

ATHENS AND ROME: LIFE AND CULTURE IN CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

Lecture 19 – Roman Warfare - Army

CLCS4007

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Roman Culture and Warfare

- ▣ Masculinity, need to prove oneself.
 - *Virtus* (a concept that shifted over time).
- ▣ Militaristic Culture?
 - “Latium had to reverence Mars, the lord of arms;
Arms gave a feral race wealth and glory.”
 - *Ovid Fasti* 3.85-86.



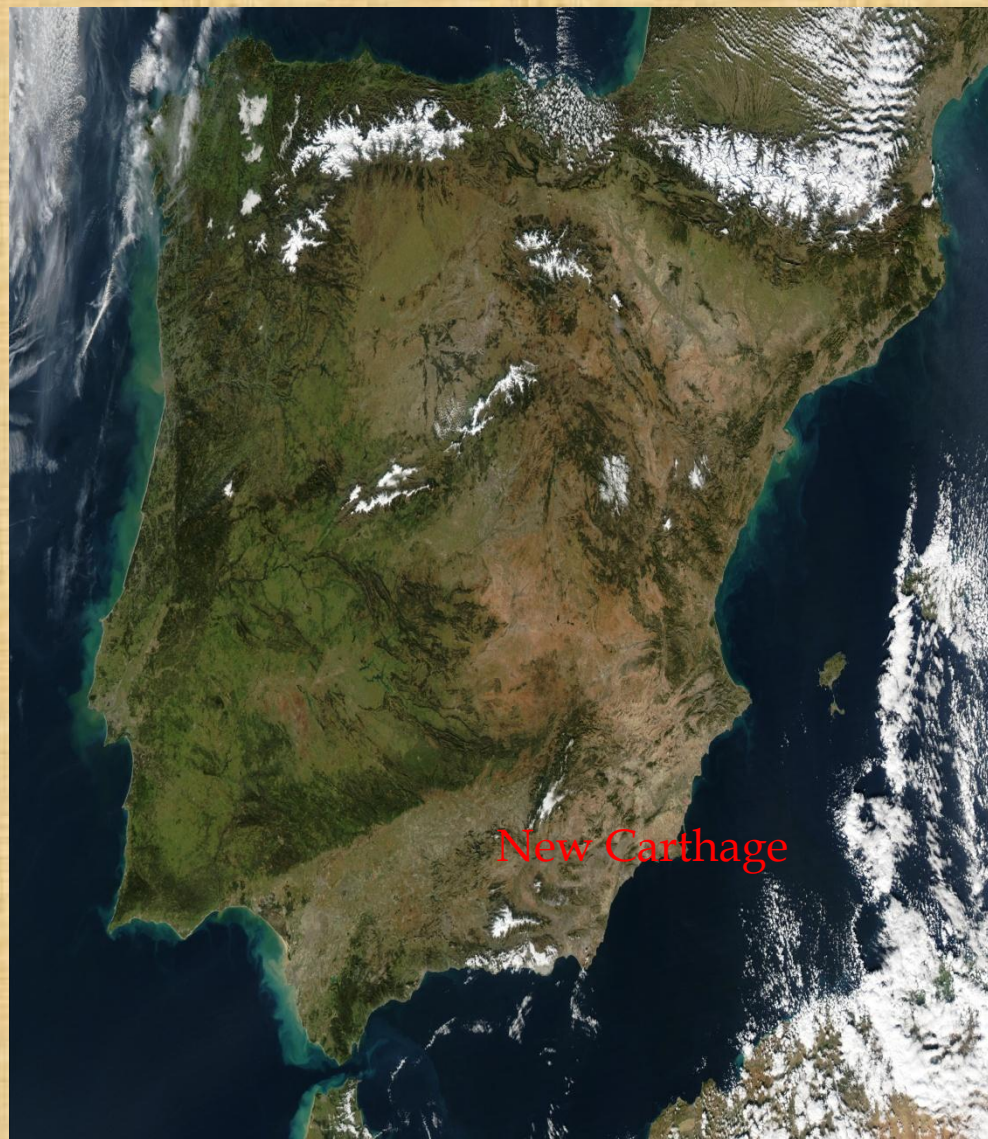
Triumphal Arch of
Septimius Severus

The Temptation of Plunder

“The common people, however, worn out as they were by the recent wars and in need of any and every kind of restorative, listened readily to the military commanders, who, besides giving the reasons above stated for the general advantageousness of the war, **pointed out the great benefit in the way of plunder which each and every one would evidently derive from it.** They were therefore in favour of sending help...” Polybius 1.10-11.

Roman Brutality

“When Scipio thought that a sufficient number of troops had entered he sent most of them, as is the Roman custom, against the inhabitants of the city with orders to kill all they encountered, sparing none, and not to start pillaging until the signal was given. They do this, I think, to inspire terror, so that when towns are taken by the Romans one may often see not only the corpses of human beings, but dogs cut in half, and the dismembered limbs of other animals, and on this occasion such scenes were numerous due to the numbers of those in the place.” – Polybius 10.15.4-6.



Caesar's Clemency

“However, he was afraid that the entry of his troops into the town [Corfinium], in the mood of licence engendered by night, might lead to looting; on receipt of the message, therefore, he commended those that had brought it and sent them back to the town, with orders that careful guard was to be kept on the walls and gates.” – *Caesar The Civil War 1.21.*

The Value of Peace

“Janus Quirinus, which our ancestors ordered to be closed whenever there was peace, secured by victory, throughout the whole domain of the Roman people on land and sea, and which, before my birth is recorded to have been closed only twice since the foundation of the city, the senate ordered to be closed three times while I was Princeps.” – *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 13.

The Evolution of the Roman Army

The Roman Army of the Regal Period

- ▣ The sources of the army in this early period are mostly from later Republican and Imperial periods.
- ▣ Archaeology suggests the early use of bronze weaponry and equipment only to be gradually replaced by iron.
- ▣ At some point Rome adopts the hoplite phalanx – introduced into Italy by Greek colonists.

Servian Reform

- Servius Tullius sixth king of Rome (578-534 BC).
- This military organisation reflected in the structure of the *comitia centuriata*.

Class	Property (asses)	Equipment	<i>Iuniores</i>	<i>Seniores</i>	Total
I	100,000	Helmet, round shield, greaves, cuirass, spear, sword	40	40	80
II	75,000	Helmet, oblong shield, greaves, spear, sword	10	10	20
III	50,000	Helmet, oblong shield, spear, sword	10	10	20
IV	25,000	Oblong shield (in Livy), spear, javelin	10	10	20
V	11,000	Slings, stones, (javelin)	15	15	30
			Infantry Total		170

He selected from the whole number of the citizens one part, consisting of those whose property was rated the highest and amounted to no less than one hundred minae. Of these he formed eighty centuries, whom he ordered to be armed with Argolic bucklers, with spears, brazen helmets, corslets, greaves and swords. Dividing these centuries into two groups, he made forty centuries of younger men, whom he appointed to take the field in time of war, and forty of older men...

...The fifth class, consisting of those whose property was between twenty-five minae and twelve minae and a half, he divided into thirty centuries. These were also distinguished according to their age, fifteen of the centuries being composed of the older men and fifteen of the younger. These he armed with javelins and slings, and placed outside the line of battle.” –
Dionysus of Halicarnasus 4.16-17.

Solders of the Mid-Republic

- Earliest contemporary description of a Roman “legion” is Polybius.
- A legion consisted of 4,200 infantry (5,000 in times of emergency), subdivided into units of 120 or 60 men called “maniples” (handfuls) – often referred to as manipular legion.
- Emphasis on small, flexible subunits of heavy infantry and the swordsmanship of soldiers; *contra* the massed phalanx.
- Response to fighting in rough, uneven terrain?

Legionaries

- ▣ The *hastari* (“spearmen”) carried two *pila* (throwing javelins).
- ▣ The *principes* (“leading men”); the more wealthy men at their prime age, probably more heavily armoured.
- ▣ The *triarii* (“third-line men”), the older men, probably also more heavily armoured.
- ▣ The legionaries broadly equipped in a similar fashion – bronze helmets, greaves, and a simple bronze chest-guard or mail tunic. Carried a long (c. 1.17 m) oblong shield (*scutum*) of laminated wood and an iron rim. They had a short sword (*gladius hispaniensis*), *pila*, and the *triarii* had a thrusting spear.

Velites

- ▣ A *veles* carried a sword, javelins, and a round shield (*parma*) three feet in diameter.
- ▣ Each man carried five (**Lucilius 7.22**) to seven (**Livy 26.4.4**) javelins.
- ▣ Skirmishers, sometimes drawn up in the van.
- ▣ Often used to drive enemy light infantry from the battlefield and to disrupt enemy battle lines

Equites – Knights

- Earlier cavalry lightly armed, but by mid-Republic they more heavily armed and wearing cuirasses.
- Horses supplied and maintained by the state.
- Polybius (6.20.9) states that 300 horsemen were assigned to each legion.
- Cavalry divided into ten groups of 30 men.

Pre-Marian Army

- ▣ Soldiers being citizens called up for specific campaigns rather than as a long term career – though potential a significant time commitment – Polybius mentions men having to serve for 10 to 20 years.
- ▣ Individual legions lacked long term identity, and only existed as long as they were needed for a particular campaign.

“Marian” Reforms

- ▣ Shift from maniple as the basic subdivision of a unit to the cohort of 500 men.
- ▣ Homogenisation of troop types and equipment within the legion.
- ▣ Troops recruited from a broader economic range of Romans, and later, more broadly, Italians.
- ▣ Some state provision of soldiers' equipment (Plutarch *Gaius Graccus* 5.1).

Legionaries in the late Republic

- ▣ *Hastati, principes, and triarii*, preserved in centurions' titles by Marius' day, but no longer had any significance in terms of equipment.
- ▣ Maintain use of the *pilum* and *scutum*. Adoption of *lorica hamata* (mail armour).
- ▣ *Velites* seem to fall out of use around or after the Jugurthine war (**Sallust *Jugurthine War* 46.7**).
- ▣ Cavalry assigned to each legion disappear.
- ▣ Role of light infantry seems to be taken over by auxiliaries.



Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus, Rome – c. late second to early first century BC.

Development of “Career” Soldier

- ▣ Marius’ recruitment of poorer *proletarii*
reflection of fundamental social and economic changes of mid-late Republic.
- ▣ Social war 91-88 BC.
- ▣ Increasing “professionalism”.
- ▣ Increased emphasis on personal loyalty to a commander – look to provide, booty and land.
- ▣ Increasing length of service and identity of a legion – c.f. Caesar’s campaigns.

Army of the Imperial Period (2)

- Term of service – initially 16 years with 4 years as a veteran – later changes this to 20 years with 5 years as a veteran.
- Pay – 225 *denarii* a year for an ordinary legionary by end of reign of Augustus (**Tac. Ann. 1.17**), increased to 300 *denarii* during reign of Domitian.
- Introduction of a regular retirement bonus by Augustus, either in cash, purchased land, or settlement in *coloniae*.

***CIL* VIII 2877 – Lambaesis, Numidia**

“To the spirits of the departed, Titus Flavius Virilis, centurion of Legion *II Augusta*, centurion of Legion *XX Valeria Victrix*, centurion of Legion *III Parthica Severiana* as *hastatus posterior* of the ninth cohort. He lived for 70 years and served for 45 years. Lolliia Bodicca, his wife, and Victor and Victorinus his sons and heirs had this made at a cost of 1200 sesterces.”

Equipment of the Imperial Era Legionaries

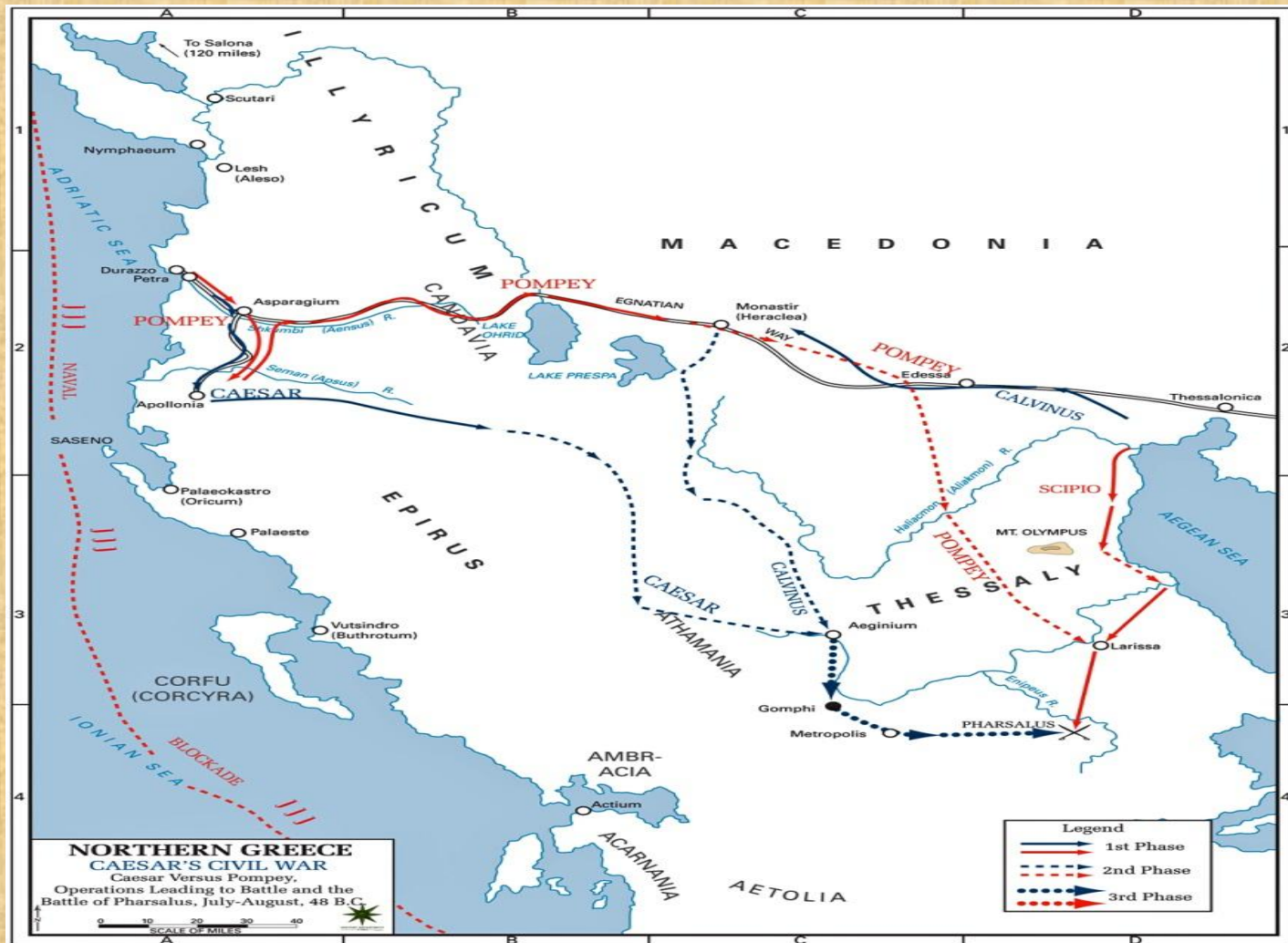
- Many elements of continuity from earlier periods – continued use of *pilum*, but only carrying one (Josephus *Jewish Wars* 3.95); also supplement by other spears (e.g. *lancae* – lighter javelin).
- Mainz sword similar to earlier *gladius* types – used primarily for stabbing rather than cutting; by 2nd or early 3rd century AD, this types replaced with the longer *spatha*, a cutting weapon previously used by Roman cavalry.
- The imperial *scutum* was rectangular from frontal view.
- The *lorica hamata* (mail armour), but also use of *lorica segmentata* (strips of iron held together with articulated leather straps and copper fittings).



Image from <http://www.lore-and-saga.co.uk/html/romans.html>

The Battle of Pharsalus – August 48 BC

Pharsalus - Modern Farsala



Size of the Forces

CAESAR'S ARMY

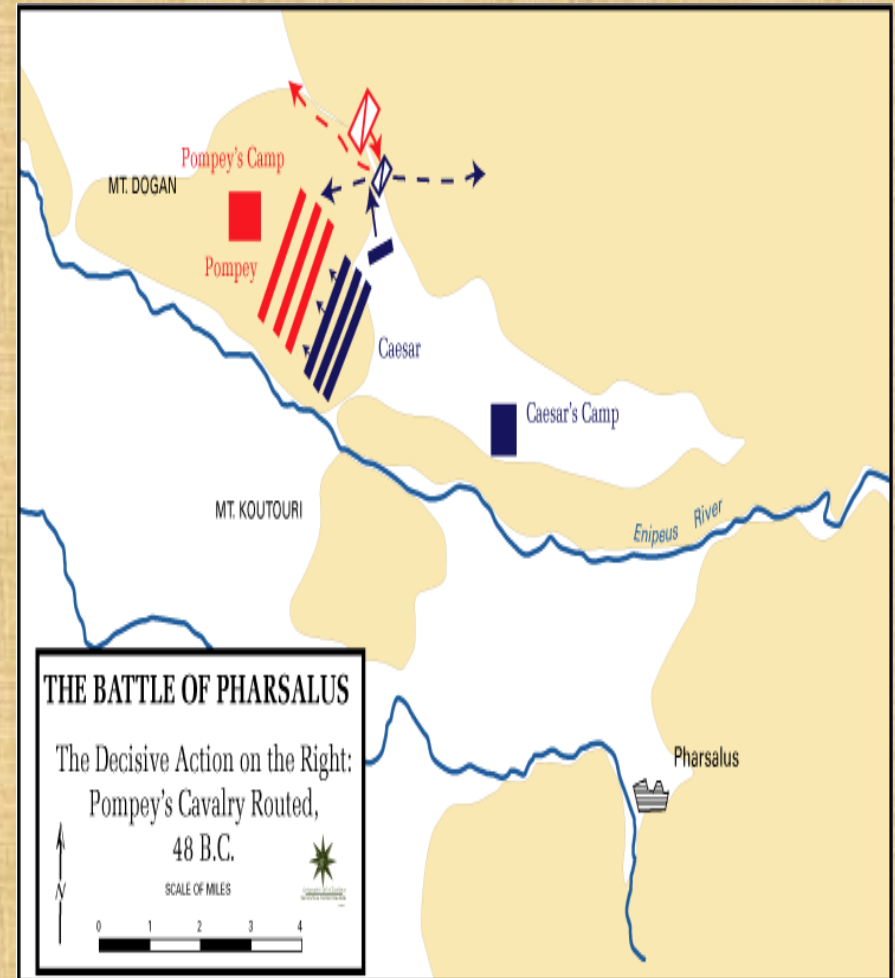
- ▣ Caesar states that he had 22,000 men form 80 cohorts.
- ▣ Each cohort must have been roughly 275 men (out of a notional 500).
- ▣ 2,750 men per legion – issues of attrition from many campaigns.
- ▣ C. 1,000 cavalry.

POMPEY'S ARMY

- ▣ Pompey's army is reported to have consisted of 110 cohorts (equivalent to 11 legions).
- ▣ A paper army strength of 45,000, plus an additional 2,000 *beneficarii* (recalled veterans).
- ▣ Pompey left 22 cohorts on detached garrison duty.
- ▣ 7,000 cavalry.

Caesar's Tactics

- ▣ *Triplex acies* formations.
- ▣ Pompey orders his cohorts to deploy ten deep and to await the enemy charge.
- ▣ Caesar cohorts perhaps four to six ranks deep.
- ▣ Caesar takes one cohort from the third line of six of his legions and formed a fourth line to protect his right flank; concealed behind his cavalry.



Decisive Victory

- ❑ Pompey lost 15,000 men in the battle in contrast to Caesar's army where only 200 men were lost (according to Caesar).
- ❑ Another 24,000 troops from Pompey's army surrender and are incorporated into Caesar's army, creating four new legions.
- ❑ Pompey flees to Alexandria.

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