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# Contents

From the Editor	5
<i>German Unification Through the Blueprint of Prussian Greatness</i>	6
Noah S. Hutto	
<i>The Future of Civil War Soldier Studies: The Failure of Courage</i>	25
Joe Cook	
<i>Piety over Piracy: The Shaolin Monks' Victory against Wokou</i>	39
Ryan Lancaster	
<i>Who Influenced Whom? A New Perspective on the Relationship between Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan</i>	53
Robert Kane	
<i>The Limits of Brilliance: The Impact of Supply Problems on Hannibal's Italian Campaign</i>	73
Jack Morato	
<i>Walter Prescott Webb: Pioneering the Great Plains and Beyond</i>	93
Chris Hilmer	
<i>The Forgotten Battle of Attu</i>	109
Mike Van Orden	
<i>Prelude to Fall Blau: The Second Battle of Kharkov</i>	125

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## Letter from the Editor

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Anne Midgley

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This, the tenth issue of the American Public University System (APUS)'s *Saber and Scroll Journal*, wraps up the third year of journal production. Over the past few years, the journal has benefitted from the contributions of a number of talented authors. The journal team is especially grateful for the participation of many APUS faculty members who have shared their fine work with us. We are pleased that the APUS historical community continues to respond so enthusiastically to the journal and are proud to bring to you one of our finest issues. In this issue, readers will find feature articles and book reviews reflecting the broad range of historical interests across our scholarly community.

As *Saber and Scroll Journal* readers are aware, most of our editors are either APUS graduate students or alumni who have finished their MAs with APUS. We would like to congratulate a number of our members who have wrapped up their master's program in 2014 – Joe Cook, Michael Majerczyk, Mike Gottert, Aida Dias, Rebecca Simmons Graf, Melanie Thornton, Kathleen Guler, and Anne Midgley. Additionally, we would like to recognize William Potter, who will complete his thesis in 2015.

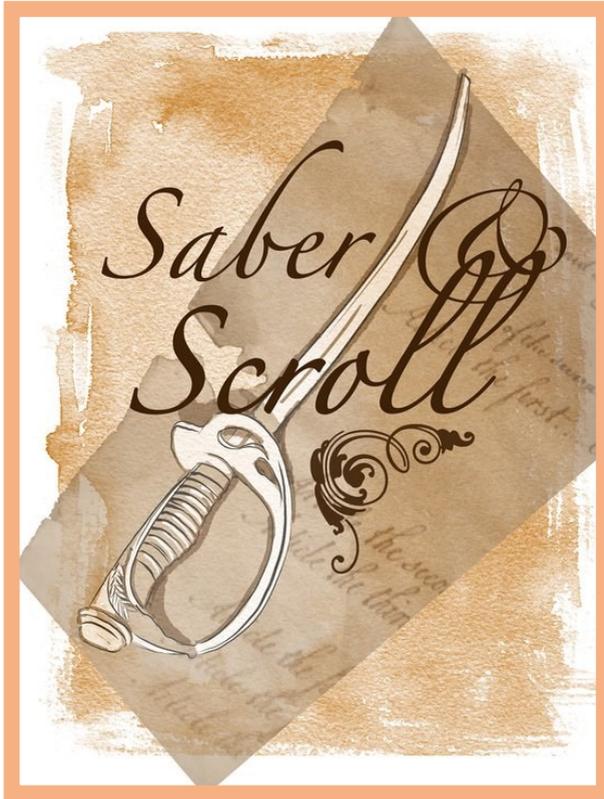
While thanks are due to all our authors and to each member of our journal team, I would especially like to thank our copy editor, DeAnna Stevens, who has worked hard to format most of our issues. We continue to seek additional volunteers to help create a superb history journal; if interested, please contact any member of the current journal team.

Please enjoy this edited and revised version of Vol. III Issue III from the fall of 2014!

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Mike Van Orden	
<i>Prelude to Fall Blau: The Second Battle of Kharkov</i>	125

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# German Unification through the Blueprint of Prussian Greatness: A Study of Similarities between the Prussians, Frederick the Great, and Otto von Bismarck

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Noah S. Hutto

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Any modern day discussion concerning the Father of Germany automatically invokes the name of Otto von Bismarck and, by virtue of his accomplishments, any list of other accomplished German leaders would also include Frederick II, or Frederick the Great. Ironically, because both men were actually Prussian, they both sought (at least initially in the case of Bismarck) the expansion of Prussia, not necessarily the creation of a unified German nation.<sup>1</sup> Despite a full century separating the two men, they both came to power in Prussia, inheriting a nation of unique challenges, both domestically and internationally. Both men maneuvered through those challenges and displayed leadership, diplomacy, incredible drive, and an absolute devotion to their state. There was, of course, the lure of personal honor and accomplishment.

These unique challenges did lend to differences in some of their actions and the paths chosen, but there remain eerie similarities. Like Frederick, Bismarck considered Austrian influence across the German states to be a threat to Prussia's emergence as a legitimate power in Europe. Both men initiated a series of conflicts with Austria, equating to three wars across seven years that eventually involved and claimed victory over both Austria and France. In the end, an emerging nationalism served both Prussians in their vision for a greater Prussia and a Prussian-led German Confederation; for Bismarck and his role, this led directly to a unified Germany. In Europe, this represented something different and separated Germany from other states. It promoted greater influence and the arrival of a German state in its own right.

Whether planned or completely subconsciously, Bismarck used Frederick the Great's successful expansion of Prussia as a foundation for his own actions. At times, Bismarck specifically invoked the name of Frederick in a speech or while addressing parliament—arguably not just for the impact of his namesake, but to specifically link his actions or ideals to those of his predecessor.<sup>2</sup> This, of itself, does

not connect the dots of similarities, but suggests in some part that Bismarck used Frederick's actions as a blueprint, building a foundation on what he felt worked, and altering those paths he felt offered better choices.

There is countless literature and historiography discussing Prussia, its rise, diplomacy, its military precision, its fall to Napoleon; conversely, there is just as much, if not more, existing research on the same facets of Germany, even specifically its unification and arrival in Europe as a major power. However, one element consistently absent is the bridge between these two great Prussians who sought greatness for themselves, but also, and very importantly, for Prussia itself. A quick sampling of cited works reflects titles such as, *Nineteenth-Century Germany: Politics, Culture, and Society 1780-1918*, *Bismarck and Germany: 1862-1890*, *German History, 1770-1866*, and *The Rise of Brandenburg-Prussia to 1786*—all distinctly covering Frederick the Great's era or Bismarck's role as the "Iron Willed."<sup>3</sup>

Admittedly, sources and research exist that cover the span of both periods, but these exist primarily as less analytical works, leaving no room for real comparison of the two key Prussians, and the similarities between their concepts and actions. John Lord's work from 1894, *Two German Giants: Frederic the Great and Bismarck –The Founder and The Builder of German Empire*, implies an analysis specifically discussing more than a superficial link between Frederick and Bismarck existed. However, it too tackled the subjects almost purely as two completely separate discussions with too brief an introduction of any given parallels.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps Bismarck's path to greatness was not entirely by coincidence. That he followed something akin to Frederick's own path was somewhat inevitable considering the nature of both the German states and Prussia's similar problems in both eras. Ultimately, Frederick the Great and Otto von Bismarck embraced a militaristic approach to statesmanship and used Prussia's famous infantry as the tool for foreign policy. Both men viewed Austria as the biggest threat to Prussia's rise to power; they understood and used France and Russia as pawns in diplomatic matters. After fighting three wars, they both embraced the importance of consolidating their gains. Following their wars, they served as brokers of peace and both turned to domestic policies that ensured the state was on the correct path to greatness.

Even before gaining power, they both envisioned a stronger Prussia, one that Europe would have no choice but to concede was now a major power. For both Frederick and Bismarck, this rise to glory aimed specifically at creating a greater

Prussia. It is important to understand this was a greater Prussia serving as the overseer of the smaller German states, not the annexation or creation of a unified German nation.<sup>5</sup> The well-being of the State was foremost in their minds. The Prussian military was the key to this success, especially since both men perceived Austria as both a threat and, quite simply, “in the way” of a Prussian-led and German-dominated Central Europe. With the accession of Maria Theresa to the Austrian throne in 1740, Frederick saw an opportunity to test the 75,000-man army he had inherited and begin his “role of defender of German liberties against Hapsburg despotism.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Pursuit of Diplomatic Gains and Legitimacy**

When Frederick took control of Prussia from his father, he inherited an army that was the envy of Europe—envied for its machine-like precision and execution of drills—but it was also relatively untested, as his father refused to use it in pitched battles because of the cost of achieving its precision. Frederick believed this as another reason that most of Europe viewed Prussia as a minor player, at best, and vowed that he would not play lapdog to the European powers.<sup>7</sup> In his opinion, the key to power and recognition was through acquisitions. Despite objections from his ministers and military advisor, he felt he had the army to survive a war with Austria.<sup>8</sup>

With an ideology that his army would serve as the best tool for state building and originally as the primary tool for his foreign policy, Frederick invaded Silesia expecting to completely pry it from Austria.<sup>9</sup> Within seven months of his accession to power, he threw Prussia into what became seven years of military conflict across three brutal wars. Frederick emerged victorious and created the powerful Prussia he intended to produce.<sup>10</sup> His three consecutive Silesian Wars, actually occurring sporadically on-again/off-again from July 1742 to February 1763, saw the Prussians defeat half of the European powers. Frederick routed the Saxons, Austrians, French, and lesser German states. By the end of his reign, thirty-one years later, Frederick had increased his army to 200,000 men.<sup>11</sup> Gaining all of Silesia also served as the catalyst for German nationalism, an event that lifted the shame from losing the Thirty Years’ War. These decisive victories over the Austrians and the French set the stage for a Europe that now recognized Prussia as a legitimate power.<sup>12</sup>

The Treaty of Dresden in 1745 ended the Second Silesian War and it was obvious to the public and politicians that Frederick II expanded Prussian influence in Europe. Prussia was now a major European power. The treaty ended greatly in Prussia's favor. For instance, it secured the territorial gains the Prussian military won. With this in hand, Frederick II secured the moniker "the Great" and Frederick the Great found its way into the public lexicon.<sup>13</sup>

The rise of Otto von Bismarck as a Prussian man of power is beyond the scope of this essay. King Wilhelm I, having inherited the crown in 1861, observed the Prussian Army was no longer the elite force that brought Prussia to power.



Figure 1 *The Allegiance of the Silesian Diet before Frederick II in Breslau*. Oil on canvas by Adolph von Menzel, c. 1855.

Consequently, he acknowledged that the lack of military might omitted a key tool of aggressive foreign policy. During a political standoff with Parliament over military reforms that would double the size of the regular army, increase reserve forces, extend conscription and service obligation rates, add additional infantry and cavalry regiments, and ultimately increase military expenditures, Wilhelm appointed Bismarck as the Minister-President in September 1862. Both men knew the importance of ensuring this military reform. It would promote Prussian influence. Bismarck immediately went on the offensive, at least politically.<sup>14</sup>

James J. Sheehan quotes Leopold von Ranke's 1836 *Politisches Gespräch* as the underpinning of what became a unique spin on Prussian (and German) politics: "A state owes its position in the world to the degree of its independence, the maintenance of which requires the subordination of all domestic considerations."<sup>15</sup> It is interesting that, like Frederick the Great, Bismarck set out initially only to create a name for Prussia through foreign policy—perhaps again,

subconsciously walking in Frederick's path towards a greater Prussia, and not with any expectations of a unified German nation. Both men executed daring statesmanship that often tight-roped above the possibility of massed enemies they could not hope to defeat alongside the quest for an unquestionable military might. Once realizing success abroad, they both turned full attention inwards to a more peaceful outlook on the European scene and began reforms within their own borders.<sup>16</sup>

During the aforementioned standoff with Parliament, Bismarck made his now infamous speech that challenged the government's lack of action. His speech suggested that if a decision was not possible, then it was his duty, as Minister-President to breach the "hiatus" in government for the good of the state.<sup>17</sup> Bismarck showed concern over Austrian influence in Germany, and although initially concerned only with creating a stronger, more influential Prussia, he showed the first hint of his intent to use rising German nationalism as a tool of policy. Bismarck's speech outlined both a domestic policy decision to undercut the existing constitution and begin a foreign policy of Prussian dominance over the German question:

Certainly the great independence of the individual makes it difficult in Prussia to rule with the constitution. . . . A constitutional crisis is not shameful, but honorable. Furthermore we are perhaps too 'educated' to put up with a constitution; we are too critical; . . . there are in the country too many subversive elements who have an interest in revolutionary change. This may sound paradoxical, but it goes to show how difficult it is in Prussia to carry on a constitutional existence. . . . Germany doesn't look to Prussia's liberalism, but to its power: Bavaria, Wurttemberg, Baden can indulge in liberalism, but no one will expect them to undertake Prussia's role; Prussia must gather and consolidate her strength in readiness for the favorable moment, which has already been missed several times; Prussia's boundaries according to the Vienna treaties are not favorable to a healthy political life; not by means of speeches and majority verdicts will the great decisions of the time be made—but by iron and blood.<sup>18</sup>

Following this speech, Bismarck embarked on a series of policies and practices that undercut parliamentary practice, and although it isolated him as a maverick that few trusted, it solidified his worth to Wilhelm I. By 1863, he established himself as all but the dictator of Prussia—with full support of the king.<sup>19</sup>

Although Bismarck also viewed the real struggle over Germany as a question of Prussia versus Austria,<sup>20</sup> his “war” with Austria did not begin as an outright invasion as did Frederick’s. For Frederick, the opportunity arose with the death of the last male heir apparent in Austria. For Bismarck, it was the death of the ruling family without an obvious heir to Schleswig-Holstein. Although his real interest in these two German states bordering and under the influence of Denmark was minimal, his real motive was flexing Prussian influence via the new German nationalism card while undermining Austrian influence. However, he did secretly covet the annexation of the duchies into a greater Prussia.<sup>21</sup> These annexations were the first step in a new foreign policy to vigorously exploit any Austrian weakness and assert a leadership role over the German states.<sup>22</sup>

With Austria all but sidelined in the Schleswig-Holstein dealings, Bismarck then showed his political skills. He initially worked with Austria to defeat the Danish military, and then after negating the threat from either the Danish or the Austrians, he reneged on the deal he had earlier brokered with Austria allowing administrative control of Holstein. This successful annexing of both duchies proved his diplomatic approach of “patience, flexibility, and the ability to exploit his opponent’s hopes, fears, and illusions.” With his leadership and iron will, he also gained additional favor domestically. Liberals started embracing the rise in patriotic fervor and German nationalism that came from military victory. Consequently, it was here that the roots of a possible unified German nation began taking hold.<sup>24</sup>

Through his very deliberate actions of cutting Austria out of Schleswig-Holstein affairs and the addition of Italy as an anti-Austria ally, Bismarck began the war with Austria that he had sought ever since 1858. Bismarck offered the German states, those of the Confederation, his plan for creating a national parliament that would work for creating a new political entity—a United States of Germany, so to speak—but it was received as more of a ruse simply to irritate and isolate Austria. Skeptic or not, there was still ongoing debate within the Confederation whether to accept this proposal when Austria and Italy began mobilizing troops along their borders. Bismarck then extended the invitation for the Confederation to join the fight against the Hapsburgs. The invitation was declined, and actually drove the majority of the Confederation states to mobilize for war on the side of Austria.<sup>25</sup>

In June 1866, King Wilhelm made a speech “to the German People” that

blamed the Confederation for keeping Germany fragmented. As such, Prussia dissolved the Confederation of States, declaring it no longer a voice for the German people. Prussia then marched to resolve the matter on the field of battle.<sup>26</sup> Like Frederick the Great's Silesian Wars, Bismarck led Prussia into a war with Austria involving multiple German states. He too noticed the gateway into Austria proper was through Saxony, and his invasion of Saxony began the Austro-Prussian War. With Prussia assuming center stage, the conflict spread across Europe and added France as a military foe. Just as Frederick led Prussia in the Seven Years' War, Bismarck moved against France in the Franco-Prussian War.

Both men oversaw the Prussian military engagements for seven years in three pitched wars. Frederick the Great led Prussia through the Silesian War, a portion of the Seven Years' War, and the War of Bavarian Succession, while Bismarck led Prussia through the Second Schleswig War, the Austro-Prussian War, and the Franco-Prussian War. These latter three wars redefined Prussia as a major power, increased German nationalism, and created a "new Europe." A new Europe emerging from sustained wars and battle scars that then required years of substantial peace, principally in regards to Prussia, to realize new gains and establish the new shift in power.<sup>27</sup>

The Franco-Prussian War is vital to understanding the Prussian blueprint that allowed for changes and what those changes actually meant for Prussia and, essentially, Germany. First, Bismarck, like Frederick before him, kept his wars for power short, concise, and decisive. The reason for only seven total years of war for both men is because not only did Prussia not have the natural resources or manpower to sustain a long conflict, they were both aware of the danger long wars posed. Both men were constantly weary of Prussia's precarious position, surrounded by other great powers. Neither could afford for those powers to take advantage of a war-embittered Prussia.<sup>28</sup>

With this in mind, Bismarck planned for a deliberate, but quick war that specifically challenged Austria. When the Austro-Prussian War finally ended, it saw the complete dissolution of the German Confederation, replacing it with the Prussian-dominated North German Confederation. Simultaneously, a southern confederation existed, but Prussia heavily influenced its autonomy and diplomacy. Also of note, the treaty ended war with Austria and allowed it to remain intact and free of occupation. Ultimately, Prussia's victory in 1867 allowed Bismarck to finally exclude Austria from Germany.

Further, Bismarck painstakingly managed to convince the crown that Saxony should retain its territorial integrity<sup>29</sup>—a lesson perhaps learned from Frederick’s treatment of defeated German states. The goal was a greater Prussia, and a unified German Confederation free of Austrian influence, not the complete destruction of Austria or of any German entity. It was clear that Bismarck sought the integration of Saxony into the Prussian fold, noting it was better for both parties to treat Saxony as a defeated enemy state rather than a conquered province. He genuinely hoped this would lift the isolation or hesitation from Saxony considering any German unification discussions.<sup>30</sup>

Just as the Austro-Prussian War ended, France, under Napoleon III, began jockeying for power in both Western and Central Europe. He demanded compensation for Prussia’s gains and for staying out of the conflict. On this point, Bismarck was adamant that no German territory, or any land inhabited by German-speaking peoples was negotiable, and flat-out refused France’s demands.<sup>31</sup> Essentially, Napoleon “throwing his hat in the ring” at this point only served to infuriate Bismarck, who now viewed France as a threat to undermine the prospect of a unified Germany. Immediately after hostilities with Austria concluded, still in 1866, Bismarck referred to France as the state with “a revolver in his pocket, his finger on the trigger,” and as Erich Eyck summarizes, “[f]rom then onwards, he spoke of the *inevitable* war against France.”<sup>32</sup>

Following the Prussian achievements of 1866, specifically providing for the unification of Northern Germany, and despite Prussian annexation of some duchies, the majority of Germans considered this current state of affairs as a necessary and meaningful step forward.<sup>33</sup> With public support, Bismarck, learning from Frederick’s own use of nationalist and patriotic fervor as a tool of foreign policy, championed the cause of Germany and Germans. For Bismarck, this was his first step away from solely serving the Prussian state and glancing to his own greatness as the father of a unified German nation.<sup>34</sup> With this new vision, Bismarck convinced himself, Prussia, and the Northern Confederation, that the path to a truly unified Germany lay with war against France, and the subjugation of Bavaria and Württemberg in the process.<sup>35</sup>

Consistent with his diplomatic panache, Bismarck created a crisis provoking France’s declaration of war on Prussia. Using France as the aggressor, Bismarck allowed France to agitate the German people. They believed, once again, they were under attack from France and the Napoleon namesake. This political

maneuver promoted further German nationalism and rallied all the German states in a unified effort to defend German honor against an ever-aggressive France.<sup>36</sup>

The Franco-Prussian War started July 1870 and ended with a preliminary peace signed seven months later in February 1871. With such a quick rout of the French, Bismarck had the necessary momentum to serve-up what he was brewing in the undercurrent of domestic and foreign politics for at least a decade. He forced the surrender of the territory of Alsace and Lorraine from France to Germany.

With Alsace and Lorraine secured, Bismarck saw the creation of the German Empire. King Wilhelm I was pronounced German Emperor in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles exactly

170 years after Prussia became a kingdom. A new and powerful German empire fell upon Europe. King Wilhelm actually saw this as the death of Prussia, and took the title, Emperor of Germany, under protest and duress. However,



Figure 2 *Otto von Bismarck escorts Emperor Napoleon III.* Painting by Wilhelm Camphausen, c. 1877. *Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin.*

as Bismarck and the German people reveled in triumph, it was time to turn towards domestic matters.<sup>37</sup>

### **Pursuit of Domestic Policies and German Nationalism**

After his military exploits, Frederick the Great immediately set in action domestic policy reform. This solidified his essential duty as the “first servant of the State” and capitalized on his territorial gains.<sup>38</sup> Frederick the Great inherited an incredible “framework of centralized institutions,”<sup>39</sup> and his policies did not significantly change Prussia’s internal framework. Where he absolutely excelled

was through his constant determination that forced change through the realigned powerbase he created. Power shifted away from his ministers and advisors and fell directly into his own hands, ensuring any changes he wanted underwent immediate implementation.<sup>40</sup> This helps explain another Frederick nickname, “The Enlightened Despot.” Frederick then turned his same aggressive behavior from military action to domestic reform, feeling that he knew what was best for Prussia, and that he was best serving his country by forcing change. His constant studies of the Enlightenment and Parisian culture greatly influenced the changes he felt bettered the state and the people. Thus, only those ideals emerging from the Enlightenment he felt benefited Prussia, without challenging his rule openly, existed within the Prussian Kingdom.

Just as Bismarck later embraced state socialist ideals as a means of maximizing the output of goods and services, Frederick preceded this concept by setting in motion his own methods of economic reforms. He maintained an army primarily consisting of foreign fighters. He believed the duty and responsibility of the people of Prussia was to increase the state’s wealth via industry and trade.<sup>41</sup> Immediately following the final years of conflict, 1778 and 1784, Frederick created the *Fürstenbund* ([German] League of Princes), establishing himself as protector of the German states, and by extension, Prussian livelihood. Frederick proved his ability to manage domestic finances, and brought Prussian currency back to its pre-war value. In 1765, he founded the Royal Bank of Berlin, a national Prussian bank with a capital of 400,000 *talers* specifically to recover from the conflict. By 1786, this bank enjoyed an annual profit of 22,000 *talers*.<sup>42</sup>

This economic feat dovetailed with his vision for industrialization. Under Frederick’s leadership, Prussia became the fourth largest manufacturing country in the world. The manufacturing gains stemmed directly from Frederick’s ban on import items and a greater concentration on quick crop farming, sheep farming, wool export, mining of mineral resources, and foresting for shipbuilding. He was also quick to include Silesia into his reforms. By 1783, the Prussian manufacturing sector was worth twenty-nine million *talers* per year. Eleven million of this was from Silesia alone.<sup>43</sup> Prosperity through industrialization and economic reform was just one way Frederick solidified his plan for Prussian greatness. Although outside the scope of this essay, Frederick’s liberal religious policies, his recognition of architecture, music, arts, and education all deserve further research. They illustrate the domestic reforms that enhanced Frederick’s goal of a true European power.

Bismarck also inherited many in-place policies that he merely expanded upon after creating a monopoly of power over administrators and king's advisors. Before Bismarck finalized consolidation of the German Empire, the new German Reich and its satellites enjoyed the *Zollverein*, which was generically, 'a policy of free trade'.<sup>44</sup> However, with a European economic downturn upon him, Bismarck saw the need for economic reforms that would strengthen the state and serve the citizens of Germany. In December 1878, he introduced his economic and tariff program that concentrated on indirect taxation and called for a general tariff on all imports. This complete reversal of the *Zollverein* was akin to Frederick's ban on imports. He then added to the tariffs a protectionist duty imposed on all domestic corn and most other agriculture products. He was instituting protectionism and by proxy served as 'a servant' to the agrarian workers of the state.<sup>45</sup>

This program was not overly popular in parliamentary circles, specifically the National Liberal Party. Bismarck successfully implemented the "iron and rye" tariff, along with other similar protectionist policies that curbed the shortage of German capital as compared to its abundance in land and labor. This protectionism was essentially the death knell for economic liberalism and pushed Germany towards state socialism.<sup>46</sup> Historian William Harbutt Dawson, in his work originally published in 1891, viewed Bismarck's reforms as simple extensions of the regime a century earlier:

Prince Bismarck has done nothing more than develop the social and political system established by the Great Elector, Frederick [Wilhelm] I, and Frederick the Great of Prussia. He has taken up the threads of policy which were laid down ... and has endeavored to infuse the spirit of the old Prussian Monarchy into the new German Empire.<sup>47</sup>

It is debatable whether Bismarck was closing the cycle begun a century earlier or acting on his own, but it is undeniable that his use of *Realpolitik*, or the robust use of politics and power for material interest, was *the* reason that Germany saw a massive economic boom post-1879.<sup>48</sup>

Bismarck's support of the working class, or the laborer's "Right to Work" (*Recht auf Arbeit*), became stronger still after 1884 when he put forth further measures that echoed the Prussia of an earlier century. The idea of Prussian common law, or *Landrecht*, started with Frederick William, the Great Elector, but was completed by his grandson, Frederick the Great. It was instituted in 1794. Essentially, it "discourage[d] idleness, recognize[d] the right of every citizen to

work, and proclaims the State to be the natural protector of the poorer classes.”<sup>49</sup> In an address to the Reichstag in 1882, Bismarck himself remarked that his policy of protectionism for the worker and the state was just “a reversion to the traditional Prussian policy,”<sup>50</sup> no doubt an ode to the man whose blueprint he had been following since his initial rise to power as the Minister-President.

Consciously or not, Otto von Bismarck’s rise to power and his vision of reestablishing a great Prussia came by way of continuing Frederick the Great’s path and policies. Dr. John Lord, a historian from the nineteenth century remarked, “Bismarck is the sequel and sequence of Frederic.”<sup>51</sup> From the outset, both men felt constrained by the precarious position of Prussia sitting in Central Europe surrounded by strong potential enemies. In addition, both men believed the initial threat was Austria, in particular, from its influence on the German states that comprised the rest of Central Europe. Frederick and Bismarck took action through an iron will that saw the Prussian Army serve as their choice tool of foreign policy. Both waged seven years of conflict spread across three wars, and both eventually claimed victory for Prussia and promoted peaceful consolidation of their new powerful states with internal reforms.

Unfortunately, Bismarck also followed the same path as Frederick; that is, he controlled every aspect of domestic ministries and policies in isolation. All actions were a product of their will, of their powerbase—and as the first servants of the state, they both failed in grooming an heir to continue their work after they were no longer in power. Napoleon Bonaparte crushed Frederick Wilhelm III’s Prussia in 1806. Bismarck’s removal from office occurred through forced resignation on March 18, 1890 after continued differences in opinion with the new Emperor Wilhelm II. Wilhelm sought his own ‘the Great’ title and pursued an expansionistic foreign policy counter to Bismarck’s.

Just as Frederick the Great’s Prussia stumbled approximately twenty years after his death, so too did Bismarck’s. Wilhelm II abdicated his throne almost twenty years after Bismarck’s death, when the Great War ended in 1918. Thus, both *Reichs* were short. However brief their actual reign, both men revitalized Germanic fervor and nationalism across Central Europe, and both men, through personal ambition and military aggrandizement, served as the creators of the German Fatherland.<sup>52</sup> It is often quipped that Prussia was “made of man” and that later, Germany too, was a creation of man,—in this case, these ‘men’ were Frederick the Great and Otto von Bismarck.

## Notes

1. Sidney B. Fay, *The Rise of Brandenburg-Prussia to 1786*, rev. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1966), 117; James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 859.

2. William Harbutt Dawson, *Bismarck and State Socialism: An Exposition of the Social and Economic Legislation of Germany Since 1870* (1891; repr., London: Forgotten Books, 2012), 17, 21, 31, 92.

3. John Breuilly, *Nineteenth-Century Germany: Politics, Culture, and Society 1780-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); David G. Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany, 1862-1890*, 3rd ed. (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2011); James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866*; Fay, *The Rise of Brandenburg-Prussia*.

4. John Lord, *Two German Giants: Frederic the Great and Bismarck – The Founder and The Builder of German Empire* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hurlbert, 1894).

5. H.W. Koch, *A History of Prussia* (New York: Dorset Press, 1987), 104; Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866*, 859.

6. Karin Friedrich, *Brandenburg-Prussia, 1466-1806* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 90.

7. Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 12.

8. *Ibid.*, 13.

9. Friedrich, *Brandenburg-Prussia, 1466-1806*, 30 & 89.

10. Dennis Showalter, *Frederick the Great, A Military History* (London: Front Line Books, 2012), ix.

11. Fay and Epstein, *The Rise of Brandenburg-Prussia*, 101.

12. *Ibid.*, 111.

13. Koch, *A History of Prussia*, 114.

14. John Breuilly, "Revolution to unification" in *19th Century Germany: Politics, Culture, and Society 1780-1918*, ed., John Breuilly (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 143-144.

15. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866*, 854.

16. Dennis Showalter, *Frederick the Great*, 28-29; James Charles Roy, *The Vanished Kingdom: Travels through the History of Prussia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 173.

17. David G. Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany*, 19-20.

18. *Ibid.*, 125.

19. Ibid., 20.
20. John Breuilly, *Austria, Prussia and Germany, 1806-1871* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), 48-49.
21. James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866*, 890-891.
22. Ibid., 880.
23. Ibid., 894.
24. Ibid., 896.
25. Ibid., 905-907.
26. Ibid., 908-909.
27. Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany*, 95.
28. Koch, *A History of Prussia*, 260; Roy, *The Vanished Kingdom*, 34-36.
29. Koch, *A History of Prussia*, 260-261.
30. Showalter, *Frederick the Great*, 145.
31. Koch, *A History of Prussia*, 261.
32. Erich Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1964), 160. The first quote is attributed directly to Bismarck by the author; the second quote is from the author himself.
33. Ibid., 148-149.
34. Ibid., 156.
35. Ibid., 173.
36. Koch, *A History of Prussia*, 266-269.
37. Ibid.
38. Fay and Epstein, *The Rise of Brandenburg-Prussia*, 102.
39. Ibid., 119.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., 121.
42. Ibid., 122.
43. Ibid., 122-123.
44. Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire*, 227.

45. Ibid., 253-255.
46. Dawson, *Bismarck and State Socialism*, 45.
47. Ibid., 15.
48. Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire*, 259-261.
49. Ibid., 19.
50. Ibid., 21.
51. Lord, *Two German Giants*, 32.
52. Ibid., iv

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## The Future of Civil War Soldier Studies: The Failure of Courage

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Joseph Cook

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It was the transformative event of United States history and has inspired a mountain of research and literature in the 150 years that have elapsed since its conclusion. As a major struggle at the dawn of the modern era, it has received attention from prominent military historians around the world, digging for lessons for officers and politicians and other matters of military significance. Despite all of this, the American Civil War remains a ripe subject for description and historical inquiry. In order to determine the value in future examination of the American Civil War, one must explore the progress of study thus far. To examine the full historiography of the Civil War would itself be a monumental task – one at which historians such as Gary Gallagher and Caroline Janney have attempted to chip away, in books such as *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten* and *Remembering the Civil War*.<sup>1</sup> Much of Civil War history literature has been focused – understandably, due to the popularity of such work – on battles and leaders of the conflict. This was propelled by the late nineteenth century effort of that very name; *Battles and Leaders*, written by participants of the war, disputed tactical decisions, and continued to wage long dead interpersonal conflicts, but did not delve deeply into the war’s issues. Gradually, the common soldier became more prominent in the histories of the war and these soldier studies hold a future potential for original Civil War historical research. The Civil War is uniquely qualified for examination of the common soldier’s experience. As Aaron Sheehan-Dean wrote, “Historians of the Civil War face [a] problem. They have not too few sources from common people but too many.”<sup>2</sup> Despite this plethora of source material, Civil War soldier studies have not come close to reaching their potential – as soldiers are too often seen as being cleanly divided between analogous groups rather than being complex individuals.

The Victorian ideals of American society in the Civil War era provided for certain expectations in the actions of Union soldiers – both on the battlefield and in camp life. Primary among these expectations were those related

to the definitions of courage and honor.<sup>3</sup> There was a debate over both concepts which focused on whether those values were intrinsic or could be earned. This debate has been examined by numerous pieces of previous scholarship, but the causes and effects of breakdowns in courage have rarely been explored. Reasons for this breakdown of courage are critical to examine, as is the concept of *moral* and *physical* courage as separate entities which Earl Hess examined in his scholarship on the Union soldier.<sup>4</sup> The source of courage is less important to understand in the context of this study than the loss of it. The same is true of honor. Accusations of being a coward would certainly cast aspersions on the honor of any man of the era. It is conceivable that soldiers who were returned to their units following such accusations would attempt to redeem their reputations by displaying more conspicuous bravery for the duration of the war. The story of these soldiers who were disgraced by accusations of cowardice cannot be told without examination of how their dishonor endured after their stumbles. Whether it was political opponents bringing up the matter and causing lawsuits, or veterans speaking at reunions, the subject of malingerers never quite disappeared – potentially isolating these soldiers from their comrades. Comprehending the level of isolation that these men felt in the aftermath of the war, or the amount of reintegration which they achieved, is critical to understanding the Civil War soldier experience.

The secondary literature on the Civil War soldier experience has largely focused on the concepts of bravery and endurance. The question of what motivated soldiers to do their duty has received extensive treatment from scholars including Hess, Gerald Linderman, and James McPherson.<sup>5</sup> All of these explore the question of why men did their duty despite adversity. Soldiers failing in their duty, and the methods which they employed to avoid prosecution while avoiding battle, were explored by R. Gregory Lande in his *Madness, Malingering, and Malfeasance*. Lande, however, did not go into detail about the lingering effects of suspicions which men held toward their comrades who failed in their duties, and described these malingerers as unique cases. What happened to his malingerers after the war? Did people on the home-front know anything about this issue? It is valuable to delve into those questions. Value would be found in exploring the issue of soldier psychology upon returning home. This research is greatly aided by the previous scholarship of Eric Dean's *Shook Over Hell*, as well as John Talbott's "Soldiers, Psychiatrists, and Combat Trauma" and "Combat Trauma in the American Civil

War.” However, both Dean and Talbott tended to treat their subjects as unique – an issue in Civil War soldier studies.

Primary sources which touch on the issues relevant to this study are numerous. Records of the Grand Army of the Republic and of regimental reunions can provide a picture of the level of comfort which potentially-disgraced soldiers felt with their former comrades. Period newspapers, soldier letters, regimental order books, and regimental histories also paint the image of these soldiers’ environments and experiences – including the subjective perceptions held by others.

As Lorien Foote discussed in *The Gentlemen and the Roughs*, the military justice system was a portion of the soldier experience, not exclusive from it.<sup>6</sup> By extension, one can establish the failure of courage as part of the soldier experience shared by many – not a rare occurrence that isolated individual men. Despite the valuable social examination provided by Foote’s scholarship, the book suffers from a problem similar to that of another social history effort: *Heroes and Cowards* by Dora Costa and Matthew Kahn. Both Foote and Costa/Kahn fell into the trap of creating and then isolating two very broad social groups. Costa and Kahn, as social scientists rather than historians, wrote that their work was “about the effect of peers on people’s behavior,” and yet by utilizing only statistical data, they largely failed to effectively show the cause-and-effect chain of the events they attempted to shed light upon.<sup>7</sup> By ultimately reducing soldiers to charts of statistics, the effect of the work is tragically similar to the time before the dawn of soldier studies as a field; a large desertion number is startling, but is startling in the same manner as a casualty number from the Battle of Gettysburg – without the personal emotion evoked by individuals’ stories or the complex interconnections of individual soldiers’ thinking.

The problem encountered by Costa and Kahn is an issue about which one of the original progenitors of soldier studies as a field, John Keegan, warned. In his seminal work, *The Face of Battle*, Keegan pulled no punches in pointing out the insufficiencies of traditional historiography in military history. Aside from mere criticism of the general ignorance or indifference demonstrated toward the common ranks in traditional history narratives, he was particularly pointed in his assault on the art of history writing. He harshly stated that private soldier’s accounts were used improperly: “At worst, they are mined for ‘interest’, to produce anthologies of ‘eye-witness accounts’ in series with titles like *Everyman at War* (*The Historian as Copy-typist* would be altogether more frank); at best, they serve as the raw material for what is not much more than anecdotal history.”<sup>8</sup> He also deplored those who – like

Costa and Kahn ultimately did – took a scientific approach to history too far, and “achieved the remarkable feat of writing an exhaustive account of one of the world’s greatest tragedies without the display of any emotion at all.” Keegan admitted that “Historians, traditionally and rightly, are expected to ride their feelings on a tighter rein than the man of letters can allow himself,” but such an entirely emotionless result was inexcusable.<sup>9</sup>

However, when Keegan turned his own attention to the Civil War as a subject for detailed study, he surprisingly failed to propel the field of soldier studies. Rather than focus his work on the soldier experience, he examined grand themes of geography and climate. One of his rare statements about the soldiery came when he stated, “They fought with chilling intensity.”<sup>10</sup> Keegan went on to say, “Men who performed the act and survived the consequences were transformed as citizens. Their understanding of ‘duty’ and ‘sacrifice’ were thereby revolutionized. Men who had stood shoulder to shoulder to brave the volleys of the enemy could not thenceforth be tepid or passive citizens.”<sup>11</sup> His societal conclusions primarily related to the failure of socialism to take hold in the United States in the post-war period. Speaking of the common American laborer, he wrote, “He had no desire to form industrial armies, having in his hundreds of thousands already formed and served in real armies and learnt by his experience that armies brought hardship and suffering. One experience of army life was enough for a lifetime and not only for an individual lifetime but for a national lifetime as well.”<sup>12</sup> The book was a disappointing ending to a superb historian’s career, and demonstrated the difficulty of delving into the Civil War soldier experience despite the tremendous amount of material for research. Without qualification within his statements about chilling intensity and about veterans becoming “pillars of the Republic,” Keegan painted an appallingly rosy picture of the soldier experience that is all-the-more discouraging within the field considering Keegan’s decades of pre-eminence. It essentially took Costa and Kahn’s faulty argument, which clumped all men whose courage ever failed them into a category of cowards who were ruined for life, and it went too far in hyperbole in the opposite direction, claiming that all men who served through the war became leaders of society.

For many American veterans of the Civil War, Keegan’s conclusion was, of course, correct. The power wielded by the Grand Army of the Republic in the post-war period was undeniable – serving as the precursor to modern political

organizations such as the AARP, lobbying for legislation with tremendous effect. In politics, business, and all other elements of American life, the Grand Army of the Republic was “made of as much governing force as religion.”<sup>13</sup> However, the Grand Army of the Republic also contributed to the hegemonic prevalence of a universally gallant description of all soldiers in early histories of the war. In their publications and statements, the organization’s leadership portrayed the war “as an unassailable monument rather than as an equivocal triumph.”<sup>14</sup> As such, they officially acknowledged no shortcomings of bravery in the performance of duty. The Grand Army served to demonstrate the place of veterans within the broad community of former soldiers – as it attempted to emulate the military structure of the armies of the Union to the fullest

possible extent. For those whose courage had failed at some point in the war, earning a place within the Grand Army of the Republic could be a sign of redeemed reputation. One such case was that of Lieutenant George Gillis of the 77th New York Infantry, who was court-martialed following the Battle of Gettysburg but returned to duty later in the war and fought with distinction. Gillis joined the Grand Army of the Republic when Post 92 was established in Saratoga Springs in 1877, and became the post’s Junior Vice-Commander. As an officer of the GAR, it would now be his responsibility to preside over court-martials of members, as the GAR

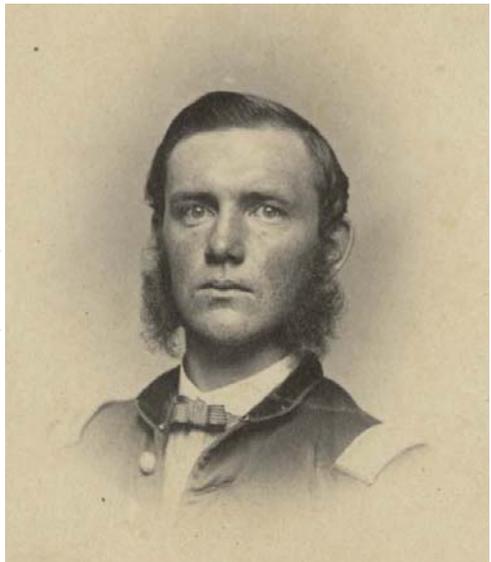


Figure 1 George H. Gillis, United States Army, New York Infantry Regiment, 77th. Original located in L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Image cropped.

aimed to establish military order to its ranks. This was a remarkable shift in fortune for a man who had been conspicuously absent for so much of his term of service that he had landed in front of a court himself and been convicted.<sup>15</sup> In a case like Gillis’s, one can see the potential redemptive power of the Grand Army of the Republic in veterans affairs; however, this does not entirely discount the tragic picture painted in numbers by Costa and Kahn – of soldiers who deserted and never

returned home, logically because of the social shame to which they were subjected. This variation of results constitute a part of the Civil War soldier experience, and complicate the task of defining societal expectations and reactions.

Publicly accepted and commended by the veteran community, the worst results of Gillis's wartime experiences were felt internally. His physical problems were clear – as physical problems typically are. A wound from the Battle of Winchester and the lingering effects of an attack of sunstroke limited him for the rest of his life. As his wife wrote following his death in 1892, “He always had to be very careful about exposure and exercise.” To a critic of his frequent absences from his company, what a wonderful statement that would have been. He had avoided exposure to combat for much of the war, and dropped out of the strenuous exercise of the forced march to Gettysburg. One can only wonder if these failings were on his mind as he took up the habit of heavy drinking for much of his life following the war (according to medical reports in his pension file), despite the professed commitment of the Grand Army of the Republic to temperance. Universalizing the soldier experiences of history is dangerous, but a depressed veteran taking to drink is certainly nothing new in society, and has almost become a cliché in the post-Vietnam world. In fact, this generalization of Civil War soldiers as victims became a popular historiographical trend during the Vietnam era. Alcohol was not mentioned at all in Gillis's court-martial in 1863, suggesting that it was indeed a vice he picked up afterward. Alcohol and intoxication can be used for many purposes, but one of those is certainly to drown out shame. If Gillis had taken to the bottle due to feelings stemming from his failures in the first half of the war – with the war having acted as the method of maturation into manhood for most young men like him – he would not have been alone in this course. At least he could do it in the comfort of his hometown, though. Unlike those found guilty of cowardice, punished severely, and cast out for it, Gillis was back in his community, and whatever demons or self-stigmatization he carried with him, he “lived a life of comparative leisure,” according to his pension record.<sup>16</sup>

This is the danger of micro-history as a method of historical inquiry, as Richard D. Brown once addressed. One could delve deep into the story of Lieutenant George Gillis and come away with a fairly optimistic picture of the aftermath of Civil War court-martial cases concerning the failure of courage. Brown warned against the fashionable mystique of micro-history and case studies, which relied upon “thick description” and “local knowledge” to establish truth

beyond dispute.<sup>17</sup> While micro-history holds value in shifting the historiographical focus to a bottom-up orientation, it lends itself to over-reaching conclusions. “Microhistory can serve to illuminate events in political and intellectual, as well as social and cultural history,” Brown wrote. “Though we cannot propound definitive truths, our empirical research into ‘a landscape cluttered with the detritus of past living,’ makes our truth claims persuasive.”<sup>18</sup> Gillis’s experience as a soldier with an inconsistent record of bravery is *a* soldier’s experience, but cannot be proclaimed to be *the* soldier experience.

Due to the complex nature of Civil War soldier studies, historians have disagreed on the proper course to pursue in future literature. Jason Phillips of Mississippi State University proposed that historians “could emphasize soldiers’ individuality and not just their agency; they could study influential soldiers instead of searching for typical ones; and they could write narratives instead of monographs.”<sup>19</sup> Aaron Sheehan-Dean believed that the future potential of the field lay in gender studies, with openings for “social and cultural historians to explore the relationship among masculinity, femininity, and the war.”<sup>20</sup> As Sheehan-Dean pointed out in his volume on the soldier experience, “The broad and complex perspectives on the Civil War generated by scholars and soldiers suggest that perhaps the subject has been adequately covered. But like most important experiences in American history, new generations of Civil War scholars will find new questions to ask and previously overlooked areas on which to focus.”<sup>21</sup> One of those open questions is the experience of lost courage. Bonds between the soldiers and the home front – as well as strains in those relationships – are critical to understanding the true lives of soldiers, and the strains have only received secondary treatment in the historiography. A valuable new trend to develop, as Phillips hinted at, would be to restore the individuality of each soldier and understand them as both actors in and subjects of the world in which they lived.

The long-standing historiography of Civil War soldiers – dating back to personal accounts and receiving academic credibility with the publication of Bell Irvin Wiley’s influential *The Life of Billy Yank* – has painted an image of the purely courageous soldier being the norm. Derivatively, one must reach the conclusion that soldiers whose courage failed them for even a moment were rare and therefore safely ignored in historical memory and scholarship. This would be a remarkable conclusion to reach if true, as Civil War armies were consistently engaged in combat more than any others in history prior to 1861. Keegan expressed the

popular perception that Civil War soldiers “overcame their fear by sensing the greater fear of being thought a coward. . . . It is exactly true that of the Civil War soldier, as of most soldiers in most wars, his greatest fear was of fear itself.”<sup>22</sup> For many, this was undoubtedly true. Fear of the stigma associated with the charge of cowardice kept men in the ranks during tremendous stress. Yet, “By common computation, about 10,000 battles, large and small, were fought in the United States between 1861 and 1865. This enormous number of battles, seven for every day the war lasted, provides the principal key to the nature of the war.”<sup>23</sup> In such a conflict, no man could be expected to never have a slip of courage. It would almost assuredly be beyond the realm of human ability.

Accepting Keegan’s assertion that men were most afraid of fear itself does not necessarily dismiss the legitimacy of failed courage as a line of inquiry into the Civil War. Even pre-meditated malingering took a degree of courage in the offending soldier, as “Each observer, from messmate to surgeon had to believe the false symptoms were genuine.”<sup>24</sup> But even committed and truly genuine soldiers could suffer collapses of courage. Veterans of the conflict recognized this, and expressed it freely in recollections prior to the sanitization of memory which occurred as the nineteenth century progressed and the themes of the Lost Cause and Reconciliation took hold. For example, Horace Porter, a notable member of Ulysses S. Grant’s staff during the war, wrote a piece for *Century* magazine concerning “The Philosophy of Courage.” In it, he confirmed the validity of Keegan’s argument, stating, “It is something higher than physical courage, it is a species of moral courage, which recognizes the danger and yet overmasters the sense of fear.”<sup>25</sup> However, he expressed a terrific level of understanding for those whose courage failed in different situations. “Courage, like everything else, wears out. Troops used to go into action during our late war displaying a coolness and steadfastness the first day . . . After fighting a couple of days, their nerves gradually lost their tension, they buoyancy of spirits gave way, and dangers they would have laughed at the first day often sent them panic-stricken to the rear on the third.”<sup>26</sup> Porter was far from judgmental of these soldiers whose nerves could not withstand the incredible consistency of stress they faced. He proclaimed, “Every soldier understands why ‘two o’clock in the morning’ courage is recognized as courage in its highest form,” and “As one’s physical condition is affected by circumstances of health and sickness, so does one’s courage vary under different surroundings.”<sup>27</sup> In fact, Porter even related a case very reminiscent of that of George Gillis, discussed

earlier. After pleading for “one more chance to redeem himself from disgrace ... He fulfilled his pledges most religiously. Wherever there was danger he was seen in the midst of it; his conduct in every subsequent fight was that of a hero ... He had effaced the blot from his escutcheon.” Then Porter made his clearest point: “The man was no coward at heart; he had for the moment, in army parlance, ‘lost his grip’ under that murderous fire.”<sup>28</sup> Soldiers themselves recognized the complexities of courage issues – and yet these complexities ultimately became erased in the studies of those soldiers.

It was understandable and logically expected for soldiers to lose their grip from time to time. Whereas some recent social historians such as R. Gregory Lande and Eric Dean have presented their subjects as extraordinary and thus fairly unique, the fact is that the field of soldier studies would benefit from stripping away that sense of uniqueness. A soldier could be brave and dutiful for days, months, or even years without a serious issue. But the strain of Civil War combat and the hardships of camp life (a subject that was examined in depth by Earl Hess in *Union Soldier in Battle* and by Gerald Linderman in *Embattled Courage*) naturally wore down the nerves of courageous men. Understanding the reasons for and effects of this erosion process does not detract from the narrative of Civil War soldier life. Rather, it humanizes the men of the past. As history became sanitized for the sake of national unity and confidence, the most accurate presentations of soldier life may have come from war veteran and fiction writer Ambrose Bierce. Bierce took an approach that criticized all “high talk” and had “a marked respect for naked, disinterested courage.” He fully accepted the successes and failures of courage, while “his criticisms of erring humanity were seldom relieved by pity or compassion.”<sup>29</sup> There was no need for judgment or sympathy to those who experienced failures of courage; that was simply a part of life in the armies of the Civil War. It was the memory of those beyond the Civil War generation that began to ignore this element of the soldier experience. The early twentieth century poet Stephen Vincent Benet captured the faulty sense of his contemporaries. Writing of the absurdness he saw in tourism of battlefields such as Gettysburg, he wrote, “No men had fought there, but enormous, monumental men who bled neat streams of uncorrupting bronze ... And the wind blows on the bronze book [and] on the bronze men ... And the wind says ‘Long ago Long ago.’”<sup>30</sup> In these uncorrupted bronze men of the past, there could be no fault, and the national historical memory wiped clean the common record of failed courage. To fully recover the Civil War

soldier experience, scholarship must recover that common feature of human nature which affected the soldiers. The Civil War was the transformative event of American history, endured and shaped by average men. To ignore their human instincts and mistakes is to ascribe whole-heartedly to a pre-ordained special status of the United States rather than comprehend the struggles of the nation which set it on its course.

## Notes

1. Gary Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

2. Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 9.

3. An in-depth analysis of the American homefront and its ideals can be found in Louise L. Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture 1860-1880* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991); also Paul Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, eds. *Union Soldiers and the Northern Homefront* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

4. Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

5. Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: the Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987); James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); James M. McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865* (New York: Random House, 1995).

6. Lorien Foote, *The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Violence, Honor, and Manhood in the Union Army* (New York: NYU Press, 2010).

7. Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, *Heroes and Cowards: the Social Face of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), xviii.

8. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: a Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme* (New York: Penguin, 1978), 32.

9. *Ibid.*, 29.

10. John Keegan, *The American Civil War: a Military History* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 363.

11. *Ibid.*, 364.

12. *Ibid.*, 365.

13. Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: the Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 114.

14. *Ibid.*, 232.

15. Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, *History of Saratoga County, New York* (Saratoga Springs, 1878); Certificate No. 509.088, George H. Gillis, Approved Pension Applications, RG 15; National Archives Building, Washington, DC; McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 40-43.

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## Piety over Piracy: The Shaolin Monks' Victory against Wokou

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Ryan Lancaster

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At numerous points throughout human history, religious zeal and warfare have united. The Crusades pitted Christian Knights Templar against Muslim warriors for control of the Holy Land. During the War of 1812, the Shawnee prophet, Tenskwatawa, blessed his braves as they went into battle against white settlers. Less recognized in the West, however, was the might of the Shaolin monks of China, who periodically forsook the scroll to demonstrate their expertise at martial arts. In one instance, Chinese officials, in a desperate last resort, mobilized these warrior monks to take on roving Japanese pirates, or *wokou*, who were pillaging China's coast. Because of crumbling law enforcement, a decadent and enticing society, and a weakened grasp on the coastal territories, Ming Dynasty China was a tempting target. This left Shaolin monks as the last line of defense against pirates.

*Wokou*, which translates as "Japanese pirates" or "dwarf pirates"<sup>1</sup> in Chinese, were a group of pirates who ransacked the coasts of China and Korea. Although they originally hailed from Japan, it was seldom that one would find a pirate of full Japanese descent. They came from a blend of cultures, containing even Portuguese within their ranks. Historian Anthony Reid estimated that twenty percent of the sixteenth century *wokou* were from the Ryukyu Islands, located southwest of Japan, ten percent were of various nationalities, and as many as seventy percent were indigenous Chinese.<sup>2</sup> As they held no definite nation of origin, they also held no nationalistic ties, as the early *wokou* invaded Japan as well as China and Korea.<sup>3</sup> The pirates marauded for silks and metal imports which were sold in Japan for up to ten times their worth in China.<sup>4</sup>

There is a long history of piracy on the Chinese coast that eventually required the assistance of the Shaolin. In the early seventh century, during the Tang dynasty, pirates ransacked the southeast shores of China. Pirate invasions in the Fujian Province endangered stability and opulence in Southern China and the new dynasty wanted help. The Emperor turned for aid to Master Tanzong, head of

the Songshan Shaolin Monastery who was also the general of the Court. At the Emperor's wish three of the fabled Shaolin Thirteen Cudgel fighting monks, Dao Guang, Seng Man, and Seng Feng, led roughly five hundred warrior monks south to engage in various skirmishes against the pirates.<sup>5</sup> They assisted the Tang soldiers in turning back the tide and the seaside war was won. The coastline was pacified and as a result Buddhism began to extend in the area.

According to several recent studies, numerous warrior monks fell in the aforementioned battles. To honor their fallen companions, some of the Shaolin monks remained behind in the Southern provinces. They were greeted and trailed by local monks who attempted to convert to Shaolin adherents. The monks were asked to stay by the local inhabitants and received consent from the Emperor to construct a Shaolin Monastery in the Fujian province. Before the construction of Southern Shaolin Monastery, monk Dao Guang went back to Songshan Monastery to meet Master Tanzong. Tanzong wrote a verse for him and requested that he select a place reminiscent of the Song San "Jiu Lian" Mountain and then construct a Southern Shaolin Temple to honor their deceased colleagues. The master intoned: "Years have passed pacifying the coast, a rest place will be found at the foot of mountain with nine lotus. One monastery it is though separated in the south and in the north, Chan sect of Mahayana shall always remain in the heart."<sup>6</sup>

The Grand Master also asked him to evoke their lineages and to spread the Chan Buddhist values innate to the Song San Temple. A simpler interpretation of the poem reads: "Days and months fighting roving bandits, wishing a temple to stay at the foot of Jiu Lian Mountain; Southern and Northern Shaolin originates from the same temple with Chan Buddhism engraved in the heart forever."<sup>7</sup>

However, this spread of Buddhism yoked with its brand of peace would not last, as pirates would again resurface several centuries later. Mentions of the *wokou* attacking shoreline areas of China can be found during the course of the Ming era (1368-1644). Looking predominantly at the archives of assaults by *wokou*, historians have determined that their main objectives were located across the Korean peninsula to the northern coastline areas of China in the early Ming period. In the second half of the period, from the Jiajing era (1521-1567) on, there are reports of pirates attacking Jiangsu, Zhejiang and southwards to Fujian and Guangdong.<sup>8</sup> These attacks were not haphazard, as the formula to create a piratical breeding ground was apparent within China.

Much of the Chinese coast was without law, and the portions that were under the influence of the empire rarely found solace. The second arrival of Japanese pirates came during the rule of Ashikaga Yoshiteru, the thirteenth shogun of the Muromachi house. The power of the Muromachi had buckled, with the contending territorial lords dividing up the nation. Historically speaking, it is challenging to differentiate amid *wokou* and pirates during this era. The historic jargon “*beilu nanwo*” (Mongols in the north and Japanese pirates in the south) that has been used in the past results from *nanwo* and *wokou* having been considered in footings of Japanese accounts or the history of Sino-Japanese affairs.<sup>9</sup> This attempt to grasp ahold of feudal Japan pushed out the unsavory pirates towards the loosely held Chinese shores and those that headed that direction would become *wokou*.

With the influx of new criminals came the need for more security, and that safekeeping would come at a price. In 1553, Hangzhou's officials (located in Eastern China), reacting to increasing demands for public safety, presented a flat tax of 0.05 *tael* (currency) for each home in place of service as nighttime guards. At the same time, however, the upsurge of *wokou* assaults in the Yangzi delta reached its highest point, an event that encouraged a rigorous conscription of men for shoreline protection and public security. In 1555, municipal officers in Hangzhou began to draft the city's capable men into a local militia that would conduct the night watchmen duties now operated by employed workers. Even after the *wokou* plunders ended, the government maintained that the local militias continue to offer night watchmen for routine responsibility, while the hired hands were redistributed to run errands for the local bureaucrats. The city's taxpayers were exposed to a twofold nuisance as they now paid duty and property taxes instead of labor services, while at the same time the government pushed urban citizens into service as night watchmen.<sup>10</sup>

Soldiers were needed all across the country, and the footing of the bill was through taxation. The grander arc of taxation in Nanjing enflamed the prospective for tax protest. In the late 1550s, the *wokou* incursions required local authorities in Jiangnan to present an assortment of distinct new tariffs and levy surcharges. Initially, widespread objections fell on heedless ears. The city's numerous bureaucrats announced obligatory caveats repeating legal measures for dispensing requisition warrants but took no significant action.<sup>11</sup>

Had the pirate problem existed in a bubble perhaps the empire could have handled it properly, but there were many other issues that plagued China. The Ming

Dynasty confronted unforeseen military expenses mainly because of the deterioration of the *weisuo* garrison system, which the organizers of the dynasty had projected would be self-sustaining. Militia expenditures to counter the invasions of the *wokou* required at least 3 million *taels* yearly in addition to 8 million *taels* for frontier defenses. The mounting menace of the Manchus on the northern frontier, added with increasing peasant revolts in the early decades of the seventeenth century, significantly stressed the unwieldy and uncompromising Ming taxation system. Even with the land tax increases which started in 1618 and continued after, the Ming fiscal problem was less one of an insufferable tax burden than that the tax structure and administration could not raise enough revenue to meet serious expenditures and collected what it did with a good deal of disorganization and disproportion.<sup>12</sup> And with that, the laws put in place to combat the *wokou* seemed only to exacerbate the concern.

The enticing coastline of China was one that the *wokou* exploited during this period, despite the fact that earlier in China's history she was able to defend her shores against such piracy. The Ming dynasty had at least during the initial sixty-five years of its existence hinged on seafaring strength. Under the emperor Zhu Di (1403-1424), the Ming navy comprised of 3,500 ships, which led yearly flotillas well off the coastline, hunted Japanese *wokou* as far as the Ryukyu Islands (southwest of Japan) to the shores of Korea and conquered the Red River delta in 1407 to reoccupy that portion of Annam (now part of contemporary Vietnam) as a Chinese province.<sup>13</sup> But financial support to the navy eventually dwindled and the coastline was left unsecure.

It would not be fair to glance over the political motives of the pirates, as they were not focused solely on ravishing the Chinese countryside for sheer entertainment value and financial gain. One of the reasons for the appearance of Japanese pirates in the Jiajing era (1521-1567) is that pirate captains like Wang Zhi, Mao Haifeng and others led crews of pirates on forays because they were incapable of making profits due to the strictness of the marine embargos placed on Japan by China. Another motive was that food shortages in Japan had forced the cost of rice to rise and people were suffering from hunger, a fact to which the sovereigns of Japan were ignorant. This evidently corresponded with an increase in demand for nautical and foreign trade among the Chinese inhabitants in the coastline areas.<sup>14</sup> Poverty and starvation are generally good instigators for illegal activity.

Chinese embargos only aggravated the situation. In the first year of the

Longqing era (1567-1572) the Governor of Fujian, Tu Zemin wanted to trade with the nations of Southeast Asia (excluding Japan, which was perceived as the gang leader of the *wokou*) and therefore the naval embargo was relaxed and foreign trade thrived. The amount of Chinese ships venturing to Southeast Asia, particularly in the second half of the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth centuries, increased from 50 in about 1567 to 137 in 1597. This consequently grew to forty per year from Fujian alone by 1612. Forty-three ships are chronicled for 1628. Therefore, an abundance of Chinese merchant vessels traveled to Southeast Asia annually.<sup>15</sup> These mouthwatering prizes were worth the minimal risk to the *wokou*.

Protection of the coastal cities of China was less than to be desired. Beginning in the mid-1500s uncultivated and essentially untapped mountains were opened and established in the sequence of a gigantic wave of immigration that continued for over two centuries. This extensive and continuous population movement was only a part of an even more widespread system of exoduses that moved large quantities of Chinese citizens from the southeast coast into the inner provinces. By the time the migrations ended in the late eighteenth century, the Yangzi highlands had been converted from a near wasteland on the outer reaches of civilization into a fruitful and essential part of a developing commercial economy, and had become the home of a lively and distinguished culture that has persisted in the area to the present day.<sup>16</sup> Many of these cities were outside the full protection of the empire, a fact which eventually led to their demise.

Many *wokou* were left to their own devices, and moved unchecked. The 1540s and 1550s witnessed pirate raids on an unparalleled scale on China's eastern and southeastern coasts. The *wokou* assaults were particularly severe along the Jiangnan coast, where they plundered not only rural areas but even walled cities. In 1554 the city of Songjiang was seized and its magistrate put to death. The government met incredible complications in its efforts to control the situation, partially as the local authorities were themselves involved in trade with the thieves and somewhat because of the weakening of the regular military. It was not before the 1560s when order was reinstated to Jiangnan, to a degree through the exertions of the Chinese generals.<sup>17</sup>

By the end of the Ming Dynasty the coast of Fujian and northern Guangdong was profoundly overpopulated. The growth of a commercialized economy in the region during the latter part of the Ming Dynasty led to a substantial consolidation of land ownership, so that many formerly land-owning

country-dwellers became renters. Furthermore, administrative and public discontent were predominantly widespread in southeast China during the late Ming-Qing period (1644-1912), as the despoliations of the *wokou* were shadowed by the early Qing rebellions of Zheng Chenggong. The devastation brought upon the Fujian-Guangdong coast by these numerous engagements was aggravated by intermittent efforts by the government to carry out a scorched earth strategy; this entailed removing the population from the lush and most densely occupied regions along the coast in order to deny pirates and insurgents alluring objects and bases of provisions.<sup>18</sup> This strategy would do more damage to the local community than to the pirates and left the areas in more disorder than when it started. The mixture of a large populace combined with inadequate foodstuffs, absence of laborers from their land, uneasy governmental and social circumstances, and government relocation guidelines all contributed to a colossal population shift in southeast China. Some of those who left the land became fishermen or pirates along the Fujian-Guangdong coast.<sup>19</sup>

Not all Chinese were steadfast in their anti-piracy stance as some actually embraced the lawlessness. Because of the degree of dishonesty in the Ming Dynasty, many Chinese bureaucrats had associations with the pirates and profited from the piracy, making it problematic for the ruling classes to control.<sup>20</sup> When there is money to be made, one can expect there to be those in power ready to swoop in and make a profit, no matter the cost. China was no exception.

With lawlessness infecting the Chinese countryside the Shaolin entered the fray. During the early decades of the sixteenth century and throughout the dynasty's latter years Shaolin monks provided a reliable military alternative to the state. By 1550, the Shaolin Temple had been in existence for roughly 1,000 years. The resident monks were legendary all over Ming China for their specific and extremely effective usage of kung fu.<sup>21</sup> They participated in local operations against Henan criminals and outlaws and battled prowling pirates along China's southeastern shores. Their contribution to national defense made Shaolin monks not only receive endorsement from Chinese officials but state backing as well. The late Ming observed remarkable development at the monastery, as notable officials and adherents of the imperial family contested with each other in backing its distinguished combat monks.<sup>22</sup>

There was also a call for the Shaolin not just to defend their country, but their way of life as well, as their monasteries were easy targets for pillaging. The

motivation for reconstruction of the Huangbo Monastery was the devastation triggered by invasions of the *wokou* throughout the Jiaping period. From 1545, the year when pirates first attacked Fuqing, to 1564, when General Qi Jiguang finally suppressed them, pirates visited Fuqing almost every year. During an attack in 1555, the core structures of Huangbo Monastery were demolished. Though pirate invasions made the deteriorating condition of Buddhism in the area worse, a rebuilding of social life in the vicinity took place after their defeat. This comprised the reconstruction of Buddhist priories such as Huangbo.<sup>23</sup> Through the destruction of temples and their subsequent rebuilding, the *wokou* fortuitously aided in the spread of Buddhism and made the Shaolin even stronger.

A number of sixteenth century sources confirm that in 1553, throughout the highpoint of the pirates' attacks, military officers in Jiangnan determined to assemble Shaolin and other monastic soldiers. The most comprehensive interpretation is author and chronicler Zheng Ruoceng's "The Monastic Armies' First Victory," contained within his *The Strategic Defense of the Jiangnan Region*. Even though he never passed the examinations, Zheng received the admiration of his colleagues as a skilled geographer of China's coastline areas. He was designated in 1560 as a consultant by Hu Zongxian, who at the time was the utmost commanding officer of the armed forces in Fujian, Zhejiang, and the Southern Metropolitan Region (modern day Jiangsu). Zheng's term in Hu's head office might have added to his knowledge of the operation against piracy, of which Hu was entrusted.<sup>24</sup> What would ensue next would be decades of bloodshed brought on by the Shaolin hunting down and systematically executing the *wokou*.

Though there were numerous smaller battles, there were really four large-scale assaults. The first took place in the spring of 1553 on Mount Zhe, which watches over the entrance to Hangzhou City via the Qiantang River. Even though particulars are limited, Zheng Ruoceng notes that this was a triumph for the monastic armed forces.<sup>25</sup> The Battle of Wengjiagang was the most significant victory for the monks. On July 21, 1553, one hundred twenty militant monks decimated an entire legion of pirate forces and left no survivors. They even pursued the remaining survivors for ten days on a twenty-mile path that headed south towards Wangjiazhuang. There the very last outlaw was executed in cold blood. As the dust settled more than a hundred pirates perished, while only four fatalities were suffered by the Shaolin. It seems that the monks showed no mercy on the enemy, as one account shows a Shaolin using his iron staff to slay a fleeing pirate's wife. What

is odd is that Zheng Ruoceng does not remark on the monks' neglect to honor their Buddhist ban on murder, even in this example when the slain was a defenseless woman.<sup>26</sup> Clearly, the Shaolin were vesting in a total war strategy.

The Chinese military did not just wait on the sidelines as the monks cleaned up the countryside. They were still a vital part of the defense, and the best accounts of what actually transpired come from army records. Two distinguished Chinese military figures involved in the fighting against *wokou* were Qi Jiguang and Yu Dayou. Yu Dayou was a general of the Ming Dynasty who studied martial arts in a Shaolin temple and who was dispatched to protect the shore against the Japanese pirates. Qi Jiguang was born to a military household on January 10, 1528. The family line delivered the traditional rank of a secondary commander of the Dengzhou Guard, which Qi Jiguang reached in 1544 upon the passing of his father. Qi Jiguang served in northern China, in Beijing, and along the Great Wall, where he battled against the Mongol aggressors. The 1550s saw amplified coastal invasions by *wokou*, and in 1555 Qi was assigned to the Zhejiang province. Qi amplified his manpower by teaching local villagers soldierly abilities. Later Qi composed his first military dissertation, the *Jixiao Xinshu*, in which he defined his teaching techniques to organize troops for combat, as well as the strategic concerns of handling the soldiers in battle.<sup>27</sup>

Shaolin were to be rewarded for their efforts. The monks' backing of the government produced for them not only words of approval but also quantifiable remunerations. In 1581 and again in 1595, Dengfeng County representatives distributed official letters, freeing Shaolin's properties from taxation. Both letters were etched in stone at the monastery to guarantee its tax-free standing under future officeholders. Remarkably, the two documents explicitly caution low-grade clerks not to remove money from the monastery for their own pouches. Dengfeng County officials allowed Shaolin tax breaks on the foundation of the monastery's military record. Their letters offer vital data on the monastery's participation in combat, for they list one by one the operations in which its monks took part:

During the Jiajing (1522–1566) reign, the Liu bandits, Wang Tang, and the pirates, as well as Shi Shangzhao and others created violent disturbances. This monastery's fighting monks were repeatedly called upon to suppress them. They courageously killed the bandits, many earning the merit of putting their lives on the line. Thus this monastery's monks have relied upon culture and warfare alike to protect the state and strengthen its army. They are not like monks in other monasteries

throughout the land, who merely conduct rituals, read the Sutras, and pray for the emperor's long life.<sup>28</sup>

The Shaolin's influence began to spread all throughout China. Buddhism in the late Ming dynasty had heavy influence on the construction practice of monasteries in this period, which saw serious action in the subdual of *wokou* piracy. Though researchers have examined how the nobility poured out their benefaction upon monastery building ventures, it is still generally unidentified how Buddhist organizations themselves were rejuvenated as the outcome of an inner revolution of Buddhism.<sup>29</sup>

Outside of larger monasteries and prestige, other advancements were made by the Shaolin. Medicine has profound ancestries in Buddhism. It is believed the basis of Shaolin medicine comes from Tamo or Bodhidharma who, when he found the monks were feeble after meditation, began gathering folk medications to help his cohorts. These cures were advanced across consecutive dynasties, cresting in the Ming period. It was during this time that Shaolin monks fought off the *wokou* in Fujian, so the demand for effective medicine arose. It was also when Shaolin Abbot Dao Guang set up a massive apothecary at Shaolin temples for followers, acolytes and the unfortunate laity.<sup>30</sup>

Shaolin activities against the *wokou* have left a mark in contemporary China. The pirates' assaults on Chinese coasts created a countrywide emergency, which was debated on all stages of government, from local consultants in the frequently affected regions to the uppermost stratum of imperial officialdom. Shaolin's involvement in this operation echoed through Ming bureaucracy. The monastery's conquests were chronicled in various official papers stretching from local newspapers and historical accounts to fictional works. If Shaolin's support to Li Shimin was the basis of its Tang period reputation, then the piracy crusade fortified its Ming period notoriety. The Shaolin's war against piracy was to motivate Chinese monks for centuries to come. Confronted with Japanese hostility in the 1930s, Chinese Buddhists evoked the monastery's triumph over the *wokou*. In 1933, the ardently nationalistic monk Zhenhua wrote *A History of Monastic National Defense*, uniting his fellow Buddhists to battle the Japanese interlopers. Arguing that in times of domestic emergency it was acceptable for monks to fight, Zhenhua mentioned Shaolin's gallant efforts to stem the sixteenth century piracy movement. By the twentieth century, the monastery's military heritage delivered a model for Buddhist warfare.<sup>31</sup>

The Ming bureaucracy seemed to do more harm than good, and that is assuming that the local magistrates were not in the pocket book of the *wokou*. The wealth of China was too great a prize to pass up, and the lack of control or security only emboldened would be pirates. That was, until the Shaolin went on a virtuous, albeit ruthless, assault on the *wokou*. It is important to remember that their often-vicious total war tactics superseded the piety of the monks. The brutality was not a product of Buddhism per se, but its allowance towards the enemy seems to have lost to annals of time.

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## Who Influenced Whom? A New Perspective on the Relationship between Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan

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Robert Kane

In 1890, US Navy Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, then at the Naval War College, published *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1665-1783*, in which he attributed Britain's rise as a global and colonial power to the use of the Royal Navy to dominate the North Atlantic and, ultimately, all the world's oceans. Theodore Roosevelt, an up and coming American politician who already had an interest in naval affairs, wrote a favorable review of that book for the *Atlantic Monthly* in October 1890. In the review, Roosevelt generally concurred with Mahan's assessment of the role of the Royal Navy in Britain's rise as a colonial and global power.<sup>1</sup> Mahan's and Roosevelt's close relationship and regular correspondence after 1890 and Roosevelt's growing support for an ocean-going Navy as Assistant Secretary of the Navy and President led some naval historians and Roosevelt biographers to believe that Mahan heavily

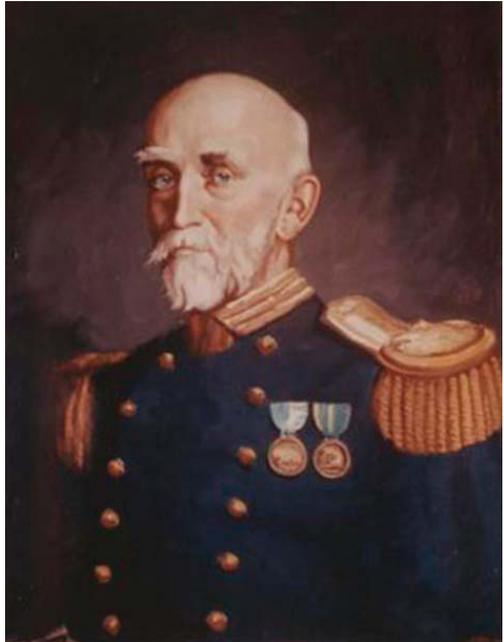


Figure 1 Portrait of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan. Mahan (September 27, 1840 – December 1, 1914) was a Navy admiral and historian, who has been called “the most important American strategist of the nineteenth century.” He based his concept of sea power on the idea that countries with greater navies will have greater global impact, most famously presented in *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, published in 1890. His concepts globally influenced the shaping of the strategic use of navies, especially in the United States, Germany, Japan and Britain, and significantly contributed to naval arms races after 1890 in Europe, the United States, and Japan. His ideas still permeate the naval doctrine today.

influenced Roosevelt in the development of his ideas about sea power and an ocean-going navy.<sup>2</sup> However, Mahan's influence on Roosevelt was not as extensive as these authors have claimed as Roosevelt, by the early 1890s, already had well-formed ideas about the importance of seapower, the need for the United States to have a great navy, and its use on the world's oceans.

The starting point to understand how and why Roosevelt developed a keen interest in naval issues, the importance of sea power, and, thus, his advocacy for creating a large, ocean-going Navy before he met Mahan is an understanding of the development of values and interests in children. According to psychologists, morals and value development begins in children as soon as they can communicate. While numerous environmental factors affect a child's personality, parents, teachers, and other caregivers are active agents in developing the character of the growing children in their charge. Parents, especially non-working mothers as they generally have more daily contact with children than fathers who generally work during the day, are the primary influence on children from birth to about the age of six or seven when children enter schools. From about seven to mid- to late



Figure 2 Admiral Stephen N. Luce (March 25, 1827–July 28, 1917), US Navy, in 1888. Luce urged the Navy to establish a professional military education institution for senior Navy officers. As a result, the Navy established the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, October 6, 1884 with Luce as its first president. In 1885, he was promoted to rear admiral, and Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose writings had greatly influenced the Navy's decision to establish the Navy War College, succeeded Luce as president in 1886. U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command.

teens, peers become increasingly important in morals and value development in people.<sup>3</sup> In Roosevelt's case, his mother's stories about his "heroic" Confederate Navy uncles, James and Irvine Bulloch, sparked Roosevelt's interest in naval affairs that he later nurtured into a definitive history of the naval war of the War of 1812. Roosevelt's naval history not only demonstrated an outstanding grasp of the intricacies of naval warfare in the latter days of sail but also severely criticized the decrepit state of the Navy in the early 1880s, years before Mahan wrote his book on sea power. As a result, Roosevelt began his advocacy to improve the state of American seapower at least six years before he and Mahan met.

Although Roosevelt met Mahan in the summer of 1888 during a visit to the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, the relationship between the two naval advocates did not begin in earnest until Mahan's publication of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* in 1890. In 1885, the Navy sent Captain Mahan as captain of the USS *Wachusett* to patrol the western coast of South America. During this tour, Admiral Stephen B. Luce, the president of the newly established Naval War College, selected Mahan as a lecturer in naval history and tactics and ultimately as his successor as president, partially based on Mahan's *The Gulf and Inland Waters*, a naval history of the American Civil War published in 1883.<sup>4</sup> To prepare for his upcoming assignment, Mahan read books on naval history in the library of the English Club in Callao, Peru. There, after reading Theodor Mommsen's *History of Rome*, Mahan concluded, according to his autobiography, that the campaigns of Hannibal during the Second Punic War might have ended differently if he had invaded Italy by sea, instead of by land.<sup>5</sup> This "discovery" and additional reading led Mahan to eventually write two of the most influential books on naval history, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* and *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812*, two years after the former book.

In these books, Mahan concluded that Britain's rise as a great power occurred because of the Royal Navy which Britain, an insular nation, needed to protect its growing overseas trade and expanding global colonial empire.<sup>6</sup> As a result, Mahan came to believe that the United States also needed a great sea-going navy (in 1889, the Navy was rated twelfth among the navies of the world) to protect its growing overseas commerce.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, this great navy should consist of large modern steel-hulled, armored, big-gunned warships (battleships and cruisers), instead of smaller warships with multiple types of weapons, that

would face similar fleets of warships in “great” fleet actions at sea.<sup>8</sup> As the United States entered the race for colonies in the late 1800s, Mahan also lectured and wrote on the need for colonies, initially as coaling stations for the Navy’s new steam-driven warships, and a canal across the Isthmus of Panama.<sup>9</sup>

The question is to what extent did Roosevelt already believe in the importance of sea power and a large ocean-going navy to the United States when Mahan published his “influence of sea power” books in the early 1890s and to see how much of what Roosevelt believed about sea power and navies came from Mahan after 1890. Roosevelt was born on October 27, 1858, into a wealthy New York City aristocratic family, descended from original Dutch settlers of New York. As a child, he was afflicted with asthma, headaches, fevers, and other illnesses, which led him as a young man to emphasize health, strength, and the outdoors life.<sup>10</sup> More importantly, his mother’s stepbrother was James Bulloch (Uncle Jimmie to Roosevelt) and her younger full brother, Irvine Bulloch. During the Civil War, James commanded a Confederate blockade runner, the *Fingal*; later refitted a British ship, the *Erica*, in July 1862, as the Confederate commerce raider, the CSS *Alabama*; and attempted to purchase two ironclad rams from the Laird

shipyard. Irvine served on the *Alabama* when the USS *Kearsage* sank the ship off the French coast in June 1864. Irvine finished the war aboard another commerce raider, the CSS *Shenandoah* which devastated the American whaling fleet in the Pacific.<sup>11</sup> Since the Bullochs did not receive an amnesty from the American



Figure 3 Theodore Roosevelt (October 27, 1858 – January 6, 1919), age 11, while visiting Paris, where this photo was taken in 1870. While in Paris, young Theodore suffered an attack of asthma. This childhood illness kept him from strenuous exercise. US Office of Federal Management.

shipyard. Irvine served on the *Alabama* when the USS *Kearsage* sank the ship off the French coast in June 1864. Irvine finished the war aboard another commerce raider, the CSS *Shenandoah* which devastated the American whaling fleet in the Pacific.<sup>11</sup> Since the Bullochs did not receive an amnesty from the American

government after the war, they went into self-imposed exile in Liverpool, England.<sup>12</sup>

During the war, Roosevelt's mother, nicknamed Mittie, related her brothers' naval exploits "and their manly, robust, militaristic pursuits" to the young Roosevelt.<sup>13</sup> Teedie, as he was called as a child, created a game called "running the blockade," based on his Uncle James' exploits on the blockade runner.<sup>14</sup> Since Roosevelt's father did not serve in the military during the war and, thus, had no tales of heroism in combat, Roosevelt reveled in his mother's tales of his "infamous" uncles. Brands wrote, "It was probably at this time that the seeds of fascination with the sea and ships were planted in Roosevelt's mind; these seeds would mature in later years into a preoccupation with sea power."<sup>15</sup> In early May 1869, in the midst of the diplomatic negotiations



Figure 4 James (L) Bulloch and Irvine (R) Bulloch, circa 1865. James Dunwoody Bulloch and Irvine Bulloch, the brother and stepbrother of the mother of Theodore Roosevelt, Martha Stewart "Mittie" Bulloch Roosevelt, were Confederate naval officers during the American Civil War. She regaled a young Theodore in the tales of their heroic deeds aboard Confederate commerce raiders during the war, which spawned TR's interest in naval issues at an early age.

between the United States and Britain over damages to Union shipping during the Civil War by British-made Confederate commerce raiders, the Roosevelt family

went to Europe. Around May 21, Roosevelt at the age of ten met his famous uncles for the first time and personally heard their tales of valor and excitement on the high seas.<sup>16</sup> To Teedie, the two Bulloch brothers “were almost mythical in stature,” “. . . two heroic figures from Mittie’s stories, the real thing at last.”<sup>17</sup> In later life, Roosevelt confided to Archibald Butt, a journalist and Army officer who became military advisor to Presidents Roosevelt and William Howard Taft that Uncle Jimmie had “appealed to him more than any man he had ever met.”<sup>18</sup>

Meeting the heroes of his mother’s tales had a profound impact on Roosevelt. A Washington reporter, referring to the belief that Irvine Bulloch had fired the last two shots from the CSS *Alabama* before she sank, later wrote, “One would suppose that the President, himself, fired the last two shots from the *Alabama* instead of his uncle [Irvine].”<sup>19</sup> As a grown man, Roosevelt would explain, “It was from the heroes of my favorite stories, from hearing of the feats performed by my southern forefathers and kinsfolk, and from knowing my father [that] I felt great admiration for men who were fearless . . . and I had a great desire to be like them.”<sup>20</sup> As he prepared to assume the office of Assistant Secretary of the Navy on April 19, 1897, Roosevelt recounted that the memories of his Uncle James and the tales of “ships, ships, ships, and fighting of ships” told to him “as a little shaver” by his mother came back to him “till they sank into the depths of my soul.”<sup>21</sup> Grondahl characterized Roosevelt’s appointment to this position as “a culmination of his childhood fantasies of becoming a naval war hero along the lines of his mother’s colorful brothers, Jimmy and Irvine Bulloch.”<sup>22</sup>

Of course, having fantasies about ships and navies does not constitute ideas about the importance and use of sea power. Roosevelt still had a fascination with the sea and navies when he entered Harvard University in the fall of 1876 and struggled through his studies for the first two years.<sup>23</sup> During his senior year, he selected the naval war of the War of 1812 as the topic of his senior paper while looking for a book in the library and finding one by James Fennimore Cooper, “the author he had loved as a boy for his tales of sea and war.” Roosevelt then remembered his Uncle Jimmie and regretted that there was not an adequate history of the naval aspects of the War of 1812.<sup>24</sup> Later, after deciding to turn his thesis into a book during his years at the Columbia Law School, he read numerous books about seamanship, naval histories, memoirs of participants, and British sources of the War of 1812. He requested and went through hundreds of original documents in the Department of the Navy’s archives in Washington, DC. From these sources, he collected extensive

data on the fighting ships of the latter days of “fighting sail,” their armaments, and the crews of both sides. Using the data and information he collected, Roosevelt compiled his own construction plans, tactical diagrams, and statistical tables for his book.<sup>25</sup>

While working on his book, Roosevelt became tired of writing and decided to take a break. He went to Europe in 1881 but remembered to pack his manuscript. During this trip, he visited his uncles in England and showed James the manuscript. His uncles not only encouraged him to complete his book, but James helped Roosevelt sort out some of the technical issues. Roosevelt even convinced Uncle James to write his own memoirs about his naval exploits during the Civil War.<sup>26</sup> Upon his return to New York, Roosevelt renewed work on his book. The end product, published in 1882, was boring to read and full of minute details, written by one who had never experienced war.<sup>27</sup> Yet, it “was also scrupulously thorough, accurate, fair, and would remain a definitive study.”<sup>28</sup>

Roosevelt’s history became the definitive account of the naval aspect of the War of 1812. Both American and British historians have recognized it as such and it is still considered an important work on the topic. He meticulously examined each naval battle of the war and analyzed the absolute and relative strengths of the opposing ships, crews, officers, and armaments. Roosevelt compared the advantages and disadvantages of each side, described the direction of the engagement, evaluated the tactics, and assessed the merits of the opposing actions. For each battle discussed in the book, Roosevelt researched the available records so he could compare the relative force of each side through a comparison of the tonnage of the vessels, the armament, and the crew size of the belligerents.

Since its publication, numerous authors, writing scholarly works as well as general and popular accounts of naval warfare in the War of 1812, have utilized Roosevelt’s work as a source and taken his analyses into account. The book received praise from contemporary reviewers for its scholarship and style, the Naval War College used it as a text, and the Department of the Navy had a copy placed in the library of every ship.<sup>29</sup> In 1893, eleven years after Roosevelt published his book, the editors of *The Royal Navy, A History from the Earliest Times to 1900*, compiled by Sir William Laird Clowes between 1897 and 1903, asked Roosevelt to write the section on the War of 1812, in recognition of the authoritativeness of Roosevelt’s book. In 1910, London and Low published Roosevelt’s section of the Clowes’s history as *The Naval Operations of the War between Great Britain and the United*

*States 1812-1815*. Admiral William S. Sims wrote that the great value of Roosevelt's book was that "it was listened to by the American people and it profoundly reflects the attitude of the nation toward the navy."<sup>30</sup> Such comments are similar to those that Mahan would receive after the publication of his books, years later. Roosevelt's naval history of the War of 1812 reveals a number of pertinent conclusions for this study. First, it demonstrated his mastery of early nineteenth century naval warfare as revealed by his detailed descriptions of the ships, their armament and crews, and the tactics of naval warfare. Second, Roosevelt recognized that the individual ship-to-ship actions on the high seas did nothing to materially decrease the overwhelming naval superiority of the Royal Navy and aid the United States in the war strategically, although they did produce tactical victories that raised the spirits of Americans discouraged by defeats in the land war. Roosevelt also believed that the mini-fleet actions on Lakes Champlain, Ontario, and Erie had greater strategic impact on the American conduct of the war than the individual ship battles as these actions allowed the United States to retain reasonable control of the lakes and the northern border region with British Canada and to secure the border from a possible British invasion of the United States from Canada. Ironically, Mahan made the same criticisms of the Navy's conduct during the War of 1812 in "The Future in Relation to American Naval Power:"

[T]he usefulness of a navy,—not, indeed, by the admirable but utterly unavailing single-ship victories that illustrated its course, but by the prostration into which our seaboard and external communications fell, through the lack of a navy at all proportionate to the country's needs and exposure. . . . They were simply scattered efforts, without relation either to one another or to any main body whatsoever.<sup>31</sup>

Mahan published this article in June 1895, thirteen years after Roosevelt published his history.

Roosevelt also experienced and understood the growing interest by some in the 1880s of the need to upgrade the Navy. At the end of the Civil War, the United States had one of the top ranked navies in the world.<sup>32</sup> However, by the early 1880s, the government had let it deteriorate to the point that it was ranked below the navies of eleven other nations. While other countries incorporated the changes in warships and armaments—steel hulls, steam engines, screw propellers, and breech-loading rifled guns—wrought by the Industrial Revolution into their

navies, the Navy still had wooden warships armed with smoothbores and powered chiefly by sail, “vessels too slow to run away and too weak to stand up in a fight.”<sup>33</sup> The reactionary policies of Admiral David D. Porter during his brief time as the de facto head of the Navy between March and June 1869 had much to do with creating the deplorable state of the Navy in the 1870s.<sup>34</sup> Later, recognizing the consequences of his own actions and policies, Porter, now with the rank of Admiral of the Navy, compared the few ships of the Navy to “ancient Chinese forts on which dragons have been painted to frighten away the enemy.”<sup>35</sup> The British called the American Navy “a hapless, broken-down, tattered, forlorn apology for a navy.”<sup>36</sup> The naval maneuvers of the “United Fleets” held near Key West, Florida, in 1874 demonstrated the “tactical ignorance” of American naval officers and the “unfitness” of the Navy’s warships for offensive operations.<sup>37</sup>

There were many reasons for the general disinterest in naval affairs and the low level of naval expenditures during this period. From 1865 to 1877, the nation focused on Reconstruction in the South after the devastating Civil War. In the 1870s, interest in protecting the civil rights of African-Americans in the South waned as large-scale capitalism and industrialization created new domestic problems. Also, the American government was more concerned with the Army’s continual fighting with various American Indian tribes on the frontier than the Navy in the absence of a discernable foreign naval threat to the country. The country and Congress sought to limit military and naval expenditures to pay the \$3 billion debt incurred during the late war. President Ulysses Grant gave some attention to naval affairs, but Congress did not appropriate funds for new ships. After the Panic of 1873, Congress, especially the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives, was even less inclined to appropriate funds for military expenditures. Finally, the absence of any real threat to the United States and the perceived experimental state of contemporary naval technology gave a budget-conscious Congress the reasons it needed to keep naval appropriations at a level to maintain existing ships, not build new ones using uncertain technology.<sup>38</sup>

Roosevelt was not unaware of the condition of the Navy by the early 1880s. In addition to being a naval history, *The Naval War of 1812* also presented a stinging commentary on the state of the Navy in 1882, a testament to his knowledge of the state into which the Navy had fallen by the early 1880s. He wrote, “[it] is folly” for the “great” United States to rely on a navy consisting partially of “antiquated wrecks” and partially of “new vessels rather more worthless

than the old.”<sup>39</sup> Later, he compared the large number of “worthless vessels” of 1882 with the few vessels of 1812, which, according to Roosevelt, were superior to any foreign ship of the same class. He believed that it would be better to use current funding to construct a few modern warships than to continue patching up “a hundred antiquated hulks.” He castigated the government, “It is too much to hope that our political short-sightedness will ever enable us to have a navy that is first-class in point of size; but there certainly seems no reason why what ships we have should not be of the very best quality.”<sup>40</sup> Roosevelt also realized that the offensive power of a navy lay in its seagoing warships in his severe criticism of Thomas Jefferson for wasting money by constructing over 150 one-gun gunboats, barely suitable for harbor defense, rather than constructing ocean-going frigates. Roosevelt called the gunboats “utterly useless” and their wartime operations a “painfully ludicrous commentary on Jefferson’s remarkable project.”<sup>41</sup>

By 1880s, many, besides Roosevelt, had come to see the need for the United States to acquire a modern navy. In the past decade, the volume of American exports had grown 200 per cent, and the probability of an international race for commercial supremacy indicated that sea power would become more important.<sup>42</sup> Small groups of men in the Department of the Navy and Congress began working to improve the condition of the Navy. Luce, who had founded the United States Naval Institute in 1873 to promote professional expertise in the Navy, spearheaded a group of officers in analyzing the needs of the Navy. Certain congressmen, such as Washington C. Whitthorne of Tennessee and Benjamin W. Harris of Massachusetts, who alternated as Democratic and Republican chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, had drawn significant conclusions on the state of the US Navy from revelations of their committee investigations. From March 7, 1881 to April 16, 1882, a vigorous Secretary of the Navy William H. Hunt did what he could to gain congressional support for new modern warships. He inspired and may have written an endorsement by President Chester A. Arthur in his State of the Union address in January 1882 for a revitalized navy and followed up in his annual report to Congress on “our languishing and neglected navy.”<sup>43</sup> However, later that year, President Arthur replaced Hunt, who became American ambassador to Russia, with William E. Chandler before Congress had had a chance to comment on Hunt’s proposals.<sup>44</sup>

With Chandler’s support, Congress passed the Navy Act of 1883, which provided for the construction of the country’s first steel warships, the protected cruisers *Atlanta*, *Boston*, and *Chicago*, and the dispatch boat, the *Dolphin*, popularly

known as the “ABCDs.” Numerous problems plagued their construction, such as American inexperience in producing rolled steel for hull plates and forging steel for heavy rifled guns.<sup>45</sup> Although the new ships were much admired by many Americans, they were insufficient for offensive operations. They were small, slow moving, and carried full rigging for sails. For example, the largest, the USS *Chicago*, measured 325 feet overall, displaced only 4,500 tons, had engines that generated only 5,000 horsepower for a top speed of 18 knots, and was rigged as a barkentine. In March 1885, William C. Whitney became Secretary of the Navy under President Grover Cleveland. Whitney continued advocating for increased funding for modern warships and instituted many reforms within the Department of the Navy. Throughout the 1880s, Congress approved funding for additional ships that incorporated new developments in naval technology: armor, the elimination of sailing gear, and larger, rifled guns. Yet, while the new naval construction program reflected a growing understanding of the tactical significance of contemporary naval technology, it did not “appreciate the strategic advantage inherent in a unified battle force of sufficient strength and endurance to destroy an enemy fleet a thousand miles offshore.”<sup>46</sup> Despite these shortcomings, the President, the Congress, and the American people had begun to recognize the shortcomings and problems of the Navy.

Roosevelt biographies do not mention whether or not he followed the congressional debates on increased funding for modern warships, had any knowledge of the construction of the ABCD ships, or expressed any thoughts on American naval developments of the 1880s. During this period, Roosevelt began his political career with his election to the New York state legislature and left that position to go out West to pursue the life of a ranch owner in North Dakota. Roosevelt also remarried in 1886, following the tragic death of his first wife in childbirth in 1884. Then, in 1889, newly elected President Benjamin Harrison appointed Roosevelt as chief of the Civil Service Commission, marking his return to public service. Yet, it is difficult to believe that Roosevelt completely divorced himself from any interest in the developments of the Navy in 1882 with the publication of *The Naval History of the War of 1812* and then, all of a sudden, rediscovered or renewed his interest in American naval development in 1890 with the publication of Mahan’s *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1665-1783*.

Roosevelt, in the summer of 1888, accepted an invitation from Luce, founder and president of the Naval War College, to speak to the college’s faculty

on Roosevelt's book, which Luce had acquired for the college's library. While Luce saw Roosevelt as an up-and-coming politician and possible patron of the college, the invitation also recognized Roosevelt as a contemporary expert on at least the naval aspects of the War of 1812, six years after the publication of Roosevelt's book. During this trip, Roosevelt met Mahan for the first time.<sup>47</sup> One can only speculate if Mahan read Roosevelt's book in preparation for this visit or afterwards and found his own thoughts about American naval power in concert with those of Roosevelt.

Yet, Roosevelt still had a significant interest in the further development of the US Navy into a modern, ocean-going naval force. Roosevelt read Mahan's book after its publication in 1890 and wrote the author, "I can say with perfect sincerity that I think it very much the clearest and most instructive general work of the kind with which I am acquainted. It is a very good book—admirable; and I am greatly in error if it does not become a naval classic."<sup>48</sup> Soon afterwards, Roosevelt wrote his glowing review of Mahan's book for the *Atlantic Monthly* in which he generally agreed with Mahan's conclusions: refutation of American reliance on privateers, the need for forward bases and stronger coastal defenses, and a large navy with a "full proportion" of battleships. Brands wrote that Roosevelt's reading of Mahan's book and the subsequent glowing book review marked Roosevelt's "discovery of Mahan" which helped start the latter's career as one of the first "defense intellectuals." Furthermore, Roosevelt "linked up" with Mahan because he generally agreed with Mahan's ideas about a modern navy for the growing United States. The relationship was "symbiotic"—both Roosevelt and Mahan benefitted from "their joint cause of naval preparedness" and of "American assertiveness abroad."<sup>49</sup>

The publication of Mahan's book was "well timed, for intensified 'navalism' was already in the air." By 1890, US shipyards could finally build a satisfactory warship with steel hulls, an adequate steam power plant that drove screw propellers, and large caliber, rifled guns. Whitney's successor as Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin F. Tracy (1888-93), who had read Mahan's manuscript in the summer of 1889, continued the shift to new modern warships begun by Hunt, Chandler, and Whitney.<sup>50</sup> Mahan provided the first, if somewhat flawed, systematic theory on the use and importance of sea power, and it appeared at a time when technological changes in navies and economic and political developments were occurring that coincided with his ideas. That Roosevelt would also concur with and

support Mahan's ideas in the 1890s does not mean that Roosevelt was overwhelmed with Mahan's ideas on sea power and navies, Mahan had to convince Roosevelt of his ideas, and/or Mahan had to teach and reinforce these ideas to Roosevelt. Roosevelt already held similar views about the importance of sea power and the need by the United States for a modern, ocean-going navy, consisting of battleships capable of conducting offensive operations before he read Mahan's book. Roosevelt as a young boy had developed a fascination with navies and ships through his Confederate Navy uncles. His outstanding *The Naval War of 1812* articulated his knowledge of naval warfare, the condition of the US Navy in 1882 when he published his definitive work and his general ideas on how to modernize the Navy. Thus, Roosevelt found Mahan to be more of another advocate for the modernization of the Navy along the general lines that Roosevelt had articulated at least seven years before, independently of Mahan, rather than a mentor or teacher as some authors have asserted. Certainly, Mahan may have "said it better" than Roosevelt that gained the attention of Congressmen and the American public but not differently.

## Notes

1. Theodore Roosevelt, review of Alfred Thayer Mahan, "*The Influence of Seapower upon History*," *The Atlantic Monthly* (Vol. LXVI, Oct 1890), accessed Jul 30, 2014, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/treditorials/am6.pdf>.

2. "Roosevelt found [in Mahan] an expansionist rationale to frame his martial patriotism." G. Wallace Chessman, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Power* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 64; Louis Auchinloss, *Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Times Books, 2001), 72; and Aida D. Donald, *Lion in the White House: A Life of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 82, called Mahan Roosevelt's mentor. John Morton Blum in *The Republican Roosevelt* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 31, wrote that Roosevelt "enthusiastically [embraced] the doctrines of Admiral Thayer Mahan." According to the Sprouts, Roosevelt saw Mahan as "a preceptor whose writings clarified and advanced his own ideas, and who led him willingly along the dazzling highway toward world power and imperial grandeur. Harold and Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776-1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944), 226. Carter went as far to state that Roosevelt as Assistant Secretary of the Navy "came under Mahan's spell." Samuel Carter III, *The Incredible Great White Fleet* (New York: Crowell-Collier Press, 1971), 7. There are other books whose authors contend the Mahan, to varying degrees, influenced Roosevelt in the development of his ideas on sea power and the need for the United States to construct a large, ocean-going navy and acquire colonies.

3. Robert M. Hodgap and Edward Mueller, "Early Social Development," in Benjamin B. Wolman, George Stricker, et. al., *Handbook of Development Psychology*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982), 284-95; John P. Houston, Helen Bee, and David C. Rimm, *Introduction to Psychology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 421-24, 426-27; Arnold F. Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, Louise Bates Ames, and Janet Learned Rodell, *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 44-45, 210-15, 220-25, 263-70; L. Joseph Stone and Joseph Church, *Childhood*

& *Adolescence A Psychology of the Growing Person* (New York: Random House, 1973), 256-63, 270-88; "Your Behavior As A Parent Influences Your Children's Behavior," n. d, accessed September 10, 2014, <http://www.improveyourparenting.com/parents-behavior.html>; Rose Erickson, "Parents' Effect on Child Behavior," Jan 16, 2014, accessed September 10, 2014, <http://www.livestrong.com/article/75282-parents-effect-child-behavior/>; Jan Getz, "The Impact of Parents' Background on their Children's Education," *Educational Studies* 268: Saving Our Nation, Saving Our Schools: Public Education for Public Good," Nov 14, 2006, accessed September 10, 2014, <http://www.macalester.edu/educationreform/publicintellecualessay/gratz.pdf>.

4. E. P. Potter, ed., *Sea Power: A Naval History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1981), 2nd Edition, 161.

5. Chester G. Starr, *The Influence of Sea Power on Ancient History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3.

6. "Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower upon History*," in David Jablonsky, editor, *Roots of Strategy Book 4: 4 Military Classics* (Mechanicsburg, VA: Stackpole Books, 1999), 99-102.

7. *Ibid.*, 103. In 1889, Secretary of the Navy Benjamin H. Tracy in his annual report to Congress, ranked the American Navy, in terms of number of warships behind the navies of, in descending order, Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Holland, Spain, Italy Turkey, China, Norway-Sweden, and Austria-Hungary. Walter R. Herrick, Jr., *The American Naval Revolution* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), 244.

8. Quotes from various books and articles by Mahan, Editor's Introduction, John B. Hattendorf, ed., *Mahan on Naval Strategy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), xix-xxii. "Preparedness for Naval War," Dec 1896, in A(lfred) T(hayer) Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power Present and Future* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 198.

9. Potter, 161.

10. H. W. Brands, *T.R.: The Last Romantic* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 9-11, 26. Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1979), 36-37.

11. Brands, 19-20, 22. Kathleen Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 28; David McCullough, *Mornings on Horseback* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 44.

12. Miller, 41.

13. Paul Grondahl, *I Rose Like a Rocket: The Political Education of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 17.

14. Dalton, 31.

15. Brands, 22.

16. Brands, 22; McCullough, 71-72.

17. Letter to Anna Roosevelt Cowles, Anna Roosevelt Cowles, ed., *Letters from Theodore Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt Cowles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), 50-1; McCullough, 74.

18. Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins Press, 1956), 4.

19. Quoted in Brands, 20.

20. Roosevelt quoted in McCullough, 24.

21. Roosevelt quoted in Morris, 565.

22. Grondahl, 245.

23. Brands, 63-64.

24. Donald Wilhelm, *Theodore Roosevelt as an Undergraduate* (Boston: John W. Luce and Company, 1910), 37-38.

25. Morris, 140.

26. No. 84, Letter to Martha Bulloch Roosevelt, Sep 4, 1881, in Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), Vol. 1, 52. James Bulloch published his two-volume book, *The Confederate Secret Service in Europe*, in 1883. See note, Nathan Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Life* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), 115.

27. Brands, 117-19.

28. McCullough, 247-48.

29. Michael J. Crawford, "The Lasting Influence of Theodore Roosevelt's Naval War of 1812," *International Journal of Naval History* (2001), accessed Apr 7, 2010, [http://www.ijnhonline.org/volume1\\_number1\\_Apr02/article\\_crawford\\_roosevelt\\_1812.doc.htm](http://www.ijnhonline.org/volume1_number1_Apr02/article_crawford_roosevelt_1812.doc.htm).

30. Introduction by Admiral William S. Sims, Theodore Roosevelt, *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924, XIV, 318; Morris, 154.

31. "The Future in Relation to American Naval Power," Jun 1895, in Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power*, 149-50.

32. During the Civil War, the United States built 63 armored vessels, 102 unarmored vessels, 12 tugs, transports, and torpedo boats, and purchased 497 ships. Congressional Record, 47<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1st Session, 5459. Footnote, George T. Davis, *A Navy Second to None: The Development of Modern American Naval Policy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940), 11.

33. Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *Makers of Naval Policy, 1798-1947* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 199.

34. Albion, 199-204.

35. Porter, "Report of the Admiral," quoted in Herrick, 25.

36. Quoted in Davis, 19.

37. Herrick, 22.

38. Davis, 11-15.

39. Preface to First Edition, Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 3rd Edition, viii.

40. *Ibid.*, 114.

41. *Ibid.*, 165. See Spencer C. Tucker, *Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993) and Thomas Hester, editor, *For the Purposes of Defense: The Politics of the Jeffersonian Gunboat Program* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1995), for two full treatments of Jefferson's gunboat navy and its impact on national defense.

42. Herrick, 23-24.

43. Albion, 207.

44. Herrick, 28.

45. *Ibid.*, 29.

46. *Ibid.*, 33-36.

47. Brands, 236.

48. No. 292, Letter to Alfred Thayer Mahan, May 12, 1890, in Morison, 221-22.

49. Brands, 236-38.

50. Albion, 208-209; Herrick, 43.

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## The Limits of Brilliance: The Role of Supply Problems in Hannibal's Failed Italian Campaign

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Jack Morato

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The year 241 BCE saw Rome emerge victorious from the First Punic War. The verdict of that war gave Rome control of Sicily, wrested from the mighty Carthaginian empire by hard fighting at sea. However, Rome's appetite for conquest was far from sated. Taking full advantage of the weakened condition of their foe in 237, the Romans seized the islands of Sardinia and Corsica as well. This post-war opportunism intensified Carthaginian resentment and virtually guaranteed a second war. Hannibal Barca, that incomparable commander who nearly brought Rome to its knees, was Carthaginian hatred personified. He tested the political will of the Roman ruling elite and the legendary perseverance of the Roman people. His campaign in Italy, known to history as the Hannibalic War of 218-201, set in motion the social, economic, and political currents which eventually resulted in the demise of the Roman Republic. The conflict was a life and death struggle for control of the Western Mediterranean, a struggle the Roman historian Livy described as "the most memorable of any that have ever been waged."<sup>1</sup> Rome's legions and the commanders who led them proved to be outclassed on the battlefields of Italy. To survive the onslaught – indeed, the wholesale massacre – the Romans learned through bitter experience to employ a strategy of attrition, containment, and isolation. They also learned to capitalize on their substantial advantage in manpower and logistics. Mighty as Hannibal was in the field, he did not have the staying power or the resources needed to bring about a favorable settlement with Rome. Hannibal's undoing was the result of the deliberate Roman policy of harassment and deprivation, his inability to win a critical mass of political support from the Italian communities, and his failure to find a long-term solution to his considerable supply needs.

## A Brief Note on Primary Sources

The most important literary source for this particular period of Roman history is the account of the Greek historian Polybius. Polybius (204-122) was a statesman and soldier who spent many years in Rome as a captive of the Republic. He was sent to Rome as part of a larger group of one thousand leading citizens of the Achaean League on suspicion of collaboration with the Macedonian ruler Perseus in the aftermath of the Third Macedonian War. He lived and worked during a dangerous time, an era of expanding Roman interference and bellicosity in the Hellenistic East. As a leading citizen of the Achaean League he needed to tread carefully in his attempt to preserve the independence of the Greeks while concurrently depriving the Romans of any pretense for further aggression against his homeland. He was ultimately unsuccessful, for in addition to their prowess in war, the Romans were exceptionally adept at finding any excuse to legitimize the subjugation of their enemies. Having come of age during this dynamic time, Polybius had access to eyewitnesses of the Hannibalic War. He had become acquainted with the consul Lucius Aemilius Paullus during the latter's campaign against Perseus in the Third Macedonian War. During his sixteen-year captivity in Italy from 167-151 Polybius was allowed to stay at the residence of Aemilius Paullus and through him gained access to the leading citizens of Rome. Among them was Scipio Africanus the Younger,<sup>2</sup> better known as the commander who orchestrated the final destruction of Carthage. Polybius witnessed the once-proud city of Carthage burn during the Third Punic War (149-146). In addition, he witnessed the sack of Corinth by the Consul Lucius Mummius in 146.<sup>3</sup> There is a bit of the historian in every history. However, Polybius was fully aware of the importance of historical objectivity.<sup>4</sup> He made explicit his desire to be an unbiased recorder of events, pointing out that students should not be, "led astray by the ignorance or partisanship of historians."<sup>5</sup> His willingness to bestow praise on friend and foe alike suggests Polybius was, in part, successful. As both a man of affairs and a man of war, Polybius understood the complex interconnectedness of politics, strategy, and tactics.

The work of Titus Livius (59 BCE-17 CE), better known by his anglicized name Livy, provides a source of slightly lesser importance than Polybius for the time period under scrutiny. He employed a style that is at once grand, sweeping, and unapologetically patriotic towards Rome. Livy's work is

somewhat marred by his patriotic flair and for this he has been the subject of criticism.<sup>6</sup> The narrative of his massive 142-book masterpiece *History of Rome from the Founding of the City* does betray a marked degree of patriotic embellishment and exaggeration, but it was highly regarded by contemporaries and in some cases it remains the only available literary source. Livy also had access to many sources which are no longer available to modern historians, and he was well positioned during his life as an acquaintance of several leading members of the Roman elite – including the Julio-Claudian emperors Augustus and Claudius. For these reasons, Livy's *History of Rome* continues to serve as an indispensable compliment to the work of Polybius.

### **Deficiencies of the Existing View of Hannibal's Failure**

The prevailing interpretation among modern historians who have covered this great war identifies Hannibal's inability to win over the communities of Italy as the primary cause of his ultimate failure. Theodor Mommsen, a mid-nineteenth century historian who wrote a widely acclaimed history of ancient Rome, explained that Hannibal's victory could have “only be looked for as the result of political and not of military successes – of the gradual loosening and final breaking up of the Italian federation.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, Hannibal could never have won the war through military victories alone; he needed to convince the Italian communities, either through coercion or persuasion, to abandon Rome and side with him. This interpretation is echoed by Henry Francis Pelham, another notable nineteenth century scholar of ancient history, who observed that Hannibal's “inability to shake the loyalty of northern and central Italy and of the Latin colonies everywhere . . . caused his ultimate failure.”<sup>8</sup> More recently, William Dunstan in his work *Ancient Rome* largely repeated what his nineteenth century counterparts had to say.<sup>9</sup> Michael Fronda, in his search for the reasons why the Italian communities remained loyal, began his analysis with the assumption that their loyalty led “ultimately to Rome's victory over Carthage.”<sup>10</sup> The view that Hannibal was undone by his inability to win allies in Italy is sound, but it neglects the deeper question of why the young general needed such support in the first place. Hannibal would not have had any need for local allies if he had possessed a sustainable source of manpower and supplies as well as the means to transport those resources to Italy from without.

The military historian Richard Gabriel observed that the Carthaginians faced two significant strategic constraints going into the Second Punic War. First, an inability to control the sea lanes and second, a lack of significant recruiting bases for their armed forces.<sup>11</sup> This meant that, among other things, Hannibal had to be self-sufficient wherever he went. He could not count on any logistical flows coming from either Spain or Africa because the Carthaginian government had little to spare and because Rome's fleets would have intercepted any ships bound for the Italian coast. With the possibility of outside support ruled out, Hannibal pinned his hopes on being able to quickly conclude the war before Rome could raise, equip, and train its vast manpower pool.<sup>12</sup> He planned to do this not by razing Rome to the ground but by forcing Rome to accept a favorable settlement by winning a rapid succession of spectacular victories.<sup>13</sup> This would have had the effect of rattling what Hannibal believed was a fragile system of alliances Rome had built around itself.

### **On Hannibal's Need for Supplies and Support**

The root cause of Hannibal's ultimate failure in Italy was his inability to find a sustainable solution for his supply problems. Unlike his opponent, who enjoyed a considerable advantage in material resources, Hannibal did not possess the capability of maintaining a drawn-out struggle. His greatest fear was losing momentum and becoming mired in a war of attrition which he was ill-equipped to fight. How to keep his army supplied in hostile country – a problem for which he was never truly able to find a solution – was one of Hannibal's constant concerns. His supply needs were considerable. Though Hannibal's warriors were undoubtedly accustomed to privation – having been forged by years of bitter fighting in Spain – even the most combat-hardened soldier still requires food, water, and warmth to survive.

Deprived the luxury of an intact supply chain, Hannibal was forced to subsist on what forage he could obtain from the Italian countryside and what little allied support he was able to muster. His greatest hope rested with the Celts living on both sides of the Alps, a diverse collection of tribes who the Romans called *Gauls*. Even before he departed Spain he sent envoys to the Celtic tribes living in northern Italy to secure their loyalty and support.<sup>14</sup> Though ethnically homogenous, these people lagged behind the Romans in terms of political, economic, and social development. Polybius described them as primitive and

warlike agriculturalists with “no knowledge whatever of any art or science.”<sup>15</sup> Their friendship was relatively easy to obtain, for these people had accumulated centuries of animosity towards their Roman neighbors to the south. Indeed, several tribes revolted from Roman rule upon merely hearing of Hannibal’s impending invasion. They drove the Romans from several of their colonies in the Po River region.<sup>16</sup> During the long march to Italy, Hannibal benefited from the friendship of Celtic tribesmen living in modern day southern France. They furnished the Carthaginian general with food, clothing, weapons, and even an armed escort to the foot of the Alps.<sup>17</sup>

Celtic support was critically important for Hannibal. Hannibal’s march from New Carthage (modern Cartagena, Spain) to northern Italy took five perilous and deprivation-filled months. By the time he descended onto the plain of the Po River in late October of 218 his army had shrunk by more than half to just

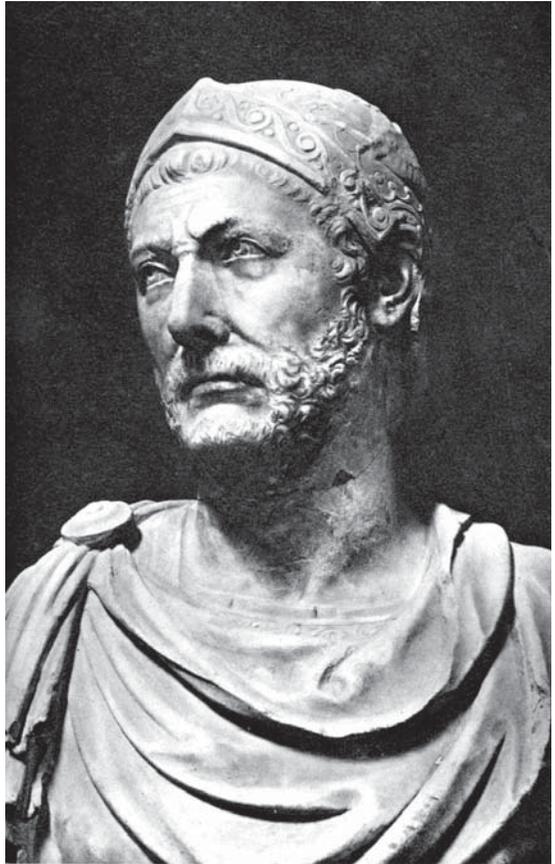


Figure 1 Bust of Hannibal. Illustration from Mommsen’s *Römische Geschichte* (1932) page 265, *Hannibal*.

twenty thousand infantry and six thousand cavalry.<sup>18</sup> Most of these troops were in an emaciated and demoralized condition. Polybius noted that “the survivors . . . had become in their external appearance and general condition more like beasts than men.”<sup>19</sup> Hannibal found himself in dire need of supplies and reinforcements, for the difficulty of the Alpine passes prohibited him from bringing many supplies with him. Fortunately for Hannibal, the Celts delivered on their promises, furnishing him with provisions and replenishing his ranks with contingents of Celtic warriors.<sup>20</sup>

Mommsen estimated that they added more than sixty thousand infantry and four thousand cavalry to his army by the time he descended into Etruria after the Battle of the Trebia River.<sup>21</sup> Though the Celtic contributions to Hannibal's Italian campaign may have been substantial, it was never enough to sustain his effectiveness throughout his protracted struggle against Rome. Rome was a juggernaut which possessed, according to Polybius, over seven hundred thousand troops capable of being mobilized for war.<sup>22</sup> Some Bruttians and Lucanians from the extreme south of the peninsula joined Hannibal in the latter stages of his campaign. However, they were too few in number and too late in arrival to make a substantial impact. The great Roman war machine had already mobilized its immense manpower pool. A discussion of Rome's overwhelming advantage in



Figure 2 *Hannibal in Italy*. Fresco by Jacopo Ripanda, c. sixteenth century. Musei Capitolini, Rome.

war resources will be provided in a later section.

Hannibal resorted to alternate means of alleviating his supply needs when willing support was not forthcoming. For instance, the Celtic tribes of northern Italy were not all equally willing to engage Hannibal in an alliance. When the Taurini people refused his gestures he besieged their capital and took it after three days.<sup>23</sup> He also resorted to bribery to obtain what he needed. He gained access to the Roman supply magazine at Clastidium by bribing the Roman commander there.<sup>24</sup> The Carthaginians also weathered lean times by plundering

the countryside – a measure which wrought a substantial amount of devastation in Italy’s rural areas. Hannibal’s rapid succession of victories at the Trebia River and Lake Trasimene sent the Romans into a panic and left him utterly free to lay waste to the Italian countryside. He did this throughout central and southern Italy. In the latter half of 217, for instance, he rampaged through Umbria and Picenum, finally settling in the rich agricultural region of Apulia on the Adriatic coast. He thoroughly plundered this area as well, dedicating himself to the restoration of his troops who were suffering at the time from what Polybius called "hunger-mange."<sup>25</sup> The rampaging delivered more than just food. Captured cities and their garrisons yielded a massive number of Roman armaments which the Carthaginian general used to outfit his troops in the Roman manner. Polybius remarked that Hannibal, “possessed himself of so large an amount [of booty] that his army could not drive or carry it all off.”<sup>26</sup> After scorching Apulia he crossed the Apennines and did the same in Campania – a region celebrated by contemporaries for its beauty and fertility.

Forage, far more than plunder or bribery, sustained the Carthaginian host during its time in Italy. The method Hannibal used to gather supplies around the Apulian city of Geronium was typical of his foraging operations in other parts of the country. Looking for suitable winter quarters, he sent his messengers to Geronium to seek an alliance with its inhabitants. Like most of the other communities of Italy they ignored his entreaties. Hannibal besieged the city and executed the inhabitants after its capture. With the town secured, he established his camp before it and began using the existing buildings within its walls as storehouses for grain. The young general then dispatched two-thirds of his army to harvest the ripe grain in the surrounding countryside.<sup>27</sup> By foraging in this manner, Hannibal was able to survive for years in Italy without external support.

Though plunder and forage could provide the basic necessities of life, they came with significant disadvantages. Taking provisions by force meant enacting great suffering on the local populace – the very people whose allegiance Hannibal needed to court. Relying on forage for survival also restricted Hannibal’s strategic agility. Hannibal’s crossing into Italy, for instance, may have been delayed for months out of a need to wait for crops to ripen in the fields of north-eastern Spain.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, he was forced to remain encamped outside Geronium at the beginning of 216 while waiting for crops to ripen in the field.<sup>29</sup> This delayed the movement of his army, an expensive tradeoff considering that momentum,

speed, and initiative were key elements of his formula for victory. Foraging also exposed his army to dangers they normally would not have had to endure. For instance, with his forces dispersed whilst foraging about the countryside around Geronium, Hannibal only narrowly prevented his camp from being overrun by a Roman attack under the command of Marcus Minucius. A large number of Hannibal's men perished that day.<sup>30</sup> The Romans, on the other hand, enjoyed complete freedom of movement. They were fighting in their home territory against a single body of Carthaginians. This allowed them to pre-stage provisions at strategically located magazines throughout Italy and avail themselves of sea transportation when and where necessary.

It has been conjectured that a want of supplies prohibited Hannibal from besieging Rome itself. William Dunstan, for example, contended that Hannibal was unable to make an attempt on the walls of Rome because of a dearth of siege equipment and adequate supply bases.<sup>31</sup> The explanation seems plausible. Bringing ballistae and catapults across the Alps would have been a foolish errand, and Polybius indeed mentioned that Hannibal left his "heavy baggage" in Spain before setting out for Italy.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, a substantial number of siege engines were captured at New Carthage after the fall of that city at the hands of Scipio Africanus in 209.<sup>33</sup> Hannibal's original plan may very well have provided for a second expedition following him to Italy with the siege equipment he left behind after Rome's legions had been subdued and a path to the city cleared. Richard Gabriel offered an alternative view, stating that instead of insufficient siege equipment (which, he claimed, was easy to manufacture on the spot), Hannibal was prevented from assaulting the city because he lacked the provisions and men needed to sustain a prolonged siege.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, his handicap in the realm of logistics and supplies played a key role in deterring Hannibal from assaulting Rome.

### **On the Roman Advantage in Resources**

Hannibal's glaring disadvantage in manpower was part of the reason why he declined to besiege Rome in the summer of 217.<sup>35</sup> It is useful at this point to undertake a digression to comment on Rome's immense advantage in material resources vis-à-vis the Carthaginians. Rome's improbable recovery in the years after the Battle of Cannae in 216 appears on the surface to be some miracle made

possible not by the dealings of men but by the intervention of the gods. The story becomes less enchanting, however, when one examines the resources available to both combatants. Rome, far and away, possessed the great advantage in manpower. Gabriel claimed that Carthage possessed a total of one hundred and fifty thousand foot soldiers and thirty-five thousand horse troops for *all* of its military needs at the outset of the Second Punic War.<sup>36</sup> From this number the Carthaginians had to provide defenders for Spain and Africa, rowers and marines for the fleet, and soldiers for Hannibal's expedition to Italy. By the late 220s, according to Polybius, Rome had two hundred and forty thousand infantry and over fourteen thousand cavalry trained, equipped, and in the field ready to fight. Of this the allies furnished one hundred and eighty thousand infantry and ten thousand cavalry – the great majority of the force. In addition to these men in the field, Rome possessed “on the roll” over four hundred thousand infantry and almost thirty-eight thousand cavalry which were “able to bear arms.”<sup>37</sup> These figures mean that, both at the outset and in the long run, Hannibal was greatly outnumbered. His best hope of breaking the political will of Rome rested with striking Italy before the Romans could fully mobilize their massive manpower reserves. He was, of course, unsuccessful in this aspect. Failing to bring the Romans to terms quickly, Hannibal was rendered impotent during the latter years of his campaign. In effect he lost the initiative and was overtaken by events after about 211. Thereafter, he was forced to sulk about in Bruttium and Lucania while the Romans waged war simultaneously on multiple fronts in Italy, Spain, Sicily, and Africa.

The sheer number of men levied and lost to the first encounters with Hannibal serve as resounding reminders not only of Rome's material wealth but also of the critical importance of her allies to the war effort. The allies consistently supplied more than half the total Roman force. For example, the numbers Livy provided indicate that the Roman allies supplied most of the manpower – a full sixty-two percent of the infantry and seventy-one percent of the cavalry – at the outset of the Second Punic War in 218.<sup>38</sup> On a broader level, Polybius announced that allied contingents represented over sixty percent of the total manpower available to Roman commanders at the outset of the war.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, it was a common practice for a given Roman legion to be composed of an equal number of Roman and allied infantry, and the number of allied horse was usually three times as many as their Roman counterparts in the legion.<sup>40</sup> Roman

troops essentially formed the core of the fighting force while the allies supplied bulk and most of the cavalry. More importantly, however, the allies could furnish new soldiers to replace those lost in battle. The early casualty rate was astounding. The first two years of the war saw 140,000 Roman and allied soldiers killed or captured by Hannibal's forces. No less than twenty percent of the entire military age population of Rome was dead by the end of the Battle of Cannae in 216.<sup>41</sup> Rome could never have survived the onslaught without the replenishments provided by her allies.

Hannibal, on the other hand, had to work with the forces he brought with him and what local reinforcements he could extract. The latter were substantial at the outset of his campaign but gradually trickled down to almost nothing. As mentioned before, the Celts supplied him with tens of thousands of troops in the beginning, and it is estimated that forty percent of his army came to be composed of Celtic warriors after he was reinforced by the northern Italian Gauls.<sup>42</sup> As was the case with his supply problems, however, Hannibal never truly found a long-term solution to the manpower limitations he faced. His elite corps of African and Spanish infantrymen, for example, gradually eroded and disappeared from his ranks. They were replaced by less effective Bruttians, Lucanians, and Gauls as his campaign wore on.<sup>43</sup> Hannibal's great disadvantage in wartime resources meant that he needed a political as opposed to a military victory.<sup>44</sup> He knew early on that spectacular victories on the battlefield would be more valuable for their psychic impact on his enemy than for the actual physical harm they caused. He intended to detach Rome from its allies by winning some battles and demonstrating Rome's weakness while simultaneously bombarding the allies with promises of liberation and autonomy.<sup>45</sup> Doing so would deprive Rome of allied manpower while adding it to his own.

### **Hannibal and the Roman Allies**

The second phase of the Second Punic War, the period from the Battle of Cannae in 216 to the recapture of Capua in 211, was the apex of Hannibal's campaign. Terentum in Magna Graecia surrendered almost immediately after Cannae as did Argyrippa in Apulia and some towns in Campania.<sup>46</sup> Sensing the distress of his enemy, Philip V of Macedon concluded an alliance of mutual support with Hannibal in 215.<sup>47</sup> Hieronymus of Syracuse, grandson and successor to the loyal Roman ally Hiero II, turned his domain over to the Carthaginians in

214.<sup>48</sup> Most of Lucania, Bruttium, and Samnium switched sides as well. Though nothing to scoff at, the total number of defections throughout the entire campaign was never enough to overcome Rome's material advantage, nor was it enough to break the political will of its leaders.

It was not for a lack of effort that Hannibal failed to gain a critical mass of support among the Italian communities; he worked hard to get them to abandon Rome. For instance, when the Celtic contingents in Publius Cornelius Scipio's army defected to Hannibal's side shortly before the Battle of the Trebia in 218, the Punic general received them amicably, promised them gifts, and encouraged them return to their respective cities to incite their countrymen to follow their example.<sup>49</sup> He consistently treated non-Roman prisoners well, stressing on numerous occasions that he was there to restore the freedom Rome had denied them. He urged them to return home to spread the word among their fellows.<sup>50</sup> Such "liberation propaganda," according to Fronda, was one of Hannibal's favorite psychological tactics.<sup>51</sup>

Polybius claimed that Hannibal's scorched-earth policy was much more than an outlet for his intense hatred of Rome – it was a calculated form of terrorism designed to induce the Italian communities to abandon the Romans.<sup>52</sup> By inflicting untold suffering, Hannibal meant to simultaneously demonstrate the weakness of Rome as the protector of Italy and show his superiority relative to the same. The results were disappointing. Indeed, Hannibal's ruthless plundering and burning probably alienated many communities and did nothing to win him friends in Italy.

The question of why the allies remained loyal to Rome must be asked. Ever the Roman patriot, Livy believed that the true source of fidelity stemmed from the mutual loyalty felt by the Romans and their Italian allies. This loyalty, according to Livy, was reciprocal. He described the wartime consuls as being genuinely concerned for the wellbeing of Rome's allies and outraged at witnessing the atrocious acts committed by Hannibal upon them. While the Italian cities and peoples had once been conquered by Roman force of arms, by the end of the third century they had generally come to see Rome as a benevolent master instead of a brutal conqueror. Roman conduct during the Hannibalic War strengthened this sentiment. Livy remarked, "though everything was wrapped in the flames of war, the allies did not allow their terrors to warp them from their loyalty, simply

because they were under a just and equable rule, and rendered a willing obedience to their superiors - the only true bond of allegiance.”<sup>53</sup>

Fronza rejected this sentimental idea. Taking a diplomatic perspective, he examined the diplomatic and political history of individual Italian cities and concluded that internal factional rivalries caused some communities to respond to Hannibal’s overtures and some to reject them.<sup>54</sup> In his words, “the dynamic of Rome’s indirect rule through collaboration by the local governing classes [within each city] intersected with personal and political rivalries within those local aristocracies, and . . . these internal divisions came to the surface when Rome’s position was threatened by Hannibal.”<sup>55</sup> Fronza’s argument seems plausible, for the history of Rome’s treatment (or mistreatment) of individual cities and their leading families must have influenced their decision of whether or not to ally with Hannibal.

### **On the Roman Strategy of Attrition and Isolation**

Rome and her generals came to learn that victory resided not in the finality of a pitched battle but in a slower, more methodical, and less certain approach of attrition warfare. Never before had the Romans found it necessary to resort to such a mode of warfare, which explains the initial vicissitudes of her generals in their approach to the Hannibal problem. With superior resources, control of the seas, and a substantial number of allies providing men and materiel for the war effort, the Romans realized that it was in their best interest to make the war a marathon instead of a sprint. This marathon approach was pioneered by a man named Quintus Fabius, the dictator for 217. His methods were controversial, but in the end they were embraced by the Romans as the best way of winning the war.<sup>56</sup> Appointed after the tragedy at Lake Trasimene, Fabius went to work implementing the delaying strategy which later bore his name and earned him the agnomen *Cunctator* (the delayer).

Fabius deliberately avoided symmetrical confrontations with Hannibal thereby preventing the disasters which had befallen his predecessors. He stayed on Hannibal’s heels as the latter stomped through the Italian countryside, watching his every move and frustrating his designs whenever and wherever he could.<sup>57</sup> The Fabian strategy was designed to whittle down the enemy’s numbers by attacking foragers or stragglers who had wandered too far afield from the main

body. Fabius's modest successes in 217 bolstered sagging Roman morale while simultaneously chipping away at the enemy's. In stark contrast to his incendiary predecessors, Fabius took a cool, pragmatic, and methodical approach to the conduct of the war. As wise as his approach was given the circumstances Rome faced, Fabius angered many who subscribed to the conservative belief that a decisive engagement was the best way to defeat Hannibal. Many of his contemporaries came to see him as weak, feminine, and cowardly. Fabius's own Master of the Horse Marcus Minucius abandoned the cautious approach at the first opportunity.<sup>58</sup> The brash Gaius Terentius Varro, one of the consuls of 216, did everything he could to provoke a pitched battle.<sup>59</sup> Even the senate and people of Rome lost patience with the Fabian approach, evidenced by the elevation of Minucius to the co-dictatorship in 217.<sup>60</sup>

Upon the expiration of his term of service, Fabius dutifully relinquished his *imperium* to the consuls of 216, Lucius Aemilius Paulus and Gaius Terentius Varro – two men who did not share his fondness for corrosive warfare. The Romans were again lulled into a pitched battle, the result of which was more catastrophic than anything they had previously endured. The Battle of Cannae in 216 resulted in the death of seventy-six thousand Roman troops with a further ten thousand taken prisoner. The debacle resulted in a number of defections to Hannibal, and it permanently altered Rome's subsequent approach to the war. Fabius's strategy, which had grown unpopular, became appreciated anew, and Fabius himself was elected to the consulship several times in the years following Cannae. Almost without exception, Roman commanders from 216 onward remained committed to Fabian tactics until the end of the war.<sup>61</sup>

Polybius observed that “the Romans both in public and in private are most to be feared when they stand in real danger.”<sup>62</sup> Roman actions in the years after 216 were consistent with Polybius's assessment. With the tenacity and grit which were their hallmarks, the Romans set about recovering what had been lost to them. The talented Marcus Claudius Marcellus secured Syracuse after a two year siege in 212.<sup>63</sup> The following year saw the consuls Quintus Fulvius Flaccus and Appius Claudius Pulcher recapture Capua after a two year siege, in spite of Hannibal's attempt to lift the siege by threatening the very gates of Rome.<sup>64</sup> Fabius, in 209, besieged and retook the southern city of Tarentum.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, Rome's allies in the Aetolian League prevented Philip V from lending aid to the

Carthaginians in Italy. Disloyal cities were treated harshly, thoroughly plundered and, as in the case of Capua, had their leading members executed.

A key element of Rome's victory strategy involved preventing external aid from reaching Hannibal in Italy. The Romans accomplished this by leveraging their superior manpower pool and their control of the sea. Sporadically throughout the war the Carthaginians dispatched a number of follow-on expeditions to Italy designed to resupply Hannibal. These were either repelled before they reached Italy or were destroyed shortly after arrival before they could rendezvous with Hannibal. In 217, for instance, a fleet led by the consul Gnaeus Servilius chased off a Carthaginian fleet bound for a rendezvous with Hannibal at Pisa.<sup>66</sup> Rome dispatched a fleet to the Adriatic to act as a buffer which prevented Philip V from transporting Macedonian reinforcements to Hannibal.<sup>67</sup> Two sizeable relief expeditions were able to reach Italy, one arrived over land by way of the Alps and one came by sea. Both were neutralized and prevented from reaching Hannibal. Hasdrubal Barca, Hannibal's brother, slipped away from Spain and scaled the Alps with a substantial army as his brother did ten years prior. He was defeated and killed by the Romans at the Metaurus River in 207 before he could provide support to his brother.<sup>68</sup> A final attempt to reinforce Hannibal was led by his younger brother Mago in 205. The Romans in this instance prevented a reunion of the brothers by assigning a force to monitor and occupy the younger Barca in the Po Valley. Mago was eventually defeated and later died of his wounds while in transit back to Africa after being recalled along with Hannibal.<sup>69</sup>

Knowing that developments in Spain would have a direct impact on events in Italy, the Romans wisely prosecuted the war in that country throughout the entire Second Punic War. Carthaginian forces left unmolested in Spain would have been free to deploy reinforcements to Italy. The Scipio family must be given credit for tying up Carthaginian resources in this critical arena. Gnaeus Scipio was dispatched to Spain at the beginning of the war in 218 specifically to prevent any Spanish reinforcements from reaching Italy. He was later joined by his brother Publius Cornelius Scipio, but both were killed campaigning in 211 against Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal. Cornelius's 25-year-old son Publius Scipio gained the Spanish command in 210 and began his long and distinguished military and political career.<sup>70</sup> He captured New Carthage in 209 by employing a coordinated land and sea attack, and he thoroughly plundered the rich city after its capitulation.<sup>71</sup> By 206 he had achieved total success in Spain by eliminating the

last remaining Carthaginian force there.<sup>72</sup> Scipio was welcomed back to Rome as a hero, and he leveraged his immense popularity to win the consulship. Within a few years he carried the war to Africa and inflicted a final defeat on Hannibal at Zama in 202, earning for himself both a permanent place in Roman history and the right to add the prestigious agnomen *Africanus* to his name.

## Conclusion

Starved of supplies and reinforcements, his every move watched by a Roman army dedicated to the purpose, Hannibal lost the initiative and had become mired in a war of attrition against an enemy with infinitely more resources. He descended into the extreme south of the Italian peninsula after the fall of Capua in 211 and was forced to saunter about the hills of Lucania and Bruttium while the Romans dispatched its forces near and far to reconquer what they had lost. Indeed, the Romans campaigned in the later years of the war as if Hannibal were not even there.<sup>73</sup> He lingered in southern Italy until recalled home in 203 to help defend Carthage from the Roman onslaught led by Scipio Africanus.<sup>74</sup> Rome imposed harsh terms after the Carthaginian defeat at Zama. Not content with fading quietly from history, Hannibal maintained a leading role in the post-war Carthaginian government until he was forced into exile by his political opponents in 195. He maintained his hatred of the Romans until the very end of his life. After his exile, Hannibal lent his considerable military talents to Rome's enemies in the east – first to the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III and finally to King Prusias I of Bithynia. He took poison in 183, electing to die by his own hand instead of being subjected to the indignity of Roman captivity and execution.<sup>75</sup>

Hannibal lost the war even though he was undefeated in every battle he fought on Italian soil, making his campaign one of the great paradoxes in the history of warfare. Though ultimately unsuccessful, the trauma of his Italian campaign left lasting scars on the Roman Republic. The physical devastation Hannibal wrought on the countryside coupled with the long absence of many Italian farmers on campaigns against him left scores of farms dilapidated beyond repair. Many small farmers were ruined economically as a result, and they flocked to Rome in search of work. This fueled the growth of the famous Roman city mob. Meanwhile, the Roman elite added to their already-immense land holdings by buying up adjacent tracts of abandoned farmland. They also encroached upon vast

swaths of *ager publicus*, public land which had recently been enlarged by confiscations from treacherous Italian communities. The result was the growth of the *latifundia*, large slave-worked estates owned by the very rich. The simultaneous growth of *latifundia* and the urban poor created an immense gulf between rich and poor within Roman society. This set the stage for the political turmoil in the age of the Gracchi and beyond.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome*, ed. Ernest Rhys, trans. Canon Roberts (London: J. M. Dents & Sons, Ltd., 1905), 21.1, accessed September 5, 2014, <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/Livy>.

<sup>2</sup> Oliver J. Thatcher, ed., *The Library of Original Sources* (Milwaukee, WI: University Research Extension Co., 1907), 3:166-93, accessed August 24, 2014, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/polybius6.asp>.

<sup>3</sup> C. B. Edwards, "Introduction," in *The Histories of Polybius*, trans. W. R. Paton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), para. 4, accessed August 24, 2014, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/Introduction\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/Introduction*.html).

<sup>4</sup> Polybius, *Histories*, trans. W. R. Paton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), 1.14.5-9, accessed September 5, 2014, <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/home.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 3.21.8-10.

<sup>6</sup> John Jacobs, review of *Livy: Hannibal's War*, by J. C. Yardley (trans.), *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, March 2007, para. 3, accessed August 25, 2014, <http://bmc.brynmawr.edu/2007/2007-03-36.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Theodor Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, 2nd ed., trans. William P. Dickson (London: Richard Bentley, 1864), 2:119.

<sup>8</sup> H. F. Pelham, *Outlines of Roman History*, 4th ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), 128.

<sup>9</sup> William E. Dunstan, *Ancient Rome* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 74.

<sup>10</sup> Michael P. Fronda, *Between Rome and Carthage: Southern Italy During the Second Punic War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Richard A. Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2008), 28-32.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Dexter Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty: Power and Politics in the Western Mediterranean, 247-183 B.C.* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 102.; Fronda, *Between Rome and Carthage*, 34-7.

<sup>14</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 3.34.1-9.

- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., 2.17.8-12; 2.29.5-8.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., 3.40.3-14.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., 3.49.5-13.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., 3.60.5.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., 3.60.6.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 3.66.7-8.
- <sup>21</sup> Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, 2:118.
- <sup>22</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 2.24.16.
- <sup>23</sup> Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, 2:113.
- <sup>24</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome* 21.48; Polybius, *Histories* 3.69.1.
- <sup>25</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 3.87.2.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 3.86.10.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., 3.100.
- <sup>28</sup> Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty*, 102-3.
- <sup>29</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 3.107.1.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 3.102.
- <sup>31</sup> Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*, 74.
- <sup>32</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 3.35.5.
- <sup>33</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome* 26.47.
- <sup>34</sup> Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 50.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., 30.
- <sup>37</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 2.24.3-16.
- <sup>38</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome* 21.17.
- <sup>39</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 2.24.3-16.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 3.107.10-12.
- <sup>41</sup> Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus*, 49.

- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., 59.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., 56.
- <sup>44</sup> Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, 2:119.
- <sup>45</sup> Fronda, *Between Rome and Carthage*, 34-7.
- <sup>46</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 3.118.
- <sup>47</sup> Pelham, *Outlines of Roman History*, 129; Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*, 75.
- <sup>48</sup> Pelham, *Outlines of Roman History*, 129.
- <sup>49</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome* 21.48; Polybius, *Histories* 3.67.1-5.
- <sup>50</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 3.77.3-7, 3.85.1-4.
- <sup>51</sup> Fronda, *Between Rome and Carthage*, 37.
- <sup>52</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 3.91.10-3.92.2.
- <sup>53</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome* 22.13.
- <sup>54</sup> Fronda, *Between Rome and Carthage*, 33.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>56</sup> Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, 2:301-2.
- <sup>57</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 3.89.1-3.90.14.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid., 3.94; 3.101-2.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., 3.110.1-5.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., 3.103.1-3.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid., 3.117.1-6.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid., 3.75.8.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid., 8.3-7; 3.37.1-11.
- <sup>64</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 9.3-9; Pelham, *Outlines of Roman History*, 130.
- <sup>65</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome* 27.15-16.
- <sup>66</sup> Polybius, *Histories* 3.96.7-10.
- <sup>67</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome* 23.38.
- <sup>68</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome* 27.47-49; Polybius *Histories* 11.1-3.
- <sup>69</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome* 30.18-19.

<sup>70</sup> Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*, 75-6.

<sup>71</sup> Livy, *The History of Rome* 26.42-47.

<sup>72</sup> Pelham, *Outlines of Roman History*, 131.

<sup>73</sup> Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty*, 137.

<sup>74</sup> Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*, 77; Pelham, *Outlines of Roman History*, 132.

<sup>75</sup> Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*, 77-8; 83.

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## Walter Prescott Webb: Pioneering the Great Plains and Beyond

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Chris Hilmer

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Walter Prescott Webb (1888-1963) was a twentieth century historian whose writings, particularly *The Great Plains* (1931), revolutionized views of the American West by demonstrating how man had adapted technology and institutions to a new environment and by describing the West, not simply as an idea or a process, but as a distinct geographic region. In 1952, the Mississippi Valley Historical Association chose *The Great Plains* as “the most important book in the first half of the twentieth century by a living American historian.”<sup>1</sup> A later work, *The Great Frontier* (1951), applied Webb’s conception of the frontier to the entire Western Hemisphere and sought to identify the effects of this “world frontier” upon European and global history. In addition to his important contributions to the history of the American West and to the study of the frontier in world history, Webb did seminal work in a number of other historical fields, including environmental history and the study of comparative frontiers.

The story of Walter Prescott Webb is a “remarkable intellectual odyssey” and during a career which spanned several decades, he would influence the study of western history as much as any other historian, including Frederick Jackson Turner.<sup>2</sup> In order to understand Webb and to evaluate his books and views, one must examine his personal background, for as Western historian Richard Etulain states, “Webb’s work was highly personal, as much as that of any recent historian.”<sup>3</sup> What were the most significant influences on his life and work?

The greatest influence upon Webb’s professional life and writings was undoubtedly his own personal experience on the frontier. Seeking to escape the difficult economy of the Deep South in the aftermath of the Civil War and Reconstruction, Webb’s parents, Casner P. Webb and Mary Elizabeth Kyle, headed westward in search of opportunity. Like countless others during that era, the “family was caught in the magnetic pull of the westward movement. Like a small cog in a human machine of migrants, they moved in stops and starts toward

a new land.”<sup>4</sup> A few years after their first move, a “second phase of their westward trek” brought them to “the piney woods of Panola County in East Texas.”<sup>5</sup> It was here that Webb was born on April 3, 1888. Then, in 1893 (the year in which Turner delivered his address on the American frontier), Webb’s family relocated again. This time they moved from “the forested Piney Woods region of East Texas . . . to Stephens County and the Western Cross Timbers, a belt of blackjack and post oak which reached south from Oklahoma and divided the Grand and Blackland prairies from the plains of West Texas. It was in this region on the edge of the Plains that the family made their permanent home.”<sup>6</sup> Webb’s biographer, Necah Stewart Furman, states that this relocation was “a significant move for the Webbs, one that carried them from the humid woodlands of old America into a new arid environment. In East Texas from whence they came the terrain and cotton-culture economy made it merely an extension of the Old South, but the dry plains of West Texas created an obvious dichotomy.”<sup>7</sup> Webb once stated, “There is no confusion in my mind as to what happened in the two contrasting regions,”<sup>8</sup> and in his 1957 address as President of The American Historical Association Webb half-jokingly claimed that his research for *The Great Plains* had begun at age four when his parents moved him to the arid plains of Stephens County.<sup>9</sup> Later, in a more serious mood Webb wrote, “I have never been able to get away from the dry country. I returned to it intellectually after having escaped it physically. I have sought to understand what I hated and feared.”<sup>10</sup> Referencing this comment, the regionalist historian Robert L. Dorman, wrote that “the closing of the Texas frontier (was) the true ghost which haunted him.”<sup>11</sup>

Although proponents of the “New Western History” such as Patricia Nelson Limerick and Richard White accuse Webb of romanticizing the frontier and the frontier experience, his childhood was marked by its harsh realities.<sup>12</sup> During this period of time, his father “chose to lead the semi-itinerant life of a part-time farmer and schoolteacher, setting up shop wherever and whenever the local citizens and seasonal harvests allowed.”<sup>13</sup> For young Walter Webb this meant hard work, isolation, and frustratingly, for an intelligent boy, the inability to attend school on a regular basis. Regarding this frustration, Tobin perceptively notes, “For a boy whose exposure to formal education was to be at best irregular, impressions drawn from life became all the more important.”<sup>14</sup> These impressions from his youth, as much as any formal learning and research later in his life, would shape his thinking. “Webb’s intellectual development reflected some of the limitations inherent in the

social conditions prevailing in a remote segment of an outlying state. Some of those limitations had a permanent impact and made it difficult for him to function as an intellectual or a professional historian.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, in spite of these early obstacles, Webb was through personal character, determination, and hard work not only able to overcome these limitations, but to become a historian of international reputation.

A second important influence in Webb’s life was the relationship he developed with a wealthy New York businessman named William E. Hinds. Isolated by the circumstances of his life, Webb sought escape by reading anything that he was able to find. At one point he purchased a subscription to a magazine that interested him called *The Sunny South*. Not long afterwards, young Walter wrote a letter, which appeared in the May 14, 1904 issue. “It was a simple letter, as straightforward and brief as an honest, teen-age, undereducated farm boy might be expected to write. In it, Webb said he wanted to be a writer and to get an education, and could someone tell him how.”<sup>16</sup> William Hinds saw that letter and decided to make an investment. “Over the next few years Webb received encouragement and practical help in the form of books and magazines from a patron he never saw, and, when he eventually went on to State University, the loaned funds he needed for the first two years came from the same source.”<sup>17</sup> The impact of this investment upon Webb’s development is incalculable. We get a glimpse of the significance of this association upon his life in a *Harper’s* article published by Webb at the time he was establishing the William E. Hinds Scholarship Fund at the University of Texas. Webb wrote, “I owe this man a great debt. It would mean a lot to me if I could report to him how a long-shot investment he made in Texas finally turned out.”<sup>18</sup>

A third key influence upon Webb was Lindley Miller Keasbey, head (and sole professor) of the Department of Institutional History, at the University of Texas at Austin. Concerning the impact which Keasbey had upon his intellectual life, Webb wrote that, “It was Keasbey who gave me an understanding for and appreciation for the relationship between an environment and the civilization resting upon it; it was Keasbey who taught me, and many others, to begin with the geology or geography, and build upon this foundation of the superstructure of the flora, fauna, and anthropology, arriving at last at the modern civilization growing out of this foundation.”<sup>19</sup> The influence made upon Webb’s development by Keasbey’s conceptual approach to research cannot be overstated. Tobin writes that, “For Webb, it had a special attraction: for a man arriving late on the scene as far as intellectual inquiry was concerned and disappointed in his early hopes, the Keasbey approach

seemed to provide both a comprehensive vision of how human society had evolved and a superb method of investigation.”<sup>20</sup> Keasbey provided Webb not only with a methodology and framework for understanding his past, but an outline for communicating his ideas to his audience.

Before examining Webb’s writing style and his works, two other things need to be considered. First, what was Webb’s relationship to Frederick Jackson Turner? Second, was Webb a Progressive historian? Concerning Turner, there can be no doubt that Webb knew of him and his work. At one point in his studies, Webb’s academic adviser, Fred Duncalf, asked Turner to provide a scholarship for Webb at Harvard. Turner declined citing Webb’s age (he was forty-three) and he instead spent the rest of his career, except for one year at the University of Chicago, in Austin at the University of Texas.<sup>21</sup> While some have viewed Webb as a disciple of Turner or think that his ideas came from Turner, Webb said that he believed that he came to his ideas independently, citing several reasons in support of this claim. First, Webb himself stated, “I had never had a course in western history. I never saw Turner. At the time I began writing *The Great Plains*, I had never read the Turner essay and I refrained from reading it until I had completed the study.”<sup>22</sup> Second, there is little in Turner’s writings to suggest that he anticipated the ideas developed in *The Great Plains*. Turner’s frontier, located east of the Mississippi, differed significantly from the one described by Webb. If a common link did exist, Webb believed it was to be found in the work of the Italian economist Achille Loria (1857-1943) who was not only a mentor to Keasbey, but whom Turner cited in his essay on the significance of the frontier. It is also interesting to note that Keasbey had translated one of Loria’s books, *The Economic Foundations of Society* (1904), into English. Webb’s conclusion on this matter was that he “was on a collateral line from the European scholars through Keasbey rather than from those scholars by way of Turner.”<sup>23</sup>

When considering Webb’s relationship with the Progressive historians, his independent nature and unorthodox educational route make it difficult to establish a clear link. Webb was, like many Westerners of his era, aligned with Populist and Progressive social and economic positions and he was in favor of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal policies. The great Western historian Ray Allen Billington said of him, that he “saw the study and writing of history, not solely as an academic exercise, but also as a panacea for the ills of society. History to him was not only an essential ingredient in the training of good citizens and the

education of cultured men; it was also – and more importantly – an instrument for social change that could, when properly used, better mankind’s lot.”<sup>24</sup> The clearest example of his use of history in this fashion was his book, *Divided We Stand: The Crisis of a Frontierless Democracy* (1937), in which Webb wrote a “masterful brief against the government for the few and a convincing argument for the economic rejuvenation of the South as a step toward national recovery. Here spoke Webb the Crusader, his weapon historical truths, logically arranged to present a case for the people against selfish corporate might.”<sup>25</sup> Webb believed very strongly, as evidenced by his desire to write for the general public, that history could and did provide answers and could help to improve society. “In a sense then, Webb was a Progressive historian; yet his optimism in general about what history could do, was to diminish considerably with time.”<sup>26</sup>

Once the major influences upon Webb’s life and his philosophical leanings have been identified, it is then possible to examine his writing style and purpose. His purpose was clearly stated in his address as President of the American Historical Association when he declared, “I wanted to write so people could understand me; I wanted to persuade them.”<sup>27</sup> His writing style was influenced by the great variety of reading materials which William Hinds had sent to him, including *Twentieth Century Review*, *American Boy*, *National Magazine*, *McClure’s*, *Current Literature*, *Review of Reviews*, and *Success*.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, Hinds “counseled Webb to read the best works of fiction – Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Hawthorne, Cooper, and Irving – and to practice descriptive writing.”<sup>29</sup> This exposure to both popular writing and good literature, as well as the admonition to write helped Webb develop a style as a historian which was both appealing and persuasive. The Webb biographer, Walter Rundell, Jr., also believed that Webb’s writing style and his sense of purpose were developed during his years of teaching. He writes that, “Those qualities of his success as a historian – imagination, creativeness, independence of mind, and belief in the soundness of his ideas – all evidenced themselves during his days as a schoolteacher.”<sup>30</sup>

Webb’s writing style was didactic and conversational, just as in the schoolhouse. His metaphors and illustrations were simple. Once while discussing the dynamic nature of modern society in *The Great Frontier*, Webb stated that “it is necessary to bear in mind that we are examining a social phenomenon which resulted largely from the introduction of a new ingredient into the historical stew.

It is important to remember that a stew is a blended composite of many things, and that each affects all the others . . . A stew, though containing many elements, is usually dominated by one.”<sup>31</sup> His writings are filled with such simple metaphors. His style also reflected a sense of humor not often found in academic writings. In a discussion of the enormous impact that the idea of the frontier had upon the American imagination and its omnipresence in American life, he said of the interestingly named “Frontier Bra” that “In advertising, the frontier has no confines.”<sup>32</sup> His illustrations and asides reveal that he knew his audience. His choice of publishing venues revealed this understanding as well since he wrote hundreds of articles for popular magazines such as *Scribner’s*, *The Saturday Review*, and *Harper’s*.

During a professional career which spanned more than thirty years, Webb wrote four major works - *The Great Plains*, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (1935), *Divided We Stand*, and *The Great Frontier*. While at first glance there may not seem to be a connection between these titles, further study reveals both a connection and a progression. Webb stated,

As I look back on this program of work, I see in the four books a record of a mental adventure into an expanding world. *The Texas Rangers* was local, simple in structure, and involved little thought. *The Great Plains* was regional, based on a single idea. *Divided We Stand* was national. *The Great Frontier* was international, and like *The Great Plains*, was the expansion of an idea. The common element in all of them is the frontier, dominant in three and present in the fourth. Taken together they tell the story of the expansion of the mind from a hard-packed West Texas dooryard to the outer limits of the Western world.<sup>33</sup>

Two of these books, *The Great Plains* and *The Great Frontier*, were signally important. The first, *The Great Plains*, is the book upon which Webb made and retains his reputation. The thesis of *The Great Plains* is the necessity of *adaptation* of institutions, and as historian William Cronon states, “unlike the simpler frontier narratives, Webb’s history traces a dialectic between a resistant landscape and the technological innovations that will finally succeed in transforming it.”<sup>34</sup> While Webb acknowledged a kinship with Turner, *The Great Plains*, according to Cronon “tells a story that significantly revises the Turnerian frontier. For Webb, the Plains were radically different from the more benign

environments that Anglo-American settlers had encountered in the East. Having no trees and little water the region posed an almost insurmountable obstacle to the westward march of civilization.”<sup>35</sup> Webb, in the fashion learned from Keasbey, painstakingly laid out not only the innovations needed to settle a region radically different from the Eastern United States, but also the social and legal adaptations which were forced upon them by this new environment. *The Great Plains* concludes with a discussion of the distinctive literature of the Plains, for Webb believed that, “If in working out the solution to the problems confronting him in the region the Western man developed something special in his outlook on life, that too may become the subject of the novelist and the artist.”<sup>36</sup>

While reaction to Webb’s book was immediate and overwhelmingly positive, some were troubled by his methodology and others by the errors which appeared in the text. These scholars “were critical of Webb’s methodology because it did not produce history in any traditional sense. It may have been geography, or anthropology, or sociology, or maybe some other things. But it was not history, they argued.”<sup>37</sup> While Webb’s method was not without precedent, it was fairly unorthodox at the time. He was simply following the model bequeathed to him by Keasbey, and one similar to that employed by the *Annales* scholars. Others claimed that Webb’s error was that “He had the idea, the insight, first; he then assembled the proof.”<sup>38</sup> On this point, there would be no argument or denial from Webb. He knew what he believed, what he felt, and what he had experienced. In Webb’s mind, all that he needed to do was to make his case, and make it he did. Cronon’s conclusion is that Webb wrote a book which was “marvelously intricate in its arguments,”<sup>39</sup> and one which had a profound influence.

Twenty years after *The Great Plains*, Webb published *The Great Frontier*. This time the artist’s canvas had expanded from the Great Plains of the Western United States to the entire globe. The purpose of the book is revealed on its first page where Webb writes, “The Frontier as a determining factor in modern Western civilization has never been fully examined by historians and other scholars.”<sup>40</sup> Using a methodology similar to *The Great Plains*, Webb sought to answer the question, “What effect did all the new lands discovered by Columbus and his associates around 1500 have on Western civilization during the following 450 years?”<sup>41</sup> From his examination, Webb developed “The Boom Hypothesis of Western Civilization.” This theory suggested that the existence of a World

Frontier during more than four centuries, and the wealth generated by the newly discovered lands of the World Frontier, had played a significant role in the development of numerous features of Western civilization including personal liberty, capitalism, and democracy. Webb also speculated concerning what the closing of this frontier might mean for the Western world. While *The Great Frontier* never won for Webb the acclaim he had received for *The Great Plains*, it is nevertheless filled with compelling ideas and has drawn praise from many noted historians including William F. McNeill and Geoffrey Barraclough.

In addition to transforming conceptions about the American West and to offering a framework with which to reevaluate the modern era, Webb is recognized as a pioneer in a number of other historical fields. His most significant contributions lie in environmental history, the study of comparative frontiers, and to a lesser degree in regional history, public history, and in the history of water reclamation.

Environmental history began in the 1960s with the writings of Roderick Nash and Sam Hayes, coming of age in the environmentally conscious era of the 1970s. Yet, environmental history has “well-known antecedents starting in 1893 with Frederick Jackson Turner’s ‘Significance of the Frontier in American History,’ through to Walter Prescott Webb’s *The Great Plains* to James Malin’s *The Grasslands of North America*.”<sup>42</sup> In spite of the fact that these early efforts in environmental history are of lasting value, the authors were “accused of crude determinism,” and “came into disrepute, and studies of people/land relationships declined with the general decline of Western history.”<sup>43</sup> They have nevertheless served as a “source of inspiration, mainly for U.S. environmental historians” because they “were fully alive to the environmental transformations of North America’s grasslands that came with Euro-American settlement, and saw in the process of frontier transformation defining forces in American history.”<sup>44</sup>

A second line of research, briefly hinted at in *The Great Plains*, but more fully developed in his later work, *The Great Frontier*, was that of comparative frontiers. In his preface to *The Great Frontier*, Webb wrote “it will not be difficult for anyone to see that the book is of American origin, and that most of the illustrations on the frontier side are drawn from the American experience. A similar story, with different emphasis and a different set of illustrations equally valid, could have come, and can come, from any country, frontier, or metropolitan, with frontier experience.”<sup>45</sup> Webb noted Canada, Australia, South Africa, New

Zealand, and Latin America as areas of potential research. Today, a simple web search of “comparative frontiers” will reveal innumerable links to books, articles, and other publications on such diverse frontiers as the Amazon, the Outback, and Tsarist Siberia. Many of the basic ideas utilized in this discipline are foreshadowed in Webb’s writings.

An examination of Webb’s career reveals that he had an extraordinary impact upon historians and the writing of history during his lifetime. Why is it, then, that he is less highly regarded today? There seem to be several major reasons. First, Webb in *The Great Frontier* characterized Europe (his Metropolis) as a stagnant world that was suddenly transformed, enriched, and empowered by the discovery and exploitation of the Great Frontier. Whether the argument has merit or not, few Europeans have ever been willing to accept this characterization. Secondly, Webb’s life and career ended in the early 1960s just as larger historiographical trends were gaining ground in Western history. “Beginning in the 1970s and during the next two decades a New Western historiography (as distinct from the more recent New Western history) gradually emerged, in which historians of the West paid increasing attention to racial and ethnic groups, women, families, gender, and environmental topics.”<sup>46</sup> This group, including Richard White, William Cronon, Richard Slotkin, and Patricia Nelson Limerick, has to varying degrees rejected both Turner and Webb. Interestingly though, an examination of their works reveals that “the frontier and regional concepts of Turner, Bolton, Webb, and Malin were by no means dead, they have just been put to use for different purposes since the 1970’s.”<sup>47</sup> Finally, Webb himself is partly responsible. In the preface to *The Great Frontier*, William Rowley writes, “Like the console radios of a bygone era, the book strikes a nostalgic note alongside the sleek, compact, and specialized models of its successors.”<sup>48</sup> Webb’s books with their hand drawn graphs and charts give the books a dated appearance, causing some today to look upon them as lacking a certain sophistication and professionalism.

Webb’s life ended tragically in 1963, the result of an automobile accident. At the time of his death at the age of seventy-four, he was as busy as ever teaching, writing, and learning. If Webb were alive today, how would he respond to the combination of criticism, neglect, and admiration that his body of work has produced? His attitude would be best reflected by what he wrote in the preface to *The Great Frontier*:

The excursion has been down the main street, but there have been many observations about views up the side alleys, some of which have been explored tentatively for a short distance. This procedure may lead some to conclude that the work lacks a satisfying completeness, that it falls short of the possibilities. That is exactly the effect desired. The author would have been much gratified to complete the story rather than begin it, but since he could not complete it, the next best thing was to suggest to others the possibilities without exhausting them. He who explores the Great Frontier intellectually is subject to the same errors as those who explored it physically. Those who wish to avoid such risks should never invade the frontier, but should remain close at home with easy access to such pillars of certitude as the policeman and the encyclopedia. Many explorers made mistakes in the American wilderness, but nevertheless came back with or sent back valuable information.<sup>49</sup>

Webb understood history and he understood the role of the historian as one who is contributing to the piecing together of a puzzle. He was aware of his faults and understood his shortcomings. He did not deny them or seek to hide them, rather he embraced them, seeing opportunity for historiographical progress, not only through those who would accept and further his ideas, but among those who would make important historical contributions through their conscious effort to *refute* them. Concerning *The Great Plains* and *The Great Frontier* he wrote, they “are idea books, and each has received its share of criticism. This is to be expected and as it should be. If an idea or interpretation cannot survive a critic, any critic, it is no good anyway. If the idea is sound, then the criticism advertises and spreads it.”<sup>50</sup> Webb’s ideas are alive today, sometimes in works based upon them and other times in criticisms of them. This fact speaks for itself. Webb was fearless in his exploration of the frontier and tireless in his efforts to explain the frontier. Whatever one’s ultimate opinion of him, it is irrefutable that he has left us with some valuable information.

As a boy, Webb had been given a heritage, the frontier. For Webb, this heritage was both a burden and a responsibility. The burden was that of a lonely and isolated youth, while the responsibility was to capture and preserve, through his historical genius, a people, a time, and a way of life. This frontier, personal and individual, as well as national and collective became the consuming interest of his life and his interpretation of it, while deeply personal, has provided explanations for millions of others.

## Notes

1. John Walton Caughey, "Historian's Choice: Results of a Poll on Recently Published American History and Biography," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39 (1952): 289–302, accessed March 23, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1892185>.

2. Elliot West, "Walter Prescott Webb and the Search for the West," in *Writing Western History: Essays on Major Western Historians*, ed., Richard W. Etulain (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2002), 167.

3. *Ibid.*, 168.

4. Necah Stewart Furman, *Walter Prescott Webb: His Life and Impact* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 9.

5. *Ibid.*, 11.

1976), 6-7.

7. Furman, *Walter Prescott Webb*, 12.

8. Walter Prescott Webb, "The Search for William E. Hinds," *Harper's Magazine*, July, 1961, 62.

9. Walter Prescott Webb, "History as High Adventure," *The American Historical Review* 69, no. 2 (January 1959): 279, accessed March 23, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1845443>.

10. Walter Prescott Webb, "Water Conservation as a Private Enterprise," address to the Water Conservation Conference, May 22, 1959, typescript in Walter Prescott Webb Papers, Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas Archives.

11. Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 157.

12. Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1987); Richard White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own:" *A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

13. Furman, *Walter Prescott Webb*, 10.

14. Tobin, *The Making of a History*, 9.

15. *Ibid.*, xv.

16. Wilbur R. Jacobs, John Walton Caughey and Joe Bertram Frantz. *Turner, Bolton, and Webb: Three Historians of the American Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 97.

17. Tobin, *The Making of a History*, 18.

18. Webb, "The Search for William E. Hinds," 66.

19. Webb, "History as High Adventure," 279.

20. Tobin, *The Making of a History*, 49.

21. Webb, "History as High Adventure," 271.
22. *Ibid.*, 279.
23. Webb, "History as High Adventure," 280.
24. Ray Allen Billington, "Introduction," in *Essays on Walter Prescott Webb* ed., Kenneth R. Philip and Elliot West (Arlington: The University of Texas, 1976), xvii.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Michael Kraus and Davis D. Joyce, eds. *The Writing of American History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 282.
27. Webb, "History as High Adventure," 268.
28. Walter Rundell Jr., "Webb the Schoolteacher," in *Essays on Walter Prescott Webb*, 97.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*, 117.
31. Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003), 144.
32. *Ibid.*, 288.
33. Webb, "History as High Adventure," 278.
34. William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *The Journal of American History*, 38, Issue 4 (March 1992): 1355.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Webb, *The Great Plains*, 454.
37. George Wolfskill, "Walter Prescott Webb and *The Great Plains*: Then and Now," *Reviews in American History* 114, No. 2 (June 2004): 301.
38. *Ibid.*, 302.
39. Cronon, "A Place for Stories," 1355.
40. Webb, *The Great Frontier*, 1.
41. Webb, "History as High Adventure," 277.
42. Michael Williams, "The Relations of Environmental History and Historical Geography," *Journal of Historical Geography* 20, no. 1 (1994): 4.
43. *Ibid.*
44. "J.R. McNeill, "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History," *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 42 (December 2003): 14-15.

45. Webb, *The Great Frontier*, xv.

46. Richard W. Etulain, *Re-Imaging the Modern American West: A Century of Fiction, History, and Art* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 170.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Webb, *The Great Frontier*, ix.

49. *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii.

50. Webb, "History as High Adventure," 280.

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## The Forgotten Battle of Attu

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Mike Van Orden

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On 20 August 2012, United States Senator Lisa Murkowski and Coast Guard Rear Admiral Thomas Ostebo dedicated a memorial commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the invasion of Attu.<sup>1</sup> This westernmost and largest island in the Aleutian chain is closer to Japan than mainland Alaska. Attu is a small windswept island that is less than three hundred miles from the International Date Line.<sup>2</sup> Today, it is home to a few Coast Guard personnel but in 1943 it was the site of a bloody battle that claimed over five hundred American and more than two thousand four hundred Japanese lives. It was the first invasion of the United States since the War of 1812 and the only invasion of North America in the Second World War; however, this battle is virtually unknown outside the State of Alaska and is often left out of the history books.

In the spring of 1942, the Japanese Army and Navy were at the pinnacle of power and control in the Pacific region. After destroying most of the American battleships in Pearl Harbor, and sinking the British battleships *The Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, the Japanese expanded and conquered Hong Kong, Guam, and Singapore. They had defeated the American forces at Corregidor and appeared unstoppable.<sup>3</sup> However, when the Premier of Japan, General Hideki Tojo decided to attack the Island of Midway, he started on a path that would eventually lead to the destruction of the Empire. The Battle of Midway was a turning point in the Pacific War.<sup>4</sup> The Aleutian Campaign is part of that Midway Campaign. In April 1942, Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto oversaw a plan he believed would finally destroy the American Navy in the Pacific.<sup>5</sup> His plan was to send a force to the Aleutians and compel the American Navy to defend the American islands. He would ambush the Americans at Midway Island.<sup>6</sup> The Japanese military remained undecided about the plan until the American raid on Tokyo and other Japanese cities on April 18, 1942. Some in the Japanese military believed that the Americans launched the twin-engine B-25 Mitchells used in the raid from the Aleutians. That

the leader of the attack, Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle grew up in Alaska added additional weight to this mistaken theory.<sup>7</sup> The Japanese decided in the spring of 1942 that the main force would attack Midway and a smaller force would “capture or demolish points of strategical interest in the western Aleutians in order to check the enemy’s air and ship maneuvers in the area.”<sup>8</sup> The small force



Figure 1 *Buildings burning after the first enemy attack on Dutch Harbor, 3 June 1942. (DA photograph). US Army Center of History, Aleutian Islands. CMH Pub. 72-6.*

consisted of two aircraft carriers, a dozen destroyers, five cruisers, and sixteen hundred soldiers. The naval force was to attack the American naval base at Dutch Harbor and the soldiers would seize Kiska, Attu, and Adak in the Aleutian Islands.<sup>9</sup>

The Japanese military had hoped that the attack on Dutch Harbor would achieve the complete surprise that the attack at Pearl Harbor had achieved six months earlier.<sup>10</sup> They were disappointed. The Americans had partially deciphered the Japanese code three weeks prior to the attack on 3 June. Moreover, the Americans spotted the carriers as they approached Alaska. An American flying boat, or PBY, patrol plane had spotted the invasion force on 2 June.<sup>11</sup> The American forces in Alaska were severely lacking and “hopelessly unready.”<sup>12</sup> Major General Simon Buckner Jr. was the commander of the Alaskan defense in

1942. He claimed, "We're not even the second team up here—we're a sandlot club."<sup>13</sup> There were several small army garrisons, scattered airfields, and an outdated naval fleet of World War One destroyers. Unfortunately, for Alaska, the bulk of the American fleet in the Pacific was needed to counter the large Japanese threat at Midway. On 21 May 1942, nine ships under the command of Rear Admiral Robert Theobald left Pearl Harbor and headed to Alaska.

On the morning of 3 June 1942, the Japanese launched the first attack against Dutch Harbor. Seventeen planes from the aircraft carrier *Ryujo* flew over the American base and destroyed some oil tanks and an army barracks. The attack killed twenty-five American soldiers and injured many others but did little real damage to the base.<sup>14</sup> The attacking Japanese were uncontested in the air because the people at Dutch Harbor were unable to signal the Otter Bay airfield for assistance.<sup>15</sup> The Japanese lost one plane to ground fire. The next morning the Japanese again attacked Dutch Harbor and destroyed a fuel depot, damaged the USS *Northwestern*, and the base hospital. However, this time the air force was alerted and eight P-40 fighter aircraft were sent to meet the Japanese threat.<sup>16</sup> The dogfight that ensued resulted in the destruction of two American and six Japanese aircraft.<sup>17</sup>

On the same day as the second Dutch Harbor attack, the main Japanese attack force at Midway suffered its first defeat at the hands of the United States. This defeat had a major impact on the war in Alaska. Admiral Yamamoto ordered a general withdrawal and a halt to the Aleutian attack on 5 June.<sup>18</sup> Japanese Admiral Boshiro Hosogaya disagreed and successfully argued to allow the landing on some of the Aleutian Islands. On 6 June and 7 June, five hundred Japanese soldiers successfully landed on Kiska. On 7 June 1,100 soldiers stormed ashore at Attu and captured 42 Aleuts, a schoolteacher, and his wife.<sup>19</sup>

Author Dashiell Hammett wrote an official history of the campaign in 1944. He wrote, "War had come to the Aleutians to a chain of islands where modern armies had never fought before."<sup>20</sup> He added, "We would have to learn as well as we went along, how to live and fight and win in this new land, the least-known part of our America."<sup>21</sup> The military value of these remote islands may be small; however, the political implications were enormous. In the 28 September 1942 issue, *Life* magazine briefed the country on the location of Attu and the Aleutian Islands and reassured its readers that the United States would not tolerate the Japanese invasion of US territory. The authors wrote, "As long as they are

there, North America is in peril. For using their maritime knowledge and protective screen of weather, the Japs can move farther along the continental doorstep until they are powerful enough to break down the door.”<sup>22</sup> The Japanese seized the propaganda opportunity and used their success in the Aleutians to cover the loss at Midway. The Japanese military claimed that the victory in the Aleutians blocked the sea routes that the United States would use to attack Japan.<sup>23</sup>

The Americans reacted quickly to the Japanese invasion of the Aleutians. Within days of the invasion, air force units began bombing Attu and Kiska. However, the overall counteroffensive that would culminate with the Battle of Attu developed slowly. In the eleven months between the loss of Attu and the American landing on Attu, the Navy kept pressure on the Japanese by bombing the island and destroying resupply ships.<sup>24</sup> On 18 June 1942, the Americans sunk a transport in the Kiska harbor and two months after the Japanese landed on the island, American destroyers attacked the Kiska harbor.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, the attack was not very effective. Buckner claimed the “bombardment of invisible targets from five miles offshore . . . was worse than no bombardment at all.”<sup>26</sup>

General Buckner wanted to move west along the Aleutian chain towards Kiska and the Japanese. His goal was to build bases on the islands closer to the Japanese to avoid long and dangerous bombing missions. By the end of the summer, the Joint Chiefs agreed and authorized the move into the Andreanof Island group, about 250 miles from Kiska.<sup>27</sup> After much disagreement between the Navy and the Army, the decision was made to land on Adak. On 30 August 1942, U.S. forces landed on that island and immediately started construction of a runway. By 12 September, planes were taking off from the new airstrip and bombing the Japanese on Kiska and Attu.<sup>28</sup>

Life on Adak was not pleasant for the Americans. Captain Billy J. Wheeler kept a diary about his life in the 36th Bombardment Squadron in Alaska. He described the conditions at the new base on the island. He wrote “The constant fog and rain make life wet and miserable. The rain is accompanied by winds in excess of 60 mph. To be abroad means to be soaked to the skin regardless of the type of clothing one wears. The weather is so disagreeable that many of us prefer to remain in our tents rather than face the elements during a dash to the mess tent.”<sup>29</sup> In four months, the Seabees built up the island and made it livable. Hammett wrote that the troops on Adak were on guard 24 hours a day against

Japanese attack. "Night and day the crews stood by their loaded guns. They knew that they guarded not only their barren island but also the stepping stones to North America."<sup>30</sup>

The air war in the Aleutians had become one-sided by the fall of 1942. American bombers pummeled Kiska and suffered few losses to the Japanese. The Japanese response was minimal. On 4 October 1942, the Japanese launched an airstrike with only three planes. Most of the raids were by a single plane and after a few days, that stopped.<sup>31</sup> With the war going badly for the Japanese in the fall of 1942, they decided to abandon the Aleutians after the winter. The Japanese consolidated the forces on the island of Kiska and for a brief time left Attu undefended.<sup>32</sup>

The American forces marched west down the chain. The island of Amchitka, only seventy-five miles from Kiska, was their next major target. In a fashion similar to Adak, the Americans landed on this island on 12 January 1943. The Americans also welcomed a new commander to the Aleutians. Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid replaced Theobald on 5 January 1943. Kinkaid was tasked with removing the Japanese from American territory and he wasted little time tackling that assignment.<sup>33</sup> Kinkaid planned to starve the Japanese by blockading the occupied islands and denying them supplies. Kinkaid's blockade was very successful and resulted in the sinking of several transport ships bound for the island. In February 1943, the Americans sunk the 3,100 ton *Akagane Maru* before the ship could deliver supplies to the Japanese. The sinking of the Japanese cargo ship convinced two other cargo ships to return to the safer waters of Japan.<sup>34</sup>

As the Americans moved toward the Japanese-held Aleutian Islands, the Japanese commander Hideichiro Higuchi suggested to Japan that they abandon the Aleutians and withdraw. On 5 February, the Japanese command denied that request, directing Higuchi "to hold the western Aleutians at all costs."<sup>35</sup> The Japanese had a force of about eight hundred on Kiska and one thousand on Attu. On Attu, the Japanese were attempting to construct a 3,500-foot runway. A runway of that length would be usable by both fighters and bombers. However, the almost constant bombardment from the Americans severely hampered construction.<sup>36</sup>

It was always assumed that the next Aleutian Island that was to be invaded was Kiska. It was the next island to the west of Amchitka and the stronghold of the Japanese-occupied islands. However, there were many active

fronts in the spring of 1943, including Guadalcanal and North Africa, and the Allied forces and supplies were stretched thin.<sup>37</sup> There were not enough ships and men to allow the Americans to successfully invade the island of Kiska. Admiral Kinkaid proposed skipping Kiska for the lightly defended Attu. Kinkaid believed that success on Attu would leave Kiska isolated in the Aleutians and the Japanese might abandon the island without a fight.

On 24 April 1943, 11,000 soldiers left California bound for Attu.<sup>38</sup> The attack plans called for the main force to land at Massacre Bay and then meet up with a smaller force coming from Holtz bay. The whole operation should have taken three days according to the military planners.<sup>39</sup>

While the invasion force was traveling from California to Attu, Kinkaid ordered a massive bombing campaign on the two Japanese-held islands. The Americans dropped thousands of pounds of bombs on the Japanese and flew over one thousand sorties. Kinkaid chose to split up the bombing so the Japanese were not tipped off that Attu was the intended target. On 1 May, Kinkaid switched to bombing only Attu. The Army Air Force (AAF) and Navy saturated the island in preparation for the invasion.<sup>40</sup>

The Japanese force on Attu, under the command of Colonel Yasuyo Yamaski numbered 2,650 men on the eve of the invasion. The Japanese had known for about a week that the Americans were going to land on Attu.<sup>41</sup> Yamaski decided that the best way to defend the island was from the high ground.

The island of Attu is a windswept speck of land at the western end of the Aleutian chain of islands. The island is about thirty-seven miles long and fifteen miles wide, with mountain peaks that rise three thousand feet. Perpetually wrapped in fog and ringed by a moss-covered bog called muskeg, the island was not an ideal place to invade. The Japanese dressed in white and used the natural features of the island to their advantage.<sup>42</sup>

The invasion of Attu began on Tuesday, 11 May 1943. About three in the morning, 244 men from the Scout battalion landed quietly on the north side of the island.<sup>43</sup> Their job was to examine the beach and determine if it was a suitable landing spot. The beach called Red Beach, although narrow, was a suitable location and landing operations began.<sup>44</sup> The First Battalion of the 17th Infantry landed on the beach then drove inland towards their first objective. They were to seize Muckenstrum Ridge, a hill overlooking Holtz bay. The attack force encountered very little resistance in the initial landing and by early afternoon 1,500 men had

landed on Attu.<sup>45</sup>

The Southern force had planned to land in Massacre Bay at 7:40 a.m. but was delayed by fog. By 3:30 p.m., the fog had cleared enough that landing craft could be launched. It took an hour for the first group of boats to reach the shore. One group of boats was lost in the fog and landed on the wrong beach. One landing craft capsized and another ran aground. The fog was so thick that a destroyer using radar led the landing craft into shore.<sup>46</sup> Military historian General B.W Boyes wrote: “Once ashore, the troops moved over the wet tundra-covered low ground to the rocky hills, shrouded in dense clouds, above the 300-foot contour lines.”<sup>47</sup>

By 5:00 p.m., the Americans had taken the beaches without firing a shot. The Americans pushed inland slowly. By 7:00 p.m., they had travelled about 2,500 yards from the beach and encountered the first enemy fire. Rifle and mortar fire pinned down the Americans and stopped the assault until the next morning.<sup>48</sup> Through the night, supplies and artillery continued to land at Massacre Bay. The muskeg and tundra bogged down the heavy vehicles. Much of the supplies had to be moved by hand because of the soggy ground.



Figure 2 *Troops hauling supplies forward to units fighting the Japanese in the Chichagof area, May 1943. (DA photograph). US Army Center of History, Aleutian Islands. CMH Pub. 72-6.*

For five days, the Southern forces faced constant enemy pressure. The Japanese dug into the hills surrounding Massacre Valley. Dense Aleutian fog frequently shrouded the Japanese artillery, allowing the unseen defenders to rain down accurate, heavy fire from well-fortified positions. The unseen defenders battered the Americans.<sup>49</sup>

On Saturday, 15 May, five days after the American landing, the Japanese, fearful of being caught between the two American forces, withdrew to the east. They left Holtz Valley and set up in the Chickagof Harbor area. After a week of heavy fighting, the Americans had suffered 1,100 casualties – almost half due to exposure. There were 12,500 American troops facing a well-entrenched Japanese force of less than 2,000.<sup>50</sup> On Wednesday, 19 May, American forces attacked the dug-in Japanese in the Chickagof hills. For the next week, the opposing forces battled for every inch of ground often fighting with bayonets.<sup>51</sup> The Americans were making progress. Through a combination of artillery and air support, the Japanese were slowly being forced into a smaller area around Chickagof Harbor.

On Monday, 24 May, the fighting shifted to an area on the north side of Chickagof Harbor called Fish Hook Ridge.<sup>52</sup> Like the events of the previous two weeks, progress was slow and bloody. The Americans used bayonets and hand grenades to drive the Japanese back. By Friday, 28 May, the Americans had driven the Japanese off the Fish Hook and had them surrounded. The struggle appeared to be over.<sup>53</sup>

Japanese Colonel Yamaski decided to make one last stand against the American forces. With less than 1,000 men, he opted for one final suicidal charge against the Americans. Japanese Lieutenant Nebu Tatsuguchi wrote one last entry into his diary:

At 2000 we assembled in front of headquarters. The last assault is to be carried out. All patients in the hospital are to commit suicide . . . Gave 400 shots of morphine to severely wounded, and killed them . . . Finished all the patients with grenades . . . Only '33 years of living and I am to die here. I have no regrets. Banzai to the Emperor. Goodbye Tasuko, my beloved wife.<sup>54</sup>

At three in the morning, the Japanese launched the attack. Historian Galen Perras wrote in *Stepping Stones to Nowhere*: “Smashing blindly through the American defences, the initial frenzied attack swiftly overran a medical clearing centre. Many of the prostrate American-wounded were viciously bayoneted as they lay

helplessly in their sick beds.”<sup>55</sup> The Japanese attack almost achieved its goal of reaching the American artillery but a hastily assembled group of engineers stopped it.<sup>56</sup>

Historians are quick to point out that the price for this small island in the Pacific had been high. Brian Garfield wrote, “In proportion to the numbers of troops engaged, it would rank as the second most costly American battle in the Pacific Theater – second only to Iwo Jima.”<sup>57</sup> Perras used the same statistic. He added that only 23 Japanese were taken prisoner after the battle out of a force of 2,650.<sup>58</sup> On the American side, 15,000 men had landed on the island, 549 were killed, and 1,148 were wounded. Approximately 2,100 Americans suffered some kind of weather related injury, usually frostbite or trench foot.<sup>59</sup>

The official history of the battle written for the Army by Colonel B.W. Boyes wrapped up the battle in traditional patriotic style. He wrote,

More than two thousand of the enemy had been slain; a score had been taken prisoner. Faces of many Americans were missing from the ranks – some five hundred of them had paid as dearly as man can pay to free United States' soil from the grasp of the Japanese invader. The first American amphibious action had been a victorious one. The tide of the war had set definitely against the 'Empire of the Setting Sun'.<sup>60</sup>

The Battle of Attu was the last battle on the Aleutian campaign. The Japanese secretly abandoned the island of Kiska before the Americans could launch an invasion. The Americans used the air bases in the Aleutians to attack the Japanese homeland. On 10 July 1943, the first B-24 and B-25 bombers flew from the islands and struck military bases on the islands of Paramushiru and Shimushu. These attacks were repeated several more times as Americans continued to fight the Japanese.<sup>61</sup>

The Americans fought two enemies in the battle of Attu. The first enemy was the Japanese invaders but the second enemy was the unpredictable weather that often disrupted military operations. There were several occasions in the build up to the battle that high winds or dense fog grounded the AAF planes. Moreover, the Americans were unprepared for the bitter cold that accompanied the fighting in Attu. A report in 1945 claimed that the harsh weather had created more hardship and deaths than the Japanese forces.<sup>62</sup>

Garfield wrote that the Aleutian campaign was the first American offensive campaign of the war. It was also the first amphibious landing by U. S.

forces in the war and the only occupation of American soil in the war. Garfield assesses the impact of the campaign by claiming that the lessons learned in the Aleutians led to later successes in the war. He wrote, "If the Normandy Invasion was won on the blood-washed beaches of Dieppe, then at least some part of the war in the Central Pacific was won on the steep beaches and craggy mountains of Attu."<sup>63</sup>

Unfortunately, historians often overlook the Battle of Attu and the Aleutians Campaign. It was a sideshow to the much larger and probably more important Battle of Midway. Attu is not often viewed as a turning point nor was it the largest battle in the Pacific. However, for the thousands of men that fought on the frozen battlefields and for the hundreds that did not return we owe it to them to remember the events in Alaska. These relatively small battles in the Pacific had an impact in the war and contributed to the ultimate defeat of the Japanese. The only invasion of the North American continent and one of the costliest battles in the war deserves to be remembered.

### Epilogue

One of the men killed at Attu was the author's great uncle. He joined the Army on 7 September 1942 and shipped out in May 1943 with the rest of the invading force. Like most of the men in the battle, it was his first fight. There is a marker on the island commemorating Roy and the other fallen American heroes. Following the war, he was re-buried in Rochester, N.Y. The original death notice was published in the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* in Rochester, New York on September 23,

#### Roy Van Orden

The body of Pvt. Roy Van Orden, who died at Attu on May 29, 1943, will arrive here by train on Friday evening and will be taken to the Merrill Funeral Home, 31 Geddes Street, accompanied by a military escort of the Jewell Buckman Post of the American Legion.

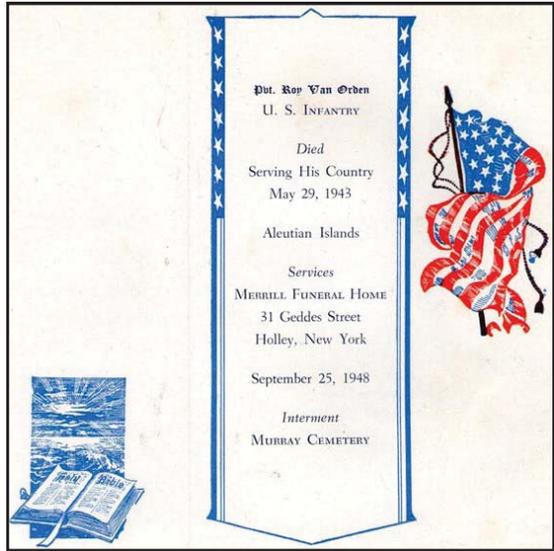
Funeral services will be held at the Merrill Funeral Home on Saturday, September 25, at 3:00 P. M., with the Rev. Paul H. Franke officiating. Interment will be made in Sandy Creek Cemetery at Murray. Bearers will be members of Jewell Buckman Post of the American Legion.

Pvt. Van Orden was inducted into the U. S. Army on September 7, 1942. He was sent out from the Pacific Coast on April 20, 1943, landed at Attu on May 11, and fought in the battle at the Engineer Hill area, where he was injured. He died in the hospital on May 29, 1943.

He is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bert Van Orden of the Ridge Road, Holley; six brothers, Arthur and James of Holley, Avery, Elmer, and Clarence of Rochester, and Claude of Albion; two sisters, Mrs. Grace Behrend of Hamlin and Mrs. James Butler of Avon; and several aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.

1948. On the right is the original funeral notice of Roy Van Orden from the Van Orden family's personal archives.

The memory of the funeral is the first and strongest image of the war to the author's father, who was nine years old at the time of the burial. The author focused the article on the battle because he felt that *it* should be remembered, while the inclusion of his great uncle is personal.



## Notes

1. Mary Kauffman, ed., "70th Anniversary of Battle of Attu Commemorated," *SitNews: Stories in the News*, June 24, 2013, accessed August 24, 2014, [http://www.sitnews.us/0613News/062413/062413\\_attu.html](http://www.sitnews.us/0613News/062413/062413_attu.html).

2. Ardon Smith, "From Here You Can See Tomorrow: New! A Short History of the Battle of Attu," *ATTU, ALEUTIAN ISLANDS, AK HOMEPAGE*, February 18, 2014, accessed August 24, 2014, <http://www.hlswilliwaw.com/aleutians/attu-homepage.htm>.

3. Brian Garfield, *The Thousand-mile War: World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), 5.

4. Dashiell Hammett, *The Capture of Attu: Tales of World War II in Alaska, as Told by the Men Who Fought There* (Edmonds, WA: Alaska Northwest Pub. Co., 1984), 6.

5. Garfield, *The Thousand-mile War*, 6.

6. Hammett, *The Capture of Attu*, 6.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Galen Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 68.

9. *Ibid.*, 69.

10. Garfield, 14.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., 33.
15. Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere*, 80.
16. Garfield, 50.
17. Perras, 80.
18. Ibid., 81.
19. Ibid., 82.
20. Hammett, 9.
21. Ibid.
22. "The Aleutians." *Life*, September 28, 1942, 36.
23. Perras, 88.
24. Garfield, 134.
25. Hammett, 9.
26. Garfield, 153.
27. Ibid., 160.
28. Hammett, 11.
29. Garfield, 182.
30. Hammett, 11.
31. Garfield, 192.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 216.
34. Garfield, 220.
35. Ibid., 221.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., 256.
38. Perras 127.
39. Ibid.

40. Garfield, 262.

41. Ibid., 271.

42. John Pennell, "Remembering the Army's historic battle for Attu Island," accessed June 8, 2014, <http://www.usarak.army.mil/alaskapost/Archives2008/080606/Jun06Story2.asp>.

43. Ibid., 273.

44. B. W. Boyes, "Short History of the Battle of Attu," November 1, 1944, accessed June 8, 2014, <http://www.hlswilliwaw.com/aleutians/PDF/Battle%20for%20Attu.pdf>.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Garfield, 307.

49. Ibid., 313.

50. Ibid, 319.

51. Ibid, 328.

52. Ibid.

53. Perras, 133.

54. Ibid.

55. Garfield, 333.

56. Perras, 133.

57. Ibid.

48. Garfield, 307.

49. Ibid., 313.

50. Ibid, 319.

51. Ibid, 328.

52. Ibid.

53. Perras, 133.

54. Ibid.

55. Garfield, 333.

56. Parras, 133.

57. Ibid.

58. B. W. Boyes, "Short History of the Battle of Attu."

59. Hammett, 16.

60. Ibid., 6.

61. Garfield, 401.

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## Prelude to *Fall Blau*: The Second Battle of Kharkov

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Tormod B. Engvig

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The Second Battle of Kharkov represented the Wehrmacht at its highest watermark, and the Red Army at its lowest ebb. Despite its incapability for large-scale offensive action in the spring of 1942, the Red Army attempted to recapture the city of Kharkov in a pincer movement from bridgeheads east of the city. Troops of the South-Western Front, commanded by Marshal Semyon Timoshenko, initially made good ground against *Generalfeldmarschall* Fedor von Bock's thinly stretched Army Group South, only to be defeated by superior tactical and operational expertise in a smashing German counterattack.

The Soviets intended "Second Kharkov" to be their first properly organized warm-weather offensive of the Great Patriotic War. Instead, thanks to deficient intelligence, poor planning, inadequate logistics, and inept leadership, the Soviet offensive proved to be a precarious, ad hoc affair. Though it initially caught the Wehrmacht by surprise, the battle ended in another Soviet catastrophe reminiscent of the great defeats of 1941. The destruction of the Soviet armies near Kharkov left the South-Western Front virtually naked on the eve of *Fall Blau* (Operation Blue), the German offensive that would culminate in the Battle for Stalingrad.

However, obscured by the Soviet defeat were signs that German military power was passing its zenith. The Second Battle of Kharkov brought a little-known German general to the forefront, Friedrich Paulus, who would later gain notoriety for surrendering his 6th Army at Stalingrad. Kharkov, though a crushing victory for the Wehrmacht, imbued it and Adolf Hitler with a false sense of security, a mistaken belief that the Red Army was a beaten force. German high-risk operational patterns—part necessity, part overconfidence—laid down at Kharkov manifested themselves again at Stalingrad with disastrous results, and contributed decisively to the destruction of Germany's eastern satellite armies and the encirclement of the 6th Army before the end of the year.

The Second Battle of Kharkov had its genesis in the failure of Operation

*Barbarossa*—Hitler’s audacious plan to defeat the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. Forced to spend the winter in hostile Russia, Army Group South was rocked by a South-Western Front counteroffensive in January 1942. Though failing in its main goal—liberating Kharkov—the attack recaptured the town of Barvenkovo and gained bridgeheads across the Northern Donets River near Saryi Saltov. These formed a threatening salient that bulged into the German line (see Fig.1). As exhausted German and Soviet armies paused to replenish and prepare for the coming spring, both saw in the Barvenkovo salient the opportunity for offensive action: the Germans as a prelude to *Fall Blau*, their thrust into the resource-rich Caucasus, the Soviets as the first step in a drive aimed at nothing less than the destruction of German armies in Russia.<sup>1</sup>

The German offensive to squeeze out the Barvenkovo salient was named Operation *Fridericus* and was set in motion in late March 1942. Aimed at cutting off the salient along the Donets River and destroying Soviet forces within, it was seen—along with the destruction of Soviet forces in the Crimea—to be an essential operational prerequisite for the launch of Blue. *Fridericus* would be mounted by the forces of *General der Panzertruppen* Friedrich Paulus’s 6th Army and *Generaloberst* Ewald von Kleist’s Army Group von Kleist; Paulus would strike from the north, Kleist from the south. While rightfully confident of victory against an enemy seen as tactically and operationally inept, von Bock had to repeatedly delay his offensive due to logistics and manpower shortages. Meanwhile, his air support—from General Kurt Pflugbeil’s *Fliegerkorps IV*—was largely preoccupied in the Crimea. While the Germans dithered, the Soviets struck first.<sup>2</sup>

While von Bock’s offensive plans against the Barvenkovo salient were kept within the realm of the attainable, the same cannot be said for Stalin’s strategic offensive ambitions in the spring of 1942. The Soviet leader, hubristic after the successful defense of Moscow, insisted on keeping up the pressure with multiple offensives all along the front. The Barvenkovo salient was the obvious place from which to mount what Stalin hoped to be the first in a series of blows to drive the occupier from Soviet soil. At the same time he hoped to upset the timetable for what he assumed would be a renewed German offensive against Moscow. Horrified, members of the *Stavka* (High Command) had no choice but to acquiesce; to do anything else would be to invite a stint in the Gulag (Soviet prison system) or worse. Timoshenko was duly instructed to plan his offensive. Unsurprisingly, the operation was flawed from the outset. Notwithstanding the

impressive reputation it would gain in later battles, Soviet intelligence on the enemy was completely lacking. Timoshenko's command and logistics were badly muddled as well; for example, while he viewed massed artillery as his army's trump card, one-third of it was still en route at the start of the offensive, with the remainder hamstrung by serious ammunition shortages.<sup>3</sup>

Ready or not, the Soviet offensive got underway on 12 May with General-Lieutenant Dmitri Ryabyshev's 28th Army, supported by 21st and 38th Armies with the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps as an exploitation force, striking from the Staryi Saltov bridgehead in the north. General-Lieutenant Avksentiy Gorodnianski's 6th Army, with Army Group Bobkin (a combined-arms force) on the flank, and the 2nd Cavalry Corps and 21st and 23rd Tank Corps as an exploitation force, advanced from the Barvenkovo salient in the south. Though Timoshenko had at his disposal a powerful offensive force with a large armored reserve, he had failed to appoint an overall commander for the northern drive; responsibility was essentially "shared" between the army leaders. To make matters worse, the forces in the Barvenkovo salient were split between his own South-Western Front (6th Army and Army Group Bobkin) and subordinate General-Lieutenant Rodion Malinovski's Southern Front (9th and 57th Armies). This caused a further muddling of the chain of command.<sup>4</sup>

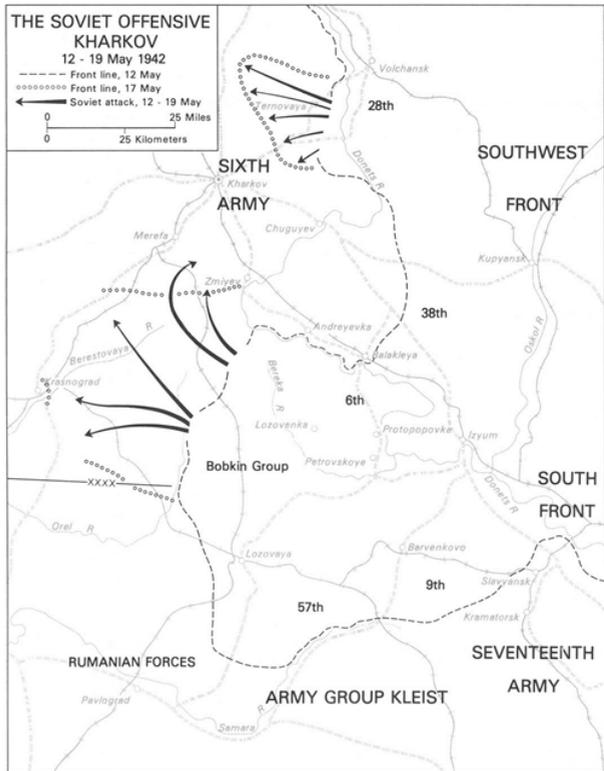
Despite its dangerously premature launch, the offensive caught the Germans by surprise as the latter, though aware of the Soviet buildup, were not expecting an attack so soon. German air cover over Kharkov was minimal, as the Luftwaffe—ominously short on resources with ever-widening areas of responsibility—had only token forces in place at the start of the offensive. General Fedor Falaleev's Voenno-Vozdushnye Sily (VVS) South-Western Front thus dominated the skies the first two days of the battle, as Soviet armies slammed into the thinly spread divisions of Paulus's 6th Army. A number of German formations soon found themselves encircled in "hedgehogs" (defensive strongpoints) and fighting desperately against the Russian advance.<sup>5</sup>

The Wehrmacht had been critically weakened from the previous winter's privations. As the *rasputitsa* gave way to summer, its leaders knew that the impending Operation Blue would determine the fate of the Third Reich. However, the bloodletting of the previous year meant that Army Group South would enter the 1942 campaigning season with only three-quarters of the infantry strength that had been available for *Barbarossa*. Most of the replacements were still en route to

the front when Timoshenko's offensive began. Therefore, while Wehrmacht doctrine stipulated that a full-strength division could defend an eight to ten kilometer frontage, Paulus's divisions, many of them at two-thirds authorized troop strength, held average frontages of eighteen kilometers. Manpower shortages were not the only thing plaguing the Germans. Army Group South's panzer divisions were by May 1942 only at about fifty to sixty percent of their authorized strength, while in artillery (especially antitank) the Germans were seriously deficient. The *Landsers* were as butter scraped over too much bread—an unsettling indicator that the Wehrmacht was stretched to the breaking point trying to hold the vast expanse of the Soviet interior.<sup>6</sup>

It would also be a mistake to assume that every German formation consisted of highly trained men and superior equipment. Due to the shortage of frontline manpower, the Germans were forced to use

formations like the 454 *Sicherungs-Division* (a rear area security unit) to buck up the line. These consisted of older, less well-trained men with a motley collection of multinational equipment—some of it World War I vintage. Lacking effective antitank weaponry, their ability to stand up to a determined enemy attack was questionable at best; predictably, the 454 *Sicherungs-Division* was routed during



MAP 23

Figure 1 Map of the Soviet offensive out of the salients north and south of Kharkov <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/USA-EF-Decision/USA-EF-Decision-13.html>.

the Soviet onslaught.<sup>7</sup>

As a way to offset their manpower and resource deficiencies, the Germans at Kharkov relied increasingly on their Romanian, Hungarian, and Italian allies. By using Axis satellite troops to hold perceived quiet sectors, the Germans were able to shift their more mobile and effective formations to where they could be best utilized—dependent of course on intelligence divining the enemy's *Schwerpunkt* (point of concentration). This dependence on dubious allies may have been born from necessity, but in its successful employment at Kharkov it may have helped set a standard of acceptance that the Germans would come to rue six months later—as the Red Army smashed the Axis satellite armies guarding the flanks of the German offensive against Stalingrad.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, at Kharkov German deficiencies were compensated for by outstanding tactical acumen, further aided by a doctrinally confused and poorly led Red Army, which in the spring of 1942 still had much to learn about mobile warfare. In the words of historian David Glantz, “The more experienced and streamlined German Army smashed the Red Army's force structure and embarrassed those in the Red Army military leadership it did not kill.”<sup>9</sup>

Elements of *Fliegerkorps IV* were hastily recalled from the Crimea, and this flying “mobile fire brigade” quickly made its presence felt over the battlefield. By 15 May the VVS, qualitatively outmatched, was driven from the skies, leaving Timoshenko's men and tanks exposed to shattering Luftwaffe air attacks. Additionally, despite heavy losses and encirclements many of the German hedgehogs withstood the Soviet onslaught, slowing Timoshenko's advance. Meanwhile, Paulus and Kleist regrouped for a devastating counterattack in accordance with the plans laid out in *Fridericus*.<sup>10</sup>

The Soviets reaped a number of hard-won successes in the first five days of their offensive. In the south, Army Group Bobkin achieved a successful breakthrough alongside 6th Army, while in the north 21st, 28th and 38th Armies liberated towns and encircled ad hoc German *Kampfgruppen* (battle groups). An interesting facet of this battle from a military history standpoint was the large-scale employment of horse cavalry by the attackers. The Red cavalry held a special place in the hearts of Soviet generals, and Timoshenko—himself a cavalry man—sought to utilize his favorite branch to the fullest. How effective such units could hope to be on a modern battlefield dominated by artillery and tanks was less clear. Nonetheless, several episodes took place where Soviet cavalry, harking back to an

earlier time, charged bewildered *Landsers* and cut down or captured hundreds of them.<sup>11</sup>

Also illustrated in this battle was the murderous nature of the war on the Eastern Front. Very few of the soldiers captured by either side at Kharkov would live to see their homelands again. Many of the Germans captured during the Red Army's offensive were simply executed, while their Soviet counterparts usually faced slower deaths from starvation and exposure in German captivity. Such was the fate of men and women thrust between two unscrupulous and pitiless dictatorships. It may be shocking for many Americans to learn that this single battle—largely ignored by western scholarship in favor of events in the Western Desert and Northern France—resulted in greater combined casualties than the total suffered by the American Armed Forces in the *entire war*.<sup>12</sup>

Despite apparent Soviet success, however, a dangerous pattern soon developed. The experienced Germans, recovering expertly, launched vigorous local counterattacks. By 15 May (two full days before the launch of *Fridericus*), panzer divisions had already contained 28th and 38th Armies. By now aware of the German buildup and plan for a counteroffensive, the Soviets nonetheless continued placing their necks farther into the German noose on the insistence of Stalin who appeared to have lost touch with reality. To compound the issue, an indecisive Timoshenko—hampered by an uninspiring staff and his political commissar Nikita Khrushchev—failed to exploit Bobkin's success in the south by committing his armored reserve. On the day of *Fridericus's* launch, the marshal finally released the 21st and 23rd Tank Corps, but by then it was too late. Timoshenko had lost control of his battle; the move only served to funnel two more formations into the German trap.<sup>13</sup>

On 17 May, *Fridericus* hit the Soviets like a sledgehammer. Slicing into Malinovski's Southern Front, Kleist's *Panzergruppe* crashed into 9th Army and drove north. By 19 May, the advance of 21st Army out of the Staryi Saltov bridgehead had been stopped by a German *Kampfgruppe*; three days later, Kleist's panzers linked up with LI Army Corps (part of Paulus' 6th Army) completely cutting off the Barvenkovo salient. The jaws had snapped shut: Timoshenko's offensive lay in tatters as his forces in the salient were methodically annihilated by the Germans. Repeated breakout and relief attempts failed as the Barvenkovo *kessel* became a place of unspeakable carnage. By 28 May, the last organized resistance in the cauldron ended. To add insult to injury, thirteen days later the

Germans launched a follow-up operation (*Wilhelm*), which from 10 to 15 June also eliminated the Staryi Saltov bridgehead. For decades, the Soviet Union suppressed the true scale of the defeat; research by Glantz suggests that out of the offensive's 765,300 Red Army participants, 170,958 were killed, missing, or captured and 106,232 wounded. The Wehrmacht had achieved these dreadful results at the cost of about 30,000; including at least 5,853 dead and 2,912 missing. For the loss of 108 panzers and 91 combat aircraft, the Germans inflicted 775 tank and 542 aircraft losses on the Soviets.<sup>14</sup>

The Second Battle of Kharkov was a Soviet disaster. Forces that should have been available to defend against Hitler's drive on the Caucasus had been thrown away in an ill-advised offensive. On 28 June Army Group South began its long-awaited Operation Blue, and there was very little the South-Western Front could do about it. The road to the Volga lay wide open. Nevertheless, the end of year saw Paulus's 6th Army's encircled at Stalingrad, his military reputation—enhanced by the victory at Kharkov—in ruins, and the beginning of the end for the Third Reich. It also saw the end of Timoshenko's favor with Stalin, and the ascendancy of the preeminent Soviet military commander of the war, Marshal Georgy Zhukov.

As German troops fanned out across the Russian steppe against negligible opposition in the summer of 1942, Hitler no doubt saw in the crushing Soviet defeat at Kharkov tantalizing signs that the Red Army was a broken force. Hidden in the Soviet retreats, however, were indicators that in fact suggested the opposite: that the Red Army was finally, after enormous bloodletting, learning how to wage modern war. In the end, victory at Kharkov reinforced a pattern of reckless risk-taking by the Wehrmacht—partly from necessity, but they ultimately led to its downfall.

The battle was a watershed of both Hitler and Stalin's military policies and habits. The former, ever more convinced that he could run his war better than his generals, increasingly micromanaged Germany's war effort. The latter, tacitly acknowledging his mistakes, finally began to give Soviet generals greater freedom and in the words of historian Mark Healy "seeking to encourage within the Red Army that very operational flexibility and independence in decision-making in the field that had been responsible for Germany's victories in the first three years of the conflict."<sup>15</sup>

## Notes

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3. Forczyk, 709, 721-727; Stephen G. Fritz, *Ostkrieg: Hitler's War of Extermination in the East* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), Kindle eBook Loc 5230-5243; Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 297.
4. Forczyk, 699-705.
5. Fritz, 5148-5152.
6. Hayward, 130; Forczyk, 311-316, 358.
7. Forczyk, 323-328; Fritz, 5256.
8. Forczyk, 381-399.
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10. Hayward, 122-123.
11. Forczyk, 416-424.
12. Forczyk, 1382; B.H. Liddell Hart, ed., "The War: An Overview," in *History of the Second World War*, (London: Phoebus Publishing Ltd, 1966), 2598-2599.
13. Fritz, 5268-5289; Hayward, 122.
14. Forczyk, 1728-1744; Glantz, 302; Hayward, 124-128.
15. Mark Healy, *Zitadelle: The German Offensive Against the Kursk Salient 4-17 July 1943* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2008), 109.

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Thomas A. Bogar. *Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination: The Untold Story of the Actors and Stagehands at Ford's Theatre*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery History, 2013.

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Book Review

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Jennifer Thompson

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Many authors have written books about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Thomas Bogar is the first author to discuss what happened to the forty-six actors, stagehands, doorkeepers, prompters, musicians, costumers, and callboys who were in Ford's Theatre that night. He uncovered what each person witnessed, Booth's connection with them, and why the police arrested and harassed some of them, even though they were innocent.

He explained how this event disrupted their lives and how they feared for their safety, especially if they had recently been seen with Booth. "Most of the forty-six were completely innocent – unsuspecting of any plot, regardless of whether it was the original plan to abduct the president or the final one to assassinate him – yet they were nevertheless caught up in a terrifying round of arrests, interrogations, and life-altering consequences" (p. xvii). This event became a permanent part of their lives. Some never spoke about the event and some told their story in interviews over a period of sixty years, but none of them left written accounts behind. Most of them probably destroyed any papers that could possibly link them to Booth, and many of them seemed to disappear from the public eye.

These actors and stagehands had been professionals, skilled craftsmen, shrewd businessmen, or were new to the stage. Many of their careers ended that night; some died soon after, and several faced being charged as co-conspirators. A few of them were able to lead successful lives after that night, but Booth haunted all of them for the rest of their lives.

John Wilkes Booth was a familiar face at Ford's Theatre. He was a good-looking actor, who loved to talk, and his personal magnetism drew others to him. Women idolized him; whether they were actresses, waitresses, or maids, all of them were eager to be near him or to serve him. Booth was unlike other actors because he treated the backstage crew as equals, and "Most of the stagehands, drawn into his orbit, would do anything he asked of them" (p. 73). Some of the

actors had even worked for him the two weeks in April 1863 when he managed the Washington Theatre.

Booth visited the theatre during the rehearsal earlier that day to pick up his mail and learned that Lincoln and Grant were expected to attend that night. One of the actors joined Booth for a quick drink at the Star Saloon. Later that afternoon, “Booth invited everyone to join him for a drink at the Star Saloon” (p. 92). The head property man and a callboy accepted his offer. One actor was a childhood friend of Booth’s, who refused to be part of his kidnapping plot. Booth gave him a sealed letter to deliver to the *National Intelligencer* publishers the next day. Several of the crew saw Booth demonstrating how quickly his horse could run. They brought and put a halter on the horse, but Booth told them not to remove the saddle. He treated them to a round of drinks at the Star Saloon. Later as the play was about to begin, one of the stagehands joined Booth for drinks at the saloon. During Act Two, Booth asked that stagehand to hold his horse near the stage door for the rest of the act, but he was needed to change scenes onstage. The stagehand ordered the errand boy to hold the horse instead. Several people saw Booth enter the lobby and slip into the theatre without a ticket. This was not unusual because “Booth was often seen around Ford’s” (p. 111).

Everyone’s lives were changed when Booth pulled the trigger. All of them feared for their lives as the mob outside threatened to burn down the theatre. Soldiers rushed in to confront the crowd. They sealed off the entrances to the theatre and ordered the cast and crew to remain inside while they cleared out the audience. They arrested those who attempted to run. “For the next few hours, the mob attacked anyone brought in, even witnesses to be questioned, and police had to protect them from being killed” (p. 119). They allowed the actors to leave early the next morning. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton ordered that everything in the theatre be impounded, all incoming mail be forwarded and read by the War Department before being released, no one could leave the city, and he required everyone to report to the police daily.

The Superintendent of Police began to arrest those who had been seen with Booth. The police started searching their homes and brought others in for questioning. Several spent time in prison, several served as witnesses, and one stood accused at the conspiracy trial.

Bogar reveals the details of what happened to each one of the forty-six cast and crew members during the investigation, the trial, and the remainder of their

lives. He found it easier to track actors and managers who stayed in their line of work. Stagehands proved hard to track, and some seemed to disappear. In the 1920s, the newspapers focused on the nine actors who were still alive to see who would be the last survivor. The program boy, who had been eleven that night, was the last to die in 1936. “To his death, he maintained that John Wilkes Booth did not die in that burning barn but escaped to South America, returning years later to Enid, Oklahoma, under an assumed name, eventually confessing his crime and true identity just before ending his life with arsenic” (p. 292).

This was a fascinating, well-written book, covering a part of the assassination story that has been overlooked by earlier historians. Those interested in Lincoln would benefit greatly by adding this well-researched book to their libraries.

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Charles Freeman. *Holy Bones, Holy Dust: How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011

Book Review

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Aida Dias

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Relics played a vitally influential role in the unfolding of events which made up the European Middle Ages. From changing ways of living to establishing major travel routes, they were the instruments of power with which the Church and state leaders gained and maintained control over the masses. Relics of saints and martyrs including whole skeletons, fragments of bone, clothing, personal objects, blood, milk, and objects associated with Jesus Christ – like the True Cross, the Holy Lance, shrouds, stones from the sepulcher and many others—were the currency of the Church, drawing those hoping for salvation of the soul or healing of the earthly body to the opulent shrines which spread all over Europe. In *Holy Bones, Holy Dust: How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe*, Charles Freeman, an expert on the ancient world and the history of Christianity, takes the reader on a journey through a time overcast by the shadow of sin and punishment, where relics provided a spiritual relief, and where the Church's power grew to the point of making the Reformation all but inevitable.

In the early days of Christianity, martyrdom came to be an almost desirable way to die for some, since it brought the mortal flesh closer to immortal spirit much quicker than asceticism. Cult-like worship of martyrs' relics often began immediately after their deaths, with reports of numerous miracles happening after contact with body parts, blood, or clothing. Freeman credits Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the fourth century, with essentially beginning the exchange of martyr relics through Europe, creating a network of shrines and Church power, although the practice had pagan origins in hero worship. Constantine had begun the practice of building shrines to honor places from Christ's life; now shrines were being built to house the relics of saints and draw people to them—the more generous the visitors, the more lavish the shrines became. *Holy Bones, Holy Dust* tells a tale of power exchanging hands as the relics themselves were exchanged. For many

centuries, the Church held the power, and its associated wealth, but there were many instances of city leaders and men like Charlemagne, Louis IX, and Philip II collecting vast numbers of relics for personal prestige and, in many cases, threatening the authority of the Church. Up to the thirteenth century any bishop could name a new saint; after that, the papacy attempted to take control by requiring that each saint's life and miracles be recorded and investigated, so that they would not lose power to leaders outside the Vatican. Freeman presents evidence showing this was partly unsuccessful since many saint cults came and went long before the papacy had a chance to even investigate them.

*Holy Bones, Holy Dust* is unique in that it is the only English language, full-length account of the history of relics and their influence in the shaping of the Church. Freeman gathers information from early hagiographies, official papal documents, and a wealth of other sources, many of which mentioned relics only in passing, failing to note the crucial role they played. He provides an unapologetic account of the corruption and pagan-origin practices of the medieval Church, but Catholics need not be offended for no judgment is offered – except perhaps by the repeated use of the word *cult* to refer to saint- and relic-worship, given its negative connotations. Freeman acknowledges the difficulties of entering “the realms of faith” (p. 22) where there are thousands of accounts of illnesses being instantly cured, of the bodies of saints being whole and exuding sweet scents centuries after death, and even of many resurrections taking place in connection with a saint's relics. He acknowledges the phenomenon of the placebo effect based on faith, but he does not dwell on the improbability of miracles.

Freeman attributes great importance, and perhaps blame, to the doctrines of Augustine of Hippo who, at a time when the Scriptures themselves were not available to the masses in the vernacular, spread the idea of original sin, and cast the world on an eternal search for salvation. Relics were introduced for this purpose; they not only allowed for saints to perform miracles, they were the instruments through which sinners could ask the saints to intercede with God in their favor so that they might be saved. At times when there were great wars and natural disasters, and particularly after the Black Death, this worked against the Church, since people believed that God had given up on them for their sinfulness. Augustine himself was at first critical of the relic exchanges and skeptical of the reported miracles, but eventually he went on to advocate the recording and publishing of all miracles.

Cities like Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Paris, and Compostela in Spain, which accumulated vast collections of relics in sumptuous shrines, drew huge crowds of pilgrims seeking to reduce time spent in purgatory. The crowds were so large that the Church began selling indulgences without requiring the actual pilgrimages. The Church, particularly in Rome, became so wealthy that the number of its critics grew every day. Another element which eventually led to the Reformation was the ever-widening division between clergy and layman. Freeman argues that the consecration of the host – itself a relic in numerous blood cults – was a main factor in the division which eventually led to the exposure of many false relics and a new tragic iconoclasm in many parts of Europe after the Reformation.

*Holy Bones, Holy Dust's* engaging narrative with vivid stories and examples is complemented by beautiful images of bejeweled reliquaries—many of the portable kind, which could be paraded to help convert pagans—and shrines, as well as maps showing the popular routes of mass pilgrimages. Its only fault might be found in the first few chapters where, in order to make a point, Freeman jumps several centuries back and forth, leaving the unwary reader with a distorted idea of the actual sequence of events, but it later settles into a more chronological storyline.

Overall, the book succeeds in its goal of describing how medieval life and preoccupation with the afterlife allowed for the veneration of saints, with their individual personalities and talents, to flourish. Further, it demonstrates the roles played both by the individual relics and by the cults in the rise of power of the Church – and subsequently in the Reformation. And it does so masterfully, leaving one wanting the continuation of the history of relics beyond the Middle Ages.

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Robert Parker. *Athenian Religion: A History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996

Book Review

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DeAnna Stevens

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Throughout the world, cultures have a belief in a supernatural power or powers. This belief system, otherwise known as religion, in part characterizes how a society interacts with events they do not understand. Understanding religions in ancient times requires an understanding of the history, the culture, and the society that one is studying. Over the years, many authors have written several books about Greek religion and mythology. These books range from a broad overview of specific rituals to specific city religions. In *Athenian Religion: A History*, Robert Parker chose to focus on the latter.

Many historians consolidate the religions of the separate city-states into one general Greek religion. Parker has chosen to focus specifically on the city of Athens. Parker states that his book is a “study of Athenian religious practices and attitudes.”<sup>1</sup> The focus of the book is on the social and political aspects of Athenian religion rather than the ethical or ritual aspects. Focusing on the social and political aspect allows Parker to provide an insight into how much or how little religion played a part in the day-to-day life in Athens.<sup>2</sup>

Parker relies on architectural and archaeological evidence as well as iconography but pays attention to literary references to the myths surrounding religions in ancient Greece.<sup>3</sup> Parker uses this evidence to enhance his discussion of how religion affected social and political interactions. The first six chapters detail the eighth through the sixth century of Athens. Parker discusses the changes in architecture and vase painting in regards to the changing effects of religion on life. Parker stresses that one can follow the progression of religion as the architecture changed, in particular iconography on buildings. The history and progression of vase painting and sculpture is used to provide examples as to the role religion played in society.

Chapters seven and eight deal with how changes in government and

politics affected religion. Parker opens chapter seven with the statement, “Attic religion in its familiar shape is a creation of Clisthenes no less than is the democracy.”<sup>4</sup> Parker discusses the changes that Clisthenes brought about in politics as well as in how the cults conducted their religious practices. Clisthenes maintained the religious substructure of the ten tribes even as he reshuffled “the Athenian population into the ten tribes.”<sup>5</sup> Parker opens chapter eight by asserting that “the history of religion overlaps . . . with the history of events.”<sup>6</sup> Here, Parker talks about the literary evidence that has survived from the fifth century. Several of these documents deal with religion and dictate that the governing council must discuss religious matters before anything else. During the fifth century, Parker explains how the religious center of the city shifted to the democratic council. The fact that officers were appointed by the council to help in the running of the temples is evidence of this shift. The final four chapters discuss how innovations and the incorporation of new gods affected Athenian religion.

Overall, the book is full of details and, sometimes, an overabundance of information. Parker provides several ideas throughout the text but rarely states something to be concrete. Instead, he provides the reader with all the evidence and the question but stops short of drawing a conclusion. This allows the reader to formulate an opinion based on the provided evidence. Knowledge of Greek history is a requirement in order to understand parts of the information Parker provides. Otherwise, *Athenian Religion* is an excellent source of evidence for religious organization in Athens. Parker explains in his introduction that this work was to be an overview rather than a detailed observation; however, once he began writing, the book quickly became “a commentary on the evidence” of Athenian religion.<sup>7</sup>

Anyone who does not have more than a basic knowledge of Greek religion will do well to stay away from this book. With all the information that Parker has provided, the reading does become tedious at times. While the footnotes are numerous and detailed, they can overwhelm the actual text of the book. Since this work is a detailed discussion on religious practices, Parker could have included a brief description or even simply a list of the major gods and goddesses. As it stands, the reader may get lost in the footnotes and, without a cross reference available, may spend unnecessary time flipping through looking for a related footnote.<sup>8</sup> Parker also dismisses any discussion of the myths as well as the involvement of women in religion. As Sarah Johnston states, “Most striking, perhaps, is Parker’s decision not to discuss various ‘personal’ or ‘optional’

religious practices in any depth.”<sup>9</sup> Johnston feels that these optional practices should have been included because they challenge Parker’s assumptions.

Other than two maps at the beginning of the book, there is a lack of illustrations or any other visual aid. Throughout the book, Parker refers to geographical structures, architecture, decorations, and other media to support his arguments. However, the reader struggles to make a connection between these items since there are no visual references included. Had even a few illustrations been contained within the informative pages, the reader would have had an easier time visualizing the vases or the buildings that Parker described.

Interestingly, Parker’s information on pottery and the changes in its structure and decorations is reminiscent of Jane Ellen Harrison’s seminal work, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*. While Harrison set the standard for using archaeological evidence of vase paintings to understand religions in ancient Greece, Parker took a step beyond her ideas and incorporated architecture and architectural changes in his study of Athenian religion. Parker’s use of buildings and their uses help the reader understand how religion affected social and political life in Athens.

Robert Parker’s *Athenian Religion* has set the bar high in regards to the amount of information provided in a book. Between the text, the footnotes, and the appendices, Parker provides the reader with a treasure trove of sources and ideas to research further. Leaving the path open to further research, Parker found a way to engage readers and allow them to expand on his ideas. Virtually unheard of in the world of historical research, Parker may have introduced a new trend in providing his theories and the evidence he used to formulate those theories, yet leaving the discussion open for further research and innovations.

With the availability of current and past books on religion in ancient Greece, Parker’s book is a valuable resource despite its weaknesses. While numerous authors write about the religions of this era, the majority of them only give an overview of the subject matter. A limited number write about specific areas of ancient religions and less limit their writing to such specificity as Robert Parker’s *Athenian Religion*. Therefore, Parker managed to find a niche that elevates his book to a necessity in the field.

## Notes

1. Robert Parker, *Athenian Religion: A History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 9.
2. Jon D. Mikalson, review of *Athenian Religion: A History*, by Robert Parker, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 5 (May 1997):1, accessed July 27, 2014, <http://www.bmc.brynmawr.edu/1997/97.05.01.html>.
3. Frank J. Frost, review of *Athenian Religion: A History*, by Robert Parker, *The Journal for Hellenic Studies* 117 (1997): 223-224, accessed August 25, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/632574>; Sarah Iles Johnston, review of *Athenian Religion: A History*, by Robert Parker, *The Journal of Religion* 78, no.1 (January 1998): 161-162, accessed August 25, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1205870>.
4. Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 102.
5. *Ibid.*, 112.
6. *Ibid.*, 123.
7. Hugh Bowden, review of *Athenian Religion: A History*, by Robert Parker, *The Classical Review* 47, no. 2 (1997): 324-326, accessed August 25, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/710522>.
8. Susan Guettel Cole, review of *Athenian Religion: A History*, by Robert Parker, *The American Journal of Philology* 119, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 293-295, accessed August 25, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1562088>.
9. Johnston, review of *Athenian Religion*, 162.

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