

The Military Reforms of Gaius Marius in their Social, Economic, and Political Context

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis is, as the title affirms, to understand the military reforms of Gaius Marius in their broader societal context. In this thesis, after a brief introduction (Chap. I), Chap. II analyzes the Roman manipular army, its formation, policies, and armament. Chapter III examines Roman society, politics, and economics during the second century B.C.E., with emphasis on the concentration of power and wealth, the legislative programs of Ti. and C. Gracchus, and the Italian allies' growing demand for citizenship. Chap. IV discusses Roman military expansion from the Second Punic War down to 100 B.C.E., focusing on Roman military and foreign policy blunders, missteps, and mistakes in Celtiberian Spain, along with Rome's servile wars and the problem of the Cimbri and Teutones. Chap. V then contextualizes the life of Gaius Marius and his sense of military strategy, while Chap VI assesses Marius's military reforms in his lifetime and their immediate aftermath in the time of Sulla. There are four appendices on the ancient literary sources (App. I), Marian consequences in the Late Republic (App. II), the significance of the legionary eagle standard as shown during the early principate (App. III), and a listing of the consular Caecilii Metelli in the second and early first centuries B.C.E. (App. IV).

The Marian military reforms changed the army from a semi-professional citizen militia into a more professionalized army made up of extensively trained recruits who served for longer consecutive terms and were personally bound to their commanders. In this way these reforms created an army which could be used against other Roman commanders or the city itself. Military eligibility was no longer exclusive to landowners, and the *capite censi* had new opportunities for spoils and social and political advancement.

Marius' reforms were not completely novel, but the practices that he introduced he also cause to be established as standard operating procedure. He implemented these reforms in a time of crisis, and subsequently the extraordinary military careers of both Marius and Sulla acted to preserve his measures and to move the army far down the road of professionalization. What I have shown in this thesis is the larger economic, social, and political context which formed the background and provided the incubator in which Marius' reforms were generated and developed. Once Marius crystalized his ideas and put them in place, the stage was set for Sulla and the new kind of military action that would seal the fate of the Republic.

The Military Reforms of Gaius Marius in their Social, Economic, and Political Context

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Preface

Textual evidence from the Roman period describes the armies of both the preceding and following periods in great detail. The manipular army of the Middle Republic (c. 164) is chronicled by the Greek historian Polybius, whose close association with the commander Scipio Aemilianus helped to grant him crucial insight into his contemporary Roman military practices. The army of Julius Caesar in the Late Republic (c.54) is described in meticulous detail by the general himself in his accounts of both the Gallic and the Civil wars. Between these two accounts of the army, the famous Roman general Gaius Marius is credited with enacting major army reforms between 107 and 101, changing the formation, tactics, and policies of his legions. The exact nature of Marius' reforms and their role in the professionalization of the army is still unclear because of the patchwork coverage of ancient sources. As a result, all major military changes that occurred in the intermediary period (ca.150- ca.60) are generally attributed to Marius. This thesis will examine and determine the specific reforms and the historical evidence which ties Marius to them so as to determine whether each reform is Marian or not.

This thesis explores the military social, economic, and political contexts in which Gaius Marius came to power and enacted his reforms. It analyzes the second century developmental context that spurred on radical army reforms. For both consistency and convenience, I use the Loeb English for Latin and Greek, in addition to preventing any personal biases or interpretations of my own from the evidence or prejudicing the translation.

This thesis would not have been possible without the unwavering support of my parents, who never failed to encourage and motivate me; and the understanding and love

of my best friend and partner, Rosie, who helped and accommodated me during graduate school and the research and writing of this project. And a special thank you to the faculty at East Carolina University's Classics and History departments, most of all Professor Frank Romer, whose endless patience, wisdom, and guidance has led me through the long process of completing this project, and whose mentoring has developed me into a better historian, writer, and person

Chapter I: Introduction

During the final decade of the second century BCE,¹ the Roman army underwent a series of major military reforms enacted by the seven-time consul, Gaius Marius. These reforms were aimed at reorganizing the legions in order to increase their flexibility and mobility, as well as to increase the overall number of their fighting force. Marius had instituted these reforms because Rome's changing military needs at the end of the second century. Throughout the third and second centuries, Rome had come into conflict with several major overseas powers, namely, Carthage and various Greek entities. After several long campaigns the Romans resolved these conflicts through conquest. These victories expanded Rome's dominion in the Mediterranean, and removed its most aggressive military rivals; in addition these conquests flooded Rome with the spoils of war. However, the Romans also found themselves in control of an overseas empire with all its inherent responsibilities like border security, maintaining order, and suppressing revolts. For the Romans to be able to maintain control over their newly acquired territories, they needed the ability to deal quickly and effectively with threats along their new borders, especially in North Africa and Spain. Also during this period, large armies of new northern invaders, namely, the Teutones and Cimbri, had begun to encroach on Roman territories from the north.

Marius' reforms did not occur in a vacuum. External pressures on the Roman army made reforms desirable, but internal social pressures motivated these changes as well. Marius was a major figure in the emblematic aristocratic conflict between the *optimates* and *populares* at Rome for influence and power. Not only was Marius a *novus*

¹ All dates in this thesis are BCE unless otherwise specified.

homo, or “new man,” which indicated that he was not born into one of the powerful consular families and that he was the first person in his family to achieve the consulship, and he also was born into a family near Arpinum, a town in Latium. Marius had risen to success by his martial ability and the power of his personality. As a result, through a variety of events Marius became champion of the plebs, who in turn elevated him to the consulship. As a leading *popularis*, he benefitted the plebs, who were the base of support for all *populares* politicians. He used the people’s general displeasure with the senatorial elite as a means of securing power. Marius even went as far as to make his former patron, Caecilius Metellus, into an enemy to ingratiate himself with his new political base, and to satisfy his growing ambition for power.

Despite being regarded as a champion of the plebs, Marius typically catered to equestrian interests when he served in Africa. The *equites* were the wealthier class of propertied businessmen at Rome, and he avoided the more radical measures of a hardline *popularis*. Marius also shared strong personal, political, and familial ties with several prominent *populares*, as well as *optimates*, men like Scipio Aemilianus, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, and Julius Caesar. (His son, C. Marius Minor, was also an acquaintance of M. Tullius Cicero, also a native of Arpinum.) Throughout Marius’s career the clash between the *populares* and *optimates* motivated many of his actions and reforms, military or otherwise, directly and indirectly. The historical background of political, military, and economic developments before Marius’ day is necessary to understand the nature of Marius’ accomplishments.

The aim of this thesis is to broaden the social, economic, political, and military context in which the military reforms of Gaius Marius were developed and implemented,

so as to better understand his reasons for reforming the army, the major second century motivations that both the senatorial aristocracy and the general Roman population had for ratifying and later perpetuating his measures, and the reform's long-term consequences in the first century. Marius' contemporary motivations and influences led to his military reforms during the final decade of the second century. His second-century perspective guides us in analyzing his reforms and their impact on events of the early first century, especially the outbreak of the civil wars that led to the fall of the republic.

In antiquity many writers mentioned Marius in histories or their military manuals, but only a handful of texts that detail his life and career have survived. Three ancient authors provide the most insight into Marius' life and career: Sallust, Appian, and Plutarch; however, their works are not ideal histories. Sallust's monograph, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, developed Marius' career along partisan lines highlighting the struggles between Marius as a *popularis* and the senatorial *optimates*. Appian's *Bella Civilia* addresses Marius as a figure within the context of the Roman civil wars. He shows the political landscape at Rome and in Italy as a battleground between the wealthy minority and the large majority of poor. As a biographer, in his *Life of Gaius Marius*, Plutarch both romanticizes and vilifies Marius while interweaving moral and religious judgments on his character.

Sallust

Gaius Sallustius Crispus lived from 86 to 35 BC, was a senator, political ally of Julius Caesar, and a widely read author even in antiquity. He was expelled from the senate for moral turpitude, and spent the rest of his life writing history. Sallust's second

work *Bellum Jugurthinum* chronicles the events of the Jugurthine War, which lasted from 111 until 105, between the Romans and a Numidian king named Jugurtha. One of the main focuses of his work is to show the rise of Gaius Marius as the ultimate commander of the war and as a rising figure in Roman politics.²

Sallust details army movements, maneuvers, logistics, and all the battles of the war, which may reflect the author's experience as a military commander and governor of Africa. However, the true strength of the work is the intimate details of Marius' initial climb as a *novus homo* to the highest office in Rome. Sallust also follows the model of the great Greek historian Thucydides who recorded the *History of the Peloponnesian War* in eight books. Both men used speeches, at least partially recreated, in order to characterize the major figures of their respective narratives. Sallust includes a speech Marius is supposed to have delivered before the consular election of 107, in which Marius provides a self-portrait as humble, modest, and soldierly, that is, as raised in venerable Roman tradition. Later in the same speech he contrasts himself with the current commander of the campaign, Metellus, and the rest of the senatorial elite whom he accuses of corruption from wealth, luxury, and over-exposure to Greek culture.³

Sallust describes Marius strongly opposing the luxurious, excesses and greed of the senatorial elite who monopolized and abused power at Rome. He focuses on the hostile relationships, first, between Marius and Metellus and, then, between Marius and Sulla. Both Metellus and Sulla being committed *optimates*, while Marius was a *popularis*. The work also covers the election for 107 and Marius' military campaign in North Africa, Sallust introduced several of Marius' most important military reforms:

² Marius' early career: Sall. *BJ*. 84.2, 86.

³ On Speeches; Thuc 2.23, Sall. *BJ*. 85.31-35.

enrollment of the *capite censi*, the reduction of the baggage train and the creation of “Marius’ Mules,” and various other disciplinary improvements.⁴

The account ends with Marius’ second election to the consulship, this time *in absentia*, for 104, after which he celebrated his formal triumph over Numidia, replenished his troops, and headed for Gaul to combat the combined threat of the Teutones and the Cimbri. Sallust’s portrayal of Marius the general shows him as concerned with the fate of the people of Rome and trying to wrest power away from the established aristocracy. Marius comments on the elite’s Hellenized lifestyles and general disconnect from the rest of the Roman people. Sallust highlights Marius’ advocacy of Roman traditions and “power to the people” as he combated the establishment.

Appian

Appian was an historian, who originally lived in Alexandria and wrote in Greek during the second century AD. Appian unlike writers like Sallust, Cassius Dio, and Velleius Paterculus, was never a senator of Rome. He had only reached the procuratorship, which was an equestrian or middle-rank position. Appian’s more humble roots probably helped to shape his perspective of Marius. Besides the *Bella Civilia*, which we are concerned with, Appian wrote several other works on Rome’s republican foreign wars.

His *Bella Civilia*, focused on the growing social and economic disparity between the common people and the decreasing number of wealthy citizens, who had consolidated enormous amounts of money, land, and slaves. Appian was concerned with the causes of the century-long period (133-31 B.C.) of civil violence at Rome, which eventually ended

⁴Sall. *BJ*. 84.1.

the republic and gave birth to the empire. The primary purpose of the *Bella Civilia* was to demonstrate that Roman civil instability was the result of partisan conflicts fueled by economic and political inequality. He even provides demographic figures to show the increased concentration of wealth. Appian puts Marius into this context as a rising star of the *populares*, fighting against the senatorial faction.

Appian does not provide us with a complete picture of Marius' life and career, but limits himself to the latter half. Marius does not play a major role in his work until his second consulship in 104 to which Appian says Marius was elected *in absentia* and given Gaul as a responsibility. Appian chronicles the rest of Marius' career in detail, highlighting the enrollment of the *capite censi* into the army, the alterations to military training and equipment, and improved tactics. He gives accounts of the battles of Aquae Sextiae, Vercellae, and Triboli River, and both engagements at the gates when first Marius and then Sulla forced their way into Rome.

Appian portrayed Marius as a the leading *popularis* at Rome during this period, fighting against the wealthy and powerful who had already resorted to civil violence on several occasions to maintain the *status quo*. The strength of Appian's *Bella Civilia* is that he coherently connects the socio-economic, military, and political problems Rome faced going into the civil war period with the emergence of the *latifundia*, or large plantations, in Italy.

Compared to other Roman sources, Appian's treatment of the three occupations of Rome in 88, 87, 86 by Sulla, Marius and Cinna, and Sulla respectively, is less extreme. His account does indeed chronicle a period of proscriptions, mob violence, murder, confiscation of property, and a large number of banishments, but it lacks the malicious

and evil character developed in works like those of Plutarch and Velleius, who likely used Sulla's memoirs as a source. His lack of vitriol may be a product of Appian's apparent sympathy for the plight of the people.

Plutarch

Plutarch, a priest at Delphi, was a Greek biographer and philosopher who lived from 46 to 120 A.D. He wrote parallel biographies of the most famous and influential Greeks and Romans throughout ancient history, in addition to a large number of moral essays. The *Life of Gaius Marius* is not a strictly historical piece, but a biography. As such, Plutarch endeavored to show Marius as a champion of the people, who rose from rags to riches, from outsider and *novus homo* to the first Roman to hold seven consulships, most of them contrary to custom and law, and who was lauded as the third founder of Rome, after Romulus and Camillus. Far from pandering to the memory of Marius, Plutarch relied on Sulla's memoirs as the primary source for the second half of his work and, as a result, he draws attention to the corruption and vile actions of Marius in his old age when he became ever greedier for power.⁵

Plutarch regularly employed legend, prophecy, and hyperbole to characterize and moralize his subjects, which muddles the facts and details for modern readers. Even though modern readers must be careful to separate the fact from fiction, Plutarch was the most prolific ancient author whose works have survived, and his biographies still stand as essential sources for scholars even today, suppling us with a coherent and detailed account of Marius' life, career, and legend. He details the battles, reforms, political

⁵ Plut. *Mar.* 35: "But Sulla himself, in his memoirs, say he did not fly for the refuge to the house of Marius, but withdrew thither in order to consult with Marius about the step which Sulpicius was trying to force him to take..."

career, and personal life and is corroborated by Appian's and Sallust's accounts, which adds to his credibility as a historical source.

He claimed that Marius was born to a family of poor laborers, which modern scholars find is extremely unlikely. Plutarch briefly describes Marius' military service under Scipio Aemilianus in the Numantine campaign of 134. He then details his subsequent rise through the ranks of the Roman state over the next twenty years: as a tribune, a praetor, and propraetor, or provincial governor, of Further Spain.⁶

According to Plutarch, Marius then continued his career as a *legatus*, a lieutenant-general, earning fame and money as a subordinate legionary commander. So, several years later in 109 he accompanied the consul Caecilius Metellus to Numidia for the war against Jugurtha. After serving loyally for two years, Marius left to run for the consulship of 107, which he won. He subsequently was awarded Metellus' command. Plutarch records Marius' enrollment of the *capite censi* in 107. His coverage of the Jugurthine War and Marius' first consular campaign are not as detailed as Sallust's account.

Plutarch chronicled Marius' victory in Numidia, his five consecutive elections as consul (104 to 100), and his campaigns against the Teutones and Cimbri. It was during this war that Plutarch discussed Marius' modification to the javelin and his military activities in Gaul. Though not great military accounts, they at least illuminate some of Marius' military reforms. Plutarch points out that during his sixth consulship (100 BC), Marius conspired with a radical tribune, Saturninus, and a radical praetor, Glaucia to force through controversial legislation, an attempt which turned into a failed coup. Marius backed out and helped the senate to put down the insurrection with his own veterans. As a result, Marius lost face with both political factions and was forced to leave

⁶ Plut. *Mar.* 4-6.

the city until the outbreak of the Social War in late 91, which facilitated his return to command.

The rest of Plutarch's biography attempts to show that Marius was corrupted by his power. The portrayal of Marius in his old age during the second half of the account clearly emphasizes that he was a vile and contemptuous man. Plutarch goes as far as to blame him for causing Sulla to march on the city in 88, when Marius was given command over the campaign in the East, which had previously been given to Sulla. Here Plutarch begins to rely on Sulla's memoirs, and as a result he portrays Marius as a merciless killer who stood as an oppressive and murderous thug supporting Cinna. He even includes several anecdotes about Marius' reign of terror. Plutarch's moralizing is at times disruptive to modern readers. However, despite the biases and moralizing, Plutarch stands as an essential source for anyone studying the life and accomplishments of Gaius Marius.

Velleius Paterculus

Velleius Paterculus was well placed in the military and is the only surviving eyewitness, besides Augustus, to important events involving various members of the imperial family. He published his two books of *Historiae* in Latin ca. 31 CE. It covered everything from the Trojan War until 29 CE. He published his work in the time of Tiberius, but it was a clear attempt at flattery, shown by the starry-eyed description of Augustus' career. Marius was the uncle of Julius Caesar, and Caesar who was the great uncle and adoptive father of Augustus; despite these family connections, Velleius provides an unsympathetic view of Marius, focusing on the civil bloodshed he wrought at

the end of his career, but at the same time downplaying Sulla's similar behavior. Velleius had grown up in the period immediately following more than a century of civil violence and factional warfare. The security of the early empire, or principate, combined with imperial ideology, produced of a widespread negative view of any popular leader who rose to power at the expense of the old established authority, now that the established authority was the emperor and a proxy senate.

In book II, Velleius describes Marius as overly ambitious, selfish, disruptive, and an enemy of peace. He even cast a dubious light on Marius' first consular election, claiming that he used sordid tax-collectors to spread rumors among the Romans to sway public opinion his way. Moreover, Plutarch argues that Marius' victory in Numidia was ill-desired and had less to do with his efforts than the work of Metellus and Sulla. His assessment, however, is unfair and inaccurate.⁷

Even though Velleius adopted a skeptical view of Marius and his actions, his review of Marius' later career and participation in the civil war is much less severe than Plutarch's. Rather than highlighting groups of freed slaves under Marius' orders hacking up citizens in the street, as Plutarch did, Velleius focuses his rebuke on the deaths of several senators, whose deaths Appian and Plutarch also attributed to Marius and Cinna.⁸ It should be said that Velleius used Sallust, Sulla's memoirs, and other materials that have not survived.

⁷ *Vell.* 2.11.1.

⁸ *Vell.* 2.22.

Cassius Dio

Cassius Dio lived from 155 to 235 CE. A senator, consul, and historian; he wrote an 80-volume history of Rome in Greek, which covered everything from the legendary landing of Aeneas in Italy forward. His discussion of Marius is not particularly detailed, but his condemnation of Marius is evident. For example, Dio shows no restraint in denouncing Marius' occupation of the city, and he provided a list of horrible violence and murder supposedly carried out by Marius or at his request. Dio then immediately shielded Sulla by claiming that many horrible acts during his occupation of the city were outside of his control and not ordered by him.⁹

Throughout the ancient and modern periods, Marius and Sulla have shared a linked history, and because of their conflicts are regarded as extreme opposites politically. They have come to represent the clash between *optimates* and *populares*. In antiquity earlier writers had a more sympathetic view of Marius while later authors writing in the imperial period, saw him as a troublemaker, who undermined the general peace. Over time, as the republican civil wars faded into the past, imperial writers, like Plutarch and Cassius Dio, adopted either a pro-Sullan view or at least an unsympathetic view of overly ambitious generals and mob power. Moreover, Marius was depicted as more violent the later that the source was written, which suggests a shift to an ideology that places security and safety above freedom and political expression.

Finally, like Velleius, Dio used Sallust, Sulla's memoirs, and other materials that have not survived. Dio also reached the consulship twice. Dio was highly placed in the governmental circles and had a keen sense of how government worked, but he was more attuned to the empire.

⁹ Dio. Frag C.5.

The very nature of these ancient works makes it necessary to cross-reference them with other literary, archaeological, and epigraphic evidence when it is available.

The Status of the Marian Question Today

The wide scope of this thesis limited me from reading every pertinent modern work in each subfield, and as a result it was necessary for me to rely on a fewer number of modern authors, than I was initially inclined.

For much of the political history, Emilio Gabba's 1976 book, *Republican Rome: the Army and its Allies*, was enormously useful. It chronicled and analyzed Rome's relationship with its Italian allies both before and after the Social War. Gabba in his first chapter on the professionalization of the Roman army discussed the military reforms of Gaius Marius. He dismissed the notion that Marius, in professionalizing the army, was acting politically along factional lines. He argues further that Marius was actually acting in the interests of the *optimates* with his enrollment of the *capite censi* and his other various reforms. However, his explanation was unconvincing because he believed that the upper class would benefit from no longer being required to serve in the army, but he did not take into account the prestige and honor associated with military service in ancient Rome.

Gabba like many others have attempted to strip away the popular motivation for Marius' actions and instead see him as an opportunistic independent, who sided with whomever he could benefit the most from. Gabba's view of Marius was limited by his topic, which was the *socii*, or the Italian allies. However, not many have taken the position like Gabba that Marius' actions benefitted the upper class, which was, and is, a

dubious position to defend. The Romans had a troubled relationship with their allies, a problem that many *populares* had attempted to solve, but everyone who had tried was murdered by the senatorial elite, i.e. C. Gracchus, Fulvius Flaccus, Saturninus, and Livius Drusus. His book was an attempt to analyze Rome's relationship with its allies both before and after the Social War, a time period steeped in Marian activity; however Gabba does not add anything new to the discussion of Marius or his military reforms.

In 1987 De Bois came out with his *The Roman Army and Politics in the First Century B.C.* in which he explored the political effects of the professionalization of Rome's army. He discussed Marius in a single chapter where he examined his military reforms. He was only interested in showing Marius' reforms as the measures, which professionalized Rome's army, ironic considering the title of the book. His overarching argument was that by professionalizing the Roman army he upset the balance of power between the social orders. It gave individual military commanders too much influence on the hearts and minds of their armies, because by enlisting men from the lower order who joined the army and stayed in the field for longer periods of time, commanders could strengthen the bonds between themselves and their men by bringing to them money, slaves, land, and/or glory. Individual commanders could even order their armies to march on the capital city as Sulla did in 88 BC.

For the socio-economic background of the Marian reforms, Brunt and Boren provided the backbone of my argument. Brunt's 1971 *Italian Manpower 225 B.C.-A.D. 14*, which has been cited by almost every scholar writing on the subject since, provides us with a coherent and comprehensive look at the demographics of the Roman republic. Most notably, Brunt tackles the grain supply, the *latifundia*, and the problem of

consolidation of the *ager publicus* in methodical detail. He argues that the second century dwindling of the landed middle-classes in Roman society was caused by the increased popularity of large cattle herds in Italy rather than the rise of large plantations as the ancient sources reported.

In his 1992 *Roman Society*, Boren provides modern readers with a purely economic analysis of the problems of the late second and early first centuries. He attempts to explain the problems of the *latifundia*, cattle ranchers, and large mining operations in terms that anyone studying material culture would easily recognize. In doing so he makes several points about the Roman grain supply, both provincial and local, which are particularly useful.

Lawrence Keppie's 1984 *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, was utterly invaluable. It was, and is, a widely successful book still used in college classes today. Keppie's aim was to show the transition of Rome's army throughout time, satisfactorily explaining the transition over two centuries from a manipular army to the legions of the early empire. Most of these changes are directly connected in one way or another to the Marian reforms, but Keppie only dedicated a single chapter to Marius.

Keppie's work is military in nature and as such is disinterested in the political motivations or byproducts of Marius' career, but instead is only concerned with his alterations to the legion. Keppie highlights the changes to the legionary formation, transition towards a cohortal organization, the changes to the javelins, the enrollment of the *capite censi*, and the reduction of the baggage train. He also includes archaeological evidence on the javelins and the Roman camp which is particularly useful. However,

aside from disassociating the man from his military achievements, there was little new about his section on Marius.

Jonathan Roth (1999, 2009) and Adrian Goldsworthy (1996, 2000) both deal with Marius in a similar fashion, addressing his reforms in a single section or chapter, and although providing interesting presentations of the information, add little new to the conversation. However, both authors make many other points about the evolution of the Roman army and its practices that were important to this thesis and the general understanding of the Roman army both in battle and on the march.

In more recent years historians have begun giving the Marian reforms the attention they, and the man responsible, warrant. Rather than using Marius and his army as a transitory period, often overlooked, historians have begun to recognize the significant influence of these reforms on the next century of Roman history. However, much of the modern debate had been centered on Marius' military reforms in particular. As more archaeological evidence has been uncovered in recent years, some scholars have come to doubt that Marius was even responsible for many of the reforms he is credited with. Some scholars are reluctant to assign him particular reforms while others have no such qualms.

In an attempt to settle the debate once and for all Christopher Anthony Matthew published the authoritative analysis of the Marian reforms in 2010, *On the Wings of Eagles*. Matthew goes through each piece of ancient literary evidence and modern archaeological findings to support his arguments, as he evaluates each reform on its merits, and argues that several of the reforms were actually tied together out of necessity. In doing so, Matthew cements the timeline of these reforms. However, because of the

dubious nature of some of the evidence, there will continue to be renewed debate over which reforms actually are Marian.

Matthew did just as Keppie and Roth did; he removed the political components of Marius' career, in order to give the reforms themselves ample attention. However, Matthew's monograph does a far better job in examining the reforms. By examining each reform in its own case study he was able to produce a much more detailed picture of the nature and chronology of the Marian reforms. The goal of his work was to analyze the reforms of Gaius Marius and determine if they were in fact responsible for the creation of the fully professionalized Roman army of the Late Republic. Matthew debunks several common misconceptions in this book. First, he argues that the manipular army was never drawn up in a checkerboard formation, which was simply a misunderstanding of several lines of Latin which actually describe the layout of city fortifications; second, he argues that the alterations of the javelin were different from what the ancient sources have conveyed, as revealed by battlefield archaeology; and finally, that the change in oaths to military commanders was a myth and would have had little psychological effect on the soldiery.

This work's greatest strength was Matthew's reasoning for the elimination of soldier classes and the adoption of the cohort as immediately following the enrollment of the *capite censi*. This change could not have been delayed very long because the enrollment of these citizens had fundamentally altered the nature of the army forever. He argues that if the *capite censi* were taken into the army and the classes were not abolished then the legions would be flooded with *velites*, light-armed skirmishers who were of little use to the Roman army. He also argues that the cohortal organization helped maintain

discipline among legions of inexperienced *proletarii* by increasing the size of the primary units of the legion. An expansion of this work to include the long terms effects of these changes would be a very useful and ambitious project.

Many historians who have written about Marius over the ages have simply recited cleaned-up versions of Appian, Sallust, and Plutarch, and therefore were not included in this list, which represents the slow process towards objectively analyzing the achievements of one of the most controversial figures in Roman history and ascertaining the impact that he had on society as a whole. Unfortunately, some modern historians have missed the mark, both reciting without any new interpretation and disassociating his achievements from his political motivations in an attempt to find objectivity. Marius' decisions, including his military reforms, were motivated by politics, albeit in a more subtle way that what was suggested by the ancient sources. Marius did not act in a vacuum nor did the army.

Matthew's study shows the progress made in the subject, and it is the closest thing to an objective analysis of Marius' reforms, barring some major revealing archaeological find. The next stage in Marian studies will be when scholars fully connect his actions as a military reformer to the collapse of the republic through the establishment of dangerous precedents, legal or otherwise.

This thesis will discuss Marius' motivations and the causes for his military reforms, explore the nature and specifics of each reform, and attempt to illuminate their impact on the early events of the following century. I explore the military, social and political, and economic conditions at Rome, so as to understand the internal pressures pushing for reform of the army. The third section deals with the external pressures for

change, specifically the wars of the third and the foreign conquests of the second centuries and their ramifications, followed by the contextualization of Marius' career. And finally, I will investigate the role of his military reforms and their consequences in the early first century.

Chapter II: The Roman Manipular Army

The third century had witnessed the Romans waging a series of wars, most of which were defensive in nature and fought in Italy: a Greek invasion of southern Italy under Pyrrhus (281-272), the First and Second Punic Wars (264-241 and 218-201), the Third Samnite War (298-290), and a couple of Gallic invasions (283, 225).¹⁰ Through these conflicts Rome's resilience proved more than a match for the invaders from Greece, Gaul, and North Africa, while paving the way for Rome's conquests of the second century. The Romans had defeated the Carthaginians, their greatest rivals for power in the Mediterranean, by attacking North Africa directly rather than fighting the war to the finish in Italy. After the decisive Roman victory at Zama in 202, the Romans began a period of rapid territorial expansion through a chain of successful conquests. By the end of the second century Rome grew from a state that included most of the Italian peninsula, and after acquiring Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia, turned into an empire, which spanned from Asia Minor in the east to Spain in the west and from North Africa in the south to Gaul in the north.

Rome's successful defense of its homeland during the third century and its overseas expansion during the second can be directly attributed to several key military innovations and adaptations implemented in the fourth century. These innovations had transformed the hoplite legion of the Regal and Early Republican Periods into what modern scholars refer to as its manipular army through the alteration of equipment, formations, organization, tactics, and strategy. The hoplite phalanx was a tightly packed army formation first developed in 7th century Greece before it spread across the ancient

¹⁰ Dates for these wars from Boughtwright et al. (2004) *passim*.

Mediterranean. The phalanx was made up of hoplites, heavily armored infantrymen who wielded eight-foot long spears and protected themselves with large round shield (typically about a yard in diameter) called an *aspis*. With these shields, hoplites formed an unbroken shield wall along the formation's front and lined up eight ranks deep.

The manipular army was developed several centuries later in Italy, evolving from the Italian hoplite phalanxes which preceded it. The manipular army, like the hoplite phalanx, used heavy infantrymen as the backbone of the formation, although, soldiers made use of different equipment, tactics, and organization. Instead of a single unbroken battle-line, the manipular legion was deployed with gaps between groups of soldiers, both to the front and to the sides. These gaps extended the line and increased the depth of the legion, and led to a series of tactical developments.

The transition towards a manipular army altered the equipment that the Romans carried into battle. The Romans changed their soldiers' equipment from several variations of the hoplite panoply: greaves to protect the lower body, a helmet or *cassis* to protect the head, the muscled cuirass or less expensive corslets to protect the body, a large round shield (*aspis* in Greek and *clipeus* in Latin), and a thrusting spear, the *doru* or *hasta*, as a primary weapon, all became more standardized and therefore are a somewhat more recognizable as a legionnaire's kit. The *clipeus* was replaced by the Italic tower shield or *scutum*; the cuirass was generally replaced by the *lorica hamata*, that is, chainmail or chest plate armor; and finally the *ensis* or *gladius*, the Roman short sword were introduced, with the *pilum*, the javelin, replaced the thrusting spear (*hasta*) as weapons. The Romans had begun to rely more heavily on close combat melee tactics rather than

middle-ranged spear combat, taking advantage of their large tower shields and short swords.¹¹

The Romans initially organized their army into units of 96 men called *centuriae*, arranged 12 men across and 8 men deep. Sixty of these centuries made up a single legion with a full fighting force of just under 6000 men.¹² They fought as hoplites in a phalanx formation, similar to many other of the Mediterranean cities, such as Athens and Sparta at this time. The Romans were heavily influenced by the Greeks, as evident by their adoption of the hoplite panoply and phalanx in the sixth century and by the Servian reforms of the same century. The Servian reforms, named for the legendary king Servius Tullius (traditionally 578-535), who was said to have implemented them, were a clear imitation of the reforms of Solon at Athens dated to the sixth century; both reorganized their city's social divisions to reflect economic status and an individual's ability to serve as a citizen soldier within the phalanx.¹³ Soldiers in the post-phalanx manipular legion continued to be propertied citizens of varying degrees of wealth, who were conscripted by the consuls through the *dilectus*, the conscription process by which consuls levied their legions. The transition away from phalanx and hoplite tactics and equipment towards those of the manipular army did not alter the overall social structure of the army, but rather perpetuated it.¹⁴

After the Romans abandoned the phalanx, in favor of the manipular arrangement, the existing Servian socio-military classes were transformed over time into a graduated legion with several different soldier classes based on their personal wealth, political

¹¹ Livy 8.8.3-14.

¹² Roth, (2009) p. 11.

¹³ Servian reforms: Liv.1.42-44, Roth (2009) pp. 10-11, Keppie (1984) pp. 16-7.

¹⁴ Dilectus: Polyb. 6.19.5-6.21.4, Keppie (1984) pp. 33-34.

influence, seniority, and military experience. The Servian soldier classes were transformed into the *hastati*, *principes*, *triarii*, *velites*, and the *equites*.¹⁵ These classes represent skirmishers (*velites*), three degrees of heavy infantrymen (*hastati*, *principes*, *triarii*), and the cavalry (*equites*).

Livy and Polybius both provide descriptions of the Roman manipular legion, its units, and equipment. They both describe the *hastati* as the front line fighters, equipped with javelins (*pila*), a *scutum*, and a *gladius*, and also protected by a chest plate and a helmet. Those soldiers who were worth a substantial sum were equipped with the *lorica hamata*, or chainmail. They were supported by *principes* in the second line, who were armed in a similar fashion, and behind them were the *triarii*, who were equipped with sword and shield, but were also outfitted with a *hasta* or thrusting spear.¹⁶ The sources also discuss the *velites* as light-armed soldiers, who carried the *parma*, a round shield as big as a Greek *aspis*, and fought as skirmishers out in front of the *hastati*, until they were overcome by the enemy and retreated through the gaps between maniples.¹⁷

Livy's and Polybius' accounts differ slightly in that Livy describes an army that used the *accensi* and the *rorarii*, while Polybius describes the *velites* as the lower order skirmishers. This terminology may reflect a change in structure of the army over time or simply may have been a historian's error. Polybius appears to have been the more reliable source because of his close proximity in time to the events and his close association with Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus during his military career, in addition to the fact that he was said to have been present during the sack of Corinth by Mummius in 146. Polybius'

¹⁵ Polyb. 6.11, 6.19-21.

¹⁶ Liv. 8.8, Polyb. 6.21-4.

¹⁷ Keppie (1984) p. 35.

description of the manipular legion indicates the state of the army during the second half of the second century.¹⁸

The process by which the Roman consul selected and drafted the men who would compose his army was called the *dilectus*. In effect this levy was a compulsory conscription drawn from the eligible male citizen population, men of Roman birth and property. The consul, after being given his assignments from the senate, conducted the *dilectus* in the city of Rome itself, selecting those he desired for his forces and sent his officers abroad, either to the allies in Italy or the provinces, to raise a prescribed number of men from each to make up the allied wings or *alae sociorum*. Once the army was assembled and properly outfitted and supplied, they marched off to war.¹⁹

Once legions went into the field, the state assumed only some responsibility for provisioning the army, while many of the costs were left to individual soldiers. The senate provided to the legions pay for basic provisions and for time spent in the field through a *stipendium* or stipend.²⁰ Initially, that's all it covered; however; over time the *stipendium* began to incorporate more expenses and as a result eventually became a system of providing wages to soldiers. It was paid for by a graduated property tax among the Romans themselves and *tributum* collected from Rome's allies and provinces.²¹

Livy records that the *stipendium* was first instituted during the preparations for the siege of Veii (c. 400), which the Romans claimed took ten years (likely a forced Roman literary parallel to the Trojan War, which also took ten years). Undoubtedly, the war against Veii took longer than a single campaigning season (spring-summer), probably

¹⁸ Liv. 8.8, Polyb. 6.24.

¹⁹ Keppie (1984) pp. 19, 32, Roth (2009) pp. 26-28.

²⁰ *Stipendium*: Polyb. 6.39.12-15, Liv. 4.59-60, Diod. 14.16.5.

²¹ *Tributum*: Diod. 14.16.5.

only three or so consecutive years.²² Although several years was certainly a long enough period of time to warrant compensation for keeping soldiers from their farms. The practice of paying soldiers must have been in use by the time of the Latin War (341-338) of the fourth century, when the Roman army was compelled to fight its allies in Latium and, more importantly, to station garrisons away from Rome for a time. The Romans needed to pay their soldiers some sort of wage in order to enable them to garrison neighboring cities and forts in Latium for extended periods of time. The security of the Roman state depended on its army's ability and willingness to rapidly respond to Latin uprisings by means of these garrisons. It became a vital concern of the senate to ensure the willingness of Rome's citizen-soldier population to participate in warfare despite longer terms of service and increased obligations, which they decided was best done through financial compensation.²³

The early Roman legion experienced some success with their hoplite phalanx against the Etruscans and the Latins by conquering the Alban hills and lower Tiber Valley, but when they came into conflict with the Samnites and Gauls, the limitations of the hoplite phalanx as a fighting system were exposed.²⁴ The Gallic victory on the field at Allia River and the subsequent sack of Rome in 390 (or 387) revealed that the Roman army was unprepared to fight as dynamic and ferocious an enemy as the Gauls.

The Gallic army had used volleys of javelins to break up the Roman phalanx prior to charging and routing the defenders. The Roman phalanx was said to have broken

²² Siege of Veii: Liv. 5.1.1-28.8, Roth (2009) p. 11.

²³ Keppie (1984) p. 18, Roth (2009) p. 18.

²⁴ Nagle (2012) pp. 80-81, lists five major limitations of the Greek phalanx: 1) First, an entire generation of warriors could be destroyed in a single battle; 2) it depended on individuals to provide their own equipment; 3) the phalanx requires significant training in order to function properly; 4) it had a limited distance and duration of campaigns because of the expense of the supply train; 5) it had trouble functioning on hills or broken terrain.

before the enemy had even made contact with its lines, which shows the devastating effect of the Gallic javelin volley on the Roman front ranks. The Roman historian Diodorus Siculus made special note of the large variety and number of the enemy javelins on this particular occasion, which reflects their importance in the engagement.²⁵ The defeat of the Romans at Allia River was so demoralizing that the Romans nearly quit their mother city forever, if it was not for the leadership of Camillus, who convinced them to remain at Rome and fight. The Romans rallied, retook their city, lauded Camillus as the second founder of Rome, and began to repair their lives. The events of 390 (or 387) had profound and long lasting effects on the Roman psyche.²⁶

Rome's wars against the Samnites forced the Romans, who were still fighting as hoplites, to fight a war in rough and mountainous terrain. The mountainous Oscan territory in central and southern Italy was disadvantageous ground for phalanx warfare. The Samnites, by taking full advantage of the uneven terrain, narrow mountain passes, and their own ambush tactics, clearly demonstrated to the Romans the limitations of the phalanx through a series of frustrating victories. Rome's humiliating defeat at the Caudine Forks (321), where the entire Roman army was ambushed, surrendered, and was famously forced to walk under the yoke, compelled the Romans to adapt and evolve their tactics. The Samnite wars further exposed the Romans to the *scutum*, the large rectangular or oval tower shields which the Romans adopted wholesale into their army, and reiterated the necessity for a more fluid formation.²⁷ This period appears to be the time when the Romans also reorganized their army into maniples and adopted a more open and much less rigid fighting formation.

²⁵ Diod. 14.113-117.

²⁶ Battle of Allia River: Liv. 5.38, Diod. 14.114.

²⁷ Battle of Caudine Forks: Liv. 9.1.1-6.9.

The Romans learned first-hand the numerous limitations and disadvantages of their phalanx legion. Their experiences fighting against Gauls and Samnites not only exposed the Romans to new tactics but also to new weapons and armament. The Romans were very open to military adaptation and to the adoption of enemy weapons or tactics which they ascertained to be beneficial. Diodorus describes the Romans as having adopted the round *clipeus* after fighting against the Etruscans who fought in phalanxes.²⁸ Later, the Romans adopted the rectangular *scutum* to replace the round *clipeus* after fighting against the Samnites, and javelins were given a new significance after their defeat at Allia River against the Gauls.

Tactically, the Romans implemented javelin volleys and changed their battle formation to better perform in mountainous and uneven ground and avoid the obstacles of the Samnite war. The battle of Allia River taught the Romans that javelin volleys were excellent for breaking up the front ranks of a phalanx, “softening” the line prior to a charge.²⁹ The Romans had also begun to alter their overall wartime strategy beginning with the second Samnite War. Strategically, the Romans began to support their legions by using their Latin allies in the *ala sociorum* or allied wing, which came to constitute roughly half of Rome’s army, drastically increasing the army’s manpower and fighting strength. Moreover, the Romans developed a system of forts and outposts at key mountain passes and choke points in order to control the movement of Samnite forces. This strategy was used over and over again throughout later Roman history: the Romans

²⁸ Diod. 23.3.1: “The Romans as pupils always surpassed their teachers. In ancient times they used rectangular shields. The Etruscans who fought in a phalanx with round bronze shields forced the Romans to adopt their equipment and as a consequence were defeated by them. Later again, peoples using the same shields as the Romans now do and fighting in maniples were conquered by those same Romans who had imitated these excellent methods of fighting and of arming themselves.”

²⁹ Diod. 14.114.

focus the majority of their attention on securing key locations and maintaining logistical integrity, while at the same time actively denying the same to their enemy.³⁰

It is vital to note that Roman successes in the third and second centuries were supported by enormous reserves of available manpower in Italy. The Romans had initially incorporated many of their neighbors in Latium as Roman citizens, such as those at Antium and Tusculum, who were granted citizenship and incorporated into the *ager Romanus*, although by the time of the Latin War (341-338) the Romans had adopted the practice of making the conquered peoples of Italy their subjects, not their equals. Most of the Latins and all Italians outside of Latium were given varying degrees of Latin rights, pertaining to free movement (*migratio*), intermarriage (*conubium*), and trade (*commercium*), but were denied access to the Roman legion and thus to Roman political power. Instead, the allies were summoned in ten cohorts, making up the *ala sociorum*. Each legion was accompanied by an equal-sized allied counterpart, effectively doubling the size of consular armies.³¹

Their practice of incorporating these allies as subjects created a primitive imperial structure, which not only provided Rome with soldiers for its armies, but also a source of annual tax revenue in the form of *tributum*. The *socii* (allies) came to make up a large proportion of Roman military forces, usually around half, sometimes higher in times of emergency. Rome's primitive imperial structure gave it access to enormous reserves of manpower drawn from across the Italian peninsula, which were vital in the third century when the Roman army experienced several devastating defeats on the field, each with a tremendous loss of life. Two battles in the Second Punic War make the list: at Lake

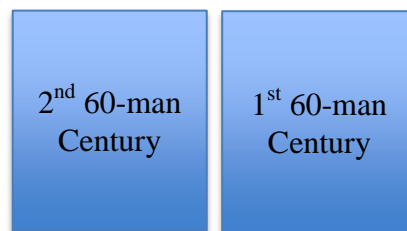
³⁰ System of fortifications and outposts to defeat the Samnites: Roth (2009) p. 28, Keppie (1984) pp. 20-21.

³¹ *Ala sociorum* after the Latin War: Roth (2009) p. 27, Keppie (1984) pp. 33-34.

Trasimene in 217 where more than half of a 30,000 man Roman army was destroyed and a year later at Cannae in 216 Hannibal's army enveloped the Roman army and reportedly slaughtered as many as 80,000 men in a single day. After both battles, the Romans levied additional forces and continued the war effort with strong determination. This is not to say that extraordinary measures were not taken. Freedmen, poor citizens, and even slaves were enrolled in the legion to raise Roman soldiers in times of crisis. However, during the middle Republic Rome consistently raised additional armies after major defeats because of its relationship with its Italian subject states and access to their eligible fighting-men.³²

The development of the manipular legion went side by side with a change in the equipment and tactics of the Roman army during the Middle Republic. These changes were accompanied by organizational and formation changes to better suit new tactics and to combat enemy formations. The largest and most noticeable change is that rather than fighting in a large inflexible single-unit phalanx, supported on its flanks by light armed soldiers and cavalry contingents, the Romans now arranged themselves into legions made up of 40 spread out maniples. The Roman manipular legion was organized into ten cohorts, each made up of four maniples of two 60-man "centuries" with their own centurions. Each maniple was made up of 120 men in various soldier classes: *velites*, *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii*

*Figure 2.1: Middle Republic maniple
See Polyb. 6.21*



³² Battle of Trasimene: Liv. 22.7; Battle of Cannae: Liv. 22.35.1-49.18.

Many of Rome's enemies outside of Latium still employed the phalanx formation. The resulting manipular legion was designed especially with these phalanxes in mind, that is, to take full advantage of the inherent weaknesses of the phalanx formation. The most significant limitations of the phalanx were its inability to attack or defend effectively in any other direction than straight forward, and its necessity to maintain an unbroken battle line without any gaps.

*See Polyb. 6.21



Figure 2.2: Manipular Cohort

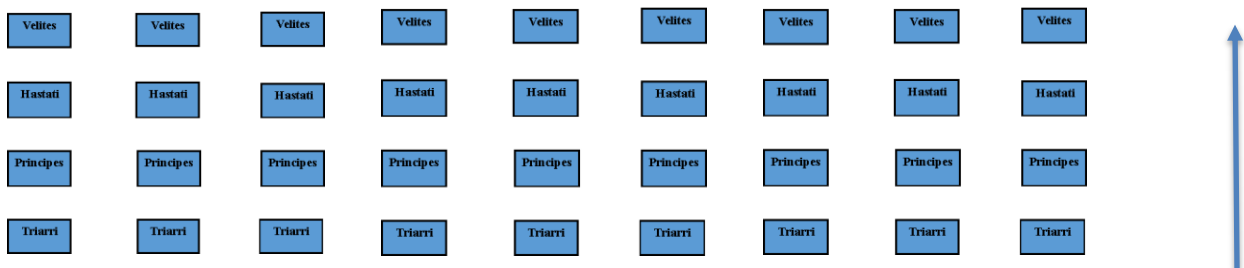


Figure 2.3: Manipular Legion

The Roman army's formation had changed significantly, utilizing strategic gaps between maniples, thus widening and deepening the formation. The manipular legion was arranged with maniple-sized gaps between the ten cohorts of the legion. Not only were there maniple-sized gaps between the cohorts across the front of the legion, but these gaps also dramatically

increased the depth of their formation by leaving spaces between the *velites*, *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii*. These gaps maximized the width and depth of the Roman lines without undermining its integrity.

Depending on the depth of the legion's maniples, those in maniples could be arranged at 4 men deep to achieve a 30-man front, or 8 men deep for a 15-man front. Roth argues that they employed six-man deep maniples with 20-men wide.³³ According to the spacing suggested by Polybius and the size of the Roman shield, the changing of the maniple depth can be the difference between maniples 60 or 120 feet across. Changing the depth could be used to double the depth of a legion or double its width, which gave Roman commanders increased versatility on the battlefield, versatility they put to judicious use.

The traditional hoplite and Macedonian phalanxes were typically eight ranks deep during the classical period, when the hoplite phalanxes were shallowest. More importantly, the hoplite and Macedonian phalanxes both required that units maintain virtually no space between them, unlike the Roman manipular battle line which had a length of empty space equal to the space occupied by soldiers. The wider manipular battle line compelled opposing phalanxes to spread their forces out, thus thinning their lines, or else to be left vulnerable along their flanks. Goldsworthy argues that armies drawn up in shallower formations indicated a higher degree of discipline, which may have been a factor when Roman commanders determined the depth to draw up their army in.³⁴

The smaller maniples, as compared to the size of a phalanx or later Roman cohorts, of only 120 men left units relatively vulnerable and exposed on the field, which, on occasion, had caused enough fear and panic that soldiers fled. Although the way the maniples were arranged

³³ Roth (2009) p. 52.

³⁴ Goldsworthy (1996) p. 176.

meant that when a forward maniple of *hastati* was under enough pressure to break and run, they could fall back behind the line of *principes* which supported them, and they behind the final line of *triarii*. In doing so, it became possible for the Roman army to recycle frightened and tired soldiers in a way that was previously impractical. It also kept the army from being routed once a single point in the line was broken, because there were now at least three lines of soldiers who could be involved in the fighting. This “safety net” of having multiple lines meant that the Roman army could withstand particularly grueling and brutal combat for a longer period of time without being routed.³⁵

The battle formation of the hoplite and Macedonian phalanxes was, by necessity, a continuous and unbroken front because both phalanxes were only offensively and defensively effective in one direction: forward. It was difficult for soldiers to combat threats on the formation’s flanks. For the hoplite phalanx, their 8 or 9 foot lances were difficult to maneuver, and more importantly, in the fighting and pushing the original battle line became distorted and made both flanks vulnerable. The longer spears of the Macedonian phalanx required two hands to hold. Their long spears were all pointed forward, creating several layers of lances in a single forward direction. Thus, the Macedonian phalanx was as vulnerable on its flanks and rear as it was imposing and formidable along its front.

The largest drawback of both the hoplite and Macedonian phalanxes was their lack of mobility, and their great vulnerability on the flanks due to the nature of the phalanx formation required the close proximity of shielded spearmen to effect a strong offensive and defensive front. The hoplite phalanx would have appeared from the front as a wall of shields, while its Macedonian counterpart, with its protruding spear-points, would have looked more like the rear end of an enormous porcupine. The phalanx formation was slow moving and did not maneuver

³⁵ Manipular legionary battle tactics: Roth (2009) p. 53; Keppie (1984) pp. 38-9.

easily compared to other formations. This is the reason that the Macedonian phalanx was regularly deployed as the army's center, supported on the flanks by lighted-armed infantry and cavalry divisions, which moved far more swiftly than the phalanx.³⁶

The Romans regularly used a variety of javelins thrown in volleys by the *velites* and heavy infantry (*hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii*), in order to break up the enemy line and defenses prior to closing the gap between armies and engaging. This technique was especially effective against hoplite and Macedonian phalanxes because of how tightly packed they were and their lack of projectile weapons to defend themselves. Furthermore, volleys of javelins sometimes softened the enemy line enough to cause the formation to be temporarily disturbed, creating weak spots which could be exploited. A javelin volley was also an excellent way in which to predicate a charge and melee. So as to capitalize on their new equipment and tactics, the Roman legions had developed skills in hand-to-hand combat. Their close-quarters melee was different than much of the spear combat that had dominated the seventh to fourth centuries.

Because of the *scutum*'s single hand grip, which allowed for much more freedom in moving the shield, the Romans were able to use them for offensive purposes as well, and the Roman soldier's reliance on short swords developed the legionaries into very close combat melee experts. The best example of this was at the battle of Mevania (308), where the Romans punched, shoved, and pushed with their shields to corral and capture a large number of their Umbrian enemies before they surrendered.³⁷ This tactic of aggressively punching with the *scutum* is also evident in Livy's account of Titus Manlius's duel with the Gallic champion.

Manlius approached his adversary and then punched up with his shield, hitting the Gaul's shield

³⁶ Keppie (1984) p. 17.

³⁷ Battle of Mevania: Liv. 9.41: "They did their work more with shields than with swords, swinging them from the shoulder and knocking down their enemies with the bosses. The slain were outnumbered by the prisoners, and all along the battle line one cry was heard: that they should lay down their arms. And so, while the battle was still going on, the surrender was made, by the men who had first advocated war."

upward and exposing a gap in his protection. He exploited the gap with several quick stabs with his short sword, killing the Gallic warrior, and ended the duel. Both of these accounts demonstrate the development of Roman tactics away from spear fighting and towards the use of the *scuta* and short swords.³⁸

The gaps between maniples functioned as more than a means of extending the width and depth of the Roman lines; they functioned as potential traps against formations like the phalanx which required a continuous, unbroken battle line. These manipular gaps were traps so that if portions of the enemy line were to advance into the gaps between the Roman maniples, they would be cut off from the rest of the phalanx and exposed to attack from the Romans on three fronts: front, left, and right. So enemy armies in the phalanx formation needed to exhibit excellent discipline from commanders and soldiers, or risk a harsh reversal of fortunes on the battlefield by the Romans.

Perhaps even more important than the presence of potential kill zones in the gaps between the maniples was the fact that these gaps also allowed the Romans to engage the enemy with a reduced proportion of its army at any given time. Because of the four-maniple depth of the line, only the units of 1200 men would be in direct combat at any given moment, while the enemy phalanx or army generally had its entire line engaged. By fighting with around 30% of the legion's fighting force, and with the rest in reserve, Roman commanders gained an unprecedented amount of maneuverability, allowing their units to be redeployed somewhere else on the battlefield, if all was going well along the frontline. The gaps in the line also allowed the Romans to apply pressure to the enemy line in select locations, attempting to break through and cause a rout, without engaging an unnecessarily large number of soldiers, tiring themselves out or risking defeat.

³⁸Duel of Titus Manlius: Liv. 7.9.6-7.11.1.

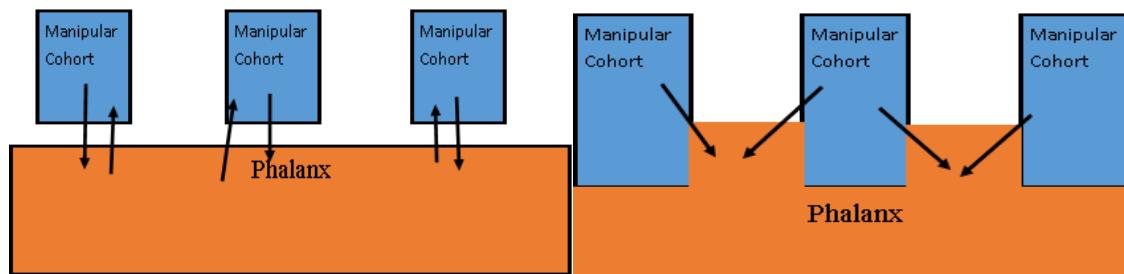


Figure 2.4: (left) Roman manipular formation prior to engagement with a phalanx, (right) melee between phalanx and manipular formation. Important to note, between the Roman cohorts, the enemy hoplites are surrounded on three sides.

There are several examples in Greek warfare that demonstrate clearly that having large gaps between units within a phalanx was a recipe for disaster. First, there is the battle of Paraetacene in 317 between Antigonos and Eumenes. Both generals deployed Macedonian-style phalanxes as their centers, supported by elephants, cavalry, and light-armed troops on their flanks. The battle was decided when Antigonos noticed that Eumenes' phalanx had created a gap between infantry divisions as they advanced, and so ordered his cavalry to charge the gap. The cavalry rushed through the gap in the line, and passed all the way through the enemy ranks. Before Eumenes' phalanx could turn to defend its rear, the cavalry wheeled around and crashed into the unit's rear and flanks, which routed Eumenes and his men.³⁹

More than a century later during the Second Macedonian War (200-197), the Romans and Macedonians fought a major pitched battle at Cynoscephalae in 197. During this battle the Romans initially repelled the large Macedonian phalanx, which was advancing against them from an uphill position. The Romans were compelled to give ground, drawing the Macedonians forward, which led the Roman *legatus* L. Quinctius Flaminius to order 20 maniples, half of a legion, to wheel around and attack the Macedonian phalanx's unprotected and exposed flank. Flaminius had noticed that as the phalanx advanced down the slope, it was eventually hemming

³⁹ Diod. 19.26-31.

itself in because a rearward retreat up the slope would be extremely difficult. He also noticed that, as the phalanx advanced, it outran many of the light-armed troops and cavalry that made up its wings and so exposed the phalanx's flanks. Once the Romans executed Flaminius' maneuver, chaos ensued along the Macedonian line; the front folded and the men began to flee.⁴⁰

The Macedonian phalanx's most distinguishing feature, the devastating spear wall, was revealed as its greatest weakness. The reason that the Macedonian phalanx was particularly vulnerable along its flanks is the nearly 20 foot-long pikes, or *sarissai*, which the Macedonians had used in their phalanx since the time of Philip II. As a result of these long spears, the Macedonian soldiers were unable to turn the long *sarissai* to meet the 20 maniples of Romans rushing towards them in a way that was not straight on. Once the Romans closed the gap between themselves and the Macedonians, their superior close quarter combat skills gave them a considerable advantage. Since the third century, Roman infantry had used short swords, *gladii*, after adopting the sword upon first encountering it in Hispaniae, and tower shields, *scuta*, after the First Samnite War (343- 341). Their equipment was ideal protection for close quarter combat, while the Macedonians were armed with small shields and very long lances, which needless to say were not.⁴¹

At Paraetacene, Eumenes' phalanx was routed because his men did not maintain proper spacing as they marched. In doing so, they opened up a gap which the enemy cavalry could exploit. The Roman victory at Cynoscephalae was the result of a similar phenomenon: as the Greek phalanx pressed forward and the Romans gave ground, it outran its wings and opened the center's flanks to attack. The mixed cavalry and light-armed wings were not the equal of the heavy infantry of either the Roman manipular legionaries or the *ala sociorum*, which defended

⁴⁰ Battle of Cynoscephalae: Liv. 33.11.1-12.10; Roth (2009) p. 77.

⁴¹ Polyb. 18.29.2.

their flanks. The portion of the Roman battle line which was composed of heavy infantry was a much higher proportion of the overall length of the line than their Macedonian counterpart's. So, as a result the Romans were able to divert 20 maniples, approximately 2100 men, to the attack on the Macedonian center's exposed side, and ensure victory.

Metamorphosis of Military Offices

As Rome's military obligations rapidly expanded during the course of the third and second centuries, the army was compelled to respond by changing and evolving the roles of certain political and military positions. Offices like praetor and *legatus* were created, other like consul and military tribune were altered fundamentally. The changes to Roman's highest political and military offices were necessary for Rome's continued expansion. As more armies were deployed annually, the need for military leadership, especially commanders with lesser or superior *imperium*, drove the Romans to create not only new positions, but more offices so that by the time men served as consuls, they already would have some military experience. In the process the roles of the offices of praetor, consul, military tribune, and *legatus* were altered forever.

First, the office of praetor changed drastically since its recreation in the fourth century. Initially, the Romans had elected annually only a single praetor, who was very often a patrician, in order to take care of administrative and judicial duties at Rome (*domi praetor*), while the consuls were campaigning elsewhere. The addition of the *militiae praetor* allowed both consuls, instead of just one, to remain in the field for their entire term while their urban duties were attended to. As Michael Sage points out, the fact that initially there was only a single praetor in

office suggests his function was to fulfill the consular judiciary and administrative duties.⁴²

Praetors were also granted lesser *imperium*, which enabled the praetor to command an army and serve as a subordinate general in the field. The prospect of commanding legions was the ultimate ambition for early Roman politicians. *Imperium* was the most prestigious power of the consul, and would not have been parceled out to lesser officials without necessity.

By the beginning of the first century, the responsibilities of the praetorship had greatly expanded. The number of annual praetorships had been increased to six when Sulla added two more during his dictatorship. Praetors had acquired more military responsibilities, leading armies in the provinces and serving as provincial governors when needed. It later became regular practice for praetors to be granted a provincial command as propraetorial governors, which indicates that the increase in the number of provinces necessitated an increase in the number of praetors.

The position of proconsul was initially implemented in order to extend Quintus Publilius Philo's authority over his campaign in Campania (315). He was besieging Naples and could not return to Rome for the consular election, so the senate moved to extend his authority by granting his *imperium* through the proconsulship. Even later, in the first century, the practice of electing a consul *in absentia* was avoided at all reasonable costs – and then some as Caesar later found out – and was only used in extraordinary circumstances. So a mechanism like prorogation was an important tool for ensuring continuity in command.⁴³ After Publilius, prorogation of consular *imperium* on an ad hoc basis allowed the senate to exert some control over the commanders in the field through its option of renewing command or not. Also, whenever the senate found it

⁴² Sage (2008) p. 101.

⁴³ Liv. 8.23.10-12, Sage (2008) p. 112.

necessary to renew a commander's authority, prorogation was preferable to reoccurring consulships or election *in absentia*.

The increased number of praetors and both consular and praetorian prorogations are indicative of increasingly frequent wars, campaigns, and rebellions, as well as provincial governorships. The Romans also began to send larger armies abroad, which meant that they required more subordinate commanders and officers to maintain control of the army and to execute strategies which involved the division of the army into smaller independent forces. A praetor could have been sent to assist a consul; however the Romans typically spread out their consuls and praetors throughout the provinces, so as to keep a commander with *imperium* in all areas of the empire. Even though they had increased the number of commanders with *imperium* by using propraetors and proconsuls, and increasing the number of annual praetors over time, the growing number of campaigns and provinces required additional officers and generals. So, Rome began to use legates and military tribunes as subordinate commanders and middle officers.

As Rome engaged in its foreign wars of the second century, legates (*legati*) were used more often as second-in-commands to generals with *imperium*. Simultaneously the power and influence of the military tribune (*tribunus militiae*) diminished significantly from what it had been in the preceding centuries. By the second century, the military tribunes were low level army officers, usually influential men in their 20's from the senatorial and equestrian orders. The military tribunate was used as a first step in the military command structure and the political advancement that was intimately and inseparably attached to it. The position of *legatus* was the senior office, held by men who were often of consular rank. Before the first century these officers were used exclusively in the provinces as commanders in their own right or as commanders subordinate to consuls or proconsuls. They were also being used with increasingly

higher frequencies as lieutenant-commanders, or deputy commanders, while accompanying proconsular generals in the field. Legates also helped to maintain continuity in provincial commands, because their terms of service were not necessarily the same as consuls or praetors: for example, Rutilius Rufus was a legate under both Caecilius Metellus (109-108) and Gaius Marius (107-106) in North Africa for a period of three years.⁴⁴

Although the Romans altered their military command structure through the regularization of prorogation, increased number of annual praetorships, and wider usage of seasoned *legati*, they still experienced problems throughout their overseas expansion, problems which stemmed from inconsistencies in command, dubious and unsanctioned conduct abroad, and strong-handed foreign policy in the senate. So, as Roman armies conquered more territories and peoples, they sometimes suffered devastating defeats in the field and made disastrous diplomatic decisions, extending and intensifying several conflicts and adding to general discontent.

Conclusion

The fourth century development of the Roman manipular army had given Rome the critical advantage on the battlefield for centuries. In the third century, even though the Romans sustained heavy casualties, they resisted the invasions of both Pyrrhus and Hannibal and protected the authority and stability of the Roman state. However, the rapid territorial expansion through an increasing frequency of conquests throughout the second century forced the Romans to consider further reforms to their army as the obligations and responsibilities of their growing empire began to put enormous stress on the soldier classes at Rome. The Romans were compelled to field more and more legions each year in order to maintain peace and stability in their provinces and to deal with enemies abroad. Roman commanders and the Roman senate

⁴⁴ Keppie (1984) p. 40- Legates were used more as deputy and lieutenant commanders after 190.

were also responsible for a large numbers of blunders best attributed to inconsistent command of wars and bad foreign policy decisions, mistakes which only exacerbated circumstances and required more Roman military action, as the next chapter will show.

Chapter III: Roman Society, Politics, and Economics during the 2nd Century.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the second century was a period of great change at Rome. Their new and growing empire had radically expanded, and their role in the Mediterranean had evolved from a major power into the regional hegemon. As a result of various military successes, the balance of power and resources at Rome itself and between Rome and its allies were significantly altered. By the middle of the second century, a long process of consolidation of the Italian farmland by a relatively small number of wealthy Roman citizens had begun to manifest serious socioeconomic, political, and even military consequences. Simultaneously, the number of both aristocratic patrician and ordinary plebeian farm families in Roman society had been decreasing overtime, further concentrating wealth, and more importantly political influence, in the hands of fewer and fewer men.⁴⁵ It is worth mentioning that the number of patrician families, who could trace their lineage back to the founding families of the city, was sharply declining, while plebeian noble families rose to fill the gap. But even though there were a greater number of plebeian aristocratic families than patrician ones, at Rome, the number of families with considerable wealth and resources was also on a downward trend.⁴⁶

These conditions greatly contributed to the political discontent which allowed men such as Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus to be elected to the office of plebeian tribune and to benefit from enormous popular support by pursuing significant reforms. Both brothers met civic violence

⁴⁵ Mousourakis (2007) p.44: "a major cause of the crisis was the decline of the free peasantry and the deepening schism between the growing urban and rural proletariat on the other hand, and the landowning senatorial aristocracy on the other. A connected element was the growing inability of the state to recruit enough yeoman legionaries to fight its wars."cp. Harris (1979) p.101.

⁴⁶ The decline of the numbers of patrician families: Boren (1992) pp.105-110.

amounting to war and murder for the two of them and others as well. Marius had grown up during this time period, which undoubtedly would have led him to form his own opinions on what needed to change at Rome.

The Latifundia

Plutarch, Appian, and Livy all refer to or describe the *latifundia* and their increase in size and number as the primary cause for much of the socioeconomic and political dysfunction experienced at Rome during the latter half of the second century. They describe the *latifundia* as large plantation-like farms, which had swollen in size through the acquisition of adjacent plots and the violation of the restriction on land holdings from the *ager publicus*.⁴⁷ The rise of *latifundia* and other large agricultural operations led to a consolidation of land, other resources, and work which, in turn, led to nearly a century of rampant unemployment in the countryside. As a result large migrations of displaced poor and jobless citizens converged on the city of Rome in search of work and opportunity.⁴⁸

Most importantly, the wealthy bought up lands which were designated *ager publicus*, that is, the portion of conquered territory Rome parceled out to its citizens for low rent. The *ager publicus* was initially intended to help maintain a large population of middle-class Roman citizens who by virtue of owning property were eligible for military service and political appointment.⁴⁹ In order to preserve these allotments and make sure that there were enough to serve the needs of the many Romans at lower economic levels, there had been laws saying that no man could rent more than 300 *jugera*, about 500 acres, of this land, and that these allotments were not to be sold. Over time these laws became unobserved and the land had since become

⁴⁷ Plut. *TG*. 8.1-3, App. *BC* 1.1.7-8, Liv. *Per.* 60.

⁴⁸ Development of *Latifundia* caused the decline of small farmers: Boren (1992) p. 70.

⁴⁹ Plut. *TG* 8.1-2.

consolidated by wealthy landowners who built *latifundia*.⁵⁰ The negative effects on employment caused by this process of land consolidation were further intensified by the large upswing in slave labor, which was almost exclusively used on *latifundia*, ranches, and orchards, and in mines, rather than offering wages to free laborers.

The consolidation of the *ager publicus* in the hands of the wealthy few was initially seen as the root of many problems at Rome. First, it reduced the number of men from the middle-classes who were eligible for service as heavy infantry, because a relatively few wealthy individuals had purchased much of the available farmland in Italy and driven off the smallholders who were then no longer liable for military service.⁵¹ Second, the *latifundia* used foreign slaves as their labor force and as a result did not hire free laborers, which further contributed to growth in urban and rural unemployment. Third, the *latifundia* represented a trend of wealth disparity among the Roman people, and as the wealth of the few increased, the population of urban poor did the same. This disparity caused a massive increase in the power of the burgeoning *popularis* faction. The Romans faced a major problem in the growing number of citizens who had previously qualified for military service but had now fallen below the property qualification and were now only eligible as *velites*, and not as the heavy infantry (*hastati*, *principes*, or *triarii*) which made up the core of the legion.⁵²

Rome's military obligations and responsibilities had expanded over the last two centuries. However, the means of levying soldiers for campaigns had remained relatively unchanged. As more and more Roman citizens were called into the field for longer periods of time, the need to maintain economically healthy middle-classes of propertied citizens, as an appropriate

⁵⁰ Harris (1979) p. 82: "we know that by 173 the tendency of landowners to engross excessive quantities of the *ager publicus* was clearly perceived, and at the same date probably not before 167 a *lex de modo agrorum* was instituted or revived to prevent such practices."

⁵¹ Gabba (1976) p. 9: middle class decline throughout the 2nd century led to an increase in *proletarii*.

⁵² App. BC. 1.1.10, Harris (1979) p. 101.

proportion of the population, increased drastically, although its middle-class population actually had been progressively decreasing over the course of the century.⁵³ The propertied citizens who were still eligible to serve were effectively overtaxed through frequent service in unpopular and unprofitable campaigns like those in Hispaniae.⁵⁴ Also, the increasing campaigns abroad dragged citizen-soldiers away from their lands long enough that many found themselves compelled to sell their land because it had fallen into relative neglect during the owner's absence, suffered from mismanagement, or simply fallen into disuse, thereby costing money with little to no output. Wealthy landowners seized the opportunity to buy up property from financially ruined farmers.⁵⁵ Returning to their lands with too much accumulated debt would have encouraged many to sell their lands to larger landowners. Rural citizens, or *agrestes*, were the backbone of the Roman army and provided far more soldiers to the army than the city. With the decline in the number of property-owners in the countryside, the number of available citizen soldiers also contracted.⁵⁶

Part of the reason that *latifundia* were so successful in Italy was their access to cheap slave labor to work them. Most slave laborers employed on the *latifundia* were captured during one of the many Roman conquests of the second century. Plutarch mentions that Tiberius was inspired to enact his agrarian law when he was travelling through Tuscany on his way to join the war in Hispaniae. He observed a startling number of "barbarian" slaves working the land.⁵⁷ The Roman army was regularly accompanied by a sizable number of slave traders and procurers who transported and sold the captives in markets back in Italy and overseas. The acquisition of slaves may not have been the primary motivating factor for the Romans to pursue an aggressive and

⁵³ Gabba (1976) p. 9: "There was a progressive decline on the part of those who belonged to the middle classes, either into the lowest class of the census or still lower into the ranks of the *proletarii*."

⁵⁴ Spanish Campaign as unprofitable: Liv. *Peri.* 48.

⁵⁵ Boren (1992) p. 69.

⁵⁶ *Agrestes* as the major contributors to the Roman Army: Brunt (1971) pp. 253-4, Dillion (2005) p. 412.

⁵⁷ Plut. *TG.* 8.7.

expansionist foreign policy, but it was clearly a strong consideration and a welcome result.⁵⁸ They reportedly had taken 25,000 slaves from Agrigentum in 262; 13,000 from Panormus in 254; 30,000 from Tarentum in 201; 8,000 from Africa in 204; 40,000 Galatians by Cn. Manlius Volso in 189; 40,000 from Sardinia in 174; 150,000 slaves from Epirus by Aemilius Paullus in 167⁵⁹; all the women and children of Corinth in 146; and another 50,000 from Carthage in 146, all of the Numantines in 134; almost 200,000 captives in Gaul in 102-101 by Marius; and 53,000 Aduatuci, by Caesar in 57.⁶⁰ Even if the numbers may be exaggerated, this list demonstrates that slaves were brought to Rome in large waves after military conquests, which meant that there were relatively regular influxes of inexpensive slave labor to the Roman economy.

The large slave population was utilized in more than agricultural labor. Harris argues that they were bought to work on orchards and pastures, but most notably in mines. Diodorus relates that tens of thousands of slaves were regularly purchased and set to work in the silver mines in Hispaniae until the deplorable and inhumane conditions or the ceaseless toil claimed their lives.⁶¹ The fact that the Romans used tens of thousands of slaves in a relatively disposable fashion provides a clue towards the vast number of slaves working under Roman masters in the second century.

The wealthy *latifundia* owner had access to big enough sums of money to purchase at cheap prices large numbers of slaves when they were available on the market, usually after a conquest. Dio Cassius states that Marius was elected to his consulship of 101 because he had brought an enormous number of inexpensive slaves to the Italian market following his one-sided

⁵⁸ Harris (1992) p. 82: "Since demand was so vigorous it would be implausible to argue that slaves were a merely incidental result of war and expansion, or one little noticed by aristocratic landowners."

⁵⁹ Dillion (2005) p.302; Agrigentum: Diod. 23.9; Panormus: Diod. 23.18; Tarentum: 27.16; Africa: Liv. 29.29; Carthage: App. *Pun* 130; Epirus: Polyb. 30.15; Sardinia: Liv. 41.28; Boren (1992) pp. 69-70.

⁶⁰ Corinth: Paus. 7.16; Carthage; Gaul: Plut. *Mar*, *Caes. BG* 2.33.

⁶¹ Harris (1992) p.82, Diod. 38.1, 36.4.

victory over the Teutones in 102. Also Boren argues that during the instances following conquests when victorious generals returned to Italy with a large number of captives, as Paullus did in 167, slave prices temporarily dropped, perhaps dramatically, because of the increased supply.⁶²

Large numbers of unskilled slave labor was a significant advantage that middle and small-scale farmers would have had a difficult time competing with. Only the wealthy landowners could afford to lay out the capital for several hundred or a thousand slaves, along with the subsequent upkeep (food and shelter) on top of the costs of procuring land, tools, and seed. Although there was a significant expense upfront, a workforce of slaves was not subject to military conscription, and could be worked especially hard because of their relatively low value. As a result of the apparent preference of wealthy plantation owners for slaves rather than free laborers, the already growing population of impoverished and disenfranchised Romans found few opportunities for work in the countryside, and was pushed into the cities by unemployment and poverty.⁶³

Contributing further to the plight of the small farmers was the regular importation of grain from provincial sources, most abundantly from Sicily, but also from North Africa and Spain.⁶⁴ The Roman state had benefitted from provincial assets since its victory in the First Punic War (241), and had expanded its provinces steadily over the course of the next century and a half. Despite occasional slave uprisings in Sicily, which came late in the second century, that province had functioned as an excellent supplementary source of grain at Rome. Sicily was Rome's breadbasket from the fall of Syracuse in 211 and throughout the Imperial period, even after Pompey, and later Caesar, subdued Egypt. In addition to Sicily, the North African coast and

⁶² Dio 27 F94.1, Boren (1992) pp. 69-70.

⁶³ DeBois (1987) p.9.

⁶⁴ Liv. 26.40.15-6, 27.5.2-5.

Hispaniae both provided grain when they experienced surpluses; for example, in 121 the consul Fabius Maximus Allobrogicus sent grain shipments from Hispaniae.⁶⁵

The provincial exports of grain added to the grain supply at Rome which would have affected the demand for grain and thereby may have reduced the income that these Italian small farmers could earn. In doing so, the profit margin was yet again reduced for small-scale Italian farmers. The *latifundia* mitigated the effects of reduced profit margins by virtue of their higher production, or by simply shifting their production to luxury goods. Small-scale farmers, on the other hand, suffered from any reduction in the profit per measure because each bushel of grain made up a larger proportion of their total production than that of the *latifundia*.

Senatorial aristocrats had also invested their resources in more than simply large grain plantations. Many *latifundia* were not dedicated to grain production, but instead produced luxury goods like wine and oil by developing growing orchards or vines. Brunt argues that during this period there also was a large upswing in the number and size of cattle ranches in Italy, so much so that large herds of grazing cattle were encroaching on arable acreage, which further reduced labor opportunities in the countryside. Brunt argues that the increase in the number of these cattle ranches in the regions which traditionally provided Rome with Italian grain (in Campania and Etruria), and argues further that these large herds of cattle were more detrimental to agrarian employment than the increase in *latifundia*.⁶⁶

For these reasons small-scale farmers were vulnerable to a vicious debt cycle, which encouraged individuals to sell their land and move to the city. The increasing size and number of *latifundia* and cattle ranches, in addition to provincial grain imports, created a positive feedback loop, which facilitated the erosion of Rome's agrarian middle-class. *Latifundia* production and

⁶⁵ Plut. *CG*. 6.2; Boren (1992) p.70: small farmers were in competition with *latifundia* and imports.

⁶⁶ Brunt (1971) pp. 283-5; Campania and Etruria as Roman breadbaskets: Cic. *Lex agraria* 2.80, Brunt (1971) p. 286.

provincial grain imports had increased the food supply at Rome, which, in turn, reduced employment opportunities for free laborers and the income opportunities for small private farmers, which was the main contributing factor that made small-scale farming in Italy unprofitable. This cycle facilitated the acquisition and consolidation of smaller parcels of privately owned land by wealthy landowners.⁶⁷

Through the acquisition of these lands, according to the ancient writers, the owners of the *latifundia* bought up large swaths of the Italian countryside and drove off many small-scale citizen-farmers from the land. These families were reduced in social status, and despite an initial income from the sale of their property, ultimately found themselves as poor laborers in the countryside or else they migrated to the city and lived as urban unemployed. *Latifundia* owners not only bought out many smallholders, but thereby reduced the number of citizens who owned property, and utilized large numbers of slaves rather than free laborers to work the land.

Concentration of Power

Alongside the disintegration of Rome's agrarian smallholders and increased socioeconomic disparity between the economic elite and the expanding class of unemployed, political power was concentrated among a small group of noble families.⁶⁸ This concentration meant that the number of families, who regularly provided successful consular candidates to the senate, was proportionately reduced in the face of an increasing population, thereby restricting the circle of power even further. Several families came to dominate the highest offices in the Roman government, which added to the political unrest and agitation of the *populares*. And despite the decreasing number of families supplying senators, there were a number of noble

⁶⁷ Brunt (1971) p.283.

⁶⁸ Mousourakis (2007) p.44.

families who had fallen on hard times and had become marginalized, such as Sulla's family.⁶⁹ The senatorial faction strongly resisted the inclusion of *novi homines* among their ranks. This is not to say that the consulship was impermeable, but resistant. Both plebeian and patrician candidates regularly won the office, but during the second and first centuries there is a marked decrease in the number of families from which consular candidates were selected.

An examination of the Roman consular list shows a significant bottleneck of patrician families during this period. In the century between 152 and 52,⁷⁰ 65% of the 200 consulships were held by members of 31 different patrician families (see Table 1 and Appendix III). These families represented recurring consulships within the century, omitting of course Cinna and Marius who represent an additional 12 consulships. These recurring consulships demonstrate a high degree of political influence and popularity among the voting body. The Caecilii Metelli, for example, frequented the office the most during this century, providing 15 consuls, which was more than double their nearest rivals.

Candidates from established consular families held an almost insurmountable advantage over *novi homines* competitors, sometimes by virtue of their money, but more often by virtue of their name-recognition, pedigree, and longstanding military experience, which was vital to Roman politics. Because of the military functions that fell to high political officials, candidates needed to be competent field commanders. However, Roman law prohibited individuals from holding the consulship twice within a decade, and generally discouraged reelections altogether, although the law was not always enforced. This created a paradoxical situation: how does the state ensure quality of its consular generals every year without reelecting proven and competent commanders? One intuitive way to solve the problem was to elect consuls from families with a

⁶⁹ Keaveney (1982) p.6.

⁷⁰ The period 152-52 was selected as a sample century because it ends with the first consulship of C. Julius Caesar and encompasses almost the entire Late Republican Period.

history of proven generals and so to avoid the election of individuals with non-elite or unproven backgrounds.

The concentration of land reflected a consolidation of resources. By the time Gaius Gracchus became tribune, the Roman census recorded just under 400,000 citizens. Although, the population of Rome had been steadily increasing throughout the century, the number of senators was on the decline. The wealthy equestrians and rich senatorial aristocrats numbered less than a few thousand. The concentration of power was more than a purely economic development. The list of Roman consuls shows that in the second and first centuries there was a decline in the number of families who held the consulship.⁷¹

From the middle of the second century to the middle of the first, roughly 30 families dominated the office of consul. Of course there were exceptions, rising and falling political stars, *novi homines*, and so on. As Mouritsen writes, “Certainly the preferences of the elite did not always prevail. Noble grandees could lose to less prominent opponents, and there are examples, which clearly demonstrate that the nobility was powerless to prevent the victory of a candidate who had gained wide popularity. Thus, in 148 Scipio Aemilianus was elected to the consulship before the prescribed minimum age and against the expressed wishes of the nobility. Marius too overcame noble opposition to his consular candidacy in 108. Later, in 105, he even regenerated the fear [of a northern invasion] and was elected *in absentia* within a decade of his first consulship.”⁷² As Mouritsen points out, despite the concentration of power among the ruling elite, there was a growing power among the people, a political authority, which was fighting to

⁷¹ Census Data: Liv. *Peri.* 60.

⁷² Mouritsen (2001) p.98; Marius elected *in absentia*: Plut. *Mar.* 11.

be heard and in certain circumstances was manifesting itself with elections of popular consuls; however, it is vital to point out that this was still the vast minority of instances.

Many of the richest men in Rome were senators. Roman law and tradition, however, restricted senators, from engaging in commerce as businessmen or merchants. This practice limited senators to landowning as a source of income, which meant that many of those who had exceeded the restrictions on holding shares of the *ager publicus* were in fact senators. As an obvious result these senators, who therefore had a vested interest in the continuation of the expansion of the *latifundia*, worked politically to defend their way of life.⁷³

⁷³ Boren (1992) p.66: "The governing classes of Rome, restricted by custom and sometimes law from certain types of trade and business activity, left engaging in wholesale and retail trade and commerce to others, or participated indirectly through relatives and trusted freedmen and slaves. Moneylending too was looked down on, though some rich nobles were indirectly involved in banking." Harris (1979) p. 79: most of the regular income of the aristocracy came from landed estates.

# of Cos	Noble Families
15	Caecilii Metelli
7	Cornelii Lentuli
7	Calpurnii Pisones
6	Pompeii
5	Cassii Longini
5	Cornelii Scipiones
5	Valerii Flacci
5	Licinii Crassi
5	Aemilii Lepidi
5	Claudii Pulchrae
5	Papirii Carbones
4	Aurelii Cottae
4	Postumii Albinii
4	Licinii Luculli
4	Fabii Maximi
4	Domiti Ahenobarbi
4	Julii Caesares
4	Octavii
3	Fulvii Flacci
3	Servilii Caepiones
3	Porcii Catones
2	Quincti Flamini
2	Aemilii Scauri
2	Popillii Laenae
2	Livius Drusus
2	Atilii Serani
2	Valerii Messalae
2	Junii Silani
2	Perpernae
2	Aquillii
2	Manilii

Figure 3. 1: Table of Families who gained multiple consulships in the century lasting from 152-52⁷⁴

⁷⁴ This table was compiled using Broughton (1951)

Tiberius Gracchus

The senate had not acted to alleviate the socio-economic and demographic problems that plagued the state, which fueled civil discontent among the *plebs urbana*. In 134, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus ran for the tribunate of 133. Gracchus was from a noble plebeian family; his father had been consul twice and celebrated two triumphs; and his mother was Cornelia, a patrician and daughter of Scipio Africanus Maior, the general credited with Rome's victory in the Second Punic War. He was a talented politician and public speaker, and he was well liked by the people. These qualities made Tiberius that much more dangerous to the senatorial elite when it became clear that Tiberius was intent on rectifying the problems caused by the *latifundia*.⁷⁵

Ti. Gracchus realized the power of the tribunate, and he proposed controversial laws without approval of the senate. Gracchus further infuriated many senators by using his influence among the people to recall rival tribune M. Octavius, who was using the power of the veto to block Gracchus' laws. The recall of Octavius was carried out on the grounds that he was acting in the interests of the optimates, and in doing so was working against the interests of the plebs. Octavius' removal from office on these grounds inflamed Gracchus' enemies in the senate.⁷⁶

With the opposition removed from the people's assembly, Ti. Gracchus then enacted his legislation unimpeded. He began with his agrarian law of 133, which was not only the most important and wide-spanning of his measures but also his most controversial. First, this measure reinstated the old Roman statute which limited each citizen to 500 *jugera*, or about 300 acres, of public land, but did not limit in any way the use or acquisition of private lands. Second, it created a land commission of three men to travel around Italy to administer the redistribution of

⁷⁵ Plut. *TG*. 4.1-5.4.

⁷⁶ Removal of Octavius: Plut. *TG*. 10.4-12.5, Liv. *Peri*, App. *BC* 1.11-13.

the *ager publicus*. The commission was made up of Ti. Gracchus, his younger brother Gaius, and his own father-in-law, Appius Claudius. The senate attempted to hinder their efforts, most notably by the decision to provide only 9 obols *per diem*, which was an insulting sum of money.⁷⁷

In addition, Ti. Gracchus passed a law, which reduced the duration of military service; it was intended to reduce the stress on the military-eligible population, while simultaneously increasing the pool of citizens from which to draw soldiers, because his agrarian law aim at restoring the limit on holdings of the *ager publicus* and redistributing any excess holdings to the landless. His other measures had less to do with military and economic concerns than with reallocating political authority from the senate to the *equites*, that is, to plebeians of wealth. Gracchus established an appeals process which gave aggrieved citizens recourse against abusive magistrates. More importantly, he passed a law, which added to the jurors (*iudices*) a number of *equites* equal to the number of senators already serving as jurors, wresting the power over the courts from exclusively senatorial hands.⁷⁸

Tiberius' land commission, in addition to his strong-arm tactics, scared many senators to such an extent that they contrived his death, after he announced his intention to run for a second successive term as tribune. Rather than pursuing the praetorship or an aedileship, he decided to run for a second tribunate because of its power and effectiveness in his hands. His decision threatened especially the personal interests of those senators who owned *latifundia*. Many wealthy individuals were enraged at the idea of being forced to give back land which they felt they had rightfully purchased, developed, and built on.⁷⁹ In 132, Tiberius Gracchus and his supporters were attacked in the streets of Rome by a mob of senators and their friends and

⁷⁷ Land Commission, *per diem*: Plut. *TG*. 13.1, 13.3.

⁷⁸ Lintott (1994) p. 69.

⁷⁹ App. *BC* 1.10.38-40.

servants. The ensuing mob violence cost Tiberius and many of his supporters their lives and threw the city into chaos. Many of those who attacked Tiberius did so because they either had lost, or stood to lose, their primary source of income through the land redistribution effort.

Many *latifundia* could be broken up or even disbanded at any given time, while an even larger number waited for the same to happen to them. Some big landowners may have desired vengeance, but others acted to prevent the coming of Tiberius' land commission and reformation to their farms. However, after Tiberius' death the senate had to act carefully so as to avoid the outbreak of civil war, and thus it allowed the continuation of the land commission, which now included Fulvius Flaccus, to replace the slain Gracchus. The people still desired land, and the rest of his legislation was safe by virtue of the public affection for him.⁸⁰

Tiberius also helped to create the equites as a self-actualized socio-political group. After 129, the equites began to coalesce into a separate and influential socio-political group made up of landed gentry, businessmen, moneylenders, *publicani*, and intellectuals. Around the time of Sulla there were as many as 20,000 equites and only 600 senators, which left the senate dwarfed by comparison.⁸¹ DeBois describes the emergence of a broad middle class of equites, consisting of land-owners, merchants, scribes, intellectuals, and the middlemen of the powerful and the *publicani*, many of whom served as officers and centurions in the legions.⁸² The equites began to grow from this point forward, and with the help of men like Gaius Gracchus and Gaius Marius, their interests came to be well represented in Roman politics.

⁸⁰ Murder of *TG*: App. *BC*. 1.14-17; Tiberius' legislation continued: Lintott (1994) p. 73.

⁸¹ App. *BC*. 1.100.

⁸² DeBois (1987) p. 44.

Gaius Gracchus

Less than a decade later, Tiberius' younger brother Gaius Gracchus was elected to the tribunate for 123. He, like his brother, had previously served as quaestor, in his case serving for almost two years in Sardinia starting in 126. Like his brother, Gaius also was a talented politician and orator, and like Tiberius, he found his political niche as a champion of the *plebs urbana*. As tribune, Gaius passed a long series of laws over the course of two consecutive terms in the office. His laws covered everything from administering courts to provisioning the army and to regulating the sale of grain.

By passing the *lex ne de capite civis romani iniussu populi iudicetur* ("the law that concerning the life of a citizen there be no trial without the order of the Roman people") Gaius had initiated the investigations and legal prosecutions of the various murderers of Tiberius and his supporters. The law condemned to capital punishment any magistrate who had used capital punishment without the express authorization of the popular assembly. This law was applied retroactively to those magistrates who had presided over the trials and execution of many of Tiberius' supporters, even compelling P. Popillius Laenas (cos. 132) to leave the city in self-imposed exile.⁸³

The *lex militaris* declared that the state provide clothing for soldiers at no cost and that no one younger than seventeen years old could be conscripted for military service. Gaius was inspired to pass the *lex militaris* by his experiences serving as quaestor in Sardinia, when his soldiers had needed cloaks at state expense to help them survive the winter. At that time, when Gaius had requested assistance from the state, the senate refused. His army, his commanding officer, his men and he were left in a dire situation. Gracchus' military law helped to shift the

⁸³ Plut. *CG*. 4.1- 4, 5.1-3, 6.1-5; Dillion (2005) *passim* for the names for C. Gracchus' laws.

general responsibility of equipping soldiers away from the soldiers and their commanders and toward the public treasury.⁸⁴

In yet another attempt to stabilize Roman military politics, Gaius passed the *lex de provinciis consularibus*, which required that all consular provincial assignments be decided by the senate prior to the election, rather than be assigned *ad hoc* depending on who won the election. This procedure was likely designed to make sure that whenever a *popularis* won a consular seat, the senate could not make lesser assignments to check the power of political opponents and ambitious upstarts. Gracchus, instead, set up the system so that the senate would be compelled to make these assignments in the interest of the state.⁸⁵

C. Gracchus also renewed his brother's project of redistributing the *ager publicus*. He created another commission under the authority of a new agrarian law, which pleased many of the *plebs urbana* at Rome who had been expecting the plots Tiberius had promised.⁸⁶ Gaius also proposed to settle landless citizens in several colonies in Italy and to establish a new colony, Junonia, on the site of the ruins of Carthage. These measures were designed to establish large numbers of Roman citizens on the land, both in Italy and in the provinces. The beneficiaries were almost exclusively made up of the destitute and unemployed.⁸⁷

Gaius passed his grain law, *lex frumentaria*, which authorized the state to purchase grain at its own expense and at market price, and then store the grain in urban granaries to prevent dangerous food shortages at Rome, whether they were caused naturally or by speculators, who had stored the grain, pushing the demand and prices higher. Plutarch specifies that the law

⁸⁴ Plut. *CG*. 5.1.

⁸⁵ Sall. *BJ*. 27.3; Cic. *Pro. Cons.* 3, 17.

⁸⁶ Plut. *CG*. 5.1; Liv. *Per.* 60.

⁸⁷ App. *BC*. 1.23.98; Plut. *CG*. 6.3; Junonia: App. *BC* 1.24.102-6, Liv. *Per* 60.

effectively reduced the price for the poor who purchased the grain at below-market prices.⁸⁸ His grain laws also regulated the grain supply to prevent businesses from cutting grain, or hoarding the commodity in order to sell it in periods of drought or great need. These grain laws were intended to offset the inequalities of the Roman grain market, stabilizing supply and improving large-scale consumer confidence in what they purchased.⁸⁹

Tiberius had recognized the growing power and influence of the *equites* when he had assigned half of the seats of the *iudices* in Rome's courts to them. Imitating and surpassing his brother, Gaius enacted laws aimed at increasing the power and influence of the *equites*.⁹⁰ He expanded his brother's measure regarding the courts with the *lex Acilia repetendarum*. This law gave the 300 senatorial seats on juries to the equestrian order, which then controlled the extortion courts. This rearrangement led to harsher sentencing for senators returning from their provinces after serving as governors, if they were accused of illegal or dubious financial conduct. These harsher punishments resulted from domestic tensions fuelled by social and political inequality and factionalism at Rome.⁹¹

His *lex de provincia Asiae* granted jurisdiction over tax collection in the province of Asia to the *publicani*, who were *equites* contractors. Boren notes that *publicani* were responsible for much more than tax collection: "they supplied the armies, built ships for the navy, contracted with the censors to build roads, bridges, and other public structures. The wealthiest publicans were the ones who won the contracts to collect *tributum* from the provinces and customs duties

⁸⁸ Plut. *CG*. 5.2; Liv. *Per*. 60.

⁸⁹ Boren (1992) pp.101-105.

⁹⁰ Debois (1987) p. 30; Plut *CG*. 5.3; Liv. *Per*. 60.

⁹¹ App. *BC* 1.22.91.

at the major ports.”⁹² As state expenditure increased, the *publicani* benefited economically far more than any other group of Romans.⁹³

The state awarded contracts to the *publicani* with the highest bid. This amount became their tax collection quota for the region, and every ounce they collected beyond that was profit. These contracts were valuable, and this policy helped to gather support for Gracchus. However, the extreme conduct and brutal methods of the *publicani* in Asia strained Rome’s relation with the province for years to come and were a major contributing factor to the outbreak of the Mithridatic War in 88.⁹⁴

The most controversial piece of legislation that Gracchus and his ally Flaccus proposed was a bill to extend Roman citizenship to the people of Latium, and Latin rights to the rest of the Italian allies. The fear of extending full citizenship rights to everyone in Latium deeply disturbed those senators who opposed an expanded popular faction with the new citizens included among their ranks. Because of those concerns, in 122 the senate orchestrated the murders of both Flaccus and Gracchus.⁹⁵

Gaius had enjoyed great popular support as the brother of the murdered Tiberius Gracchus. So when he was elected to the office of tribune he took full advantage of the growing anti-senatorial sentiment that had developed in the period following the murder of Tiberius and his supporters. This sentiment allowed him to push through a large quantity of reform legislation aimed at justifying his brother’s cause, resurrecting his policies, and limiting the power of the senate. However, when Gaius had proposed to enfranchise the Latins and give Latin rights to the Italian allies, he had gone too far. The senate organized a direct response, first attacking Flaccus

⁹² Boren (1992) p. 69.

⁹³ Harris (1979) p. 95; Boren (1992) p. 69.

⁹⁴ *Publicani lex provincia asia*: Outbreak of the Mithridatic War: Liv. *Per.* 78.

⁹⁵ App. *BC* 1.21.86, 23.99-101.

and Gracchus politically, by sponsoring rival tribunes who proposed even more radical measures in the assembly, many of which they never intended to follow through on. This opposition was organized only after sending Flaccus and Gracchus to oversee the establishment of the colony at the site of Carthage. In their absence Livius Drusus the Elder and Quinctus Fabius Maximus began to chip away at their support. The best example of their fraudulent promises was the one to establish a series of colonies across Italy. However, after Gracchus was killed, they immediately cancelled all colonies underway except Junonia.⁹⁶

After Gaius and Flaccus returned, the senate sent them back to North Africa, saying that the boundary markers which they themselves had laid at the colony of Junonia were dragged away by wolves, a bad omen. The founders left Rome, and in their absence the senatorial opposition worked tirelessly to undercut their authority and influence by passing even more radical legislation to win over their supporters. The senate had little, if any, intention of following through with their promises. When Flaccus and Gaius returned the second time and seemed to be reestablishing their political power, the senate invoked the *senatus consultum ultimum* (hereafter referred to as *SCU*), and the consul Opimius gathered men together and killed both Flaccus and Gaius in the street. In the decade or so following the deaths of these statesmen and their supporters Roman politics were dominated by the senatorial faction, which dismantled the agrarian laws of the Gracchi and repealed many of the acts that their own optimate tribunes had proposed in 122, while Flaccus and Gracchus were at Carthage.⁹⁷

Rome's relationship with its Italian allies (*socii*) was complex and increasingly stressful for the allies themselves. The *socii* were used as sources from which Rome could draw soldiers to fight in auxiliary divisions alongside its legions. These auxiliary divisions made up roughly

⁹⁶ App. BC 1.14.

⁹⁷ App. BC 1.25-6; Plut. Mar. 14.3.

half of the Roman army.⁹⁸ The allies were also required to pay taxes (*tributum*) to Rome. Roman citizens were exempted from paying *tributum* after the conquest of Macedonia in 167.⁹⁹ The freedom of Roman citizens from paying *tributum* immediately added a strong financial incentive to the political incentives that went with Roman citizenship. Adding to the turmoil was the fact that during the second century the Romans had invested several towns and cities in Latium with full citizen rights (for example, Arpinum in 188). These new citizen settlements only generated the expectation that other *socii* too might receive full citizen rights.

In the second half of the second century some Romans complained that non-Romans were illegally migrating to the city and falsely claiming to be citizens, which involved receiving benefits from grain subsidies, the right to vote, and freedom from *tributum*. In particular, conservative optimates feared losing power through the enfranchisement of the Italians who might further support mass enfranchisement laws. The tribune of 126 M. Junius Pennus proposed a law which expelled all non-Romans from the city, a bill which, from the optimate perspective, could not have come at a better time.¹⁰⁰

In 125 the consul Fulvius Flaccus, who had been a member of Tiberius' land commission, proposed an extension of Roman citizenship either to all the Latins or to all Italian allies (the details are obscure).¹⁰¹ Unfortunately Appian is extremely brief in his discussion of the failed legislation.¹⁰² The senate struck down the bill and as a result the Latin town of Fregellae rose in revolt. Unfortunately for the Fregellans no other towns joined their uprising and Rome easily overcame them. Despite the defeat of the measure, and despite bloodshed in Latium, the issue of Roman citizenship for the Italians was far from dead. Three years later Gaius Gracchus

⁹⁸ *Socii*: Roth (2004) p. 27.

⁹⁹ Roman *tributum* exemption after 167: Liv, 7.27.4.

¹⁰⁰ Law of Pennus: Cic. *Brut* 109.

¹⁰¹ Law of Flaccus: App. *B. Civ* 1.21.

¹⁰² App. *BC*. 1.21, Val. Max. 9.5.1.

as tribune proposed a similar measure, which would have made all Latins into Roman citizens and given Latin privileges to all Italian allies. Not only had the law failed to be enacted because of strong optimate opposition, but in 122 Flaccus and Gracchus were going to remain as tribunes for another year; and they had proposed the bill directly in the assembly rather than in the senate, as Flaccus had done in 125.

The senatorial faction was alarmed that Gracchus, with Flaccus, sought to circumvent their authority altogether, an aggressive political maneuver which provoked quick action by the optimates. The consul of 122, Opimius, invoked the *SCU* and, along with a mob of supporters, brought about the deaths of both Gracchus and Flaccus and buried the issue until the 90's.¹⁰³

Italian Allies and Growing Frustration with Rome

The deaths of Flaccus and Gracchus were disheartening for many of Rome's Latin and Italian allies who were becoming desperate for civic inclusion. Many of Rome's Italian neighbors had been subjects of the city for centuries and had never been granted full-citizenship at Rome. Although these people shared a common culture, religion, language, and mode of government with the Romans, they were unable to seek political office in the capital. Nevertheless, each *municipium*, an autonomous Italian town with full or partial Roman citizenship, was responsible for providing soldiers either for the Roman *auxilia* or for the *alae sociorum*, the two allied divisions. Because of the political nature of military appointments and Roman *imperium*, generals and commanders were always Roman. So whenever there were high casualty rates and regular military defeats, such as during the Pyrrhic War, Second Punic War, or the Spanish Wars, the *socii* were especially frustrated.

¹⁰³ Deaths of Gracchus and Flaccus in 121: App. *BC*. 1.25-6.

As a result, many came to desire an equal share of the developing empire they fought for and helped to maintain politically, socially, and economically. The routine denial of citizenship by the Roman senate angered many *socii*. Further contributing to the frustration of the *socii* were the agrarian bills of 133 and 123, which divided the Romans politically and were generally hated among the wealthiest allies, who were compelled to surrender portions of their land for Roman settlement because it was legally considered part of the *ager publicus*.¹⁰⁴

After 121, there is no report of any attempt to enfranchise the Italian *socii* as a whole until 91 when Livius Drusus, a wildly popular optimate tribune of the plebs, proposed to the assembly a measure to extend full Roman citizenship to all of Rome's Italian allies. The senate reacted with the same strong-handed politics as it had before and managed the death of Drusus, again through an *SCU* followed by civic violence. The allies had been on the verge of rebellion prior to Livius' death. In 95 the *lex Licinia Mucia* was passed which again expelled all foreigners from the city, with the aim of limiting voter and citizenship fraud, which enraged many of those who were hoping for enfranchisement. Livius' measure in 91 was designed to forestall the unrest of the allies.¹⁰⁵

The actual expulsion of foreigners from the city showed that little political progress had been made and that the Roman aristocracy was too xenophobic and conservative to extend the citizenship. The cycle of hope and disappointment enraged Rome's allies. So, when four years later their champion Drusus was assassinated for his enfranchisement bill, war broke out from sheer desperation, and this time it was not with a single town but with virtually the entire peninsula of Italy below the Po. Roman *populares* like Flaccus and Gracchus, and even the optimate Drusus, had attempted to use their popularity with the people to pass bills to

¹⁰⁴ App. BC 1.10.

¹⁰⁵ *Lex Licinia Mucia*: Cic. *On Duties* 3.47; see also Dillion (2005) p.484.

enfranchise the Italian allies. The politician responsible for orchestrating the enfranchisement of the allies stood to gain an enormous population of loyal supporters, and thus to strengthen his faction, which exacerbated political resistance and political turmoil in Rome.

The political friction between the Italian allies and the Roman aristocracy is important to this discussion because enfranchisement and anti-foreigner policy were dominant issues during the lifetime of Gaius Marius. Moreover, Marius himself had origins in Latium outside of Rome, which probably molded his policies and political perspective to some degree. When Marius had begun his political career as tribune for 119, he did so in this environment of political unrest after the optimates had twice resorted to civic violence under the *SCU* in dealing with serious political opposition. However, Marius himself had enfranchised some Italian soldiers fighting under his command who he believed exhibited talent and bravery on the battlefield. The fact that Marius did not support any sweeping measures resolving the issues with the Italian allies may reflect either his reluctance to undertake radically controversial measures or his genuine lack of interest in larger political issues. Considering the fate of C. Gracchus, Flaccus, and Livius Drusus the Elder, the issue of citizenship for the allies was likely untouchable in Roman politics in Marius' years of consecutive consulships.

Chapter IV: Roman Military Expansion from 2nd Punic until 100BC



Green: 218 BC Rome's territory at the outbreak of the Second Punic War

Red: Rome's territory at 100 BC

*Original taken from UNC <http://ancientworldmappingcenter>, augmented by M. Gambino

The third century BC witnessed Rome thrust into the role of imperial hegemon of the western Mediterranean. Rome had previously rebuffed the invasion of the Greek king Pyrrhus demonstrating the resilience and military capabilities of the Roman state. Rome's victory over Carthage in the First Punic War had yielded the city's first provinces: Sicily and later Corsica-Sardinia; its victory over Carthage in the Second Punic War saw Rome's primary military and commercial rival in the Western Mediterranean shattered. The invasions of Pyrrhus and Hannibal revealed that the conquest of the Italian peninsula would require an enormous force and regular

access to reinforcements, and even still it would be a tall order. Although both the Carthaginians and the Greeks had won battles in Italy, some of which were massive defeats for the Romans (Heraclea, Lake Trasimene, and Cannae), the Romans proved to be victorious in both wars.

The Roman victories in Italy against Epirus and Carthage showed to their rivals that their position in Italy was secure. Almost all of the third century's most famous battles were fought in Italy until the second half of the second Punic War, when Scipio Africanus had campaigned successfully in Carthaginian territory. After the battle of Zama in 202, the war came to a favorable conclusion for the Romans, revealing the benefits of fighting wars abroad rather than at home, and they still had the manpower in Italy to keep the city safe from attack. As a result, the second century was a period of frequent foreign conquests, expanding the state's territorial control. They fought in Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul against a variety of Gallic peoples: the Boii, Insubres, Allobroges, and Arverni; in Hispaniae against the Celtiberi and Lusitani; against Philip V of Macedon, the Spartans, and Thracians in the Balkan region; against the Ligurians in northern Italy; in Africa against the Numidians and Carthaginians. There is also a long list of wars against rebels and invaders fought in order to maintain control over their provinces: Aristonicus in Asia, two slave revolts in Sicily, Jugurtha in Africa, and Germanic Teutones, Ambrones, and Cimbri in the north, along with several wars in Hispaniae centered around Numantia, and in Gaul, both at Mediolanum (Milan) and in the Narbonese region.

During the first half of the second century, Rome also became militarily entrenched in the affairs of the East for the first time. Several Greek armies fought against Rome in a series of successive wars, but were victorious in none. The Romans fought against Philip V of Macedon in the Second Macedonian War, Perseus in the Third Macedonian War, Antiochus in the Syrian War, and finally and decisively against the Achaean League. Throughout this long series of

conflicts Rome's original policy to leave the Greeks to their own devices as long as they agreed to peaceful and friendly terms had begun to change as Rome began to consolidate its hold over Greece by the time of the fourth Macedonian War (149- 148). The Roman aristocracy had come to adopt a foreign policy of territorial expansion and not of defensive conquests as some have argued.¹⁰⁶ So, the final push to take Macedonia and Achaëa was conducted under the leadership of Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus, who defeated Greek armies at Alpheus River, Scarphea, and Chaeronea.¹⁰⁷ The Romans concluded the Achaean War with the consul Mummius' sack of Corinth in 146 and the subsequent reorganization of the region into the province of Achaëa and Macedonia, bringing Roman administrative presence to the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰⁸

The Romans had also spread their influence north of the Po valley into Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, as well as northeast into Galatia (189) and Thrace (188), and at the same time, further into the Aegean region as a whole. Shortly after Cn. Manlius Volso conquered Galatia and Thrace in the early 180's Roman generals campaigned in Gaul in the north and others fought against the Celtiberian and Lusitanian tribes on the Iberian Peninsula. Throughout the rest of the second century, Rome's armies pushed further and further from Italy, conquering territory and adding provinces. Conquest had earned the Romans abundant spoils: more markets, more tribute from conquered peoples, and more slaves present in the capital. Although, as Rome's dominion grew beyond the Italian peninsula, the very nature of Rome's chief political offices changed, as well as the commitment of the people in the form of harsher service in the army for longer periods of time and further from home. Rome had been developing an empire but not an imperial form of government.

¹⁰⁶ Harris (1979) p. 105.

¹⁰⁷ Alpheus River: Florus 1.32; Scarphea: Paus. 7.15; Chaeronea: Liv. *Per.* 7.15.

¹⁰⁸ Mummius sacks Corinth: Paus 7.16; Liv. *Per.* 52.

Rome sent armies east into Asia Minor after king Attalus III had posthumously bequeathed the kingdom of Pergamum to the Roman people in 133 to expand and solidify their presence in the region. The bequest of this province gave the Romans a vital foothold in Asia Minor without having to launch a major seaborne invasion from the Mediterranean or cross the Hellespont with a large land army. Importantly, it forced Rome to establish a military presence in their new province or see it fall into the hands of other rulers, bringing shame and dishonor to Rome and making the Romans appear weak to their enemies. In 130, the consul Publius Licinius Crassus led an army to Asia to put down a revolt led by Aristonicus who had not accepted the will of Attalus III. Crassus arrived in Pergamum and immediately received aid from the surrounding regions: Pontus, Bithynia, and Cappadocia, among others. Crassus and his entire consular army were defeated and destroyed near the town of Foca. Fortunately for the Romans, the senate had deployed reinforcements, which arrived almost immediately after Crassus' defeat and destroyed Aristonicus, avenging Crassus, and restoring order to the province.¹⁰⁹

Roman Military and Foreign Policy Blunders, Missteps, and Mistakes

Celtiberian Spain

As Rome's conquests and fighting in Hispaniae persisted throughout the second century, the conflict became a major sore spot for many Romans, especially those who were called to serve in those campaigns. Spain continued to remain a major military problem from one decade into the next, defying lasting peace. Throughout the Hannibalic War, Rome sent two legions to the region annually, and in the years 210-206, they sent four, showing the importance of holding the Iberian Peninsula as a crossing point into Europe from North Africa.¹¹⁰ After the conclusion

¹⁰⁹ Liv. *Per.* 59; Strabo 14.1, 38; Orosius 5.10.

¹¹⁰ Harris (1979) p. 208.

of the Second Punic War Rome came into conflict with the Celtiberi, Lusitani, Oretani, and Vaccaei in the 190's. Fighting persisted in Hispaniae until the consul Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, father of the famous Ti. Gracchus assassinated in 132, took charge of the war there. The consul campaigned until he established a positive position and signed a peace treaty with the Celtiberians in 179. The Gracchan treaty stabilized the region until 153, when the Senate reopened the conflict and sent Quintus Fabius Nobilior as consul to Hispaniae with an army, and reopened the conflict.¹¹¹

A long series of missteps by Roman commanders, and on several occasions by the senate, made the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula a long and protracted process because of the fierce resistance it nurtured from the native tribes. Rome's involvement in the Iberian Peninsula began in the years leading up to the outbreak of the Second Punic War. Hannibal Barca of Carthage and the Romans were contending over Saguntum, which caused Rome's military interest in the Iberian Peninsula as a territory. Hannibal's consequent invasion of Italy and the subsequent North African campaign at the end of the invasion deflected Rome's non-military interest in Hispaniae, but Roman expansion commenced after their victory at Zama in 202. Rome rapidly consolidated its hold over many portions of Hispaniae, although their control proved to be tenuous and somewhat fleeting.¹¹²

After years of Roman rule in Hispaniae several native tribes revolted. The consul Fulvius Flaccus had been sent by Rome to put down these insurrections. He fought and won a major pitched battle of which we know few details. Flaccus was succeeded in command by the consul Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus. The elder Ti. Gracchus led his forces against a 20,000 man Celtiberian army, which had been harassing several cities and towns still friendly with Rome. He

¹¹¹ App. *Hisp* 42; Polyb. 35.1.1; Harris (1979) p. 209.

¹¹² Harris (1979) p. 131.

routed the Celtiberian army, relieving Rome's allies, and then pressed the attack against several other rebellious regions. His campaign culminated with the capture of Complega and the surrounding countryside, lands which he divided among the Roman poor, which may have helped to inspire his son's controversial agrarian law of 133.¹¹³

From a position of power, after taking Complega and defeating the Celtiberians in the field, Gracchus negotiated individual treaties with many of the native tribes of Hispaniae. The Gracchan treaties bound the natives with oaths of loyalty and friendship to Rome and required them to pay tribute and furnish soldiers on demand. Not only were these agreements accepted by many of the local people as an alternative to continued Roman aggression, which is shown by the period of relative peace that followed, but they were also praised back at Rome. Gracchus was granted a triumph in 175 for his actions, and this treatment will stand in stark contrast to that of later commanders in the province.¹¹⁴

In 153 the senate sent another consul, Fulvius Nobilior, to the region to put down another Celtiberian revolt, which had broken out when the Senate attempted to enforce the stipulations of the Gracchan agreements in several Spanish communities. Arguments over the particulars led to war. Fulvius levied troops, assembling a force of 30,000 men, presumably six legions, which was joined by 300 horse and 10 elephants from the grandfather of Jugurtha, King Masinissa. The consul led his army against the city of Numantia, striking the first blow of the war. Unfortunately for him the attack ended in disaster. The elephants panicked at the wall and charged the Roman lines as they chased Celtiberians back into their city. The Romans lost 4,000 men and three elephants.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ App. *Hisp.* 43.

¹¹⁴ App. *Hisp.* 43, Liv. *Per.* 41.

¹¹⁵ App. *Hisp.* 46.

In the wake of Fulvius' failure, the senate sent out another consul, Claudius Marcellus, with a supplementary force to rectify the situation. Marcellus was able to gain the cooperation of many of the rebellious tribes, as well as to end the Numantine revolt. But the senate decided that the treaty did not properly reflect Roman honor and power, and preferred more punitive measures rather than a policy of reconciliation. So in the next year, 151, Marcellus was replaced with yet another consul, Licinius Lucullus, whose blood-thirsty and treacherous conduct while in Spain made negotiations with the Celtiberians nearly impossible.¹¹⁶

Lucullus's campaign in 151 is noteworthy for a couple of reasons. First, during his preparations, the Roman levy was conducted by lot, because some soldiers had complained that they were continually selected for difficult and dangerous campaigns while others were continually passed over or selected for more glorious and profitable wars.¹¹⁷ Obviously the Spanish wars had already developed a notorious reputation among Romans as being a particularly terrible place to serve or as offering little opportunity for booty, or perhaps for both reasons. It also demonstrates that the Roman military-eligible classes were being exhausted in the process of Rome's conquests. More importantly it shows that the complaints of these citizens were taken seriously enough to warrant action.¹¹⁸

Second, Lucullus had subdued the people of Cauca, a Celtiberian people, who had never caused problems for the Romans or been targeted by the senate for military action. When he invaded their land, the representatives of Cauca came to him asking what they could do to appease him and stop the violence. He requested hostages, money, and the promise of furnishing troops for Rome. They agreed and did as they had agreed, but Lucullus ordered all the men of Cauca killed despite giving them his word to the contrary. Cauca was sacked, its men killed, and

¹¹⁶ App. *Hisp.* 48.

¹¹⁷ App. *Hisp.* 49.

¹¹⁸ Selection by lot: App. *Hisp.* 49.

the rest of the population was sold into slavery.¹¹⁹ Lucullus carried out these actions in hopes of raising the morale of his troops through the sacking of a city, in addition to helping the state and himself make a profit on the war through the sale of captive slaves.

So it should be no surprise that when he moved against Intercalia later in 151, where 20,000 enemy infantry and 2,000 cavalry had fortified themselves, and asked them to negotiate, the people of Intercalia refused, citing his treachery to the people of Cauca. Lucullus then laid siege to the city, but the long siege was conducted in an area which the consul himself had previously laid waste. So before long both the Romans and the Spanish armies were faced with famine and poor health conditions, which continued to deteriorate until Lucullus's *legatus*, P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, after his legendary victory in single combat, was able to negotiate peaceful terms to end the war without any further bloodshed. The people of Intercalia agreed to provide Lucullus with 50 hostages, 10,000 cloaks, and some cattle, but they lacked gold and silver.¹²⁰

Despite this resolution, the Roman-Iberian relationship was dangerously strained after years of war, deceit, and brutality. Four years later in 147, the Celtiberians revolted yet again, this time under the leadership of a Lusitanian named Viriathus. The consuls for that year had been dedicated to the Achaean War in Greece and the Third Punic War in North Africa. As a result, the Roman response was led by a praetor named Marcus Vetilius, who led two legions to Tribola where he was defeated, losing more than 4000 men.¹²¹

Six years later, the war against Viriathus was intensified as the Romans were concluding their other wars against the Achaean League and Carthage. The senate sent Quintus Pompeius Aulus with 30,000 men into Numantine territory to put down the revolt; however, his forces

¹¹⁹ App. *Hisp.* 51.

¹²⁰ App. *Hisp.* 53; Liv. *Per.* 48.

¹²¹ App. *Hisp.* 61-65; Liv. *Per.* 52.

were so thoroughly harassed that he withdrew from enemy territory without accomplishing anything of any strategic value. Instead, Pompeius decided to attack Termantia because it appeared to be an easier target than Numantia; he misjudged the situation and failed to take the city, after which he fled from Termantian territory because of incessant harassment from their warriors, who used similar guerilla tactics to the Numantines. Pompeius, and Vetilius both demonstrated the weakness of the Roman state and fostered future rebellions because they failed to successfully dominate the region, and even worse were driven from Celtiberian lands.¹²²

It was not until 134 that the Roman people reelected as consul Scipio Aemilianus, who had destroyed Carthage in 146 and helped resolve the Spanish war in 151, in order to take command in the Numantine War and end the Spanish problem once and for all. Appian claims that Scipio had to be elected contrary to law again because he was still too young to serve as consul. However, as Horace White points out, Scipio had been too young for the consulship in 146, but by 134, twelve years later, he was 51 years old, nine years older than the minimum age. Thus, he was legally allowed to hold office because more than a decade had passed since his first consulship.¹²³

In order to raise a *supplementum* for his Numantine campaign of 134, Scipio did not conduct a levy or *dilectus*, nor did he draft soldiers via lots, but rather he filled the ranks of his army by inspiring and enrolling volunteers. There were enough soldiers already in Spain, and he decided that it was unnecessary to levy any more troops from Rome. This decision was undoubtedly motivated by political considerations to avoid any backlash from the citizens who would have been called into service reluctantly, which is clearly reflected by Livy: “When the Spanish war had proceeded with little success for some time and so confounded the Roman state

¹²² App. *Hisp.* 77.

¹²³ Horace White (1912) p. 90, n.1; App. *Hisp.* 6.84-5.

that men could not be found who would even accept military tribunes or be willing to go as lieutenants...¹²⁴ His use of volunteers to fill the ranks of his *supplementum* in 134 (which inspired Gaius Gracchus, Caecilius Metellus, and Gaius Marius all to volunteer) foreshadowed, and may have influenced, Marius' utilization of volunteers from the *plebs urbana* to fill his ranks in 107.

Once in Numantia, Scipio conducted a brutal campaign and eight month siege, culminating in the sack and destruction of the city and the complete reduction of its population to suicide and slavery. The destruction of Numantia earned Scipio a second cognomen, Numantinus, which was added after Africanus, making him one of a very few Romans with the high distinction of dual cognomens.¹²⁵ The wars in Hispaniae defied speedy resolution, since the conflict was undoubtedly lengthened by the mismanagement of the Roman senate and of individual commanders. Violations of the Gracchan treaty, the senate's decision not to accept the peace agreement worked out by Marcellus, and Lucullus' decision to attack people who had not offended Rome were all major mistakes that undermined any *fides* the Romans had established there. This lack of trust, combined with the blood-thirsty senate and its commanders, led to continual violence in the form of revolts, rebellions, and insurrections. The Numantines became a regional beacon of anti-Roman resistance for almost a century, while at Rome the wars against the Numantines had gained an unsavory reputation for being hard fought and grueling because of the skill of the Celtiberian warriors and their relentless guerilla tactics.

The wars in Hispaniae were problematic because Rome had desperately attempted to subdue the region without long-term success. Ironically the diplomatic solution was never taken seriously in Rome as anything other than a mechanism to buy time when other, larger, and more

¹²⁴ Liv. *Per.* 48.

¹²⁵ Scipio Africanus the Younger's second cognomen: App. *Hisp.* 98.

important Mediterranean conflicts like those at Carthage or in Greece occupied their attention and manpower. Roman military leadership had cost many thousands their lives, and its shortcomings were the primary cause for the length and severity of the wars in Hispaniae. These Roman missteps not only cost Roman lives but also the lives of a great many Italian allies.

Furthermore, whenever Rome's focus shifted from the Iberian Peninsula to other regions of the Mediterranean, the quality of the commanders sent to Hispaniae diminished significantly, as seen through the poor conduct of many of the praetors sent there. Under these circumstances, not even sending a consul there would guarantee any better conduct of the war. Consular armies were typically much larger than their praetorian counterparts, usually on the order of 3:1, but even consuls, despite their larger armies, commonly conducted the war with personal rather than strategic goals. As a result, abuses and missteps like those under Lucullus made negotiation and alliance drastically more difficult. The lack of a concrete plan to resolve the Spanish situation is symptomatic of the Roman military system. The traditional annual selection and replacement of military commanders had disrupted campaigns, shifted strategies and tactics constantly, and even facilitated competition between commanders to outperform one another in search of *fama* and *gloria*.¹²⁶

Servile Wars

Since Rome had acquired Sicily as a province (241), the island functioned as a vitally important grain supplier to the city of Rome, and its large slave population warranted a praetor or propraetor governor every year.¹²⁷ Even though they had recognized the need for proper

¹²⁶ Phang (2008) p. 23.

¹²⁷ App. Sic. 5.4.

provincial administration and a military presence in the province, two massive slave uprisings erupted in Sicily during the late second century.

Rome's great expansion had brought the spoils of war, which in its most basic forms meant money and slaves. Over the course of the second century, they had brought hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of slaves into Italy to work mines and farms, and be public craftsmen, gladiators, and functionaries for an array of domestic or administrative duties. Most slaves were put to work on farms, cattle ranches, and the mines of the wealthiest Romans (see chapter III). Life in the mines was a particularly grueling prospect which Diodorus claims was not even preferable to death.¹²⁸

The large numbers of slaves working and living in appalling conditions brought about slave revolts which required large Roman armies to put them down. These wars were particularly hard-hitting for the Roman economy because they took the workers out of the fields and required even more men to fight them. Diodorus describes the First Servile War (135-131), when a large number of slaves in Sicily revolted because of harsh and abusive treatment at the hands of their masters, and were encouraged by their own large numbers. The slave forces, which swelled as high as 200,000, defeated the Romans in battle several times, remaining at large and in control of much of Sicily until the consul of 132 Rupilius successfully put down the revolt in 131.¹²⁹ There was another slave revolt in Sicily at the end of the second century (104-100) which took more than four years to put down and restore order to the province. In 73, this time south of Rome around Capua and then up to Etruria, the famous Spartacus led an uprising of gladiators. Their

¹²⁸ Diod. 36.1.

¹²⁹ Diod. 34.2.1-23.

ranks swelled to more than 120,000 and even threatened the safety of Rome itself before being put down by Licinius Crassus in 71, with the unwanted help of Pompeius Magnus.¹³⁰

Slave revolts were a serious concern among the Romans because of the large number of slaves living among them. Spartacus' uprising not only disrupted the grain supply to Rome by engulfing Etruria and southern Italy in chaos, but also put the city in danger of being attacked by hostile forces. The uprisings in Sicily had diverted armies and commanders from Rome's foreign campaigns to restore order. Sicily's function as a breadbasket for Rome made it essential to maintain control of its territory because of its high concentrations of slave laborers. Likewise, the revolt of Spartacus drew large numbers of slave laborers in addition to the original gladiators, and his army of rebels threatened especially central and southern Italy. These revolts were the price of a too rapidly expanding slave population and generally abusive treatment towards slaves by their masters.

Cimbri and Teutones

In 113 the Teutonic and Cimbric migrations alarmed the senate, which sent the consul Papirius Carbo with a consular army to check their incursion into Gallic and Italian territories. Unfortunately, Carbo was vanquished by the Germanic forces in a battle of which the details have been lost to history.¹³¹ Five years later, in 108, the Roman senate officially denied the request of Cimbrian and Teutonic embassies to be settled on land controlled by Rome. In response the Romans sent Marcus Junius Silanus, as proconsul, against the Cimbri. His army

¹³⁰ App. *BC* 1.116-20.

¹³¹ Carbo's defeat: Liv. *Per.* 63; Vell. 2.12.

was defeated just as Carbo's had been. Fear and apprehension grew in Rome after two consular armies were defeated by the Germanic and Celtic forces.¹³²

The senate then sent the consul Cnaeus Mallius Manilius and the proconsul Publius Servilius Caepio with a combined army of 80,000 men, which means that each commander had a force of eight Roman or allied legions (about 40,000 men each), and this was the largest dedicated use of manpower in a single military operation since the Second Punic War. The ensuing battle resulted in a massive and panic-inducing defeat of the Romans in 105. If the Roman figures can be trusted their defeat in Gaul had cost more than 80,000 soldiers, and 40,000 camp followers lost their lives. Both Roman camps were taken, and the commanders only barely escaped with their lives.¹³³

This combined defeat was a profoundly significant event in Roman history. It scared the Roman people so much that on their return the generals were brought up on charges of treason in the *quaestio*, or court, which Saturninius had established. In this state of fear, the remaining consul Rutilius required that all men of Italy swear an oath not to leave the peninsula, in order to check any desire to flee. This precaution also aimed to ensure that Rome's next commander would have the manpower in Italy to put up an effective defense.¹³⁴

The prosecution of Caepio, on whom the Romans placed the majority of the blame, resulted in a conviction. The Romans ascertained that Caepio acted out of jealousy of the current consul and commander, Manilius, and his primary authority in the campaign. The conviction nearly resulted in Caepio's execution, but a friendly tribune interceded and, instead, the conviction ended in the confiscation of Caepio's property and the stripping of his *imperium*; effectively he was exiled from Rome. The conviction of Caepio was the first time since the

¹³² Defeat of Silanus at Noreia: Liv. *Per.* 65.

¹³³ Arausio: Liv. *Peri* 67, Dio Cassius 27.

¹³⁴ Licinianus 13-14.

legendary King Tarquinius the Younger that the Romans had punished a commander in this way, which demonstrates the degree of fear and anger the people felt because of another defeat at the hands of barbarians and the dangerous possibility of the city of Rome itself being attacked and sacked.¹³⁵

The defeats of Carbo, Silanus, Caepio, and Manilius had introduced a wave of terror and panic at Rome, which motivated the people and the senate to elect, contrary to law and custom, Gaius Marius to the consulship five times consecutively (104-100), even though he had been consul as recently as 107. The goal was to provide a victorious general to resolve the situation in the north and save Rome from otherwise certain destruction in the process. Marius was a good choice, having just proven himself in North Africa and earlier in Hispaniae. He was chosen rather than someone from a more established patrician family like the Caecilii Metelli, in part because the campaign for consulship of 107 had polarized Marius the *popularis* as the antagonist of the optimates. His allegations of corruption and weakness among the senatorial aristocracy must have hit a nerve with the people, who were also frustrated with the numerous failures against the Germans, and before that, frustrated with the aristocratic military leadership in Hispaniae, and now in North Africa, as evident from both Scipio's and Marius' second consular elections in 134 and 105 respectively. Scipio had been a popular choice, replacing a hardline optimate, Licinius Lucullus; Marius had found a similar niche and replaced the prominent Q. Caecilius Metellus.

Marius' consulships from 104 to 100 not only reflect the Roman people's decreased confidence in aristocratic consuls as commanders, but also a significant change in the elections of consuls. This change was neither procedural nor was it legal, but instead was an ideological

¹³⁵ Trial of Caepio: Liv. *Per.* 67, Epstein (1954) p. 71: Arausio was the result of Caepio and Manilius' unwillingness to cooperate as commanders.

shift regarding which men were potential candidates. Prior to the failures of Carbo, Silanus, Caepio, and Manilius, the Roman people and aristocracy were satisfied with electing consuls without victorious military records. They chose consuls by virtue of the candidate's achievements at lower offices such as praetor or legate, although even more important than a candidate's personal qualifications were his family's reputation.

The Caecilii Metelli are the most poignant example of this phenomenon. As a family they had contributed 19 consuls since the beginning of the third century, 14 of whom held office in the century lasting from 152 to 52, double that of any other aristocratic family in the century. The reason that so many Caecilii Metelli became consuls was the family's untarnished military record. Prior to the election of Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus in 109, his uncle Metellus Macedonicus (*cos.* 143), his father Metellus Calvus (*cos.* 142), and his cousins Metellus Caprarius (*cos.* 113), Metellus Balearicus (*cos.* 123), Metellus Diadematus (*cos.* 117), and M. Caecilius Metellus (*cos.* 115), along with his brother Metellus Dalmaticus (*cos.* 119), all enjoyed successful military careers, all but one earned *cognomina* as rewards for their victorious consular campaigns, and most earned triumphs. They also went on to hold some of the most distinguished positions in the Roman state such as *princeps senatus*, *pontifex maximus*, augur, and censor. The martial talent and honor of the family paved the way for Q. Caecilius Metellus (later Numidicus) to rise to the consulship.

The decade and a half since the Via Domitia was constructed had opened the areas north of the Alps to Rome and to a series of defeats. In 119, a Balkan tribe, the Scordisci, defeated Sextus Pompeius, the governor of Macedonia. In 113 Germanic tribesmen who entered Gaul in the previous year defeated a consular army under the command of Papirius Carbo. In 110 the army sent to deal with Jugurtha of Numidia surrendered, and in 109 the Cimbri who had defeated

Carbo defeated another consular army commanded by Junius Silanus. The consul Lucius Cassius was defeated by the Tigurini in 107, and in 105 Caepio was defeated at Arausio.¹³⁶

However, after the failures of 113, 108 and 105, combined with the unpopular and bloody wars in Hispaniae, the Romans began to change the way that they voted for consuls. Marius was elected *in absentia*, which was rare in its own right, but it also occurred just three years after he had held his first consulship, seven full years before the minimum of a decade's interlude. The desire to avoid defeat in the field led the Romans not only to elect Marius for 104, but to do it again for an unprecedented four more consecutive terms. Marius had set the precedent, one which remained throughout the Late Republic, and which accompanied the rise of so many powerful commanders during the first century such as Pompey, Crassus, Caesar, and Lucullus.

The expansion of Roman territories and increased frequency of foreign wars during the second century fostered a changing political and military environment at Rome. Errors of consuls and praetors in the field had cost many thousands of Romans, Italians, and provincials their lives in lost battles, misconducted negotiations, and poor strategic decisions. For a variety of reasons Marius was able to take full advantage of the atmosphere of discontent with aristocratic blunders and abuses, and the next chapter will situate Marius in this military and political context.

¹³⁶ Potter, David (2007) p.80.

Chapter V: Biography of Gaius Marius

The biographer Plutarch describes Gaius Marius as being born in 157 to a poor family from a small village in Latium near Arpinum, which Rome had forcibly annexed during the fourth century, and to which it had not granted full Roman suffrage until 188. According to the modern consensus, Plutarch's assertion that Marius came from the lowest possible socioeconomic origins is either an historical error or a purposeful attempt to portray Marius as a champion of the underprivileged. From the humblest origins to seven-time consul makes for a much better story, although it is very unlikely that during his youth Marius showed his promise for a distinguished military career. The earliest indication is that Marius was made a *tribunus militaris* by age 23, a position usually reserved for the children of senators and influential equestrians. His appointment as a military tribune at such a young age strongly suggests that Marius' family was at least moderately wealthy in order for Marius to have had the opportunity to earn such an office. It is safe to say, however, that Marius' family was not even close to as wealthy or influential as many of the senators, especially those who owned *latifundia*.

As *tribunus militaris* Marius had entered into the military command structure, serving under P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus during his second consulship on the campaign against Numantia in 134. Plutarch does not mention Marius' appointments as *tribunus militaris* or quaestor, but an inscription left by Marius, corroborated by Velleius Paterculus, claims that he held both offices.¹³⁷ Most likely, Plutarch omitted them because he felt they were unimportant or insignificant.

¹³⁷ Marius in Numantia: Plut. *Mar.* 4; *ILS* 59 p. 478; Vell. Pat. 2.17.1-3.

The military tribunate was the young politician's first step in his personal *cursus honorum*, generally to be followed by an appointment quaestor. If Marius had been quaestor at such a young age, it would have been noteworthy because the office of quaestor had an age requirement of thirty years. It would have been difficult, because it was contrary to law and custom for Marius to have earned a quaestorship before the age of thirty, and extremely impressive for a *novus homo* to canvass enough support for an election to quaestor in just a couple of years. All of that would have deserved special note in Plutarch's work. The silence of the sources on this matter indicates that these beginning offices were not particularly noteworthy, and as such his career likely followed the regular Roman pattern and followed the normal traditions. So it is safe to say that Marius served as a quaestor between 127, when he turned thirty, and 119, when he served as *tribunus plebis* (ages 30-38).¹³⁸

Marius' service under Scipio was important and formative, and presumably influenced his later military reforms. While serving under Scipio, Marius had earned the general's admiration and respect. Praise from Scipio gave considerable political capital to Marius' reputation. Fortunately for Marius, he also served during a time when there were important political events unfolding at Rome, most notably the rise and fall of Ti. Gracchus. Being from Arpinum, and sharing more in common with the poor as political outsiders, Marius might have joined with Gracchus, but apparently avoided that danger. There is little else to be said about Marius' early career.

In 119 Marius was elected tribune of the plebs, a position of increasing power and authority especially after the careers of the Gracchi. As tribune, Marius proposed and passed the *lex Maria tabellaria*, a law which in effect increased the privacy of voters and reduced the ability

¹³⁸ Plut. *Mar.* 4.

of candidates to solicit voters at the poll. In advocating this law, Marius came into direct confrontation with the Caecili Metelli. He threatened the consul of 119, L. Caecilius Metellus Delmaticus, with arrest because he had spoken out in opposition against the law. Although Marius had assumed an aggressive stance against the senatorial elite and enacted a law designed to limit their influence with voters, he also vetoed an agrarian law, much like that of the Gracchi. His actions as a tribune did not make him a *popularis* radical, but instead suggested a more measured approach. His tribunate came only two years after Opimius, with the authority of the SCU, ordered the deaths of C. Gracchus and Fulvius Flaccus for their radicalism. Marius had learned from watching their downfall, and as a result throughout his entire political career, his actions were carefully measured.¹³⁹

After his term as tribune Marius ran for the next logical office, aedile. He put his name forth for both aedile positions, the curule and the plebeian, and was unprecedentedly defeated twice. Instead of running again for the aedileship, Marius aimed higher. And in 115, he was elected to the praetorship, which had higher military status. His lauded military career under Scipio may have given him an edge. His victory may also have owed something to the electoral bribery charges after this election, charges of which he was eventually acquitted. As a praetor, Marius became a senator and could expect to be granted a provincial governorship as propraetor on the conclusion of his term.¹⁴⁰

Indeed, Marius was assigned a propraetorial governorship of Further Spain. No major problems are recorded for Marius' governorship, nor were there any trials for extortion (*res repetundae*) afterwards. In fact, during his tenure as governor, his personal finances had been drained rather than his coffers filled. The fact that Marius did not profit as governor may reflect

¹³⁹ *Lex Maria tabellaria*: Plut. *Mar.* 4.

¹⁴⁰ Propraetorship: Plut. *Mar.* 5.

the poor economic value of the province and the high cost of maintaining his forces in the area, reasons which made the Hispaniae unpopular for commanders and soldiers alike, or it may reflect Marius' personal honesty.¹⁴¹

When Caecilius Metellus Numidicus was assigned the war against Jugurtha in North Africa, he took Gaius Marius as a *legatus legionis*, as well as Rutilius Rufus, a friend of Metellus and future rival of Marius. The selection of Marius as a legate shows that Metellus regarded him as an important talent and, presumably, an important addition to his clients, despite Marius' rough treatment of Metellus' cousin, L. Caecilius Metellus, over the *lex Maria tabellaria* in 119, although the Metelli had supported Marius for the tribunate. He broke the trust (*fides*) between client and patron again at the end of 108, almost two years into his service as *legatus* in Africa, when he requested leave to return to Rome and run for the consulship. Sallust relates that Metellus first advised Marius to not reach beyond his station and, instead, to be patient and wait for Metellus' son to be old enough so that they could run together (not an unheard of arrangement in this period).¹⁴²

If what Sallust relates reflects the truth, Metellus regarded Marius as a client and as such would see to his advancement in good time. Despite his humble origins, Marius no longer desired to remain as a client, but instead to rise to the consulship with his own clientele. So Marius took umbrage at the remark and left for Rome at the end of the year, only after harassing Metellus until the consul yielded and allowed Marius to take leave. In Marius' defense, Metellus' son, Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius, never held the consulship until 80, six years after Marius' death! Marius barely made it back to Rome in time to participate in the consular election for 107. His

¹⁴¹ Spain unpopular for commanders and soldiers: App. *Hisp.* 54.

¹⁴² Plut. *Mar.* 7, Epstein (1954) p. 36.

reputation had inflated significantly because of regular reports of his leadership in Africa, as well as from his previous service in Hispaniae under Scipio and his subsequent governorship.¹⁴³

The general distrust and discontent among the *plebs urbana* towards the senatorial aristocracy contributed to Marius' appeal as a consular candidate. There were battlefield losses and no relief from the same socioeconomic problems the Gracchi had faced. Marius positioned himself to take full advantage of the people's frustrations. He focused his campaign on criticizing Metellus and his conduct of the war, and he asserted that he himself would be a better choice for the Jugurthine War. He promised a speedy resolution to the war, but did not promise territorial expansion or extravagant spoils. As Badian points out, Marius' electoral agenda indicated that his primary concerns were aligned with the interests of the equites who were not as eager for expansion as the aristocracy, because the equites were still expanding economically into provinces which had been conquered earlier.¹⁴⁴ Even more, Marius widened the scope of his criticisms, pointing out the aristocracy's lavish lifestyles and their adoption of Greek customs at the expense of Roman austerity and piety. Marius demonstrated his political position in his speeches, reported by Sallust, and through his later deeds as consul, which show him as a conservative *popularis*.¹⁴⁵

In his brief political campaign Marius had not promised economic or social reform, but instead offered a return to traditional ideals and the creation of a counterforce to the growing power of the senatorial elite. Marius had considerable influence with the *agrestes* (the agrarian *plebs*) because of his military reputation, earned as a tribune under Scipio, as governor of Further

¹⁴³ Marius as *legatus*: Diod. 35.38, Vell. 2.2.2, Plut. *Mar.* 7.

¹⁴⁴ Badian (1968) pp.27-29, 40, pp.53-54; argues that equestrian overseas capital investment was a reason that they desired speedy resolutions to conflicts in the provinces. They had usually maximized their investments in areas like Asia and Sicily so territorial expansion during the end of the second century was no longer an equestrian prerogative.

¹⁴⁵ Sall. *Bj.* 85.31-35.

Spain, and as a *legatus* in North Africa. Remarkably, Marius' conduct as a legate was widely known at Rome, even as the war was still unfolding.

“By doing all these things and thereby winning the hearts of the soldiers, Marius soon filled Africa, and soon filled Rome, with his name and fame, and men in the camp wrote to those at home that there would be no end or cessation of the war against the Barbarian unless they chose Caius Marius consul.”¹⁴⁶ This reputation was the result of a sincere effort by Marius and his friends to spread by means of newsreaders or pamphlets the stories of his exploits. In doing so, Marius also set the stage for his return to Rome and future elections to the consulship.

Marius' political speeches, as reflected in Sallust's account, show that he presented himself as an alternative to the senatorial aristocracy, who had become larger and larger targets for the animosity of the masses with allegations of corruption, mismanagement of military matters, economic inequality, and repeated acts of civil violence since 132. Presenting himself as a *popularis* and supporter of traditional Roman ideals, Marius canvassed the necessary support to win the consulship and with it the Jugurthine War. This self-representation may help to explain the support he received in the election for 107 from the *agrestes*, who did not regularly travel into the city to vote for consular candidates. The *agrestes* were fed up with the poor performance of senatorial commanders in the field and with the changing values of the senatorial nobility, which had shifted towards Hellenization, as Marius' speech in Sallust shows.

To win the consulship of 107, Marius had set himself apart as a political antagonist to the established powers. Marius' humble origins and anti-senatorial platform helped him garner support among the plebs, especially the *agrestes*. Moreover, his image was constantly enhanced with tales of his bravery and discipline in the field. Several anecdotes pertaining to Marius'

¹⁴⁶ Plut. *Mar.* 7.4.

conduct in Hispaniae and North Africa distinguish him from the senatorial aristocracy. In direct contrast to typical aristocratic behavior, Marius was said to have eaten “shared” bread with the soldiers, to have toiled alongside his men, to have not worn a hat despite being bald and deployed in the North, and to have trained on the Field of Mars (Campus Martius) well into his old age.¹⁴⁷ Marius was also said not to have held *convivia*, or lavish feasts, unlike other commanders. These anecdotes in conjunction with his electoral speeches show that Marius was able to distinguish himself as an example of Roman *virtus*, while the aristocratic patricians had been more interested in the civility, luxury, and elitism of high Greek culture, striving towards the ideals of Greek *aretê* rather than Roman *virtus*.¹⁴⁸

As consul, Marius immediately began to levy a *supplementum*, a reinforcing army, meant to replenish ranks and possibly to reinforce the army already serving in North Africa. He opened up enrolment to volunteers from the *capite censi*, the poorest rank of Roman citizens, a move similar to Scipio’s voluntary levy of 134, in which Marius himself had volunteered. Although these actions are similar, Marius’ extension of the levy to men who had previously been excluded from military service was distinct and new at Rome, although there had been instances when in a moment of crisis the senate armed the *proletarii* and even the freedmen as well.¹⁴⁹ Marius’ enrollment of the *capite censi* permanently altered the overall practice of levying troops at Rome. The *capite censi* were excited for the opportunity to enlist and for a wide variety of reasons including economic incentives, social opportunities, and access to public office. The issues surrounding the enrollment of the *capite censi* are explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

¹⁴⁷ Plut. *Mar.* 7.3: C. Marius ate ‘*koinon arton*’ which encouraged high morale from his soldiers.

¹⁴⁸ Sall. *BJ.* 85.39: Marius, unlike other aristocrats, refused to hold *convivium* in the field.

¹⁴⁹ Slaves: Liv. 22.57; volunteers: Liv. 41.34, Polyb. 6.19.

After raising an army, Marius relieved Caecilius Metellus of command. A little more than a year later, Marius had ended the Jurgurthine War. But first the large number of raw recruits in his armies had required that Marius spend several months training and conditioning his new soldiers with forced marches and the labors of fortification prior to deploying them in operations against critical targets. He acclimated them to the realities of war and honed their martial abilities with minor operations like the taking of small forts and towns. Once his recruits were properly prepared, Marius made his way to Cirta (in modern day Algeria), the major city in the region. He had hoped that a siege of the city would result in the capitulation of Jugurtha or in control by the Romans.¹⁵⁰

As Marius approached Cirta, the enemy sallied out to meet him. A major pitched battle was fought, which Marius won decisively. After taking Cirta, and after subsequent negotiations, Jugurtha was surrendered to one of Marius' quaestors, Lucius Cornelius Sulla. The fact that Jugurtha was surrendered to Sulla, and not Marius, gave ammunition to Marius' critics back home. They claimed that the war was won by the efforts of Metellus who started it, and Sulla, who finished it.¹⁵¹ The senate awarded Metellus the cognomen Numidicus, and openly praised Sulla for his part in the resolution of the war in an attempt to diminish the *gloria* and *fama* of Marius. Despite political opposition, however, Marius returned to Italy with his legions, celebrated his triumph over Jugurtha, and made ready for the war against the Teutones and Cimbri. After the triumphal celebrations were concluded, Marius departed for Cisalpine Gaul with most of his army.¹⁵²

Marius had not stayed long in Rome because, when he returned in 105, Caepio and Manilius had lost a major battle in the north against the Teutones and Cimbri, in which

¹⁵⁰ Acclimation of his troops: Sall. *BJ.* 67.1-92.4, Matthew (2010) p. 23, n.44.

¹⁵¹ Battle of Cirta: Sall. *BJ.* 89- 95; surrender to Sulla: Plut. *Mar.* 10.7.

¹⁵² Marius' celebrates triumph: Sall. *BJ.* 114; Liv. *Per.* 67; Plut. *Mar.* 12; Vell. 2.12; Val. Max. 6.9.14.

putatively 80,000 Romans were slaughtered. This was the third large-scale battle lost north of the Alps (in 113, 109, and 105), and the Roman death toll had become horrifying. Rome was under direct threat of an invasion force ranging from 300,000 to 400,000 which had cost the lives of tens of thousands of Romans and more than 60,000 *socii*.¹⁵³ So panicked by the potential danger posed to Rome by the northerners, the people again elected Marius consul, but this time *in absentia*. This election to the consulship was too soon after his first consulship and also violated traditional practice by being *in absentia*. At this point the role of the consulship changed forever.¹⁵⁴

Necessity compelled the Romans to select the most experienced and successful commander if they hoped to defeat their enemies. Even the senatorial aristocracy did not object strongly, as long as they could avoid another disaster.¹⁵⁵ Marius even brought over his soldiers from North Africa, after he dismissed those levied by Metellus because he did not trust their abilities, loyalties, or long service, which in any case did merit discharge. Marius chose the legions especially trained by gladiators acting under Rutilius Rufus. Presumably Rufus commanded the units with the greatest concentration of *capite censi*. Marius appreciated and prized well-trained soldiers and good discipline, something he witnessed close up in 134, when Scipio Aemilianus had instituted conditioning, toil, discipline, and modesty in the ranks. Much of what Marius later did in his own military reforms had been attempted, to some degree, by Scipio.¹⁵⁶ Marius not only dismissed the propertied soldiers that Metellus had levied, but

¹⁵³ Figures for the size of the Cimbric force: Plut. Mar. 11.2 (300,000), Diod. 37.1 (400,000); Diod. 36.1: more than 60,000 allies lost in Gaul.

¹⁵⁴ Marius' second consulship: Liv. Per. 67; *in absentia*: Plut. Mar. 12.1.

¹⁵⁵ Cic. Pro. Cos. Prov. 19.

¹⁵⁶ Plut. Mar 3.

replaced them with yet another levy of *capite censi* volunteers, thus establishing the practice as ordinary routine.¹⁵⁷

When Marius assumed command of the Northern War, the Cimbri headed west towards Spain rather than southeastward across the Alps into Italy. They travelled as far as the ridges of the Pyrenees Mountains where the Celtiberi turned them back. After ravaging southern Gaul, they made their way back to the Rhone and Italy to reunite with the Teutones and Allobroges. The westward Cimbric expedition had lasted two years, time that Marius used industriously. He trained his men, maintained good forts in the Alpine region, and ordered his legions to construct the *fossa Mariana*, the Marian canal, at the mouth of the Rhone.¹⁵⁸ Projects such as the *fossa Mariana* not only were splendid opportunities to put soldiers to work, improving their physique, discipline, and attitude while at the same time drastically improving his supply lines. Spending the time to train and condition soldiers, to implement new formations and tactics, to occupy and secure key defensive positions, and to improve the logistics, all helped to bring about the decisive victories at Aquae Sextiae (102) and Vercellae (101).¹⁵⁹

While he trained his men from 104 to 102, Marius was reelected to the consulship in order to retain his command in the Northern War, such reelection was highly irregular, especially since he had not engaged the enemy nor won any victories in these two years.¹⁶⁰ His reelections were the result of a strong belief that if he was not consul then either he might not want to command the war or the optimate might attempt to elect one of their own in order to take the war away from Marius. There is some evidence suggesting that popular tribunes such as Saturninus

¹⁵⁷ Matthew (2010) pp. 20-22.

¹⁵⁸ Plut. *Mar.* 15.

¹⁵⁹ Plut. *Mar.* 15.1.

¹⁶⁰ Plut. *Mar.* 13, 14.3, Liv. *Per.* 67.

played a part in keeping Marius in power. So the desire for consistency in leadership, in addition to a strong effort by *populares*, kept Marius in power.¹⁶¹

In 102, when the Teutones and the Allobroges crossed into Cisalpine Gaul, Marius cut them off at Aquae Sextiae. Marius compelled the enemy to cross the river, at which point, he killed or enslaved as many as 150,000 of the enemy.¹⁶² After defeating the Teutones, Marius set about making preparations for the Cimbri. Dio credits Marius' election in 101 to the favor that he had earned among the optimates because of the enormous number of inexpensive slaves he had made available for purchase in Italy. Cicero credits the aristocracy with acknowledging the need for a superior commander like Marius rather than recalling him because they disagreed with him personally or with his politics.¹⁶³ Less than a year later, Marius intercepted the Cimbri, and although it was uncharacteristic of him and against common Roman military practice, he agreed in advance to meet the enemy at Vercellae. Marius sped to the battlefield and arranged his men so that they would benefit from both the location of the sun and the direction of the wind.¹⁶⁴ He and his co-consul, Catulus, routed and slaughtered 120,000 Cimbri, and taking more than 60,000 of the enemy into slavery. The most important legacy of the Northern War was that Marius had the opportunity to implement a series of important military reforms uninterrupted and unchallenged, and enough time passed that these reforms developed into policy and protocol.¹⁶⁵

For the year 100, Gaius Marius was elected to an additional consulship with the help of the tribune of the plebs, Saturninus. This consulship was extraordinary because it was more of a reward for defeating the northerners and saving the city than a means of assigning a general to a command. Saturninus was a radical tribune who had plans for Marius' consulship. He had hoped

¹⁶¹ Plut. *Mar.* 14.7-8.

¹⁶² Plut *Mar.* 20.1-21.3.

¹⁶³ Dio. 27 F94.1: Marius won the favor of some *optimates* because of large number of slaves

¹⁶⁴ The placement of his army at Vercellae: Front. *Strat.* 2.2.8.

¹⁶⁵ Vercellae: Plut. *Mar.* 25.4-27.3.

with the support of Marius, the now six-time consul, hero, and third founder of Rome, that he could enact revolutionary legislation and lead a coup to overthrow the senatorial aristocracy. Unfortunately, the attempted coup did not go as he had hoped. Marius was either unable or unwilling to help Saturninus and his friends once the coup had unfolded and the rebels were trapped on the Capitoline hill. In the face of a concerned citizenry and enraged senate, Marius was compelled to take the optimate course.¹⁶⁶

Marius was left holding the bag. He had been a political ally and fellow *popularis* with Saturninus. Saturninus had acted too rashly and radically when he occupied the Capitoline, which made Marius' lending him political or military support untenable. Established and powerful, Marius now hoped to salvage his reputation by disassociating himself from Saturninus' coup. The best way to do this was to fight against it. The senate invoked the *SCU*, and Marius and his colleague in the consulship, L. Valerius Flaccus, were compelled to murder Glaucia and Saturninus.¹⁶⁷ Marius summoned some of his veterans from Picenum to help put down the insurrection, an important precedent for using veteran colonies. Furthermore, once Marius had ended the coup, he placed Glaucia and Saturninus in custody within the Curia. He then went to the senate in order to plead for Saturninus' life, but his request was ignored, and Saturninus and his associates were killed by a mob inside the Curia still wearing the insignia of their offices.¹⁶⁸

Following this event Plutarch relates that Marius was cast into political oblivion. He was compelled to leave for the East on a diplomatic expedition. Almost nothing is mentioned about Marius until the outbreak of the Social War a decade later. The coup of Saturninus had rapidly eroded Marius' support among the *populares*, who believed he should have intervened on behalf

¹⁶⁶ Plut. *Mar.* 16.

¹⁶⁷ Cic. *Pro. Rab.* 20-1.

¹⁶⁸ Murder of Saturninus: App. *BC.* 132.

of the tribune, and not the optimates, who disliked his close association with Saturninus and his history of popular actions. He was the man for whom the radical tribune was working, so he separated himself from the hardline *populares* by abandoning Saturninus and by bringing about the end of the coup. The *optimates* regarded Marius harshly because of his attempted defense of Saturninus, their previous association, and Marius' entire previous career. Left without any real basis of political support, the six-time consul and savior of Rome left on self-imposed exile to the East.¹⁶⁹

A decade later, the outbreak of the Social War gave Marius the opportunity to return to public life. Rome's Italic allies had been incited to war in 91, and the Roman senate evoked the *SCU* to sanction the murder of Livius Drusus, the optimate tribune who had proposed that the Romans extend citizenship to the *socii*. For almost a half-century the senate had rejected this idea, and they still did. Many of the allies had believed that Drusus was going to succeed, so when he was murdered instead, war broke out.

The Italians organized themselves into an Italian Federation, which conducted the war against Rome. The Italian federation was led by the Samnites in the south and the Marsi in the north; both groups were renowned for their martial ability. The Italian army numbered more than 100,000 men and possessed some of the more talented commanders in the empire. Rome in response immediately raised an army of 100,000 men themselves, about 20 additional legions, calling upon veterans, new recruits, the rich, and the poor. Rome also was in need of talented commanders and as a result gave armies to almost every single competent military commander

¹⁶⁹ Plut. *Mar.* 31: "unable to endure the sight of Metellus returning, he set sail for Cappadocia and Galatia, ostensibly to make sacrifices which he had vowed to the Mother of the Gods."

still alive. It can be argued that the enormous demand for soldiers for the Roman army during the Social War cemented Marius' reforms into practice because of their efficacy at doing just that.¹⁷⁰

Marius' conduct as a commander in this war has come under scrutiny and criticism from modern historians. The truth is, we do not have much evidence for his command during the Social War aside from Appian's account of the battle of Tolenus River. For the Social War, Marius was made a *legatus* of the consul Rutilius Lupus, and commanded half a consular legion in the north against the Marsi and their allies. At Tolenus River, Rutilius and Marius led their armies across the river at two separate locations. Rutilius and his forces were ambushed while they crossed. They were soundly defeated, losing the consul and more than 8000 Romans. Marius, who crossed without much resistance, came to reinforce the consul, but rather than directly engaging the enemy, he occupied and commandeered the enemy camp. The Italians panicked when saw that their camp, all their provisions, personal belongings, and loot had fallen into the hands of the Romans. Battle ensued again, but this time the Romans, under Marius, defeated the enemy, inflicting 8000 casualties and holding their camp. Not long after the battle of Tolenus River, Marius was given command over the entire consular army after the death of the consul, and he and Sulla are said to have ended the war against the Marsi. He then retired from his command, claiming to be too sickly to command further.¹⁷¹

After the end of the Social War, at least in the Marsian theater in northern Italy, Marius' long-time rival, Lucius Cornelius Sulla, was elected consul for 88. The senate had granted him the war against Mithridates in Greece and Asia. This war was seen as very profitable with a low risk of defeat. As such it was a highly desirable command for generals and service for soldiers. Despite being in poor health during the Social War, Marius used the influence of a tribune of the

¹⁷⁰ Keppie (1984) p. 69.

¹⁷¹ Laying down his command because he was infirm: Plut. *Mar.* 33.

plebs, Sulpicius. Sulpicius passed the *leges Sulpiciae* through the assembly, which stripped the command against Mithridates from Sulla and bestowed it on Marius through a special commission.¹⁷²

This was a bold and brazen act against the senatorial class, as well as Sulla personally, who despite having long been a decorated war hero, had only just been elected consul, while Marius already had held that office six times. Additionally, Sulla had not been given primary command of an important war as of yet either. His superior performance on behalf of Rome during the Social War as a legate had helped to foster the belief that it was his right by custom, tradition, and honor to lead the war against Mithridates. Even more important to Sulla's decision-making was the fact that during the passage of the Sulpician laws civil violence broke out in Rome, claiming the life of Sulla's son and causing Sulla himself to flee to Marius' house.¹⁷³

After being run out of town, having his son murdered, and having his command stripped, Sulla decided to strike back. Sulla was no Caecilius Metellus. Sulla made his way to Capua, where his army was camped. When he arrived he spoke to his six legions about his dishonor and told them that Marius did not intend to use them for the war against Mithridates, but would raise new legions and choose his veterans for service. Sulla's legions were angry over the mistreatment of their commander and feared that they would lose their opportunity to plunder the East, and so in 88, six legions marched on Rome with Sulla, beginning in earnest the first Roman civil war.¹⁷⁴

Ironically, the First Civil War (Marians and Sullans) provides little relevant information about Marius or any effect he may have had that could have led directly to the outbreak of the Second Civil War (Caesar and Pompey), because he simply did not live very long into the

¹⁷² App. *BC.* 1.55-6; Plut. *Mar.* 34.

¹⁷³ Sulla fled to Marius' house: Plut. *Mar.* 35

¹⁷⁴ Sulla Marches on Rome: Plut. *Mar.* 42-50.

period. Sulla took the city in a battle at the gates against Marius and his supporters. Sulpicius was killed, and Sulla and his men purged the city of known Marians. Marius and his son escaped into the countryside until Sulla made his way east to fight Mithridates. Once Sulla was gone, Marius returned to the city, at the head of a ragtag army. The consul Cinna had engaged in open warfare against his colleague Octavius. On his return Marius threw his lot in with Cinna, and they together took back Rome. Once in possession of the city, Marius and his bodyguard of freedmen soldiers cleansed the city of any political rivals.¹⁷⁵ Marius was made co-consul with Cinna in 87. Marius served for less than two weeks during his seventh consulship before he died, leaving the civil war to be fought in his name by men who identified themselves as Marians for years to come.¹⁷⁶

It seems that Marius, in his old age and desperate circumstances, let his ambition or desire for vengeance drive him into alliances with troublesome younger men like Cinna, Carbo, and Sulpicius. After Sulla's first march on Rome in 88, it is clear that *populares* politicians used Marius as a lightning rod to bring Marian veterans to fight against optimate-supported Sullans. Marius was famous and accomplished, and he inspired diehard loyalty among his former supporters and veterans. It appears that in his final years, Marius was not in control of the events around him and was unduly exploited by new politicians who wanted to use his name, supporters, and military assets.

Marius' Military Strategy

Frontinus, Appian, and Plutarch show that Marius' genius was his understanding of strategy in war. Rome's commanders had often suffered from the problem of short-sighted

¹⁷⁵ Plut. *Mar.* 53.

¹⁷⁶ Marius' Death: Plut. *Mar.* 45; Liv. *Per.* 80.

strategies because of their desire to conclude wars quickly before their command was exhausted. It was the way that the Romans allotted *imperium*, never letting one man hold it, like a king, for too long. This restriction facilitated hasty decisions in the field. Marius' campaigns against Jugurtha, the Teutones and Allobroges, and the Cimbri all were concluded in a single decisive battle, after training his forces, optimizing the logistics, and dictating the site and conditions of battles as shown at Cirta (106), Aquae Sextiae (102), and Vercellae (101).

Plutarch provides an account of Marius' stalking the Teutones until the battle of Aquae Sextiae:

But when the Barbarians had passed by and were going on their way, Marius also broke camp and followed close upon them, always halting nearby and at their very side, but strongly fortifying his camps and keeping strong positions in his front, so that he could pass the night in safety. Thus the two armies went on until they came to the place called Aquae Sextiae, from which they had to march only a short distance and they would be in the Alps. For this reason, indeed, Marius made preparations to give battle here, and he occupied for his camp a position that was strong, but poorly supplied with water, wishing, as they say, by this circumstance also to incite his soldiers to fight.¹⁷⁷

Plutarch's account shows Marius as a pragmatic and relentlessly commander, who restrained his soldiers until the optimal opportunity presented itself.

However, Marius' performance as a commander during the Social War a decade later has brought the general considerable criticisms from some scholars, modern and ancient alike, who argue that at age sixty-nine he was too old and infirm to command competently in 88. Yet there was a conspicuous lack of military failures in his career, and he had shown real skill snatching

¹⁷⁷ Plut. *Mar.* 18.2.

victories at the battle of Tolenus River (90), at which the consul Rutilius Lupus was killed along with 8000 of his men. These criticisms reflect a general misunderstanding of his actions and of the requirements of the war.¹⁷⁸

Marius had assessed the military situation in Italy and, as a result, had adopted a strategy in the Social War similar to that used during the Second Punic War. He concluded that pitched battles, if lost, would do far more harm than the benefits victories would bring. A major Roman defeat early in the war would lower confidence in Rome's power and encourage its remaining Italian allies to revolt or switch-sides, just as Capua had done during Hannibal's invasion of Italy; whereas an early Roman victory might do little more than dissuade other peoples from joining the dissidents.¹⁷⁹

Marius was simply pursuing a policy of not losing the war, and dragging out the struggle would encourage certain populations in Italy to remain loyal, capitulate, or negotiate terms. He is criticized as remaining too aloof in the field and not readily seeking battle, but he understood that, not the winner of the battle, but the winner of the war was the real victor. That is why he generated a strategy based on training his men to secure positions and logistical support and be in battle-ready condition.

As a general Marius exhibited patience and vision similar to that of Q. Fabius Maximus, the great delayer. Roman commanders had often sought quick and decisive battles against their foes in order to win *gloria* and *fama* before their term of office expired. On every occasion, however, Marius demonstrated a single-minded dedication to the war's wider strategic goals rather than risk defeat in pursuit of speedy victory. Marius regularly maintained his advantageous positions in the face of taunting and challenge. He engaged in battle when he felt his forces had

¹⁷⁸ See Sampson (2013).

¹⁷⁹ Capua's disaffection during the Hannibalic War: Keppie (1984) p. 28.

significant advantage either in position, training, logistics, or tactics. Marius demonstrated his vision by refusing to pursue the Teutones and the Cimbri into Gaul and Hispaniae, but instead decided that his best course of action was to dedicate his time, without guarantee of renewed consulships, to training and conditioning his soldiers.

Marius may have been capable of defeating the northerners in Gaul or Hispaniae, achieving a speedier and more impressive victory, but he also would have made his army vulnerable to ambush, dual engagement, or being outflanked by both northern armies at once. Not only would it have cost numerous Roman lives but it would have left Rome exposed and defenseless against invaders, northerners or otherwise.

Conclusion

A close study of Marius' political and military considerations reveal the man as a brilliant military strategist and field commander, who deserved the praise which many later Romans gave him, and he was a surprisingly astute and aware politician for the most part. He walked a fine line maintaining the support of the *plebs urbana* and possible physical violence by the *optimates*, who had shown their bite in both 132 and 121 and again in 100. Marius, however, did make several obvious miscalculations which cost him dearly, but, to his credit, he recovered from them and died while holding the highest office in Rome for the seventh time, however ingloriously. The man's true legacy, though, lay with his military reforms. Unlike most of the political reforms of the period, Marius' military reforms were left untouched throughout the civil wars and even resisted being repealed by Sulla or any other optimate.¹⁸⁰ The simple truth is Marius' military

¹⁸⁰ Plut. Pomp. 22.

reforms worked in a very pragmatic sense, but in the end they also created social and political difficulties in the Roman world. In the next chapter I examine what those reforms were.

Chapter VI: Marian Military Reforms

Gaius Marius had consistently demonstrated his talent as a shrewd general, and even more as a great military reformer. He was an innovator in a time when Rome had experienced much social and military progress and change. It is unclear which changes can specifically be attributed to Marius and which ones cannot be. Furthermore, it is important to understand his reforms within their proper context and in relation to innovative Roman commanders of the past. Earlier commanders paved the way for Marius and, in some cases, actually enacted earlier on less developed versions of some of his reforms before him. Admittedly, these generals did so on an ad hoc basis and not as regular practice. However, whether by virtue of continuous consulships or his successes on the battlefield or simply the efficacy of the reforms themselves, Marius' practices became standard operating procedure for commanders of his generation and of all that followed. His example affected the armies of Sulla, Pompey, Crassus, Caesar, Lepidus, Mark Antony, Octavian, and countless others. It can be argued that his practices also provided these commanders with the power that enabled them to wage civil war.

Specifically, Marius is credited with the enlistment of the *capite censi*, the elimination of much of the baggage train, the dissolution of army *ordines* among the infantry, and the reorganization of Rome's legions into cohortal formations. Additionally, he is often credited with the creation of a virtually professional army, because he established training regimens, made a structural alteration to the Roman javelin, and set the gilded eagle, or *aquila*, as the only Roman legionary standard. Some scholars and textbooks have also attributed to Marius some reforms for which there is little or no strong historical or literary evidence, such as altering oaths of allegiance so that soldiers swore their loyalty to their commander and not the state. This chapter

will explore each of the best supported and most influential of Marius' reforms individually and cumulatively.

The Enrolment of the Capite Censi

Political and Social Environment

As discussed in greater detail in Chapter III, by the end of the second century Rome was notably suffering from a decline in the numbers of citizens who were eligible for military service, mostly as a result of growing disparities in real wealth and personal resources, which greatly favored the senatorial aristocracy. The senate needed to fill the ranks of the army, and the *plebs urbana* desired better opportunities for work, but the means had to be agreeable to all parties or else risk violent repercussions. Both Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus were murdered along with many of their friends, allies, and associates because they had threatened the *status quo* on the *ager publicus* with their land commissions. Two decades later, Marius operated in a tense environment where his brazen rhetoric was tolerated so long as legislative changes did not disrupt the flow of income for the wealthiest Romans, specifically in the operations of their *latifundia*.

Marius' enlistment of the *capite censi* provided the mechanism to increase its forces in the field at the same time as it combated growing unemployment and unrest among the *plebs urbana*. By leaving the *latifundia* alone, there would be virtually no negative consequences for the senatorial elite. All that needed to be sacrificed were the physical distinctions between the old socio-economic *ordines* and their association with the army, which would have little or no effect on the lives and wealth of the richest Romans. On the other hand, both urban and agrarian poor could now volunteer for military service and earn a relatively stable income, gain entry into the

political arena, and have the added benefits of any spoils of war such as slaves, loot, monetary bonuses, and even land grants at the end of their terms of service.

When Marius was elected consul for 107, he was confronted with a scenario similar to the one his former commander, Scipio Africanus Aemilianus, faced during the siege of Numantia in 134. In both cases the wars were unpopular among the people and even less popular for those citizens who might be chosen to fight in them. Marius risked significant political backlash if he had conscripted a large number of citizens for his *supplementum* in 107. The war against Jugurtha was unpopular and unpromising because the region had recently been combed over during the Third Punic War (149-146 BC), when Roman soldiers sacked and destroyed Carthage. North Africa had lacked sufficient time to fully recover economically, and thus, it did not offer the prospect of loot and booty. For many, there was little incentive to go to North Africa and fight a difficult war with low chance of profit or glory.¹⁸¹

Reasons to raise a supplementum

Although it was politically risky, many reasons made it vital for Marius to raise an army before assuming command over the forces in Numidia. Marius, like all consuls, was entitled to levy a *supplementum* to reinforce or replace those soldiers already deployed in the province. In broad terms the *supplementum* was important for several reasons: first, it allowed new consuls either to increase to replenish the ranks of the legions in the province, which often had taken casualties from warfare, disease, or desertion. Secondly, it allowed soldiers, who had served for extended periods of time and were desirous and deserving, to receive discharges as fresh troops

¹⁸¹ Matthew (2010) p.19: "Campaigning in Numidia is likely to have been less attractive than in other, wealthier, regions. The city of Carthage had been razed only four decades earlier in 146 BC and the current campaign had already been prosecuted for four years with little success." Also see Dio 21.40; Livy 44.44 and *Per.* 51.

filled their positions. Third, and perhaps most importantly, especially for a politically controversial general such as Marius, it provided the new consul with a core group of soldiers that he himself had levied and were, theoretically, loyal to him. This was even more important when the new consul was a political enemy of the man he was replacing, as in the case of Marius and Metellus.

It was vital that Marius raise his own army prior to assuming command in Numidia, even though he previously had been a *legatus*, commanding many of the soldiers serving under Metellus. Marius could not have been sure that some, or all, of Metellus' soldiers had not turned against him after he departed for Rome to run in the consular election for 107 and, in all likelihood, secure his succession to high command in Numidia. The armies in Numidia required reinforcements after more than two years in the field under guerilla attack with the attendant losses as at Vaga (106). A *supplementum* of loyal and fresh soldiers also put Marius in a position to require new training and other practices.¹⁸²

Marius' Enlistment of 107

Amid general displeasure with the war against Jugurtha, Marius hastened back to Rome in 108 to stand for election. His ambitious and viciously contentious political campaign against the senatorial aristocracy, most directly Caecilius Metellus, had earned him the fervent support of the *plebs urbana*, and as a result he was easily elected as a consul for 107. Immediately, Marius levied a *supplementum*. However, rather than levying soldiers exclusively from the propertied citizens as usual, Marius opened enrollment to all citizen volunteers, even to the propertyless *capite censi*. He had, for the first time, allowed men without any property or land to

¹⁸² Plut. *Mar.* 8.1-2; Epstein (1954) p. 61.

enlist in the legions, violating the centuries-long restriction of the army to the landowning classes.

The enrollment of the *capite censi* had many long-reaching effects for the people and army of Rome, but most importantly it revitalized the Roman army which had begun to stagnate with the decline of the Roman middle-classes. Marius appears not to have had political or social aims, but rather wanted simply to fill up the ranks of his legions. His sights were on not angering potential voters and on not pushing too hard against the senatorial aristocracy, as the Gracchi and their supporters had done in 133 and 121.¹⁸³

Precedents

Marius' decision to enroll the *capite censi* apparently was not his first inclination. Before enrolling propertyless citizens, he had attempted to rally volunteers from veterans, the Italian allies, and provincials. However, few volunteers responded. As a result, Marius relied on the plebeian support which had led to his first consulship. Although Marius was permitted to levy legions, he found himself in an increasingly common problematic position: he needed to raise an army, but few qualified citizens were available. In addition, the unpopular war promised hard fighting and insubstantial spoils. Rather than risk unpopularity among the plebs and equites by conscription, Marius decided, as Licinius Lucullus in 151 or Scipio Aemilianus in 134, to innovate in the *dilectus*. Instead of drafting by lots, encouraging propertied volunteers, Marius opened enrollment as regular legionaries to even Rome's poorest citizens, the *capite censi*. Marius had found a large reservoir of willing men to fight in the army, but enrolling these men

¹⁸³ Gabba (1976) p. 15: "Neither Marius nor the *optimates* understood the political and social ramifications of the enrolment of the *capite censi*."

was only the first step. If his plan was going to work, Marius needed to overcome several obstacles in its execution.¹⁸⁴

Execution of the Policy

The greatest hurdle Marius had to overcome in enlisting large numbers of landless and unemployed citizens was to find a way to arm and equip them, a costly expense. The pre-Marian manipular legion required its soldiers to provide for their own arms and armor, like the hoplite citizen-soldiers of Greece. So if Marius enrolled men without property, who paid for their gear? Scholars have attempted to answer this question for years, many proposing that Marius evoked the military law of Gaius Gracchus to compel the senate to pay the bill, and that this was simply a natural progression of the state's expanding expenditures.¹⁸⁵

This explanation does not suffice; the truth appears to be more complex. Marius had several factors working to his advantage in 107, which helped him to arm and supply his *capite censi*. First off, scholars who have concluded that all male citizens purchased the arms and armament that they could afford before heading off to war appear to misunderstand the nature of the Roman army. Instead, evidence suggests that soldiers were not expected to buy all their entire legionary kit outright prior to going to war, but rather that they were given the gear with the obligation to repay the state treasury for its costs. *Publicani* provided the equipment, the state bought it and gave it to soldiers, and then a quaestor collected the payments.¹⁸⁶ The property requirements of the specific census were a means of assessing an individual's ability to repay a

¹⁸⁴ Scipio's 134 enrollment of volunteers: App. *Hisp.* 85.363.

¹⁸⁵ See Matthew (2010) p.24, n.49; Keppie pp. 58-61, n.8; Santosuosso pp. 13-14, n.4; N.V. Sekunda, S. Northwood & M. Simkins, *Caesar's Legions: The Roman Soldier 753 BC to 117 AD*, (Oxford, Osprey 2004) p. 56; Adkins & Adkins p. 228, n. 11; Gabba pp. 6-7, n. 8.

¹⁸⁶ Sage (2008) pp. 101-102.

loan, and individuals of the higher census classes may have been eligible for more or better gear than their poorer counterparts.¹⁸⁷

Each individual soldier needed to own his gear, and not simply rent or borrow it from a state armory, so that veterans could be battle-ready for emergency call-ups after their discharge. In the Early and Middle Republican periods, it also was essential for Roman soldiers to maintain their gear in times of peace because they could be summoned for immediate service in an emergency. Over a period of about twenty years, Romans were required to serve around six years, although not necessarily consecutively. Since propertied male citizens were required for immediate service, they needed to own their equipment or be forced to repurchase the same gear several times in their adult lives.¹⁸⁸

Roman soldiers had two main options, either to pay for their gear outright or to repay loans through payroll deductions, which ancient sources record in both the Republican and Early Imperial periods. Polybius states outright that the cost of additional arms and equipment was deducted from the soldiers' pay at the time of the Second Punic War; and during the Imperial period, Tacitus records that legionaries from the time of Trajan complained about having to repay the state through payroll deductions for the cost of their armor and weapons. If the practice existed in both the preceding and subsequent periods, then logistically it should also be the method employed throughout the Middle and Late Republican periods as well.¹⁸⁹

Arming Marius' *supplementum* may have been more risky than costly. If this was the case, then the state assumed the responsibility of providing a larger number of kits to individuals through cash loans. The soldiers' kits of the Marian legion were more complete than those of preceding armies because of these loans, which helped to eliminate the distinctions between the

¹⁸⁷ *Ordines* as measurement of financial credit: Matthew (2010) p. 3.

¹⁸⁸ Soldier term requirements: Roth (2008) p. 21.

¹⁸⁹ Polyb. 6.31, 6.39; Tac. *Ann* 1.17.

ordines. The *capite censi* that swelled Marius' ranks after 107 lacked valuable property and contracted larger loans without any significant collateral. It made little sense to provide an array of different kits for different economic groups, especially since the state recouped the cost of most of these kits through payroll deductions by a quaestor. The state assumed the risk that many of these soldiers might die (before they repaid their loans).

Three factors combined to help in arming Marius' legionaries drafted from the poorest classes. First, the army and state already had the mechanisms in place to provide arms and equipment to any soldier through the system of loans described above. There was nothing new about the state distributing arms and armament to soldiers without direct upfront compensation. Second, the *lex militaris* of Gaius Gracchus had increased the state's obligations to fund portions of the soldiers' kits, mostly clothing, that is, the tunics and cloaks. However, the surviving references imply that only the soldier's cloak, the *sagum*, was included in this law.¹⁹⁰ It has been argued that this law may have been extended to include armor and weapons, which would have eliminated the problem.¹⁹¹ However, there is no certainty that Gracchus' law went beyond the *sagum* as described in the ancient texts. If it had, there should have been a wider recognition of that impact in the sources.

Third, Marius as a former *legatus* of Caecilius Metellus knew that the general had collected a supply of equipment and arms. In 109, when Metellus was preparing for the war in Numidia, Sallust relates that he brought together a large surplus of arms, armor, equipment, and

¹⁹⁰ Plut. *CG*. 5.

¹⁹¹ Gabba (1976), p. 10, argues that the military law of G. Gracchus extended to all military deductions, and not just clothing as Plutarch suggests. However, by the end of the 2nd century the state had ceased to provide any valuable accommodation for soldiers, causing deductions to continue into the professional army periods. see Matthew (2010)p.24, n.49; Keppie (1986) pp. 58-61, n.8; Santosuosso pp.13-14, n.4; N.V. Sekunda, S. Northwood & M. Simkins, *Caesar's Legions: The Roman Soldier 753 BC to 117 AD*, (oxford, Osprey 2004) p.56; Adkins & Adkins p. 228, n.11; Gabba pp.6-7, n.8.

provisions for the campaign.¹⁹² As a legate, Marius was well aware of this fact and may have planned on accessing this surplus of equipment for his own army of *capite censi*. This equipment was likely the property of the legal commander which would have been Marius in 107, and that consideration made it much easier to fully arm his legions.¹⁹³

Discipline and Training

Recruiting soldiers from the *capite censi* had another side-effect. These soldiers, more than the usual conscripts, required extensive training before they were battle-effective. The young men recruited from the *capite censi* had previously been ineligible for military service and as a result had little to no martial experience or training relative to those who were brought up with the expectation of military service. The *capite censi* recruits needed to be trained to fight with *gladius* and *scutum*, to move in units, to throw a javelin, to set up camp properly, to forage, to march, and so on. These soldiers also needed to be physically conditioned like many other Roman armies in the past.¹⁹⁴ Taking the time to train his new recruits was by no means a novel idea. Generals had regularly dedicated several months to the training and conditioning of even veteran armies in order to prepare them for an upcoming battle or siege.

In order to best train his novice soldiers, Marius initially directed his army's efforts towards the taking of small and vulnerable enemy assets, as mentioned in the previous chapter. He marched his army around the countryside and seized small forts and towns to acclimate his soldiers to the demands of war in the region.¹⁹⁵ Undoubtedly, Marius was also gauging their capabilities as a force, so as not to overestimate them in battle. He attacked several forts and

¹⁹² Metellus gathered a surplus of equipment: Sall. *BJ.* 43.

¹⁹³ Sall. *BJ.* 43.3.

¹⁹⁴ Plut. *Mar.* 13-14.

¹⁹⁵ Sall. *BJ.* 89-92.

small settlements in order to build their experience and confidence before he laid siege to Cirta in 106.

The practice of conditioning soldiers, however, through toilsome labor, forced marches, and drilling for periods of months was uncommon in the Middle Republic. Generals were not particularly keen on spending most of their annual command preparing their army, and it may have been less important since the soldiers of the manipular army typically trained their martial skills at home and throughout their childhood. In the Late Republic, commanders like C. Julius Caesar and Cn. Pompeius Magnus trained their soldiers in a manner similar to Marius.¹⁹⁶

While Rutilius Rufus was serving as *legatus* under Marius, he had employed gladiators to better train his soldiers to fight with swords and shields. It is reasonable to assume that Marius had taken command of the most experienced legions and left to Rufus the initial training of the more inexperienced legions with the new recruits. This basic training program ensured that the new soldiers acquired all the necessary fighting techniques. These drills were effective, developing the fighting skills of these new recruits, as apparent in their victory at Cirta.¹⁹⁷ After the siege of Cirta, Marius had gained such advantage in Numidia that Jugurtha was surrendered to the Romans, ending the war in North Africa. After the war in North Africa, Marius received the command against the Teutones and Cimbri in Gaul. For this campaign, he chose the soldiers who had served under Rutilius Rufus, and dismissed those who had been levied by Metellus. Marius then enlisted additional men and led his force to the north of Italy. Marius' clear preference for the soldiers that served under Rutilius Rufus shows that he desired well-trained

¹⁹⁶ Plut. *Mar.* 13.

¹⁹⁷ Front. 4.2.2; Plut. *Mar.* 10, 13.

soldiers, and goes a long way to demonstrate the efficacy of both the training program and the drafting of *capite censi*.¹⁹⁸

Consequences

Marius' plan had worked out exceedingly well. Sallust reports that these volunteers from the *capite censi* composed the majority of Marius' army. Marius had appealed to a class, which was generally excluded from military service. In doing so, Marius effectively offered employment, the hope of loot, and a certain level of prestige to a group of people which had previously been denied such opportunities. As a result, Marius' supplementary force swelled well beyond its legal limits, a fact that seems to have been ignored at the time.¹⁹⁹

Many scholars have argued that the enrollment of the *capite censi* simply continued a prolonged process of decreasing property requirements, especially for the lowest order of citizens, which took place over the course of centuries. Matthew argues, however, that the perception of changing property requirements simply reflects of errors among the ancient sources.²⁰⁰

Marius' enrollment of these *capite censi* was a vital step towards a fully-professionalized army. Marius had provided some unemployed citizens with opportunities for wages, spoils, and social advancement. Continued high unemployment and economic inequality gave Rome incentive to continue Marius' policy into the future. Also, volunteers were motivated to serve for extended foreign campaigns, which enabled Marius to fight the war in Numidia at his own pace. Sulla and all subsequent commanders of the first century raised their legions from the *proletarii*,

¹⁹⁸ Front. *Strat.* 4.7.3.

¹⁹⁹ Gell. 16.10.14; Sall. *BJ.* 86.4; Matthew (2010) p. 22.

²⁰⁰ Matthew (2010) pp.12-13.

and by the time of Caesar from provincials.²⁰¹ Even if the Roman senate had desired to abandon Marius' open enrollment and his subsequent reforms, any notion to do so was abandoned at the outbreak of the Social War, a conflict which required all of Rome's military might to survive.

Marius' enrollment of the *capite censi* paved the way for the rest of his military reforms. He was now able to recruit far more effectively than previous generals had. Recruiting volunteers from the *capite censi* was a better mechanism for filling the ranks of the army as evident by the lack of any mention of a *dilectus* after Metellus' conscription of 109. Inexperienced urban and rural poor required additional training and possibly new formations to ensure their quality, and possibly even their superiority. These soldiers were more willing to serve for extended periods of time, which also gave them ample opportunity to be trained.²⁰²

By enrolling the *capite censi* Marius had provided future generals with a great tool. These soldiers from the urban and agrarian poor were more likely to act in their own self-interest and by extension on the interests of their commanders over that of the state. For example, in 88, when Sulla appealed to his men stationed in Capua to march with him on Rome, according to Appian, he had with him only a single officer, but six full legions of soldiers.²⁰³ The absence of other officers perhaps shows the discomfort of propertied individuals who shared a vested interest in the *status quo* at Rome. *Capite censi* soldiers were more interested in their future opportunity to go east and plunder Asia in the looming campaign against Mithridates than a potential civil war. David Potter argues that the soldiers from the *proletarii* were not agents for the best interests of their class: "The willingness to slaughter fellow peasants on land seized from Italian communities makes it plain that Sulla's veterans cannot be seen as representatives of the

²⁰¹ Caesar drafts Spanish provincials: Matthew (2010) p. 22.

²⁰² No *dilectus* after 109: Matthew (2010) p.23; willing recruits could be extensively trained: Matthew (2010) pp. 22-3.

²⁰³ App. *BC.* 1.57.

interests of a class other than that constituted by the soldiers of Sulla.”²⁰⁴ It is also unlikely that Julius Caesar could have convinced an army of propertied citizen-soldiers, as in the old manipular army, to cross the Rubicon, and perhaps even less likely that Octavian could have used citizen-soldiers of the old type to strong-arm the senate after the battle of Mutina (43) and the deaths of the consuls Hirtius and Pansa.²⁰⁵

Influence on Consular Elections

As discussed in chapter V, Marius’ election to the consulship of 107 resulted from his campaign and speeches which set him apart as a champion of the *plebs urbana* and an antagonist of the senatorial elite. Marius enlisted even the poorest citizens and set a precedent that changed Roman armies in the Late Republic and Empire. Beesley argues that, when the people elected Marius as consul and conferred on him the Jugurthine War, it set in motion the end of the Republic, as the professionalized army was created and the Marian faction was born. Beesley may have overreached by extending definite causation to events which were simply connected and interrelated. There is little doubt that Marius’ election in 107 was part of a long chain of events that led the Roman Republic into long periods of civil war and divisive partisanship, but it was by no means the only, or even the most important, factor.

In 107, a *novus homo* from outside of Rome, had been elected to the consulship because of an inflammatory political campaign which promised results in a war that had cost Rome an army in 110, challenged on entrenched consular commander (Metellus) in Numidia, and lost Vaga with its entire Roman garrison in 108. The election for 107 was an important moment for Marius, but it was not nearly as radical and historically significant as his election for 104, which

²⁰⁴ Potter (2007) p. 80.

²⁰⁵ Battle of Mutina: App BC 3.70-73.

was contrary to both law and custom. As previously discussed in Chapter III, the consulships traditionally went to members of tested and accomplished noble families, in the hope that their pedigree and upbringing would prove their own competence.

In 104, immediately following his victory and triumph over Jugurtha, Marius had been elected to take command as consul in the war against the Teutones and Cimbri. He was the best apparent choice as a military commander with an already trained and outfitted force, a new and easier economic requirement for enlistees, and widespread popular support. Marius had shown himself to be superior to his rivals by making good on his promise to end the Jugurthine War. Also, because Marius had portrayed himself as a champion of the people, he had little trouble securing support from the assembly.²⁰⁶ As a *novus homo*, Marius also was politically removed from responsibility for the recent military disasters.

After raising additional forces in Italy, Marius went north into Gaul to deal with the threats of the Teutones and Cimbri. Fortunately for Marius, the Cimbri had turned west through Gaul to the Iberian Peninsula instead of crossing into Italy. As a result, Marius was given two more years to prepare his forces for the fight ahead, while being reelected to consecutive consulships in the meanwhile. His four consulships of 104 to 101 were the product of a fear that the senate might attempt to take the command from Marius and put Rome at risk. Marius was admired all the more because of Rome's various failures in Gaul, in Hispaniae, and in Numidia. Most importantly, in the period from 104 through 101, and for a significant core of soldiers from 107 through 101, Marius had ample opportunity to implement all of his legionary reforms.

²⁰⁶ Figures for Arausio: Liv. *Per.* 67; Diod. 35.37.

In 100, Marius had been elected to his sixth term as consul, which was unique because Marius was elected as a reward for past service rather than being marked out for a new campaign. He was not chosen to lead a foreign campaign, he did not raise an army, and it appears he might not even have left the city for any significant length of time. With the help of the tribune Saturninus, Marius had capitalized on the popularity and renown from his victories. Marius was lauded as Rome's savior and its third founder after Romulus and Camillus as he celebrated his triumphs, flooding the city with spoils and slaves. The fact that the senate and people elected him consul for 100 indicates Marius' popularity, which now had fundamentally changed the role of the consulship.

The Cohortal Legion Formation and Homogenization of the Infantry

Under the manipular army organization these soldiers should have been outfitted as *velites*, giving Marius a large surplus of light armed skirmishers without a core unit of heavy infantry. For several reasons which will be discussed in this section, Marius altered the formation and organization of the legion so that its size was increased, its units were larger, and there were no *velites* but instead there was a uniformly outfitted heavy infantry.

The enrollment of the *capite censi* necessitated the restructuring of the legion and the dissolution of the traditional manipular ranks. Marius had enlisted large numbers of *capite censi* in both 107 and 104, which not only caused a disproportionate number of soldiers from the lowest census class, but also would have left the legions with a surplus of *velites* rather than soldiers. Marius could have sprinkled these men from the lower order across the various *ordines*,

outfitting some as *velites*, others as *hastati*, *principes*, or *triarii*, but instead he reorganized the legion so that all its soldiers could be used in the thick of battle.²⁰⁷

Marius reorganized the legion so the smallest isolated unit in their battle formation was the 480-man cohort, instead of the 120-man maniple. It is clear that this change had occurred by the time of Julius Caesar's army which is described as using a cohortal formation.²⁰⁸ The cohortal arrangement did not make use of differentiated infantry classes. Instead of *velites*, *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii*, they were simply cohorts of heavy infantry, all outfitted in similar fashion. It appears that the last time that Marius used *velites* was at Muthul in 108, when he was serving as *legatus* under Metellus, and the last major battle before Marius assumed command in Numidia. Sallust does not mention *velites* at any later point in his work, which may indicate their absence. Although Matthew has taken *expeditiis cohortis* "swift" or "light cohorts" to indicate the presence of *velites* after Muthul, but that translation seems unlikely.²⁰⁹ Considering Sallust specifically used the term *velites* throughout his *Bellum Jugurthinum*, *expedites cohortis* must have been referring to something different. A basic translation of the term yields "swift cohorts" or "maniples" in English, which refers to soldiers who were not burdened with any excess gear, and were thus capable of moving more swiftly, although they were still outfitted as heavy infantry and not skirmishers.²¹⁰

The absence in Sallust's account of the term *velites* after the battle of Muthul illuminates Marius' desire to do away with the *velites* altogether. During the conflict, the *velites* were hit hardest by the hit-and-run guerilla tactics of the Numidian forces. He likely experienced similar tactics in Hispaniae earlier in his career. That is why Marius outfitted all his legionaries in the

²⁰⁷ Matthew (2010) p.20.

²⁰⁸ Matthew (2010) p. 32; Caes. *B Civ.* 3.88-94.

²⁰⁹ Matthew (2010) p. 32; Sall. *BJ* 11.100, 12.103.

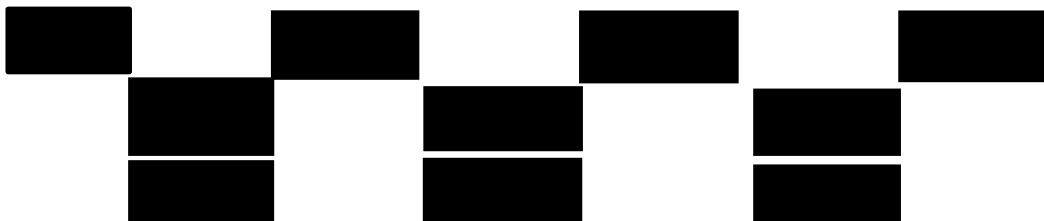
²¹⁰ Swift cohorts: Matthew (2010); Sall. *BJ*. 100.2 "expeditis manipulis", 103.1 "expeditis cohortis."

same fashion and gave them javelins; he thus increased his fighting force without losing the advantages of javelin volleys.

Next, Marius changed the army's basic battle formation. Scholars have postulated that Marius enacted structural changes like the cohortal formation when he assumed command in the Teutonic and Cimbric Wars in 104, because he would have needed several years to retrain his armies. Matthew also argues that in preparation against the loose and fluid tactics of the Germans and Gauls, Marius wanted to consolidate his units into the new formation.²¹¹ However, he does not take into account Marius' efforts to strengthen his Numidian legions against guerilla tactics and cavalry harassment. The argument that it required several years for Marius to implement a cohortal organization neglects the fact that the cohortal organization was arguably an easier formation to teach an army of new recruits because of its fewer groups, divisions, and gaps. Also, Marius' success in the Jugurthine War suggests that his soldiers performed and fought well, which may not have been the case if he was still using a manipular legionary organization with large numbers of untrained *capite censi*. By restructuring the legions into a cohortal organization, Marius greatly increased the fighting power of the army.

Cohortal Legion drawn up in a tries acies, or "triple line"

Figure 6.1



²¹¹ Germanic tactics: Matthew (2010) pp. 30-33.

The pre-Marian legion was typically 4200 men strong, made up of ten cohorts each of 420 men. 1200 of the 4200 men in the legion, were light-armed skirmishers, *velites*, who had been effective in causing disorder among the enemy lines prior to the engagement of the lines, but played very little part in the rest of the conflict. The main body of 3000 heavy infantry took the brunt of the ensuing melees.

After Marius' restructuring, the legion was a body of soldiers 4800 strong, still divided into ten cohorts, but each cohort was made up of six centuries of 80 men making them 480 men strong. The post-Marian cohorts were made up of uniformly outfitted soldiers (no separate *ordines*), a change which increased the number of heavy infantry from 3000 to 4800 men, a full 60% stronger than the manipular legion. Moreover, the cohortal legion's missile capabilities were not inferior to the manipular legion, because all 4800 men was also outfitted with multiple javelins, heavy and light.²¹² The post-Marian legionary battle formation were 10 cohorts drawn up in the three lines. The new cohortal organization implemented a new battle formation to take advantage of these changes to the legion. The cohortal legion arranged in the 4-3-3 (see figure 6.1) formation maintained many of the advantages of the manipular arrangement, with the staggered battle line, while strengthening the cohesion and fighting capabilities of each unit (for more see Chapter II).²¹³ Later generals, like Julius Caesar, adopted this formation. Caesar deployed his legions in three lines in almost every major battle he fought in Gaul.²¹⁴

The Marian legion was deployed in a much wider arrangement than the deep formation of its manipular counterpart. The deeper manipular formation was needed to facilitate, if necessary, the first battle line falling behind the second, and the second falling behind the third. Individual

²¹² Keppie (1984) p. 66.

²¹³ Keppie (1984) p. 64.

²¹⁴ Caesar *BG* 1.24-5; 1.41; 1.49; 1.83; 4.14.

maniples probably were not drawn up any less than four ranks deep, more likely six or eight like hoplite phalanxes of the past. Roman commanders after Marius regularly altered the depth of their formation in order to resist cavalry charges or particular stresses. They also spread their troops out, by reducing the number of ranks from six or eight to as low as three or four.²¹⁵ The ability to flank and spread out opponents was advantageous so long as it did not come at expense of the line's stability.

120-men maniples in the pre-Marian legion were relatively isolated on the battlefield, making them subject to being surrounded and then routed, especially the lightly armed *velites* who fought in front of the first line in the manipular army. By consolidating the maniples into cohorts creating a 480 men group, Marius had increased security of the formation and encouraged unit cohesion. Marian cohorts were a single unit, without any sizable gaps between maniples. This arrangement had a significant psychological effect on those within the cohort, reducing the compulsion to flee and the feeling of panic once the melee began. In the pre-Marian legion, maniples were facing the enemy on both flanks and their front. In a group of 120 men, presumably drawn up 15 across and 8 deep, it would have been much easier for men in the maniple to feel enough enemy pressure that they felt compelled to break and flee. Also, as mentioned above, the manipular formation promoted falling back behind the lines to the rear. The Marian legion had preserved the three line formation, making it possible for cohorts to fall back behind their comrades before reentering the fray, but with the larger cohortal groups this tactic occurred less frequently.

As the army advanced, it was easier for units drawn up in depth to maintain order than in shallower and wider formations.²¹⁶ The pre-Marian legion was significantly narrower across its

²¹⁵ Goldsworthy (2000) p. 175.

²¹⁶ It is easier to march in deeper formations: Goldsworthy (2000) p. 176.

fronts than its cohortal successor. It was 19 maniples wide, considering that each of the ten cohorts was one maniple wide and each cohort had a maniple-sized gap between them. If maniples were 15 by 8 the legion would be 285 men-wide or if they were arranged 20 by 6, then they would be 380 men-wide. The cohortal legion was arranged with 7 cohorts across, each either as 60 by 8 or 80 by 6, making the legion 420 or 560 men-wide. That is a 147% increase in width, no matter the arrangement, not only without sacrificing any line strength, but even strengthening it.

Consequences

Through his restructuring of the legion, Marius had eliminated many of the class distinctions and seniority issues in the army. There were no longer separate *hastati*, *principes*, *triarii*, or *velites*. The remaining distinctions were those between centurions and the general infantry, those among the centurions themselves according to cohort and rank, and those among officers according to their office. This change was done, not because Marius had hoped to destroy class division in the military, but to accommodate the large number of *capite censi* that now populated the army. This change united the infantry as a single body. As discussed above, Marius did not use these men as *velites*, and in arming them Marius set a new standard for the entire legion.

During the period from 104 to 102, Marius spread his reforms to a large number of legions and commanders, as he was preparing for the eventual arrival of the Teutones and Cimbri. What is clear is that by the time of the Social War (91-88), the Roman army was making full use of Marius' enrollment norms and the army's cohortal formation. At the opening of the Social War, Rome fielded as many as 100,000 men at arms at a time when the citizen population

of Rome was no more than 400,000.²¹⁷ Rome reached this number by drawing on its poorest classes, which made up the vast majority of the population. The post-Marian, cohortal legion, remained the basic legionary formation for centuries to come. The armies of the Late Republic and Empire used large numbers of these legions to maintain security and stability throughout the ancient world.

“Marius’ Mules” and Discipline

Marius, like many generals before him, was concerned with streamlining the army and the baggage train. It was desirable for armies to be as logistically independent as possible while operating in the field. Roman commanders had improvised temporary measures whenever the legions’ discipline or physical conditioning was lacking. These temporary measures typically banned servants or slaves from carrying their master’s gear, or reduced the size of the baggage train by banning some or all camp followers. With the camp followers sent away, soldiers were forced to be more self-reliant. Marius went a step further and made these previous measures permanent policy of his legions. Furthermore, Marius’ reforms were adopted into regular practice, becoming later Roman commanders’ standard operating procedure.

The ancient sources credit Marius with the implementation of the crossed sticks that legionaries used to carry their entire kit, including shield, armor, weapons, rations, and any other equipment, like cooking utensils, tents, entrenching tools, and so on, while they marched. Soldiers now maintained their strength and fitness by carrying their entire kits on the march,

²¹⁷ Liv. *Per.* 59- 318,823 citizens (c. 131); Liv. *Per.* 60: 394,736 citizens (c. 121); Liv. *Per.* 63: 394,336 citizens (c. 111).

which was a considerable weight. Making soldiers carry all their gear helped to make the legions more autonomous and less dependent on supply lines and baggage trains.²¹⁸

Marius put his soldiers to work because hard work and toil taught discipline and developed strength. As discussed earlier, he avoided luxuries himself, and he also was said to have spent the time between 104 and 102 not only drilling and training his men, but marching them and having them build fortifications and do other labors. Plutarch describes Marius' measures as "practicing the men in all kinds of running and in long marches and compelling them to carry their own baggage and to prepare their own food."²¹⁹

"Marius' Mules" came to describe the soldiers who served under the commander because of the load they carried and the hard work they performed. Plutarch provides an alternative which even he found an unconvincing explanation:

Hence, in after times, men who were fond of toil and did whatever was enjoined upon them contentedly and without a murmur, were called Marian mules. Some, however, think that this name had a different origin. Namely, when Scipio was besieging Numantia, he wished to inspect not only the arms and the horses, but also the mules and the waggons, that every man might have them in readiness and good order. Marius, accordingly, brought out for inspection both a horse that had been most excellently taken care of by him, and a mule that for health, docility, and strength far surpassed all the rest. The commanding officer was naturally well pleased with the beasts of Marius and often spoke about them, so that in time those who wanted to bestow facetious praise on a persevering, patient, laborious man would call him a Marian mule.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Keppie (1984) p. 66; Matthew (2010); Roth (2008) p. 92.

²¹⁹ Plut. *Mar.* 13.1.

²²⁰ Plut. *Mar.* 13.1-2.

Keppie posits that the term “Marius’ Mules” came as a clever observation of the overburdened and lumbering legionaries who were now packed down with gear and of their likeness to beasts of burden.²²¹

Marius reformed the legion so that it was more independent and had a small entourage of camp followers, a smaller and less burdened supply train, and better conditioned soldiers.

Vegetius, writing in the Late Empire, dictates that soldiers should be made to march with at least 60 pounds of gear, in order to keep the army disciplined and fit. Vegetius’ mention of Marius’ practice shows the long-term effects of “Marius’ Mules” in both the republic and the empire.²²²

Earlier Measures by Roman commanders

Roman commanders prior to Marius implemented alterations or reforms to their army’s policy or conduct, especially regarding the baggage train and the camp followers. During the second Punic War, Scipio Africanus trained his soldier on a several day cycle involving running in armor, sword drills, cleaning equipment, and rest.²²³ Later his kinsmen Scipio Aemilianus ejected all the camp followers and required his men to carry their own equipment on the march in Hispaniae in preparation for his siege of Numantia. In the Middle Republic it was more common for well-off soldiers to have servants or slaves attending them on campaign, but once Marius made the majority of the legion unpropertied *capite censi*, this practice ceased. Even Caecilius Metellus had instituted similar measures during his command against Jurgurtha. He ejected the camp followers: merchants, servants, prostitutes, and diviners and fortune tellers.²²⁴

²²¹ Plut. *Mar.* 13.2, Keppie (1984). pp. 66-67.

²²² Veg. 1.15.

²²³ Polyb. 10.20

²²⁴ Sall. *BJ* 45.2, Plut. *Mar.* 13. App *Hisp.* 1.86.

Consequences

Frankly, there is very little to differentiate the earlier measures taken by Scipio or Metellus from those of Marius, except that Marius' reform was not temporary. Marius' innovation became standard. After Marius, the shift towards more disciplined, mobile, and independent legions continued.²²⁵ About fifty years later, Marius' nephew by marriage, Julius Caesar, trained and conditioned his legions for forced marches and battlefield mobility. The marching pace of his soldiers allowed Caesar to advance far ahead of his column to fortify important positions and make ready for battle, as he had done with six legions against the Nervi at the Sambre River in 58, when he advanced a full seven miles ahead of his column and fortified a suitable location for them.²²⁶ This advanced unit moved swiftly, even while carrying construction tools. The speed of his legions and their independence from the baggage train enabled Caesar to survive after being cut off from their supply-train at the beginning of the Alesian campaign in 53.²²⁷

Aquila

Pliny the Elder credits Marius with the introduction of the gilded eagle, or *aquila*, as the legionary standard. He dates this to 104, as Marius began his preparations for the campaigns against the Teutones and Cimbri. Pliny also mentions that the pre-Marian legion had used four other animal totems as standards prior to this innovation, but afterwards the eagle gradually prevailed. Scholars have surmised that the other four animal standards were used by the four consular legions. Standards give an important reference point on the battlefield and provide a means of visual communication between officers and the legion as a whole.

²²⁵ Matthew (2010) pp.44-45.

²²⁶ Caesar *B. Gall.* 2.17-28, Matthew (2010) p. 43.

²²⁷ Alesia: Cs. *B. Gall.* 7.14.

The eagle superseded all other standards and came to represent the legion itself. Matthew argues that the eagle inspired an *esprit de corps* and points out that the unitary symbol of the eagle may have represented Marius' new homogenized legion. The *aquila* inspired confidence and morale, perhaps encouraging the men with the idea that Jupiter Optimus Maximus was on their side. The opposite was also true, that the loss of the eagle brought great dishonor and was a terrible omen.

As Matthew points out, there is little textual evidence supporting the symbolic significance of these standards. However, from later on Caesar gives two examples in his account of the Gallic War. During the first invasion of Britain in 55, none of Caesar's men wanted to get off the ships for fear of the enemy on the beach. But one of Caesar's *aquiliferi*, standard-bearers, motivated his comrades by disembarking first, which prompted the others to follow him or risk losing the eagle.²²⁸ A year later in 54, one of Caesar's *aquiliferi* threw the standard over the ramparts of their own camp to keep it from enemy hands, during their fight to the death to save the camp.²²⁹

The Pilum Adjustments

Marius is also credited with adapting the construction of the *pilum* in such a way that the spearhead and shaft bent at a right angle on hitting the ground or any solid object. First, the bent javelins were unusable and could not be thrown back. Secondly, after the javelin pierced a shield, its bent shape made the shield very difficult to hold and handle. According to Keppie, who provides archaeological examples of *pila* from the area around Numantia in the late second and

²²⁸ Caes. *B. Gall.* 4.25.

²²⁹ Caes. *B. Gall.* 5.37, App. *BC.* 2.61; Matthew (2010) pp. 55-59.

early first centuries, the iron heads of the heavy *pilum* had the double sockets described in Plutarch's account, and thus such *pila* existed in Marius' day.²³⁰

Plutarch reported that Marius had retrofitted the javelins on the eve of the battle of the battle against the Cimbri at Vercellae in 101:

*And it is said that it was in preparation for this battle that Marius introduced an innovation in the structure of the javelin. Up to this time, it seems, that part of the shaft which was let into the iron head was fastened there by two iron nails; but now, leaving one of these as it was, Marius removed the other, and put in its place a wooden pin that could easily be broken. His design was that the javelin, after striking the enemy's shield, should not stand straight out, but that the wooden peg should break, thus allowing the shaft to bend in the iron head and trail along the ground, being held fast by the twist at the point of the weapon.*²³¹

Matthew argues that retrofitting some tens of thousands of javelins on the eve of a battle would have been nearly impossible. Rather, adapting the *pilum* had to have occurred during the months prior to the battle.²³² The javelins appear to have been a factor in the defeating the Cimbri at Vercellae, although the exact impact is unknown. Closely associated with the adjusted javelins is another important effect: Roman missile volleys now became more lethal because the weapons could not be re-used by the enemy after they had thrown their own.

Veterans

Land Grants (Coloniae Militares)

²³⁰ Keppie (1984) p. 66.

²³¹ Plut. *Mar.* 25.

²³² Plut. *Mar.* 25.1-2, Matthew (2010) pp. 79-82.

The “veteran phenomenon,” as Gabba dubbed it, refers to the situation in the first century when commanders began to use extra-constitutional powers to win favor with their own veterans.²³³ It was only after Marius that veterans were viewed both as an all-important group to be satisfied and that they were seen as a useful for generals in new ways.²³⁴ Marius had regularly reenrolled his veterans, which created a group of men bound together closely by serving under the same commander for several years. With the help of Saturninus, Marius settled a large number of his veterans in military colonies, first in North Africa under the authority of the *lex Appuleia* of 103, and in Italy before 100.²³⁵ These veterans received land grants in overseas colonies whether they were *socii* or Roman citizens.²³⁶

“The impetus for this new kind of colonization [military colonies] had been initially given by Marius’ army reform... [to men] he had enrolled for a set period in his army and had then discharged, he sought to assuage their land hunger with the help of this temporary political ally, L. Appuleius Saturninus. But Saturninus’ agrarian law in 103 concerned itself chiefly with viritane distribution.”²³⁷ Marius himself was not personally responsible for any formal colony for civilian citizens except for Mariana on Corsica, although he was indirectly responsible for a large number of military colonies. Either under the leadership of Saturninus, as Salmon argues, or simply with his help, Marius settled most of his veterans, both Italian and Roman, in overseas and domestic *coloniae militares*. In doing so, Marius acquired a large retinue of clients both in Italy and Africa. Salmon further argues that if Marius did not realize the significance of this colonization effort, Sulla certainly did. “At the first opportunity [Sulla] improved on Marius with

²³³ Gabba (1976) p.42.

²³⁴ Gabba (1976) p.41.

²³⁵ Gabba (1976) p.42.

²³⁶ Sherwin-White (1956) p. 345.

²³⁷ Salmon (1970) p. 129.

the characteristic thoroughness, to reward his soldiers, to punish his opponents, and to ensure the continuation of his own system of government.”²³⁸

Prior to Marius, veterans were not significant assets for commanders in either a military or political capacity, especially because generals rarely had held consecutive consular commands where the ability to enroll veterans begins to matter. When Marius enrolled the *capite censi* and began to professionalize the army structure, generals were pleased with the same soldiers for longer periods than one or two years. Marius had commanded the same soldiers for as long as six consecutive years in some cases and thereby his success was intimately connected with the economic and social advancement of his veterans. His men not only received portions of the booty and slaves taken from the Cimbri and Teutones, but also obtained land grants in veterans’ colonies in Italy and North Africa, which propelled many of them into the middle census-classes.

Marius had also made it a point to reenroll his veterans, something alluded to in Sulla’s address to his soldiers at Capua in 88. Sulla threatened that Marius would use his own veterans for the campaign against Mithridates instead of them. The soldiers responded by marching on Rome with Sulla. Marius’ veterans had also proven their loyalty in 100, when they were called from Picenum to put down the coup of Saturninus.²³⁹ As consul, Marius used his *imperium*, to summon his nearby veterans to the city. (This is something that Sulla, Caesar, and Augustus later emulated with their own military colonies spread across Italy and the provinces). Sulla is said to have settled his veterans on the land around the city in an attempt to protect Rome from a *popularis* uprising.

It is also important that after Sulla had taken Rome and exiled Marius, Marius had fled to North Africa to raise an army from his veterans. (The practice of raising forces from settled

²³⁸ Salmon (1970) p. 129.

²³⁹ Coup of Saturninus: Plut. *Mar* 35; Sulla’s speech at Capua: App. *BC* 1.57.

veterans was later conspicuously imitated by Octavian).²⁴⁰ Broughton argued, “The most direct evidence for the Marian colonization consists of a passage of Aurelius Victor and of the appearance in the third century A.D. of the cognomen Mariana in the official titles of Thibaris and of Uchi Maius.”²⁴¹

Marius was beginning to spread out his supporters somewhat widely in the Roman world through a relatively aggressive colonization effort. He was given special privileges, to settle veteran Romans and Latins in colonies. Cicero even reports that the Latin veterans in these colonies became new Roman citizens without the express permission of the senate. In his *Pro Balbo*, Cicero lists numerous special grants made to proconsuls as rewards for service, but none before Marius.²⁴²

Veteran colonies, in Italy and abroad, offered their former commanders established pockets of loyal political and military support. As a result Roman commanders could recall their veterans to arms in times of need. The earliest example when Marius put down the coup of Saturninus with his veterans from Picenum. Sulla later settled as many as 80,000 veterans, not only his own but some Marian veterans as well, in a series of colonies on lands immediately surrounding Rome, to protect for himself and Rome against rivals, and enemy partisans.²⁴³ However, in the execution of this policy, Sulla spared the lands of the wealthy Roman landowners, so long as they were not expressly hostile to him and his cause.²⁴⁴ Land grants for

²⁴⁰ Sherwin White (1956) pp. 227-8.

²⁴¹ Broughton (1968) pp. 32-33. Thibaris is marked by the ruins of modern-day Henshir Hamamet, and Uchi Maius, now in Menchir Douemi, not far from Dugga (ancient Thugga).

²⁴² Cic. *Pro Balbo* 48; Sherwin White (1956) p.112, 294; Cicero *Pro Balbo* 46-51, 55

²⁴³ Debois (1987) p. 44- Sulla arbitrarily confiscated land from farmers in a wide circle round Rome, which contributed to the ranks of displaced and disgruntled victims of the Civil War.

²⁴⁴ Debois (1987) p. 44.

veterans, created problematic expectations for Sulla and opportunities for Sulla and later Pompey.²⁴⁵

The “veteran phenomenon” enabled Sulla to fight against the Marians after 88 in addition to providing loyal Marian supporters and manpower, which fueled the wars between Marius, Cinna, and Sulla and the Sertorian War.²⁴⁶ Even, Marius’ son, Marius, at an unusually young age became consul after his father’s death. During his consulship, Marius received many soldiers who “had already completed their term of service as set by law hastened of their own accord to join the young man [Marius].”²⁴⁷

Marius had created an expectation that commanders would take care of their veterans with retirement bonuses, possible future opportunities to join new campaigns, and settlement in colonies on land grants. By linking the success of Roman generals directly to their soldiers, Marius created a system in which soldiers fought for the reputation, the *gloria* and *fama*, of their commander because of the tangible rewards they might receive.²⁴⁸ An underappreciated or unpopular commander could be the difference between success and failure in claiming retirement benefits. Land grants for veterans became a political problem for Sulla and Pompey. For example, in 60, when Pompey returned from the East, the current consuls, L. Afranius and Metellus Celer, denied him the authority to provide land grants, and refused to ratify his colonial settlements.²⁴⁹ Authority for land grants contributed to the volatile conditions that faced men like Pompey the Great, Crassus, Caesar, Lepidus, and others.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ Adams (2007) p. 204.

²⁴⁶ Alston (2007) p. 184, Sall. *B. Cat.* 16.4, 28.4-Marian colonists were crucial in the restoration of the Marian faction after Sulla’s march on Rome.

²⁴⁷ Diod. 38.12.

²⁴⁸ Phang (2008) p. 23.

²⁴⁹ Dio Cassius *Roman History* 37.49.1-50.6.

²⁵⁰ Adams (2007) p.204.

Enfranchisements

Marius used his fame and reputation to provide his veterans with more than land grants. Sherwin-White observes: “The special privilege given to Marius of creating a certain number of new citizens in his colonial foundations, whether these were Roman or, as is more probable, Latin colonies, shows how the Romans sought to compensate the Latins for their lost privileges.”²⁵¹ Marius had appropriated the right to grant full citizenship to Latins or other Italians in his colonies. As Sherwin-White, following Cicero, points out, there were no instances prior to Marius of any general, consul or otherwise, enfranchising allies without the authority of a law specifically designed to do so.²⁵²

Most notably, Marius enfranchised two cohorts of Umbrian infantry after the Cimbric War. Shortly after Marius, Pompeius Strabo enfranchised a squadron of Spanish cavalymen during the Social War, which is significant because he enfranchised provincials and not Italians. Regardless of Marius’ rationale, he did give citizenship to groups of Italian soldiers, which in turn helped to re-ignite the desire of the auxiliaries and *socii* for enfranchisement. When several years later in 89, Pompeius Strabo repeated the practice with provincials, it highlighted and made political allies with this potential reward for service. Many private commanders adopted the practice, and it eventually evolved into the imperial institution of granting citizenship to veterans after a 25-year term of service.²⁵³

Marius’ enfranchisement of Italians may reveal the politician’s feelings towards the mass enfranchisement of the *socii* that some had agitated for. In Marius’ lifetime every tribune who had attempted to pass such a measure was stopped either legally or through civil violence:

²⁵¹ Sherwin-White (1956) p.112; Cic. *Pro Balbo* 48.

²⁵² Sherwin-White (1956) p.292; Cic. *Pro Balbo* 55: Rome regularly enfranchised the priestesses of Ceres, who they recruited from southern Italy, but for each instance they needed to pass a new law.

²⁵³ Rankov (2007) p. 5; Sherwin-White (1956) p.294; For Marius see, Cic. *Pro Balbo* 46, Val. Max 5.2.8, Plut. *Mar* 28.

Fulvius Flaccus and Livius Drusus both lost their lives, the entire town of Fregellae was destroyed, in hopes of enfranchisement at Rome. The *socii* had been treated as Rome's subjects for centuries and were required to provide money and men to its army. Marius rewarded his most venerated Italian allies with the reward which they desired most, citizenship. Marius might have simply felt that they deserved it or less likely, as an outsider himself, he might have sympathized with their cause.

By the time that Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar were leading their armies, the practice of raising legions had shifted toward large levies of provincials, not Romans or Italians, and these soldiers expected to be rewarded for loyal service with citizenship and land grants. However, the senate failed to grant the authority to consuls to enfranchise veterans or provide land grants without its approval or that of the assembly.

The fact that the senate had compelled Pompey to seek an unconventional solution to win the concessions that his men demanded, shows that the senate, in particular, was hesitant about any general accumulating too much power and wealth too easily. Pompey had proved himself to be a supporter of Sulla and the optimates. He started his early military career commanding forces in Southern Italy for Sulla, and then fighting against Marians in Spain, and his middle career helping Crassus put down Spartacus and ridding the Mediterranean of pirates.

The Sullan Aftermath

Sulla is a transitional figure between Marius and those who came later. In this section, I discuss and highlight key Marian policies that are reflected in what Sulla did. He had both served under and fought against Marius in their nearly 20-year-long antagonistic relationship. He was a praetor when Marius took the first steps toward formalizing –and

professionalizing—the cohortal legion. Sulla served under Marius again when the Teutones and Cimbri threatened Rome. He benefitted from Marius’ generalship, as Marius benefitted from his. As *legatus* in the Social War Sulla was the equal of Marius and they cooperated against the Marsi and brought operations in that theater to a close. However, Sulla garnered more praise in Rome, because the much older Marius withdrew early retirement from the campaign left Sulla in the spotlight. Subsequently, in 88, when Marius had superseded Sulla’s consular command in the Mithridatic War, Sulla benefitted from the personal loyalty of his own enlisted *capite censi* to take Rome. The attack on the capital shows how much the soldiers’ loyalty had shifted from the state to their own commanders.

Sulla marched on Rome in 88 with an army of six legions which were stationed at Capua. His army was composed mostly of *capite censi* soldiers, who were motivated by their desire and their personal loyalty to Sulla. No Roman commander had marched against the city since the legendary Coriolanus in the early fifth century. After Sulla, however, several Roman commanders did just that, including Marius, Sulla a second time, and Lepidus.²⁵⁴ When Sulla returned to Italy in 86, he found Rome in the hands of Marians who had retaken the city and killed many of Sulla’s friends and supporters. After marching on the city again, at the end of 82, Sulla made himself dictator with unlimited power and proscribed hundreds of citizens, whose confiscated property he used for his own purposes, including land allotment for veterans.²⁵⁵

In restoring the senate to its traditional number of 300, and then expanding it to 600 by including equites and veterans, he both ensured that a majority was loyal to him and gave political duties to at least some of his veterans as a direct consequence of Marius’ military reforms. Sulla reinforced the *cursus honorum* by law, making the office of quaestor a

²⁵⁴ Revolt of Lepidus (78-77) App. BC. 1.107.

²⁵⁵ Plut. *Sulla* 33.1-2; Liv *Per.* 89.

prerequisite for the praetorship, and the praetorship a prerequisite for the consulship. He applied legal age and term limitations to these offices, perhaps to forestall abuses of the system. Sulla limited the scope of the *imperium proconsulare* and *propraetore*, thereby restricting the authority of provincial governors. These actions all reinforced his own political and military authority.²⁵⁶

Sulla had made changes to almost every facet of Roman political life, but maintained every single one of Marius' reforms and precedents, and then established them as standard practices. In the years following the Social War, Marius' measures that helped to professionalize the army were further reinforced.²⁵⁷ The following generations of generals were instructed, not only by the example of Marius who saved the city, but also Sulla who saved the republic.

Sulla's proscription was a profitable endeavor that brought him a large sum of money, property, and land, which he used, among other things, to placate as many soldiers as he could. According to Brunt's estimates, Sulla doled out allotments to some 80,000 veterans, not only his own men, but also large numbers of Marian soldiers who had opposed him in the civil war and now posed a continuing threat. According to Appian, he distributed land to a full 23 legions, far more than he had personally commanded. He needed this to please his own men, but also to ingratiate himself with the large number of other veterans who might otherwise be used against him.²⁵⁸

Even though many of Sulla's precedents were inapplicable to many commanders, and were ignored by others, he had laid the framework for the occupation of Rome and the methods of how to hold the city successfully after a civil war, and through it all he left the military reforms of Marius intact.

²⁵⁶ App. BC. 1.100; Vell. Pat. 2.32.2.

²⁵⁷ Adams (2007) p. 204.

²⁵⁸ App. BC. 1.100.469-70; Debois (1987) p. 44.

Concluding Observation

The Marian military reforms changed the army from a semi-professional citizen militia into a more professionalized army made up of extensively trained recruits who served for longer consecutive terms and were personally bound to their commanders. In this way these reforms created an army which could be used against other Roman commanders or the city itself. Military eligibility was no longer exclusive to landowners, and the *capite censi* had new opportunities for spoils and social and political advancement.

Marius' reforms were not completely novel, but the practices that he introduced he also cause to be established as standard operating procedure. He implemented these reforms in a time of crisis, and subsequently the extraordinary military careers of both Marius and Sulla acted to preserve his measures and to move the army far down the road of professionalization. What I have shown in this thesis is the larger economic, social, and political context which formed the background and provided the incubator in which Marius' reforms were generated and developed. Once Marius crystalized his ideas and put them in place, the stage was set for Sulla and the new kind of military action that would seal the fate of the Republic.

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APPENDIX I: Marian Consequences in the Late Republic

The role of the *legatus* had also been transformed during the second century. Legates were used to settle provinces, and as secondary commanders, serving under a consul or proconsul. In 67 the *lex Gabinia* would redefine the office of *legatus*: no longer would the *legatus* be a private individual sent by the state to assist a magistrate, but instead would be a personal deputy to his commander.²⁵⁹ This transition towards deputy legates was already under way in Marius' time. The deputy *legatus* was used more and more, giving additional opportunities and enabling militarily-inclined politicians like Marius and Sulla, and later Pompey, to increase their glory and fame and acquire great wealth. After the Social War, elected consuls sometimes brought on outbreaks in civil violence, like Octavius and Cinna in 88, or Lepidus and Catulus in 78. In an era when civic violence was a distinct possibility, loyal *legati* were at a premium, which underlines the transition towards increased power and autonomy for individual commanders.

With his attempt to steal Sulla's command in the Mithridatic War, Marius used the popular assembly and strong-arm tactics by Sulpicius and Glaucia to take command. Although his attempt ultimately failed and was a catalyst for Sulla's march on Rome and the outbreak of the First Civil War. Marius' use of a special commission was an important precedent. In the following generation, Pompey was treated with apprehension and fear because the senate desired to make full use of his martial talents, but wanted to avoid empowering a single individual too much, as had happened with Marius and Sulla. So, they resorted to granting Pompey *imperium* through special commission.

²⁵⁹ *lex Gabinia* of 67, the *legati* were no longer private persons from the senate, but officially appointed deputies of the commanding magistrate, and it was from their midst that the commanders of the legions came to be chosen. Pompey took 25 legates with him to the East, 15 of whom he had selected himself.

Pompey, Crassus, and even Caesar all benefitted from special commissions. Despite his youth and not having held the consulship, Pompey was given *imperium proconsulare* to prosecute the war against Sertorius.²⁶⁰ Later Pompey was assigned by special commission to the war against the pirates, although by then he had held the consulship. The *lex Gabinia* of 67 vastly enlarged his anti-pirate command far beyond what was customary or legal.²⁶¹ Then he took command in the Parthian War by the authority of a special commission, the *lex Manilia*, passed by the tribune Manilius in 66.²⁶² And during the twilight of his career, the senate gave him a special commission to bring grain to Rome, which he also used to bring Egypt into the Roman sphere.²⁶³ Perhaps the most significant example of a special commission granting a dangerous amount of power was the senate's decision, under Cicero's prodding to send the 19-year-old Octavian Caesar, less than a year after his adoptive father's murder, with an army he raised himself, to assist the consuls Hirtius and Pansa against Antony at Mutina. Unfortunately, both consuls died in the battle and left Octavian in a position to negotiate with both his army and his victory for an appointed consulship, which led to the problematic triumvirate with Antony and Lepidus, and eventually led to the end of the Republic.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ Livy. *Per.* 90-1; App. *BC.* 1.86.392-3.

²⁶¹ *Lex Gabinia* Plut. *Pomp* 26.2.

²⁶² *Lex Manilia* Plut. *Pomp* 30.1-2.

²⁶³ Plut. *Pomp.*

²⁶⁴ Octavian's Special Commission: App. *BC.* 3.68-3.73.

Appendix: II: The Legionary Eagle Standard during the Principate

Famous events in the principate of Augustus illustrate the symbolic importance of the legionary standard, Augustus made it a point to recover the standards lost in 53, 38, and 36 (one by Crassus, two by Antony). Tiberius actually negotiated their return though Augustus represented it in his *Res Gestae*,²⁶⁵ and Augustus featured the surrender on the breastplate of his statue from Prima Porta. In 2 BC the recovered standards were later displayed publically in the newly completed temple of Mars Ultor in the *forum Augusti*. Augustus was restoring Rome's lost honor. For Augustus, the eagle standard had become a central symbol for both the legion and the empire.²⁶⁶



Close up of the Augustus' breastplate on the statue from *Prima Porta*. Depicted on the Breastplate is the handing over of the Standards lost to the Parthians.

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²⁶⁵ Augustus, *Res Gestae* 5.

²⁶⁶ Suet. *Aug.* 21-23.

²⁶⁷ "For a full discussion of the recovered standards and their public display, see Romer (1978) pp. 191-96."

It was Augustus who completed the process of professionalization of the army, a process which Marius had left unfinished. Marius had set precedents which opened enrolment to all citizens, established the practice of providing land grants to veterans, altered and regimented certain army practices, and even unified the Rome's legions under the symbol of the eagle. However, as discussed above, the Marian reforms fell short of an comprehensive overhaul of the army and left much of the responsibility for obtaining these things for soldiers up to individual generals, which contributed greatly to the events surrounding and permeating the civil wars.

Augustus on the other hand, consolidated military control under himself, making the emperor the commander-in-chief of the entire Roman military structure. He established a military treasury to ensure that the army was paid and that its veterans received land grants upon retirement. The army under Augustus also regularized the practice of recruiting among provincials, with the promise of citizenship upon completion of their tours of duty. Finally, Augustus created a Praetorian Guard stationed at the city. In taking these final steps, the army under Augustus was no longer a source of major political instability. With these new practices, the legions were generally satisfied, which eliminated the major incentives for following an ambitious into yet another civil war.

Appendix III: The Caecilii Metelli of the Late Second and Early First Centuries.

In this listing, I follow Broughton's *Magistrates of the Roman Republic*

I. **Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus** (cos. 143)

Praetor in 148; propraeator from 147-6; consul in 143; proconsular governor of Nearer Spain in 142; Augur from 141 until his death in 115; and Censor in 131. Brother of L. Caecilius Metellus Calvus (II), and father of Balearicus (III), Diadematus (IV), M. Caecilius Metellus (V), and Caprarius (VI).

II. **L. Caecilius Metellus Calvus** (cos. 142)

Praetor in 145; consul 142; legatus in 140 and 136. Brother to Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus (I) and father of Numidicus (VII) and Dalamaticus (VIII).

III. **Q. Caecilius Metellus Balearicus** (cos. 123)

Praetor in 126, consul in 115; proconsul in 122; censor in 102. Son of (I), and brother to (IV, V, and VI)

IV. **Caecilius Metellus Diadematus** (cos. 117)

Praetor in 123; consul in 117; proconsul in 116; censor in 115 (he expelled 32 senators) Son of (I), and brother to (III, V, and VI)

V. **M. Caecilius Metellus** (cos.115)

Praetor in 118; consul in 115; proconsul in Sardinia from 114-112, celebrated triumph over Sardinia in 111. Son of (I), and brother to (III, IV and VI).

VI. **C. Caecilius Metellus Caprarius** (cos.113)

Praetor in 117; consul in 113, proconsul in Thrace in 112; celebrated a triumph over Thrace in 111; Censor in 102. Son of (I), and brother to (III, IV, and V)

VII. **L. Caecilius Metellus Delmaticus** (cos. 119)

Consul in 119; censor in 115; and *pontifex maximus*. Son of Calvus (II) and brother to Numidicus (VIII)

VIII. **Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus** (cos. 109)

Augur in 115; praetor in 112; propraetor in 111; consul in 109; proconsul in Numidia in 108; celebrated a triumph over Numidia in 106; censor in 102. Son of Calvus (II) and brother to Delmaticus (VII)

IX. **Q. Caecilius Metellus Nepos** (cos. 98)

Praetor in 101; consul in 98. Son of Balearicus (III), father of Celer (XIV) and Nepos Iunior (XIII).

X. **Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius** (cos. 80)

Praetor in 98; propraetor (or *proconsularis*) from 88-82 under Sulla; *pontifex* in 89, *pontifex maximus* in 81; consul in 80. Son of Numidicus (VIII) and cousin to Creticus (XI)

XI. **Q. Caecilius Metellus Creticus** (cos. 69)

Praetor in 74; *pontifex* 73; consul 69; proconsul in Crete from 68 to 64; celebrated a triumph over Crete in 62; legate in 60; *pontifex maximus* in 57. Son of Caprarius (VI), cousin of Pius (X) and L. Caecilius Metellus (XII)

XII. **L. Caecilius Metellus** (cos. 68)

Praetor in 71; propraetor in Sicily in 70; consul in 68. Son of Delmaticus (VII)

XIII. **Q. Caecilius Metellus Celer** (cos. 60)

Tribune of the plebs in 90; aedile in 88; legate in 66; praetor in 63; consul in 60. Son of Nepos (XIII)

XIV. **Q. Caecilius Metellus Nepos Iunior** (cos. 57)

Tribune of the plebs in 62; praetor in 60; consul in 57; governor of Nearer Spain in 56.

Son of Nepos (IX) and brother of Celer (XIII)

XV. **Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio Nascia** (cos. 52)

Praetor in 55; consul in 52; proconsul 49 (Asia) to 48 (Greece). Adopted son of Pius (X)