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*The Society of Ancient Military Historians*

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### **Message from the Book Review Editor**

The pandemic has made a mess of getting the most recent issue out. We share our sincere apologies to members and reviewers for the unavoidable delay. This issue contains book reviews only so we can get back on track.

We would also like to draw your attention to our new Facebook page, which can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/ancmilhist/> If you have not liked our page yet, please do!

As always, we are more than happy to receive any inquiries and feedback, as well as information about upcoming conferences, events, CFPs, books, and so forth (email: [ll-brice@wiu.edu](mailto:ll-brice@wiu.edu)).

Happy reading and stay strong!

### **Books Received, Winter 2021/2022**

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.

Baker, Gabriel. *Spare No One: Mass Violence in Roman Warfare*. London: Rowan & Littlefield, 2021. Pp. 279; ISBN: 9781538112205, hbk.

Bennett, Bob and Mike Roberts. *The Wars of Alexander's Successors 323-281 BC*. Vol. II. Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2019. Pp. 202; ISBN:9781526760791, pbk.

Elliott, Simon. *Romans at War: The Roman Military in the Republic and Empire*. Havertown, PA: Frontline, 2020. Pp. 297; ISBN: 9781612008851.

- 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*. Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2021. Pp. 165. Pbk.
- Eph'al, Israel. *The City Besieged: Siege and its Manifestations in the Ancient Near East*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2013. Pp. 211.
- Esposito, G. *Armies of Celtic Europe 700 BC-AD 106*. Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2019.
- Forty, Simon and J. Forty. *Limits of Empire: Rome's Borders*. Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2021.
- Johstono, Paul. *The Army of Ptolemaic Egypt 323 to 204 BC: An Institutional and Operational History*. Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2020. Pp. 320; ISBN: 9781473833838, E-book.
- Matyszak, Philip. *Sparta: Rise of a Warrior Nation*. Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2021. Pp. 191, pbk.
- Morrow, Alexander, Agostino Von Hassel and Gregory Starace. *Caesar's Great Success: Sustaining the Roman Army on Campaign*. Havertown, PA: Frontline, 2020. Pp. 154.
- Taylor, Michael. *Antiochus the Great*. Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2021.
- Taylor, Richard. *The Greek Hoplite Phalanx. The Iconic Heavy Infantry of Classical Greece*. Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2021. Pp. 531; ISBN: 9781526788566. Hdbk
- 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 book review editor: Lee L. Brice, History Dept. MG438, Western Illinois University, 1 University Cir., Macomb, IL 61455. E-books and announcements can be emailed directly to [LL-Brice@WIU.EDU](mailto:LL-Brice@WIU.EDU).**

### **Book Reviews**

**Fitzpatrick, Andrew P. and Colin Haselgrove (eds.). *Julius Caesar's Battle for Gaul: New Archaeological Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2019. Pp. 336; \$55, ISBN: 9781789250503, pbk.**

Reviewed by Elizabeth M. Greene, [egreene2@uwo.ca](mailto:egreene2@uwo.ca)

The focus of this volume is on the archaeology of Caesar's wars, for the first time providing a European-wide perspective on Caesar's battles in the first century BCE. Archaeological investigations of Caesar's campaigns go back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, but over the past two centuries work has been published in specialized volumes and sometimes obscure locations. A primary goal for the volume, therefore, was to provide scholars with readily available scholarship in a single language (English) on the subject of the Caesarian wars set into a broad European context. The present volume delivers this goal in a commendable way. The research stems from a conference held at Oxford in 2017, which sought to provide a wider context for understanding the archaeology of the British campaigns. With fifteen chapters, in addition to a thorough introduction, the volume covers topics from the Sertorian wars and military engineering, to numismatics and the archaeology of mass violence.

The volume opens with the obligatory treatment of texts with a pair of chapters (Chs. 1-2) situating the *Bellum Gallicum* in this discussion. Christopher Krebs reminds us that we still need to pay attention to the work whether we like it or not, arguing for a position in the middle ground where archaeology can inform meaning of the *BG* and the *BG* can still help understand the archaeology. Greg Woolf provides a clear narrative recap of the *BG* and reminds the reader that the very notion of "Gaul" as a single entity is entirely Roman in its creation and understanding. Woolf takes the imperialism we see in the *BG* out of its provincial context and places it into a broader context of the Roman empire, reminding us that the conquest of Gaul really had everything to do with political intrigue in Rome.

The stated focus of the volume—new archaeological data—is presented in several chapters and will be well worthwhile for an English-speaking audience, especially anglophone students without second languages. All the chapters in the volume are commendable and worth the read, but a few stand out as particularly worthy for their contribution to the volume's goals: to provide new archaeological perspectives on Caesar's campaigns.

In chapter 3, "The Gauls on the eve of the Roman conquest," Ian Ralston sets the stage very well for understanding new evidence for the conquest period with a solid review of our current first-century BCE picture in Gaul. Especially useful is the overview of broad settlement patterns at this time and discussion of both Gallic

and Roman perspectives on this organization. Especially welcome is the presentation of recent evidence for agricultural production and discussion on recent excavation on rural settlements and farms and their role in the complex economy of Gaul (26-30). Also noteworthy is the review of the substantial increase in archaeological data on ritual and cult (34-41), which Ralston argues completely contradicts previous conclusions that religious practice in Gaul was essentially atectonic.

Chapter 4 covers “The Sertorian Wars in the conquest of Hispania: From data to archaeological assessment,” in which Ángel Morillo and Feliciano Sala-Sellés do an excellent job presenting a cohesive picture of the results of modern archaeological approaches applied to military bases in Spain, such as Cáceres el Viejo, Renieblas, Almazán, and a number of other sites. A major takeaway is the chronology of rectangular camps, visible in the Sertorian-period forts (1<sup>st</sup> c. BCE) and how we understand the evolution of Roman castrametation. This chapter also contributes to the growing research on siege works in the Roman world, best visualized at Valencia and La Caridad de Caminreal (60-2; a theme also taken up broadly by Michel Reddé in Ch. 6; defenses against siege are covered by Sophie Krausz in Ch. 9). The chapter also recognizes a previously unknown pattern of military occupation in small fortlets on the Alicante coast that took local topography and regional traditions into consideration in their construction (62-5). Also important, however, is the appropriate warning about our lack of clear evidence for the dating of most of these sites.

Picking up on recent trends in military archaeology, Nico Roymans looks to northern Gaul and the field of conflict archaeology to understand mass violence and the social consequences of conquest (Ch. 7). His conclusions that the extreme violence witnessed by this region may have been prompted by “anti-Germanic ethnic stereotyping and racism by the Romans” (130) has contemporary resonance. Also looking to trends in provincial archaeology, the theme of resistance is explored by Philip de Jersey (Ch. 14) through a close look at the coin hoards from the island of Jersey (coinage is also the theme of Ch. 13 by Colin Haselgrove).

Lionel Pernet offers an addition to the scholarship and archaeology of auxiliaries, which has seen steady growth over decades of research, in “Fighting for Caesar: The archaeology and history of Gallic auxiliaries in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC” (Ch. 10). Pernet focuses on burial assemblages with weaponry and other military implements to understand traditional choices being made alongside adopted trends in Gaul around the conquest period. The discussion on ‘Romanization’ is underdeveloped but the author also rightly points out that firm conclusions about shifting choices are difficult to make before the Augustan period.

There are two further welcome additions to reporting new archaeological evidence that helps us contextualize the period beyond the written sources available. Chapter 11 by Sabine Hornung presents the evidence from the Hermeskeil fortress near Trier, especially important as the only known example of a site in the territory of the Treveri dating to the Caesarian campaigns. Similarly, the authors of Chapter 12 (Pujol et al.) present recent excavations that revealed rare evidence for Caesar’s campaigns against his civil enemies, in this case a battle against Pompey’s forces in 49 BC at Puig Ciutat, before the campaigns in Ilerda in that year.

This volume admirably achieves its goal to present new archaeological evidence that contextualizes Caesar’s campaigns within a broad European framework. Its ability to take us beyond the *Bellum Gallicum* and provide evidence from the perspective of those who fought against Caesar should be well received in this well-presented volume.

**Lange, Carsten Hjort. *Triumphs in the Age of Civil War: The Late Republic and the Adaptability of Triumphal Tradition*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. Pp. 333; \$35.95, ISBN: 9781350060579, pbk.**

Reviewed by Seth Kendall, [skendall@ggc.edu](mailto:skendall@ggc.edu)

As Carsten Lange declares on the second page of his book *Triumphs in the Age of Civil War*, “the subject of this monograph is equally that of triumph and that of civil war”. More specifically, it was written to challenge what its author considers the prevailing orthodoxy about Roman triumphs, which is that the celebration of these for victories in a civil war was contrary to traditional practices; if one was indeed granted to a commander, it was only if the victory could in some way be framed solely as a defeat of a foreign enemy beaten along the way to or alongside the unsuccessful Roman faction. Not so, asserts Lange: in the Late Republic “a commander could in practice expect to triumph after a civil war victory if it could also be represented as being over a foreign enemy, even if the foreign nature of the enemy was dubious at best and the principal opponent was clearly Roman. *The civil aspect of the war did not have to be denied* [emphasis added], and it was only after a victory in an exclusively civil war that triumphing was understood as being in breach of traditional practices.” (p. 2).

In pursuit of this thesis, Lange first discusses how important the triumph was as a tool of legitimacy for commanders, a theme to which his first chapter is partially devoted. Chapter Two discusses the way triumphs were traditionally awarded during the Republic and the steps which were typically undertaken to obtain one. Triumphs could, of course, be denied: if either the enemy or the military action was not considered worthy, the Senate could refuse a general's request. Sometimes a "consolation" in the form of an *ovatio* could be granted, often for minor engagements or the suppression of revolts; alternatively, a spurned general might stage a semi-unofficial "protest" triumph on the Alban Mount. Both of these are thoroughly described, and Lange also notes that even these were recorded on the *Fasti Triumphales* (the subject of Chapter 3), which also typically listed either the enemy defeated or – importantly – the region in which the war took place. Lange notes (here and elsewhere) that mentioning the latter over the former would be a convenient way to downplay a civil war.

Chapter Four illustrates the ways in which the bequest of triumphs began to deviate from tradition. Lange's point of departure is C. Marius, who not only committed a violation of custom by convening the Senate in his triumphal regalia, but was awarded triumphs *in absentia*, thereby bypassing the customary meeting with the Senate and the formal request for the honor. Furthermore, Lange locates several triumphs granted to commanders who theoretically ought not to have received them, notably those awarded to L. Cornelius Sulla, L. Licinius Murena, and L. Licinius Lucullus for "defeats" of Mithridates which nevertheless had not neutralized that king as a threat. More importantly still, a triumph was awarded to Antony and Octavian for a war which did not take place between them, thus preserving the peace.

Chapter Five ("Triumph and Civil War in the Late Republic: Constructing the Enemy") continues on this theme. Lange observes several incidents in which triumphs were actually extended to generals – Sulla, C. Pompey, and Caesar – for engagements against other Romans, and while the official record in these cases show that triumph was celebrated over the foreign enemies fighting alongside the Romans (over Mithridates, "Hispania", and Juba of Mauretania, respectively), the accounts of the triumphs themselves demonstrate that the Roman participants in all of these wars were not hidden or disguised. The culmination of this chapter is in the "triple triumph" of 29, of which one celebrated his victory at Actium. Actium would prove troublesome for Octavian, in that it marked the completion of his commission as triumvir to restore peace (and therefore mention had to be made of his defeat of Antony), but Octavian simultaneously appeared to wish to downplay his victory over other Romans. This reluctance is seen in surviving iconography like his victory monument in Nicopolis, the subject of chapter.

Lange's book is informative (particularly chapters 2 through 6), well-written, and well-researched; if he is occasionally repetitive, as it must be admitted that he is, such repetition has the advantage of keeping his point consistently in view. That said, chapters 7, the epilogue, and the Appendix (discussing changes to entry into Rome, the "Casa di Pilatos Relief", and imperial "Triumphal arches", respectively) do not contribute very much to his analysis, especially since they all discuss sculpture for which the photographs provided are too small to allow for enhancement of the discussion. Omission of these chapters, as well as some of the more theoretical elements of Chapter 1, would have resulted in a shorter but not necessarily weaker book. These limitations notwithstanding, Lange's text is a worthwhile read for students of the Late Republic and Principate, though it will probably be less appealing to the general reader.

**Armstrong, Jeremy and Matthew Trundle†, eds. *Brill's Companion to Sieges in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Leiden: Brill, 2019. Pp. xviii, 353; \$155, ISBN (e-book): 9789004413740; ISBN: 9789004373617. hdbk**

Reviewed by Brian Turner, Portland State University, brian.turner@pdx.edu

Jeremy Armstrong and Matthew Trundle, the editors of this third volume in Brill's *Warfare in the Ancient Mediterranean World* series, have compiled an array of useful case studies examining various aspects of siege warfare in the ancient world. For the most part the volume is organized chronologically, but important themes (around which a review can be organized) do emerge. Many of the chapters touch upon more than one of these themes, and readers (and specialists) will no doubt discover others.

Unsurprisingly, operational aspects, the tactics and strategies of siege warfare are front and center – although none of the contributors fall hard for any sort of technological determinism. Quite the opposite, in fact.

Gwyn Davies' opening contribution convincingly illustrates how structural conditions, like topography, climate, and environment, affected the logistical and tactical choices commanders could make when conducting a siege. Duncan B. Campbell emphasizes similar conditions. Cataloguing and analyzing some twenty-nine Caesarean-era sieges, he illustrates that the infamous siege of Alesia should not be considered paradigmatic; rather conditions like topography and the commander's own judgement are paramount. Both essays usefully challenge the idea that sieges progress along a rigidly defined path.

Brett H. Heagren employs written and visual sources in a well-developed examination of Egyptian assault warfare (which he differentiates from siege warfare) across the third and second millennia BCE. Finding that the Egyptians rarely portrayed sieges, Heagren concludes that they preferred open battle on a scale and with skill equal to what modern scholars would call "operational art." Like Heagren, Alan B. Lloyd focuses primarily on operational aspects in his examination of four fourth century invasions of Egypt. Lloyd illustrates that built fortifications formed but one part of a defensive system that also relied upon leadership, morale, and the defensive advantage afforded by Egypt's natural position. Still focusing on

operations, Thomas C. Rose traces the military career of Demetrius Poliorcetes, whom we should recognize as both a besieger and fortifier of cities. Rose also argues that Demetrius' proclivity for siege warfare was connected to his emphasis on preserving Greek freedom and on developing claims of ruler cult.

Such socio-political aspects form a second major theme running throughout the volume. Matthew Trundle analyzes the transformation of siege warfare in the fifth century BCE. Even if, as Echeverría notes (331), there may well be evidence for more widespread siege activity prior to the Classical period, Trundle has usefully illustrated the importance of money, the growing centralization of the state coupled with the expansion of its reach, and the innovations that came with the interstate wars of the fifth century as significant factors in the development of siege capabilities in the Greek world. The connection between siege warfare and the centralization of political power can also be seen in Jeremy Armstrong's clever solution to the discrepancy present in our literary and archaeological evidence regarding the dating of Roman (and Italian) circuit walls. Until and unless new evidence emerges, Armstrong's argument that the relatively late development of such fortifications can be attributed to changing patterns in warfare ought to be taken seriously. James Crooks follows a similar understanding of early Roman history in his analysis of the roll of the *volutarii* during the war with Veii – which included a significant siege – at the beginning of the fourth century BCE. Both authors (among others in the volume) illustrate how aspects of siege warfare – walls and recruitment patterns – are connected to the emergence of a more formally organized and militarized state.

The connection between social organization and warfare, necessarily leads one to consider the effect of siege warfare upon the civilian population. Jennifer Martinez Morales illuminates the varied roles women (and children) played in siege warfare. Her important contribution – the only study in the volume to delve so deeply into the consequences of siege upon the besieged – illustrates how women became active participants in the defense of the walls. Future studies should build upon her excellent work. Indeed, walls and cities were not the only spaces in which women and children regularly faced the horrors of war.

Finally, several contributions focused on the use of our sources. Two, Luis R. Siddall and Davide Nadali, examine ancient Assyria. Their difference over the Assyrian preference for siege warfare seems in part the result of contradictory evidence. Siddall recognizes that royal inscriptions tend to present siege warfare in a "cursory manner" (37). Nadali, meanwhile, argues that while Assyrian bas-reliefs illustrate the development of canonical imagery and the potential for political statement, they are also informative sources for the reconstruction of the sophisticated and multifarious actions of Assyrian siege warfare. Moving to late antiquity and beyond, Conor Whately evaluates Procopius' hyper-realistic but ultimately accurate narrative of the 537/538 CE siege of Rome, an event Procopius witnessed alongside the general Belisarius. Whately usefully challenges us to consider the balance between autopsy and cultural imperatives, linguistic traits, and artistic choices in our ancient sources. Such conditions are further explored in Josh Levithan's rather wide-ranging contribution. Analyzing various siege narratives from Homer through the Renaissance, Levithan illustrates how such descriptions could follow certain historiographical and epic patterns and yet still offer historical value.

The companion ends with Fernando Echeverría's excellent and thought-provoking epilogue which not only draws connections between the volume's contributions but also calls for further study. Challenging the traditional siege paradigm, Echeverría calls for an expanded global analysis of siege warfare.

Sieges obviously captivate and they stand apart from the other operations of war. Tales of a heroic defense, courageous assault, or ingenious inventions fascinate, while reports of mass civilian slaughter and

enslavement repulse. The supposed clarity of the outcome renders sieges compelling events to remember and examine. But as so many of the contributions to this volume illustrate, sieges were but one element of war among militarized societies. Building upon the excellent work in this volume, future studies will no doubt continue to illuminate the operational niceties and cultural imperatives that made ancient (siege) warfare as fascinating as it was destructive.

† Matthew Trundle passed away in 2019 before seeing the fruits of his labors on this project. His camaraderie and compelling scholarship will be missed. (The editor allowed the author to write a more extensive review than usual)

**Breeze, David J. *The Frontiers of Imperial Rome*. South Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword Books, 2019. Pp. xxxiii, 274; \$24.95, ISBN: 9781526760807, pbk.**  
Reviewed by Walter Roberts, [Walter.Roberts@unt.edu](mailto:Walter.Roberts@unt.edu)

The 2019 edition of *The Frontiers of Imperial Rome* is a republication (with additions and corrections) of David J. Breeze's 2011 text. Breeze currently manages the Antonine Wall as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is a specialist on Roman Scotland with a focus on military history. He is also the chairman of the International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies. The front matter of the book contains lists of 48 illustrations and maps and 26 full-color plates, acknowledgments, a discussion of technical matters, a list of abbreviations, and an introduction. The main body of the monograph is divided into three parts: "Sources," "The Frontiers, and "Interpretations," which cover twenty chapters. The book closes with a conclusion, sections on further reading and relevant archaeological sites, references, and an index.

The book's aim is to present a broad overview of the operation, purpose, and role of the Roman frontiers in the era from Augustus (27 BCE) to the abandonment of Britain in the face of barbarian invasions (ca. 407-410 CE). Breeze's focus is how archaeology presents this story through the material remnants of border installations. He aims for an audience that is a bit more educated on the intricacies of Roman imperial frontiers than the average educated lay reader.

In terms of evidence, Breeze does a good job of incorporating a wide variety of types, including literary, numismatic, epigraphic, artistic, and archaeological. As many historical analyses of Roman imperial frontiers focus on the literary sources, Breeze gives a brief survey of the main ancient authors and works, starting with Caesar and Tacitus and running up through Ammianus Marcellinus. He also mentions the laws codes and the *Notitia Dignitatum*. As one would expect, however, the bulk of the evidence for the remainder of the book is the material remains from the Roman frontiers. Breeze offers a brief survey of the frontiers, where the spaces and strategies were often defined by geographic considerations. River frontiers (such as the Rhine and Danube) were different from desert frontiers (such as Syria and North Africa) for example, while mountain (Dacia) and sea frontiers (Britain) presented their own environmental challenges. Finally, Breeze noted that in places the Romans ignored obvious physical demarcations and established what he called "linear barriers," of which the German *limes* system and Hadrian's Wall are the most famous examples.

Breeze's main argument is that there was a cohesive policy concerning the established borders of Roman imperial authority. Border installations served two main functions: as military garrisons guarding the borders and as administrative posts to control the flow of immigration into the Roman Empire. Whether the military roles of the frontier installations were offensive or defensive depended upon the ebb and flow of Roman imperial politics and social developments. Breeze clearly sees the frontiers as well-planned spaces with practical, as opposed to symbolic, applications. For Breeze, the frontiers of the Roman empire were well-planned and designed with an eye towards long-term strategic goals of conquest and consolidation of imperial power.

Breeze presents himself as a counterpoint to historians who favor the literary sources in interpreting the operation, purpose, and role the Roman imperial frontiers. He argues that scholars such as Susan Mattern, C. R. Whittaker, and Benjamin Isaacs who rely on the literary accounts of the frontiers too easily adopt the *prima facie* presentation of such sources that present the frontiers as amorphous, nebulous, entities whose purpose was vague and at times destructive to imperial interests due to assimilation. In the end, his analysis of frontiers as first and foremost military zones that only later shifted to broader cultural zones echoes and builds upon the work of Hugh Elton and Edward Luttwak.



*The Frontiers of Imperial Rome* is an excellent survey of the current state of scholarly debate on Roman imperial frontiers. It is suitable for the lay reader with a solid foundation in Roman history, advanced undergraduate students, and graduate students in the field. The emphasis on the material evidence is a nice counterbalance to more traditional interpretations of the Roman frontiers during the imperial era, which tend to favor the often imprecise narrative given by the literary sources. Breeze does a good job of showing how the material remains in frontier regions were designed with the idea of form following function, with that function being a military presence to advance the interests of Roman imperial authorities. Breeze's presentation of the Roman imperial elites as coherent, long-term strategists and planners, does however, lead one to question how and why they did not foresee the cultural consequences of their frontier strategies. This is not a criticism, but rather a sign of a book well done and an argument well presented.

**Hoyos, Dexter. *Carthage's Other Wars: Carthaginian Warfare Outside the 'Punic Wars' Against Rome.* Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2019. Pp. 256; ISBN: 9781781593578.**

Reviewed by Juan Strisino, [JStrisino@aol.com](mailto:JStrisino@aol.com)

Scholars and students of ancient history know about the Punic Wars (Punic being the Latin term used to denote Carthaginian). These were three large-scale confrontations fought between Rome and Carthage from 264 to 146 BCE. Hitherto, Carthage had been establishing its empire and had become the leading power in the western Mediterranean basin. In pursuit, though, was the expanding Roman Republic. Conflicts of interest ensued, making war between the two inevitable. There are many modern accounts devoted to the Punic Wars (see *A Companion to the Punic Wars* ed. D. Hoyos, 2011 with bibliography), but little, at least in book format, dedicated to Carthage's 'other' campaigns. Here is where Hoyos, a leading exponent of Carthaginian history, offers the first full length study. The book has four main topics: "How that empire was achieved, what sort of people the Carthaginians really were, how they fought their wars, and who were the enemies in the centuries before Rome..." (xviii). Through careful and detailed sifting of the primary evidence, Hoyos has delivered on all counts.

There are ten chapters each subdivided, five maps, seventeen listed plates, a conclusion, a bibliography, endnotes and an index. Chapter One explores the sources. It shows that we mainly depend on Greek and Roman writings with some Carthaginian fragments and very little evidence from archaeology. Chapters Two and Three are context setting. The author lays out the case for Carthage's Phoenician foundations (late ninth century BCE) and its political and cultural influences up to it reaching its republican status. They achieved this through trade and business (mainly seaborne) dealings by its merchants and landowners with its neighbours (in north Africa), friends and foes (Greeks and Romans). Hoyos then moves on to outline Carthage's military developments. He discusses how it built its armadas, followed by the growth of its ground forces and its defences. In these two succinctly evaluated chapters, Hoyos demonstrates how, from humble beginnings, Carthage began establishing itself as the dominant empire in the region.

Chapters Four through to Ten turn to the military phases of Carthage's achieved supremacy. The approach is chronological. In the analysis offered, Hoyos introduces the reader to three centuries of non-Roman wars, some of which fell between her contests with Rome. These include belligerent and defensive clashes, for example, against the Phocaeans of Alalia down to the nuisance of Pyrrhus. Carthaginian leaders did not always make for very competent generals. Hence, men like Malchus, Mago and Hamilcar Barca were capable. In contrast, Himilco in the siege of Syracuse in 396 and Bomilcar's clash with Agathocles, were liable and desperate. Analysis also centres on armies/navies, states and enemies involved, battles, defeats, negotiations and peace. With the Greek city states of Sicily, primarily Syracuse under its tyrants Dionysius the Great and Agathocles, Carthage encountered some resolute opponents. In North Africa, Sardinia and later in Spain she won and lost significant battles. In Spain particularly, Carthage encountered determined resistance from Tartessians and Celtiberians. Eventually, however, these were no match for the Carthaginians. In one incident, for example, Hamilcar Barca laid siege to a hilltop where the Iberian lord, Indortes, had retreated. Hamilcar captured Indortes, exercised his brutality on him before crucifying him. However, he also released 10,000 of his men. The Carthaginian message was clear: it was not to be messed with, but would be a fair friend of those who cooperated with it. Hoyos' account demonstrates just how much Carthage's military aided the achievement of its superpower status prior to Roman intervention.

Hoyos' has written and edited a great deal about Carthaginian history and this places him in a strong position to detail, collate and explicate the military history of Carthage's 'other' wars. The result is an impressive study and Hoyos' command and negotiation of the sources is comprehensive and astute throughout, particularly as the sources are so often inconsistent and unclear. He has also shown that contrary to ancient and modern opinion, Carthage was not just a commercial state and a maritime power prior to her engagements with Rome but that she was a military power which had fought and prioritised many wars on land with more victories. Hoyos highlights that Carthage was self-confident, cautious, prepared to coexist, but vigorous where diplomacy failed. Possibly not written for the average reader in mind, this book will be a great addition for scholars, graduates and undergraduates engaged in Carthaginian/military studies. An outline chronology and a glossary of select personalities and their affiliations would have been useful for the uninitiated. The benefit of this study is to demonstrate that Carthage did not only engage Rome in war, but that it had also fought against different enemies. It is certain to spark further debate and will be the current standard reference.

**MacDowall, Simon. *The Goths: Conquerors of the Roman Empire*. South Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword Books, 2017. Pp. xvii, 161; \$34.95, ISBN: 9781473837645, hdbk.**

Reviewed by Walter Roberts, [Walter.Roberts@unt.edu](mailto:Walter.Roberts@unt.edu)

Simon MacDowall is a non-academic historian whose accomplishments include stints in the Canadian military, the United Nations diplomatic corps, and the United Kingdom civil service. His 2017 work, *The Goths: Conquerors of the Roman Empire*, contains 39 full-color plates, nine maps, eleven chapters, 4 brief appendices giving a timeline and lists of relevant Gothic kings and Roman emperors, a bibliography, and an index. The organization is a straight chronological narrative from the first known appearance of the Gothic peoples in literary sources in the third century CE until the end of the Gothic Wars in the late sixth century CE.

The title *The Goths: Conquerors of the Roman Empire* suggests to the reader what they might be getting—a monograph that is the story of the Goths as conquerors of the Roman Empire, rather than peaceful settlers who took advantage of the collapse of an overburdened imperial system. The intended audience for the book seems to be educated lay readers who are military or Roman history enthusiasts. MacDowall, however, pulls a bait and switch. Under the guise of a traditional military-campaign narrative about Gothic and Roman relations, the author interjects the more recent scholarly analysis that the Goths (and by implication, the larger “barbarian” incursions of this period) were part of a more complex process whereby the Roman imperial system was breaking down due to both internal and external pressures. In the end the Goths and their successful creation of two successor kingdoms were part of a gradual transition to a positive new world order rather than a catastrophic break with the Roman past that plunged Europe and the Mediterranean world into the so-called “Dark Ages.” MacDowall in particular emphasized how the Goths were often allies of the Romans in their role as *foederati* troops. The evolution of the Goths from mercenaries under Roman command to self-sufficient war bands that gained their political and territorial autonomy was a mirror of the overall decline and transition of the Roman imperial system. More specifically, the Goths provided a stabilizing force for the populations of former Roman territories facing a vacuum of power once the imperial system collapsed in Europe by the end of the fifth century.

In terms of evidence, MacDowall relies on modern translations of the literary corpus of the period. He relies heavily on Ammianus Marcellinus, Procopius, and Zosimus for the fourth and early fifth centuries, while switching to authors such as Sidonius Appollinaris, Gregory of Tours, Cassiodorus, and Jordanes for the later parts of the narrative. Overall, he presented and interpreted the sources in a fair way. I was disappointed, though, with the lack of information about from which modern editions of the literary sources he pulled his copious quotations. In addition, given the audience and nature of the book, it was not surprising that MacDowall gave the material evidence, including numismatic, epigraphical, and archaeological sources, very little consideration. He did provide a hint of the wider variety of the types of evidence available for this subject in his gorgeous color plates depicting frescos, military paraphernalia from the period, jewelry, and inscriptions.

In terms of modern scholarship, MacDowall comes down firmly in the camp of the Goths as one of the replacements for the vacuum in civil, military, and political authority left behind in Europe by the disappearance of Roman imperial authority. While not as rosy in his assessment of the Goths as say Patrick Amory, Peter Brown, or Peter Heather, one can still put MacDowall in the “assimilationist” camp. He does not at all subscribe to the view of the Goths as rampaging, conquering, “barbarians” who destroyed the last bastion of civilization



that Europe would see for almost 1,000 years put forward by authors such as Bryan Ward-Perkins, J. B. Bury, and (of course) Edward Gibbon. His more nuanced understanding of this whole issue is more akin to Ralph Mathisen and Thomas Burns.

*The Goths: Conquerors of the Roman Empire* by Simon MacDowall is a nice introductory text on the role of the Goths in the end of Roman imperial rule in Europe for an educated lay audience. His interpretation of the Goths and their establishment of politically autonomous territorial kingdoms in the areas of Roman Spain and Italy from the fourth to the sixth centuries CE is supported by primary sources and the most relevant current secondary scholarship. He straddles the fine line between those scholars who see transition and assimilation and those who present a picture destruction and fragmentation. As such, I would seriously consider using this text in my upper level undergraduate courses that I teach on this period as a way of introducing students to both the narrative of events and the issues of modern interpretation on the end of Roman imperial rule in Europe.

**Schmitz, Michael. *Roman Conquests: The Danube Frontier*. South Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword Books, 2019. Pp. xxi, 149; \$39.95, ISBN: 9781848848245, hdbk.**

Reviewed by Walter Roberts, [Walter.Roberts@unt.edu](mailto:Walter.Roberts@unt.edu)

*Roman Conquests: The Danube Frontier*, by Michael Schmitz, continues a trend in recent scholarship concerning the Roman imperial frontiers that reinforces the notion of these spaces as primarily zones of military concern. Michael Schmitz is a specialist on Roman Dacia at the University of Melbourne in Australia who is. His latest work contains a list of illustrations, acknowledgements, and an introduction in the front matter, followed by ten chapters covering the Danube frontier from the First Illyrian War (230 BCE) to the death Marcus Aurelius (180 CE), ending with a concluding chapter, a reference section, a bibliography, and an index. The intended audience seems to be a broad, well-educated lay reader who wants a succinct overview of Roman attitudes and military operations on the Danube frontier during the first two centuries of the Roman Empire.

Schmitz paints the Roman elites as unabashedly expansionistic and suggests that their experiences in establishing a frontier along the Danube were reflective of Roman imperial policy as a whole. His basic argument is that up until the reign of the emperor Hadrian, the Romans used the Danube frontier as a forward staging area to expand their territory. The culmination of this process was the conquest of Dacia under the emperor Trajan in two successive campaigns in the early second century CE. Then internal political and economic developments led to a more defensive strategy on the frontiers, and the subsequent growth of the military budget to fund increased troop numbers only accelerated this process.

In terms of evidence, Schmitz relies on the usual literary corpus, with Polybius, Appian, Tacitus, and Cassius Dio being the most notable. In addition, he liberally uses Trajan's Column and archaeological finds of weapons (such as the Dacian *sica* and *falx* blades) and defensive fortifications. He tends to take the sources at face value, which is not necessarily a bad methodology, but in doing so, he leaves the uninformed reader with the impression that this is the only way to view the sources. For obvious reasons (source material and personal interest of the author), most of the book focuses on Dacia as representative of Danube frontier cultures, but again this could leave the reader with only a passing knowledge of the period with a mistaken impression.

One of the more intriguing arguments that Schmitz makes is that Dacian weaponry and defensive fortifications drove technological developments in Roman armor and siege warfare. The Roman soldiers began to wear mail and scale armor in place of the old, segmented armor in the face of the Dacian use of the brutal, hacking *falx* blades, while the Dacian mastery of mountain fortifications forced innovations in Roman siege warfare. Ironically enough, this analysis seems to support an argument of the frontier zones as regions of symbiotic assimilation as well as conflict between Romans and "barbarians."

This book firmly fits in mold of recent scholarship that reinvigorates Edward Luttwak's influential argument of a Roman "Grand Strategy." In this interpretation, the Roman elites in the period after Augustus formed a pseudo-modern imperial regime based upon territorial expansion. This expansionistic policy established the frontiers as forward bases for offensive military action, but when expansion became impractical due to overextension of resources, the frontiers became zones of defense and consolidation. This book thus falls in line with recent scholarship from the likes of David Breeze and Hugh Elton and is in opposition to (or at least debate) with scholars represented through the works of C. R. Whittaker and Susan Mattern.

Although relatively short, Michael Schmitz's *Roman Conquests: The Danube Frontier* contains much useful information and insightful analysis. This is an excellent introduction to recent trends in scholarship on the

Roman imperial frontier studies through a case study of Roman actions on the Danube frontier. In the interest of capturing a broader audience, Schmitz's analysis is at times simplistic, but a closer reading of the text reveals an awareness of the complexity of Roman frontier studies. It is refreshing to see an author recognize that analyses of these frontier zones as either exclusively military zones or exclusively zones of cultural assimilation do not have to be mutually exclusive. I would highly recommend this book to any undergraduate or graduate student interested in Roman frontier studies of Roman military history.

**Manning, Sean. *Armed Force in the Teispid-Achaemenid Empire. Past Approaches, Future Prospects.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2021. Pp. 437. ISBN: 9783515127752, ppbk.**

Reviewed by John O. Hyland, john.hyland@cnu.edu

The study of the Achaemenid Persian military suffered from comparative neglect long after the development of robust scholarly approaches to the empire's larger history. Almost a quarter century ago, Pierre Briant remarked that this part of the field was "lagging behind," and lamented the lack of a "comprehensive monograph on the Achaemenid armed forces, their composition, the methods of their recruitment, their financing, their command structure, or their fighting tactics" (p. 107 in K. Raaflaub and N. Rosenstein (ed.), *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, 1999). Sean Manning's *Armed Force in the Teispid-Achaemenid Empire* is the first full-length book to take up Briant's challenge, and while it does not pretend to fully comprehensive coverage, represents a welcome step forward in the study of military dimensions to one of the ancient world's largest and most influential empires.

Manning opens with a historiographic overview and critique, highlighting problematic treatments of Persian warfare by Classicists who failed to contextualize Greek accounts through Ancient Near Eastern evidence or specialist literature, whereas many emerging scholars of Achaemenid Studies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century deemphasized military history based on Hellenocentric narratives. Manning recognizes the continuing importance of Greek historiographic testimonia, but stresses the methodological necessity of comparison with the Achaemenids' better-documented Near Eastern predecessors. The contextual application of Assyrian and Babylonian evidence is an important element in current approaches to Achaemenid Studies (see B. Jacobs and R. Rollinger (ed.) *A Companion to the Achaemenid Persian Empire*, 2021), and Manning's facility with Assyriological scholarship shines through his introductory sketch of the Assyrian military dynamics which prefigured those of the Persians.

Plunging into the methodological challenges of the diverse Achaemenid evidentiary corpus, Manning devotes three chapters to studies of how to approach military material in the royal inscriptions, Babylonian economic documentation, and archaeological materials. In close readings of the Cyrus Cylinder and the Behistun (Bisotun) inscription, he stresses textual agenda and audience, explaining narrative strategies that excluded details of army sizes and tactics in favor of scripted illustrations of military and political supremacy through divine favor. The chapter on soldiers' perspectives ably surveys the evidence for military service obligations within the rich corpus of materials from the temple and entrepreneurial archives from the Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid periods. The archaeological chapter surveys relevant material region by region, offering insights on many points of detail (such as an enlightening discussion on iron composition and smelting techniques employed in the manufacture of swords and spearheads).

A climactic chapter applies rigorous scrutiny to modern reconstructions of Achaemenid battle methods. Here Manning displays his facility not only with Classical scholarship, but also in the global history and historiography of armed conflict. He unravels the origins of persistent myths about Persian combat techniques, notably explanations of early successes as the product of massed archery and cavalry dominance, which he traces to Orientalizing equations with much later Mongolian or Turkish military practices. Manning's alternative approach, following Christopher Tuplin's exhaustive study of the evidence for cavalry (in G. Fagan and M. Trundle (ed.), *New Perspectives on Ancient Warfare*, 2010), argues that horsemen played only limited roles in early Achaemenid battles. Instead, he develops a more plausible model of infantry combat, incorporating not only archers' volleys but also decisive attacks by formations of spearmen, whose capabilities have been underestimated in many studies due to excessive trust in Herodotean claims of "short" Persian spears that are contradicted by much of the Achaemenid visual evidence. Provocatively, Manning posits a comparison with eighteenth-century European linear tactics, in which infantry formations alternated between periods of stationary firing and bayonet assaults to break the enemy lines; while careful not to press the parallel to

anachronistic extremes, he points out that tactical models rooted in combinations of ranged and close infantry combat can offer more suitable comparanda than those rooted in simplistic conflation of “Eastern” military systems. Later sections explore other selective case studies, using Mesopotamian evidence to contextualize Greek accounts of siege methods and chariot usage, and applying Hellenistic and Roman comparisons to posit more realistic bases for the infamously exaggerated sizes of Achaemenid field armies in the Greek histories.

Although Manning’s book does not aim at comprehensive survey, the lack of attention to the standing armed forces at the empire’s heart does remain an unfortunate omission. While he attributes his reluctance to discuss the famous “Immortals” to the difficulty of connecting Greek accounts with internal evidence, this downplays the potential for reassessment of this topic through institutional comparison with Assyrian palace armies and consideration of documentary evidence for Neo-Elamite and early Achaemenid “spear-bearers,” connected with the court and administration in the Susa Acropole and Persepolis Fortification archives (see W. Henkelman in *ARTA* 2002.007). Without discussion of this central component, readers may come away lacking a strong sense of Persia’s overarching military structures, in contrast with the strong introductory overview of the Assyrian armed forces. But apart from this gap, Manning’s book is largely successful, offering shrewd reassessments and paths forward for many aspects of Achaemenid military studies. It will prove an essential resource for students of Persian armies, campaigns, and their historiographic representations, and raises great expectations for Manning’s future contributions to the field.

**Coşkun, Altay (ed).** *Ethnic Constructs, Royal Dynasties and Historical Geography around the Black Sea Littoral*. *Geographica Historica* 43. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2021. Pp. 381. ISBN: 978-3-515-12941-1.

Reviewed by Miroslav Ivanov Vasilev (Institute of Balkan Studies and Centre of Thracology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences), [miroslav.vasilev@balkanstudies.bg](mailto:miroslav.vasilev@balkanstudies.bg)

The volume, dedicated to the lasting scholarship and singular humanity of Heinz Heinen, is divided into four major parts. The first part – “Studies in Group Identity and Ethnicity Constructs around the Ancient Black Sea Coast” – consists of five papers. Valentina Mordvintseva presents Michael Rostovtzeff’s world view on ‘Iranians’ and ‘Sarmatians’. She notes that his ideas about the role of the Iranians and Sarmatians in the cultural history of southern Russia were influenced by concepts popular in his days e.g., the conception of constant movement of people from east to west and the results of that migration. Mordvintseva points out that although incompatible with much more differentiated modern models for cultural transfer, Rostovtzeff’s ideas are still influential and prevail in current archaeological literature. In her view, the increase of the ‘Iranian influence’ on the cultures of the northern Black Sea region in the first century BCE was not a result of invasions of new tribes from the east but was rather a result of strengthening the connections of local elites with the Parthian elites in Iran and its satellites. Joanna Porucznik studies cult and funerary practices in Olbia and its *chora*. She attacks “the traditional ethnic-oriented methodological approach” which “has its serious limitations in the study of ancient world” and advocates for “a distinction between ethnicity and cultural identity” which “allows for the analysis of cross-cultural objects and traditions without unnecessary attempts to attribute them to a given *ethnos*.” As for religious practices, basing her arguments on the worship of cults in Olbia and its *chora* and in Chersonesus and its *chora*, Porucznik challenges Polinskaya’s view that there was no distinction between urban and rural spheres in Greek religion. She also notes the important role of the Orphic-Dionysiac cult in expressing the city’s unity and the new importance the cults of Achilles and Apollo in Olbia gained during the Roman period. Philip Harland discusses different ancient views on ethnic hierarchies. The accent is put on the place of Pontic peoples in the ethnic hierarchy as presented in ancient ethnography. He demonstrates that the majority of Greek authors placed Pontic peoples low on the vertical and only few others such as Ctesias and Ephorus offered alternatives. Marta Guzmán focuses on some responses of local populations to Greek settlers: cases in which the locals changed their attitude (from positive to negative) towards the settlers as well as further aspects of the Greek presence among local populations (e.g., attraction of the Greek way of life, Greek prestige objects, writing and cults, etc.). She arrives at the conclusion that Greek colonization introduced not only new opportunities but also new dangers and potential instability in the daily life of the local populations. In the last paper Alexandr Podossinov presents polarized ancient views (especially Strabo’s) on the Scythians.

The second part – Studies in the Royal Dynasties of Pontos and the Bosporan Kingdom – consists of four papers. Madalina Dana shows that the Bosporan kings aimed to present themselves as perfect Hellenic rulers which can be seen in their political piety, cultural patronage, their role as benefactors and admirers of Greek culture, etc. Germain Payen traces the political changes in the Black Sea region in the aftermath of the Peace of Apameia (188-179 BC). Luis Pastor demonstrates how Pharnaces II represented the Persian conception of kingship in the Bosporan kingdom as well as in the Pontus: he wore a tiara before his subjects in the Bosphorus and named one of his sons Darius, he adopted the title Great King of Kings and ordered the castration of boys of Amisus, he used Scythian chariots in military operations and probably started the construction of the unfinished monumental tomb of Amaseia (non-Hellenic design and placed inside the rock). At the same time, he did not ignore his Hellenic genealogy as evidenced by his coinage. In their lengthy paper Altay Coşkun and Gaius Stern reject the view that queen Dynamis and prince Aspurgus visited Rome and were depicted on *Ara Pacis Augustae* (13/9 BCE). They point out that no ancient source mentioned such a visit and that Agrippa needed her in the Bosporan kingdom in and after 14 BCE to support her husband Polemon. As for the *Ara Pacis*, they think that the woman identified as Dynamis was most likely one of Agrippa's daughters, perhaps Vipsania III, while the boy was a Parthian prince.

The third part – Studies in the Historical Geography of Pontos and Kolchis – consists of three papers by Altay Coşkun. The first deals with Deiotarus Philorhomaioi's territorial possessions. He had enlarged his kingdom thanks to Pompey (Strabo 12.3.13). According to Coşkun, he ruled over his inherited Galatian tetrarchy, the Eastern Pontus from Gadilonitis to Acampsis (without Amisus) and over the mountain tribes of the Paryadres and Scydises as far as Lesser Armenia. Moreover, his power was extended into Colchis. The second identifies the eleven city-states that Pompey added to Bithynia (Strabo 12.3.1): five old (Heracleia, Tiejion, Amastris, Sinope and Amisus) and six new (Abonuteichus, Pompeiopolis, Neapolis, Magnopolis, Diosopolis and Nicopolis). The sixth plus Megalopolis and Zela were Pompeius' eight new foundations mentioned in sources (App. *Mith.* 117; D.C. 37.20.1-2). The last is devoted to the location of the sanctuary of Leucothea (Strabo 11.2.17-18): suitable candidates are the so-called 'Green Cape which 'now hosts the Batumi Botanical Garden' and Tsikhisdziri, 'whence the Kolchian Plain begins' (based on mythical implications of the cult, topographical of Strabo's account and historical of the topography).

The fourth part – Cultural Change in Late Antiquity – consists of two papers. Dan Ruscu's concerns Christianity and urban changes in late Roman Scythia Minor. He shows that changes in the city landscape (Tomis, Callatis, Istrus and Tropaeum Traiani) until the sixth century AD were influenced largely by other factors than Christian architecture (as wildly believed) which flourished at the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth centuries AD. In the last paper Hugh Elton holds the opinion that in deciding which crop to plant ancient farmers peopling the southern Pontic coast were dependent on many factors, the most important of which were political changes rather than, as has been suggested, climate change.

The volume is well edited and all papers contribute usefully to the topics they discuss and the volume as a whole. The book is a welcome addition to recent work on the region and is recommended.

**Gabriel, Richard A. *Great Generals of the Ancient World. The Personality, Intellectual and Leadership Traits That Made Them Great*, Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Books, 2017. Pp.327; £25, ISBN: 9781473859081, hdbk.**

Reviewed by Korneel Van Lommel, University of Antwerp, [korneel.vanlommel@gmail.com](mailto:korneel.vanlommel@gmail.com)

In search of great generals of the ancient world, Gabriel lists a set of criteria to answer following questions: 'What makes a military leader great? Of the thousands of officers who served in history's armies, why is it that only a few are remembered as remarkable leaders of men in battle?' (p.1) Factors relevant to the success of great commanders are the historical circumstances in which he must act and his personal qualities and characteristics. Only challenging times provide opportunities for a commander to stand out from the rest, argues Gabriel. Then he continues to explain all traits of personality and character of memorable military leaders. Those include intelligence and a good education, a good understanding of the political dimension of war, the capability to create military innovation and a strong mind and strength of purpose.

Based on these criteria Gabriel spends the next nine chapters to an equal amount of great commanders. His list of commanders is diverse in matter of time and culture: Thutmose III of Egypt, Moses, Sargon II the Great of Assyria, Philip II of Macedon, Scipio Africanus, Hannibal Barca, Julius Caesar, Marcus Agrippa,

Muhammad. The eleventh and final chapter is titled ‘Why Not Alexander?’ in which he argues why Alexander was not a great general despite the large territory he conquered in a short period of time.

In his introduction chapter he closes with a short reflection on this selection of military leaders. He acknowledges that any attempt to list a top 9 of greatest generals will be subject to objections. Some will argue the list is incomplete or might object some of the choices he made, a topic I will deal with further on this review. His main argument for his selection is his forty-two years of studying and writing military subject in antiquity, not a convincing argument, I would argue.

The rest of the monograph is problematic for a number of reasons, so I will restrict myself to the main issues. The most important critique I have to offer to publication is a lack of critical analysis of the source material. A historiographical work should not limit itself to a paraphrase of the ancient sources. Instead it should engage with the evidence supported by insights of modern literature. For example, the chapters on Sargon II the Great and Caesar are mainly based on sources written by the generals themselves. For Sargon, Gabriel bases his information on the royal inscription and the so-called Annals of Sargon. For Caesar, he summarizes the writings of the Roman general: *The Gallic War* and *The Civil War*. It comes as little surprise these sources are exclusively positive, an aspect not mentioned by Gabriel. Certainly for Caesar, one can find other evidence that contradicts the general’s polished narrative. Unfortunately, Gabriel has not incorporated them in his work. As a result, all chapters except the final one on Alexander are almost hagiographic of nature.

For the chapters on Moses and Muhammad, Gabriel has to rely solely on religious texts. Nowhere does he justify why these text should be read as historical accounts. Gabriel simply ignores the symbolic nature of these texts. They are, as he puts it, to be read as an after-action report (p.39). The rare occasions where Gabriel does doubt the reliability of the ancient sources are concerned with the numerical aspect of military forces, though he does this only sporadically.

In the final chapter, Gabriel takes a controversial viewpoint by not including Alexander in the list of greatest generals. Even in antiquity Alexander was considered as one of the great. His main critique on Alexander is that the Macedonian general deserves no credit for his victories because these were only possible thanks to his father, Philip II of Macedon. For example, it was Philip who brought innovation to the army and Alexander merely made use of it. Some of the campaigns made no strategic sense, like his Indian campaign. And Gabriel criticizes Alexander for his ‘Soviet policy of migratory genocide’ (p.273). Finally, Alexander made no arrangements for his succession which made his empire fall apart. Though one can agree with much of these arguments, they also apply to generals that did make it to his list of greatest generals. Take for example Caesar. He made no remarkable military innovations, his campaign in Britain was strategically flawed, he slaughtered thousands of people while violating Roman war ethics and after his assassination he left Rome in chaos, on a brink of another civil war. It is puzzling why Gabriel did not see these parallels.

To conclude, I would not recommend the purchase of this book. The reader will not become more familiar with the historicity of these 10 generals. Suggestions for further reading will not be easily found. The bibliography is for the most part outdated, as most publications date from the previous century. As a consequence, a lot of recent and insightful scholarship from which the author might have benefited, is left unmentioned.

**Potter, Alan J. *The History of Jerusalem. Its Origins to the Early Middle Ages*. Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword Books, 2020.**

Reviewed by Roberto Mazza, Northwestern University, [robbymazza@gmail.com](mailto:robbymazza@gmail.com)

Works about Jerusalem are certainly not scanty, nor there is a lack of commitment to write new ones. The work of Potter falls into the category of linear narratives that do not really offer anything new to our understanding of the history of the city of Jerusalem and at best provide some clarity where other works have failed to do so. This is not to diminish the efforts of the author nor to discourage others to engage in the writing of historical narratives about Jerusalem, but certainly to consider whether it is worth reproducing what has been already discussed by so many. What is the difference between the best-seller work of Sebag Montefiore *Jerusalem: A Biography* and the work under review? They both offer linear narratives following a sort of strict chronological approach, obviously the difference is in the credibility of the author. This is not to question the education of Potter and his ability to professionally work as historian of Jerusalem, but to point out that scholarly written work are not just based on primary research, ability to read and combine primary and secondary sources, but



also to provide a rationale for the work undertaken. In the first few pages of this book Allen claims that he decided to write about Jerusalem mainly because his wife was born in Bethlehem and there Catholics are generally treated with disdain by the local Muslims – a claim that would require some substance – but more importantly because he visited the Old City of Jerusalem and he was fascinated with it. Many historians began their work following an inspirational trip or a meeting and after developing professional skills they engage with the object of their fascination. What scholars are generally trying to do is to bring to the table a new argument or a new interpretation. Potter's narrative is a summary of numerous works brought together but not critically assessed – taken for the most part at a face value.

The narrative produced by Potter is certainly well articulated and the twenty-seven chapters are fairly well written and enjoyable to read if the reader has no knowledge of the early history of Jerusalem. The history of Jerusalem is, however, more complex and still unclear in many parts. The author does not offer any new insight that may shed light on those periods, nor does he offer any critical assessment of highly controversial questions, for instance the localization of the city of David or even his existence and reign. The timeline itself is not questioned and essentially taken for granted either from the Bible or a number of scholarly written works. While scholars with different views have agreed on some points, they still disagree on many others in relation to dates, facts, and people: none of this is represented in the narrative produced by Potter. To his credit it must be said that the chapters are heavily referenced with plenty of footnotes showing the amount of works used by the author.

Popular narratives are often a good tool to bring complex history to a larger audience, and while the level of the analyses may be superficial, good works still highlight the history and its complexities without forgetting the historiographical debates. *The History of Jerusalem* does not really cover those points and in the end its readers may just go through a rather dry chronology of events, a sort of printed Wikipedia with a richer bibliography.

**Grainger, John D. *The United Kingdom: The Unification and Disintegration of Britain since AD 43*. Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books, 2019. Pp. 330; \$39.95, ISBN: 1526748193, hdbk.**

Reviewed by Steven Catania, [steven.catania@wisc.edu](mailto:steven.catania@wisc.edu)

In his book, John D. Grainger argues that the union of England, Wales, and Scotland has created significant benefits for the inhabitants of Great Britain and that its longevity is worthy of study. Drawing from secondary sources, listed at the end of each chapter, the book is accessible to the general public. The author's background as a military historian is apparent through his extended discussions of armed conflict, while also incorporating some religious, legal, and political developments. However, there are noticeable gaps in the book's coverage and some questionable conclusions. Nevertheless, it provides an overview of some key moments in the creation of the United Kingdom and some of the present challenges to that unity.

The first section, which looks at the situation after Rome abandoned the British Isles, is the strongest. Grainger explores the fragmented political geography of the isles and uses the lens of violent conflict to explain how England and Scotland reached a higher level of unification through their need to withstand Viking and Norman attacks. With the threat level in Ireland and Wales different, similar structures did not develop as quickly or at all.

In the second section, Grainger explains the events he believes led to the emergence of the United Kingdom in 1801. He argues that Edward I, and his successors, benefitted from military action, but were unsuccessful at unifying the countries. Starting with Henry VIII, Grainger details how Protestantism helped unify the British Isles. He also argues that while military action remained part of politics, from the Tudors onward it was negotiation and Parliamentary Acts that allowed the isles to transform from a union of crowns under James I/VI to a politically unified state under George III.

The final section explores how the unification of the four countries splintered. Grainger argues that nationalistic ideology, coupled with differences in religion and years of resentment generated by English military dominance, led to the Republic of Ireland gaining independence. He then turns his attention to more recent challenges to the United Kingdom's unity as a result of referenda spanning the last 30 years. Grainger concludes with a brief discussion of how leaving the European Union may accelerate the dissolution of the United Kingdom or create a foreign threat that binds the nations closer.

Even before the referendum to leave the EU threatened its existence, scholars studied the creation of the United Kingdom. Among these scholarly works, Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* describes the forces that shaped the United Kingdom, two of which were the threat of invasion and Protestantism. While Grainger's argument also centers on the importance of these two forces, his book differs from many works in the field by its limited coverage of the British Empire. He provides some statistics about emigrants from the British Isles to the colonies but does not discuss how the identities of global British citizens moving to the British Isles contributed to the changing nature of British identity in the years leading up to the referenda. For decades, the field has been moving toward employing a four nations approach to the United Kingdom and its empire. Susan Kingsley Kent's *A New History of Britain Since 1688: Four Nations and an Empire* shows the benefits to be gained by taking a wider, holistic perspective. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of Grainger's work. A more nuanced discussion of the benefits that the Scots, Welsh, and English gained as a result of the unification may have helped this book stand out more in the field, even with its limited coverage of the British Empire.

There are, however, parts of the work that hamper its overall effectiveness. For instance, at times Grainger makes pronouncements concerning the intentions and actions of historical actors that appear overstretched or contradictory. One example is when he argues that, "[i]f it can be assumed that Edward I was making a serious attempt to unite the British Isles – which he certainly seems to have aimed for when he deposed his own choice as Scottish king in 1296 ... he had clearly failed" (143). Yet, two pages later, Grainger argues, "[i]t must be concluded that Edward did not seriously aim to unite the British islands into a single kingdom, because his political assumptions concerning suzerainty and lordships did not permit him to think in those terms" (145). In an effort to view everything through his definition of unification, Grainger attributes meaning and agency to actions and thoughts outside of their historical context. Another limitation in the work is when Grainger compares the situation of the United Kingdom in 1801 to his definition of a fully unified state. One wonders why the author waited nearly 250 pages to share this benchmark representing the culmination of the unification process. Providing this definition at the beginning would allow the reader to make their own assessment throughout the book.

What are provided at the beginning, and throughout, are twenty-two maps. While many of these are helpful in contextualizing Grainger's discussion of the political geography, they are not all effective. Some suffer from minor issues, such as a difficulty in distinguishing between overlapping diagonal lines used to represent boundaries across time periods. Other maps have larger issues, such as one which shows Ireland as being entirely Catholic from 1707-1920 (199), and one depicting place names in Roman Britain in Latin except for Londinium, which appears as London (6). This latter example highlights the need for additional copyediting on the part of the press to correct multiple spelling errors, tighten the narrative, and fix inconsistent formatting in the work.

Despite its issues, Grainger's book will appeal to select audiences. Those seeking to learn about some of the major developments in the creation of the United Kingdom will find value in this work. Those seeking a more balanced and nuanced discussion of the process, and its larger ramifications, will want to look elsewhere. Overall, the author is successful in showing that the longevity of the political alignment in the British Isles is worthy of study.