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Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby, ed., *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare. Vol. 2: Rome from the Late Republic to the Late Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007. Pp. 630. ISBN 978-0-521-78274-6.

Review by Rose Mary Sheldon, Virginia Military Institute (sheldonrm@vmi.edu)

Since warfare was the single biggest preoccupation of historians in antiquity, it is not surprising that Cambridge University Press has decided to bring out a two-volume set on how and why the Greeks and Romans fought wars or, in some case, prevented them. Given the resurgence of research into military subjects in the last decade, a work that pulls together the best in recent scholarship is a welcome tool for both specialists and military history buffs. Many of the best British military writers on Rome have contributed to the formidable task of covering every major topic in Roman military history from the early Republic through the Empire.

The first part, on the Late Republic and the Principate, begins with an essay by Harry Sidebottom (Oxford) on “International Relations.” Moving then to a more narrow topic, Boris Rankov (London) writes on “Military Forces.” He avoids earlier controversies over the nature of the army and its reforms from the beginning of the Republic and skips right to the decline of the manipular army, the Marian reforms, and the problem of legionary recruitment in the late Republic. Rankov has elsewhere asserted<sup>1</sup> that reliable sources on the subject before Polybius are altogether lacking and also rejects much of what Livy says as fable. He sticks to safer ground, choosing to discuss the major political change in the nature of the army in the late Republic, when Rome, rather than supporting its citizen legions with auxiliary troops (*alae* or “wings”) drawn from its subject allies, enfranchised those allies after the Social War, giving them entrance into the legions themselves. Specialist light-armed troops, such as slingers and archers, thereafter came from Rome’s overseas allies. The new, pan-Italic armies, which came to identify more and more with individual leaders like Sulla, Pompey, and finally Caesar, fought the civil wars that destroyed the Roman Republic.

The legions of the Principate with their auxiliaries are fully described, as are troops based in Rome, such as the praetorian cohorts, the urban cohorts, the *vigiles*, and the *equites singulares*, with detailed discussion of their training, discipline and morale, plus descriptions of the forts and fortresses in which they lived. There is also a short section on the fleets. None of these topics is cut and dried, but a well-written, judiciously balanced narrative based on the best contemporary scholarship is the product.

Adrian Goldsworthy’s chapter on “War” meets his usual high standard of elegant writing. He discusses the types of war fought by the Romans in the late Republic and the Principate, not only wars of conquest but also wars to suppress rebellion or respond to invasion

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<sup>1</sup> In *Exploratio: Political and Military Intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople*, with N.J.E. Austin (London: Routledge, 1995).

and raiding. He points out that the Roman army was flexible enough to adapt, although as with any army, the process was not always an easy one. There was no single preferred way to prosecute a war, although the Romans obviously preferred pitched battles on advantageous terrain. He wisely stresses, however, that the Romans never ruled out surprise attacks and raids, their effectiveness ensured by good discipline, a clear line of command, and strong sense of purpose. The Roman refusal to concede defeat also made it hard for opponents to win a permanent victory. These factors plus the sheer ferocity of Rome's war-making and the boldness (to the point of recklessness) of some of its commanders made it the dominant military power in the Mediterranean. Goldsworthy rounds out his second section with discussions of intelligence, engineering skills, logistics, and naval matters. More controversial is his treatment of grand strategy and frontiers, where he admits that "debate continues to rage fiercely" over how rational the processes behind each decision actually were (108).<sup>2</sup>

Catherine M. Gilliver (Cardiff) writes on the realities of battle: the tactical maneuvers, deployment, and use of field engineering combat mechanics. Her chapter includes sections on naval and amphibious warfare, siege warfare and low-intensity conflict—a topic missing from many earlier works. But not in evidence here is the emphasis popularized by John Keegan<sup>3</sup> on what it would have been like to participate in an actual battle. Only three pages in the entire volume even mention wounds or the wounded (138–41).

Military finance and supply are treated by Dominic Rathbone (London). Paying, feeding, and equipping an army had a great impact on the economy of the Roman Empire. In spite of having no real statistics to work with, Rathbone draws very effectively on the evidence of papyri, ostraca, tablets and other inscribed materials from Vindolanda in Britain, Vindonissa in Germany, Bu Njem in Africa, Dura-Europos in Mesopotamia, and soldiers' dedicatory and funeral monuments throughout the empire. By pulling together these fragmentary sources, he estimates the cost of the army to the state. Roman imperialism also had socio-economic effects on Italy and later the provinces. Since the army was not self-sufficient, it required large quantities of grain, meat, and other foodstuffs from the surrounding areas, not to mention wine, water, animals, clothing, weapons. (It might have been nice to know what Rome's Parthian wars cost all the provinces as legions were relocated to the East for Trajan's campaigns there, or whether taking over the present-day area of Iraq was as expensive in the ancient world as it is in ours.)

The first part ends with an essay by Colin Adams (Liverpool) on "War and Society." He discusses what he calls the structural causes of war and the changing pattern of warfare in the late Republic. First of all, fighting in multiple theaters took a heavy toll on Roman and Italian resources. Overseas wars like those with Carthage left Rome with responsibilities of pacification and administration. Nor did wars of expansion cease as Pompey overran the East and Caesar conquered all Gaul. But the larger the empire got, the more wars were fought to protect Roman territory both inside and outside of Italy. Marius found himself defending Roman interests against German tribes. Roman interests in Asia Minor were

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<sup>2</sup> After a careful discussion of defenders and critics of Edward Luttwak's *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins U Pr, 1976), he takes a diplomatic position by showing that the ancient literature can accommodate elements of both views.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Face of Battle* (NY: Viking, 1976).

threatened by Mithridates. Inside Italy, violence erupted during the Social War (91–88 BC), in which the Italian allies finally won citizenship from their Roman masters, and during the struggles between Marius and Sulla. A bloody slave revolt broke out under Spartacus (73–71); Cicero quelled a conspiracy by Catiline to stage a coup d'état (63); finally there were Civil Wars between Pompey and Caesar and between Octavian and Antony, culminating in the Battle of Actium (31), which toppled the teetering Republic. Putting severe socio-economic pressures on the Roman government in the last century of the Republic were such byproducts of imperialism as the huge influx of slaves, fierce competition for personal recognition, extortionate tax collection in the provinces, the creation of *latifundia* (large commercial estates), and the arrival in Rome of a dispossessed landless class.

From analysis of the effect of politics on the army and vice versa, the discussion moves to the imperial-era army and society in the provinces, the oppression of civilians, the legal status of soldiers, and the role of the military in internal administration. The army was used as a workforce and the mere presence of Roman legions affected regional economies. The growth of urban centers around army installations—the so-called *canabae* and *vici*—accelerated the urbanization of the empire.

Mark Humphries (Swansea) begins Part II which cover “The Later Roman Army,” with an essay on international relations beginning with Theodosius I at Constantinople and Rome. A section on late antique geopolitics covers the Empire and its enemies, the role of ideology in foreign relations, and Rome’s relationship to the barbarians who surrounded the empire. Rome combined war and diplomacy to keep Arabs, Persians, Goths, Huns, Avars, and Turks at a safe distance. Humphries’ section on “The Formation of Frontier Policy: Spies, Merchants and Frontiers” owes much to A.D. Lee’s ground-breaking work on the subject.<sup>4</sup>

There is an entire section on the later Roman army as a standing professional force. In one of the best-illustrated chapters in the book, Hugh Elton (Trent) describes the regimental structures of the army, the types of troops and their numbers, their equipment, and their individual career structures. This analysis is important because historians have blamed the Roman military for many of the ills of the late Empire. Elton points out, however, that, although the army sometimes failed to perform well, it was not responsible for the fall of the western Empire. On the contrary, he argues that the major characteristics of the army at this time were “small-scale change and institutional flexibility” (309). He notes that even good armies can and do lose wars and that financial exhaustion from fighting the Persians in the East, not incompetence, kept Rome’s armies from dealing effectively with Arab attacks.

Also writing on the late empire, Michael Whitby (Warwick) takes apart Edward Luttwak’s theory of the shift from preclusive defense to defense in depth.<sup>5</sup> He argues that Roman boundaries existed for religious, fiscal, and legal reasons as well as military, and that, although logistics and internal security considerations may have influenced changes in military dispositions in some parts of the empire, elsewhere Roman troops had always been dispersed quite widely around a given region’s cities. Neither defense in depth nor areas for mutual interaction entirely explain the nature of late Roman frontiers. It is clear, how-

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<sup>4</sup> *Information and Frontiers: Roman Foreign Relations in late Antiquity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> See note 3 supra.

ever, that the Romans began to pay closer attention to their neighbors, to discover more about them, and to think of ways of securing military advantage without the risks of direct warfare. Internal security was always an issue and banditry was endemic in areas recently affected by invasions or civil war.

Much of what we know about Roman warfare, we know from ancient military treatises. Philip Rance (no academic affiliation indicated) writes on the theory of combat, especially in the work of Vegetius and the *Strategikon* of Maurice. He treats the cavalry units of the late empire, the *clibanarii* and *cataphracti* along with siege craft.

This book is not just a treatise on the mechanics of war. Large sections on warfare and the state investigate the military basis of imperial power (A.D. Lee, Nottingham), the military and politics (Richard Alston, London), international relations (Mark Humphries), warfare and society (Andrew Fear, Manchester), and religion and war (Michael Whitby).

This beautifully produced volume features helpful maps, charts, and illustrations, elegant writing throughout, and references to the best modern scholarship. It is appropriate for both a general audience or specialists in Roman history. The footnotes and bibliography are up-to-date and most useful guides to further reading. The book touches on topics often overlooked in older military works, like intelligence, reconnaissance, ambush, and deception even if only in passing. A section on command, control, communications and intelligence would have been useful; except for that one lacuna, this work will become a standard reference tool and would appear on the bookshelf of every student of Roman military history but for its prohibitive \$240.00 price tag.