

The RAG

Cleopatra and Arsinoe —

Two Tales of Tombs

IN THIS ISSUE

- Everyday Writing from the Roman Frontiers: 2. Libya
David Kennedy
- Recollections of a septic grave digger: Cyrene (Libya) 1956
Michael Crouch
- Ancient Cyrene in Libya
Francesca Radcliffe
- The battle of Cannae: Some considerations in the light of recent publications
Martin Porr

2—3 Two recent archaeological developments have brought Cleopatra into the news. They each concern tombs—her sister Arsinoe’s tomb and her own.

4—5 A skull of a skeleton found early last century in ‘The Octagon’ a tomb in Ephesus in Turkey was recently reconstructed using measurements of the skeleton taken in the 1920s. The skull itself was lost in the 1940s. The reconstructed skull turned out to be elongated and so arose the following argument which has become the subject of a recent BBC documentary. *Cleopatra arranged for her sister Arsinoe to be murdered. Arsinoe was duly murdered on the steps of the Temple of Diana in Ephesus. Because the skull is elongated Arsinoe was African and not Greek, therefore Cleopatra was African and not Greek.*

8—11 The flaws in the argument are obvious. Are the skeletal remains those of Arsinoe? Maybe they are; maybe they aren’t. Between this problem and a second major flaw are a number of lesser flaws, not least whether or not the measurements taken in the 1920s were taken and recorded accurately. Thus, we cannot know for sure that Arsinoe and Cleopatra were sisters. Even if King Ptolemy was the father of both we cannot know that they had the same mother. The Ptolemies are not famous for having set standards of sexual propriety, unless for a somewhat low standard of endogamous relationships, in which case Cleopatra would more likely have been Greek— even if also perhaps mentally challenged!

Why should it matter to anyone? It shouldn’t, but the fact is that Cleopatra has become a Caucasian possession — to suggest that Cleopatra was black is to interfere with a cherished European story assumed to be about Europeans, Julius Caesar, Mark Antony and Cleopatra. After all Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton were not Africans! On the other hand ethnocentrism is not the exclusive property of Caucasian Europeans. To some Africans and those of African descent the discovery of ‘Arsinoe’s’ skeleton with its ‘African’ skull has been of no little interest. Indeed, whether the ancient Egyptians

were black and whether the Classical world was deeply indebted to a black African civilization, were matters the subject of a 3 volume work by Martin Bernal: *Black Athena. The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. Bernal’s thesis has been controversial enough to spark lawsuits and vicious academic exchanges. In that regard see Mary Lefkowitz *History Lesson. A Race Odyssey* a book about her experiences following her rejection of some of the Bernal thesis as being a case of turning myth into history.



Image Foundry Studios Ltd

A 3D cyber impression of a Cleopatra of mixed ethnicity by Image Foundry Studios, Ltd, Manchester, compiled from images of Cleopatra on ancient artefacts.

Less acerbic in its connotations is the recent discovery of shafts inside a temple, Taposiris Magna, some 50 kms to the west of Alexandria in Egypt giving rise to speculation that one of the shafts may be the tomb of Cleopatra and Antony.

Encouragement to the theory has been the discovery at the site of the head of a statue of Cleopatra, coins embossed with Cleopatra’s image and a mask that some believe belonged to Mark Antony. The theoretical basis to the speculation is Plutarch’s assertion that Cleopatra and Mark Antony were buried together.

All in all this tale too seems to have more than a bit of fairy about it. (Ed.)



Isis: Page 6

Everyday Writing from the Roman Frontiers: 2. Libya

David Kennedy

Deep in the Libyan desert lie a number of extremely well-preserved Roman forts. Some have building inscriptions and allow us to date their construction to the reign of the Emperor Septimius Severus. That is no surprise. Severus was from Libya – born in Lepcis Magna and of at least partial native Punic extraction. He visited his homeland in AD 202-3, beautified his home city on a lavish scale and promoted further advances south into the desert.

One of the forts of this period is that at the place now called Bu Ngem (pronounced Boon-jem). It lies 330 km southeast of Tripoli at an oasis in an area of sand desert. In Roman times it was called Gholaia. We know the name because French excavators at the site recovered 158 ostraca from in and around the Principia, the fort's HQ building, which preserve details on this ancient scrap paper of the garrison and its activities. After a long period of gestation reading and interpreting texts written with a brush, the final report was published in 1992. It has taken years for the fascinating information they contain to be disseminated and even now the book – published in Libya – is hard to find. The search is worth the effort as the ostraca are a little treasure trove of fascinating details of the garrison and its activities.



First the name 'Bu Ngem' – presumably it is a Romanization of a native, probably Berber name for the oasis.

The garrison was composed of auxiliaries – troops recruited from provincial populations rather than citizen legionaries. Like troops throughout the Roman Empire, irrespective of their origin and cultural identity, they became Roman in their organization and behaviour.

Two of these documents are discussed below, adapted from their presentation in Adrian Goldsworthy's superb, *The Complete Roman Army*, London (2006). Like other caches of documents from the Roman Empire, they give us fascinating insights on life in one of the thousands of military posts on the frontiers.

Document 5 (A Report):

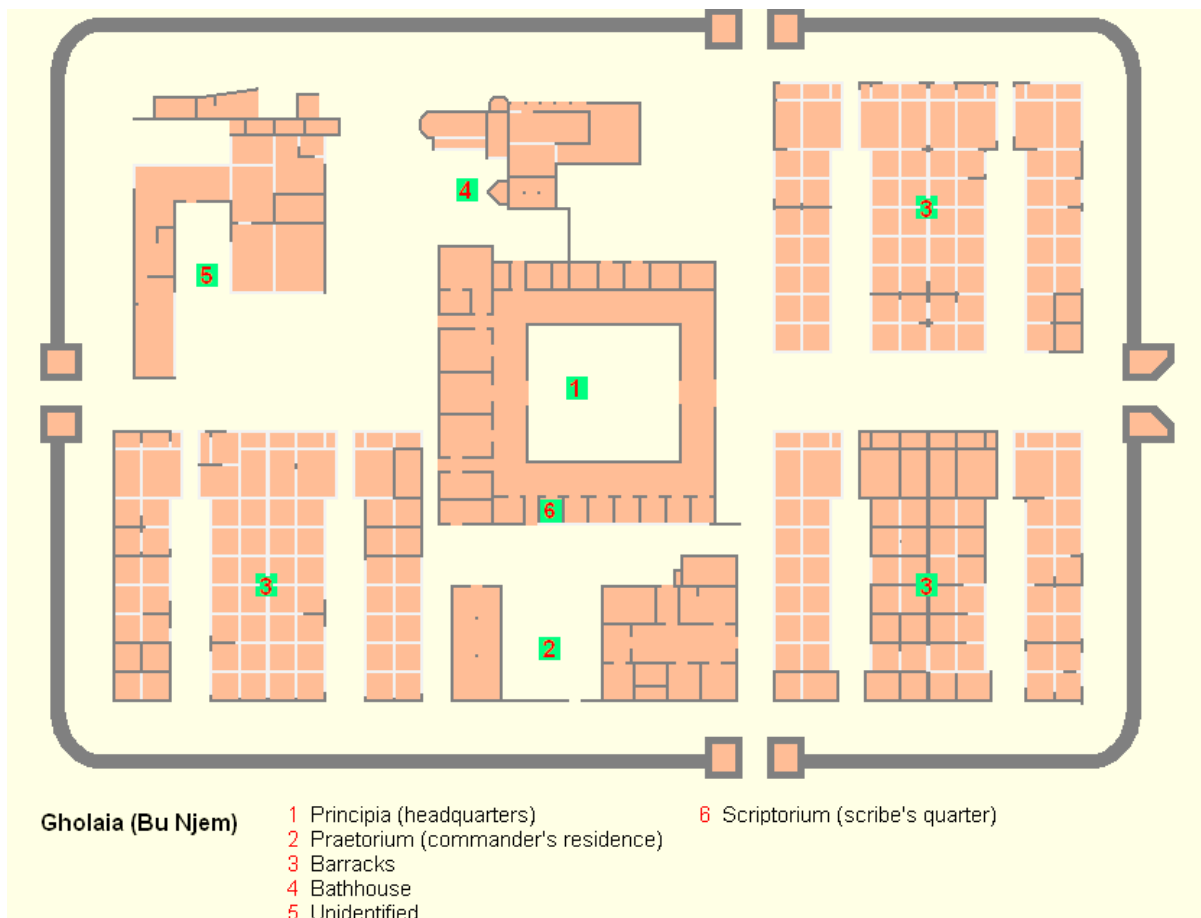
XVI KALendas IVLias Nvmervs		16 June, number	
		Number of recruits	
		of which cavalry	96
TIRONES Nvmervs	LXXXXVI	quintanari	64
IN HIS EQvites	LXIII	To the bathhouse	3
QVINTANARI	III	From the shows	11
AD BALNEVM	XXII	To the commander of the auxiliaries	8
DESPECTacvLIS	VIII	To the dromedaries' station	1
ADPRAEPOSITVM	I	Optio	1
AD STationem CAMELLARI-orvm	I	item Rufus	1
OPTIO	I	On sick leave	1
ITEM RVFVS	I	Exempted	4
AEGRI	I	Other details	28
EXCVSANTVR	III	The bathhouse received	26
RELIQVIMVNIFICES	XXVIII	(Illegible)	
BALNEVS ACCIPIT	XXVI		

In the report above we are told there are 96 soldiers, 64 of whom are horsemen. The duties assigned are then set out. No less than 11 are assigned “to the bathhouse” and later 26 are listed as at the bathhouse. Presumably the first group are there as a duty; the latter as a perk. A reminder, too, that throughout the empire, even the most remote forts, from Central Scotland to the Libyan Desert, had its bath and provided this remarkable amenity of health and recreation. A single soldier is assigned to the dromedary post – an obvious component of a unit required to patrol the desert as well as secure the water supply. Only one man is listed as sick.

Document 36 (A Report)

		Sent out to cut wood for the bathhouse	
MISSVS AD LIGNVM BALNEI	I	Guard duty	1
ADSERVATOR	I	On sick leave	2
AEGRI	III	Julius Ianuarius	4
IVLIVS IANVARIVS		Caecilius <...>	
CAECILIVS <...>			

This second report (above) is more damaged and gives the duties of just 7 men. In this case four are sick. Two are on guard duty. A single man has been given the important but thankless duty of collecting fuel for the baths. In that environment the scope for collecting fuel must have been limited. One might have expected animal dung but the text explicitly says he is on wood-cutting duty.



Reference: R. MARICHAL, *LES OSTRACA DE BU NJEM (Libya Antiqua, supplement vii)*. Tripoli: Grande Jamahira Arabe, Libyenne, 1992.

Next issue: Vindolanda

Recollections Of A 'Septic-Grave-Digger': Cyrene (Libya) 1956

Michael Crouch



Michael Crouch is currently undertaking a PhD in History at UWA, part-time. During 1954-57 he was an undergraduate at Cambridge, reading Economics and Law. In an effort to escape the British summer during the Long Vacation, along with some twenty other mainly non-archaeological students, he volunteered for the 1955 Cambridge University Expedition to Libya, to help excavate a trench, in the huge Haua Fteah cave, east of Benghazi, under the direction of the fanatical Dr. Charles McBurney, a Cambridge prehistorian. During that long, hot summer he and his fellow 'slaves' gained the sobriquet of 'septic-grave-diggers' bestowed on them by the immaculately turned-out British Army training team, stationed nearby. In 1956 Michael returned to Libya, this time to Cyrene, to assist Professor Richard Goodchild with his work on the Greco-Roman remains of the city.



One might have thought that after the miseries of the previous year's work, working a ten-hour day under primitive conditions, earning neither the appreciation of our Leader nor much job-satisfaction, that to return to Libya for more of the same was



Cyrene in 1956

masochistic to the extreme. But it wasn't: for one thing McBurney was safely back in Cambridge brooding over his finds and wondering whether he could beat his peers to publication. For another, the gentle and courteous Dick Goodchild, in charge of the Cyrene excavations would be a joy to live with and work alongside. Dick had extended an invitation to those of us who could make our own way back to Libya in 1956, to be housed and fed by him. Then there was the fact that Cyrene was located in the cool hills above that pestilential coastal plain, where swarms of flies had guaranteed a septic scratch from a flint blade resulted in swollen glands by the evening. But most of all, I would be working in the dramatic surrounds of one of the great Greco-Roman cities of North Africa. This was civilisation! Villas, statues, columns, paved streets ... not a burin in sight.



Apollonia, the port for Cyrene. Much of the old port is now underwater and can clearly be viewed from the surface on a calm day

Originally the most important Greek city in North Africa, Cyrene was founded in the 7th century BC. In 96 BC the Romans took possession of Cyrenaica, and it became a province of Rome 18 years later. Thereafter, it enjoyed a period of peace until a Jewish revolt in 115 AD caused widespread destruction.



Michael emerging from the sewer

Following reconstruction of the city, principally under the Emperor Hadrian, Cyrene again entered a period of prosperity. In AD 365, an earthquake destroyed much of the city. As Rome declined, so did Cyrene until it was just a spectacular ruin which includes the Sanctuary and Temple of Apollo, the Acropolis, the Forum, and the Temple of Zeus. A mainly Arab workforce worked under Goodchild's direction to clear the rubble of a thousand years; small dump-trucks on rails criss-crossed the various sites and, dominating the whole operation, were the gigantic recumbent columns of the Temple of Zeus that lay as witness to that devastating earthquake.



Michael's find

I was the only one of the 1955 septic-grave-diggers who actually made it to Cyrene. Getting there was vastly enjoyable—and this at time when backpackers were a very rare species. I spent a few days in Paris, parking myself for a few nights under the Pont du Passy. Train to Marseilles and the next day onto the *Ville de*

Tunis, 5th-class (deck) in company with a disgruntled battalion of French troops bound for that dreadful war in Algeria. I caught a local bus through Tunisia, accompanied by friendly, patriotic Boy-Scouts who sang lustily of the freedom of the Motherland (the Arab world under the leadership of the Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser was beginning to actively resent the French and British presence on Arab soil). From Tripoli it was a huge oil tanker towing a bowser that took me ever so slowly along the North-African shoreline to Benghazi and from there a lift to join Dick Goodchild in Cyrene. When I think that I only worked for about a month with him and one other student, I might have wondered at the time whether it had been worth it—but not really. The highlight was being lowered on a rope down an ancient privy into the main sewer of the old Roman city.



The ruined villa from which entrance was made to the sewer'

The other student and I crawled along a narrow tunnel that opened out into the great sewer in which we could walk upright—the first persons to set foot down there for 1,500 years. The walls were constructed of large stone blocks and the roof was vaulted, reminiscent of the London Underground. We found a large Corinthian column, smashed pottery, tiles—and, nearby, a metre-tall statue of 'an attendant of the Nymph Cyrene.' Her torso was of limestone and her marble head was lying nearby (apparently when someone in the household died their statue was smashed, but eventually the torsos were recycled, with just the heads being replaced). She is now in the Cyrene museum.

I then quite fortuitously joined another famous Cambridge archaeologist of the period, Eric Higgs, who was prospecting for flints in the desert south of Sirte (still dangerous because of war-time mines). Getting back to Cambridge was assured. Very leisurely and enjoyable it was, after the frenetic McBurney expedition, a gentle if lengthy drive back to England in late September, again via Tunis, in time for Term.

It's hard getting into Libya these days—and expensive—so I haven't been back, but that part of Libya, I believe, is crawling with archaeologists: prehistorians, classicists—the lot. I wonder how many of them ever think of the earlier generations, pioneers of a the period before oil was discovered, when the deserts were still strewn with the debris of the North African campaigns of World War II—and when this particular 'septic-grave-digger' had only the immediate challenges of getting back to England.

Ancient Cyrene in Libya

Francesca Radcliffe

In March this year I had the opportunity to join a small group¹ for a 10-day visit to Libya. I had never been to this country before, and this seemed to be too good an opportunity to miss. Some years ago I had met Philip Kenrick, our tour leader, and this encouraged me to join the group. Philip has known and worked in Libya for many years and travelled extensively all over North Africa and Europe. His enthusiasm is infectious, his knowledge vast and he has just written a most lively and interesting guide on Tripolitania,² and a forthcoming one on Cyrenaica is eagerly awaited. We visited a number of coastal sites, in both regions, all extremely interesting, but I shall concentrate my short article on the site of Cyrene alone, as it is one of the sites I most enjoyed. Cyrene lies near the modern town of Al-Bayda, midway between Benghazi and Tobruk in Cyrenaica, the eastern region of Libya bordering with Egypt. The remains of the ancient city are very extensive at the edge of a plateau, the Jebel Akhdar, 13 km from the coast and 600 metres above sea level. The plateau falls dramatically down to a narrow coastal plain whose 200m cliffs in turn drop into the sea. The setting is breathtakingly beautiful and impressive.

The history of how the Greeks settled in Cyrene is known from many classical sources. I enjoyed reading Herodotus' account which is full of colourful and intriguing details.³ Cyrene's history can be briefly summarised: a group of Greek inhabitants from Thera (modern Santorini), just north of Crete, consulted the Oracle of Apollo in Delphi after their island suffered a terrible drought - they wanted a land to settle with a good source of water. After a number of failed attempts, they finally landed on the northern coast of Libya; a north-easterly wind - not unknown in the Mediterranean - must have helped their sailing. The coast of Cyrenaica is but a short distance southwest of Crete (map below), and eventually they were led inland by the local inhabitants. There they finally settled.

Many were the attractions of their new-found land: friendly locals, sheltered havens in a somewhat treacherous coast-line, extremely fertile soil, and no lack of springs and rain (as we witnessed during our visit) due to the geology and geographi-



cal position on the high plateau, close to the sea. As a special bonus there grew a medicinal plant called *silphium* (which was in great demand and exported all over the Greek empire and was eventually harvested to extinction) which became one of the sources, if not *the* source, of the wealth of Cyrene. This is amply demonstrated by the richness of its ruins. The city, modelled on

Delphi, whose famous oracle the people of Cyrene were so keen to consult, has a lavish number of temples, tombs, a vast Agora, a Gymnasium/Forum, at least four Theatres, a Hippodrome not to mention a number of Greek and Roman Baths.



Cyrenaica, and Cyrene, were added peacefully to the Roman empire when Ptolemy VII bequeathed them in his will to the Roman people. Although long prosperous, the city suffered major destruction during the Jewish revolt in AD 115. Its subsequent decline was halted for a while under Septimius Severus (AD 193-211) but received the *coup-de-grace* during a powerful earthquake in AD 365, after which sections of the town were abandoned. Some of these have only been recently discovered and when possible may be excavated.⁴

Some areas of the city were abandoned from the 3rd century onwards at the time of the barbarian invasions. In the 5th century, the defensive system was reshuffled, a great part of the easternmost town was abandoned and a new wall was erected to defend it on that side. During these times and in the following periods much building material was robbed and reused for the construction of early Christian churches and other buildings nearby. A great number of pagan statues were also lost, burnt in five Byzantine lime-kilns, whose foundations still stand on the south side of the Sanctuary of Apollo. By the time of the Arab conquest in the 7th century AD Cyrene had been almost completely abandoned. It lay buried but not forgotten until rediscovered in the 18th and 19th century by travellers and explorers: Lemaire in

1705 was the first, followed in 1821-22 by the Beechey brothers, who found the Temple of Zeus.

In 1861 two British naval officers, R. M. Smith and E. A. Porcher, started excavating this great Temple of Zeus. Other excavations in the city followed in the 1860s under the aegis of the British Museum, and in 1910 an American excavation was interrupted by the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war. During this excavation an archaeologist was murdered, the story worthy of a thriller by Agatha Christie.⁵

The Italians having invaded Cyrenaica in 1911, inevitably set up an army base right on top of the ruins at Cyrene and in the winter of 1914 during a torrential thunderstorm the headless statue, of what became known as the Venus of Cyrene, emerged from the mud in what we now know are the Baths of Trajan. This handsome statue, dated to the 2nd C AD, was taken to Rome and displayed in the Museo Nazionale for almost 95 years. It was returned by the Italian government just before our visit, and now stands proudly in Cyrene again in its small museum, a delightful "storeroom" full of most remarkable treasures (photo below and opposite a photo of a statue of Iris in the Museum).



Following the discovery of the Venus, Italian archaeologists started to excavate the site of the Sanctuary of Apollo and large areas of the Forum and Agora until WW II brought these excavations to a halt.⁶ In 1954, work was resumed by the Cyrenaican Department of Antiquities⁷ in conjunction with Italian archaeologists of the University of Urbino.

Visitors like me may well find the chronology of the present site somewhat confusing, and it is a great challenge to try to disentangle which bit was built when and by whom, and one really needs to be guided by expert knowledge. What we see of the ancient city today is mainly its Hellenistic framework: foundations of buildings crammed together, either reconstructed or

newly-built in Roman times, and in some cases partially re-erected in modern times. The stone is the local soft limestone which did not stand up to the harsh winds, biting sands and lashing rains, and has disintegrated in places over the centuries.



In the area of the Sanctuary of Apollo (photo above), there are many buildings, temples, a theatre and baths among others and the famous Fountain of Apollo which was the prime cause for the city's being established on this site: two major springs originate in the limestone plateau nearby. The founding of the city is linked to the legend of the Greek nymph Kurana (or Kurene), a beautiful maiden with whom Apollo fell in love, brought to Libya and married on this site; she became the local divinity and the city took her name.⁸ Another story tells about Kurana killing a lion that was ravaging the countryside and thus gaining this kingdom and becoming its queen. This became a favourite subject for statues during Roman times and, as the emblem of Cyrene, also appeared in coins which feature a woman strangling a lion with her bare hands.

The temple dedicated to Apollo (photo. below), is the most important monument of the Sanctuary. It incorporates the remains of three successive buildings. The standing Doric columns, restored in the 2nd century AD after the Jewish revolt, were overturned in the earthquake of 365 and have been re-erected by modern excavators.



Not far from this temple is the *Strategeion* (photo overleaf), fully restored and re-roofed by the Italian archaeologists in the 1930s. This 4th C BC building dedicated to Apollo was built by

three generals (*Strategoï*) from Cyrene, but its earlier use is uncertain. In the earlier Roman period the building was repaired and rededicated to the Emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37). All this we know because a statue of the emperor was found with an inscription recording the dedication on its base. How delightful to find in a place so many inscriptions telling us what was happening. And Cyrene is blessed with a great number of them, now mostly stored in the museum, which must have been manna for the archaeologists digging here and for historians researching into her past.



(c) Francesca Radcliffe

On the eastern hill of the city, a short distance away, stands the temple of Zeus (photo below), in splendid isolation, the surrounding areas not having been excavated. This temple, the biggest in Cyrene, with its colossal Doric columns was built during the 6th century BC in the local stone, quarried nearby. The temple was destroyed by Jewish rebels during the uprising in AD 115, its interior was rebuilt after the revolt and the reconstruction completed under the emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 160-181). What we see today, is the modern restoration, started in 1967 and finished in 1991, by Sandro Stucchi, the Italian archaeologist who directed the re-building. Forlorn, abandoned & rusting behind the temple are the rails tracks and the machinery used during this operation: moving and raising such massive blocks of stone must have been a monumental undertaking.



(c) Francesca Radcliffe

This temple (photo above) of gigantic proportions, slightly larger than the Parthenon in Athens, has 8 columns on the façade and 17 along each side; inside the west end of the temple a masonry platform was built to support a colossal marble statue, some parts thought to have been of gilded plaster, of a seated Zeus, twelve times life size, similar to the famous statue of Zeus at Olympia. Not much remains of this statue: a few fingers and toes are on display in the museum.

Also displayed in the museum is an older and very fine life-size head of Zeus (photo below), thought to belong to an earlier cult, and which was pieced together from over a hundred fragments.



(c) Francesca Radcliffe

In front of the temple, on the eastern side, stand several blocks with a dedicatory huge inscription, fragments of the monumental architrave, dated to the times of Claudius (AD 41-54).

Cyrene is one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, yet today it is also one of the most neglected and endangered sites in the Mediterranean. When we visited this stunning and unforgettable place we were almost the only visitors, which was ideal for us but I am sure a few more visitors would have been welcomed both to help its upkeep and the local economy.

Notes:

1. Organised by Ace Study Tours in Cambridge. <http://www.cestudytours.co.uk/>
2. Philip Kenrick, *Tripolitania, Libya Archaeological Guides*, Silphium Press, 2009
3. Herodotus *The Histories*, Penguin Classics, 1996, pp107, 169, 293-95, 308
4. In 2000 Professor Mario Luni of the University of Urbino uncovered a Greek Sanctuary dedicated to the goddess Demeter and in successive years of excavations a theatre, a monumental gate and other features of Hellenistic date came to light. They were all destroyed by the earthquake, and never built over. An important project at Cyrene is being developed and implemented through a Global Heritage Fund-led partnership between the Second University of Naples (Italy), the Libyan Department of Antiquities, and the Libyan Ministry of Culture. This programme is the "first project involving Libyans, Italians, and Americans working together and aims to implement the conservation work and training programme for site conservators, archaeologists, and site maintenance and personnel of the Libyan Department of Antiquities in Cyrenaica". See http://www.globalheritagefund.org/where/cyrene/progress2008/cyrene_progress_2008.asp
5. See www.archaeology.org/online/features/cyrene/decou.html
6. R. G. Goodchild, *Cyrene and Apollonia, an Historical Guide*, 1963, p 35
7. Excavations were also carried out in various areas of Cyrene by Richard Goodchild in the 1950s when he was Director of Antiquities in Cyrenaica.
8. R. G. Goodchild, *Cyrene and Apollonia, an Historical Guide*, 1963, p 56

The Battle of Cannae

Some Considerations in the Light of Recent Publications

Martin Porr

According to my assessment, even if you have many more troops than others, how can that help you to victory? (Sun Tzu 1988, 109)

The battle of Cannae certainly is one of the monuments of ancient history. The story of Hannibal's famous victory over a superior Roman army in southern Italy in 216 BC continues to inspire numerous authors to the present day. Why is this so?



The battle of Cannae has a central place in one of the most extraordinary narratives of history, the epic struggle between Rome and Carthage over more than a hundred years. It is also part of the story of Hannibal, who has to be counted as one of the most extraordinary personalities in history. The story of Hannibal and the Second Punic War has all the elements of a perfect drama. I do not want to recount here the details of this epic encounter, which are probably very familiar to most readers (see Goldsworthy 2003 for an overview). I only want to draw attention to the fact that the battle of Cannae gains much of its fascination from being simultaneously the most serious defeat of a Roman army and the turning point of the war in Rome's favour. Cannae produced a much needed revision of Roman strategy. It rehabilitated the Fabian strategy towards Hannibal in Italy. It possibly led to a rethinking of Roman infantry equipment (Samuels 1990) and, ultimately, the rise of Publius Cornelius Scipio, who was able to learn the lessons from Hannibal's successes and turned them against the Carthaginians. In contrast to Hannibal's failure to break the Roman alliance system in Italy, he succeeded in destroying the Iberian support for Carthage in Spain. He later found in Massinissa a key ally among the Numidians, who gave him the decisive advantage in cavalry in the battle of Zama in 202 BC. The victory of Cannae immortalized Hannibal as one of the most able and extraordinary generals in history. But it also turned him into one of the most tragic figures in history. He won the battle, but he lost the war. In defeating

the Roman army at Cannae so expertly, he ultimately created the Empire and the Roman military system that he had set out to destroy.

One certainly has to ask the question if still new insights can be gained from new books that are written on a subject that has been receiving as much attention as the battle of Cannae over the last centuries. Indeed, there is no easy answer to this question. Books are always written within a certain environment, from certain individual perspectives and certain academic paradigms. In the fields of history or archaeology, major revisions mostly occur when new evidence or sources are discovered and necessitate a rethinking of established ideas. Unfortunately, this has not happened in the study of the Second Punic War in recent decades. No major discoveries have been made. However, recent publications have continued to integrate different sets of information, especially the different literary and archaeological sources to produce a more complete understanding of the battle. Here, I especially would like to stress the value of the framework adopted by Keegan (1976) and Hanson (1989), who – despite the obvious differences – both favour a very close and situated perspective in understanding ancient battles. It is often all too easy to analyze a battle from a bird's eye perspective and almost like a board game. This approach certainly has its value to gain a broad overview of the troops involved and the geographical features influencing the unfolding of the drama of battle. This perspective, however, tends to underestimate the importance of the human element in these processes – and this is especially important for the understanding of ancient and medieval battles. In these early encounters the control of a large number of men was a logistical challenge not to be underestimated. This principal difficulty must further be seen in relation to time-critical factors, i.e. the problem to communicate the right information at the right time to the right troops. The correct interpretation of information as well as the successful and timely communication seems to be the most important factor in understanding the actions of troops and commanders in ancient battles. This analysis, of course, has to be supplemented by an under-



Photo: A. Porr

A view over the hills surrounding Canne della Battaglia and the plains of the Ofanto River - the perfect battle field

standing of the wider contexts of the troops involved, influencing their abilities and their motivations. In the case of Cannae, for example, these factors could not have been more different for the forces involved, certainly leading to a different set of experiences and reactions. Hannibal's fighting units and commanders were all professional and experienced soldiers, who probably had been together for quite some time. They were on enemy soil and their fate in the case of defeat was more than uncertain. At the same time, they must have been full of confidence in their abilities and their commander after their march over the Alps and their previous crushing victories over Roman armies. In contrast, the Roman army consisted mostly of inexperienced soldiers and commanders, who relied too much on the strength of their superior numbers. However, this superiority quickly proved to be of no advantage in the encounter on the plain of the Aufidus River.

Understanding how Hannibal succeeded in defeating the massive Roman army at Cannae means understanding the behavior of individual soldiers and commanders, from their point of view and with their background in mind.

The great mystery of Cannae – that a smaller army can defeat a larger army – can best be explained with reference to the localized perceptions of individual soldiers who are not aware of the exact circumstances of their situation in the course of the battle. A soldier will interpret the dangers he is exposed to according to his experience, the information he receives from his superiors and his own observations. Hannibal probably calculated that the Roman soldiers would not be able to react correctly and independently when things started to go wrong around them. He used his superior cavalry to create confusion in the rear of the Roman battle formation and probably also to cut the Roman commander's ability to communicate with his units. His African infantry, positioned on the wings of his formation, served to further confuse and frighten the Roman legionaries and to push them into each other. The actions of Hannibal's cavalry clearly demonstrate that they were briefed before the battle on the role they had to play. After breaking through the enemy cavalry formations it was certainly impossible for Hannibal to give any orders to their cavalry commanders. In contrast, Hannibal positioned himself in support of his centre. He therefore created very short lines of communication with the soldiers who possibly had the most difficult part in his battle plan. They needed to hold off the Roman legions as long as possible and to give his other troops enough time to conclude the encirclement and let Roman morale collapse. Hannibal certainly knew that it was in the centre that his skills of command where most needed and where he expected the battle to be most unpredictable.

While Hannibal's army obviously executed a well constructed plan, the Romans demonstrated an astonishing lack of strategic and tactical awareness. This can already be seen in the choice of the battlefield, which was an almost perfect battleground. Many authors have stressed that the plain of the Aufidus was a perfect ground for cavalry manoeuvres and this certainly was the case. It consequently provided the perfect stage for Hannibal's battle plan and the complex interplay of light and heavy infantry and cavalry. The Romans' inability to analyze their own strengths and weaknesses in this context becomes even more astonishing if the major defeats at the Trebia and the Lake Trasimene are taken into account. Especially in the former battle Hannibal also lured the heavy Roman infantry forward to let him attack the flanks of the battle formation with his superior cavalry. The Ro-

man generals failed to see the pattern in Hannibal's battle plans. In all three battles he used a contingent of heavy infantry to pin down the main body of the enemy formation while his cavalry (and parts of his infantry) performed quick and devastating manoeuvres. This tactic even formed a central part of his ambush at Lake Trasimene, where his heavy African and Spanish troops were positioned to prevent a frontal breakthrough of the Roman vanguard. In each case, surprise and confusion formed major elements in Hannibal's battle scheme. At the Trebia he positioned Mago with a cavalry contingent in an ambush situation; at Lake Trasimene he placed his whole army to ambush the Roman troops and at Cannae he made his cavalry perform quick and surprising attacks to the rear of enemy formations twice. First, after defeating the Roman cavalry on the right wing, Hasdrubal attacked the left wing from behind. Second, after comprehensively defeating the cavalry of the Roman army the Carthaginians turned to attacking the main body of the enemy in the rear. At this stage, the Carthaginians' cavalry had already cut major communication lines of the Roman army and did much to cause concern and fear within the ranks of the Roman infantry. With the attacks of the African infantry on both flanks the morale of the main body of the Roman army certainly began to crumble and finally collapsed. These were the devastating effects of confusion and surprise.



View from the ruins of Canne della Battaglia onto the plains of the Ofanto River. The column was erected in remembrance of the battle at Cannae

Hannibal was very much aware of the fact that he would never win a battle against the Romans with a strategy of attrition. Indeed, whenever his troops had to face the Roman legionaries head on the Romans broke through his formation. This happened at Trebia, Lake Trasimene and even at Cannae where his centre was not able to withstand the onslaught of the Roman army and was only saved because of the Carthaginians' successes elsewhere on the battlefield. In Luttwark's (2003, 115) terminology, Hannibal was a master of "relational maneuvers". His actions were based on a careful analysis of the involved armies' strengths and weaknesses. Hannibal always tried to capitalize on some weakness of the Roman armies. In most cases this was their weak cavalry and their inability to quickly and appropriately react to fatal developments on the battlefield. In the end, Hannibal was successful because of a "combination of surprise and a faster speed of execution to attack the enemy's weakness effectively before he [could] react with his strength" (Luttwark 2003, 115).

Hannibal's use of an integrated army clearly shows the influ-

ences of the Hellenistic tradition that goes back to the reforms of Philip II of Macedon (Hanson 2000) and Alexander the Great might well have been a major inspiration for Hannibal, both on a strategic and tactical level. Both generals led a small but highly motivated and well trained army into the heartland of the enemy. Both used heavy infantry to pin down the enemy in the centre and used their cavalry to attack weak points in their enemies' armies. Both consequently were repeatedly able to overcome their numerical disadvantages in major battles. Hannibal's tactics in forcing the crossing of the Rhone River even mirrors Alexander's tactics in the battle at the Hydaspes River. He might have received these inspirations from his teacher Sosylos, who taught him Greek when he was younger and who accompanied him throughout his life as a historian (Seibert 1993a, 31-33). A distant echo of Hannibal's fascination with Alexander's achievements can also be seen in the fabricated Roman legend of Scipio's encounter with the great Carthaginian at the court of Antiochos III. Here, Hannibal supposedly named Alexander as the greatest general of all times (Seibert 1993a, 511-512). In contrast to Hannibal, however, Alexander never lost a battle and he also won his war against the Persian Empire. In the light of this comparison, the battle of Cannae stands out as a tactical masterpiece that achieved almost nothing on a strategic level. Much has been written about Hannibal's apparent failure to use this victory to end the Second Punic War. Again, we are faced with one of the great controversies in ancient history and a classic "what if" story. I prefer to think that it is most likely that Hannibal's decision can be explained as a combination of his original intentions (to break the Italian league), the condition of his army, his estimation of the defensive capabilities of the city of Rome, the expected supplies from North Africa and possibly also his underestimation of the Roman will to continue the fight. In the end, the defeat at Cannae proved to be the catalyst for the Roman success in the Second Punic War and gave Rome control over the western Mediterranean.

A number of recent publications have added to our understanding of the battle of Cannae, Hannibal and the Second Punic War. The most extensive treatment can currently be found in G. Daly's (2002) book that approaches the battle from a perspective inspired by J. Keegan's (1976) *Face of Battle*. His very detailed analysis of the different phases of the battle, the weapons and the units involved is very inspiring and sets a high standard for understanding ancient military encounters. Goldsworthy (2001) has also recently dedicated a volume to Cannae, which is not as exhaustive and academic but still a useful publication. It is a nice addition to Goldsworthy's readable overview of the Punic Wars (2003). These books are all well edited and presented. The same can be said about the recent contributions by D. Hoyos (2005; 2008), which do not specifically concentrate on the battle or even military aspects. They, however, present a well structured overview of the persons and the politics of the Punic Wars as well as the biography of Hannibal.

Two other publications are also noteworthy in this context, which concentrate on military aspects of Hannibal's campaigns. Carey's (2007) book provides a good overview of Hannibal's and Scipio's battles until their encounter on the plains of Zama. Far from being just a detailed treatment of this latter battle (as the title might suggest) this book contains a lot of information on the other encounters in the Second Punic War and also presents a large number of useful and professional tactical and regional map illustrations. A new shorter book by Stephenson (2008) represents a solid discussion of Hannibal's army, but it

suffers from some poor illustrations and poor quality photographs. Altogether, the more recent publications do complement nicely some of the now almost classic contributions to the field. Until today, the books by Connolly (e.g. 1978; 1981) are still unmatched in the artistic and aesthetic quality of his illustrations. For any serious student of the military history of Cannae and the Second Punic War the book by Lazenby (1978) remains a core text, while the two volumes by J. Seibert (1993a; 1993b) remain indispensable critical and comprehensive reviews of sources and it is rather unfortunate that they are not available in English.

The study of Hannibal's campaigns in the Second Punic War gives us insights into classic ancient warfare as well as universal military rules of engagement. It comes therefore as no surprise that Hannibal's relational manoeuvres at Cannae would certainly have appealed to Sun Tzu: "*When you are concentrated into one while the opponent is divided into ten, you are attacking at a concentration of ten to one, so you outnumber the opponent*". We can still learn from the drama of the Punic Wars, from its victories and failures, its strategies and tactics.

References

- Quotes from Sun Tzu are taken from the 1988 Shambhala edition of *The Art of War*, translated by Thomas Cleary.
- B. T. Carey 2007. *Hannibal's Last Battle. Zama and the Fall of Carthage*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books.
- P. Connolly 1978. *Hannibal and the Enemies of Rome*. London: MacDonald Educational.
- P. Connolly 1981. *Greece and Rome at War*. London: MacDonal.
- G. Daly 2002. *Cannae. The Experience of Battle in the Second Punic War*. London: Routledge.
- A. Goldsworthy 2001. *Cannae*. London: Cassell.
- A. Goldsworthy 2003. *The Fall of Carthage. The Punic Wars 265 – 146 BC*. London: Cassell.
- V. D. Hanson 1989². *The Western Way of War. Infantry Battle in Classical Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- V. D. Hanson 2000². From Phalanx to Legion 350 – 250 BC. in: G. Parker (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare. The Triumph of the West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 32-49.
- D. Hoyos 2005². *Hannibal's Dynasty. Power and Politics in the Western Mediterranean, 247 – 183 BC*. London: Routledge.
- D. Hoyos 2008. *Hannibal. Rome's Greatest Enemy*. Exeter: Bristol Phoenix Press.
- J. Keegan 1976. *The Face of Battle*. London: J. Cape.
- M. Samuels 1990. The Reality of Cannae. *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen* 47, 7-29.
- J. Seibert 1993a. *Hannibal*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- J. Seibert 1993b. *Forschungen zu Hannibal*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- I. Stephenson 2008. *Hannibal's Army*. Stoud: Tempus.
- Martin Porr is Lecturer in Archaeology at UWA. His area of special interest is the Paleolithic but he has been fascinated since childhood by the Hannibalic War.**

Roman Archaeology at UWA Membership of The RAG

Notes and News

Aerial Archaeology in Jordan Project

Thanks to a very generous grant again from the Packard Humanities Institute in California, the project is now moving ahead swiftly. Stafford Smith, a First Class Honours graduate in Archaeology, has been appointed as a Research Assistant to manage much of the everyday work. Part-time research assistants are Andrew Card, Jayne Fyfe, Danny Cairns and Karen Henderson. Karen has also enrolled for a PhD to work on some of the aerial material.

DLK was in Rome in April to give a paper on the project at a conference to mark the 100th anniversary of Aerial Archaeology in Italy. A week later he gave another paper in Vienna at the annual conference of the European Geophysical Union. He has been invited to give papers later this year at conferences on remote sensing in archaeology in India and China.

While in Europe he also examined archives of old aerial photographs of the Middle East held in the Bavarian War Archives in Munich and at several locations in London.

Aerial Archaeology in France

Although it was a Frenchman – Père Antoine Poidebard – who pioneered aerial archaeology in the Middle East in the 1920s, there has been relatively little work in France itself since the retirement of the tireless Roger Agache some 20 years ago. It was a particular joy to be able while in Europe to spend over two hours in a light aircraft being flown over a succession of superb Roman sites in the orbit of Avignon.

Schools Session on Ancient Warfare

Following our very successful session in 2008 on Caesar for Ancient History students at WA schools, we were asked to organize another this year. As it is the 'Greek' year, Professor John Melville-Jones has undertaken the arrangements. It will take place on Saturday 25 July Warfare in Greek World. The programme is open to RAG members and will replace our first Saturday session. It consists of:

Judith Maitland: The Chariot and the Bow in Bronze Age Warfare.

Chris Matthew: The Advantages of Greek Fighting Techniques in the Persian Wars.

Wendy Van Duivenvoorde: Ancient Greek Triremes.

Chris Matthew: The Strategy of the Thermopylae-Artemisium Line in 480 BC.

Jeff Champion: When the Sarissa, the Phalanx and the Elephant met the gladius. The Battle of Heraclea, 280 B.C.

In addition:

Chris Matthew (Macquarie University) is being brought to WA by the Classical Association of Western Australia. He will also be delivering a public lecture, 'Greek Hopliters in an Ancient Chinese Siege', on Thursday July 23 at 6.00 in the Fox Lecture Hall. This is concerned with the identification of soldiers mentioned in Chinese records of 36 B.C. as fighting in the defence of a city in northern Sogdiana. In addition, he will present a research seminar on Friday July 24 (venue to be decided) with the title 'When Push Comes to Shove: What was the Othismos of Hoplite Combat?'

RAG Saturday Sessions Winter 2009

Saturday 15 August (Disease in the Roman World – Fiona Crowe and Lara O'Sullivan)

Saturday 24 October (Roman Dance – Glenys Wootton and Karen Henderson)

DONATIONS

The Roman Archaeology Group acknowledges with thanks financial donations by the following members:

Peter Anstis
DD & AG Boyer
Iain and Marlene Carmichael
Natalie Cullity
Dr G Cullity
Jack Flanigan
Rodney Greaves
Paul Healy
W. L. Leadbetter
Michael Manley
Emilia Oprandi
David and Helen Treloar
Ian Warner

\$25.00 Ordinary membership
\$35.00 Family membership 1 (2 adults; 1 copy of RAG magazine)
\$50.00 Family membership 2 (4 family members; 1 copy of RAG magazine)
\$50.00 School membership (2 copies of RAG magazine)
\$10.00 Student membership
Complete and post the form with this edition of the RAG or contact The Treasurer at the email address below.

The RAG Inc

www.romarchgroup.humanities.uwa.edu.au/

Chairman

Professor David Kennedy
M205 Classics and Ancient History
University of Western Australia
Stirling Highway
CRAWLEY WA 6009

Tel: 08 64882150 Fax: 08 64881182
E-mail: dkennedy@cyllene.uwa.au

Deputy Chairman

Rodney Greaves
rodneygreaves@inet.net.au
0438 941 582

Secretary

Michael Manley
4C/25 Victoria Ave., CLAREMONT, WA
6010, 04179 32031

E-mail: mike1155@inet.net.au

Treasurer

Maire Gomes
E-mail: gomescm@bigpond.com

The RAG

Newsletter

Correspondence to the Editor:

Kevin J. O'Toole
M461 Legal Services
University of Western Australia,
Stirling Highway,
CRAWLEY WA 6009

Tel: (08) 64884709

E-mail: kevin.otoole@uwa.edu.au