ROME'S CIMBRIC WARS (114-101 BC) AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE IBERIAN PENINSULA*

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ABSTRACT

The Cimbric Wars and their impact on the Iberian peninsula comprise an episode in Roman history, which has been neglected by both ancient and modern commentators. The wars themselves are remembered chiefly for battles fought in southern Gaul and northern Italy between 105 and 101. However, the conflict had a much wider and more devastating impact. Gaius Marius may have engineered the Roman defence and finally great victories on the battlefield, but this triumph has obscured a regional catastrophe the likes of which were not to be seen again until the final days of the Roman Empire in the West. The Cimbri and Teutones posed the greatest challenge to Rome's supremacy, even its existence, since the invasion of Italy by Hannibal. The ancient sources have obscured the enormity of the threat and its consequences, especially for Iberia. The intention here is to retrieve some idea of the extent of the campaigning of both sides in the war and the magnitude of the disaster as it affected the region south of the Pyrenees.

Teutoni a Mario trucidati Cimbri deleti (Obsequens 44, 44a)

Introduction

Historians who study ancient Greece and Rome sometimes reach incorrect conclusions because, having been taught to, they prefer to believe their written sources and other material evidence rather than undertake empirical research. In a recent study of the Classics, Maurizio Bettini stresses the point that all ancient writers protected their real personalities to avoid character assassination.1 Yet we trust these shadowy figures because we must, although

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the defects of such an approach are only too manifest. Plutarch, none too trustworthy a source at the best of times, at least visited the battle-site at Bedriacum, even if that experience does not obviously emerge in his life of the emperor Otho. The historians Sallust and Tacitus, presumably both experienced military men, display indifference to, or perhaps disdain for, a comprehensive discussion of battle-plans and tactics even when these should be central to their themes. Such a notion is quite beyond a writer like Livy, who is the main source for many military events in Roman Republican history. Polybius, who might just be more dependable, lies outside the scope of the present discussion, an episode in Roman history which, if not exactly unrecorded, has certainly been much neglected by both ancient and modern commentators. This is the war between Rome and the Germanic coalition of tribes, the Cimbri and Teutones, which is remembered for battles fought chiefly in southern Gaul and northern Italy between 105 and 101 BC, but which affected a far wider region, especially, I shall argue, the Iberian peninsula. Gaius Marius engineered the Roman defence and eventual victory, but the triumph over the enemy has obscured a regional catastrophe the likes of which were not to be seen again until the dying days of the Roman Empire. Yet the sources do not yield their information easily, with the result that, on occasion, it has been missed altogether. It is the intention here to retrieve some detail of the campaigning between the two opposing sides and the magnitude of the disaster as it affected Iberia.

The 'Cimbri Wars' occurred over nearly a decade-and-a-half at the end of the 2nd century BC. These wars have attracted little interest in modern

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The Ambrones, also identified by ancient writers, seem to have been a branch of the Cimbri. The Tigurini, mentioned by Appian and Orosius, were members of the Helvetii, but joined the Germanic migration about 109. The closest source chronologically is Livy, but his work remains only in epitomes. Orosius, the source most distant from the events, used Livy. Between the two are Appian's history of Rome's wars against the Gauls, and Plutarch's biographies of Marius, Sulla and Sertorius, all of whom were personally involved in the fighting. The lost sources, probably employed by Plutarch, are the memoirs of Q. Lutatius Catulus, who participated in the battle at Vercellae; and Sulla himself whose account was certainly mendacious on occasion.

scholarship, but in Italy and especially in Rome at the time there was incredible panic and anxiety. At the successful termination of the hostilities, the Roman populace hailed Gaius Marius the ‘third founder’ of Rome (Plut. Mar. 27.5, after Romulus and Camillus), illustrating contemporary perceptions of the seriousness of the threat and the actual extent of the warfare. This was no petty or inconsequential military operation. However, the written sources themselves are scattered and insubstantial; moreover, they are contradictory and unsatisfactory when gauged against even a rudimentary field study. The logistics of moving armies and whole groups of people around over large distances obviously feature prominently here, and the ease or, conversely, the difficulty of movement around the region has a significant impact on the conclusions reached.

**Tracking the Cimbri (114-105)**

Far from the eventual main theatre of war, Southern Gaul or Narbonensis, lies Illyricum, a region highly influenced by Rome since the 3rd century BC, and along its coastline, at least, after more than a hundred years of contact, Romanised, prosperous and civilised. It was here, probably in 114 (Liv. Per. 63), that a tribe named the Cimbri, a gens vaga (‘nomads’), had entered the area for the purpose of plundering (populabandi in Illyricum venerant). Taken by surprise, the Roman response was neither rapid nor conclusive. In retrospect, the subsequent Roman action is dependent on whether or not the Cimbri raiding party was perceived as an invader. It is not known if the Cimbri had attacked inland tribes such as the Delmatae, officially beyond Roman control, or the coastal towns which had much stronger ties with Rome. There was also the problem of identifying where next the Cimbri might attack. Aquileia lies not many kilometres north-east along the Illyrian coast.

The Senate ordered Cn. Papirius Carbo, one of the consuls of that year, to respond to the unwelcome attentions of the marauders. And it appears that towards the end of the summer of 113 this band of Cimbri, not

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4 According to Brogan, *OCD*² 240, the Cimbri originated in Jutland, and were forced by over-population, famine and a rise in sea-level into a southerly migration. Plutarch thought (Mar. 112-7) that these people came originally from central Asia. On the question of Germanic or Celtic origins of the Cimbri see, for example, Canon Rawlinson, ‘On the ethnography of the Cimbri,’ *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 6 (1877) 150-58. The Gallic Aduatuci later claimed to be of Cimbric origin (*OCD*³ 331).
necessarily the entire tribe; were moving north in the more rugged Alpine valleys of Noricum, and had veered away from a direct confrontation with the Romans south of the Tyrol. How long would they be put off by Roman power? The consul chose to strike first rather than indulge in defensive tactics. After all it could easily be argued that Roman allies had recently been the victims of a raid. Yet Carbo's action is described by modern historians as rash and arrogant. He was certainly defeated at Noreia (either Friesach in Steiermark, St Margarethen or Magdelemsberg), having first negotiated with the enemy, then having attempted to lure the Cimbri into an ambush. Appian states rather censoriously that:

... he suffered severely for his treachery, and lost a large part of his army. He would probably have perished with his whole force had not darkness and a tremendous thunderstorm fallen upon them while the fight was in progress.

Appian simply concludes with the statement that the 'Teutones' (as he incorrectly calls them) passed into Gaul. That will not do, however, since the encounter had serious ramifications for domestic political life. Carbo subsequently committed suicide following a prosecution for his poor generalship, although whether he was motivated by the prospect of an easy triumph or believed in his proactive measures against a hostile tribe is impossible to recover. The Papirii Carbones subsequently suffered from adverse propaganda.

Velleius (2.8.3) states that the Cimbri (he also adds Teutones) crossed the Rhine at roughly the same time as the triumph of M. Minucius Rufus (cos. 110) over the Scordisci of Thrace, an event which occurred in 106. No other source notes this movement of the Cimbri and Teutones, and it comes out of sequence in Velleius' general chronological narrative. Moreover, it is an

3 Plutarch (Mar. 11.2) says that 300,000 were on the move, but that 'rumour fell short of the truth'.

6 This is based on a fragment of Appian, Celt. 13, but not found in earlier sources, although other evidence, especially Livy, is equally fragmentary. For modern pronouncements on Carbo see, for example, MRR 1.535: 'treacherously forced the Cimbri to battle near Noreia and suffered a disastrous defeat'; and for the sources.

7 On the identification of Noreia, see G. Alfoldy, Noricum (London 1974) 47-51. According to Strabo (5.1.8), Aquileia was 1200 stades (140 miles/225 kms) from Noreia, and the river-system which linked them was navigable and, hence, the developing situation was of some concern to the Romans at this time.

8 Carbo was acquitted of any crime: E.S. Gruen, Roman Politics and the Criminal Courts, 149-78 BC (Cambridge, Mass. 1968) 131; Harris (note 3) 245-46.
error. On Velleius' reckoning there would be seven missing years in the wanderings of the Cimbri, but they must have crossed the Rhine at least a year or two earlier than Velleius' attempt at synchronised dating. We can be sure of this because the consular colleague of Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus, M. Junius Silanus, was also beaten by the Cimbri, either in 109 or 108. Either very soon after this engagement (Livy. Per. 65) or just before (Florus. 1.38.2), the Cimbri sent ambassadors to Rome where, in the senate, they requested land, a request which was denied. Florus states that these Cimbrian legates first appeared before the consul who sent them to Rome. The chronology looks rather suspect since the delay between this move and a later battle seems dubious, and Livy's epitomist may be preferred. A victorious Cimbri sent messengers to Rome demanding land, an audacious move and quickly dismissed by the senate. It shows, nonetheless, that the two sides had contact on a diplomatic as well as military level from 109/8. Where was the engagement between the two? Somewhere in Gaul south of the great bend in the Rhone, more specifically just north-west of the Alps, perhaps very close to Lake Geneva, since the presence of the Cimbri sparked off widespread instability here. It accounts for the unrest among the local Helvetii, in particular among the Tigurini, who defeated and killed the consul of 107, L. Cassius Longinus, and most of his consilium in the lands of the Nitioboriges (Livy. Per. 65). The Nitioborician territory lay adjacent to that of the Volcae Tectosages, and their capital at Tolosa.

The campaign to Arausio (105 BC)

After these violent contacts with Rome and the defeat of a consular army, the Cimbri moved further west. They seem to have settled for some years among the Parisii or Velocasses of the Seine valley. Something precipitated another move in 106 or before, if they were involved in the rebellion of the Volcae, which was probably encouraged by the Tigurini (Dio 27.90) or the Cimbri beating of the Romans in 109, and which was suppressed by the

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9 Also prosecuted by the tribune Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus and acquitted in 104 (Cic. Div. in Cae. 67; Verr. 2.2.118).
10 Orosius (5.15) says that this was near the Atlantic Ocean, and situated west of the Arverni. The main river of the region, the Garonne, drains into the Bay of Biscay, a plausible route for a migrating tribe, and shows how far the Tigurini had wandered, probably causing much instability and pursued by the Romans beyond their frontiers. L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus (cos. 112) died alongside Longinus. C. Popillius Laenas, another senior legate, probably an ex-praetor, negotiated the release of survivors, but was later convicted of maiestas (MRR 1.552).
An army of Cimbri - it may not have been the entire tribe - appears to have moved down the east bank of the Rhone heading directly for Arausio, the furthest outpost of Roman presence in Gaul. At Arausio was the consul Cn. Mallius Maximus (cos. 105) with an army of about 40,000, while on the west bank was the proconsul Q. Servilius Caepio with another army roughly the same size. Caepio had moved north after his sack of Tolosa and defeat of the Volcae. Was he pursuing the Cimbri or remnants of the Volcae? Constitutionally, Caepio was subordinate to Mallius, but he refused to cooperate, asserting an independent command. Caepio's proconsulship against the Volcae had been extended and so he was entitled to argue that within his particular sphere of command he was the senior officer. Mallius had command of Gallia Narbonensis east of the Rhone, but in opposing the invaders in his provincia he was the commander-in-chief. By summoning Caepio across the river he was making the point of the subordination. Caepio was unhappy, but crossed the Rhone. The invaders sent ambassadors, but since they did not send them to Caepio as well as Mallius, the quarrel, according to Dio until then concealed, was exposed (27.91.3), and fear of the Romans turned to contempt. The defeat at Arausio happened on 6 October 105. Two separate engagements occurred, since Caepio stationed his army between that of Mallius and the invaders. Caepio's army was thrust back to the Rhone and Mallius was unable to defend his camp.

In his life of Sertorius (Sert. 3.1), Plutarch mentions his subject's participation in the battle at Arausio where he was in Caepio's army. He describes how Sertorius in the rout swam the river in full armour to escape. This must mean that Sertorius swam back from east to west and that the Romans were trapped with the Rhone at their backs. They had presumably faced the Cimbri and their allies to the north, but had been outflanked on their right wing, which meant that centre and left were pushed towards the Rhone. The

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11 Although clearly a competent general, who had already celebrated a triumph from his praetorian governorship of Further Spain, he is best remembered for his pillaging of Tolosa, and the subsequent and suspicious circumstances in which its treasures disappeared en route to Massilia. He was convicted and exiled in 103 (Oros. 5.15).
12 According to Dio 27.91, Mallius sent for Caepio after the capture and death of his senior legate Aurelius Scaurus (cos. 108), who must have encountered the Germanic tribes higher up the Rhone valley, a defeat which left Mallius under strength and needing reinforcements. Dio writes of jealousy between the two commanders; cf. Oros. 5.16.
13 Plutarch (Luc. 27.7) notes only the date of Caepio's defeat.
14 MRR 1.555: 'both suffered disasters.'
only means of escape for infantry would have been Nemausus, north of Narbo, then crossing back over the Rhone to Massilia. For the vast majority there was no escape; and some reports claim 80,000 were killed, 30,000 more than at Cannae. Orosius states that the figure was given by Antias, but this is probably a piece of spurious scholarship, and the number was more likely obtained from Livy, who may have acknowledged Antias as his source. This is not the most reliable line of evidence. Orosius also claims that there were just ten survivors from this debacle, which is surely an exaggeration meant to dramatise the gravity of the situation. More worrying is the fact that Livy used Antias when there must surely have been better sources. And if the casualty list is dubious, then so, too, may be any details of the battle, and the reasons why the Romans were defeated. Still, the event itself left the whole region exposed to the invaders from the north. But precisely what comprised this region?

The geography of Gallia Narbonensis and Hispania Citerior

The essential features of the coast of southern France, from Provence to the frontier, have changed little since antiquity. A low coastal plain, rising slowly to the Massif Central to the north, contrasts dramatically with the more abrupt Alpine mountain chain to the south, which was known even then as the Pyrenees. The sea has, however, receded about 10 to 15 kms, leaving sandy flats, interspersed with lagoons along which today are dotted various seaside towns and nature conservation areas. There is no coastal road as there is in Provence, which is serviced by the famous Corniche. A number of minor and fairly modern roads connect towns and villages, such as Salses, Canet, Colloure, and follow the boundaries of farms, vineyards, and rivers. The roads leading to the modern holiday resorts are mostly culs de sac. The main highway is today what it was from about 120 BC, a continuation of the Corniche, the Via Domitia, which was designed to link northern Italy, via Liguria, with the then new colonial foundation at Narbo Martius (Narbonne). From there, the main road ran south through the mountains by the Le Perthus Pass, used from prehistoric times, and led to Girona, Barcino

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(Barcelona), Lérida, and Tarraco (Tarragona), and ultimately to Valenti and Gades. It was one of the great roads of the Roman Empire, and its route has altered little over the years. The modern system of toll-roads allows rapid travel. Today it can take as little as two hours to drive from Tarragona to Narbonne. Distances are crucial factors in much of this discussion.

The main urban settlements in the coastal sweep from Massilia to Tarraco remain familiar, and are a mixture of Greek and Roman colonies: Aix-en-Provence (Aqua Sextiae), Aedes (Aderetum), Nimes (Nemausus), Narbo Martius. In the Roman Empire, Perpignan developed as a further settlement, and Sales became a formidable fortress on the main road. South of the mountains, the early Greek colony of Emporion looks north across the bay to its neighbour Rhode, while the lights of Massilia were probably also visible on a clear night. Girona, Barcelona and Tarraco were the main Roman settlements, but other smaller sites inland suggest an early exploitation of the region. Minerals were certainly exported to Italy. Tarraco became the capital of Hispania Citerior, later Tarracensis, and was one of the major cities of the Empire. Its Roman remains are impressive by any standard.

The modern region of Spanish and French Catalonia almost covers this ancient region with its northern border at Sales, some 20 kms south of Narbonne, and its southern boundary at the delta of the River Ebro. As a political entity it corresponds to the major part of the medieval kingdom of Majorca. The modern political boundary between Spain and France cuts directly across the region, but is an even more recent development belonging to the 16th century. At the end of the 2nd century BC, Gallia Narbonensis merged with Iberia with less defining characteristics than today. Local tribes either side of the mountains lived alongside descendants of Greek settlers and more recent Roman colonists. The tendency in studies of Roman Spain or Roman Gaul, however, has been to overlook this close proximity and to treat these regions as if they were separate states in antiquity. As a result, matters which affected both areas tend to lose significance in the overall history of each. And this has obviously affected an examination of the Cimbrian Wars at the close of the 2nd century, and reduced their magnitude almost to a footnote status.

**Marius’ campaign to Aqua Sextiae (102 BC)**

Plutarch’s biography of Marius contains the fullest account of the military action against the Germanic tribes (Mar. 11.2-27.6), whom he names as Cimbri and Teutones from their first appearance. Plutarch is rather more concerned about ethnic origins than in the extent of their wanderings, so any
indication of movements prior to 104 is neglected and even afterwards is rather hazy and possibly erroneous. He did not visit southern Gaul as he had Bedriacum. Marius had been elected to his second consulship at the very end of 105, by which time the Cimbri had apparently vanished into the Iberian peninsula (Mar. 14.1). Marius did not pursue the enemy, but instead organised defensive positions on the east bank of the Rhone. Did the fate of Cn. Paprius Carbo or L. Cassius Longinus weigh heavily on his mind? The sources are completely silent about what happened to the new colony at Narbo Martius west of the Rhone. It was presumably destroyed, but possibly evacuated after Arausio. There is no mention of Roman troop movements in that region. It was abandoned. Marius arrived east of the Rhone by the late spring or early summer of 104. Plutarch (Mar. 13.1) suggests a fairly rapid deployment of forces from Italy, but no action occurred in either that year or the next. Indeed, it is clear that the electorate’s memory of Arausio had dimmed since 105, as Marius secured his fourth consulship with difficulty. The Roman base-camp, according to Plutarch (Mar. 15.1), was at Arles, the lowest ford or bridging-point on the Rhone, which had been joined to the sea by a canal.\(^6\)

So Marius led his army to this place and because the men had nothing to do they constructed a great canal. The canal is still named after him.

(cf. Strabo 4.1.8)

Eventually, states Plutarch (Mar. 14.6; 15.5), the enemy was expected and, in fact, the Cimbri and Teutones were approaching. This was in the early summer of 102, but where were they coming from? The Roman high command was evidently well-informed, but it is not necessary to assume a sophisticated military intelligence-network, whatever Plutarch may have to say (Sert. 3.2) about Sertorius’ undercover exploits. The Romans stationed in Spain should have kept Rome abreast of events, but did they? Our sources are not unanimous about who was where. According to Livy (Per. 68) it was the Teutones and the Ambroses who were approaching, and Plutarch (Mar. 15.5) yields the same information, but Orosius has additionally the Cimbri and Tigrini (5.16). Moreover, while it may be correct to assume that Marius

\(^6\) Described as the fossae Marianae, it could serve as a defensive position as well as a canal. Plutarch also states that as military tribune in 103, Sulla was instrumental in obtaining the friendship of the Marsi, but this must be an error for an episode in the Social War. It was perhaps inserted to illustrate Sulla’s diplomatic skills. For Marius’ difficulty in the elections for 102, see R.J. Evans, \textit{Gaius Marius: A Political Biography} (Pretoria 1994) 85.
was at Arles, Orosius actually places him at the confluence of the Isère and
the Rhone, north of Valence. Was this information in Livy and could it be
accurate?

The Germanic coalition had only recently been formed, or reformed, in
the territory of the Vollocasses in the Seine valley. It seems that the Cimbri
had marched all the way back from Spain, via Le Perthus again, participated
in the most recent revolt of the Volcae (Liv. Per. 68), and perhaps collected
the rest of the tribe before marching with their allies back down the Rhone.
They may even have marched down the east bank, for no source has any-
thing to say about these elaborate movements of large numbers of people
prior to their arrival outside the camp of Marius. That camp was attacked for
three days (Oros. 5.16) - the epitome says simply 'attacked' - ; on the fourth
day in pursuit Marius encountered the enemy in battle. Plutarch (Mar. 18.1)
says that the camp was attacked and when it could not be taken the Teutones
and Ambrones decided to push on to the Alps:

There one could certainly see how great their numbers were, both from
the length of their column and the time it took for them to pass; because
it is said that they marched in a steady stream past Marius' encampment
for six days on end.

If the camp was at Arles, a march of 60 kms or two days brings an army to
the vicinity of Aix, the site of Marius' victory. Orosius' description of a battle
fought on the fourth day after a three-day siege of the camp is simply not
credible. Ultimately this material may have come from Antias and been
related untested by Livy. Plutarch's 'six day passage' of the enemy column
outside the camp causes an interesting logistical problem, but also provides
for an alternative reading of the campaign. If the Roman camp was at Arles
and it took six days for the Teutones to march past, and at least 130,000 of
them are supposed to have passed by, then the head of their column was at
Aix before the tail-end had left the east bank of the Rhone. However, if
Marius' camp was north of Valence, then a quite different interpretation of
events becomes possible. The huge number of enemy with their families and
possessions could pass by over a number of days - perhaps fewer than six -
and be on the move along the east bank of the Rhone before moving along
the Via Domitia to Aix, possibly ten days to two weeks in all. The Romans
followed at a reasonable distance until they found a suitable place from
which to launch an attack.

17 The catastrophe at Arausio presumably provided the impetus for this new
uprising; Harris (note 3) 247.
The two battles at Aqae Sextiae were a great triumph for Marius and a suitable revenge for the double defeat at Arausio. However, the tactics seem relatively simple if, indeed, not a little haphazard. The Ambrones and Teutones took advantage of the hot springs at Aix, while Marius deliberately made camp away from easily accessible water-supplies. Camp-followers went down to the river and, once there, started brawling with the Ambrones who had been enjoying the hot springs. Gradually a more general engagement developed, at the end of which 30,000 Ambrones were routed and killed beside the river. The battle continued next day when the Teutones attacked uphill. Led by the legate M. Claudius Marcellus, a column of 3,000 troops, which had been concealed in a copse, attacked the enemy from the rear. The battle became a slaughter. The bones of the dead fertilised the vines of Massilia and produced a bumper harvest. Marius had planned and executed a famous victory. Plutarch’s account is rather non-committal (Mar. 19.3-21.3), but Florus states that it was a mistake corrected (1.38.8). Whatever the planning or lack of it, the outflanking manoeuvre in antiquity plainly caused such utter confusion that, with escape denied, those caught in the trap died in profusion.

Modern battle re-enactments suggest that one important explanation for the one-sidedness of the slaughter was the sheer crowding together of the encircled troops, making them an easy target and preventing them from fighting effectively. Imagine men dropping their weapons and vainly begging for mercy, or blindly clawing at or even cutting down their own comrades to try to get further into the heart of the press, away from the executioners and towards an illusory way out.

The campaign to Vercellae (101 BC)

The Cimbri (cf. Florus 1.38.18, who thought that the Tigurini accompanied them) were to skirt the northern foothills of the Alps and force an entry into Italy from the north-east, while the rest were to march through Liguria and the coastal route to Italy, first attacking Marius: a classic pincer-movement. But a number of points are worrisome. First of all, when and where was this

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88 Note the possibility of the creation by Roman writers of double battles here.
89 Liv. Per. 68: 200,000 killed and 90,000 captured; Plut. Mar. 21.2: 100,000 captured and killed; Oros. 5.16: destruction of the Tigurini and Ambrones.
tactic decided? Plutarch's account should alert us again to some major logistical problems. He says (Mar. 15.5) that

the Cimbri were held up by various delays, but the Teutones and Ambrones set out at once and soon came into view.

Even if the Teutonic/Ambrones group expected a hard fight against Marius' army before they could get fully under way, it is easy to see that their route was far shorter than that of the Cimbric group. The Cimbri should have begun their march first. Plutarch also states that this Cimbric group was to proceed to Noricum - to the east of the Alps, where the main routes south are via Brenner and Villach. However, then we are told (Mar. 23.1) that, 'within a few days' of the victory at Aix, Marius heard that his consular colleague Catulus was also in the field against the Cimbri. Catulus had 'marched his army into the Italian plain and placed his army behind the river Adige.' Does this mean that the Romans were facing northeast towards Noricum on a defensive line just north of the Po, where the Adige enters the Adriatic? Not according to Plutarch, who appears to place the Romans in positions much higher up the Adige valley, directly north of Verona. Plutarch describes forts on the far bank of the river, fords and a bridge. The Cimbri came down from the passes to the Roman position and Catulus led what was (depending on the source) either a strategic withdrawal, or a chaotic scramble for safety. Plutarch describes naked warriors scaling the snowy heights and sliding down the slopes towards the Romans on their shields (Plut. Mar. 23.3). Then there is a confused account of the river being dammed by the Cimbri, who broke down hills, bits of cliff and floated down tree trunks. This looks like an attempt to break Catulus' bridge and so isolate the fort on the far bank of the Adige, which indeed fell to the enemy who, however, allowed the Romans to depart under a truce. Where was this defensive line? Livy (Per. 68) also states that Catulus was attempting to block the Alpine passes and had garrisoned a fort, later lost, at the Assis river (another name for the Adige). This does mean, of course, that the Cimbri marched only as far as Raetia. The battle at Aquae Sextiae took place in mid-summer (Plut. Mar. 21.3), before the autumn and winter rains, at about the same time as the consular elections in which Marius was re-elected to his fifth consulship (Mar. 22.3). Catulus' engagement with the Cimbri was later in the year, if Plutarch is right to describe snowy conditions at higher levels, but it cannot have yet been winter. This allows only a matter of weeks for the German pincer-movement to be sealed. The biggest problem therefore is how could the Cimbri have reached any of these passes on the eastern side of the Alps when
they left after the Teutonic/Ambrones group? Moreover, they had spent four years in marching from Noricum into Helvetia between 113 and 110, yet Plutarch and Livy are suggesting that it took only a matter of days in 102 to march from near Arles to the Adige river. The answer seems simple. The Cimbri cannot have marched all the way to Noricum and the Adige valley, although specified by Plutarch and Livy. The Cimbri were marching with wagons and families, and this was not an army on a forced march. Yet a pincer-movement could have been attained by far less marching.

The next problem involves Vercellae as the site of a battle between the Cimbri and the Romans. Battles usually take place along the line of a campaign route, whether an invasion or a defence. And although Plutarch says (Mar. 25.3) that Manius specified the place of engagement, it is not normal for opposing armies to move to a playing-field to fight one another. Modern Vercelli lies in the upper reaches of the Po Valley, about 250 kms from the Alpine passes from Noricum or the Adige valley. Catulus had engaged the Cimbri in the autumn of 102 – perhaps as late as November. The battle at Vercellae took place after the summer solstice (Plut. Mar. 26.4). The Cimbri were therefore in northern Italy for roughly seven months, which would have allowed them plenty of time to drift west back into the highlands where, says Plutarch (Mar. 26.4), they were used to the cold conditions. It is nonetheless a surprising move since they had just marched from the west. Would they have wandered back into the Alps when the richer lands of the Po valley lay all around them, and when the Romans seem to have regrouped much further to the south? Modern Vercelli is not an obvious choice for a battle, even if the Cimbri were seeking the whereabouts of the Teutonic/Ambrones group. Why did they dawdle in the Po valley when greater riches awaited them in Italy?

In antiquity it was fairly rare for armies and their numerous followers to move around in the winter months; and that rarity should surely indicate that the Cimbri wintered in one place. If that place was in or near Vercelli, it would also mean that the invaders did not come down any of the eastern

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21 It is worth remembering that the army of Antigonus took nearly a month to march 590 kms in the winter of 317/6 from Susa to Ecbatana (A.B. Bosworth, The Legacy of Alexander [Oxford 2002] 118); and that A. Catinius (cos. 58) took about two months to march from Pelusium to Alexandria, a distance of just 320 kms in 56 (M. Siani-Davies, Cicero’s Speech ‘Pro Rabirio Postumo’ [Oxford 2001] 30). Furthermore, in AD 69, the emperor Vitellius spent several months on the road moving at a leisurely pace from the Rhine to Rome, while his generals Fabius Valens and Allienus Cacina took roughly ten weeks to arrive at Bedriacum from the northern frontier.
Alpine passes or down or across the Adige river, but instead had marched up the Rhone valley to Lake Geneva, crossed the Alps by way of the Great St Bernard Pass and into the Po valley from the northwest and not the northeast. This flies in the face of the ancient evidence which seems quite specific - except that it is impossible.\textsuperscript{22} The route via Lake Geneva and Great St Bernard still allowed for the deployment of the Germanic pincer-movement and also for the late departure of the Cimbric group. It still took the Cimbrı nearly three months from somewhere near Arles to the head of the Po valley by this shorter route. They had expected the Teutonic/Ambrones group to be in the Po valley ahead of them, and so were caught unprepared when Marius produced captive Teutones in chains. These had escaped from Aquae Sextiae only to be captured in the territory of the Sequani (Plut. Mar. 24.4). Significantly, the lands of the Sequani lie in the upper reaches of the Rhone valley, precisely the route by which the Cimbrı may have marched. It is possible that the survivors of Aquae Sextiae hoped to catch up with their allies. The Sequani, on the other hand, would have been only too happy to hand them over to the Romans, especially if they had been obliged to allow the Cimbrı free passage through their lands.

At this point it should be noted that Campi Raudii, the site of the battle of Vercellæ, may be nowhere near modern Vercelli and may be much further east.\textsuperscript{23} Florus, whose work is taken from Livy, states (1.38.13) that the Cimbrı spent time in Venetia, which would place them north of the Adige river and so would also support Plutarch's evidence, and that the climate and abundant supplies here made the Germans soft. But Florus also refers to the Cimbrı crossing the Tridentine Alps in winter before crossing the river Athesis (1.38.12).\textsuperscript{24} Of the battle at the Raudian Field Florus says only that it was very broad. Anywhere in the Po valley would suit that vague description. There is also a suggestion that the battle actually took place near modern Ferrara.\textsuperscript{25} However, in the aftermath of victory, a colony was founded at

\textsuperscript{22} A tributary of the Po near modern-day Milan, and not a stone's throw away from Vercellæ, is today called the Adda, which might possibly account for later confusion.
\textsuperscript{23} Thus OCD\textsuperscript{11}113 = OCD\textsuperscript{3}1587.
\textsuperscript{24} It is possible that the 'tridentine' or 'three-pronged' is somehow related to Florus' earlier statement (1.38.1) that the Cimbrı, Teutones and Tigrini were fugitives from the north whose land had been flooded by the ocean and who had been forced to migrate. The fate of these three tribes is then recounted. The Teutones were destroyed at Aquae Sextiae, the Cimbrı at Vercellæ, the Tigrini, a 'reserve force in Noricum', just disappeared, according to Florus. 'Tridentine' may also describe the town of Trento at the southern end of the Adige valley as it emerges from the Alps.
\textsuperscript{25} Scullard (note 15) 399.
Eporedia (Ivrea), near modern Vercelli, which commands the north-western Alpine approaches to Italy. The battle is unlikely to have taken place many miles from this new settlement, since it was populated with veterans of the recent campaign and, no doubt, newly obtained slave labour. Its position was surely designed to prevent a repetition of recent events.

The options are becoming clear. First, a Germanic war council somewhere near Paris, where a decision was reached whereby the Cimbri (perhaps with the Tigrini) were to march to Italy via the Alps while the Teutones (and the Ambrones) were to march down the Rhone, then proceed to Italy via Liguria. The pincer-movement now begins to make sense, even if the Cimbri were late in their departure, providing Marius' camp was not at Arles, but north of Valence. The Cimbri could, at a pinch, have made it all the way to Noricum or Raetia and then down the Adige valley. It must also be assumed that the Romans, through good military intelligence, knew of this plan in order to guard this particular pass and not any of the many others. The Teutones, then, also had a much longer march down almost the entire length of Gaul, along the east bank of the Rhone, bypassing Marius' camp near the confluence of the Isère and Rhone, and were only caught by the Romans at Aix, about 200 kms further south. Second, a Germanic war-council near Marius' camp at Arles - it is quite possible that the Cimbri did not return to the Seine valley from Spain - where the pincer-movement was adopted. A drastic change in the route of the Cimbri would then have to be accepted. The Teutones still went for Liguria, but the Cimbri went via the Rhone valley and into the Duania valley, which leads into the upper reaches of the Po. The sources may, therefore, be hopelessly corrupt, and have little or no value for trying to recreate the military campaigns of the Cimbri Wars. On balance, since the literary sources are so specific, the first option ought to be preferred, but that the Cimbri reached Raetia and not Noricum before their eruption into Italy.

Events in Hispania Citerior

Meanwhile in the Iberian peninsula, there is total silence, but can it be assumed that all was well? Far from it, since there are tell-tale signs of a great disaster. While Marius was holding defensive positions along the Rhone and, from 102, Catulus was in the Po valley, a major slave-rebellion had disrupted Sicily from 104, which soon had an adverse impact on basic food-supplies to Rome, which in turn destabilised domestic politics. It is no wonder that notices of events in Iberia are hard to recover, although Livy for one must have covered these. Only the epitomes remain and they tell next to nothing,
since the writer was concerned firstly with Marius, secondly with the suppression of the slaves, and finally with domestic politics. Disasters could easily have been missed. And other possible useful sources such as Diodorus or even Dio are at best fragmentary for this period.

Iberia had been far from stable even in the decade before the Cimbri and their allies crossed the Pyrenees in 105/4. A proconsul had been killed in battle about 113/12, roughly at the same time as Carbo’s defeat at Noraia. Another proconsul triumphed ex Hispania ulteriore and the troublemakers were probably Lusitani. M. Marius, younger brother of Gaius, governed Ulterior late in the 2nd century (App. Ib. 100) and conducted another campaign against the Lusitani. It looks as if the peninsula was ripe for revolt just as the Cimbri were making their way down the Rhone valley. The epitome of Livy (Per. 67) states clearly enough that:

Cimbri vastatis omnibus, quae inter Rhodanum et Pyrenaeum sunt, per saltum in Hispaniam transgressi ibique multa loca populati a Celtiberis fugati sunt, reversique in Galliam in Vellocassis et Teutonis coniunxerunt.

The Cimbri destroyed everything between the Rhone and the Pyrenees, and crossed into Iberia by the pass and there devastated many places before they were defeated by the Celtiberi and returned into Gaul and joined the Teutones in the land of the Vellocasses.

This means that Narbo Martius and Nemausus were sacked, but also that towns south of the Pyrenees were also destroyed. And here the fate of Emporon and Rhode, Barcino, Ilerda and even Tarraco, among the Greco-Roman settlements, although unknown, was probably grim. The Celtiberians obviously resented the presence of the Cimbri and saw them off. This is also of interest since the Germanic tribes had inflicted several defeats on the Romans, but were themselves beaten by an Iberian tribe. The Celtiberians must have been formidable, and as events later illustrate, they were certainly a more enduring enemy of Rome.

Appian (Ib. 99) gives a further clue to the immensity of this disaster.

When the Cimbri invaded Italy, and Sicily was torn by the second slave rebellion, the Romans were too preoccupied to send troops to Spain, but sent legates to settle the war as best they could.
Which war? Does this refer to the campaigns against the Lusitani which must have included Roman legions? Or does this refer to a greater menace which needed full scale attention after the campaign to Vercellae?

When the Cimbri were driven out T. Didius was sent to Spain, and he killed about twenty thousand Arevaci. He also removed Termes ... from its strong position into the plain, and ordered its people to live without walls. He also besieged Colenda which he captured after eight months and sold all its inhabitants, the women and children too.

The Arevaci were not Lusitani, nor did they live anywhere near the borders of Hispania Ulterior. This tribe lived in northern central Iberia, south of the river Ebro, but closer to the province of Hispania Citerior. Titus Didius was governor of Hispania Citerior, and his seniority (cos. 98) appears to highlight a crisis, since he was the first consular proconsul here in over a decade; and within a year Hispania Ulterior also received a consular governor in P. Licinius Crassus (cos. 97). Moreover, in an era when extended commands, although not extraordinary, were comparatively scarce, Didius was maintained in Hispania Citerior for four and a half years while Crassus’ command extended for three and a half years. The gravity of the situation has gone largely unrecorded, but it must have been fuelled by the Cimbrian presence, and although the Celtiberians reacted against it, further success was possibly encouraged by the belief that Rome faced defeat at the hands of the Germanic tribes. The highly defensive attitude of the Roman armies and their absence or evacuation from Spain merely acted as an additional spur. Both Didius and Crassus celebrated triumphs for the victories in Spain in June 93. The successor to what was probably a single Spanish command was C. Valerius Flaccus (cos. 93) who remained in his provincia for over twelve years, a command without precedent in the Republican period, before he too celebrated a triumph. Appian says (Ib. 100) that Flaccus also killed 20,000 Celtiberians and sacked the town of Belgida. A twelve-year command against mostly northern Iberian tribes during the Social War and the civil unrest in Italy during the 80s shows the extent of the resilience of anti-Roman sentiment. And after Flaccus’ departure, Sertorius was able to exploit extreme antipathy towards Rome. Iberia’s pacification only really began after 70 BC.

Didius is also supposed to have sacked another, unnamed, town (App. Ib. 100).

Compare Aquillius’ command of two and a half years in Sicily, Marius’ command against Jugurtha which lasted four years, and his command against the Cimbri and Teutones in southern Gaul, which lasted from early in 104 to the mid-summer of 102.
The ancient sources and the evidence they contain seem to obfuscate the seriousness of the Cimbrian Wars and their impact on Iberia. For example, the Germanic tribesmen are described as 'labby' (Oros. 5.16) under the heat of the sun or when they spent time living off the land in the Veneto (Flor. 1.38.13). Plutarch (Mar. 26) says that the Cimbri were famous for being able to withstand the cold not the heat, yet these same tribesmen had marched up and down the length of Gaul and spent years in the heat of Iberia. Was this characterisation of, on the one hand, frightening barbarians and, on the other hand, of intemperate buffoons meant to serve a purpose? The Romans could be beaten by the first but surely not by the second. Why does some of the evidence seem so implausible? Marius was proclaimed sole victor of the Cimbrian wars by a very relieved *populus Romanus*, but perhaps some writers sought to belittle his achievements, hence the diminution in the calibre of the opponents - unable to stand the heat, over-indulgent, bathing in hot springs. Livy, Florus, Plutarch and even Orosius could see the magnitude of the victories, but still transmitted some rather nonsensical material. It could have come from Antias, better still, it could have come from Sulla's memoirs. He was present in southern Gaul and at Vercellae and his work was still read in the 2nd century AD. It shows that it is wise to be alert to source contamination.

At the end of it all, southern Gaul was rebuilt and the towns and harbours along the Mediterranean coast regained their prosperity, but it is well worth observing that whereas Gallia Narbonensis (modern Provence) is considered a symbol of early and vigorous Romanisation, not to mention the fusion of Greek and Roman culture, in the last years of the 2nd century BC, a great and sustained disaster affected this region and that immediately to the south (modern French and Spanish Catalonia). I would suggest that not only was the Cimbrian War at the end of the 2nd century BC the greatest challenge to Roman supremacy in the west since the Hannibalic invasion, but that it also triggered a further thirty years of instability in Spain, a region which was crucial to the Empire's survival. The reportage of events at this time is not only limited and influenced by topical elements and even ancient propaganda, but modern political boundaries have tended to obscure the impact of the Germanic tribes on several vital regions of the Roman Empire.

Postscript

Of further interest is the fact that, after Vercellae, Marius was not offered what could have become a very prestigious command in Spain. He clearly knew the region having served at Numantia, and then perhaps as propraec-
torian governor there\textsuperscript{28} and his brother had also served here. Clearly his popularity had suffered as a result of his involvement in the sedi
tio of Saturninus and Glauvia in 100. He was probably already in Asia when Didius was posted to Hispania Citerior.\textsuperscript{29} Once the Cimbric threat had been removed, the war against the Celtiberians may have been regarded as a regional conflict rather than a world war.

**ADDENDUM: PROCONSULS IN SPAIN (112-92 BC)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ulterior</th>
<th>Citerior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>112 (?) L. Calpurnius Piso Fugi† (App. Il 99)</td>
<td>Q. Fabius Labeo (late 2nd century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111 (?) Ser. Sulpicius Galba (cos. 108)</td>
<td>M'. Serrius (late 2nd century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110 (?) Ser Sulpicius Galba</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 109 (?) Q. Servilius Caepio (cos. 106) | 108 Q. Servilius Caepio (triu. _ex Hispania_)
| 108 Q. Servilius Caepio (triu. _ex Hispania_) | |
| 102 (?) M. Marius (App. Il 100) | T. Didius (cos. 98)
| 101 (?) M. Marius | (Obseq. 47)
| 100 L. Cornelius Dolabella (pr. 100) | T. Didius
| 99 L. Cornelius Dolabella (triu. _ex Hispania ulteriore_) | T. Didius
| 98 | T. Didius (triumphed _ex H. de Celtiberiis_)
| 97 P. Licinius Crassus (cos. 97) | C. Valerius Flaccus (cos. 93)
| 96 P. Licinius Crassus | C. Valerius Flaccus (App. Il 100)
| 95 P. Licinius Crassus | C. Valerius Flaccus
| 94 P. Licinius Crassus (triu. _de Lucianeis_) | C. Valerius Flaccus
| 93 P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica (pr. 93) | |
| 92 | |
| 91 | |
| 90 | |

\textsuperscript{28} Plut. _Mar._ 6.1; _MRR_ 1.534; cf. Evans (note 16) 5 n. 12, 54-57.

\textsuperscript{29} Evans (note 16) 1.27.
81 (triumphed *de*<sup>30</sup> *Celtiberis*)

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<sup>30</sup> His command may originally have been for both Spanish provinces (*MRR* 3.211), if Nasica was a legate of Crassus (*MRR* 3.72). A twelve-year proconsulship seems virtually certain.
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