

# A COMPANION TO THE ROMAN ARMY

*Edited by*

Paul Erdkamp



A COMPANION  
TO  
THE ROMAN ARMY

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BLACKWELL PUBLISHING

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK

550 Swanston Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia

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First published 2007 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd

1 2007

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

A companion to the Roman army / edited by Paul Erdkamp.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4051-2153-8 (hardback : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 1-4051-2153-X (hardback : alk. paper) 1. Military history, Ancient.  
2. Rome—History, Military. 3. Rome—Army. I. Erdkamp, Paul.

U35.C648 2007

355.00937—dc22

2006009420

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Set in 10/12pt Galliard

by Graphicraft Limited, Hong Kong

Printed and bound in Singapore

by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

The publisher's policy is to use permanent paper from mills that operate a sustainable forestry policy, and which has been manufactured from pulp processed using acid-free and elementary chlorine-free practices. Furthermore, the publisher ensures that the text paper and cover board used have met acceptable environmental accreditation standards.

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**This book is dedicated with great respect and gratitude  
to Lukas de Blois on the occasion of his retirement**





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# Abbreviations of Reference Works and Journals

<i>AE</i>	<i>Année épigraphique</i>
<i>AJAH</i>	<i>American Journal of Ancient History</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AncSoc</i>	<i>Ancient Society</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>BASP</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
<i>BGU</i>	<i>Aegyptische Urkunden aus den staatlichen Museen zu Berlin; Griechische Urkunden</i>
<i>BICS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London</i>
<i>BJ</i>	<i>Bonner Jahrbücher</i>
<i>BMCRR</i>	H. Mattingly and R. A. G. Carson, <i>Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum</i> , 1923–
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
<i>CBFIR</i>	E. Schallmayer et al., <i>Corpus der griechischen und lateinischen Beneficiarius-Inschriften des römischen Reiches</i> , Stuttgart 1990
<i>ChLA</i>	A. Bruckner and R. Marichal (eds.), <i>Chartae Latinae antiquiores</i> , Basel 1954–
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CPL</i>	R. Cavenaile, ed. <i>Corpus Papyrorum Latinarum</i> , Wiesbaden 1958
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>

CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus de l'académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
Daris	S. Daris, <i>Documenti per la storia dell'esercito romano in Egitto</i> , Milan 1964
EA	<i>Epigraphica Anatolica</i>
FIRA	S. Riccobono et al., <i>Fontes iuris romani anteiustiniani</i> , 1940–3
FO	L. Vidman (ed.), <i>Fasti Ostienses</i> , Prague 1982
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
IGBulg	G. Mikailov, <i>Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae</i> , Sofia 1956–1987
IGLSyr	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i>
IGR(R)	R. Cagnat et al., <i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes</i> , Paris 1901–27
ILAlg	<i>Inscriptions latines de l'Algerie</i> , 3 vols., Paris 1922, 1957, 1976
ILS	H. Dessau (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae selectae</i> , Berlin 1954
InscrAq	J. B. Brusin (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Aquileiae</i> , 3 vols., Udine 1991–3
JDAI	<i>Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRGZ	<i>Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz</i>
JRMES	<i>Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
LA	<i>Liber Annuus</i> (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Jerusalem)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>Lib. Hist. Franc.</i>	<i>Liber Historia Francorum</i>
LTUR	Eva Margareta Steinby (ed.), <i>Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae</i> , 6 vols., Rome 1993–2000.
MAAR	<i>Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome</i>
Mitteis, <i>Chr.</i>	L. Mitteis und U. Wilcken, <i>Grundzüge und Chrestomatie der Papyruskunde</i> , Leipzig 1912
MRR	T. R. S. Broughton, <i>The Magistrates of the Roman Republic</i> , 3 vols. (1951, 1952, 1986)

- Not.Dig.Occ.*      *Notitia Dignitatum Occidentis*
- O. Amst.      R. S. Bagnall, P. J. Sijpesteijn, and K. A. Worp, *Ostraka in Amsterdam Collections*, Zutphen 1976
- O. Bu Djem      R. Marichal (ed.), *Les Ostraca de Bu Djem*, Tripoli 1992
- O. Claud.      J. Bingen et al., *Mons Claudianus. Ostraca Graeca et Latina*, Cairo 1992, 1997, 2000
- O. Florida      R. S. Bagnall (ed.), *The Florida Ostraka. Documents from the Roman Army in Upper Egypt*, Durham, NC 1976
- OJA*      *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*
- OLD*      P. W. G. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford 1968–82
- P. Abinn.      H. I. Bell et al. (eds.), *The Abinnaeus Archive: Papers of a Roman Officer in the Reign of Constantius II*, Oxford 1962
- P. Berol.      G. Ioannidou (ed.), *Catalogue of Greek and Latin Literary Papyri in Berlin (P.Berol.inv. 21101–21299, 21911)*, Mainz 1996
- P. Brooklyn      J. C. Shelton (ed.), *Greek and Latin Papyri, Ostraca, and Wooden Tablets in the Collection of the Brooklyn Museum*, Florence 1992
- P. Columb.      *Columbia Papyri*. Vol. I (1929)–XI (1998)
- P. Dura      C. Bradford-Welles et al., *The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Final Report V 1. The Parchments and Papyri*, 1959
- P. Fay.      *Fayum Towns and their Papyri*, B. P. Grenfell, A. S. Hunt, and D. G. Hogarth (eds.). London 1900
- P. Fouad      A. Bataille et al. (eds.), *Les papyrus Fouad*, Cairo 1939
- P. Grenf. 1      B. P. Grenfell, *An Alexandrian Erotic Fragment and Other Greek Papyri, Chiefly Ptolemaic*, Oxford 1896
- P. Grenf. 2      B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *New Classical Fragments and Other Greek and Latin Papyri*, Oxford 1897
- P. Hamb.      P. M. Meyer (ed.), *Griechische Papyrusurkunden der hamburger Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek*, Leipzig/Berlin 1911–24
- P. Mich.      *Michigan Papyri*. Vol. I (1931)–XIX (1999)
- P. Osl.      *Papyri Osloenses*. Oslo. Vol. I, S. Eitrem (ed.), *Magical Papyri*, 1925. Vol. II, S. Eitrem and L. Amundsen (eds.), 1931. Vol. III, S. Eitrem and L. Amundsen (eds.) 1936
- P. Oxy.      B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt et al., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, London 1898–
- P. Panop.      T. C. Skeat, *Papyri from Panopolis in the Chester Beatty Library*,

- Beatty *Dublin*, Dublin 1964
- P. Petaus U. Hagedorn et al. (eds.), *Das Archiv des Petaus*, Cologne 1969
- P. Strasb. *Griechische Papyrus der kaiserlichen Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek zu Strassburg*
- P. Yale Yale Papyri in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
- PBSR *Papers of the British School at Rome*
- PG J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Paris 1857–66
- P.Gen.Lat. J. Nicole and C. Morel (eds.), *Archives militaires du 1<sup>er</sup> siècle (Texte inédit du Papyrus Latin de Genève No. 1)*. Geneva 1900
- PIR E. Klebs et al. (eds.), *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, Berlin 1897–8
- PIR<sup>2</sup> E. Groag et al., *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, Berlin 1933–
- PLRE J. Morris et al. (ed.), *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge 1971–92
- PSI G. Vitelli et al. (eds.), *Papiri greci e latini*, Florence 1912–
- RAC *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, Stuttgart 1950–
- REB *Revue des études byzantines*
- REMA *Revue des études militaires anciennes*
- RIB R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*. Vol. 1. *Inscriptions on Stone*, Oxford 1965
- RIC *The Roman Imperial Coinage*. Vols. I–X, London 1923–94
- RIU *Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns*, Budapest, 5 vols., Amsterdam 1972–91
- RMD M. M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas*, 1 (1954–77), 2 (1978–84), 3 (1985–93), London 1978, 1985, 1994
- RMR R. O. Fink, *Roman Military Documents on Papyrus*, Cleveland 1971
- RPC A. Burnett et al., *Roman Provincial Coinage*, London 1992–
- RRC M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, Cambridge 1974
- SB F. Preisigke et al., *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten*, Strassburg/Berlin/Leipzig 1913–
- SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*
- Sel. Pap. A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar (eds. and trans.), *Select Papyri* Vol. I: *Non-Literary Papyri Private Affairs*, Cambridge, MA: 1932, repr. 1988; and Vol. II: *Official Documents*, Cambridge, MA 1934, repr. 1995

<i>Sylloge</i>	W. Dittenberger, <i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
Tab. Vindol. 1	A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, <i>Vindolanda. The Latin Writing Tablets</i> , Gloucester 1983
Tab. Vindol. 2	A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, <i>The Vindolanda Writing Tablets</i> , London 1994
Tab. Vindol. 3	A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, with contributions by John Pearce, <i>The Vindolanda Writing Tablets</i> , London 2003
<i>TAPhS</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</i>
Waddington	W. H. Waddington, "Inscriptiones grecques et latines de la Syrie recueillies et expliquees," Paris 1870
<i>W.Chr.</i>	U. Wilcken, <i>Chrestomathie</i> , Leipzig 1912
<i>YCS</i>	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
<i>ZRG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte (Romanistische Abteilung)</i>

# Abbreviations of Works of Classical Literature

Aen. Tact.	Aeneas Tacticus
Appian, <i>B. Civ.</i>	<i>Bella civilia</i>
Appian, <i>Iber.</i>	<i>Iberike</i>
Appian, <i>Mithr.</i>	<i>Mithridateius</i>
Appian, <i>Pun.</i>	<i>Libyke</i>
Appian, <i>Syr.</i>	<i>Syriake</i>
Apuleius, <i>Met.</i>	Lucius Apuleius, <i>Metamorpheses</i> [= The golden ass]
Augustine, <i>Epist.</i>	Aurelius Augustinus (= St. Augustine), <i>Epistulae</i>
Aurelius Victor, <i>Caes.</i>	Sextus Aurelius Victor, <i>Caesares</i>
[Caesar], <i>B. Afr.</i>	[Trad. ascribed to C. Iulius Caesar], <i>De bello Africano</i>
[Caesar], <i>B. Alex.</i>	[Trad. ascribed to C. Iulius Caesar], <i>De bello Alexandrino</i>
Caesar, <i>B. Gal.</i>	C. Iulius Caesar, <i>De bello Gallico</i>
Caesar, <i>B. Civ.</i>	<i>De bello civili</i>
Calpurnius Piso, <i>Ann.</i>	L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi, <i>Annales</i>
Cic., <i>Brutus</i>	M. Tullius Cicero, <i>Brutus</i>
Cicero, <i>Agr.</i>	<i>De lege agraria</i>
Cicero, <i>Att.</i>	<i>Epistulae ad Atticum</i>
Cicero, <i>Fin.</i>	<i>De finibus bonum et malorum</i>
Cicero, <i>Flacc.</i>	<i>Pro Flacco</i>
Cicero, <i>Har.</i>	<i>De haruspicum responso</i>



Cicero, <i>Leg. Man.</i>	<i>Pro lege Manilia</i>
Cicero, <i>Nat. Deo.</i>	<i>De natura deorum</i>
Cicero, <i>Off.</i>	<i>De officiis</i>
Cicero, <i>pro Font.</i>	<i>Pro Fonteio</i>
Cicero, <i>Rep.</i>	<i>De republica</i>
Cicero, <i>Sen.</i>	<i>De senectute</i>
Cicero, <i>Sull.</i>	<i>Pro Sulla</i>
Cicero, <i>Tusc.</i>	<i>Tusculanae disputationes</i>
Claudianus, <i>B. Get.</i>	Claudius Claudianus, <i>Bellum Geticum</i>
Claudianus, <i>III Cons. Hon.</i>	<i>De tertio consulatu Honorii augusti</i>
Claudianus, <i>In Eutr.</i>	<i>In Eutropium</i>
<i>Cod. Just.</i>	<i>Codex Iustiniani</i>
<i>Cod. Theod.</i>	<i>Codex Theodosiani</i>
Corippus, <i>Laud. Iust.</i>	Flavius Cresconius Corippus, <i>In laudem Iustini</i>
<i>De vir. ill.</i>	<i>De viri illustribus</i>
<i>Dig.</i>	<i>Digesta</i>
Ennius, <i>Ann.</i>	Q. Ennius, <i>Annales</i>
Epictetus, <i>Disc.</i>	<i>Diatribae</i>
Epiphanius of Salamis, <i>Adv. haeres.</i>	<i>Adversus haereses</i>
<i>Epit. de Caes.</i>	<i>Epitome de Caesaribus</i>
Eugippius, <i>Vit. Sev.</i>	<i>Vita Sancti Severini</i>
Eusebius, <i>Vit. Const.</i>	<i>Vita Constantini</i>
Festus, <i>Brev</i>	<i>Breviarium</i>
Frontinus, <i>Strat.</i>	Sextus Iulius Frontinus, <i>Strategemata</i>
Fronto, <i>Ad M Caes.</i>	M. Cornelius Fronto
A. Gellius, <i>NA</i>	Aulus Gellius, <i>Noctes Atticae</i> [ <i>Attic nights</i> ]
Gregory of Tours, <i>HF</i>	Gregorius, Bishop of Tours, <i>Historiae Francorum</i>
<i>HA, Ant. Pius</i>	<i>Historia Augusta, Antoninus Pius</i>
<i>HA, Aurel.</i>	<i>Aurelianus</i>
<i>HA, Avid.</i>	<i>Avidius</i>

<i>HA, Caracalla</i>	<i>Caracalla</i>
<i>HA, Comm.</i>	<i>Commodus</i>
<i>HA, Gall.</i>	<i>Gallienus</i>
<i>HA, Hadr.</i>	<i>Hadrianus</i>
<i>HA, Marc.</i>	<i>Marcus Aurelius</i>
<i>HA, Pert.</i>	<i>Pertinax</i>
<i>HA, Sev.</i>	<i>Septimius Severus</i>
<i>HA, Sev. Alex.</i>	<i>Severus Alexander</i>
<i>HA, Tyr. Trig.</i>	<i>Tyranni Triginta</i>
<i>Heliodoros, Aith.</i>	<i>Heliodoros, Aethiopica</i>
<i>Hieronymus, Chron.</i>	<i>Chronica</i>
<i>Hieronymus, Epist.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>Hilarius, Epist.</i>	<i>Epistula ad Eucherium</i>
<i>Johannes Lydos, Mens.</i>	<i>De mensibus</i>
<i>Josephus, Ant. Jud.</i>	<i>Flavius Josephus, Antiquitates Iudaicae</i>
<i>Josephus, B. Jud.</i>	<i>Bellum Judaicum</i>
<i>Lactantius, Mort. Pers.</i>	<i>Lucius Caecilius Firmianus, De mortibus persecutorum</i>
<i>Libanius, Orat.</i>	<i>Orationes</i>
<i>Livy</i>	<i>T. Livius, Ab urbe condita</i>
<i>Livy, Per.</i>	<i>Periochae</i>
<i>Mauricius, Strat.</i>	<i>Strategikon</i>
<i>Mon. Anc.</i>	<i>Monumentum Ancyranum = Res Gestae Divi Augusti</i>
<i>ND</i>	<i>Notitia Dignitatum</i>
<i>Nov. Iust.</i>	<i>Novellae Iustiniani</i>
<i>Novellae Val.</i>	<i>Novellae Valeriani</i>
<i>Onasander</i>	<i>Strategicus</i>
<i>Pan. Lat.</i>	<i>Panegyrici Latini</i>
<i>Paulus, Epit. Fest.</i>	<i>Paulus Diaconus, Epitoma Festi</i>
<i>Petrus Patricius, Exc. Vat.</i>	<i>Petrus Patricius</i>
<i>Philo, Flacc.</i>	<i>In Flaccum</i>
<i>Philo, Leg.</i>	<i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>

Philostratus, <i>VS</i>	<i>Vitae sophistarum</i>
Pliny, <i>Epist.</i>	C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus, <i>Epistulae</i>
Pliny, <i>NH</i>	C. Plinius Secundus, <i>Naturalis historiae</i>
Pliny, <i>Pan.</i>	[= C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus], <i>Panegyricus</i>
Plutarch, <i>Aem.</i>	Plutarchus, <i>Aemilius Paulus</i>
Plutarch, <i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antonius</i>
Plutarch, <i>C. Gracc.</i>	<i>C. Gracchus</i>
Plutarch, <i>Cam.</i>	<i>Camillus</i>
Plutarch, <i>Cato Mai.</i>	<i>Cato Maior</i>
Plutarch, <i>Crass.</i>	<i>Crassus</i>
Plutarch, <i>Def. Or.</i>	<i>de defectu oraculorum</i>
Plutarch, <i>Galba</i>	<i>Galba</i>
Plutarch, <i>Luc.</i>	<i>Lucullus</i>
Plutarch, <i>Marc.</i>	<i>Marcellus</i>
Plutarch, <i>Otho</i>	<i>Otho</i>
Plutarch, <i>Pomp.</i>	<i>Pompeius</i>
Plutarch, <i>Pyrrh.</i>	<i>Pyrrhus</i>
Plutarch, <i>T. Gracc.</i>	<i>T. Gracchus</i>
Plutarch, <i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timoleon</i>
Porphyr., <i>De Caer.</i>	Constantine Porphyrogenitus, <i>De Caeremoniis</i>
Procopius, <i>Aedificia</i>	<i>Aedificia</i>
Procopius, <i>Bella</i>	<i>Bella</i>
Ps.-Fredegar, <i>Chron.</i>	[ascribed to] Fredegar, <i>Chronica</i>
Ps.-Hyginus, <i>Mun. Castr.</i>	Ps.-Hyginus [ascribed to Hyginus], <i>De munitionibus castrorum</i>
Rutilius Namatianus, <i>Red.</i>	Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, <i>de reditu</i>
Sallust, <i>Cat.</i>	C. Sallustius Crispus, <i>Catilina</i>
Sallust, <i>Jug.</i>	<i>Ingurtha</i>
Seneca, <i>Nat.</i>	L. Annaeus Seneca, <i>Naturales quaestiones</i>
Socrates, <i>Hist. Eccl.</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Sozomen, <i>Hist. Eccl.</i>	Sozomenos, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>

Stat. Silv.	Publius Papinius Statius, <i>Silvae</i>
Suetonius, <i>Aug.</i>	C. Suetonius Tranquillus, <i>Augustus</i>
Suetonius, <i>Cal.</i>	<i>Caligula</i>
Suetonius, <i>Claud.</i>	<i>Claudius</i>
Suetonius, <i>Dom.</i>	<i>Domitianus</i>
Suetonius, <i>Jul.</i>	<i>Iulius Caesar</i>
Suetonius, <i>Nero</i>	<i>Nero</i>
Suetonius, <i>Tib.</i>	<i>Tiberius</i>
Symmachus, <i>Epist.</i>	Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, <i>Epistulae</i>
Symmachus, <i>Relat.</i>	<i>Relationes</i>
Synesius, <i>Regn.</i>	<i>De Regno</i>
Tacitus, <i>Agric.</i>	Cornelius Tacitus, <i>Agricola</i>
Tacitus, <i>Ann.</i>	<i>Annales</i>
Tacitus, <i>Hist.</i>	<i>Historia</i>
Tertullianus, <i>Ad nat.</i>	Q. Septimius Florens Tertullianus, <i>Ad nationes</i>
Tertullianus, <i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apologeticum</i>
Tertullianus, <i>Cor.</i>	<i>De Corona</i>
Tertullianus, <i>Idol.</i>	<i>De idololatria</i>
Theophanes, <i>Chron.</i>	Theophanes Confessor, <i>Chronographia</i>
Ulpian, <i>Edict</i>	Domitius Ulpianus, <i>Ad edictum</i>
Varro, <i>L.L.</i>	M. Terentius Varro, <i>de lingua Latina</i>
Vegetius, <i>Epit.</i>	Flavius Renatus Vegetius, <i>Epitoma rei militaris</i>
Vell.	C. Velleius Paterculus
Vergilius, <i>Ecl.</i>	P. Vergilius Maro, <i>Eclogae</i>
Vergilius, <i>Georg.</i>	<i>Georgica</i>
Victor of Vita	Victor of Vita, <i>Historia persecutionis Africanæ provinciae temporum Geiserici et Hunerici regis Vandalorum</i>
Xenophon, <i>Anab.</i>	<i>Anabasis</i>
Xenophon, <i>Cyr.</i>	<i>Cyropaideia</i>
Zacharias of Mytilene, <i>Hist. Eccl.</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesia</i>

# Introduction

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*Paul Erdkamp*

The guiding principle behind this companion to the Roman army is the belief that the Roman army cannot adequately be described only as an instrument of combat, but must be viewed also as an essential component of Roman society, economy, and politics. Of course, the prime purpose of the Roman army was to defeat the enemy in battle. Whether the army succeeded depended not only on its weapons and equipment, but also its training and discipline, and on the experience of its soldiers, all of which combined to allow the most effective deployment of its manpower. Moreover, every army is backed by a more or less developed organization that is needed to mobilize and sustain it. Changes in Roman society significantly affected the Roman army. However, the army was also itself an agent of change, determining in large part developments in politics and government, economy and society. Four themes recur throughout the volume: (1) the army as a fighting force; (2) the mobilization of human and material resources; (3) the relationship between army, politics, and empire; and (4) the relationship between the armies and the civilian population. Even in a sizeable volume such as this choices have had to be made regarding the topics to be discussed, but the focus in this volume on the army in politics, economy, and society reflects the direction of recent research.

Modern authors often claim that ancient Rome was a militaristic society, and that warfare dominated the lives of the Roman people. Interestingly, the first outsider in Rome to paint an extensive picture of Roman society and whose account has largely survived essentially says the same thing. Polybius was in a position to know, since he was brought to Rome as a hostage after the Third Macedonian War (171–168 BC) and was befriended by one of the leading families. The main task he set himself in his *Histories* was to explain Rome's incredible military success during the past decades. To Polybius, the stability of her constitution was one important element, but Rome's military success is explained by two other elements: manpower and ethos. At the eve of the Hannibalic War, Polybius informs us, Rome was able to mobilize 700,000 men in the infantry and 70,000 horsemen. To be sure, Rome never assembled an army

of such size – even in imperial times her soldiers did not number as many as 700,000. But such a number of men was available to take up arms and fight Rome’s opponents in Italy or overseas. In other words, almost all male, able-bodied citizens of Rome and her allies could be expected to serve in the army at one point or another. Military service was indeed the main duty of a Roman citizen, and military experience was widespread. The empires that Rome had defeated in the past decades – Carthage, Macedon, the Seleucid Empire – had lost the connection between citizenship and military service, instead relying largely on mercenaries. Polybius was also struck by the military ethos that Roman traditions instilled in the Roman elite and common people alike. Citizens and allies were awarded in front of the entire army for bravery in combat. Decorations were worn on public occasions during the rest of the soldiers’ lives. Trophies were hung in the most conspicuous places in their homes.

So when we consider this people’s almost obsessive concern with military rewards and punishments, and the immense importance which they attach to both, it is not surprising that they emerge with brilliant success from every war in which they engage. (Polybius 6.39)

At the time that Polybius witnessed Roman society, the army and military ethos played important roles in the lives of almost all male Roman citizens. In that sense, Rome’s was a militaristic society.

Although war and the army remained important aspects of the Roman Empire, it would be difficult to characterize Roman society at the time of Augustus (31 BC–14 AD) or Trajan (98–117 AD) as militaristic to the same degree. Just as the term “Roman” applied to ever widening circles, more and more recruits enlisting in the legions came from Spain, Gaul, and other provinces, while the people of the capital city did not serve in the armies anymore. Moreover, military service had become a lifetime profession for a minority of the empire’s inhabitants. Recruits signed up to serve for up to 25 years. Many would die while serving in the army, though more of natural causes than due to military action. Many veterans from the legions became prominent members of local society, while those who had served in the auxiliary forces earned Roman citizenship at discharge. However, only a few percent of the empire’s population served in the armies or fleets. Large sections of the empire hardly saw Roman armies at all during the next centuries, while many soldiers never saw combat. The army still held an important place in society, mostly so in the border regions where the majority of troops were concentrated, but this role had changed significantly.

Waging war remained the largest task undertaken by the state, and the army was the largest institution that the state created. It certainly was the most expensive, taking up about three quarters of the annual imperial budget. Mobilizing, equipping, and feeding the several hundred thousand men that were stationed between Britannia’s northern border and the Arabian desert was an undertaking that could not be sustained by the market alone, and required the direct intervention of the central and local authorities. On the other hand, the presence of Roman legions and auxiliary forces was the engine that drove crucial developments in the economy and society of the border regions. And it was through the army that many members of local aristocracies were integrated into the Roman Empire.