

ROMAN LEGIONARY 109–58 BC

The Age of Marius, Sulla and Pompey the Great



ROSS COWAN

ILLUSTRATED BY SEÁN Ó'BRÓGÁIN

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Series Editor Marcus Cowper

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ROMAN LEGIONARY 109–58 BC

INTRODUCTION

The Roman legionary of 109–58 BC was a temperamental character. He was frequently rebellious and without discipline, sometimes mutinous and even murderous, and he had to be handled with the utmost care. Charismatic generals such as Marius, Sulla and Pompey the Great knew instinctively how to manage the legionary, how to manipulate his emotions, how to inspire and cajole, how to rouse him to fury and loose him with devastating effect upon the enemy. But some could not control the unruly legionary. Some commanders were ignored, insulted, humiliated and abandoned; others were stoned, clubbed or stabbed to death.

Greedy for plunder and prone to committing the most appalling atrocities, the legionary was also flighty and superstitious, remorseful and emotional. He lusted after glory and was so concerned for maintaining his reputation for *virtus* (valour) that he might refuse to retreat and die heroically with all his wounds to the front of his body. On other occasions, he would abandon his weapons and flee from the enemy in a panic.

He was not the disciplined iron legionary of the modern popular imagination. No automaton, the legionary of 109–58 BC was complex and mercurial. This book will explore what motivated him, how his loyalty was secured, how he was trained, equipped and organized for combat, and how he won (or lost) his battles. This was an era of intensive warfare, foreign and civil, in which the legionary might find himself battling German warriors, African cavalry, Spanish light troops, Pontic pikemen, Armenian cataphracts and even fellow Italians and Romans.

CHRONOLOGY

(All dates BC)

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 109–107 | Metellus campaigns against Jugurtha. |
| 107–105 | Marius consul; he recruits from <i>capite censi</i> and fights Jugurtha. |

Relief of a trophy of captured arms from a triumphal monument, perhaps set up by Cornelius Sulla to celebrate his victories in the East. Centrale Montemartini, Rome. (© Sarah E. Bond/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)





Bowl of a typical bronze Montefortino-type helmet used by legionaries in our period. Musée départemental de l'Arles antiques. (Claude Valette/Flickr/ CC BY-SA 2.0)

- 105 Sulla captures Jugurtha; Cimbri and Teutones defeat Romans at Arausio.
- 102 Marius defeats Ambrones and Teutones at Aquae Sextiae.
- 101 Marius and Catulus defeat Cimbri at Vercellae.
- 91–88 Social War in Italy; Italian *socii* (allies) granted Roman citizenship but are not distributed in the existing 35 tribes curtailing their voting rights.
- 88 Sulla takes Rome.
- 87 Death of Pompeius Strabo; Cinna and Marius capture Rome; Sulla besieges Athens.
- 86 Death of Marius; Fimbria takes over Flaccus' army; Sulla captures Athens and defeats Pontic armies at Chaeronea and Orchomenus.
- 84 Cinna distributes new Italian citizens among the existing tribes, giving them equal voting rights; death of Cinna.
- 83–82 Civil War in Italy. Sulla victorious.
- 82–81 Pompey in Sicily and Africa.
- 81–79 Sulla dictator.
- 81–72 Sertorian War in Spain.
- 78 Death of Sulla; rebellion of Lepidus.
- 77 Suppression of Lepidus; Pompey sent against Sertorius.
- 73–71 Spartacus' revolt.
- 73–66 Lucullus in Asia.
- 69 Lucullus victorious at Tigranocerta.
- 68 Discontent in Lucullus' army.
- 67 Mithridates defeats Triarius at Zela; Pompey clears the Mediterranean of pirates.
- 66–62 Pompey takes over Lucullus' command in the East.
- 63–62 Catiline's rebellion; Petreius defeats Catiline at Pistoria.
- 61 Caesar campaigns in Spain.
- 58 Caesar defeats the Helvetii and Ariovistus.

RECRUITMENT AND TERMS OF SERVICE

Assidui

Service in the legions was determined by wealth. Citizens liable for service were called *assidui*, men who possessed property. By the end of the 3rd century BC, the qualification was in fact so low that possession of the ancestral cottage and a single *iugerum* (little more than half an acre of land) made a man liable for service (Liv. 42.34.2). By 129 BC, the land requirement had dropped to about 0.6 of a *iugerum*, and soon afterwards those owning a modest house and garden probably qualified (Cic. *Rep.* 2.40; Rich 1983, 298–99).

There were of course *assidui* in towns and the city of Rome itself, but recruits from the Italian countryside remained the majority throughout this period (Sall. *Hist.* 3.15.27R). Urban recruits were considered loungers and prone to indiscipline (Dio F100). Unlike countrymen who tended their crofts or toiled in fields rented from great landlords (Sall. *Hist.* 1.22R), they were not inured to labour. Strength, stamina and skill with tools were essential for the legionary, who was as much pioneer and engineer as he was a warrior; he would entrench a camp at the end of the day's march, and was frequently called on to construct siege and field works. Consider the battle of Orchomenus (86 BC). The legionaries of Lucius Cornelius Sulla first dug wide trenches to keep the Pontic cavalry from firm ground and to force it into marshy terrain. Following the main engagement, the legionaries surrounded the Pontic camp with a circumvallation and then proceeded to use their tools to break through a corner of the fortification. At this point the courage of the legionaries faltered, but a tribune named as Bassilus scrambled over the demolished rampart and charged into the defenders. His heroics spurred the hesitating legionaries to follow and the camp was captured. Bassilus survived and was decorated by Sulla on the following day (App. *Mith.* 49–51; Plut. *Sull.* 21). The daring tribune can be identified with Lucius Minucius Basilus, who captured the Esquiline Gate in 88 BC (below).



Assidui. Census-taking scene on the so-called Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus, late second century BC. Louvre, Paris. (Marie-Lan Nguyen/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)

It was the relative poverty of many *assidui*, coupled with a determination to retain their ancestral property (Sall. *Cat.* 33.1, 59.5), which made them keen to serve in the legions. Their *stipendium* (military pay) was merely a subsistence amount, but rich plunder could be won on campaign, especially in wars against the Eastern kingdoms, and this might even enable *assidui* to augment their smallholdings.

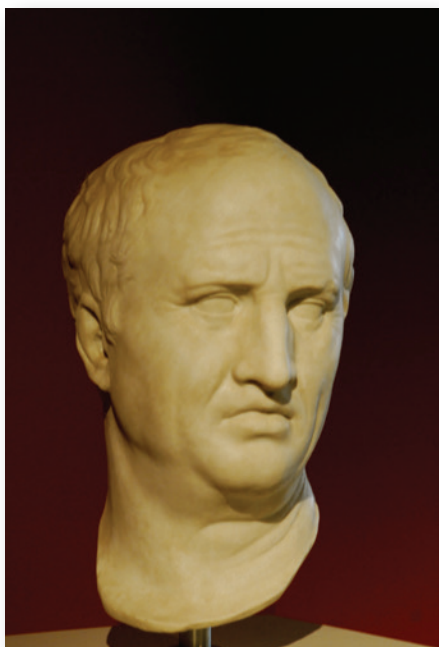
In 88 BC, the war against Mithridates VI of Pontus was assigned to the consul Sulla, but his political enemies succeeded in having the command transferred to his great enemy, Gaius Marius. Sulla rushed to Campania where his army of six legions was mustering and appealed to the soldiers. The legionaries 'were eager for the war against Mithridates because it promised much plunder and feared that Marius would enlist others instead of themselves'. When Marian tribunes arrived from Rome to take control of the army, the legionaries stoned them to death and required little persuasion from the charismatic Sulla to march on Rome and 'deliver her from tyrants' (App. *BC* 1.57). The vanguard under Basilus and Gaius Mummius took the Esquiline Gate by surprise and attempted to force its way deeper into the city, but was driven back by the populace which had taken to the rooftops and was pelting the legionaries with tiles. With the Colline Gate and the Sublician Bridge also secured, Sulla himself entered the city by the Esquiline Gate and set fire to the houses from which Basilus' force had been bombarded, and picked off the civilians on the roofs with flaming arrows. When Sulla threatened a general conflagration, the civilians' resistance evaporated, but Marius was waiting in the Esquiline forum. Marius' scratch force, which must have included veterans who had rallied to their patron, resisted so fiercely that Sulla's legionaries began to fall back. Sulla seized a standard and forced his way into the front ranks. A keen student of the psychology of the Roman soldier, Sulla knew that by exposing himself to danger the legionaries would rally 'out of regard for their general and from



The Arch of Gallienus stands on the site of the old Esquiline Gate. The Esquiline Forum lay beyond the gate and it was there, in 88 BC, that Sulla defeated Marius and seized control of Rome. (Sailko/Wikimedia/CC BY 2.5)



Silver coin of Mithridates VI of Pontus, Rome's ambitious, wily and determined opponent in the East. His generals were defeated by Sulla and Lucullus, and Pompey finally drove him to commit suicide in 63 BC. Altes Museum, Berlin. (Sailko/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY 3.0)



Marcus Tullius Cicero served his military apprenticeship with Pompeius Strabo at the siege of Asculum, and then with Sulla at Nola, in 89 BC. Archaeological Park and Museum Xanten. (Polybert49/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)

fear of ignominy, should they abandon their standard'. The legionaries duly rallied but the battle was at stalemate. Sulla then sent orders for the reserve legions outside the walls to enter the city, to advance up the Suburan road and outflank Marius' positions. When they were attacked in the rear, the Marians gave up the fight before they were completely surrounded. Marius retreated to the Temple of Tellus where he issued a proclamation promising freedom to any slave who would fight for him, but none did and he fled from the city (App. *BC* 1.57–59; Plut. *Sull.* 9).

When Sulla returned to Italy in 83 BC he had to fight another civil war, but so great was the plunder his legionaries acquired from the rich cities in Asia that had colluded with Mithridates, that they offered to finance the campaign. The general was pleased by this demonstration of loyalty but declined the offer (Plut. *Sull.* 27.3).

After their discharge from the army, some Sullan veterans became infamous for their luxurious living. Sulla settled the men in colonies established on land seized from towns and cities that had sided with his opponents in 83–82 BC. The veterans were given substantial plots estimated in size from 10 to 100 *iugera*, and a lump sum of cash (App. *BC.* 1.104; Keaveney 2005a, 151–55). Marcus Tullius Cicero served at the siege of Nola in 89 BC and was well acquainted with the kind of men who marched with Sulla. (The 17-year-old Cicero was a *tiro*, meaning recruit, but as the scion of a wealthy equestrian family with aspirations of entering the Roman Senate, he was not serving as a *miles gregarius*, or common soldier. He was attached to Sulla's staff to complete his year's *tirocinium militiae*, or military apprenticeship, which had begun earlier in 89 BC with a stint on the staff of the consul Gnaeus Pompeius Strabo at the siege of Asculum: Cic. *Phil.* 12.27.) Cicero was in no doubt about the valour of the Sullan veterans: he had witnessed them storm a strongly fortified Samnite camp at Nola (Cic. *Div.* 1.72, 2.65) and would later describe them as men of great courage, but among the colonists were

A

Legionary *eques*, 109 BC

In the 2nd century BC, the manipular legion had a cavalry component of 300 horsemen (*equites*). However, *equites* are conspicuous by their absence from the cohortal legion. The last appearance of legionary cavalry on campaign dates to 102 BC when a detachment under the command of the son of a senator abandoned a fort in the Adige valley and fled before the advancing Cimbri (Val. Max. 5.8.4; Vir. *Illus.* 72.10). The three-year minimum service requirement for *equites* was still in effect at the time of the Social War of 91–88 BC (ILS 6085), but *equites* had by then disappeared from the legion and been replaced with units of non-citizen and barbarian auxiliaries. The reason for this change remains elusive.

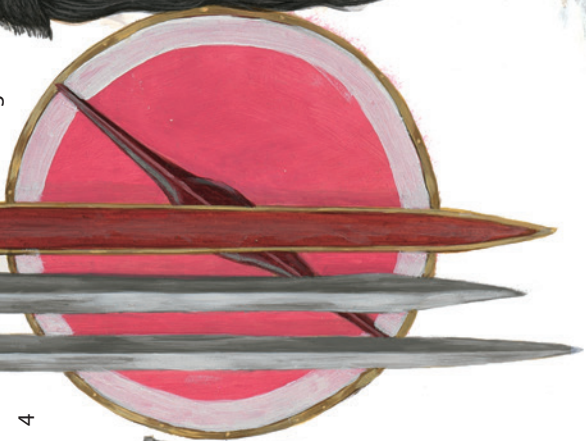
The young *eques* depicted here is equipped following the cavalryman on the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus. His distinctive late Hellenistic helmet (1) combines the features of Boeotian and pilos types. His mail shirt is typical but the muscle cuirass remained an option (2); a round *parma*-type shield would have afforded extra protection (3). His sword is the famous *gladius Hispaniensis*, with a hilt modelled after the Altar; the inset shows an alternative *gladius* with trilobate pommel; the *pugio* (dagger) was the secondary sidearm of the legionary (4). The horse armour illustrated here follows a relief from the Piazza della Consolazione in Rome, perhaps from a triumphal monument set up by Sulla to commemorate his victories (5). Control of the horse was facilitated by spurs and while saddles were used, it is uncertain if the Gallic-type horned saddle illustrated had yet been adopted by the Romans.



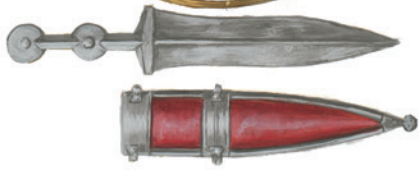
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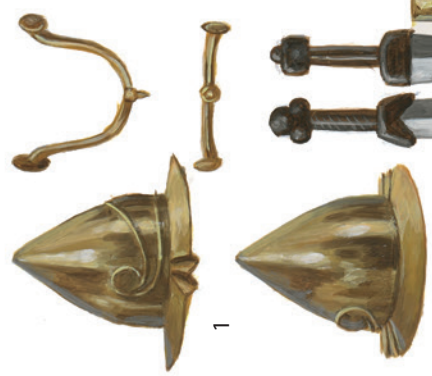
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2



1



Bowls filled with food or drink used by magisterial candidates to woo voters. When empty, the name of the generous candidate was revealed, here Cato the Younger and Catiline. When Catiline failed to secure election as consul for 62 BC, he rebelled. (Panairjdde/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY 1.0)



some who ‘used their sudden and unexpected wealth to give a display of luxury to which they were quite unaccustomed and which was beyond their means. Putting up buildings as men of wealth and enjoying their choice of farms, their large establishments, and their sumptuous banquets, they have run so deeply into debt that they would have to raise Sulla from the dead [d. 78 BC] if they wanted to be in the clear’ (Cic. *Cat.* 2.20).

Lucius Sergius Catilina, better known as Catiline, was a legate of Sulla in the civil war. He found willing recruits among these impoverished men when he embarked on rebellion in 63 BC. Gaius Manlius, who had served under Sulla as a centurion and would therefore have received a greater share of the spoils from Asia and a large plot in the colony at Faesulae, was typical of the type. Having squandered his bounty, he was eager for a return to the glory days of battle and plunder (Dio 37.30.5). He became Catiline’s deputy and commanded the right wing of the rebel army at Pistoria. More Sullan veterans formed the front rank of Catiline’s outnumbered army (Sall. *Cat.* 16.3; 59–61).

***Capite censi* and non-citizens**

Of the so-called military reforms of Marius, his recruitment of the *capite censi* in 107 BC, and perhaps again in 104 BC for the Cimbric War, is usually flagged as the most important. The *capite censi* were those ‘counted by the head’ in the census because they possessed no property. They were even rated below the *proletarii*, who possessed some goods but were too poor to afford arms and armour; in times of emergency the *proletarii* might be levied for legionary service and equipped at the expense of the state. However, both classes were liable for service in the fleets (Gell. NA 16.10.1–13).

Newly elected as consul in 107 BC, Marius recruited a *supplementum* (supplement) for the legions already in Africa and engaged in the war against Jugurtha of Numidia. He famously enlisted men from the *capite censi*. They were eager for *gloria* (glory) and dreamt of returning home rich with plunder (Sall. *Iug.* 86.1.2–3). However, Marius did not, as is sometimes claimed, abolish the property qualification; he merely ignored it in order to reward the urban poor who had supported his candidacy as consul. He also received strong support from ‘the rural plebs’ and his *supplementum* most likely included *assidui* from the countryside around Rome and his home town of Arpinum (*ibid.* 73.6). It has been suggested that the Senate decreed Marius

a *supplementum* of 3,000 legionaries, but the unconventional consul enlisted 5,000 (Rich 1983, 324). He certainly sought out veterans to provide his new force with an experienced cadre (Sall. *Iug.* 84.2).

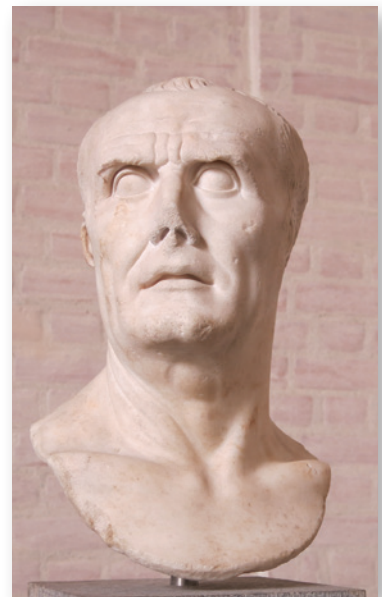
The recruitment of *capite censi* was perhaps not Marius' innovation. A frequently quoted passage from Plutarch's *Life of Tiberius Gracchus* has been supposed to demonstrate that *assidui* could be ruined by extended military service, especially in Spain, where fruitless campaigning produced little or no plunder. Soldiers might return to Italy to find that their families had been forced to sell their ancestral plots, or that the land had been illegally occupied, or that as smallholders they were unable to compete with the great estates (*latifundia*) that exploited slave labour:

The wild beasts that roam over Italy have every one of them a cave or lair to lurk in; but the men who fight and die for Italy enjoy the common air and light, indeed, but nothing else; houseless and homeless they wander about with their wives and children. And it is with lying lips that their generals exhort the soldiers in their battles to defend sepulchres and shrines from the enemy; for not a man of them has a hereditary altar, not one of all these many Romans an ancestral tomb, but they fight and die to support others in wealth and luxury, and though they are styled masters of the world, they have not a single clod of earth that is their own. (Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 9.4–5)

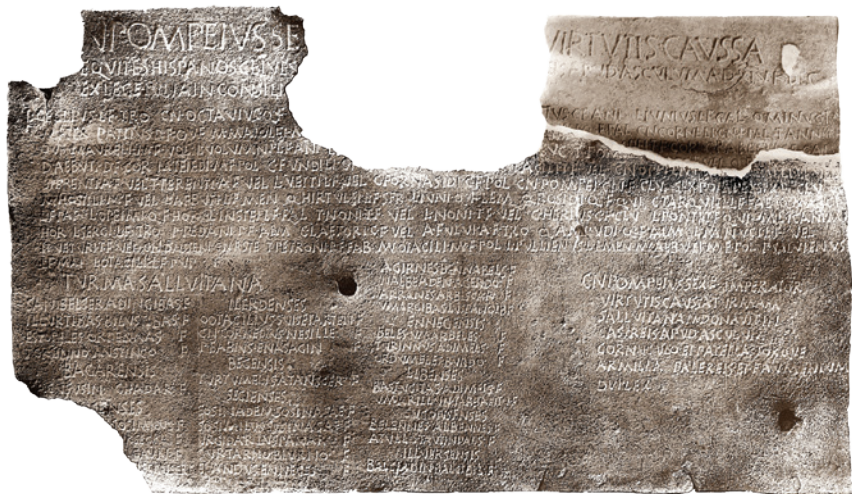
The landless veterans described in such emotive terms by Gracchus in the 130s BC may in fact have been landless to begin with, if they had been conscripted from *proletarii* or *capite censi*. *Assidui* were keen to enrol for campaigns in the urbanized East, where plunder, in the form of luxury goods and humans (sold as slaves) was plentiful. They were less keen to serve in the grinding conquest and consolidation of the Iberian Peninsula, the scene of frequent military reverses and a place where little portable plunder was to be won (Brunt 1987, 396). In the later 2nd century BC, those responsible for the levy were certainly bending the rules by enrolling boys below the age of 17 (Plut. *G. Gracch.* 5.1), and may also have exploited the untapped manpower of the *proletarii* and *capite censi* to fill out the ranks in legions or supplements destined for areas not considered to be lucrative.

Service in Spain was not always unrewarding. When Gaius Julius Caesar took up his post as governor of Hispania Citerior in 61 BC, he found a garrison of 20 cohorts (i.e. two legions). He proceeded to enrol another legion (Plut. *Caes.* 12.1). He did so in just a few days. It is uncertain how many Roman citizens liable for legionary service were in the province and it may be that, as he later did with the famous *Alaudae* (the Larks) in Transalpine Gaul, he conscripted Romanized natives and subsequently granted them citizenship to legitimize their status as legionaries (Suet. *Caes.* 24.2; Brunt 1987, 471–72). Whatever their origins, he immediately led the legions against the Callaici and Lusitani, 'overpowered them and marched on as far as the outer sea [the Atlantic coast], subduing tribes which before were not obedient to Rome.... He enriched the soldiers from their campaigns and was saluted by them as *imperator*' (Plut. *Caes.* 12.1, 4). The source of this enrichment was most likely from the sale of captives as slaves (cf. App. *Iber.* 99).

Gaius Marius. In 107 BC, the consul was apparently the first to recruit legionaries from the *capite censi*. Glyptothek, Munich. (Thomas Cloer/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)



Bronze plaque recording Pompeius Strabo's grant of Roman citizenship to a squadron of Spanish cavalrymen on account of their valour at the siege of Asculum (89 BC). The document also lists Strabo's *contubernales* (ILS 8888). (RHC Archive)



Contubernales

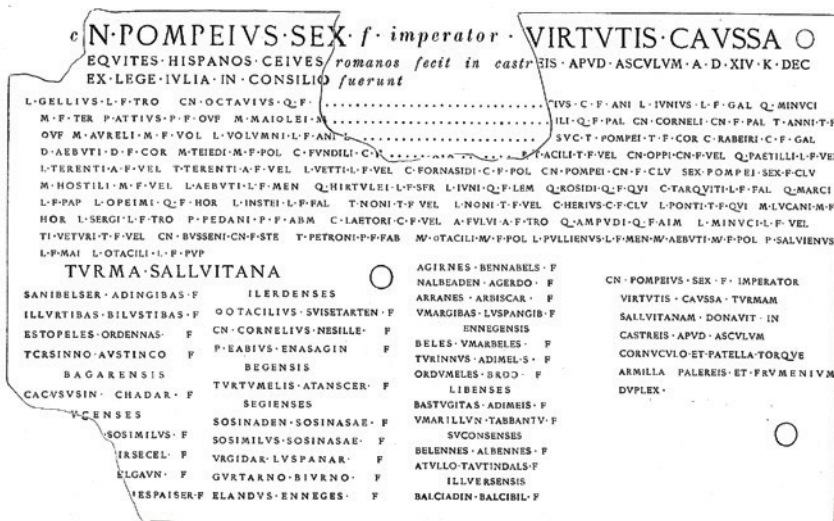
Not all legionary recruits were poor or of modest means. There were richer *assidui* and sometimes equestrians and even nobles found themselves in the ranks of the *milites gregarii*. One such was Quintus Hortensius Hortalus, the famous orator. In 90 BC, at the height of the Social War, he served as an ordinary legionary; in the following year, perhaps befitting his equestrian status, or because Roman casualties had been so high and officers were in short supply, he was promoted to the rank of *tribunus militum* (military tribune), probably in the army of Sulla (Cic. *Brut.* 304; Vell. Pat. 12.16.3). Nobles, such as the patrician Catiline, often began their military careers on the staffs of generals (ILLRP 969, 11, with Strabo in 89 BC), and were known as *contubernales*, or ‘tent-mates’. In 105 BC, the son of the consul Publius Rutilius Rufus clearly expected to serve with his father as a *contubernalis*, but Rufus, who was restoring morale and discipline following the disaster at Arausio, made the youth ‘a *miles* in a legion’ (Front. *Strat.* 4.1.12).

Contubernales enjoyed better quarters and food (see quote) but did not necessarily have it easy. This was an era in which generals fought in the front rank and their *contubernales* were beside them. Despite their elevated social status, the *contubernales* might share the concerns of their fellow-soldiers. Lucius Terentius, from Firmum in Picenum, was on the staff of Pompeius Strabo at the siege of Asculum (ILLRP 969, 8) and still in Strabo’s army when the general was summoned by the Senate to defend Rome from Lucius Cornelius Cinna and Marius. In this campaign, Terentius shared a tent with Pompey, the son of Strabo. He was apparently bribed by Cinna to assassinate his *contubernalis* while other soldiers dealt with the general (Plut. *Pomp.* 3.1).

Pompey got information of the plot while he was at supper. He was not at all disturbed, but after drinking more freely even than usual and treating Terentius with kindness, as soon as he retired to rest stole out of the tent unnoticed, set a guard about his father, and quietly awaited the event. Terentius, when he thought the proper time was come, arose, and approaching the couch of Pompey with drawn sword, stabbed the bedclothes many times,

supposing him to be lying there. After this there was a great commotion, owing to the hatred felt towards the general, and a rush to revolt on the part of the soldiers, who tore down their tents and seized their arms. The general did not venture forth for fear of the tumult, but Pompey went up and down among the soldiers beseeching them with tears, and finally threw himself on his face in front of the gate of the camp and lay there in the way, weeping and bidding those who were going out to trample on him. As a consequence, everyone drew back out of shame, and all except 800 changed their minds and were reconciled to their general. (Plut. *Pomp.* 3.2–5)

Strabo's legionaries had proved intensely loyal in 88 BC when the consul Quintus Pompeius Rufus (a distant relative of Strabo's) attempted to assume command of the army; he was attacked as he was about to perform a religious ceremony and the legionaries 'slaughtered him like a sacrificial offering' (Val. Max. 9.7.2. *mil. Rom.* 2). But in 87 BC, when Strabo failed to commit to the defence of Rome and engaged in negotiations with Cinna because he was eager for a second consulship, the mood in camp soured. When Strabo finally deigned to send his legions against Cinna, a brutal battle was fought on the Janiculum Hill. The Cinnans lost 600 men and the hill could have been retaken, but Strabo held back, still willing to support whichever side would guarantee him the consulship in the forthcoming elections. Strabo's soldiers were incensed at being cheated of victory. They, and their fellow-soldiers in the Senatorial forces, also suffered *c.* 600 casualties on the Janiculum (Gran. Lic. 35.18–20; Oros. 5.19.10–11), and a tragic episode only added to their disgruntlement. One of Strabo's legionaries killed a Cinnan soldier and set about stripping the corpse, which he belatedly recognized as his own brother: 'for in the battle their helmets had prevented them from recognizing each other's faces, and they were so enraged that they failed to look closely at each other' (Oros. 5.19.12–13). Appalled at what he had done, Strabo's legionary killed himself (Tac. *Hist.* 3.51; Gran. Lic. 35.20). Strabo continued to intrigue secretly with Cinna and the situation in his camp was exacerbated by a plague that struck down far more soldiers than the battle of the Janiculum. The general himself was afflicted and confined to his tent, and the plot was



Transcription of ILS 8888. Line eight names Lucius Terentius and Gnaeus Pompeius (Pompey the Great), the *contubernalis* he attempted to assassinate in 87 BC. The L. Sergius at the start of line 11 is Catiline. Cicero is not included; he must have already transferred to Sulla's army. (RHC Archive)

hatched to do away with him and Pompey. As Cinna was negotiating with Strabo up to the point the plague struck, it seems unlikely that he would have suborned Lucius Terentius and others to murder the general and his son. Terentius was simply a member of a faction within the army vehemently opposed to Strabo's double-dealing and seized the opportunity offered by the plague to strike (Hillman 1996). It is notable that 800 legionaries remained aloof despite the theatrics Pompey used to quell the mutiny. In what must have seemed like an act of divine retribution, Strabo died soon afterwards when his tent was struck by lightning during a violent storm (Gran. Lic. 35.21–23).

Perhaps the most famous legionary of the era was Publius Ventidius. He was from a leading non-citizen family in Picenum that fought against Rome in the Social War, and as a child he processed through Rome as a captive in the triumph of Pompeius Strabo (89 BC). The property of Ventidius' family probably ended up in the hands of Strabo. Ventidius did, however, gain his freedom and with it Roman citizenship, and the impoverished young man supported himself by serving in the 'hobnailed ranks' of the legions. Ventidius would ultimately become one of Rome's greatest generals. In 38 BC he participated in another triumph in Rome: as a conqueror, celebrating his spectacular victories over the Parthians (Plin. *NH* 7.135; Val. Max 6.9.9).

Dilectus

How was the *dilectus* (levy) conducted? In 83 BC, Gnaeus Pompeius, son of Strabo and better known as Pompey the Great, took it upon himself to raise a private army and side with Sulla in the civil war against Gnaeus Papirius Carbo and Marius the Younger. Despite being carried out by a private citizen who had no legal authority, the levy was probably conducted in the usual manner:

Pompey, who was only 23, and who had not been appointed general by anybody whomsoever, conferred the command upon himself, and setting up a tribunal in the forum of Auximum, a large city, issued an edict ordering the chief men there, two brothers named Ventidius, who were acting against him in Carbo's interest, to leave the city. Then he proceeded to levy soldiers, and after appointing tribunes and centurions for them all, made a circuit of the other cities, doing the same thing. All the partisans of Carbo withdrew and gave place to him, and the rest gladly offered their services to him, so that in a short time he had mustered three complete legions, and provided them with food, baggage-waggons, carriages, and other necessary equipment. Then he led his forces towards Sulla, not in haste, nor even with a desire to escape observation, but tarrying on the march as he harried the enemy, and endeavouring to detach from Carbo's interest all that part of Italy through which he passed. (Plut. *Pomp.* 6.3–4)

How was it possible for Pompey to levy three legions and equip them? In 87 BC, he inherited his father's wealth, estates and, most importantly, his vast *clientela* (clients and dependents) in Picenum (Vell. Pat. 2.29.2–1; Plut. *Pomp.*

The young Pompey. His spectacular and unconventional military career was facilitated by the vast wealth and *clientela* he inherited from his father, Pompeius Strabo. Louvre. (Carole Raddato/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)



6.1). When Strabo reconquered the region, he consolidated his status as the *patronus* (patron) of the elite and landed families who made up the curial class and sat on the town councils and were responsible for local governance. In the highly stratified and hierarchical society of Roman Italy, these *curiales* had their own clients, whom they would compel to heed Pompey's edict. Many of Strabo's veterans turned out, too, providing the new legions with a battle-hardened core that proved decisive when Carbo's forces attempted to prevent Pompey from linking up with Sulla ([Caes.] *BAfr.* 22; Val. Max. 5.29; Plut. *Pomp.* 7.2).

The veterans may have brought their own arms, but other recruits would certainly require equipping. Roman and Picene losses in the Social War had been high, and it is unlikely that Pompey's legions drew exclusively on *assidui*. As a major landowner, Pompey could call up his tenants (*coloni*, cf. Sall. *Cat.* 59.3), and may have encouraged them with hopes of being rewarded with land as well as the usual promise of plunder. The outfitting and supply of three legions comprising 15,000 to 18,000 men, as well as a substantial force of cavalry (cf. Plut. *Pomp.* 7.1), required massive resources, but Pompey had inherited the necessary wealth. When his father captured Asculum he 'had the prefects, centurions, and all the leading men beaten with rods and beheaded. He sold the slaves and all the booty at auction and ordered the remaining people to depart, free indeed, but stripped and destitute. Though the Senate expected that the proceeds of the booty would somewhat increase the public income, Strabo did not contribute anything from it to the needy treasury' (Oros. 5.18.26).

When Catiline rebelled, he formed the men recruited by himself and Manlius into 'two legions, filling up the cohorts as far as his numbers would allow; and afterwards, as any volunteers, or recruits from his confederates, arrived in his camp, he distributed them equally throughout the cohorts, and thus filled up his legions, in a short time, with their regular number of men, though at first he had not had more than 2,000' (Sall. *Cat.* 56.1–2). Initially,



Asculum (Ascoli Piceno), the centre of Picene resistance during the Social War. It was captured by Pompeius Strabo in 89 BC. (Giorgio Tomassetti/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)



Statue of Gaius Billienus in military attire, c.100 BC, on Delos. Billienus, who governed the province of Asia in 105 BC, was a *novus homo* or new man in the Roman senate. The -ienus suffix of his name indicates non-Latin heritage. (Kevin Stroup/Flickr/CC BY 3.0)

then, each of Catiline's legions was only 1,000 strong and had century-sized cohorts. Catiline was a famous soldier (Cic. *Cael.* 12) and likely involved in official levies. His method of legion formation in 63 BC – establishing a cadre and building upon it until an optimum fighting strength was reached, probably followed the usual practice (Brunt 1987, 688).

Avoidance of service

Most Romans desired glory and the chance to enrich themselves with booty, but there was always some evasion of the levy. Some citizens went to extreme lengths to avoid service. A famous example is Gaius Vettienus. During the Italian or Social War of 91–88 BC, he deliberately mutilated himself by cutting two fingers from his left hand. He presumably pretended this was the result of an accident and expected to be declared unfit for service, but his self-mutilation resulted instead in the confiscation of all his property and his being chained up in perpetuity as warning to other cowards. 'By this action he wore out disgracefully in bonds the life which he had not

been willing to give honourably in the line of battle' (Val. Max. 6.3.3c).

Vettienus is a *gentilicium* (clan or family name) with the suffix -ienis and indicates the unwilling legionary was of non-Latin descent (Syme 1938, 23–24). His family would have originated somewhere in central Italy, perhaps in Picenum (note the name of Caesar's senior lieutenant, the Picene Quintus Labienus) or maybe in the territory of the Vestini (the likely birthplace of Salvidienus Rufus, the general of Octavian). The Caesarian centurion Lucius Vorenus, famous for his rivalry with Titus Pullo, bears another distinctive central Italian *gentilicium*. The -enus suffix could point to the origin of his family in the Sabine country. Consider the heroic Vettulenus (App. *BC* 4.25 with Syme 1964, 228–29), who exemplified Cicero's description of the Sabines as 'most brave men ... the flower of Italy' (Cic. *Lig.* 32). Origins in Picenum, Umbria or Etruria are also possible for family names with the -enus ending. Epigraphy suggests that Gaius Volusenus Quadratus, the equestrian who served Caesar as a legionary tribune and cavalry commander from 57 to 48 BC, was of Etruscan or Umbrian descent (Rawson 1978, 151). Vorenus and Volusenus may not have sprung from old Roman or Latin stock, but they were immortalized by Caesar as exemplars of Roman valour (*Caes.* *BG* 5.44; 3.5). Vettienus was a disgrace to both his Roman identity and his Italic ancestry.

Age of recruits

Iuniores, that is men aged between 17 and 46, were liable for service; *seniores*, aged 47 to 60, were called up only in emergencies. However, the minimum age was not strictly adhered to and as tribune of the plebs in 123–122 BC, Gaius Sempronius Gracchus passed a law that no-one aged

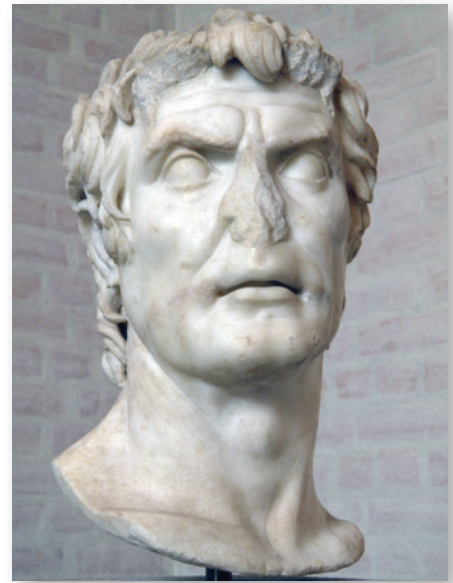
below 17 could be conscripted. A veteran of 12 years' service in the army, Gracchus was only too aware of such abuses (Plut. *C. Gracch.* 5.1, 2.5).

We have little evidence for the ages of individual recruits. Hortensius Hortalus was aged 23–24 when he served as a legionary in 90 BC, but he was not a typical recruit. The Fimbrian legionaries, whose extraordinary service began in 86 BC and continued until 62 BC, must have been recruited in their late teens and early twenties. Quintus Canuleius of Caesar's Seventh Legion, was only 18 when he was killed in the Gallic War of 58–51 BC (*ILS* 2225).

In 89 BC, the consul Lucius Porcius Cato was compelled by the on-going crisis of the Social War to levy his legionaries in Rome. They are described as 'rather too old for military service'. It is unlikely that they were *seniores*. An edict issued by Rutilius Rufus following Arausio (105 BC) prevented men aged 35 or less from leaving Italy (Gran. Lic. 33.14). This suggests the preferred upper age for recruits.

Considering their apparently advanced age, at least some of them would have previously served, but they were a mutinous bunch and Cato struggled to assert his authority. The dignity of Cato's office, his status as one of the two supreme magistrates of the Roman Republic, did not impress these mature Romans. They were lazy, tardy in obeying orders, and when he attempted to enforce discipline, they pelted him with clods of wet earth. The chief troublemaker was Gaius Titinius, 'a loungeur about the Forum', who made his living in the courts. He was arrested and sent to Rome for judgement but, feigning mental incapacity and grovelling before Cato, he was pardoned and released (Dio F100; Sisenna F59C). Cato, or more likely his legates, tribunes and centurions, then restored a degree of discipline and led the legionaries with some success against the Marsi, but in a battle by the Fucine Lake, the consul was killed. According to Livy, he was killed at the point of victory, but Orosius preserves a darker tradition in which the consul was cut down by one of his own men (Liv. *Per.* 75; Oros. 5.18.24).

The unruly legionaries were then taken over by Sulla, Cato's senior legate. They fought with him in the capture of Rome and the triumphant campaign against Mithridates' armies in Greece (Keaveney 2005b, 210–11). Sulla did not suffer indiscipline from these men,



Sulla. Courageous, charismatic and genial, he was also ruthless and an expert motivator and manipulator of legionaries. Glyptothek, Munich. (Carole Raddato/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)



Detail of the defensive wall of Pompeii. The marks in the stone by the Herculaneum Gate were made by sling bullets and ballista balls during Sulla's siege of the town in 89 BC. (Justin Ellis/Flickr/CC BY 2.0)

but he was cut from a different cloth. He had charisma, exuded warmth, confidence, competence and authority, and was an expert manager and manipulator of men (Sall. *Iug.* 96.3). Pompey was another born leader of men.

In 66 BC, Pompey took over the army of Lucius Licinius Lucullus, an exceptional general but a man lacking charisma and the ability to engage with his troops. In fact, Lucullus' campaign against Mithridates and Tigranes ground to a halt when the Valerian legions (also known as the Fimbrians) refused to follow him any longer. The later Roman senator and historian Cassius Dio (who had struggled with an unruly provincial garrison and was even forced to flee Rome for fear of being lynched by the Praetorian Guard) was struck by the contrast between Lucullus and Pompey:

Let no one wonder that Lucullus, who had proved himself most skilful of all men in generalship, who was the first Roman to cross the Taurus with an army for warfare, and who had vanquished two powerful kings and would have captured them if he had chosen to end the war quickly, was unable to control his men, and that they were always revolting and finally deserted him. For he required a great deal of them, was difficult of access, strict in his demands for work, and inexorable in his punishments; he did not understand how to win over a man by persuasion, or to attach him by mildness, or to make a friend of him by conferring honours or bestowing wealth – all of which means are necessary, especially with a large crowd, and most of all with a crowd on a campaign. Hence the soldiers, as long as they prospered and got booty that was a fair return for their dangers, obeyed him; but when they encountered trouble and fear took the place of their hopes, they no longer heeded him at all. The proof of this is that Pompey took these same men – for he enrolled the Valerians [Fimbrians] again – and kept them without the slightest show of revolt. So much does one man differ from another. (Dio 36.16)

Pompey and Sulla knew when to enforce discipline, when to let mutinous behaviour run its course, and how to exploit subsequent remorse (Keaveney

The hot springs at Guelma, Algeria. The town was known as Calama in Roman times. It was here that Jugurtha defeated Aulus Albinus (Oros. 5.15.6) and forced his army under the yoke. (Dan Sloan/ Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)



2007, 77–82). Take, for example, an episode that occurred during Sulla's siege of Pompeii in 89 BC. Aulus Postumius Albinus was serving as Sulla's legate. His arrogant manner alienated the troops and, when it was rumoured that he planned some treachery, they rose against him. He implored and begged but was beaten to death with clubs and stones. Sulla declined to punish the soldiers. He declared that atonement for shedding the blood of a fellow-citizen was possible only by spilling enemy blood. The regretful soldiers determined that they must conquer or die in the imminent battle against the rebel general Lucius Cluentius, who was marching with a Samnite army to break the siege of Pompeii. Cluentius was repulsed and pursued to Nola, where he and his army were slaughtered. Blood had atoned for blood (Liv. *Per.* 75; Oros. 5.18.22; Val. Max. 9.8.3).

Aulus Albinus was a man of consular dignity, but he came with heavy baggage. In 110 BC, Aulus' older brother, the consul Spurius Postumius Albinus, campaigned without success against Jugurtha. He returned to Rome to conduct elections (November) and left Aulus in charge of the army. Probably in December 110 BC, Aulus led the legions out of Africa and invaded Numidia, where he hoped to decisively defeat Jugurtha, and so win the glory that eluded his sibling, or to extract a huge bribe from the king and evacuate the country. Either way, there was profit to be had. Aulus' legionary centurions and the officers of the allied and auxiliary cavalry squadrons were as duplicitous and corrupt as their commander: they were bribed by Jugurtha's agents. The king retreated and lured Aulus ever deeper into Numidia:

After he had arranged these matters to his satisfaction, in the dead of night he suddenly surrounded Aulus' camp with a throng of Numidians. The Roman soldiers were alarmed by the unusual disturbance. Some seized their arms, others hid themselves. Some encouraged the fearful: consternation reigned. The hostile force was large, night and clouds darkened the heavens, there was danger whichever course they took: in short, whether it was safer to stand or flee was uncertain. Then from the number of those who had been bribed ... one cohort of Ligurians with two *turmae* (cavalry squadrons) of Thracians, and a handful of *milites gregarii* (legionaries) went over to the king, while the *primus pilus* of the Third Legion gave the enemy the opportunity of entering the part of the camp he had been appointed to guard, and there all the Numidians burst in. (Sall. *Iug.* 38.4–6)

The treachery of the *primus pilus*, the senior centurion of the Third Legion, a man that Roman tradition and honour demanded should never abandon his post, is particularly striking. But the spirit of the army reflected the nature of its commander. With the Numidians in the camp, the Roman soldiers dropped their weapons and fled to a nearby hill; only darkness prevented their slaughter. The following day, Aulus came to terms with Jugurtha. The king was content to let the Romans remain on the hill and starve to death, or to storm it and kill them, but suggested he would let them live if Aulus agreed to a peace settlement and evacuated Numidia within ten days. There was a catch, of course. Jugurtha had served with distinction in the Roman army at Numantia (134–133 BC) and had visited Rome as recently as 112 BC. With his keen understanding of Roman tradition and history, he insisted the treaty was conditional on Aulus and his army passing under the yoke.

Jugurtha intended on the Romans the disgrace they had last endured two centuries before after being worsted by the Samnites at the Caudine Forks; the king was doubtless aware that the Roman commander at that debacle was Aulus' direct ancestor. The humiliation of passing under the yoke of spears cannot be underestimated; it was the ultimate symbol of subservience, that the defeated soldier was no better than a dumb ox or a slave (Sall. *Iug.* 38.9–10). Interestingly, blame for the shameful treaty and 'foul flight' of the Roman army back to Africa attached to Spurius (*ibid.* 43.1). Spurius was not present, but Aulus was fighting under his auspices. Spurius was forced into exile but Aulus' political career did not suffer unduly and climaxed with his election as consul in 99 BC. However, it is not surprising that Sulla's soldiers were deeply suspicious; he was tainted by defeat and rumours probably swirled around the camp that he had done a deal with the Samnites. As for Sulla, the man who had finally captured Jugurtha and brought the war to a close (*ibid.* 113.5–6), he probably felt nothing but contempt for the legate.

A number of the Thracians, Ligurians and legionaries who deserted to Jugurtha were handed back in 108 BC. Quintus Caecilius Metellus Numidicus, who assumed command of the war in Africa, was a fearsome disciplinarian and made a particular example of the traitors. Some of the auxiliaries had their hands amputated while others were buried up to their waists, shot with arrows and darts, and, while they still lived, set alight (App. *Num.* 3). All of the legionary deserters were executed, but the methods are not recorded (Sall. *Iug.* 62.6; Dio F89.1). *Fustuarium* is possible (see below) but other methods, including decapitation or crucifixion, as well as torture prior to execution, cannot be discounted (cf. Liv. 30.43.13; Val. Max. 2.7.11).

THE MILITARY OATH

The soldiers of Cato, Lucullus and Aulus Albinus failed to live up to the *sacramentum*, the oath they swore on enrolment. In the 2nd century BC, the practice was for a single recruit to take 'the oath that he will obey his officers and execute their orders as far as is in his power. Then the others come forward and each in his turn takes his oath simply that he will do the same as the first man' (Polyb. 6.21.1–3). Another source fleshes out the particulars of the oath. The soldier swore to follow the consuls (or whoever was in command), not to desert the standards or do anything contrary to the law. Breaking the oath made a soldier *sacer* (cursed, polluted) and he was liable to summary execution (Dion. Hal. 10.18.2; 11.43).

The laws of the camp insisted that a soldier must not steal, give false evidence or demean his person; these crimes were punishable by *fustuarium*, that is being beaten to death with rods or clubs (*fusti*) (Polyb. 6.37.9). The Greek term Polybius uses for the last offence has been interpreted as referring to prostitution. In 104 BC, Gaius Lusius was serving as a tribune in the army of his uncle, Marius. Lusius lusted after a young legionary named Trebonius, who resisted his sexual advances. Finally, Lusius summoned Trebonius to his tent and attempted to rape him, but Trebonius drew his sword and killed the tribune.

Sacramentum. Military oath-taking scene on the reverse of a denarius issued by the moneyer Tiberius Veturius in 137 BC. Palazzo Blu, Pisa. (Sailko/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY 3.0)



Marius was not with the army when this happened, but on his return he brought Trebonius to trial. There were many accusers, but not a single advocate, wherefore Trebonius himself courageously took the stand and told all about the matter, bringing witnesses to show that he had often refused the solicitations of Lusius and that in spite of large offers he had never prostituted himself to anyone. Then Marius, filled with delight and admiration, ordered the customary crown for valour to be brought, and with his own hands placed it on the head of Trebonius, declaring that at a time which called for noble examples he had displayed the most noble conduct. (Plut. *Mar.* 14.4–5)

Trebonius demonstrated not only that he acted in self-defence, but had remained true to the *sacramentum*. Lusius, on the other hand, had made himself *sacer* by attempting to violently rape a fellow-soldier (Val. Max. 6.1.12).

Length of service

In the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, a legionary was liable for service in 16 or, in times of emergency, 20 campaigns before the age of 46 (Polyb. 6.19.2–3; Brunt 1987, 399). This requirement was probably quite ancient, when campaigns fought in central Italy might last for only a season or six months, but as Roman power grew and service overseas became the norm, a legionary was expected to serve continuously for a number of years. For example, in 180 and 140 BC, we hear of legionaries in Spain being replaced with new recruits after six years (Liv. 40.36.6; App. *Iber.* 78). In a section reflecting the legal requirements for holding office after 89 BC, the Table of Heraclea states that a citizen of the Lucanian town was ineligible to serve as a local magistrate or councillor unless he had completed six *stipendia* in a legion (ILS 6085).

When Marius was consul for the second time and assumed the command against the Cimbri (104 BC), he ‘had the option of choosing a force from two armies, one of which had served under Rutilius, the other under Metellus and later himself, he preferred the troops of Rutilius, though fewer in number, because he deemed them of trustier discipline’ (Front. *Strat.* 4.2.2). It is



Legionaries and an *eques* (cavalryman) on the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus. The manipular legion had a contingent of 300 *equites*, but they are absent from the cohortal legion, which relied on allied and auxiliary cavalry support. (Marie-Lan Nguyen/ Wikimedia Commons/ Public Domain)

usually assumed Marius did so because Rutilius Rufus had trained this new army to a high standard. However, the bulk of Marius' African army was composed of men originally recruited by Lucius Calpurnius Bestia in 111 BC (Sall. *Iug.* 27.5). As six years had elapsed since their recruitment, Marius would have discharged them when he returned to Italy in 105 BC. The *capite censi* who volunteered in 107 BC presumably continued to serve in garrisons in Africa or with Marius against the Cimbri until the conclusion of the war in 101 BC. The *emeriti* (veterans) Marius had persuaded by special inducements to re-enlist in 107 BC may have signed on for only the duration of the campaign. Rather than grizzled middle-aged warriors, we should perhaps imagine that some of the *emeriti* who sailed to Africa with Marius were men in their mid- or late twenties.

The six-year service period was a cause of concern for Sulla in 83 BC. He was about to return to Italy and confront his Marian opponents, but as the core of his army had been recruited in 89 BC, he feared the soldiers would disperse to their homes as soon as they landed in Italy. He therefore required them to swear a new *sacramentum* to serve for the duration of the civil war (Plut. *Sull.* 27.3).

Early in 77 BC, Pompey was given another of the special commands that characterized his spectacular and unconventional career. He was granted *imperium* by the Senate to assist the proconsul Quintus Lutatius Catulus (son of the co-victor of Vercellae) in the suppression of Marcus Aemilius Lepidus. Pompey received a part of a newly levied army and besieged Lepidus' legate, Marcus Iunius Brutus, in Mutina. Brutus (father of the assassin of Caesar) quickly yielded and his army went over to Pompey. Meanwhile, Catulus defeated Lepidus on the outskirts of Rome. Lepidus retreated into Etruria and then fled to Sardinia, where he died. With the Roman Republic secure, Catulus ordered Pompey to disband his army, but Pompey refused (Plut. *Pomp.* 16–17; Sall. *Hist.* 1.67.21R). Pompey was desirous of another special command to assist Metellus Pius in the war against Sertorius, and so he marched towards Rome and established a camp just outside the city. The Senate took the heavy hint and invested Pompey with proconsular *imperium*. Over the course of 40 days, doubtless drawing on his extensive *clientela*, Pompey's army swelled to 30,000 infantry (five or six legions) and 1,000 cavalry (Sall. *Hist.* 2.86.4R; Oros. 5.23.9). The army remained in commission until Pompey and Metellus celebrated their joint triumph over Sertorius in Rome on 31 December 71 BC (App. *BC* 1.121). So, once again, six continuous years of service for Pompey's legionaries, but Pius, who also disbanded his army in 71 BC (Sall. *Hist.* 4.38R), had been fighting in Spain since 79 BC.

Long service

Discharge after six years or so was not, however, guaranteed. When Lucullus went east in 73 BC, he was accompanied by a single legion recruited in Italy in the winter of 74/73 BC and when he arrived in Asia, he took over command of an existing Roman army (Plut. *Luc.* 7.1–2). This army included the two Valerian or Fimbrian legions that had been enlisted by the consul Lucius Valerius Flaccus in 86 BC. They mutinied against him and went over to his legate Gaius Flavius Fimbria, who led them with success against Mithridates, but when Sulla appeared on the scene, they deserted Fimbria. Sulla left the Fimbrians, as they had become known, as a garrison force in the East. They could anticipate discharge in 80/79 BC but made no effort to return to Italy



and appear to have promptly re-enlisted. It may be that they had been recruited from *capite censi* and had no property to reclaim. They were 'lawless but good fighters' (Plut. *Luc.* 7.2) and became increasingly mutinous as the war dragged on, especially when they were denied opportunities to plunder. In 67 BC their agitation resulted in them being granted discharge, but beyond marching out of Lucullus' camp in a most theatrical fashion, the two legions still did not disband (Smith 1958, 37–40).

When Lucullus returned to Rome in 66 BC, he was accompanied by 1,600 soldiers; they would later process with him in his triumph (Plut. *Luc.* 36.4). The minimum continuous service performed by these men was seven years for the legionaries recruited by Lucullus and rather more for those from the army of Asia; there were certainly no Fimbrians in the detachment. The rest of Lucullus' army was taken over by Pompey and the soldiers did not receive their discharge until 62 BC. The Fimbrians, still under arms, re-enlisted under Pompey and continued their service to 62 BC, giving them 24 *stipendia* (Dio 36.16.3; 46.1) There were others like the Fimbrians. At the time of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey (49–48 BC), there were apparently legionaries with 30 *stipendia* ([Sall.] *ad Caes.* 1.8.6). Such veterans must have been sought after as under-officers and centurions when new legions or *supplementa* were enrolled. Marcus Petreius' legions at Pistoria contained many re-enlisted veterans (Sall. *Cat.* 59.5).

The development of essentially professional soldiers is matched by an officer class that eschewed the legal and political careers pursued by Cicero and Hortalus. Fimbria was a *homo militaris* (military man), but the classic example is Marcus Petreius. When he assumed command of Antonius Hybrida's army and led it to victory over Catiline's Sullan veterans, this *homo militaris* had served with great glory for over 30 years as 'tribune, prefect, legate and praetor [i.e. as a governor in command of a provincial garrison]' (Sall. *Cat.* 59.6).

Short service

The service of some soldiers was considerably shorter. The legionaries of the younger Catulus served for only the duration of the campaign against Lepidus (Plut. *Pomp.* 17.3). The veterans levied from mid-November 63 BC onwards by Petreius were probably discharged soon after the battle of Pistoria (c.3 January 62 BC) and the subsequent mopping up operations (Sall. *Cat.* 59.5, cf. 36.3; Dio 37.41.1). Some may have been tempted by the promise of booty to accompany Hybrida to his proconsular province of

Publius Gellius (centre), a hard-faced soldier of the mid-1st century BC (ILLRP 503). His cuirass, sash and the ring on his third finger might suggest he was an equestrian officer, but it is possible that he was a senior centurion. He is depicted here with his wife (his former slave) and their son (also born as a slave). Boston Museum of Fine Arts. (ctj71081/Flickr/ CC BY-SA 2.0)



Military procession on a cinerary urn from Volterra. The bare-headed figures in the centre, who dwarf the helmeted soldiers to the left, may represent the senior *contubernales* and centurions of the deceased magistrate/commander – the togate figure on the right. Museo Etrusco Guarnacci, Volterra. (Sailko/Wikimedia/CC BY-SA 4.0)

Macedonia and participate in his plundering forays into Thrace and Moesia (61 BC), but lacking the expert leadership of Petreius, Hybrida's army was defeated in Dardania and forced to abandon its swag. Hybrida then targeted Istria in Moesia, but was defeated by the Bastarnae and fled back to his province leaving the enemy in possession of a number of Roman standards that were not recaptured until 30/29 BC (Dio 38.10.2–3; 51.26.5). About two weeks before Petreius began re-enlisting veterans, the urban praetor Quintus Caecilius Metellus Celer was dispatched to Picenum with instructions to levy an army that befitted the 'dangerous time'. By late December he had a force of three legions and was blocking Catiline's likely escape routes over the Apennines into Cisalpine Gaul (Sall. *Cat.* 30.5, 57.2). If these legions were emergency levies it is likely that

they were demobilized soon after Catiline's defeat and death. However, it may be that Celer's legions were existing formations from the garrison of Cisalpine Gaul and he merely raised a *supplementum* (Brunt 1987, 451).

Pompey's Picene legions, recruited in spring 83 BC, may have been discharged following his triumph on 12 March 81 BC. The legions Cinna recruited in 87 BC drew heavily on the newly enfranchised Italians. Many of these men would have been veterans of the Social War, which resulted in their transformation from *socii* (allies, hence the name of the war) to Roman citizens, but theirs was a second-class citizenship and they flocked to the standard of the deposed consul because he promised equal voting rights and parity with the old citizens. Cinna is said to have raised more than 300 cohorts (more than 30 legions) in Latium and Campania (Vell. Pat. 2.20.4; App. *BC* 1.65). The figure is clearly an exaggeration. Another source relates that Cinna split the army besieging Rome into four parts: Marius received three legions and the remainder was divided between Cinna and the lieutenants Quintus Sertorius and Carbo (Oros. 5.19.9). It is tempting to suppose that each commander received three legions, but we can only speculate. It was nevertheless a substantial force and with it Cinna forced the Senate into submission. After this triumph, the majority of the legionaries were discharged. In 84 BC, when it was evident that no accommodation could be made with Sulla and he intended to return to Italy and wreak vengeance on his enemies, Cinna and Carbo had to conscript a new army.

B

Gladiatorial fighting demonstration, 105 BC

Following the disaster at Arausio (6 October 105 BC), where two Roman armies were defeated in succession by the Cimbri and some 60,000–120,000 Romans, allies and camp followers were reputedly killed, the consul Rutilius Rufus instituted a training reform aimed at improving the legionary's sword fighting skills and drafted in *doctores* (instructors) from the gladiatorial school of Aurelius Scaurus (Val. Max. 2.3.2). Here we see two gladiators, modelled after a graffito from the House of the Priest Amandus at Pompeii, demonstrating the techniques the legionaries would have to master. Rufus, on the tribunal with his legates, his lictors and a crowd of appreciative legionary recruits look on.





Celtiberian dagger. It was the model for the legionary's *pugio*, the weapon used to kill Cinna at Ancona in 84 BC. Museo Numantino, Soria. (Ángel M. Felicísimo/Flickr/CC BY 2.0)

Cinna assumed his Italian clients would gladly re-enlist, but their mood was not enthusiastic, especially when it became clear that he planned to ship the legions across the Adriatic to Liburnia. There would be little plunder in Liburnia and the prospect of fighting fellow-citizens overseas was not enticing. The first division made the crossing in fine weather, but the second encountered a storm and the fleet was scattered. When the ships made land again, the legionaries deserted (App. BC 1.77–78). The third division was preparing to depart from Ancona (*Vir. Illus.* 69.4) when the desertion of the second detachment became known. The legionaries mutinied and refused to board the transports. Cinna, who was present, was furious and ‘called them to an assembly in order to terrify them, and they assembled, also angry and ready to defend themselves. One of the lictors, who was clearing the road for Cinna, struck somebody who was in the way and one of the soldiers struck the lictor. Cinna ordered the arrest of the offender, whereupon a clamour rose on all sides, stones were thrown at him, and those who were near him drew their daggers and stabbed him. And so Cinna perished’. Carbo prudently recalled the first division from Liburnia (App. BC 1.78; Plut. *Pomp.* 5).

The legions levied by Cinna and Carbo fought against Sulla in 83 and 82 BC. More soldiers were conscripted by the consuls of 83 BC and must have drawn heavily on *proletarii* and *capite censi*. Gaius Norbanus’ legionaries were game but the raw recruits were predictably routed by Sulla’s veterans in a battle between Casilinum and Capua. After much fraternisation, Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiagenus’ four legions defected to Sulla in Campania. In 82 BC, five cohorts deserted from Carbo to Metellus Pius in the midst of a battle. Later that year, a complete legion of new citizens from Lucania, went over to Metellus (App. BC 1.84–85, 88, 91). There were many other desertions. In his *Memoirs*, Sulla stated that the Cinnans and Marians opposed him with 450 cohorts, in other words 45 legions (Plut. *Sull.* 27.3). Sulla himself arrived in Italy with five legions, and with the forces raised by Pompey and through desertions, his army grew to 23 legions. All of these legions were probably understrength, but the total number of Italians under arms was immense, perhaps 272,000 (Brunt 1987, 440–45). Following Sulla’s final victory at the battle of the Colline Gate on 1 November 82 BC and the subsequent fall of Praeneste, the demobilization of the surviving Cinnan and Marian legionaries must have been swift. At most, they will have served three full *stipendia*, but many would have seen prior service as legionaries or *socii*.

Stipendium

According to Polybius, who wrote in the mid-2nd century BC, ordinary legionaries received an annual *stipendium* (pay) of 120 *denarii* (Polyb. 6.39.12). From this modest sum was deducted the cost of clothing, rations and replacement weapons; Gaius Gracchus’ law requiring the state to pay for clothing was probably annulled (Plut. *G. Gracch.* 5.1). Even when Caesar increased pay to 225 *denarii*, it was still considered meagre recompense (Suet. *Caes.* 26.3; Tac. *Ann.* 1.17.6 on legionary dissatisfaction with pay). In Polybius’ day, centurions received twice the legionary rate, but in the early 1st century BC, corrupt provincial governors were known to auction centurionates to the highest bidders. It is possible that centurions’ pay had increased substantially, but the attraction of the post was probably the



Detail from the Mausoleum of the Julii at Glanum (St Rémy-de-Provence), depicting a centurion in combat (identified by his transverse helmet crest). Built in the later 1st century BC, the mausoleum was dedicated to a Gaius Iulius who fought for, and received Roman citizenship from, Julius Caesar. (Andy Hay/ Flickr/CC BY 2.0)

greater share of spoils received in the event of victories and the capture of cities (Smith 1958, 66), and the ability to employ a century in illegal but profitable raids for plunder, livestock and slaves (cf. Sall. *Iug.* 44.5).

BELIEF AND BELONGING

Rolling in the dust

When Sulla departed for the East early in 87 BC, he left behind one legion to bolster the forces still besieging Nola (the city would hold out until 80 BC) and to restore order in Campania. Previously, the focus had been on the new citizens that rallied to Cinna, but it was this force of Roman citizens of old stock that gave the deposed consul the recognition he required:

Cinna proceeded to Capua, where there was another Roman army, whose officers together with the senators who were present, he tried to win over. He went to meet them as consul in an assembly, where he laid down the fasces as though he were a private citizen, and shedding tears, said, 'From you, citizens, I received this authority. The people voted it to me; the Senate has taken it away from me without your consent. Although I am the sufferer by this wrong I grieve amid my own troubles equally for your sakes. What need is there that we should solicit the favour of the tribes in the elections hereafter? What need

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Inscription from a Campanian aqueduct recording Cinna as consul for the second time in 86 BC (*CIL* I² 713). Cinna had been deposed as consul in the previous year and hastened to Capua, where he won the support of legionaries with a theatrical display that included tearing his clothes and rolling in the dust. (RHC Archive)



have we of you? Where will after this be your power in the assemblies, in the elections, in the choice of consuls, if you fail to confirm what you bestow, and whenever you give your decision fail to secure it.' He said this to stir them up, and after exciting much pity for himself he rent his garments, leaped down from the rostra, and threw himself on the ground before them, where he lay a long time. Entirely overcome they raised him up; they restored him to the curule chair; they lifted up the fasces and bade him be of good cheer, as he was consul still, and lead them wherever he would. The tribunes, striking while the iron was hot, took the military oath to support Cinna, and each administered it to the soldiers under him. (App. BC 1.65–66)

The soldiers' enthusiasm and their 'spontaneous' decision to swear a new *sacramentum* was also stimulated by Cinna's promise of largesse for all ranks (Vell. Pat. 2.20.4), but the effect of his theatrics should not be underestimated. The typical Roman and Italian soldier was highly emotional, prone to violent outbursts, and

The classic portrait of the mature Pompey the Great. The bluff-faced *imperator* was known to weep and wail in the most melodramatic manner to manipulate the emotions of his legionaries. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. (Carole Raddato/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)

often mutinous and murderous when he perceived he was not receiving his due. Cinna's behaviour may seem undignified, but such a display could engender in the legionary such pity or remorse that he could be swayed by the great man lying as a suppliant in the dust. Pompey would deploy the same tactic a few months later when he lay in the gateway of Strabo's camp by the Colline Gate and tearfully invited the mutinous legionaries to trample him (Plut. *Pomp.* 3.3).

Pompey's mutinous legions

In the winter of 82–81 BC, Sulla charged Pompey with the capture of Carbo in Sicily and the extirpation of the Marians and Cinnans in Africa. These tasks were accomplished swiftly, but Pompey's army was spectacularly unruly. In Sicily, the legionaries would not desist from 'plundering and drawing their swords to threaten civilians; Pompey put a seal upon their swords, and whosoever broke the seal was punished' (Plut. *Pomp.* 10.7; *Mor.* 203C). At Carthage, the legionaries dug for rumoured buried treasure. Pompey did not attempt to stop them. He maintained a good-humoured front while the legionaries dug frantically. As he suspected, the gold-fever passed after some days. The legionaries grew ashamed of their antics and implored Pompey to lead them into battle. Pompey did so, and routed the army of the Marian commander Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus and his ally, the Numidian king, Hiabaras. Despite Pompey's superiority in numbers, it was a hard-fought encounter, made difficult by the broken terrain that forced the armies to fight in irregular fashion, and by squally weather, with wind driving rain into the faces of the Pompeians. At one point, the helmeted, and doubtless bedraggled, Pompey was not recognized by one of his own legionaries. The soldier demanded the watchword but Pompey, taken aback,

did not answer promptly and narrowly avoided being killed. When the battle was won, all that remained was for the camp of Ahenobarbus to be stormed; Pompey led the assault bareheaded (Plut. *Pomp.* 11.3–12.4; Oros. 5.21.13).

As a result of his overwhelming victory (17,000 of Ahenobarbus' 20,000 men were killed), the army saluted Pompey as *imperator*, which simply means commander or general, but was a signal honour. Loyalty was cemented during a punitive foray into Numidia, in which Pompey demonstrated in brutal fashion the power and reach of Rome, but also found time to hunt lions and elephants. On returning to his headquarters at Utica in the province of Africa, Pompey received a letter from Sulla instructing him to ship five of his legions back to Italy, and to wait in Utica with the remaining legion until he was replaced by another commander (Plut. *Pomp.* 13.1).

Half of Pompey's legions were, of course, those he had raised in Picenum. From Sulla's point of view, it would be preferable if these legions were disbanded and the men transferred into his *clientela* by enrolment in his new veterans' colonies (cf. Sall. *Hist.* 1.41R). But Pompey was desirous of a triumph. Civil war, clients, charisma and great personal wealth had enabled Pompey to by-pass the usual senatorial routes to power and prestige. He had already achieved more than the scheming Pompeius Strabo, and would not give up his army easily. It provided him with a powerful lever. Despite his charm, Pompey was not dissimilar to his father; he was 'honest of face, shameless of heart' (Sall. *Hist.* 2.17R). A suitably theatrical display was called for.

Pompey himself gave no sign of the deep distress which these orders caused him, but his soldiers made their indignation manifest. When Pompey asked them to go home before him, they began to revile Sulla, declared they would not forsake their general, and insisted that he should not trust the tyrant. At first, then, Pompey tried what words could do to appease and mollify them; but when he was unable to persuade them, he came down from his tribunal and withdrew to his tent in tears. Then his soldiers seized him and set him again upon his tribunal, and a great part of the day was consumed in this way, they urging him to remain and keep his command, and he begging them to obey and not to raise a sedition. At last, when their clamours and entreaties increased, he swore with an oath that he would kill himself if they used force with him, and even then they would hardly stop. (Plut. *Pomp.* 13.1–2)

It will come as no surprise that Pompey did not kill himself. He returned to Italy with all of his legions and Sulla, recognizing a demonstration rather than a rebellion, and knowing well the unpredictable temper of the soldiery, received Pompey warmly and called him Magnus ('the Great'), giving official recognition to the title the legionaries had bestowed upon their *imperator* in Africa. Sulla required rather more persuasion to accede to Pompey's irregular request for a triumph. He would be the first equestrian to be awarded this most public and prestigious of Roman honours, but Sulla finally relented. He preferred to have Pompey as an unruly but essentially loyal lieutenant. The rapacious nature of Pompey's legionaries resurfaced just as he was about to triumph (12 March 81 BC). Displeased at their share of the spoils from the African campaign, they threatened to disrupt the ceremony unless they received more. No theatrical pleas this time: the bullish Pompey told them flatly that he would rather not triumph at all and the would-be mutineers,

wishing to share in the glory, quickly fell back into line. The procession did not go entirely to plan. Instead of the usual team of horses, Pompey hitched the triumphal carriage to four Numidian elephants, but the beasts were too big to pass through the city gate (Plut. *Pomp.* 13.3–14.6; *Mor.* 203E; Gran. Lic. 36.31; Plin. *NH* 8.4). Pompey must have disbanded his army after the triumph. He was not involved again in warfare until 77 BC, when he received a new army (see above). He did, however, resort to arms in 78 BC when Lepidus attempted to prevent Sulla's ashes from being interred in the Campus Martius, but Rome was packed with grieving Sullan veterans and Pompey would have had no difficulty in gathering a scratch force (Plut. *Pomp.* 15.3; App. *BC* 1.105–106).

The tears of Lucullus

Theatrics were not the preserve of Cinna and Pompey. When Sulla surrounded Fimbria's camp at Thyateira with a circumvallation (85 BC), Fimbria's soldiers divested themselves of armour, began to fraternize and then to desert. Fimbria called the rest to assembly, but they declined to fight against fellow-citizens. He then rent his clothes and beseeched the soldiers individually, but the desertions continued. With theatrical methods exhausted, Fimbria deployed bribery and threats.

He went around among the tents of the tribunes, bought some of them with money, called these to the assembly again, and got them to swear that they would stand by him. Those who had been suborned exclaimed that all ought to be called up by name to take the oath. He summoned those who were under obligations to him for past favours. The first name called was that of Nonius, who had been his close companion. When even he refused to take the oath Fimbria drew his sword and threatened to kill him, and would have done so had he not been alarmed by the outcry of the others. (App. *Mith.* 59)

The attempt to kill his *contubernalis* completely alienated the army and the desperate Fimbria sent a slave to assassinate Sulla. Posing as a deserter, the nervous slave was easily detected. Sulla's legionaries then proceeded to shout insults at Fimbria from their circumvallation. They called him Athenion after the leader of a slave rebellion in Sicily. Enduring the taunts, Fimbria approached the circumvallation and requested a parley with Sulla. A legate appeared instead, compounding Fimbria's humiliation, but he was granted his life on condition that he would take ship from the province of Asia. For Fimbria, that was a disgrace too far. He said he knew of a more honourable route, and so instead of proceeding to a port, he went to the temple of Aesculapius at Pergamum where he committed suicide (App. *Mith.* 59–60; Plut. *Sull.* 29.1).

Bust of Mithridates VI as Heracles, in the Louvre. When the Pontic king crushed Triarius' legions at Zela in 67 BC, Lucullus was prevented from exacting revenge by the mutinous behaviour of the Fimbriani. (Carole Raddato/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)



It was seen above how Lucullus inherited Fimbria's legions. His lack of charisma and inability to empathize with these unruly men was his undoing. Lucullus was not an unemotional man; he wept at the sack of Amisus (Plut. *Luc.* 19.4). He was tall and considered handsome, reckoned a powerful orator, and was a courageous fighter who led from the front in battle and inspired by personal example, as at Tigranocerta (69 BC), where he fought on foot with the legionaries (*ibid.* 33.3, 28.1–5; App. *Mith.* 85). He could project such a sense of certainty and purpose that superstitious soldiers were persuaded to fight on inauspicious days or to follow him into unexplored territory (Plut. *Sull.* 27.7, 32.1). He could rally defeated soldiers, for example during the skirmishing around Cabeira (71 BC):

While some of Mithridates' men were hunting a stag, the Romans cut them off and confronted them, whereupon a skirmish followed, with reinforcements adding continually to either side. At last, the king's men were victorious. Then the Romans in their camp, beholding the flight of their comrades, were in distress, and ran in throngs to Lucullus, begging him to lead them, and demanding the signal for battle. But he, wishing them to learn how important, in a dangerous struggle with the enemy, the visible presence of a prudent general is, ordered them to keep quiet. Then he went down into the plain by himself, and confronting the foremost of the fugitives, bade them stop, and turn back with him. They obeyed, and the rest also wheeled about and formed in battle array, and a short time routed the enemy and drove them to their camp. (Plut. *Luc.* 15.5–7)

An interesting fragment of Sallust's *Histories* concerning this episode portrays Lucullus in the classic mould of the *dux* (general) whose appearance restores the morale of faltering soldiers and they fight all the harder because he now witnesses their deeds (Sall. *Hist.* 4.5R). Lucullus may not have possessed charisma, that ability to inspire devotion in others, but in battle he was dynamic and confident and could clearly motivate men.

Lucullus was a disciplinarian, but he was no martinet. After the Cabeira incident, he made an example of the defeated soldiers by forcing them to dig a deep ditch in unbelted tunics as the rest of the army looked on (Plut. *Luc.* 15.7). This punishment was particularly humiliating because the military belt was a key symbol of soldierly identity and stigma would attach to these men until they had redeemed themselves in battle. Contrast the treatment of defeated legionaries by Marcus Licinius Crassus in 72 BC. When two legions under the command of a legate were routed by Spartacus, Crassus re-armed survivors (they had disgracefully discarded their weapons as they fled) and made them swear a new *sacramentum*, but 500 legionaries, reckoned to have been the first to flee, were divided into groups of ten and one man from each



The 'Tivoli General', a statue of a Roman commander of 70–50 BC. He is heroically nude, but a *paludamentum* (general's cloak) preserves his modesty. The cuirass by his leg has the gorgon's head motif and *cinctorum* (sash) typical of Roman officer armour. Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome. (Amphipolis/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)

was executed (Plut. *Crass.* 10.1–2; Sall. *Hist.* 4.13R). This was the dreaded decimation. Those chosen by lot for execution were then clubbed or stoned to death by their comrades (cf. Polyb. 6.37).

Lucullus was an impressive man, but he lacked warmth and his aloofness in camp made men of all ranks suspect that he despised them (Plut. *Luc.* 33.3). This unfortunate manner riled Publius Clodius Pulcher, a young officer of uncertain rank but prominent in the army because of his being Lucullus' brother-in-law. He persuaded the Fimbriani to mutiny and agitate for their discharge. Public opinion in Rome then turned against Lucullus and his command was gradually dismantled (68–67 BC).

In 67 BC, the four-legion army of Lucullus' legate, Gaius Valerius Triarius, was defeated by Mithridates at Zela. Triarius was eager to snatch a victory of his own before Lucullus was replaced, but he was routed, losing 24 tribunes, 150 centurions and 7,000 legionaries (Plut. *Luc.* 35.1–2; App. *Mith.* 89). Triarius survived the disaster and Lucullus had to hide the legate for his own protection. Lucullus' intention to avenge the defeat, and to salvage something of his previous success, was undermined once again by the Fimbriani. Now that their discharge was confirmed, the legionaries declared that Lucullus no longer had the authority to command them. Lucullus' last resort was to appeal to them as a suppliant:

Entreating the soldiers man by man, going from tent to tent in humility and tears, and actually taking some of them by the hand in supplication. But they rejected his advances, and threw their empty purses down before him, bidding him to fight the enemy alone, since he alone knew how to get rich from them. However, at the request of the other soldiers, the Fimbriani were constrained to agree to remain during the summer; but if, in the meantime, no enemy should come down to fight them, they were to be dismissed. Lucullus was obliged to content himself with these terms, or else to be deserted and give up the country to the Barbarians. He therefore simply held his soldiers together, without forcing them anymore, or leading them out to battle.... Lucullus was not even his own master, but was mocked and insulted by his soldiers. These went so far in their outrageous treatment of their general, that, at the close of the summer, they donned their armour, drew their swords, and challenged to battle an enemy who was nowhere near, but had already withdrawn. Then they shouted their war cries, brandished their weapons in the air, and departed from the camp, calling men to witness that the time had expired during which they had agreed to remain with Lucullus. (Plut. *Luc.* 35.3–6)

With this dramatic exit, Lucullus knew the game was up. There was no point in using the next obvious theatrical tactic, namely lying in the gateway of the camp. The Fimbriani would have trampled him to death.

The piteous Marius

A general rather more adept than Lucullus in the theatrical art of command was Marius. When he returned from exile in 87 BC, Cinna appointed him proconsul and offered him the fasces, but Marius deliberately rejected the symbols of magisterial office. He had not cut his hair since his flight from Rome and cultivated an unkempt appearance: 'for he wished that men would pity him' (Plut. *Mar.* 41.4). The show continued as he moved with exaggerated slowness to greet Cinna. Marius was indeed now old, especially by the

standards of the Ancient World: he was now about 70 years of age. But he was not as decrepit as his performance suggested; he made a point of training every day (*ibid.* 34.3). The symbolic meeting progressed with Marius being introduced to Cinna's army, and he doubtless gave those soldiers the same polished suppliant act that had won him support after he landed in Etruria and marched to Latium:

Still squalid and long-haired, he marched through the towns presenting a pitiable appearance, boasting about his battles, his victories over the Cimbri, and his six consulships; and what was extremely pleasing to them, promising, with all appearance of genuineness, to be faithful to their interests in the matter of the vote [i.e. enrolling the new citizens in the existing voting tribes]. In this way he collected 6,000 Etruscans and reached Cinna. (App. *BC* 1.67)

While a suppliant might arouse the sympathy of civilians and soldiers alike, they would not necessarily follow a pitiful character. Marius therefore tempered his act: in 'his appeal for compassion there was mingled the look that was natural to him and now more terrifying than ever, and through his downcast mien there flashed a spirit which had been, not humbled, but made savage by his reverses' (Plut. *Mar.* 41.4). Needless to say, Marius' infirmity evaporated when Cinna presented him with an army and he set about besieging Rome and Ostia in the most energetic manner (Gran. Lic. 35.17; App. *BC* 1.67–68; Plut. *Mar.* 41–42). Once he had gained control of a body of men, Marius became the stern Roman general of popular imagination, leading by example, exacting rigorous but fair discipline and expecting obedience in return (Sall. *Iug.* 100.4–5; Plut. *Mar.* 14.1–2).

TRAINING

Death of a consul

In early June 90 BC, the consul Publius Rutilius Lupus and his legate and kinsman, Gaius Marius, established camps on the west bank of the river Tolenus. The consul and his deputy then threw bridges across the river and prepared to invade rebel territory. A short distance separated the Roman camps, Marius' being located downstream of the consul's. Vettius Scato, the rebel general, established his own camp opposite Marius but concealed most of his soldiers in ravines and rough ground near Lupus' bridge. The consul was impatient to get to grips with Scato and his Marsian army, but Marius advised his relative to wait. The newly levied Roman troops were not yet fully trained; they should be drilled in the camps until they were ready to fight, advised Marius. He added that they had ample provisions, whereas the Marsi would soon be forced to withdraw.

Wary of the ever-ambitious Marius, the consul was not convinced. On the morning of 11 June, Lupus led his army across the Tolenus and into Scato's ambush. The Marsi emerged from their hiding places with their shields held high, ready to intercept missiles, and pelted Lupus' marching column with rocks (Sisenna F7C). The consul was struck on the head and mortally wounded. The surprise was total and Lupus' soldiers were overwhelmed. Those not killed in the rough ground were driven into the Tolenus: 8,000 died. Marius only discerned Scato's ruse when bodies floated downstream to

Left: Silver coinage of the Italian rebels (from top): the Italic bull goring the Roman she-wolf (*lupa*, perhaps an allusion to the defeat of Rutilius Lupus in 90 BC) and two military oath-taking scenes. Right (from top): denarius of 54 BC commemorating the consulship of Pompeius Rufus and Sulla. Denarius issued by Gaius Valerius Flaccus (brother of the general deposed by Fimbria), note the legionary eagle flanked by two centurial standards referring to *H(astati)* and *P(rincipes)* (82 BC). Denarius issued by the moneyer Aulus Postumius Albinus (81 BC). His great-uncle was humiliated by Jugurtha and his father died at the Colline Gate. The reverse depicts one of his more successful ancestors with a legionary eagle and the fasces (81 BC). (RHC Archive)



his bridge. He immediately crossed the river, stormed the lightly defended enemy camp and advanced up the far bank to take Scato's army in the rear. The Marsi were thus routed in turn, but Scato escaped into the ravines where he had set his ambush (App. *BC* 1.43; Oros. 5.18.10–13; Dio F98.1–2).

Toil

In 109 BC, Metellus Numidicus took command of the legions which had, so recently, been demoralized by the inept leadership of the Postumii brothers. Metellus' restorative methods included forcing all slaves, *lixae* (camp followers who provided goods and services), merchants and baggage animals from the camp, and making the legionaries prepare their own food. Every morning, Metellus broke camp and the legionaries gathered up all their baggage for a route march. As they marched, Metellus was everywhere, sometimes at the head of the column, sometimes at the rear, sometimes in the middle, making sure no legionary fell out of rank or moved away from the standards. It is likely that Metellus ordered halts for the soldiers to practice discarding their packs and quickly draw their weapons. Cicero emphasizes the importance of this. The legionary, he tells us, had to carry, among other things, half a month's rations and a stake, but must be ready to cast them aside and be ready for action with his *gladius* and *scutum*, which should be like extensions of his limbs (Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* 2.37). Metellus presumably also



Combat techniques

The legionary is generally thought of as a heavy infantryman who fought in close order with his comrades. In actual fact, the legionary fought in a regular but relatively open order and was quite mobile fighter, requiring space to wield javelin, sword and shield; to rush forward at the enemy, or to step back or turn and meet attacks from various directions (Polyb. 18.29.5–10). Some legionaries, such as the Sertorians illustrated here, fought as light infantry, in completely open order, and used hit-and-run tactics. The Sertorians, and the Pompeians who eventually defeated them, were strongly influenced by local Spanish fighting techniques, especially the tactics of the Lusitani (Caes. *BC* 1.44).



The drainage of the Fucine Lake began in Roman times, was completed in the 19th century, and it is now an agricultural plain (Fucino). In 90 BC, the lake was still intact and the consul Cato died on its shore in 89 BC during a battle with the Marsi, perhaps by the hand of one his own men. (Rudy Massaro/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 4.0)



drilled the legions in wheeling from column into battle line and to assume various formations, such as would soon be employed at the battle of the river Muthul. There would also have been practice at advancing rapidly towards the enemy and charging at the run, and when to raise the *clamor* (war cry) (*ibid.* 2.37; cf. *Caes. BC* 3.93). At the end of the march, Metellus' legionaries entrenched a new camp as if Jugurtha's army was near, guards were set and all was closely inspected by Metellus and his legates, including Marius and Rutilius Rufus (*Sall. Jug.* 45.2–3).

During the battle of Vercellae (101 BC), the proconsul Lutatius Catulus vowed a temple to 'the Fortune of the Day'. Catulus' superbly fit legionaries, whom he claimed neither panted nor sweated during the long fight, helped win the victory, and the temple was duly consecrated in Rome (temple B at Largo di Torre Argentina). (Wknight94/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0)



Marius was keen on building strength and stamina, and cutting down on the number of baggage animals, by making legionaries march with their loads on forked sticks, which could easily be discarded. The soldiers became known as *muli Mariani*, or ‘Marius’ mules’ (Plut. *Mar.* 13.1; Front. *Strat.* 4.1.7), but this was nothing new. Both Marius and Metellus had served under Scipio Aemilianus at Numantia (134–133 bc) and drew on his example. Aemilianus restored discipline to the enervated Roman army by sending away its slaves, prostitutes and mules (App. *Iber.* 84). Marius also made his soldiers practice running, which was essential for charging and pursuing the enemy. Pompey added jumping, for soldiers would encounter obstacles on the battlefield and might need to leap across the ditch surrounding an enemy camp. The rampart above the ditch might have to be demolished in order to gain entry, so Pompey also made his men practice with the *vectis* (lever) (Sall. *Hist.* 2.20R). Without such preparations, his army ‘could not have matched Sertorius in battle’ (Veg. 1.9).

Pompey trained alongside his men in full armour, competing with them in running, jumping and javelin throwing; few could match the length of his cast (Plut. *Pomp.* 64.1–2). Similarly, Marius earned the respect of his men by participating in their exercises and in battle he surpassed all in his skill with *scutum*, *pilum* and *gladius* (Plut. *Mar.* 20.5–6).

Cicero was a firm believer in constant training. As well as building endurance and making the use of entrenching tools and weapons second nature, the continual *labor* (toil) encouraged *animus* (spirit). This was particularly evident in veteran legionaries. *Tirones* might possess the advantage of youth, but lacking training and experience they were prone to terror and flight in battle. The great *animus* of the veteran made him steady and contemptuous of wounds, while the *tiro* would wail disgracefully at the merest scratch (Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* 2.38). How then to prepare the *tiro* for battle? The recruit was exposed to low-level combat and accustomed to victory and its rewards. When Marius arrived in Africa with his *supplementum*



Aerial view of Numantia (near modern Soria), the Celtiberian fortress finally captured by Scipio Aemilianus in 133 bc. Marius and Jugurtha honed their military skills during the siege. (Ayuntamiento de Soria)

(107 BC), he distributed the new recruits among the legions that Metellus had restored to discipline and promptly marched the army into a fertile and prosperous district of Numidia:

There he gave everything that was plundered to the soldiers and then attacked some fortresses and towns that were not well defended by nature or garrisons, fighting many battles, but small ones in various places. Meanwhile, the raw recruits learned to enter battle fearlessly and saw that those who ran away were either captured or killed, while the bravest were the safest. They realized that it was by arms that liberty, country, parents and all else were protected, and glory and riches won. Thus in a short time the new soldiers and the veterans were assimilated and all became equally valiant. (Sall. *Iug.* 87.1–3)

When fully trained, the stamina of the legionary was such that he could fight a battle even after a forced march and digging a camp. Sulla's soldiers overcame weariness to triumph at Sacriportus and the Colline Gate (Plut. *Sull.* 28–29), and Catulus boasted that his legionaries neither sweated nor panted at Vercellae (Plut. *Mar.* 26.5).

Gladiatorial techniques

In 105 BC, Rutilius Rufus was consul and, following the disastrous defeat of his colleague Gnaeus Mallius at Arausio, he instituted new methods in weapons training. Rufus employed instructors (*doctores*) from the gladiatorial school of Gaius Aurelius Scaurus 'to plant in the legions a more sophisticated method of avoiding delivering a blow'. Gladiatorial fighting techniques had never before been used by the Roman legions, but the novel methods were morale-boosting (Val. Max. 2.3.2).

A wealthy citizen might train with a *familia* (troop) of gladiators in order to perfect his fighting techniques (Cic. *Sest.* 9). One wonders if Catiline's habit of lunging with his sword for the head or neck, rather than the usual targets on the torso (flank and stomach), resulted from such training (Cic. *Mur.* 52).

Adapting to the Enemy

The Roman legionary was trained to fight in a relatively open order:

In their mode of fighting each man must move separately, as he has to cover his person with his long shield, turning to meet each expected blow, and as he uses his sword both for cutting and thrusting it is obvious that a looser order is required, and each man must be at a distance of at least three feet from the man next him in the same rank and those in front of and behind him, if they are to be of proper use. (Polyb. 18.29.7–8)

But Roman legionaries preferred opponents who held their ground. Enemies who fought in a very open and mobile manner presented difficulties. For example, in 49 BC, Caesar's seemingly invincible legionaries were temporarily baffled by the tactics of Pompeian legionaries at Ilerda:

Their method of fighting was to charge at first at full speed (*impetus*), boldly seize ground, taking no particular trouble to preserve their ranks but to fight singly and dispersed. If they were hard-pressed, they did not consider it a

disgrace to retire and quit their position. For, waging a continuous warfare against the Lusitani and other barbarous tribes, they had become used to a barbarous kind of fighting, as it usually happens that when troops have spent a long time in any district they are greatly influenced by the methods of the country. It was this system that now threw our men into confusion, unaccustomed as they were to this kind of fighting; for as the enemy kept charging individuals they thought that they were being surrounded on their exposed flank [i.e. their unshielded right]. As for themselves, they had judged it right to keep their ranks and not to desert their standards nor to give up without grave cause the position they had taken. And so when the *antesignani*¹ were thrown into confusion the legion posted on that wing could not stand its ground and withdrew to the nearest hill. (Caes. *BC* 1.44).

Caesar was not unaccustomed to such tactics; he had defeated the Lusitani in 61 BC, but Pompey's legionaries had been battling them since the Sertorian War, and had adapted their fighting style accordingly. In the run up to the battle of Thapsus (46 BC), Caesar's legionaries were again struggling in skirmishes with more mobile troops, on this occasion Labienus' Numidian cavalry and light infantry. Some speedy training in effective counter-tactics was called for:

Caesar proceeded to train his forces, not as a commander trains a veteran army with a magnificent record of victorious achievements, but as a *lanista* trains gladiator recruits. He instructed then in how many feet they were to retreat from the enemy; the manner in which they must wheel round upon their adversary; the restricted space in which they must offer him resistance, now doubling forward, now retiring and making feint attacks; and almost the spot from which, and the manner in which they must throw their missiles. These were the lessons he taught them. For it was surprising the amount of worry and anxiety the enemy's light-armed troops were causing our army, what with their making the cavalry wary of engaging for fear of losing their mounts, since the light-armed troops kept killing them with their javelins, and with their wearing the legionaries out by their speediness; for no sooner had a heavy-armed soldier, when pursued by them, halted and then made an attack on them than their speed of movement enabled them easily to avoid the danger. ([Caes.] *BAfr.* 71)

Note how the anonymous author, generally considered to have been one of Caesar's officers, likens his general to a *lanista* – the manager of a troop of gladiators, suggesting the lasting influence of Rutilius Rufus' training reform.

1 Lit. 'those before the standards', perhaps younger legionaries considered more agile and therefore suited to taking on enemy light troops (Caes. *BC* 3.84), but the term was also applied to the first line of an army in battle order, e.g. Sulla's formation against a Pontic phalanx in Boeotia, where the first line is described as *antesignani* and the second as *postsignani* ('behind the standards') (Front. *Strat.* 2.3.17).



Julius Caesar. His vaunted legionaries sometimes faltered when they encountered unfamiliar tactics, but Caesar would promptly train them in appropriate counter-measures. Altes Museum, Berlin. (Ethan Gruber/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)

Legionaries armed with heavy flat-tanged *pila*. Detail from the Mausoleum of the Julii at Glanum. (Andy Hay/Flickr/CC BY 2.0)



EQUIPMENT

Pilum

The *pilum* came in various types, ranging from light to heavy and with socketed or tanged heads, but was distinguished from other javelins by having a long iron shank between the point and where the socket or tang fixed to the wooden shaft.

Roman reliance on the *pilum* was already centuries-old when Caesar's legions unleashed volleys of *pila* on the Helvetii at Bibracte in 58 BC. The javelins pinned together overlapping shields or the long shanks became bent and could not be removed and the Helvetian warriors were forced to cast aside their shields and receive the Romans' sword with 'naked bodies' (Caes. *BG* 1.25). In advance of the battle of Vercellae (101 BC), Marius had the heavy flat-tanged *pila* of his army adapted by replacing one of the iron

D

Weapons

Roman legionaries used billhooks (1) while on campaign for cutting wood, but the discovery of billhooks in the destruction layer associated with Pompey's capture of Valentia (75 BC) prompted the suggestion that they might also have been employed in combat, e.g. mounted on a long pole and used as an anti-cavalry weapon (2) (Ribera and Calvo 1995).

As well as expertise with the *pilum*, *scutum* and *gladius*, legionaries were expected to be competent with the sling (3) (Veg. 1.16). The inscribed lead sling bullets (*glandes*) illustrated here follow Roman and Picene examples from Pompeius Strabo's siege of Asculum (90–89 BC) (4):

ASCLANIS DON – 'A gift for the Asculani!' (ILLRP 1093 (3))

FERI / POMP – 'Hit Pompeius!' (ILLRP 1092)

FERI PICAM – 'Hit a magpie!' (CIL IX 6080, 12 (2): *pica* is magpie, but *picus*, woodpecker, the bird sacred to Mars from which the Picenes took their name, was probably meant)

L XV – 'the Fifteenth Legion' (ILLRP 1098 (3))

TAVRVM VORES MALO / TAMEN EVOMES OMNEM – 'Swallow the bull and go to hell! / But you'll puke up the lot!' (ILLRP 1100 (3): the bull of Mars was the symbol of the Italian rebels)

Also illustrated here is a *glans* from Numantia dating to the Sertorian War: PIETAS / Q·SERTO PROCOS – 'Loyalty / Quintus Sertorius proconsul' (AE 2002, 786). The final bullet, from Saint-Pargoire, names a centurion of Caesar's favourite legion: C·VARIO·LX – 'Gaius Varius, centurion of the Tenth Legion' (Feugere 2008).



1



2



3



4





rivets that secured the head with a wooden dowel. The intention was that the dowel should break on striking an enemy shield, and that the wooden shaft would then pivot on the iron rivet and hang down, thus encumbering the Cimbric warrior (Plut. *Mar.* 25.1–2). These examples tend to obscure the main function of the *pilum*: to penetrate shield and armour and wound or kill the man (Liv. 9.19.7, 10.39.12). It was with this in mind that Marius' co-commander at Vercellae, the proconsul Catulus, had his name inscribed on *pilum* shafts to determine how many of the enemy his legionaries had killed (*ibid.* 27.4). The *pilum* might also be used like a spear as a thrusting weapon, especially against cavalry (Plate H).

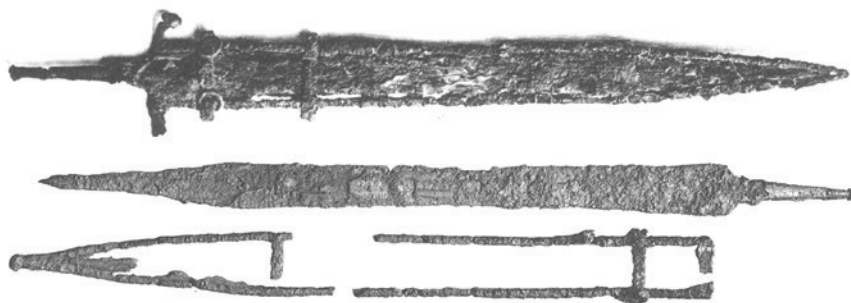
Gladius and Pugio

A volley of *pila* could be devastating, disordering or even breaking up an advancing enemy formation. However, the enemy sometimes advanced so rapidly that there was no time to hurl *pila*: at Sacriportus, Pistoria and Caesar's battle against Ariovistus, legionaries either thrust their *pila* into the ground or simply dropped them, drew their swords and charged (Plut. *Sull.* 28.6; Sall. *Cat.*

Relief of legionaries from Estepa dating to the time of Caesar. The legionary to the right is armed with the *gladius Hispaniensis*. Only one wears body armour (a shirt of mail: *lorica hamata*) but both have *ocreae* (greaves) and are well protected by their *scuta* (shields; still long but shorter than those depicted on the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus) and *galeae* (helmets). Museo Arqueológico de Sevilla. (Imperi Viator/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)

60.2; Caes. *BG* 1.52).

The *gladius Hispaniensis* (Spanish sword) was the typical weapon of the period. The Romans probably developed it from a Celtiberian prototype in the late 3rd century BC (Quesada Sanz 1997; Bishop 2016, 8–12). It was a cut-and-thrust weapon, and its relatively long blade made it suitable for infantry or cavalry use; extant examples have blades lengths of c.60–64cm. At the battle of the Sucro (75 BC), the mounted Pompey was attacked by a tall Sertorian infantryman and received a wound to his hand, but Pompey's riposte severed his opponent's sword hand (Plut. *Pomp.* 19.2). The *gladius Hispaniensis* was capable of cleaving limbs and chopping off heads (Liv.



Top and middle: Roman-type swords with metal framed scabbards from the Gallic cemeteries at Ornavasso and Giubiasco, 1st century BC. (RHC Archive)



31.34.4), but a blade could fail if it struck armour. When Sulla's army captured Athens in 87 BC, the first legionary to scale the city's wall was Marcus Aetius. 'Sulla himself says in his Memoirs that ... when an enemy

The Acropolis viewed from the Kerameikos, from where Sulla's legionaries, led by Marcus Aetius, finally broke into Athens. The blade of Aetius' *gladius* shattered when it struck the helmet of a defender. (Aleksandr Zykov/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)



Cinerary urn depicting the legend of the Seven Against Thebes, but the distinctive gate with sculptural heads is that of ancient Volaterrae and it was probably influenced by Sulla's siege of the Etruscan city in 80 BC. Museo Etrusco Guarnacci, Volterra. (Verity Cridland/Flickr/CC BY 2.0)

An iron *pugio* (dagger) of the type carried by legionaries. Museo de Teruel. (Turol Jones/ Flickr/CC BY 2.0)



confronted him, he gave him a downward cut on the helmet with his sword, and the weapon shattered. He did not, however, yield ground, but remained and held his own' (Plut. *Sull.* 14.2).

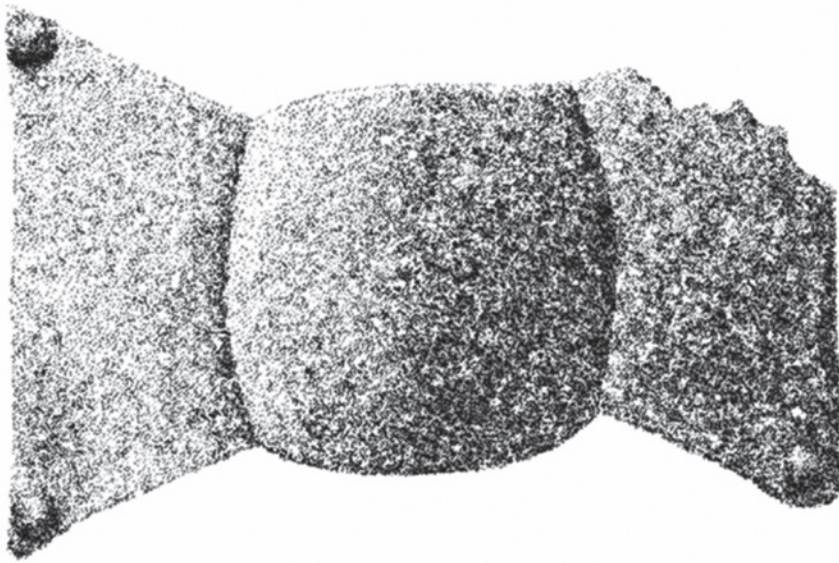
The legionary was equipped with a secondary sidearm, the *pugio* (dagger). It receives little attention in our sources except as the weapon used by mutinous legionaries to murder Cinna in 84 BC (App. *BC* 1.78).

Detail from the Aemilius Paullus monument illustrating the offensive use of the *scutum*. The legionary on the left swings his heavy shield to strike the mount of a Macedonian horseman. (No. fm135134 Delphi, Archäologisches Museum, Relief, 167ante. © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg)

Scutum

The legionary wore a helmet (*galea*), body armour (*lorica*), usually of mail, and sometimes greaves (*ocreae*), but his main protection was the *scutum*, a tall oval shield that covered him from shoulder to shin. The *scutum* was used offensively as well, to batter and barge opponents (Plut. *Mar.* 20.5). Despite being heavy, a legionary would punch out with his *scutum*, hitting his enemy with the metal boss (*umbo*) (Sall. *Hist.* 2.74.2R).





The legionary *scutum* of our period was reinforced with either an hourglass-shaped or a winged *umbo* (boss), such as this iron example from La Caridad (Caminreal), Museo de Teruel. (RHC Archive)

Slings, stones and scorpions

Corps of Balaeric slingers (*funditores*) feature regularly among the auxiliaries in Roman field armies. In battle, the slingers were positioned in the gaps between the subunits of the legions, but skill with the sling was also considered useful for legionaries (Veg. 1.16), especially when conducting sieges or defending positions or fortifications. Hence the lead sling bullets (*glandes*) inscribed with the numerals and titles of Pompeius Strabo's legions from the siege of Asculum (ILLRP 1097.1, 1098.3; CIL IX 6086, 18.1).

The legionaries of Rutilius Lupus, routed by the Marsi at the Tolenus, knew how effective a weapon the simple hand-thrown rock or stone could be. Legionaries also used this humble missile, for example when repulsing a



Inscribed lead sling bullets (*glandes*) from the sieges of Asculum (90–89 BC) and Perugia (41–40 BC). Some of the inscriptions, especially those from Perugia, are quite obscene: The sling bullet was the ultimate hurled insult. Terme di Diocleziano, Rome. (Sarah E. Bond/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)



Relief from Asculum depicting *funditores* (slingers) of the 1st century BC. (RHC Archive)

sortie against their siege works at an unnamed fortress in Isauria (Sall. *Hist.* 2.74.2R), but they also had access to sophisticated stone- or bolt-throwing artillery, such as the *scorpio* (scorpion) used by the Fimbrians at Cyzicus (*ibid.* 3.26R).

E

Aquilifer of Caesar's Tenth Legion

In 58 BC, on hearing of the immense reputation of Ariovistus' Germans for *virtus* (valour) and skill at arms, Caesar's army was infected with fear. It started with the inexperienced *contubernales* in Caesar's entourage, but it spread even to the veteran legionaries and centurions. There were cowardly mutterings that the soldiers would refuse to follow the standards when Caesar moved his camp from Vesontio to face Ariovistus. Caesar summoned all ranks of centurion and demanded of them, 'Why do you despair of your *virtus* or of my competence?' If necessary, he would march on the Germans with only the Tenth Legion. Order was restored (Caes. *BG* 1.39–41). Shame was always a great motivator for Romans: how could they have even countenanced abandoning their *imperator*? And competitiveness, too. Why should the Tenth have all the glory? In the subsequent battle against Ariovistus, Caesar selected legates to command the legions and, more importantly, to act as witnesses to the *virtus* of the legionaries. The vaunted *virtus* of Ariovistus' warriors was no match for the berserk fury of the legionaries. When the Germans formed a *testudo* ('tortoise', a defensive formation with walls and roof of shields), the legionaries who had so recently cowered in the camp at Vesontio, 'leapt on to the masses of the enemy, tore the shields from their hands and wounded them from above' (*ibid.* 1.52).

Here we see the *aquilifer* (eagle-bearer) of the Tenth, carrying the *aquila* (eagle) that Marius established as the primary standard of the legions. His shield bears the abbreviated *Equestris* (horsemen) epithet that stemmed from Caesar preferring to use this most trusted legion as his bodyguard for a parley with Ariovistus. When he took horses from Gallic auxiliaries and mounted the legionaries on them, one of the soldiers joked that Caesar had not only formed them into praetorian cohort (a great honour) but also made them all *equites* (*ibid.* 1.42). The *aquilifer* is adorned with *dona militaria* (military decorations) for bravery: gold torques and bracelets, and a harness of *phalerae* (medallions) carved from chalcedony and miniature silver shields.

The inset shows an alternative form of *aquila* (eagle standard) (1). The centurial standards carry plates or banners referring to *H(astati)* ('spearmen') and *P(rincipes)* ('best men') or *P(ili)* ('pilum-bearers') (2). These titles, stemming from the three divisions of the manipular legion, were retained by the cohortal legion. Each cohort had six centuries, two each of *hastati*, *principes* and *pili*, designated as prior (front, leading) or posterior. The sources present cohorts fighting as single units, but the retention of the traditional titles suggests the centuries were trained to fight individually or paired together in something like the old manipular manner (*ibid.* 2.25). Centurial standards might be adorned with embossed discs bearing the images of suitably martial deities (3).



Elements of a *scorpio* from La Caridad (Caminreal), a type of catapult used by legionaries in sieges. Museo de Teruel. (Marblas4/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0)



ORGANIZATION

Funerary monument of the Septumii (75–50 BC). Centre is Lucius Septimius, an equestrian officer, probably a legionary tribune (*ILLRP* 697). He grasps the hilt of a gladius with his left hand. Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome. (Sarah E. Bond/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0)

From manipule to cohort

In 109 BC, as he advanced towards the river Muthul, Metellus detected an ambush prepared by Jugurtha. He strengthened the vulnerable right flank of his army with 'three lines of reserves'. These reserves (*subsidia*) are described as being formed of *manipuli* (maniples) (*Sall. Iug.* 49.6). The usual interpretation of this is that Metellus' legions were still organized in maniples, of which there were 30 per legion, and that he deployed them in the





Relief of a *cornicen*, the horn player who relayed trumpet signals from the general to direct the century's standard-bearer; the standard was the legionaries' focus of direction in battle. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid. (Santiago Lopez-Pastor/ Flickr/CC BY-ND 2.0)

traditional *triplex acies* (triple battle line). This, it is asserted, is the last instance of the manipule being deployed as a tactical unit, but as the battle develops, the legionaries fight not in maniples but in cohorts (*ibid.* 51.3). *Velites*, the light troops, also make a final appearance in the run up to the battle of the Muthul. However, these particular *velites* were not necessarily the 'swift ones' of the manipular legion, but lightly equipped Italian allies (*ibid.* 46.7, cf. 105.2).

By 104 BC, Marius had discarded four of the five customary standards (*signa*) of the legion (wolf, minotaur, horse and boar), retaining the eagle (*aquila*) alone. These *signa* had originally preceded their respective *ordines* (ranks or battle lines) of the legion but, in recent years, they had been left in camp while only the eagle was taken into battle (Plin. *NH* 10.16). The four standards that Marius got rid of were connected with command and control of the manipular legion but were no longer of relevance to the cohortal

legion. The legion was now divided into ten cohorts, and there were six centuries in a cohort. Each century was commanded by a *centurio* (centurion). He was assisted by the *optio* (deputy), *signifer* (standard-bearer), *cornicen* (hornist), and *tesserarius* (officer of the watchword). Curiously, there was no cohort commander or overall cohort standard. The six tribunes (officers of equestrian rank), seem to have shared responsibility for command of the legion, but one might be placed in overall command for a specific task (e.g. Gabinius, charged by Sulla with the defence of Chaeronea: Plut. *Sull.* 16.8). Only at the end of the period are senatorial legates encountered as legion commanders, and then only as *ad hoc* appointments to act as witnesses to the valour of the legionaries in battle (Caes. *BG* 1.52). Much about the organization and operation of the legion remains elusive.

The size of the legion

Marius is said to have raised legions of 6,200 men (Festus 453L). In 88 BC, each of the six ‘full legions’ in Sulla’s army had a complement of about 5,800 (App. *BC* 1.57; Plut. *Mar.* 33.4, *Sull.* 9.3). Despite hard campaigning in Greece and Asia Minor, Sulla returned to Italy in 83 BC with five legions comprising 30,000 men (cf. Vell. *Pat.* 2.24.3). One of Sertorius’ legions numbered 6,000 men (Plut. *Luc.* 7.1), and Lucullus’ five legions (including the two Fimbrian units) totalled 30,000 men (App. *Mith.* 72). In 87 BC, Marius attracted 6,000 volunteers in Etruria and formed them into a legion (Gran. *Lic.* 35.17; App. *BC* 1.67), but the Cinnan and Marian legions that confronted Sulla in 83–82 BC had cohorts of 500 (App. *BC* 1.82). Five or six thousand men should be considered optimum figures for newly raised or reinforced legions. In 69 BC, Lucullus’ legions had an average strength of c.4,000 (Plut. *Luc.* 27.2). Even a force of 1,000 men could be considered as legion if it was organized in ten cohorts (Sall. *Cat.* 56.2).

CAMPAIGN AND BATTLE

A most notable encounter between legionary forces was fought near Pistoria on about 3 January 62 BC (main sources: Sall. *Cat.* 56–61; Dio 37.39). On one side were the two drastically understrength legions of Catiline. Ranged against them was ‘the great army’ of the proconsul Antonius Hybrida, comprising three or four full-size legions, a praetorian cohort and reinforcements recently brought from Capua by Publius Sestius (Cic. *Sest.* 9–12).

The drunk general

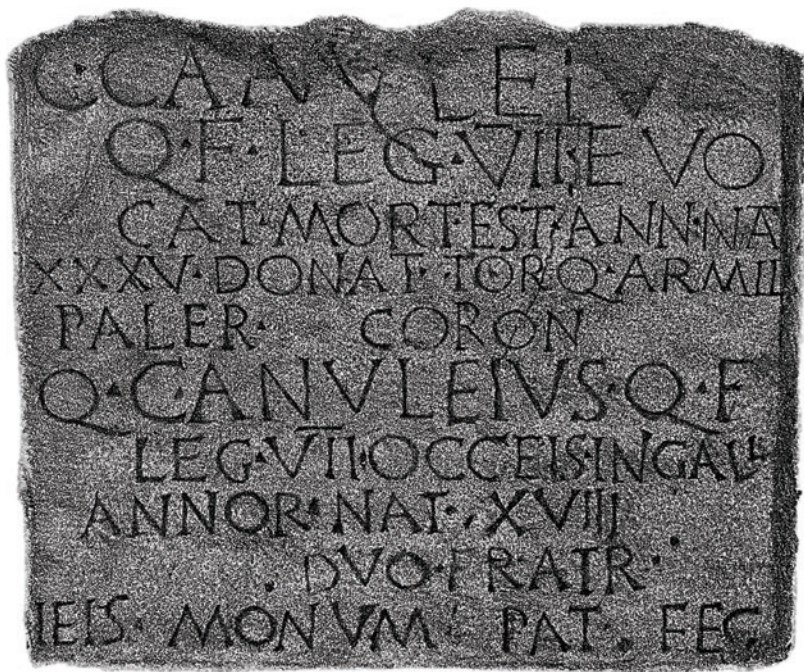
On the day of the battle, Hybrida, an old friend of Catiline, was incapacitated by a ‘disease of the feet’ and he passed command to Marcus Petreius. It was suspected that Hybrida’s ailment, perhaps gout, was feigned because he did not wish to fight against the man with whom he had campaigned on a joint ticket for the consulships of 63 BC. It is also possible that the proconsul deliberately got so drunk that Petreius had to take command.

Dissolute behaviour may have contributed to Hybrida’s expulsion from the Senate in 70 BC and at a trial in 59 BC, the prosecutor Marcus Caelius Rufus accused him being so drunk in camp that he was unable to respond when the enemy attacked. Caelius asserted that when centurions rushed to



the general's tent 'they found him lying prone in a drunken slumber, snoring with all the force of his lungs, and belching continually, while the most distinguished of his *contubernales* sprawled over every couch, and the rest of

Faesulae (Fiesole), a Sullan veteran colony and the headquarters of Catiline and Manlius in 63 BC. (Szilas/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain)



Gravestone of the Canuleii brothers who served in Caesar's Seventh Legion (ILS 2225). Quintus (lines 6–8) was killed in Gaul aged 18 and must have died soon after enlistment, but Gaius (lines 1–5) won military decorations, completed his service and was invited to re-enlist as an *evocatus*. *Evocati* received better pay and ranked only slightly below centurions. (RHC Archive)



Snow- and spruce-clad hills at Campo Tizzoro. The battle of Pistoria (Pistoia) was actually fought somewhere in the mountains north of the city (Montagna Pistoiese). Catiline probably hoped to cross the Apennines by the valley of the Rhenus (Reno), and Campo Tizzoro and Pontepetri, where the river rises, have been suggested as possible locations for the battle. (Luigi Torreggiani/Flickr/CC BY 2.0)

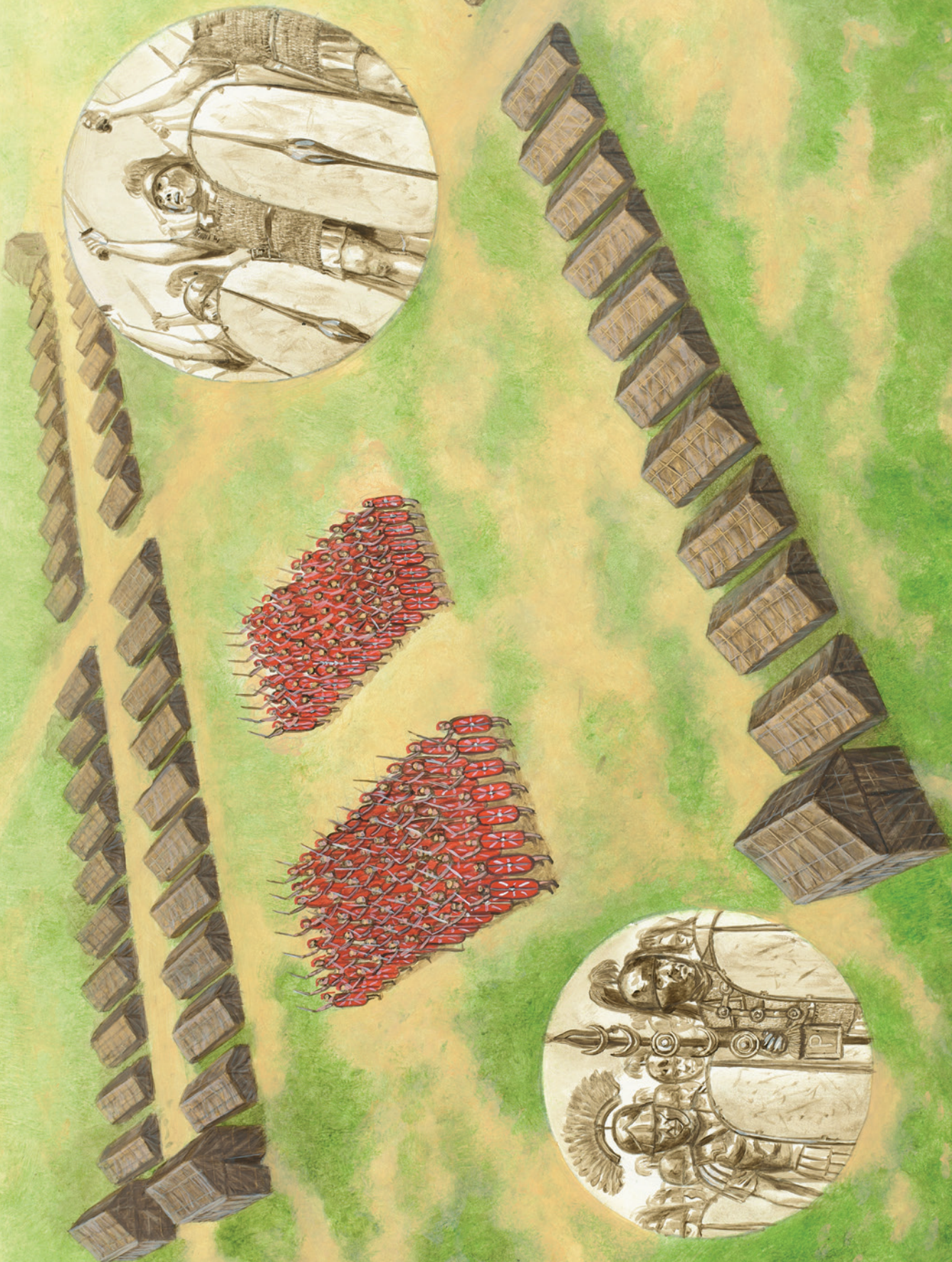
the harem lay round in all directions'. These were not military *contubernales*; the word is used in its slang meaning of prostitute. The prostitutes 'attempted to rouse Antonius, called him by name, heaved up his head, but all in vain, while one whispered endearing words into his ear, and another slapped him with some violence. At last he recognized the voice and touch of each and tried to embrace her who happened to be nearest. Once wakened he could not sleep, but was too drunk to keep awake, and so was bandied to and fro between sleeping and waking in the hands of his centurions and his concubines' (Quint. *Inst.* 4.2.123–24).

The fragment of Caelius' speech does not identify the enemy. It may refer to Hybrida's defeat by the Bastarnae, but he was being tried on two counts: for his corruption as governor of Macedonia and his suspected complicity in

F

The Fimbriani

In 67 BC, when command of the war against Mithridates of Pontus was transferred from Lucullus to Pompey, the Fimbrian legionaries, who were in their twentieth year of service, deliberately insulted Lucullus, whom they considered miserly and disliked for limiting their opportunities to plunder. According to Plutarch, at the end of the summer the Fimbrians 'donned their armour, drew their swords, and challenged to battle an enemy who was nowhere near.... Then they shouted their war cries, brandished their weapons, and departed from the camp' (Plut. *Luc.* 35.6). The camp was somewhere in Pontus or Eastern Galatia. The Fimbrians, who had agitated for and been granted discharge (as private citizens and no longer under military discipline, they were emboldened to insult their former commander in this theatrical manner), did not return to Italy. Now essentially professional soldiers, they remained under arms in Asia, re-enlisted with Pompey and continued to serve until 62 BC.



Catiline's conspiracy (Dio 38.10.3–4). It is possible, then, that Caelius (who had himself flirted with Catiline's cause) accused Hybrida of being blind drunk on the day of the battle of Pistoria.

Manoeuvres and desertions

In November 63 BC, Catiline had two full legions at Faesulae, but only a quarter of the soldiers were fully armed. A small Senatorial army under Marcius Rex was already near Faesulae, but posed no real threat. When Hybrida's army arrived in late November, Catiline broke camp and marched and counter-marched through the wintry hills north of Faesulae, denying Hybrida any opportunity for battle. Supplies started to run low, as did morale. When news arrived in mid-December that Catiline's plot to seize Rome had been exposed and his co-conspirators executed, the majority of the legionaries deserted. They



Battle. Fluid *gladius* and *scutum* combat as depicted on a painting from the tomb of Titus Statilius Taurus, a general of the later 1st century BC. Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome. (Daniel Hennemann/Flickr/CC BY 2.0)

G

Gnaeus Petreius takes command

At the start of winter in 102 BC, the army of the consul Lutatius Catulus retreated before the marauding Cimbri. In the valley of the river Adige near Trento, one of Catulus' legions was stationed in a fort intended to slow the advance of the barbarians. When this blockhouse was surrounded by the enemy and about to be overrun, the tribune in command of the legion panicked. Gnaeus Petreius, the *primus pilus* of the legion, opined that the only option was to cut through the Cimbri, but the terrified tribune refused to lead such an attack. Petreius drew his *gladius* and slew the tribune: the equestrian officer had effectively broken the *sacramentum* and was thus liable to summary execution. Petreius assumed command of the legion (the five other tribunes were clearly not going to attempt to pull rank), harangued the soldiers and then launched the charge that saw the legion break through the Cimbri. Impressed by the audacious attack, the Cimbri did not pursue the legion and it re-united with Catulus' army. Petreius was publicly honoured by Marius and Catulus and awarded Rome's highest military decoration, the *corona graminea* (Plin. *NH* 22.11; Plut. *Mar.* 33.6). The grass crown was presented only to those who had extricated an army from disaster. Gnaeus is thought to be the father of Marcus Petreius, the victor of Pistoria.



had been attracted by hopes of plunder or a genuine desire for revolution, but there was no chance of reinforcements reaching them now. A second army of three legions under Metellus Celer was positioned to intercept the rebels if they crossed the Apennines, and the men chose to take advantage of an amnesty offered by the Senate (Sall. *Cat.* 36.2). Only 3,000 remained with Catiline, and they included his choicest troops: centurions, *evocati* (veterans invited to resume service under their old commander) and *lecti* (chosen men). Nor would Catiline's freedmen and *coloni* (tenants) abandon their *patronus*. They were honoured by being organized into his praetorian cohort.

Unable to cross the Apennines (presumably by the Porretta Pass and the valley of the Reno), for the 'secret routes' he favoured were revealed to Senatorial forces by deserters, Catiline finally marched into the high country above Pistoria (Montagna Pistoiese). Here, at the northern edge of Etruria, he determined to make a stand. He would either cut his way through Hybrida's army or die fighting like a hero. By 3 January 62 BC (Sumner 1963) the small army had exhausted its supplies and the general assembled the remaining legionaries and exhorted them. Mostly veterans, they were under no illusions about the likely outcome of the battle. They were vastly outnumbered but they were determined to die well and preserve their pristine reputations for valour.

Battle

Catiline had the trumpeters sound the signals and he led the legionaries in battle order down from the high ground into a pre-selected plain near Hybrida's camp. With so few troops, Catiline had to turn the terrain to his

H

The battle of Tigranocerta, 69 BC

Lucullus' famous victory at Tigranocerta was set in motion by a detachment from an already small army of 24 legionary cohorts (comprising 10,000 men) and 1,000 archers and slingers. Ranged against Lucullus was the huge army of King Tigranes of Armenia: 55,000 cavalry (including 17,000 cataphracts (heavily armoured lancers)); 10,000 archers and slingers; 150,000 infantry, and 35,000 engineers, smiths and other specialists. The numbers are grossly exaggerated, but Lucullus was greatly outnumbered and had to adapt his tactics accordingly. (Sources: Plut. *Luc.* 26–28; App. *Mith.* 85.)

Lucullus marched towards the enemy in an extended battle line to present as broad a front as possible to enemy so strong in cavalry. When his advance was obstructed by a river, he had the legionary cohorts turn into column and cross it by centuries. When Tigranes observed the start of this manoeuvre, he thought the Romans were turning to retreat and poured scorn on them. However, the Romans forded the river and Taxiles, the king's minister, observed that the shields of the legionaries were uncovered and their armour was polished and gleaming: the Romans were going into battle.

Lucullus re-formed opposite Tigranes' right wing, which was protected on its flank by a hill, and the majority of the cataphracts were arrayed in front of the main Armenian battle line. Lucullus prepared to make a running charge, a typical Roman method of minimizing the time the legionaries would be exposed to missiles before they closed with the enemy. At the last moment, however, he changed his tactics. He ordered his squadrons of Gallic and Thracian cavalry to harass the cataphracts. While the enemy were distracted by this diversion, Lucullus led two legionary cohorts at the run up the far side of the hill that was supposed to secure the flank of Tigranes' army. At the summit, he paused and yelled to the legionaries, 'The day is ours, fellow-soldiers!'; and then sprinted down the hill into the enemy.

Lucullus had ordered the legionaries not to throw their *pila* but instead use them to thrust into the unprotected thighs of the otherwise heavily armoured cataphracts. The surprise of the attack was total; Tigranes' huge army dissolved in panic and the king was forced to flee for his life. The legionaries slaughtered tens of thousands and all but wiped out the cataphracts. The legionaries 'were almost ashamed, and laughed one another to scorn for requiring weapons against such slaves' (Plut. *Luc.* 28.7).



advantage. His chosen battlefield was a narrow plain, secured on the left by mountains and on the right by broken, rocky ground. Campo Tizzoro and nearby Pontepetri are the traditional locations for battle. Eight cohorts filled the plain and formed Catiline's main battle line. The remaining legionaries were held in reserve beneath their standards, but Catiline withdrew all the centurions, *lecti*, *evocati* and best equipped legionaries and placed them in the front line. Catiline sent away his horse and those of his officers to show the legionaries that the danger would be the same for all.

Catiline and his bodyguard took up position at the centre of the battle line. He had with him a Marian *aquila* from the Cimbric War. This standard had previously been kept in a shrine in Catiline's house and it is unclear how he acquired it. Manlius commanded the right wing and a 'man of Faesulae', perhaps the Sullan veteran Publius Furius (Cic. *Cat.* 3.14), commanded the left of the rebel army.

Petreius, suspicious of Catiline's offer of battle, sent out scouts to reconnoitre, but no ambush or ruse was detected. Catiline was offering a head-on collision of legions. Petreius promptly formed his battle lines, placing the re-enlisted veterans at the front. He exhorted the legionaries, many of whom he knew by name from previous campaigns and then led them slowly towards the enemy.

Catiline did the same and when the legionaries came into javelin range, they dropped their *pila*, drew their swords and charged. Petreius' veterans were shocked by the rebels' fury. The old warriors would not give ground. Catiline both fought and directed the fighting, making sure the wounded were carried behind the line, and sending his guardsman to plug gaps and reinforce weak spots. Petreius' army could make no headway and the legate decided to call in his own praetorian cohort of elite legionaries. Targeting the centre of Catiline's line, the Sullan veterans were finally pushed back; the praetorian cohort then split, driving right and left to assault the insides of the wings of the rebel army. Manlius and the Faesulan died fighting. Their legionaries refused to retreat and were killed where they stood. The centre of Catiline's army had indeed been forced back, but these men too, Sullan veterans, freedmen and tenants alike, would step back only so far and also died with all their wounds to the fronts of their bodies. Catiline himself, charged into ranks of the enemy, hacking and stabbing until he himself was mortally wounded. He was later found beneath a heap of foemen.

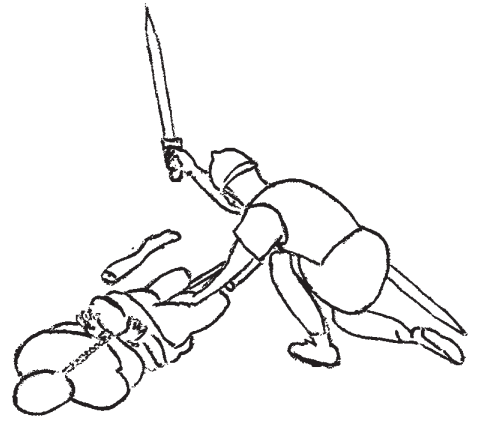
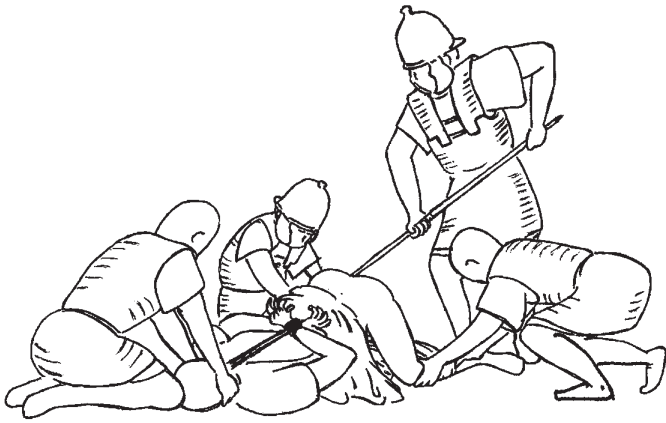
Of Catiline's 3,000, none survived, and such was the mauling inflicted on Petreius' army that it was a 'joyless victory' for the Roman Republic.

AFTER THE BATTLE

Carnage and slaughter

The Roman field of battle was a ghastly place. Hand-to-hand combat with edged weapons, as well as a continuous hail of iron, lead and stone missiles, resulted in carnage. The aftermath of Marius' rout of the army of Jugurtha and Bocchus near Cirta in 106 BC was typical:

There was a dreadful sight in the open plains: pursuing, fleeing, killing, capturing, horses and men dashed to the ground, many of the wounded unable either to flee or to remain quiet, now making an effort to rise and at once



collapsing. In short, wherever the eye could see, the ground was soaked in blood and strewn with missiles, weapons and corpses. (Sall. *Iug.* 101.11)

The best hope of safety for the defeated lay in flight, but the Romans were vicious and tenacious in pursuit. Following the capture of the Pontic camp at Orchomenus (86 BC), Sulla's legionaries pursued some of the enemy into Lake Copais and watched them drown as they begged for mercy (App. *Mith.* 50).

Inured by marching and trained to charge at the run, the legionary was superbly adapted to the chase; the prospect of plunder resulted in rapid recovery from the rigours of battle. It should not be imagined that famous night-long pursuits were the preserve of cavalry; the legionary was not willing to allow the choicest spoils to fall into the hands of mounted auxiliaries. The pursuit of the troops defeated at Artaxata (68 BC) eventually ended the morning following the battle. The legionaries were exhausted by killing, taking prisoners and by seizing as much booty as they could carry (Plut. *Luc.* 32.8). Fights over booty were common and might present fugitives with an opportunity to escape, such as Mithridates from Cabeira:

The Romans, who were forcing the pursuit, were hard upon him, and it was for no lack of speed that they did not take him. Indeed, they were very near doing so, but greed, and petty soldier's avarice, snatched from them the quarry which they had so long pursued in many struggles and great dangers, and robbed Lucullus of the victor's prize. For the horse which carried the king was just within reach of his pursuers, when one of the mules which carried the royal gold came between him and them, either of his own accord, or because the king purposely sent him into the path of pursuit. The soldiers fell to plundering and collecting the gold, fought with one another over it, and so were left behind in the chase. (Plut. *Luc.* 17.4–6)

Such was the soldiers' greed and fury in the pursuit that they often killed indiscriminately rather than take prisoners. At Cabeira, again, Lucullus ordered that Callistratus, the private secretary of Mithridates, was to be captured alive. Callistratus was duly taken, but on discovering that he had gold pieces concealed in his girdle, the soldiers slew him and pocketed the gold (Plut. *Luc.* 17.7). Archaeological excavations have uncovered graphic evidence of the brutality and torture inflicted by Pompeian legionaries on

Legionary atrocities. Skeletal remains from Pompey's capture of Valentia (75 BC) revealed that Sertorian prisoners had been impaled and dismembered. (RHC Archive)

Monument set up by the son of Gaius Voconius, a soldier of the 1st century BC. Gaius' military decorations for valour, are rendered in great detail: two twisted torques, two snake-shaped bracelets, and a set of medallions and miniature shields (phalerae) mounted on a chest harness. Museo Nacional de Arte Romano de Mérida. (Caligatus/ Wikimedia/CC BY-SA 3.0)



their Sertorian captives at Valentia (75 BC): dismemberment, impalement and decapitation (Ribera and Calvo 1995). At the capture of enemy cities, legionaries ran amok, raping, murdering and wantonly burning and destroying property (App. *BC* 1.109; Plut. *Sull.* 14; App. *Mith.* 38; Plut. *Luc.* 19.4). Legionaries committed atrocities on a massive scale, such as the massacre of civilians at Capsa (Sall. *Iug.* 91.6) or the cold-blooded murder of thousands of Samnite prisoners after the battle of the Colline Gate (App. *BC* 1.93).

When the madness had passed and the legionaries returned to camp, there were celebrations. The commander would praise his men, decorate the most valiant and distribute booty and prize money. There was feasting, drinking and several days' holiday from the usual fatigues (Sall. *Iug.* 54.1; App. *Mith.* 115; Plut. *Mar.* 20.1). Sacrifices to thank the gods were conducted and trophies of captured arms were erected (Plut. *Mar.* 22.1; *Sull.* 19.5).

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GLOSSARY

<i>assidui</i>	citizens wealthy enough to qualify for military service
<i>capite censi</i>	‘those counted by the head’, the poorest class of citizens
centurion	commander of century subunit of the legion
cohort	ten per legion; each cohort was subdivided into six centuries, but had no overall commander or standard
consul	one of two supreme magistrates elected annually
<i>contubernalis</i>	‘tent mate’, title of a soldier on a general’s staff
<i>eques, equestrian</i>	‘horseman’; title of men possessing property worth 400,000 sesterces (in the later 1st century BC) and who originally served as cavalrymen. In this period, equestrians usually served as tribunes or legates. Sons of senators held equestrian rank until they were elected to the junior magistracy of quaestor, after which they were senators for life
<i>imperium</i>	magisterial authority; non-senators could be invested with <i>imperium</i> to command military forces
legate	senior lieutenant invested with <i>imperium</i> by his commander
legion	infantry unit of 5,000–6,000 Roman citizens, organized into ten cohorts, with six centuries in each cohort, but had no regular commander. Officered by six tribunes and 60 centurions
lictors	magistrate’s attendants, armed with <i>fascēs</i> (rods and axes) symbolizing the magistrate’s authority and power to punish or execute citizens

praetor	senior magistrate, also an ancient title for an army commander hence 'praetorian cohort' as the general's bodyguard
prefect	commander of an allied infantry cohort or a force of cavalry
<i>primus pilus</i>	'first spear/javelin', senior centurion
proconsul	title of a praetor or consul after his year of elected office ended and he took up a post as a provincial governor or some other function
<i>proletarii</i>	second poorest class of citizens
<i>sacramentum</i>	the military oath
Senate	ruling assembly of Rome composed of former magistrates (senators)

ABBREVIATIONS

AE	<i>L'Année Épigraphique</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
ILLRP	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae</i>
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
App. BC	Appian, <i>The Civil Wars</i>
App. Iber.	Appian, <i>Iberian Wars</i>
App. Mith.	Appian, <i>The Mithridatic Wars</i>
[Caes.] BAfr.	Anonymous continuator of Caesar, <i>The African War</i>
Caes. BG	Caesar, <i>The Gallic War</i>
Caes. BC	Caesar, <i>The Civil War</i>
Cic. Brut.	Cicero, <i>Brutus</i>
Cic. Cael.	Cicero, <i>For Caelius</i>
Cic. Cat.	Cicero, <i>Against Catiline</i>
Cic. Div.	Cicero, <i>On Divination</i>
Cic. Lig.	Cicero, <i>For Ligarius</i>
Cic. Mur.	Cicero, <i>For Murena</i>
Cic. Phil.	Cicero, <i>Philippics</i>
Cic. Rep.	Cicero, <i>The Republic</i>
Cic. Sest.	Cicero, <i>For Sestius</i>
Cic. Tusc. Dis.	Cicero, <i>Tusculan Disputations</i>
Cic. Verr.	Cicero, <i>Verrine Orations</i>
Dio	Cassius Dio
Dion. Hal.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, <i>Roman Antiquities</i>
Front. Strat.	Frontinus, <i>Stratagems</i>
Gell. NA	Aulus Gellius, <i>Attic Nights</i>
Gran. Lic.	Granius Licinianus
Liv.	Livy
Liv. Per.	Livy, <i>Periochae</i>
Oros.	Orosius, <i>Seven Books of History Against the Pagans</i>
Plin. NH	Pliny the Elder, <i>Natural History</i>
Plut. C. Gracch.	Plutarch, <i>Life of Gaius Gracchus</i>
Plut. Caes.	Plutarch, <i>Life of Caesar</i>
Plut. Crass.	Plutarch, <i>Life of Crassus</i>

Plut. <i>Luc.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Life of Lucullus</i>
Plut. <i>Mor.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Moralia</i>
Plut. <i>Mar.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Life of Marius</i>
Plut. <i>Sull.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Life of Sulla</i>
Plut. <i>Ti. Gracch.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Life of Tiberius Gracchus</i>
Polyb.	Polybius
Quint. <i>Inst.</i>	Quintilian, <i>Institutes of Oratory</i>
Sall. <i>Cat.</i>	Sallust, <i>The War with Catiline</i>
Sall. <i>Hist.</i>	Sallust, <i>The Histories</i>
Sall. <i>Jug.</i>	Sallust, <i>The War with Jugurtha</i>
[Sall.] <i>ad Caes.</i>	Imitator of Sallust, <i>Letters to Caesar</i>
Suet. <i>Caes.</i>	Suetonius, <i>The Divine Julius Caesar</i>
Tac. <i>Ann.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i>
Tac. <i>Hist.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Histories</i>
Val. Max.	Valerius Maximus
Vell. Pat.	Velleius Paterculus
Vir. <i>Illus.</i>	[Aurelius Victor], <i>On Illustrious Men</i>

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