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Scutum di Dura Europos, unico esemplare pervenuto.
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The Sun of Rome is Set: Memories of the Battle of Cannae and the Anxieties of Ammianus Marcellinus and Claudian

by KEENAN BACA-WINTERS

ABSTRACT: One of the worst military disasters in the Roman history was the Battle of Cannae (216 BCE) which occurred in the Second Punic War. The battle left such an impact with its trauma that any military defeat in the following centuries was comparable to Cannae. Two Roman authors, Ammianus Marcellinus and Claudian, invoked Hannibal and the Battle of Cannae in their readers' minds to impart the defeats and disasters for the later empire. This article examines how these two men used the memory of Cannae to make sense of a world they believed was decaying.

KEYWORDS: BATTLE OF CANNAE, SECOND PUNIC WAR, HANNIBAL, CARTHAGE, CLAUDIAN, AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, CULTURAL MEMORY

The Second Punic War (218 BCE-201 BCE), waged by Hannibal against the Roman Republic, was an event that left its mark upon the Roman people throughout the centuries; it was war that determined who would dominate the Mediterranean: Romans of the Italian Peninsula or the Carthaginians of north Africa.¹ In 218 BCE, in fulfillment of his father Hamilcar's wishes to restore Carthaginian pride and prestige after losing to the Romans in the First Punic War, Hannibal invaded Italy by marching the Carthaginian army across the Alps and laid waste to the peninsula over the next 17 years. Years after the war had ended, King Antiochus III (r. 222 BCE-187 BCE) asked Hannibal why he hated the Romans. Hannibal related the following anecdote from his youth:

“My father Hamilcar,” said he, “when I was a very little boy, being not more than nine years old, offered sacrifices at Carthage, when he was going as commander into Spain, to Jupiter, the best and greatest of gods; and

¹ Eve MACDONALD, *Hannibal: A Hellenistic Life*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015, p. 254.

while this religious ceremony was being performed, he asked me *whether I should like to go with him to camp*. As I willingly expressed my consent, and proceeded to beg him not to hesitate to take me, he replied ‘*I will do so, if you give me the promise which I ask of you.*’ At the same time, he led me to the altar at which he began to sacrifice, and, sending the company away, required me taking hold of the altar, to swear that *I would never be in friendship with the Romans*. This oath, thus taken before my father, I have so strictly kept even to this day, that no man ought to doubt but that I shall be of the same mind for the rest of my life.”²

This anecdote exemplifies the Roman people’s cultural memory (a common memory shared among the members of a culture) of Hannibal through the ages: A man whose hatred for Rome was imprinted on every fiber of his being.³

The Second Punic War was a defining moment in Roman cultural psyche, because the Romans had faced a man who was forged with an everlasting hatred of them and who almost succeeded in destroying the Republic. The effects of Hannibal and the damage he had done to the Romans was so great that whenever danger faced the Romans, authors and statesmen summoned the ghost of Hannibal from the recesses of their cultural memory to impart the importance of whatever dangers faced the Romans. The senator Cicero, for instance, during the Roman Civil War (49 BCE-45 BCE), sardonically asked Mark Antony why he was summoned to the Senate: “What, I ask you, was the reason why I was forced into the Senate yesterday? Was I alone absent? Or have you not often been in less number? Hannibal, I fancy, was at the gates.”⁴

By summoning Hannibal, who by this time had been dead for nearly 200 years, Cicero demonstrates that behind every danger, emergency, trial, and tribulation, the memory of Hannibal and the Second Punic War remained an important fixture of Roman cultural memory centuries after the fact. Hannibal’s ghost, in other words, was never truly exorcised from Roman cultural memory, which in turn has left its mark upon modern scholarship, especially among military historians such as Theodore Ayrault Dodge, an officer in the American army during

2 Cornelius Nepos, “Lives of Eminent Commanders: Hannibal 23.2,” in *Justin, Cornelius Nepos, and Eutropius*, (Trans.) Rev. John Selby WATSON, New York: Bohn’s Classical Library, 1853, p. 418, original emphasis.

3 MACDONALD, cit., p. 227.

4 Cicero *Philippic I* 1.5.12, (Trans.) Walter C. A. KER, *Philippics*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969, p. 31.

the American Civil War, who published his study of Hannibal's tactics in his 1891 book, *Hannibal*. One hundred years later, in 1981, Ernle Dusgate Shelby, a former officer in the British military, published a revision of Dodge's *Hannibal*, also titled *Hannibal*. Recent scholars have focused their scholarly inquiries to the experience of the common soldier during the Second Punic War, another trend in scholarship has shifted focus to the effects of Hannibal on other areas of Roman life. In 1965, Arnold Toynbee published *Hannibal's Legacy: The Hannibalic War's Effects on Roman Life*. Toynbee's work focused on how the Second Punic War altered Roman politics. In 1982, James William Ermatinger published *Rome After Hannibal: Changes in Society and Economics 225–133 B.C.* Ermatinger focused his study on how Hannibal's invasion altered the agricultural and economic practices of the Roman government. While Ermatinger published his work in the early 1980s, it was not until 2003 that another author published a work focused upon how the Second Punic War altered the political landscape of the Mediterranean. Dexter Hoyos's book, *Hannibal's Dynasty: Power and Politics in the Western Mediterranean, 247–183 BC*, studied how Hannibal's aristocratic Carthaginian family shaped and altered politics in Carthage and in Roman in the Mediterranean world. Finally, in 2015, Eve MacDonald published *Hannibal: A Hellenistic Life*, in which she explores the *milieu* Hannibal's life and cultures, and the effects that Hannibal had on Roman society centuries after his death. MacDonald also expertly surveys Hannibal's presence in modern culture. This brief historiography is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to demonstrate the fascination that historians have had with Hannibal. This article utilizes cultural memory studies to untangle how Romans (or at least a range of elite historians) were trying to say about their own identity as a people when reflecting on the Second Punic War.

Indeed, the Romans' memory of Hannibal was one of the many ways in which Roman identity was shaped,⁵ and repeating the story throughout time – tales of

5 MACDONALD, cit., pp. 229-236. For the binding of a culture through a common cultural memory, see Jens BROCKMEIER, Remembering and Forgetting: Narrative as Cultural Memory, *Culture and Psychology* 8, 15 (2002), p. 18; Jeffrey K. OLICK; Joyce ROBBINS, Social Memory Studies: 'From Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices, *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998), p. 133; Eviatar ZERUBAVEL, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. 4-5.

Roman bravery against the marauding Carthaginian being passed down, parent to child, over and over again all over the Roman world – helped solidify that identity.⁶ This paper examines how two Roman authors, Ammianus Marcellinus and Claudian, who respectively lived in the late fourth to early fifth centuries CE, remembered the Second Punic War and how these recollections demonstrated the anxiety they felt about the state of affairs of the Roman world at that time. These authors had a collective cultural memory of Hannibal from which they could draw to make their audiences understand the problems that faced their age.

Particularly, Ammianus and Claudian drew upon their shared memory of the Battle of Cannae (216 BCE). Hannibal effectively destroyed an entire Roman field army and caused terror in the city of Rome itself when he marched upon it after the battle. The relationship between violence that a people endured and the construction of cultural memory is an intimate one, which is why authors over the centuries would ruminate over narrative memories of Punic war violence.⁷ While the Romans eventually triumphed over Hannibal when the consul Scipio Africanus invaded North Africa and repaid the Carthaginians blood for blood for Hannibal's invasion at the Battle of Zama (204 BCE), the sting of defeat at Cannae never left Roman cultural identity. Cannae is not unlike other instances of violence that other ethnic groups have used to form national identities. Across time and space, different groups of people all over the world use the memory of violence to construct their ethnic identities.

For example, some Chinese people remember the Rape of Nanking inflicted by the Japanese during the Second World War as a way to foster national identity. To this day, some Chinese harbor anti-Japanese sentiment due to the refusal of the Japanese to apologize for committing the Rape of Nanking.⁸ What is more, how the Chinese people have remembered the Rape of Nanking changed over time as the Chinese used Nanking differently during different parts of their history,

6 D. Vance SMITH, *Irregular Histories: Forgetting Ourselves*, *New Literary History* 28, 2 (Spring 1997), p. 164.

7 See Paul RICOEUR, *Time and Narrative*, Kathleen McLAUGHLIN and David PELLAUER (Trans. and Ed.), *Time and Narrative, I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 74-75: "The whole history of suffering cries out for vengeance and calls for narrative."

8 For more information, see Mark EYKHOLT, *Aggression, Victimization, and Chinese Historiography of the Nanjing Massacre*, in Joshua A. FOGEL (Ed.), *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, pp. 26-27.

much like how the Romans recalled Cannae differently over the centuries after the battle, as we will see.⁹ Additionally, certain Serbians in the early 1990s used the memory of the Ottoman invasions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to justify the mass murder of Muslims in the Balkans.¹⁰ For some ethnic groups, the past is still palpable in the present, and the people in these groups live with that past everyday of their lives.

The Roman people were not different. The battle of Cannae, in particular, held a special place in the cultural memory of the Roman people. The Romans not only remembered Cannae as a horrible defeat, but they also recalled the manner in which Roman soldiers died in battle. In the centuries after that gruesome event, the memory of the Carthaginian army's slaughter of thousands upon thousands of Roman soldiers loomed large. The heaps of dead bodies at Cannae provided Roman authors with a measuring stick as a way to gauge the severity of a catastrophe. Furthermore, any major military defeat was a reminder of the disaster at Cannae, and the Battle of Adrianople (378 CE) was a particularly unpleasant reminder of the fact that at times, the Roman war machine could be brought to its knees. Adrianople was the first indication that not all was right in the later Roman Empire; it suggested that something was wrong and showed the entire world that something was changing.

Time as a Flat Circle: Cannae Revisited

The origins of Adrianople are as simple as they are tragic: Hunnic pressure on the eastern frontier forced Gothic refugees into the Roman Empire. The Romans took Gothic children as hostages and did not feed the other refugees.¹¹ The Goths,

9 See Daqing YANG, The Malleable and the Contested: The Nanjing Massacre in Postwar China and Japan, in T. FUJITANI, Geoffrey M. WHITE, and Lisa YONEYAMA (Eds.), *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001, pp. 54-59.

10 For the link between memories of alleged Ottoman and Albanian atrocities against Christian Serbs to justify ethnic cleansing of Serbian Muslims, see Michael SELLS, Religion, History, and Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in G. Scott DAVIS (Ed.), *Religion and the War Over Bosnia*, New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 24-37.

11 Ammianus Marcellinus *Res Gestae* 31.3.8; 31.4.10-11, J. C. ROLFE (Ed. and Trans.), *Res Gestae*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958. See also Zosimus, *A New History*, (Ed. and Trans.) Ronald T. Ridley, Sydney: Australian Association of Byzantine Studies, 1982, 4.20.5-7, although Zosimus labeled the Goths as Scythians; David S. POTTER, *The Roman Empire at Bay: AD 180-395*, London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 530-532; for the Huns

with their backs to the wall, went on a rampage in desperation, with drastic consequences for the Romans. The resulting uprising led to the Battle of Adrianople, in which the eastern emperor Valens (r. 364-378) died along with two-thirds of imperial army in the east,¹² with the victorious Goths attempting to march upon Constantinople, the capital of the eastern Roman Empire.¹³ Adrianople was such a shock to the Romans that Julius, the “commander-in-chief of the troops beyond the Taurus,” sent a letter to his commanders ordering them to assassinate any Goths whom they held as hostage as revenge for the Roman defeat at Adrianople; these commanders executed the order immediately.¹⁴ Such was the desire for revenge that the Romans had toward the Goths after Adrianople that the Romans resorted to murdering children. The writer Ammianus Marcellinus (325 CE-400 CE) had the following to say about the aftermath of the battle: “The annals record no such massacre of a battle except the one at Cannae.”¹⁵ Adrianople severely weakened Roman imperial power in the east, but what is more important here is the image that Ammianus was invoking in his audience’s mind one word, “Cannae,” to which he compared Adrianople. Ammianus had a reason to use this word; he had a purpose in recalling this battle from the mists of time. What, then, was Cannae? Let us examine the battle in detail.

The Battle of Cannae began when the Carthaginians captured the town of Cannae, the citadel of which stored provisions for the Roman army. The Roman Senate dispatched the consuls Lucius Aemilius Paulus and Gaius Terentius Varro to recapture the town from Hannibal. Each consul had command of the army on alternate days. On Varro’s turn at command, Hannibal created a carefully de-

pushing the Goths into the Roman Empire: 1028; Mehmet YILMAZATA, Notes on the *Res Gestae* and Historiographical Views Towards the Battle of Adrianople (378 A.D.), *Journal of Ancient History and Archeology* 5.3 (2018), p.28.

- 12 Alexander SARANTIS, Waging War in Late Antiquity, in Alexander SARANTIS and Neil CHRISTIE (Eds.) *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, 8.2, Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2010, p. 61; David ROHRBACHER, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 4.
- 13 Ammianus Marcellinus cit. 31.13.12, 18, 31.16.4; John MATTHEWS, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, London: Duckworth, 1989, pp. 300-301; ROHRBACHER, cit., p. 210.
- 14 Ammianus Marcellinus cit. 31.16.8, in Rolfe, p. 503; Michael P. SPEIDEL, The Slaughter of Gothic Hostages after Adrianople, *Hermes* 126, 4 (1998), p. 505; A. H. M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: A Social and Economic Survey*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964, p. 154.
- 15 Ammianus Marcellinus cit. 31.13.19, in ROLFE, p. 483.

signed ruse. Hannibal left his camp open and full of riches and ordered his army to leave everything but their weapons in their tents and to retreat over a ridge outside of Cannae to wait for the Roman army to swarm the town.¹⁶ The ultimate goal of Hannibal was to ambush the Romans when they would have been busy plundering the camp. The Roman army was restive due to the lack of activity in the Carthaginian camp and desired to plunder the camp because they believed the Carthaginians had deserted it. Varro then sent forth a mission to reconnoiter the situation.¹⁷ The reconnaissance team reported to the consuls that Hannibal had set a trap to ambush the Romans.¹⁸

Immediately after receiving this news, Paulus and Varro had different opinions on the proper course of action. Varro wanted to dispatch the army to plunder the Carthaginian camp because he did not believe that Hannibal was actually deceiving the Romans. Paulus wanted to delay any attack on the town because the sacred fowls refused to eat their feed, which to him was an ill omen.¹⁹ Varro acquiesced with Paulus's point of view when two Roman slaves who escaped from the Carthaginians reported that the Carthaginian army awaited them on the other side of the ridge. Hannibal, after he discovered that his attempt to deceive the Romans to march into an ambush had failed, immediately set the same deception into play. Hannibal ordered his soldiers to build a camp where they waited on the other side of the ridge and abandoned the new camp in the same manner as the previous one. Then again, the scout reported that Hannibal had abandoned camp. This time, Varro and the rest of the soldiers' point of view won out, and, according to Livy (59 BCE-17 CE), "they set forward, under the urge of destiny, to make Cannae famous for the calamity which befell the Romans."²⁰ The Roman army then marched into the Carthaginian camp.

16 Livy *History of Rome* 22.41.7, B. O. FOSTER (Trans.), *History of Rome* (1929; repr., Cambridge Harvard University Press, 2001).

17 Livy cit. 22.42.4.

18 Livy cit. 22.42.5.

19 Livy cit. 22.42.8. When a Roman consul went on a military campaign, he brought with him sacred chickens. Before a battle commenced, the keeper of the sacred chickens would feed them; if the chickens ate the food with alacrity, then the Romans considered that the battle would go in the Romans' favor. If the chickens refused their food, that was considered a bad omen and was prescient of a Roman defeat, as in this case before the Battle of Cannae.

20 Livy cit. 22.43.8-10, in Foster, p. 345.

The ensuing battle was a massacre of the Romans.²¹ The Carthaginian cavalry defeated the Roman cavalry on either side of the Roman infantry, enclosing the Roman infantry in the center, like a closing pincer.²² The Carthaginians at Cannae “assail[ed] the Romans from behind and striking at their backs and hamstrings, effected a great slaughter and confusion” that resulted in “forty-five thousand five hundred thousand” Roman dead, according Livy.²³ The consul Aemilius Paulus died there along with 80 members of the senate.²⁴ The violence at Cannae was an indelible image burned into the collective memory of the Roman people, and this is the image that Ammianus wanted to invoke in his readers’ mind when he compared Adrianople to Cannae. Again, Livy:

There lay those thousands upon thousands of Romans, foot and horse indiscriminately mingled... Here and there amidst the slain there started up a gory figure whose wounds had begun to throb with the chill of dawn, and was cut down by his enemies; some lay there still alive, with thighs and tendons slashed, baring their necks and throats and bidding their conquerors drain the remnant of their blood. Others were found with their heads buried in holes dug in the ground. They had apparently made these pits for themselves, and heaping the dirt over their faces shut off their breath.²⁵

Livy continued, “Never, save when the city had been captured, was there such terror and confusion within the walls of Rome” that the *decemviri* (Roman high priests) allowed the rite of Ceres to lapse because “a single matron who was not bereaved” remained to perform the rite.²⁶

Ammianus also desired to invoke in his readers’ mind the fear, terror, and des-

21 For an up-to-date survey of the Battle of Cannae, see MACDONALD, cit., pp. 128-134.

22 Livy cit. 22.47.8.

23 Livy cit. 22.48.4-5, 49.15 in FOSTER, p. 363.

24 Livy cit. 22.49.13.

25 Livy cit. 22.51.5-9, in FOSTER, p. 369.

26 Livy cit. 22.54.7, in FOSTER, p. 377; 46.4-5 in Foster, p. 383. Livy here was referring to the Gallic Sack of Rome in 386 BCE; for more information see Livy cit. 5.35-55; Veit ROSENBERGER, The Gallic Disaster, *The Classical World* 96, 4 (Summer, 2003), pp. 365-373, especially 365-366; Arnold TOYNBEE, *Hannibal's Legacy: The Hannibalic War's Effects on Roman Life*, vol. 1, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 25, 123, and 372-377 for the loss of clout in Italy the Romans suffered after the Gallic sack. This conflation of the loss at Cannae with the Gallic Sack of Rome reveals that both disasters were equated in the Roman psyche, and indeed, both Cannae was a reminder for the Romans of a time in their early history when the city fell to barbarian hordes. One disaster, in other words, brought upon the Romans by an outsider was a reminder of another disaster that was similar in nature.

peration that first-century CE Romans experienced after hearing the news of the Cannae. The following demonstrates how the battle affected the people who heard about the violent battle. The *decemviri* accused two Vestal Virgins, Opimia and Floronia, of unchastity before the battle of Cannae. In the aftermath of the battle, however, the *decemviri* buried one of the Vestals alive (the other committed suicide) and so severely scourged a secretary to the pontiffs, Lucius Cantilius, who had sex with Floronia, that he died from the punishment.²⁷ The Romans had to do something to appease the gods for this “pollution.”²⁸ What they did next proved their desperation after Cannae: The Romans crossed a cultural boundary and performed a foreign religious rite in a desperate attempt to propitiate the gods.

The Senate ordered the *decemviri* to consult the Sibylline Books so that they could remedy the situation. What the Sibylline Books dictated in a time of national crisis was the following:

By the direction of the Books of Fate, some unusual sacrifices were offered; amongst others a Gaulish man and woman and a Greek man and woman were buried alive in the Cattle Market, in a place walled with stone, which even before this time had been defiled with human victims, a sacrifice wholly alien to the Roman spirit.²⁹

Cannae was such a traumatic experience, in other words, that it forced the Romans to turn to foreign practices in order to make sense of the world. The practice of sacrificing in general represents an attempt by the sacrificing people to place whatever transgression they committed on the victim, then in the act of killing, the gods forgive the sin and the gods are pleased with the sacrifice.³⁰ During a time of a great crisis – in this instance, Cannae – the Romans sacrificed humans in their desperation to address the crisis. In the case of the Romans who sacrificed

27 Livy cit. 22.57.2-3. The Vestal Virgins kept the sacred flame of Vesta—the goddess of hearth and household—constantly lit in the temple of Vesta in the Forum in Rome. The Vestals were not to have sex in order to show their devotion to the goddess; if a Vestal Virgin engaged in sexual congress, she was buried alive while the man with whom she had had sex was scourged.

28 Livy cit. 22.57.5, in Foster, p. 385. See also Holt N. PARKER, Why Were the Vestals Virgins? Or the Chastity of Women and the Safety of the Roman State, *American Journal of Philology* 125 (2004), pp. 575-580, 586-590.

29 Livy cit. 22.57.6, in FOSTER, pp. 385-387; MACDONALD, cit., pp. 135-136.

30 See René GIRARD, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, Stephen Bann and Michael METTEER (Trans), London: The Athlone Press, 1987, pp. 24-27 for the concept of transferring blame onto the sacrificial victim during sacrificial ritual.

two pairs of Greeks and Gauls, the Romans placed the blame of the Vestals breaking their vow of chastity on the outsiders whom the *decemviri* sacrificed, and not on the Roman people themselves.³¹ That the Romans were so traumatized after Cannae was not lost upon Ammianus.

That Ammianus used Cannae in his description of Adrianople demonstrates that the memory of the former had never died. The memory of the violence and fear that had affected the Roman people after Cannae survived the centuries when the Republic grew and evolved into an empire; it was the thread that linked the Roman people to their past, no matter how far back in the past an event had occurred.

When the history of a people is intimately linked with violence that is a part of that people's cultural memory, the only way in which that cultural memory could be recorded for posterity is by ordinary people actively discussing their experiences and passing these narratives to their children. Those children will pass the stories on and so forth.³² According to René Girard, in other words, "Mimetism is indeed the contagion which spreads throughout human relationships, and in principle it spares no one."³³ The Second Punic War affected every member of Roman society. Those people were the conduit by which the memory of the terror that Hannibal inflicted upon the Roman people was passed to the next generation until everyone was familiar with these stories when Livy composed his narrative in the first century CE.³⁴ By the late-fourth century CE Cannae had been so firmly

31 For the role of sacrifice in a time of mimetic crisis and the violations of society's mores during such a crisis in an effort to deflect the blame whatever deity that the society offended (e.g., as in the case of the Roman people adopting the foreign rite of human sacrifice), see GIRARD, cit., pp. 20, 41-42. For the importance of the sacrificial victim to come from outside the community, see 78: "The community belongs to the victim, but the victim does not belong to the community. Even when the victim does not appear in the guise of a stranger, it will be seen as coming or returning from the outside, especially returning to the outside at the moment when the community expels it. The fact that sacrificial victims, even when they are human, are chosen from outside the community suggests that the interpretation makes the victim exterior to the community." See also Rosenberger, cit., 368-370 for the Romans using Gauls as sacrificial victims due to the Romans' vestigial fear of the Gauls due to the Gallic Sack of Rome in 386 BCE. See also Bernhard GIESEN, *Triumph and Trauma*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2004, pp. 46-48 for the concept of the outsider as bringing misfortune to the victim.

32 See ZERUBAVEL, cit., p. 7 for the oral transmission of cultural memory.

33 GIRARD, cit., p. 299.

34 For the function of cultural memory acting as a thread holding together the identity of a society, see ZERUBAVEL, 37-54. See Helena POHLANDT-McCORMICK, 'I Saw a Nightmare...':

implanted into Roman cultural memory, that Ammianus could use one word to describe the disaster of Adrianople to the Roman Empire: “Cannae.”

The Roman Empire of Ammianus was not the same as the empire of Livy’s time. Livy lived in a time when the empire was secure and life was unaffiliated by the horrors of Ammianus’s time; threats in the east from the Goths and the resurgent empire of the Persians, Ērānšahr.

Gallic Bravery and Thumbless Italians

The sieges of Amida and Nisibis by the Sasanian forces of *Šahanšah* (king of kings, analogous to “emperor”) Šābūhr II (r.309 CE-379 CE) were of particular importance to Ammianus, for he saw foreign armies marching with impunity across the eastern Roman frontier.³⁵ Amida in particular concerned Ammianus because of who he witnessed repulsing the Sasanian onslaught, the Gallic auxiliaries of the Roman army. When those Gallic auxiliaries at Amida saw the “throngs of wretches” suffering under the siege, they demanded from their commanders the opportunity to engage the Sasanians in battle while Roman soldiers stood frozen at the city gates.³⁶ Ammianus continued:

The Gauls faced them, relying on their strength of body and keeping their courage unshaken as long as they could, cut down their opponents with the sword, while a part of their own number were slain or wounded by the cloud of arrows flying from every side... When on the following day the slaughter was revealed, and among the corpses of the slain there were found grandees and satraps... And as because of this event a truce of three days was granted by common consent.³⁷

Violence and the Construction of Memory (Soweto, June 16, 1976), *History and Theory* 39, 4 (December 2000), pp. 23-44 for the way in which a people will form their own narratives of a traumatic event even when a government attempts to change the story. That is not to say that the Roman government manipulated the memory of the Second Punic War, but rather this article is useful for the fact that it highlights the methods in which a people will remember a traumatic event.

35 ROHRBACHER, cit., 17-19; GAVIN KELLY, *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Allusive Historian*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 53-55.

36 Ammianus Marcellinus cit. 19.6.3, 497.

37 Ammianus Marcellinus cit. 19.6.9, 13, in ROLFE, pp. 499-503; POTTER, cit., pp. 504-505, who downplays the role of the Gallic auxiliaries in the defense of Amida. For a chronology of the siege of Amida and an explanation of the origins of the Gallic soldiers, see Matthews, cit, pp. 58-61, 65-66.

While the use of barbarian auxiliaries in the Roman military was not new at this point in Roman history,³⁸ it is noteworthy that Ammianus chose to write about the bravery of the Gallic troops at Amida while subtly criticizing the behavior of the regulars of the army, Roman citizens, those descendants of the grand armies of the Roman past. The actions of these Gallic auxiliaries did more against the Sasanians than regular Roman soldiers.

The best passage from Ammianus's work that suggests his unease with the Romans from his time is conveyed through the following, which indicates that his outlook on his world was bleak when he compared the Gauls to the inhabitants of Italy:

All ages are most fit for military service, and the old man marches out on a campaign with a courage equal to that of the man in the prime of his life; since his limbs are toughened by cold and constant toil, and he will make light of many formidable dangers. Nor does anyone of them, for dread of the service of Mars, cut off his thumbs as in Italy.³⁹

Compare Ammianus' portrayals of fourth-century Romans again to how Livy describes his contemporaries; note the polarities in each description of Roman character. Early in his history of Rome, Livy digressed and postulated in a thought experiment regarding who would win a war between the Romans and Alexander of Macedon. It is not surprising that Livy decided that the Romans would win this hypothetical conflict, but his reasoning is important because he again invoked the memory of Hannibal:

What soldier can match the Roman in entrenching? Who is better at enduring toil? Alexander would, if beaten in a single battle, have been beaten in the war; but what battle could have overthrown the Romans, whom Caudium could not overthrow, nor Cannae?... A thousand battle arrays more formidable than those of Alexander and the Macedonians have the Romans beaten off.⁴⁰

38 This phenomena of the later Roman Empire is a shift from the early era of the Principate. Roman commanders in the early Empire saw the benefit of using barbarian auxiliaries in conditions that were detrimental to the regular legions' style of combat, such as the different terrain the legions were used to fighting on, such as marshes. For more information, see Catherine M. GUILIVER, *Mons Graupius and the Role of Auxiliaries in Battle, Greece and Rome* 43, 1 (April 1996), pp. 54-57, 59-60, 67.

39 Ammianus Marcellinus cit. 15.12.3, in Rolfe, p. 197.

40 Livy cit. 9.19.9, in FOSTER, p. 239. See also Ruth MORELLO, *Livy's Alexander Digression (9.17-19): Counterfactuals and Apologetics*, *The Journal of Roman Studies* 92 (2002), pp. 62-85.

Livy's Romans could have crushed Alexander because Hannibal could not subjugate them after winning important battle after battle, including the all-important Battle of Cannae. Even when writing about the horrible aftermath of Cannae, Livy chose to highlight the bravery and strength of the Romans who had fought there. While the Carthaginians were searching the bodies of the dead, one body in particular made everyone pause: "What most drew the attention of all beholders was a Numidian who was dragged out alive from under a dead Roman, but with mutilated nose and ear; for the Roman, unable to hold a weapon in his hands, had expired in a frenzy of rage, while rending the other with his teeth."⁴¹ Even in violent death in a violent battle, according to Livy, could the proud and victorious Roman people still topple their enemies.

The Romans in Ammianus's time, however, were stupefied at the sight of Šābūhr II's armies and cut off their thumbs to escape protecting the empire in military service. Ammianus clearly thought that when compared to the barbarian tribes that were protecting the empire, the Romans of his time were found wanting, if we are to accept wholeheartedly Ammianus' sentiments, which of course we cannot do; the reality on the ground is different. Despite Ammianus's morose sentiments, the Roman Empire was not in danger of falling to the barbarian horde.⁴² Julian (r. 360 CE-363 CE), whom Constantius II (r. 337 CE-361 CE) made Caesar (a sub-emperor) in the West, soundly defeated the Alamanni barbarians at the Battle of Strasbourg (357 CE),⁴³ reclaimed and restored forts built by Emperor Trajan (r. 98 CE-117 CE) across the Rhine,⁴⁴ and defeated the Franks.⁴⁵ Ammianus thus compared Julian's campaigns to Rome's victory over Carthage, "This memorable war, which in fact deserves to be compared with those against the Carthaginians... was achieved with very slight losses to the Roman commonwealth."⁴⁶

41 Livy cit. 22.51.9, in FOSTER, pp. 369-371. The Numidians were a people from North Africa that were allied with the Carthaginians; they made excellent cavalry and were the horsemen who destroyed the Roman cavalry at the Battle of Cannae.

42 Thomas HARRISON, *Templum multi totius: Ammianus and a Religious Ideal of Rome*, in Jan Willem DRIJVERS and David HUNT (Eds.), *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 165.

43 Ammianus Marcellinus cit. 16.12.62; POTTER, cit., 501-502; MATTHEWS, cit., 297-300.

44 Ammianus Marcellinus cit. 17.1.11.

45 Ammianus Marcellinus cit. 17.2.1-3; 8.1-4.

46 Ammianus Marcellinus cit. 17.1.14, in Rolfe, p. 311. For more on Julian's accomplish-

In an era in which he found many things to criticize, Ammianus found a reason to celebrate the success of a Roman emperor and invoked in his reader's mind the Roman victory over Hannibal.⁴⁷ Ammianus linked Julian's victories to the Romans crushing Hannibal centuries before, and Ammianus wanted to elevate Julian's position as a Roman leader to those Romans in the past who were victorious over Hannibal.⁴⁸ This excitement, however, was not meant to last.

Julian was killed in battle in a disastrous invasion of Ērānšahr in 363 CE, which resulted in the Sasanians occupying more Roman territory. Emperor Jovian (363 CE), Julian's successor, surrendered Nisibis to the Sasanians in exchange for safe passage out of Ērānšahr, which disgusted Ammianus and made him unfairly paint the emperor as weak.⁴⁹ Anyone with a strong sense of Roman identity during this time, like Ammianus, would have felt that their world was turning upside down, which is why Ammianus used Cannae as a way to impart the state of the empire.⁵⁰ The next author, however, lived in a different Roman Empire than the one of Ammianus; he had every reason to delve into Rome's past in order to make sense of his present.

A Flagging Roma and a New Scipio Turns the Tide

In the early fifth century CE, the poet Claudian (370 CE-408 CE) faced a world that would have sickened Ammianus. Constant rebellions were killing the already weakened Western Roman Empire. Rufinus, the regent for the eastern emperor Arcadius (r. 395-408 CE), sold positions of high stature,⁵¹ confiscated

ments against these groups, see Averil CAMERON, *The Later Roman Empire: AD 284-430*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 134.

47 ROHRBACHER, cit., 33-34.

48 This assertion confirms recent scholarship on Ammianus and his depictions of events. Scholars such as Giuseppe Zecchini and Mehmet Yilmazata have recently asserted that despite the troubles of his age, Ammianus was an optimist who wanted the Roman Empire to overcome its tribulations like a phoenix rising from the ashes. For more, see YILMAZATA, cit., 32-33; Giuseppe ZECCHINI, *Storia della storiografia romana*, Editori Laterza, 2016, p. 239; and Noel LENSKI, *Initium mali Romano imperio: Contemporary Reactions to the Battle of Adrianople*, *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-)* 127 (1997), 162.

49 ROHRBACHER, cit., 33, 180, 208, 210.

50 ROHRBACHER, cit., 30.

51 Claudian *The First Book Against Rufinus* 3.179 Maurice PLATNAUER (Ed. and Trans.),

the property of others,⁵² and put those whose property he confiscated to death.⁵³ Claudian was aware that Rufinus' actions were damaging to the empire: "An empire won and kept at the expense of so much bloodshed, born from the countless lesser...one coward traitor overthrew in the twinkling of an eye."⁵⁴ Claudian's quote demonstrates that the Romans of his era were well aware that their world was declining; more importantly, the Romans of this era were aware that the toils that their ancestors endured to build the empire had been all for naught due to Rufinus' alleged crimes in the eastern empire.

While Rufinus was committing these deeds in the eastern empire, Gildo rebelled against the western empire at the behest of the eastern consul Eutropius in North Africa and endangered the grain supply of the western empire.⁵⁵ This threat, when coupled with Rufinus' mischief in the east, was too much for Claudian to bear. Claudian wrote of a personified Rome, *Roma*, whose hair was gray and who was emaciated with hunger, said to Jupiter:

Was it for this that I waged lamentable war with proud Carthage for so many years?... Is this my reward... for my losses on Cannae's field?... For naught my lands been laid waste, so many of my generals slain, the Carthaginian invader broken his way through the Alps, Hannibal approached my affrighted capital?... Has thrice-conquered Carthage fallen for Gildo's benefit? Was this the object of mourning Italy's thousand disasters, of centuries spent in war, of Fabius' and Marcellus' deeds of daring – that Gildo should heap him up riches?... Alas for our toil and those many deaths: the two Scipios have labored, it seems, to further Bocchus' native rule: Roman blood has given victory to the Moors.⁵⁶

Claudian Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1963.

52 Claudian cit. 3.190-193.

53 Claudian cit. 3.234-236.

54 Claudian *The Second Book Against Rufinus* 5.50-53, Maurice PLATNAUER (Ed. and Trans.), *Claudian*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1963, p. 63. For the alleged crimes of Rufinus, see Alan CAMERON, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1970, pp. 61-83. Rufinus' transgressions must be taken with caution, for Claudian, writing as Stilicho's propagandist, had only three pieces of evidence to back up any wrongdoings that Rufinus, who before he was regent to Arcadius, might have committed. For Stilicho and Rufinus's rivalry, see 61; for Claudian's evidence, see 69.

55 CAMERON, cit., p. 93.

56 Claudian *The War Against Gildo, I* 15.76-95, Maurice PLATNAUER (Ed. and Trans.), *Claudian*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1963, p. 105; Michael ROBERTS, Rome Personified, Rome Epitomized: Representations of Rome in the Early Fifth Century, *American Journal of Philology* 122 (2001), pp. 535-536, especially 563: "The poets of the turn of

Claudian's statement suggests that he felt that rebellion was chipping away at the western empire and that the suffering that the Roman people endured during Hannibal's invasion of Italy was for nothing because the empire that their Roman ancestors paid for in blood was wasting away. All of the dead at Cannae – what did they die for? This question is a cry from the depths of Claudian's soul. The response, according to Claudian, based on his emotions and evocative language, is a resounding, "Nothing!" *Roma* (the city of Rome personified as a woman) lamented that the sacrifices of her citizens made in the centuries leading to the early fifth century CE were for naught and that the outsider, the Moor, the Carthaginian, the foreigner, was victorious over the glorious empire of the Romans.

Claudian and Ammianus are similar in their use of the memory of Cannae and the Second Punic War. They invoke both to convey to their readers the state of affairs of their times. When Claudian wrote about the Roman losses at Cannae, he wanted, like Ammianus with Adrianople, for his readers to understand the gravity of the situation. Claudian used the memory of Cannae in a manner similarly to Ammianus: to make his readers understand that the world was broken and that it would take someone strong enough like the Romans who faced Hannibal to set it into proper order.

The New Hannibal and Roma restored

During Claudian's time, the Visigothic warlord Alaric and his tribesmen were in the service of both the eastern and western Roman empires. Alaric was an adept commander who was denied the title of general (and with it the handsome pay) of both eastern and western courts and rose in rebellion and invaded Greece and Italy.⁵⁷ Stilicho, the regent of the boy-emperor in the west, Honorius (r. 393 CE-423 CE), was instrumental in denying Alaric's request.⁵⁸ The use of barbar-

the fourth century and the early fifth century return repeatedly to the image of Rome, metaphorically imagined as a queen or goddess, and metonymically represented by a series of historically and culturally charged locations."

57 Stephen MITCHELL, *A History of the Later Roman Empire: AD 284-641*, Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015, pp. 95, 99; POTTER, cit., p. 528, Bryan WARD-PERKINS, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 23.

58 J. F. DRINKWATER, *The Usurpers Constantine III (407-411) and Jovinus (411-413)*, *Britannia* 29 (1998). pp. 271, 281. For more on Stilicho's attempts to use Alaric against barbarians and rebellions, especially Constantine III, see MITCHELL, cit., pp. 98-100.

ian troops had become more commonplace that Ammianus could have ever imagined. What would have shocked Ammianus more, however, was Claudian's praise of Stilicho, who was a Vandal.

Stilicho met Alaric in battle and repulsed the Visigoth. For the moment, the Italians seemed to have avoided disaster due to Stilicho's military acumen. Claudian was quick to praise Stilicho for defeating Alaric and lauded him for repulsing a man who was more of a threat than Hannibal:

The elder Scipio, who single-handed turned the Punic wars back from Italy's coast to their own home, fought not his battles unmindful of the Muse's art; poets were ever the hero's special care. For valor is always fain to seek alliance with the Muses that they may bear witness to her deeds... Therefore, whether to avenge his sire's death the young warrior brought into subjection the Spanish seas or embarked upon the Libyan wave his dreadful standards, resolved to break with sure spear the strength of Carthage, Ennius was ever at his side and in all his campaigns followed the trumpet's call into midst of the fray. Him after the battle the soldiers loved to hear sing, and the trooper, still dripping with blood, would applaud his verses. When Scipio had triumphed over either Carthage – over the one to avenge his sire, over the other his fatherland – and when at last disasters of a long war, he drove weeping Libya a captive before his chariot wheel... Thee, Stilicho, our new Scipio, conqueror of a second Hannibal more terrible than the first.⁵⁹

Claudian reminded his readers about Scipio Africanus, the man who defeated Hannibal, but reduced his accomplishments by introducing Stilicho as someone who defeated a second Hannibal. This is important because Scipio Africanus was a lauded figure in Roman history, so great that the astronomer Manilius wrote about what constituted the Milky Way Galaxy. According to Manilius, only exemplary Romans occupied the Milky Way's mass of stars, including Scipio, Hannibal's victor.⁶⁰

Moreover, Cicero, in his *De Re Publica* wrote that Scipio the Elder tells his adopted son, Scipio Africanus the Younger, to look to the stars of the Milky Way. It is here, in the starry heavens, where Scipio resides, that he tells his son where

59 Claudian *On Stilicho's Consulship II*, 23.1-22, Maurice PLATNAUER (Ed. and Trans.), *Claudian*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1963, pp. 39-41.

60 Manilius *Astronomica* 1.792, G. P. GOOLD (Ed. and Trans.), *Astronomica*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

his destiny lies.⁶¹ Manilius and Cicero suggested that, indeed, many Romans in the past remembered Scipio and his dedication to the Roman Republic.

Claudian used the memory of the Second Punic War as a way to stave off the decline of the Roman Empire in the west and elevated Stilicho as someone who defeated Alaric, who according to Claudian was more terrible than Hannibal. By turning Stilicho into a hero, Claudian reduced Stilicho into an absolute hero because the Romans of the early fifth century CE needed to cheer someone in a decaying world. According to Bernard Giesen, “In populist constructions of charisma, there is the insurmountable barrier between the charismatized hero, who has the word, and the audience that listens to him or her. In contrast to the hero, the audience can only cheer, confirm, and shout – it cannot argue and suggest, tell stories and command actions.”⁶² Stilicho, in other words, is the hero, and the audience of Claudian’s narrative must cheer on Stilicho as he destroys those who threaten Rome. The more that Claudian reduced Stilicho to an absolute hero, the more his audience, in theory, would identify with Stilicho.⁶³

Claudian further lionized Stilicho by writing that a rejuvenated *Roma* proclaimed, “Let... the Scipios, terror of Carthage, learn by one man’s help I have been rescued by a double danger and have recovered both Libya and the faces.”⁶⁴ This passage is important because it suggests that in an era in which the Romans thought that all of the toil that their ancestors endured to obtain an empire was for naught, Stilicho restored and thus re-legitimized the memory of Roman suffering and endurance during the Second Punic War by restoring Rome to its former glory when he defeated Gildo and repulsed Alaric.⁶⁵ Moreover, Stilicho, as noted above, was successful in driving Alaric out from Italy, and according to Claudian, Stilicho was more successful than the heroes of the Second Punic War because he defeated Alaric quicker than the Romans defeated Hannibal:

61 Cicero, Scipio’s Dream 16, in Clinton WALKER KEYES, (Ed. and Trans.), *De Re Publica, De Legibus*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

62 GIESEN, cit., pp. 15-22, 80-84. See specifically 83-84.

63 Fredrick BARTH, Introduction, in Fredrick BARTH (Ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Boston, MA: Waveland Press, 1969, pp. 18-19, 27-28.

64 Claudian cit. *On Stilicho’s Consulship*, II 22.383-385, in PLATNAUER, p. 31.

65 Gildo proved to be such a threat that Stilicho broke off his campaign against Alaric, who was marching across the eastern Empire. See Cameron, cit., pp. 88-9, 159-161; Emma BURRELL, A Re-Examination of Why Stilicho Abandoned His Pursuit of Alaric in 397, *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 53, 2 (2004), pp. 251-254.

Fabius was the first to stay by his slow struggles Hannibal's lightning rush; then Marcellus, meeting him in the open field, taught him defeat, but it was the valor of Scipio that drove him from the shores of Italy. In the case of our latest foe Stilicho succeeded in combining in himself the diverse skill of all these three; he broke their frenzy by delaying, vanquished them in battle and drove the vanquished host from Italy.⁶⁶

According to Claudian, Stilicho embodied all three characteristics of the heroes of the Second Punic War when he expelled Alaric from Italy. The Romans of the early fifth century CE considered Stilicho greater than the heroes of the Second Punic War because Stilicho was an amalgamation of them, but he was so while simultaneously restoring the empire that each of these men obtained when they faced Hannibal. Additionally, while Hannibal was able to march on Rome briefly during the Second Punic War, Stilicho prevented Alaric from even gazing upon Rome itself; such was Stilicho's brilliant generalship, in Claudian's mind.⁶⁷

In the early fifth century CE, even while using Hannibal as a reference point, the Roman psyche had finally supplanted the importance of the Second Punic War as an indicator of Roman greatness in a *milieu* of a decaying world. Claudian used Roman cultural memory of the Second Punic War as a weapon against the shrinking frontiers of civilization, anarchy, and barbarism. Claudian, however, died before he saw his hero's fall. Stilicho was assassinated, and a resurgent Alaric invaded Italy and sacked Rome in 410 CE.⁶⁸ The hope of a restorer of Rome that Claudian had wanted to instill in his readers' minds by banishing Cannae and the Second Punic War were for naught. The empire of those Romans were able to rally from the brink of annihilation at Cannae to defeat Hannibal at Zama was lost in the west for all time while the Eastern Roman Empire continued on for another thousand years.

What is important here, however, is that in a time when the Roman imperial

66 Claudian cit. *The Gothic War* 26.138-144, in PLATNAUER, p. 137; Michael DEWAR, Hannibal and Alaric in the Later Poems Claudian, *Mnemosyne* 47, 3 (June 1994), pp. 351, 368-370.

67 DEWAR, cit., pp. 363-364.

68 For Stilicho's assassination, see Zosimus cit. 5.34.1-5. For Stilicho's temporary expulsion of Alaric, see CAMERON, cit., pp. 180-182, 186. See also CAMERON, cit. *The Later Roman Empire*, pp. 148-149; WARD-PERKINS, cit., 25-27; and MITCHELL, cit., 100, for an explanation on the barbarian recruits in the Roman army, whom Stilicho recruited, who defected and fought for Alaric after Stilicho's assassination and the Roman government's pogrom of barbarians living within the western Empire.

government was shrinking, Ammianus and Claudian used the cultural memory of the Second Punic War to explain to their audiences how their world was collapsing. Claudian and Ammianus saw with horror what was happening around them and used the tools that were available to them, Cannae and the Second Punic War, to talk to their audiences. Claudian went further than Ammianus, because in his mind, Stilicho was more important than the heroes of the Second Punic War and supplanted them with the Vandal general; such is the outcome of a messy world and the malleability of memory, identity, and history.⁶⁹

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⁶⁹ John R. GILLIS, Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship, in John R. GILLIS (Ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 4, 16.

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Archimede prima di essere ucciso da un soldato romano.

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