

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World*. Edited by BRIAN CAMPBELL and LAWRENCE A. TRITLE. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xxxviii + 783. \$175.00. ISBN 978-0-19-530465-7.

O the rivalry of major presses! On the heels of the two-volume *Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (2007) comes OUP's one-volume response. Other surveys and evaluations of the *status quaestionis* are already or soon to be available from the Association of Ancient Historians, Wiley-Blackwell, and Brill.<sup>1</sup> In the current mania for "Companions" and "Handbooks"—the bane of limited library budgets but a gold mine for presses and authors—exploitation of ancient military history's recent renaissance scarcely surprises. Military history sells, even if (from a scholarly perspective) this revival disturbingly promotes re-inventions of the wheel and often blurs scholarship's distinction from popularization, as academic historians too (who should know better) now indulge in imaginative speculation. Does OUP's *Handbook* serve a real scholarly purpose not met in the *Cambridge History*? Perhaps not.

As justification, the Oxford volume (xxix) rehearses in less detail the emphasis of the Cambridge work and commits the same errors: studies of social structures to replace the supposed narrow focus on grand strategy and army movements seen in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century works of J. G. Droysen (1808–84) and Hans Delbrück (1848–1929), as if Delbrück, who fathered the academic study of military history, did not also anticipate current war-and-society studies, and as if the twentieth century produced no significant work. The *Handbook's* editors assume their tome requires no justification *vis-à-vis* the Cambridge work, although *CHGRW* appears as a standard abbreviation in the *Handbook* and several

<sup>1</sup> AAH: *Recent Directions in the Military History of the Ancient World* (2011); Wiley-Blackwell: *Companion to the Roman Army* (2007); *Encyclopedia of the Roman Army*, 3 vols. (in press); Brill: *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, 2 vols. (2013). I exclude anthologies not called a "Handbook" or "Companion" and popular surveys. In the interest of full disclosure, the reviewer confesses contributions to the *Cambridge History*, *Recent Directions*, and the *Companion to the Roman Army*; for a critique of some aspects of the *Cambridge History* and the "face of battle" genre of military bibliography, see "Greece: Mad Hatters and March Hares," in *Recent Directions*, 53–78.

papers cite inspiration from the Cambridge tomes or show unacknowledged borrowings. Commendable, however, is inclusion of both traditional (“Hatter”; see note 1) perspectives and the so-called “new approaches” of “Hares.” The volume is not pushing an “agenda” as others have,<sup>2</sup> nor is emphasis on social structures a noticeable motif.

Part I (“Introduction”) offers broad overviews of Greek (Louis Rawlings) and Roman (Randall Howarth) warfare, Greek (P. Millett) and Roman (Michael Lovano) writers on war, war and archaeology (Simon James), and war and the environment (Donald Hughes). Rawlings’ “new” interpretation (3–28) of Greeks appears less radical here but with a curious understanding (19–21) of a phalanx’s tactical organization. Howarth’s survey (29–45), if intended as a *status quaestionis*, thoroughly “cherry-picks” the literature cited and “trends” emphasized. Rebuttals in print of the controversial views of A. Goldsworthy and P. Sabin on Roman battle, D. Whittaker and B. Isaac on Roman strategy, and B. Campbell on *virī militares* are omitted. Millett (46–73) and Lovano (74–90) address poetry, drama, philosophy and historiography, but ignore the technical writers and the development of military theory. James’ archaeological paper (91–127) is exclusively Roman. Hughes’ breezy discussion (128–39) of the environment’s role in warfare offers engaging anecdotes without a real argument.

Part II includes chronologically defined papers covering classical Greece through the Roman Imperial period. “Face of battle” in its title, “The Face of Battle in the Classical World,” functions more as a “buzz word” than a description of contents, as Part III, “Impacts and Techniques: War in the Classical World,” offers more technical “face of battle” material (in the sense of the phrase coined by John Keegan) than Part II. Some papers are unexciting: John Serrati (179–98) and Nicholas Sekunda (199–215) on the organization, tactics, and social aspects of Hellenistic armies and Michael Sage (216–35) on the Roman Republican army. In contrast, John Lee (143–61) on classical Greeks deserts familiar mainland developments for those in Thrace, Sicily, and Achaemenid Persia. Phyllis Culham (236–60), with modern concepts like symmetrical/asymmetrical warfare and unit cohesion, attempts an innovative analysis of Imperial Roman warfare. Colin Adams (261–76) on war and Roman society treats only Egypt, falls into the papyrologist’s error of regarding Egypt as a typical Roman province, and espouses the now refuted view of the Roman army as a “total institution.”

<sup>2</sup> G. Shipley and J. Rich, eds., *War and Society in the Greek World* (London 1993).

Part III features thematic discussions: mercenaries (Matthew Trundle), discipline (Stefan Chrissanthos), logistics (Donald Engels), navies (Philip de Souza), arms and armor (Greek: Eero Jarva; Roman: Duncan Campbell), Greek siegecraft (Angelos Chaniotis), generalship (Rosemary Moore), horses (Ann Hyland), tactical intelligence (Frank Russell), and Greek “rituals” of war (Daniel Tompkins). Of this group Christine Salazar (294–311) on treatment of the wounded and John Rich (542–69) on Roman rituals of war are the most useful. A final section of Part III, “Fighting the Other,” marks a major difference from the Cambridge work. If Bruce Laforse (569–87) largely rehearses the standard survey on the Greek-barbarian dichotomy and its inaccuracies, Peter Wells (588–600) offers an informed discussion of Germans (1<sup>st</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries) east of the Rhine, not matched, however, by his superficial presentation of Dacians, Sarmatians, and Goths north of the Danube. The palm for Part III certainly goes to Scott McDonough’s analysis (601–20) of the Sasanid military and society, even if, in the end, his Sasanids end up looking much like their Parthian predecessors.

Part IV, “Case Studies,” is a most curious appendage to an encyclopedic work and an unnecessary distinction in an anthology, especially as the editors do not explain the purpose of these “case studies” and selection of specific themes. Besides Michael Seaman on sieges and John Buckler on Leuctra, we find Lee Brice on the Athenian Sicilian Expedition, Thomas Martin on Demetrius Poliorcetes, Dexter Hoyos on the Second Punic War, and A.D. Lee on Roman-Sasanid wars. Hoyos’ survey, summarizing current views and criticizing Hannibal, stands out despite an occasional indulgence in armchair generalship. All these papers could have been in Part II.

A brief, disappointing “Epilogue” concludes this lengthy tome: Thomas Palaima’s musings (727–36) on classical themes in Anglophone war literature from World War I to Desert Storm retraces familiar ground, and Tritle (736–40) superficially treats the use of ancient military writers from Machiavelli to Basil Liddell Hart and J.F.C. Fuller with some misconceptions and inaccuracies and a plea for more study of combat and the “pragmatic” approach to war. A paper from the co-editor, Brian Campbell, is conspicuously absent.

This *Handbook*’s purpose is not clear: is this an encyclopedia, conveniently summarizing the *status quaestionis* on specific themes, or just another chronologically wide-ranging anthology? Waldemar Heckel’s paper (162–78) on the old problem of distinguishing hypaspists from argyraspides in the armies of Alexander

and the Successors belongs in a journal or an anthology rather than an encyclopedia, as do Buckler's defense (against Victor Hanson) of his earlier views on Leuctra and Epaminondas' genius (657–70) and Tompkins' skepticism (527–41) about Greek "rituals" of war. Closest to an encyclopedia article comes Seaman (642–56) on sieges in the *Pentecontaetia* and the Peloponnesian War, with two appendices listing all sieges and the ancient sources.

Many papers, however, offer rather conventional surveys of varying quality on chronological periods or themes. Some authors recycle previous publications: e.g. James from *Roman and the Sword* (2011); Sage from his *The Republican Roman Army: A Sourcebook* (2008), not cited in his bibliography; and Hyland on horses and cavalry training. Interesting is the embarrassment or largely derivative nature of papers by Greek specialists covering Roman material (de Souza on Roman navies, Trundle on Roman *socii*, *auxilia*, and *foederati* as "mercenaries," Tritle on the Roman battle experience) and Romanists discussing Greeks (Chrissanthos on Greek discipline, Moore on generalship). Only the papers of McDonough, Salazar, Rich, and Hoyos emerge as exceptional in a "handbook" closely resembling just another anthology.

Trimming duplicate coverage could have cut undue bulk: John Lee with both Rawlings and Leforse, Martin with Serrati; combining Serrati and Sekunda, and likewise McDonough and A.D. Lee. But fuzzy conceptualizing of contents matches the lax editing: more than a few typos and omissions of works cited from the individual papers' bibliographies. The maps (xxx–xxxviii), legible but often incompletely labeled, contain some errors (e.g. xxxii: no movements of Alexander in 328 BCE?). Carelessness in the "Chronology" (xv–xxiii) does not inspire confidence in a reference work. The *Second* Macedonian War (200–196) is called the "First" and the *Third* Macedonian War (171–168), labeled the "Second," is dated "168–166" (xix). Scholars may find the occasional "gem" in the bibliographies, but at \$175 I cannot recommend this book for individual purchase. The *Cambridge History's* imperfections did not justify another *status quaestionis* six years later.

The body of the article is in 11 point.

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