in this period, see Bishop and Coulston, 1993, pages 48-64

<sup>158</sup> For a challenge to this traditional view, see Zhmodikov, 2000, *Historia* 49, pages 67-78

<sup>159</sup> Parker, 1928, page 15

<sup>160</sup> Polybius, 22.4

<sup>161</sup> Parker, 1928, page 15

maniples per legion, and placed in a line, with a gap between each group of equal width to that of one of the maniples.

The second line was composed of the soldiers in their prime; presumably those with more extensive military experience, but not yet afflicted with any infirmity due to age. These principes were equipped in a similar manner to the hastati and were placed in maniples in the second line, with their maniples normally filling the gaps between those of the hastati. The troops drawn up in maniples were more widely spaced than those in the old phalanxes, both on an individual and a group level, allowing for greater freedom of movement and tactical flexibility.<sup>162</sup> Behind the principes came the triarii, the oldest of the troops. These were equipped with the old hasta, rather than the pilum.<sup>163</sup> These were also drawn up in maniples and positioned so as to fill the gaps in front of them. The positioning of the various maniples would have conferred numerous tactical advantages. Not only would it have allowed individual maniples to manoeuvre more easily within their line, but it also allowed the front line to fall back efficiently into the second when pressed hard and allowed the second line to reinforce the first easily when more strength was required at the front. The “dents” that were opened in the line by the gaps between the maniples of the hastati also presumably offered opportunities for the partial encirclement of enemy troops.

The normal size for a legion at this time was 4,200 men, with the normal composition being 1,200 of each of the velites, hastati and principes and 600 of the triarii. The size of legions was sometimes expanded, usually through the expansion of the first three groups.<sup>164</sup> In addition to this, there were 300 cavalry attached to each legion, divided into ten squadrons. It is clear from this that the Roman focus was very much upon heavy infantry. The hastati and principes seem to have formed the core of the Roman legion, with the velites, triarii and even, to some extent, the cavalry implemented in such a way as to provide them with support. Normally, four legions were raised in any one year, although this number appears to have increased dramatically during crises such as the Second Punic War.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Parker, 1928, page 16

<sup>163</sup> Parker, 1928, page 14

<sup>164</sup> Parker, 1928, page 14

<sup>165</sup> Parker, 1928, page 17

## The Post-Marian Army ( The Muluccha, Ariovistus)

Traditionally, the next stage of the development of the Roman army has been attributed to Gaius Marius. However, recent scholarship has conceded that the grounds for this identification, namely that the last appearance of maniples in our literary sources comes during Metellus's campaigns against Jugurtha, are by no means secure or decisive.<sup>166</sup> Of course, we do, thanks to Sallust's *Bellum Jugurthinum*, have a fairly solid basis for believing that Marius was responsible for one particularly significant reform to Rome's military, namely the abolition of the property qualification. No doubt this development was instrumental in ensuring that Marius's name was attached to a whole range of other military innovations that occurred during this period.

The most significant of these was the replacement of the maniple with the cohort. An individual cohort was larger than a maniple, with just ten of them to each legion. Each cohort was made up from a mixture of the four types of infantry, resulting in a more diverse formation, although the divisions between the groups was rapidly diminished and was soon only retained for the purpose of determining rank. The ten cohorts were then drawn up in three lines, with four cohorts on the front line and three on the second and third lines.<sup>167</sup> Bell discusses the advantages of the cohort over the maniple in some detail. It presented a uniform front-line, rather than the broken line of the maniple formation, which was better able to withstand the sudden and vigorous onslaughts of the barbarian tribes.<sup>168</sup> The cohort also represented a powerful individual unit, by comparison with the maniple, which made it ideal for detachment from the legion for smaller, more scattered engagements.<sup>169</sup>

The date for the adoption of the cohort as a tactical unit is the subject of some debate. As we have seen, its attribution to Marius is based on extremely thin evidence. There is also evidence in Livy and Polybius<sup>170</sup> to suggest the use of the cohort in the Second Punic War, a century before the time of Marius. The most likely theory, proposed by

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<sup>166</sup> Bell, 1965, *Historia* 14, pages 404-422, Parker, 1928, pages 28-29. Keppie, 1984, page 63

<sup>167</sup> Keppie, 1984, page 64, with diagram on page 65

<sup>168</sup> Bell, 1965, *Historia* 14, pages 409-411

<sup>169</sup> Bell, 1965, *Historia* 14, pages 411-413

<sup>170</sup> Polybius, 11.23.1

Bell, is that the cohort was adopted in Spain during the Second Punic War and then continued to co-exist with the maniple throughout the Second Century B.C.<sup>171</sup> Parker argues that Scipio's use of the cohort was simply an experiment prompted by a particular situation,<sup>172</sup> but I find the number of references to the use of the cohort in Spain in Livy that Bell cites to be convincing evidence for at least moderately sustained use of the cohort. Of course, that Marius was not responsible for the invention of the cohort or its initial introduction into the Roman army does not preclude the possibility that he may have done much towards its final complete replacement of the maniple. Bell's arguments that the cohort would have been uniquely well suited to Marius's campaigns against the barbarian tribes are doubtless true.

Indeed, it is tempting to associate the various shifts that occurred in Rome's tactical organisation with the shifts in the enemies that she found herself facing. During her earliest years, the phalanx was adequate against the local Italian states Rome found herself pitted against. As Rome's sphere of influence and the scale of her wars grew, she needed the increased flexibility that came from the maniple system to counter the well-trained and organised Greek and Carthaginian armies she was facing. Eventually, with Greece and Carthage subdued, Rome found herself defending her borders against barbarian foes, whose savage offensive tactics required the greater defensive strength of the cohort. No doubt this explanation is a gross over-simplification of the factors that prompted Roman tactical development, but it presents a useful summary of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various formations.

Other reforms to the Roman army can be ascribed to Marius with slightly more certainty. It seems that Marius was responsible for standardising the equipment used by the various classes of infantry.<sup>173</sup> This was probably a natural development from the increasing state funding for the Roman army, which now provided its troops with equipment rather than demanding that they supply their own.

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<sup>171</sup> Bell, 1965, *Historia* 14, pages 404-409

<sup>172</sup> Parker, 1928, pages 28-29

<sup>173</sup> Keppie, 1984, page 66

The final major change that Roman tactical doctrines went through in this period concerns the decline of the velites. Roman light infantry had apparently proven extremely ineffective in Spanish campaigns, when matched against the superior Spanish light infantry. Similarly, the use of velites to support cavalry left them horribly exposed if the cavalry should be forced to withdraw. Over the course of the Second and First Centuries B.C., the velites appear to have been withdrawn from the Roman forces, replaced by additional cavalry and light infantry from the allied auxiliary troops.<sup>174</sup>

Indeed, auxiliaries in general seem to have become more significant as Rome's army became more developed. Rome's weakness with respect to cavalry had been evident in the Second Punic War and even then, allied cavalry was used extensively to support the Roman cavalry. It is interesting that while we hear of the Roman cavalry being routed at Cannae, we do not hear of any similar difficulties on the part of the allied cavalry.<sup>175</sup>

Therefore, if we look at the whole course of the development of the Roman military through the Regal and Republican periods, we see first a trend towards diversification and complex formations, followed by a later trend back towards unified equipment and simple formations. However, several common themes do run through the whole course of the development of the Roman army. The focus upon heavy infantry is continuous and unbending. The maniple system is built around its heavy infantry and the cohort later takes the practice further by absorbing the triarii and the velites into the ranks of the heavy infantry. As Rome's empire grows, so does her dependence upon her subjects and allies to provide her with light infantry and cavalry.

## Sources

I have not yet touched upon one of the greatest problems facing us in our development of the Roman army, namely the problem of our sources. Obviously, we have several literary sources upon it. Most notably, Polybius wrote a detailed and

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<sup>174</sup> Bell, 1965, *Historia* 14, pages 419-422

<sup>175</sup> For more on auxiliary troops, see Dixon and Southern, 1992 and McCall, 2001.



lengthy description of the Roman military in the sixth book of his work.<sup>176</sup> Rawson provides an extensive discussion of Polybius's account of the Roman military,<sup>177</sup> noting several problematic features, such as its heavy focus upon the role of the tribunes, which she attributes to Polybius's use of the *commentarii* of tribunes in forming his account.<sup>178</sup> Besides Polybius, we also have numerous other literary sources on the Roman army, although none of it is so systematic or sustained. Livy mentions military matters frequently in his history, as do Sallust, Dionysius, Varro and many other authors. However, as I intend to show, authors in the ancient world were frequently ill-informed on military matters and did not necessarily possess the knowledge required to successfully narrate and interpret accounts of stratagems and battles. In particular, I must be extremely wary of depending upon literary sources for my knowledge of the military, given my intention to examine the worth of these sources as authorities upon military affairs. In order to pass an adequate judgement, it will be necessary to ensure a non-literary supply of evidence.

Bishop and Coulston break the forms of evidence concerning the Roman army down into three distinct categories: representational,<sup>179</sup> archaeological<sup>180</sup> and documentary.<sup>181</sup> The first of these categories refers to sculpture, which can be a valuable tool in evaluating the equipment in use by the Roman army at any particular time. Presumably, the obvious argument runs, the equipment depicted in the sculpture will be analogous to that in use at the time of the sculpture's production. However, the matter is not necessarily this simple. As Bishop and Coulston and Rawson<sup>182</sup> note, sculpture was often influenced by a variety of propagandistic factors, such as archaism and Hellenism. Moreover, we need not assume that the sculptors had any more detailed knowledge of military affairs than had our literary sources.<sup>183</sup>

The propagandistic use of sculpture would have had several influences upon what was actually depicted. Anybody with even a passing familiarity with the modern

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<sup>176</sup> Polybius, 6.19-42

<sup>177</sup> Rawson, 1991, pages 35-48

<sup>178</sup> Rawson, 1991, pages 36-37

<sup>179</sup> Bishop and Coulston, 1993, pages 19-32

<sup>180</sup> Bishop and Coulston, 1993, pages 33-41

<sup>181</sup> Bishop and Coulston, 1993, pages 42-47

<sup>182</sup> Rawson, 1991, page 34

<sup>183</sup> Bishop and Coulston, 1993, page 20

propaganda imagery produced during or after the two World Wars would be aware that such imagery tends to focus upon concepts such as victory, defiance and strength, rather than upon the less palatable matters of defeat and hardship. As such, we find a disproportionately large amount of our representational evidence for the Roman army depicts state occasions such as processions and triumphs. The equipment in these depictions is often incomplete, with armour that would obscure the soldiers bodily or facial features removed.<sup>184</sup> Indeed, there is even reason to believe that the arms of Roman soldiers are on occasion replaced by Greek arms, when the sculptor's aim is to Hellenise the troops.<sup>185</sup> Of course, there are exceptions to this, such as Trajan's column, which apparently depicts a Roman army decked out in the proper military equipment of the day.<sup>186</sup> However, even when we find such representations, they frequently date from the Imperial period and, as such, are not particularly useful in dealing with the army of the Republic.

There are, of course, further limitations of representational evidence. Sculpture does not lend itself well to the detailed portrayal of formations or manoeuvres. As such, while we may be able to learn about equipment from sculpture, it has almost nothing to tell us about tactics.

Similarly, archaeological evidence is not without its problems. Logic would suggest that vast amounts of armour and weaponry must have been produced in the ancient world. However, as Bishop and Coulston state, ancient battlefields do not often yield large deposits of abandoned weapons, for the simple reason that ancient states could not easily afford to leave discarded equipment where it fell.<sup>187</sup> As such, most of our archaeological finds of Roman military equipment are of weapons and armour that were deliberately abandoned because they were seriously damaged or of supplies which were buried to deny them to an advancing enemy. As such, they only provide us with a narrow viewpoint upon the Roman military.<sup>188</sup> Of course, archaeological evidence shares the limitations of representational evidence with regards to its lack of value as a source for tactical developments.

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<sup>184</sup> Bishop and Coulston, 1993, page 21

<sup>185</sup> Bishop and Coulston, 1993, pages 20-21

<sup>186</sup> Bishop and Coulston, 1993, pages 21-22

<sup>187</sup> Bishop and Coulston, 1993, pages 33-34

<sup>188</sup> Bishop and Coulston, 1993, pages 34-37

Documentary evidence is comprised of two separate sub-groups; literary and non-literary. I have already discussed literary evidence and the caution with which I am forced to regard it. However, non-literary documentary evidence can provide us with a few useful insights into the workings of the Roman military, albeit after the Republican period. Personal letters, in particular, provide us with a very different perspective upon the Roman army to that which is offered by our literary sources. Bishop and Coulston provide an example in the form of a letter from a soldier requesting equipment, which sheds much light on the means by which soldiers provided for themselves.<sup>189</sup> However, sub-literary sources are again limited in their scope; they are generally written under peaceful conditions and provide us with a depiction of the army in garrison, rather than the army at war.<sup>190</sup>

Therefore, having briefly surveyed the available sources of information available to us upon the Roman army, it seems impossible to escape the conclusion that it is often our literary sources that provide us with the fullest evidence upon the Roman army. It will therefore be impossible to assess the relative merits of various authors as recorders of military events without depending, to some extent, upon concepts of the reliability of certain authors. However, we are not left totally at the mercy of our literary sources. While representational, archaeological and sub-literary sources provide us with only narrow views of the Roman military, they can help us to identify obvious anachronisms within our literary accounts and may often provide indications when our literary paths fail to convey properly the details of a situation.

## **The Operation of the Roman Army**

### **Supply**

As well as considering the nature and the development of the Roman army, it will also be helpful to assess matters relating to its practical operation. Warfare has always taught us that no army, however well trained and armed, can survive in the field without attention to matters such as supplies, the chain of command and even

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<sup>189</sup> Bishop and Coulston, 1993, page 43

<sup>190</sup> For some of the more recent finds in this category, see Birley, 2002

recruitment to replace its losses and fuel expansion of its ranks. By assessing the role that such matters play in the works of various authors, it will become possible for us to draw conclusions as to the qualities of these authors as military historians. However, in order to do this, we must first possess some understanding of such matters ourselves.

As we have seen, until the time of the Second Punic War (and perhaps after this time), Rome fielded four legions, each composed of something between four and five thousand men. It would, of course, have been necessary to provide each of these men with their daily requirement of food and water, and also to provide adequate shelter when required. Roth and Erdkamp both provide a detailed description of the nutritional needs of a Roman soldier<sup>191</sup> and Roth, through his reference to Vegetius, provides us with evidence that the Romans themselves were aware of the importance of a soldier's diet. Roth's account is remarkably thorough and takes into account such factors as average height, build and age. Evidence suggests that the average Roman soldier would have been smaller and lighter than their modern American equivalents, and hence would have required smaller rations. In addition, the generally greater average age of the Roman soldier by comparison with his modern equivalent would have further diminished his nutritional requirements. As such, Roth estimates that the average Roman soldier would have a recommended daily intake of 3000 calories per day. Of course, we do not need to assume that the troops actually received this level of intake, but as Roth notes, it is unlikely that they were underfed under normal circumstances. However, as a contrast to Roth, Erdkamp argues that the army's food supply was not necessarily of interest to Roman authors.<sup>192</sup>

The regular grain ration<sup>193</sup> would have formed a significant part of the Roman soldier's diet. Wheat-grain, particularly when baked into bread, provides a relatively efficient source of calories, but it is not sufficient in itself and is by no means the most compact source of nutrition. In addition to this, there would also have been meat, cheese, vegetables and seasonings such as olive oil, which would have provided protein and vitamins. These were apparently provided by a second ration, distinct

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<sup>191</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 1-16 and Erdkamp, 1998, pages 27-32

<sup>192</sup> Erdkamp, 1998, page 11

<sup>193</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 14-16 and 18-26

from the grain ration.<sup>194</sup> Roth estimates the average Roman soldier's meat intake as being roughly one half pound of meat per day, with beef, and especially pork, being the most common meats.<sup>195</sup> This would have been supplemented by vegetables, mostly beans and lentils. When we consider the average size of the Roman legion, it is clear that just one legion would have required a vast amount of food each day; over two thousand pounds of meat alone, in addition to grain and vegetables. The duration for which foodstuffs such as meat, particularly meat other than salted pork, could be stored would not have been particularly long and frequent resupplies would have been necessary.

The other great necessity would, of course, have been water. Roth agrees with the figure of two litres per day as the required intake of a Roman soldier<sup>196</sup>, although obviously this would have varied depending on climate and is quite possibly a rather conservative estimate. Whatever the exact statistic, it is clear that a Roman legion would have used at least 8,000 litres of water per day, and quite possibly substantially more. As such, no army would have been capable of surviving for any length of time away from a supply of fresh, clean water, unless exceptional measures had been taken for the transport of water and tight rationing imposed. Wine, both "vintage" and "sour", would also have formed part of the Roman ration and would have been issued to troops in quantities of approximately one quarter of a litre per day and drunk diluted in water.<sup>197</sup>

Roth demonstrates that Roman troops were provided with their rations in a raw form, rather than with prepared meals. Although centralised cooking would be practiced outside of times of war, the Roman army at war would require soldiers to produce their own bread, a task that would often be dealt with on a squad level.<sup>198</sup> During times when cooking was not possible, prepared iron rations consisting of hard-biscuit and dried meat were used.<sup>199</sup> In addition to this, it was necessary to provide fodder for the animals attached to the legion,<sup>200</sup> both cavalry horses and pack animals, although

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<sup>194</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 24-26

<sup>195</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 27-32

<sup>196</sup> Roth, 1998, page 37

<sup>197</sup> Roth, 1998, page 39

<sup>198</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 44-51

<sup>199</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 51-53

<sup>200</sup> For more on the legion's animals, see Davies, 1968, *Latomus* 27, pages 75-95

this could largely be provided by allowing the animals to graze where conditions were suitable and could, under dire circumstances, be neglected entirely.<sup>201</sup> The army's animals could become a source of food when all alternatives failed, but this would have been a last resort measure, since it would have seriously undermined the army's ability to continue operations. As Erdkamp states, the greatest challenge in keeping an army supplied arises from its very nature as a mobile entity.<sup>202</sup>

When combined, all of the food listed above comes to represent a truly massive amount of material, which it was necessary to deliver to an army on a regular basis. Even in modern times, where motorisation and even the use of aircraft have become the norm in the establishment of supply-lines, battles have been lost because of failure to maintain adequate supplies. Despite having the motorised resources of the German army and the might of the Luftwaffe behind it, the German offensive against the Soviet Union during the Second World War faltered and eventually failed as it was cut off from its supply lines, thanks to both enemy activity and the sheer distances involved. In the Roman world, where supplies would have been delivered by ship, pack-animals or even carried by humans, the constraints that supply lines placed on an army's activity must have been immense.

There were obvious advantages to loading down the individual soldiers with as many of the army's provisions as they could carry; the need for vulnerable baggage trains was reduced and the supplies remained as close as possible to where they would be needed.<sup>203</sup> In addition, this would minimise the amount of material that would have to be left behind when an army moved and hence diminish the frequency with which it would need to be resupplied. Marius's reforms increased the load carried by legionaries, to the point where they were jokingly referred to as "Marius's Mules".<sup>204</sup> In addition to his clothing, armour and weapons, a Roman soldier would have been required to carry his cooking equipment, tools and rations, with the latter sometimes

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<sup>201</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 61-67

<sup>202</sup> Erdkamp, 1998, page 12

<sup>203</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 68-77

<sup>204</sup> Keppie, 1984, pages 66-67

stretching to thirty days worth of grain.<sup>205</sup> The result of this was a spectacularly heavy pack, whose size was considerably in excess of those in use in modern armies.<sup>206</sup>

Dedicated supply trains<sup>207</sup> would also have been employed to help move an army's supplies. Each unit would have had its own supply train, and there would have been a centralised train to serve the entire force.<sup>208</sup> The vulnerability of a slow-moving, unarmed supply train should not be underestimated and nor should its attractiveness to the enemy as a target. Hence it was important that supply trains should be protected by the rest of the army while on the march and that their size should be kept as small as possible.

Of course, if the army's baggage train was vulnerable, then its supply lines were even more so. Furthermore, whereas the size of the baggage train could be reduced by shifting more of its burden onto individual soldiers and ensuring that no inessential material was carried, such measures could not be employed with supply lines, which, by their very nature, mostly operated at a considerable distance from the fighting forces. In general, the supplies would be gathered first at a base of operations within the army's area of activity, usually a friendly town or harbour, and would then be transported forward again to the army's actual location, where they would be stored in or near the camp and, should the army be required to move, would be transported by its baggage train.<sup>209</sup>

Roth places the development of sophisticated Roman supply lines at the time of the Punic Wars.<sup>210</sup> The major operations in Spain and Africa were supplied via ship, with grain collected from the allies. This necessitated a complicated logistical operation, since the grain would often be arriving from various points around the Mediterranean and would require sorting then delivering to the troops. In addition to the danger posed by enemy activity, naval supply lines were also vulnerable to bad weather and

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<sup>205</sup> Roth, 1998, page 72

<sup>206</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 74-75

<sup>207</sup> The term "supply train" refers to any system used by an army to move its baggage and is not necessarily indicative of the use of any particular technology, although railways have, of course, been used to this effect in the modern era.

<sup>208</sup> Roth, 1998, page 79

<sup>209</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 156-157. Erdkamp, 1998, page 48 also discusses the establishment of magazines in detail.

<sup>210</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 158-161

would be particularly affected during the winter months. In addition, inland campaigns would not be able to benefit from naval supply lines and would be forced to depend upon slower land-based means of transportation

Even when an operational base for the collection of supplies could be established, its ability to support the troops would often be limited. Its range and the speed of its operations would often be inadequate, particularly when it was required to support an army engaged in fast moving offensive operations. As such, armies would often be forced to operate beyond the ends of their supply lines. There were numerous techniques that an army could employ when traditional supply lines failed and were not available, some of which were particularly appropriate during offensive operations.

Roth identifies these techniques as “Forage, Requisition and Pillage”, although as he points out, all three of these share many common features.<sup>211</sup> Indeed, Erdkamp argues that it is often impossible to separate foraging from plunder.<sup>212</sup> In essence, all of them can be reduced to the idea of making the territory supply the army, although each denotes a slightly different context for this. Foraging refers to the practice of gathering essential resources from the surrounding land. These resources will essentially consist of water, firewood and food for both humans and animals. Foraging for water is perhaps the most vital of these tasks, for it is lack of water that will render an army ineffective and lead to deaths in the shortest time.<sup>213</sup> In the Mediterranean climate, foraging for water was often not more complicated than simply finding a nearby river or spring and would have necessitated the digging of wells and other, more complex waterworks, as well as strict organisations for the regular collection of water without hindrance by enemy activity. Of course, foraged water could become dangerous when contaminated by the enemy.<sup>214</sup>

Foraging for firewood was also essential, for, as we have seen, firewood was vital for the functioning of the Roman army. This could be a particularly dangerous activity in

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<sup>211</sup> Roth, 1998, page 117

<sup>212</sup> Erdkamp, 1998, page 123

<sup>213</sup> Roth, 1998, page 119

<sup>214</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 119-123



hostile territory, particularly when the camp was located far from the nearest source of suitable wood.<sup>215</sup>

Foraging for food was perhaps the most aggressive type of foraging. This would involve the harvesting of local crops, planted by the local population for their own use and the confiscation of food from local sources. As such, this would no doubt have been perceived as theft by the local population and would have had the nature of an aggressive act. Although the habit of cutting crops directly from the fields was by no means unknown (as is indicated by the presence of a sickle in the standard soldier's pack), it would naturally have been easier to confiscate grain that had already been collected and processed, so food depots, both civilian ones and those set aside for the use of enemy military forces, would have been prime targets.<sup>216</sup> Indeed, we can see the significance that was attached to these in the Roman response to Hannibal's occupation of Cannae.

Requisition refers to the confiscation or collection of supplies from a friendly or occupied civilian populace. This could take a number of forms, ranging from outright confiscation without recompense through to forced sale, sometimes at not unduly harsh prices. Requisition was naturally a tempting option for a commander, where it was available, since it generally relied on the local civilian population to bring their goods to the camp and did not require the dispatch of vulnerable foraging parties. Of course, large-scale requisitions, particularly of vital pack-animals, would have had a detrimental effect upon Roman relations with the region in question.<sup>217</sup>

By contrast with requisition, pillaging was a totally non-consensual form of foraging. Usually inflicted upon the inhabitants of a defeated region, pillaging was the large-scale, systematic capture of supplies and booty. This would be undertaken with no thought for relations with the population being pillaged and civilian casualties could be expected as a matter of course during such operations. Of course, attempts were made by Roman authorities to keep the level of pillaging, particularly that variety where individual soldiers would steal items for themselves, in check, but there can be

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<sup>215</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 123-125

<sup>216</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 130-134

<sup>217</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 141-148

no doubt that these measures were not entirely successful.<sup>218</sup> Looting and pillaging have been features of warfare throughout the ages, with the practice remaining alive and well in the present day. Under conditions of warfare, the rights of an occupied population are frequently ignored in favour of naked greed on the part of the occupiers. Pillaging would have been a useful but dangerous tool for a Roman commander operating in unfriendly territory; on the one hand, it could provide him with much needed resources and much desired wealth, but on the other hand, it could be instrumental in the decline of military discipline and would ensure lasting hostility on the part of the local population. Gilliver highlights one of the most powerful reasons why a Roman commander may have been reluctant to allow his troops to engage in plunder; clemency could be a powerful weapon in ensuring the surrender of an enemy, saving time, cost and lives.<sup>219</sup>

## **Command**

One of the most difficult problems faced by any large military force concerns the establishment of the proper command structure under battle conditions. Of course, armies would generally be under the command of a consul or proconsul, but one man alone could not lead an army consisting of thousands, or even of tens of thousands. It is a well-known wartime saying that no battle-plan survives contact with the enemy; every battle requires frequent tactical manoeuvres and readjustments that a general is not necessarily well placed to deal with. Just as the modern army relies heavily upon its junior officers and NCOs, so the ancient army would have needed any number of intermediate authorities between the commander of the army and the troops.<sup>220</sup>

As we have seen, the structure of the Roman Army changed dramatically between the Regal period and the time of Caesar. Therefore, we should also expect to find that the command structure within the army was subject to similar change. For the earliest forms of the Roman army, we do not have sufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions regarding the nature of the command structure, although it seems likely to me that, given the status-oriented nature of the early Roman army, family ties and

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<sup>218</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 148-155

<sup>219</sup> Gilliver, 1995, pages 221 and 232.

<sup>220</sup> See Goldsworthy, 1996, pages 123-132 for the organisation and hierarchy of a general's staff.

links of social dependence would have been important in determining the structure of the various subgroups of the army.

With the introduction of the maniple formation, we can speculate more firmly about the military hierarchy. With the size of tactical groups ranging from sixty up to one hundred and twenty, it would not have been impossible for a couple of men to exercise complete control over each such group. Two centurions were chosen from among the men of the maniple, the senior of whom was given command of the left flank of the maniple and the other of whom commanded the right flank. These were supported by two junior officers and two standard bearers.<sup>221</sup>

The adoption of the cohort over the maniple saw the size of the basic tactical unit increased from a maximum of one hundred and twenty up to a maximum of six hundred. As a result, the number of centurions for each legion was increased from two to six, with the addition of a complicated system of rank among the centurions.<sup>222</sup> In addition, the role of the centurion began to change, with the more senior centurions becoming more analogous to officers in the modern army than to NCOs.

Above the centurions were the military tribunes. While the centurions were experienced soldiers, the office of military tribune was often, by the time of Caesar, occupied by "political" officers, with no real knowledge of warfare, but required to perform a period of military service in order to advance their future political prospects. Originally, the foremost centurions had been promoted to this office and it would no doubt have held considerable importance, but as the political elements grew more common, it seems most likely that any competent commander would have ensured that the military tribunes were not placed in positions of real authority. Indeed, Parker demonstrates that by the Imperial period, the military tribunes were mostly responsible for the army's paperwork and for some disciplinary matters, rather than for any kind of command in battle.<sup>223</sup> Finally, above the military tribunes were the legati. Like the position of military tribune, this was primarily a political position and was frequently occupied, at least in the Imperial period, by men of very little

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<sup>221</sup> Parker, 1928, page 14

<sup>222</sup> Parker, 1928, pages 30-36

<sup>223</sup> Parker, 1928, pages 188-191

military experience, who served only short appointments. Although often subordinate to a consular or proconsular commander, legati could, on occasion, be given independent command of legions.<sup>224</sup>

As such, it is clear that the majority of the burden of command in battle would have fallen upon the centurions, who would have been the most senior experienced soldiers under a general. Their role in ensuring discipline and co-ordination among the rank and file would have been similar to that of the NCOs in the armies of the Western allies in the second world war, where corporals and sergeants would often find themselves in effective command of infantry due to the inexperience of the junior officers. However, this would have been tied in many cases to a larger official command than that of the modern NCO.

That centurions must have played a decisive role in battles is beyond doubt. Our accounts of ancient battles make it amply clear that even the most senior commanders were expected to engage in battle, even if they were not placed on the very front lines. Indeed, our sources indicate a relatively high rate of casualties among senior commanders in ancient warfare, no doubt related to the fact that they presented the enemy with an extremely tempting target.

A general's involvement in battle had consequences beyond his exposure to danger, although this will have been an important factor. There is perhaps a natural tendency, when one studies accounts of battles, to imagine the general as a disembodied figure, floating above the battlefield, able to see the course of the entire battle and to order his troops to respond accordingly. In reality, the general would, for obvious reasons, only have been able to focus upon a single area of the battlefield, namely that in which he had chosen to position himself in. Obviously, the general would need to communicate his plan for the battle to his centurions before the battle itself begun, since the noise and motion of a battle would have made it impossible to deliver any but the simplest of orders or pre-arranged signals. Therefore, it would have been necessary for the centurions to ensure that the battle-plan was followed as closely as possible during the battle. Indeed, they would also have been required to perform a certain degree of improvisation when required, particularly if the enemy line was

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<sup>224</sup> Parker. 1928. pages 187-188

broken, a general retreat was sounded or it was necessary to move to the aid of forces on a different area of the field<sup>225</sup>

### **Manpower**

The final aspect of the practical organisation of the Roman army that I will cover concerns recruitment. I have already outlined the process by which property qualifications for service in the Roman army were eroded and eventually removed altogether, but it will also be useful to examine the system of recruitment itself and the other constraints that were placed upon it.

After the Marian reforms, any member of the citizen body was apparently eligible for service. Indeed, Brunt argued that conscription could be applied to all, with a few exceptions (which could be suspended in emergencies) and with tough penalties for deserters.<sup>226</sup> However, this is only true in practice so far as extends to financial matters. The Roman army demanded certain other qualities from its recruits, which would have ensured that many remained excluded. Perhaps the most significant of these was the height qualification. Roth discusses these requirements, five feet five inches (in modern measurements) for recruitment into the legions, and five feet ten inches for recruitment into the cavalry or the first cohort of a legion.<sup>227</sup> The first of these figures was apparently the average height in Roman society, while the second would have been perceived as unusually tall. As such, fully half of the adult male Roman population may have been technically ineligible for military service, while the vast majority would have been ineligible for the more prestigious positions. Roth indicates that military service was considered desirable, at least during the Republican and early Imperial periods,<sup>228</sup> but Watson demonstrates the degree of unpopularity that military service had gained by the time of the late Empire.<sup>229</sup> This decline of popularity inevitably led to the reduction of the qualifications for military service.

Although the height requirement is the only such requirement described to us in specific detail by our sources (here Vegetius), there would no doubt have been a

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<sup>225</sup> Goldsworthy, 1996, page 124 argues that generals needed a certain degree of ability.

<sup>226</sup> Brunt, 1971, page 391

<sup>227</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 9-10

<sup>228</sup> Roth, 1998, pages 9-10

<sup>229</sup> Watson, 1969, pages 39-40

variety of other qualifications. Physical strength would have been required, particularly given the weight of the pack that a legionary was expected to carry. There would also, as in modern times, have been a variety of physical defects, such as poor eyesight or deformed limbs, that would have excluded somebody from military service.<sup>230</sup>

Smith describes the practice of conscription in Republican Rome, but emphasises that volunteers, where they were available, would have been taken in preference to conscripts.<sup>231</sup> Brunt, however, argues that conscription would have been relied upon before the Marian reforms.<sup>232</sup> No doubt the property qualification was instrumental in forcing Rome to conscript from among those groups who were eligible for service. Smith envisions such conscription as a decidedly negative influence, despised by those subjected to it, not only for the danger and discomfort it exposed them to, but also for the financial loss it would incur upon them.<sup>233</sup> Of course, the substantial financial losses incurred by smallholders who met the property qualification ensured that future generations of their families were not eligible for service. Indeed, the cycle that this prompted appears to have been one of the decisive factors leading to the dangerous and divisive incidents with the Gracchi. By contrast, when military service was opened to those who had previously not met the property qualification, it represented an opportunity to earn a livelihood, or even to gain substantial enrichment.

Of course, it is one thing to consider how Rome met her military requirements during relatively settled periods, but it is another thing altogether to consider how she recruited in times of emergency. In the aftermath of such disasters as Cannae, the senate had temporarily suspended the property qualification (which was not to be formally abolished until more than a century later) and even recruited slaves into the ranks.<sup>234</sup> Therefore, it is clear that Roman scruples with regard to eligibility for military service were flexible.

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<sup>230</sup> Watson, 1969, pages 41-42

<sup>231</sup> Smith, 1958, pages 4-5

<sup>232</sup> Brunt, 1971, page 393

<sup>233</sup> Smith, 1958, pages 8-11

<sup>234</sup> Keppie, 1984, page 61

The high turnover of Roman troops that we would expect to find during crises such as the Second Punic War, when Roman losses caused the elimination of entire legions in a single blow, must surely have faced Rome with a twofold crisis. Not only did she have to make up for her lost numbers, but she also had to train her new recruits with a far smaller number of experienced veterans than would normally have been available. Smith's argument that veterans were mixed in with raw recruits and gradually replaced seem convincing,<sup>235</sup> since they represent the only practical way in which a newly raised army, forced into service as fast as possible, could be brought up to any kind of fighting standard. However, it seems likely that many of the Roman armies fighting in Italy during the Second Punic War would have been composed of largely "green" troops, and that although our sources may not describe them as such, we should bear this in mind when studying them.

In conclusion, Roman recruitment was, for the most part, an organised, structured and restricted process. However, the Romans were well aware that these restrictions represented only a means to an end and were by no means reluctant to discard them in times of crisis.

### **Roman Attitudes to War**

My final task in this chapter will be to assess Roman attitudes towards war.

Obviously, this is a vast subject and I shall have to limit the scope of my writing here to providing a summary of the current critical positions and some guidance for further reading.

Oakley attributes Rome's early warfare to the need to expand as a counter to over-population.<sup>236</sup> During the period of Rome's Italian expansion, war was an annual occurrence, undertaken by states in the hope of profit, or to defend their own wealth from raiders.<sup>237</sup> The wars were of short duration and usually confined to the summer campaigning months. We have no sources on Roman attitudes to war at this time, but given the frequency and small scale of these wars, it seems to me to be unlikely that

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<sup>235</sup> Smith, 1958, pages 5-7

<sup>236</sup> Oakley, 1993, in Rich and Shipley, 1993, page 12

<sup>237</sup> Oakley, 1993, in Rich and Shipley, 1993, pages 14-15

they would be regarded as exceptional or indeed as anything other than a regular aspect of life.

Rich demonstrates a change in the pattern of Roman warfare, beginning in 264B.C. with the onset of the First Punic War.<sup>238</sup> From this point onwards, Roman warfare became a year-round occupation, due to the necessity of keeping troops in regions far from Rome for protracted periods. The scale of the wars also increased, with substantially larger armies being required. These increasingly major conflicts were accompanied by larger and more numerous peaceful interludes between the conflicts. Hence, warfare ceased to be a minor annual intrusion upon ancient life and became instead a more significant, but more occasional interruption, with individual conflicts being more worthy of note.

Traditionally, Rome's wars had been viewed as a form of defensive expansion; Rome conquered enemies and took control of their territory in the course of defending herself and her allies. However, Harris overturned this view, arguing convincingly in favour of a more aggressive manner of Roman expansionism.<sup>239</sup> His arguments that, by the time of the late Republic at least, Rome's acquisition of an empire was a source of pride for Rome<sup>240</sup> cast serious doubts upon the supposed "expansion through defence" ethos. Furthermore, his investigations of the potential gains of an expansionistic policy for Roman citizens at all levels of society makes the argument for an aggressive, expansionistic Rome all the more plausible.

Although Harris's arguments remain highly significant today for their purpose in overturning the myth of Rome's "defensive imperialism", Rich has proposed that they too oversimplify the problem of Roman imperialism in the Republican period. Rich agrees with, to a certain extent, North's arguments that the causes of Roman warfare were more complicated than either the traditional "defensive imperialism" or Harris's more aggressive version would imply. He agrees that a variety of psychological and socio-economic factors, such as fear and the need for more slaves, accompanied and

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<sup>238</sup> Rich, 1993, in Rich and Shipley, 1993, page 44

<sup>239</sup> Harris, 1979

<sup>240</sup> Harris, 1979, page 130



perhaps even supplanted the desire for expansion for profit.<sup>241</sup> However, Rich then deviates from North as he differs with North's view that Roman social structures were all working uniformly to drive Rome into an expansionist agenda. Rich demonstrates that the social pressures driving Rome to aggressive warfare were not uniform and not constant. Moreover, he argues, once Roman conquest spread outside of Italy, it ceased to bring many of the immediate benefits, in terms of land for redistribution, that the Italian conquests had brought.<sup>242</sup>

While problems relating to the nature of and the factors behind Roman expansion are perhaps easy enough for the modern scholar to consider, matters surrounding the Roman's own feelings on these matters are perhaps more difficult to appreciate. The modern era, particularly the second half of the Twentieth Century, has seen a radical and almost unprecedented shift in attitudes towards war and imperialism. Indeed, while there are few today who seriously question the justification of the Second World War, the sheer scale of the World Wars, combined with the increased immediacy with which new forms of communications allowed for front-line conditions to be conveyed to the civilian population, has led to a strong current of popular anti-war sentiment. Moreover, the mistakes made by the major hegemonies during the cold war, particularly the attempts at interference by the United States in Vietnam and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan have resulted in a radical shift in the perception of imperialism. While the British empire of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries was a source of pride for Britain, imperialism is today seen as unjust and contrary to international law. The term "Empire" has become fixed in the modern imagination with ideas of villainy and tyranny, a tendency both demonstrated in and furthered by popular films such as George Lucas's Star Wars saga.

To carry over such attitudes to a study of the ancient world is extremely dangerous. Had the Romans felt the same way about warfare as the population of a modern, First World nation, it seems highly unlikely that they would have engaged in it so often or allowed it to feature so heavily in their patriotic artwork. Although, as we have seen, Harris was perhaps somewhat too ready to depict the Romans as inherently aggressive, his chapter on Roman attitudes towards war remains essential reading for

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<sup>241</sup> North, 1981, JRS 71, pages 1-9. Rich, 1993, in Rich and Shipley, 1993, pages 38-44

<sup>242</sup> Rich, 1993, in Rich and Shipley, 1993, pages 44-55

anybody attempting to gain an insight on the Roman mindset.<sup>243</sup> According to Harris, war represented very much a means to an end for the ambitious Roman aristocrat; although diluted, the military service qualification necessary to hold office had not been totally removed and time spent in the army would have been an important stage in an aristocratic political career.<sup>244</sup> Indeed, until the end of the Second Century B.C., it would have been normal for warfare to be the most prominent aspect of a young aristocrat's life and military matters would also have remained important to him as he continued up the career ladder, particularly if he eventually achieved the office of consul, which carried with it important military duties.<sup>245</sup> Although it was possible to win fame and glory in other areas, such as the law-courts, it was military glory that counted for the most.<sup>246</sup> As such, Roman aristocrats had a strong motive to seek warfare with neighbouring states, since this would present them with the best opportunity to advance their own careers.

However, aristocratic attitudes alone did not constitute the whole of the Roman state's attitudes towards war. Even though, in practice, the power of the general populace to influence the course of military events was limited, the theoretical powers that they possessed to over-rule declarations of war or peace-treaties would have ensured that popular sentiment carried at least some degree of weight. As we have seen, before the abolition of the property qualification by Marius, service in the Roman army was unpopular among those who met the requirements of the qualification but lacked any real wealth or political aspirations. However, following Marius's abolition of the property qualification, there is every indication that those who had previously been disqualified enrolled for military service in large numbers and continued to do so until the Late Empire. Indeed, as Harris notes, even during the Middle Republic, the percentage of the population that participated in military activities was extremely high.<sup>247</sup>

Harris paints us a picture of a Roman population that was, by and large, enthusiastic and opportunistic in matters of war. However, there is, no doubt, an element of over-

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<sup>243</sup> Harris, 1979, pages 9-53

<sup>244</sup> Harris, 1979, pages 10-12

<sup>245</sup> Harris, 1979, pages 14-16

<sup>246</sup> Harris, 1979, pages 18-23

<sup>247</sup> Harris, 1979, pages 44-47

simplification here. That Roman society did not share the modern day terror of conflict is perhaps beyond doubt, but this is not to say that Romans were unaware of the darker side of warfare. If ordinary garrison duty and even small-scale conflicts did not place a soldier in any particular degree of danger, the same cannot be said for major struggles such as the Punic Wars. In particular, disasters such as those as the Trebbia and Cannae would have cost the lives of a not-insignificant proportion of the adult male population of Rome and the impact of this upon both individual families and the Roman state in general should not be underestimated. No doubt the increasing scale of these wars and the ensuing casualties was at least partially responsible for the increasingly large gaps between Rome's wars that emerged in the Second Century B.C..

In addition to this, the First Century B.C. saw a very different type of warfare consume the Roman state. Civil wars, which brought all of the problems associated with a large-scale war and few or none of the usual benefits. Indeed, it perhaps comes as no surprise that we should find strong elements of war-weariness in the writings of the Augustan authors. If we look once more at Livy's prologue, we find Livy condemning the strife of his own day.<sup>248</sup> However, we should not take this as indication of uniformly anti-war sentiment, for the very past in which Livy seeks to take refuge is filled with wars and conflicts. It seems that the Romans had come to separate civil wars, which they regarded as a wholly negative phenomenon, from foreign wars and conquests, which remained a source of acquisition and patriotic pride.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Livy, 1.pr

<sup>249</sup> For more on attitudes to the military in the Late Republic, see Patterson, 1993, in Rich and Shipley, 1993, pages 92-112

## Chapter 4.1 – The Battle of Cremera

The Battle of the Cremera occurred in 477 BC and accounts of it are preserved for us today by Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. My analysis of this battle will be divided into four sections. First, there will be an account of those aspects of the story that are present in all of our accounts<sup>250</sup> and, as such, can be considered uncontroversial in that they were presumably well established in the annalistic tradition.. Next, the battle accounts of Livy and of Dionysius will each be examined in turn. Finally, there will be a comparative analysis of the two accounts, conducted in such a way as to develop some preliminary conclusions on the differing historical attitudes of the two authors.

As it took place in 477 BC, long before the development of a proper literary tradition at Rome, we may place this battle firmly in the category of the legendary. For the annalists and antiquarians of the first century BC, however, it undoubtedly counted as historical,<sup>251</sup> even if it figured amongst the *res cum vetustate nimia obscuras*, events preceding the Gallic sack.<sup>252</sup> Although its appearance in the accounts of both Dionysius and Livy can be taken as proof that it was already an established part of the literary tradition, we can be absolutely certain that there was not an unbroken chain of reporting of these events by historians spanning from the time of the battle down to the time of our authors.<sup>253</sup> In addition, the early date of this battle forces certain suppositions upon us regarding the organisation, equipment and tactics of the Roman forces involved. If we follow Keppie's timeline<sup>254</sup> for the development of the Roman army, then it seems reasonable to conclude that the normal size for a Roman legion at this stage was approximately four thousand men, supplied largely from the households of the upper classes and equipped in the manner of *hoplites*.

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<sup>250</sup> Ogilvie 1965, 359-60

<sup>251</sup> According to Varro, there were three epochs: after the *adelon* ('the obscure') and the *mythikon* ('the mythical'), both of which are pre-historic, there came the *historikon* ('historical') epoch. The *adelon* is from the origins to Ogygus and the first flood; the *mythikon*, from Ogygus to the first Olympiad; then the *historikon* runs to the present. (Censorinus, *de die natali* 21.1-4 Sallmann (cf. Varro, fr. 3 P).

<sup>252</sup> <sup>252</sup> Livy 6.1. with Kraus 1994 and Oakley 1997, *ad loc.* and Oakley's Introduction, section 3.

<sup>253</sup> Cornell 1995, pp.4-7

<sup>254</sup> Keppie, 1984, pages 14-18. But note that there are good grounds for a greater degree of scepticism about figures like these – and hence for conceptions of the Roman army as organised in a state-based legionary fashion by conscription etc. See Raaflaub, 1986, 44-45 (although note the misprint: not 3000 Fabians) and Cornell, 1995, 179 ff.

The background details to the battle are generally uncontested and may be summarised briefly. After four years of sustained hostility with her long-standing rival Veii, which had seen the Romans making considerable progress in seizing territory controlled by Veii and her allies, the Veientes were forced into taking a more aggressive stance so as to maintain their trade routes with other cities. The result of this was a series of raids upon Roman holdings, with the Veientes apparently assisted by other nation-states hostile to Rome. With their lock upon the Veientine territories threatened, the Romans were faced with the need to place a garrison by the river Cremera, a tributary of the Tiber.

From here onwards, the details of the story become more liable to dispute. Apparently, with Rome suffering from internal problems and from other more dangerous military threats from the Sabines and Etruscans, a decision was taken by the *gens Fabia*, one of the most influential families at Rome, to dispatch every combat-worthy person in their house, coming to a total of three hundred people, to deal with the growing crisis. The Fabii apparently established a fort and used this as a base for a number of successful raids upon Veientine supply-lines and military outposts. However, having grown over-confident from their run of continued successes, the Fabii were eventually lured into a trap and destroyed almost entirely, with the exception of one survivor, who escaped to tell the story of the battle at Rome and continue the Fabian line.

Even before we begin a detailed examination of this account, some problems with it are immediately apparent. The neatness of the numbers involved; three hundred Fabii, one survivor, suggests that a certain degree of invention has occurred. Also, the date of the battle is sufficiently close to that of the more famous battle of Thermopylae and the account of the eventual destruction of the Fabii contains so many parallels with the Herodotean account as to suggest a deliberate parallel, intended to stress the importance of the battle.<sup>255</sup> The battle of Thermopylae – although a Persian victory – was regarded as one of the most noteworthy and important battles of Greek history, thanks to the bravery of the Spartans who fought there and the consequences of their

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<sup>255</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the parallels between the battle of the Cremera and the battle of Thermopylae, see Ogilvie, 1965, pages 359-360

resistance for the wider Greek war-effort. If a historian were to be successful in drawing a link between Cremera and Thermopylae, the inevitable result would be to raise the perceived significance of the defeat at the Cremera and further to glorify the Romans involved, by placing them on the same level as the famous Spartans. The origins of this elaboration must remain within the realm of speculation, but Fabius Pictor, motivated by eagerness to glorify his family's exploits, is one of the more likely suspects.

Livy links his account of the events surrounding the battle with his ongoing interest in the struggles between patricians and plebeians at Rome. He has already narrated how a Fabian consul, Quintus Fabius, has become unpopular with his men for his anti-plebeian stance, despite his fine military record.

**consul Romam rediit non tam belli gloria aucta quam inritato exacerbatoque in se militum odio (Livy 2.43.11)**

**The consul returned to Rome, but he had not enhanced his military reputation so much as he had aggravated and embittered the hatred of his soldiers towards him.**

Indeed, Livy makes no secret of his own views on this matter.

**in Ueientes nihil dignum memoria gestum est; et in Aequis quidem Fabio aliquanto plus negotii cum ciuibus quam cum hostibus fuit. unus ille uir, ipse consul, rem publicam sustinuit, quam exercitus odio consulis, quantum in se fuit, prodebat. (Livy 2.43.5)**

**In this latter campaign nothing happened worth recording. Fabius, however, had considerably more trouble with his own men than with the enemy. He, the consul, single handed, sustained the commonwealth, while his army through their hatred of the consul were doing their best to betray it.**

This initial unpopularity and the accompanying paralysis inflicted upon Rome's military was then reversed, as the Roman troops grew weary of taunts from the enemy and more eager for action, into which they were eventually (and successfully) led by

another of the Fabii, Marcus Fabius (Livy 2.45-47). The aftermath of this battle saw Caeso Fabius elected to the consulship, where he unsuccessfully attempted to overcome senatorial opposition to the idea of distributing land taken during recent victories over the Etruscans among the plebeians (Livy 2.48).

It is against this backdrop, with the Romans still divided bitterly over the issue of the division of land and the Fabii partially isolated from both patrician and plebeian orders that Livy begins his narration of the events directly leading up to the massacre of the Fabii at the battle of the Cremera. Caeso Fabius's offer to the Senate that the Fabian clan should assume total responsibility for operations against the Veientes and its reception by the people of Rome is presented by Livy in glowing, and perhaps hyperbolic, terms. Is there not, indeed, a ridiculous degree of exaggeration here? The Roman people envisage the fighting all being done by three individual gentes: Fabii will take on Veii, two others will take on Volsci and Aequi – and the *populus Romanus* will sit back enjoying *pax* as the neighbouring peoples are subdued! How could this be? One of the messages, surely, of Livy's work, is of expansion by hard fighting on the part of the *populus* itself: that conquest has to be earned.

**si sint duae roboris eiusdem in urbe gentes, deposcant haec Uolscos sibi, illa Aequos: populo Romano tranquillam pacem agente omnes finitimos subigi populos posse. (Livy 2.49.2)**

**If there were two houses of the same strength in the City, and the one claimed the Volscians for themselves, the other the Aequi, then all the neighbouring states could be subjugated while Rome itself remained in profound tranquillity.**

However, it is important to realise that this praise is given only through the device of indirect speech; Livy is not claiming to share these sentiments himself, but is rather attributing them to the people of Rome at this time. As such, this should be seen not as direct praise of the Fabii by Livy, although he is no doubt exploiting the opportunity for praising them, but rather as a mechanism for expressing the unrealistic hopes, soon to be frustrated, of the Roman people in relation to the Fabii.

The departure of the Fabii from the city of Rome is perhaps one of the most interesting and most revelatory sections of Livy's account of the events surrounding the battle of the Cremera. Livy's narrative technique here displays a number of striking features. The bright, jubilant scenes that accompany the departure are undercut by heavy foreshadowing of the defeat to come, adding a strong tragic element of pathos to the scene.

**praetereuntibus Capitolium arcemque et alia templa, quidquid deorum oculis, quidquid animo occurrit, precantur ut illud agmen faustum atque felix mittant, sospites breui in patriam ad parentes restituant. in cassum missae preces. infelicia, dextro iano portae Carmentalis, profecti ad Cremeram flumen perueniunt. is opportunus uisus locus communiendo praesidio. (Livy 2.49.7)**

**As they passed the Citadel and the Capitol and other temples, their friends prayed to each deity, whose statue or whose shrine they saw, that they would send that band with all favourable omens to success, and in a short time restore them safe to their country and their kindred. In vain were those prayers sent up! They proceeded on their ill-starred way by the right postern of the Carmental gate, and reached the banks of the Cremera. This seemed to them a suitable position for a fortified post.**

The word **infelici** is extremely interesting, here. Livy's use of it is in a strictly anachronistic sense; none of the people present in the scene he is describing have any reason to think of the road as being unhappy or unfortunate. Rather, the word **infelici** can only be used with the benefit of hindsight and as such, this shows that Livy's account is here lifting itself outside of direct narrative. Indeed, as Ogilvie notes, it seems likely that for Livy, the primary focus of this episode was the "tragedy of the Fabii".<sup>256</sup> For Levene, the focus here is on the use of the words "**infelici via**" as representative of a bad omen. Levene remarks that this is the only place in Livy's known work where explicit piety (that of the Fabii) is not met with success, where the piety has not been undercut by a deeper impiety. Levene highlights that Livy's intention here is to emphasise the tragic blindness of the Fabii and that this

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<sup>256</sup> Ogilvie, 1965, page 360



demonstrates an over-arching lack of a religious theme to this section of Livy's work.<sup>257</sup>

Nevertheless, he takes pains to ensure that the Fabian venture is represented as an act of supreme bravery rather than supreme folly, by adding a description of the string of successes enjoyed by the Fabii in the early days of their campaign, with comments upon how unlikely it was that they should have enjoyed such good fortune.

**nec erant incursiones modo in agros aut subiti impetus incursantes, sed aliquotiens aequo campo conlatisque signis certatum, gensque una populi Romani saepe ex opulentissima, ut tum res erant, Etrusca ciuitate uictoriam tulit. (Livy 2.50.1)**

**There were not only forays into each other's territories and surprise attacks upon the foragers, but sometimes they fought regular engagements, and this single Roman house often won the victory over what was at that time the most powerful city in Etruria.**

Immediately after this, the narrative perspective shifts to the Etruscans, showing their dismay at the initial success of the Romans and then their cunning plans to defeat the Romans through trickery. It is clear that Livy is dealing here with one of the more obvious problems facing historians of early Rome; namely how to make a Roman defeat appear glorious and absolve the Romans involved of any blame. Simply put, it is acceptable for a Roman commander to be beaten due to his patriotic overconfidence, the trickery of his enemies or a vast numerical disadvantage, whereas the idea of Romans losing due to lack of skill, inferior tactics or lack of courage on the part of the commander is far less palatable.

Such justifications of Roman defeats and the absolution of blame for them are common in Roman accounts of their own history, particularly in the writings of

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<sup>257</sup> Levene, 1993, pages 159-160.

Livy.<sup>258</sup> Further examples may be drawn from his accounts of even the most crushing of defeats, namely those suffered at Trebbia, Lake Trasimene and Cannae. During his account of the battle of the Trebbia, Livy praises the Roman infantry (Livy 21.55.4). At the battle of Lake Trasimene, it is the consul who is singled out for praise (Livy 22.5.1). And at Cannae, Carthaginian treachery plays a large role (Livy 22.48.1).

Livy's account of the battle of the Cremera itself is fairly brief, although not without interest. It can be summarised thus: the Fabian forces are ambushed and surrounded while in the process of raiding a herd of cattle (Livy 2.50.6). At first they are surrounded on all sides, but they then manage to break out of the initial encirclement and take up a defensive position on high ground and for a while it looks as though they may survive (Livy 2.50.10). However, the enemy once again surrounds them, by using a path around to the back of their position and the surviving Fabii are killed, save for one survivor (Livy 2.50.11). The parallels with Thermopylae, as remarked upon above, are in evidence here. In particular, the motif of a defending force being attacked from behind after their enemies discover a secret path is a common one in ancient historical writing. Aside from Thermopylae and the Cremera, we see this pattern appear in Thucydides' account of the capture of the Spartan outpost on Sphacteria (Thucydides 4.36) and in Sallust's account of the taking of the fort at the river Muluccha (Sallust, *The Jugurthine War*, 93-94). It seems that it is often used when an author wishes to suggest parallels with Thermopylae so as to amplify the perceived scale of the events he is describing or else to illustrate the qualities of the men involved.

Livy uses very little technical military language in his description of the battle. Only a single formation, the **cuneus** used by the Fabii to break out of the initial encirclement, is described using military vocabulary. No doubt, this is in part due to the simplicity and brevity of the battle, as Livy describes it. There may also be a measure of unfamiliarity with military terms at work in Livy's mind, but for the most part, it seems to me that the lack of technicality in Livy's account is well suited to the battle as he describes it, since Livy's version of the battle is essentially a skirmish between

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<sup>258</sup> Rosenstein, 1990, discusses the methods used by Roman commanders to absolve blame for defeat. He points to the break in the *pax deorum*, for which the commander himself cannot assign any blame, as the fault leading to the break is usually only detectable through hindsight.

small numbers of men with no preparation or organisation at all on the Roman side and only loose tactics on the side of the Veientes.

Livy's conclusion to his summary of the Cremera contains an obvious attempt at adding a veneer of credibility to his account.

**trecentos sex perisse satis conuenit, unum propter impuberem aetatem relictum, stirpem genti Fabiae dubiisque rebus populi Romani saepe domi bellique uel maximum futurum auxilium (Livy 2.50.11)**

**It is generally agreed that three hundred and six men perished, and that one only, an immature youth, was left as a stock for the Fabian house to be Rome's greatest helper in her hour of danger both at home and in the field.**

By asserting that authorities agreed that three hundred and six people died, Livy is endeavouring to show that he has had either direct or indirect access to sources that were kept, at the time of the battle or oral traditions that had formed since it, recording the number who died. This would not only add credibility to Livy's account and to the numbers he gives, but it would also serve to enhance his standing as a historian by demonstrating his careful use of sources. However, much of the effect of this is lost since Livy does not name his sources, and since Dionysius of Halicarnassus presents us with wildly different (and generally more credible) numbers.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus treats the episode quite differently. He covers broadly the same events as Livy in the chapters leading to his account of the Cremera, although he employs a far sharper focus upon the details of the military events than we see in Livy and there is far less of a detailed account of the political turmoil at Rome.

Dionysius is more precise in his identification of the factors leading to the realisation at Rome of the need to establish a fortification at the Cremera, pointing to a Veientine raid deep into Roman territory, following on from a series of significant Roman victories over the Veientes.

The first really significant deviation from the account offered by Livy comes when Dionysius describes the marshalling of the Fabii and gives an account of their numbers. While Livy gave a count of three hundred and six, Dionysius makes this

only the number of the members of the Fabian family who were present, and adds to this a total of around four thousand others; friends and clients of the Fabii (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.15.3). We see an earlier reflection of this in the writing of Diodorus, with whom Dionysius may have shared sources, or drawn from a similar tradition:

τῶν δὲ Ῥωμαίων ἡττηθέντων συνέβη πολλοὺς αὐτῶν πεσεῖν, ὧν φασὶ τινες τῶν συγγραπέων καὶ τοὺς Φαβίους τοὺς τριακοσίους, συγγενεῖς ἀλλήλων ὄντας καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μιᾷ περιειλημένους προσηγορίᾳ. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἐπράχθη κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν ενιαυτὸν. (Diodorus Siculus, *Library*, 11.53.6)

**The Romans were defeated and many of them perished, among their number, according to some historians, being the three hundred Fabii, who were of the same gens and hence were included under the single name.**

In addition, Dionysius also states that the party led by the Fabii was later reinforced by a Roman army under the command of Caeso Fabius, one of the consuls.

(Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.15.3)

The account of the departure of the Fabii is far shorter and more prosaic than that delivered by Livy. Next comes Dionysius's account of the initial construction of the fort. Here we receive a moderately detailed description of the construction of the fort, (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.15.4) the initial successful foray against the Veientine lands (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.15.5) and the consternation this caused for the Veientines. In all of these matters, overall leadership is attributed to Caeso Fabius, the consul, rather than to Marcus Fabius, who was apparently the leader of the Fabian forces. Dionysius states the reasons for the consul taking satisfaction from the initial success of the expedition. Dionysius's claims to understand the thoughts of the Roman commander must, of course, be understood in their proper context; they are not supposed to be representations of "genuine" thought processes, but rather a technique through which Dionysius can better explain the situation. However, the motives attributed, namely the pleasure of extracting swift revenge and the practical benefits gained from the confiscation of livestock and agricultural equipment from the enemy, sound plausible, as indeed was

Dionysius's intention. This fits with DH's programme of explaining the underlying reasons, outlined in his second preface (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 11.1).

Dionysius's account of the further raids launched from the fortress of the Cremera is also very different from that offered by Livy. Dionysius presents us with a more detailed breakdown of the Fabian and Roman troop movements, with a division into four parts, one of which focuses on the defence, leaving the other three free to plunder the surrounding lands. As with Livy, Dionysius states that the Roman and Fabian forces defeated the Veientes in pitched battles on occasion, although he does not suggest that the Veientes had the advantage of superior numbers. (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.15.7)

Yet another major difference between the accounts of Livy and Dionysius now emerges. While Livy presents the foundation of the fort, the initial raids and the eventual deaths of the Fabii as a single episode and, without specifying a timespan, implies that the events occurred in rapid succession, Dionysius gives us a much more detailed chronology and indicates that the force remained in place for the duration of an entire winter.

At this point, Dionysius shifts his focus away to events at the Cremera and turns to Rome's problems with the Volscii and Aequians (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.16). It is also made clear that Caeso Fabius has by this point removed his army from the fort at the Cremera, leaving only the Fabii and their companions in place. However, with the Veientes set to be reinforced by their Tyrrhenian allies, he is sent back to the region, although no longer consul, along with the consul Lucius Aemilius and an expeditionary force, the size of which is not described for us.

After briefly describing Roman successes against the Aequians and their difficulties against the Volscii, Dionysius returns to the matter of the Veientes. However, in the description of the battle between the forces of the consul, Lucius Aemilius, and the Veientine and Tyrrhenian forces that follows, no mention is made of any of the Fabii or of their fort at the Cremera. Dionysius then describes the negotiations for the surrender of the Veientes and the disfavour that fell upon Lucius Aemilius as a

result of the generous terms he allowed (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.17.2-4). Of course, the peace does not last, for the Tyrrhenians, still hostile towards Rome, are angry with the surrender of their Veientine allies and convince them to resume hostilities. The Veientes search for an honourable means of breaking their peace treaty and decide upon an objection to the Fabian fortification at the Cremera, which has not been disbanded (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.18.3). Upon learning that the Veientes are demanding the withdrawal of the Fabians, the Roman Senate resolves upon sending a consular army to its assistance (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.18.4-5). However, while the army is still in preparation, the Fabians are attacked and killed. It is reasonable to wonder why Dionysius includes all of this material in his account, providing such a break in his narrative. The most likely explanation is perhaps that Dionysius is either seeking to demonstrate the perfidy of Rome's enemies through their eagerness to violate the terms of a treaty on a technicality and to downplay any suspicions that the fort itself was provocative, or else he is reflecting a similar desire found in his sources. Again, although it is necessary to enter the realm of speculation, Fabius Pictor may be thought a likely suspect here. The Fabian house clearly had the strongest motivation to preserve a sympathetic historical tradition relating to the events at the Cremera.

Unlike Livy, Dionysius presents us with two possible accounts of the battle, although he does not treat them with equal regard. The first possible account, which he considers the less likely, is that all of the Fabii had left their fort so as to conduct a ritual sacrifice which was the duty of the Fabian clan (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.19.1). Whilst in the process of conducting this sacrifice, they were ambushed by a large force of Tyrrhenians and overwhelmed by missile weapons (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.19.2). Dionysius dismisses this account because he regards it as highly improbable that the entire Fabian detachment would have left the fort unguarded to perform a religious observance, when it would have sufficed for a small group of them to undertake the task.<sup>259</sup> It also, perhaps, lacks the significance for Rome's development that the other account contains, which diminishes its utility for Dionysius's history. No trace of this account can be found in

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<sup>259</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*. 9.18.3

Livy, for which there may be a number of explanations. Either it was a less common account, or Livy regarded it as too improbable for inclusion, or else he simply did not wish to break the flow of his narrative by including an alternative. Indeed, it may well be that a combination of the above factors was involved.

This is not to say that this account is without a certain artistic merit. Indeed, it seems to me to be likely that this account had arisen due to more recent Fabian traditions. Ogilvie remarks upon the Fabian dynasty's repository of historical traditions in his introduction to his commentary on Livy's account of the Cremera. He expresses the opinion that the "Fabian" elements of the Cremera episode must have been, for the most part, an invention of the Fabian house.<sup>260</sup> Certainly, despite the lack of conclusive evidence, Ogilvie presents a convincing case. Following on from this, it is perhaps possible to believe that the religious observance that this account presents as incumbent upon the Fabii was perhaps tied in to some later religious duty of the Fabian clan, and that this story arose as a consequence of that duty. The motif of religiously scrupulous Fabii is of course seen very clearly during the Gallic siege of the Capitol, with Fabius Dorsuo (Livy 5.46.2-3 and 5.52.3-4). There is a neat irony in the story, where the Fabii, on their way to perform a sacrifice, themselves become the sacrificial victims. Much like Livy's account of the battle, this first account offered by Dionysius contains little in the way of military terminology and as such, it would seem that Dionysius intended it to be treated more as an exemplum than as a detailed account of a battle. Certainly, Dionysius's second account is far more detailed. Its framework is far closer to that offered by Livy; sensing their opponents' overconfidence, the Tyrrhenians (as opposed to the Veientes, as we see in Livy) plan a subterfuge to allow them to isolate and destroy a Fabian force (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.20.1). They do so by deliberately sacrificing herds to draw a detachment of Fabii (unlike in Livy, we are told that a Fabian detachment is left guarding the fortress) further and further from their camp, before finally attacking and surrounding them. As in Livy, the Fabii manage to break out from the initial trap, inflicting heavy losses upon the enemy, and manage to seize high ground (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.20.4). Again, Dionysius provides us with more information than Livy with regard to the span of time involved,

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<sup>260</sup> Ogilvie, 1965, page 359

making it clear that the Fabii spent a whole night trapped on top of their hill. The next day, the Fabian detachment remaining in the fort hears of their comrades' misfortune and, leaving a few men to guard the fort, set out to their assistance (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.21.1). However, before they can come to the aid of the detachment trapped on the mountain, they are ambushed and killed. The trapped Fabians charge the enemies encircling them and fight ferociously for another whole day, at the end of which, the Tyrrhenians, who are now also suffering from the conflict, offer them the chance to surrender, which is refused (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.21.2). The fighting continues into the next day, with hunger, wounds and exhaustion only sharpening the Fabian bravery, until eventually they are worn down at range and then killed in close combat. Following this, the Tyrrhenians attack the fort at the Cremera, whose few remaining occupants fight valiantly before being killed (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.21.6).

The military sequences of this account are more clearly defined than those in either of the other two accounts I have investigated. Numerous phases of the assault on the troops on the hill are outlined, with the combat alternating between close-quarters and long-ranged battle. There is also a consciousness of the effects of thirst and fatigue upon the performance of the soldiers involved. There is little in the way of military terminology used and it is particularly noticeable that despite an account of a battle containing both long and short ranged combat, at no point are the troops on either side differentiated using the usual terminology for those involved in the various types of combat. Of course, this can perhaps be explained by the irregular nature of both the battle and the Fabian forces involved.

Although Dionysius's account is far more detailed than Livy's, many of the essential details and even the much of imagery used are the same. In particular, some of the implicit comparisons with Thermopylae are very much present.

καὶ ἦν νιφετῶ παραπλήσιος ἢ πληθὺς τῶν βελῶν. (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.21.3)

**And the multitude of missiles was like a snow storm.**



It is impossible to read this and not be reminded of the famous lines from Herodotus about the arrows at Thermopylae blocking out the sun (Herodotus, 7.226). However, not all of the Thermopylae comparisons are present in Dionysius's account. Certainly, at no point is it suggested that the Tyrrhenians use a concealed path to circle around behind the Romans.

Even a cursory examination of Dionysius's treatment of the incidents at the Cremera show that he is far more concerned to demonstrate the manner of his employment of sources concerning this matter to his readers than Livy. The presentation of two conflicting accounts of an event is by no means atypical of Dionysius's style, as I have indicated in chapter 2, but it does perhaps demonstrate that Dionysius has a more critical attitude towards the battle and, as such, lends credibility to the account which he decides is more probable. Sadly, like Livy, Dionysius does not name his sources. Of the origins of the two accounts, he says only:

ἔμοι μὲν δὴ ὁ λόγος οὗτος πιστότερος ἐφαίνετο πολὺ τοῦ προτέρου. φέρονται δ' ἐν γραφαῖς Ῥωμαίων ἀξιοχρέοις ἀμφότεροι. (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.21.6)

**To me now this account appears much more credible than the former; but both of them are to be found in Roman writings of good authority.**

Ultimately, though, it is on the basis of his own reasoning, rather than the authority of the sources responsible for the transmission of the two accounts, that Dionysius bases his approximation as to their credibility. Similarly, it is on the basis of his own common sense that he rejects an element of the story which Livy had unconditionally accepted, namely the survival of a single youth, who continued the Fabian name. Arguing decisively against the likelihood of none of the Fabii having been left in Rome during the expedition, Dionysius pours scorn upon it and expresses the opinion that the tradition arose from the fact that only one of the next generation of Fabii, the son of the former consul Marcus Fabius, enjoyed any degree of prominence among the next generation of Rome's political leaders (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 9.22.5)

Going beyond the obvious structural differences, there are a number of other areas in which Livy and Dionysius vary in their presentation of this episode. For the most part, Livy employs a very direct narrative style. Aside from his comment about authorities agreeing upon the number of deaths, he does not frame his account with any direct indication that he is drawing upon earlier treatments of the affair. Of course, I am not accusing Livy of plagiarism here, for as I have already noted, it is made amply clear elsewhere in his work that he draws his information from earlier historians. However, I believe that the lack of any reference to his sources in this chapter is a good indication that Livy does not find them any more open to question in this area than they are in most others.

Dionysius, on the other hand, repeatedly reminds the reader that he is drawing upon earlier historians and that his trust in them is often far from absolute. As I have already mentioned, Dionysius is not afraid to offer his opinions upon the validity of his sources, although he prefers to include all possible accounts, so that his reader may understand his reasoning and may make an independent judgement.

In addition to certain other elements, such as Livy's contraction of the timespan of the battle from three days down to one, as Ogilvie notes, the over-riding impression that the reader gains from these accounts is that Dionysius was primarily concerned with presenting his readers with an objective historical discourse, while for Livy, the primary concern was a cohesive narrative. Of course, as Ogilvie notes<sup>261</sup>, it is highly unlikely that any such Fabian-dominated battle ever occurred at the Cremera. Therefore, it is quite feasible to believe that Livy's storytelling approach is in fact a more appropriate manner in which to treat this episode than the more scientific methods employed by Dionysius. By modern criteria, it is perhaps Livy's approach which emerges as the most applicable. However, Dionysius's more reasoned antiquarianism is perhaps more useful to us in understanding the attitudes of the Roman elite of his own day towards the military events preceding the Gallic sack of Rome.

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<sup>261</sup> Ogilvie, 1965, page 359

## Chapter 4.2 – The Battle of Cannae

The battle of Cannae, which occurred in 216BC, was the last of the three major defeats that Hannibal's army inflicted on the Romans following his crossing of the Alps. Hannibal's earlier victories at the Trebbia and Lake Trasimene had caused great concern at Rome and had led to a feeling that the Second Punic War was turning against the Romans. Although the delaying tactics of Fabius Maximus had met with some success, there was a strong element at Rome, represented first by the master of horse Minucius but later assumed as a popular cause, who wanted to confront and defeat Hannibal in a pitched battle, so as to bring a quick end to Hannibal's occupation of Italy.

Livy's account of the battle of Cannae, which occurs in the twenty second book of his work, is among the most famous of his battle sequences and the battle itself has been the focus of much scholarly attention. Despite its age, De Sanctis's account<sup>262</sup> remains one of the more prominent, but there are many matters of controversy surrounding the battle, which, although they are not central to my investigation, it may be necessary to touch upon. This will allow us to recognise any "political" considerations that might be influencing the depiction of the battle.

Livy's main source for the battle of Cannae appears to have been Polybius. However, the degree of correspondence between his account and that of Polybius varies significantly, implying that other sources were involved.

An explanation of the background to the battle is essential to understanding several of the themes that run through the accounts of it, particularly the intensely hostile picture of Varro and his actions during the battle.. Frustration with the progress of the war lead to the highly irregular elections<sup>263</sup> of 216BC returning the aggressive, apparently plebian Gaius Terentius Varro as consul (Livy, 22.35.1-2). The patrician Lucius Aemilius Paulus is then elected as Varro's colleague, although apparently without any degree of enthusiasm on his own part (Livy, 22.35.3-4). No detailed record of the

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<sup>262</sup> De Sanctis. 1916

<sup>263</sup> For discussion of the issues surrounding this election, as portrayed in Livy, see Lazenby, 1978, pages 73-74

complexities surrounding this election is found in the account of Polybius, which deals with the matter as though it were simply a routine election (Polybius, 3.106.1), adding only the supplementary detail that the dictators, Fabius Maximus and Minucius, laid down their office at this point (Polybius 3.106.2). Walbank acknowledges the failings of Polybius's account and suggests that Livy's is to be preferred here.<sup>264</sup>

Livy's description of the means that Varro used to secure his election depict him as a demagogue of the worst variety. He soars to popularity on a tide of popular sentiment, which opposes the caution of Fabius Maximus (Livy, 22.34.2). His base of support is described as the "**volgus**" and he himself is described as increasing his own reputation through the destruction of others'. The cautious tactics of Fabius are warped by Varro's supporters into a plot by the whole aristocracy to ensnare Rome in war and then to prolong the conflict as far as possible (Livy, 22.34.2-11). The tone of this passage, as the accusations of conspiracy are extended first to the senate, then to the augurs, then to the traditional aristocracy and finally to the plebeian aristocracy is of crazed paranoia and fanatical hatemongering; inevitably leaves the reader feeling contempt for Varro.<sup>265</sup>

The real nature of Varro's politics is perhaps more open to debate. While Walbank seemingly accepts Livy's version of events and describes Varro's success as "a victory for the *plebs*",<sup>266</sup> Lazenby argues that there is no decisive evidence to suggest that Varro's policies were in any way "popular". He finds Varro's career to that date unremarkable, aside from his support for Minucius and does not find any evidence that the senate suffered from a lack of faith in his leadership.<sup>267</sup> Lazenby identifies the fundamental conflict between Varro and Paulus as being not the tension between the plebs and the aristocracy, but rather the tension between the adherents to the doctrine espoused by Fabius Maximus and those who preferred the more aggressive strategies proposed by the likes of Minucius.<sup>268</sup> As Lazenby notes, there is good evidence in Livy's account for the existence of a strong historical tradition of hostility to Varro.

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<sup>264</sup> Walbank, 1957, page 435

<sup>265</sup> On this election, see Daly, 2002 pages 119-20

<sup>266</sup> Walbank, 1956, page 435

<sup>267</sup> Lazenby, 1978, page 74

<sup>268</sup> Lazenby, 1978, pages 74-75

We shall encounter more evidence for this later; before, during and after the battle itself.

After his account of the elections, Livy then describes the augmentations that were made to the Roman forces in preparation for the coming military actions against Hannibal.<sup>269</sup> Livy here breaks off from his direct account to admit that there is no agreement between his sources on this matter (Livy, 22.36.1). Polybius states that Rome doubled the number of legions in the field from four to eight, with approximately five thousand men in each legion, not including allied troops.<sup>270</sup> If, as Lazenby claims<sup>271</sup>, they also raised an equal number of allied troops, this would bring the total number of infantry up to eighty thousand.<sup>272</sup> In addition to this, there are apparently six thousand cavalry, making for a total force of eighty six thousand. Livy acknowledges this possibility (Livy, 22.36.3), but also suggests that the additions may have been on a smaller scale; a total of an extra ten thousand troops added to the four existing legions (Livy, 22.36.2). Combined with the cavalry, this would have put the total size of the Roman force at approximately fifty to fifty five thousand men. Indeed, Brunt argues for a total force of ninety thousand, of which half were Roman citizens.<sup>273</sup>

These numbers have been heavily debated by modern scholars. De Sanctis came down on the side of the smaller figure, on the basis that when dealing with such figures, the lower is most likely to be accurate and on the basis that six thousand cavalry were not adequate to support eighty thousand infantry. Dorey and Dudley also come out in support of the smaller figure, claiming that commanding and supplying a force of more than eighty thousand would have been impossible; they decide that the Roman force must have been between forty five and sixty thousand strong.<sup>274</sup> On the other hand, Walbank comes out in favour of the larger size, rejecting De Sanctis's argument concerning the cavalry on the quite reasonable basis that the Romans would have wanted as large a force as possible for such a battle and that a lack of cavalry

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<sup>269</sup> See Daly 2002, page 32

<sup>270</sup> Polybius, 3.107.9, also Brunt, 1971, page 671

<sup>271</sup> Lazenby, 1978, page 75

<sup>272</sup> Brunt, 1971, page 677 argues in favour of a 1:1 ratio of Romans to allies at Cannae, at least in infantry

<sup>273</sup> Brunt, 1971, page 419

<sup>274</sup> Dorey and Dudley, 1971, page 63

would not have brought a halt to infantry recruitment.<sup>275</sup> Lazenby also argues in favour of a higher figure, on the basis that it would have been folly for Rome to repeat the mistakes of the Trebbia, where an attempt to engage Hannibal with only a small numerical advantage and an actual disadvantage in terms of cavalry had led to disaster. Personally, I side with those who argue for a larger figure. Polybius's declaration of the size of the Roman force is exact and if he experiences any of the confusion with which some scholars have credited him, it is not immediately apparent. In addition, I do not necessarily see that it would have been logistically impossible to support an army of eighty thousand, when said army is encamped on Italian soil, at the end of a short supply line and in country that provided ample water and opportunity for foraging.<sup>276</sup> Difficulties of exercising command over such a large force may well have existed, but this should not be taken as evidence that the force must have been smaller; the commanders may well have considered additional organisational difficulties an acceptable price to pay in return for increased manpower.

Once he has discussed the possible size of the force, Livy then states that the morale of the troops was better than it had been at any earlier point in the war, as a result of the successes of Fabius Maximus (Livy, 22.36.5). This remark is opposed by a description of strange portents which had been seen at the time and the alarm they caused (Livy, 22.36.6-8). Walsh discusses Livy's use of portents in his work<sup>277</sup> and notes that Livy's attitude towards them is often ambiguous. Despite his explicit arguments in favour of including them in his work, listed at 43.13.1, he sometimes remarks upon them as being suitable only for the overly credulous (Livy, 21.62.1). Nevertheless, Walsh argues, lists of prodigies, including the list given before Cannae, are often left without any sceptical analysis and we should believe that Livy is at least acknowledging the possibility that they may represent genuine divine warnings.<sup>278</sup> Presumably, the portents here are supposed to serve as warnings against the rash action proposed by Varro. I find it significant that although Livy notes that the portents were expiated in accordance with the relevant authorities, the disaster for Rome was not averted (Livy, 22.36.8). To Walsh's theories concerning portents in

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<sup>275</sup> Walkbank, 1956, pages 439-440

<sup>276</sup> For Roman foraging operations at Cannae, see Roth, 1998, page 288

<sup>277</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 62-64

<sup>278</sup> Walsh, 1961, pages 63-64

Livy, which I find generally convincing, I would add that while Livy believes that the reverence for the gods that the men of the past displayed was by no means misguided, he also recognised that unfavourable omens must be evaded not through religious rites, but rather through prompt and direct action. Levene draws comparisons with the bad omens received before the Roman defeat at Ticinus. Overall, according to Levene, the picture here in Livy is that Hannibal has worked with some success to gain the favour of the Gods. However, Levene cautions against reading too much significance into Livy here; the defeat at Cannae is ultimately due to human recklessness and factionalism, rather than divine disfavour.<sup>279</sup> I find Levene's account convincing; his arguments here and elsewhere that religion is not an over-arching theme in Livy's work seem to be amply supported by the evidence.

The next chapter deals with the gifts and aid that were sent by King Hiero (Livy, 22.37). Since this chapter is not directly relevant to the battle of Cannae, I shall not present a detailed discussion of it here. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to say a few words on the placing of this episode within the arc of events surrounding Cannae. The generosity of King Hiero, which extends to the supply of food (Livy, 22.37.6), auxiliary troops (Livy, 22.37.9) and even a golden statue of Victory (Livy, 22.37.5), serves as a reminder that Rome is by no means alone in her endeavour. Of course, Livy's focus on the statue of Victory is perhaps ironic given the outcome of the battle that follows its arrival. It may well be that Livy is reflecting upon the *hubris* of the Romans, or the loyalty of her ally, at a time when parts of Italy had already gone over to the side of Hannibal. Levene presents an alternative here; the statue of Victory is a positive omen, albeit one that is undercut by the negative omens already discussed. The Romans are more pious after the dictatorship of Fabius and their defeat here is more correctly attributable to human folly than to divine disfavour.<sup>280</sup>

The account then moves back to the preparations for the departure of the Roman forces and deals with the oath that the soldiers took, which was the first of its kind.<sup>281</sup> According to Livy, prior to this incident, troops had only taken a general oath to assemble when called by the consul and not to depart without his bidding (Livy,

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<sup>279</sup> Levene, 1993, 47-48

<sup>280</sup> Levene, 1993, 48-49

<sup>281</sup> Discussed by Daly 2002, page 52. He attributes it to low morale after Trebia and Trasimene.

22.38.3), supplemented by voluntary pledges to soldierly conduct, exchanged within and unique to the individual sections of the army (Livy, 22.38.3-4). This was replaced by a standardised oath administered officially by the tribunes (Livy, 22.38.5). Livy places great emphasis on the fact that this was a measure “**quod nunquam antea factum erat**” (Livy, 22.38.2). Two possible explanations for this emphasis suggest themselves; first, that Livy wished to emphasise the uniqueness of the preparations in order to show just how great the apprehension felt at Rome was; second, that Livy viewed the new system of a unified oath as inferior to the old voluntary oaths and wished to associate it with such a notorious defeat as Cannae. Given that the Roman defeat in the battle is not actually attributed to any particular failings or lack of courage on the part of the Romans, it seems to me that the former explanation is the more likely.

This is followed by an account of the parting words that the consuls spoke to the people of Rome as they departed the city. There is little here that adds to our portraits of the two commanders as they were formed during the account of the elections. Varro again plays the part of the demagogue, and restates his earlier charges against the aristocracy (Livy, 22.38.6-7). There is an obvious parallel here with the behaviour of Cleon before his departure for Pylos, as it is represented in Thucydides (Thucydides, 4.27). This can, I believe, be taken as further evidence that Livy’s representation of Varro was very much influenced by a hostile tradition that painted him as a stock-villain. By contrast, Paulus emerges exceedingly well from this chapter. He is set up as an obvious opposite to Varro:

**Collegae eius Pauli una, pridie quam ab urbe proficisceretur, contio fuit, verior quam gratior populo, qua nihil inclementer in Varronem dictum (Livy, 22.38.8)**

**His colleague Paulus spoke but once, on the day before he left the city. His words were more truthful than agreeable to the people, but he said nothing harsh against Varro.**

This is, however, qualified by Paulus’s sarcastic praise of Varro’s skills as a general, which allegedly allow him to know everything about the upcoming operation even before he has left the city (Livy, 22.38.9-10). The dichotomy here, with Paulus being



praised for his refusal to attack his colleague and at the same time delivering what the reader is no doubt supposed to see as a perfectly well justified attack upon his colleague serves to emphasise the extent Livy, or the sources he was drawing upon, sought to enhance the reputation of Paulus.

For the events above – the arrival of the gifts from Hiero, the discussion of the changes to the oaths and the consuls' speeches to the people – there is no parallel to Livy's text in Polybius. Therefore, judging from the Roman perspective of these scenes, it seems likely that Livy was dependent here upon Roman sources. There is also no parallel in Polybius for the passage that follows, namely the speech given by Fabius Maximus to Paulus, the logical successor to his own policies. This long speech begins by setting out Fabius's intentions towards Paulus and expressing his respect for him (Livy, 22.39.1-3). Fabius then sets out the main argument of his speech; that Paulus's main struggle will not be with Hannibal, but rather with Varro (Livy, 22.39.6). Moving on, Fabius draws a parallel between Varro and Flaminius, making the former out to be even more dangerous than the latter (Livy, 22.38.6). He pours scorn on Varro's bragging over military matters, of which he has no experience (as Paulus himself noted in the last chapter) and declares that Rome is heading, under Varro's leadership, for a disaster worse than that of Lake Trasimene (Livy, 22.39.8). Next, Fabius outlines the reasons behind his own policies for the war; Rome is surrounded by allies, while Hannibal is far from home, with no supply line, forced to survive from the spoils of his pillaging (Livy, 22.39.13). It is interesting that Livy does here mention the necessity for Hannibal to keep his army supplied; matters of logistics could deserve a mention when circumstances demanded. Rome is growing stronger by the day, while Hannibal's strength wastes away (Livy, 22.39.14-15). Fabius ends his speech with a return to the notion that Paulus's true fight will be against Varro rather than Hannibal (Livy, 22.39.17-18). The dangers of seeking popularity are discussed (Livy, 22.39.20), as are the dangers of haste (Livy 22.39.22).

With no parallel to this speech existing in Polybius and no indication in Livy's text as to the source of it, it is my belief that this speech is entirely an invention of Livy. First, although no location is explicitly given for this speech, it has the appearance of

a private discussion, rather than a public address. Indeed, at one point, Fabius himself says

**Nec gloriandi tempus adversus unum est, (Livy 22.39.9)**

**It is no time to boast, when I am speaking to one man.**

This seems to me to further advance the possibility that this conversation is in private, with no witnesses. As such, any reporting of the speech by a third party becomes highly improbable. Of course, this is not sure evidence that Livy himself composed this speech, for as we have seen, the episode of Cannae, particularly as it touches on the two consuls, had developed an active historical tradition by Livy's day. However, this speech seems to conform closely enough to the pattern of *exempla* noted by Chaplin that we may find reasonable grounds for seeing Livy's hand at work. Indeed, Chaplin notes that Fabius's role here is very much that of the wise adviser.<sup>282</sup> The foremost *exemplum* here is that of Flaminius, but there are numerous other didactic elements to the speech. Indeed, in my opinion, Fabius's speech is giving advice on two distinct, yet connected levels. There is the direct, immediate advice given to Paulus; he must seek to combat the policies of Varro and continue to employ the Cunctator's own strategies. There is also a more general level of advice, which, while applicable to Paulus, also serves as instruction to Livy's own audience, and helps to fulfil the objective he set out in his introduction.

The more general lessons that can be drawn from the speech are threefold. First, it is the duty of good men to seek to counteract the efforts of bad men, even though they may share the same cause. Second, it is not through the pursuit of glory that true glory is won. Finally, rash action always brings unsatisfactory consequences.

**Festinatio improvida est et caeca (Livy, 22.39.22)**

**Haste is improvident and blind**

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<sup>282</sup> Chaplin, 2000, page 54

Indeed, this line, upon which Fabius's speech ends, has every appearance of being a maxim and there can be no doubt that Livy is endeavouring to make the lessons of this speech as widely applicable as possible.

Paulus's reply is reported only in indirect speech. He expresses agreement with Fabius, but predicts practical problems in putting the advice into action (Livy, 22.40.1-2). He also states that he would not be prepared to oppose Varro to the point of incurring overwhelming popular enmity (Livy, 22.40.3). It is at this point, one may feel, that the defeat of Rome at Cannae is ensured. The consuls then set out from the city, Paulus accompanied by the most prominent senators and Varro accompanied by a crowd of his supporters, again described in unflattering terms (Livy, 22.40.4).

From this point onwards, several chapters are devoted to Roman and Carthaginian preparations for the battle and the organisation of their camps. Polybius also provides coverage of these events, but his perspective on them is often very different. For example, in Polybius's account, we are given a description of Paulus's speech to the troops. Here, he provides plausible explanations for the earlier Roman defeats at the Trebbia and Lake Trasimene (Polybius, 3.108.6-10) and reminds them of the reasons for which they are fighting against Hannibal (Polybius 3.109.6-12). It is clear from this speech, which Walbank regards as an invention,<sup>283</sup> that in Polybius's account, Paulus has resigned himself already to the prospect of a pitched battle against Hannibal. Livy's account contains no trace of this speech. I suspect that it may have been incompatible with his agenda of showing Paulus to be determined to avoid battle until the last possible moment.

Chapters 40 to 43 describe Hannibal's supply difficulties, which Paulus had hoped to exacerbate through delay (Livy, 22.40.7-8), an incident in which Paulus's caution and attention to augury sparked anger from Varro and the troops, but at the same time saved the Romans from a trap laid by Hannibal (Livy, 22.42), and Hannibal's choice of position for his camp, which is advantageous in that it puts the prevailing wind and the ensuing dust clouds in the face of the enemy troops (Livy, 22.42.11). There has been much scholarly debate over the precise locations of the camp and the battle,

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<sup>283</sup> Walbank, 1956, pages 441-442

which are not directly relevant to my purpose here.<sup>284</sup> Nevertheless, while Lazenby accepts as probable the Roman tradition that the dust at Cannae was a major factor,<sup>285</sup> Walbank dismisses it as an invention of Roman propaganda.<sup>286</sup> It is most likely that the impact of the clouds of dust was invented, or at least exaggerated, due to the absence of any mention of this in Polybius's text. However, I am sure that by the time of Livy, successive generations of Latin historians had ensured that this was a fundamental part of the Cannae narrative.<sup>287</sup>

At this point, the Romans are using an alternating command system, where Paulus and Varro each have the supreme command on alternate days. In the narratives of both Livy and Polybius, the same pattern emerges here. Paulus's days are characterised by caution, delay and restraint (Livy 22.45.4, Polybius 3.110.8), while Varro uses his days recklessly and aggressively (Livy 22.45.5, Polybius 3.110.4). The precise order of events differs between the two accounts, but the overall picture that emerges is the same. In chapter 44, Varro wishes to rush into Hannibal's trap by engaging him on ground suitable for cavalry battles, which will emphasise Hannibal's cavalry advantage, but Paulus restrains him.

Chapter 45 sees the Romans finally and conclusively provoked into giving battle, by a Carthaginian raid on the forward Roman position (Livy 22.45.1-4). Paulus still disapproves of the decision to give battle, but will not deprive the effort of his support if it cannot be prevented (Livy 22.45.5). Livy now describes how the Romans are drawn up for battle. Here, he follows Polybius's account almost exactly (Livy 22.45.7). The Roman cavalry is on the right wing, near the river, with the Roman foot-soldiers next to them, in the centre (Livy, 22.45.7, Polybius 3.113.3). The allies are on the left wing, with the cavalry on the outside and the infantry closer to the centre (Livy 22.45.7, Polybius 3.113.3). Livy omits the detail, given by Polybius, that the Roman maniples were drawn up closer together than normal and were of unusual depth. This detail is significant, for it demonstrates clearly the Roman intention to use their infantry as a tight formation to push through the Carthaginian centre, with a

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<sup>284</sup> Walbank, 1956, pages 435-438. Dorey and Dudley, 1971, pages 63-64. Lazenby, 1978, page 77 and Daly, 2002, pages 32-34

<sup>285</sup> Lazenby, 1978, page 77

<sup>286</sup> Walbank, 1956, page 438

<sup>287</sup> See Daly, 2002, page 43 on this

seemingly endless supply of replacements for troops who fell.<sup>288</sup> Its omission would appear to be a strong indication that Livy often lacked the ability to discern details that were important from a military perspective. Varro commanded the left wing and Paulus the right (Livy, 22.45.7-8).

Hannibal sends his light armed troops ahead over the river and places them at the front of his battle-line (Livy 22.46.1, Polybius 3.113.6). The Gallic and Spanish horse goes on the left wing, opposite the Roman cavalry (Livy 22.46.2, Polybius 3.113.7). The Numidian cavalry goes on the right wing, with the Infantry in the centre, with the Africans at the ends and the Gauls and Spaniards in the centre (Livy 22.46.3, Polybius 3.113.7). Livy again omits information given by Polybius, namely that Hannibal advanced the central infantry companies out beyond the ones on the wings, so as to create a crescent formation.<sup>289</sup> However, Livy does follow, with a striking degree of exactitude, the digression by Polybius upon the arms and appearance of the Carthaginian forces (Livy 22.46.4-6). It seems likely that Livy was not particularly confident of his ability to work from multiple accounts of the arrangement and equipment of the forces involved and hence decided to follow a single account, namely that of Polybius, for these sections. Livy also follows Polybius's account of how the sun was inconvenient for neither side, but supplements this with another reference to the clouds of dust, which apparently inconvenienced the Romans (Livy 22.46.9).

Livy continues to follow Polybius as the battle begins; the light-armed troops begin the fighting, but their skirmishes are inconclusive.<sup>290</sup> Next comes the battle between the Roman cavalry and the Spanish and Gallic horse. This does not follow the pattern of traditional cavalry battles, for lack of space forces both sides to dismount and engage each other on foot. At length, the Carthaginians get the upper hand and slaughter the Romans (Livy, 22.47.1-3). Next comes the infantry engagement, where the Romans, through force of numbers, drive back the Spaniards and Gauls and push deep into the enemy lines (Livy 22.47.4-7, Polybius 3.115.4-8). Upon this, the

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<sup>288</sup> Dorey and Dudley, 1971, page 65

<sup>289</sup> Polybius, 3.113.8 – It has been suggested that this effect was accidental, but most scholarship agrees that Hannibal acted deliberately here, so as to tempt the Romans into a rash attack upon his centre. Walbank, 1956, page 445, Dorey and Dudley, 1971, page 65, Lazenby, 1978, pages 81-82. Daly 35 ff has an extensive discussion of the tactics of the battle.

<sup>290</sup> Lazenby, 1978, page 83 for the general ineffectiveness of Roman *velites*

African infantry, who had originally been deployed behind the Spaniards and Gauls, move in from the sides to attack the narrow Roman formation from the rear. This leaves the now-exhausted Romans surrounded and faced with fresh Carthaginian troops (Livy 22.47.8-11, Polybius 3.115.9-12).

Having followed Polybius's account closely through the opening sections of the battle, Livy now diverges once again from his earlier source. Polybius moves next to describe the consul Paulus deciding to increase his level of personal involvement in the fighting, so as to make good the earlier promises he had made to the troops in his address to them (Polybius 3.116.1-3). Since Livy had omitted this speech from his account, it should not come as much of a surprise that this passage is also omitted. Livy instead goes on to describe a Carthaginian trick, whereby five hundred Numidians feigned surrender, so as to be escorted behind the Roman lines, where they later seized up weapons and attacked the Romans from behind (Livy 22.38.2-4). There is no mention of this episode in Polybius, and I believe that Lazenby is correct to identify this as a Roman propaganda invention designed to make the defeat more palatable to Romans by blaming it upon *punica fides*.<sup>291</sup>

Both Livy and Polybius then describe the collapse of the Roman left. However, while for Livy, the focus is the panic and confusion in the Roman ranks (Livy 22.38.5), Polybius is much more interested in events on the Carthaginian side of the battle (Polybius 3.116.5-8). This Carthaginian focus, along with the favourable appraisal of Hasdrubal's tactical skills, leads Walbank to conclude that Polybius was using a Carthaginian source here.<sup>292</sup> For Livy, the interest is specifically Roman. While Polybius briefly noted that Paulus was killed at this stage of the engagement and gave a simple yet effective eulogy (Polybius 3.116.9), Livy gives us a far more detailed account of the death of Paulus. In Livy's account, Paulus was wounded early in the battle (Livy, 22.49.1) but fought on nevertheless. Having eventually been forced to dismount due to being too weak to control his horse, his escort was killed and he was left to die on the battlefield (Livy 22.49.2-5). At this point, C. Lentulus, a military tribune, came upon the wounded consul and offered him his horse, so that he might reach safety (Livy, 22.49.6-8). But Paulus orders Lentulus to return to Rome himself,

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<sup>291</sup> Lazenby, 1978, page 84.

<sup>292</sup> Walbank, 1956, 447

to instruct the Senate to prepare Rome for invasion and to pass a final message of thanks to Fabius Maximus (Livy 22.49.9-10). Finally, he expresses his wish to die on the battlefield, so as not to be forced to face public anger or turn accuser against his fellow consul (Livy 22.49.11). When his speech is over, Paulus dies in the midst of an enemy attack, while Lentulus is carried away by his horse, which bolts in panic (Livy 22.49.12).

There can be no denying that Livy's account of Paulus's demise, unlikely though its authenticity may be, is a more satisfying conclusion to the plot and character arcs that Livy has built up around the battle. The reference to Fabius Maximus closes the arc that dealt with the relationship between the famous Cunctator and the reluctant consul. Paulus's fear of public scorn and his refusal to publicly condemn Varro both mirror his character traits as we saw them before the battle began. Varro is described as having fled to Venusia with fifty five horsemen, rather than having been part of any organised retreat (Livy 22.49.14). Livy's description of the flight of Varro is actually far less harsh than that of Polybius.

ὀλίγοι δὲ τινες εἰς Οὐένουσίαν διέφυγον, ἐν οἷς ἦν καὶ Γάιος Τερέντιος ὁ τῶν Ῥωμαίων στρατηγός, ἀνὴρ αἰσχρὰν μὲν τὴν φυγὴν, ἀλυσιτελῆ δὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν αὐτοῦ τῇ πατρίδι πεποιημένος. (Polybius 3.116.13)

**A few escaped to Venustia, among them being the consul Gaius Terentius, who disgraced himself by his flight and in his tenure of his office had been most unprofitable to his country.**

This ends the account of the battle in both Livy and Polybius. Livy offers a brief description of the successful efforts of some of those caught in enemy territory to escape from the Carthaginian's clutches (Livy 22.50.4-12), but it seems to me that this is little more than Roman propaganda clutching at straws in the face of an overwhelming defeat.

Polybius put the number of Roman dead from the battle at seventy thousand (Polybius 3.117.3), while Livy's total count, including cavalry and infantry, comes to forty eight thousand two hundred (Livy 22.49.15). Walbank states that Polybius's count came

from a Carthaginian source and hence may have been prone to exaggeration.<sup>293</sup> Lazenby also argues against Polybius's count in favour of Livy's.<sup>294</sup> Indeed, as modern scholars have not been slow to note, Livy's identification of the dead is indeed more accurate than Polybius's, for Polybius identifies M. Atilius Regulus as being among the dead, despite the fact that he lived to hold future offices.<sup>295</sup>

Livy's account of the battle of Cannae clearly has more than one objective. While Livy is content to follow Polybius for many of the "tactical" sections of the narrative, where we may speculate that his interest in or knowledge of the subject matter was less, it seems certain that Livy draws upon other historical traditions elsewhere and even on occasion indulges in his own invention. The tradition of hostility towards Varro and defence of Paulus seems to have been sparked by Polybius, whose links to the Scipios probably shaped his ideology here. However, by the time of Livy, this tradition is much more developed and does indeed seem to have become one of the dominant themes of the Cannae episode. Perhaps Roman sources found it convenient to place the blame for the defeat on the head of one man, a man who did indeed have a counterpart every bit as virtuous as he himself was contemptible, rather than upon the entire army or even the Roman people.

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<sup>293</sup> Walbank, 1954, page 440

<sup>294</sup> Lazenby, 1978, pages 84-85

<sup>295</sup> Polybius, 3.116.11. Lazenby, 1978, page 85



### Chapter 4.3 – The Battle of Zama

I will now turn my attention to the battle of Zama, which took place between Roman and Carthaginian forces in 202BC. Coming at the very end of the Second Punic War, the Roman victory here effectively marked the end of Carthage's military power. By this stage, the fortunes of war had already begun to shift away from the Carthaginians, with Hannibal's strength having been wasted away in Italy through the stratagems of Fabius Maximus, the delayer, and with Hannibal's brother, Hasdrubal, having been killed at the battle of Metaurus in 207BC. Scipio's landing in Africa in 204BC led to Hannibal's recall from Italy. Arriving in 202BC, he found himself lacking adequate cavalry support and forced to face a strong Roman army in the desert at Zama.

As with the other case-studies, I shall focus not only upon the battle itself, but also upon the events that immediately precede and follow it in our accounts. Numerous accounts of the battle survive, but only Livy's is of primary interest to me. However, given that Livy's account is based so heavily upon the earlier account of Polybius, it will be impossible to conduct an examination of Livy's handling of the battle without making frequent reference to Polybius's own treatment.

The battle of Zama occurs in the thirtieth book of Livy's history. The battle itself occupies chapters thirty-two to thirty-five of this book, while I shall be examining the span of chapters twenty eight to thirty seven. The same events occur during the fifteenth book of Polybius's history. The battle itself occupies chapters twelve to fourteen of this book. However, since I shall be considering a slightly broader span, namely chapters three to seventeen.

As with the battle of Cannae, the fact that Polybius was regarded as having a certain proximity to the events here and would have had unrivalled access to information sources upon them ensures that Livy generally sticks closely to the account offered by Polybius. Indeed, Walbank seems confident in his assertion that Livy used Polybius as his primary source for this episode, with just minor interpolations from other annalists.<sup>296</sup> In both cases, the historians approach the events from the same direction;

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<sup>296</sup> Walbank. 1967, page 446

the Carthaginians have just violated a treaty that had been established between themselves and Rome, due to domestic disapproval of said treaty, which placed extremely unfavourable terms upon them. Polybius also cites Carthaginian confidence that Hannibal would be able to defeat the Roman forces in Africa as a factor in their decision to end the treaty:

τὸ δὲ συνέχον, οὐ μικρὰς ἀλλὰ μεγάλας εἶχον ἐλπίδας νικήσειν διὰ τῶν περὶ τὸν Ἀννίβαν. (Polybius, 15.2.3)

**But above all they had no slight hopes of conquering with the assistance of Hannibal, but were on the contrary most sanguine.**

Although Livy's presentation of the events concerning the attack on the ambassadors differs slightly, the differences are not particularly significant. However, once the narrative moves on to the actual account of the episode at Zama, some more important differences become evident. Both Livy and Polybius begin their accounts with assessments of the psychological state of the Romans. In Polybius, the overriding Roman emotion is a desire for retribution for the attack on their ambassadors and the violation of the treaty.

Γενομένων δὲ τούτων αὐθις ὁ πόλεμος ἄλλην ἀρχὴν εἰλήφει βαρυτέραν τῆς πρόσθεν καὶ δυσμενικωτέραν. οἳ τε γὰρ Ῥωμαῖοι δοκοῦντες παρεσπονδῆσθαι φιλοτίμως δέκειντο πρὸς τὸ περιγενέσθαι τῶν Καρχηδονίων, οἳ τε Καρχηδονιοὶ συνειδότες σφίσι τὰ πεπραγμένα πρὸς πᾶν ἐτοίμως εἶχον πρὸς τὸ μὴ τοῖς ἐχθροῖς ὑποχείριοι γενηθῆναι. (Polybius, 15.3.1-2)

**The consequence of this was that the war began afresh, the cause of its renewal being more serious and more productive of bitter feeling than the original one. <sup>2</sup> For the Romans, thinking that they had been treacherously attacked, set their hearts on getting the better of the Carthaginians, and the latter, conscious of their guilt, were ready to suffer anything rather than fall into the power of the Romans.**

Nevertheless, Polybius stresses that Scipio himself does place limits upon his thirst for vengeance, with his statement in the next chapter that Scipio will not himself sink to the level of the Carthaginians by attacking ambassadors (Polybius, 15.4). Polybius endorses Scipio's view and leaves no room for doubt that he himself shares the sentiments. Indeed, as Walbank notes<sup>297</sup>, Polybius's statement concerning Roman morality on this matter recurs frequently in later sources on Roman history.

θεωρῶν γὰρ τὴν σφετέραν πατρίδα περὶ πλείστου ποιουμένην τὴν περὶ τοὺς πρεσβευτὰς πίστιν, ἐσκοπεῖτο παρ' αὐτῷ συλλογιζόμενος οὐχ οὕτως τί δέον παθεῖν Καρχηδονίους, ὡς τί δέον ἦν πράττειν Ῥωμαίους. (Polybius, 15.4.10)

**For aware as he was of the high value attached by his own nation to keeping faith to ambassadors, he took into consideration not so much the deserts of the Carthaginians as the duty of the Romans.**

However, in Livy 30.28.1, we receive a very different picture of the mindset of the Romans. The emphasis here is placed upon the duality of their thoughts.

**Inter haec simul spes simul cura in dies crescebat nec satis certum constare apud animos poterat utrum gaudio dignius esset Hannibalem post sextum decimum annum ex Italia decedentem uacuum possessionem eius reliquisse populo Romano, an magis metuendum quod incolumi exercitu in Africam transisset:**  
(Livy, 30.28.1)

**Meanwhile, hope and anxiety alike were increasing from day to day, and men could not quite make up their minds whether it was a fit subject for rejoicing that Hannibal, retiring from Italy after sixteen years, had left the Roman people to take possession of it, and not rather a ground for apprehension that he had crossed over to Africa with his army intact.**

The significance of these lines is not immediately clear. It is perhaps somewhat surprising that the non-Roman author, namely Polybius, should apparently be so

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<sup>297</sup> Walbank, 1967, page 445

determined to give a version of events which places the Romans firmly upon the moral high ground. At the same time, it also comes as rather a surprise that Livy, a Roman source writing almost two centuries after Polybius, with access to Polybius's works, should have missed such an opportunity to replicate a passage that reflected so generously upon the Romans. However, it is my belief that it is Polybius's "proximity" to these events, rather than intentional bias towards the Romans that has shaped the nature of his account here.

Indeed, we must treat the story of the Carthaginian attack upon the Roman ambassadors with a certain degree of caution. Harris gives numerous examples of both real and alleged attacks upon and abuse of ambassadors being used by Rome as a pretext for military action, where the real motivation comes from entirely different sources. The murder of an ambassador was apparently used as a pretext for a war with Illyria<sup>298</sup>, while perhaps rather unsound accusations of ill-treatment were used as pretexts for war with Dalmatia<sup>299</sup>, the Achaean League<sup>300</sup> and even for the declaration of the Third Punic War<sup>301</sup>. There is no hint in either Livy or Polybius that the Punic attack upon the ambassadors was in any way fabricated. Nevertheless, this seems to me to be further evidence for the possibility that Polybius had been significantly affected by Roman propaganda surrounding these events, propaganda which was perhaps more transparent (and hence more tempting to downplay) by the time of Livy.

When Polybius was writing his history, some veterans of Zama would still have been alive and it would have been perfectly possible for Polybius to have been exposed, even if only second hand, to their accounts of the battle.<sup>302</sup> Indeed, given the significance that came to be attached to this battle, it is improbable, to say the least, that Polybius would have been able to live in Rome for any length of time without being treated to accounts of the battle, its prelude and the thoughts of those involved. Livy, on the other hand, has a far wider perspective on these events. It is not that he does not want to demonstrate to his readers the strength of the Roman moral superiority; as we shall see, he later does this at length during the speech of Scipio.

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<sup>298</sup> Harris, 1979, page 195

<sup>299</sup> Harris, 1979, pages 233-234

<sup>300</sup> Harris, 1979, pages 240-241

<sup>301</sup> Harris, 1979, pages 234-235

<sup>302</sup> The issue of average lifespan in the ancient world is obviously of relevance here. While I do not have time to explore this in depth, see Kajanto, 1968.

Rather, he believes that he can give his account of these events a more pleasing shape and a more obvious role in his history by giving a wider context to his psychological assessment of those involved in Zama. Ultimately, Livy is guilty of treating the Roman forces at Zama as though they were all historians. The thoughts he ascribes to them are the thoughts that we would expect from intelligent and partially detached observers, with a detailed knowledge of the events of the war to that point. Given the length of the Second Punic War and fact that many of those fighting at Zama would have been just infants when Hannibal gained his initial victories in Italy<sup>303</sup> (even Scipio himself would have been of no great age at this time), it is highly unlikely that any significant section of the Roman army would have been able to achieve such a perspective.

Another aspect of this section of Livy's narrative that is worthy of note, and which is not found in Polybius's work, is the manner in which he applies Roman form to Hannibal and his army.

**multos occursuros Scipioni in acie qui praetores, qui imperatores, qui consules Romanos sua manu occidissent, muralibus uallaribusque insignes coronis, peruagatos capta castra captas urbes Romanas. non esse hodie tot fasces magistratibus populi Romani quot captos ex caede imperatorum prae se ferre posset Hannibal.** (Livy, 30.28.6-7)

**Many men who would encounter Scipio in battle had with their own hands slain Roman praetors, generals-in-command, consuls, had been decorated with crowns for bravery in scaling city-walls and camp defences, had wandered through captured camps, captured cities of the Romans. All the magistrates of the Roman people did not have so many fasces as Hannibal was able to have borne before him, having captured them from Roman generals.**

The purpose of showing Hannibal and his army decked out in the Roman manner and loaded down with Roman spoils is not only to remind the reader of the victories that Hannibal has won over the Romans, but also to elevate the Carthaginian troops onto

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<sup>303</sup> For discussion of the range of ages of soldiers serving in the Roman army, see Roth, 1999, pages 9-13

the same level as the Roman forces. The credit due to the Roman forces will be all the greater if their victory can be shown to have been won over a worthy opponent.

After this episode, both Polybius and Livy describe Hannibal's relocation to Zama (Polybius, 15.5.1, Livy 30.29.1) and an episode in the Roman camp, where Scipio presents captured Punic scouts with a tour of the Roman camp and allows them to return to Hannibal unscathed (Polybius 15.5.4-7, Livy 30.29.2-3). Both remark that the position taken by Hannibal was disadvantageous due to its distance from water, a factor upon which Appian blames the Carthaginian defeat (Polybius 15.5.8, Livy 30.29.10 and Appian, *Punic War*, 7.30). However, once we come to the matter of the conference between Scipio and Hannibal, differences between the accounts again emerge. In Polybius, Hannibal's decision to meet with Scipio is inspired by his curiosity and admiration resulting from Scipio's treatment of his scouts (Polybius 15.5.8). The dominant theme is that of respect for a worthy opponent. Hannibal's actions are in contravention of his orders from his Carthaginian rulers, who had ordered him to confront Scipio in battle directly. Livy, on the other hand, confesses ignorance as to whether Hannibal was ordered to conduct the negotiations and even inserts a note that Valerius Antias describes them as taking place after an initial battle, which went in favour of the Roman forces.

The conference itself follows broadly the same outline in the accounts of both Polybius and Livy. However, on closer inspection, a number of discrepancies become clear. Walbank discusses the historical basis for this section and argues in favour of speeches having their base in reality. However, we must remain aware of the practice of using speeches to say "what needed to be said"<sup>304</sup>. While Walbank<sup>305</sup> finds it reassuring that the speeches present Hannibal as the aging, experienced statesman and Scipio as the younger, more aggressive Roman aristocrat, I find this conformity to established stereotypes to be somewhat suggestive of plausible-invention on the part

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<sup>304</sup> This phrase is a rough translation of Thucydides 1.22.1, which, as is rightly stated by Woodman, 1988, page 11, remains one of the most discussed passages in all of classical literature. Woodman lays out several of the opinions that have been offered on this passage, such as Kagan's insistence that Thucydides offered an entirely accurate reproduction of every speech. Woodman himself comes down upon the side of G.E.M De Ste Croix, who proposed a theory that Thucydides gave the "general gist" of what was said, while still relying on invention for the flesh of the speeches. The significance of this passage is increased by the fact that Thucydides provided such a commonly-used model for later historians, particularly in the manner of the presentation of their speeches.

<sup>305</sup> Walbank, 1967, page 451

of Polybius. Eckstein refers to this scene and notes the similarities between the young Hannibal, as presented by Polybius, and Hannibal's own impression of Scipio<sup>306</sup>; further evidence, in my mind, that Polybius is employing invention to further his literary objectives. In particular, Polybius's assertion that the conference happened between the two men with only an interpreter in attendance (Polybius 15.6.3) (and indeed Scipio's assertion that the substance of the conversation is not worth relaying to Rome (Polybius 15.8.13)) seems to me to make it highly implausible that the speeches given here are an accurate account of "what was actually said".

The differences between the speeches can be summarised as follows. Polybius begins with an account of how the warfare between the Carthaginians and the Romans spread from its beginnings in Sicily and Spain to the gates of the home-cities of the nations themselves (Polybius 15.6.4-6). He then expresses his intention to deliver his city from danger and put an end to the strife with the Romans (Polybius 15.6.7). Livy's Hannibal opens with a somewhat more dramatic tone, reminiscent of the language of tragedy.

**tum Hannibal prior: 'si hoc ita fato datum erat ut qui primus bellum intuli populo Romano, quique totiens prope in manibus uictoriam habui, is ultro ad pacem petendam uenirem, laetor te mihi sorte potissimum datum a quo peterem.**  
(Livy 30.30.3)

**Then Hannibal, the first to speak: "If it was foreordained by fate that I, who was the first to make war on the Roman people and who should so often have had victory in my grasp, should come forward to sue for peace, I rejoice that destiny has given me you and no one else to whom I should bring my suit.**

He then goes on to flatter Scipio and to remind Scipio of the importance of the man who now begs him for peace.

After this introduction, he then covers the same territory as had Polybius in his own introduction to Hannibal's speech, namely the geographical scope of the war and the

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<sup>306</sup> Eckstein, 1995, page 145

immediacy it has held for both of the powers involved, coming as it has to the very gates of their city. He also denounces the greed that has led his people to desire territory beyond Africa; an indirect parallel to the opening line of this speech as it is given by Polybius.

δεξιωσάμενος δὲ πρῶτος Ἀννίβας ἤρξατο λέγειν ὡς ἐβουλετο μὲν ἂν μήτε Ῥωμαίους ἐπιθυμῆσαι μηδέποτε μηδενὸς τῶν ἐκτὸς Ἰταλίας μήτε Καρχηδονίους τῶν ἐκτὸς Λιβύης. (Polybius 15.6.4)

**Hannibal first saluted Scipio and began to speak as follows: "Would that neither the Romans had ever coveted any possessions outside Italy, nor the Carthaginians any outside Africa;"**

Both speeches then continue with Hannibal reflecting upon the nature of fortune and warning Scipio of the sudden twists she can cause, out of fear that his young Roman counterpart is unaware of them (Polybius 15.6.8 – 15.7.2, Livy 30.30). In Polybius's account, Hannibal gives a single illustration of this (Polybius 15.7.2-4) and then goes on to propose terms for a treaty and conclude his speech. Livy, however, spends far more time on elaboration of this point. In Livy's account, Hannibal focuses not only upon the downturn in his own fortunes, but also upon the reversal in fortunes that Scipio has brought about for his family. By describing Scipio as avenging his father and uncle, Livy transforms a war between nations into a feud between two families. The vocabulary of tragedy cast a heavy shadow over all of Hannibal's speech, as Livy relates it. If the Hannibal of Polybius's account is a statesman, willing to use literary motifs in order to reinforce his point, but primarily concerned with results, then Livy's Hannibal is both a tragic hero and a philosopher. The severity of his language used and the emphasis upon Hannibal's wretched current state are both evocative of tragedy. However, as Walsh observes, Hannibal's lecture on the fickle nature of fate is also reminiscent of the teachings of the Stoics.<sup>307</sup> In this respect, Hannibal is very much a Roman figure here, just as his army had earlier taken on the characteristics of a Roman army.

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<sup>307</sup> Walsh, 1961, page 103



Indeed, the most significant difference between the versions of this speech given by Livy and Polybius lies in their respective lengths, with Livy's account being longer.<sup>308</sup> Therefore, it comes as something of a surprise that Scipio's reply is equally brief in both of our sources. The ingredients of Scipio's speech are again broadly the same in both Livy and Polybius; Scipio rebuts Hannibal's claim that the Romans should view Carthage's current situation as an incentive to make peace and denounces the Carthaginians for their treachery in breaking the earlier treaty, rejecting the newly proposed terms for peace as a reward for Carthaginian perfidy. However, while Polybius spends most of the speech dwelling upon the disgust that Scipio feels for the Carthaginians' breaking of the earlier treaty, the emphasis in Livy is once again upon the role of fate. The rejection of the terms for the treaty is crammed into the last few lines of the speech. Polybius, on the other hand, does not even explicitly relate Scipio's rejection of Hannibal's arguments concerning fate, but rather relegates them into summarised, indirect speech, before the beginning of his more direct narration (Polybius 15.8.3).

The conclusions I would draw from a comparison of the speeches in the two sources are largely the same as the conclusions I drew from the comparison of the earlier psychological assessments. Polybius's focus is very much upon the justification for Rome's continuation of hostilities. For Polybius, the key issue here is that the Carthaginians have already proven themselves unworthy of trust through their violation of their earlier treaty and that for Scipio to reject their proposal is not only understandable, but also morally right. As before, I would defend Polybius from charges of pro-Roman bias on the grounds that the majority of Polybius's sources of information, namely the Romans involved in the events themselves, would have unfailingly focussed upon this aspect of the matter in their accounts. Livy, on the other hand, is writing from a far more distant vantage point. His sources do not have the immediacy in their need to emphasise the justifications for the Roman actions. As such Livy has rather more freedom to focus upon the development of characters and the theme of fate. In Livy's account, the motives of the generals are more personal and even philosophical than they are political. There can be little doubt that Polybius

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<sup>308</sup> In general, the speeches are generally so similar that Chaplin, 2000, page 25 cites this as the speech in which Livy comes the closest to simply reproducing Polybius.

intended his depiction of Hannibal here to serve as an exemplum<sup>309</sup>, yet Livy assumes the freedom to develop the lesson further by developing the treatment of the theme in Scipio's reply.

Once the negotiations have failed, the accounts of both authors move on to the battle itself. Here, we find extremely close correspondence between the two accounts and it will not be necessary to make detailed comparisons for the entire duration of the battle. Indeed, that the accounts should correspond so closely in this area is perhaps indicative of Livy's evident unfamiliarity with military matters; he does not have a detailed understanding of the matters under discussion, so he is forced to trust the judgement of others. Both authors briefly emphasise the scale and importance of the battle before they begin their accounts, but although their methods differ slightly, the intention is the same (Polybius 15.9.1-6 and Livy 30.32.2-5). The mindsets of the armies are not differentiated at this point; both Romans and Carthaginians are thinking alike.

Livy and Polybius present the encouragement that the generals give to their army very differently. In Polybius's account, it is Scipio's speech that comes first, while Livy presents them in the opposing order. However, while Polybius gives a supposedly direct account of both speeches, Livy reports them only indirectly. The speech of Scipio reported by Polybius feels highly generic; it reminds the Romans of the spoils that await them if they win (Polybius 15.10.2) and of the honour that will be bestowed upon those who die fighting if the Romans are beaten (Polybius, 15.10.3). It also contains a standard exhortation not to flee, with a reminder of the dishonour and eventual death that this will incur (Polybius 15.10.3-5). In Livy's account, Scipio is more concerned with arousing his men's anger over the Carthaginian violation of the truce. He mentions the Carthaginian's weakness and, according to an extremely interesting comment by Livy, he uses the fact that his conference with Hannibal had gone unobserved to misrepresent his Carthaginian counterpart. This is as clear as one could expect to definite evidence that Livy did not intend his earlier narration of the conference between Hannibal and Livy to be taken as an accurate account and that he did not believe Polybius's account to be any more precise. Both authors pay less

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<sup>309</sup> Eckstein 1995, page 145 discusses the moral lesson that Hannibal delivers here.

attention to the speech of Hannibal and in both cases, the primary focus is upon the past successes of the Carthaginians, although Polybius also shows Hannibal comparing the size and quality of the Roman army at Zama with the size of the armies that the Carthaginians have faced in the past.

Unlike the conference between the generals, the speeches to the troops would obviously have been conducted in full view of the armies. As such, Polybius would presumably have been able to speak to people at Rome who had been direct witnesses to Scipio's speech and his account must be given a greater degree of credibility than Livy's. Indeed, I am tempted to believe that Livy's summary of Scipio's speech was intended primarily as an estimate of what it would have been appropriate for Scipio to say in the context, in the belief that this would be more interesting than the rather mundane and generic speech that was indeed delivered.<sup>310</sup>

In between the speeches of the generals comes the description of how they array their forces. Obviously, this passage is highly significant for our purposes. As one would perhaps expect, Livy relies heavily on Polybius for this section and indeed some of the lines of Livy's text read very much like a direct translation of Polybius. However, it is extremely interesting to note that Livy actually misinterprets Polybius on one of the most crucial sections of this passage. Polybius describes the maniples being drawn up contrary to the usual fashion, with the principes directly behind the front-line hastati, rather than in the gaps between the maniples of the hastati, as was normal.

πρῶτον μὲν τοὺς ἀστάτους καὶ τὰς τούτων σημαίας ἐν διαστήμασιν, ἐπὶ δὲ τούτοις τοὺς πρίγκιπας, τιθεὶς τὰς σπείρας οὐ κατὰ τὸ τῶν πρώτων σημαιῶν διάστημα, καθάπερ ἔθος ἐστὶ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις, ἀλλὰ καταλλήλους ἐν ἀποστάσει διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν παρὰ τοῖς ἐναντίοις ἐλεφάντων. (Polybius 15.9.7)

**In front he placed the hastati with certain intervals between the maniples and behind them the principes, not placing their maniples, as is the usual Roman**

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<sup>310</sup> The question of the authenticity of battle exhortations has been the subject of much debate. Hansen, 1993, argues that the battle exhortation is a Thucydidean creation, which could not practically have been delivered on the battlefield. He argues that such exhortations would, in reality, have been limited to a few simple phrases shouted as the general took his position in the line.

**custom, opposite to the intervals separating those of the first line, but directly behind these latter at a certain distance owing to the large number of the enemy's elephants.**

The effect of this is to allow for wide, open channels between the maniples, which might be manipulated so as to allow the Punic elephants to pass through without causing significant harm to the Roman lines. However, Livy misunderstands Polybius here and presents us with a very different and rather confused-sounding account.

**Non confertas autem cohortes ante sua quamque signa instruebat sed manipulos aliquantum inter se distantes ut esset spatium qua elephanti hostium acti nihil ordines turbarent.** (Livy, 30.33.1)<sup>311</sup>

**However, he did not form cohorts in close contact, each in advance of its standard, but rather maniples at a considerable distance from each other, so that there should be an interval where the enemy's elephants might be driven through without breaking up the ranks.**

Livy's describes Scipio as drawing up his forces in maniples rather than cohorts, so as to leave a wide gap between the groups of forces. Although Livy had understood from Polybius that Scipio wished to allow open channels for the elephants to pass through, he had completely misunderstood the means that were employed. The introduction here of the idea of the cohort as a tactical unit is anachronistic, since as has been discussed, the cohort does not seem to have been introduced until near the end of the second century BC. Indeed, Livy's failure to understand Polybius here must surely give us cause to doubt that Livy properly understood the arrangement of the manipule formation.

Livy then follows Polybius extremely carefully in describing the deployment of Scipio's cavalry and the placement of its commanders. As is so often the case, the cavalry is not Roman. In this case, we appear to have cavalry from the other Italian nations on the left wing and Numidians on the right. Livy then follows the final part

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<sup>311</sup> Livy's mistake here has often been remarked upon by commentators and is even deemed worthy of a footnote in Moore's 1949 Loeb translation.

of Polybius's account of the deployment of the Roman forces by describing the placing of and the orders given to the light-armed velites. Of course, with Livy's earlier misinterpretation of Polybius's description of the placing of the maniples, this particular passage does not sound particularly coherent in Livy's account, since Livy has already lead the reader to suppose that the channels between the maniples are of considerable width .

Livy continues to stay extremely close to Polybius during the account of the disposition of Hannibal's forces. Hannibal adopts a formation three lines deep, with a fourth reserve force. The elephants, of which both authors tell us he had more than eighty, are at the front. Livy embellishes slightly here, by commenting that this was a greater number of elephants than Hannibal had fielded in any earlier battle. This is a simple attempt to further impress the reader with the magnitude and significance of this battle. Livy follows Polybius fairly exactly in describing the composition of the second line, which is made up of mercenaries of various nationalities, although he does add a legion of Macedonians, which Walbank argues might be an invention of the annalistic tradition<sup>312</sup>, and the third line, composed of Libyans and Carthaginians. However, Livy once again embellishes on Polybius when describing the Punic reserves. Polybius simply comments that the forth line was made of troops brought over from Italy and that it was placed more than a stade behind the other lines. Livy comments that these soldiers were mostly Bruttians and that they had been compelled to fight against their will. There is certainly no mention of this in Polybius, but sadly we do not have sufficient evidence to tell whether Livy had another source for this or whether he was simply trying to find a convincing explanation for the deployment of these troops so far behind the other lines.

However, as noted by Walbank<sup>313</sup>, it is highly likely that this force is actually composed of Hannibal's veterans of his Italian campaigns, who would, of course, be his most experienced and most trusted troops. In this case, the purpose of holding them back would be to keep them fresh until such a time as their entry into the battle would have the greatest effect. Given that this makes good tactical sense and that the dangers inherent in leaving a force of dubious loyalty alone and unguarded behind the

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<sup>312</sup> Walbank, 1967, page 456

<sup>313</sup> Walbank, 1967, page 458

main body of an army and across its line of retreat, the likely conclusion is that Livy's explanation was spurious and incorrect. This shows either that Livy was not always particularly cautious and careful in drawing inferences from his readings of more militarily competent sources, or else that he did not exercise sufficient caution in checking "alternative" sources that he may have used where he believed his major sources to be inadequate in the level of detail they provided. The section ends with the deployment of the Punic cavalry, which, as usual, is on the wings of the force. Livy follows Polybius with no embellishment in this section.

With the forces drawn up and the troops encouraged, the battle finally begins. Livy again diverges slightly from Polybius here, since he depicts the battle as beginning suddenly, while Hannibal is still addressing his troops, with the Romans giving the first battle-cry. Polybius's account had the battle beginning when both sides were fully prepared, and after there had already been some skirmishing between the Numidian cavalry that both sides possessed. Indeed, in Polybius's account, it is Hannibal who gives the signal for the start of the battle itself, when he gives the order for his elephants to attack. Regardless of this discrepancy, Livy then follows Polybius almost exactly in his description of the elephants panicking upon hearing the battle cries and inflicting much harm upon their own lines. Despite his earlier confusion, he also follows accurately Polybius's account of the Romans handling of the elephants who penetrated the Roman ranks. However, Livy cites the elephants driven out of the Roman lines as the main cause of the Carthaginian cavalry being put to flight. Indeed, Livy relegates Laelius, the Roman cavalry commander, to a fairly minor role here, simply exacerbating the panic among the ranks of the Carthaginian horse. In Polybius's earlier account, it is Laelius's seizing of the initiative that routs the Punic cavalry. Despite the often-attested fear that war-elephants inspired in cavalry, Polybius's account again seems the more credible. Scipio's plan had been to allow the elephants to pass through his ranks and to go beyond, out of the battlefield. Given the lumbering inertia of war-elephants, it seems more likely to me that the elephants did indeed pass through the Roman force, rather than being driven back upon their own ranks. Again, I believe Livy to be engaging in the invention of what he sees as likely factors for issues which his earlier sources did not fully explain. Polybius's account of Laelius's charge is, it must be granted, extremely short on details and it is my belief that Livy wished to provide a fuller account.

This now leaves the Carthaginian forces without any cavalry support at all. Livy's dependence upon Polybius is further revealed as he follows his antecedent upon a digression concerning the nature of the Roman war-cry as opposed to the Punic one. Livy does perhaps show some awareness here that this is at best a peripheral issue for the battle, since, unlike Polybius, he remarks **Ad hoc dictu parva sed magna eadem in re gerenda momenta** (Livy, 30.34.1). In addition, he omits the quote from Homer that Polybius uses to illustrate his point.

Livy's account then progresses to the hand-to-hand combat involved in the battle. Although he broadly follows Polybius's account here, there are some interesting variations and stylistic differences. In both accounts, Hannibal's mercenaries push forwards and engage the Romans. However, the better-disciplined and more numerous Roman ranks push back the mercenaries towards their second line. The Carthaginians in the second line have not, to this point, engaged in battle; a marked contrast to the Roman second line, who are pushing forwards the *hastati* and encouraging them. At this point, Polybius is highly pejorative of the Carthaginian second line, describing them as **μισθοφοροις**. (Polybius 15.13.3) Livy takes a more detached and less emotive approach to the battle, avoiding the use of language with moral implication. Indeed, unlike Polybius, Livy supplies us with the probable military justification for refusing to allow the mercenaries to retreat into the Carthaginian second line.

**non tamen ita percultos iratosque in aciem accepere sed densatis ordinibus in cornua vacuumque circa campum extra proelium eiecere, ne pauido fuga vulneribusque milite sinceram et integram aciem miscerent.** (Livy, 30.34.8)

**Nevertheless, even so they did not admit the panic-stricken angry men into the line, but closing up their ranks, they forced them out upon the wings and into the empty plain on this side and that outside of the battle, in order not to contaminate their own line, still intact and fresh, with soldiers alarmed by the flight and their own wounds.**



We now move on to the final stage of the battle. Not all that much needs to be said about this for the most part, since Livy broadly follows Polybius's account. With the ground now soaked with blood and covered with bodies<sup>314</sup>, the advancing *hastati* find their ranks broken up by the uneven terrain. Therefore, Scipio orders a temporary halt and reorders the line, bringing the *principes* and the *triarii* onto the wings of the *hastati* and advancing in a single line. This line then engages the powerful Carthagian second line, which has thus far escaped unscathed. The two sides are fairly evenly matched in terms of numbers, skill and spirit, but the return of the Roman cavalry allows the Carthaginians to be encircled and slaughtered, thus ending the battle.

I suspect that Livy intended to show himself the better historian, through an apparent dismissal of subjectivity and there can be no doubt that Livy's account here reads more like a dry, scholarly work of military history. However, on the other hand, it also demonstrates a far lesser degree of empathy with the combatants; both with the advancing Roman front-line and the retreating mercenaries. Polybius's account far better conveys the anger that must necessarily have been felt by the mercenaries, as refuge was denied to them by their own allies.

Major discrepancies between the accounts begin once again with the negotiations for peace after the battle. In Livy, the treatment of the Carthaginian ambassadors is described rather summarily.

**Postero die reuocatis legatis et cum multa castigatione perfidiae monitis ut tot cladibus edocti tandem deos et ius iurandum esse crederent** (Livy 30.37.1)

**On the following day the envoys were recalled and with repeated upbraiding for their treachery were advised that, being taught at last by so many disasters they should believe that the gods and an oath mean something.**

Polybius, however, discusses the matter in far more detail. Indeed, he describes a speech given by Scipio to the Carthaginian ambassadors, in which he reminds them

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<sup>314</sup> D'Huys, 1987, page 229 discusses the use of gory imagery here in Polybius. D'Huys argues that Polybius is normally averse to accepting gory descriptions of events, on the grounds that they are spurious and engineered to evoke pathos. The inclusion of the gory details in this passage is because Polybius wishes to emphasise the historical importance of the facts in question.



that they have no right to safety (Polybius, 15.17.3-4); a reminder of the earlier Carthaginian attack on Roman ambassadors and the fury it provoked.

We can draw several conclusions from this episode. First, it is clear that Livy did indeed make extremely heavy use of Polybius when writing his account of this battle. The order of events is exactly the same and, for many of the sequences which focus on more technical military matters, Livy's work reads almost as a straight translation of Polybius, although as we have seen, Livy does, on occasion, become confused and differ from Polybius's account through what must surely be accidental error. However, to say that Livy just used Polybius, with occasional references to other annalists is to grossly oversimplify the matter. It seems to me that in many areas, Livy is content to edit and rewrite sections so as to make a more coherent story and one that is better fitted to his own time.<sup>315</sup> It is clear to me that the issue of the attack upon the ambassadors was of great importance in Polybius's time and that it was viewed as a central part of the Zama episode. However, by Livy's time, this sequence has been swept aside somewhat and buried under more general conceptions of the battle's role in the broader span of the Second Punic War. As such, Livy's changes in emphasis are all but inevitable.

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<sup>315</sup> See Chaplin, 2000, page 25 for discussion of Livy's frequent adaptation of earlier *exempla* for Augustan audiences.

#### Chapter 4.4 – The Battle of the Muluccha

The next of my case studies shall be taken from Sallust's work, the *Bellum Jugurthinum*. In many ways, the battle I have chosen to examine here stands in direct contrast to Cannae and Zama. While those two great battles against the Carthaginians were rightly famous in Roman times, and even retain a degree of this fame in certain circles today, the battle at the fort near the river Muluccha is virtually unknown and is generally not even attributed a proper name. Nevertheless, I intend to show both that this battle was of sufficient scale and significance to be worthy of study and that it casts some interesting reflections upon Roman techniques for military history.

The description of the battle fills three chapters of the *Bellum Jugurthinum*, running as it does from chapter 92 through to chapter 94. The reader's initial impression as to the significance of this battle is diminished somewhat, since it is placed between two episodes of seemingly greater importance. The sacking of Capsa, which was instrumental in opening up the eastern sections of Numidia to Marius, precedes the account of the Battle of the Muluccha. Although Sallust does not spend more than three chapters on the destruction of Capsa, the amount of editorial comment that he interjects into the account, including his partial defence of Marius's actions (considered harsh, perhaps unduly so, even by ancient standards), leaves us in no doubt that he attached great significance to these events. Chapter 95 sees the introduction of a new character into the narrative, namely Sulla, whose future role in the course of Roman history was to prove so great. In the two chapters he devotes to Sulla's arrival at Marius's camp, Sallust lavishes much attention upon his future role, and the characteristics that allowed him to achieve such prominence.

Sandwiched between these two narrative highlights, it is perhaps not surprising that the Battle of the Muluccha should have escaped significant notice. However, I can find no evidence to suggest that Sallust himself wished to "bury away" the account in his text. Indeed, in many ways, the Battle of the Muluccha is among the most unique of the battles described by Sallust and contains many historical parallels of which he may have wished to make the reader aware. As Paul notes<sup>316</sup>, the journey to the

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<sup>316</sup> Paul, 1984, page 228

Muluccha must surely have been a far from trivial undertaking for Marius, given that it lies far from Capsa. Paul notes that this expedition would have necessitated the continuation of Marius's campaigns through the winter months (a feat by no means impossible in the warm climate of Northern Africa), although he also allows for the possibility that Sallust has deliberately rearranged the chronology of events here, for structural reasons.

Syme also takes issue with Sallust's handling of the chronology of these events.<sup>317</sup> Indeed, he even cites the episode as one of those most damaging to Sallust's reputation as a source of information on military events.<sup>318</sup> Syme identifies the Muluccha as being all of five hundred miles from Cirta, where much of Marius's campaigning in 107BC had been focused. Moreover, Paul states that the Muluccha was almost seven hundred and fifty miles from Capsa, where the narrative last placed Marius. If we accept Paul's estimate that the armies in North Africa would have marched at an average of two miles per hour for twelve hours a day<sup>319</sup>, then we still have a minimum duration for the journey of over thirty one days. Moreover, with much of the territory to be crossed being poorly known, inhospitable and held by a population which was not necessarily friendly, necessities of reconnaissance, resupply and even combat must surely have slowed the progress of the troops even further.<sup>320</sup> Indeed, Syme speculates that Sallust has confused the river Muluccha with another.<sup>321</sup> However, Syme does not go any further than speculation and Paul cites Sallust's always-erratic reporting as evidence that his failure to comment on this march is no reason to believe that it did not occur.<sup>322</sup>

Chapter 92 begins with a brief and possibly somewhat barbed passage describing the high esteem that Marius had won himself through his earlier actions. Sallust remarks

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<sup>317</sup> Syme, 1964, page 146

<sup>318</sup> Syme, 1964, page 148

<sup>319</sup> Paul, 1984, page 226

<sup>320</sup> The matter of long distance endurance marches rose briefly to prominence in the twentieth century during the Second World War, after the Japanese media reported in 1942 that one of their army battalions had set a new record by marching a hundred miles in seventy two hours. Shortly afterwards, a battalion from the US 506<sup>th</sup> Regiment beat this record by marching a hundred and eighteen miles in the same time. Both of these marches were conducted on friendly territory, in relatively hospitable environments and both left the men involved exhausted and unfit for further marching, let alone combat. In this light, the achievements of Marius in North Africa seem all the more impressive.

<sup>321</sup> Syme, 1964, page 148

<sup>322</sup> Paul, 1984, page 230

that both his friends and his enemies believed him to be either supremely skilful or divinely inspired.<sup>323</sup> However, as Paul notes, Sallust does not necessarily mean comments about divine inspiration to be taken as compliments<sup>324</sup> and the passage also potentially contains a criticism of Marius's handling of his troops. Whether or not this criticism is real depends very much upon our reaction to the phrase "**modesto imperium**" (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 63.6). Paul<sup>325</sup> chooses to read this as meaning "rigorous discipline", in which case, no criticism of Marius would be implied. However, in the older Loeb translation, Rolfe<sup>326</sup> translates it as "mild discipline", arguing in favour of his interpretation in a footnote. Although, as Paul notes, his own interpretation of this fits better with our description of Marius's treatment of his troops at other periods during his life, it does not seem unfeasible that Marius's rather precarious political position at this juncture would have led to him attempting to curry favour from his troops.

Marius remains a complicated character in Sallust's work. When he is discussed in detail in chapter 63, the portrait is, for the most part, positive. Marius had grown up in Arpinum, where he had engaged in preparation fitting for a life of military service, rather than for a life of leisure (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 63.3). His character was initially flawless and free from unsuitable ambition (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 63.2). When he embarked on his political career, he progressed from office to office on the basis of his own merits.<sup>327</sup> His only disadvantage was the lack of an aristocratic family background (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 63.2 and 63.6-7). However, this is tempered by an allusion to the ambition that was to drive him later in life:

**nam postea ambitione praeceps datus est** (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.4)

**For afterwards he was driven headlong by ambition**

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<sup>323</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.2

<sup>324</sup> Paul, 1984, 223-224

<sup>325</sup> Paul, 1984, pages 227-228

<sup>326</sup> Rolfe, 1960, pages 332-333

<sup>327</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 63.5 – Paul, 1984, page 170-171 rightly notes that this does not fit particularly comfortably with what we know of Marius's career from elsewhere and that there are real difficulties reconciling it with Plutarch, *Life of Marius*, 5

Later in the narrative, Marius remains a difficult figure; he is, for the most part, a competent and careful commander (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 100.1), although Sallust does hint at occasional flashes of recklessness, particularly when he describes his reasons for wishing to attack Capsa (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 89.6). Marius's political ambitions figure heavily in the narrative, especially his desire for the consulship. However, since the aristocratic party to which Marius is opposed is portrayed in a highly negative light, Marius's ambition and the military reforms that follow on from his electoral success (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 84 and 86) are seen as a positive influence, for the most part. Perhaps more unreservedly negative is Marius's reliance upon fortune to carry the battle for him, a trait that we shall see fully demonstrated in the account of the events at the Muluccha. Kraus and Woodman perhaps offer the best surmise of Sallust's treatment of Marius, when they talk of "virtus alloyed with base elements, sometimes turning a man from the proper course altogether".<sup>328</sup>

After his reflections on Marius, and another brief passage on the capitulation of other Numidian towns, following the example set at Capsa (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.3), Sallust turns to matters at the river Muluccha. The initial description of the enterprise makes no mention of the formidable journey that Marius would have made, but does stress the difficulty of the undertaking.

**aliam rem aggreditur non eadem asperitate qua Capsensium, ceterum haud secus difficilem.** (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.4)

**He essayed another feat, not involving the same danger as the taking of Capsa, but no less difficult.**

As I said above, numerous explanations have been ventured as to why Sallust should have been so comparatively dismissive of this venture. I find myself in agreement with Paul's arguments that Sallust did not make any geographical errors, particularly his argument that without the lengthy return march, there is little else to fill the

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<sup>328</sup> Kraus and Woodman, 1997, page 11

campaigning season for 106.<sup>329</sup> Given Marius's election was so heavily based on promises to bring the war to a speedy conclusion (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 64-65), it seems to me highly unlikely that he would have spent significant lengths of time sat idle. It seems most likely that Sallust did not comment upon the journey because it did not fit into his narrative and because he had so recently described another long journey (although not, admittedly, a journey of the same order of magnitude) undertaken by Marius, in chapters 90 and 91.

Next, Sallust describes the terrain on which the battle was fought. The fort was situated on a rocky hill in the middle of a plain near the river. The fort was high and only accessible by a single path (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.5). Paul notes that the description given by Sallust is too vague for the location to be precisely identified<sup>330</sup>, but we nevertheless receive enough information to get a rough idea of the tactical situation. The fort on the hill is strong enough to resist almost any attack by conventional means and it is well enough supplied to last for a considerable time under siege (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.7). Siege engines and towers are impractical, due to the narrow approach to the fortress, which allows any that approach to be destroyed by the defenders before they can be brought into a useful range (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.7-8). Indeed, Sallust spends fully half of chapter 92 describing the factors which make the fort so unassailable.

Sadly, Sallust makes no direct mention of the logistical condition of the Roman army. It is possible that the description of the Ligurian soldier hunting for snails in chapter 93 is intended to hint at a shortage of food, but if so, this is not made explicit.<sup>331</sup> If Marius had placed his forces so as to besiege a fortification, such matters would no doubt have been of great importance to him. Roth is undoubtedly correct in identifying the decisive factor in a siege as being the ability of the two sides to maintain their supplies.<sup>332</sup> Although it appears from Sallust's account that Marius had first intended to take the fortification by means of a direct assault, it seems highly unlikely to me that such an apparently astute commander would not have laid provisions to besiege a position so likely to prove unassailable. As we shall see, I

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<sup>329</sup> Paul, 1984, page 230

<sup>330</sup> Paul, 1984, page 229

<sup>331</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 93.2

<sup>332</sup> Roth, 1999, page 314

believe there is evidence here that Sallust may have had his own reasons for wishing to portray Marius as being unready or unwilling to take the fort by siege.

First, however, I will examine the motivation that Sallust supplies for Marius's attack on this fort, removed so far from his previous area of operations. No doubt we are still supposed to bear in mind Marius's motivation for attacking Capsa (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 93.2), namely to surpass the deeds of his predecessor Metellus, but we are also supplied with a more tangible, financial motive.

**Quem locum Marius, quod ibi regi thesauri errant, summa vi capere intendit.**

(Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.6)

**This place Marius aimed to take by a supreme effort, because it held the king's treasures.**

This does not necessarily indicate greed on the part of Marius and his soldiers. For although such spoils were no doubt always welcome to a Roman army, their confiscation would lead to an important strategic advance. Jugurtha's strength had lain in his ability to rebuild armies from nothing after defeat and a crucial tool in doing so was the use of mercenaries. Deprived of his funds, Jugurtha would be unable to hire mercenaries or even to provide sufficient pay for a citizen army. Indeed, we later learn that the loss of his treasury came as a great blow to Jugurtha (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 97.1).

Chapter 92 ends on a pessimistic and perhaps even cynical note (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.9). Surprisingly, Paul has nothing to say on these lines, although I believe that they can tell us much about Sallust's attitudes towards Marius and towards the Roman soldiery in general. I believe that Sallust intends here to criticise Marius's skills as a general, for throwing his forces in a futile attack at an impregnable position with no particular thought for strategy, in such a way as much equipment (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.8) and, more importantly, the lives of the best of his troops were cast away. Sallust also seems to be arguing here that the best soldiers are those who die first in battle and that the survivors are deficient, through lack of courage. Sallust is frequently scathing in his criticism of the Roman soldiery

in the *Bellum Jugurthinum*; in chapter 38 he describes the officers of the Roman army being bribed to abandon their posts (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 38.3), leading to the defeat of the army, which, due to its cowardice is put to flight (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 38.7-9) and forced into a shameful surrender. Furthermore, when Metellus takes command of the Roman army in North Africa, Sallust devotes the whole of chapter 44 to a description of the shameful state of the troops. Even after the destruction of Capsa, when the Roman army was in far better shape under the leadership of Marius, Sallust attributes the improvement to purely selfish motives (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.2). Therefore, I would conclude that 92.9 is further evidence of a general disdain felt by Sallust for the Roman army. As Kraus and Woodman note<sup>333</sup>, Marius's army meets with such success against Jugurtha because they, like Jugurtha, are motivated by *lubido*, a trait which Marius's reforms to the military have given free reign to (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 84.3-4).

At the start of chapter 93, we are told that Marius continued in his efforts to take the fort, in vain. With a complete lack of regard for precision, Sallust merely tells us that Marius expended "**Multis diebus et laboribus consumptis**" (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 93.1). There is no precise identification of the length of time involved, nor of the type of labour. Indeed, we have no way of knowing whether this should mean that Marius simply continued with his efforts to take the fort by direct assault over the course of the next few days, or whether he spent weeks, or even months, in a protracted siege. As was the case with the journey to the Muluccha, Sallust's imprecision here dramatically reduces the value of his account to the military historian.

In the same sentence, we see Marius debating with himself as to whether he should abandon his attack on the fort, or else hold out, in the hope that "**fortunam**" (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 93.1) would come to his aid. By anybody's standards, this is a highly negative depiction of a military commander. The contrast of his newfound defeatism with his earlier enthusiasm for the endeavour, after spending so many lives, hints at a lack of nerve and determination, far from ideal traits in a responsible

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<sup>333</sup> Krauss and Woodman. 1997. page 24



commander. The brevity with which Sallust treats the time during which this change of heart came about ensures that we are not provided with any excuses for Marius.

Marius's dependence on fortune to deliver him from his difficulties is even more significant. It hints at an inability on the part of Marius to solve his problems for himself<sup>334</sup> and even of irresponsibility; as Marius entrusts the lives of his men to a concept as abstract and notoriously fickle as fortune. However, there is more to the relationship between Marius and "**fortuna**" than is immediately apparent from this sentence. Indeed, Marius's superstition and uncanny good luck are recurrent themes of his characterisation in Sallust's depiction of him. In his (somewhat delayed) introductory character sketch in chapter 63, Marius is shown as being driven to ambition for the consulship by the words of a soothsayer, who advises him to put his trust in the gods and in fortune as often as possible (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 63.1). Later, as we have seen, at the start of chapter 92, he is credited with being blessed with fortune by friends and enemies alike (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 92.2). Syme goes to some lengths to point out, with convincing evidence, that Sallust placed little store in the gods, portents and reliance on chance<sup>335</sup>; although Syme does not use the phrase himself, the picture that emerges is of Sallust as a firm believer in the maxim that "the gods help those who help themselves".

Paul also examines the role of fortune in Sallust's depiction of Marius.<sup>336</sup> He offers two theories as to Sallust's intentions. The first is that Sallust is using a source hostile to Marius and that he was therefore reliant on information that Marius's victories were achieved only through luck. The second is that Sallust had pro-Marian sources, which showed Marius cultivating for himself a reputation as a man blessed by the favour of fortune; a device bound to inspire confidence and loyalty among the troops. To me, it seems the most likely that the first of these theories is the correct one. In 93.1, Marius is in no way sending out a deliberate image of one who is favoured by fortune. Rather than using fortune as a tool, he is instead holding on in the hope that fortune will make use of him. I have nothing to add to Paul's discussion of Sallust's sources on Marius, but it does seem to me that we do not necessarily need to look to

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<sup>334</sup> Indeed, it is worth noting here that it is not Marius himself who eventually brings an end to the matter of Jugurtha, but rather Sulla, his deputy.

<sup>335</sup> Syme, 1964, pages 246-248

<sup>336</sup> Paul, 1984, pages 166-167

earlier sources to see Sallust's motivations for his depiction. Sallust's own experiences as a "new man" in Roman politics<sup>337</sup> and the later downfall of his political career<sup>338</sup> seem to me to provide ample material for such a depiction of a young man of excellent character being ruined by ambition and by dependence upon the fortune that speeds him on in the early days of his career. Indeed, I am forced to wonder if Sallust's Marius is not supposed to be a representation of a younger version of the author himself, complete with blemishes and imperfections.

There can be no doubt that the depiction of Marius in 93.1 is by no means that of the ideal commander and that a good deal of criticism is implied. Indeed, this continues into 93.2:

**Quae cum multos dies noctisque aestuans agitaret** (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 93.2)

**For many days and nights he had been prey to indecision**

Although Sallust's recording of the passage of time here is as imprecise as ever, we are at least given a rough idea of how long Marius was assailed by his doubts for. To be consumed by indecision for the space of several days is perhaps one of the most heinous sins that a commander in a battle situation can commit.

However, 93.2 also sees the start of the reversal of Marius's fortunes in this endeavour, as his accustomed good luck comes into play. A Ligurian, assigned to fetch water for the camp<sup>339</sup> and distracted by the rather strange errand of hunting for snails, makes his way almost to the top of the mountain without realising what he is doing. Once there, he is seized by a desire to complete the ascent (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 93.3) and with the help of a conveniently located tree he ascends unnoticed to the plateau above the fortress (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 93.4). He then returns, making a careful note of the route he took, and informs Marius of his discovery of the route to the top (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 93.5-6).

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<sup>337</sup> Syme, 1964, pages 22-23

<sup>338</sup> Syme, 1964, pages 38-39

<sup>339</sup> This is the only reference to Roman logistical matters in this episode.

Paul finds it significant that Sallust should lavish such attention upon this incident and upon the strong element of chance that prevails.<sup>340</sup> Although he acknowledges the possibility that Sallust used a hostile depiction of the incident taken from Sulla's *Commentarii*, he regards it as more likely that this section was, for the most part, constructed entirely by Sallust, working from an extremely bare framework of events. This would seem to strengthen my argument that Sallust's depiction of Marius is not taken wholesale from his earlier sources, but is rather, for the most part, a product of his own invention. The detail that the Ligurian was hunting for snails when he made his discovery is highly peculiar and Paul suggests that modern scholarship has found it rather difficult to swallow.<sup>341</sup> However, it seems to me that it is impossible to pass definite judgement on the authenticity of this section of the account.

Upon hearing the Ligurian's story, Marius sends some of his staff to investigate. He receives mixed reports as to the feasibility of an ascent via this route, but on the whole, he is encouraged (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 93.7). He then assembles a force to accompany the Ligurian back up to the plateau above the fortress. As both Paul<sup>342</sup> and Rolfe<sup>343</sup> note, the Latin here is uncertain and although we can be sure that Marius sent five of his trumpeters and four centurions, it is not clear which other forces, if any, were sent to accompany them. Sallust's trademark imprecision yet again damages his narrative here; as Paul rightly notes, a force of just ten men would be grossly insufficient for such an attack, and yet Sallust does not specify any numbers beyond this.

However, at the start of chapter 94, Sallust reverses his usual trend by providing us with a great deal of detailed information on the preparations that the men made for the climb. The soldiers remove their helmets and boots to facilitate the climb and place their swords and shields upon their backs. They discard the standard Roman shield of the day, which, with its metal reinforcement, would be near-impossible to carry during a difficult climb and prone to making loud noises when banged on the rocks in favour of Numidian hide-shields (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 94.1).

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<sup>340</sup> Paul, 1984, page 231

<sup>341</sup> Paul, 1984, page 231

<sup>342</sup> Paul, 1984, page 232

<sup>343</sup> Rolfe, 1960, page 339

Sallust reveals here an excellent degree of familiarity with military equipment as well as with the practicalities of climbing expeditions. Indeed, this comes as something of a surprise given the lack of attention that he paid to the journey to the Muluccha. It seems to me to be most likely that either Sallust was writing from some personal experience here, or he was writing after consultation with a contemporary authority on such matters or else that Sallust's source on this matter, which Paul had speculated was strictly rudimentary<sup>344</sup>, became far more detailed at this juncture.

The Ligurian then leads the Romans up the cliff, using ropes to help them, showing the safest paths and offering encouragement (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 94.2). I believe it is significant that Sallust lavishes so much praise here upon a Ligurian auxiliary. The general picture that emerges from this section is of the brave and hardy Ligurian leading the timorous and unfit (even though they had been picked for their agility) Romans up a cliff that presented no obstacle for the Ligurian, but was the cause of much trepidation for the Romans. This seems to continue the general trend of Sallust being less than complimentary with regards to Roman forces.

Eventually, they reach the plateau and find that the enemy are distracted by the Roman attack upon their front gate (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 94.3). The focus now shifts to Marius, who has been expending his effort on keeping the enemy occupied with the main body of his force. When he hears (by means unspecified) that the Ligurian and those with him are in position, he urges his men onwards and he himself forms part of the tortoise-shell formation, which he drives up to the base of the walls of the fort, while his artillery and archers lay down fire from a distance. Sallust's account here does contain the correct military terminology and gives the initial appearance of being a detailed account. However, while we hear of a **testitudine** being drawn up, there is no indication of the number of forces involved. Indeed, since we have no precise idea of how wide the approach to the fort was, we cannot even hazard an estimated guess. Marius's personal bravery here is no doubt intended to impress us and it serves as an important reminder at this juncture of the

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<sup>344</sup> Paul, 1984, page 231

fact that the portrayal of Marius in the *Jugurthine War* is by no means entirely, or even mostly, negative.

The Numidians, by now accustomed to driving off Roman attacks, come outside of the walls of their fortress to do battle and throw taunts down on Marius and the Romans, threatening them with slavery to Jugurtha (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 94.4). The purpose of this sections seems to be simply to allow the reader, who suspects by now that the Numidians are about to be destroyed, a thrill of pleasure at seeing Numidian hubris so close to their downfall.

The focus then shifts back to the Roman flanking force, which sounds its trumpets to announce its entry into the battle. The women and children are the first to flee, but the panic spreads through the entire Numidian force (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 94.5). The presence of women and children in the fortification suggests to me that this is a larger and more permanent emplacement, perhaps closer in nature to a town, than Sallust's account would elsewhere imply. Yet again, a lack of detail provided by Sallust makes it impossible to say for certain. The Romans are emboldened by this and charge with renewed vigour, first wounding the enemy, then reaching the wall and killing them (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 94.5).

As Paul notes, the general pattern of this battle, where a force in a highly defensible position is taken via a flanking attack from a route not defended because it was considered impassable, is a common one in ancient historical texts.<sup>345</sup> Polybius comments on this recurring pattern during his account of the siege of Sardis (Polybius, 4.15.2-3). There is no doubt that from a genuine military perspective, there is often wisdom in looking for points that the enemy regards as too naturally strong to be worthy of defending with manpower. However, a number of ideologically-charged battle descriptions following this pattern established a trend towards using such accounts where an author wished to make a specific point about the participants. As we have seen, I believe that the Herodotean description of the battle of Thermopylae (Herodotus, 7.226) and the explicit parallels drawn with this by Thucydides in his account of the capture of the Spartans on Sphacteria (Thucydides, 4.36) played an

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<sup>345</sup> Paul, 1984, page 231

important role in shaping Livy's description of the last stand of the Fabii at the Cremera. We must therefore face the question of whether Sallust intended to set this battle up to fulfil any of the ideological purposes which such accounts serve elsewhere.

Direct parallels with Herodotus are perhaps the easiest to discard. The Numidians are not intended to be symbols of bravery or virtue. They do not hold out steadfast until the end and they are not even heroically outnumbered (at least, not in Sallust's account, which gives no idea whatsoever of the exact numbers involved). The Romans, while by no means perfect, are not a dissolute, evil force and the path to the rear is not discovered by a Numidian traitor, whose actions would be worth only of condemnation, but rather by a Ligurian auxiliary, whose actions are worthy of praise.

However, there are far closer parallels to be found with the Thucydidean passage. In Thucydides, the passage to the rear of the Spartan fortification is revealed to the Athenians by the local Helot population, who might reasonably be expected to side with the Athenians. The panic caused among the Spartan ranks by the appearance of forces on the hill behind them mirrors the panic of the Numidians almost exactly. It seems to me that the degree of parallel between the two incidents is close enough that it is unlikely to be coincidence. Scanlon draws a parallel between Marius's assumption of the command of the war against Jugurtha with Cleon's semi-accidental usurpation of command of events at Pylos and Sphacteria.<sup>346</sup> Indeed, I find it rather strange that Scanlon, who elsewhere notes many interesting parallels between Thucydides's work and the *Bellum Jugurthinum* should have failed to mention the obvious parallels between those battles, both of which come so soon after parallel scenes of change-of-command.

That Sallust should have invented the episode at the Muluccha entirely seems to me to be highly improbable. Sallust is not here in the position that Livy was in when he dealt with the battle of the Cremera; he is not dealing with events of Rome's prehistory, but rather with events of less than a century before his own time. He was writing about events that would, for the most part, have been better referenced and

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<sup>346</sup> Scanlon, 1980, pages 160-162

better remembered. However, if Paul's tempting theory that Sallust constructed his account of the Muluccha from records which gave little more than the bare bones of the events,<sup>347</sup> then it is highly plausible that Sallust would have filled in the gaps with material that allowed him to draw close parallels with an author who influenced his work so greatly.

Sallust ends his account of events at the Muluccha with a highly negative surmise of the role that Marius had played.

**Sic forte correcta Mari temeritas gloriam ex culpa invenit.** (Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 94.6)

**Thus Marius's rashness was made good by fortune and he gained glory through an error in judgement.**

Paul rejects the arguments that Marius acted overly rashly, arguing on the basis of the strategic objectives that the capture of the fort met.<sup>348</sup> Judged purely on the basis of the facts, as they survive today, this is a reasonable conclusion. However, Sallust does not seem to have been purely interested in laying down the facts of the matters he describes; indeed, he is often deficient in doing so. Sallust's Marius, as distinct from the historical Marius, is indeed guilty of rashness and irresponsibility, leading to problems from which he was only saved through fortune. Sallust's judgement is not fair in a purely historical sense, but from the point of the view of the tale he has been telling, which, if the introduction is to be believed, is as much of a moral lesson and a character study as it is a record of events, the judgement is sound.

Ultimately, Sallust's account of the events near the river Muluccha is deficient in many respects as a work of military history. A consistent lack of detail undermines the account, as does the occasional failure to properly appreciate strategic and logistical factors. However, if we remove the account from the expectations of modern historiography, then we find that it presents us with an interesting and vital

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<sup>347</sup> Paul, 1984, pages 4-5 and Paul, 1984, page 231

<sup>348</sup> Paul, 1984, pages 233-234

section from the development of a story that is intended to have as much moral value as it does historical.



## Chapter 4.5 – Caesar’s Campaign against Ariovistus

My final case study will concern Caesar’s account of his actions against the Germanic king Ariovistus. This episode is one of the two main focuses of the first book of Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico*. The total span of the episode involving Ariovistus runs from chapter 30 of this book, through to the end of the book at chapter 54. Out of this span, the battle against Ariovistus itself occupies chapters 51 to 53. However, as with the other case studies, it shall be necessary to devote some time to the circumstances surrounding the battle.

The first half of the first book of the *De Bello Gallico* deals with Caesar’s successful efforts to prevent an aggressive migration of the Helvetii through Roman territory. Caesar’s efforts in this area had won him much admiration from other Gallic chieftains, who perceived that his efforts had been as much to their benefit as they were to Rome’s (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.30). With Caesar’s permission, a convention between the Gallic states was held, after which an issue was brought to Caesar’s attention by a representative from the tribe of the Aedui. The long-running rivalry between the dominant tribes of the Aedui and the Arverni had led to the Arverni and their allies, the Sequani, calling upon the help of Germanic mercenaries. These mercenaries found conditions in Gaul to their liking, and consequently subjugated all of the parties involved in the Gallic dispute, bringing more of their settlers across the Rhine and building a dominion for themselves in Gaul. Ariovistus, the leader of the Germans, had repeatedly defeated the Gauls in battle and had extracted hostages from their leading families (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.31-32).

Caesar then lays out for the reader the factors which compelled him to take action in this matter. Four distinct motivations are set out; first, the Aedui were acknowledged as friends and allies of Rome, and hence their pitiable state was damaging upon Rome’s reputation. Second, the influx of a large number of Germanic settlers into Gaul would be damaging to Roman interests in the areas. Third, the aggression demonstrated by the Germans indicated that a future offensive into Italy was likely. Finally, Ariovistus himself was guilty of a level of arrogance that Caesar found offensive (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.33). Although there has not been a tremendous amount of recent English-language scholarship upon Caesar’s actions against

Ariovistus, these justifications have been deemed worthy of a certain level of comment. Adcock describes the motivations as “suited to Roman interests, pride and fears”<sup>349</sup> and Ebel also notes that Caesar would have needed to justify his campaign to those at Rome.<sup>350</sup>

Caesar’s initial justifications do indeed give the impression that he is anxious to “cover all of his bases”. The Aedui’s friendship with Rome is a cause for shame at their subsequent treatment. The threat to Roman influence in Gaul is an appeal to pragmatism and self-interest. The perhaps rather unlikely spectre of a Germanic menace to Rome harks back to Roman fears of the Gauls that dated to the Gallic sacking of the city in 390BC. Finally, the reference to Ariovistus’s arrogance serves as a spur to Roman pride, which would not allow any barbarian to defy them. Indeed, as Adcock rightly notes, Caesar’s comment that he finds Ariovistus’s arrogance to be unbearable is a good indication that Caesar already believes that the problem demands a military solution.

Nevertheless, Caesar goes on to show that he attempted to find a diplomatic solution and that Ariovistus spurned his offer of a conference (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.34). Caesar’s next message to Ariovistus is described in more detail and contains Caesar’s demands that Ariovistus should halt the flow of his settlers over the Rhine and should restore the hostages he had taken to their people. This message also deals with one of the trickier issues that Caesar had to face in his dealings with Ariovistus; namely that Ariovistus himself, as well as the Aedui, had been declared a friend of the Roman people in Caesar’s own consulship. Ariovistus’s favoured position is mentioned twice in the message; first in the opening lines:

**Quoniam tanto suo populi que Romani beneficio adfectus, cum in consulatu suo rex atque amicus a senatu appellatus esset, hanc sibi populo que Romano gratiam referret,** (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.35)

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<sup>349</sup> Adcock, 1956, page 30

<sup>350</sup> Ebel, 1976, page 78

**Since after having been treated with so much kindness by himself and the Roman people, as he had in his consulship been styled king and friend in the Senate, he make recompense to himself and the Roman people,**

Then again towards the end of the passage:

**Si id ita fecisset, sibi populoque Romano perpetuam gratiam atque amicitiam cum eo futuram,** (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.35)

**[Caesar says] that “he himself and the Roman people will entertain a special feeling of favour and friendship towards him,”**

However, the very end of the passage touches upon the similar friendship enjoyed by the Aedui and Caesar’s duty to protect them. The essential thrust of Caesar’s message is that Rome is not unwilling to take sides in conflicts between those that she has declared to be her friends. As Adcock notes, the bond of *amicitia* with Rome was not a one-sided relationship and placed behavioural expectations upon the *amicus*.<sup>351</sup> There can be no doubt that Caesar wishes to impress upon his audience that Ariovistus has been the first to violate the “contract” that existed between himself and Rome and therefore that Caesar himself did not commit any breach of trust.

Ariovistus’s reply does not directly address the issues of Caesar’s message, but rather simply asserts Ariovistus’s right to dictate to the people he has conquered as he pleases. An explicit parallel is drawn between his own treatment of those he has conquered and the treatment that Rome inflicts upon the peoples she conquers. The message ends with the rejection of Rome’s demands, a scornful dismissal of the concept of friendship with Rome and a challenge to engage with him in open battle, where the German troops will apparently prove their superiority (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.36). The arrogance of Ariovistus is made clear to the reader by this message, as is his uncultured attitude towards the people he has made subject to him, which is no doubt intended to form a sharp contrast with the sympathy that Caesar himself displays towards the Gallic peoples.

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<sup>351</sup> Adcock, 1956, page 32

Caesar now learns of the passage of German reinforcements across the Rhine and, fearing the consequences of this, he attends to his corn supply and then takes his troops to meet Ariovistus (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.37). Caesar does not here enter into details of his logistical operations, although his passing mention of them serves to remind us that he was well acquainted with the arts of war and the importance of supply lines. The lack of detail seems to be indicative of an awareness on Caesar's part that he was writing for an audience largely unaccustomed to and uninterested in the details of maintaining an army in the field and that although such matters were of importance to him, he recognised that detailed explanation of them was not necessary.

Caesar marches for three days and then learns that Ariovistus is intending to take the town of Vesontio. Caesar describes the town as being well stocked with the supplies necessary for the conduct of war and possessed of a strong natural position. Therefore, Caesar pushes on with his troops, marching by day and night, so that he managed to take the town first and fortify it (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.38). Again, logistical matters are mentioned without any real level of detail. With this in mind, it may seem rather strange that Caesar should have given such a comparatively thorough description of the landscape of Vesontio.<sup>352</sup> Pelling argues that Caesar usually simplified his topographical descriptions so as not to try his reader's patience,<sup>353</sup> but it seems to me that the description of Vesontio goes beyond the requirements of the narrative, particularly given that no battle occurs there. I believe that Caesar is using this more detailed description to add colour to his narrative and to fulfil the duty of the historian to describe places of interest that would be unfamiliar to his audience.

Caesar's time at Vesontio gives rise to one of the more striking incidents from the first book of the *De Bello Gallico*. For while he is gathering provisions for his troops here, his troops come into contact with Gauls and traders who preach the virtues of the German soldiers to such an extent that Caesar's troops are stricken with panic. This begins among the tribunes and the politically motivated officers, who have accompanied Caesar from Rome so as to court his friendship for political alliances. Caesar contemptuously describes the manner in which many of these officers excuse

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<sup>352</sup> For the modern location of Vesontio, see Pelling, 1981, *Latomus* 40, pages 754-755

<sup>353</sup> Pelling, 1981, *Latomus* 40, pages 741-742

themselves from fighting and the manner in which those who remain display their fear openly. This results in the fear spreading to the common soldiery, where it takes root so firmly that an open mutiny seems possible (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.39).

Whether Caesar is exaggerating the scale of the panic within the ranks is perhaps irrelevant here; his purpose is to attack those who saw warfare purely as a means to advance their political goals. While Caesar no doubt sought to use a military record to advance his own career, much as Pompey had done with his conquests in the East, he draws a line between himself and those who see war as purely a means for political progress, rather than as an entirely separate field of endeavour worthy of study and demanding of discipline for its own sake.<sup>354</sup>

Caesar deals with this incipient mutiny through a speech that he delivers for his centurions and records for us in its entirety. Since Caesar was writing about events of his own time and this speech was delivered in public, it seems best to accept that it conveys an accurate account of what was said, if not in terms of its exact wording (although this is by no means impossible if Caesar had a draft of this speech on hand when he composed the *De Bello Gallico*) then at least the essence of what was said. He begins by stating that he believes it to be unlikely that the matter will result in conflict, based on Ariovistus's past behaviour. He then reminds the troops of past Roman successes, such as that of his uncle Marius against the Cimbri and Teutoni and the suppression of the slave-revolt in Italy. He then notes that the Germans have often been beaten in warfare in the past by the Helvetii, whom the Romans themselves have recently won a significant victory over. The German's recent victory is claimed to be the result of a stratagem of Ariovistus, rather than the result of any particular valour on the part of the German troops. Caesar then deals with the arguments that he had heard put forwards against advancing; he reassures his men that the corn supply is adequate and that the proposed route is not unfeasible. He also says that he has no fear that rumours of a mutiny are in any way founded and that even if they are, he shall proceed forwards with the Tenth Legion alone, of whose loyalty he has no doubt. He promises the Tenth Legion that he shall make them into his personal guard (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.40).

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<sup>354</sup> For more discussion of "political" military officers, see Parker, 1928, pages 51-52

This speech is significant to our understanding of Caesar's skills as a general in a number of ways. If the speech is indeed reproduced faithfully, then it is addressed to a very different audience than the rest of the narrative. Indeed, the increased detail in which Caesar discusses the corn-supply seems to me to argue strongly that Caesar was here addressing an audience who would both understand and be intensely interested in such matters.

Adcock claims that Caesar's handling of this speech demonstrates his "eminent understanding of the art of being a soldier's general".<sup>355</sup> There can be no doubt that this speech is a masterful effort towards calming the fears of an army on the edge of panic. The reminder of past Roman victories is perhaps predictable, but Caesar's belittlement of the enemy, including his explanation of the stratagem used by Ariovistus to beat the Gauls, would doubtless be effective upon those experienced in the arts of war. Finally, the praise for the loyalty of the Tenth Legion seems to be an extremely clever ploy for ensuring the loyalty of the whole of Caesar's army. The men of the Tenth Legion themselves will not only gain a boost to their self-esteem, but they will also become fearful of losing their reputation through cowardice. Moreover, the unfavourable reflection that this casts upon the rest of the legions will place a heavy burden of shame upon those who had formerly been unwilling to fight.

The speech has the desired effect and after the centurions convey Caesar's message to the rest of the army, the troops express their regret to Caesar and the Tenth Legion expresses its thanks for his confidence. Caesar then marches on from Vesontio, using a route that takes him across open ground rather than through the rough terrain that the troops had feared. After seven days of marching, Caesar's scouts report that the enemy are twenty four miles away (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.41). Given that Caesar explicitly states that the route he took involved a detour of fifty miles, it seems reasonable to assume that this choice of routes was, at least in part, inspired by the fears of his men. I believe that Caesar wishes to demonstrate here his willingness to listen to the concerns of his troops, even if it is not possible to endure any direct challenge to his authority.

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<sup>355</sup> Adcock, 1956, page 31

Ariovistus requests a parley and Caesar begins to hope that the matter might be resolved without bloodshed. However, Ariovistus then seeks to impose terms on the parley, which Caesar believes were intended to force its cancellation. In particular, Ariovistus insists that Caesar should not bring an infantry escort, but rather only cavalry. This is probably in response to the often-noted inferiority of Roman cavalry. Caesar is unwilling to entrust his safety to his Gallic cavalry, and so instead mounts the Tenth Legion on their horses, fulfilling his promise to make them his personal guard (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.42). Caesar arrives at the parley and Ariovistus demands that each side should go forwards on horseback accompanied by just ten men. It is interesting to note that all of the demands with regard to the setting for the parley are dictated by Ariovistus and we do not hear of any response to them by Caesar, other than his compliance. Whether or not this is an accurate depiction is impossible to judge; it does not seem particularly likely to me that Caesar would have been totally silent on the subject of security arrangements and it is probable that he wished to portray Ariovistus as difficult and uncompromising.

Caesar's opening speech contains roughly the same content as his earlier message to Ariovistus; both Ariovistus and the Aedui enjoy the friendship of Rome, but Caesar cannot stand by while the Aedui are deprived of what Rome acknowledges as theirs. Consequently, Ariovistus must cease his aggression and not bring any more German settlers into Gaul (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.43). Ariovistus's reply is a more complex matter, which contains numerous points of interest. Ariovistus repeats his earlier assertion that his conquests in Gaul had been primarily a defensive measure, an assertion that runs contrary in most respects to that earlier delivered to Caesar by the Aedui and Sequani. Because he acted only out of self-defence, he can treat his victims however he pleases. The portrayal of Ariovistus as arrogant and self-centred continues with his explanation of his reasons for seeking friendship with the Roman people; he is prepared to accept this for so long as it is of benefit to him, but is not prepared to put up with the restrictions that it imposes on his behaviour. The Romans have no right to interfere in his own area of Gaul, just as he would not seek to interfere in the Roman province established there. Moreover, he has cause to doubt the friendship between the Romans and the Aedui, since he has not seen any evidence of mutual military support between them in the past. Therefore, he must regard this supposed friendship as a pretext for Roman expansion (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.44).

This presents numerous difficulties for a Roman audience. The first two points are easily dispatched; Caesar's behaviour towards conquered peoples can easily be contrasted with that of Ariovistus and Ariovistus's ideas regarding the concept of friendship with the Roman people are deeply flawed. Rome is, to some extent, also guilty of discarding friendship with Ariovistus as soon as it becomes inconvenient, but, thanks to Caesar, it is demonstrable that they made every effort towards its continuation. However, the argument that Rome uses alliances as a pretext for expansion is perhaps more difficult to discard. Indeed, it is likely that Rome had often heard claims that she should not meddle in the internal affairs of other empires from her neighbours in the past. Therefore, Caesar's reply to this is dominated by the need to prove that Rome's rights of influence extend to the whole of Gaul, rather than just those parts of it under direct Roman control (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.45).

Ebel discusses Caesar's analysis of earlier Roman conquests in Gaul in some detail.<sup>356</sup> The Arverni, Ariovistus's former allies, had been defeated along with the Ruteni by Quintus Fabius Maximus in 121B.C., but had been pardoned by Rome and not made into a Roman province. However, as Ebel notes, the Romans regarded such pardons as containing the justification for any amount of future meddling in the affairs of the pardoned people.<sup>357</sup> As such, Rome has both a legal obligation to help the Aedui and a moral right to assert her influence over the whole of Gaul.

At this point the parley breaks up, as Caesar is informed that the German horsemen have been pelting his own cavalry with missiles. Although he claims that his forces could have easily overcome the enemy, he withdraws so that he can not be said to have engaged in battle under oath of parley (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.46). While we may obviously be inclined to take Caesar's boast here with a pinch of salt, especially given that he was not accompanied by true cavalry, he manages to paint his actions in what must undoubtedly have been a difficult situation in the best possible light for his audience at Rome.

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<sup>356</sup> Ebel, 1976, pages 78-80

<sup>357</sup> Ebel, 1967, page 80



After the failure of this parley, Ariovistus requests that Caesar attends a second meeting to conclude the business. But Caesar, seeing no need for any more words and suspecting a trap, sent two of his men in his place, both of whom had reason to expect better treatment at the hands of Ariovistus than any of Caesar's other deputies. Caesar is enthusiastic in the praises of Gaius Valerius Procillus, who was a Gaul and hence fluent in the Gallic tongue, and he describes Marcus Mettius as a former friend of Ariovistus. However, Caesar had been right to suspect a trap and the two are accused of spying and arrested (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.47).

On the same day, Ariovistus advances his camp and pitches it six miles from Caesar's. Pelling must surely be correct when he insists that Caesar must have moved his own camp forwards at some point prior to this, reducing the distance between them somewhat from the twenty four miles that had been described at the end of chapter 41.<sup>358</sup> The next day, he moved two miles behind Caesar's camp, so as to disrupt his supply of corn from the Sequani and the Aedui (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.48). As the battle approaches, Caesar is not able to avoid going into more detail about his logistical operations, since they have a direct impact on the impending battle itself.

Caesar is also compelled to discuss the German tactics. The Germans combine six thousand cavalry with six thousand infantry, a ratio vastly at odds with that of the Roman forces. In battle, the role of the German infantry is to move with and support the cavalry, providing cover for their retreat and protecting any cavalry who are dismounted. The infantry were intended to move quickly around the battlefield and were selected for their speed. Although Caesar does not say so, it seems reasonable to assume that these fast troops were only lightly armed. By this time, the standard Roman tactical formation is the *cohort*, which, due to its size and rigidity, would presumably not be well suited to fast moving skirmishes against these combined groups of cavalry and light infantry.

After failing to provoke an engagement for five days, and presumably with dwindling corn-supplies, Caesar takes his troops forwards in a three-line formation, with the

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<sup>358</sup> Pelling, 1981. *Latomus* 40, page 752

intent of building a second camp six hundred paces from the enemy camp. Ariovistus sends forwards sixteen thousand light-armed troops to disrupt this, but the first two Roman lines hold off the Germans long enough for the third line to establish a small camp. Caesar then leaves two legions in the small camp and withdraws his remaining four to his original, larger camp (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.49). From this point onwards, Caesar's account of the battle becomes increasingly detailed and technical. There is little political commentary and far more detail is lavished upon the detailed movement of troops.

The next day, Caesar sends his troops forward again, in the hope of provoking an engagement, but is initially unsuccessful. However, later in the day, Ariovistus launches an attack upon the smaller Roman camp, which continues until sunset. Caesar learns from the prisoners that Ariovistus is unwilling to engage in a more serious battle because the German women's traditional divination has revealed that the Germans will not be able to win a battle if they engage before the new moon (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.50).

Surprisingly little detail is lavished upon the skirmish at the smaller camp. I can see two possibilities for this. First, "**partem suarum copiarum**" suggests that Ariovistus had not committed a particularly significant force to this battle and that consequently, it was of little note. The second possibility is that Caesar's troops were not particularly successful in this engagement and that he had no desire to spoil the narrative of a generally successful campaign by inserting a description of a setback. Given that it would have been inconsistent for Ariovistus to have launched a major operation, where success would have produced any real result, while labouring under unfavourable omens, I tend to prefer the former of these explanations and accept that the battle was simply not significant enough to be worthy of detailed record.

The main engagement of the campaign is prepared in chapter 51. Caesar, eager now for battle and perhaps excited by the prospect of forcing the Germans to engage under the psychological handicap of unfavourable omens (I can find no indication that Caesar himself paid any attention to Germanic divination) ranged the troops of the allies in front of the smaller camp, less than six hundred paces from the enemy camp. He then advances his own troops right up to the enemy camp, so as to make battle

unavoidable. Caesar notes that the enemy outnumbered his own legions. The Germans are now compelled to bring forward their own forces and they array these in a line, drawn up according to their tribes. They place wagons containing their womenfolk among their lines, so as to remove any hope of retreat (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.51).

Sadly, Caesar omits to provide us with a count of the forces involved in this battle. He himself had six legions at his disposal. Nominally, each Roman legion from this period should have consisted of five thousand infantry and three hundred cavalry, but, many have noted, Caesar's legions in Gaul were often under full strength. As such, it is possible that the total size of Caesar's force was not significantly greater than twenty two thousand men. The reference to allies in chapter 51 implies that he had more forces besides these at his disposal, but no number is given for these. As for Ariovistus, we may assume that his troops outnumbered the Roman legionary forces, at the very least. He had at least sixteen thousand light infantry and an additional six thousand cavalry and probably considerably more besides. At the very least, he most likely had as many infantry as Caesar's legionary forces and a significant cavalry advantage over them. Caesar's failure to provide a detailed numerical account for the forces involved in this battle is a real shortcoming and suggests to me the possibility that Caesar's total forces, including both legionaries and allies, was greater in number than Ariovistus's; a fact he may have been reluctant to draw attention to.

Caesar places the quaestor in charge of one of his legions and the legates in charge of the other five. Caesar places himself on the right of his own force, noticing that the enemies opposed to this seem likely to waver. The battle begins and the charges of the two sides are so rapid that there is no time for long-ranged combat with spears, but rather the battle proceeds closely to sword-range. Here, the Germans adopt defensive tactics, but the courageous Romans throw themselves onto the German formations and strike from above. As Caesar had predicted, the Roman right puts the German left to flight. However, the German right flank holds out through weight of numbers and presses back the Roman left. The situation is relieved by the cavalry commander, Publius Crassus, who spots the danger and brings forwards the third line to assist those struggling at the front (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.52).

This battle description is, in some ways, extremely formulaic. The Roman's initial success is attributed to their courage in throwing themselves upon the enemy formations, while the Germans manage to hold out on their right flank purely through weight of numbers. Obviously, Caesar was not an entirely impartial observer of events, although given his perspective on them and his natural desire to praise his own troops, this is an easily understandable and forgivable flaw. Caesar is by no means afraid of sharing the credit for his victory, and while his own role in the battle is not embellished, the role of Publius Crassus is singled out for special praise.<sup>359</sup> I believe that Caesar is in no doubt that his victory will bring him no small degree of fame and therefore knows that he can safely make use of it to increase the loyalty of his men and his subordinate commanders by allowing them to share in it.

After Publius Crassus's relief of the Roman left, the Germans are put to flight. Caesar himself states that the Germans fled for five miles, until they reached the Rhine, which they then crossed. There has been much debate as to the distance given by Caesar here, which many scholars have taken as inaccurate. Pelling summarises the debate that has surrounded the matter<sup>360</sup> and eventually concludes that the flight was indeed fifty miles rather than five, and that the retreat was an orderly one, since the Germans had time to make preparations for crossing the Rhine. That some degree of order was maintained during the retreat does indeed seem undeniable, but even if we accept Pelling's argument for a fifty-mile retreat, I feel it is necessary to ascribe the error in the text to manuscript corruption rather than Caesar's own mistake, for surely nobody was better placed than he to assess the distances involved. Pelling argues that Caesar would not have known exact distances and this I find credible, but for him to mistake fifty miles for five seems beyond all comprehension.<sup>361</sup>

Ariovistus himself escapes, but his wives are both slain, as is one of his two daughters, while the other is captured. However, the pleasure that Caesar extracts from this is nothing to that which he gains from his rescue of Gaius Valerius Procilius, the captured envoy. Procilius recounts how his life had been saved by the divination of the Germans, which had deemed it inauspicious to execute him (Caesar,

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<sup>359</sup> For more discussion of Caesar's willingness, or otherwise, to share praise, see Adcock, 1956, pages 26-27

<sup>360</sup> Pelling, 1981, *Latomus* 40, pages 756-757

<sup>361</sup> Pelling, 1981, *Latomus* 40, page 757

*De Bello Gallico*, 1.53). With the Romans victorious, the Germans waiting to cross the Rhine into Gaul return to their homes and Caesar calls a slightly early end to the campaigning season (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.54).

Thus ends Caesar's account of his campaign against Ariovistus. For the most part, this campaign appears to be an accurate record of what happened; certainly, it would have been difficult for Caesar to engage in outright invention concerning such widely-witnessed events. However, as we have seen, this is not to say that Caesar is without an agenda and that he does not occasionally fit the facts into a framework that suits his own agenda. Caesar is at pains to demonstrate that his actions were consistent with Roman law and morality and with Rome's political interests. This is perhaps indicative of the insecurity faced by a general in the field, particularly the insecurities faced by a general with as many influential enemies (and uncertain allies) in Rome as Caesar had accumulated. After the near-mutiny at Vesontio, Caesar portrays his own troops in a uniformly positive light. Clearly he wished to allow their reputation to enhance his own. The Germans are portrayed as brave fighters, particularly in chapter 48, but they are also shown up as uncivilised. Their treatment of prisoners and conquered peoples is exposed as barbaric and although he does not explicitly criticise it, it seems likely that Caesar does not approve of their reliance upon divination, which twice works to Caesar's own benefit.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

Now that I have examined these instances of battles in our sources, it will be necessary for me to review my findings and to examine them in a context that will allow them to contribute to our understanding of the authors in question.

For the most part, my investigations have served to confirm the currently prevailing views on the authors that have been investigated. Certainly, many of the concepts that were discussed in chapter 2 have been further confirmed. Livy is indeed uncomfortable when writing on military matters; his mistake with regard to the deployment of the Roman troops at Zama provides ample proof of this, as does his tendency to follow Polybius more closely than he would otherwise when describing battles themselves. Sallust does indeed suffer from a marked lack of precision in his writing; his failure to emphasise the length of the journey to the Muluccha and his hasty, simplistic description of the attack upon the fort there can leave no room for doubt in this regard. However, the exploration of these case studies has also offered a few less obvious insights into the historical techniques of the authors under investigation and these insights are summarised below.

### **Livy**

Livy has perhaps received more attention than any of the other authors involved in this study. The examinations of the Cremera, Cannae and Zama have all explored different aspects of Livy's writing on warfare.

From the episode at the Cremera, we have seen that Livy did not regard these early battles as being in any way "factual" occurrences. There is no concern with the details of events or the specifics of how the battle was fought and such matters are dealt with summarily. Livy does not deem his use of sources, or the existence of various accounts of this battle to be at all worthy of note. Rather, for Livy, the purpose of narrating such sections is twofold. First, he provides entertainment for his audience, and possibly also for himself. This ties in with his aim, as stated in his prologue, of

finding refuge from the troubles of the present in the past.<sup>362</sup> Secondly, he uses the episode, set as it is in the distant past and far removed from the world of Livy's own day, to offer comment upon the present. In particular, it is highly likely that Livy's narration of this episode is intended as commentary upon the role of the private army in the Roman world, since this has developed from being a tool to defend the Republic in times of crisis into a force with which individual generals vied with each other for power at the expense of the state.

Livy's wholehearted acceptance of the version of the Cremera story that most emphasises the parallels with Thermopylae (as opposed to the other variations on the story mentioned by Dionysius) is significant in that it reveals his underlying bias in favour of Rome. In this case, with a battle he regards as primarily mythical, he does not feel any compulsion to keep these patriotic urges in check. However, as we shall see, his attitude is rather different when it comes to later battles.

The battles of Cannae and Zama illustrate Livy's handling of victory and defeat. Obviously, for an author such as Livy with a pro-Roman agenda, both of these battles present very different challenges and Livy's response to them is very different. By studying the Polybian accounts of these battles, we can see how Livy adapts his account to suit his methods. In the account of the famous Roman defeat at Cannae, Livy frequently goes beyond the Polybian account in his condemnation of the Carthaginians, his emphasis of the bravery of Aemilius Paulus and his condemnation of Terentius Varro. Numerous episodes occur in Livy's account that are not narrated by Polybius: the conversation between Paulus and Fabius Maximus, the Carthaginian trick involving the prisoners and the death scene of Paulus most prominent among them. Faced with the prospect of a devastating Roman defeat, Livy feels the need to adopt the version of events that offers the strongest excuses for the Roman defeat. Of course, Livy is compelled by other factors to limit the type and extent of the excuses he can offer. For example, as we have seen, Livy downplays the importance of the unfavourable omens received before the battle and even presents us with a positive omen; the dedication of the statue of victory. For Livy to assign divine causes to Rome's defeat would have been counter-productive for him on a number of levels.

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<sup>362</sup> Livy. 1.pr.5

First, it would have undermined the Roman achievement in their victories, by associating the outcome of battles too closely with the whims of the gods. Perhaps more importantly, it would have shown Rome as a city suffering from divine disfavour.

However, when we compare the accounts of Livy and Polybius concerning the battle of Zama, we discover a very different picture. Here, Livy sticks more closely to the account offered by Polybius and even, on occasion, discards with some of Polybius's more emotive language. Livy's account dwells less upon the offence caused by the Carthaginian attack upon the ambassadors and is less condemnatory of the decision not to admit the retreating mercenary forces into the Carthaginian line. Livy is also every bit as effusive as Polybius in his praise of Hannibal's skills as a general and is perfectly happy to assign Hannibal's defeat to circumstances beyond his control. So, why this sudden reversal of Livy's methods when the Romans are successful? Clearly, Livy understands that to be overly enthusiastic in his praise of the Romans when they are triumphant, he would not only be in danger of over-exposing his prejudices, but he would also be making a clear, decisive contrast between his attitudes towards Romans and their enemies and would severely undermine any claims he might make towards impartiality. By allowing the Romans to be excused their defeats, Livy is also obliged to allow Rome's enemies to retain some vestiges of their pride. In addition, Livy can also use this to demonstrate Rome's graciousness towards her former foes and increase the stature of Rome by increasing the stature of those she has defeated. Livy does indeed use his accounts of warfare and battles to advance his pro-Roman agenda, but his handling of these accounts is by no means as simplistic as we might expect.

### **Dionysius of Halicarnassus**

Although I have only examined one of Dionysius's accounts of a battle, it has revealed much about his attitude towards writing on military events. Dionysius's history, or at least those sections which survive for us today, is concerned only with events that we would most likely term mythological. However, Dionysius did not share Livy's agenda of simply retelling these mythological events without any



intention to affirm or refute them,<sup>363</sup> but rather he subjected such early accounts of warfare to more detailed investigation, comparing conflicting accounts and offering his own opinion upon them.

Dionysius's account of the Cremera contains two distinct narratives, one of which is significantly longer than any account we have preserved in Livy. The obvious parallels to Thermopylae that we find in the account of Livy are gone. Clearly, Dionysius is uncomfortable with that extent of Roman propaganda. However, it seems to me that in relating these stories while stripping them of their propagandistic elements, Dionysius is perhaps missing out on the whole purpose behind them. As Livy understood so well, the battle stories of early Rome were not supposed to be accurate historical accounts, but rather cultural resources for the Romans of later days.

### **Sallust**

Sallust's account of the battle at the Muluccha is of crucial importance to our understanding of his historical techniques. As has already been stated, Sallust was not particularly concerned with the exact details of military engagements, even though he was discussing battles that occurred not long before his own time. For Sallust, even during his battle sequences, his characters remained his primary focus. The character of Marius dominates the episode at the Muluccha. Sallust's focus is firmly upon Marius's reaction to the difficulties that face him, rather than the difficulties themselves. The Muluccha episode, portraying Marius as a man dependant upon chance to bring him success and unconcerned for the hardships of his troops, is an important episode in the steady undermining of Marius's character that runs through the *Bellum Jugurthinum*.

### **Caesar**

Caesar's account of his dealing with Ariovistus are extremely revealing with regards to his intentions as an author. The length at which Caesar details the events that lead up to the battle, his negotiations with Ariovistus and the arguments put forward by

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<sup>363</sup> Livy, 1.pr.6-7

both sides is striking, dwarfing as it does his account of the battle itself. Caesar was, in some ways, faced with the opposite problem from that which Livy had been forced to confront. Whereas Livy had been forced to find ways to explain Roman defeats, Caesar was compelled to find explanations for his victories, so as to prevent his political enemies from using them against him. That Caesar can establish the cause behind the battle is more important than the conduct of the battle itself and, indeed, Caesar treats the battle almost summarily, with its most important role being to stress the superiority of the Roman troops and to give credit to those among his subordinates who had deserved it.

### **General Conclusions**

Perhaps the most important conclusion that can be reached from this work is that none of the authors investigated could genuinely be considered a military historian. In not one single case have we seen a battle investigated for its own sake, but rather, we have seen battle sequences used in line with a variety of ulterior motives. Livy's battles form the highlights of what are primarily moral episodes, Sallust's are primarily tools to be used in the development of his character studies and Caesar's are implements of personal propaganda and self-justification. Dionysius perhaps comes closer than the others to the modern conception of a military historian in terms of his motives for investigating battles, but even for him, moral motivations are never too far removed and, perhaps more importantly, his choice of subject matter does not lend itself to military history in the slightest.

Of course, this is not to say that battles were not of interest to the historians of the First Century B.C. On the contrary, the frequency with which they occur and the length at which they are sometimes described makes it amply clear that they were considered a vital part of any historical work. However, the interest in them was, for the most part, not *qua* battles, but rather in the shadows that they cast across other areas. The purpose of the battle accounts is certainly not to offer instruction to the reader on how best to organise an army or fight a battle.

It is perhaps possible to offer some explanations as to the causes behind this. In the case Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a severe lack of personal experience with

military matters would almost certainly have left them unwilling to make any kind of pretence to be offering advice or instruction on military matters. However, it is perhaps more significantly true that when we try to find reasons for this lack of a specific focus upon warfare, we must also examine our own standpoint. The Twentieth Century was marked by two World Wars of cataclysmic proportions, which, combined with the increasing immediacy with which modern media can bring home the impact of war to the civilian population, have resulted in a changed attitude towards battle. Since the end of the Second World War, modern conflict by Western has been limited in scale and remote in location. Wars have become isolated events, which can be studied in isolation. However, as we have seen, warfare in the ancient world was almost a constant state and even if, by the final quarter of the First Century B.C. attitudes towards it had changed as a result of the lengthy and divisive civil wars, it remained deeply integrated into ancient life. As such, it was possible for historians in this period to write about warfare and battle without actually taking on the mantle of military historians, for these were simply one of the major aspects of their world.

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