ROMAN WARFARE

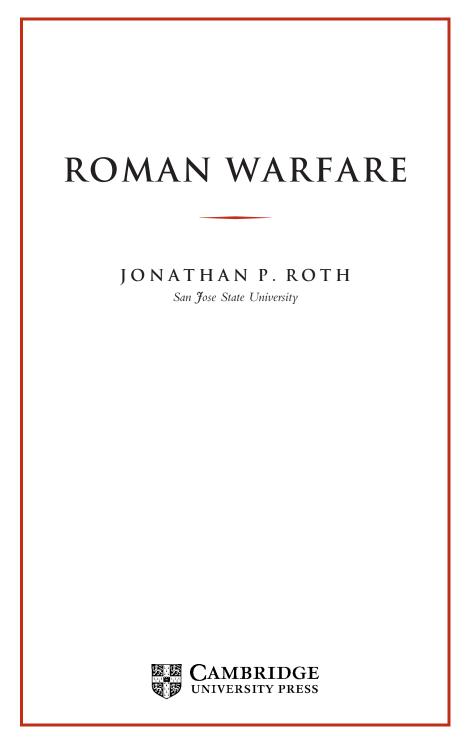
Roman Warfare surveys the history of Rome's fighting forces from their inception in the seventh century BCE to the fall of the Western Empire in the fifth century CE. In nontechnical, lively language, Jonathan P. Roth examines the evolution of Roman warfare over its thousand-year history. He highlights the changing arms and equipment of the soldiers, unit organization and command structure, and the war and battles of each era. The military narrative is used as a context for Rome's changing tactics and strategy and to discuss combat techniques, logistics, and other elements of Roman war. Political, social, and economic factors are also considered.

Full of detail, up to date on current scholarly debates, and richly illustrated with halftones and color plates, *Roman Warfare* is intended for students of the ancient world and military history.

Jonathan P. Roth is a professor of history at San Jose State University. A scholar of Roman military history, he is the author of *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War*.

CAMBRIDGE INTRODUCTION TO ROMAN CIVILIZATION

Cambridge Introduction to Roman Civilization is a program of books designed for use by students who have no prior knowledge of or familiarity with Roman antiquity. Books in this series focus on key topics, such as slavery, warfare, and women. They are intended to serve as a first point of reference for students who will then be equipped to seek more specialized scholarly and critical studies. Texts in these volumes are written in clear, jargon-free language and integrate primary texts into a synthetic narrative that reflects the most up-to-date research. All volumes in the series will be closely linked to readings and topics and presented in the Cambridge Latin Course.



CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press 978-0-521-83028-7 - Roman Warfare Jonathan P. Roth Frontmatter More information

> CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press 32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521537261

© Jonathan P. Roth 2009

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2009

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data Roth, Jonathan P., 1955– Roman warfare / Jonathan P. Roth. p. cm. – (Cambridge introduction to Roman civilization) Includes bibliographical references and index. ISBN 978-0-521-83028-7 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-53726-1 (pbk.) 1. Military art and science – Rome – History. 2. Rome – History, Military. I. Title. II. Series. U35.R68 2009 355.020937–dc22 2008025380 ISBN 978-0-521-83028-7 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-53726-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

	List of Illustrations	page ix
	Acknowledgments	xvii
	Introduction: Sources and Methods	1
1	The Wars of Early Rome (Beginnings to 343 BCE)	7
2	The Conquest of Italy (343–264 BCE)	25
3	The Army's Greatest Challenge: The Punic Wars	
	(264–202 BCE)	39
4	The Army in Republican Society	59
5	Rome's Army Wins an Empire (202–133 BCE)	73
6	The Transformation of the Army (133-64 BCE)	87
7	Caesar's Wars (64–44 BCE)	105
8	Death Throes of the Republic (44-30 BCE)	119
9	Augustus' New Army	133
10	Conquests of the Imperial Army (30 BCE-68 CE)	151
11	The Imperial Army as Society	171
12	War and the Roman Peace (68–191 CE)	191
13	Rome Struggles for Survival (191–285 CE)	213
14	Rome Fights Back (285–378 CE)	231
15	Half an Empire Falls (378–476 CE)	249
	Timeline	267
	Glossary	279
	Glossary of People	287
	Bibliography	295
	Index	303

1	Two Italian hoplite soldiers are shown on plaques	
	found in Palaestrina, the ancient Praeneste, a Latin	
	city that fought both with and against the Romans	
	in wars of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.	page 12
2	A map of central Italy during the time of the Roman	
	monarchy and the early Republic.	15
3	A remnant of the Servian Wall on the Aventine Hill,	
	built with blocks of tufa, a volcanic rock, in the 370s BCE.	
	Note the arched opening for a torsion artillery piece.	17
4	A bronze sculpture of the fourth century BCE,	
	showing two Etruscan hoplites carrying a wounded	
	comrade. It served as the lid for a burial urn, quite	
	possibly that of the injured soldier.	23
5	Two Samnite infantrymen and a cavalryman from a	
	tomb dating to ca. 350-325 BCE. They carry	
	trophies of a victory, perhaps over the Romans.	29
6	The Via Appia about six Roman miles from the walls	
	of Rome, where it is paved with flagstones. The road	
	was begun in 312 BCE and subsequently lined with	
	villas and monumental tombs.	31
7	The sarcophagus of Scipio Barbatus, a consul of 298 BCE.	
	The inscription says in part that he "was a brave and	
	wise man, whose handsome looks (forma) were equal	
	to his courage in battle (virtus)."	37

8	Bronze coin issued by the Mamertines, Italian	
	mercenaries who had seized the town of Messena	
	and made it a base for piracy and banditry. Threatened	
	by the Syracusans and Carthaginians, the Mamertines	
	appealed for help to the Romans, whose intervention	
	led to the First Punic War.	41
9	The prow of a warship and its ram shown on an as,	
	a Roman bronze coin minted at the end of the third	
	century BCE. Below the vertical line one can see the ship's	
	forward "castle," where archers could be stationed.	41
10	A map of the Carthaginian Empire. The islands of	
	Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica had been lost by the	
	time the Carthaginians conquered Spain.	45
11	Three stages of the Battle of Cannae, fought between	
	the Romans and Carthaginians in 216 BCE.	47
12	A terracotta statuette of an elephant carrying a castle	
	with two shields hanging on it and an African driver,	
	illustrating either the Punic Wars in the third century	
	BCE or the Roman wars against the Hellenistic	
	monarchies in the second.	51
13	Three legionaries of the Second Punic War: a hastatus,	
	a triarius, and a veles, as reconstructed by Angus McBride.	55
14	A reconstruction of the layout of the Roman daily	
	marching camp as described by Polybius, a Greek	
	historian living in Rome.	56
15	Emperor Marcus Aurelius enters Rome in triumph.	
	Although this relief dates from the second century CE,	
	the ritual had changed little from Republican times.	68
16	A relief on Trajan's Column shows a barge, part of a	
	convoy carrying soldiers, being loaded with tents in	
	the harbor of a fort serving as a supply depot.	82
17	A Roman silver denarius from the end of the third	
	century BCE shows the two gods Castor and Pollux,	
	called the Dioscuri, dressed as Roman cavalrymen.	84

18	A stone relief illustrates two Roman soldiers being enrolled	
	at a military census. It is from the so-called Altar of	
	Domitius Ahenobarbus, dating to around 100 BCE.	89
19	A scene from the same relief shows an officer, possibly	
	a military tribune, watching a sacrifice being carried	
	out during the military census.	89
20	A silver denarius minted in 103 BCE shows a Roman	
	defending a wounded fellow soldier in a sword fight	
	with a barbarian.	94
21	A map of the Roman Empire around 60 BCE, the	
	period of the Roman Civil Wars.	102
22	This idealized marble portrait of Gaius Julius Caesar	
	originally would have been painted in lifelike colors.	107
23	A silver denarius issued by Julius Caesar in 48 or	
	47 BCE shows a trophy with arms and equipment	
	captured from the Gauls.	111
24	A painting by Peter Connolly reconstructs the Roman	
	circumvallation at the siege of Alesia in 52 BCE. Moats,	
	obstacles, and double walls with wooden guardtowers	
	made for a formidable defense against attempts to	
	break in or out.	113
25	On a denarius issued sometime between 32 and	
	29 BCE, Octavian is called "Caesar son of the god	
	(Caesar)." He is shown as a general directing his troops	
	and carrying a spear, his military cloak or pallium	
	billowing out behind him.	121
26	A warship on a relief dating to the late first century	
	BCE. One can clearly see the forward "castle" as well	
	as soldiers ready to board an enemy ship.	129
27	A relief shows a group of Praetorian Guardsmen,	
	probably from the late first century CE. An aquila	
	or eagle standard is visible on the left.	136
28	A bronze military diploma of a Spanish cavalryman,	
	Gaius Valerius Celsus, who served in a Pannonian unit	

	stationed in Britain. Issued in 103 CE, it documents	
	the awarding of citizenship to Celsus, his wife, and	
	his children at the end of his auxiliary service.	140
29	A relief from Trajan's Column shows legionaries	
	operating a carroballista, a light torsion artillery piece	
	mounted on a wagon for mobility.	142
30	A sestertius of Caligula shows the emperor making a	
	formal speech or <i>adlocutio</i> to the cohorts of the	
	Praetorian Guard. The troops stand at attention with	
	their eagle standards.	145
31	A painting by Peter Connolly represents a	
	second-century CE hippica gymnasia, a mock battle	
	used to train cavalry in throwing javelins. The elaborate	
	metal masks were worn to protect the face.	148
32	A marble statue of Augustus from the first century CE.	
	On his breastplate is a depiction of Parthians returning	
	Roman standards lost at the Battle of Carrhae.	154
33	A similar statue, found at Pompeii, represents Marcus	
	Holconius Rufus, an important businessman and civic	
	leader. Although he never served in the army, Augustus	
	gave him the honorary rank of military tribune, so	
	he is portrayed in an officer's uniform.	154
34	A bronze statuette from the second century CE, perhaps	
	of a god in the dress of a legionary soldier. The figure	
	wears segmented armor (lorica segmentata), the protective	
	leather strips called <i>pteryges</i> , and a crested helmet.	160
35	The Roman world in the time of Augustus and the	
	Julio-Claudian emporers	162
36	A sestertius of Nero shows him and another horseman on a	
	decursio, a series of complex and rapid equestrian maneuvers	
	used to train cavalrymen. Nero was an excellent rider	
	and may well have participated in such exercises.	168
37	A wooden tablet from the auxiliary fort at Vindolanda,	
	now in England, dating to the late first or early	

	second century CE. Listing the names of soldiers	
	and the prices of various items ranging from bacon	
	to a horse, it may represent the accounts of a	
	private trader.	175
38	Trajan's Column shows wine barrels being offloaded	
	from a cargo ship. The fort on the river is a supply	
	depot for the Roman army invading Dacia.	175
39	A scene on Trajan's Column of Roman soldiers taking	
	care of the wounded. On the right, a cavalryman's	
	thigh is being bandaged, and on the left, a legionary,	
	wounded in the arm or shoulder, is being aided.	177
40	Surgical instruments found at Richborough, England,	
	the site of a Roman camp. Since there was also a	
	civilian settlement there, it is not certain that these	
	examples actually belonged to an army physician,	
	but similar ones would have been used in military	
	medicine.	177
41	A reconstruction of the legionary fortress of the Second	
	Augusta at Caerleon in Wales. Called Isca by the Romans,	
	the modern name of the town derives from Castra	
	Legionis, "camp of the legion."	179
42	Legionaries building a fortification wall as depicted on	
	Trajan's Column. The soldiers are working in armor –	
	does this reflect reality or is it an artistic convention?	181
43	The tombstone of an auxiliary cavalryman named	
	Longinus Biarta. In the upper register he reclines on	
	a couch in civilian dress; his horse and a military	
	slave (calo) are shown in the lower register.	184
44	A painting of Vindolanda near Hadrian's Wall, around	
	200 CE, as reconstructed by Peter Connolly. Note the	
	tightly packed barracks, the stone wall, and the town	
	growing up outside the fort's gate.	188
45	A scene on the Column of Marcus Aurelius, dating to	
	193 CE, shows soldiers looting a village and assaulting	

	women. Such brutality toward conquered peoples was	
	not viewed negatively but as a sign of Roman strength.	193
46	A scene on Trajan's Column shows legionaries assaulting	
	a Dacian town. The <i>testudo</i> or "tortoise" formation,	
	with shields held overhead, protected them from	
	missiles hurled by the defenders.	196
47	Modern-day reenactors dressed as first-century CE	
	legionaries form a <i>testudo</i> or tortoise formation. Such	
	reenactments can help us to understand scenes such as	
	that seen on Trajan's Column.	196
48	Roman auxiliaries, probably dismounted cavalry, attack	
	Dacians in a scene on Trajan's Column. Note the	
	characteristic oval shields, as opposed to the rectangular	
	scuta carried by legionaries.	199
49	The emperor Trajan is shown on his column conferring	
	with high-ranking officers. This image emphasizes his	
	actual participation in battle, in contrast with emperors	
	who did not campaign personally.	201
50	In this dramatic scene on Trajan's Column, King	
	Decebalus of Dacia, threatened with capture, commits	
	suicide. The soldier reaching toward the king is	
	Tiberius Claudius Maximus, an auxiliary officer, who	
	brought the king's head to Trajan.	201
51	The foundations of a small stone fort, or mile castle,	
	that served as a base for the soldiers patrolling a section	
	of Hadrian's Wall. The wall was built in the 120s CE	
	to protect the northern frontier of the province of	
	Britain.	204
52	This second-century CE bronze helmet of the Weisenau	
	Type was found near Hebron, Israel, then in the	
	province of Judaea. It may date to the Bar Kokhba	
	Revolt of 132–135 CE.	206
53	A sestertius issued by Hadrian shows the emperor at the	
	head of standard bearers. The legend under the soldiers'	

	feet reads disciplina, "military discipline," suggesting	
	that this image represents an <i>ambulatio</i> or training march.	207
54	The army marches over a pontoon bridge in a scene on	
	Trajan's Column. As an artistic convention, each soldier's	
	pack is shown held high over his head to make it visible,	
	although in fact his shield was strapped onto his back	
	and the pack slung over it.	209
55	A relief representing the Roman virtue of clemency	
	(clementia) as being exhibited by a conqueror. Here,	
	Emperor Marcus Aurelius spares the lives of two	
	barbarians begging for mercy.	211
56	In a scene on the sarcophagus of Hostilian, who ruled	
	Rome for one month in July 251 CE, the emperor is	
	shown leading soldiers to victory over barbarians.	
	In fact, Hostilian never fought in battle.	217
57	Two legionaries shown in fighting poses from a	
	relief found in the legionary fortress at Mogontiacum	
	(Mainz). The lead soldier crouches with his gladius	
	at the ready, while behind him a comrade shields	
	him from above.	220
58	A view of the walls of Rome built by the emperor	
	Aurelian between 271 and 275 CE, which still surround	
	much of the city. They were made of brick, ultimately	
	16 meters (52 feet) high, with towers every hundred	
	Roman feet apart.	227
59	A bronze medallion of the emperor Tacitus (275–276 CE),	
	with the legend <i>adventus Aug(usti)</i> : "Arrival of the Emperor	
	(in Rome)." Tacitus is preceded by the goddess Victory	
	and followed by two soldiers representing the army.	229
60	A scene from the Arch of Constantine, completed in	
	315 CE, probably represents the siege of Verona.	
	Constantine's soldiers, with round shields and spears,	
	attack Maxentius' troops – a rare example of Romans	
	depicted killing other Romans.	234

61	Reenactors wear reconstructed equipment of	
	fourth-century CE Roman infantry. The round or	
	oval shields and scale armor are characteristic of the	
	late Empire, as are the lances.	234
62	This gold solidus, minted in Antioch for the emperor	
	Valens, mixes pagan and Christian images. In his left	
	hand the emperor holds a statue of the goddess Victory	
	and in the right a military standard, with a Christian	
	cross prominently displayed.	240
63	A map of the late Roman Empire around the late	
	fourth century CE.	244
64	A scene from a mosaic of the third or fourth century	
	CE shows two Roman soldiers taking part in a wild	
	animal hunt. The symbol on the tunic of the pointing	
	figure is a crux gammata, a Mithraic symbol that passed	
	into Christian usage.	251
65	This ivory diptych, a kind of ceremonial plaque, dates	
	to around 395 CE and represents Flavius Stilicho,	
	the half-Vandal, half-Roman officer. Stilicho rose to	
	command the Roman armies of the Western Empire.	255
66	This page from the Notitia dignitatum, dating to the 420s	
	CE, refers to the Master of Offices (magister officiorum) of	
	the West. It shows the shield patterns of units under this	
	official's command, as well as equipment made by arms	
	factories (fabricae) that he managed.	259
67	Late Roman heavy cavalry, or <i>clibinarii</i> , are	
	shown marching past the Arch of Constantine in a	
	painting by Christa Hook.	260
68	A map showing the political situation after the collapse	
	of the Western Roman Empire.	265

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks are due to Cambridge University Press for the opportunity to work on this project, and especially to Beatrice Rehl, my longsuffering editor, Barbara Folsom for her copyediting, and Holly Johnson for production editing. The careful reading of various drafts of this work by colleagues such as Jasper Oorthuys, Myles McDonnell, Gaius Stern, Jean-Jacques Aubert, and Robert Knapp saved me from many egregious errors. Many thanks to Nick Marshall and the Batavi for their kind help in providing a picture of late Roman reenactment. My brothers, David and Andrew, both took time from busy schedules to read drafts and offer suggestions. As this book has no footnotes, I wish to acknowledge here the many works, both academic and popular, written by my fellow students of Roman military history. In addition, I extend my thanks to the many anonymous authors of articles in Wikipedia, which provided an enormous and readily available handbook on any number of subjects. My colleagues and friends at San Jose State University have been very supportive through this entire process. My largest debt, however, is to my wife, Susan Heidenreich, who helped me in a myriad of ways, including wording, organization, and illustration. Without her constant encouragement and support this book quite literally would never have been written.