

**Gabriel Baker, *Spare No One. Mass Violence in Roman Warfare*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021. 292 pages. ISBN 9781538112205.**

Whereas recent studies on the army of the Roman Republic have focused on financing (Taylor 2020) and socio-economic organization (Cadiou 2018; Armstrong 2016), Gabriel Baker's study is devoted to the use of mass violence as a deliberate strategy in Roman warfare.<sup>1</sup> According to the author, his book is the first monograph on mass violence in Roman warfare written in English in 80 years (p. 12).

In the introductory chapter, Baker writes that his book is intended to be accessible to general readers, students, and experts (p. 9). That being said, Chapter Two is a summary of Roman military and political history, which the author admits can be skipped by readers already possessing a background in that domain. Given the nature of this chapter, there is not much to criticize, since its aim is to offer a short overview of centuries of Roman history. However, there are some bibliographical omissions in the discussion about the formation of the Roman plebeian-patrician aristocracy, such as K.J. Hölkeskamp's *Die Entstehung der Nobilität*.<sup>2</sup>

Chapter Four discusses the motives for the use of mass violence in Roman warfare. Although well researched, one shortcoming of the chapter is that it does not bring up the concept of *bellum iustum* in its discussion of the use of mass violence against enemies of Rome. Chapters Five to Seven are devoted to case studies on the use of mass violence in the Second Punic War, the Third Macedonian War, and the Lusitanian War. These basically read like narratives of the main events of these conflicts.

In Chapter Five, Baker emphasizes that the Romans used mass violence or clemency against Italian, Sicilian, and Spanish communities for different reasons during the Hannibalic War. Italian communities that defected to Hannibal could be severely punished to terrorize others into submission, although such behaviour could actually backfire if Rome was not perceived as having the upper hand in the war. In the Iberian Peninsula, Spanish soldiers captured after having fought for Carthage could be released to entice other Iberian communities to defect to Rome.

Chapter Six focuses on the Third Macedonian War, where Baker, although acknowledging that Greeks were also ruthless in war, describes the Roman use of mass violence as definitely alien to the Hellenes — although this is later nuanced in the conclusion. I understand that this is the general impression given especially by Greek sources or sources offering a Greek perspective. Yet, it must be remembered

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, M. J. 2020. *Soldiers and Silver. Mobilizing Resources in the Age of Roman Conquest*, Austin; Cadiou, F. 2018. *L'armée imaginaire. Les soldats prolétaires dans les légions romaines au dernier siècle de la République*, Paris; Armstrong, J. 2016. *War and Society in Early Rome: From Warlords to Generals*, Cambridge.

<sup>2</sup> Hölkeskamp, K.-J. 2011 (2nd edition). *Die Entstehung der Nobilität. Studien zur sozialen und politischen Geschichte der Römischen Republik im 4. Jh. v. Chr. 2.*, Stuttgart.

that Roman anecdotes about enemies terrified by Roman soldiers and weapons are probably embellished to emphasize Roman valour. For instance, Livy's mention of Macedonian soldiers terrified by the wounds inflicted by Roman weapons probably fits this category (p. 153). Furthermore, the famous anecdote of Macedonian soldiers trying to surrender at the battle of Cynoscephalae by raising their pikes upward, only to be slaughtered by the Romans who did not understand the gesture (p. 150–151), could perhaps lead some non-specialist readers to believe that Romans always fought to the death, which was of course not the case.

Chapter Seven concludes this series of case studies by examining the Lusitanian War of the mid second century BCE. Although Baker skillfully resists the traditional, yet inaccurate, view of the Lusitanians as users of 'guerilla tactics', he nonetheless describes Viriathus as waging 'irregular warfare', something the Romans themselves actually also practiced. There is no mention of François Cadiou's recent work on this topic in the notes or bibliography.<sup>3</sup> Baker argues that, since the Romans were unable to defeat the Lusitanians in pitched battles, they resorted to inflicting mass violence against communities supporting them.

Baker concludes that mass violence was a common practice in Roman warfare. It could aim at outright destroying communities in order to remove a troublesome enemy. It could also perform the role of punishing those supporting enemies of Rome or those who betrayed it. These acts of violence did not always benefit the Romans, as massacres could also harden the resolve of other communities to continue fighting. Sometimes recognizing this, some Roman commanders mixed cruelty with ostentatious clemency when dealing with enemy settlements and prisoners.

In the end, Baker argues that the Romans were not more prone to mass violence in warfare than any other ancient Mediterranean people. The major difference lies with the fact that the Romans were militarily more successful than anybody else. Therefore, by the middle Republic, the means at their disposal to project violence were on a different scale.

The book is well researched and written. It derives from a PhD dissertation and the meticulous research involved in such a work is clearly discernable. Yet, my main criticism is the lack of clarity about the target audience. A PhD dissertation is clearly a work aimed at a specialist audience. It can of course be modified to better accommodate a more general readership and I think this is what has been done. However, the result is a bit of a middle ground. Baker claims to have both the expert and the general reader in mind, yet these two types of readers will use the book differently. A general reader will simply enjoy the well-written book and will probably not pay attention to most of what I point out in this review.

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<sup>3</sup> Cadiou, F. 2013. "Alia ratio. L'armée romaine, la guérilla et l'historiographie moderne," *Revue des Études Anciennes*, 115, 119–145.

On the other hand, a scholar using the volume for research will frequently want to take a look at the references. Unfortunately, instead of footnotes, endnotes are placed at the end of each chapter. This is probably the choice of the publisher, but it is frustrating for scholars who will want to use the book for research, as they will have to constantly flip back and forth between pages. Whereas I understand the idea of not wanting to intimidate casual readers with long footnotes, why would endnotes spread over several pages in a row be any less daunting to them? Moreover, from the point of view of an expert, the amount of general narrative devoted to the progress of campaigns in Chapters Five to Seven seems a bit excessive when the emphasis of the book is on the use of mass violence in Roman warfare rather than Roman warfare *tout court*.

To conclude, this book is elegantly written and is well supported by ancient evidence and modern literature. While offering little new for the specialist, it is nonetheless useful as a work of reference. Above all, it succeeds in providing a useful and compelling narrative for the general reader.

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