

# RES MILITARES

The Official Newsletter of the Society of Ancient Military Historians



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*The Society of Ancient Military Historians*

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<https://www.ancientmilitaryhistorians.org/>

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### **Message from the Secretary**

It is a great pleasure to present the latest volume of *Res Militares*. The current issue features five very informative book reviews as well as a catalogue of books available for review.

As always, we are more than happy to receive any inquiries and/or feedback, as well as information about upcoming conferences, events, CFPs, books, and so forth (email: [i\\_georganas@yahoo.com](mailto:i_georganas@yahoo.com)).

Happy reading and Happy Holidays!

*Ioannis Georganas*

### **Books Available for Review, 2023**

***Res Militares*, Society for Ancient Military Historians, Books Received, 2022-2023**

The following books have been received for review (those with an asterisk are already assigned to reviewers). Qualified volunteers should indicate their interest by sending a message to [ll-brice@wiu.edu](mailto:ll-brice@wiu.edu), with their last name and requested author in the subject line. They should state their qualifications (both in the sense of

degrees held and in the sense of experience in the field concerned). Volunteers are expected to be familiar with the topics and will submit reviews of no greater than 800 words (unless arranged by the editor) within 120 days. Graduate students are welcome to volunteer but should contact their supervisor to ascertain that a review is appropriate at this time in their studies.

Casprini, Fabrizio and Marco Saliola. *The Roman Gladius and the Ancient Fighting Techniques: Volume 1 Monarchy and Consular Age*. Yorkshire, UK: Frontline Books, 2022. Pp. 408. ISBN: 9781526778338.

Coby, Paul. *Forts and Roman Strategy: A New Approach and Interpretation*. Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2022. Pp. 272. ISBN: 9781526772107.

Barca, Natale. *Before Augustus: The Collapse of the Roman Republic*. Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2023. Pp. 384. ISBN: 9781636242323.

Elliot, Simon. *Roman Britain's Pirate King: Carausius, Constantius Chlorus and the Fourth Roman Invasion of Britain*. Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2022. Pp. 192. ISBN: 9781399094368.

Elliot, Simon. *Roman Special Forces and Special Ops: Speculatores, Exploratores, Protectores and Areani in the*

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*Service of Rome.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. Pp. 176. ISBN: 9781399090926.

Elliott, Simon. *Old Testament Warriors: The Clash of Cultures in the Ancient Near East.* Havertown, PA: Frontline, 2021. Pp. 146; ISBN: 9781612009544.

\*English, Stephen. *The Army of Alexander the Great.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2021. ISBN: 9781399013864.

Esposito, Gabriel. *Armies of the Roman Republic 264-30 BC: History, Organization and Equipment.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. ISBN: 9781399094023.

Fratantuono, Lee. *Diocletian and the Military Restoration of Rome.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. ISBN: 9781526771834.

Grainger, John D. *Sextus Julius Frontinus and the Roman Empire.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. ISBN: 9781399051224.

Grainger, John D. *The Ptolemies, Rise of a Dynasty: Ptolemaic Egypt 330-246 BC.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword History, 2022. ISBN: 9781399090223.

Hall, Joshua R. *Carthage at War: Punic Armies c. 814-146 BC.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. ISBN: 9781473885387.

Hall, Joshua R., Louis Rawlings, and Geoff Lee (eds.) *Unit Cohesion and Warfare in the Ancient World.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2023. ISBN: 9781032426242.

\*Hoo, Millinda. *Eurasian Localisms: Towards a Translocal Approach to Hellenism and Inbetweenness in Central Eurasia, Third to First Centuries BCE.* ISBN: 9783515133159.

Kambouris, Manousos E. *The Greek Victories and the Persian Ebb 480-479 BC: The Battle of Salamis, Plataea, Mycale and After.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2022. ISBN: 9781399097802.

Kambouris, Manousos E. *Persia Triumphant in Greece: Xerxes' Invasion: Thermopylae, Artemisium and the*

*Destruction of Athens.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2022. ISBN: 9781399097758.

Kambouris, Manousos E. *The Trojan War as Military History.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. ISBN: 9781399094467.

\*Lund Sørensen, Søren, ed. *Sine Fine: Studies in Honour of Klaus Geus on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday.* Germany, 2022. ISBN: 9783515133500.

Matyszak, Philip. *Julius Caesar in Egypt: Cleopatra and the War in Alexandria.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. ISBN: 9781399097369.

Matyszak, Philip. *Sparta; Rise of a Warrior Nation.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2021. ISBN: 9781399014564.

Matyszak, Philip. *Invasion! Rome Against the Cimbri, 113-101 BC.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2022. ISBN: 9781399097314.

McHugh, John S. *The Reign of Emperor Antoninus Pius, AD 138-161.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword History, 2022. ISBN: 9781526773982.

Morrow, Alexander, Agostino Von Hassel and Gregory Starace. *Caesar's Great Success: Sustaining the Roman Army on Campaign.* Havertown, PA: Frontline, 2020. Pp. 154.

Noble, Gordon and Nicholas Evans. *Picts: Scourge of Rome Rulers of the North.* Edinburgh, UK: Birlinn LTD, 2022. ISBN: 9781780277783.

O'Gorman, P. J. *Britain and Rome: Caesar to Claudius: The Exposure of a Renaissance Fund.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2022. ISBN: 9781526769510.

Pitassi, Michael. *Hellenistic Naval Warfare and Warships 336-30 BC: War at Sea from Alexander to Actium.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. ISBN: 9781399097604.

Powell, Lindsay. *Augustus at War: The Struggle for the Pax Augusta.* Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military,

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2022. ISBN: 9781399023368.

Romane, Julian. *Julius Caesar's Civil War: Tactics, Strategies and Logistics*. Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. ISBN: 9781399089425.

Sampson, Gareth C. *The Battle of Pharsalus (48 BC): Caesar, Pompey and their Final Clash in the Third Roman Civil War*. Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. ISBN: 9781526793621.

\*Sanger, Patrick and Sandra Scheuble-Reiter, eds. *Soldner und Berufssoldaten in der griechischen Welt: Soziale und politische Gestaltungsraume*. Germany, 2022. Pp. 378. ISBN: 9783515133128.

\*Sauer, Eberhard W., et al. eds., Jebrael Nokandeh, and Hamid Omrani Rekavandi. *Ancient Arms Race: Antiquity's Largest Fortresses and Sasanian Military Networks of Northern Iran*. Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2022. ISBN: 9781789254631.

Stiles, Joseph. *Alexander and the Great Persia: From Conqueror to King of Asia*. Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword History, 2022. ISBN: 9781399094412.

Sullivan, Tony. *The History of Roman Legion VI Victrix: The Original Watchers on the Wall*. Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword History, 2023. ISBN: 9781399088572.

Sullivan, Tony. *The Roman King Arthur: Lucius Artorius Castus*. Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword History, 2022. ISBN: 9781399084024.

Syvänne, Ilkka. *Emperor Septimius Severus: The Roman Hannibal*. Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2023. ISBN: 9781399066655.

Syvänne, Ilkka. *The Military History of Late Rome AD 602-641*. Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2022. ISBN: 9781399075671.

Taylor, Richard. *The Greek Hoplite Phalanx*. Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2021. ISBN: 9781526788566.

Zerjadtke, Michael. *Der ethnographische Topos in der Alten Geschichte: Annäherungen an ein omnipräsentes*

*Phänomen*. Berlin: Franz Steiner, 2020. Pp. 164, ISBN: 9783515128704, Pbk.

Publishers interested in submitting books for review should send them to the new book review editor: Lee L. Brice, 1102 S University St. Normal, IL 61761, USA. E-books and announcements can be emailed directly to [LL-Brice@WIU.EDU](mailto:LL-Brice@WIU.EDU).

### **Book Reviews**

**Swanton, Justin. *Ancient Battle Formations*. Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2020. Pp. 320. ISBN: 9781526740069, hbk.**

Reviewed by Jeremy Armstrong, [js.armstrong@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:js.armstrong@auckland.ac.nz)

Swanton's *Ancient Battle Formations* investigates, in an explicitly cross-cultural way, how ancient armies organized themselves in battle. At the core of this volume is the idea that all warfare, or at least all ancient warfare, can be examined and explained by exploring the common human element. Thus, in Chapter 1 ('The Fundamentals of Formation') Swanton breaks down the incredible diversity of ancient warfare into a few key aspects, which allows ancient armies to be discussed and compared in similar terms. He suggests that most troops can be categorized into general types (e.g. 'lightly-armed skirmisher foot' or 'melee infantry') which are roughly comparable across time, space, and culture. He also suggests that "Battle formations and their corresponding tactics had two purposes: give each constituent soldier the conviction his formation could protect him, and convince the other side that their formation could not protect them" (pg. xiii).

With this framework in place, Swanton goes on to examine three different infantry formations in detail: the Greek hoplite phalanx (Chapter 2), the Macedonian phalanx (Chapter 3), and the Triplex Acies of the Roman army (Chapter 4). The volume then concludes with a short epilogue, 'The Golden Age of Infantry' (Chapter 5), where Swanton gives his version of the traditional narrative of the rise of infantry in the early Mediterranean Iron Age and until its supposed decline in the fourth and



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fifth centuries CE.

The book's great strength is how it brings together a vast corpus of ancient literary evidence on the topics of battlefield formations and internal military organization. While the assembled material is not quite encyclopedic in its coverage, it comes remarkably close for the topics and armies explicitly discussed. While it was frustrating, as an academic reader, not to have the original Latin and Greek supplied, Swanton consistently gives readable (and fairly literal) translations of most of the passages consulted – sometimes with added commentary on the original wording and terminology. Thus, when viewed as something akin to a 'source book', the volume is tremendously useful and has much to offer readers of every type. Swanton also approaches his task in a very readable manner, and with evident excitement, making the end result an engaging and enjoyable read.

However, the volume was clearly not intended as a 'source book', and it is in the interpretation that it is consistently runs into trouble. While Swanton often offers quite interesting analysis of various passages, the volume is let down by the fact that he often seems to be working *ex novo*. The list of secondary sources cited does not cover a single page, and contains quite a few out-of-date volumes. There is little engagement with, or seeming awareness of, the suggestions made by other scholars on the armies, societies, and formations discussed. In a related point, Swanton is also rather uncritical of the ancient texts used, viewing them all as both fundamentally reliable and consistent in their descriptions and approach to ancient battle – a point which he acknowledges, early on, will be controversial (pg. xi). Thus, Swanton happily deploys Livy's detailed descriptions of the Roman army in the early fifth century BCE (centuries before detailed battle narratives would have been preserved in writing) alongside contemporary histories, tactical manuals, as well as moralizing biographies (esp. Plutarch) and works from other genres. All ancient literary evidence seems to be treated roughly equally, at least where it fits the argument, which is bound to worry any reader with a sense of the complexities of the source tradition. Given this diverse range of evidence deployed so uncritically, it is difficult to know what to make of models suggested and the cross-cultural norms supposedly driving them. For some of these, Swanton

may be correct that what we are seeing is a combination of basic human psychology and the simple physics of hand-to-hand combat playing out. Humans (both individuals and groups), engaging in the same type of activity, will behave in similar ways. However, it might also be that Swanton has inadvertently hit upon a particular facet of how ancient authors thought about and described formations and battles, or indeed something else entirely.

In sum then, Swanton's *Ancient Battle Formations* is a flawed and somewhat frustrating volume on several levels, especially for an academic reader. Swanton is, as he fully admits, not a professional historian and is not engaging in that conversation or debate. He is not reading the sources with a critical appreciation of their development, or indeed viewing ancient armies as facets of more complete ancient societies. However, despite that (or perhaps because of it), it is also a very interesting volume. Its biggest contribution is almost certainly its presentation of the evidence. But beyond that, Swanton's interpretations are often quite fresh and practical, centering an accessible and relatable human element, which is often lost in more academic treatments. Although the overt narrative and approach to battle offered may not convince an academic audience, some of the underlying themes identified may be worth grappling with.

**Kent, Patrick A. *A History of the Pyrrhic War*. New York: Routledge, 2019. Pp. 152. ISBN: 9781032090306**

Reviewed by Paul Johstono, [paul.johstono@au.af.edu](mailto:paul.johstono@au.af.edu)

Patrick Kent's *A History of the Pyrrhic War* is the first scholarly study in decades devoted to Pyrrhus of Epirus' conflicts with Rome and Carthage (280-275), and one of the first in English. The Pyrrhic War has been studied in larger projects, of course, but this concise book (129 pages, plus bibliography and index) considers this significant war alone. The book combines critical work with ancient sources and an accessible narrative style, both diligent and digestible.

Pyrrhus ruled Epirus from 297 until dying in 272. A grandnephew of Alexander the Great, he possessed much





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of the dash and brilliance of his more famous uncle. But this book is not a biography. Pyrrhus' war against the Roman and Carthaginian Republics was the last major conflict before Rome and Carthage fought the First Punic War. Kent argues that the weighty reputations of these antagonists obscured the war's real history, turning its narrative into a "preamble" (123). He argues it was but one episode within a longer, larger "multipolar regional conflict" between Rome, its core allies, and shifting coalitions among Greek cities and Italian communities in Southern Italy (128). Pyrrhus paraded into a complex conflict characterized by protracted, tenacious warfare wherein different parties pursued "distinct objectives and considerations" (9). The chief reason Pyrrhus failed was underestimating the difficulty of converting tactical victories into lasting recognitions of his patronage or hegemony (124).

K. engages extensively—although not completely—with modern historiography and the complicated ancient evidence in chapter one. The war occurred at the "edge of living memory" (4), where sources like the *Fasti* provided a reliable framework upon which Roman historians innovated presentations of the war suiting their interests (5). The ancient sources are mostly fragmentary composite narratives innovated by Greek and Roman authors over different generations. Particularly interesting are the shifts in Pyrrhus' moral position: a tragic victim, honorable opponent, victim of *hybris*, foil to Roman moral superiority (14-16). The historiographic discussion balances conciseness and coverage, which distinguishes his effort from the Pyrrhus biographies. I noted the absence of De Scala among the nineteenth century Germans, *FRHist* for the ancient sources, and Fronda (2010), Rosenstein (2012), and Terrenato (2019) might have been useful in K.'s depiction of a protracted multipolar conflict.

One of the highlights of the book for me were K.'s several excellent set piece analyses. K.'s demonstrates (28-35) that Roman claims that Tarentum instigated the war were propaganda to sweep away the shifting efforts of Italian coalitions to resist Roman expansionism. K. offers some pleasing work on the numismatic evidence for Pyrrhus' Sicilian campaign (95-96). K. works between ancient evidence and careful reasoning to build a plausible narrative for the Roman garrison at Rhegium (102-105). I

would like to have seen K. make one of his set piece arguments for why he accepts some elements of Dionysius but rejects others on the battle at Asculum (54). One minor note: Kineas son of Alketas did not disappear (111); he went to Egypt, where he won the stadion at games in 267 and was priest of Alexander in 263.

Much of K.'s methodology comes down to sifting out the moralizing about Roman virtue or Pyrrhus' darkening tendencies (110) and suggesting that the complexity of the multipolar conflict provides real explanatory power. K. often asserts the "complex web" of political, military, social, and economic relationships (28). For example, K. assigns the "convoluted mess" of diplomatic efforts largely to so many parties' "pursuit of their own goals" (76). There is clear friction between K.'s argument that Rome was "merely one of many communities interacting within a complex web of politics, culture, trade, and war" (19) and his analysis of Rome's expansionist behavior in Magna Graecia: the garrison in Rhegium, alliances with Italian Greek cities, and aggressive naval operations near Tarentum. His multipolarity thesis could be elaborated and deployed with more explanatory power. I for one would welcome this in a future work or new edition.

The maps are useful and easy to read. One other curiosity is the price of the original hardback (\$127.50) and the new paperback (\$52.95) for such a short volume without images other than maps, which is the publisher's decision not the author's responsibility. This decision will undoubtedly curtail distribution of the volume.

**Forty, Simon and Jonathan Forty. *Limits of Empire: Rome's Borders*. Havertown, PA and Oxford, UK: Casemate Publishers, 2021. Pp. 200. \$34.95. ISBN-10:1636240763, ISBN-13:978-1636240763, hardback.**

Reviewed by Charles C. Kolb, [CCKolb.13@gmail.com](mailto:CCKolb.13@gmail.com)

The Forty brothers (experienced military writers and editors) provide a detailed, comprehensive introduction to the highly complex history of the rise, expansion, and fall of the Roman polity in the circum-Mediterranean world over nearly ten centuries, ultimately controlling nearly twenty million square miles and more than sixty million inhabitants. Their historical sources include inscriptions, archaeological and military records, ancient books and letters, theses, aerial photographs, and LiDAR. The book



has four topical chapters on border expansion, troops, engineering, and border life, plus ten lengthy essays and 26 maps and 340 color images detailing borders from Britannia through the eastern provinces and across North Africa.

Omitting the Period of Kings (625-510 BC), the Forty's commences with the Roman Republic (509-31 BC) and includes much of the subsequent Imperial Roman period (31 BC-AD 476). The initial fluctuating boundaries between the Romans and barbarians were dictated by natural geography and the politics of location, with little demarcation, necessitating the creation of a matrix of forts and outposts linked by roads (*limes*). By the second century AD, there were 56 thousand miles of *limes*. The empire's expansion began with the addition of Sicily in BC 241 and, following the Punic Wars (264-241 and 218-201 BC), saw the Roman Republic become the dominant force in the Mediterranean acquiring Carthaginian territories in Gaul, Spain and North Africa and was victorious in the Cimbrian War (113-101 BC), and expanded into Greece. The enlargement continued into Egypt, North Africa, and Anatolia so that with the accession of Emperor Hadrian in AD 117, the empire held sway from Britain to Morocco, from Spain to the Black Sea, continuing to consolidate its territory. The authors illustrate these acquisitions on five detailed maps and in two Timelines (753 BC-AD 117 and AD 117-527).

The Roman East, especially Mesopotamia and Persia, were troublesome, notably three Parthian Wars followed by the Sasanian succession continuing conflicts after 224. An effective map shows the distributions of Roman Legions and Fleets in the East and in Germania, AD 125 and 400. Each Legion was a discrete, stand-alone unit based in a fortress within its own specific province. In addition to conquering territory and quelling revolts, they built forts, towers, walls, bridges, *limes*, granaries, temples, amphitheaters, baths, water and sewage systems, monuments and cemeteries. Contrary to common belief, these soldiers were also skilled craftsmen such as stone masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, potters, etc. who increased the spread of Roman civilization. Typically, border garrisons consisted of ca. 5,500 men organized into ten cohorts of eighty men each who managed and armed its own troops; later the garrisons also acquired

equipment and supplies from merchants and craftsmen who established civilian settlements (*vici*) near the forts.

Border Engineering" focuses on the construction of forts (*castra*) including materials used and illustrating a "typical" structure with palisade, ditch, and gateways encompassing 50-60 acres. Chapter 5 is devoted to "Border Life" describing domestic and commercial establishments constructed along streets and comprised of taverns, bath houses, brothels, and temples on facing streets, with stables, latrines, and workshops on adjacent back streets. Three configurations of *vici* near *castra* are portrayed: linear, ring, and tangent. Inhabitants included traders, merchants, craftsmen, plus camp followers such as courtesans, families of troops, and even retired veterans. The authors provide a splendid assessment of these "frontiers of the empire," examining physical barriers – from the walls in Britain to desert Africa – and reviewing the ways they were constructed and garrisoned and how that changed over time. A very brief discussion of naval organization mentions types of craft and areas patrolled, notably the Rhine and Danube and eastern Mediterranean Sea. "Chapter 4 The Borders" (pp. 68-181) is a survey of structures (ground plans, aerial photos, and images) from 20 modern-day countries encircling the Mediterranean Sea: Britannia (Hadrian's and Antonine walls, and Saxon Shore *castra*); Germania (Superior and Inferior to the Danube); Rhine-Iller-Danube (middle Rhine Valley); Raetia (Germany and Switzerland); Noricum and Pannonia (Black Forest to Black Sea); Moesia, Dacia and the Black Sea (Moldova, Ukraine, and Crimea); Eastern Border (Caucasus, Sinai, and Red Sea); *Limes Arabicus* (Jordan); Egypt and Cyrenica (Egypt to Libya); *Africa Proconsularis* (Tunisia); and Mauretania and Numidia (coastal northwest Africa).

There is a tremendous amount of detailed information packed into two hundred pages, which serves as a worthy introduction and guidebook to sites, major Roman museums, and "gazetteer of visitable sites." Readers desiring detailed cartography should consult Richard J.A. Talbert (ed.) *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman Empire*. Princeton, 2000, iPad (App) 2013. Pinch-zoom up to 800 percent, 102 color maps. <http://press.princeton.edu/apps/barrington-atlas>. David J. Breeze (ed.) *et al. Frontiers of the Roman Empire*. Archaeopress, 2020-ff., nine separate open-access

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multilingual books to date in paperback and digital forms covering: The Antonine Wall; Roman *Limes* in Serbia, Hungary, Slovakia, Lower Germany, Danube, Dacia, Egypt, and North Africa. <https://www.archaeopress.com/Archaeopress/Collection/Frontiers-of-the-Roman-Empire>.

**Canestrelli, Gioal. *Celtic Warfare from the Fifth Century bc to the Fifth Century ad*. Havertown, PA: Pen and Sword Books, 2022. Pp. 208; \$42.95, ISBN: 1399070177, hdbk.**

Reviewed by Ian Martin, [ian.a.martin@outlook.com](mailto:ian.a.martin@outlook.com)

A standard topic of ancient borderlands research is the Celts. As one of Rome's many enemies, they continually draw attention and new study. This is the case with Gioal Canestrelli's new work, *Celtic Warfare from the Fifth Century bc to the Fifth Century ad*. Released in 2022, this work looks at the development of Celtic warfare from what most consider the beginnings of their consolidation into a recognized cultural group in the fifth century BCE to the domination of the largest groups of Celts in Gaul and Iberia by the end of the first century CE. In this respect, while not unique, this work fits neatly into a growing field of research quickly becoming more developed and complex.

The issue with studying the Celts of the Roman world is the lack of writing by the Celts themselves. While they did have the beginnings of their own written language, contact with Mediterranean peoples, whose writing systems were much more developed at the time, quickly replaced the indigenous Celtic system. The result is that little in the way of Celtic writing survived and not much emphasis was placed on written scholarship in the Celtic communities. As a result, modern historians must rely on sources written by non-Celtic authors for much of their information on the Celts. This is both the strength and weakness of this work.

Canestrelli has researched this work exhaustively. He enlists dozens of ancient sources and consults a wide array of modern sources in several languages. Unfortunately, he seems to limit his use of non-written sources to his discussions of the military equipment employed by the Celts and not in his discussion of the development of Celtic warfare as a whole.

The work is arranged in chapters divided into four periods of Celtic development beginning in 480BCE and ending at 10BCE. It also adds one additional chapter each discussing the Celts of the British Isles and the Celts of Iberia. Within each chapter is a general discussion of the developments of Celtic warfare and the causes of its development as well as a breakdown of the development in the panoply of the Celts by type (body armor, swords, helmets, etc.) for the period being discussed. Each chapter is beautifully illustrated. It also gives a respectable description of the equipment in through that period as well as a discussion on the equipment's development.

The thesis proposed by the work is that the Celtic approach to warfare was "driven both by contact with Mediterranean cultures and different requirements closely related to social issues that were in constant flux," (xv). It is here that issue is found with the work. This thesis presents Celtic development as occurring largely through contact and influence with Mediterranean societies. It gives the Celts no agency of their own. In this respect, *Celtic Warfare* harkens back to the ideas of past historians that did not think the "other peoples" around the Mediterranean littoral could develop on their own without input from the more advanced cultures to their south. No effort is given in this work to look at the Celts on their own. Even in areas that were militarily as advanced albeit in a decidedly different manner than the classical Mediterranean societies, such as in Iberia, the author goes so far as to ascribe to them, at least partial, Italic origins to explain their advanced development, (141-2).

Overall, the work does not add much that could be considered new to the discussion on Celtic warfare. It is, however, a very good and concise review of the main ideas that began the field of Celtic military studies. That said, *Celtic Warfare* is an excellent source for looking at the development of Celtic military equipment. While the origins of the equipment are up for discussion, the actual descriptions of that equipment and temporal placement of when it appears are excellent. One wishes that the author had taken the material evidence more to heart when discussing his development of Celtic warfare as a whole instead of relying so much on the writings of the ancients.



**Braun, Brandon. *Commemorating Classical Battles: A Landscape Biography Approach to Marathon, Leuktra, and Chaironeia*. Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow, 2023. Pp. 240; \$80.00; ISBN: 9781789259353, prbk.**

Reviewed by Matthew A. Sears, [matthew.sears@unb.ca](mailto:matthew.sears@unb.ca)

Braun employs a diachronic “landscape biography” analysis of three Classical Greek battles, respectively Marathon (490 BCE), Leuktra (371 BCE), and Chaironeia (338 BCE), to illuminate the afterlives of these battles, and Classical Greek commemoration and reception in general. Braun divides commemoration into five phases: 1) initial commemoration; 2) official commemoration; 3) commemoration maintenance; 4) lapses of memory; and 5) re-remembrance. Braun elaborates on these stages in three contexts, namely the battlefields themselves, sanctuaries (including local and Panhellenic), and inside the cities involved. The thrust of the landscape biography approach is that battlefields have lives of their own that exist far longer than the battles themselves and their immediate aftermath. A battlefield’s biography extends, in fact, up to the present moment, when visitors encounter and reckon with many centuries’ worth of monuments, stories, and memories.

Braun is right to point out that the afterlives of battles are just as important and interesting, and revealing of Classical Greece and its reception, as how the battles unfolded. By doing so, he treads on well-trodden ground. For Marathon, Peter Krentz’s work (*The Battle of Marathon*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) is exemplary, while John Ma’s article on Chaironeia (“Chaeronea 338: Topographies of Commemoration,” *JHS* 128 [2008] 72-91) provides a fulsome discussion on that battlefield across the ages. There has been less scholarship on Leuktra, due in part to that battle offering fewer material and literary sources. What Braun seeks to add to the existing literature is a systematic approach centered on the five phases of landscape biography.

Braun is only partly successful. As the author admits, there is often no clear line distinguishing one phase from the next. When does the “maintenance” of commemoration end and the “lapse of memory” begin? Do conflicting accounts in later sources indicate a forgetfulness due to the passage of time or a varied source

tradition stretching back to the event in question? What exactly makes a commemorative act or monument “official?” Does an Athenian family depositing a vessel in the offering trench of the Soros at Marathon engage in an official act of commemoration or a personal and familial one, or both? I think there are ways to approach these questions and clarify some answers, but Braun’s methodology (12-14) falls short. He assembles and analyzes literary sources based on running the names of the battles through the *TLG*, which yields scattered and decontextualized passages ranging across all genres and extending into the Byzantine period. Even though there is copious scholarly source criticism of authors such as Plutarch, Braun does not much engage with it. Instead, we are left with a balance-of-probabilities approach, which, to crib from the source-critical principle of *lectio difficilior*, might lead us astray. Similarly, there is little space given to the role of genre in determining the evidentiary worth of a source. The 4<sup>th</sup>-century CE rhetorician Libanius is deployed (129) as a demonstration of how later generations forgot about the specifics of battlefield burials at Chaironeia, with no discussion of why such a figure would use this particular case, or even whether he would care about the accuracy of a specific exemplum from centuries past. Braun has waded into an enormous topic – no less than 2,500 years, give or take some substantial lacunae, of material and literary commemoration – but does not deploy the depth of analysis necessary for these sources (could anyone?).

Braun is more comfortable dealing with material evidence, but at times I found myself wishing he had applied Occam’s Razor. He is right to caution that we cannot take at face value the modern designations given to battlefield memorials. The Soros at Marathon indeed has a more complex history than today’s signage would suggest. The trophy monument at Leuktra (74-77), however, is almost surely a Theban trophy from that battle (rather than a monument to mythical slain virgins or the other remote possibilities Braun raises), just as the lion at Chaironeia (100-106) probably marked the Theban dead (rather than the Athenians or another party). A substantive question regarding these two monuments is not their designations, but whether they were erected during the period of Theban revitalization in the third century, a topic apropos to Braun’s project that is nevertheless given little space.



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As a final note, the press and its editors did not serve the project well. Factual errors abound (Plutarch is labelled a Roman historian [50], the Thespian polyandrion is described as a battlefield burial [71], etc.). References are frequently unhelpful (modern works are frequently noted by only author and date without specific pages or a suggestion of the argument being made, while a typical citation for the battle of Marathon simply lists “Herodotus 6” [23, n. 21]). Infelicities in style distract (such as the use of “mnemonic” to mean “memorial” or “commemorative”).

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