

2009

Marius' Military Reforms and the War Against Jugurtha

Ryan Brown

Western Oregon University, rkbrown06@mail.wou.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.wou.edu/his>



Part of the [Military History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brown, Ryan, "Marius' Military Reforms and the War Against Jugurtha" (2009). *Student Theses, Papers and Projects (History)*. 75.
<https://digitalcommons.wou.edu/his/75>

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of History at Digital Commons@WOU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Theses, Papers and Projects (History) by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@WOU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@wou.edu.

Gaius Marius is responsible for developing the Roman Legion into what it is known for today. Not only did his reforms but also his conduct & tactics as a commander paved the way to victory over Jugurtha and future foes. By considering the claims of rival commanders during the war, Q. Caecilius Metellus (ca 160 BC – 91 BC) and L. Cornelius Sulla (c. 138 BC – 78 BC), it can be determined whether or not Marius truly deserved credit for the victory because each one of them played key roles in Jugurtha's defeat. Marius' reforms, while they significantly improved the Roman military, they would also cause dissent within the Roman nobility and eventually bring an end to the Republic.

I

Centuries earlier when Rome was as just a village on the bank of the Tiber River, its army consisted of the king, his body guards and retainers, as well as members of the clan-groups living within the city. Rome fought with the Fidenae, and Veii, whose army differed very little from the armies of all the small towns scattered across Latium, the flat land south of the Tiber river mouth. The neighbors to the North, the Etruscans, introduced military tactics and equipment to the cities of Latium. It is believed that the first military structure was based on the three 'tribes' of the regal period, the era of Romulus and the early kings of Rome (735-509 BC), the *Ramnes*, the *Tities* and the *Luceres*—all Etruscan names and so a product of the period of strong Etruscan influence.¹ Each of these tribes provided 1,000 men to serve in the army, under the command of the *tribunus*, or a tribal officer. A total of 3,000 men were formed, known as the *legio* or levy. Of the earliest wars of the Republic, fought mainly side by side with Rome's Latin kinsmen, little can be said. It may fairly be assumed that the Roman foot-

¹ Lawrence Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1984), 14.

soldiers fought in the phalanx, the solid line of spearmen, a formation probably learnt from the Etruscans.²

The Roman army saw reforms from Rome's sixth king, Servius Tullius (578-535 BC); along with the first census of Rome, he divided up its populace into classes based on wealth. They were also organized into centuries (hundreds). This division into classes carried into the military. The *equite* were the richest class, and formed 18 centuries. The rest of the population formed the bulk of the army, consisting of 5 classes acting as infantry. Each class was had its own unique equipment. Men over 46 were to protect the city from attack and there were also men who did not fall into one of the 5 classes for the military, who were disqualified from service. These reforms brought on by Servius ushered in the Roman army as hoplites. Hoplites fought in close order, with shields overlapping, and spears jabbing forwards, in a *phalanx*, which could be of any length but usually eight rows deep. A phalanx was made up from groups of 96 men, 12 men wide and 8 men deep. Rome's hoplite resembled that of Greece, but Rome claimed to have borrowed it from the Etruscans.³

Rome engaged in a decade long war with neighboring Veii, an Etrurian city located to the Northwest of Rome. In order to prepare for the struggle against Veii the Roman army was expanded from 4,000 to 6,000 men, probably by the creation of the 'second' and 'third' classes of the Servian system.⁴ The next stage in the development of the army is associated traditionally with the name of Camillus. Rome had hardly recovered from this decade long struggle when the Gauls swept down Italy, and after

² F.E. Adcock, *The Roman Art of War Under the Republic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1940), 7.

³ Keppie, *Roman Army*, 16-17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

their victory at the Allia, captured Rome with the exception of the Capital. On each occasion Rome was saved by the strategy of Camillus, and so it is not surprising that tradition has ascribed to him important reforms. The first reform was one that dealt with the introduction of pay for soldiers. The second was an improvement to the armor of soldiers by adopting the *scutum* or oval-shaped shield instead of the *clipeus* or round shield. The *hasta* or thrusting-spear was replaced by the *pilum*. The third reform was the abolishment of the phalanx and the levy of Roman citizens was established as its replacement. They organized it into maniples or small companies. These companies consisted of 60 men each, but later expanded into 120 men each.⁵ The *pilum* was best used in a maniple because a throwing spear could not be effectively used in a phalanx. It appears the phalanx began being substituted for the maniple near the end of the fifth century BC. With the new maniples and the stability of soldiers through winter with pay, Rome was victorious through the Punic wars, and the Macedonian campaign.

Towards the end of the second century a crisis arose. Rome was at war with the Numidian prince Jugurtha, and after some initial failures had at length selected the distinguished general Metellus to command the campaigning army. But still the war dragged on and the expected Roman victory was not forthcoming.⁶ Rome required a commander to bring a swift end to the conflict; but it did not need to look far.

II

Gaius Marius, born in 157 BC in Arpinum, belonged to one of the town's leading families. He served most likely as an *eques* in a legion, at Numantia, and is said to have attracted the attention of Scipio Aemilianus. He later became a military tribune, later

⁵ H.M.D. Parker, *The Roman Legions* (England: Oxford University Press, 1928), 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

reaching the senate, becoming the first in his family to have done so. His marriage in 111 BC allied him with the patrician family of the Julii Caesares, which must mark his acceptance into the ruling circle of Rome.⁷

Marius served as an officer on the staff of Metellus against Jugurtha. Metellus established fortified strongholds throughout eastern Numidia and nibbled at the center of the King's support. But public opinion at Rome demanded quicker results. Marius himself, returned from Numidia, was elected consul for 107 BC, and was clearly expected to make short work of Jugurtha. A speech by Marius, on the morrow of the elections, emphasized his 'professionalism' in contrast to his predecessors in command. In order to increase his forces, Marius called for volunteers from the *capite censi*, or those assessed in the census as not holding land and unable to serve in the army. Marius also persuaded many time-served veterans to join him. Even with his numbers Marius still had difficulty overcoming Jugurtha.⁸ The war, up until Marius' election, had seen little progress. Troops were involved in scandals and desertion in great numbers. In addition to this, there was severe incompetence on the part of commanders, some even succumbing to bribery. The first Roman army sent to Numidia was forced to surrender and face the humiliation of passing under the yoke.⁹

In Marius' speech following his election in 107; Marius states that he believes the state holds more importance than any office such as consul or praetor and that he acknowledges the great responsibility that had been laid upon him. He spoke on how careful he must be in not making a single mistake with this new responsibility he has been entrusted with, from protecting the state, to the dislike the nobility had for him,

⁷ Keppie, *Roman Army*, 57.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁹ Adrian Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare* (London: Phoenix, 2007), 104.

willing to take any opportunity to ruin him. In order to demonstrate his ability to lead and meet the task at hand Marius asks the people to decide whether his deeds in life or the words of others are what matters. Marius soon turns to the war, and assures the people that the problem of Jugurtha is a minor one. He attributes the length at which the war has remained un-won to the greed and incompetence of Rome's generals. Marius asked for the support of all men able to serve, promising victory, spoils, and glory, but more importantly to remain by their sides and suffer with them, and take no special reward for himself.¹⁰ One of the reasons he called for this speech was to incite the people against the nobility. Because Marius, along with his family, had obtained nobility with his election, he saw the opportunity to express his ambitions and his hatred for the current state of the nobility in Rome.¹¹

In his first campaign, Marius concerned himself mostly with training of his newly acquired troops, teaching them to act as one unit, and the capturing of small towns; the most important of which was Capsa (See map p. 22). This town served a very important strategic purpose in the eyes of Marius, along with the terrain it had a respectable sized garrison, and the inhabitants were quite loyal to Jugurtha being free from taxes. Marius abandoned gear, taking only water filled containers made from the cattle of previously captured towns. He had his men march at night for three days, on the third night they reached an area less than a couple miles outside Capsa but remained unseen. Marius waited until the Numidian's came out of the town to go about their daily work; it was then that Marius ordered his cavalry and fastest soldiers to rush the gate and seize it.

¹⁰ Sallust, *The Jugurthine war: The conspiracy of Catiline* Trans S. A. Handford (Penguin classics. London: Penguin Books, 1963), 117-22.

¹¹ Erik Hildinger, *Swords against the Senate: The Rise of the Roman Army and the Fall of the Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 97.

Marius is said to have rushed along with the men in order to prevent his men from immediately pillaging the town following its capture. After securing this town, the men were massacred, spoils were taken by the soldiers and others were sold into slavery.

In the opening year of Marius' second campaign, beginning in 106 BC, Marius was eager to capture Jugurtha's treasure house, located close to the river Muluccha, present day it is the river that makes up the western boundary of Algeria. The passage to this fort was extremely narrow, with steep precipices on either side, and their entire advancement had to be made while in combat. Mantlets were used with little success; rocks and fire made quick work of them. With little progress being made, Marius became discouraged, even considering giving up until a private from one of the auxiliary cohorts discovered a way to reach an outer wall of the fort. After convincing Marius that this path was suitable, the private led a small group up the face, reaching the section of the fort that was now deserted from the forward fighting. Once the party gave signal of their success, Marius ordered a *testudo*, or 'turtle' formation; method of arranging shields overhead to provide complete cover. This was done to occupy the attention of the enemy. The party that had reached the fort was ordered to sound their trumpets to confuse the enemy into believing a second attack. This scattered enemy forces which in turn caused panic within the fort, allowing Marius to mop up and take the fort.

Upon hearing these losses, which included much of the treasure Jugurtha was using to pay his troops, he urged his father-in-law, Bocchus to send troops to Numidia to ensure its safety. When Bocchus showed signs of hesitance, Jugurtha bribed Bocchus' court with gifts and promise of sections of his own lands for aid; this enticed Bocchus and he sent aid.

The forces under these two kings ambushed Marius while he was preparing for winter encampment. Marius' troops were completely taken by surprise; no formation or command signals could be made. The Romans engaged the enemy as best they could, in face of overwhelming numbers, the Romans found themselves gradually making circular formations that offered both protection, but also gave them a way to withstand the assault. Marius' was not phased by the ambush, he gathered his cavalry and began lending aid to any soldiers he could. Marius' only option was to secure a retreat for his men, he occupied two small hills nearby and ordered cavalry to stay guard over one hill while he gathered his troops and headed for the second hill. The enemy forces surrounded the hills though they did not attack, instead they boasted and celebrated. Marius kept his cool and allowed the enemy to continue their celebration while he had his troops remain as silent as possible and simply waited for daylight to come and for the enemy to become tired, even fall asleep. Thus early the next morning, Marius ordered his men back down the hills to attack. His forces completely took the enemy by surprise and Marius continued his way towards his winter camp, located at Cirta along the Northern coast (See map p.22).

Despite his success Marius never did take things for granted, he carefully marched his troops in a square formation as if the enemy were in sight. Suddenly he received four scouts, each bringing warning of advancing enemies. Because Marius did not know which direction they would come from, he maintained the square formation of his troops. Jugurtha sent troops at all sides and another battle began. This engagement however was short lived; the Roman cavalry made quick work of their foes and with

coming to the aid of others cause Bocchus to flee; eventually Jugurtha was surrounded and he too was forced to flee. Marius was finally allowed to reach Cirta for the winter.

Shortly after reaching his winter camp at Cirta, Marius received a request from Bocchus for two loyal men to meet with him in order to discuss matters pertaining to the war. Lucius Sulla and Aulus Manilus were the two men chosen by Marius. Many exchanges were made between Sulla and Bocchus over Bocchus' intentions and his wish to be a friend to Rome. He tells Sulla that his conduct was only as a result of being promised a portion of Jugurtha's lands and trying to protect them from invasion. Bocchus promised Sulla that from here on he would not cross into Jugurtha's lands, nor would he allow Jugurtha to cross over into his, and that he wanted nothing more than be close to Rome. However, Sulla insisted that Bocchus do rather and say in order to keep his promises; Sulla asked for Bocchus to deliver Jugurtha to him, and after much hesitance, Bocchus agreed. Jugurtha was lured by message that Rome and Bocchus were seeking a treaty, and that Jugurtha was asked to attend the meeting. Jugurtha agreed and upon arriving at this meeting, he was ambushed and delivered to Sulla who in turn handed him to Marius. Marius was able to bring Jugurtha back to Rome, in chains, like he had promised the people he would upon his election to consul.¹²

III

It is true that before being elected consul Marius served under Metellus during the Jugurthine War. Metellus before 107 had captured towns and set up garrisons of his own through out Numidia, and this certainly did hurt Jugurtha, namely by limiting his supplies because of the Roman garrisons. Metellus had also beaten Jugurtha numerous times on

¹² Hildinger, *Swords against Senate*, 101-09. See also Sallust, *Jugurthine War*, 123-48.

the battlefield. Secondary sources lend credit to Metellus by saying that the war was on the way to its end before Marius was even elected; Metellus' capturing of Thala was key in the war and has been treated as delivering a blow that would usher in the end of the war. Plutarch seems to also credit Metellus with the majority of the victory, saying that Metellus had taken care of the work before Marius was elected; the only thing left was the capturing of Jugurtha.

Sulla has been credited with having the diplomacy that concluded the war, if not for him the war might have dragged on longer than it already had been. M. Holroyd writes: "The part played by Sulla in the negotiations with Bocchus, which followed the Battle of Cirta, was undoubtedly a very important one; Marius might have had the courage, he would never have had the finesse, to carry through so difficult and dangerous a task."¹³ We also have to thank Sulla with his arrival because he brought with him cavalry that as I have discussed earlier in the second campaign, came in very handy. Sulla will also stake his own political career because of his actions during this war.

As for Marius, he opened the Roman legions to the lower classes, or the *capite censi*, which was previously not allowed. Marius has been seen as only continuing Metellus' already established plan for the war against Jugurtha. Marius had, after all, served as Metellus' lieutenant against Jugurtha before being elected consul. However, he must have been attributed with some credit in the eyes of the people; as other historians give mention that contemporaries of Marius give him the majority of the credit for the Jugurthine War. It is the reputation he built from this war which helped him be chosen as the commander for forces in the Northern Wars that immediately followed Jugurtha.

¹³ M. Holroyd, "The Jugurthine War: Was Marius or Metellus the Real Victor?" *The Journal of Roman Studies*, vol., 18 (1928): 18.

Upon his return from the north, Marius was hailed as the savior of Rome, and held a magnificent Triumph, along with Catulus, in 101 BC. His prestige was unrivalled, and it was expected that he would play a leading political role. As the victor of the hour, he secured election as consul for a further year in 100 BC. Rewards for his troops were secured through the agency of radical politicians, but at the end of the year Marius retired from the city on a diplomatic mission to Asia Minor.¹⁴ This, along with his previous elections made for an unconstitutional seven consulships.

Plutarch, attributes the opening and middle efforts of the war to Metellus, and they give Sulla the credit for the war's conclusion. Plutarch says "For many that envied Marius, attributed the success wholly to Sulla; and Sulla himself got a seal made, on which was engraved Bocchus betraying Jugurtha to him, and constantly used it, irritating the hot and jealous temper of Marius, who was naturally greedy of distinction, and quick to resent any claim to share in his glory, and whose enemies took care to promote the quarrel, ascribing the beginning and chief business of the war to Metellus, and its conclusion to Sulla; that so the people might give over admiring and esteeming Marius as the worthiest person."¹⁵ This is contrasted by Holroyd who writes: "according to Livy's version, Metellus's conquest of Numidia amounted merely to the widespread devastation of the country, while to Marius belongs the credit-and this is my principal point-of securing Jugurtha's final and permanent expulsion-unless Bocchus could help him back-from the Kingdom of Numidia."¹⁶

¹⁴ Keppie, *Roman Army*, 67-68.

¹⁵ Plutarch, and John Dryden, *Plutarch's lives of illustrious men* (New York: John W. Lovell, 1880), 2; 47-48.

¹⁶ Holroyd, *Marius or Metellus*, 18.

IV

The legislation of Tiberius Gracchus (168 BC–133 BC) can be seen as a sort of foreshadow to the work done by Marius with the *capite censi*. Tiberius had proposed the relocation of land in order to benefit poorer citizens; this was done, in part, in order to allow more citizens to reach the property requirement for service. Tiberius' legislation faced opposition from the senate. Following Tiberius' murder, his brother Gaius Gracchus (154 BC–121 BC) obtained his own political career and issued his own reforms; namely proposing that the state pay for a soldier's equipment and weapons. In addition to this he established seventeen as the minimum age for enlistment.

It is important to note that Marius was not the first to enlist the *capite censi* into the army; traditionally members of this class were allowed, even encouraged, by the senate to enlist during times of extreme emergency. The land requirement for enlistment had gradually been lowered time and time again; Marius can be seen as only take the process a step further. The old Servian Constitution, according to Livy, required a minimum property of 11,000 *asses* for qualification, this standard carried through the Second Punic War. By 160 BC, Polybius reports that the minimum for enlistment was 400 greek *drachmae*, the equivalent of 4,000 *asses*. Cicero in the year 129 BC places the minimum at 1,500. Marius is not said to have completely done away with the land requirement, he is said to have only appealed to the *capite censi*, who he was able to equip via state funds through the Graachan legislation. It is possible to say that there remained a law or restriction on eligibility for service; however there is no mention of

restrictions after Marius. This could mean that the restriction was simply dropped off or done away with by 101 BC.¹⁷

Marius' efforts with recruitment into the legion began transforming Rome's army from a citizen militia into a professional army. During the Jugurthine War, Marius' initiative to open the Legion to the *capite censi* was sparked by the recognition of the need for more troops in Numidia. He learned this during his lieutenancy under Metellus, and felt that even a few thousand more men might give him the advantage.¹⁸

During Marius' campaigns in the north against the Celtic tribes, namely the Cimbri and the Teutones, Marius faced new tactics which his maniples proved insufficient; the three lined formation of maniples could not withstand the frontal onslaught used by the Celts from the start of battle. The units themselves were small, and the first line was normally divided by gaps as wide as the maniples themselves. Consequently an attack strongly pressed home might easily overcome the resistance of the front lines, and the enemy troops might advance through the gaps and deliver an unimpeded assault upon the second line of defense. Marius decided to strengthen the front line of defense by increasing the size of each unit, even willing to decrease the distance between the units to shorten the gaps, this gave birth to the cohort.

Thus by the time of Caesar, the cohort took the place of the maniple as the tactical unit of the Roman Army, and the legion was organized into ten cohorts, each of which was subdivided into six centuries. The effect of this reform gave much greater cohesion and stability to the separate units that composed the lines of attack and defense. The

¹⁷ Keppie, *Roman Army*, 61.

¹⁸ Hildinger, *Swords against Senate*, 98.

division into three lines was also no longer adhered to.¹⁹ The cohort had also been foreshadowed as early as Scipio Africanus, but most likely did not reach full development until after Marius' reforms. Its effect, when it was fully reached, was to increase the self-reliance and tactical versatility of the legionary. With this went a greater skill in fighting and a greater adaptability to tasks of all kinds, including engineering and even craftsmanship. Thus there gradually came a change which made the Roman soldier more a professional, more closely attached to his general and more immediately dependent in battle on the initiative as well as the steadiness of this centurion. The whole Italian *personnel* of the Roman armies became a homogeneous infantry of the line, professional in character and loyal to its professional chiefs rather than to the Roman state. Yet it must not be supposed that it was a mere *soldateska*. It retained its Italian-Roman character; it felt itself superior to mercenaries and auxiliaries, and it kept those qualities of steadiness and discipline under generals whom it trusted.²⁰

Each cohort in the 'new' legion was made up—as titles of its centurions make clear—from a maniple drawn from each of the three old lines of *hastati*, or young soldiers, *principes* or soldiers in their prime and *triarii* or the older soldiers, together with the *velites* or lightly equipped soldiers. The cohort was thus a miniature world of the old legionary organization—it was not a random grouping of three adjacent maniples in one of the old lines. The First Cohort of the new legion consisted of three maniples which had stood at the extreme right of the old lines; the Second Cohort was made up of the next three maniples in order of seniority, and so on; the Tenth Cohort consisted of the maniples which had stood at the left ends of the three lines of *hastati*, *principes* and

¹⁹ Parker, *Roman Legions*, 27-28.

²⁰ Adcock, *Roman Art of War*, 21-22.

triarii. The new legion consisted of ten cohorts, who formed up for battle in three lines, in a four-three-three formation. Most probably the cohorts were of a standard size, which we know was 480 men under the Empire (See image p.21). Thus the legion had a strength of some 4,800 men. Each cohort contained six centuries of eighty men. It is believed that after Marius the centuries contained one hundred legionaries, thus giving the whole legion a strength of 6000.²¹

Consistently with the establishment of a professional army Marius gave the individual legions an identity which they had not previously possessed. Marius is credited with making the eagle or *aquila* the legion's chief standard, and a focus for loyalty and affection. Our source, the Elder Pliny, places the adoption of the eagle precisely in 104, at the start of preparations for the northern wars. He notes that the legion up to this time had had a variety of standards—the eagle, the wolf, the minotaur, the horse and the boar, and that all had been carried in front of different elements in the legion. The standards are identified as: Jupiter is the eagle, Mars the wolf, and Quirinus the boar, and these are the three original *numina* of Rome. The Minotaur may represent Jupiter Feretrius or the god of the offensive, the horse Jupiter Stator or the god of defense.²² Marius is stated to have given prominence to the eagle and to have abolished the others. All five standards were animal totems, reflecting the religious beliefs of an agricultural society. It is not known which sub-units within the legion used the five standards, but it might be expected that the *hastati*, *principes* and *triarii* had separate standards, and perhaps the *velites* also. Polybius notes that each maniple had two standards, one for each century.²³ The *aquila*, in time of peace was kept in the *aerarium* at Rome; in time of war a little chapel was built

²¹ Keppie, *Roman Army*, 64-65.

²² Parker, *Roman Legions*, 37-38, 67.

²³ Keppie, *Roman Army*, 67.

for it. During the republic the eagle was at first made of silver and later of gold; it was placed at the top of a long pole, decorated with various adornments. It was given into the care of the *primus pilus* or leading centurion.²⁴ At the close of the Republic it seems likely therefore that the legion's three most important standards were the *aquila* in the care of the chief centurion of the *triarii*, and two others, presumably in the charge of the *princes* and the *hastatus*. The retention of these standards serves as an interesting sidelight on continuity of tradition within the legion. The eagle-bearer or *aquilifer* of the legion was thus the man who carried the standard of the senior century of the First Maniple of the *triarii*. In battle and on the march the standards were important as a rallying-point. The loss, or surrender, a standard, especially the eagle itself, was a particular disgrace.²⁵

Parker states that the remaining Marius reforms are of more detailed and less general importance. We have noticed already the disappearance of the *velites*, and it is of no great surprise that with them the Roman cavalry was gradually withdrawn from the legion. The inferiority of the Roman cavalry had been demonstrated by the Punic wars, and it was a wise decision to substitute it for the more efficient services of foreign mercenaries. In the Gallic War Caesar made exclusive use of *equites* raised in Gaul, Spain, and Germany, and the absence of Roman horsemen is sufficiently shown by the fact that, when Caesar goes to meet Ariovistus to arrange terms of a possible peace, he forms a mounted escort from the infantry of the tenth legion. From the time of Marius onwards, the policy of the Roman government was to draw such supernumerary troops as it required from the native peoples it conquered. Parker continued that the assimilation of

²⁴ Parker, *Roman Legions*, 36.

²⁵ Keppie, *Roman Army*, 67.

hastati, *princes*, and *triarii* rendered any differentiation in armor meaningless.

Consequently the *hasta*, which had been the offensive weapon of the *triarii*, is replaced by the *pilum*, so that the whole legion is now uniformly equipped. Further improvements were also made in the Roman armor and equipment. In the Polybian account the *pila* were said to have been made by driving the shank into the handle, which was so solidly fixed that, even if the blade were broken it was not dislodged from the wood.²⁶ Marius made improvements to the rivets of the *pilum* so that it would be impossible to remove it from an enemy shield and used against the spear's owner. Caesar further improved the *pilum* by leaving the shank of the spear un-tempered so it would bend on contact.

The *pilum* is a throwing type weapon; because of its composition, having a barbed spear head, the purpose of the *pilum* was to pierce an object and become irremovable via the barb and its ability to bend. Marius' improvements to this *pilum*, involved removing one of the two iron rivets, which held the iron spear portion to the shaft, and replacing it with a wooden rivet. The purpose of this was so that when the *pilum* made contact with its intended target, the wooden rivet would give and cause the shaft portion of the spear to rotate and be dragged along the ground. This served the purpose of slowing or hindering troops. During the war in the north, Marius made developments to the *pilum*. Roman soldiers traditionally were equipped with a style of *pilum* referred to as the *Broad-Tanged*, or 'heavy' *pilum* (See image p.23). The improvements to the *pilum* were in part due to Marius' need to constantly re-arm his troops in preparation for war against the Cimbri in 101. He began acquiring weapons locally, the style *pilum* found in North Italy

²⁶ Parker, *Roman Legions*, 43-44.

was known as the *Spike-Tanged*, which had only one rivet; Marius found this style of *pilum* more reliable and adopted it.²⁷

Marius is also responsible for having made improvements in the construction of the soldier's pack. In addition to the actual armor of a soldier, they were said to have carried tools such as a saw, axe, and chain. In addition to this they also had three days rations, as well as a kit of some kind. Parker also tells us that Marius made it so a soldier's pack did not hinder them, he says: "Marius is said to have devised a scheme by which the soldier was able to remove his pack without interfering with his armor. It is said that this would be the equivalent to how a British soldier discards his full marching order, but remain dressed in light marching order without taking off his equipment."²⁸

V

The opening of the ranks to the *capite censi* has attracted the most attention, and the unanimous disapproval of ancient writers.²⁹ One particular consequence of the Marian 'reform' of army service has been seen in the consequent offers of land which were found to be made to the soldiers as a reward for military service in the first century. It is true that veterans of Marius' African campaign were given land there in 103, and measures for the settlement of veterans of the northern wars were being canvassed, and probably brought to fruition in 100. Presumably the land went to those who by their service with Marius now completed the legal minimum of service, rather than to all-comers. However, there is no indication that land or cash gratuity became a regular feature of military service in the following century. The Senate was openly hostile to

²⁷ Peter, Connolly, "The *Pilum* from Marius to Nero – a Reconsideration of its Development and Function," *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies*, no. 12-13 (2001): 1-7.

²⁸ Parker, *Roman Legions*, 45.

²⁹ Keppie, *Roman Army*, 61.

such rewards, whenever suggested, and most generals felt disinclined to press for special treatment. It was only under the stress of civil war conditions that land plots and cash gratuities were regularly offered, and obtained. It has been held by many in modern times, following the denunciations or asides of hostile ancient authorities, that Marius' action paved the way for the lawless, greedy soldiery whose activities were thought to have contributed largely to the disgrace and fall of the Republic a few generations later.³⁰

Because of the shift from a citizen militia into a professional army, by taking volunteers instead of conscripting soldiers from the general populace, this became an annoyance to the Senate. This annoyance was for good reason; a militia would see the state and the senate not just as their top priority, but as its authority. By becoming a professional army, soldiers saw Marius' (or their current general) ambitions as their priority.³¹

The relationship between the soldier and their commander in this new professional army proved very dangerous and has been attributed to the cause of the fall of the Republic. Parker writes: "the policy inaugurated by Marius in the teeth of Senatorial opposition of enlisting troops on his own initiative set a dangerous precedent. . .in large measure the cause of the succession of civil wars which marked the last century of the Republic."³² It was a simple matter of figures with their own political ambitions, and the means to raise and fund an army, had the ability to march their army on Rome and proclaim themselves ruler, this cycle and style of thinking would continue until Augustus' reign.

³⁰ Ibid., 61-63.

³¹ Hildinger, *Swords against Senate*, 99.

³² Parker, *Roman Legions*, 26.

The work of Marius may be conveniently summarized. In place of the annual levy Rome started a professional army. All citizens were liable for military service, and, although conscription thus remained the rule, it is probable that the legions were normally maintained by voluntary enlistment. The legions were now given an identity, which later developed into a permanent system enumeration, and the new tactical unit, the cohort, with its centuries composed of soldiers armed with the *pilum*, survived into the Principate as the basis of the future military organization. Lastly, by the enfranchising law of 90-89 BC the recruiting area for legionary troops was extended to all Italy south of the Po. The *socii* or allies disappeared, and the Roman army was now composed of legions of citizen-soldiers and *auxilia* or detachments of foreign troops serving either as volunteers or as mercenaries.³³

The opening of the army to the *capite censi* began Rome's path towards a professional army. Marius' promise to make short work of Jugurtha proved true; his ability to prepare his troops and make swift work of his objectives such as Capsa gave the people the results they wanted. Metellus laid the ground work by which Marius would use to wrap up the war and Sulla obtained a renowned political career because of his actions. The success Marius had against Jugurtha would be called upon again against the Northern tribes; following this war, Marius would return to Rome and hailed as the "Third Founder of Rome".³⁴

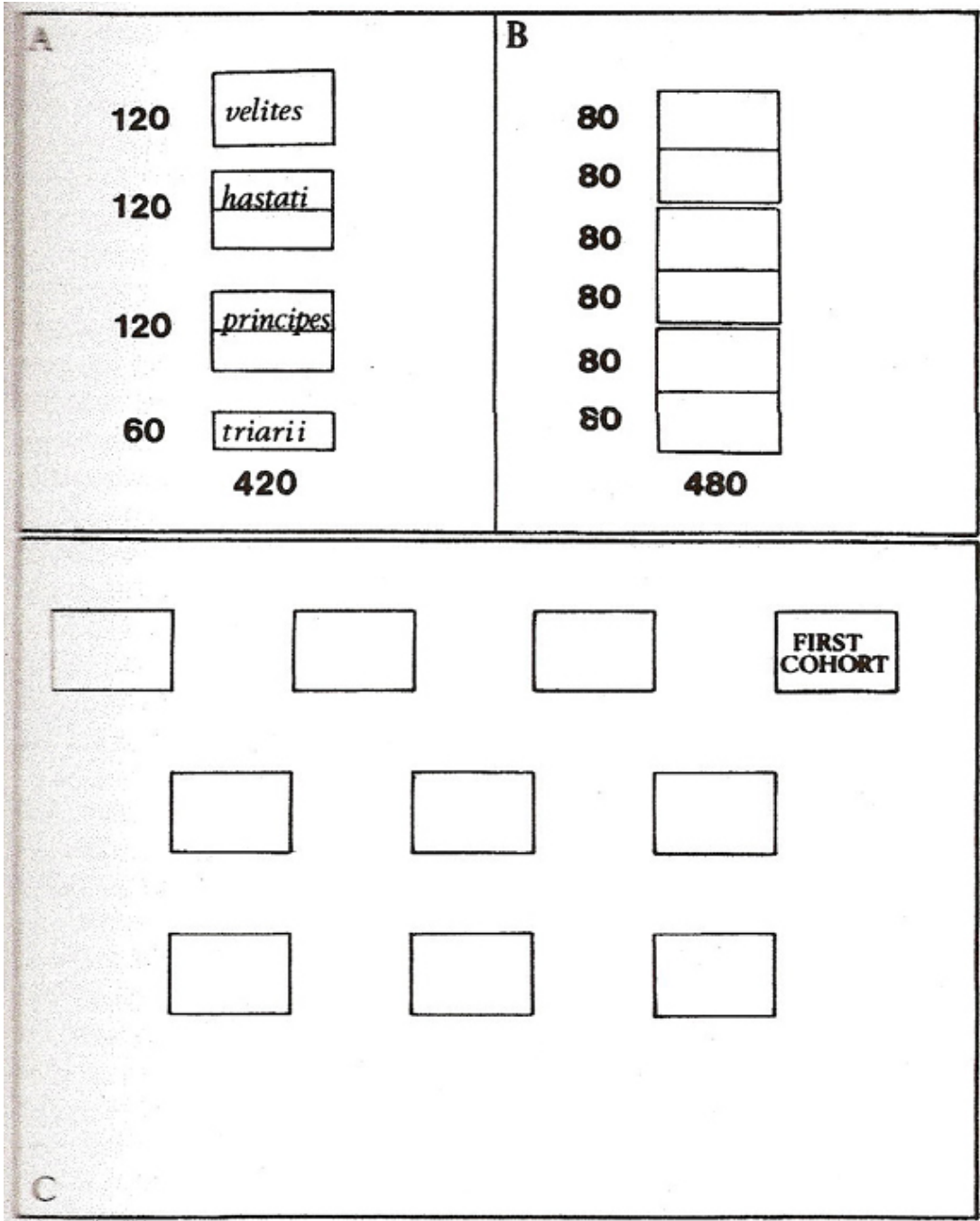
In addition to this, Marius gave the army an identity with the development of the battle standard. Marius' improvements to not just the maniple, and eventual conversion to the cohort, but the improvements done to the soldier's *pilum* were so great that their use

³³ Ibid., 45-46.

³⁴ Hildinger, *Swords against Senate*, 141.

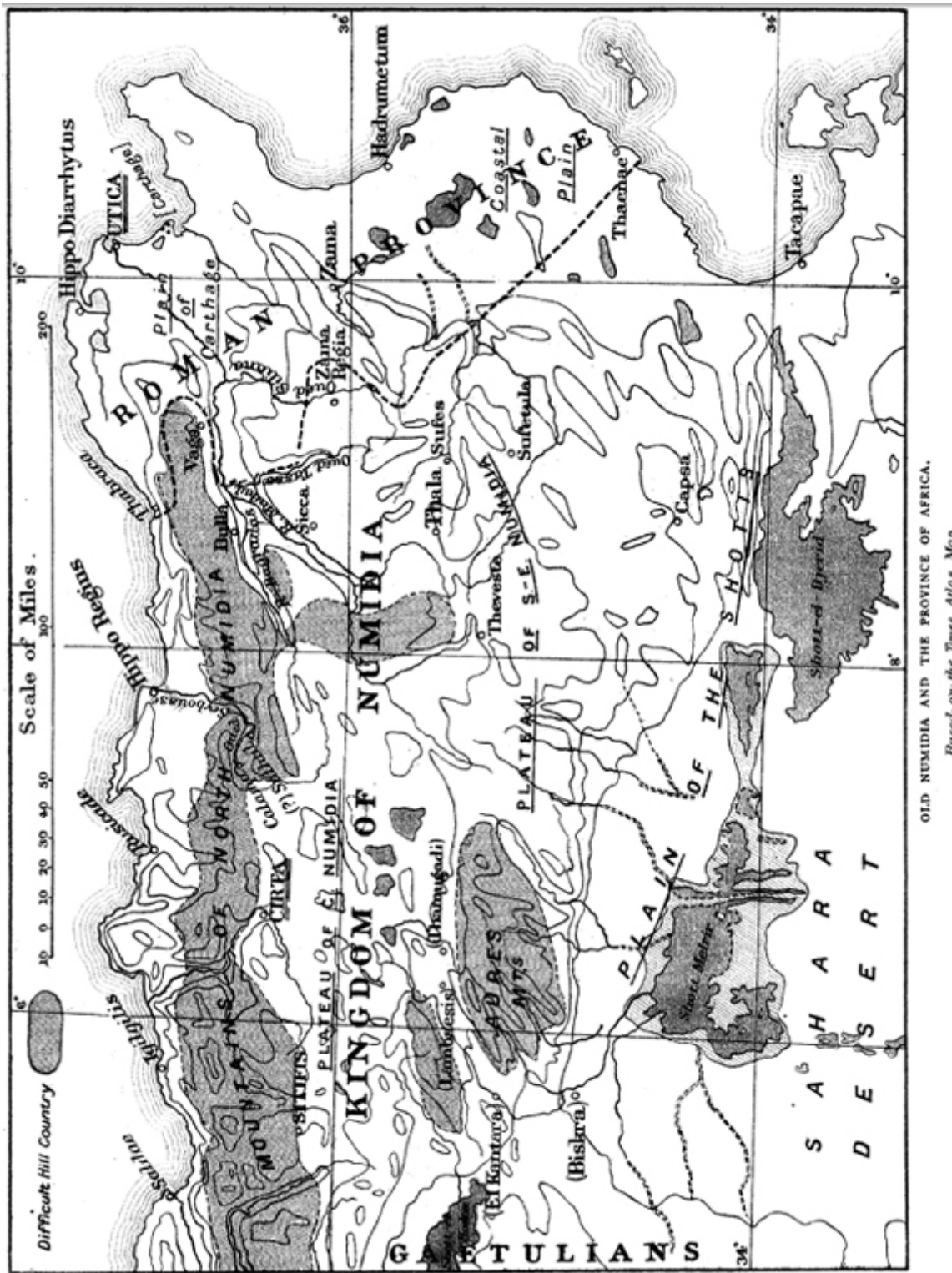
continued into the time of Julius Caesar. However, this professional army, while it initially proved positive, it would lead to disputes over land promised to veterans, Roman citizenship to Rome's allies and eventually the Social Wars, but help numerous men to command their own private armies and march them upon Rome to seize power.

Appendix



20 From maniple to cohort. a: single maniples (i.e. two centuries) of *hastati*, *principes* and *triarrii* organised into a cohort (second century BC), together with *velites*. b: cohort of six centuries (first century BC onwards). c: likely battle formation of the 10 cohorts of a legion in Caesar's time

Source: Keppie, *Roman Army*, 65 Fig. 20



Source: Holroyd, "Marius or Metellus," Map 2.

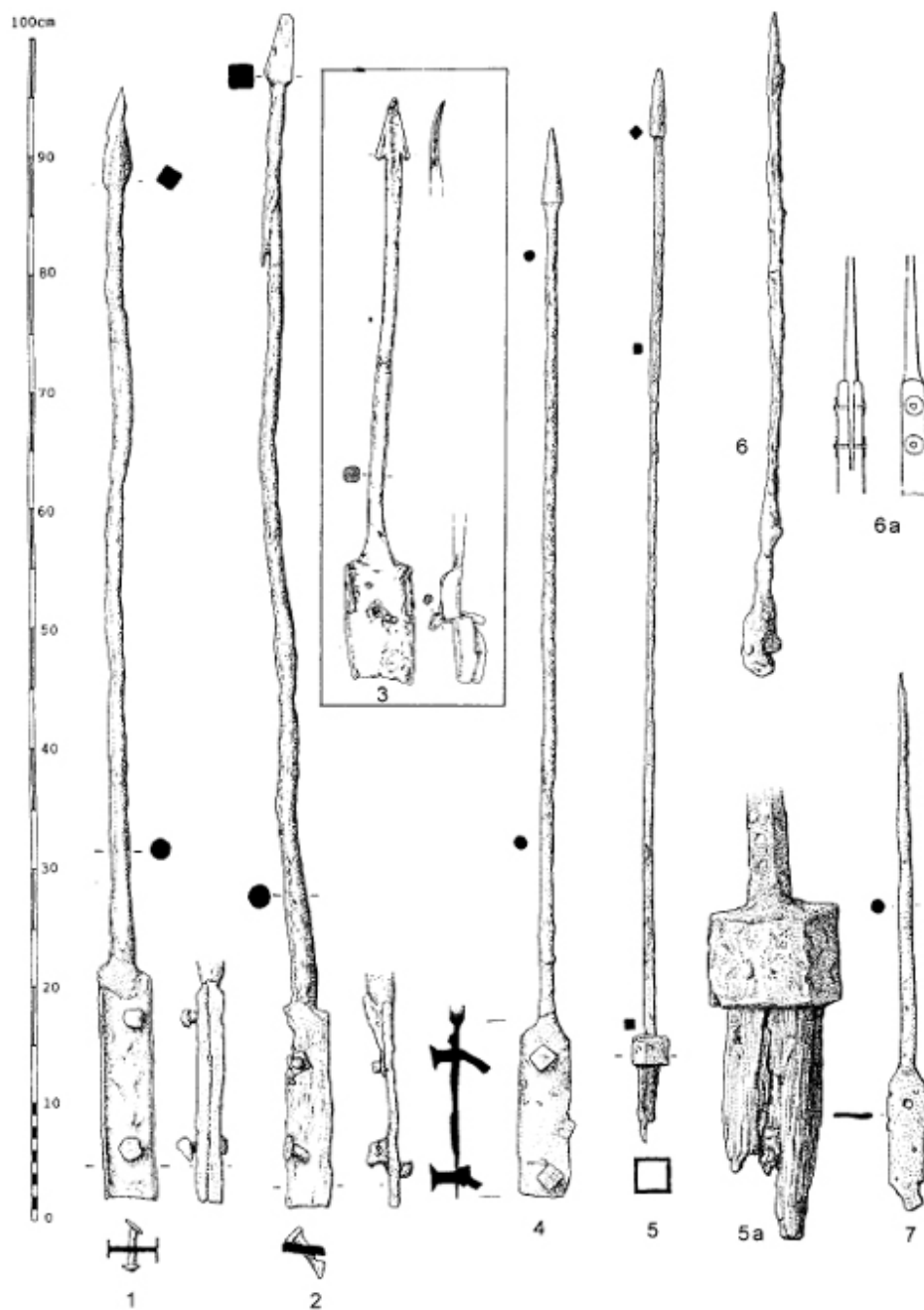


Fig 2: Broad tanged pila of late Republican type. 1–2 Caminreal (Spain), 3 Šmihel (Slovenia), 4 Valencia (Spain), 5 Saône (France), 6–6a Alesia (France), 7 Xanten (Germany)

Source: Connolly, “Marius to Nero,” 4.

Bibliography

- Adcock, F. E. *The Roman Art of War Under the Republic*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1940.
- Connolly, Peter. "The *Pilum* from Marius to Nero – a Reconsideration of its Development and Function." *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies*, no. 12-13 (2001): 1-8.
- Gabba, Emilio. *Republican Rome, the army, and the allies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
- Goldsworthy, Adrian. *Roman Warfare*. London: Pheonix, 2007.
- Hildinger, Erik. *Swords against the Senate: The Rise of the Roman Army and the Fall of the Republic*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002.
- Holroyd, M. "The Jugurthine War: Was Marius or Metellus the Real Victor?" *The Journal of Roman Studies* 18 (1928): 1-20.
- Keppie, Lawrence. *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1984.
- Parker, H.M.D. *The Roman Legions*. England: Oxford University Press, 1928.
- Plutarch, and John Dryden, *Plutarch's lives of illustrious men*. New York: John W. Lovell, 1880, vol. 2.
- Sallust, and S. A. Handford, *The Jugurthine war: The conspiracy of Catiline*. Penguin classics. London: Penguin Books, 1963.
- Sidebottom, Harry. *Ancient Warfare: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc, 2004.