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"Fighting like robbers"

Small-scale battles in the Roman conquest of the Iberian Peninsula and the war against Jugurtha

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1. Introduction

When the Roman state decided to go to war, they would mobilize their citizens and call upon their allies for troops. The forces that had heeded this call would then be sent out to find the army of their enemies and give battle. Generally, the warring armies would camp on opposite sides of the soon-to-be-battlefield and when the timing was deemed right, one or both would leave their camps and form up their ranks into battle formation. A monumental clash of arms that could last hours would follow until one of the two sides emerged as the victor. In the majority of cases this meant that the survivors of the defeated force would either flee, or if their commander managed to retain the forces cohesion: withdraw. This process would then be repeated as many times as needed, until one of the warring sides was no longer willing or able to continue the conflict and had to sue for peace.

This is, albeit rather simplified, the basic model of how Roman warfare is commonly presented in literature, both ancient and modern. Large-scale set-piece battles are centerpieces in ancient descriptions of military campaigns and were among the most decisive events featuring in Roman warfare. But did they really make up the majority of combat? Naturally, ancient accounts tend to highlight the more exceptional and spectacular aspects instead of merely reporting what actually took place. Lulls in the fighting, logistical deliberations by the commanding staff or small-scale combat such as skirmishes or hit-and-run actions tend to be omitted or only mentioned in passing. Exceptions exist, however they are few and far between and generally only appear as a narrative illustration or to function as a vessel for the authors underlying message.[1]

Although ancient authors did not deem such matters to be serving their narrative or simply thought that they were not very interesting to read about, they most certainly were not unimportant. Lulls in the fighting were valuable chances for armies to consolidate and reorganize while the cruciality of logistics as the lifeline of any decently sized military force cannot be understated. Both topics have been in the eye of historians specializing in Roman military history and brought forth important publications.[2] Skirmishes and similar combat actions however have hitherto flown under the radar and are still a mostly under-investigated aspect of Roman military history.

While occasionally appearing in a supporting role, hitherto small-scale combat engagements in Roman warfare have only once been the primary focus of a scientific investigation. Emblematic of this position within the academic discourse is its almost complete absence from the standard monographic works on the Roman army. Pat Southern´s *The Roman Army: A social and Institutional History*, Keppie´s *The making of the Roman army -from republic to empire* and the *Blackwell Companion to the Roman army* all leave out this aspect of ancient warfare whereas Goldsworthy´s *The Roman Army at War - 100BC to 200AD* only superficially and in passing

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[1] L. Rawlings. 'The Significance of Insignificant Engagements: Irregular Warfare during the Punic Wars'. In *Circum Mare: Themes in Ancient Warfare,* Brill, 2016, 205.

[2] See: P. Sabin. 'The Face of Roman Battle'. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 1–17 or J. Roth. *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C.-A.D. 235)*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, v. 23. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1999.

mentions small unit engagements and states that they were not the way in which Roman armies normally fought.[3]

More attention is given by Gilliver in *The Roman Art of War* who notes that it is strange that authors of ancient military treatises completely omitted the use of guerilla-warfare and similar tactics against enemy supply lines.[4] Successively this connection of small-scale-combat and skirmishing with military logistics is echoed in academic literature focussing on this aspect of ancient warfare. *The logistics of the Roman army at war (264 B.C. -235 A.D)* by Jonathan Roth and *Hunger and the Sword: Warfare and Food Supply in Roman Republican Wars (264 - 30 BC)* by Paul Erdkamp both discuss examples of skirmishing operations in the context of foraging and plundering. While contributing valuable insights, their understanding of this phenomenon is naturally limited by the scope of their works.[5] A more complete understanding of the phenomenon is to be found in a dissertation from 2011 by A. Anders, on Roman light infantry in the context of face-of-battle-studies.[6] In his sixth and seventh chapter he discusses the tactical roles of light infantry, including instances of skirmishing operations. Although his exploration of the topic is comparatively rich, the dissertations main focus lies on light infantry in the context of large-scale combat events such as set-piece battles, preventing a further and more complete exploration.[7]

Another branch of military history studying small scale combat operations is the study of insurgencies and guerrilla warfare. Although publications are comparatively numerous, detailed explorations on the practice of small-scale combat encounters are scarce. Rather the focus lies on conquering and controlling territory through violence and only delves into small-scale combat and skirmishing as a political or economic tool. Additionally, the majority of the publications in this categories focus on terminology whose potential for application to ancient contexts is limited. This is because these terms were formed in a colonial or post-colonial era in which modern concepts

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[3] P. Southern. *The Roman Army: A Social and Institutional History*. Oxford: University Press, Incorporated, 2007; L. Keppie. *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire.* London: Routledge, 1998; Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Roman Army at War, 100 BC-AD 200*. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, 93; Other instances of skirmishing operations being tied to foraging are: M. Sage. 'The Development of the Manipular Army'. In *The Republican Roman Army*. Routledge, 2008, 94.

[4] Gilliver, Kate. *The Roman Art of War*. Stroud etc: Tempus, 1999, 60.

[5] J. Roth. *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C.-A.D. 235)*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, v. 23. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1999; P. Erdkamp. *Hunger and the Sword: Warfare and Food Supply in Roman Republican Wars (264 - 30 BC)*. Amsterdam: Brill, 1998.

[6] Face of battle studies: J. Keegan. *The Face of Battle*. New York: Viking Press, 1976; P. Sabin. 'The Face of Roman Battle'. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 1–17.

[7] Anders, Adam. *Roman Light Infantry and the Art of Combat: The Nature and Experience of Skirmishing and Non-Pitched Battle in Roman Warfare 264 Bc-Ad 235*. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2011, 142-181.

such as the nation-state and an attached standing army are the norm and therefore mainly apply to such contexts.[8]

In 2016 however an inquiry was published which focused on small-scale combat engagements and skirmishes as its own concept within in Roman warfare. This inquiry, authored by Louis Rawlings, examined what he termed "irregular operations", during the Punic wars and argued that these, should not be seen as singular and isolated events but as an aspect of warfare in itself. He found that when analyzed in this manner, "irregular operations" could play an important role in several strategical and tactical aspects of his studied conflict.

Not only does this underscore the importance of this subject as a component of Roman warfare and warfare in general, it also provides a useful starting point for further investigation.

To conduct such a follow-up investigation, using Rawlings interpretation of small-scale combat actions as an aspect of Roman warfare, is the central objective of this thesis.

The aim is to demonstrate that during the Republican period these combat engagements were no mere anomalies in a military convention of set-piece battles, but a frequently and purposefully wielded tool in a Roman generals toolkit.

1.1 methodology and chronological boundaries

To achieve this, this thesis will expand upon Rawlings evidence-base (the Punic wars) and examine Roman wars in the time period following the end of the second Punic war up until the complete conquest of the Iberian peninsula under Augustus. This period covers the last 182 years of the Roman republican period (201 BCE to 19 BCE), a period during which Roman warfare on foreign soil was at its height. Because of the scope of this thesis and to increase comparability, only conflicts taking place on the Iberian peninsula and North Africa have been included. Both areas were major, if not the most important, theaters during the Punic war, so by focussing the examination on them, most of the environmental parameters such as geography remain relatively consistent.

In addition to broadening our understanding of Roman military thinking and custom, a study of this phenomenon also enhances our general understanding of the practice of skirmishing in Roman warfare as a holistic concept. Additionally, this study provides relevant context to the present discussions around the phenomena of guerrilla, insurgencies and regular and irregular warfare and their applicability to ancient contexts.

In conducting this investigation, this thesis follows a top-down approach, starting off with an analysis of small-scale combat encounters from a grand strategical view. It then moves down to the

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[8] S. Metz. 'Rethinking Insurgency'. In *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, 1st ed. Routledge, 2012, 33;
R. M. Sheldon. 'Introduction'. *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 31, no. 5 (2020): 932.

theatre-strategic elements of offensive, defensive and logistics, ending with the more detail oriented aspects of information and soldiers psychology.

This will be done by first investigating Roman attitudes towards this type of combat engagements as opposed to the traditional view of large armies fighting set-piece battles. This investigation into the possible role of small-scale engagements as a primary offensive method will be done in chapter two of this thesis. As this covers the relative position of small-scale combat encounters within Roman operational thinking, this thesis will proceed to investigate the ways in which this kind of fighting was implemented into Roman strategy and tactics.

This will be started by a discussion of small-scale battles in an offensive and defensive context in chapter three and four, covering the "classic" aspects of warfare centered around direct confrontation. Chapter five will investigate the role of small-scale battles of logistics while on campaign. Adequate supply was vitally important to any fighting force and as mentioned above, previous scholarship has already identified the importance of small-scale battles in relation to this aspect, warranting further investigation in this direction. This is followed by chapter six, on the similarly crucial aspect of military Intelligence, investigating the importance of small-scale battles for the purpose of acquiring and analyzing useful information when on campaign. Subsequently there is chapter seven that investigates how small-scale combat encounters affected Roman soldiers psychology and how they were seen from a soldiers perspective.

Lastly, all of the results will be brought together and presented in the conclusion, creating a comprehensive overview of the role of small-scale combat engagements in Roman warfare. It will demonstrate the variety of aspects in which small scale combat encounters appeared and how these were utilized by Roman commanders or their opponents against them while simultaneously placing these insights into the grand cadre of Roman war-fighting as a whole.

The analysis presented in this thesis was mainly conducted on the basis of primary source material relevant to the chosen conflicts and Roman military thinking in general. This includes relevant sections of the *Ab Urbe Condita* by Livy, *Vītae Parallēlae: Quintus Sertorius, Vītae Parallēlae: Pompeius* and *Vītae Parallēlae: Gaius Marius* by Plutarch, *Rhomaika XIII: Emphylion I* by Appian, *Rhōmaïkè Historía* by Cassius Dio, *Bellum Civile* by Julius Caesar and the entirety of Appians *Rhomaika VI: Iberike,* Sallust´s work *Bellum Iugurthinum,* Frontinus´s *Strategemata,* Vegetius´s *De rei militari* and *The Spanish War* by an unknown author. As his format of writing is that of Caesar and the content describes Caesars fight against Pompey in the Iberian peninsula, he shall for reasons of convenience, therefore be called Pseudo-Caesar in this thesis. The sections of the *Historiae* by Sallust detailing the Sertorian war as well as Florus *Bellum Cantabricum et Asturicum* and the *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII* by Orosius have also been examined but supplied no material detailed enough to be of any use in this study. Almost all mentioned works were accessed through the LOEB classical library project which is an initiative by Harvard

University. This project makes available ancient sources in Greek and Latin which can be read in their original form, parallel to a translation that meets academic standards.

Although the previously described bias in these primary sources as favoring more spectacular events still applies, this does not mean that they are completely devoid of direct or indirect descriptions of skirmishing actions. Nevertheless, careful reading and contextualization are still necessary in many cases as Roman terminology for this kind of combat can be confusing. Generally, small-scale combat encounters are referred to as "fighting like bandits, brigands or robbers" (Latin: *latrocinia* and Greek: *leisteia*).[9]

This linguistic obstacle muddies the waters when it comes to differentiating between Roman commanders rooting out some bandits in an area or deliberately engaging in skirmishing against an opposing belligerent. There is no general solution to this problem. In this thesis a case-by-case evaluation has been made and doubtful cases have been left out or are clearly referenced as such.

Additionally there is the matter of modern terminology. Hitherto no definite set of terms has been agreed upon when discussing skirmishing and other small-scale combat actions. In his investigation of the Punic wars Rawlings termed them "irregular operations". This however also implies that there are "regular operations". According to his own analysis, however these operations would be a standard part of ancient warfare making it "regular" warfare. This and other problems with this binary view of warfare as a concept have been scrutinized many times in relevant academic literature.[10] Additionally this and many associated terms are deeply rooted and shaped by perceptions of modern military history, making them even more difficult to apply. For example: the modern military concept of irregular warfare describes "a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s)."[11] As mentioned above, the concept of a nation-state with an accompanying standing army is difficult to apply to an ancient context. Additionally this term is also used widely in military and military-historical academia. Therefore, to prevent confusion, this thesis will avoid usage of such terminology. Rather this thesis will refer to the tactics that are the subject of this thesis as: small-scale battles or combat encounters. Skirmishes or hit-and-run-style attacks are examples of this.

This excludes the exchange of harassing actions of two opposing forces in the context of a pitched battle. In a Roman context this would generally be an exchange of missiles between the opposing armies in an attempt to defeat the opposing missile troops, as well as to "soften up" the enemy

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[9] M. Boot. *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*. Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013, xxiii,

[10] R.M. Sheldon. 'Introduction'. *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 31, no. 5 (3 July 2020): 932-934; B. Hughes, F. Robson. *Unconventional Warfare from Antiquity to the Present Day*. 1st ed. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017, 1-24.

[11] M. Sheehan, E. Marquardt, and L. Collins, eds. *Routledge Handbook of U.S. Counterterrorism and Irregular Warfare Operations*. Taylor & Francis, 2022, 1.

formation as to make it easier to break during the following clash of the battle lines.[12] This however will be referred to as "pre-pitched battle skirmishing" if necessary. Because of its set role as part of pitched-battles and because of its formulaic execution, skirmishing in this particular context is not considered to be part of the subject-matter investigated in this thesis.

Naturally the ambiguity of what exactly differentiates a "small"-scale combat encounter and a "medium" or "large" is one of the main obstacles in attempting this undertaking. Our sources are notoriously unreliable when it comes to accurate troop numbers and in the vast majority of cases these are not even mentioned. Therefore this thesis will not even attempt to establish an arbitrary number, above which a force cannot count as small. Rather the purpose of the force and nature of the combat-engagement shall be the defining factor. This thesis will investigate military detachments whose primary objective is combat duty, but who are not tasked with confronting the enemy in a set-piece battle. This excludes foragers, scouts or messengers and naturally plenty of doubtful cases are still left. These will however therefore not be considered, except in circumstances where a reasonable case for their relevance can be made.

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[12] K. Gilliver. *The Roman Art of War*. Stroud etc: Tempus, 1999, 105-106.

2. Small-scale attacks as the main offensive effort

Hitherto Roman warfare has been reconstructed as an affair consisting of large scale and potentially decisive engagements such as set-piece-battles or sieges interspersed by forces marching and maneuvering. As noted above, Roman historical accounts often prioritized these events, recounting them in detail and emphasizing their importance.[13]

Such a perspective is reinforced by Roman military treatises such as Frontinus´s "Stratagems", which mainly focuses on large scale encounters and only provides a comparatively small amount of examples of the successful use of skirmishes as main offensive method.[14] Vegetius too, only discusses skirmishes as part of a concept of war centered around large-scale and decisive confrontations. Although he gives some instructions on the execution of ambushes and small-scale battles. He does however, not treat them as an alternative but rather presents them as a supplement to decisive large scale engagements.[15] As Giliver notes: "For ancient military writers the question was not if a pitched battle would happen but more when and under which circumstances."[16]

Evidently, the Roman military mind was one that thought in terms of large armies and concentrated forces instead of small dispersed units carrying out an endless stream of exhausting strikes. Nevertheless, even within this framework small-scale actions would be employed and in rare cases even preferred to a head-on confrontation.

Most interesting in this regard is Livy´s account of the raids performed by the troops under the command of Cato the Elder, near Emporiae. Livy records that as a result of these raids, a great number of prisoners were taken and that because of this Cato´s enemies did not dare to venture out of their fortifications anymore. Unfortunately, Cato´s reasons for taking this course of action remain unexplained, leaving us unable to determine if these results were intentional.

Only Cato´s speech (as recounted by Livy) at the end of the raiding period clearly indicates the commanders preference of a large-scale head-on confrontation over the raiding-campaign he had just fought.

"...he (Cato) had the tribunes, prefects, and all the cavalrymen and centurions called to a meeting: The time that you have often longed for has arrived," he told them, "the time when you might have the opportunity to demonstrate your courage. So far you have been fighting more like robbers than

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[13] K. Gilliver, *Roman Art of War,* 91.

[14] Fron. *Str.* 2. 5

[15] Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* 3.6, 3.9, 3.10, 3.12.

[16] K. Gilliver. *Roman Art of War,* 92.

warriors, but now you will meet in regular battle, one enemy against another—and then, instead of raiding fields, you will have leave to drain the wealth of cities."[17]

Although it is impossible to confirm Livy´s account as accurate, Cato´s choice of words is unmistakably in favour of large-scale confrontation, indicating that the raiding campaign was born out of necessity instead of choice. It is possible that by raiding the enemy, Cato changed the strategical situation to a scenario in which a set-piece battle became the best possible option for both sides.

The second possible case stems from Appians description of the skirmishing expeditions launched by Fabius Maximus Aemilianus against the Celtiberian commander Viriathus. For a while these raids were the Roman main offensive effort, with Appian even stating that Maximus declined Viriathus challenges to a field-battle until his army was fully trained. According to Appian these skirmishing missions encouraged the Romans implying their success. However here again Maximus reasoning behind these skirmishing attacks is not mentioned, so it remains unclear if the encouragement of his troops was indeed the main desired effect or just a byproduct of a skirmishing campaign waged for another reason.[18] Additionally, although Maximus apparently waged a successful skirmishing campaign against Viriathus, it is unclear if this also caused his victory over Viriathus. Appian only states that this victory took place after Maximus had fully trained his army and that he pursued Viriathus and his troops in their flight. If however, the decision was reached through skirmishing or a set-piece battle is left to interpretation. Roman authors preference for set-piece battles and the mention of the pursuit of Viriathus and his troops after defeat, a common ending of a set-piece battle, however suggest the victory being won in such a confrontation rather than through a continuous skirmishing campaign.

The examples of Maximus and Cato both suggest that Roman commanders considered large-scale and decisive combat actions such as set-piece battles and sieges to be the preferred offensive tool. Only when these were perceived as unavailable but a commander would still want offensive actions to be conducted a skirmishing campaign would become an option. It should be noted however that this period of skirmishing was likely not intended to bring about victory. Rather its purpose was the creation of a situation in which decisive large scale clashes were once again a viable option.

A good example of a Roman commander following this principle is Sertorius. Born to a Roman patrician family, Sertorius had sided with Gaius Marius during the Roman civil war between Marius and Sulla. According to Plutarch he had become one of the factions most important

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[17] Liv. 34.13

[18] App. *Hisp.* 65

generals and had to flee Italy after the Sullan victory.[19] Accompanied by only a small group of loyalists, he headed to the Iberian peninsula where he became the leader of the Lusitanians. Heading an army of native troops with a small Roman core, he managed to consistently defeat Roman armies sent by the Sullan senate against him. Only his murder at the hands of some of his Roman companions brought an end to his campaign.

In his efforts against the Roman armies, Sertorius frequently engaged his enemies in field battles, often emerging victorious. Plutarch for example gives a short overview of the Roman commanders that had already been defeated by Sertorius before Metellus was sent against him.

"...Cotta he defeated in a sea-fight in the straits near Mellaria; Fufidius, the governor of Baetica, he routed on the banks of the Baetis with the slaughter of two thousand Roman soldiers; Lucius Domitius, who was pro-consul of the other Spain,[1] was defeated at the hands of his quaestor; Thoranius, another of the commanders sent out by Metellus with an army, he slew... "[20]

One thing about this passage that should be noted is that Plutarch states that all of these commanders were defeated in single and decisive or unspecified events. In this light Sertorius campaign against Metellus appears unusual as in this campaign he favored a prolonged campaign of hit-and-run tactics, preferring to defeat his enemies in detail instead of facing them head-on. Although the reasons behind this radical change in tactics are impossible to definitively determine, however an educated guess can be made.

Plutarch emphasizes that when it came to set-piece battles Metellus was a skilled and dangerous general and had a corresponding reputation. That Sertorius likely shared Plutarchs assessment is illustrated by his decision to engage in a set-piece battle against Pompey while Metellus and his army had not yet arrived. According to Plutarch, the aim of both commanders was to reach a decision before Metellus could arrive.[21] Although one could also interpret Sertorius decision as being fueled by the unwillingness to fight two armies at once, his past record indicates that it was no problem for him to stay out of a direct confrontation if he wanted to do so. The way in which he had fought against Metellus beforehand clearly demonstrates that he had enough stamina to continue without taking this chance of confronting Pompey. Additionally, Plutarch makes mention of Sertorius opinion about Pompey as being inexperienced and easily defeated.[22] It is therefore likely that in this case too, Sertorius deemed a set-piece battle against Pompey to be a winnable endeavor, whereas he still considered Metellus too difficult as an opponent.

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[19] Plu. *Sert.* 4

[20] Plu. *Sert.* 12

[21] Plu. *Sert.* 19

[22] Plu. *Sert.*18

Sertorius patience in his fight against Metellus, and his reasoning for when he engaged in field-battles as opposed to making use of skirmishing actions is powerfully visualized in an episode recorded by both Frontinus and Plutarchus:

"Sertorius, then, since all the peoples within the river Ebro were unitedly taking up his cause, had an army of great numbers, for men were all the while coming to him in streams from every quarter; but he was troubled by their barbaric lack of discipline and their overconfidence, since they called loudly upon him to attack the enemy and were impatient at his delay, and he therefore tried to pacify them by arguments. But when he saw that they were impatient and inclined to force their wishes upon him unseasonably, he let them take their way and permitted them to have an engagement with the enemy in which he hoped that they would not be altogether crushed, but would be severely handled, and so made more obedient for the future. Matters turning out as he expected, he came to their aid, gave them refuge in their flight, and brought them safely back to their camp. And now he wished to take away their dejection. So after a few days he called a general assembly and introduced before it two horses, one utterly weak and already quite old, the other large-sized and strong, with a tail that was astonishing for the thickness and beauty of its hair. By the side of the feeble horse stood a man who was tall and robust, and by the side of the powerful horse another man, small and of a contemptible appearance. At a signal given them, the strong man seized the tail of his horse with both hands and tried to pull it towards him with all his might, as though he would tear it off; but the weak man began to pluck out the hairs in the tail of the strong horse one by one. The strong man gave himself no end of trouble to no purpose, made the spectators laugh a good deal, and then gave up his attempt; but the weak man, in a trice and with no trouble, stripped his horse's tail of its hair. Then Sertorius rose up and said: "Ye see, men of my allies, that perseverance is more efficacious than violence, and that many things which cannot be mastered when they stand together yield when one masters them little by little. For irresistible is the force of continuity, by virtue of which advancing Time subdues and captures every power; and Time is a kindly ally for all who act as diligent attendants upon opportunity, but a most bitter enemy for all who urge matters on unseasonably."[23]

Not only does this allegorical tale clearly convey Sertorius disagreement about his and his subordinates prospects of emerging victorious when engaging in a head-on fight, it also reveals Sertorius reasoning concerning when to pursue skirmishing actions over one decisive battle. Because of the slim chances of victory, such a confrontation would be considered to be unavailable leaving Sertorius to resort to other methods of continuing the fight against his opponent. Apparently, exhaustive skirmishing actions, letting his opponent die by a thousand cuts was deemed the most promising alternative, unitil a suitable opportunity for a set-piece battle arose

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[23] Plu. *Sert.* 16

again. This aligns with advice given by Vegetius who when discussing the right time to engage in a field battle stresses that a wise commander should be careful about this decision and that in some cases it was more advisable to await a more opportune moment and avoid large scale confrontation and harass the opposing army instead.[24]

The result of Sertorius choosing this approach is powerfully illustrated by Plutarch who emphasizes Metellus´s inability to adapt to this new dynamic. He remarks on multiple occasions that not only Metellus but also his army were driven into dire straits because they were unable to get a hold on the Sertorian forces.[25]

According to Plutarch reasons for this situation are twofold. One the one hand he repeatedly mentions Metellus old age and accompanying inflexibility, while on the other hand he states that the Iberian forces under Metellus were superior to the Romans in mobility.[26]

Such an affinity of the inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula with mobile units such as light infantry is no novelty. A recent analysis of the fighting styles of Iberian and Celtiberian soldiers against the Romans proposes that most of them were able to fight in the manner of both light and heavy infantry explaining the duality of Sertorius methods of engagement, incorporating occasional large scale decisive clashes into a tactical and strategical landscape dominated by smaller skirmishing actions.[27] Additionally, a possible cultural factor is also something that regularly appears in our sources. Plutarch for example mentions that when Gaius Marius was praetor of Hispania Ulterior he campaigned against the locals. Among those, he states, robbery was considered a honourable profession.[28] When one reads this and considers that in Roman literary convention, terminology such as "banditry" and "robbery" would also be frequently used do describe armed forces engaging in skirmishing and raiding, this statement could very well be interpreted as indicating that the inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula preferred to fight in a more small-scale and mobile manner than the Romans considered normal. This indicator as to the Iberian military traditions cultural factor is reinforced by Caesar describing the confusion of his soldiers in a confrontation with opponents who "had become accustomed to a certain style of combat with the Lusitanians and the rest of the natives". He states:

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[24] Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* 3.9

[25] Plu. *Sert.* 12, 18; Plu. *Pomp.* 17

[26] Plu. *Sert.* 12; Plu. *Pomp.* 17, 19

[27] F. Quesada Sanz. 'Not so Different: Individual Fighting Techniques and Small Unit Tactics of Roman and Iberian Armies within the Framework of Warfare in the Hellenistic Age'. *Pallas: L'HELLÉNISATION EN MÉDITERRANÉE OCCIDENTALE : Au Temps Des Guerres Puniques (260 - 180 Av. J.-C.) : Actes Du Colloque International de Toulouse 31 Mars - 2 Avril 2005*, no. 70 (2006): 245–263.

[28] Plu. *Mar.* 6.1

"The enemy's combat style was this. The soldiers would run forward at first with great urgency and boldly seize a position. They did not really preserve their formations, tending to fight singly and scattered. They did not think it shameful to withdraw and leave a position if hard pressed..."[29]

This fluid method of combat, partly or completely devoid of concentration around unit-standards matches a reconstruction of Roman fighting in skirmishes published by Anders in his analysis of light infantry combat.[30]

In this light, Metellus inability to adapt to a fighting style characterized by smaller battles with interspersed large-scale confrontations, seems to also partly have been symptomatic of a cultural difference in military conventions.

Suffering significant losses by the hands of a skirmishing opponent seems to have been a more widespread occurrence among Roman commanders.

The devastating effect of exhaustive and repeated combat actions is clearly shown by Sextus Digitius who became praetor of Hispania Ulterior after the departure of Cato the Elder. Livy did not consider any of the engagements he fought to have been noteworthy and states that they were very numerous and that at the end of Digitius tenure as praetor only half of his army was left.[31] While the engagements are not specified as being skirmishes, the great number and Livy´s reluctance to name any of the engagements as field-battles or sieges indicate that they were at least of similar nature. Additionally when describing another similar instance Livy makes it a point to mention numerous engagements and field-battles separately, further supporting this interpretation:

"Throughout the winter a number of engagements, none of them noteworthy, were fought in response to attacks made by marauders rather than by enemy forces, though the results were uneven and they were not without loss of men. More was achieved by Marcus Fulvius. He fought a pitched battle with the Vaccaei, Vettones and Celtiberians near the town of Toletum, and there defeated and put to flight the army of these tribes, and took their king, Hilernus, alive."[32]

This too is an example of Roman forces suffering significantly through repeated small scale combat actions. Marauders were considered, just as bandits, to be organized as fighting in many smaller uncoordinated groups resulting in many smaller engagements when combating them.

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[29] Caes. *Civ.* 1.44

[30] A. Anders. *Roman Light Infantry and the Art of Combat: The Nature and Experience of Skirmishing and Non-Pitched Battle in Roman Warfare 264 Bc-Ad 235*. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2011, 178-180.

[31] Liv. 35.1

[32] Liv. 35.7

Another example of a Roman army being harried by their enemies is from Appian who notes that after fighting a victorious set-piece engagement, the Roman pursuit had become uncoordinated which got exploited by Viriathus leading to 3000 Roman casualties according to Appian. The survivors were driven back to their camp and resisted a subsequent assault by Viriathus forces. Although it is possible that Viriathus counterattack consisted of skirmishing units, picking off the uncoordinated Romans in small groups this cannot be said with certainty. However Appian records that for the following night and day (and possibly even longer) the Romans were harried by attacks made by Viriathus mobile infantry and cavalry until their eventual retreat to Itucca.[33]

It is not unusual that retreating armies would suffer heavy casualties after a defeat in battle, resulting in the breakdown of army-cohesion and discipline. This was exploited by the victorious forces as their enemy could, because of this breakdown, not put up any coordinated resistance. However in this case the Roman army, although severely battered, seems to still have been able to quickly fortify a camp and retreat as a concentrated force. This suggests that the attacks mentioned by Appian were indeed conducted in a hit-and-run manner instead of Celtiberians picking off uncoordinated Roman survivors one after another.

A similar example also provided by Appian describes how after they had to abort the siege of Pallantia, the Roman army under Aemilius Lepidus lost a large amount of men because of constant Pallantian attacks during their retreat.[34]

Several years earlier, the Roman general Lucius Licinius Lucullus had attempted to conquer Pallantia as well, but he too had to abandon a siege of the settlement. During their retreat, his army was also continuously attacked by Palantian cavalry, only entering safe territory after they reached the river Duoro.[35] In both cases the Roman armies had been still coherent and functioning but nevertheless unable to stop the Palantian hit-and-run attacks.

This summons the impression that the Palantians had recognized that they possessed an advantage in skirmishing capabilities leveraging this to great effect. Rutilius Rufus narrowly escaping defeat at the hands of Palantian skirmishers, additionally reinforces this assumption.[36]

This leaves us with the Impression that to the Roman military mind, systematic use of skirmishing and hit-and-run tactics was something one would generally guard against instead of using oneself. Their effectiveness when employed against Roman armies could be devastating, with the repeated success of such tactics by the inhabitants of Pallantia being a powerful example. Only on select occasions would Roman commanders engage in this kind of fighting themselves. The examples of Sertorius, Cato and Maximus suggest that they would most likely adopt small-

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[33] App. *Hisp.* 67

[34] App. *Hisp.* 82

[35] App. *Hisp.* 55

[36] App. *Hisp.* 88

scale combat actions as the main method of fighting in order to bridge a timespan where they were unable or deemed it unwise to engage their opponents in a decisive head-on confrontation but felt that some offensive action was nevertheless necessary.

<div align="center">**3. As an offensive strategical tool**</div>

3.1 Immobilizing or impeding movement

Even when not in direct contact, opposing armies would be engaged in a deadly perpetual struggle centered around movement and maneuvering. Outmaneuvering an opposing force could bring major advantages, such as ambush-opportunities or the capture of war-goals and objectives of strategical and tactical importance, such as favorable terrain such as an easily defensible postion. Additionally, a well-timed and quick retreat or the timely arrival of an army to break a siege had the potential to ward off major disasters. It is therefore not surprising that commanders would sometimes split off small detachments from their main force, for the main purpose of slowing down an opposing force or to impede its mobility. These detachments would be sent out and would then engage in or only threaten combat. Depending on the specific situation and the troops a commander had at his disposal, the exact method of execution would differ. Nevertheless, some common strategies can be identified.

Most effective was the obstruction of the enemies route of march through occupation of easily defensible positions along an opponents the route of advance. Utilizing their strong position small units would function as blocking detachments. They would hinder or outright prevent the opposing army from passing their position and so coerce them into a situation where they were forced to make a decision between potentially suffering a delay of unknown duration, as well as a great deal of casualties, by forcing their way through or having to seek another less safe or longer route. Either way, valuable time, supplies and potentially manpower would have been expended.

An impressive example of this concept in action was Caesars attack on the Pompeian forces that had taken up position around Ilerda in the northern mountains of the Iberian peninsula.

Unexpected floods had made several rivers and their bridges impassable and Pompeian infantry and cavalry detachments had fortified roads and mountain passes. Caesar lamented that this situation prevented his armies passage and that the only way in which he could continue his advance was by ordering his troops to fashion improvised boats.[37]

The fact that Caesar saw this decision as his only option and did not even consider forcing his way through the blocking detachments, speaks to their effectiveness.

Later on, during that same campaign the tables were turned, as this time it was Caesar who had sent out units occupying mountain passes in order to block the Pompeian retreat. This heavily contributed to the Pompeians, who were heading towards a newly fashioned bridge over the Ebro river, having to abandon their undertaking and head back to their previously evacuated fortifications at Ilerda.[38] Next to the possible casualties and time lost, confrontation with Caesars blocking units bore an additional risk for the Pompeians. Because Caesars main force was lurking

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[37] Caes. *Civ.* 1.54

[38] Caes. *Civ.* 1.72

in the vicinity, entering the mountain passes and attempting to force passage would have presented a significant risk of encirclement. With his main force, Caesar could easily follow the Pompeian army and seal them in the mountain pass, effectively surrounding them. In an attempt to find an alternative route of retreat, the Pompeian commanders marched towards the nearby city of Ortogesa. To ensure that Caesar would not outmaneuver them, they sent ahead four cohorts of light infantry to occupy a nearby hill. However these were quickly spotted and caught by the Caesarean cavalry, resulting the annihilation of almost the entire four cohorts. This powerfully illustraties the strength of blocking detachments being directly linked to their strong positions and that while potentially very effective, there was also substantial risk to sending out blocking detachments.[39]

Naturally the composition and size of such blocking detachments would differ, depending on the available troops, their objective and the timeframe in which they would have to operate. A great example for this is Caesars use of light infantry and cavalry to patrol the river-banks of the river Sicoris. He states that this was a response to Pompeian units probing different parts of the river in search for locations to cross.[40] When patrolling a large area such as a riverbank, the mobility of light infantry and cavalry would have been crucial because it enabled a comparatively small force to supervise much larger area. In the case of a crossing-attempt or bridgehead, they would be able to quickly concentrate their forces and establish local numerical superiority before the amount of enemy forces that had successfully made the crossing became too great. It should be noted however that this was highly dependent on the circumstances as in a mountain-pass for example, superior mobility would have only been of limited use.

Unfortunately, out of all sources studied for this thesis, Caesar remains the only source for the use of blocking detachments. It is therefore impossible to say if this was a more widespread phenomenon. Nevertheless as the well-known story of the Spartan king Leonidas describes a similar affair, it is likely that these were not isolated incidents but speak for a more common practice.

Another method of slowing down the advance of an enemy army that was less dependent on the availability of suitable terrain was the slowing down of an enemy marching column through constant harassment by skirmishing detachments. This tactic exploited the way in which most ancient armies marched and fought.

Because an army´s strength lay in its cohesion, it could move only as fast as its slowest member. Because of this, harassing units could attack, or threaten to attack, a part of the marching column and thereby force this part to stop and defend itself or at least form up in a defensive formation. As army-cohesion had to be maintained, all other units would then also be forced to a halt. An accumulation of such small scale attacks could therefore significantly hamper the progress

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[39] Caes. *Civ.* 1.70

[40] Caes. *Civ.* 1.83

of a far superior force. Roman commanders were acutely aware of this as for example Sallust records Metellus fearing the Numidians taking this approach. He feared that by delaying his advance through attempts on his flanks the Numidians attempted to exhaust the Roman soldiers and cause them to deplete their water rations before reaching a location where replenishment was possible.[41]

Caesar also records his cavalry making heavy use of this kind of delaying attacks while fighting the Pompeians near Ilerda.

In his description of his pursuit of the Pompeian army, Caesar repeatedly mentions his cavalry's success in harrying the enemy rearguard.[42] He even gives a rare and detailed description of how exactly his cavalry carried out these attacks and the effect they had:

"The nature of the fighting was as follows. Unencumbered cohorts brought up the rear of Afranius' column. The majority would make a stand where the ground was flat. If a hill had to be climbed, the nature of the terrain itself warded off danger, in that those who had gone ahead would protect their own from higher ground as they came up. When they came to a ravine or descent, and those who had gone ahead were unable to assist those behind, and Caesar's cavalry was hurling weapons from higher ground at their backs, then their situation was very dangerous. The only thing to do when they approached locations of this sort was to order the legions to make a stand, push the cavalry back with a concerted charge, descend into the ravines at a run and all together as soon as the cavalry was out of the way, and make a stand again on higher ground after crossing in this fashion. (Their cavalry, of which they had a great number, was of so little assistance that Afranius and Petreius took these men, thoroughly cowed as they were by earlier battles, into the middle of their column and themselves provided cover for them; none of them could deviate from the line of march without being captured by Caesar's cavalry.)"[43]

This quote clearly shows that in cases where no sufficient countermeasures were taken, this tactic could have a major impact on an army´s speed of march.

It can therefore be concluded that even when armies were not directly facing each other, small detachments could be sent out to hinder an opponents movement. These detachments would through the clever exploitation of terrain, be able to significantly impede or outright stop the movement of a vastly superior force. Mountain passes or similar naturally occurring bottlenecks could be blocked or river-crossings contested, causing whole armies to become stuck. If combined with suitable terrain, even comparatively tiny forces could cause an army to become stuck.

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[41] Sal. *Jug*. 50

[42] Caes. *Civ.* 1.63-1.64, 1.70

[43] Caes. *Civ.* 1.79

Advantageous terrain was however essential, as blocking detachments were very vulnerable when caught outside of its protection. However even when such terrain was not available, the rate of advance of an unprepared army could still be brought to a crawl. Through exploitation of the way in which ancient armies operated, continuous attacks in a hit-and-run fashion forced them to halt and defend themselves. A part of an army that is under attack cannot march and an army can only march if all of its parts can do so simultaneously.

3.2 Tricking the enemy

Deception is as central to warfare as intelligence, mobility or logistics. Cunning and skillfully concocted ruses were frequently praised by writers, be they ancient or modern. Although the creative nature of this aspect of warfare has given birth to a sheer unending variation in successful and failed plans of deception, commonalities can nevertheless be observed. On some of these occasions, small-scale combat engagements would feature heavily as an an essential component in deceiving opponents. Most notable is the use of small units, used offensively in order to provoke an enemy into committing tactical or strategical mistakes.

Semproinus Graccus for example, carried out skirmishing attacks of escalating severity against an encamped Celtiberian force. When he estimated that his opponents had become accustomed to the raiding, and grew bolder in their response, Graccus ordered his skirmishing units to simulate a rout. His plan to entice his opponents into giving chase to the apparently routed Roman forces worked, resulting in an ambush that annihilated the pursuing Celtiberians.[44]

Cato too is recorded by Livy as having attempted to draw out his enemies through the raiding of countryside and attacking their supply-depot with only a number of light armed cohorts. In this case however it was unsuccessful and his enemies refused to give battle. As a result Cato retired after a successful campaigning season full of plundering but without being able to decisively defeat his opponents main force.[45]

Sometimes, small and preferably mobile forces would also be used to draw the attention of an opposing army and function as a distraction.

Most famous is one occasion detailed by Appian. He writes that Viriathus had been cornered by Vetilius and his army and was faced with fighting a pitched battle that he estimated was unwinnable for him. By ordering his army to form up, then scatter and reconvene at a previously agreed upon location he was able to save his army from almost certain defeat. While his army was scattered and in retreat, Viriathus and a small but very mobile force remained on the battlefield and kept the Roman army that was formed up in battle formation busy, giving his troops time to gain some distance before Viriathus fled as well.[46]

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[44] Liv. 40.48

[45] Liv. 34.19

[46] App. *Hisp.* 62

Distraction of the Roman forces with a small force and having the Romans believe that his army had only been redeployed into several smaller detachments was key to the success of this strategy.

Another instance, taking place during Sertorius war against the Sullan senate forces under Pompey is recorded by Plutarch. The latter had been sent to the Iberian peninsula in support of Metellus who had been suffering heavily against Sertorius. Intending to break this siege, Pompey decided to occupy a nearby hill which would provide an overview of the beleaguered city. He sent out a detachment of troops which would race ahead to secure this position while he would follow with the rest of the army. Sertorius, alerted to Pompeys plans sent out a similar force himself and managed to occupy the hill and defend it against the Pompeian detachment. When Pompey arrived with his main force and prepared to dislodge Sertorius force from this position, the latter made Pompey aware that he had just entered a colossal ambush. Sertorius revealed that his small detachment was only the bait and and that his main force had been hidden in an area which had now become the to the rear of Pompeys army. This placed him in a precarious position because in the case he would decide to advance on Sertorius regardless, the main force to his rear would attack him. If he turned around, he would still have an, albeit smaller, enemy force to his rear, forming a similar danger. Poor Pompey was forced to stay in place within viewing distance of the city and to watch while it got captured and put to the torch by the Sertorian besiegers.[47]

In all of the previous examples, small units were used as a bait in order to lure a larger opposing force into a desired position. This would often be an ambush, as is the case of Graccus, Sertorius, however as the example of Viriathus clearly shows, more creative cases could also appear. This success as a bait in these scenarios was probably the result of a forces size. It had to be large enough to be able to inflict at least a modicum of damage, however also small enough for its intended purpose, be that mobility or stealthiness. When caught such a detachment could be easily overwhelmed, securing a low-risk victory that, depending on the objective of the force could have a more or less significant impact. It is therefore likely that some Roman commanders foresaw their enemy going though this or a similar deliberation and exploited this accordingly.

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[47] Plu. *Sert.* 18

4. The skirmishing screen

One of the most famous aspects of Roman military thought was the way in which an army marched and how it rested. The specific forms this could take varied depending on the campaigning circumstances. As a general rule, the bulk of the army, consisting of heavy infantry, would march together with the pack animals and camp-followers in a long column. In their rear and flanks, depending on the side from which an attack could be expected, they were protected by a cloud of light infantry and other mobile forces. In front, cavalry would sweep the area so it was safe for the army to pass and no unexpected ambushes could occur.

Together, this would create a "cloud" of light and mobile units, moving around the bulk of the main army, standing ready to defend the main force against attacks and skirmishing actions.[48]

Describing the war against Jugurtha, Sallust gives a description of Metellus and later Marius marching their armies in this configuration as they are expecting Numidian aggression. Appian too mentions cavalry being used by Scipio Aemilianus as an advance guard during the Numantine war.[49] Interestingly he adds, that when the army encamped, this cavalry advance guard would also provide security-duties outside of the outer perimeter of the camp. Although Appians it is unclear what exactly Appian meant by "security duties", given the mobile nature of cavalry it is likely that this involved the securing of an outer perimeter around the building site of the camp through screening patrols. Additionally Scipio also sent another squadron out scouting.[50] Livys description of Quintus Fulvius Flaccus´s cavalry riding out and keeping an eye out for approaching enemies, while his army was encamped opposite of an opposing force, can be interpreted as being another example of a similar practice.[51]

Caesar too implies cavalry as being one of the main unit-types used to counter-skirmish. In a passage describing attacks of his cavalry on the enemy rearguard, he mentions the enemy cavalry being in such a battered state that they were not able to be of any help to their beleaguered rearguard-units.[52] It is also noticeable that in this passage, the enemy light infantry is not mentioned and only cavalry is referred to as a potential countermeasure. This omission may be influenced by an earlier battle in which Caesars cavalry had destroyed a large contingent of the Pompeian light infantry which could have reduced their numbers to such a degree that they were rendered unable to play any role in the defense of the Pompeian force.[53]

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[48] Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* 3.6*,* 3.8

[49] Sal. *Jug.* 46, 100

[50] App. *Hisp.* 86

[51] Liv. 40.30

[52] Caes. *Civ.* 1.79

[53] Caes. *Civ.* 1.71

Given these inconsistencies concerning the presence of light infantry as part of the skirmishing screen, it is likely that only cavalry was a constant component in the protective screen that could be reinforced by light infantry when the need was felt by the commander.

It is likely that the "security duties" mentioned by Appian would not stop when the march ended and the camp had been built. It is probable that the cavalry and light infantry would keep their position of an anti-skirmishing screening unit while the army was encamped.

The main indicator towards this is their manning of outposts which would be situated around the main camp outside of the rampart, forming a security perimeter around the main encampment. Sometimes already preexisting natural or artificial fortifications were available, which could be reoccupied and used in the same manner as the field-outposts.

As the number of soldiers stationed in one of these outposts would not have been very high the skirmishes they fought would also be of limited scale. Naturally this limited size would also pose a serious risk and Appian records Scipio Aemilianus deliberately foregoing the use of such outposts, as he was afraid that they would be defeated in detail.[54] It should be noted that this is one of the rare references dating to before the Caesarean civil war, implying that the use of such outposts would have been a long established practice when used by Caesar. Additionally this instance is interesting because it suggests Scipio not intending to support was to not support the garrisons of his outposts in the case of an attack. Possibly, these soldiers were expected to either fend off the attack, save themselves or perish while fighting a delaying action and giving the rest of the army a chance to form up into battle-formation. The latter however could harbor serious risks as can be seen in the episode in which two Roman armies were routed after being fed piecemeal into a battle that had started as a skirmish after an attack on foragers.[55]

Although the identity of the troops manning these outposts is not always explicitly mentioned, they were likely cavalry or light infantrymen. Pseudo-Caesar for example explicitly states cavalrymen being among the ones being stationed in such an outpost while it was attacked by a more numerically superior Pompeian force.[56] Vegetius too explicitly names cavalry as being stationed in such outposts.[57] If they would sometimes also be accompanied by infantry, however is much less clear cut. Our only source for this is Pseudo-Caesar, recording Caesar´s stationing of infantry and cavalry in his outposts. Unfortunately he does not expand upon the type of infantry, or Caesars reasons for including infantry in this manner, only elaborating on the use of these outposts as an early-warning system.[58] He then continues the narrative by describing the   complete

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[54] App. *Hisp.* 87

[55] Liv. 39.30

[56] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 13

[57] Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* 3.8

[58] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 6

destruction of some of these outposts, leaving only a few survivors. Confusingly however, only cavalry are mentioned as being killed in the process, leaving out any mention of the fate of the infantry. The reason behind this omission is unknown and can at present not be ascertained. It is likely however that their initial mention as being among the troops stationed in such outposts was not a mistake as especially light infantry were generally quite mobile units and would, for example as part of the protective screen during the march, regularly fight in close coordination with cavalry. Another possibility is the cavalry and infantry being stationed in separate outposts and the Pompeians for unknown reasons only deciding to attack the ones manned with cavalry. Nevertheless, this episode also highlights the weakness of such outposts when isolated by a numerically superior force. According to Pseudo-Caesar, the Pompeians, using a combination of cavalry and infantry units, were able to approach and surround the Caesarean outposts due to a heavy morning-fog which probably prevented any alarm being raised.[59] Here too it is unclear if light or heavy infantry was involved in the assault.

This combined use of cavalry and infantry in an attack on these outposts can also be found in another passage. Apparently, a Pompeian combined force of cavalry and light infantry came into contact with a Caesarean outpost and managed to expel its garrison from their position. Pseudo-Caesar writes that they did so despite the involvement of a few squadrons of Caesarean cavalry and light infantry. Frustratingly, it remains unclear if these were the same units that occupied the original outpost.[60]

Next to their purpose as watch-posts, it is likely that these outposts would also be used to exert control over important terrain. Caesar, campaigning in northern Hispania, at one point describes the Pompeian forces avoiding his cavalry-patrols and outposts, even if this meant taking a longer route.[61]

In a later instance he also mentions his opponents deciding on the creation of earthworks to protect their route to a water-source, hampering Caesarean attacks on their water-carriers. He reports that while under construction, the building site and route to of the earthworks were screened by these outposts serving as interim-protection.[62]

It is clear that Roman soldiers stationed in such outposts were capable of and did engage in fighting small combat engagements. They were not the only ones however as there is evidence that not only Romans made use of such perimeter guard-posts. Livy records that when facing the forces of Cato the Elder, the Celtiberians and Turdetani had made camp and established outposts between its two campsites. These were attacked by Cato´s forces who fought some skirmishes

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[59] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 6

[60] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 14

[61] Caes. *Civ.* 1.59

[62] Caes. *Civ.* 1.73

against the garrisons of these outposts.[63] Semproninus Graccus too attacked Celtiberian outposts when he attacked an opposing army encamped near the city of Alce. According to Livy he used cavalry and light armed units in his assaults and through this managed to draw out a large part of the enemy force into an ambush.[64] This is notable as it parallels Pompeys use of the same unit-types in his attack on the Caesarean outposts. Unfortunately however the murkiness of the language in the passage written by Pseudo-Caesar prevents further speculation about the reasons behind this choice of unit-types. The importance of mobility in Graccus attacks however is indisputable, making light infantry the natural choice over their more heavily armored counterparts.

Taking all of this together, a picture emerges in which a marching Roman army would have a force of cavalry and, if deemed necessary, light infantry who would function as a mobile screening force patrolling a perimeter around the army. When at the end of the marching day, the whole force would encamp and become stationary these screening units would occupy small satellite outposts around the camp. These would serve as small bases controlling the surrounding area either through direct oversight or combat patrols. This would serve not only as an early-waring system to the rest of the force, but also as an effective counter-skirmishing force against enemy sorties. In order to attack this skirmishing-screen, an attacking enemy would have to send out similar forces themselves who would then attempt to breach the perimeter by engaging the outposts with superior numbers or leveraging an advantage in some other manner. This would however, risk a coordinated response by the rest of the attacked army. In order to maintain the element of surprise when attacking the main force, an attacker would have had to take out these satellite-bases in a discreet manner.

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[63] Liv. 34.19

[64] Liv. 40.48

5. Logistical factors

5.1 Foraging

Whenever a Roman army was on campaign it was always on the lookout for occasions in which it could lighten the load on its logistical lines by acquiring supplies locally. Additionally, some things like water or fodder were significantly easier to procure from the surrounding area reducing the effort of bringing them up from the nearest supply-depot. Foraging was generally divided into four different aspects: the collection of water (*aquari)*, the collection of grain and other foodstuffs (*frumentari*), the collection of firewood (*lignari*) and the collection of fodder (*pabulari*).[65]

When the command to forage had been given, parties of men would be sent out to then collect the desired items and bring them back to the base out of which the army was currently operating. The composition of these foraging parties could vary, however in the vast majority of cases they would be comprised of soldiers assisted by their camp-servants. Pack-animals would sometimes also be brought along to increase carrying capacity. Sending out foraging parties would however also bring with it a significant risk-factor as the foragers tended to spread out over a large area in order to accomplish their task effectively. Additionally, they would have been distracted by their foraging work. This oftentimes involved menial labour such as for example the harvesting of fields. Because of this, soldiers would often lay aside their arms as they were unpractical while performing this kind of labour and camp-servants were seldom armed.[66]Additionally the size of foraging expeditions could vary widely, depending on the situation and the intended scale of the proceeds. This could range from a few thousand men to less than a few hundred. All in all this would create a situation in which a significant amount of not-combat-ready soldiers and their servants would be spread out in small groups, over a relatively large area. For a hostile force, this presented a prime opportunity to catch their enemies off-guard and to potentially inflict significant damage.

A stellar example of this concept in practice is recorded by Sallust in his work on the war against Jugurtha. He describes the Roman forces who were out on a foraging or plundering mission, being caught unarmed and massacred by Numidian forces.[67]

Another, albeit less detailed example from the Sertorian war is recorded by Appian. Pompey (who would later become Pompeius Magnus) had been sent to Spain to defeat Sertorius who, by then, had been defying the Sullan regime and the Roman senate for years. Shortly after clearing the mountain passes of the Picos de Europa and crossing into the Iberian peninsula, one of his legions

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[65] J. Roth. *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C.-A.D. 235)*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, v. 23. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1999, 118.

[66] J. Roth. *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C.-A.D. 235)*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, v. 23. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1999, 131.

[67] Sal. *Jug.* 54

went out to forage together with their pack-animals. According to Appian this legion was completely annihilated by the Sertorian forces, leaving Pompey with one less army available.[68]

A few years later Caesar too suffered a similar setback. He had encamped opposite of the Pompeian forces and attempted to take tactically significant high-ground. When this attempt backfired and his forces were routed, Cassius Dio reports that the Pompeians became encouraged by their success and killed many of the scattered Caesareans. This massacre also included the members of a Caesarean foraging-party that had been spread out foraging simultaneous to the battle occurring. Similarly scattered and without adequate protection, they fell alongside their fleeing comrades from the defeated attacking force.[69] As both examples clearly demonstrate, an attack on the enemy foraging parties could cause serious losses with relatively little risk because scattered units would not have been able to mount a coordinated defense. Additionally only the mere prevention of foraging activities by the opposing army could also have a similarly extreme impact.

A good example of this is the fate of the army led by Quintus Fulvius Nobilior, who in 153 BCE had during his campaign against the Celtiberians lost a set-piece battle, causing the settlement which harbored his supply-base to switch sides. Although this seems unusual, it was a common Roman practice to use the most unreliable parts of their army as security for their supply depots or convoys.[70] Suddenly faced with supply issues and being deep in enemy territory, the Roman army´s supply had suddenly been reduced to only that which they could forage. As it was the end of the season, Nobilior decided to transform his marching camp into his winter-quarters which caused many soldiers to freeze to death or die from exposure. According to Appian, the Celtiberians had a major hand in this as they would kill his wood-gathering parties, significantly adding to the death-toll.[71]

The Celtiberians fighting Gaius Vetilius in 147 BCE almost suffered a similar disaster. Vetilius had attacked and defeated the Celtiberian foragers, causing the rest of the army to become trapped without provisions. Only a ruse employed by Viriathus saved the army which would have otherwise surrendered.[72]

Commanders were well aware of these dangers and would therefore attempt to avoid enemy attack as much as possible. For example: during his campaign against Numantia, Scipio Aemilianus had exhausted the surrounding countryside and was in need of fresh foraging-ground.

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[68] App. *BC* 1.109

[69] D.C. *Hist.* 20, 41

[70] Roth, Jonathan. *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C.-A.D. 235)*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, v. 23. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1999, 286.

[71] App. *Hisp.* 47

[72] App. *Hisp.* 61

This meant that his army had to relocate and according to Appian there were rich foraging areas nearby. Unfortunately for Scipio this meant that he had to pass the enemy city of Numantia or take a longer route to circumvent the city. Although it was faster, he decided against passing Numantia directly and rather took a long detour. He reasoned that his foragers would be tired and slow on their return to the rest of the army which made them perfect targets for Numantine raids and that the cost of the ensuing battles would be too high.[73]

Being able to completely avoid the enemy was, especially under campaigning circumstances, probably the exception rather than the rule. This meant that when foraging was needed, the foragers would have to be provided extra protection. One method in which this could be achieved was to place the camp in or near the foraging area in order to be able to quickly provide support and an opportunity to retreat into the camp in the case of enemy attack. Scipio Aemilianus for example had his men forage only to the rear of his camp out of fear for attacks by the Numantines.[74] Similarly Livy records an episode during the first Celtiberian war in which the Roman forces under Quintus Fulvius Flaccus and the Celtiberian army were encamped opposite of each other. In this instance, the Romans consistently refused to give battle which had established an uneasy peace. Livy remarks that both sides foraged to the rear of their camps without being bothered by the opponent. Nevertheless, cavalry units remained near the foragers, ready to intervene if necessary.[75] Although this situation was far better than being caught off-guard in the field, it was not entirely without risks and still left the strategic initiative in the hands of the attacker. Livy gives account of one occasion in which foragers were attacked and then given support from the remainder of their army which was still in their camp. The attacking forces however decided to do the same and so this initial skirmish escalated into a full scale field-battle. The terrain was however unfavorable for the Romans, causing them to loose the battle and two legions were routed.[76]

Keeping the foragers close to the camp, while a safer option was still far from ideal as it limited the amount of goods which could be collected, especially in areas where foraging areas were located widely apart. That keeping the foragers close to the camp was therefore a measure likely to be employed only when an attack by the enemy was expected.

In the vast majority of cases, however commanders would order the foraging parties to be accompanied by an armed guard, furnished from other units in the army. These would set up a perimeter and defend the foraging units within. Sallust for example mentions Metellus having learnt

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[73] Caes. *Civ.* 1.66; App. *Hisp.* 86-87.

[74] App. *Hisp.* 86

[75] Liv. 40.30

[76] Liv. 39.30

his lesson from the earlier mentioned mistake, ordering several cohorts to stand guard and protect his foragers from attacks by the Numidian forces.[77]

Another, even more explicit example of this happening is from Appian, who writes that Fabius Maximus Aemilianus (the brother of the famous Scipio Aemilianus) ordered his foragers to be under armed guard while he himself circled them with his cavalry. His enemy, Viriatus had previously attacked and destroyed the Roman wood-gathering parties and so it is likely that this had been a hard learned lesson. Interestingly Appian also mentions that Maximus had learnt to protect his army in this way during the war in Macedonia, implying his actions to be a more widely known tactic.[78]

His younger brother too, used his cavalry to drive off attacks on his foragers. Again it is Appian who describes Scipio Aemilianus having to save one of his officers, Rutilius Rufus, who together with a detachment of cavalry had been sent out to protect their foragers against repeated enemy skirmishes. The unfortunate Rufus had apparently let himself get carried away while pursuing the skirmishers and he and his cavalry unit got ambushed in nearby hilly terrain. Only quick action by Scipio and his remaining cavalry managed to extricate Rufus and his units from this predicament[79]

On another occasion Scipio had to quickly rally his men who were busy plundering a village. Once again a cavalry-unit had become too detached from the main force and needed rescue as it had been ambushed in a small ravine. Scipio who was standing outside of the village, next to the left behind standards of the plundering units quickly rallied some men and managed to extricate his cavalry and rout the enemy, however not without loss.[80] Continuing the theme of cavalry detachments getting into trouble, Flaccus who accompanied Scipio on this campaign, also got himself ambushed while on a foraging-mission. He however managed to extract himself and his soldiers from the situation by making them believe that Scipio had captured Pallantia, the enemies city. This rallied the Romans, which in turn disheartened the ambushers causing them to retreat.[81]

Multiple observations can be made from these examples. Firstly, all of them record personal involvement of high-ranking officers or even the army-commander. On the one hand this indicates that the importance of the successful execution of a foraging expedition was deemed high enough as that the highest echelons of leadership would become involved. It is likely that they would keep an eye on things and enforce military discipline in order to prevent foraging parties

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[77] Sal. *Jug.* 54

[78] App. *Hisp.* 65

[79] App. *Hisp.* 88

[80] App. *Hisp.* 89

[81] App. *Hisp.* 81

from becoming too detached from the main cloud of foragers.[82] On the other hand it also shows the importance of commanders and officers being able to react quickly and respond to an attack by providing immediate support. It is likely that they did this by finding a location which provided a good overview of the foraging area and keeping an eye out for possible threats, as is evidenced by Scipio standing with the nearby standards while his men were plundering a village. Alternatively they would act like Maximus Aemilianus and roam around the foraging area with a cavalry escort. When a threat was identified they would quickly depart with a relief-force such as Rufus with a detachment of cavalry, to counter it. That this was not without danger is clearly demonstrated by an example from the siege of Numantia by Quintus Pompeius Aulus´s forces. Appian notes that after an attack by the Numantines on Aulus´s foragers, a tribune named Oppidus was listed as being among the casualties.[83]

This brings us to the second major observation which is the importance of cavalry in protecting foraging operations. Appians descriptions of Maximus establishment of armed protection makes it clear that cavalry were not the only unit-type protecting foraging parties and it is likely that infantry would have been involved to a significant degree. Nevertheless, it would have been cavalry forces that would have played a deciding role in the defense of foragers as their superior speed and mobility would have made them the obvious pick for a quick reaction-force as described above. Cavalry also tended to be made up from the higher echelons of society, so the possible unfamiliarity of some cavalry-soldiers with harvesting and other kinds of menial labour would probably not have made them a very valuable addition to any foraging unit strengthening the assumption that their presence among foraging detachments was combat-focused. An exception to this may have been the grazing of the cavalry horses. This is probably what is meant when Caesar mentions that he had released his cavalry to forage and that because of this, they were away from the camp.[84] In another passage he is more explicit: He records that the Pompeian defenders of the North-Iberian mountain passes had sent their cavalry to graze on the other side of a river as they had exhausted all the terrain near to their base. Here they would frequently be involved in clashes with other cavalry units belonging to the Caesarean army under Gaius Fabius.[85] Caesars specificity on the clashes being cavalry clashes and the nature of the foraging being that of grazing, indicate that other instances of foraging parties coming into contact with enemy forces were more infantry heavy, with cavalry taking a more active protective role.

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[82] J. Roth. *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C.-A.D. 235)*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, v. 23. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1999, 140-141.

[83] App. *Hisp.* 78

[84] Caes. *Civ.* 1.80

[85] Caes. *Civ.* 1.40

Grazing areas and foraging grounds would in most cases however be identical so the possibility of protecting cavalry letting their horses graze while no threat was apparent does not seem far fetched.

Having now outlined the defensive measures, it is time to examine the opposite perspective and focus on the methods of attack that would be used when targeting enemy foraging parties. In this aspect too, cavalry seemed to have played a significant role. The best example for this is Appians note on an attack on Lucullus´s forces which explicitly states that the attacking Pallantians were using cavalry to kill his foragers. The previously mentioned attack on Flaccus can also serve as an example concerning the use of cavalry in assaulting foragers.[86] Caesar too writes on the power of cavalry in attacking foraging parties in the context of his struggle at Illerda. He complains that as soon as one of his soldiers would leave the camp to forage, they would get attacked by Lusitanian cavalry belonging to the Pompeians.[87] Later on however, he is the one hindering his enemies from foraging. He states that after being intimidated by the performance of his cavalry, the Pompeian forces did not dare to go far away from their camp or they attempted to circumvent Caesars cavalry patrols and outposts by taking overly long routes to their foraging areas. When caught regardless, Caesar states that they were more likely to flee when attacked or even when the cavalry only so much as appeared in sight, leaving behind their gains. This situation, with Caesar dominant in cavalry led to his opponents shifting their foraging operations to nighttime, however upon realizing that this too was not a permanent solution they retreated to Celtiberia.[88] During this retreat however they were cut off by Caesarean forces. Now trapped they had to build earthworks to protect the route to the water-source as Caesars cavalry threatened their foragers.[89] Two other examples confirming the use of cavalry on the attacking as well as the defending side are from Caesars Hispanian campaign against the brothers Pompey. Pseudo-Caesar records that a squadron of forty horsemen raided a Caesarean party who was out to get water. In the ensuing skirmish eight cavalrymen and an unspecified number of Caesarean troops were captured, indicating that this was a rather small scale skirmish.[90] Although less straightforward another passage from the same campaign also records what seems to have been a skirmish of rather small proportions. While Caesars soldiers had been busy constructing a field-work and meanwhile some of Caesars cavalry had been killed while foraging for wood.[91] As will be explained below, it is likely that these men are likely to have been the escort-detail instead of foragers themselves.

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[86] App. *Hisp.* 55

[87] Caes. *Civ.* 1.48

[88] Caes. *Civ.* 1.59, 1.61

[89] Caes. *Civ.* 1.72

[90] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 21

[91] 56 BCE; Caes. *B. Hisp.* 27

Although less mobile than cavalry but still much quicker on their feet than heavy infantry, light infantry also feature in descriptions of attacks on foraging parties. In the instance mentioned above where forty cavalrymen attacked a Caesarean watering party, it is mentioned that they approached Caesars camp accompanied by light infantry which probably served as a back-up force.[92] Lucius Licinius Lucullus too had problems with light infantry attacking his foragers when attacking the fortified town of Cauca. Its inhabitants had seriously mauled Lucullus´s foragers and driven them back to their camp. Appian notes that when they fought a set-piece battle against Lucullus´s army which had drawn up the battle line immediately afterward, their style of fighting was that of light infantry.

"A pitched battle developed in which the Caucaei, who fought in the manner of light-armed troops, got the better of Lucullus for a long time until they completely ran out of ammunition. At that point, as they were not frontline fighters, they fled and about three thousand of them were killed in the crush at the gates."[93]

It would not be too bold to assume that Appians description of their fighting style is also applicable to the way in which they had confronted the foragers, especially as Appian implies that they suffered from a complete lack of heavy infantry. Lucullus´s foraging situation however did not improve after these events as he proceeded to massacre the Caucaeans and the survivors of the massacre carried out a scorched-earth policy in their flight.[94]

A similar episode took place during Quintus Pompeius Aulus disastrous siege of Numantia.

The Numantines had successfully sent out harassing sorties which had driven the Romans into their camp. These, for unknown reasons sent out a foraging party which then got destroyed by the Numanines who had been harassing the Roman camp with projectiles.[95]

Caesar too mentions his foragers being attacked by light infantry and states that not only were the attacking forces typical for the local Iberian style of fighting, they were, because of their light equipment, also able to swim across a dividing river and so able to attack otherwise inaccessible foraging areas.[96]

When taking together all the previously presented information a certain picture emerges: When a Roman army would go out foraging, A sizable part of its strength would be designated as an escorting force accompanying the foragers. This force would mainly be comprised of infantry

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[92] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 21

[93] App. *Hisp.* 51

[94] App. *Hisp.* 51

[95] App. *Hisp.* 78

[96] Caes. *Civ.* 1.48

who would form a defensive perimeter around the foragers. It is likely that, because the foraging area could be of considerable size and foragers would spread out over this area, the establishment of multiple smaller perimeters was also a possibility. Together with the commander of the foraging expedition, which would normally be a high ranking officer or even the general himself, cavalry would patrol the foraging area in order to scan for enemy movement or foragers too far straying away. It is likely that while keeping watch, they would also let their horses graze whenever possible. When an enemy attack was identified, the cavalry would rush over and assist the beleaguered security detachment in their struggle. This would prevent them from getting overrun and created a timeframe for reinforcements to arrive.

The nature of attacks on enemy foragers is more difficult to reconstruct as details on these are scarce. What can be said with relative certainty however is that for such attacks preference was given mainly to fast and mobile units such as cavalry or light infantry. As for their style of fighting some things can be deduced. It is very likely that attacks on foraging expeditions were performed by highly mobile assault parties of limited size. Multiple smaller units were less likely to be spotted and had the advantage that they were able to engage their enemies in multiple locations at once, amplifying the shock-effect. This would also make it more difficult to coordinate a defense, as the defensive force would be in confusion and would have to coordinate a defense on multiple points along their perimeter making coordination even more difficult. Foragers being spread out and working in groups would also increase the likelihood of some of them becoming cut off from the rest if the defensive perimeter were to be breached. One single formed up army would poses more penetrating power, would however have been much slower and more easily spotted forfeiting the element of surprise. This could give the foraging army crucial time to gather themselves and to either withdraw or form up into battle-formation.

This proposed model of attack on foraging parties also fits with the examples given previously. Scipio sending Rufus to relieve his foragers is described as a skirmish, and his defeat of the party that ambushed his cavalry indicates the limited size of the ambushing party as Scipio was able to defeat them with only a part of his force which he had hastily assembled. In his deliberation on wether to pass or circumvent Numantia he was afraid of the disadvantage which his heavily laden foragers would have against the mobile Numantians and Pompeys and Nobiliors unfortunate wood-gatherers were not described as having been a concentrated effort but rather as being isolated parties. Quintus Pompeius Aulus was attacked in a manner which was explicitly stated as being harassing in nature, suggesting a series of smaller engagements and Livys account of an attack on foragers escalating into a set-piece battle heavily implies that the foragers were only a small force and that the bulk of the troops were only later brought out from the camp in support. Only the two accounts from Pseudo-Caesar seem to directly state the size of some engagements against foraging parties as being rather limited.

5.2 Razing and pillaging

The massive destruction that could be wrought upon a country and its inhabitants has been a feature of wars since the origin of warfare. Rome was no exception in this regard and Roman legions and their allies would frequently go out to pillage, plunder and steal. Most famous is the razing of whole cites and towns, as these events were often recorded in detail. Even if a detailed description of the destruction of a settlement was missing, ancient authors would generally report that the place had been destroyed and its inhabitants were killed, sold into slavery or a combination of two. Settlements were however not the only places that an army would destroy, and occasional rather brief mentions of the ravaging of countryside and scattered towns can be found in ancient accounts. Quitus Servilius Caepio for example ravaged the territory of the Vettones and the Callaeci after he had been outsmarted by Viriathus.[97] Flaccus too is recorded as going on a marauding tour across Celtiberia not only once but twice.[98] The second time he did so even when his successor had already been chosen but had not yet arrived in Hispania.[99] After his capture of Munda, Livy records Graccus burning agricultural land and attacking strongholds until he encountered another powerful city. In all these passages, a description of how exactly these pillaging-operations were conducted is however absent. An indication is given however in the earlier described passage concerning the raiding campaign by Cato the Elder at the beginning of his campaign near Emporiae. In his speech before facing a Celtiberian army in a sep-piece battle references the preliminary raiding-missions. His use of language as referring to this kind of fighting as that "of robbers" and "raiding" indicates that up until that point, he had made heavy use of tactics involving multiple smaller units, instead of each time leading out his army in one large coordinated force.

Such an approach seems likely, considering that by definition, the inhabitants of the countryside would live in small communities far apart from each other and spread out. When a passing army would the lay waste to the countryside they wold have to disperse into smaller groups in order to do so as anything else could be described as overkill. The time and resource-investment of a complete army would be far too high when compared to the gain brought by serially plundering single farms or villages. Therefore, if an army wanted to destroy a larger area, dispersion was necessary, bringing with it almost the same parameters as have been described in the preceding part on foraging. It is also not unreasonable to assume that the armies disciplined conduct during raiding expeditions would not be similar due to that exhibited during foraging expeditions as gathered loot would be collected and later divided among the different units by the commander.

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[97] App. *Hisp.* 70

[98] Liv. 40.33

[99] Liv. 40.39

While this measure was surely also aimed at avoiding conflicts within the army, it also prevented the troops from becoming reckless in the face of personal gain.[100]

As for the countering of enemy raiding parties, only one passage provides some degree of insight into the mind of a Roman commander. Sextus Junius Brutus had, together with his army been sent by the senate on a punitive expedition as a response to frequent Celtiberian raiding of Roman and allied territory. If Appian is to be believed, Brutus theorized that he would have great difficulty in hunting down the great number of small groups of raiders that swarmed the area. His alternative plan was to attack the hometowns of these raiders one by one, theorizing that the raiding parties would dissolve because their members would hasten back to defend their homes.[101] While this clearly identifies the Celtiberian raiding efforts as less organized and disciplined as Roman foragers for example, the singularity of this example prevents us from making any further conclusions about them. Another noteworthy piece of information is that Brutus disapproved of a method involving a multitude of smaller units, however again his reasons for this are unclear.

Although the state of the evidence is such as that it does suggest that small skirmishes did indeed feature in Roman pillaging and counter-raiding operations. It is likely that Roman commanders would have executed raiding-campaigns in a similar manner as foraging-expeditions, as both scenarios have much in common. Nevertheless, definitive statements into this direction remain, at present, impossible.

5.3 Interrupting supply lines

A continuous stream of supplies was the lifeline of an army, be it ancient or modern, and by their nature the ones that delivered them existed apart from the main force. Despite foraging efforts, the regular flow of supply-convoys was a necessity for an army that wanted to operate for any notable length of time. This made supply-lines a high-value target, and because the main force of the army would generally be occupied with the opposing army, the cutting of supply-lines was left to smaller detachments operating mostly independent in the enemies rear.[102] A good example of this is the case of the aforementioned Sextus Iunius Brutus who at one point even led his army against the tribe of the Bracari, because they interfered with his supply-lines.[103]

In his exposé on Pompey, Plutarchus delivers an example of the effect of a successful campaign against the enemy supply lines and describes how the Iberian-Roman forces under Sertorius forced Metellus to withdraw from Hispania altogether during winter for lack of supplies. Metellus´s

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[100] J. Roth. *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C.-A.D. 235)*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, v. 23. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1999,150-152.

[101] App. *Hisp.* 71

[102] J. Roth. *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C.-A.D. 235)*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, v. 23. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1999, 284-285.

[103] App. *Hisp.* 72

colleague Pompey decided to stay in Hispania regardless, but he too is described as having had major supply-difficulties during that winter.[104]

Caesar too was no stranger to cutting the Pompeian supply lines and even won the battle of Ilerda because of it. Through effective use fo his superiority in cavalry he was able to outmaneuver Pompeys generals Lucius Afranius and Marcus Petreius and forced them to surrender due to lack of provisions.[105] A mention by Pseudo-Caesar in his account of Caesars second campaign in Spain, against Pompeys sons Sextus and Gnaeus Pompeius, hints at Caesar again using his cavalry to target enemy supply-convoys. Pseudo-Caesar states that a detachment of the Caesarean cavalry had ventured out further than usual in pursuit of a Pompeian supply-convoy. Apparently they managed to catch it as they returned with fifty people as their prisoners who were captured together with their pack-animals.[106] Unfortunately, the text does not reveal if this was intentional or the result of coincidence.

Clearly all of these occasions only involved battles of limited dimensions as the whole of Caesars infantry and probably also some of his cavalry were not present. It is interesting however that although deprivation of enemy supplies was popular as a method of gaining victory, Roman armies were composed around the concept of a field battle, centering around heavy infantry instead of mobile units who would have been more suited to intercepting supply lines.

The comparatively low numbers in the last example also again strengthen the assumption that this was only a limited engagement and probably only one of two supply-convoys were attacked. That this was not always the case however is demonstrated by Caesars account of an attack of his opponents on one of supply-deliveries which had become immobilized due to the flooding of a river. For this, the Pompeian generals marched out with three legions and all of their cavalry.

Caesars cavalry catching a supply convoy is echoed by an episode which took place during the siege Tremantia by Quintus Pompeius Aulus. Appian records that the Trematians had routed a tribune delivering supplies to Aulus. Here too there is reason to assume that this was not a large scale combat engagement, as it is mentioned as part of a list of, albeit costly, skirmishes. Additionally although the escort of a supply-convoy in wartime and hostile territory would not be unsubstantial, it is clearly distinguished form a set-piece battle which took place only a short while after. It is therefore likely that the unfortunate tribune and his escorting detachment had been unsupported by the main force of Pompeius Aulus and was therefore defeated.[107] Ironically these events preceded the events of Pompeius losing another tribune on a foraging expedition, which are discussed above.

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[104] Plu. *Pomp*. 19; Plu. *Sert.* 12

[105] Caes. *Civ.* 1.48-1.85

[106] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 11

[107] App. *Hisp.* 76

In conclusion it can be stated that a coordinated effort against the supply-lines of an opposing army would be most likely be carried out by small and very mobile detachments of troops such as cavalry. These detachments would roam around an opposing force and intercept incoming supply-convoys. Although the resulting battles would have been very limited in size they could, if carried out consistently and in high enough numbers, render an entire army combat ineffective. It is clear that Roman commanders were very aware of this and are attested to have used or counteracted this strategy on multiple occasions to varying success.

6. Intelligence gathering

6.1 Reconnaissance in force

Discussions on Roman intelligence gathering usually focus on espionage and intrigue within the internal and external political sphere. Although the occasional piece is published about the military intelligence-system, mentions on raiding and skirmishing as a means of gathering intelligence are either absent or sparsely strewn. Most informative in this regard is the book by Austin and Rankov on intelligence gathering in the Roman empire. Nevertheless, although they breach the topic in the context of their discussion of the *procursatores,* it remains comparatively superficial. They rightfully point out that useful source-material is difficult to come by, preventing an analysis from going into depth. It seems that this state of research has not been altered, especially considering that a much more recent book on intelligence gathering in the Roman military only incidentally references small-scale combat engagements such as skirmishes.[108]

Although it is well known that occasionally, reconnaissance parties would get into scraps with the enemy, it remains a question if intentional seeking out of small-scale combat for the sake of gathering intelligence took place. This presupposes the active intent of the detachment to come into contact with the enemy deviating from the previous academic focus on intelligence-gathering-units whose combat-potential served mainly as protection. Examples of this are for example the *exploratores:* small groups of soldiers, preferably cavalry who would perform reconnaissance tasks. Occasional combat being an expected part of their assignment explains their preference of operating in groups instead of as single individuals.

That numbers were important for reconnaissance missions is aptly demonstrated by the case of Quintus Fulvius Flaccus sending his brother Marcus Fulvius Flaccus on a mission to scout the dimensions of the enemy camp. Marcus was ordered to approach the camp as close as possible but to avoid combat. For this task he was given the unusually large force of two cavalry squadrons.[109] Although we do not know the exact reason for this increase in cavalrymen, it can be assumed that this was done to ensure the safety of Marcus Flaccus, preventing him from becoming isolated and outnumbered by enemy cavalry.

Commanders accompanying squads of *exploratores* is well attested. Caesar for example records that during the battle of Ilerda he had followed the Pompeian force on their retreat trying to reach the safety of their newly constructed bridge on the river Ebro. Both Caesar and his opponents recognized that they were headed for mountainous terrain and whoever reached it first would have

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[108] Eg: R.M. Sheldon. *Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome: Trust in the Gods, but Verify. Studies in Intelligence*. London ; Frank Cass, 2005, 121; N. J. E. Austin & N.B. Rankov. *Exploratio: Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople*. London etc: Routledge, 1995, 40-42.

[109] Liv. 40.30

the advantage over the other. Being unfamiliar with the region otherwise both sides sent out scouting parties.

"On the next day Petreius set out undercover with a few cavalry to explore the region. The same was done from Caesar's camp: Lucius Decidius Saxa was sent with a few men to reconnoiter the character of the terrain."[110]

It is notable that both sides send out high ranking officers, in the case of Petreius even the commander. Caesar however highlights the small size of these detachments and it is unlikely that they would seek out violent confrontation. However that this could and would occur occasionally, is demonstrated by an example from Pseudo-Caesars *Bellum Hispaniensis***.** He records that one night an enemy scouting party, consisting of one of the Iberian legionaries employed by Caesars enemies and three slaves, was taken prisoner by the Caesarean cavalry.[111]

So while e*xploratores* did not intend to become engaged in combat, they recognized that sometimes this would be inescapable, leading them to operate in small groups for safety.

Closer to the kind of unit we are looking for are the *procursatores*. Although it is likely that they only developed later in the Roman militaries lifespan, they are a unit whose purpose was both skirmishing and gathering information. In their section on this topic Austin and Rankov describe them as a cavalry-force who would form the vanguard while the army was on the march. They state that in this capacity *procursatores* mainly secured the marching path and if needed fought skirmishes to flush out opposition. As a secondary task they would reconnoiter the area through which the army would then follow them, providing tactical and geographical information. Armies would ideally not only have skirmishing forces in the front (see chapter "the skirmishing screen") but also in their rear and, if possible, their flanks. Austin and Rankov agree that it is likely that these forces functioned in a similar way to the *procursatores,* only engaging in combat defensively.[112]

In both of these examples, the tasks of skirmishing and intelligence gathering are separated, however there would have been certain very valuable information that would have only been available if one had observed the opposing army or even experienced combat against it. Information on the composition and morale of the army or the capabilities, fighting styles or loyalties of specific units would have all been pieces of information very valuable to a commander. In order to acquire this knowledge and so gain a possible advantage the dispatching of combat patrols to "feel out" the enemy would have been a safer solution than risking a full-scale field-battle which could potentially end in defeat.

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[110] Caes. *Civ.* 1.66

[111] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 20

[112] N. J. E. Austin & N. B. Rankov. *Exploratio: Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople*. London etc: Routledge, 1995, 40-42.

Livys description of Cato the Elders activities while encamped near Emporiae clearly states that one of the purposes of his raiding expeditions was indeed to get a "feel" for his enemy before he engaged in battle. Livy states:

"They usually set off at night so they could advance as far as possible from camp and also fall upon the enemy unawares. This practice provided training for his raw recruits, and large numbers of the enemy were also taken prisoner (in fact, the enemy would no longer venture beyond the fortifications of their strongholds)."[113]

Appians description of Pompeius Magnus fight against Perpenna who had just betrayed and murdered Sertorius, also contains a description of two armies testing each other before committing to battle.

"When Metellus had gone off to other parts of Iberia—for he thought that dealing with Perpenna was no longer a difficult task for Pompey on his own—these two skirmished and made trial of each other for several days without deploying their whole army. On the tenth day, however, a great battle broke out between them."[114]

One important detail in this description is that both sides are specified to have not deployed their complete force, heavily implying that the skirmishing was done by smaller units.
This setup of two armies encountering each other and then sending skirmishers to harass and test the opposing force can also be found in Livys description of the Spanish campaign by Semporinus Gracccus. Graccus marched on the city of Alce where he knew an enemy army had encamped. After arrival, he proceeded to send out his light troops top skirmish with the Celiberians. After a few days he ordered them to engage the enemy in such a manner that they would be baited to leave their positions and follow Graccus´s forces. The Romans feigned a rout and in this manner managed to lure the Celtiberians into an ambush. Although in this instance there is no explicit mention by Livy as to the presence of "testing"-skirmishes, however it seems highly likely that while performing these skirmishing actions the Romans noticed that their enemy was prone to being baited out of his positions, leading to the creation of this plan.[115]

Another possible example of "testing"-skirmishes being performed, this time against the Romans, comes from Scipios siege of Numantia. Appian records that the Numantians would frequently make small sallies against the envelopment constructed around their city. Again the

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[113] Liv. 34.13

[114] App. *Hisp.* 115

[115] Liv. 40.48

purpose of these sallies is not explicitly stated, however it could have been the case that they were testing the defenses for weak spots.[116]

Although these examples demonstrate that scenarios in which reconnaissance in force was a likely motivator were not uncommon, they neglect to mention the kind of soldiers carrying out these skirmishes. Only Livys statement of the raiding missions fulfilling a training-function indicates a wide variety of participating units. In other cases however, it would have made sense for commanders to employ *exploratores* and especially *procursatores* in a skirmishing role. These units would have already been accustomed to carrying out independent operations, gathering intelligence and in the case of the *procursatores* also skirmishing. Additionally, them being cavalry and operating in small groups would have given them an advantage over small groups of enemy (light) infantry.

When taken together, the presented passages heavily suggest that there is precedent for skirmishing parties being sent out with the explicit purpose of gaining more information concerning the combat-value of an opposing force. This could potentially give access to information that was unobtainable normally or only through spies, deserters, traitors or prisoners. It is not clear if specific units were used in such a capacity and it is likely that all kinds of units could perform in this manner, depending on the circumstances. However two types of units, the *exploratores* and *procursatores* have been identified as being particularly suited to such an assignment. This assessment is mainly based on their previous assignments as scouts and skirmishers. It should however be noted that, based on the source material their use in an offensive manner, cannot be confirmed which is why further research is heavily suggested.

6.2 Taking prisoners

When skirmishing with enemy units, soldiers could, aside from being killed or wounded, also be made prisoners. Only occasionally the capturing of prisoners is mentioned in our sources, however their importance for intelligence gathering efforts should not be underestimated. More frequently, prisoners are mentioned as being part of the plunder gained by sacking cities or defeating enemy armies.[117] Sometimes however small amounts of prisoners would be taken during skirmishing actions and it is likely that the extraction of intelligence from them was an important motivator. Although sale of enemy combatants into slavery was indeed an option, the small numbers of prisoners taken and these prisoners being part of the opposing fighting force suggests their value lying more in them being targets for interrogation.

An example of this is Caesar´s recording of his cavalry catching some Pompeian soldiers who had gotten lost. It was from them that he received the information about the enemy force

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[116] App. *Hisp.* 93

[117] J. Wickham. *The Enslavement of War Captives by the Romans to 146 Bc*. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2014,12.

attempting to silently sneak out of their camp in that same moment.[118] Another case recorded by Pseudo-Caesar tells us of Pompeian messengers being captured while on their way into the beleaguered town of Corduba. Their messages were taken from them and later displayed by Caesar in an attempt to sow discord among the defenders of the town.[119]

Unfortunately these seem to be the only examples from our sources directly connecting prisoners taken during skirmishes with the gathering of intelligence. Other examples only refer to the act of capturing prisoners, neglecting to tell the reader the reader if they were interrogated after capture. Occasionally sources give additional information such as the numbers of prisoners or to what type of soldier they belonged, suggesting at least some degree of information gathering. Oftentimes however, even this information is lacking. Pseudo-Caesar for example records that forty Pompeian cavalry had made a surprise attack on one of the watering parties and had taken an unspecified number of prisoners. The Caesarean side on the other hand had managed to capture eight of the attacking cavalrymen.[120] During an earlier passage he also mentions two members of the legion raised in Iberia becoming captives of the Caesareans. For unknown reasons they pretended to be slaves, however they were recognized by some of the Caesarean soldiers and executed by them before anyone could intervene.[121] Another time it was only one individual belonging to the Pompeian second legion becoming captive.[122]

Not only solders were taken captive during skirmishes. non-combatants belonging to the enemy force, would also sometimes be captured. A great example of this is the attack of the Caesarean cavalry on a Pompeian supply convoy. Pseudo-Caesar tells us that fifty men and the pack animals belonging to them were taken prisoner. It is likely that these men were mule-drivers or similar rather than soldiers and they they posed no threat to the attacking cavalry. These in turn would not have had any reason for killing them, taking them prisoner instead.[123] In another instance he mentions scouts being captured. Only one of them is listed as being a soldier, the three others being slaves.[124] As was customary with scouts, all them were nevertheless executed.[125]

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[118] Caes. *Civ.* 1.66

[119] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 18

[120] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 21

[121] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 20

[122] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 13

[123] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 11

[124] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 20

[125] R.M. Sheldon. *Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome: Trust in the Gods, but Verify. Studies in Intelligence*. London ; Frank Cass, 2005, 123.

Lastly there are occasions which describe soldiers "being stripped of their weapons and equipment" as a result of a combat engagement. One proposed interpretation of this formula is that they were taken prisoner. It is likely that they were not casualties as these are usually listed separately within the same passages. Additionally it was standard procedure that prisoners were stripped of their equipment, lowering their chances in the case of future resistance.[126] It is unclear however why this phrase was used instead of vocabulary denominating capture, if that was indeed the intended meaning.

Unfortunately, Pseudo-Caesar remains an outlier, with other ancient writers being more brief in their descriptions of small scale combat and only rarely mentioning prisoners being taken in such a context. One notable exception however is Livy who mentions that during Cato the Elders actions at Emporiae great numbers of prisoners had been taken. Livy does not however directly relate the raiding activity and any collection of further intelligence to each other.[127]

Although the lacking diversity of our sources prevents the drawing of definite conclusions, it is likely that the taking of prisoners would be an occasional result of skirmishing actions. Reasons for this could be varied, ranging from mere mercy to the intention of extracting valuable intelligence from the freshly captured soldiers. At present it is impossible to definitively establish the collection of intelligence as a defining motivator for the capture of prisoners. However, the presence of various passages attesting to the capture of prisoners during skirmishes as well as indicators, such as occasional information relating to the personal identity of the prisoners, suggest that capture for interrogation did indeed happen.

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[126] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 15, 24

[127] Liv. 34.13

<h1 align="center"><u>7. Psychological factors</u></h1>

As already described by Rawling in his article on irregular warfare during the Punic wars, small scale combat actions would often function as opportunities to train or inspire soldiers and for them to show off their prowess in battle and so earn recognition and rewards. Focusing on this aspect, this chapter will seek to corroborate and nuance Rawlings findings.

7.1 Morale

When discussing skirmishing actions in ancient warfare, the importance of the effect they could have on morale is something that cannot be understated. Ancient writers make frequent reference to the morale-impact of skirmishing actions and Roman military treatises stress the importance of managing the mood of an army, bringing forth skirmishes as one of the factors potentially impacting morale. Frontinus for example devotes a chapter to the ways in which commanders could ward off hits to their armies fighting spirit. Among the examples concerning large-scale battles such as sieges or field-battles, he does also include an instance describing the potential negative mood-impact of being defeated in a skirmish.

Sulla had sent out a party of auxiliary cavalry, of whom none came back and Frontinus describes how in response he turned to deception. Sulla successfully convinced his soldiers that these auxiliaries had actually been traitors who had been sent on a suicide mission.[128]

Pseudo-Caesar too records a case of commanders attempting to prevent a negative hit to the mood of their troops in this manner. He tells us of the capture of a standard bearer from one of the Pompeian legions who had deserted. This standard-bearer told the Caesareans that Gnaeus Pompey (junior) had forbidden the unit this standard-bearer belonged to, to tell others about them suffering thirty five casualties in a skirmish only a few days before.[129] It can be safely assumed that this was an attempt to prevent the spread of discouragement among the troops, while also illustrating that such small actions could have an effect on the larger fighting-body.

That this mechanism could work both ways is illustrated through another example by Pseudo-Caesar. He records an occasion in which Pompeian forces managed to inflict heavy casualties upon the Caesarean light infantry and cavalry during a skirmish. After this victory the Pompeians became boastful, implying that this heightened spirit resulted from their succes in this skirmish.[130]

Another example predating this one is delivered to us by Appian and concerns Maximus war against Viriathius. While Viriathus had won a series of large victories against the Roman armies,

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[128] Fron. *Str.* 2. 7

[129] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 18

[130] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 14

Maximus evaded direct confrontation and trained his fairly inexperienced army. While doing so he sent out a part of his army in "frequent skirmishing expeditions, thereby making trial of the enemy and instilling confidence in his own men."[131]

Clearly, repeated successful skirmishing could have a positive effect on the morale of an army as a whole. This mechanism was, however not only limited to positive impact. Especially when an army was unable to defend effectively against repeated small-scale attacks, morale was at serious risk. A good example of this is Lucullus´s siege of the the town of Intercatia. Upon arrival at the town, Lucullus had his army surround the town with fieldworks which was standard procedure in a siege by Roman forces. However as the Intercatian cavalry had left the town previous to Lucullus envelopment and kept harassing and skirmishing with the Romans during the night. Appian states that this combined with rampant dysentery had significant psychological impact on the Roman force. So much so that Appian describes them as being rendered unable to properly sleep and stand guard.[132]

Pompeius Aulus attempting to attack Numantia experienced similar difficulties. After having suffered some heavy losses during skirmishing actions, his battered army was ordered to switch targets and assault the town of Temantia instead. Although not explicitly stated, it is likely that the morale of his soldiers had gotten so poor that Pompeius needed an easy win to at least somewhat stabilize their plummeting courage. Unfortunately, this change of targets proved a miscalculation and the Temantians made the situation even worse. They too managed to severely damage the Roman forces, with Appian remarking that at one point that the Romans "spent the night in fear and under arms"[133]

Another good example is Sertorius fight against the army led by Metellus. Plutarch records that after having endured harassing through hit-and-run tactics for a long time while remaining unable to engage the Sertorians in a direct head-to-head confrontation, Metellus army became increasingly desperate. So much so that they apparently even urged the aging Metellus to accept an offer for single combat against Sertorius himself, if only because this would bring an end to their situation, regardless of the outcome of the duel.[134]

Scipio Aemilianus is described by Appian as being very aware of the potential impact of skirmishes on the morale of his troops. He states that for this explicit reason, Scipio forbade outposts to be set up as these would present easy targets and a loss of some of these would mean that his campaign would start with one or multiple defeats, even if they were only small.[135]

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[131] App. *Hisp.* 65

[132] App. *Hisp.* 54

[133] App. *Hisp.* 74

[134] Plu. *Sert.* 12

[135] App. *Hisp.* 87

It is curious that the vast majority of the presented examples showcase the negative impact of skirmishing actions against the Romans instead of the other way around. Possible explanations for this asymmetry could be that Roman commanders were aware of the potential but only acknowledged it as a factor that they needed to guard against instead of utilizing it themselves. Another, equally likely interpretation could be that this negative bias is the result of ancient authors wanting to emphasize the dire state of some situations. Nevertheless, it is clear that the success or failure of skirmishes between opposing armies could have a significant impact on the morale of a fighting force. Roman commanders were very aware of this circumstance and took this into account when weighing the risks on their potential course of action in the tactical and strategical sphere, using it to their advantage or taking measures to limit the damage to the fighting spirit. In this they would not shy away from lying to their own soldiers or strictly censoring the information they had acces to.

7.2 Training

During the Republican period, the Roman state did not possess a standing army but recruited its soldiers from among its citizen-body only when there was an immediate need. If a conflict was over, an army would be disbanded or occasionally, depending on the circumstances, transferred to another theatre of war. Therefore it is not surprising that newly raised armies would lack anything more than superficial military training. It was standard practice that commanders would train their soldiers in the area of operations, before commencing any real offensive maneuvers.

Although classic exercises and drilling in camp or before a deployment was also standard practice, one of the methods to supplement this rather isolated training regimen was to send soldiers on raids against the enemy force. As already mentioned in the chapter on intelligence gathering, this would help not only the commander but also the soldiers become accustomed to the tactics, mannerisms, equipment, strengths and weaknesses etc. of their opponents. Additionally, as Rawlings points out, this would have been a very low-risk endeavor for the commander. Even in the case of catastrophic failure he would only lose a small amount of men and not endanger his whole force but only their morale.[136] Vegetius too advocates for small-scale battles in which soldiers can become accustomed to the chaos, screaming and other horribleness of battle.[137]

These claims are supported by for example Sallusts account of the conduct of Gaius Marius during the war against Jugurtha. Having successfully taken command of the war, Marius is described as starting off with attacking small easy targets and plundering rich areas to embolden and train his soldiers.[138]

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[136] L. Rawlings. 'The Significance of Insignificant Engagements: Irregular Warfare during the Punic Wars'. In *Circum Mare: Themes in Ancient Warfare*, Brill, 2016, 255.

[137] Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* 3.10

[138] Sal. *Jug.* 87

Cato the Elder too makes use of the same methods, encouraging and training his units by sending them off on raiding missions when testing the proverbial waters near Emporiae.[139]

The previous example of Maximus training is soldiers and meanwhile sending a part of his army out on raiding missions against Viriathus is another likely example. Although Appian does not directly relate the skirmishing expeditions and the training of the army to each other, the fact that they both happen at the same time and that Appian mentions that Maximus army gained confidence in themselves as a result of these raiding activities heavily imply that they also doubles as a method of slowly familiarizing his new units with the enemy and battle.[140]

When taken together, these examples all confirm Rawlings assessment of small-scale combat actions being used deliberately as a method to provide new recruits with combat experience without risking the whole army. Additionally, Roman commanders could also let their fresh soldiers become accustomed to the combat environment in a more or less controlled fashion, minimizing risk while still taking offensive action.

7.3 Individual valour in skirmishes

In a highly competitive society like the Roman Empire, individuals going to war would do so not solely for altruistic or patriotic reasons. Especially Roman republican history is littered with examples of individuals exploiting wars for their own personal gain, mainly through the acquisition of plunder and fame. However, not only generals would profit from a successful campaign. Soldiers and officers too could enrich themselves or acquire promotions which would help them climb the social ladder. In his article on irregular warfare during the punic wars, Rawlings demonstrated how skirmishing actions were ideal for such displays of individual *virtus.*

Interestingly however, no direct examples of such actions being performed or rewarded by commanders can be found in the evidence surveyed for this thesis. Nevertheless, a few cases of ancient writers lauding individuals for their courage during skirmishing actions are present.

Pseudo-Caesar for example records combat taking place as a result of an attack by Pompeian skirmishers on Caesarean soldiers, working on earthworks near the river Sammum. He states that the Caesareans were driven further back than intended and only the intervention of two centurions from the fifth legion managed to stabilize the situation. They crossed the river and are described as having fought so zealous that they drove back the entire attacking Pompeian force. Pseudo-Caesars states that they acted with "dash and gallantry" and mentions that both were heavily decorated soldiers. So decorated in fact that an attempt of the Pompeian soldiers to loot the bodies caused a cavalry charge which in turn led to the charging Caesarean cavalry almost becoming

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[139] Liv. 34.13

[140] App. *Hisp.* 65

encircled.[141] Pseudo-Caesars description of this episode reveals that their combat-performance was directly linked to their status.

Another example by Pseudo-Caesar recounts how some cavalrymen dismounted their horses and started fighting as on foot against the opposing Pompeian light infantry. Pseudo-Caesar stresses how unusual this scenario was and stresses the dangers involved stating that normally, the dismounted cavalryman would loose and be killed in such a situation. Nevertheless the action was very successful and drove the Pompeians back to their rampart. His description of the casualties does however reveal that the Caesarean cavalry had been assisted by infantry.[142]

Unfortunately the sources under investigation in this thesis do not directly corroborate Rawlings´s findings and can only provide speculative examples. This is not to say, that the thirst for personal glory was not a motivating factor for Roman soldiers when deciding to take part in skirmishing operations. Rather, it demonstrates the need for further corroborating research and sources of evidence.

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[141] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 23

[142] Caes. *B. Hisp.* 15

8. Conclusion:

The traditional view of combat in ancient warfare is one dominated by set-piece battles and sieges carried out by large concentrated forces numbering in the thousands of men. The objective of this thesis was to challenge this view and to explore the phenomenon of small-scale combat encounters and skirmishing actions in Roman warfare. As a result of the investigation presented in this thesis, several key observations can be made:

Most important is the one presented in the second chapter concerning the use of skirmishing operations as a primary offensive tool.

It has been shown that generally, Roman commanders would prefer to fight a small number of decisive large-scale engagements. Only when this was considered impossible and offensive actions were still deemed to be necessary, skirmishing or raiding campaigns would be launched. It should however be noted that these were not intended to decisively defeat an opposing belligerent but rather to create a strategical situation in which grand decisive battles would again be a viable option. Additionally, the occasional mention of Roman armies suffering significant losses through an accumulation of small-scale battles and the absence of instances of Roman armies doing the same, proves that Roman commanders and military thinkers were aware of this method of conducting warfare but chose to ignore it in so far as that they only took measures to defend against it.

However, this does not man that small-scale combat engagements, or the potential thereof, were not used offensively by the Romans. As chapter three demonstrates, this was very much the case. Harassment of the marching column by a force carrying out hit-and-run attacks would force the attacked part to halt and form up into a defensive formation, thereby slowing down the entire marching column or destroying the army´s internal cohesion. Additionally one or potentially multiple of these small and very mobile harassing forces could also be employed to fix the attention of an opposing army, creating aan opportunity for outmaneuvering or other kinds of deception. An army´s movement could also be impeded by the use of small combat-detachments taking up strategic positions and blocking passageways, potentially forcing entire armies to become stuck, divert their route or turn around entirely.

However, as chapter one demonstrates, Roman commanders were more occupied with protecting their main offensive instrument, the large concentrated army, against these and other small-scale attacks. How they approached this task is explored in chapter four which identifies skirmishing units as essential in providing this security for the main force of an army on campaign. While on the march, small and mobile units would patrol around the marching column establishing a protective perimeter around the army. In this area, they would provide reconnaissance and fight small skirmishes in order to defend the main force against enemy scouts, harassing parties of becoming ambushed entirely. Potentially, this screen of skirmishers would also function as a buffer, fighting

delaying actions and slowing down attacking forces, thereby giving the main bulk of the army time to deploy into an appropriate battle order. This remains true if the army made camp, however in this scenario, these units would take up station in small satellite-outposts. From here they patrolled the perimeter around the marching camp. Although light infantry is mentioned as being an optional part of the skirmishing screen while on the march, it remains unclear if this also applied when te army was encamped. This is mainly due to the ambiguous source material and therefore further study into this matter could clarify this matter.

Another important aspect discussed in this thesis is the role of skirmishing units in foraging and plundering missions. This was the focus of the fifth chapter which identified three important aspects. The most potential for small-scale combat engagements to have significant impact on the tactical or strategical environment was through the targeting of enemy supply lines. As this chapter demonstrates, the interception of supply deliveries by relatively small units, capable of operating mainly behind enemy lines could render entire armies inoperable.

One method of avoiding full dependence on these vulnerable supply lines was plundering or foraging. These activities were often carried out by a large part of, or even the complete army. However, the large area that this army would need to cover presented the risk of parts of the army becoming detached from the rest. This dispersion of forces made them vulnerable to attacks and risked encirclement and defeat in detail. In order to protect the distracted and vulnerable foragers or plunderers, commanders would send large security-detachments to accompany them. They would consist of heavy infantry forming a protective perimeter which was reinforced by light infantry and cavalry patrols. They would leverage their mobility and speed to quickly mount an armed response to emerging threats. When not engaged in patrolling the foraging area or actively skirmishing with opposing forces, this thesis suggests that cavalry would let their horses graze while remaining aware or even mounted. It has also been demonstrated that plundering or foraging expeditions, and in some cases the accompanying cavalry-detachments, would be led by some of the highest ranking officers or even the general himself, illustrating their importance.

Small and fast forces such as cavalry light infantry were also identified as being the ones that would have most likely be involved in attacks on plundering and foraging parties. Essential to this were their speed and increased ability to remain unnoticed compared to a traditional field-army.

Another area of warfare investigated by this thesis in which small-scale combat encounters played an important role is that of intelligence gathering. This thesis argues that by sending out skirmishing units to take prisoners or simply engage in combat, Roman commanders had access to valuable intelligence concerning enemy forces. Aside from the opportunity to capture prisoners, engaging in small battles with opposing forces would give Roman commanders a relatively low-risk method of forming an impression of an enemies fighting style and spirit as well as the equipment, loyalty and general combat-potential of different units. Although this method of gaining intelligence is heavily suggested by our sources, it cannot be definitively confirmed leaving an opportunity for

deeper investigation utilizing a wider variety of sources. A potential question for example would be if this was a more widely shared tactics or if its appearance was only incidental and the result of the initiative of single commanders. Further research into these aspects is therefore recommended.

Lastly the impact of such small engagements on the soldiers themselves has been examined. It has been shown that victory or defeat in small-scale battles could have serious impact on the morale of an army, with commanders attempting to manage the morale of their troops by controlling the narrative. Additionally, a series of small-scale attacks , launched over an extended period of time, could be a powerful factor in sapping away an army´s fighting spirit.

Despite the potential risks however, commanders frequently sent even newly recruited soldiers on skirmishing-missions. Exposing their inexperienced troops to the horrors of battle gave commanders a way of letting them to become accustomed to this violent chaos without risking their whole army in a set-piece battle.

For soldiers this was an attractive prospect as well because fighting in such small units made it easier for individual soldiers to show off their *virtus* in battle, and be noticed and accordingly rewarded by their superiors. This display of individual valour, had been suggested by Rawlings, however this thesis found it impossible to corroborate this. Further investigation of this phenomenon would therefore be advisable as this inequality in evidence may reveal the reasons behind this imbalance of evidence.

When taking all of these aspects together, a picture of Roman warfare emerges in which small-scale combat encounters are an integral part of the functioning of a campaigning army. Although decisive large-scale battles were indeed the desired mode of confrontation for Roman armies, small-scale combat engagements were an essential part of the other aspects of waging war. In many cases, skirmishing detachments would fulfill critical supporting, facilitating the successful operation of the main army, such as the protection of the rest of the army from attacks or starvation. In order to function properly in a campaigning environment a Roman army and its commander would have been reliant on an effective skirmishing force, suffering heavily if an opponent proved superior in this regard.

"Irregular operations" as Rawlings termed them were therefore a multipurpose and flexible but regular part of every Roman military campaign and by no means only an occasional incident.

This has several implications, as the academic potential of small-scale combat engagements has yet to be exhausted. Additionally, its wide appearance over many aspects of ancient warfare and demonstrate its relevance to the study of Roman warfare and ancient warfare as a whole. Because of his, an investigation of other wars fought by the Romans in this regard may be a logical next step. In this particular attention should be paid to (Roman) wars in other regions, who were however contemporary to the period studied in this thesis as well as Rawlings article. This may

give additional insight into the environmental as well as cultural reasons behind the willingness of commanders to employ small-unit-tactics.

Lastly, should these investigations prove fruitful and further precedent for the observations presented in this thesis can be produced, the previously existing paradigm of Roman doctrine and methods of fighting may need be expanded.

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