

**THE BATTLE SCENES
ON THE COLUMN OF MARCUS AURELIUS**

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ON THE COLUMN OF MARCUS AURELIUS

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the battle scenes of the column of Marcus Aurelius (Rome, late 2nd century AD), which are analysed from three main points of view: from the viewpoint of composition, as representations of historical events, and as bearers of message to the contemporary viewer. As works of art, the battle scenes of the Marcus column diverge significantly from both the established classical tradition of battle art, and also from the battle scenes on the column of Trajan. This identifies them as novel, original works created for the purpose of adorning the new monument. Detailed analysis of the figure types making up the scenes also indicates a connection to the contemporary sarcophagus industry based in Rome, suggesting that it was from here that the designer(s) and/or carvers of the column came. As representations of historical events, the battle scenes prove to be very poor evidence, whether from the view of military equipment, troop behaviour in battle, or in comparison to the few literary descriptions of the battles of Marcus' wars. This contrasts sharply with the representation of battle on the column of Trajan. Finally, and as has been noted by scholars, the scenes of battle on the Marcus column present a remarkably violent depiction of combat. However, this can be shown to be reflective not only of the nature of Marcus' wars but also of a much harsher set of standards for the treatment of rebellious enemies. Thus, the message of the column's battle scenes is one which would correspond well with the presumed viewpoint of a contemporary Roman.

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Introduction

Today, the column of Marcus Aurelius (Fig. 1.1) stands in a broad piazza beside the Via del Corso in Rome, which still follows the route of the ancient Via Flaminia (Fig. 1.2). The monument consists of a marble column 100 Roman feet tall, perched atop a 40-foot pedestal and crowned by a statue of the emperor.¹ Inside the column is a spiral staircase (Fig. 1.3), by means of which a visitor can climb up to a narrow platform atop the capital. The exterior surface of the column is carved with a single, continuous helical frieze in high relief (Fig. 1.4), which shows scenes of military actions by the Romans against barbarian peoples.

In ancient times the column of Marcus Aurelius was easily the tallest and most prominent object on the northern Campus Martius. In the 4th-century regionary catalogues of the city of Rome it is associated with a temple of the deified Marcus² and, although there is no solid archaeological proof, the column is generally thought to have

¹ Petersen (1896: 2) felt that the restored wording of *CIL* 6.1585a, *colu[mnam centenariam divorum] / Marci et Faustinae*, indicated the presence of two statues; all other references are to Marcus alone. The modern statue is of St. Paul, erected in the late 16th century (see Colini 1955: 35).

² Both the *Curiosum urbis Romae* and the *Notitia urbis Romae* list a *templum (divi –Not.) Antonini et columnam coelidem altam pedes CLXXV s(emis) gradus intus habet CCIII fenestras LVI* (*Curiosum* and *Notitia* Regio IX, line 19; see Jordan 1871-1907: 2.2.539-574).

stood in the courtyard of this temple.³ Neither the column nor the supposed temple stood in isolation. Immediately to the south was the temple of the divine Hadrian, to the west was the column and memorial altar to Antoninus Pius, and to the north-west were two further memorial altars, one of which was possibly dedicated to Marcus himself.⁴ The significance of these monuments in relation to the Marcus column will be discussed in Chapter 1.

The Marcus column has been much damaged (blank areas in Fig. 1.5 indicate damaged sections of the frieze) and its base has been entirely resurfaced with new marble, but the carvings are still for the most part clearly visible. It is this great helical frieze which has attracted most scholars to the monument, and no wonder, for at well over two hundred meters in length, it presents a wealth of extraordinarily varied sculptural detail. The frieze of the Marcus column appears to take for its subject the wars of the emperor against various Germanic barbarians north of the Danube. The chronology of these wars is notoriously complex, for it must be based on fragmentary and scattered sources.⁵ Nonetheless, the bare outlines are clear. Conflict began in the late 160s AD, but the bitter low-point was reached in 170 when, following a Roman defeat, the barbarians invaded Italy itself. Marcus marshalled his armies and counterattacked, winning in a series of campaigns two victorious acclamations, the first against the

³ See most recently Sediari 1997: 216, and Maffei 1993: 303. A number of ambiguous architectural fragments found in the supposed area of the temple have been tentatively identified with this structure; most are collected in *Carta Archeologica di Roma* II, 189 and 191-2.

⁴ The differing orientation of the column base and these altars, along with the substantial distance between the two, has led more than one scholar to doubt the identification (e.g., Maffei 1993: 303, and Frischer 1983-82: 74). However, the visual connection between the two monuments (see Chapter 1) does appear to argue strongly in its favour.

⁵ For recent (and disagreeing) studies of the chronology of Marcus' wars, see Wolff 1990 and Kerr 1995. For a comprehensive narrative treatment see Birley 1993: 163-183.

Germans in 172 and the second against the Sarmatians in 175, for which he celebrated a double triumph in Rome in 176.⁶ Trouble on the frontier began again almost immediately, and Marcus was compelled to return to the Danube in 178, where he remained until his death in 180.⁷

A chronological (or pseudo-chronological) order appears to prevail in the frieze. The narration begins at the bottom with a scene of the Romans crossing the Danube, ends at the top with the expulsion of barbarians, and is divided in the middle by a personification of Victory (Fig. 6.5). Between these framing elements are depicted scenes of the Roman army and its emperor at war: marches, sacrifices, speeches, parleys, sieges, battles, the taking of prisoners, and executions. All these events, and more besides, appear repeatedly over the long, winding course of the frieze. They appear for the most part in small, discrete units called "scenes," each more or less distinct from its neighbour. The average size of a scene is one-eighth of a turn around the column shaft, though there are also many scenes that occupy a full one-quarter of a winding. The modern system of division identifies 115 such scenes, in the course of twenty windings of the frieze.⁸

Before beginning the survey of research on the Marcus column, another monument must be introduced: the column of Trajan. The Marcus column has long existed in the artistic and scholarly shadow of this earlier monument, which was dedicated in 113 AD to honour the emperor Trajan for his two victories over the Dacians

⁶ "Germanicus" appellation: *HA Commodus* 11.14; "Sarmaticus" appears on coins in 175; on the triumph, *HA Marcus* 16.1-2, 27.4.

⁷ *HA Marcus* 27.9-10, *HA Commodus* 12.6. See Morris (1952: 34-37) and Birley (1993: 198-210) for discussions of the main events of the later wars and their sources.

(in 102 and 105; see Chapter 4). An architectural and artistic singularity in its time, Trajan's column is in many respects identical to that of Marcus. As will be seen (Chapter 1), it served as a model for the designers of the Marcus column, and in a similar manner the modern scholarship on it serves as a model for researchers working on the latter monument. As might be expected, this has often resulted in a significant lag in scholarship on the Marcus column. A simple but accurate impression of the relative scholarly interest in each monument can be gained by comparing the number of books published on each in the last century: eight for Trajan's column (four of which have appeared in the last quarter-century) and four for Marcus' (with about 50 years separating the latest two).⁹ The reasons for the discrepancy of interest are multiple, including the greater damage to and relatively lower quality of the Marcus column sculpture, and the much higher degree of detail shown on Trajan's column. The effect of these factors has been that Marcus column scholarship has depended heavily on theories developed first during the study of the column of Trajan.¹⁰

1. Previous Approaches to the Column of Marcus Aurelius:

⁸ The divisions used today are still those instituted by Petersen in his 1896 publication.

⁹ The main works on Trajan's column are Cichorius 1896/1900, Lehmann-Hartleben 1926, Zwicker 1941, Florescu 1969, Rossi 1971, Gauer 1977, Lepper and Frere 1988, Settis et al. 1988, and Coarelli 2000 (the smaller works of Monti 1980 and Richmond's 1982 reprint not included). For the Marcus column we have Petersen (ed.) 1896, Zwicker 1941, Caprino et al. 1955, and Scheid and Huet (eds.) 2000. Becatti's 1957 work on the column of Marcus Aurelius consists only of a very short text with no notes – its main focus is its seventy photographs. The same author (1960) treats both Marcus' and Trajan's columns in a work more focussed on the later columns in Constantinople.

¹⁰ An extreme example is Romanelli 1955, who in his study of the army on the Marcus column spends as much or more time discussing the evidence of Trajan's column – on whom see Lehmann-Hartleben 1956: 518.

The first major modern work on the column of Marcus Aurelius was that of the German scholars Petersen and Domaszewski, who also produced the first full photographic record of the frieze in 1896.¹¹ Supported by the Kaiser, their main purpose was to mine the column for information on the enemies of the Romans, the supposed ancestors of the modern Germans. In the course of his detailed description of the scenes, Petersen attempted to distinguish between what he saw as different races of barbarians, based on dress and facial characteristics: "Ja für uns das Wichtigste ist, die Gegner der Römer zu betrachten und nach ihrer Charakteristik zu unterscheiden."¹² Domaszewski, in the same volume, focussed on the historical aspect of the column. In answer to the most fundamental of historical questions about the column, he concluded that its frieze records the events of the years 171-175, with the Victoria in the middle marking Marcus' Germanic victory at the end of 172. The end of the frieze, according to this theory, then represented the Sarmatian victory of 175, after which Marcus celebrated a double triumph in Rome in 176. There was a major problem, however, with one scene, the famous Rain Miracle (scene XVI). This scene, which shows a Rain God drowning a barbarian host while Romans look on, is the only one on the column to represent more or less certainly a well-known event from the wars, which is recorded not only by Dio, the main Roman historian of the high empire, but also by others.¹³ Although the scene has very little correspondence to the details of the event described by Dio (see Chapter 6), the general connection is essentially beyond doubt. Dio says that this event was the cause of

¹¹ Petersen (ed.) 1896. For surveys of pre-19th century treatment of the column, see Colini (1955), with good coverage of the column in the Medieval period, and Huet (2000), which gives an account of the Renaissance and later periods, including a history of drawings, casts, and photographic recording efforts.

¹² Petersen 1896: 46. On this aspect of Petersen's work, see Beard 2000: 265-266.

Marcus' seventh imperial acclamation, which is marked on coins at Rome datable to 174.¹⁴ This poses a challenge to the theory that the frieze covers events of 171-175, because the Rain Miracle appears in the third of the column's twenty spirals. To maintain these dates would require that spirals 1-3 cover the years 171-174, and that spirals 4-20 all be devoted to the remainder of 174 and to 175; this causes a remarkable problem of imbalance (assuming that the frieze is strictly and proportionally chronological). Domaszewski attempted to solve this problem by creating a complex argument to show that Dio's text might be interpreted to suggest an alternative date of 172. However, he was not able to explain away Dio's connection of the event to Marcus' imperial acclamation, and nor for that matter have any subsequent scholars.¹⁵

The next major development in the study of the Marcus column also came from a German scholar, in the form of Max Wegner's lengthy art-historical study of the style of the column, which remains unsurplanted to this day.¹⁶ Wegner's purpose was not to study the art of the Marcus column *per se*, but rather to compare it with that of the column of Trajan in an attempt to define what he saw as a shift or a turning point in Roman art (a *Stilwandel*), occurring in the 2nd century AD. Wegner's achievement was to define the style of the column: painterly rather than sculptural; emphasis on the play of shadows in the deep drill-cuts and figural modeling; a striving to express motion and

¹³ Rain Miracle: Dio 72.8.1-3 and 72.10.1-4. For the other sources, see Chapter 6.5.

¹⁴ On the acclamation, Dio 72.10.4; for dating of coins with IMP VII, see Mattingly in *BMC IV*: cx. For a recent comprehensive treatment of the dating of the Rain Miracle see Wolff 1990: 11-19. Zwikker (1941: 206-219) also gives a thorough discussion of the problem, along with transcriptions of the sources; he concludes with a date of 172.

¹⁵ On this see most recently Wolff 1990: 14-15. Other work on the column in the decades after the publication of Petersen (ed.) 1896 include four articles that appeared in quick succession on the depiction of German villages (*Germania II and III* [1918 and 1919]), and Dodd's (1913) study of the chronology of Marcus' wars based on numismatic evidence.

power in the twisting and turning of figures.¹⁷ Architecture and landscape elements were subordinated to these emotive figures, and much more of the background was simply left blank. The next step was taken by Gerhard Rodenwaldt, who firmly linked the art of the Marcus column with a wider and deeper artistic trend of the late 2nd century.¹⁸ Rodenwaldt identified the main characteristics of this new style in the funerary reliefs of the lower classes; almost as an aside he identified many of their characteristics in the art of the Marcus column. The Marcus column, as the most prominent monument of late 2nd-century art in Rome, soon came to be identified as the key monument of the Antonine *Stilwandel*.¹⁹ Rodenwaldt's own words provide the best summary of his view of the column and its art:

"On the Column of Marcus some essentially new and peculiar elements, unknown to Flavian or Trajanic art, are apparent. In place of broad presentation there is a concentration of action, Roman pride of conquest, helpless barbarian submission, the solemn representation of the Emperor himself are strongly stressed, and a transcendental element comes into the scene depicting the [Rain] Miracle. The Italic centralizing method of composing single scenes and the un-classical repetition of identical figures, like those of marching legionaries, are employed to intensify effect. Lines and alternations of light and shadow heighten the expressive character of the whole work, the merit and artistic significance of which have for long been underrated. It is no transition, but rather a prelude to the last phase of ancient art. Its roots are struck deeper in the spiritual heritage of Rome than those of Trajan's Column, and yet it points towards the art of the future."²⁰

Rodenwaldt suggested that this new style was more than a natural development in art, removed from other concerns. To him, it was a manifestation of a change in mentality, in

¹⁶ Wegner 1931.

¹⁷ See especially his comparison of the two Victory figures, *ibid.* 63-71.

¹⁸ Rodenwaldt 1935 (for a resumé in English see Rodenwaldt 1936).

¹⁹ For example, Pallottino 1938: 34, Hamberg 1945: 158.

²⁰ Rodenwaldt 1936: 796.

how the Romans viewed the world, precipitated by a crisis of confidence and identity in the late 2nd century. In his view, formed in the uncertain environment of the years between the First and Second World Wars, the column's art was an antidote to uncertain times.

Zwikker made the next major contribution to the study of the Marcus column with his 1941 book on the historical interpretation of the frieze. Firm in the belief that the sculpture was a faithful historical record of events, he bolstered the argument that the frieze ended with the events of 175.²¹ The greatest hurdle to this dating, the Rain Miracle, he attempted to bypass by arguing that Dio had made an error in composition, and that the 7th imperial acclamation was in reality attached to another battle in a later year.²² He then proceeded to re-date the event by preferring the dating provided by another source, the 4th century *Chronicon* of Eusebius, and concluded that the event took place in 172. Neither Zwikker's side-stepping of Dio's testimony nor his favouring of the evidence of the *Chronicon* (which actually offers three different dates in different versions) has gained acceptance.²³

²¹ For Zwikker's historical interpretation of the frieze as whole, see idem (1941) 257-274. He takes the year 172 rather than 171 for its beginning, based on Dobias' (1932:132) association of scene III with a coin of 172 showing a bridge crossing (Zwikker 1941: 261).

²² Here Zwikker (1941: 217-219) argues that the imperial acclamation was not taken in earnest by Marcus when it was awarded to him by his soldiers in 172 as a result of the Miracle (as Dio relates), but that Dio, drawing his information from a secondary source, assumed that the event took place in Marcus' second campaign versus the Quadi, in 174, when Marcus did indeed accept a seventh imperial acclamation.

²³ Zwikker 1941: 214-215. The *Chronicon* of Eusebius exists in three main versions, each of which provides a different date: the translation of Hieronymus (St. Jerome; Helm 1984: 206-207) gives 173, the Armenian version gives 172, and the *Chronicon Paschale* dates the Miracle to 171 (for the latter two, see Schoene 1866: 172; the relevant excerpts are also given by Zwikker, 210-211, nn. 169-171). On the basis of Pertinax's whereabouts in these years (the *Chronicon* records him as present at the Miracle), Zwikker settles on 172 as the optimal year for the event (ibid., 215-217).

Zwicker's work was to be part one of a two-part examination of the column, of which the second volume would deal with the art of the frieze.²⁴ Unfortunately, however, this volume never appeared. This was a serious omission, for in the meantime the study of Trajan's column had already taken an important step forward with Lehmann-Hartleben's study of that column's art.²⁵ This represented a true advance, for Lehmann-Hartleben intended to investigate the actual structure of the column's narrative sculpture. The most enduring of his conclusions, one which later spurred significant advances in the study of both columns, was his demonstration that the vast bulk of the frieze was assembled from stock scene types, of which he identified six dominant themes. Over and over again we see representations of formal addresses to the soldiers, sacrifices, scenes of construction, reception of embassies, marches, and battles. Unfortunately, three-quarters of a century would go by until this type of analysis would be applied to the frieze of the column of Marcus Aurelius.²⁶

In the meantime, the column of Marcus Aurelius was photographed prior to being encased in a protective covering to avoid war damage in the 1940s. These photographs were eventually published in 1955, along with a series of essays designed to cover in general, if not in detail, the main features of the column: its architecture, historiography, art, military representations, and historical associations.²⁷ Their authors duly addressed these and other themes, but none of the contributions succeeded in breaking substantially new ground. In his 1956 review of this compilation, C. Vermeule wrote that a

²⁴ Zwicker 1941: 6.

²⁵ Lehmann-Hartleben 1926.

²⁶ Hölscher 2000.

²⁷ Caprino et al. 1955, with the relevant authors being Gatti, Colini, Pallottino, Romanelli, and Caprino.

"comprehensive study of the Marcus Column [...] must surely result from so many recent skirmishes."²⁸ This, however, was not to be, and instead the column's study again lapsed into inactivity.

It was the ongoing, progressive study of the column of Trajan that would eventually inspire a reassessment of the Marcus column. The first move in advancing the research on the column of Trajan was made in the 1970s by Gauer, who built on the scene-classification of Lehmann-Hartleben and demonstrated that his stock scenes tended to be arranged in standard, repetitive sequences.²⁹ The further elucidation and analysis of these sequences in the '80s and '90s by Hölscher and Settis resulted in a revolution in the understanding of the column's frieze.³⁰ The stock scenes of the column, in their opinion, were carefully calculated to embody key imperial virtues. They were organised into set sequences to form a framework to aid the viewer in deciphering their meaning. The most important part of this shift in the modern analysis of Trajan's column was towards questions of message and meaning. Discussion has focussed especially on the ancient observer of the column, and has led to speculation about what the column might have meant to him or her.

Meanwhile, in part because of these developments in the study of Trajan's column, interest began to gravitate back towards the Marcus column. One of the results was a reassessment by Wolff of the chronology of the frieze, and especially the Rain Miracle conundrum.³¹ Wolff stressed the unreliability of Eusebius' *Chronicon* and the

²⁸ Vermeule 1956: 317.

²⁹ Gauer 1977.

³⁰ Especially Hölscher 1980 and 1991, and Settis 1988.

³¹ Wolff 1990.

failure of attempts to "explain away" Dio's reference to the 7th imperial acclamation.³² The solution, he felt, is to maintain the date of 174 for the Miracle, and on this evidence to accept that the column begins its story in that year and carries on to 180, the year of Marcus' death on the front. The Victory figure then represents Marcus' double triumph of 176.

Another contribution of the 1990s was a groundbreaking study by Pirson of the message and meaning of the frieze.³³ Following the lead of the work of Hölscher and Settis on Trajan's column, Pirson set out to interpret the scenes of violence, including battle, on the column of Marcus Aurelius. Pirson concluded that the violence in these scenes was not random or intended as a critique of war, but instead was based on "a significant conception of Roman superiority."³⁴ These images of superiority "reflect the mentality of contemporaries and their need for self-affirmation in insecure times."³⁵ This line of inquiry has been pursued most recently by Hölscher, who builds on his work on Trajan's column and applies a similar analysis to the narrative structure of the Marcus column frieze.³⁶ The differences visible – in particular, the much less strict sequencing of standard scenes – indicates for him a dissolution of the order seen on Trajan's column. The cause of this, suggests Hölscher, is the appearance of a new mentality in the late 2nd century, coupled with the need to express a simpler and firmer message about the

³² Ibid., 11-12. Birley (1993: 171-174) retains the traditional date of 172, based on coins of that year which show Marcus carrying a thunderbolt. Most recently Motschmann (2002: 125-144) has also addressed the Rain Miracle in detail, but he is apparently unaware of the work of Wolff, sidesteps the problem of the association with Marcus' 7th imperial acclamation, and settles back on a date of 172 (ibid., 131-132).

³³ Pirson 1996; cf. also Hölscher 2000.

³⁴ Pirson 1996: 141-168 (quote from 141).

³⁵ Ibid., 174.

³⁶ Hölscher 2000.

enemies of Rome. What is at issue is not the glorification of Roman arms and institutions, but rather the humiliation and subjugation of her enemies. The choice of scenes was guided by the desire to present this novel message in as simple and straightforward a manner as possible.³⁷ The complex, highly structured narrative seen on Trajan's column had been rendered down to its simplest components on this successor monument.

Hölscher's study is part of a larger work, a collection of papers with the encompassing title of "Autour de la Colonne Aurélienne," published in the year 2000.³⁸ Ostensibly preoccupied with gesture, this volume draws together papers on a large range of subjects, including the architecture of the column, its historiography, the role of gesture in narrative, specific scene types such as marches, construction, and assemblies (with a focus on gestures of the individuals participating), optical devices, style, and visual language.³⁹ Some of the fourteen contributors base their work on earlier research on this column or that of Trajan – Martines having worked on the structure of both columns, Hölscher on narrative and message on Trajan's column, and Galinier on patterns of reading of that earlier monument. However, for the bulk of the contributors, the Marcus column is, to a greater or lesser degree, a new subject. While useful in detail, this diverse collection fails to address many fundamental problems: the date of the column, its function, the historicity of the events on its frieze, or the nature of its art broadly conceived. One can still write, as Vermeule did following the publication of Caprino et

³⁷ Hölscher 2000: 94-95.

³⁸ Scheid and Huet (eds.) 2000.

³⁹ Respectively, the papers of Martines, Huet, Galinier, Balty, Hanoune, David, Sauron, Elsner, and Beard.

al. in 1955, that the column of Marcus Aurelius remains sorely in need of comprehensive treatment.

2. Purpose and Methodology of the Present Study:

To begin with, it must be made clear that this study does not seek to fill the persistent lack of a fundamental study of the Marcus column. However, it does aim to take a few steps in that direction. This study is based on the proposition that research on the column, especially recently, has tended to run at times ahead of our basic understanding of the column itself and of its frieze. The column of Trajan has, since Lehmann-Hartleben's study of 1926, been subjected to repeated (though not necessarily sustained) art-historical scrutiny. As a result, much has been learned about how its frieze is composed, and this has led directly to analyses of the message which it embodies. Since Zwicker's failure to publish his promised second volume, no such study of the Marcus column has appeared, and with the exception of Hölscher's examination of its narrative structure, the art of the Marcus column and its individual scenes remain largely neglected. Other shortcomings in the study of the Marcus column can also be seen: military matters are often glossed over, and the debate over chronology has increasingly focussed on small aspects of particular scenes. The result of this is that new lines of inquiry are being pursued when issues of the actual genesis of the monument, its function, the reliability of its detail, and its very date remain largely uninvestigated, or at least unresolved. We do not know who created the frieze of the column of Marcus Aurelius, by what methods, or drawing on what resources.

The significance of these lacunae is potentially great. For the column of Marcus Aurelius is not a normal work of Roman art, any more than was the column of Trajan before it. The column of Trajan was, in its time, an absolute and entire novelty, both architecturally and artistically. Its artistic novelty did not stem merely from the curious decision to wind a figural frieze up the shaft of a column; rather, the very art of the frieze itself employs many elements and techniques of composition never before seen in the medium of sculpture (see Chapter 4). It appears, for all intents and purposes, to have been a novel work of substantial genius. About seventy years later, the designers of the Marcus column faced a challenging task. Theirs was the job of creating another such massive historical column, with only one precedent to guide them, and at a time when all those who might have worked on this original were most likely dead. However, there has been very little investigation of the challenges the designer(s) would have faced, or the methods used to overcome them.

In this study, two new but connected approaches to the analysis of the Marcus column are ventured. The first is to investigate the probable design process of the column, from conception to execution. The second and larger portion of this study will investigate the actual creation of the images in the frieze, the accuracy of their details, and their potential message to a contemporary viewer. To study all the images is beyond the scope of any single work. Therefore, a detailed analysis of a single recurring iconographic element has been settled on: the scenes of battle. The battle scenes were singled out as the potentially most fruitful iconographic element for detailed analysis for a number of reasons. First, battle art has a rich and extremely long-lived tradition in

ancient Greek and Roman art, and one for which there is a good deal of documentation, both in art and in literature. This rich tradition resulted in the development of trends in composition and detail, employed in different situations to express different messages. More importantly, the 2nd century AD provides one of the richest of all harvests of battle art from any period in the ancient world. Not only do we have the two columns of Trajan and Marcus at each end of the century, but in between there is a relative wealth of artistic depictions of battle. These come from Rome, but also from the provinces, from public monuments but also from the private sphere. A particular opportunity (though also a difficult problem) is posed by a remarkable series of battle-theme sarcophagi carved in Rome itself. The style of carving of some of these battle sarcophagi is very similar to that of the Marcus column's frieze, suggesting a potentially close connection between the two. Thus battle scenes present a particular and in many ways unique opportunity to study the relationship of private and public art in the late 2nd century AD. All of this offers a wealth of information on the immediate artistic context of the Marcus column's battle scenes. Finally, battle art is heavily laden with meaning. By its very nature it is an intense and dramatic subject. It is the place where Roman and barbarian come into closest and most violent contact, it is a field where the qualities of groups and individuals can be most vividly brought out. In sum, the battle scenes provide excellent material for the detailed, technical analysis of the art of the Marcus column, and they also provide an opportunity to analyse its message and meaning.

In the following work, after an investigation of the probable planning process of the column's frieze, the battle scenes of the Marcus column are analysed from three

points of view. 1) From the viewpoint of their composition, with a goal of understanding through formal analysis the artistic methods used in their creation and their relation to battle art past and contemporary. 2) As representations of historical events, to evaluate their historical content both in detail and in the broader context of specific events of the wars and of 2nd century battle in general. 3) As potential bearers of message, to interpret their meaning to their designer(s) and the message they may have conveyed to the contemporary Roman viewer.

Chapter 1 is dedicated to reconstructing the most probable main steps in the creation of the column, from the first decision to build it to its final execution in stone. No records of this process have been left, but there are a limited number of ancient sources concerning other monuments from which parallel information can be drawn. More importantly there is the column itself, and its model, the column of Trajan. The survival of both monuments presents the opportunity of putting ourselves, as it were, in the shoes of the designer(s) of the Marcus column. It is thus possible to assess how and to what extent Trajan's column was used as a model for the creation of its successor, and at the same time to identify the places where the Marcus column designer(s) came up with new methods. The method of comparison is based primarily on considerations of architecture and of the initial challenges of laying out the helical frieze on the column shaft. This investigation provides the basis for the main portion of this study, a detailed assessment of the battle scenes which appear on the frieze.

Chapter 2 lays the fundamental foundation for the analysis of the battle scenes. Each battle scene is analysed on two basic levels. First, overall composition, including

factors such as placement in the scene of combatants, the use – or not – of military formations, and the relative actions of each side. Different methods of composition can reveal borrowing from earlier traditions or pinpoint departures into new territory. Next the figure types: how the individual combatants were depicted and the poses they adopt. Fighting figures could be created by drawing on traditional images, of which there was a large stock dating back to Hellenistic and Classical Greece, or by employing novel creations, which are easily identified once the traditional repertoire is known. The use of traditional figure types can demonstrate firm links between a group of monuments or artworks; for example, figure types on 2nd century battle sarcophagi link them to Hellenistic prototypes (see Chapter 5). On the other hand, the adoption of novel types, especially when traditional ones were readily available, points to a change in the working methods of the artists, and consequently in their goals. Thus the remarkable originality of many of the figure types on Trajan's column points either to innovative design or to the borrowing of images from another medium (Chapter 4). Careful assessment and classification of these features for each battle scene allows for concise, penetrating comparisons to be made between different scenes, whether on a single monument (such as the Marcus column itself) or between distinct monuments or time periods.

Chapter 3 begins the task of setting the Marcus column battle scenes in their artistic and historical context, by examining the background of battle art in the ancient world, up to the second century AD. The main trends in scene composition and figure type are outlined, with a focus on identifying the most notable and significant developments in the genre over the centuries.

Chapter 4 focuses in depth on the battle art of the second century, including the column of Trajan. A similar approach to that used in Chapter 3 is employed here, but greater attention is given to detail, and an attempt is made to understand the breadth and depth of the battle art which formed the immediate context for the battle scenes on the Marcus column.

Chapter 5 then treats the special case of the battle sarcophagi, which date (so it seems) to both before and after the column. The sarcophagi are worthy of special attention not only because they were created in Rome itself, and at more or less the same time as the column, but also because they have more specific connections to it. In particular, the iconography of one group of battle sarcophagi appears to be derived from Marcus' Germanic wars, and the style of these sarcophagi is often so close to that of the column sculpture that some scholars have proposed a direct connection by means of common sculptural workshops or, perhaps, carvers.

All of these investigations are brought together in Chapters 6 and 7. In Chapter 6, the Marcus column's battle imagery is discussed in the light of both traditional battle art and of the battle art of the 2nd century AD. The goal of this chapter is twofold: first, to assess the artistic place of the column's battle scenes, and second, to evaluate the historicity of the battle depictions. The first goal is pursued through comparison of artistic features (composition, figure types) of the column's battles with those of contemporary and earlier monuments. The second goal is pursued by comparing aspects of the battle scenes to what we know of the actual reality of battle in the 2nd century. For arms and equipment, this involves comparing the depictions of these items on the column

with archaeological finds, and to a lesser degree with literary sources. The broader questions of the actual conduct of battle are more difficult to come to grips with, since literary sources must be relied on almost exclusively. Nonetheless, it is possible to a certain degree to reconstruct how Roman armies of the time were deployed and how they fought, and this information can be compared to what we see in the column's frieze. These questions occupy the second part of Chapter 6.

Finally, Chapter 7 attempts to tie these analyses together into a unified interpretation of the meaning and message of the battle scenes and of the column as a whole. After an assessment of how the use (or neglect) of traditional battle imagery could affect the message conveyed by battle art, the possible intentions of the designer(s) of the Marcus column battle scenes are investigated. This follows the logic that the choices and decisions of the designer(s) give hints at the message they intended the battle scenes to convey. Secondly, an attempt is made to reconstruct the possible message received by the viewer. The first step is to assess just what the ancient viewer could see. The second is to reconstruct the viewer's likely mindset, given the circumstances of the late 2nd century AD and common Roman attitudes to wars of the sort depicted on the column of Marcus Aurelius.

Chapter 1: Genesis and Planning of the Column

The sculpted frieze of the column of Marcus Aurelius must be viewed within the broader context of the genesis and planning process of the monument as a whole. The frieze is, after all, a component of the larger monument, and its precise role in that monument is far from clear. To understand its creation and to appreciate its purpose as seen in the eyes and minds of its creators, we ought first to examine the monument of which it forms a part. The purpose of this chapter is to uncover as much information as possible about the planning process of the column and about how the frieze was incorporated into that process. I begin with a brief consideration of the decision to build the column and the reasons behind it, and follow this with an examination of the planning process of the frieze itself.

The first part of this discussion is naturally connected closely with the problematic question of the date of the monument. The scenario advanced here is based on a date of the year 176 for the decision to erect the monument, not an entirely novel idea, but certainly one that has fallen very much out of favour.¹ The foundation of the following argument is that the Marcus column should be assessed first and foremost on

¹ This potentially conflicts with what I see as the most probable date of the Rain Miracle, AD 174 (see Introduction.1, and Wolff 1990) – but only if one assumes that the sequence of images on the column is rigidly chronological. This is a very big assumption, and this study finds nothing to support it. Birley (1993, Appendix on the sources) appears to be inclined towards an association with Marcus' triumph.

the basis of its function. Evidence for this function is most appropriately taken from the models on which the monument itself was based: primarily Trajan's column, to a lesser extent the column of Antoninus Pius. The following discussion will show that the hypothesis of a date of 176 is historically appropriate and helps to explain a number of remarkable features of the column's architecture and topographical placement.

1. The Decision to Build:

In July of 175 Marcus, engaged on the northern front, was compelled by the news of the revolt of Avidius Cassius to make peace with the Quadi and Marcommani and set out for the east to suppress the insurrection.² Cassius was slain before Marcus could reach Syria, but Marcus continued his march through the East all the way to Alexandria. During the return journey to Rome, tragedy struck in the form of the death of Faustina, Marcus' beloved wife, causing the emperor great grief.³ On his return to Rome Marcus had the double duty of celebrating his triumph over the Germans and Sarmatians, and of mourning at the funeral of his wife. Faustina's body was cremated on a great pyre on the Campus Martius and her ashes laid to rest in the Mausoleum of Hadrian; on the site of her cremation a commemorative funerary altar was built.⁴

It is likely that the column of Marcus Aurelius was voted at that time by the Senate and people of Rome to honour the emperor for his recent triumph, and also in part

² Dio 72.17.1; *HA Marcus* 25.1.

³ Dio 72.30.1.

⁴ The pyre and altar are both shown on contemporary coins: *BMC IV* 1552 etc. for the pyre, 1580 for the altar.

to commemorate his departed wife.⁵ The monument has aspects which connect it to both these events. Its triumphal aspects are the clearest. The column of Marcus Aurelius was designed in close imitation of the column of Trajan, both architecturally and artistically.⁶ Likewise the circumstances of 176 were similar to those of 107: a victorious emperor had returned to the capital having successfully executed two wars against a powerful barbarian enemy in the area of the Danube. After nearly three-quarters of a century of relative peace, Marcus' military greatness could easily be equated with that of Trajan. This attitude is hinted at in the *Historia Augusta*, which records the Marcommanic war as "a war which surpassed any in the memory of man."⁷ Thus it is not difficult to imagine that the Senate would have taken such an opportunity to vote Marcus a monument suitable to his accomplishments; not merely an arch following the precedent set for *triumphatores* of old (though Marcus seems to have received this honour too⁸), but a monumental column following the precedent set by the erection of one in honour of Trajan.⁹ This is a much more satisfying theory than the more commonly held belief that

⁵ A connection to Marcus' triumph was first advanced by Petersen (1896: 2), but has gained little following. Jordan-Ruwe (1990: 67-69) also argued for a date of 176, but later (1995: 89) recanted, arguing that the absence of the column on Marcus' coinage and the use of the term *columna divi Marci* in *CIL* 6.1585b argue against a date of 176; she then credits Commodus with the column (ibid. 108). However, Trajan's column did not appear on coins until after it was completed, and was also called *columna divi Traiani* after his death.

⁶ On the architectural debt of the Marcus column to that of Trajan, see Wilson Jones 1993; for a comparison of the friezes of the two monuments, see most recently Hölscher 2000.

⁷ *HA Marcus* 17.2: *bellum Marcomannicum, sed quantum nulla umquam memoria fuit*. Trans. D. Magie, Loeb.

⁸ The existence of at least one arch is attested by a number of panels of relief sculpture, eight set into the Arch of Constantine and three now in the Museo del Palazzo dei Conservatori, which include a representation of Marcus and Commodus (erased) in a triumphal chariot. See Ryberg 1967 and, for bibliography and more accurate descriptions of the panels, Koeppl 1986.

⁹ The date of the decision to erect Trajan's column is not attested in our sources, but is logically placed after Trajan's second Dacian victory, which is recorded along with the first in its sculpted frieze.

the column was voted only after the emperor's death in 180.¹⁰ Such a dating would require the assumption that the Romans of 180, wanting to honour an emperor on the occasion of his death, chose a type of monument which heretofore had been only erected to honour a living emperor on the occasion of a great triumph. The date of 176, when Marcus' wife was cremated, also provides a potential explanation for the connection between the column and Faustina which is recorded in an inscription of AD 193: *columnnam centenariam divorum Marci et Faustinae*.¹¹

The order of events may be hypothetically reconstructed as follows. The emperor had returned from a successful campaign with a double victory to his credit, and a dead wife to mourn. The Senate reacted by voting a suitably grand monument, and indeed, they would have had the benefit of much time to prepare this reaction, as Marcus completed his eastern tour following Cassius' abortive revolt. The monument would be made in the image of that erected in honour of the emperor Trajan on the occasion of his own second triumph over two generations ago. It would be erected along the Via Flaminia, in the Campus Martius and thus invoke parallels not only with Trajan's but also with the column of Antoninus Pius, set up by Marcus and Verus to honour their deceased father. Although shorter (50') and lacking both an internal stairway and an external

¹⁰ Advocated by, for example, Caprino *et al.* 1955: 18; Becatti 1957: 1; Richardson 1992: 95; Maffei 1993: 302; Davies 2000: 45-48; Elsner 2000: 253-255. Birley (1993: 252-253) feels Rossi's (1977) hypothesis may favour a dating of 172-175, but remains undecided.

¹¹ *CIL* 6.1585a, a letter of Adrastus, *procurator columnae*, to the emperor Septimius Severus. However, as an anonymous reader has pointed out to me, the base of the column of Antoninus Pius (see below) provides evidence for a monument (also a column) being able to commemorate a deceased empress fully twenty years after her death.

frieze, Pius' column did carry a statue of the emperor, and it was only a few hundred feet distant from the eventual site of the Marcus column (see Fig. 1.2).¹²

2. The Planning Process:

The decision to build the column of Marcus Aurelius was presumably made public by the Senate in the form of a decree. We do not have any record of this decree, but it is possible that the parallel of a similar decree, preserved in the *Tabula Siarensis* (AD 20/21) and listing honours voted for the deceased Germanicus, may give us some idea of the sort of information it likely contained. The decree orders a marble arch (*ianus marmoreus*) to be built in a specific spot in the Circus Flaminius, adorned with gilded standards of defeated enemies, inscribed with a *titulus* whose entire text is given, and topped by a statue of Germanicus in a triumphal chariot flanked by effigies of other members of the imperial family.¹³ The following, then, were the most important aspects of the monument in the eyes of the Senate: its form, its material, its location, the inscription, and its free-standing statuary. No mention is made of architectural ornament or relief sculpture, though we can hardly assume that such an arch went without. Such an ambivalent attitude to relief sculpture is also reflected in our sources on both the column of Trajan and that of Marcus, where nowhere is the helical frieze ever mentioned,

¹² On the column of Antoninus Pius see Vogel 1973 and Ward-Perkins 1976.

¹³ See González and Arce (eds.) 1988: 307-308. The relevant lines (9-21) of the text, preserved on a bronze tablet, read: *placere uti ianus marmoreus. extrueretur in circo flaminio pe[cunia publica, posi]tus ad eum locum in quo statuæ divo Augusto domuique augus[tae iam dedicatae es]sent ab G(aio) Norbano Flacco, cum signis devictarum gentium ina[uratis tituloque] in fronte eius iani [...text of inscription follows...]. supraque eum ianum statua Ger[manici Caesaris po]neretur in curru triumphali et circa latera eius statuæ D[rusi Germanici patris ei]us, naturalis fra tris Ti(beri) Caesaris Aug(usti) et Antoniae ma tris ei[us et Agrippinae uxori set Li]viae sororis et Ti(beri) Germanici fratris eius et filiorum et fi[liarum eius].*

although frequent note is made of various architectural features.¹⁴ If the Senate issued a similar decree for the building of the column of Marcus Aurelius, it likely read something similar to: “Build a marble column in the manner of Trajan’s, but on a taller base, in the Campus Martius between the Ara Pacis and the Temple of the Divine Hadrian, inscribe it with the following text and place on top a statue of the Emperor.”

The architecture of the column provides a good example of the extent to which the Marcus column designers emulated Trajan's monument, and how much they were willing to alter the design provided by their earlier model. Architecturally, the greatest similarity between the two columns is the actual height of the column shafts, one hundred Roman feet, which gave rise to the use of the term *columna centenaria*, as for example in the inscription of Adrastus.¹⁵ Also nearly identical is the spiral staircase ascending their interiors. It was this feature which was apparently judged most noteworthy by the fourth century, when the term *columna coclis* was employed to describe each in the regionary catalogues.¹⁶ There are, however, some differences in detail. While the shaft of Trajan’s column tapers significantly as it ascends (from 12½ at the bottom to 11ft at the top), the diameter of Marcus’ column differs by only half a foot between the bottom and the top (12¾ to 12¼ feet).¹⁷ The internal stairway of the column of Marcus Aurelius begins to

What is intended by *signa* is unclear; Trillmich (1988: 58, n.11) proposes military standards or personifications.

¹⁴ On literary references to the columns, see Beckmann 2002.

¹⁵ *CIL* 6.1585a and b. Wilson Jones (1993) discusses certain discrepancies between the two columns and their alleged heights in Roman feet.

¹⁶ That the adjective *cochlidis* refers to the internal staircase, not the external helical relief, is suggested by the relatively common use, especially in the later classical period, of the related term *coclea* to refer to spiral stairs or buildings containing such a stair (see *TLL* 3.1398.4-11); similarly in Greek, κοχλίας (Strabo 17.1.10 and Procopius *Pers.* 1.24). See Beckmann 2002.

¹⁷ Wilson Jones (1993 figs. 3 and 4) provides convenient comparative drawings of the two columns, with measurements.

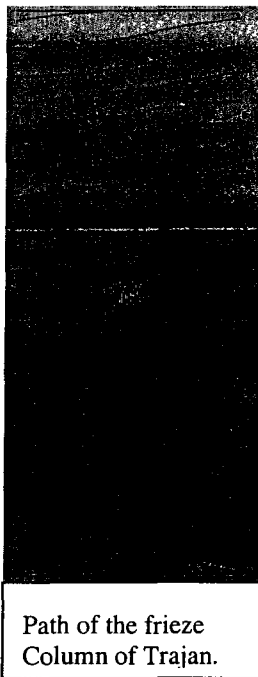
spiral at its lowest step, whereas that of Trajan's column ascends through the column base in three straight flights.¹⁸ These straight flights were necessary to leave room in the middle of the base for a chamber in which to deposit Trajan's ashes, another significant difference between the two monuments. As one ascends Trajan's column, light is admitted through narrow windows placed high in the stairwell wall; in the Marcus column, the windows open at waist level. Finally, at the top of the column of Marcus Aurelius, one steps out onto a platform slightly more than four feet wider than that atop the column of Trajan.

The decoration of the bases of the two columns was also different. The relatively squat base of Trajan's column is covered with carvings of Dacian spoils, while Victories flank an inscription above the entrance. The base of the Marcus column, which is almost twice as tall as Trajan's, was severely damaged during the middle ages and totally refaced (after being defaced) by Pope Sixtus V. Sixteenth century drawings show that a major part of its decoration consisted of a wide sculpted band, which circled the base above the level of the entrance.¹⁹ On three sides were carvings of Victories and garlands, while above the entrance itself was a depiction of Marcus receiving the surrender of defeated barbarians. It is possible that the areas above and below were faced with fine marble, and there was doubtless an inscription.²⁰

We can learn something about the planning of the frieze through a close examination of its layout. The clear difference between the layout of the Marcus column

¹⁸ Martines (2000: 19-29) compares the structural characteristics of both monuments.

¹⁹ See Colini 1955: 33, fig. 6, for a reproduction of one such drawing, by Antonio Dosio.



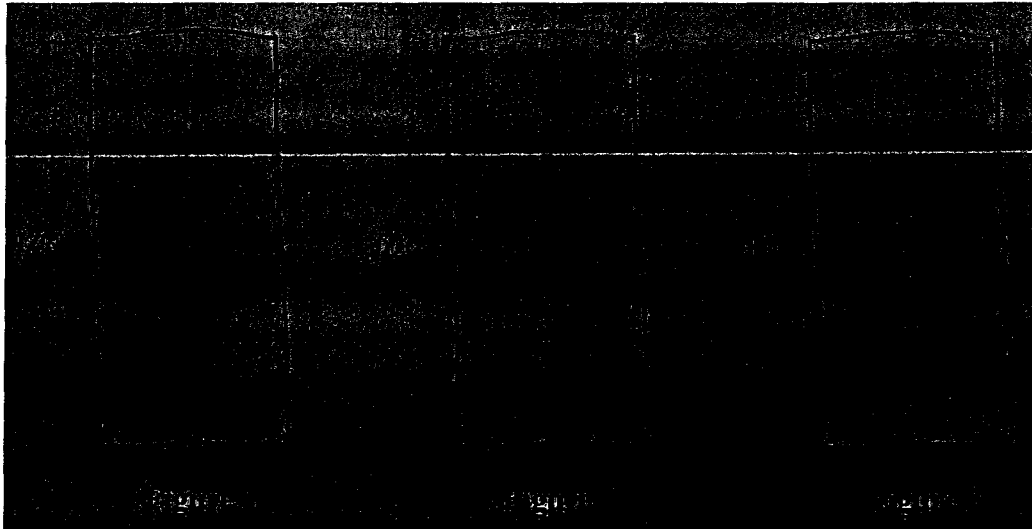
frieze and that of Trajan's column has been often noted in passing, but its significance has never been investigated in detail. Whereas on the column of Trajan the frieze has fluid, undulating borders and fluctuates greatly in height (image left), the Marcus column frieze is entirely regular, with straight borders. This is a clear indication that the outline of the frieze (and, as will be argued, likely its key scenes as well) was planned in advance of its execution on the column shaft.

When the structure of the Marcus column frieze is dissected, it can be seen to be based on a simple method of layout.

Though the number of spirals on the Marcus column is usually given as 21, in reality the division of the shaft was based on the simpler unit of 20. The method seems to have been as follows. The surface of the shaft was drawn "unrolled" as a rectangle. This rectangle was divided in two halves by a vertical line drawn down its centre, corresponding to the eastern axis of the column (Figure 1 below). This was considered the central axis: it was chosen as the site for the three most important scenes of the column (Danube crossing III, Rain Miracle XVI, and Victory LV), and it also faces the Via Flaminia, the main approach to the column. This axis was then divided into 20 sections, each of which measured 5 Roman feet, and which thus added up to the 100-foot height of the entire column shaft (Figure 2). The spiral itself was then plotted based on these 5' divisions,

²⁰ Gatti 1955: 25, fig.5, gives a suggested architectural reconstruction of the base. Jordan-Ruwe (1990) attempts a new reconstruction of the base with a mix of parallels lifted from other monuments and from hypothetical sculpture.

with each winding beginning and ending at the central axis (Figure 3). This achieved a



rough parity in number of spirals with Trajan's column (which has 23), but accomplished the task in a much simpler and straightforward manner. The fundamentally different approach of the designer(s) of each column to the problem of plotting the frieze may indicate a difference in background or training of the designers themselves. The rigid, measured technique seen on the Marcus column is in keeping with the working methods of Roman architects, who preferred where possible to employ designs based on whole numbers.²¹ This may suggest that the hand of an architect rather than an artist was involved in this part of the planning process.

On the column itself, the spiral frieze actually ends on the southern axis, one-quarter of a turn short of the plotted ending on the central axis. This apparent anomaly is accounted for by the fact that the uppermost one and a quarter feet of the shaft are occupied by fluting, copying that on the column of Trajan.²² This fluting effectively cuts

²¹ See Wilson Jones 2000: 74.

²² The fluting on the Marcus column measures 33.5 cm, and 5.5 cm of necking separates the fluting from the frieze; see Martines 2000: 87 for measurements, *ibid.* fig. 12 for an illustration.

off the last quarter-turn of the frieze. The resulting helical frieze has nineteen full windings, with further truncated windings both at the bottom and at the top.

Designed in this manner, the frieze was not only easily plotted in two dimensions, but also had the advantage of being easily transferable to the column itself. Its layout could have been achieved by such a simple method as winding a rope around the shaft, making sure that it passed through measured marks on each axis, rising in the simple gradient of five feet over each full turn. This could have been done from the ground up, and it would not even have been necessary for the entire shaft to have been in place before the masons could begin to plot the helix.

The next step was to obtain or create images to fill this frieze. The 19 full windings had a total length of about 220 metres, to which must be added the truncated windings at bottom and top.²³ This is as long as two football fields including end-zones, or more than seven times the height of the hundred-foot column itself. To fill such a lengthy frieze was obviously no light task. It was decided to accomplish part of this by copying some of the content of the column of Trajan's frieze onto that of the Marcus column. A key image was the Victoria. On the column of Trajan, the Victoria is placed at almost exactly the middle of the column shaft – the 50' mark falls at about the level of her breasts. On the Marcus column, however, such a placement was not possible, since because of the method used to draft the frieze, the 50' point on the central axis falls directly on the border between two spirals. The designer thus had the choice of placing

²³ Based on a circumference of 11.62m (calculated from a diameter of 3.7m, averaged from Martines' measurements [2000: 87-88]).

the Victoria above or below the real halfway mark; he chose to place her below, perhaps out of concern for visibility or out of consideration for the perspective of the viewer.

Copying of Trajan's column is also clear in the lowest one-and-a-half windings of the Marcus column frieze, and to some extent in the upper-most truncated winding. This takes two forms. First, the Danube landscape, up to and including the River God, is an almost exact copy of that on the column of Trajan. So many of the details of the Danube landscape are so accurately reproduced that there can be no doubt but that the Marcus column's designer went to the column of Trajan, stood before it with drawing materials, and made a precise sketch of its lowest scenes.²⁴ When this sketch was transferred to the Marcus column frieze, none of the elements of the Danube landscape on Trajan's column were left out. The only differences between the two are the result of additions made to the scene on the Marcus column: three more buildings at the beginning of the scene; a soldier in the third boat; a palisade in the background.²⁵

The next three scenes, bridge-crossing (III), *adlocutio* (IV) and sacrifice (V), were, on the other hand, inspired by but not copied from the column of Trajan. The designer of the Marcus column cannot have made much more than an impressionistic

²⁴ Petersen (1896: 99) mentioned this copying, but few if any later students of the column have paid it much attention. The copied elements on the Marcus column are: the second fortified house, which reproduces the form of the first two houses of the column of Trajan, down to the detail of a lion-head door ornament; the log-pile followed by two haystacks; the torch-bearing watch-towers interspaced with soldiers; the barrel-loading scene followed immediately by fortifications, with a boat in front and a porticoed building inside; just before the River God, a tree followed by two buildings, followed by a porticoed building with two trees behind it.

²⁵ Zwikker (1941: 256), though he sees "inspiration" from the column of Trajan, argues against taking the Danube crossing as a copy. Instead he proposes that the palisade, reflecting the actual state of the late 2nd c. *limes*, the boat-bridge, and the different armour of the soldiers, all speak for a clear attempt by the Marcus column designer to introduce aspects of contemporary reality into the scene. The boat-bridge (see below) and armour (see Appendix) are here discussed elsewhere; the palisade can likely be seen, along with the

sketch, or perhaps only notes, from the Trajanic original. A few details seem to have been copied: the two *tubicen*-players at the right of scene III, and some of the details of Roman armour, which here more than anywhere else on the Marcus column resemble the armour worn by soldiers on Trajan's column. The differences, though, are clear to see: the bridge-crossing march passes through two arches, not one; the emperor appears in the march; the *adlocutio* is composed in an entirely different way; soldiers ride toward the sacrifice scene, rather than walking. The changes to the bridge-crossing scene can perhaps be explained as a simplification of its Trajanic counterpart, where there appear to be two bridges, one of which seems to end in nothing. This may well have confused the Marcus column designer, who then rendered his new scene in a simpler manner. The other changes suggest a strong move away from copying and towards original, independent design.

The final elements of the Marcus column frieze seem also to have been inspired by those in the same position on Trajan's column, although it seems more a case of inspiration than of direct copying – it must have been hard, at any rate, for a viewer on the ground to copy these scenes.²⁶ On both columns we see a row of barbarians and Roman soldiers, ending in a scattering of animals and trees as the frieze winds down to nothing. On the Marcus column the humans are shown atop a low boat bridge, and the animals are turned in the opposite direction, but the similarity is very strong. It seems

other additions made by the Marcus column designers, as an attempt to fill up the large amount of blank space present in the Trajanic original, and represent nothing more than a manifestation of a *horror vacui*.

²⁶ The carving at the very end of each frieze is superbly illustrated on pls. X and XII in Scheid and Huet 2000.

possible that these elements were copied by an artist uncertain of how to bring such a monumental frieze to an appropriate end.

Besides the Victoria and the introductory and concluding scenes, there are only two other frieze elements which were copied from the column of Trajan. One was the *testudo* scene (Trajan: LXX-LXXI; Marcus: LIV; discussed below, Chapter 6.2), which is much more an imitation than a genuine copy, but which was placed in about the same position on the Marcus column that it occupied on the column of Trajan. Also in imitation of the column of Trajan was the placement on the Marcus column of an *adlocutio* scene (LV) immediately before the Victoria, executed much like its counterpart on the column of Trajan.

The designer's next task was to fill the remaining frieze with figures. To judge from the final product, it appears that it was in the designer's mind to accomplish this task by creating numerous small scenes of a more or less regular size, equivalent to one-eighth of a full winding of the frieze. This tendency becomes stronger the further up the column one goes, to the point that a number of the uppermost spirals (esp. 12, 15, and 18) are composed entirely from these one-eighth scenes. The divisions of these scenes fall at regular intervals, either on or halfway between the window axes.²⁷ The purpose may have been to provide a framework for the delegation of work to the carvers, or it may simply have aided in the initial arrangement of frieze content. Whatever the case, this schema is very different from that used for the planning of the column of Trajan – if indeed any set plan was employed there.

With this framework in place, the designer then had to fill the frieze. It is likely that this was done in more or less the order in which we read the frieze today, from left to right and moving from the bottom of the column to the top. This is suggested by a number of factors. First is the logic of such a schema in the composition of a historical work with a clear beginning and an implied victorious conclusion. In addition, the copying of the introductory scenes of Trajan's column provided a clear starting point for the column's designers. A development from strict copying to looser imitation to free composition is seen in this first winding of the column, indicating a left-to-right progression. Finally, some of the scenes themselves (including the battle scenes: see Chapter 2) also suggest this direction of planning, by displaying an evolution in design and composition which can be traced from bottom to top, left to right through the frieze. This argues against Hamberg's theory that the frieze was "fitted together" from a group of prefabricated scenes.²⁸ In Hamberg's argument, all the scenes of the column would have been executed beforehand, as individuals and not in any particular sequence, on the basis of some set requirement for x number of battles, y number of *adlocutiones*, etc. When it came to putting the frieze together, these scenes would have been selected more or less at random, as needed and according to genre. This study suggests that this was almost certainly not the case.

Up to this point, then, it can be shown that the frieze was laid out according to a simple mathematical pattern, divided into small manageable units, and partly filled by

²⁷ Zwikker (1941: 255) also proposed the use of the windows as a "festes Gerüst der Komposition," and promised to investigate this in Part 2 of his study, which unfortunately never appeared.

²⁸ Hamberg 1945: 138.

copying elements from Trajan's column. At what point in the construction process was the frieze transferred from the planning stage and carved onto the column? How much content had been planned at this stage? The placement of the windows give evidence that the frieze was tied closely to the architectural elements of the column itself, and that both of these aspects – frieze and architecture – were carefully planned in advance of construction. A point must be made about the placement of the windows relative to the interior passageway. On the column of Trajan, the windows all open very high in the passageway, and their window-slits slope upward. The effect is that these windows are positioned so high that a person inside can see nothing other than sky through them, and the intended goal seems to have been to deprive the climber of any view of the outside world until he or she emerged atop the capital. The designers of the Marcus column, who otherwise copied closely so many elements of Trajan's, chose to place the windows at about the middle of the passage wall. It is difficult to see a practical reasoning in this. If the windows were intended to provide the visitor with a view, they should have been placed higher. If the primary goal was to better illuminate the treads of the stair, they could have been placed lower. The reason for their placement, I would argue, has to do with their position in relation to the frieze.

The benchmark case is the window beneath the shield of Victory. This window elegantly forms the pedestal on which Victory balances her shield. (The windows are indicated by blacked-in rectangles on Fig. 1.5; the Victoria and its window can be seen in the middle of spiral 10.) This positioning was almost certainly not an accident, but rather was chosen by the designer(s) of the frieze. The position of Victory had already been

determined as the ninth spiral, and it would have been known from the plans that a window would be needed along this axis in this particular spiral. The placement of the window was dictated by the relative position of the staircase, whose ascent through the column shaft would have been already plotted by the architect. The designer(s) then chose to utilise this window as Victory's shield support, which determined its vertical position relative to the stairway inside. All other windows were then positioned in relation to this window, one along each axis for each winding of the internal stair, always in the same position relative to the stairwell. This yielded the orderly progression of windows visible on the column, rising in a line at a somewhat greater gradient than that of the frieze itself.

There are two windows along the frieze that depart significantly from this otherwise orderly pattern. These are the window beneath the River God in the first spiral, and the window that appears within the fluting just above the top of the frieze on the west axis. The former is depressed by about twenty centimetres, the latter elevated from the standard gradient by about the same amount.²⁹ The intent in both cases, as Martines suggests, seems to have been to avoid conflict with the frieze.³⁰ The lower deviant window was clearly placed where it was in order to avoid marring the body of the River God. The upper deviant window was placed solidly within the effective camouflage of the fluting, as an alternative to its otherwise plotted position in the middle of the last

²⁹ The average window is 65cm above the steps; the lower deviant window is 43cm above the steps, the upper 86cm (Martines 2000:57).

³⁰ Ibid.

winding of the frieze, where it would have broken up a continuous procession of barbarians.

All these adjustments suggest that the main elements of the frieze had been determined before it was plotted upon the column itself. The placement of the windows was part of this same process, and was carefully subordinated to it. Once the overall layout of the windows had been determined, they caused very little interference with the frieze, since the frieze structure already incorporated most scene breaks along the main axes. Only in two cases was it thought necessary to shift the windows to accommodate frieze content. Given these considerations, it may be supposed that a substantial amount of the frieze's final content was extant in full draft form before it was executed in stone.

3. Drafting the Content of the Frieze:

Thus we can establish with some confidence the likely method used to lay out the frieze on the column shaft, and it is clear that a small portion of this frieze was then filled by copying scenes directly from the column of Trajan. A much more difficult question is how the remainder of the frieze content was created. If they did not copy, did the designers take at least inspiration or guidance from the other scenes of Trajan's column? Did they borrow or adapt images from other fields of art, monumental or otherwise? Might they have drawn on other sources entirely? Or did they operate largely independently? Did they impart a high degree of historical accuracy (implying a use of accurate documentation of the wars), or was historicity neglected? These questions can be answered only by examining in detail the iconography of the frieze itself. This is

(partly) the goal of the next three chapters of this study. Obviously to examine every aspect of this iconography over the entire 720 feet of the frieze is not possible here. Therefore my approach, as discussed in the Introduction, is to choose one recurring iconographic element, the battle scene, and to study this in each place that it appears on the column.

Chapter 2: The Marcus Column Battle Scenes

The relief of the column of Marcus Aurelius presents a story which is not always clear (Figure 1.5). In the first place, it is not clear whether we are being given anything resembling a comprehensive outline of two wars, as we are (more or less) on Trajan's column. The beginning of the Marcus column frieze depicts Roman soldiers marching across a bridge past the personification of a river, which is immediately followed by an *adlocutio* (address to the army) and a *lustratio* (a ritual sacrifice). The army then advances through unoccupied country, destroying a village and taking prisoners. In spirals 2 and 3 there is very limited fighting, and the viewer's attention is focussed on two miracles. These miracles show an enemy siege engine destroyed by fire and a great winged Rain God washing away enemy troops.¹

After the Rain Miracle, spirals 4 and 5 are taken up almost entirely by scenes of battle; battle scene XX, a running fight between two villages, is the largest single battle scene on the column. Following this orgy of battle is an interesting sequence consisting of a long march scene punctuated by one relatively minor battle and framed at either end by fortified camp scenes (spirals 6 to 7). These camps are depicted in a very similar

manner and are placed one directly above the other on a vertical axis. This respite from intense fighting is followed, after half a spiral of battle and barbarian supplication, by a strange and unfortunately damaged scene (XLII, at the end of spiral 7). In it the emperor or one of his subordinates appears to anoint a young man, while in the background three strange contraptions reminiscent of sedan chairs await with their occupants. This scene has been tentatively interpreted as the bestowal of the *toga virilis* on the young Commodus, recorded by Dio as happening in or near the theatre of operations just after Cassius' revolt was announced to Marcus (AD 175).²

After this comes a spiral of fighting and village destruction (spiral 8), concluded by an ornate *submissio* scene (beginning of spiral 9), which depicts substantial architecture. Immediately afterwards is a siege sequence. First the Romans are shown repelling attackers from one of their forts (scene L). After a parlay, a further battle (LII) and another barbarian submission, the Romans are shown attacking a barbarian fort using two groups of infantry in *testudo* formation (scene LIV, beginning of spiral 10). This scene is immediately followed by an *adlocutio* and then by the grand figure of Victory flanked by trophies (middle of spiral 10).

After the figure of Victory, the progress of the war seems to pick up where it left off. The most striking scenes in the next two spirals (11 and 12) are two massacres, both of barbarians and one perpetrated by the Romans, the other by, apparently, barbarian

¹ The miracles are reported in the *HA* (*Marcus* 24.4), and the Rain Miracle is treated at length by Dio (72.8.1-10.5), on which see the discussion in the Introduction and in Chapter 6.

² Dio 72.22.2. The original discussion of the scene is Petersen 1896:68; most recently Wolff (1994:74-75) has concluded that the idea is a possibility. However, the fact that the seated figure wears chain- or scale-mail armour (the border of which is clearly visible in Petersen's illustration) makes this identification, in my mind, rather doubtful.

allies at Roman command. Then follows a sequence of Roman marches and ceremonial scenes involving Marcus, punctuated by battles and skirmishes. The battle scenes in the upper half of the column tend to be smaller than those in the lower half, and there are fewer of them. This sequence carries on right up to the end of the spiral, with the last discernible battle being a Roman sortie from a fort (battle scene CIX). The narrative ends with scenes of barbarians on the march, apparently driven out of their land. There does not seem to be any single climactic scene, at least nothing comparable with the great submission scene at the end of the frieze of Trajan's column.

The scenes of battle shown on the column of Marcus Aurelius are numerous – 30 in all.³ The battles are highlighted on the diagram of the column in Fig. 1.5, and the Catalogue at the end of the text provides drawings and descriptions of all battle scenes which are not too severely damaged. Selected scenes and details are illustrated in Figures 1.6-20. The term "battle" is often inappropriate, since their size varies from full-scale battles involving fifteen or more combatants to isolated one-on-one encounters. In the interest of simplicity, however, I refer to all of these combat encounters as battle scenes. The term "scene" also needs some clarification. Numbered scene divisions are modern inventions, and denote specific units of frieze in which a single major activity or event takes place. It seems that the designers of the Marcus column actually worked with a similar concept in mind when they designed the frieze (see Chapter 1 on plotting the

³ The battle scenes are: VIII, XII, XV, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXIII, XXIV, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX/XXX, XXXV, XXXIX, XLIII, XLVIII, L, LII, LIV, LVII, LXIII, LXX, LXXII/LXXIII, LXXVII, LXXIX, LXXXIX, XCII, XCVII, IC, CV, CIX. Pirson (1996: 140) counts 36 battle or small combat scenes, but he includes four (XXXIV, XL, LXXVI and XLVII) which are Renaissance restorations which may or may not reflect the original scene content, and he counts LXXII/LXXIII as two scenes.

frieze), but modern divisions do not always reflect their ancient equivalents.⁴ Most combat encounters on the Marcus column occur in self-contained units with clear breaks from the preceding and following scenes. Such breaks are mainly achieved, not by the insertion of dividers (such as the trees sometimes used on Trajan's column), but rather by the simple technique of turning the figures at the scene borders away from each other. In most cases it can be assumed that the designers conceived of these battle scenes as individual and self-contained entities. However, a few smaller encounters exist as elements of larger scenes, often without any clear connection between them and the surrounding activities (the first "battle" scene of the column, VIII, is a good example).

The relationships of the battle scenes to their neighbouring scenes is usually far from clear. Sometimes the sequence appears logical. Scene XX, a battle in a village, is followed by a scene of the emperor supervising the execution of a prisoner, in a similar village setting. Scene L, a vigorous Roman attack, is preceded by the depiction of Roman soldiers making a sortie from a besieged fort. However, for the most part such clear and direct relationships between the battles and the adjoining scenes do not exist. This reinforces the impression that the battle scenes, like most others on the column, were created as individual independent units, and can be analysed as such. There are also two interesting cases, in spirals 3-5, where three battles are shown side by side in an unbroken – though not clearly interconnected – sequence. The first begins with scene XVIII, which shows a battle in a village, followed by a battle in the open (XIX) punctuated by a

⁴ Most conspicuously, some of Petersen's scenes encompass two, and in at least one case perhaps three, units which seem to have been conceived of as separate entities by the column's designer(s). These include Petersen's scenes XIX, XXXIX, XLIX, LV, LXXVIII (this scene shows two distinct marches and one bridge crossing), CIII, and CVIII.

depiction of Marcus in camp (in XIX) and followed by another village battle (XX). The second such sequence begins three scenes later, and appears to contain three separate battles (in scenes XXIII and XXIV) in one uninterrupted sequence.

Analysis of the battle scenes is not a simple task, for they are a very heterogeneous group. Some show formations of Roman troops locked into combat with stoutly resisting barbarians, others show scattered collections of battling pairs, while still others show Roman cavalry in warlike poses galloping unopposed over the prostrate bodies of barbarian dead. The setting can be an open field, a village, a swamp, a forest or a fort. The overall impression is one of immense variety. The goal of this chapter is to study these disparate representations of the Roman army in battle, and to identify and quantify patterns (or the lack thereof) in these scenes. Detailed scene-by-scene description is, as much as possible, avoided; for this purpose a Catalogue is provided, where can also be found complete drawings of each scene. Photographs, where available, appear in the illustrations (Figures 1.6-20). The analysis begins with an introduction to the appearance of the Romans and their enemies as depicted on the column.

1. The Opposing Forces:

The historical significance of the arms and equipment of the Romans and their opponents is discussed in Chapter 6.7. The following remarks are merely summary, intended to point out the ways in which the opposing forces on the Marcus column were depicted and differentiated.

The depiction of the Roman army and their barbarian opponents is remarkably standard over the entire column. The Roman army is shown as being made up of infantry and cavalry in nearly equal numbers. Most Roman soldiers are shown wearing one of three types of armour: chain mail, scale armour, or segmented cuirasses composed of horizontal metal strips. Modern scholars commonly refer to the first three types as *lorica hamata*, *lorica squamata*, and *lorica segmentata*, though the first two names are rarely attested in the sources and the third is a modern term.⁵ The fourth type of armour, the solid metal cuirass, is shown only once on one soldier in a battle scene (VIII). On the column, chain and scale armour is represented as short-sleeved coats waist-length or slightly longer, drilled with holes to indicate chain mail (Fig. 1.8) or incised with scallop shapes to indicate scale (Fig. 1.7). Segmented armour is shown as a torso covering of horizontal strips, which sometimes cover the entire area from waist to neck, but sometimes stop at mid-chest, in which case a solid plate is shown between the strips and the neck (Fig. 1.20). The shoulders are always shown protected by a series of shorter, curved segments. The infantry wear all three of these main types of armour, the cavalry only the first two.

Beneath these cuirasses, the Romans on the column of Marcus Aurelius are shown dressed in sandals and short tunics, most often worn over calf-length trousers (the main exception being for soldiers wearing segmented armour, who are usually depicted with a longer tunic and bare legs). The lower hem of the tunic appears as a short 'skirt,' often fringed, which hangs down below the bottom of the soldier's armour cuirass. The

⁵ See Grosse under "Lorica" in *RE* 13 (1927) 1444-1449 for a discussion of these and other armour terms.

sleeves are generally visible extending from under the short sleeves of the cuirass.⁶ For wearers of chain mail and scale armour, a scarf is shown around the neck, tied in front, perhaps to prevent chafing from the armour. There are variations in the details of these three types of armour. Sleeve and tunic edges can be scalloped or pinked; drill holes may be set in rows or randomly distributed; scales smooth-edged or with a feathered appearance; segmented armour can have various numbers of strips, and these strips can be joined in different ways. However, their basic configurations remain constant over the entire surface of the column. Constant too is the depiction of horsemen wearing chain or scale armour, never the segmented variety.

Helmets and shields round out the heavy-duty protection of the Roman soldier. The standard Roman helmet shown on the column (e.g., Fig. 1.15) consists of a metal bowl to protect the head, with a brow-guard, neck-guard and cheek-pieces, and topped by a feathered crest, more rarely by a metal ring. There appears to be no pattern to the use of the crest or ring; see for example battle scene IC, where Romans 6 and 7 wear ring-topped helmets but all the other Romans have crests. The most common type of Roman shield (Fig. 1.15) is oval and about the size of the soldier's torso and is decorated with various patterns, often fleur-de-lis. The less common shield type (Fig. 1.20) is large and more or less rectangular in outline, curved like a section of a cylinder, and undecorated. It is only shown used by troops wearing segmented armour.

With regard to arms, the primary weapon is the spear. This is always depicted in the same manner, a sturdy looking pole about two-thirds the height of the soldier, tipped

⁶ Fuentes (1987) treats thoroughly the evidence (mainly artistic, including a number of painted

with a diamond or triangular head. Although every Roman soldier also has a sword, these are much less frequently employed in battle. The cavalry in particular are never shown using their swords. The bow is the rarest weapon shown in Roman hands, and appears only once in the hands of a soldier dressed as a Roman regular (a horseman in scene LVII). Otherwise, bows are sometimes employed by troops apparently allied to the Romans (e.g., scenes XV, XXXIX). Other allied troops also appear rarely on the Roman side (scene XXIII), dressed so similarly to the barbarians that the only way to tell them apart is that they fight in support of the Romans, rather than against them.

The Romans' hapless enemies also come in infantry and cavalry varieties, but they are much more poorly equipped. Barbarians never wear body armour or helmets. Their dress varies, and can consist of loincloth, full-length trousers, trousers and tunic, or trousers and tunic with a long-sleeved shirt below; a cloak can be added to any of these combinations. Barbarians employ shields, which can be oval like those of the Romans but also hexagonal or round. The designs carved onto barbarian shields, however, are often identical to those found on Roman shields. The main weapons of the barbarian are the spear and the sword. Remarkably, these are in no way distinguishable from the corresponding Roman equipment, with the exception that the barbarians are not provided with scabbards. Bows also appear in barbarian hands, though rarely, and there is one instance where slingers are shown.⁷ Petersen and Domaszewski believed that it was

representations) for the Roman military tunic. The colour of the tunic was, it seems, usually white, in spite of modern trends to depict it as dyed, especially red.

⁷ This is scene X - not a battle, but rather a conference across a river between sling-wielding barbarians on one side and the emperor on the other. The intention of these slingers is less than friendly, it seems, since Marcus' comrades are compelled to hold shields above his head.

possible to distinguish between different ethnic groups of barbarians on the basis especially of facial characteristics; however, this has failed to convince modern scholars.⁸

2. Battle Scene Composition

The composition of the battle scenes, that is, the way in which they are assembled from their figural components, has been one of the main focuses of their treatment by earlier scholars. The main reason for this is that it allows broad comparisons to be quickly made with other battle scenes on other monuments. To facilitate this comparison, categories have been created in which the scenes could be conveniently grouped. Two main trends, and the terms used to describe them, should be distinguished at the beginning. These are the so-called *Einzelkampf* and *Gruppenkampf* methods of composing battle scenes; I retain the German names for these categories not only because they are concise, but also because they are so frequently encountered in the literature on the subject. *Einzelkämpfe* (one-on-one fights, sometimes referred to as *Zweikämpfe* or *Einzelgruppen*, isolated fighting pairs) are the most common ancient method of representing combat, by combining two (or sometimes three) fighters in an isolated group (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the development of this technique). To make a depiction of an entire battle, all that is needed is to multiply the number of *Einzelkämpfe*. The opposite of the *Einzelkampf* is the *Gruppenkampf*, where soldiers are shown grouped together in coherent, homogeneous units; that is, one body of soldiers from "side A" is shown

⁸ Their main attempt was to distinguish between Germans below the figure of Victory and Sarmatians

opposed by a body of soldiers from "side B." While at its most basic the *Gruppenkampf* schema can be quite simple, it is sometimes employed in complex, sophisticated attempts to represent battle in a "realistic" way. One final term must be mentioned here, as it is sometimes used in different ways and runs the risk of ambiguity. This is the designation *Massenkampf*, which refers to a massed battle, but does not distinguish whether the combatants are organised into fighting pairs (*Einzelkämpfe*) or into homogeneous groups (*Gruppenkämpfe*) – both schemes are possible under the *Massenkampf* rubric.⁹ This term is not used in this and in most succeeding chapters, but with regard to the sarcophagi, where it is employed to mean a dense mass of *Einzelkämpfe*, it has gained a solid foothold in the literature and cannot be avoided.

Max Wegner, in his comparative study of the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, remarked that on the Marcus column the battle scenes were "dismantled into fighting pairs," while on Trajan's column battles between massed formations were dominant.¹⁰ Wegner's pronouncement is representative of a common and generalising perception of the Marcus column's battle scenes as consisting predominantly of one-on-one encounters.¹¹ However, this characterisation is misleading. In fact, about half (15 of 29) of the Marcus column's battle scenes depict combat between clear and distinct formations of troops, both Roman and barbarian. Only five of the battle scenes appear to

above (Petersen 1896: 46-51, 105-125); against this see Wolff (1990: 14).

⁹ Bie (1891) used the term *Massenkampf* to refer to fights between groups of soldiers; Andrae (1956) uses it to refer to the massed battle depictions of the late Antonine battle sarcophagi, which are actually tightly-composed masses of figures locked in *Einzelkämpfe*.

¹⁰ Wegner 1931: 141.

¹¹ Lehmann-Hartleben (1926: 108), for example, expresses much the same opinion when he says "die Markussäule in den Kampfszenen durchweg zu den griechischen Einzelgruppen...zurückkehrt," and Pirson (1996: 142) simply cites Wegner's interpretation without comment.

be composed solely of fighting pairs, thus potentially fitting Wegner's characterisation of *Zweikämpfe*, and even these deserve special examination to determine exactly how they were assembled. The remaining battle scenes include three scenes of fighting in villages, the setting of which affects their composition in a standard pattern, and seven other scenes, sometimes as small as a single fighting pair, which do not properly fit into any of the above categories.

As a perusal of the Catalogue shows, the most striking feature of the composition of the Marcus column battle scenes is the sheer variety of compositional methods employed. The battle scenes are discussed below under three general and not always mutually exclusive categories: battles showing formations of troops, battles based on *Zweikämpfe*, and scenes designed on other principles. Added to these is one further category, that of battles in villages, which though built up of *Zweikämpfe*, are set apart from them by their physical setting.

3. Scenes Depicting Formations:

Fourteen battle scenes employ clear formations, by which I mean that these battles all show more or less homogeneous groups of Roman and barbarian troops (thus *Gruppenkämpfe*). Ten of these scenes are remarkable in that they appear to group together in clusters of two or three scenes each sharing a particular approach to composition.

Scenes **XV** and **XIX** are two of the earliest battles on the column, and both show linear formations of barbarian infantry actively resisting attack from linear formations of

Roman troops. In scene XV two barbarians (15.7 and 8)¹² stand back to back in order to resist an attack from both sides. This attack is made by three archers on each side (15.1-3 and 9-11), dressed as barbarians but wearing caps, and apparently allied to the Romans. The barbarians are shown in fighting poses, and figure 15.7 is particularly aggressive. The actual fighting occupies only the top half of the frieze, and is not clearly related to the action below. In scene XIX the barbarian formation (figures 19.10-12) maintains a close shoulder-to-shoulder line in the lower right corner of the scene. The Romans attack in two lines: two cavalymen from the left (19.8 and 9) and five infantrymen (19.1-5) from above. Though outnumbered, the barbarians stand their ground and await the attack with raised shields and braced, aggressive poses. These scenes are composed in a similar manner. Both use linear formations that are arranged horizontally on the frieze. These lines of figures are restricted to either the lower or upper register – that is, they are arrayed along a groundline at the bottom of the frieze or in its middle. A hint of perspective is given by the overlapping of figures, but the overall effect is static.

Scenes **XXIII** and **XXXIX** also use fairly rigid formations of Roman and barbarian troops, but composition and content are different. They each share the common component of a group of three barbarian riders in a stacked, overlapping formation fleeing from a massed force of Romans also arrayed in line. Scene XXIII consists effectively of two separate encounters: to the left, three Romans (23.1-3) on two superimposed registers attack a group of barbarians (23.4-8), some of whom have fallen to the ground and some of whom flee on horseback. The right half of scene XXIII is

¹² Individual fighting figures within the battle scenes are numbered on the drawings in the Catalogue, and in

organised in a similar manner, but with stricter formations of troops. At the right, two lines of Roman and allied soldiers (23.12-13 and 14-16) are arrayed in superimposed registers. To the left, three barbarian horsemen (23.9-11) are arrayed in a vertical line and flee from their attackers. Scene XXXIX employs a nearly identical method of composition, though with attackers and fugitives on different sides of the scene. At the left, two lines of Roman troops (39.5-7) and barbarian allies (39.1-3) are shown in superimposed registers. They are attacking a vertical line of barbarian cavalymen (39.8-10), who flee to the right. In both this scene and in scene XXIII, one of the fleeing barbarians extends his arm back in a pleading gesture. The novel features of these scenes are the vertical linear formations of barbarians, and the flight/pursuit theme.

Scenes **L**, **LII**, and **LXXII** employ a different and again more complex formation. The main battle in scene **L** occurs at the far right, where four Romans (50.10, 14, 16 and 17) attack a group of barbarians, all but one of whom (50.15) have already fallen. The Romans are arrayed in staggered line, which engages the barbarians on their front and hooks around them at the top of the scene. Scene **LII** is composed in a similar manner. There, a group of Romans on horseback (52.1, 2, 5-8) attack a pair of barbarians (52.3 and 4), only one of whom still resists. The barbarians are encompassed by the Roman formation which appears to hook around the top of the scene; one Roman (52.8) even attacks from the rear, seemingly having completed the envelopment. Finally, scene **LXXII** employs compositional techniques seen in both scenes **L** and **LII**. There a group of barbarians (72.3, 4, 7) is shown in defeat, under the attack of four Romans (72.1, 2, 5

the text are referred to using the formula of scene number first, then figure number.

and 6) who attack from the left and from above. Figures 72.1 and 2 are almost identical to figures 52.2 and 1, while 72.5 and 6 reflect very closely the pose and actions of figures 50.16 and 17.

Finally, one group of three scenes (**XCII**, **XCVII**, **CV**) shares the common compositional theme of a group of barbarian cavalry fleeing to the right, pursued by a group of Romans who inflict casualties upon them. Scene **XCII** is the most complex of these, and shows a dense group of Roman cavalrymen (and perhaps one infantryman – figures 92.1-3, 5, and 7) occupying the left part of the field. They attack a massed group of barbarians, also on horseback, who flee to the right. The other two scenes in this group are simpler but are based on the same general compositional principle. In each case it is Roman infantry who attack fleeing barbarian cavalry. The barbarians are not shown in strict linear formation like those in the very early scenes **XXIII** or **XXXIX**; rather, they flee in a more or less disordered mass. In each of these three scenes, two barbarians are shown fallen on the ground. The nature of the pursuing Roman troops can vary (infantry in two cases, cavalry in one), but this does not appear to have any particular effect on the way in which the two groups interact: the Romans advance and attack with their spears, while the barbarians flee, are speared, and fall to the ground.

These variations appear to reflect a system of standard compositional types, and they show that the column's artists sometimes made repeated use of certain techniques of composing the battle scenes. These compositional techniques are never repeated more than three times, however. An interesting pattern emerges if these scenes are ordered in the sequence in which they appear on the column. The following table lists these scenes,

ordered vertically from bottom to top of the column (the spiral numbers are listed on the left, 20 being the top spiral):

Spiral	Battle Scene	Description
20		
19		
18	<CV>	<Masses of barbarian cavalry pursued by Roman infantry or cavalry>
17	<XCVII>	
16	<XCII>	
15		
14		
13	{LXXII/III}	{Romans attacking in a hook formation}
12		
11		
10		
9	{L} {LII}	
8		
7	<<XXXIX>>	<<Linear formations, barbarians fleeing>>
6		
5	<<XXIII>>	
4	(XIX)	(Linear formations, barbarians resisting)
3	(XV)	
2		
1		

As can be seen, there is a strong tendency for battles using the same compositional technique to be located close to each other on the column. Moreover, the use of such techniques appears to follow a sequence. One appears, is used for two or three scenes, and then drops out of use, to be replaced sooner or later by another. This sequence proceeds from simple, linear formations lower on the column to more complex arrangements higher up.

Besides the scenes discussed above, four more battle scenes remain which show formations of troops but do not share any of the specific techniques used in the ten scenes

discussed above. Three of these scenes (XLVIII, LIV, LVII) cluster in spirals 9 and 10, while the fourth (IC) is found much later in spiral 17. Scene XLVIII is damaged, and but for this it might have been possible to group it compositionally with L, LII and LXXII. It shows a group of Roman cavalry (48.3-7) and one infantryman (48.1) attacking a group of barbarian horsemen. Only two of these barbarians are visible, fallen on the ground. The swampland herbage is interesting, and a desire to show this setting clearly may have been the reason why the figures are more widely spaced than usual, so that between them the swamp reeds might be seen.

Scenes LIV, LVII, and IC are all unique in their composition and each stands out strongly from the other battle scenes on the column. The first is LIV, which shows the Roman attack in *testudo* formation on a barbarian fort. The fort is apparently made of interwoven sticks, a construction technique also used to depict barbarian huts. Four defenders (54.5-8) throw rocks, swords, wheels, torches and a flaming pot on their attackers; one also wields a spear. The main group of Roman attackers (of whom there are twenty-four, one for each shield, though only the legs of eight are visible: 54.9-16) is arrayed beneath the fort in two groups. Each group protects itself with shields held over the soldiers' heads. To the sides, other Romans throw spears and torches. The composition is highly symmetrical, with the pairing of the two *testudo* formations reflected by the three pairs of individual soldiers shown aiding in the attack (two pairs to the left, one to the right).

Of similar overall organisation (but lacking in symmetry) is the next battle scene of the column narrative, LVII. This scene shows a group of four barbarians in the upper

centre (57.4, 5, 7 and 8) vigorously resisting an attack by a group of Romans. Three of the Romans (57.1-3) attack from the left and one from the right. One of the Romans, figure 57.3, is uniquely armed with a bow. In the two cases where Romans and barbarians are directly engaged (57.1+4 and 57.5+6), the contest appears equal. The whole scene is set in a forested landscape, while at the bottom of the field a barbarian woman, her two children and some livestock are being rounded up by two Romans (57.9 and 10).

The final unorthodox formation battle, IC, is perhaps the strangest on the column. It shows a great mass of Roman cavalry and infantry, including a unique trumpeter (99.5), charging to the right over the prostrate bodies of a few fallen barbarians. Only one Roman (99.6) is clearly threatening a barbarian (99.7), although figures 99.16-18 may be aiming their weapons at another fallen barbarian further to the front of the main battle scene. There is no other scene like this on the column.

4. Scenes Employing Zweikämpfe:

In the battles discussed above, the coherence of bodies of troops combined with a sense of unified action makes it relatively easy to determine what is going on. The Romans attack from one side or both, and the barbarians resist, flee, or fall. Six other battle scenes, however, exhibit neither coherent formations nor the sense of unified action by either the Romans or the barbarians. They are also often characterised by prominent one-on-one combats, the *Zweikämpfe* of Wegner.

The best example of such a scene, and the most extreme manifestation of the *Zweikampf* technique, is **LXIII**. This scene is divided into two “registers” by means of a rocky groundline that runs the length of the middle of the frieze, paralleling the compositional methods seen on the *Decursio* relief of the base of the column of Antoninus Pius.¹³ This line also serves to unite what otherwise would be a confusingly uncoordinated composition. The fighting component of the battle consists of two groups of one-on-one combatants (figures 63.4+5, 63.9+10) and one two-on-one encounter (63.6 and 63.7 versus 63.8). There are five other figures not involved in actual combat: Roman 63.1 rides gesturing off to the left, Romans 63.2 and 3 ride towards the centre, and barbarian 63.11 and Roman 63.12 both ride off to the right in the upper register. Roman 63.12 is even in the act of stabbing downwards with his spear, although there is no target visible. What is most remarkable about this scene is that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to get a sense of any coherent, unified action on the part of the combatants. Romans and barbarians ride to and fro, sometimes fighting, sometimes not. The one thing that this scene does provide is a strong sense of balance. The lower register has a clear focus towards the triangular central group (figures 63.6-8), which is emphasised by the pairs of riders converging on it from each side. The upper register has an opposite, outward sense of flow, as figures 63.1 and 63.11+12 gallop away from the apparently gratuitous scene of barbarian 63.5 being stabbed by Roman 63.4.

Another battle scene that exhibits symmetry is **LXXVII**. The fighting takes place in the left half of the scene, where in the upper and lower registers one Roman is about to

¹³ See Kraus 1990:95.

stab one seated barbarian, who tries feebly to defend himself with his shield. These two fighting pairs are almost mirror images of one another. Although this encounter is much smaller than LXIII, it is related to it compositionally. Compositional balance was apparently the highest priority in the mind of the designer.

Another example of this mirror-symmetry can be seen in battle **LXXXIX**, only two turns of the frieze above LXXVII. In LXXXIX, four barbarians beside/on top of a bridge are attacked from both sides by pairs of mounted Romans. The barbarians are shown in a variety of poses, from standing and actively fighting (89.3) through falling (89.5) to prostrate (89.7). The two pairs of Roman attackers are mirror images of each other. The upper and lower members of each pair have the same pose as their equivalent on the other side of the scene, only they are seen, as it were, from the other side.

Similar in content (though lacking the symmetry of the scenes discussed above) are scenes **LXXIX** and **XXIX/XXX**. In the former, two or perhaps three pairs of Romans and barbarians are visible (figures 79.1+2, 79.8+9, perhaps 79.10+5), but their arrangement has no clear order. The unexplained fall of barbarian 79.7 from his horse does not help matters. In the damaged scene **XXIX/XXX**, the situation is similar. Three fighting groups are visible, in no particular order. The fact that both leaping horseman 29.5 and standing figure 29.7 appear to be Roman makes the composition appear even more complicated.

Finally, there is scene **XXIV**. Judged in relation to the scenes discussed above, it appears quite disorganised. Two of the three fighting pairs are very loose in their composition (barbarians 24.1 and 24.9 both fall from their mounts apparently without

being touched by the weapons of their attackers, 24.2 and 24.8), and two Romans (24.6, 24.7) appear in fighting poses without visible opponents. Petersen's description¹⁴ of the scene as a repulse of a barbarian attack on the rear of a marching Roman column may help account for the apparent confusion in composition, but such an argument verges on the circular.

5. *Battles in Villages:*

The village battles belong, from a compositional perspective, with the other *Zweikämpfe*. At first glance, these battles set in barbarian villages (of which there are three) appear little better composed than some of the disorderly battles discussed above. However, on closer inspection, it becomes clear that there is a unified action taking place, although it seems to be broken up into more than one phase. The inclusion of a number of barbarian huts makes this type of organisation possible. It is also important to note that in these scenes there are no instances of battle-posed figures with no visible opponent (a not-uncommon feature in the disorderly *Zweikämpfe*).

Three village battles occur on the column, all in the lower half, two at either end of a single unified battle sequence in the 3rd/4th spiral. One of these, scene **XVIII**, is unfortunately too heavily damaged for detailed commentary. Its surviving fragments do show some similarities with the other two village battles, namely its setting and the mixed nature of combat represented, but there are also some differences, especially the presence of barbarian cavalry, which set it apart somewhat from the other two village

¹⁴ Petersen 1896: 63.

battle scenes. Both of these other scenes, **XX** and **XLIII**, have a number of notable similarities. The action begins on the left-hand side with a Roman attack, met by a combination of barbarian resistance and flight. After this fighting come the hut(s) of the barbarians, among which helpless villagers, male and female, are attacked or captured. This suggests that the left-hand portions of the scenes are intended to represent the initial attacks on the villages, while the right-hand portions show the aftermath. This interpretation is backed up by the scene immediately to the right of **XX** on the column, where the emperor is shown supervising the execution of a prisoner while in the background a soldier sets fire to a house. In both scenes the action is divided into upper and lower registers, though there is some spreading of elements between these (e.g. figure 20.4 in scene **XX**) and some interaction (especially in scene **XLIII**) between them. Unique elements of these scenes are the barbarians who lament the destruction of their houses (20.7, .9, .10; 43.8) and/or flee on foot from the Roman attack (20.19; 43.2, .10). Such flight is a rare act for a normal barbarian infantryman in battle, but perhaps these men are not soldiers, but rather civilian inhabitants of the unfortunate settlements. Certainly this is the case with figure 43.10, a woman, and perhaps also with 43.2, a young, beardless male.

6. Other Combat Encounters:

There is relatively little to be said about the composition of the remaining battle scenes on the column. Two (**VIII** and **XXXV**) are merely isolated *Zweikämpfe*, not proper battles at all. Another three, **XII**, **XXVIII**, and **CIX** are too heavily damaged to

be fully understood. Scene **LXX** appears to be no more than a slaughter of prisoners or wounded barbarians, but damage to the upper half of the scene makes it impossible to tell if there was more fighting depicted there or not. Finally, there is the interesting case of scene **XXVII**, the only battle scene in which the emperor himself is depicted. The scene is divided into two registers by an artificial groundline, but contrary to all other scenes, this groundline slopes up to the left. Atop this line, the emperor (27.6) gallops in the company of four mounted soldiers. At the head of the column, a Roman infantryman (27.2) has apparently knocked barbarian 27.1 from the path – although the Roman still has his sword raised to strike. Below are shown one dead barbarian and a seated barbarian being attacked by a Roman infantryman. The actual fighting is restricted to the two Roman infantrymen, and it is possible that they are clearing the way for the emperor or defending him from attack. The only other Roman in an attacking pose, 27.8, has no visible opponent; this is odd but not unique on the column. A clear attempt has been made to single out the emperor in the centre of the scene; he rides above the barbarians, and in front of his companions. This scene is perhaps loosely comparable to scene **IC**, where the Romans ride unopposed over their vanquished opponents.

7. Figure Types

On the Marcus column, figures in battle scenes perform a limited number of possible actions. They either advance, fight, cower, fall, lie dead, or flee. The Roman does by far the bulk of the advancing and fighting, while to the barbarian falls the lot of cowering,

falling, dying, and fleeing. The sheer number of figures which the artist(s) had to execute resulted naturally in many specific poses being repeated over and over again. These repeated poses can be grouped into "types," defined here as a template which existed in the mind of the artist and manifested itself on the column in multiple figures sharing the same pose. Some actions (spearing overhand, for instance) fit into fairly rigid types; other types are less rigid, and some actions of figures in battle (e.g., falling from a horse) do not fit into any standard type at all. A study of these types can be used as a tool to investigate the working methods and, even more importantly, the training and origin of the artist(s). This is because the repetition of specific figure types, like any habit, is a learned behaviour. By looking for the roots of the figure types in other areas of art, we can identify influences on the artist(s).

A full survey of these figure types is offered in the Appendix. Most (but not all) of the resulting types exhibit a fairly high degree of standardisation in figure poses. These poses are not identical for each figure, and each type is better viewed as encompassing a range of body positions without an ideal archetype. For most figures, there was no model to be copied, no Hellenistic form to be reproduced. The "types" are thus mostly (but not all) an artificial construction of this classification system, reflecting the *inclinations* of the artist rather than the contents of his copybook (an aid, I would argue, that he did not have).

The bulk of the figures in most of the types conform more or less to a standard pose. Exceptions to these standard poses are easy to spot when they appear. It is also possible to spot three whole types in which there is a low degree of standardisation: "C:

Roman infantryman spearing overhand,” “**b**: Barbarian infantry spearman fighting,” and “**e**: Barbarian falling from horse.” Depictions of barbarians falling from horses are particularly irregular – no two are alike. The factor of figure orientation (facing left or right) is also significant, for in the more populous figure categories, combatants facing left tend to vary much more from the norm than those facing right. That factor likely explains a large part of the lack of standardisation seen in figure type **D**: all of its members face left. This brings up another significant observation. This is that left-facing figures are much more common among the barbarians, proportionally, than among the Romans. This is mainly the result of the usual role of the barbarian in battle as defending against a Roman attack, which most often comes from the left and proceeds right, in the overall narrative direction of the frieze. Indeed, all of the barbarian swordsmen and all of the pleading fallen barbarians face left.

To make this difference clear, the main figure types have been charted below, each identified with a letter (upper case for Romans, lower case for barbarians) which will be used to identify the types in later charts. A count of the examples of each type is provided, divided into left-facing (L.) and right-facing (R.) examples and also summed into a total count (T.). The degree of standardisation of each type is also given, using the rough categories of None, Low, Moderate, and High.

	Figure Type	L.	R.	Standardisation	T.
	Fighting Romans:	20	52		72
A	<i>Roman cavalryman spearing overhand:</i>	3	19	High	22
B	<i>Roman cavalryman spearing underhand:</i>	1	13	High	14
C	<i>Roman infantryman spearing overhand:</i>	10	16	L. High, R. Low	26
D	<i>Roman infantryman spearing underhand:</i>	2	9	Moderate	11
E	<i>Roman infantryman with sword:</i>	4	4	High	8
F	<i>Roman archer:</i>	3	8	Moderate	11
	Advancing Romans:	6	35		41
G	<i>Roman cavalryman advancing:</i>	4	15	High	19
H	<i>Roman infantryman advancing:</i>	2	20	High	22
	Fighting Barbarians:	12	5		17
a	<i>Barbarian cavalry fighting:</i>	1	2	-	3
b	<i>Barbarian infantry spearman fighting:</i>	3	3	Low	6
c	<i>Barbarian infantry swordsman fighting:</i>	8	0	High	8
	Defeated Barbarians:	33	45		78
d	<i>Barbarian fleeing:</i>	7	23	Moderate	30
e	<i>Barbarian falling from horse:</i>	6	3	None	9
f	<i>Defensive fallen barbarian:</i>	2	2	Moderate	4
g	<i>Pleading fallen barbarian:</i>	6	0	Moderate	6
h	<i>Semi-prostrate barbarian:</i>	2	3	Moderate	5
i	<i>Barbarian fallen on face:</i>	5	6	Moderate	11
j	<i>Barbarian fallen on back:</i>	5	8	Moderate	13

8. Figure Groups

The analysis of individual figures makes clear that the column's artists employed, consciously or not, a limited number of relatively standard types when rendering Romans and barbarians in battle. At the same time, innovation and novelty in figure design were possible, particularly in certain classes of figure, such as barbarians falling. These observations raise a number of questions: how were the standard types employed in a

battle scene, and were they ever grouped into standard fighting pairs with specific opponents, as was common on 2nd century sarcophagi (see Chapter 5)? Also, in what circumstances were novel and innovative figures employed? The first step towards answering these questions must be an analysis of the arrangement of figure types into fighting pairs or groups.

A survey of the 30 battle scenes with their total of 208 combatants reveals 56 clearly identifiable fighting groups, in which one figure is plainly shown fighting with one or more opponents. Almost all of these groups are pairs.¹⁵ This means that about half of all figures shown in the battle scenes are shown locked in one-on-one combat. 41 advancing Romans and 24 dead barbarians account for a very large proportion of the remaining figures, but nevertheless it is not uncommon to find a figure in a fighting pose with no visible opponent.

To clarify the composition of these small fighting groups, I chart below the numbers of encounters between types. The entry in each cell represents the number of times one figure type (Romans listed across the top, barbarians down the left side) is shown fighting with another. There are three more “encounters” than actual fighting groups, since in three of the scenes with more than two combatants there are more than two figure types employed.

¹⁵ The exceptions are a two-on-one fight in scene XIX, a three-on-one fight in LII, the depiction of two opposing lines of infantry (and one Roman cavalryman) in scene XIX, and the two scenes with archer formations (XV and XXXIX).

	A	B	C	D	E	F
a				2		
b		1	1			2
c	4	3	1	1		
d	4	5	2	2	1	2
e	3		4		1	
f		1	2	2	1	
g			4	2	3	
h		1	2			

This chart reveals a general pattern in the combination of figure types into fighting pairs. Barbarian types *c* and *d* (sword-wielding and fleeing figures respectively) are most often combined with Roman types *A* and *B* (horsemen with spears, wielded either over- or under-hand). On the other hand, barbarian types *f* and *g* (sitting barbarians, defending themselves or pleading) are combined almost exclusively with attacking Romans of type *C*, *D*, or *E* (all infantry fighting with spear or sword). Also, Roman swordsmen (*E*) are only shown in combat with barbarians who flee, fall, or sit on the ground (*d*, *e*, *f* and *g*). Finally, and perhaps not surprisingly, prostrate barbarians (figure types *i* and *j*) are never shown with direct opponents; they do however frequently appear under a galloping Roman horseman.

At the same time, it must be noted that these figure type combinations are not absolute; they appear to be trends rather than firmly written rules. To determine exactly how standard such combinations were, it is necessary to examine the groupings themselves.

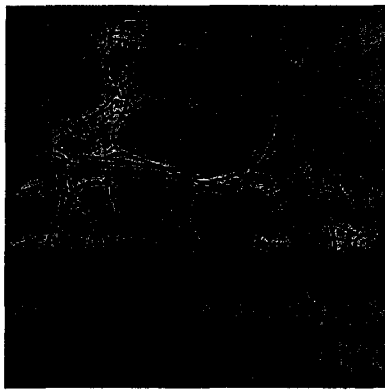
The first possibility to consider is whether artistic convention dictated specific standard figure combinations, in much the same way as it appears to have governed the choice of individual figure types. It requires no more than a brief perusal of any one group of “standard” figure combinations (e.g., *Ac*, *Ad*, *Bc*, etc.) to see that the answer, in most cases, is no. For example, in the combination *A* (Roman horseman spearing overhand) versus *c* (barbarian swordsman), both types, when analysed as individual figures, exhibit a high degree of standardisation. When they are grouped together in fighting pairs, however, the resulting arrangements are anything but standard:



Barbarian 50.15 stands slashing overhand in front of the forequarters of the horse of Roman 50.14, who twists in his saddle to bring his spear to bear; barbarian 50.9 twists backwards to meet the charge of Roman 50.8; barbarian 109.2 kneels beneath the upraised hooves of the horse ridden by Roman 109.1, who leans forward in his saddle as he stabs down with his spear; and barbarian 52.3 appears to be primarily engaged with the underhand-spearing Roman attacker 52.1, although he is beset from above and behind

by two other attackers of type A. It seems clear that there was no standard way in which the artists were accustomed (or expected) to execute this or any other fighting pair.

This observation, that there is no clear pattern to specific placement of figures within most fighting combinations, has a few exceptions, one of them notable. This is the case of figure pairs 52.1/.3 and 57.1/.4:



In both scenes a charging Roman on horseback wields his spear underhand against a barbarian on foot, who stands with one leg forward. In his right hand the barbarian holds a sword ready to stab forwards, and on his left arm, wrapped in a cloak, he holds a round shield which is partly overlapped by the head of the charging horse. The pairs are not, of course, identical: the sword arm of barbarian 57.4 is bent, while that of 52.3 is not; the Romans wear different types of armour; and the figures meet at slightly different levels in each composition. Nonetheless, the similarity in composition is great.

There are at least two other instances of similar figure pairs, but neither is nearly so close in composition as the example discussed above.¹⁶ This brings up a further question about the grouping of figures: if there are almost no identical figure combinations, then might other factors besides artistic convention be causing the rough pattern of figure groupings seen in the chart? First, if the groups of figure pairs are examined, it can be seen that more than one of each “standard” grouping often occurs within a single scene:

A vs. c : 2 of 4 such pairs occur in scene L
A vs. d : 2 of 4 such pairs occur in scene XLIII¹⁷
B vs. d : 2 of 5 such pairs occur in scene XCII
C vs. e : 2 of 4 such pairs occur in scene XXIV
F vs. b : both of these pairs occur in scene XV

This suggests that some of the apparent standardisation in figure pairs is the result of factors in scene composition. That is, it is the result of a step in the process of designing the column's frieze, and not related to configurations learned from classical battle art.

In sum, about half of all figures shown in the battle scenes are depicted fighting in small groups, and almost all of these groups consist of only two figures. There is some pattern visible in the pairing of figures. Roman cavalry are most often engaged in fighting barbarian swordsmen or in chasing fleeing horsemen. Roman infantry, on the other hand, are most often shown attacking barbarians on the ground. However, this pattern is not absolute. Moreover, with only one notable exception, these figure pairs are

¹⁶ These are the Roman infantrymen 27.4 and 77.2 who attack (one with a spear, the other with a sword) respectively seated barbarians 27.3 and 77.1, and the rather less similar pairs of Roman swordsmen 8.8 and 20.18 and their fleeing barbarian opponents 8.9 and 20.14.

¹⁷ One of these pairs involves a barbarian woman, 43.10, who may or may not be the intended opponent of roman 43.9.

never of a rigid, standard type. Also, two figure pairs of the same “type” often appear in one and the same battle scene. All of this suggests that a deep-seated artistic convention is not likely the reason behind the pattern visible in figure pairs.

9. Summary and Conclusions

Dress and equipment of figures on the Marcus column are highly standardised, and there is no clear difference between the weapons employed by the Romans and those employed by the barbarians (except that the barbarians are shown using theirs less often!). When the overall composition of the scenes is examined, the first characteristic that strikes the viewer is their variety. However, as with the figure pairs, within this variety there are patterns. In many cases two or three battle scenes share common compositional techniques. There is indication of a pattern to the use of these techniques as one proceeds up the column. Analysis also shows that half of the battle scenes contain clear groups of Roman and barbarian protagonists, organised in distinct formations. Although *Zweikämpfe* are a common feature, even in some battle scenes with distinct formations, they are more often subordinated to the ideal, if it may be called that, of the *Gruppenkampf*.

Standard figure types are relatively easy to identify: for the Romans these are mainly based on ways in which their weapons are used; for the barbarians, armed fighting types (generally scarce) tend to copy Roman poses, while other standard poses are used for fleeing and fallen figures. Exceptions to or variations in standard types occur in the

case of falling figures, or sometimes when figures are shown facing left, the opposite of the usual direction of movement on the column. When it comes to the grouping of figures into fighting pairs, there is much less standardisation than among the figures themselves. That is not to say that there are no patterns discernible: for example, Roman cavalry generally fight barbarian infantry, while Roman infantry are more often shown engaged with fallen barbarians. However, this pattern is vague enough, and has so many exceptions, that it seems not likely to be the result of specific artistic convention but rather due to the way in which the figures are employed in scene compositions. The artists did not create certain figure pairs because they were accustomed to; rather, they paired up combatants as necessity dictated.

These observations, while of some interest in the narrow context of the column itself, are of little real further use or importance on their own. However, like the column itself, the battle scenes are part of a wider artistic tradition, one which stretches back many hundreds of years. The figures of the column's battle scenes, their arrangement into pairs and compositions, not to mention the message and meaning which they contain, might – or might not – have predecessors in earlier battle art. It is only in this context that the battle scenes can be fully assessed, whether this assessment is a positive one, or negative. The purpose of the next three chapters is to provide this background, beginning with the earliest Greek battle art, and moving on to focus with greatest attention on the public and private battle art of the 2nd century AD, which formed the immediate artistic context of the Marcus column itself.

Chapter 3: The History of Battle Art before Trajan

The battle scenes of the Column of Marcus Aurelius did not exist in a vacuum. They were one example of a type of art of which many other specimens were on view in contemporary Rome, and behind which lay a long and influential tradition. The aim of this chapter is to provide a general outline of the broadest trends in the development of battle art from archaic Greece to the beginning of the 2nd century AD, to the extent that this can be determined from the surviving pictorial and literary sources. The main focus is on pointing out patterns and developments in figure types, composition, and themes, and on elucidating as well as possible the tradition of battle depiction that had developed by the beginning of the 2nd century AD. The evolution of this tradition is often hard to trace, for it is not fully documented by our surviving sources, and new developments in one area almost never seem to have caused changes across the entire genre. The resulting picture is thus by no means complete, but the gaps in our knowledge are as important to understand as the patterns in the evidence which survives. This investigation will set the stage for the more detailed analysis of 2nd century AD battle art that follows.

The compositional methods outlined in Chapter 2, *Einzelkampf* and *Gruppenkampf*, are more than artistic conveniences. *Gruppenkämpfe* can be seen as a more realistic attempt at representing battle than a collection of *Einzelkämpfe*. Most

battles in these periods consisted of clashes between more or less solid masses of troops, with individual combat being by far the exception.¹ *Einzelkämpfe*, on the other hand, might be seen as an attempt at representing Homeric battle as described in literature, with its emphasis on single combat, but other, more theoretical interpretations have also been suggested. Bie saw the *Gruppenkampf* as a characteristic of despotic cultures and their triumphal art (including Assyria, the Hellenistic kingdoms, and Rome), and *Einzelkämpfe* on the other hand as a Greek development reflecting heroic ideals and the growth of individualism.² More recently, Greek battle art up to the age of Alexander the Great has been thoroughly treated by T. Hölscher, whose work naturally forms a basis for my treatment of this period.³ Hölscher traces a development from the *Einzelgruppen* of the 5th c. BC Marathon painting at Athens to the “tight spatial and chronological co-ordination” of the Alexander mosaic.⁴ I am less ready than Hölscher to accept that our very fragmentary surviving evidence allows for the reconstruction of such an evolution (we have, for instance, no surviving full-scale publicly exhibited paintings by any of the recorded Greek masters), but at the very least this theory forms a useful tool for identifying new trends in battle art when they appear, and forms the basis for part of the analysis that follows.

¹ See especially Hanson 1989 on Greek hoplite warfare.

² Bie 1891: 29-30.

³ Hölscher 1973.

⁴ Hölscher 1973: 222; see *ibid.* 50-68 for the Marathon painting, 162-169 for the Alexander mosaic and its composition, and 218-223 for analysis of developments in battle art during the 4th century BC down to the time of Alexander.

1. Archaic Greece:

The earliest archaic battle scenes are found on vases, and are of two distinct types: fighters grouped in opposing ranks (*Gruppenkämpfe*), and isolated pairs or more rarely trios of fighters (*Einzelkämpfe*). The former type of composition, as on the Chigi vase, a Proto-Corinthian olpe (pitcher) in the Villa Giulia (ca. 650-640 BC, Fig. 3.1), is rare.⁵ The Chigi vase shows rows of overlapping Greek warriors about to engage in combat, and has often been taken as a fundamental illustration of hoplite warfare.⁶ Much more common are battles made up of numerous *Einzelkämpfe*. The figures are generally in profile, standing or kneeling, performing standard stabbing and slashing attacks with spear and sword. An early-6th century tripod-kothon by the Corinthianizing Attic C-Painter (Figure 3.2) provides a good example of how artists rendered these *Einzelkämpfe*, not exactly copying poses from one fighting pair to the next, but nonetheless keeping closely to a limited number of general figure types and combinations, producing a repetitive composition.⁷ The three common themes on these pots are Greeks fighting Greeks (both in ranks and as *Einzelkämpfe*), Greeks fighting Amazons (which appear only as *Einzelkämpfe*), and Greeks fighting Trojans. Around 560 BC, the first scenes of Greeks fighting Orientals appear, showing mounted Greeks clashing with mounted eastern archers, perhaps intended as Scythians.⁸ A fifth theme is found in the sculpted

⁵ See most recently Hurwit 2002: 3 n. 12 for date, pp. 14-16 for discussion of battle frieze. Another example of ranked fighters is found on an aryballos of the same painter (London 1889.4-18.1; Boardman 1998, fig. 176), where *Einzelkämpfe* are also shown.

⁶ Hurwit 2002:14, n. 47. Bie (1891: 20) saw oriental influence in the depictions of *Kriegerreihen* on Corinthian vases.

⁷ Tripod-kothon by C-painter, Paris (Louvre CA 616). Hölscher 1973, pl.2.

⁸ See Beazley 1951 pls. 30.5, 31.1-3, and Hölscher 1973: 27.

frieze of the Siphnian treasury at Delphi, dated to c.525 BC.⁹ It includes scenes of Greeks fighting Trojans, and also scenes of the Greek gods fighting with Giants, a subject that becomes very popular in later battle art. Elements of both ranked and *Einzelkampf* composition are used, and dead combatants are shown on the ground.

2. *The Persian Wars and Classical Greece:*

The attacks by the Persians on mainland Greece (490 and 480-79) provided new fodder for the artist and resulted in a number of depictions of Greeks fighting Persians, as seen for example on Figure 3.3, an Attic red-figure kylix.¹⁰ There seems to have been a serious attempt made to represent faithfully Persian dress, equipment, and even physiognomy, although there is no evidence that any specific events of the wars were intended.¹¹ The poses of the warriors on both sides, however, are not significantly different from those used in earlier battle art, and the method of composition is entirely that of *Einzelkämpfe*. Given the absence of any distinctive details (e.g., identifiable persons or objects related to a specific battle), we should likely understand the Persian figures as generic opponents in generic compositions. The enemies of the Greeks, who in earlier battle scenes would have been rendered as Amazons, Trojans, or even other Greeks, were now also sometimes shown as Persians. These scenes certainly had extra meaning for the contemporary Greek, even if no specific battle was intended: they were tokens of Greek superiority and victory over a foreign barbarian invader.

⁹ See Fuchs 1969: 426-430, figs. 487-490.

¹⁰ Hölscher (1973: 38-40) provides a list of the relevant vases; for illustrations one must look to Bovon 1963, figs. 1-15.

¹¹ Hölscher 1973: 44.

The next two significant changes in battle depictions occur around the middle of the 5th century. The first involves the equipment of the combatants: up to this point mortals and giants were usually shown fully equipped in the hoplite fashion, but they are now often depicted naked, except for weapons, shield, and perhaps helmet.¹² The second development is a new method of composition. Although *Einzelkämpfe* are still employed, and figure types are all familiar, the figures themselves are not placed on a single ground line. Instead the combatants are shown spread over a broad field, as if seen from the air. This technique is first seen in products of 5th century Attic pottery workshops, and is well illustrated by an amphora of the Suessula Painter dating to 425 BC (Figure 3.4).¹³

The suggestion has been made that such vases may be linked to the development of wall painting in Athens (see below).¹⁴ This seems to me to be an unnecessarily complicated answer. Instead, the new compositions can be explained as the result of independent development in vase painting, from relatively simple compositions to much more complex ones, often abandoning the *Einzelkampf* style and showing development in figure types.¹⁵ New developments can be seen clearly in the Gigantomachy on the amphora by the Suessula Painter (Figure 3.4), where *Einzelkämpfe* are employed in some cases (e.g., bottom right), but clear groups of combatants can also be distinguished. In the right half of the scene, a semicircle of gods (Herakles, Zeus, Dionysus, and Poseidon) are

¹² Earlier examples of naked combatants, though uncommon, do exist: as, for example, on a neck-amphora of the 6th century BC, Paris (Louvre E 863), illustrated in Bothmer (1957), pl.3., where one of the combatants is naked.

¹³ Paris (Louvre S 1677); Boardman 2001, fig.301, drawing after Furtwängler. This compositional method can be found as early as 460 BC, as for example on an Attic volute krater by the Follower of the Niobid Painter (ARV 2, 612.2; Berger 1968, pl. 17) with an Amazonomachy theme. For examples with other themes, see Boardman 1991, figs. 15.1 (Seven against Thebes) and 16 (Amazonomachy).

¹⁴ Boardman 2001: 272; B. is cautious in defining the nature of the link.

¹⁵ E.g., Boardman 1991: 326, 329.3.

opposed to a cluster of four giants, who make defensive gestures. No ground lines are observed except for the bottom border of the composition, and figures are overlapped in a complex manner. A slightly later Attic pelike London (Figure 3.5) displays a similar method of composition, in which two lines of opposing fighters are opposed to each other, gods above and giants below.¹⁶ Thus the essential tool of composition remains the *Einzelkampf*, but by employing the new above-and-below arrangement of figures the artist is able to create the appearance of unity in the two groups of fighters clashing in battle.

It is important to note that at the same time as these striking developments were taking place, the older-style linear compositions were not abandoned, and indeed even the Suessula Painter, the artist of the vase in Figure 3.4, also produced battle scenes in the linear compositional method.¹⁷ Even more importantly, sculpture on two major Athenian monuments, the Parthenon metopes and the Athena Nike temple frieze, clearly demonstrate the sustained popularity of *Einzelkämpfe* and linear composition in classical Athenian sculpture.¹⁸ Relief sculpture is, in fact, extremely conservative in its employment of compositional methods, not just in the Classical period but also into the Hellenistic and Roman periods as well. Relief battle compositions which are not *Einzelkämpfe* are remarkable in any period, and always require special analysis.

¹⁶ Attic pelike, related to the Talos Painter (London BM 1920.3-15.3), dated 425-370 BC. Boardman 1989, fig. 326.

¹⁷ E.g., an amphora in New York, Met. 44.11.12, fig. 122 in Richter 1946.

¹⁸ The subject matter of the Nike Temple frieze is debated; see Hurwit 1999: 212 for resume of current opinions. In the context of the Acropolis, the sculpted shield of the Athena Parthenos statue deserves mention, although it is only preserved in supposed copies from the Roman period (see Harrison 1981). It seems to have been covered with an Amazonomachy in *Einzelkampf* style, and may possibly have represented a battle for a besieged city (Athens?).

Before leaving the battle art of classical Athens, one further monument deserves mention: the Stoa Poikile, apparently located in the Agora, and built about 460 BC.¹⁹ Our sources indicate that it contained three battle paintings, one of a battle between the Athenians and Spartans at Oinoe, another showing an Amazonomachy, and finally a depiction of the famous battle between the Greeks and the Persians at Marathon. The paintings themselves are described by Pausanias (I.15), and though his descriptions are brief, they provide a glimpse of a medium of classical battle art which has otherwise been entirely lost. Pausanias says little about the first two battles. We are told that the Oinoe painting showed "not the crisis of battle nor when the action had advanced as far as the display of deeds of valour, but the beginning of the fight when the combatants were about to close."²⁰ This gives us some idea of the overall composition of the work: two massed bodies of troops, not yet come to blows. Of the Amazonomachy no detail is given, beyond the mention that Theseus is present, a common occurrence in classical Amazonomachies.²¹ Pausanias is more informative when it comes to the Marathon painting:

"At the end of the painting are those who fought at Marathon; the Boeotians of Plataea and the Attic contingent are coming to blows with the foreigners. In this place neither side has the better, but the centre of the fighting shows the foreigners in flight and pushing one another into the morass, while at the end of the painting are the Phoenician ships, and the Greeks killing the foreigners who are scrambling into them ... Of the fighters the most conspicuous figures in the painting are

¹⁹ The exact location of the stoa is unknown. For collected sources, see Wycherley 1957: 40-41 for the location, 45 n.2 for the date.

²⁰ Trans. W.H.S. Jones, Loeb edition.

²¹ A potential link between the stoa and the vase paintings showing Amazons has been seen in an inscription on a vase showing Amazons (*NSc* 1927, pl. 20), where one Amazon is named Peisianassa, similar to Peisianakteios, the original name for the Stoa Poikile (see Beazley 1929: 366; this connection is followed by Hölscher 1973: 71). The vase, however, does not show a scattered battle, or even fighting at all, but rather only a procession of Amazons mounted and on foot.

Callimachus, who had been elected commander-in-chief by the Athenians, Miltiades, one of the generals, and a hero called Echetlus.” (I.15; trans. W.H.S. Jones)

The painting is therefore composed in such a way as to show three distinct stages of the battle, a feature otherwise unknown in battle art of the classical period. Pausanias also mentions that three of the Greeks were particularly noticeable in the fighting, indicating a focus on major characters. Hölscher interprets Pausanias' description as indicating a non-continuous composition; that is, it is not a joined series of scenes with key figures which are repeated in each scene.²² He also takes Pausanias' description as indicating that the battle was divided into single figures and small groups, as seen on vases. Pausanias' descriptions of the Stoa Poikile paintings make it clear that there is a substantial segment missing from our understanding of classical Greek battle art. Judging from the descriptions, these were complex works, much more so than even the most complicated battle scenes on vases, let alone the predominantly linear composition used in contemporary sculpture.²³

3. The 4th Century and the Alexander Mosaic:

The 4th century BC saw the continuation of Athenian vase-painting trends and, as the Athenian industry faded, its continuation on the vases of southern Italy. The most notable development in vase painting occurred late in the century, in the work of the Darius Painter: there we see battle scenes that depict, apparently, fighting between

²² Hölscher 1973: 50-54.

²³ An exception to the commonly linear battle sculpture can be found in the relatively complex relief sculpture of some Lycian tombs, especially the Nereid monument at Xanthos and the Trysa Heroon, which

Alexander and Darius (Figures 3.6 and 3.7).²⁴ The vases show battles between Greeks and Persians, composed in bands of *Einzelkämpfe*, with the addition of two prominent figures: one a mounted Greek, the other a finely dressed and bearded Persian in a chariot (lost in Fig. 3.6), fleeing from the Greek.

The iconography of the Darius Painter's vases is related to the subject matter of the famous Alexander Mosaic (Fig. 3.8). This large mosaic, 5.1 by 2.7 meters, found at Pompeii, has been generally accepted as a copy of a late-4th century Hellenistic painting (though this date has recently been challenged).²⁵ Its composition is absolutely unlike that of any earlier surviving battle scene. The view is approximately from eye level, the combatants are massed in groups, realistically overlapping and receding into the distance. Relatively few are actually shown fighting; instead we see the spears of the Macedonian phalanx in the background, with Persians fleeing before them. The focus of the action is on Alexander, mounted at left, and Darius, fleeing in his chariot at right. Adding to the sense of realism is the absence of nudity and the apparent attempt to recreate with accuracy the actual armament of the Macedonians and the Persians. Like Pausanias' descriptions of the Stoa Poikile painting, the Alexander Mosaic provides a rare glimpse of a class of artwork now almost entirely lost.

Like vase painting, relief sculpture of the 4th century follows in the tracks of its 5th century forebears right up to the end of the century. Rows of *Einzelkämpfe* are the norm

date to the early 4th century. However, Childs (1971: 76-8) has concluded that their iconography is almost exclusively Near Eastern, and not in any way modelled after Greek prototypes.

²⁴ Two vessels of the Darius painter preserve this theme: an Apulian volute crater (Naples Mus. Naz. 3256) and an Apulian vase (Hamilton collection, lost). Stewart 1993, figs. 4 and 5, p.151.

(the most famous example being the frieze of the Mausoleum at Halikarnassos). However, at the end of the century, just as on vases and in painting, we find a work which depicts Alexander: the Alexander Sarcophagus from Sidon (Fig. 3.9).²⁶ Although it employs standard *Einzelkämpfe*, they are much more densely positioned, with more overlapping than usually seen. In comparison to this style of composition, surviving examples of contemporary tomb painting in Macedon itself remain closer to classical *Einzelkämpfe*, well spread-out on a single plane.²⁷ Alexander, at the far left, is not in armour nor does he face Darius (who does not appear on the sarcophagus), but his lion headdress makes him clearly identifiable. This sarcophagus has one further point of interest: it was brightly painted, and enough of this painting has survived to give us a good idea of its original appearance.²⁸

The contrast between the composition of the dense, eye-level perspective of the Alexander mosaic and the looser, much more traditional figure arrangements of the Alexander and Darius vases and the Alexander sarcophagus is glaring. It has even led to speculation that the compositional style itself of the Alexander mosaic presents a new message to the viewer, one focussed on the importance of the two key leaders.²⁹ It was this focus on the two leaders, argues Hölscher, which *allowed* the artist of the Alexander mosaic to let the two armies recede naturally into the background. According to this theory, the designers of the vases and sarcophagus had other intentions: to show more of

²⁵ A 3rd to 2nd century date for the original has been proposed by Pfrommer (1998: 216), mainly on the basis of antiquarian details. The most recent argument for the mosaic as a copy of a painting of the time of Alexander is Cohen's (1997: 2).

²⁶ See Graeve 1970 and Schefold 1968.

²⁷ E.g., Petsas 1966 fig. B and pl. A.

²⁸ For colour illustrations showing the painting of the relief, Schefold 1968.

the fighting, and to depict the generals at the head of their armies. While possible, this theory by itself does not explain why compositions like that of the Alexander mosaic never appear on vases or sculpture of the Hellenistic period. It is plausible that the force of tradition was too strong among the painters of vases – and among their customers.

This example should make us wary of guessing at the appearance of earlier paintings by analogy with vase painting and sculpture. If we did not have the Alexander mosaic, but only a mention of it in some literary source, there would doubtless be many attempts to reconstruct it based on images taken from sources like the Alexander and Darius vases and the Alexander sarcophagus. The results of such an attempt could not come close to the actual appearance of the original.

4. The Hellenistic Period – Introduction:

Battle art constitutes a substantial and important portion of Hellenistic art; in fact, the key example of the dramatic, emotional Hellenistic baroque style, the frieze of the Great Altar at Pergamon, is itself a battle depiction.³⁰ A roughly contemporary work, and one which helps bridge the gap between the art of Greece and that of Rome, is the Aemilius Paullus monument at Delphi, commissioned by a Roman general to record a victorious battle against the Macedonians, but carved by a Greek.³¹ Outside the light shed by these two monuments, however, our understanding of Hellenistic battle art becomes murky. The remaining “Hellenistic” battle pieces are only known to us through supposed

²⁹ Hölscher 1973: 162-169, esp. 168.

³⁰ On the role of the Altar in art history and the derivation of its style, see De Grummond and Ridgeway (eds.) 2000: 2.

³¹ The main study of the Aemilius Paullus monument is Kähler 1965.

Roman copies (mainly for sculpture in the round), or through translations into new media (mainly certain Roman relief sculptures which are supposed to copy one Hellenistic painting or another). One of these involves the supposed reflection of a Pergamene battle painting in a series of Roman “Greek versus Gaul” battle sarcophagi of the 2nd c. AD (see Chapter 5.1). Much more complex is the question of the two Attalid dedications, one of large figures set up by Attalos I (241-197 BC) in Pergamon, and one of small figures and various battle subjects set up on the Acropolis at Athens by Attalos II (159-138).³² These monuments were unique in the history of battle art, since they showed only one side of the battle: the conquered and dying foe. The point may have been to give the viewer the impression that he was observing the enemy as if he himself were the victor.³³

5. Hellenistic Battle Monuments:

The Great Altar at Pergamon, dated 180-160 BC, bears two friezes showing battle, one on the exterior and one on the interior.³⁴ The exterior Gigantomachy frieze, while a masterpiece of expressive art, adheres to the familiar technique of *Einzelkämpfe* arranged in a single line. The figures themselves are familiar from Classical Greek relief and vase

³² The classic attempt to associate surviving Roman sculptures with forebears belonging to either of these two groups is Bienkowski's (1908). The evidence has recently been summarized by Marszal (2000: 204-212), who concludes that there are few if any secure copies of the originals; he particularly throws doubt on two of the most generally accepted members of the Pergamon dedication, the suicidal Ludovisi Gaul and the Dying Trumpeter.

³³ Pirson 2002: 74.

³⁴ The main publications are Winnefeld 1910, Kähler 1948. Stewart (2000: 39-41) reviews the current state of the debate over the dating of the Altar and its carvings. He favours a date in the late 170s to the early 160s, which corresponds in particular with iconographic elements such as the various Macedonian attributes of a number of the giants – most notably the starburst on the shield of the giant fallen beneath the horses of Hera in the middle of the east frieze (Stewart fig. 6). This suggests a connection to the Third Macedonian War of 172-168 BC, in which the Pergamenes fought against Macedonia; Stewart considers the connection

paintings, and especially the art of 5th century Athens.³⁵ Its style sets the frieze apart from its forebears: the highly expressive faces of the suffering giants, the vigorous movement and strain in the bodies, and the expression of pathos that these achieve.³⁶

Of greater interest for the development of battle art is the Telephos Frieze from the interior courtyard of the altar, for it may show a type of composition not earlier seen in sculpture: that is, one in which all figures are not standing on the same level, but are instead spread about the field.³⁷ Alas, the frieze is only preserved in fragments, and the battle sections have suffered more than others have. Thus, while the remaining fragments of battle could be equated with a composition using multiple ground lines, and while this technique was certainly used in other, non-battle sections of the frieze (e.g., the building of the ark for Auge), it cannot be said for certain what the exact technique of composition was. It has been suggested, however, that the frieze represents a translation into stone of Hellenistic innovations in painting.³⁸

Roughly contemporary to the Great Altar is the important frieze of the Aemilius Paullus monument at Delphi (Figure 3.10), dated to 168 BC, erected to mark Aemilius' victory over the Macedonians at Pydna.³⁹ The monument was in the form of a tall, rectangular pillar, topped by a statue of the Roman general. The frieze, approximately

of such symbols to the earlier Macedonian Wars (215-206 and 200-196) too distant. See, however, the cautionary note of Green in the same volume (de Grummond and Ridgway [eds.] 2000: 181).

³⁵ See Winnefeld 1910: 234-237 and Kähler 1948: 116-120 for analysis of figure prototypes.

³⁶ Kähler 1948: 80-102; de Grummond and Ridgway 2000: 2.

³⁷ See Winnefeld 1910: 155-227 and most recently Dreyfus and Schraudolph (eds.) 1996. The date of this frieze may be somewhat later than the external gigantomachy frieze: Andrae (1996: 125-126) suggests the 160s BC.

³⁸ Winnefeld 1910: 237-239. Stewart (2000: 41-42) discusses the influence of painting on the frieze, although he argues against it being a copy of a specific painting (*ibid.*, 48).

0.45m tall, encircled the upper part of the pillar and has a total length of about 6m.⁴⁰ The most remarkable feature of the frieze is that it seems to include a representation of a specific event in the battle of Pydna: the breaking-out of a riderless horse ("A" in Fig. 3.10) from the Roman lines, recorded both by Plutarch and Livy as having been the catalyst of the battle.⁴¹ Here, however, most of the resemblance to the reality of the actual battle ends. Although some soldiers can be convincingly identified as Roman (numbers 6, 7, and 20 on Fig. 3.10; 13, 24, and 27 are less certainly Roman), or as Macedonian (3, 8, 29; perhaps 17) by their distinctive shields, the identities of most of the other nineteen combatants are less than clear.⁴² The Macedonian phalanxes, which play the central role in both Livy and Plutarch's account of the battle, are nowhere to be seen – a stark contrast to the Macedonian phalanx in the background of the Alexander mosaic. Moreover, three figures appear naked (12, 19, 25) and two others (6 and 7), ostensibly Roman by virtue of their characteristic long oval shields, wear only loincloths.

These problems with the determination of the nationality of the figures in the battle frieze of the Aemilius Paullus monument present severe obstacles to the analysis of its composition. Kähler's attempt (as illustrated in Fig. 3.10, where the supposed Romans are shaded dark, the Macedonians light) creates an appealing impression of a composition based on small groups, with some *Einzelkampf* elements (especially figures 7 and 8, 11 and 12, and 24 and 26). However, it also presents the problem that Roman soldiers are

³⁹ The fundamental study is Kähler 1965. The inscription on the base (Kähler 1965: 8) gives the identification and purpose of the monument: *L. Aemilius L. F. Imperator de rege Perse Macedonibusque cepet.*

⁴⁰ The pillar measures 2.2 x 1.05 metres per side; Kähler 1965: 12.

⁴¹ Plutarch *Aemilius* 18.1; Livy 44.40.7.

⁴² See Kähler (1965: 25-35) for identification of figures.

frequently shown in defeat (12, 19, 21, and perhaps 14 and 24). In fact, according to Kähler's identifications, the Macedonians are shown in no worse a state than the Romans, with only two combatants defeated (3 and 8) and one dead (29). Not only does this grossly contradict the balance of Roman and Macedonian dead recorded by Livy (100 Romans killed versus 20,000 Macedonians)⁴³, but it also flies in the face of all known later examples of Roman battle art, where no Roman is shown clearly worsted in combat. One explanation might be that Kähler's figure identifications are wrong, but it should also be considered that, given the evident lack of concern for realism on the part of the sculptors (surely, for example, no Romans fought in loincloths), such an attempt might simply be futile. Another explanation might be that the frieze was composed freely by a local Greek without particular concern for (or instructions specifying) reality, or with little concern for Roman interests. In sum, this problematic monument adds more questions than answers to our understanding of the development of Roman battle art.

6. *Early Roman Traditions in Battle Art:*

At about the same time as these works were being executed in Greece and the Hellenistic east, we begin to have fairly extensive documentation of another new and important type of battle art, which takes us from Greece to Rome and, eventually, from the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD. Aemilius Paullus himself provides a good bridge to this tradition, for Pliny (*NH* 35.135) tells us that after returning to Rome, he sent to Athens for a painter, *ad triumphum excolendum*. That is, Aemilius wanted a Greek

⁴³ Livy 44.42.7.

painter to create images to adorn his triumph and to advertise his recent victories to the Roman people. Our record of this use of painting by successful Roman generals goes back to 264 BC when, Pliny says (*NH* 35.22), Messala displayed on the side of the senate house a *tabula proelii, quo Carthaginenses et Hieronem in Sicilia vicerat*. Lucius Scipio is also reported by Pliny (*ibid.*) to have done much the same thing, setting up a *tabulam victoriae suae Asiaticae* (over Antiochus III, 190 BC) on the Capitol. Another example is given by the case in 146 BC of L. Hostilius Mancinus, the first Roman to force his way into Carthage, who not only exhibited a picture of Carthage and the attacks on it, but even stood by it and explained the details to the public (*ibid.*, 35.23). Pliny does not tell us what these paintings looked like, but if one was improved by narration, it must have been fairly complex.⁴⁴

The tradition of exhibiting paintings of battle as part of the ceremony of the triumph was maintained through the first century BC.⁴⁵ In the first century AD we finally have a description of some of these images, in Josephus' description of the triumph of Vespasian and Titus in AD 71:

"But nothing in the procession excited so much astonishment as the structure of the moving stages; indeed, their massiveness afforded ground for alarm and misgiving as to their stability, many of them being three or four stories high, while the magnificence of the fabric was a source at once of delight and amazement. For many were enveloped in tapestries interwoven with gold, and all had a framework of gold and wrought ivory. The war was shown by numerous representations, in separate sections, affording a very vivid picture of its episodes. Here was to be seen a prosperous country devastated, there whole battalions of the enemy slaughtered; here a party in flight, there others led into captivity; walls of

⁴⁴ On these and other early references to paintings and other objects carried in Roman triumphs, see Holliday 1997.

⁴⁵ Appian (*Roman History* 12.17.117) records that Pompey, in his triumph over Mithridates, exhibited images of the king fighting, defeated, and fleeing and also images of a siege; Caesar (*ibid.*, 2.15.102) is reported to have done much the same.

surpassing compass demolished by engines, strong fortresses overpowered, cities with well-manned defences completely mastered and an army pouring within the ramparts, an area all deluged with blood, the hands of those incapable of resistance raised in supplication, temples set on fire, houses pulled down over their owners' heads, and, after general desolation and woe, rivers flowing, not over a cultivated land, nor supplying drink to man and beast, but across a country still on every side in flames. For to such sufferings were the Jews destined when they plunged into the war; and the art and magnificent workmanship of these structures now portrayed the incidents to those who had not witnessed them, as though they were happening before their eyes."⁴⁶

This description, although it sounds very generic, at least gives a general impression of the types of images which could be shown in such a situation, the prominent role played by battle among them, the bloodiness of the battle, and the various settings in which the fighting occurred. Understandably, none of these triumphal paintings have survived in the original. It has been suggested, however, that copies (or at least adaptations) of them may survive in such monuments as the column of Trajan and the relief panels of the arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman forum.⁴⁷

In comparison with the tantalising descriptions of triumphal painting, the surviving depictions of battle in art from Italy between the Hellenistic and Imperial period offer relatively little in the way of novelty. The earliest examples of such art are from Etruscan sources (beginning in the late 5th century BC, though most are later), either in relief on sarcophagi or cremation urns, or more rarely in painting on sarcophagi or in tombs.⁴⁸ On the urns and sarcophagi the subject matter is dominated by battles of Greeks and Gauls, but also includes other subjects such as Amazonomachies and, rarely,

⁴⁶ *Jewish Wars* 7.139-148; trans. H. Thackeray, Loeb edition.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 4 for discussion of the sources of images from the column of Trajan.

⁴⁸ See Brendel (1978: 379-386) and Höckmann (1991: 204).

historical or pseudo-historical fights.⁴⁹ The latter type of battle, which becomes a dominant theme in Roman battle art, is well illustrated by a painting from the Francois Tomb at Vulci, dated to the 4th century BC. Here the subject is the rescue of a captive from his captors and the slaughter of Romans by local Etruscan heroes; the combatants are identified by name.⁵⁰ The figure types, however, remain standard and their arrangement linear, divided into *Einzelkämpfe*.

Significant signs of change appear in a 3rd-early 2nd century BC tomb painting from the Esquiline hill in Rome (Fig. 3.11).⁵¹ The painting shows four superimposed registers of figures, the main ones labelled by name. In the second register (from the bottom) two main figures, M. Fanio and Q. Fabio, face each other. To the left of Fanio, and in the register below, fighting figures are visible. The three figures in the lowest register are most interesting. Not only are they placed, apparently, in a landscape, but they also are shown fighting in one single direction, indicating that they are part of a group of fighters belonging to one side of a battle. Both of these features are quite unlike what is found in the usually dominant *Einzelkampf* style of composition.

The sculptural representations of battle to have survived from the city of Rome before the 2nd century AD are small both in number and in scale. The single most substantial is an Augustan relief (the "Mantua relief", Fig. 3.12) thought to have come from an Augustan temple in the Forum, where it would have formed part of the

⁴⁹ For Greek-Gaul depictions, which suddenly become popular in the 2nd century BC, see Höckmann (1991) and Pirson (2002, esp. 76-79).

⁵⁰ Brigue (1986: 162); ead. figs. 96 and 97 for other paintings from the tomb, which include scenes from the Trojan war and the full-length portrait of Vel Saties.

⁵¹ Coarelli (1976: 20-21) favours a date in the early 3rd century, Ling (1991: 9) 3rd to early 2nd century.

architrave.⁵² It measures only 0.55m tall, less than the faces of most sarcophagi,⁵³ and shows Romans on foot and on horseback fighting with largely naked barbarians; the subject is perhaps a legendary battle.⁵⁴ The figure poses are familiar from classical and Hellenistic battle art, but the method of composition is not. Instead of the familiar *Einzelkämpfe*, the frieze shows a steady advance by a body of Roman soldiers, whose enemies are for the most part not actively resisting them, but are rather shown as being totally overwhelmed. This absolute dominance of one side over the other appears earlier only in the Alexander mosaic, although the overall style of composition is quite different.

The rest of our evidence for pre-2nd century battle sculpture from the city of Rome consists only of fragments. An example of battle sculpture, perhaps from an arch of Claudius across the Via Flaminia, is shown on Renaissance drawings as consisting of closely-spaced *Einzelkämpfe*.⁵⁵ Fragments of at least three sculpted battle scenes survive from the same general period, some over-life-sized, so we know that such sculpture did exist.⁵⁶ What we do not know is what their original format was, or even their general appearance. Thus we are left rather in the dark as to what battle art looked like in the city of Rome up to the beginning of the 2nd century AD.

Finally, two fascinating but poorly understood Augustan/Tiberian monuments from Roman Gaul provide further evidence that we are missing large parts of the picture with regard to battle-theme relief sculpture. One is the Mausoleum of the Julii at Glanum, the other the arch at Orange. The Glanum Mausoleum, dated to the Augustan

⁵² Strong 1961: 91.

⁵³ See Koepfel (1983b: 132-133) for bibliography.

⁵⁴ Marszal 2000: 219.

⁵⁵ Koepfel 1983a: 103 for source and date, pl. 43.3 for illustration; idem 1989: 49 for bibliography.

period and possibly a monument set up by sons descended from a soldier of Julius Caesar, bears two substantial battle reliefs measuring 3.9x2.2m each (Fig. 3.13).⁵⁷ The west relief shows a battle between infantry, the north a cavalry battle. The combatants have been identified as Romans and Gauls, though they are only distinguishable by helmet decoration: crests for the (supposed) Romans, horns for the Gauls.⁵⁸ The infantry battle is particularly interesting, as it shows a complex scene with figures on different ground lines, some of whom are grouped into ranks (although *Einzelkämpfe* are still visible, e.g., figures 1 and 4). The cavalry battle, in contrast, makes no such attempt at grouping the figures on each side, and is entirely composed of *Einzelkämpfe*. This is noteworthy, for it is one of the very few successful depictions of close combat between horsemen that survives from antiquity. Horsemen are usually shown engaged with foot soldiers, a situation which is probably due to the difficulty of composing mounted *Einzelkämpfe*, and which underlines the sophistication of the artist who created this work.

The attic reliefs of the Tiberian Arch at Orange (Figure 3.14), whose sculpted areas measure a remarkable 7x1.5m each, show Romans fighting barbarians.⁵⁹ The Romans are mainly cavalry, the barbarians mainly infantry. *Einzelkämpfe* are prominent, but Romans and barbarians are often also grouped in distinct masses. The composition is

⁵⁶ See Koeppel 1983b numbers 3, 4, and 34, dated to the Julio-Claudian period.

⁵⁷ On the Glanum mausoleum in general see Kleiner 1980. The mausoleum is dated by epigraphic characteristics of its inscription (*CIL* 12.1012); see Rolland 1969: 68. On its sponsors, see Kleiner (1992: 112-113).

⁵⁸ Marszal (2000: 218) explains the similarly heavy armament of both sides as a reflection of reality in the long-Romanized province of *Galia Narbonensis*.

⁵⁹ The date of the arch has been heavily disputed, but is generally judged to be Tiberian on the basis of the restoration of the inscription: see Amy 1962: 143-153 and 158; accepted, for example, by Kleiner (1992: 154). Anderson (1987) has recently proposed a date in the early 3rd century, but the details of the Roman arms and equipment depicted (quite similar to those on the Glanum Mausoleum and Altar of Ahenobarbus in Rome) seem to make such a date unlikely.

relatively complex, with figures shown on multiple ground lines, heavily overlapped. It is difficult to say what relation these sculptures at Glanum and Orange had to the battle art of 1st century Rome, but it is clear that they are not "provincial" creations in the manner of military tombstones or such works as the Tropaeum Traiani (see Chapter 4.6).⁶⁰ Nineteenth-century theories held them to be Hellenistic in origin, stemming from the pre-Roman influence of Greek culture in southern Gaul; later scholars argue, on the basis of the relation of figures to background, for a Roman origin.⁶¹ Kleiner identifies Greek models for many of the components of the hunt scene (South Relief), and concludes that the whole is the work of a Gaulish artist who used Greek motifs but composed his scenes in a non-Greek manner.⁶² The entire work, however, is so unique in the tradition of battle art that Kleiner concluded that "to judge from surviving Gallo-Roman reliefs, the Glanum Master had no followers. His name is lost and his personal style appears to have died with him."⁶³ The Glanum monument thus serves as one more witness to the holes in our knowledge of Greco-Roman battle art.

7. Summary and Conclusions

Battle was a popular theme in ancient narrative art. Even though mythological battle dominated in the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek periods, we have firm evidence of historical themes at least as early as the 5th c. BC. Historically based battle

⁶⁰ See Kleiner 1980 for a summary of the debate over the sources of the Glanum images.

⁶¹ Kleiner (1980: 105-109) discusses previous opinions on the artistic heritage of the reliefs.

⁶² Kleiner 1980: 125-126.

⁶³ Kleiner 1980: 126.

art appears to have been more popular in the Roman period, as typified by its appearance in triumphal paintings. The line between historical and mythological is sometimes hard to draw – take, for example, 5th century depictions of Amazons in Persian dress, or the Macedonian equipment of some of the Giants on the Great Altar of Pergamon. The Roman period presents fewer such subtle messages in its battle depictions; instead, there is a strong trend towards realism. The culmination of this trend will be studied in the following chapter.

From an artistic point of view, if a single theme in battle art up to the 1st century AD were to be identified, it would have to be that of linear *Einzelkämpfe* – at least, this is the dominant style in the works that have survived. These *Einzelkämpfe* were usually composed using stock figure types, which were repeated as needed. Most of these figure types had been developed by the end of the classical period, and remained in use into the Roman era. Innovations at various periods are evident: Persians appear in the early 5th century BC, nudity in the mid-5th century, scattered composition in the later 5th century, and Alexander figures in the late 4th. Despite these innovations, however, there was a high degree of uniformity in the way fighting figures were depicted, most of which can be traced back at least to the 5th century BC, and especially to the innovative battle art of Classical Athens.

There is clear development within the broad field of *Einzelkämpfe*. More crowded and closely spaced compositions appear as time progresses, with individual figures and even fighting pairs overlapping one another (e.g., the Alexander Sarcophagus, Fig. 3.9). One of the highest points in the overall evolution of battle art can be seen in Attic vase

painting of the later 5th century (e.g., the Gigantomachy in Fig. 3.4), where figures are spread all over the field. Although they still remain locked in individual combat, these *Einzelkämpfe* are sometimes arranged so that fighters from both sides stand together, producing the effect of a *Gruppenkampf*. The highest degree of sophistication in this type of composition is reached in works like the sculpture of the Mausoleum at Glanum (Fig. 3.13), where elements of both *Einzelkämpfe* and *Gruppenkampf* are combined. Nonetheless, it seems that into the Roman period battle art was mostly dominated by simpler *Einzelkämpfe*, even though they were usually tightly composed. An example of this trend at its height can be seen in the carving of the Arch at Orange (Fig. 3.14), but this should be contrasted with the simpler, linear composition on the Mantua relief (Fig. 3.12).

The actual significance of these compositional methods is debatable. Bie proposed that the popularity of *Einzelkämpfe* and the practice of depicting battle as equal stems from the identity of the Greek polis-inhabitant as a soldier, steeped in the tradition of Homeric heroism.⁶⁴ Zanker has elaborated this idea.⁶⁵ This seems, however, to be an over-generalised theory. In particular, Zanker does not consider the very one-sided depictions of Greek versus Persian combat, where a Greek warrior is never shown defeated by a Persian opponent. Also, we cannot forget that there are clearly great gaps in our knowledge of the genre, only hinted at in our sources. Pausanias' description of the Marathon painting seems to depict a work more complex than anything surviving from the classical period, and the Alexander Mosaic demonstrates just how far removed such

⁶⁴ Bie 1891.

works of top-level battle art could be from the greater bulk of common, generic, battle depictions. Most critically, the frequent mentions of Roman triumphal painting make it clear that a large number of such paintings must have existed in Rome, of whose actual appearance we know very little. It is against this background that the battle art of the 2nd century AD must be evaluated.

⁶⁵ Zanker 1998: 63-64.

Chapter 4: Public Battle Art of the Second Century AD

The richest century in terms of surviving Roman battle art is the second after Christ. At either end of this century stand the two columns with their helical friezes, Trajan's carved in the 100s and 110s, Marcus' in or about the 180s. Between these monuments are a collection of other battle depictions, the most important being the Tropaeum Traiani in Adamklissi (modern Romania, ancient Moesia Inferior, just south of the border of Dacia), and the Great Trajanic Frieze in Rome.¹ Not only do these monuments provide a mass of evidence for the ways in which the Romans depicted battle in the 2nd century AD, but they also provide a striking illustration of how varied the methods of battle depiction could be in one time period. At the same time they serve as a useful introduction to the ways in which scholars have approached the analysis of Roman battle art. Most importantly, for our purposes, they give us a fairly good idea of the types of battle depictions that were extant when the column of Marcus Aurelius was carved, and on which its artists may have drawn for inspiration.

¹ The only other major monument of this period showing battle is the Parthian Monument of Lucius Verus from Ephesus (see Oberleitner 1978: 66-94, figs. 48-73). This very unrealistic monument is rooted firmly in Asia Minor's Hellenistic tradition of battle art and is essentially unrelated to contemporary battle art in the city of Rome; thus I do not treat it here.

1. The Column of Trajan

The column of Trajan was erected by the senate and by the people of Rome to honour the emperor for his two victories over the Dacians, in AD 102 and 105. Construction was completed, and the column dedicated, by the year 113.² Like the column of Marcus Aurelius (for which it served as a model), the shaft of the column of Trajan is covered with a helical frieze depicting scenes of war. Scholars agree that the frieze represents the first and second Dacian campaigns of the emperor Trajan, though opinions on its historical accuracy vary greatly. At the one extreme are historians who, following the example of Cichorius, have used the relief to reconstruct (often in detail) Trajan's campaigns;³ at the other extreme are scholars who see artistic or propagandistic concerns as outweighing historical accuracy.⁴

² The inscription on the base of the column (*CIL* 6.960) gives Trajan's titulature as it was between January 112 and September(?) 114, and an unfortunately damaged fragment of the *Fasti Ostienses* records a dedication in May 113 by Trajan in his forum of some monument which ends with the letter "m" (Calza 1932, 201, ll.53-56: AD 113, "id. Mai. Imp. Traianus [templum Ven]eris in foro Caesaris et [...? columna]m in foro suo dedicavit;" see also *Inscriptiones Italiae* XII, 203 and 232). This word was restored by Calza as "columnam," and most scholars since have followed this restoration. However, the earliest securely dateable coin depicting Trajan's column was not issued till five months later than this supposed dedication date, at the earliest (see Beckmann 2000: 130-131). Claridge's (1993) recent suggestion that the frieze was carved under Hadrian has gained little following, and has been argued against by La Rocca (1998: 167, who is followed by Hölscher 2002: 132) on the basis that Hadrian would not have excluded Trajan's Parthian wars from such a carving.

³ Cichorius (1896,1900) was the first to publish a complete set of photographic illustrations of the column, taken from casts. Later proponents of the historical approach include Rossi (1971), Strobel (1984), and Lepper and Frere (1988).

⁴ Lehmann-Hartleben (1926) pointed out features like repetition of figure types and the use of stock scene types (formal address, sacrifice, building, embassies, marches, and battles). His analysis provided the basis for more recent work by Settis (1988) and Hölscher (1991) aimed at finding a complex political message in these scenes and the patterns in which they are organized on the column. Hölscher (2002: 130) feels that this interest in the political content of Trajan's column is waning, but he does not speculate on what might be replacing it.

A useful test of the historicity of the relief of Trajan's column can be found in the study of the arms and equipment of the Roman and Dacian soldiers. Because of its remarkable detail and the sheer number of times such details are shown over the entire length of the frieze, the relief has traditionally served as a mine of information about the Roman army of the high empire. There are two main types of Roman soldier. One (e.g., Fig. 4.8, Roman in lower right) wears segmented armour (*lorica segmentata*, consisting of metal strips covering the torso and shoulders) over a long-skirted tunic, sandals on his feet and a helmet on his head. He carries a tall, semi-cylindrical shield and is armed with a short sword (and likely also often a spear, though this is never shown – the only evidence are the holes drilled in the hands of many soldiers for the later provision of metal weapons). The other main type of Roman soldier (e.g., in Fig. 4.6) wears chain mail (*lorica hamata*, shown as a thick, hip-length short-sleeved shirt incised with a zigzag pattern) over a short-skirted tunic and trousers, and wears sandals and helmet. He holds a flat oval shield and is armed with a sword (often longer than the swords of his comrades in *loricae segmentatae*) and a spear (though like those of his comrades, this is never represented in carving). These two types of soldier are generally called, respectively, legionaries and auxiliaries. However, there is little solid evidence to support this.⁵ Moreover, recent study has shown that there is little evidence to support the accuracy of even basic details of the dress and equipment of these Roman soldiers.⁶ The Dacians, it seems, have been treated with similar neglect for accuracy. They are

⁵ See the discussion of historicity of the battle scenes in Chapter 6.5-7.

⁶ The key study is Coulston 1989, though Robinson (1975: 7) earlier voiced his concern that sculpture of the imperial capital cannot be seen as accurate evidence for the study of Roman armour.

commonly depicted wearing some combination of trousers, tunic, and cloak, and they employ swords and shields that are often indistinguishable from those of the Romans. Sometimes, however, they are shown using traditional Dacian weaponry (e.g., Fig. 4.9; this is the *falx*, a curved blade mounted on a long handle).

The contemporary Tropaeum Traiani, a Roman victory monument on the borders of Dacia itself (discussed in more detail below) provides a sober corrective. Executed by local sculptors in a province where the wars took place, its detail can be assumed to be more accurate than any produced by the traditionally trained artists of the capital. The contrast between the two is stark: Figure 4.21 provides a good example. On the Tropaeum the Dacians are shown wielding their famous two-handed curved swords; their Roman opponent, who wears scale armour (not seen on the column) is equipped with an arm-guard of segmented metal (never depicted on the column) to ward off blows from this fearsome Dacian weapon. The implications of such differences will be examined below in Chapter 6.7. Here it is enough to note that the details of arms and equipment on Trajan's column give a general impression of the reality of the day, but cannot be called accurate.

2. *The Battle Scenes:*

There are nineteen battle scenes on Trajan's column, varying in size and difficult to analyse and interpret as a group.⁷ In comparison to the battle art which had gone before, many of them display remarkably novel features, and it is worth singling these out

at the beginning. First, many battle scenes show clashes between more or less homogeneous formations of Roman and enemy troops, in which both sides are shown fighting more or less fiercely. Second, while in most scenes there is a substantial component of dead and fleeing Dacians, these components never entirely dominate.⁸ Third, many battle scenes are quite large, with opposing forces often containing between ten and twenty soldiers. More importantly, these large battle scenes are usually composed with tactical unity. This distinction is important, for it means that the artists have taken a relatively complicated solution to the problem of creating a large battle scene (an example of a simpler approach would be the Pergamon altar frieze, where large size is obtained by creating a long string of *Einzelkämpfe*.) On Trajan's column large battles are depicted as clashes between more or less homogeneous groups of soldiers in formation, much as might be expected on an actual battlefield. Hints of this approach have appeared in earlier battle art, but Trajan's column takes this technique far beyond anything seen before. These large battle scenes also frequently incorporate architectural and landscape elements which, combined with more sophisticated use of perspective techniques, result in a heightened sense of realism. Finally, it seems that there is often an attempt to show more than one phase of a single battle in a more or less unified scene, for example, the main clash and the subsequent rout of the enemy. These general observations should not lead one to think that Trajan's column is a model of refined, articulate battle depiction; for instance, one still finds figures in fighting poses with no

⁷ These are scenes 24, 29, 32, 37, 38, 40, 54, 56, 70 and 71, 72, 92, 93, 112, 113, 115, 116, 134, 144, and 151.

⁸ The main exceptions are the cavalry battles: in the two cases where Roman cavalry engages a solely mounted enemy (scenes 37 and 142-4), all of the enemies are depicted as casualties or in flight.

clear opponents.⁹ In general, however, many of the battle scenes of Trajan's column must be judged as much more effective and realistic than any of their predecessors; at the same time, however, there are also battle scenes on Trajan's column which are much more traditional in their appearance.

The interpretation of the battle scenes has naturally been affected by trends in the scholarship of Trajan's column. For Cichorius, firm in his belief in the historicity of the frieze, large scenes represented important, full-scale battles, while smaller ones indicated skirmishes. Lehmann-Hartleben, however, pointed out important differences in the composition of the battle scenes, in particular of the infantry battles.¹⁰ He saw a progression from partly-mixed groups of fighters in the lower scenes (24 and 29, to him similar to the composition of the Glanum Mausoleum panels) to the well-defined "masses" of troops in 66 and 70; thereafter came a "backlash" in scenes 72 and 112, a return to, in his words, "*Einzelgruppenkampf*" (battle composed of isolated fighting groups). This happened, argued Lehmann-Hartleben, because the group battles were unable to represent the "*Höhe der Schlacht*," the height of battle.¹¹ For Lehmann-Hartleben, these *Einzelkämpfe* foreshadowed the battle scenes of the Marcus column.¹² Reading him, in fact, one gets the impression that he (who in his subtitle refers to the column as "a Roman artwork at the beginning of Late Antiquity") saw the high-water

⁹ Figures 40.31, 40.33, 40.39-42, 72.25 (all barbarians), 24.33, 24.35, 24.36 (Romans). The figure numbers in this chapter follow those used by Koeppl (1991, 1992) and are in the form of "scene number:figure number."

¹⁰ Lehmann-Hartleben 1926: 93-108.

¹¹ Ibid., 99. Lehmann-Hartleben makes these distinctions sound clearer than they actually are (there are at least two scenes, 94/95 and 105, in the upper half of the column identifiable according to his own characteristics as *Massenkämpfe*), but it is certainly true that the only true *Einzelkampf* scene (112) and

mark of Roman battle-art lapping about two-thirds of the way up the column of Trajan; thereafter decline set in. However, Lehmann-Hartleben's analysis does not hold when all the battle scenes of the column are considered. Scene 115, the very next field-battle after the *Einzelkampf*-based scene 112, shows an encounter between two homogeneous masses of troops, where according to Lehmann-Hartleben's theory, such ought not to appear. Furthermore, *Einzelkämpfe* can hardly be said to dominate the battle scenes on the upper third of the helical frieze, since (as will be shown below) scene 112 is almost entirely alone in this category.

More recent work on the battle scenes of the column of Trajan has been less concerned with their art historical analysis than with their interpretation within specific portions of the column's stereotyped and supposedly message-laden narrative. Hölscher, for example, feels that battle scenes 66/67, 70/71, and 72 (which are the last three battles of the lower half of the frieze) represent actual battles at the end of the first Dacian war, but that events from each were specifically selected so that together the three battles present "three ideal types of victory which are here linked to a program of exempla."¹³ These three "ideal victories" are: the victory through logistical means ("*Materialschlacht*," exemplified in the construction activity in scene 66 before the battle in 67); victory through discipline (shown especially by the *testudo* in scene 71); and total victory (scene 72).

another partly traditional-looking composition (151) occur only in the upper half of the column. See below for further discussion of this feature.

¹² Ibid., 108.

¹³ Hölscher 1991: 291-292, quote from 292: "*drei ideale Typen des Sieges die hier zu einem exemplarischen Program vereinigt sind.*"

It is not a simple matter to evaluate these approaches. Cichorius' trusting interpretations of the Trajan's column battle scenes as closely linked to historical reality are certainly too simplistic: this much is shown by Lehmann-Hartleben's identification of significant stylistic differences between the scenes. However, Lehmann-Hartleben's presentation of these differences is sometimes oversimplified, and his interpretation of their significance (that they stem from an artistic attempt to represent the most important point of battle as clearly as possible) rings false. Finally, Hölscher's attempt to give the battle scenes deeper individual meaning is intriguing, especially for what it may tell us about the purported source of many of the column's battle scenes – triumphal painting.

At the same time, though, this approach somewhat neglects the possible implications of an art historical analysis like Lehmann-Hartleben's, and thus tells only part of the story. A more comprehensive approach to the analysis of the battle scenes on Trajan's column would be to bring both of these analytical tools together, to use art historical methods to group the battle scenes and identify their prototypes (or lack thereof), and only then to apply an analysis of their content to help us understand their meaning. The following analysis is an attempt to apply such a methodology to a selected group of battle scenes.

Five particular scenes were chosen that well demonstrate the varied compositional techniques used for battle scenes by the designer(s) of the frieze (Figs. 4.1-5). The first is scene 24, the first battle on the column and one of the largest. The second, scene 37, is a cavalry battle, while scene 40 presents a remarkably complex composition. Scene 70/71 appears to represent a two-stage battle and also was possibly an inspiration for the

composers of Marcus column battle LIV, the siege scene with *testudo*. Finally, scene 112 is the one true *Einzelkampf* battle scene on the column of Trajan. Three of these (24, 70, and 112) fall into Lehmann-Hartleben's groupings of, respectively, partly mixed, massed, and *Einzelkampf* battle scenes, and offer the opportunity of critiquing his division in detail.

3. Composition of Trajan's Column Battle Scenes:

Scene 24 (Fig. 4.1), the first battle on the column, only appears after three full windings of the frieze. It is a large battle, incorporating 23 Dacians and 10 Romans, all infantry with the exception of one Roman cavalryman entering battle at the extreme left. Although only 11 of the Dacians are actually shown fighting, they still outnumber their opponents. The Dacians, under attack, are drawn into two distinct ranks, the first stretching across the entire field in the foreground, the second made up of three figures in the centre background. This battle well illustrates three of the main points made above. The bodies of Roman and Dacian forces are well delineated. A great number of Dacians are actually shown fighting, and though many dead are visible, the battle is not depicted as a clear rout. These factors, when taken together, give a genuine impression of a large and substantial battle between massive, organised forces. There is, however, an interesting element of non-realism: the figure of Zeus (A), appearing out of a wispy cloud with a cloak billowing behind his bearded head, his right arm poised to hurl a thunderbolt (once rendered in metal, now lost) at the Dacians.

Scene 37 (Fig. 4.2) is very simply composed. It shows two groups of cavalry, Romans on the left and heavily armoured barbarians (traditionally identified as Sarmatian allies of the Dacians) on the right.¹⁴ This battle is characteristic of pure cavalry-vs-cavalry encounters on the column (of which there are only two, this scene and 144), in that there is no direct, head-on contact shown between the two sides. Instead, one side flees while the other rides in pursuit, cutting or spearing down their quarry as they go. That the fugitives are incurring losses can be seen from the barbarian slumping on his horse, and another fallen to the ground. Only one barbarian turns to shoot at the Romans with his bow; the remainder adopt poses common to fleeing barbarian infantrymen, complete with gesturing arms.

Scene 40 (Fig. 4.3) shows a battle between a line of Roman infantry and a mass of Dacians, the latter apparently attacking the former. No scene on Trajan's column illustrates more clearly the superiority of the positions in which the Dacians are sometimes depicted. The mass of barbarian attackers appears certain to overwhelm the thin Roman line, and it is only the pile of Dacian corpses at the far right which lets us know the eventual outcome of the contest. As with the former battle, there is more than one main line of action: the second can be seen in the charge of two Roman cavalrymen at the middle upper right. Again, it is the Dacians who have numerical superiority: in the main left-hand portion of the conflict, there are 15 active Dacian fighters against only 9 Romans. Nonetheless, the outcome of the battle is a Dacian defeat. The heap of corpses at right is truly massive, occupying more than half the height of the frieze. Above them

¹⁴ On the identity of the barbarian horsemen in scale armour, who appear also in scene 31, see Lepper and

are four more Dacians in flight, perhaps meant to indicate the survivors of the combat. There are no Romans to be seen to the right of the tree. Thus, the artists may have intended to show two phases of the same battle, with the main combat on the left and its aftermath on the right.

In scene 70/71 (Fig. 4.4) there are clearly two battles going on, one on the left and one on the right, divided by a highly artificial tree. On the left, a line of Roman infantry backed up by archers attacks a disintegrating group of Dacians, some of whom resist while others flee inside a fort. To the right of the tree divider, another formation of Romans attacks a fort with their shields locked into a protective covering (*testudo*). The architecture of the forts on the left and the right is not the same, but the close connection of the two battles nonetheless suggests a close relationship between them. This scene, or rather these two engagements placed side-by-side, give the impression of being intended to represent two stages of one and the same battle. On the left, the Romans defeat the Dacian army in the open, outside their fortress, into which the survivors of the battle flee. On the right we see the next logical step: the Romans assault the Dacian fortress. The angle of the *testudo* attack, towards the left, ties this scene to the previous one. The two scenes are divided by an artificial tree, which makes clear the chronological separation of events.

Finally, scene 112 (Fig. 4.5) presents another method of composition. The organisation of scene 112 is clearly one of artistic convenience, as opposed to realistic accuracy. Fighting pairs (*Einzelkämpfe*) are arranged in such a way as to create a well-

balanced composition, focussing on the two over-hand slashing swordsmen in the middle and framed by the shorter figures on the ends of the scene. Limbs and bodies are artfully overlapped, a feature common on the Marcus column but very rare elsewhere on Trajan's. All of this serves to emphasise the true nature of scene 112: a highly artificial creation, entirely different from all the other battles depicted on the column, both in detail and in overall composition. Lepper and Frere's interpretation, that it represents a "skirmish" in which some Dacians have been surrounded and are being "put to the sword," was apparently based on this scene's use of *Einzelkämpfe* instead of homogeneous groups commonly found lower on the column.¹⁵ However, the *Einzelkämpfe* of scene 112 are due not to an attempt to represent scattered engagements in a historical skirmish, but rather to the employment of traditional figure types, firmly rooted in Greek battle art. The scene's unique composition has to do with artistic, rather than narrative, purposes.¹⁶ What is particularly fascinating about scene 112 is that it clearly shows that there existed two parallel yet very different styles of battle art in the early second century. These styles existed alongside each other not only on the column, but also (presumably) in the repertoires of the artists.

These five scenes, then, show five different manners of battle composition – although one could reduce this count to two, by grouping scenes 24, 37, 40 and 70/71 together (all showing groups of fighters in more or less solid masses or lines). Scene 112, in contrast, stands very much alone among the battles on the column of Trajan. Its composition and, as argued below, its figure types link it to traditional Greek battle

¹⁵ Lepper and Frere 1988: 164.

depictions, while the other battles on Trajan's column display a novel, realistic composition, heretofore almost entirely unseen in ancient battle art.

4. Figure Types and Figure Pairs:

An examination of the composition of the battle scenes of Trajan's column does not tell the whole story of their artistic creation. The single figures are important too, especially since they give us another tool to analyse such remarkable scenes as 112. They also allow us to search for possible influences from earlier battle art for the many scenes which otherwise, because of their novel composition, seem to have little or no connection to earlier tradition. It should be noted that it is much more difficult on the column of Trajan than on any earlier battle depictions (with the exception of the Alexander Mosaic) to excise discrete figures or even figure pairs from the battle scenes, as they tend to be very closely packed and overlapping.

The single most common fighting figure type on the column of Trajan is one which shows a combatant attacking from above (Figs. 4.6-10). This feature is very much tied in with scene composition, where only rarely do fighting figures share the same ground line. The main exceptions to this rule, that figure pairs do not share the same ground line, occurs when a standing figure is shown attacking one sitting, kneeling, or lying on the ground.¹⁷ An excellent illustration of the use of this type is found in battle scene 24 (the first on the column, Fig. 4.1), where eleven of the fighting figures

¹⁶ This was recognized by Hamberg (1945: 164).

(including Zeus himself) have much this same pose: shield arm forward, other arm (intended to be holding a weapon, often not actually depicted) extended back to strike.

Naturally, then, the second most common figure type is that of the fighter resisting an attack from above. Figures of this type can be either in standing position (Figs. 4.6-8, very common for both Dacians and for Romans), or more rarely (and reserved exclusively for the Dacians) in a kneeling or falling position (Figs. 4.9, 4.10). Those in a standing position are often shown fighting with extreme vigour, whether they are Roman or Dacian, and it is not clear that they are about to be vanquished – and indeed, this could hardly be the case where such defending figures are Romans. Those in sitting position most commonly defend themselves with a shield, more rarely with a weapon (e.g., Fig. 4.9). A kneeling or crouching defender will often appear, from the waist upwards at least, very similar to his standing counterparts (compare for example the defenders in Figs. 4.6 and 4.9). Sometimes, however, traditional figure types are employed (Dacian B in Fig. 4.1, for example, is a not-uncommon stock battle image¹⁷).

When we move beyond the attacking-from-above and attacking/defending-from-below types, standardisation of fighting figure types appears to fade. However, this may be somewhat misleading, since many figures in the battle scenes on Trajan's column are only partially depicted, being heavily obscured by the many other bodies often massed

¹⁷ The other exceptions are few enough to number here: 66.37+38, a rare combination; 24.37+38-40, an archer and his opponents; 24.30+41, but where 41 is also being attacked by another figure, 34, on an angle; and the entirety of scene 112.

¹⁸ Cf. the naked barbarian on the later Palermo Roman vs. German battle sarcophagus, and the left-most Gaul in the La Granja relief (Schäfer 1986, pl. 61; Bienkowski 1908, pl. 2b).

around them in combat. Many of these closely packed figures display characteristic features seen in the attacking-from-above and attacking/defending-from-below types.

The attacking horseman type, the most common Roman fighting type on the Marcus column (Roman types A and B), is much less often seen on the column of Trajan, and when a Roman (or Roman ally) is shown in this pose, he is rarely shown directly engaged with an enemy. The cavalry, as noted, is most often represented in a single homogeneous mass, in pursuit of rather than in direct contact with the enemy (scenes 37, 142). On the one instance when they are shown engaged en masse with enemy infantry (scene 64), the two bodies of troops remain more or less separate.

Of the non-fighting figure types from the Trajanic battle scenes, the most common are the fallen barbarians. They appear not only in the battles themselves, lying on the ground, but also sometimes in heaps at the edges of the fighting (e.g., at the right of battle scene 40, Fig. 4.3). The seated type of fallen barbarian is also common on the column of Trajan (Fig. 4.12), and is sometimes rendered in a classical style, with artfully arranged drapery (Fig. 4.13).¹⁹

From these observations, one might make an attempt at reconstructing the standard approaches taken by the designer(s) of the Trajan's column battle scenes, especially when it came to executing individual figures. First, they made heavy use of figures fighting downwards or upwards. They then paired attackers and defenders (or, as is often the case, attackers and attackers) when possible, but did not sacrifice the unity of

¹⁹ Marvin (2002: 212) draws a parallel between these classicizing seated figures and the Capitoline Dying Gaul (*ibid.*, fig. 9.1) as part of her argument that the Ludovisi barbarians are Roman creations of the second century AD. However, such classicizing figure types are the exception rather than the rule on Trajan's column.

the fighting body as a whole for the sake of clear depiction of individual combat. Finally, where necessary, they depicted figures from various angles while retaining the same general poses.

There are, however, some glaring exceptions to these general and flexible rules, epitomised by the classically styled scene 112 (Fig. 4.5). The differences are clearly visible. The entire scene is organised around pairs of fighting figures, all on the same ground line, and all in unique poses. The movements of the bodies are extremely fluid and are accentuated by their billowing garments and cloaks. These aspects of figure type and style have not gone unnoticed by commentators, but none has moved beyond merely remarking on apparently Greek roots for the types.²⁰ A figure grabbing the head or hair of a kneeling opponent while preparing to or actually delivering a deathblow (Fig. 4.16) is a staple of Greek battle art, whose variations are well illustrated by the frieze of the Great Altar at Pergamon.²¹ However, the combination of a fallen enemy making a *pleading* gesture with an opponent who grabs him by the hair is not seen in Greek battle scenes proper.²² Such a combination is, however, seen on a number of Greek vases depicting scenes from Homeric myth, and it also seems to be a standard means of

²⁰ Lehmann-Hartleben (1926: 98) characterizes them as "ganz nach griechischer Art," and Coarelli (2000: 180) suggests "the influence of Hellenistic models." A surprising number of commentators (including Cichorius, Settis, and Lepper and Frere) make no comment whatsoever on the style of the figures.

²¹ Two distinct versions of the hair-grabbing motif can be seen on the North frieze, where a Fate attacks a snake-legged giant, and on the West frieze, in the depiction of Doris and her opponent. Another variation of the composition can be seen on the south frieze of the Temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis (Stewart 1990, fig. 416, fourth and fifth figures from right).

²² Although a lone pleading figure is not uncommon in battle scenes, he is never shown grasped by an opponent: compare figures 8 and 12 on the frieze of the Aemilius Paullus monument at Delphi (Chapter 1, Fig. 12).

depicting the fight between Theseus and Procrustes.²³ Combatants with sword arms bent far back over their heads (Fig. 4.17) are common on Greek art and appear also in later Roman works such as the arch at Orange (see Chapter 3, Fig. 3.14) and sarcophagi of the 2nd c. AD.²⁴ The effect seems to be to accentuate the pitiful aspect of the victim.

The dress of the figures provides perhaps the clearest indication of the unique nature of scene 112. The Romans, in contrast to all their brethren shown in combat elsewhere on the column, do not wear helmets (with the exception of the figure on the extreme left); they do however wear billowing capes, something seen in no other battle scene.²⁵ Both of these features are marks of the heroic Greek warrior, rather than the contemporary Roman soldier – compare for example the depiction of Trajan at the centre of the Great Trajanic Frieze (Fig. 4.27), an image drawn from Hellenistic heroic prototypes. Among the Dacians, two features of dress recall Gaulish dress as seen on Greek-vs.-Gaul battle sarcophagi (see Chapter 6): the wounded figure in a seated position near the centre of the composition with his clothing falling off (Fig. 4.18 – compare 4.13), and the “Dacian” at the far right (Fig. 4.19), who seems to have a torque about his neck. Such Gaulish-style figures do appear elsewhere at times in the battle scenes on Trajan's column, but they are very rare.²⁶

²³ The hair-grabbing motif on Attic ceramics: Ajax and Cassandra on an amphora by the Kleophrades painter (early 5th c. BC; Boardman 1975, fig. 135); the death of Agamemnon on a crater of the Dokimasia painter (second quarter of the 5th c. BC; *ibid.*, fig. 274.2). For depictions of Theseus and Procrustes, see Boardman (*ibid.*) figs. 137 and 223.2 (both early 5th c.).

²⁴ For the variations of Greek examples of this motif compare: Chapter 1, Fig. 5 (470 BC); Boardman 1991 fig. 230 (lekythos of Eretria Painter, third quarter of the 5th c. BC); *ibid.*, 293 (lekythos by Aison, 425-380 BC). For sarcophagi, see Chapter 5.

²⁵ Cichorius (1900: 213) explains the absence of helmets by stating that these soldiers represent “lighter-armed” auxiliaries.

²⁶ The fighting pair at the far left of 112 is closely mimicked in scene 151, the seated figure with clothing askew is also shown in scene 24.

The implication of this examination of figure types used in the battle scenes on Trajan's column is that the artists of the column, while able to draw on stock figure types, in most cases chose not to. In the rare cases in which they did, particularly scene 112, the resulting composition stands out in glaring contrast to all others on the column.

5. Summary of Trajan's Column Battle Scenes:

The majority of the battle scenes on Trajan's column show encounters between homogeneous masses of Roman and Dacian troops. While these groups can be rendered in orderly lines, in masses, or somewhere in between these extremes, there does not seem to be (as Lehmann-Hartleben argued) a clear pattern of change or development in composition over the course of the frieze: similar clashes between masses of troops are seen at both the bottom and the top of the column (cf. scenes 24 and 115), as are similar cavalry battles (scenes 37 and 144) and sieges (scenes 32 and 134). As a whole, these battle scenes are strikingly different from all other earlier examples of battle art. Aside from faint parallels, for example tendencies to mass troops together (as in the Alexander Mosaic or the relief on the Glanum Mausoleum), it is impossible to trace the development of the battle scenes of Trajan's column from any of the works of battle art which survive today.

That a brand-new, highly complex and varied compositional style was invented just for the frieze of the column of Trajan is highly unlikely. The most reasonable conclusion is that the battle scenes of the column were an adaptation in stone of similar art in another medium, which has not survived. This is not as desperate a conclusion as it

sounds, for we have good evidence of another art form, in the perishable medium of painting, which would fit the bill most adequately. This is triumphal painting (on the earlier history of which see Chapter 3.6). Though we do not know exactly what the scenes on these paintings looked like, we do know their general contents: they showed events from the war that they chronicled, including landscapes, sieges, and battles. The idea that the column's relief is derived from triumphal painting is not a new one. It was first suggested in the mid-19th century, and as early as 1945 Hamberg was able to say that this view was the one most widely held.²⁷ Koepfel has recently expressed a similar idea for the relief of the column of Trajan as a whole, making the following succinct argument: "No relief of this type can be found prior to the reign of Trajan. Why not? If we did not have those few literary descriptions of triumphal paintings, we would be hard put to respond to this question. The answer is, of course, that the column frieze represents an ingenious adaptation to the sculptural medium of compositions which, up to that time, had been rendered only in painting."²⁸ The preceding analysis of the battle scenes provides firm grounds to back up this argument for the frieze as a whole.

It is not clear, and obviously cannot be known, how closely the battle scenes of Trajan's column replicate the battles shown on the paintings carried in Trajan's triumph. It is possible that the paintings may have originally been executed on strips of fabric, as Josephus' "tapestries" may represent (see Chapter 3.6), and arranged one above the other as, perhaps, in the Esquiline painting (Chapter 3.6, Fig. 3.11). If this were so, little

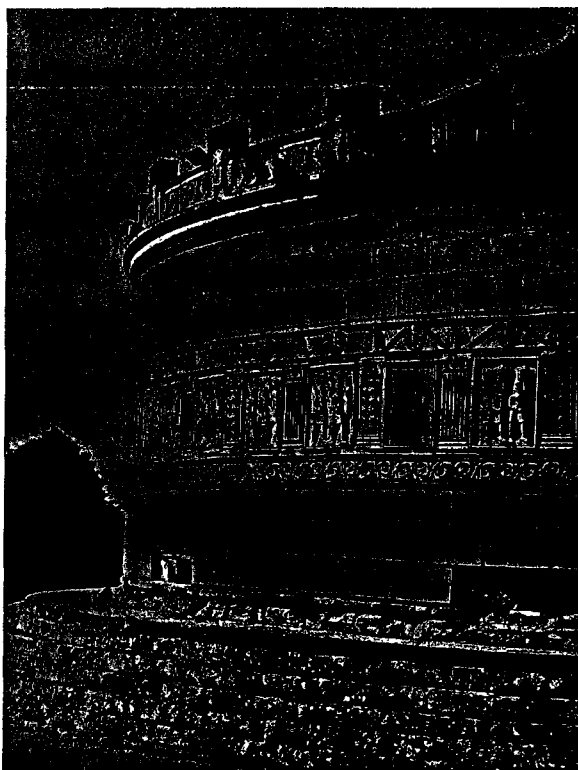
²⁷ The connection between the frieze of Trajan's column and triumphal painting was first suggested by Semper in 1860 (295). For Hamberg see *idem* 1945: 125. See also Rodenwaldt 1921/22: 82.

²⁸ Koepfel 1985: 92. See Coarelli 2000: 13-16 and Settis et al. 1988: 86-100 for recent surveys of these and other theories regarding the source of the images on Trajan's column.

adaptation would have been needed before the images could be transferred to the column. More often, though, and more certainly, it seems that such paintings were executed on large panels (perhaps reflected in the historical reliefs of the Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum). In this case, the painted battles may have been larger and more complex than the column's depictions, and would have had to be simplified. Nonetheless, the original composition of the battles seems to have been retained, resulting in the entirely novel appearance of so many of the battles on Trajan's column.

In this context, scene 112 is a glaring exception, a purely artistic creation which drew on Greek prototypes for composition, figures, and even dress. The reason for the inclusion of such a scene is not clear. It was certainly not created in the same realistic vein as the other battle scenes, and thus could not have had a model in the form of a realistic, documentary painting. That there was no realistic model for this scene implies that it was created especially for this spot on the column, perhaps as a "space-filler," a scene needed to fill a gap in the narrative. The widely spaced figures in the rest of scene 112 (the ones not involved in the fighting) and their unclear activities make this conclusion appealing. Its uniquely traditional style might then be interpreted as springing directly from an artist's intuitive stock of learned images. This suggests that the pool of triumphal paintings might not have provided enough models to create all battle scenes needed to fill the frieze of Trajan's column, and that as a result the designer(s) had to improvise.

6. The Tropaeum Traiani



The Tropaeum Traiani, located in modern Romania about 22km south of the Danube and 50km west of the Black sea, was a massive cylindrical monument (30m diameter, 11m tall) made up of a rubble and concrete core faced in stone and surmounted by a stone trophy.²⁹ Dated by its inscription to AD 108/109 and dedicated to Mars Victor, the Tropaeum served as a victory monument to one or both of Trajan's Dacian wars.³⁰ The main

figural decoration of the monument was a series of 54 figural metopes, each measuring about 1.5 by 1.2m, which were found separated from the core of the structure. They are thought to have ringed the middle part of the cylinder, separated by decorative relief slabs, but their original order is unknown (above left is the modern reconstruction at Adamklissi, built around the core of the original monument and based on the work of Florescu).³¹ Of these metopes, 18 show fighting, usually between one Roman and one

²⁹ The fundamental work and source of published illustrations is Florescu 1965. For a recent discussion, including coverage of the 1977 reconstruction made after Florescu's theories, along with arguments for and against it, see Bianchi 1997.

³⁰ For the inscription of the Tropaeum, see Florescu 1965: 61-67. The Trajanic dating is accepted by the vast majority of scholars (see list in Florescu, 9). On the function of the monument, see Florescu 18-20.

³¹ Photo by the author.

active Dacian; other wounded, dead, or fleeing Dacians are also often shown. Almost all are one-on-one combats, whether by design or as a result of the restrictions imposed by the borders of the rectangular metopes themselves. Half of these battle-metopes fall into two standard categories; the other half are more or less unique in composition. The two standard categories are:

- A) Roman cavalryman attacks Dacian infantryman, with or without wounded/dead Dacian below horse (Fig. 4.20; there are in total 4 metopes of this type [4, 5, 6, 7]).
- B) Roman infantryman attacks Dacian infantryman, often with wounded Dacian sitting in lower right corner (Fig. 4.21; there are a total of 5 metopes of this type [16, 17, 18, 19, 20]).

The Roman horsemen's pose in type A is familiar from Trajan's column, but the depiction of such an attack on enemy infantry is rare there. The defensive-looking pose of the Roman infantryman in type B metopes is also rare on Trajan's column.

The other battle metopes vary in complexity and originality. Relatively standard in content are ones that show a Roman soldier stabbing an enemy who is in a vulnerable, fleeing, or pleading position (e.g., Fig. 4.22, also metopes 21, 22, 23, 29, 33). Metope 35 (Fig. 4.25) takes this basic scheme further by adding a wagon, woman, and child to the composition. Other metopes complicate things by adding more figures, such as 34 (Fig. 4.24), in which a Roman soldier is surrounded by Dacians, fighting and deceased. One metope, 36, stands out because it shows two Romans engaged in attacking a group of Dacians; unfortunately, this metope has been damaged by having a large hole cut in its

centre, so that it is not possible to tell exactly what is going on. Finally, there is one (and only one) battle-metope that shows an element of landscape: this is metope 31 (Fig. 4.23), in which a Roman soldier is shown attacking a Dacian archer, who is "kneeling" in a tree. At the base of the tree, a second Dacian lies decapitated. Landscape appears in only one other metope on the Tropaeum, 32, in which the emperor is shown accompanied by two soldiers in a wooded setting.

In comparison to battle scenes on other monuments, the Adamklissi metopes show some similarities but for the most part stand alone. The spear-wielding horseman is common on tombstones and his basic pose is seen in most depictions of attacking horsemen on all of the 2nd century imperial battle monuments.³² The pose of the attacking Roman infantryman, especially the way he holds his shield, also finds parallels on provincial monuments, including tombstones and the small frieze of the Arch at Orange, but is seldom seen on Trajan's column.³³ The fighting barbarians have different poses from those seen on any other monuments, but this is due to their weaponry: they are depicted using large, two-handed shaft-mounted blades (the Dacian *falx*) instead of the spears and swords usually shown on monuments from the city of Rome. The falling Dacians are usually quite clumsily depicted, as are the fallen: their poses are stiff, limbs are askew and sometimes even omitted. In general, the resistance of the barbarians is moderate at best: on only five of the metopes (16, 17, 18, 31, 34) can they really be said to be actively fighting with a Roman. Otherwise, they cower, fall, or flee. In this respect,

³² For military tombstones of Roman cavalymen see Junkelmann 1990: 174-193. These stones have a tradition stretching back to classical Greece, of which the Dexileos monument (394-393 BC) from Athens is a prime example (ibid., 180, fig. 176).

³³ Amy 1962, pls. 10 and 11.

the composition of the Adamklissi metopes is notably different from most battle scenes of Trajan's column.

7. The Great Trajanic Frieze

The Great Trajanic Frieze consists of eight large marble panels bearing over-life-size figures (ca. 3m tall on average).³⁴ The panels were preserved by their re-use in the arch of Constantine, and it is not known how long the original frieze was, or where it was displayed.³⁵ Constantinian re-cutting of the emperor's head has rendered him unidentifiable, but all scholars identify him as Trajan, based on the iconography of battle against the Dacians.³⁶ Even with the identification of the emperor as Trajan, the date of the actual Frieze is not clear; though most scholars assume it dates to his reign, the way Trajan is depicted suggests otherwise. He is shown not as a mortal, but as a god-like figure wearing lion-skin boots. This suggests that at the time the Frieze was commissioned, Trajan was dead and deified; thus a date in the reign of Hadrian is possible.³⁷

³⁴ A.-M. Leander Touati 1987 provides the most comprehensive source, along with bibliography of earlier publications.

³⁵ Packer (2001: 198) suggests the frieze was located on "the attic ... along the north facade of the Basilica Ulpia," i.e., facing the column courtyard; this configuration is illustrated in a reconstruction image, fig. 165. Hölscher (2002: 141) also suggests the Forum of Trajan, but favours a location on the rear walls of the main porticoes.

³⁶ The one main dissenter, Gauer (1973), has since retracted his proposal of a Domitianic date, based on his reconsideration of the style of the frieze (Gauer 1981: 183, n.2: "Ausgehend von der programmatischen Verschiedenartigkeit von großem Fries und Traianssäule ... habe ich den Fries für ein Denkmal Domitians erklärt. Diese Lösung des Problems scheint mir aus kunstgeschichtlichen Gründen nicht haltbar zu sein.").

³⁷ Leander Touati (1987) gives no explicit opinion on the subject of the date of the frieze, but seems to take it as being Trajanic. Toynbee (1953: 92, n.4), apparently followed by Kleiner (1992: 221), dates the frieze

At first glance, the surviving portion of the frieze appears to constitute a single complex battle. However, close examination reveals three separate events: an attack from two sides by Roman cavalry and infantry on a body of Dacian infantry (Fig. 4.26); the destruction of a group of Dacian cavalry by a body of Roman cavalry led by the emperor himself (Fig. 4.27); and an isolated depiction of a Roman cavalryman attacking a Dacian on foot (Fig. 4.28). Although there is no formal separation of these scenes from each other on the frieze, they appear almost certainly to have been composed as distinct units, and make the most sense when viewed as such.

To begin with the simplest, the third battle scene of the Great Trajanic Frieze (counting from the left; Fig. 4.28) is essentially a depiction of single combat, with two fallen Dacians thrown in to occupy the space beneath the attacking Roman cavalryman. This simple type of composition is much like that seen in the metopes of the Tropaeum Traiani. The other two scenes, however, depict groups of Romans fighting groups of Dacians and are composed in much more complicated manners. The first (Fig. 4.26) shows a two-sided attack. In it, Roman horsemen attack a group of Dacians from both sides; two barbarians appear to offer weak resistance, but most of the others have been overwhelmed. Behind the Dacians, in the centre of the composition, two Roman infantrymen and another horseman also appear to be involved in the battle – Roman 22 is engaged directly with Dacian 23. While *Einzelkämpfe* can be identified (20 and 21, 22 and 23, 32 and 33), the combatants are clearly organised into homogeneous groups. In this way, the composition of this battle is similar to many on the column of Trajan. The

to the Hadrianic period, but without giving reasons. Otherwise, since Gauer's recantation, all scholars

highly symmetrical nature of the composition is also worth noting; the Dacians are organised in a pyramid-like arrangement. Nor is this arrangement of figures simple: rather, it is composed, especially at the lower right, of complexly overlapping and interwoven figures.

The second and largest battle (Fig. 4.27) is composed of a group of Romans attacking from the left and a group of Dacians fleeing to the right, leaving a number of their comrades fallen beneath the hooves of their attackers. The action is centred on the heroic figure of Trajan (50), riding down a kneeling Dacian (60). To the right of this pair is a mass of overlapping and intertwined Dacians in various states of collapse and flight; one, 65, is being grasped by the hair by a Roman horseman (64). Beneath Trajan, and on the ground to the left of him, lie vanquished Dacians.

There is a substantial amount of standardisation in figure types in the battle scenes of the Great Trajanic Frieze, and also in the ways in which these types are combined to create fighting pairs. To begin with the Romans, the dominant type is the galloping horseman, who wields most often a spear but sometimes a sword. Striding (and apparently fighting) infantrymen are shown in only one scene (22 and 26 in Fig. 4.26).³⁸ The main exception among the Romans directly involved in fighting is 64 on Fig. 4.27, who grabs Dacian 65 by the hair and prepares to smite him with some weapon, now missing.

The Dacian figure types, though more numerous, show significant standardisation and often clear pairing with attacking Romans. The only Dacians actually shown in a

favour a Trajanic date.

fighting pose, 33 (in Fig. 4.26) and 76 (Fig. 4.28), are both of the same type (standing, leaning back slightly, holding a shield to their front and a weapon in the other hand), and are both being attacked by a galloping Roman horseman. A second Dacian type is the kneeling figure (21 and 60) being attacked by a horseman. The remaining fallen Dacians are shown in various poses. Repeated poses are clearly evident: two lie doubled over, back bent (51 and 81), two fall back with one leg bent (24 and 46); and three lie with head bent back, face towards the viewer (34, 63, and 82). The first pose is familiar from Trajan's column. The second pose is exactly replicated on neither Trajan's column nor other monuments, and appears to be something of an adaptation of the "sitting wounded" pose common on Trajan's column (e.g., scene 40, mid-right before tree). The final pose appears fairly often on Trajan's column (e.g., in scenes 44, 70, 72, and 112). The first two types, reclining and bent over, are employed in a standard manner, always depicted beneath a charging Roman horse.

Other Dacian figures are not standard. Three of these, figures 65, 62, and 61, are grouped together at the right side of the second (main) battle (Fig. 4.27). Dacian 65, being grasped by the hair by Roman 64, has already been mentioned: the combination is a classic Hellenistic one, extremely common in various configurations on the Great Altar frieze at Pergamon, for example. Figure 62, a fleeing Dacian with head turned back and arm extended to control his horse, is strongly reminiscent of the similarly occupied Persian depicted in front of the chariot of Darius in the Alexander mosaic from Pompeii

³⁸ Here I follow Leander Touati's (1987) numbering.

(Fig. 3.8). Figure 61, who completes the battle scene, has been cast from his horse and is being trampled down.

In sum, while the battle scenes of the Great Trajanic Frieze have a number of Hellenistic features, the individual figures are often stiff and repetitive. Nonetheless, the first two battles (Figs. 4.26 and 4.28) are quite complex and fluid, with the interwoven bodies and, especially in the middle battle, a vivid sense of tumultuous movement. These features can be compared to scene 112 of Trajan's column, as can the symmetrical composition of the leftmost battle of the Trajanic Frieze (Fig. 4.26).

8. Conclusions:

There are at least three main styles identifiable in official Roman battle art of the 2nd century AD. The first is the "realistic" type of battle scene, with massed and orderly ranks, which dominates on the column of Trajan. The second is the Greek trend, with traditional figure types and one-on-one composition, typified by scene 112 on the column of Trajan, in figures elsewhere on the column, and in the two larger battles of the Great Trajanic Frieze. The third main style is that of one-on-one combat pairs of non-traditional figure types, typified by the metopes of the Tropaeum Traiani but seen also in the small battle of the Great Trajanic Frieze (Fig. 4.28). In each of these styles of battle scene, the degree of victory (that is, the extent to which Roman victory is shown as unopposed) varies. Trajan's column is dominated by battles looking more or less even;

Adamklissi and the Great Frieze, however, tend much more towards compositions that show massive Roman victory over feeble barbarian opposition.

Chapter 5: Battle Sarcophagi

Until the 2nd century AD, cremation was the dominant funerary practice in Rome. When inhumation began to gain the upper hand around the reign of Hadrian, with it evolved an industry of sarcophagus production.¹ These were large marble containers big enough to hold a body (and sometimes much larger), whose main front panel was commonly carved with ornamental decoration or figural scenes from myth or daily life. The scale of production of these sarcophagi is shown by the large number of examples which survive today: about 6,000 dating between the 2nd and 4th centuries.² Of these, about twenty show scenes of battle;³ by way of comparison, there are seven hundred examples each of sarcophagi decorated with Erotes or depictions of the Seasons, about four hundred with Dionysiac themes, and sixty depicting Amazonomachy.

The first attempt to analyse the battle sarcophagi, and still the most thorough, was made by Hamberg. He set out to trace what he saw as an evolution in battle art on sarcophagi, beginning with sarcophagi showing battle between Greeks and Gauls and culminating in the late 2nd century with depictions of apparently contemporary Roman

¹ See Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 27-30 for the evidence for this change in funerary tradition.

² Koch 1993: 94.

³ Andrae (1956: 14-16) catalogues 17 examples, including the Large Ludovisi sarcophagus (not treated here because of its much later date). Koch and Sichtermann (1982: 91) use the figure of "about twenty;"

soldiers fighting Germanic barbarians.⁴ Hamberg saw this evolution as part of a general *Stilwandel*, “nourished in Antonine art by an intensified understanding of the tragic barbarity of war,” and tied to the Marcomannic campaigns of Marcus Aurelius.⁵ This view has gained wide acceptance, and remains dominant today.⁶ The only other major study of the battle sarcophagi has been that of Andreae, whose main focus was on four particular sarcophagi with representations of Greeks fighting Gauls. For these sarcophagi he proposed as a *Vorbild* a famous battle painting from the Hellenistic period.⁷ The battle sarcophagi as a whole, however, he divided into two groups: those employing *Zweikämpfe*, and those showing battles between densely-packed and well-mixed masses of troops; the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi belong to the former and most of the Roman vs. German sarcophagi to the latter. Unfortunately, Andreae did not extend his analysis far beyond his four core Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi, and though the terminology has stuck, it has not been tested.⁸

Neither of these systems of division (Hamberg’s based on subject matter, Andreae’s on composition) is entirely satisfying on its own. Here, a somewhat different grouping for the battle sarcophagi is adopted, using a combination of both these sets of criteria. Among the battle sarcophagi, which cover a chronological period from the mid-2nd to the early-3rd century, two major groups can be singled out, along with a number of more or less unique specimens. The sarcophagi here placed in Group 1 (which number

Koch (1993: 66) uses the figure of “etwa 30,” but with no indication of where the extra ten sarcophagi come from. See below for a detailed discussion of numbers.

⁴ Hamberg 1945: 172-178.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁶ See, for example, Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 90-92 (though they do not employ ethnic terms); Koch 1993: 66-67.

⁷ Andreae 1956; see below, p.130.

four), the earlier group chronologically, have two characteristic features: they depict battle between figures presumably identifiable as Greeks and Gauls, and they employ a distinctive set of repetitive figural motifs. The sarcophagi of Group 2 (containing five examples) are distinguished by one main feature: they depict battles between soldiers who are predominately identifiable by their arms and equipment as Romans and Germanic barbarians. Group 2 sarcophagi also employ, to a greater or lesser degree, a novel compositional technique: mass battle. These groups are related, as is shown by the sharing of motifs on some examples, but many uncertainties of evolution, chronology, and theme exist. These questions are made even more complicated by some striking similarities in style and military detail between Group 2 sarcophagi and the carvings of the column of Marcus Aurelius. Together, these two groups account for more than two-thirds of known battle sarcophagi. The remainder (totalling eight) consist of fragmentary or unique examples which cannot be assigned to either of the two groups described above, and do not constitute a homogeneous group on their own; they are treated briefly here.

Given the variety of the battle sarcophagi, and the clear connection of some of them to a major work of state art, it is surprising that relatively little scholarly attention has been focussed on this class of sculptural monuments as a whole. This chapter cannot hope to fill this gap, but it does aim to justify the division into two groups outlined above, to clarify the relationship between these groups, and to suggest some explanations for the novel features of Group 2: the depiction of Roman and German combatants and the *Massenkampf* style of composition.

⁸ Andrae 1956: 13-14; Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 91.

1. Group 1: Greeks versus Gauls in Einzelkämpfe:

This group of sarcophagi contains four examples, which all show battles between civilised but apparently non-Roman soldiers and barbarian warriors (Figures 5.1-4). They are usually dated to the later part of the reign of Marcus Aurelius and to the earlier part of the reign of Commodus.⁹ The civilised combatants in these scenes are generally identified as Greeks, although their dress (cuirass with pteryges over tunic) is not clearly distinguished from the battle dress sometimes shown worn by Romans. However, such armour is usually, if not exclusively, worn by Roman officers and emperors - it is, for example, the only type of armour ever shown worn by Trajan and Marcus on their respective columns. When this cuirass is shown on the sarcophagi, however, it is rendered in a very different manner than in Roman state art. It appears as skin-tight, paper-thin, as if entirely flexible. This is the *Muskelpanzer*, and indicates that the sculptors were aiming to create a heroic effect. The identification of the barbarians as Gauls is also problematic.¹⁰ Two main attributes, their general nudity and the fact that some of them wear torques, Gallic metal neck-ornaments, connect them to the classic image of the Gaul familiar from Hellenistic art.¹¹ This iconography reflects (and is

⁹ On the dating, Koch and Sichterman (1982: 91) give 170-190; Koch (1993: 66-67) proposes 160/170-190; see immediately below for further discussion. A sarcophagus from the collection of Karl Bergsten, sold at Christies London on 21 April 1999, photograph published in *Minerva* 10.5 (1999) 37, is almost certainly a modern fake, copying the Ammendola battle sarcophagus exactly, in a manner entirely uncharacteristic of the general group of sarcophagi, and adding one new motif at the right of the reproduced composition.

¹⁰ Koch and Sichtermann (1982: 91) call the barbarians "more or less clearly" Gauls, but state that barbarians of the Danube area, Germans or Sarmatians, may actually be intended by the artist. However, they certainly are not dressed like the Germans and Sarmatians on the Marcus column, our main source for the sculptural appearance of these people. This interpretation is connected to the tendency to view the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi as indirect products of Marcus' wars (with the Roman vs. German examples appearing only late in, or even after, the wars).

¹¹ Marvin (2002: 212) argues that attributes such as torques, soft shoes, and baggy trousers were part of a general stereotype of the "northern barbarian," which could include Gauls, Germans, and Dacians. This seems, however, to be too generalising, and there are clear differences, for example, between the barbarians

arguably in part derived from) that of the three-dimensional sculptural groups dedicated by the Attalid kings of Pergamon after their victories over Gauls in Asia Minor.¹² However, not all the barbarians on these sarcophagi have these attributes: particularly noteworthy are the captives on the lid of the Ammendola sarcophagus, likely the earliest of the group (Figure 5.1). There the barbarians wear trousers, cloaks, and a kilt-like garment wrapped around the waist; on one is a torque visible.

The method of composition on these sarcophagi is, in most cases, that of close-spaced and heavily overlapping *Einzelkämpfe*. All four of these sarcophagi show clearly that their motifs were taken from a common source, and the best-preserved example is the Ammendola sarcophagus in the Capitoline Museum in Rome (Fig. 5.1).¹³ Andreae assigns this sarcophagus to the same workshop as the Vatican *Feldherr* sarcophagus, which he dates on the basis of its portrait to the time of Marcus Aurelius. Koch and Sichtermann assign the Vatican *Feldherr* more precisely to 180-190, but do not associate it directly with the Ammendola sarcophagus, which they apparently intend to occupy the earliest place in their battle sarcophagus chronology – i.e., 170s AD.¹⁴ At the left of the Ammendola sarcophagus, a mounted Greek spears a falling Gallic horseman; in the centre another mounted Greek stabs downward with his sword at a Gaul on the ground, who appears to be stabbing himself in the chest (or, perhaps, who grasps the broken shaft

on these sarcophagi and those on Trajan's column. Scene 112 of Trajan's column (see Chapter 4) is the exception that proves the rule.

¹² One group set up by Attalos I (241-197 BC) in Pergamon, another on the Acropolis at Athens by Attalos II (159-138). The figures are analysed by Bienkowski (1908), and at least one of Bienkowski's types, his "Bearded Gaul Leaning Back" (fig. 53, pp. 41-44) appears on the sarcophagi considered here (in the middle of the Ammendola sarcophagus, and also on the Palermo Roman vs. German sarcophagus). See Marszał (2000: 204-212) and Chapter 3.5 for further discussion of the Attalid groups.

¹³ Ammendola sarcophagus: Koch 1993: 66-67, fig. 37; Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 91, n.5, fig. 74; Andreae 1956: 14, #3, pl. 1; Hamberg 1945: 173-174, pl. 38.

of a spear which has laid him low). Further to the right stands a naked Gaul, viewed from the back, with a sword raised behind his head to strike; and at the far right of the composition, a Greek grasps a fallen Gaul by the hair and prepares to deal the death-blow. In the background on the right half of the sarcophagus, there are three other figures, whose relationship to the foreground figures and to each other is less than clear. A barbarian near the centre flees on his horse; to the right in the far background a Gaul advances with shield and raised sword; and finally at the far right a Greek has his spear awkwardly poised to strike at some opponent.

Three other sarcophagi belong to the same group as the Ammendola example. Most similar is the fragmentary sarcophagus from the Via Tiburtina (Figure 5.2); the Doria Pamphilj sarcophagus (Figure 5.3) has a more dispersed composition, and the Little Ludovisi sarcophagus (Figure 5.4) is longer and shorter.¹⁵ It is clear, however, that all are closely related to each other, since they share many of the same figure types and combinations. For example, the falling Gallic horseman plus downward-spearing Greek appear on all four sarcophagi, while the hair-grabbing pair on the far right of the Ammendola sarcophagus also appears on two of the three others in the group (Doria Pamphilj and Via Tiburtina). It was this sharing of motifs which encouraged Andreae to seek a common source for the images, and it was the Greek vs. Gaul theme that caused him to turn to Pergamene art of the Hellenistic period. Despite sharing so many motifs

¹⁴ Andreae 1956: 14; Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 106. Vatican *Feldherr* sarcophagus: Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 106, fig. 96.

¹⁵ The Via Tiburtina sarcophagus is in the Museo Nazionale delle Terme, #108437 (Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 90, n.6; Andreae 1956: 14, #4, pl.2); for the sarcophagus from the Villa Doria Pamphilj see Koch and Sichtermann (1982: 91, n.7, fig. 75), Calza (1977: 201-202 (P. Pensabene), #232, pl. 137), and Andreae 1956: 15, #8, pl. 3); for the Little Ludovisi sarcophagus, Koch and Sichtermann (1982: 91, n.8) and Andreae (1956: 14-15, #5, pl. 4).

(which are often repeated so precisely that there can be no doubt that a common source was relied on), two of these sarcophagi display novelties in composition. First, the Doria Pamphilj sarcophagus breaks from the linear composition of the Ammendola sarcophagus and shows figures more spread-out across the field from top to bottom. Secondly, the Little Ludovisi sarcophagus (Fig. 5.4) introduces in its centre a charging figure on horseback, a “general,” his entire body and face prominently in view. Both of these features appear on later battle sarcophagi and the “general” on the Little Ludovisi in particular has been taken as representing an intermediary phase in battle sarcophagus development – that is, the Little Ludovisi is taken as being the latest of the Greek-vs.-Gaul group, and a prelude to the type of composition found on some of the Roman-vs.-German sarcophagi.¹⁶ One should perhaps be cautious in this regard, however, since the central general-figure has parallels in earlier art (for example, the Great Trajanic Frieze), as well as later.

What inspired the sarcophagus carvers to employ this set of repetitive figures on the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi? From where were the images drawn? First, it must be noted that this method of sarcophagus composition was the rule in the workshops of Rome. Grassinger, for example, has divided the Amazonomachy sarcophagi into groups based on the employment of standard sets of *Kampfmotive* particular to each group, with great effect.¹⁷ The Group 1 battle sarcophagi discussed here share almost nothing with the Amazonomachy repertoire apart from the trumpeter.¹⁸ Likewise, Amazonomachy sarcophagi do not employ any of the distinctive figure types seen on the Greek vs. Gaul

¹⁶ Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 91.

¹⁷ Grassinger 1999: 157.

¹⁸ See Grassinger (ibid.) 140-141 for illustrated repertoire of Amazonomachy figure types.

battle sarcophagi. The distinctive pair of the falling Gallic horseman and downwards-spearing Greek, which appears on all four sarcophagi of this group, never shows up on Amazonomachy sarcophagi. The hair-grabbing pair, on three of the Greek versus Gaul sarcophagi, uses standard figure poses which are distinct from the figures used to construct the similar groupings on Amazonomachy sarcophagi.¹⁹ As a potential source for the common imagery of these sarcophagi, Andreae has proposed a Pergamene battle painting of a sort mentioned by Pliny (*NH* 34.84): "many artists made (pictures of) battles of Attalus and Eumenes against the Gauls" (*plures artifices fecere Attali et Eumenis adversus Gallos proelia*).²⁰ It could be argued that such an illustrious forbear is unnecessary, given the general trend in Roman sarcophagi of repeating figures and compositions.²¹ It may be more likely to suppose that one artist executed a design (in stone or otherwise) which was then copied with greater or lesser fidelity by a number of other carvers, just as seems to have been the case for Amazon, wedding, hunt, and other sarcophagus themes. In such a scenario, it would have been only the "fossilisation" of these particular figures on these four sarcophagi through the peculiar workings of the Roman sarcophagus industry which makes them appear so remarkable. However, the Ammendola sarcophagus presents a contrast that may support the theory of a Hellenistic model. This lies in the difference to be seen between the captive male barbarians on the

¹⁹ Grassinger's types B1 and B2 (*ibid.*, 140).

²⁰ Andreae 1956: 74-79. This idea had been current before Andreae (Rodenwaldt 1938: 24), and even then Hamberg (1945: 175) argued strongly against an association of the battle sarcophagi with Pergamene painting, noting that "the absence of every trace of topographical indications and of 'air' between the figures is in immediate contrast to what we know about the painting of the hellenistic epoch." Against the sarcophagus-Pergamene painting association, see also Marszal 2000: 210-211.

²¹ On the models employed by sarcophagus carvers, see Koch 1993: 53-54. Jung 1984 provides striking examples, conveniently collated, of rote repetition of figure types and scene composition on sarcophagi over periods as long as half a century: figs. 2-4 for Medea sarcophagi, 5-7 Leukippides sarcophagi, 8-10 and 11-13 for Endymion sarcophagi.

lid of the Ammendola sarcophagus, who wear trousers and cloaks, and have no torques about their necks. This may indicate that the main panel was modelled after an earlier (Hellenistic) prototype, which employed standards of barbarian representation common to that period, but that the lid was a new composition, using barbarian imagery more common in the 2nd century AD.

2. Group 2: Roman versus German Sarcophagi:

The second main group of battle sarcophagi produced in Rome shows figures who may be identified not as Greeks fighting Gauls, but rather as Romans fighting Germanic barbarians. The two sides are, for the most part, clearly identifiable by their arms, armour, and clothing. In most cases (the Pisa sarcophagus is perhaps an exception, though its damaged state makes it impossible to be certain), the Romans wear chain, scale, and segmented armour in addition to the occasional cuirass (which, especially in the case of "generals," is often rendered in a more realistic manner, analogous to that seen on the Marcus column). The barbarians now almost all wear trousers (though the Palermo sarcophagus contains some important exceptions – see below), and many are fully clad. Some of their physical attributes are also different, especially their hair and beards, which are shown longer than those of the Gauls. Based on the common depiction of a "general," plus the scenes of authority sometimes shown on side or lid panels, these sarcophagi may have been commissioned by members of the equestrian or senatorial class.²² Five clear examples of this type of battle sarcophagus are known.²³

²² See Wrede 2001: 23-24.

²³ For a catalogue of the main preserved examples (including the mid-3rd c. Large Ludovisi sarcophagus, not discussed here) see Andreae 1956: 15-16, catalogue #s 9-17. Also not included here is Andreae's #14,

The most complex and, remarkably, the best-preserved example of the group is the **Portonaccio Sarcophagus** (Fig. 5.5).²⁴ The main front panel shows a dense battle, centred on a charging Roman cavalryman who attacks a defenceless, gesturing barbarian.²⁵ All about him the battle rages, conducted by both mounted warriors and ones on foot. Despite the apparent confusion of the battle, a general order can be seen: the Romans charge in from the left, and appear to burst out among the barbarians in the centre of the composition. The figures themselves are overlapped and entwined in a highly complicated manner. The foreground is littered with the contorted bodies of fallen barbarians. Truly a remarkable composition, the Portonaccio sarcophagus is unlike anything seen before in Greco-Roman battle art. The front panel is framed by two trophies, at the foot of which stand barbarian couples, man and woman, unfettered but of mournful appearance.

The remaining Roman/German battle sarcophagi are all less complex in their form and composition.²⁶ A good example is the **Palermo Sarcophagus** (Fig. 5.6),²⁷ whose

a relief described by Reinach (1912: 260, 2) as being a fragment of a sarcophagus, but with a composition unlike any other. Looking more like a piece of monumental sculpture after the model of the Great Trajanic Frieze, it shows a group of Romans on horseback, their leader in the fore, trumpet players and lion-capped standard-bearers in the back, attacking from the left. A group of barbarians makes a feeble resistance on the right. Andreae (1956: 15) states that the whereabouts of this piece is unknown, and no photo is published. Also excluded is Andreae's #10, a fragment from St. Paul's, "vielleicht Schlachtreief," and #12, the Casino Doria Pamphilj sarcophagus, a highly eccentric composition (see below note 26).

²⁴ Museo Nazionale inv. # 112327. The best single source is Musso 1985, with description, bibliography, and a number of detailed photos. See also Hamberg 1945: 176-177, Andreae 1956: 15, #13.

²⁵ Although attempts have been made to associate this figure with a specific historical person (see, for example, Hamberg 1945:176, n.43), especially through interpretations of a faint Roman numeral "IIII" scratched on the legionary standard, the uncarved (not, as Hamberg suggests, damaged) face of the "general" makes this somewhat doubtful.

²⁶ The nearest that any such Roman/German sarcophagus comes to the Portonaccio sarcophagus in composition is the Casino Doria Pamfilj sarcophagus (Calza 1977: 202-204 (P. Pensabene) cat. #233, pls. 137, 138; Andreae 1956:14, #12). However, there are a number of problems with this piece, particularly that it is heavily damaged and restored (see Matz and Duhn 1881: 433-434; some restorations also postdate this brief description of the sarcophagus), and it is not properly published. Its theme is apparently a battle (incorporating a fortress in the background) between roughly Roman-looking figures and an unidentifiable

figures are executed in a style very similar to that used by the carver of the Portonaccio sarcophagus – so similar that Andreae assigned them to the same workshop.²⁸ The two sarcophagi have in common the figure of the charging general in the centre, and the military standards arrayed along the upper border. The Romans are shown attacking from the centre, from the left, and from the right. The barbarians, some naked, make efforts at resistance but are clearly being overwhelmed. As on the Portonaccio sarcophagus, most of the fighters are paired with clear opponents, although the composition is so dense that it is hard to call them *Einzelkämpfe*. There seems to have been an effort to group barbarians and Romans together, however loosely: two small knots of Germans in the centre left and centre right, one large mass of Romans in the centre and two smaller groups of Romans at the edges of the composition.

The third main sarcophagus of this group is the **Pisa Camposanto Sarcophagus** (Fig. 5.7),²⁹ which is unfortunately heavily damaged: the entire centre section is missing, along with many portions of the high-relief figures on the surviving surface. Still, the overall format is clear, and it is one that differs greatly from the Portonaccio and Palermo sarcophagi, for it consists entirely of a cavalry battle. Almost all the action proceeds from left to right. At the left, the focus of attention is on the cuirassed Roman (A) in the upper left corner, who with his comrades drives before him one or more Germans. At the right

enemy, some naked, some dressed like Germanic barbarians but wearing helmets, and some apparently female. The arms and equipment are often fantastic. Rodenwaldt (1935: 24) suggests that a triumphal relief or painting formed the *Vorbild* for this sarcophagus. I do not consider this sarcophagus in detail here.
²⁷ Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale inv. #739/90. Tusa 1995, #77, pp.76-77; Andreae 1956, #9, p.15; Hamberg 1945: 175-176.

²⁸ Andreae 1956: 15; the issue of style and workshops will be examined below as it relates to chronology and the relationship of the sarcophagi to the Marcus column. The format of the piece is odd; at 1.77 by 0.48m, it seems too tall to be the face of a sarcophagus lid as usually assumed (e.g., Wrede 2001: 23) – the lid of the Portonaccio sarcophagus measures, for example, 2.39 by 0.36m.

are the traces of another cuirassed Roman (B). The barbarians seem confined to the middle and lower registers of the field. The figures, as far as can be seen, have few strong attachments to traditional types, the main exceptions being the charging cuirassed Roman A and the twisting, foreshortened Roman (C) at the far right.

The fourth major example of the Roman/German sarcophagus genre is the **Borghese Sarcophagus** (Fig. 5.8).³⁰ This sarcophagus uses a composition method unlike any of the three already examined, in that the Romans are shown bursting through, as it were, the centre of a mass of barbarians, who flee on horseback at the upper right and left, and are overwhelmed and slaughtered in the foreground. The main figure (A) is located just right of centre, galloping to the right while trampling a barbarian beneath his horse. Some influence of the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi may be seen in the naked barbarian fallen from his horse at the lower left (B), but otherwise the figures are more or less novel. There are also oddities, such as the oversized helmet (C) held up, apparently, by the horseman just left of centre (D), who balances A in the composition. The depiction of a helmet-bearer along with a bareheaded commander is not uncommon in Roman funerary art, but the three-crested helmet is unusual, as is its placement in the hands of a man riding away from the central figure. Schäfer explains it as the helmet of Virtus, symbolic of that military virtue.³¹ The composition of the Borghese sarcophagus is very dense, but *Einzelkampf* elements are clearer here than on the other Roman/German sarcophagi, particularly in the foreground. The background however (that is to say, the

²⁹ Pisa, Camposanto Monumentale, C 21. Arias et al. 1977: 151-152, pls. 112-113; Andrae 1956, #11, p. 15.

³⁰ Located in the atrium of the Casino of the Villa Borghese. Schäfer 1979; Andrae 1956, #16, p. 16; Hamberg 1945: 179-181.

space at the top of the field) is filled with the sort of generic chase-scenes consisting of mounted opponents which are common to all these sarcophagi.

Finally comes a sarcophagus fragment, heavily damaged and heavily restored, once in the **Villa Giustiniani** (Fig. 5.9).³² Again the action is centred on one figure (A), this time not armoured, who gallops to the right over a crouching, diminutive barbarian. Behind A is a confused cavalry battle, with figures galloping in all directions, while to the lower left Roman foot-soldiers fight dismounted Germans. Immediately above A, a Roman rides along bearing an object (now mostly missing) which was likely A's helmet (H). In general, the composition of the Palazzo Giustiniani sarcophagus is not unlike that of the Borghese sarcophagus, though it shares none of its figure types. Strange and out of place in this battle scene is a small shield (S) in the bottom centre, which appears to be connected to a diminutive trophy, consisting of a minute suit of armour and helmet, located beneath Roman A. The role of this feature in the composition is not at all clear.

In sum, the Roman versus barbarian battle sarcophagi constitute a disparate group. While they share some aspects of composition and detail, their variety indicates that these sarcophagi were all individual and original creations, based perhaps on a common theme or idea, but not rooted in any single artistic archetype.

³¹ For more such helmet examples, and for a discussion of their significance (indication of *virtus*?) see Schäfer 1979: 363-370.

3. *Unclassified Sarcophagi:*

In addition to the three examples discussed above but excluded from Group 2, five further Roman battle sarcophagi fall clearly into neither Group 1 nor 2.³³ Most of these are commonly dated as contemporary to Group 1 (see discussion of dating below), but none of them share their figure types or pairs. Some, in fact, are difficult to call battle sarcophagi at all. A fragmentary sarcophagus in the Museo Nuovo Capitolino in Rome, for example, shows a number of Gauls and Greeks standing about in a static composition, while the ground line is littered with debris, including dead men and many shields.³⁴ A sarcophagus formerly in the Villa Giustiniani (Fig. 5.10), by contrast, is a dynamic composition centred on a clash between a mounted Greek (though this time in a decidedly more Roman style of cuirass) and a striding Gaul.³⁵ This sarcophagus seems to have an iconographic connection to lion hunt sarcophagi:³⁶ a fallen Greek who lies beneath the horse ridden by the central Greek. This is a feature otherwise never seen on either Group 1 or 2 battle sarcophagi. The central figure rides against a large and dangerous-looking

³² This sarcophagus is reported by Andreae (1957: 15, catalogue #14) to be no longer in the Villa Giustiniani.

³³ See note 23. One of these four, Andreae's #2, a specimen in Ince Blundel Hall, has not been seen by me, and thus is not discussed here. One further example besides those discussed here has come to light since Koch and Sichtermann's publication: a sarcophagus in the Ellen Art Gallery of Concordia University, Montreal, published by Francis (2000; also abstract in *AJA* 104 (2000) 323). It is an unusual piece for its size, figure types and style, and its place in the battle sarcophagus corpus (if indeed it has one) is uncertain.

³⁴ Museo Nuovo Capitolino #2141 (Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 91, n.10; McCann 1978: 107-117, figs. 131-133). Koch and Sichtermann (ibid.) follow McCann (ibid., 107, who in turn follows an unreferenced attribution by Rodenwaldt) in assigning two further sarcophagus fragments at the Metropolitan (a head and torso and a head, McCann figs. 129, 130) to the Museo Nuovo sarcophagus. This seems unlikely to be the case, however, since the style of the Metropolitan pieces (which certainly seem to come from a single work) is very different from the Museo Nuovo sarcophagus: e.g., the Metropolitan pieces have long noses with a bulbous end, nostrils which recede a third of the way up the cheek, and finely incised facial hair; the Museo Nuovo sarcophagus heads have pug noses and facial hair accentuated with the use of very distinctive drill holes.

³⁵ Andreae 1956: 15, #14. Andreae includes this sarcophagus in his *Massenkampf* group, though it is very much unlike the rest; he also notes that this sarcophagus is no longer in the Villa Giustiniani.

³⁶ Compare, for example, Koch and Sichtermann (1982) figs. 82 and 84-88.

opponent - here a Gaul, in the hunt sarcophagi, a lion. Another example of unclassifiable battle is to be found in the Camposanto in Pisa.³⁷ This sarcophagus shows combat between a mounted force of civilised soldiers wearing muscled cuirasses and a group of barbarians, mounted and on foot, who have a variety of clothing, from none to full tunic and cape. The composition as a whole is exceptional, and its execution is rather abnormal, with numerous problems of relationship between the figures and the background. The abnormal is taken to excess in a battle sarcophagus in the Abbey of Farfa, near Rome.³⁸ It has proven hard for scholars to decide where exactly in the spectrum of battle sarcophagi the Farfa sarcophagus belongs, as it contains some very idiosyncratic elements. It uses a combination of *Einzelkämpfe* and groups of figures, and depicts Greeks, Gauls, Persians(?) and Amazons engaged in combat. Andrae, in his initial publication of the piece, placed it in a new group with a sarcophagus from the Abbey of Cava de' Tirreni, which he defined as having the subject matter of Greeks fighting Persians.³⁹ The possibility of forgery cannot be discounted.

The apparent lack of any connection between these unclassifiable battle sarcophagi and those of either Group 1 or 2, in addition to the lack of any connection to the Marcus Column battles, renders them of little use in helping to define trends in 2nd century battle art. Therefore, the analysis below focuses on the sarcophagi of Groups 1 and 2, their relationship to each other, and especially the relationship of Group 2 sarcophagi to the battle scenes of the Marcus column.

³⁷ Andrae 1956: 15, # 6; Arias et al. 1977: 64-65, cat. A 13, pl. 15.

³⁸ Andrae 1968-69: 153-156, fig. 5; Panella 1970, figs. 697, 698; Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 91, n.12.

³⁹ Andrae (ibid.) fig. 4.

4. The Relationship between the Groups 1 and 2:

The Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi and the Roman vs. German sarcophagi are strikingly different in a number of ways. However, there are also a few similarities between the groups, and they serve as helpful indicators by which to gauge the relationship between the two. The following discussion seeks to lay out these similarities and differences, and to assess the relationship, both artistic and chronological, between the groups.

One of the most obvious differences between the groups is the dress and equipment of the combatants. On one are shown cuirassed Greeks and largely naked Gauls. On the other are chain-mail armoured Romans (with some rare officers in cuirass and occasional infantrymen in segmented armour) fighting against trouser-wearing barbarians of the type familiar from the Marcus column. However, there are some notable exceptions: a few figures on the Palermo sarcophagus, with a Roman vs. German theme, are shown naked (Fig. 5.6 A, C, and I); barbarian B on the Borghese sarcophagus (Fig. 5.8) is also completely naked.

Another major difference between the two classes of battle sarcophagi is style. Compare for example the style of Ammendola and the Portonaccio sarcophagi (Figs. 5.1 and 5.5a-c). The Ammendola sarcophagus, with its Greek vs. Gaul combat, is executed in an essentially Hellenistic style. The figures are modelled with careful, and at times exaggerated, realism. Men twist violently in their saddles, each muscle on their torso delineated. Others are tensed in awkward positions, ready to strike blows. Even when falling from a horse or sitting motionless at the base of a trophy, no figure lacks a sense of tension in its carefully sculpted body. The style of the Portonaccio sarcophagus, with its

depiction of Roman vs. German combat, is something entirely different. Figures tend to be elongated and thin. When bare flesh is shown, musculature is only roughly depicted, and the bodies appear supple and flexible. There is a remarkable sense of movement as figures are shown bent and twisted into unexpected poses. Even faces are subjected to this treatment, becoming longer and narrower. Facial expressions can be vivid and intense, but also vapid. Barbarian faces are often desperate and contorted, while the Romans appear more or less calm and nonchalant. Many of these characteristics can be picked out in the other sarcophagi of their respective groups, and few or none of the stylistic characteristics of one group are ever found in sarcophagi of another.

Figure types provide a further useful comparative tool for analysis of the battle sarcophagi. These will be analysed in greater detail below, in the comparison of the Roman vs. German battle sarcophagi and the Marcus column battle scenes, but a few remarks will be useful here. For the most part, the two groups of battle sarcophagi do not share figure types. This is a striking contrast when one considers the way in which specific figures were carefully repeated in the main series of Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi. In comparison, most of the Roman vs. German battle sarcophagi show no such sharing of motifs between them. However, there are a few important exceptions. First, on the Palermo Sarcophagus, fallen German D is clearly modelled on the fallen Gaul seen at the bottom centre of the Ammendola and Doria Pamphilj sarcophagi. Even the drapery and waistband are reproduced. Roman G on the same sarcophagus is also reminiscent of the Greek seen at the left of both the above-mentioned Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi. Barbarians B and C, while not paralleled on the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi, likewise show the influence of Classical or Hellenistic prototypes. The Borghese Roman vs. German

sarcophagus also offers two parallels, albeit rough, of types on Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi. Fallen barbarian B is similar, though by no means identical, to the falling Gallic horsemen common to the Ammendola, Doria Pamphilj, and Little Ludovisi sarcophagi. The hair-grabbing pair of Roman F and barbarian H is also reminiscent of similar arrangements on Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi, but it is by no means a close parallel.

One final feature of the battle sarcophagi is worth comparison. Almost all of the battle sarcophagi show barbarian captives at each side of the front panel, either standing or sitting. These are accompanied by trophies or, less commonly, Victories. However, there are some clear differences in how these framing devices are handled. On the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi, the barbarians are single naked males, and are always shown seated. On the Roman vs. German sarcophagi, the barbarians are most often shown in couples (man and woman), always fully clothed, sometimes with a child, and always standing.⁴⁰ There are also differences to be seen in the trophies themselves, the most important of which is the appearance of fur caps atop the trophies on the Ammendola and Doria Pamphilj sarcophagi. These caps never appear on trophies on the Roman vs. German sarcophagi.

To sum up: the differences between these two groups of sarcophagi are great. The Roman vs. German sarcophagi are executed in a new style. The detail of arms and equipment on these sarcophagi is also almost entirely new. On most examples, an entirely new approach to composition and figure types has been adapted. Even the format of the framing devices, the trophies and their attendant barbarian captives, has been changed. Were it not for the occasional borrowing of figure types and use of nudity, one

would have to suppose that the two groups were unrelated except in general theme. However, even these small connections are enough to scuttle any such supposition. The Palermo Sarcophagus is the best example, and appears to provide a link between the two groups. Some of its figure types were taken from the repertoire of the Greek vs. Gaul battles. It is particularly important to note that one of these figures, fallen barbarian D in the centre, has exact parallels with the same figure on Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi. At the same time, the detail of arms and equipment of most of its other figures, and its style, closely connect the Palermo sarcophagus with the Portonaccio sarcophagus – even the captive barbarians at the feet of the trophies on each sarcophagus are in almost identical poses.

Here, a further oddity of the battle sarcophagi becomes apparent: with the advent of the Roman vs. German examples, these sarcophagi abruptly break from the prevailing workshop procedure. This prevailing procedure is well illustrated by the Amazonomachy sarcophagi, which continue to employ standard sets of *Kampfmotive* through to the end of the 3rd century.⁴⁰ Different sets of motifs are employed, and though these change over time, the working methods and principles remain the same. In light of this, the relatively sudden appearance of the novelties of the Roman vs. German sarcophagi, connected as some of them seem to be to the Greek vs. Gaul group, seems even more remarkable.

What can be made of these observations? First, the few similarities identified indicate that Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi had an influence on at least some carvers of Roman vs. German battle sarcophagi. The repeated figure types on the Palermo

⁴⁰ On the trophies of both types of battle sarcophagus, see Picard 1957: 442-446.

⁴¹ The latest belong to Grassinger's Group VII (Grassinger 1999: 168).

sarcophagus can only have come from the exclusive repertoire of the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi. However, the differences in detail and particularly style are so great, even on the Palermo sarcophagus, that one has difficulty imagining a smooth evolution leading from one type to the other. Rather, one should probably suppose that there was a significant break between the two groups. The most likely type of break would be a chronological one, sufficient in length to allow for the development of a new style and preference for new details. However, the chronology of these sarcophagi is problematic, to say the least. This is the final point that must be investigated before we can proceed to a comparison of the Roman vs. German sarcophagi and the Marcus Column itself.

5. Dating:

The dating of sarcophagi – all of them, not just the battle sarcophagi – is based almost entirely on a floating chronology. That is, the sarcophagi have been put into order based on perceived development in their style, giving them an internal chronology. However, there are almost no independently dated individual examples to allow us to anchor this sequence firmly in time.⁴² To deal with this problem, scholars tend to divide the sarcophagi into periods of 20 to 30 years length, and then to date these periods by stylistic parallels with other, better dated, works of sculpture. For this purpose, portraits are especially important, but only a relatively small number of sarcophagi bear portrait heads. The Portonaccio sarcophagus is a prime example of this problem, since although

⁴² The single exception relevant to our period, and perhaps the only sarcophagus of the second half of the 2nd century which is datable on external grounds, is the sarcophagus of C. Iunius Eunodus and Metilia Acte in the Vatican (Toynbee 1934: 182-183, pl. 42.1; Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 254-255, fig. 143). Its inscription is only roughly datable to between the years 161 and 170. The figures are closer in style to the Greek vs. Gaul than to the Roman vs. German sarcophagi, but they are hardly identical to them.

its central figure was intended to have a portrait head, this was left uncarved (as was not uncommon).

Two periods cover the material discussed here: the Middle Antonine (AD 150–170/80) and the Late Antonine (170/80–200).⁴³ The Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi tend to be placed bridging, as it were, the Middle and Late Antonine periods, generally between 170 and 190; the Roman vs. German sarcophagi are placed immediately thereafter, within one or two decades following the year 190.⁴⁴ Behind these numbers lie two theories, which go beyond the usual stylistic comparison in the quest for dates for these sarcophagi. The first is that the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi are connected to the outbreak of new wars under Marcus Aurelius.⁴⁵ The second is that the Roman vs. German sarcophagi are connected to the carving of the column of Marcus Aurelius, which most scholars take as having been carved in the 180s and 190s.

The theory of associating the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi with the outbreak of war under Marcus Aurelius rests on the idea that the wars brought military subject matter again to the fore. However, the theme of battles of Greeks versus Gauls was very popular in Greek (and Etruscan) art. The publicity efforts of the Hellenistic kings of Pergamon had rendered the theme popular – and mythologised – enough for it to stand more or less alongside battles of Greeks and Amazons or the hunt for the Calydonian boar. Thus it would have been a viable choice, on the merit of its own theme, for patrons prior to the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

⁴³ Periodization of Koch and Sichtermann (1982: 255-256).

⁴⁴ Andrae 1956: 14-16 (Greek vs. Gaul 170-180, Roman vs. German 185-200); Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 91 (Greek vs. Gaul 170-190, followed by Roman vs. German); Koch 1993: 66-67 (Greek vs. Gaul 160/70-190, then Roman vs. German).

⁴⁵ Koch and Sichtermann (1982: 90-91) state this theory explicitly.

The second theory, inspired as it is by the apparent stylistic connection between the Roman vs. German sarcophagi and (parts of) the Marcus column frieze, undoubtedly has merit. However, the nature of this relationship is far from clear. The simplest solution would be to establish that the sarcophagi post-dated the column, but unfortunately the sarcophagi themselves offer few clues. There are some sarcophagi that offer very close stylistic parallels to the key example of the Roman vs. German group, the Portonaccio sarcophagus. A Meleager sarcophagus in Perugia and dated 190-200 is one example, as is an Adonis sarcophagus in Mantua dated to ca. 190.⁴⁶ The latter is especially close to the Portonaccio sarcophagus, both in its fluent style and in its complex composition. The problem with such parallels, however, is that to cite them as dating evidence is to make a circular argument. These sarcophagi are themselves dated at least in part by comparison to the battle sarcophagi, whose dating hangs, as noted, on their relationship to the column of Marcus Aurelius. The only way to break this circle is to revisit this comparison, and to consider again the relationship of the Roman vs. German sarcophagi with the Marcus column.

6. The Relationship between the Sarcophagi and the Marcus Column

The Roman vs. German battle sarcophagi show similarities with the Marcus column, particularly in appearance, dress and armament of combatants. This raises the question of exactly how the sarcophagi (and their carvers) are related to the column (and its carvers); the following analysis seeks to answer this question. Once the nature of the relationship

⁴⁶ Perugia Meleager: Koch 1975: 111-112, #83, 36-37 for dating. Mantua Adonis (Palazzo Ducale):

is established as thoroughly as possible, it may then be possible to seek answers to the key question of dating – are the sarcophagi earlier than, contemporary with, or later than the column? Given their very similar themes, could the same carvers have worked on each? Did the reliefs of the column inspire the sarcophagus carvers?⁴⁷ Or did their material come from an entirely different source? The following analysis seeks to compare the column and sarcophagus battle scenes from the perspectives of composition, figure type and detail.

7. Composition and Figures:

The composition of the **Portonaccio Sarcophagus** is clearly unlike any single battle scene on the Marcus column, but certain of its elements do have parallels with some column scenes. Battle scene L has the most of these similar elements: a more or less central figure (50.14) on horseback engaged with a barbarian on foot, a strong diagonal (formed by Romans 50.10, .14, and .16) similar to that in the centre of the Portonaccio sarcophagus, with overwhelmed barbarians to the right and below. Scene L also mixes together the Roman and barbarian troops to a certain extent, while still keeping the overall sense of two main bodies in conflict. Battle scene IC provides a parallel for the dense composition of the Portonaccio sarcophagus, but this density is made up exclusively of Romans, while the barbarians mainly lie underfoot. The figure types of the Portonaccio sarcophagus also deserve mention, since a number are quite exceptional, and some are entirely without parallel (note that these exceptional figure

Grassinger 1999: 215, #55, pls. 47.1, 48.1, 50.2.

types are confined almost exclusively to the bottom half of the composition). These include the kneeling, spear- and shield-wielding barbarian at the lower left (Fig. 5.5 B), his Roman attacker with shield held above his head (C), the head-over-heels barbarian (D) who somehow manages to still hold on to his spear, the fallen barbarian (E) grasping the spear of his attacker (F), who is likewise shown using a remarkable, backhand stabbing attack. To these novel fighting figures can be added almost all of the fallen barbarians at the bottom of the frieze. These figures are new creations by the sarcophagus carver, and do not follow the pattern of figure types identified on the Marcus column.

The combination of figures into fighting pairs is also often done in a novel way on the Portonaccio Sarcophagus. This can be seen especially in the pairs of figures B and C, and figures E and F, where the combatants are physically separated by other figures (in the case of B and C, by a horse and rider!). Figures G and H present an interesting contrast to the otherwise overwhelming impression of Roman superiority: here the Roman (H) is placed in a position apparently inferior to his attacker, and one wonders if this is not the result of a mistake by the carver, who may have misinterpreted a drawn plan of the battle and switched the identities of these two combatants. However, this sort of placement of the barbarian in a position above the Roman does have many parallels in Trajan's column, where the Romans win every battle regardless, and figures G and H on the Portonaccio sarcophagus may simply be a rare reflection of this type of thinking on a later monument.

⁴⁷ This was apparently Rodenwaldt's view when he wrote (1936: 795) "It is comprehensible that the stonemasons should adopt for a series of battle-sarcophagi the peculiar character of the Roman historical relief which had risen to new heights in the Column of Marcus Aurelius."

The composition of the **Palermo Sarcophagus** has little in common with any of the Marcus column battle scenes. The overall compositional principle – a central body of Romans grouped around a commander galloping right, flanked by smaller groups of fighters – does have a general parallel in the Portonaccio sarcophagus, but the figures and fighting groups themselves do not. The fighting and the fallen are for the most part standard types, though a number of the barbarians on the groundline have unique poses, particularly Fig. 5.6 A with his twisted body and up-turned shield, and E, with his curious pleading gesture. Figure B is similar to many of the fallen barbarians on the column, but with his left arm bent beneath his head he does not fit with the fairly standardised figures in this pose as shown on the column. Figures D and C are likewise not reflected in any column figures, but D, as mentioned above, does have a very close parallel in the reclining barbarian at the bottom centre of the Ammendola sarcophagus. Remarkable for other reasons is Roman F, who is twisted at a physically impossible angle in his saddle. There is little to say about the grouping of figures into fighting pairs, except to note that on the Palermo sarcophagus this grouping is not done in nearly as complicated a manner as on the Portonaccio sarcophagus.

The **Pisa Sarcophagus** is more difficult to assess, since it has lost so many of its higher relief elements, including many of the figures themselves. The composition in general is more spread out, and the figure types of the Pisa sarcophagus include many generic galloping horsemen. However, at least one of these is reminiscent of figures seen on Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi, Fig. 5.7 D, who falls forward over the neck of his horse (in a manner which is quite different from any of the riders falling from horses on the Marcus column). Because of the damage to the sarcophagus, it is very difficult to assess the

composition of figure pairs. There is an impression of less close connection between fighting figures than on the Palermo sarcophagus, but no particular evidence of the widely spaced pairs with other figures interposed as seen on the Portonaccio example.

The novel composition of the **Borghese Sarcophagus** (with the Romans appearing to “burst” through the centre of the barbarian mass) has already been mentioned. For all this, the figure types themselves do not present many striking novelties, and at least one (fallen barbarian Fig. 5.8 B) appears similar to figures on Greek vs. Gaul battle sarcophagi. An exceptional combination is the hair-grasping pair of Roman F and barbarian H, since, though the theme is common, the body of the victim is normally angled away from the attacker and is being pulled back by the attacker’s grasp on the hair (as, for example, on the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi or on the Pergamon altar;⁴⁸ the only hair-grasping pair on the Marcus column, in scene LXXIX, is entirely different in composition). In contrast to this tradition, figure H on the Borghese sarcophagus seems like a fallen barbarian type more often seen in isolation, but here combined with a hair-pulling attacker.

It is instructive to compare these methods of composition with those employed on other sarcophagi, particularly ones showing battles between Greeks and Amazons. The Amazon sarcophagus in the Capitoline Museum (Fig. 5.11), dated to 140/150, is the oldest known of these.⁴⁹ On its front panel are a series of *Einzelkämpfe* arranged on a single ground line; on its lid are a row of Amazon captives seated amidst their weapons.

⁴⁸ For this pair on the Pergamon altar: Fate fighting with the snake-legged giant on the North Frieze, and Doris and her opponent on the West Frieze. A similar group of figures appears on the Ammendola, Via Tiburtina, and Doria Pamphilj Greek versus Gaul battle sarcophagi.

⁴⁹ Capitoline Museum #726; Grassinger 1999 #94, pp. 157 and 237, pls. 91-93; Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 138, fig. 147.

Both of these elements are very similar to the compositions in the same fields on the Ammendola sarcophagus (Fig. 5.1). Their style is also comparable, although the Ammendola sarcophagus shows more use of the drill to add volume to drapery and hair. Figure 5.12 illustrates an Amazon sarcophagus from the Vatican, dated to about AD 180.⁵⁰ Although figures have been extensively restored in places, the original composition has been preserved. This scene, though still composed primarily of *Einzelfkämpfe*, has its figures placed closer together than on earlier examples, and they frequently overlap. The composition has also become spread out more in the vertical direction. Both of these characteristics can be seen in the Doria Pamphilj (Greek vs. Gaul, Fig. 5.3) and Little Ludovisi (Fig. 5.4) sarcophagi. Finally, Figure 5.13 shows an Amazon sarcophagus in Paris, dated to the beginning of the 3rd century.⁵¹ It is centered on a depiction of Achilles and Penthesilea, around which a battle rages. The *Einzelfkämpfe* from which it is mostly composed are often difficult or impossible to isolate from the surrounding tumult. Figures overlap and intertwine, and are heaped one above the other; it may only be the retention of standard figure types which prevents this composition from dissolving into a chaotic melee. This is reminiscent of the composition of the Portonaccio sarcophagus. These rough comparisons do not indicate a parallel development, but they do suggest that, in both battle and Amazon sarcophagus production, there was a progressive tendency to break away from earlier linear arrangements, and to spread figures over the field. In the case of the Amazon sarcophagi, the figures themselves remained true to their prototypes. In the case of the battle

⁵⁰ Vatican (Belvedere) #896; Grassinger 1999 #101, pp. 167, 240, pls. 98-99.

⁵¹ Louvre #1052; Grassinger 1999 #122, pp. 180, 248-249, pl. 110.3.

sarcophagi, the prototypes were treated with much less reverence, and sometimes abandoned entirely.

8. Dress and Equipment:

The arms and armour of the **Portonaccio Sarcophagus** resemble those in the column battle scenes generally but not in detail. The barbarians wear the same mix of clothing as those on the column, and fight with the same types of weapons (mainly spears, sometimes a sword). The Romans are also shown wearing each of the four armour types found on the column, and these are deployed in the same manner: cuirass reserved for the main figure, chain and scale-armoured figures mounted or on foot, segmented-armoured figures always on foot. However, when the details of the Roman equipment are examined, there are important differences to be seen. The segmented armour is executed in a manner very different from that usually seen on the column, where chest strips are usually simply divided by a vertical incision (e.g., Fig. 1.20). The Portonaccio sarcophagus shows instead round-ended chest segments joined loosely by ties, and with shoulder segments stacked atop one another, instead of being arrayed side by side.⁵² Also novel are the smooth-surfaced tunics worn by many Romans. Presumably these are intended to represent armour, since they have the same shape and trimming as the standard scale and chain tunics. However, they are not incised with scales nor drilled with holes, but rather left plain on the surface. The helmets also show differences. Their form is generally the same as many of those on the column (the

⁵² The closest representation to this of segmented armour on the column is in scene XXX, where a soldier wears armour whose segments terminate in curved ends at the centre of the torso.

varieties are well illustrated in scene III). On the sarcophagus the crests are short and stubby, and in two cases (Romans A and J) the crest is of a type never shown on the column.⁵³ A significant difference in detail is also the appearance on the front and right side of the sarcophagus of dragon-standards born by the Romans, a feature that never appears on the column. Also absent from the column are eagle-headed sword hilts of the type shown worn by the general on the sarcophagus front. The barbarian dress is also significantly different in detail. On the Portonaccio sarcophagus, barbarians are shown wearing broad belts and cloaks which clasp in front; both of these features are exceedingly rare on the column, where almost all barbarians are unbelted and have their cloaks clasped at the shoulder. Two barbarians (E and I) are also shown wearing trousers, shirt, and a girdle of thick, twisted fabric. This girdle does appear on the column (e.g., scenes XX, XXIX, LXVIII, LXXVII), but never on barbarians whose upper body is clothed, but instead only when no shirt or tunic is worn (e.g., barbarian B). Finally, the hair-knot sported by the male barbarian captive beneath the right-hand trophy is another detail never seen on the Marcus column.⁵⁴

Like the Portonaccio Sarcophagus, the details of the arms and armour shown on the **Palermo Sarcophagus** have, at first glance, many similarities to the Marcus column; however, also like the Portonaccio sarcophagus, when looked at in detail there are actually many deviations. The body armour is poorly detailed, its edges often not clearly differentiated from the tunic worn beneath and its surface left lightly or entirely

⁵³ The crests on the helmets of the marching Romans shown on the left side of the Portonaccio sarcophagus are much more similar to those on the column, tall and flared.

⁵⁴ The hair-knot appears on Trajan's column, scenes XXVII and C. It is mentioned by Tacitus (*Germ.* 38.2) as the mark of the "Suebi," a broad term including, among other German tribes, the Marcomanni and the Quadi: *insigne gentis obliquare crinem nodoque substringere.*

unworked. Roman tunics have fringed sleeves, not seen on the column. Roman helmets on the Palermo sarcophagus often have crests placed much further back on the head, and again we see at least one crest type which is unparalleled on the column (Fig. 5.6 G, who wears what seems to be an eagle-crested helmet). Two Romans (F and H) bear shields which are notched on the ends, and the central Roman “general” figure wears an eagle-hilt sword. The barbarian equipment on the Palermo sarcophagus shows even more variation. First, many barbarians are shown naked, or wearing only a band of cloth around their midriff. When dressed, their clothing is similar to that of the column barbarians, but they often bear an extra detail never found on the column: sword-belts and scabbards.

On the **Pisa Sarcophagus**, arms and equipment seem (as is the case with the previous two sarcophagi) in general similar to but in detail different from the column depictions. Besides cuirassed Figure 5.7 A, no clear depiction of Roman armour is visible, but the small undamaged sections show armour which is similar in form to the chain and scale of the Marcus column, but with unworked surfaces. This impression is backed up by the unworked armour of the Roman soldier on the left short end of the sarcophagus. Barbarian dress is similar to that on the column (no nudity shown, setting this apart from the Palermo sarcophagus), but wide belts and sword scabbards do appear. Again we see an eagle-hilted sword worn by a Roman, the seated officer shown on the right short end of the sarcophagus.

Moving to the armour of the **Borghese Sarcophagus**, that of the Romans represents yet a further departure from the types shown on the Marcus column. Three figures wear cuirasses; two plain and one (the central “general”) decorated in relief. The

other Romans wear a somewhat unusual form of scale armour, in that it is either sleeveless or has fringes of long, thin straps at the shoulders, a feature usually only seen on cuirassed figures (though it does appear on the Marcus column in one scene, and later on the Large Ludovisi sarcophagus). Most Roman helmets are destroyed, but the helmet of figure E preserves a long, plumed crest unlike anything on the column. The barbarians are either naked or fully clothed, but when the latter is the case, their dress is much the same as that of the barbarians on the column.

9. Summary and Conclusions

The general impression given by the sarcophagi when compared to the Marcus column is one of superficial similarity but substantial difference in detail. Compositionally, none of these sarcophagi can be tied directly to the battle compositions seen on the column; indeed, in many cases they could hardly be more different. Their figure types are likewise unrelated. When the battle sarcophagus figures and the Marcus column battle figures are compared to the battle art of the earlier 2nd century, each is clearly different in its own way; however, the sarcophagus figures show the greatest degree of difference, and the most novelty in their types. This is particularly evident in the most complex example, the Portonaccio sarcophagus, where a number of entirely novel figure types appear. The details of arms and equipment also set the Roman versus German battle sarcophagi apart from the column: eagle-headed sword hilts appear in the hands of Roman commanders, chain mail on the Roman troops lacks the drilling which is characteristic on the column, and the barbarians often carry scabbards. The conclusion

that must be reached is that the Roman vs. German sarcophagi do not owe a direct debt to the art of the Marcus column.

What was the genesis of the Roman vs. German sarcophagi? Some of them (Palermo, Borghese) employ figure types taken from Greek vs. Gaul battle sarcophagi. Thus, there was some connection, even if only limited, between the two groups. The other sarcophagi (Portonaccio being the prime example) employ none of these types and make use instead of myriad new, individual figures arranged in entirely novel compositions. However, the carvers of the Roman vs. German sarcophagi did not take these details directly from the Marcus column either. There are far too many discrepancies to imagine that the carver of, for example, the Portonaccio sarcophagus learned his trade working on the Marcus column. Such an artist would have shown Romans in scale armour, would have drilled holes in chain mail, and would not have used many of the other unusual details of equipment in his composition. The influence must have come from elsewhere, although a single source need not be imagined for all of the novel features seen on the Roman vs. German sarcophagi. For example, there must have been many more depictions of Romans and Germans extant in the time of Marcus Aurelius than just the figures on the column. There would have been triumphal painting, parades of actual soldiers and their barbarian prisoners, not to mention the memories and reports of actual people involved. The details of Roman and German equipment could have come from one or more of these other sources.

The composition of the battle scenes was most likely a new creation of the sarcophagus carvers. Unlike the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi, the Roman vs. German sarcophagi do not stem from a single prototype, so there is no point in positing a different

(and now lost) artwork as the source of each. The new compositions may reflect a more general trend, seen in some of the later Greek vs. Gaul and Amazon sarcophagi, towards tighter, more complex compositions. In the Amazon sarcophagi, this trend was restrained by the retention of traditional figure types. In the new battle sarcophagi, however, the old types were quickly abandoned and with that act, the artists were free to create figures as they wished or needed to serve their composition. Still, the incredible novelty of the Roman vs. German sarcophagi, in comparison to the general sarcophagus industry, requires more in way of explanation. The theme provides the most likely key, and the answer lies most likely in a connection to the wars of Marcus Aurelius. The following chapter discusses the relationship of the sarcophagi and the Marcus column, along with the column's relationship to other works of battle art.

Chapter 6:

The Marcus Column Battles and the Tradition of Battle Art

This penultimate chapter brings the focus back to the Marcus column and its battle scenes, with the goal of determining the place of the battles in the overall tradition of battle art, and especially that of the 2nd century AD. Two main questions will be focussed on. First, what can the comparison between the Marcus column battle scenes and earlier battle art tell us? Second, how historically accurate are these battle depictions, both with regard to specific events and in relation to what we know of the Roman army of the period?

1. Sources of Battle Imagery on the Marcus Column

The purpose of the first part of this chapter is to analyse the place of the battle scenes in the design process of the Marcus column frieze, and to investigate the working methods of the designer(s) themselves. The first step in investigating these questions must be to compare the battle scenes with other examples of battle art, particularly of the 2nd century, in order to determine how much the designer(s) drew on, or were influenced by, these sources.

2. Copying or Inspiration?

The Marcus column battle scenes are remarkable when viewed against the backdrop of the main traditions in battle art. As seen in Chapter 3, the tradition in battle art in the Classical and Hellenistic periods was varied. Nonetheless, some main trends can be easily identified, such as the focus on mythological subjects and the domination of compositions by *Einzelkämpfe* made up of standard figure types. These figure types and *Einzelkämpfe* could be put together in varying degrees of complexity, resulting in compositions ranging from single lines to involved melees. Compare, for example, the linear combat on the frieze of the temple of Athena Nike or on the Aemilius Paullus monument (Fig. 3.10) with the sophisticated *melées* executed on vases by the Suessula Painter (Fig. 3.4). The work of this vase painter illustrates one of the exceptions to the general trend of simple combat depictions. Unfortunately, many of these exceptions remain largely mysterious, for they were found in paintings on walls or panels, and these are all lost to us. Their complexity can only be glimpsed in the mirrors of copies such as the Alexander Mosaic (Fig. 3.8) and, possibly, the panels of the mausoleum at Glanum (3.13). It is especially important to note that, of the three main media in which we see battle depicted in the Classical and Hellenistic periods (relief sculpture, vase painting, and wall/panel painting), relief sculpture tends to hold itself most closely to the linear *Einzelkampf* tradition.

The Roman period, and especially the second century AD, saw the continuation of these general trends (although, of course, vase painting was no longer a factor). The linear method of battle composition continues to be dominant, especially when the

evidence of the sarcophagi is taken into account. At the same time, however, it is clear that there was a significant, and probably independent, tradition of painted scenes of battle, in the form of triumphal paintings. We cannot know what these were like, although those of Trajan's two triumphs may be reflected in the sculpted frieze of his column.

Leaving the images on Trajan's column aside for the moment, it is apparent that the Marcus Column battle scenes show similarities to a number of features of Classical and Hellenistic battle-art traditions. However, are these similarities actual *parallels*? The distinction is important, for at issue is the degree to which the Marcus column frieze has real connections to the traditions of battle art. The battle scenes of the Marcus column are most remarkable for their sheer variety. Consider scenes XIX (linear formations), XXIV (scattered figures), and IC (mass of charging Romans, prostrate barbarians). These have almost nothing in common with Classical or Hellenistic battle depictions. Scene XIX echoes an Archaic style of composition, such as on the Chigi vase (Fig. 3.1), but this is not a true parallel. In fact, the goal of the designer of scene XIX was clearly different from that of the painter of the Chigi vase. On the vase, two armies clash head-on; in XIX, a single group of barbarians is attacked by two Roman forces, and there is clear interaction between all three, transcending the upper and lower registers of the scene. The lack of other parallels for scene XIX, particularly in the Roman period, suggests that its designer created it more or less on his own. Scene XXIV, on the other hand, is made up mainly of *Einzelkämpfe* – but once again, its connection to Greek battle art is tenuous. Some fighting figures have no opponents, and

the two upper *Einzelkämpfe* are very clumsily assembled. Only the Roman swordsman (24.6) could be derived from or inspired exclusively by a Classical type. Finally, scene IC is like nothing from the Greek repertoire. It does however find a potential parallel in the Augustan-period Mantua relief (Fig. 3.12), where Roman soldiers charge over similarly prostrate opponents.

The question of the relationship between the Marcus column battle scenes and those of Trajan's column is rather more complicated, and extends beyond the issue of copying. Take, for instance, the *testudo* scenes of each column. That scene 70/71 on Trajan's column provided the inspiration for scene LIV on Marcus' seems likely, in a general way at least, for not only is their content very similar, but also so is their placement on the columns, shortly before the Victory figure. The broad similarities in content are in the configuration of the *testudo* (four shields wide by three deep), the use of segmented-armoured soldiers to form the *testudo*, and the placement of defenders on top of the wall. In detail, however, many differences are to be seen. The *testudo* on Trajan's column has additional shields to form a wall on the side, and two other shields in addition to the main rectangle of twelve for the roof. The employment of the *testudo* is also different in each case. On the Marcus column, it seems to be used in a direct attack on the walls. On Trajan's column, it is set at an angle to the wall itself and may be intended to represent an attack on the gate into which four Dacians are fleeing. The defenders within the fort itself also act in a much more unorthodox manner on the Marcus column, throwing rocks, swords, fire and even wheels upon the attackers. These elements are clearly not derived from the column of Trajan. In the end, all one can

conclude is that while the presence of the *testudo* scene on Trajan's column likely inspired the placement of a similar scene in a similar position on Marcus', the actual scene was composed independently.

It is abundantly clear that no other battle scene on Trajan's column was singled out for reproduction on Marcus', and that there certainly was no direct copying. However, there are other areas where comparison of the two monuments is required. The columns are, after all, very closely related in appearance and, presumably, in function. The battle scenes of each monument share one important characteristic: they stand (for the most part) separate from contemporary traditions of battle art. They do not reproduce standard battle-scene formats, but instead employ novel figures arranged in novel ways. The question is, then, did the designers of each monument use similar methods and sources when creating these battle scenes, even if the results in each case were different? This is in fact the most useful purpose of a comparison of the battle scenes on each column: to answer the question of how the scenes were composed.

To begin with, there are substantial similarities between the battle scenes of the two columns when considered on a detailed level. This is particularly evident in the figure types, which appear to have been created using much the same improvisational techniques (although the figures themselves differ greatly – see below). In each case there is a low degree of reliance on traditional types, and instead we find generic poses of attacking and defending figures. These figures are not reproductions of an ideal archetype in the manner that we see, for example, on the Greek vs. Gaul or Amazon battle sarcophagi. Rather, they are variations on a theme, which likely existed in the

head of the designer(s). The rare occurrence of a clearly traditional type shows that the designers of both friezes had exposure to classical battle art, but the vast bulk of the figures they created remained independent of this influence.

These generic figure types, however, are not the same on both monuments. Some variance would naturally be expected, since the same people clearly did not design both friezes. However, these differences reveal not only the hand of different designers, but also the influence of distinctly different approaches to composing the battle scenes. One of the major figure types on Trajan's column is that of a combatant attacking downwards, and another is, naturally enough, a soldier defending himself against an attack from above. These two types are common on Trajan's column because of the frequent use of an angled, perspective-based compositional technique in the battle scenes. The column of Marcus Aurelius, on the other hand, makes little use of such figure types, and the reason for this is that its battle scenes were based on very different compositional concepts. While battles showing massed groups of soldiers are common on the Marcus column, these encounters are not rendered in the same way as on Trajan's column. Perspective is generally abandoned, and figures are grouped on a single plane. Instead of the staggered, angled ranks of Trajan's column, we see simpler, overlapped masses of troops. When ranks are used, these are static and either parallel or perpendicular to the frieze band. Another major difference between the figure types used on each monument is to be found in the horsemen. On the Marcus column, the attacking horseman is the most important offensive Roman type, shown with spear held at his hip or raised over his head. This type of figure is relatively rare for actively fighting figures on Trajan's

column, especially where the spear is shown wielded overhand. The reason for this, again, has to do with how the scenes are put together. The Marcus column makes frequent use of horsemen in the thick of battle; the column of Trajan, on the other hand, seldom does so (see below on the role of cavalry and infantry in battle on each column).

There are further differences in the compositional methods used for the battle scenes on the two columns. The Trajanic battle scenes can be divided into three broad groups: infantry encounters, cavalry battles, and sieges. Each of these employs a more or less standard composition: infantry clash face-on in massed groups; cavalry encounters show one group fleeing while another pursues; and sieges show a fortress ringed by enemy attackers. One cannot divide the battle scenes on Marcus' column in the same manner – or, if one did, the result would be a more-or-less pattern-less jumble. The reason is that infantry and cavalry encounters do not exist as rigorously separate entities, and with the exception of the *testudo* scene, sieges as seen on Trajan's column are essentially absent. The Marcus column battle scenes can be most effectively divided on the basics of composition (Chapter 2), not troop type. The largest groupings of battle scenes on the Marcus column encompass no more than three scenes. Even within these groupings, cavalry and infantry are often freely alternated. For example, in the group formed by scenes XCII, XCVII, and CV, barbarian cavalry is pursued and killed by Roman cavalry in one case and by Roman infantry in the other two, with exactly the same effect. The conclusion to be drawn is that on Trajan's column, the types of troops affected the way in which a scene was composed; on the Marcus column, they did not. These differences are more than artistic curiosities, and they raise important questions

about the historicity of battle depictions on each monument; this question will be discussed later in this chapter.

3. *Sources of Images:*

The many differences between the battle scenes of the Marcus column and of its predecessor raise the question of what type of sources the designers may have had to work from. Like Marcus', the battle scenes on the column of Trajan are more or less unique when viewed against the backdrop of traditional battle art of the period. They show soldiers of both sides fighting while arranged into homogeneous groups, often arrayed in battle order. Traditional figure types are for the most part neglected, and troops are shown equipped in a realistic, contemporary manner. As already mentioned, the conservative nature of relief sculpture is a dominant characteristic throughout its history, and has existed since the Classical period.¹ Departures from this tradition of conservatism, typified by the linear *Einzelkampf* schemata, immediately attract attention and invite, even require, explanation. In the case of the column of Trajan, the general conclusion has been that these battle scenes are based on models in a lost medium: painting, and particularly triumphal painting (see Chapter 4.3). This seems the only reasonable explanation for the sudden appearance of such novel and relatively sophisticated compositions in a medium which otherwise appears to have been quite conservative.

¹ Consider, for example, the standard *Einzelkämpfe* of Classical battle friezes compared to the innovative compositions employed on contemporary vase painting (see Chapter 3).

Can the same source material be argued for in the case of the battle scenes of the column of Marcus Aurelius? Overall, the battle scenes on the Marcus column are composed in a fairly simple manner. There are very few attempts at employing (Hellenistic) perspective techniques similar to those seen on Trajan's column. When it seems possible that such an attempt was made, as in scene L, the result is awkward and unconvincing. Battle scene L shows an angled line of Roman cavalry clashing with a group of barbarian footsoldiers. On the Roman side, the effect of the composition is more or less satisfying, if simple, based on staggered overlapping figures. On the barbarian side, however, the composition is, with respect to perspective, a failure. Only one barbarian stands to fight, while the two others above and to the right are draped in awkward, falling poses with only highly artificial links to the terrain (by means of conveniently placed rocky lumps). More often, complicated figure-group arrangements are not even attempted in the Marcus column battle scenes. Encounters are rendered as collected *Einzelkämpfe*, or as clashes between two disordered groups. When ordered lines of soldiers are employed, they are stiff and poorly integrated into the battle (scenes XIX, XXIII, XXXIX). The filling of the entire field of the frieze with a convincing battle scene was apparently a substantial problem for the designer of the Marcus column. A common solution to this problem, and one which was never resorted to on Trajan's column, was to divide the field in two by creating a second ground-line in the middle of the frieze. Figures were then fixed to this line or to the lower border.

This tells us that the Marcus column battles were not copied from a source that used the same compositional techniques as did the source of the Trajan's column battles.

However, the Marcus column battle scenes may well have been taken from triumphal paintings (or some other pictorial source) that looked very different than those of Trajan's time. We do not even have firm evidence that paintings were carried in Marcus' triumph. There might also have been other possible pictorial sources: for example, Lucius Verus is recorded as offering the philosopher and historian Fronto "*picturas*" of events in the Parthian wars.² These were in addition to copies of despatches and letters, and were intended as raw source material which Fronto could use to write his history. The possibility that a literary battle description could be based on a picture is intriguing, but once again we do not know what these images might have looked like.

4. The Significance of the Sarcophagi:

It appears from their product that the designer(s) of the frieze were inexperienced in traditional battle art, but had some significant skill in figural art in general. Where would such artists have been drawn from? As we have seen, most of the figures in the Marcus column battle scenes fit into a relatively small number of standardised and generic types. These types are, for the most part, not taken from the traditional repertoire of Classical and Hellenistic battle, but at the same time they are not particular to the column alone. Instead, they are "natural" types, meaning that they are the sort of figure that any reasonably skilled artist might be expected to come up with if he were told to draw, for example, a horseman with a spear, or a foot soldier advancing. For example, the spear-wielding soldiers, which account for 70 of the 89 figures actually

² Fronto *ad Verum Imp.* 2.3 (in the Loeb edition = vol. II, 195).

shown fighting, had been depicted in much the same way since ancient Greece. Examples can be found from the Archaic to Hellenistic periods (e.g., Figs. 3.1-3, 3.5, 3.6). Further examples from the second century AD appear on the column of Trajan (for footsoldiers Figs. 4.6-10, horsemen Fig. 4.2), the Great Trajanic Frieze (Fig. 4.26, Roman 20, Fig. 4.27, Roman 41), and at Adamklissi (Fig. 4.20, 4.23). They might be compared to the figure types involved in construction scenes on the column of Trajan, which are mostly restricted representations of soldiers engaged in a small selection of standard tasks and are repeated heavily.³ Such types do not allow us to draw any particular conclusions as to the origin of the designer(s) of these scenes.

When one looks to the more complex fighting figures, however, there are some notable parallels to be found. The first is in the pose of the two very similar under-arm barbarian swordsmen from scenes LII and LVII (52.3 and 57.4 – Fig. 6.2), who hold high their round shields as they fight with an approaching Roman horseman. This figure is common on Amazon and Achilles sarcophagi, and is very closely paralleled on two Amazon sarcophagi, where not only is a very similar pose used for the swordsman, but where also he is paired with a very similar mounted attacker (e.g., Fig. 6.1).⁴ Even more informative is the type of the Roman or barbarian swordsman (E and c; see Chapter 2.7 and Appendix) with sword raised behind the head. On the column, this figure is (with

³ Lehmann-Hartleben 1926: 43-50.

⁴ Vatican Museo Chiaramonti 1735 and Vatican Belvedere 896 (dating to AD 170 and 180) = Grassinger (1999) cat. 100 and 101, pp. 239-240, pls. 96.6 and 97.2. Also on an Amazon sarcophagus in the Berlin Antikensammlung (sk 1879, Grassinger 1999 cat. 102, pp. 241-242, third quarter of the 2nd century, pl. 101.5) and an Achilles sarcophagus in Rome, Villa Albani, circa AD 190 (inv. 223, *ibid.* cat. 41, pp. 209-210, pls. 32.4, 33.2).

only one exception) shown facing left, whether he is a Roman or a barbarian.⁵ This figure type, facing left, is common on Amazon, Meleager, and Herakles sarcophagi.⁶ The orientation of this figure contrasts with similar representations on Greek versus Gaul battle sarcophagi, where such a figure appears only once in a left-facing pose, but twice facing right, and always as a naked barbarian.⁷ One further Marcus column figure type with parallels in the sarcophagi is the barbarian lying on his back with his right arm extended back over his head (79.3, 99.14, 99.20 – Fig. 6.4). This type is common on Herakles sarcophagi (where it is used for a defeated Amazon) and on Amazon sarcophagi (Fig. 6.3).⁸ These three figure types suggest some degree of influence on the designer of the Marcus column from the sarcophagus workshops. Further influence in this direction can be identified in the lone trumpeter in scene IC (Roman 99.5), which is seen in Amazon and Greek vs. Gaul battle sarcophagi.⁹ Though the number of types with good parallels is small, they do seem to show a pattern: there seems to be a closer connection with sarcophagi of the Amazon and Herakles types than with the Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi, which seem at first glance to have more relevant subject matter.

Other factors may support the existence of a connection between the column's designer(s) and the sarcophagus industry. First, some iconographic details in scenes other than battles have parallels in sarcophagus decoration. Consider the trophies

⁵ The exception is Roman figure 20.11, who is not in exactly the same pose as the rest of this group, with his shield held out before his body.

⁶ Hübner 1990: 21-27, figs. 1.2a-j.

⁷ Facing left: Little Ludovisi; facing right: Ammendola and Doria Pamphilj (see Chapter 5).

⁸ Herakles: Robert 1919, cat. 102, 105, 107, 112, 120; Amazon: Grassinger 1999: 140, type "Gefallene Q," with an especially good parallel in cat. 114, pl. 107.1.

⁹ Trumpeter on Amazon sarcophagi: Grassinger 1999: 141, "Tubicen Y"; on Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagi: Doria Pamphilj and Little Ludovisi sarcophagi (Chapter 5).

flanking the Victoria figure (Fig. 6.5). On Trajan's column, both trophies wear non-Roman style helmets. On the Marcus column, the left-hand trophy wears a fur cap, the right a Roman style helmet with full facial mask. Both of these features appear commonly on sarcophagi: the fur cap on the left-hand trophies of the Ammendola (Fig. 5.1) and Doria Pamphilj sarcophagi (Fig. 5.3), the full face mask on the right-hand trophy is paralleled on the Palermo (Fig. 5.6c) and Portonaccio (Fig. 5.5a) sarcophagi.

The Marcus column scenes with boats are also exceptional. While the warships and transports on Trajan's column are executed with realistic detail (though with little attention to scale), those on the Marcus column are often ludicrously rendered. The worst offender is Scene XXXIV, where ships transporting Roman soldiers across a river look more like gravy-boats; Scene LXXXI renders the boat more successfully, but the passengers adopt similarly un-nautical attitudes. Proper oared warships are never shown, though they would have played a role in campaigns along the Danube. Parallels (though not exact copying) can be found in Eros sarcophagi, where dumpy ships are crewed by cavorting passengers.¹⁰ Finally, the head of the Rain God in scene XVI is closely paralleled in sarcophagus depictions of Oceanus, shown as a "mask" in the centre of the front panel, whose flowing hair and beard form a stream of water which feeds a "sea" beneath.¹¹

Another sign of connection to sarcophagi is to be seen in the division of scenes into small, regular units. The size of these units on the column (typically 1/8 of a spiral)

¹⁰ Koch and Sichtermann 1982 fig. 249. Pure seafaring scenes on sarcophagi are rare, are mainly dated to the 3rd century, and tend to be more realistic (*ibid.*, 124-125; figs. 132-135).

¹¹ Rumpf 1939: 11-19, #s 32-54, especially 32 = pl. 11 (Ostia, Fondo Aldobrandini, third quarter of second century AD), which is similar to the Rain God in both form and style.

is not equivalent to a sarcophagus front: they are narrower and at the same time taller than the average sarcophagus panel. Rather, the concept of breaking the frieze into these units may indicate the influence of a designer accustomed to working in discrete units of standard size, such as sarcophagus fronts. Certainly this method of work suggests that the designer was not used to working on large, open fields, either in length or width. This would preclude the hand of a monumental painter (if the frieze of Trajan's column or the panels of the Arch of Septimius Severus can be taken as reflecting the work of such an artist).

A final link between the column and the sarcophagi is style. The execution of certain figures on the column has such evocative parallels with the carving of a number of sarcophagi that more than one scholar has speculated whether or not it might be possible to find the "hand" of one of these sarcophagus carvers on the column itself.¹² However, no one has as yet succeeded in making such a definite connection between these two groups of monuments. Even the sarcophagi that seem most similar, when inspected in detail, are clearly not the work of the same hands.¹³ Another substantial problem is that of dating – since neither the dates of the sarcophagi nor of the carving of the column frieze are known with certainty, we cannot know which came first. A further

¹² Rodenwaldt 1935: 23; Becatti (1960: 77-79) follows Rodenwaldt, and speculates that some carvers from the same workshop responsible for the column also executed sarcophagi like the Frascati Wedding sarcophagus (Koch and Sichtermann 1982: #94). Traversari (1968) attempted to connect sarcophagi showing the death of Meleager to the "Maestro" responsible for the Marcus column's frieze, but this idea has not taken hold (Traversari is mentioned by neither Koch and Sichtermann [1982: 165-166] nor by Koch [1993: 78]).

¹³ Becatti's (1960) plates 42 and 43 provide an excellent opportunity for comparing the style of barbarian heads on the Marcus column, the Frascati Wedding sarcophagus, and the Portonaccio battle sarcophagus. This comparison, selective though it is, suggests fairly close stylistic similarity between the column and the Frascati sarcophagus, but not the work of the same artists. The distorted, triangular, elongated faces of the Portonaccio sarcophagus are further removed from the style of the column.

question can be asked: if sarcophagus carvers were responsible for the column's frieze, should we expect to find clear evidence of this through analysis of the "hands" of distinct carvers? The answer is likely no, for even in the field of sarcophagus study itself, this is almost never possible. Sarcophagi are not grouped by artist, but rather in looser stylistic assemblages; these are then said to belong to the same "workshop," with this term left loosely defined at best.¹⁴ Also, if there has been no success to date in finding the hand of a specific sarcophagus carver on the column, it should also be kept in mind that the resources available for this type of study are poor. Most scholars are forced to work from two-dimensional photos when comparing what is essentially three-dimensional sculpture; the result can hardly be a happy one.

In sum, there is evidence to link the column frieze to the artists of the general sarcophagus industry (though not specifically to the carvers of the Roman vs. German battle sarcophagi). However, it is difficult to evaluate this connection. Do the parallels in figure types indicate a specific connection to the sarcophagus industry, or are they rather the manifestation of forces of tradition common in the broader world of classical art? The main problem faced here is that we have very little battle art of the period with which to compare these types. The only major more-or-less contemporary piece is the Verus Monument at Ephesos, which is only preserved in fragments, none of which demonstrate clear connections with what we see on the Marcus column or the sarcophagi.¹⁵ Some of the rarer figures on the Marcus column have parallels outside of the sarcophagus repertoire. For instance the trumpeter in scene IC has parallels not only

¹⁴ On workshops, see Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 259-267.

with the battle sarcophagi (c.f. Figs. 5.9, 10, 12), but also with earlier battle art (e.g., Fig. 4.27) – whence the type surely came to the battle sarcophagi. The pair of one barbarian supporting another in scene LXXIX may reflect Achilles and Penthesilea on later Amazon sarcophagi (Fig. 5.13), or perhaps the Pasquino group of Menelaos with Patroklos, but neither is an exact parallel.¹⁶ A complete evaluation of this problem would require a study of the components of all of the column's scenes, not just the battles. However, the sarcophagus parallels, though few, are quite close, and do seem to speak for a connection between their artists and those of the column.

5. The Battle Scenes as History: Specific Events:

Whether or not the battle scenes of the Marcus column were based on a source like triumphal painting, their debt to the history of Marcus' wars must still be evaluated. Extensive histories of the war must have been current at the time the carving was executed. To what extent did the artist(s) of the frieze rely upon them in their creation of the battle scenes? This is a difficult question to answer, not least because we have no full history of the wars. Our best source is the history of Cassius Dio, who wrote in the early 3rd century AD, and whose text for this period is preserved only through later abbreviations and citations. Dio's fragmentary text provides no descriptions of any battles from Trajan's wars against the Dacians.¹⁷ For Marcus' German campaigns, we are only somewhat more fortunate. Dio provides two fairly detailed battle descriptions, one of which can even be connected to a specific scene on the column, the Rain Miracle.

¹⁵ For the Verus Monument see Oberleitner 1978: 70-83 and Krierer 1995, figs. 172-178.

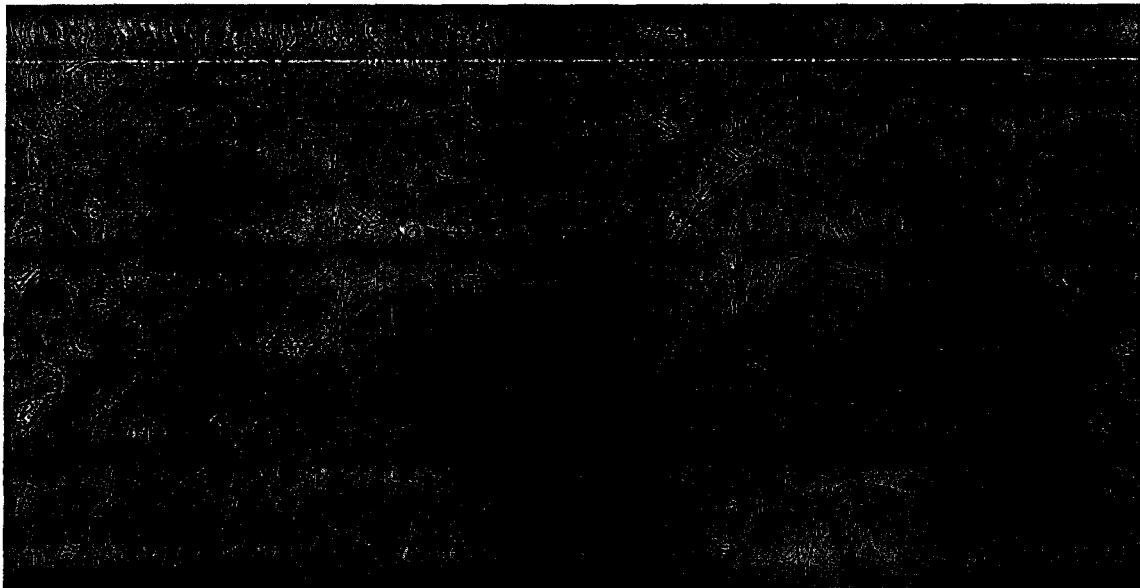
However, the details provided by Dio of both these battles are fantastic in the extreme, to the extent that it is very difficult to view either as historically accurate. Nonetheless, they provide useful material to compare with the battle scenes of the Marcus column. The first battle described by Dio involves the defeat of the Iazyges on a frozen river:

The Iazyges were conquered by the Romans on land at this time and later on the river. By this I do not mean that any naval battle took place, but that the Romans pursued them as they fled over the frozen Ister and fought there as on dry land. The Iazyges, perceiving that they were being pursued, awaited their opponents' onset, expecting to overcome them easily, as the others were not accustomed to the ice. Accordingly, some of the barbarians dashed straight at them, while others rode round to attack their flanks, as their horses had been trained to run safely even over a surface of this kind. The Romans upon observing this were not alarmed, but formed in a compact body, facing all their foes at once, and most of them laid down their shields and rested one foot upon them, so that they might not slip so much; and thus they received the enemy's charge. Some seized the bridles, others the shields and spearshafts of their assailants, and drew the men toward them; and thus, becoming involved in close conflict, they knocked down both men and horses, since the barbarians by reason of their momentum could no longer keep from slipping. The Romans, to be sure, also slipped; but in case one of them fell on his back, he would drag his adversary down on top of him and then with his feet would hurl him backwards, as if in a wrestling match, and so would get on top of him; and if one fell on his face, he would actually seize with his teeth his antagonist, who had fallen first. For the barbarians, being unused to a contest of this sort, and having lighter equipment, were unable to resist, so that but few escaped out of a large force. (Dio 72.7.1-5, trans. E. Cary, Loeb ed.)

This clearly does not correspond to any battle scene on the column of Marcus Aurelius. Moreover, it contains numerous unbelievable incidents: the Romans lay down their shields in the face of a charge by enemy cavalry; they proceed to wrestle their mounted opponents to the ground; gymnastic manoeuvres then win the day. The barbarian tactics are described in the manner of fanciful stereotype: these people are inhabitants of the north, accustomed to fighting on ice and have even trained their horses for this. In this

¹⁶ For the Pasquino group see Stewart 1990: fig. 746.

light, this battle description appears to be, at best, a very free interpretation of a potentially real event; at worst, it is a complete fiction.



The second of Dio's battle descriptions, and the one which is illustrated on the column, is the Rain Miracle (above; scene XVI).¹⁸ No fighting is actually depicted in this scene (thus it has not been included in the general consideration of battles above); instead, this scene shows the Roman forces standing in the centre and to the left, with fallen barbarians and their mounts to the right. The Rain God himself dominates the scene from his position in the upper right-hand corner.

The Romans in the centre appear merely to stand by and observe the carnage to the right. Those Romans on the left shield themselves, literally, against the deluge. The barbarians, represented by only three corpses and two horses, are being washed away in a

¹⁷ Battles are mentioned superficially at 68.8.2, 68.8.3, and 68.14.2.

¹⁸ On the dating of this event, see Introduction.1. I am inclined to follow Wolff's (1990) arguments for a date of 174.

stream of water. This depiction is very much at odds with the description of the same event that is found in Dio:

The Quadi had surrounded them at a spot favourable for their purpose and the Romans were fighting valiantly with their shields locked together; then the barbarians ceased fighting, expecting to capture them easily as the result of the heat and their thirst. So they posted guards all about and hemmed them in to prevent their getting water anywhere; for the barbarians were far superior in numbers. The Romans, accordingly, were in a terrible plight from fatigue, wounds, the heat of the sun, and thirst, and so could neither fight nor retreat, but were standing in the line and at their several posts, scorched by the heat, when suddenly many clouds gathered and a mighty rain, not without divine interposition, burst upon them. [...] When the rain poured down, at first all turned their faces upwards and received the water in their mouths; then some held out their shields and some their helmets to catch it, and they not only took deep draughts themselves but also gave their horses to drink. And when the barbarians now charged upon them, they drank and fought at the same time; and some, becoming wounded, actually gulped down the blood that flowed into their helmets, along with the water. So intent, indeed, were most of them on drinking that they would have suffered severely from the enemy's onset, had not a violent hail-storm and numerous thunderbolts fallen upon the ranks of the foe. Thus in one and the same place one might have beheld water and fire descending from the sky simultaneously; so that while those on the one side were being drenched and drinking, the others were being consumed by fire and dying; and while the fire, on the one hand, did not touch the Romans, but, if it fell anywhere among them, was immediately extinguished, the rain however, on the other hand, did the barbarians no good, but, like so much oil, actually fed the flames that were consuming them, and they had to search for water even while being drenched with rain. Some wounded themselves in order to quench the fire with their blood, and others rushed over to the side of the Romans, convinced that they alone had the saving water; in any case Marcus took pity on them. He was now saluted *imperator* by the soldiers, for the seventh time; and although he was not wont to accept any such honour before the senate voted it, nevertheless this time he took it as a gift from Heaven, and he sent a despatch to the senate. (Dio 72.8.1-3 and 72.10.1-5, trans. E. Cary, Loeb ed.)

In this description, the Roman troops are saved from thirst by a rain that falls upon them. The barbarians are at the same time destroyed by thunderbolts and a hailstorm. None of the details of this fantastic description can be found on the column. The Romans in scene XVI in no way seem fatigued or thirsty; in fact, they use their shields to shelter

themselves from the rain, not to catch it for drinking. There is no actual fighting taking place, nor is there any sign of hail or of the fire and thunderbolts which in Dio's description play such an important role. No barbarians are shown turning themselves over to the Romans. In a similar way, the column shows details that do not correspond to Dio's description: the great winged Rain God; the barbarians being washed away in the resulting torrent, instead of being consumed by fire. There are further problems. Why is Marcus not shown present at the battle, as Dio implies was the case?¹⁹ Why is the imperial acclamation attested by Dio not shown either in scene XVI or in the subsequent XVII, which shows instead a group of barbarians, including women and children, submitting themselves to the emperor?

Dio's battle descriptions are regularly embellished with made-up details and events and elaborated by use of rhetorical *topoi*, especially from Thucydides.²⁰ Also, even when he takes details from an authoritative source, he often alters them or presents them out of chronological order. This is clearly seen in his treatment of the battles of Caesar's Gallic wars, for which Caesar's own writings constitute the ultimate source.²¹ The battle of Caesar's fleet against the ships of the Veneti (inhabitants of the north coast of Gaul) provides a good example of Dio's treatment of battle. Caesar (*BG* 3.14-15) relates that he was unable to pacify the region by taking towns, so he decided to wait for

¹⁹ Dio relates that the rain was called up by the prayers of Arnuphis, a priest who was with Marcus: *συνόντα τῷ Μάρκῳ* (72.8.4), and that near the end of the battle, Marcus took pity on barbarians who were fleeing to the Roman side to escape the devouring flames (72.10.4).

²⁰ E. Cary in his introduction to the Loeb edition of Dio, xiv. On elements of Thucydidean battle description, see Paul 1987: 309-310.

²¹ See E. Cary in the introduction to the Loeb edition of Caesar's *Gallic War*, xiv, n.2. Cary suggests that Dio's immediate source was Livy's account, itself based on Caesar. On Caesar's main themes in his battle descriptions (tactics, *animus*, and *virtus*) see Lendon 1999.

the arrival of his fleet. When this appeared, the Gallic fleet sailed out to meet it. The Roman commander, Brutus, was unsure of how to fight against the much heavier Gallic vessels, but by using sharp hooks attached to long poles, the Romans began to cut the enemy rigging, immobilise their ships, and take them by storm. The enemy at this point tried to flee, but was becalmed, at which point the Romans rowed up and completed the victory. Dio (39.40.1-43.5), in a much longer description of the events, begins with a long account of the Gallic ships and fighting technique (partly invented, partly culled from elsewhere in Caesar). He then says that the Gauls were at sea, and that Brutus did not dare sail out against them until the wind suddenly fell and the enemy was becalmed. Dio then relates ramming attacks by the Romans (which Caesar never mentions, and twice [*BG* 3.13 and 14] calls impossible against the strong Gallic ships), and describes how enemy ships were torn open, towed away, or burned. This is all invention, with substantial elements of generic, generalising description. Finally, Dio says that the Romans tied knives to poles and used them to cut the enemy ropes and sails to prevent any escape. In both accounts the outcome is the same, but Dio's can be relied on neither for chronology of events in the battle, nor even for the exact details of specific events themselves (the becalming of the enemy fleet, the poles with hooks), or the reasons for or causes of them.

Looked at in this light, we have little reason to trust any of the details related by Dio about the Rain Miracle battle. It is much more likely that he simply made most of them up. The entire description is filled with generalisations: the Romans first drinking, then fighting, and some then drinking their blood as they fought; the Romans drenched

and drinking, the barbarians burning and dying; the fire on one side going out, on the other flaming up. Likewise the details, such as the helmets and shields turned up to catch the rain, are almost certainly Dio's invention.

Dio's account of this battle can be balanced by a brief relation of the same event in the 4th century *Chronicon* of Eusebius. There he writes that during Marcus' wars, "Pertinax and the army were afflicted with thirst while fighting in the land of the Quadi, when a rain was sent from God, while at the same time lightning-bolts deluged the Germans and Sarmatians and killed many of them."²² This description is simpler than Dio's, and closer to what we see on the column, though it does add the detail of lightning-bolts killing the enemy, where the column shows only drowning.

It is not my purpose here to enter into a discussion of the historicity of the overall relief. Suffice to say that the historical interpretation of the helical frieze of the Marcus column is fraught with problems. Not the least of these is the argument by art historians that factors other than historicity (such as visibility and ideology) were equally if not more important to the frieze designers.²³ The battle scenes themselves add little to the debate. At the very least, the depiction of the Rain Miracle shows that the artist(s) of the column were making some attempts to integrate and represent events, whether real or

²² *In quis (bellis) semel Pertinaci et exercitui, qui cum eo in Quadorum regione pugnabat, siti oppressis pluvia divinitus missa est, cum e contrario Germanos et Sarmatas fulmina persequerentur et plurimos eorum interficerent.* (*Chronicon* AD 173, Helm 1984: 206-7, also Schoene 1866: 173). Another short description of this battle, preserved in a speech of the 4th century rhetorician Themistius, is claimed by its author to be based on a picture which he has seen. This picture showed the emperor standing in the battle-line, with hands extended to heaven, and soldiers filling their helmets with the rain. There is no mention of barbarians. (Themistius *Orationes* 15.191.b-c; German translation in Leppin and Portmann 1998).

²³ More work in this field has been done on Trajan's column than Marcus'. That the frieze of Trajan's column was composed using many stock scenes was first noted by Lehmann-Hartleben (1926), whose analysis has been built on by Gauer (1977) and, especially, Hölscher (1980, 1991) and Settis (1988). In

semi-mythical, of the actual wars. This scene might be compared with the representation of Zeus in scene 24 of Trajan's column ("A" in Fig. 4.1), joining the Romans and helping them in their battle. Rossi has suggested that figures 1 and 2 in scene XLIII are intended to represent the Roman Valerius Maximus and the barbarian prince Valeo, whom Maximus killed.²⁴ Although Birley finds this plausible, only the lack of a full beard differentiates this barbarian from others shown in similar positions on the column, and nothing appears to single out the Roman horseman.²⁵ This young man may only serve, along with the woman in the lower right corner of the scene, to populate the village landscape in which the battle is being fought. From another point of view, the generic and schematic content of most of the Marcus column battles, partly subordinated to repeated patterns of composition, speaks against their historicity. That is not to say that they *cannot* have been related to events of the war. However, they are at best artistic symbols for actual battles; at worst, they are convenient space-fillers. This should not surprise, for at least one, possibly more, of the battle scenes on Trajan's column (scene 112) seems to be an artistic filler (see discussion in Chapter 4).

6. *The Battle Scenes as History – the Details:*

The comparison of our very limited literary accounts of battles during Marcus' wars with the battles we actually see on the column yields little useful information. The main conclusion, in fact, is that Dio's battle narratives are fantastic and rhetorical.

comparison, the Marcus column narrative appears much less structured (Hölscher 2000). For recent attempts to analyze the frieze from an historical perspective, see Kerr 1995 and Davies 2000:191-192.

²⁴ Rossi 1977; the event is recorded in an inscription, *AE* 1956.124.

²⁵ Compare figures 20.7, 20.14, 43.10, and numerous figures in similar poses on horseback (e.g. 71.3 etc.).

However, this does not mean that the Marcus column battle scenes are more historical simply because they do not resemble Dio's reports. The historical accuracy of the Marcus column battle scenes must also be evaluated on their own, and in comparison to other artistic battle representations, first and foremost those of Trajan's column.

It is perhaps best to begin at the most detailed level: that of the weapons and equipment used by the opposing forces. Most scholars, even some of those interested specifically in arms and armour, have tended to accept the column's depictions at face value and move on to interpreting their significance. In particular, there is a tendency to use the armour types of Roman soldiers as indicators of the units to which the troops are supposed to belong: a soldier in scale armour is identified as a praetorian, one in segmented armour as a legionary, and one in chain as an auxiliary.²⁶ The roots of this approach lie in studies of the frieze of the column of Trajan. There, the regular Roman troops are represented in two distinct "uniforms": one type wears segmented armour, carries curved rectangular shields, is often found in association with legionary and praetorian standards, and spends most of its time marching and building; the other wears chain mail, carries flat oval shields, and does most of the fighting. The general assumption, based to some extent on textual evidence, is that the former represent legionaries and praetorians, the latter auxiliaries.²⁷

²⁶ For example, by Petersen (1896), and by Caprino (1955). However, Romanelli (1955: 68) registers his doubt as to the validity of specific troop-type assignments for chain and scale-wearing soldiers.

²⁷ One theory, most recently advanced by Coulston, holds that the light use made on the column of soldiers wearing segmented armour in battle was intended to reflect positively on Trajan as a general who achieved victory while shedding a minimum of Roman blood (Coulston 1989: 32; repeated in Bishop and Coulston 1993: 209). This interpretation is based on a passage of Tacitus (the battle of Mons Graupius, *Agr.* 35) in which the auxiliaries do the bulk of the fighting (and the bleeding, remarked upon by Tacitus as the sign of a great victory). An opposing view, put forward by Cheesman in his 1914 study of the auxilia of the Roman army, is that the auxiliaries were in the forefront at Mons Graupius because the terrain was

Before examining the situation on the Marcus column, it is important to note that the accuracy of sculptural representations of the Roman army, particularly on Trajan's column, has not escaped criticism. Robinson pointed out that two main divisions ought to be made in the realm of sculpture: the work, on the one hand, of "military sculptors" who carved soldiers' tombstones near military stations (particularly in the provinces), and on the other hand, the work of the artists of the capital.²⁸ By comparing the creations of the latter with those of the former, and with known archaeological finds, Robinson demonstrated that the sculptors of the capital cannot claim any great degree of accuracy when it comes to detailed representation of soldier's equipment.²⁹ Coulston took the analysis a step further by noting a disproportionate presence of praetorian standards on Trajan's column. He also noted the substantial influence of the buildings of Rome (or at least their building-technique) on the column's depictions of military architecture.³⁰ This, he argues, suggests that the Roman sculptors drew heavily on what they saw in the capital when carving the frieze of the column. When it came to representing the details of the army, they likely relied heavily for inspiration on the most prominent troops at Rome: the praetorians.

Nonetheless, the basic theory of identification of troop types based on armour has held fast for the column of Trajan.³¹ The soldiers in segmented armour are still taken as being citizen troops, whether members of the legions or the praetorian gaurd; those in

unsuited for legionaries in formation, and that the tactical nature of the war in Dacia may have dictated a similar use of auxiliary soldiers (Cheesman 1914: 103-104, esp. 104 nn.2 and 3).

²⁸ Robinson 1975: 7.

²⁹ Coulston, in his detailed study of the military equipment shown on Trajan's column (1989), brings to light many of these errors in detail.

³⁰ Ibid., 34.

chain mail are viewed as non-citizen members of the *auxilia*. The Marcus column introduces the extra complication of soldiers in scale armour, who have been interpreted as praetorians.³² There is limited literary evidence to support this. Dio describes praetorians in the time of Macrinus (c.218) wearing scale breastplates.³³ This may support the praetorian attribution, but Dio says in the same breath that these praetorians also carried ἀσπίδας...σωληνοειδεῖς, curved shields, possibly referring to the large, rectangular, semi-cylindrical type of Roman shield.³⁴ This is in contrast to the scale-armoured soldiers on the column, who carry only flat oval shields. A simple count (see chart below) indicates that scale-wearing soldiers are more likely to be infantry than cavalry, as opposed to chain-wearing soldiers, who are more often mounted than on foot.

	Chain	Scale	Segmented	Total
Cavalry	26	7	0	33
Infantry	19	14	4	37
Total	45	21	4	70

The difference in cavalry numbers is pronounced, but there appears to be no clear intent behind this discrepancy. In most battle scenes, soldiers in scale- and chain-mail are mixed and freely alternated, although chain is almost always more common than scale. Ease of execution may be a factor, as chain was rendered by simple drill-holes (Fig. 1.8) while scales were carefully and individually carved, often with elaborated

³¹ See Bishop and Coulston 1993: 22, and Coulston on Roman arms and armour in the *OCD*, 3rd edition.

³² A theory at least as old as Petersen 1896.

³³ 79.37.4, the only more or less contemporary literary reference I know of which bears directly on the subject

³⁴ E. Cary (Loeb edition of Dio) translates this as “grooved shields,” but this makes little sense based on what we know of Roman shield types.

edges (clearly seen in Fig. 1.7). This mixing of chain and scale is standard practice over most of the column frieze (compare the *adlocutiones* LV and XCVI), and they are never formed into distinct units. In comparison, the soldiers in segmented armour are commonly shown in homogeneous, distinct formations. The overbalance of chain-wearing cavalymen in battle scenes is mainly due to five battle scenes in the top half of the column, in which all soldiers are shown wearing chain, including 21 horsemen.³⁵ There seems to be no solid basis for identifying scale-armoured soldiers as praetorians.

Thus, the use of armour type to distinguish between troop types on the Marcus column appears inconclusive at best. Almost certainly, attempts to identify praetorians on the column cannot be supported. However, there are other methods of making such distinctions than just identifying the armour. Bishop and Coulston have argued, after surveying the archaeological and tombstone evidence, that there indeed were differences between legionary and auxiliary troops when it came to equipment.³⁶ The differences, they argue, lay not so much in the type of armour, but in the shields and weapons of the various troops. These differences had their roots in the roles assigned to the respective troop types in battle. The legionary, with his curved rectangular or sub-rectangular shield and armour-piercing javelin (Chapter 2.1), was equipped to fight set battles in close order. The auxiliary, with his flat oval shield and long spear, could both skirmish and stand in line of battle, as the situation demanded.

³⁵ Battles where all Romans wear chain mail: LVII (5 cavalry, 1 infantry), LXIII (5 and 3), LXXIX (2 and 1), LXXXIX (4 and 0), and XCII (5 and 0).

³⁶ Bishop and Coulston 1993: 206-209 (Appendix: Was there 'legionary' equipment?). Maxfield (1986) provides a thorough discussion of the relevant pictorial evidence for certain kinds of armour associated with certain troop types.

On the column of Marcus Aurelius, chain-wearing soldiers are generally indistinguishable in their duties from those wearing scale armour. There seems to be no basis for singling them out as a specific and cohesive group, and in fact they are often mixed together apparently without discrimination. However, the soldiers in segmented armour do seem to be assigned special duties at times, particularly outside of combat (in which they appear quite rarely). Such troops appear in only one scene (XIX) fighting as a unit, and then only once (XCVII) outside of the *testudo* attack (LIV) as an individual soldier in a larger battle. On the other hand, they are five times shown as single units marching on the upper half of the column (LXVII, LXXVIII, XCIII, CIII, and CXI) and are the only troop type shown engaged in construction activities (LXXXII, XCIV). Thus, they may in some way be intended to represent some special class of soldier. To assign them the name 'legionary,' however, would be presumptuous since we have no firm evidence that segmented armour was restricted to legionaries in the Antonine period. An Antonine-period relief from Croy Hill (in Britain) does indicate that this armour type was still in use in the time of Marcus, and with it the rectangular shield, but the type of troops depicted is not specified.³⁷ The latest dated archaeological example of this armour, from Newstead, dated by Poulter to ca.164-180,³⁸ was found in a pit along with fragments of chain and scale armour, suggesting that all three types of armour were in use at about the same time in the Antonine period.³⁹ Unfortunately, it has not been possible to determine whether the fort was garrisoned by legionary or auxiliary troops, or

³⁷ See Coulston 1988.

³⁸ Poulter 1988: 38 and 42.

³⁹ See Curle 1911: 158-161 for illustrations and discussion of the finds.

both.⁴⁰ It does seem likely, however, that praetorians did not make up part of this remote British garrison, and thus we may discount the theory of scale armour being the sole prerogative of praetorian guardsmen.

Thus, the scale-wearing soldiers on the Marcus column are unlikely to have been meant to represent praetorians. The restricted duties of the segmented-armour-wearing soldiers, on the other hand, may have some connection with the actual duties of the legionary soldier. However, it seems much more likely that this connection appears on the column (and appears relatively seldom) through a channel of artistic influence from the monuments upon which its designers drew for inspiration. Trajan's column and the Great Trajanic Frieze both show similar employment of troops wearing segmented armour, and there must have been more such monuments, and likely paintings too.

7. Historicity – The Structure of Battles:

There is less clear differentiation between troop types on Marcus' column than on Trajan's, especially with regard to the activities of troops wearing different types of armour. Particularly noteworthy is that troops wearing segmented armour, though present and specialised in some ways, are much rarer on Marcus' column, especially in battle, where they are almost absent. Between the other two main Roman troop types, those wearing scale and those wearing chain armour, there is no clear distinction.

⁴⁰ Poulter 1988: 39-42.

The next step is to analyse the overall composition of the battle scenes. There is a very clear difference in what different troop types are shown doing in battle on the two columns. On Trajan's column, infantry generally clash face-on in massed groups; cavalry encounters on the other hand show one group fleeing while another pursues. On the Marcus column, cavalry and infantry are very often freely alternated within single scenes, and in these cases infantry and cavalry are often shown performing essentially the same duties in battle (e.g., XXVII, XLIII, XLVIII, L, LXIII, XCVII, IC).

This difference in the way troop types were depicted in battle on the two columns may very well reflect a difference in knowledge of military reality (or, at least, in the extent to which they were concerned with that reality) between the designers of both monuments. In battles of this period, the decisive combat usually occurred between groups of infantry; fights between infantry and cavalry were much rarer, especially away from the eastern frontiers of the empire.⁴¹ Encounters between groups of cavalry were more common, since these forces often occupied the same positions (e.g., on the flanks of the main infantry bodies) in opposing armies. These tendencies are well reflected by the battle scenes on the column of Trajan, but not by those on Marcus'. There are also some interesting observations to be made about the behaviour of troops on the battlefield. According to our sources, in cavalry battles it was apparently common, even usual, for one body of cavalry to break off before engagement with the opposing horsemen, or to do so after only a brief skirmish.⁴² The fleeing force would then be exposed to attack

⁴¹ See Goldsworthy 1996: 191-227 for discussion of Roman infantry battle, 228-235 for fights between cavalry and infantry.

⁴² Goldsworthy (ibid. 237) cites examples from Caesar, Plutarch, and Arrian. He also cites a remarkably similar observation made by a British veteran of the Peninsular War, in which the cavalry, armed with

from its pursuers, and could incur heavy losses thus.⁴³ This is exactly what we see in scenes 37 and 144 of Trajan's column: one body of cavalry fleeing from the other, its rearmost members falling to the swords and spears of the pursuers. The way that cavalry are employed on the Marcus column is very different: they are often mixed together with infantry, they engage enemy cavalry and infantry seemingly at random, and in doing so are often indistinguishable in their role from the infantry. It seems that the battle scene compositions on Trajan's column reflect, in general at least, much of what we know about the reality of Roman battle. The Marcus column compositions, on the other hand, do not. This indicates either a lack of knowledge of, or a lack of concern with, realism of the part of its designer(s). The composition of the Marcus column battles also supports the theory of their designer(s) coming from the sarcophagus industry – for there, in Greek vs. Gaul and Amazon sarcophagi, we see constant and indiscriminate mixing of infantry and cavalry in battle.

8. Conclusions

The designer(s) of the Marcus column had as a model the column of Trajan. There was almost no copying of the earlier monument's battle scenes, and what is more, it is clear that the designer(s) also used very different artistic methods than their Trajanic predecessors. The Marcus column designer(s) appear to have created their compositions

sword and lance, did not differ greatly from that of the Romans: "Cavalry seldom meet each other in a charge executed at speed; the one party generally turns before joining issue with the enemy, and this often happens when the line is still unbroken and no obstacles of any sort intervene" (L. Nolan, *Cavalry: Its History and Tactics*. London 1853: 228, cited by Goldsworthy p. 236).

on the spot, for the specific purpose of adorning the column, and with very little borrowing from, or even reference to, current or earlier battle art. The only solid connections which can be made are to the figural repertoire of the sarcophagus industry, suggesting that the scenes' designer(s) may have been drawn from that field.

In comparison to the designer(s) of Trajan's column, the designer(s) of the Marcus column seem to have had a different degree of knowledge of the battles on which they based the scenes they were creating – or if they had such knowledge, they considered it less important to represent it in the frieze. Our sources allow little useful evaluation of the historicity of the individual battles shown; it can only be said that the Rain Miracle does not entirely reflect either of our two main sources for it. In details of armour and equipment, there is also little indication that the Marcus column designers attached great meaning to specific weapon or armour types. The battles themselves employ simplified compositional methods, often mixing troop types, not just those wearing different armour, but also soldiers on foot and on horseback. These methods of composition do not reflect our knowledge of the roles of these different troop types in actual battles of the period. They do, however, again point to a possible connection to the sarcophagi, where cavalry and infantry are freely mixed in battle.

The most likely reason for the selection of workers from the sarcophagus industry is that this was done for the sake of convenience and speed. Other aspects of the Marcus Column show evidence of hurried or simplified construction: the all-spiral stairway; lack of entasis; sloppily cut stairwell. Another sign of hurried execution is the lack of metal

⁴³ Ibid., 239-240.

inserts in the frieze. On the column of Trajan, all spears, most swords, and many other weapons and implements were made out of metal.⁴⁴ At the time of the construction of the Marcus column, these inserts would still have been plainly apparent on the column of Trajan, and their absence from Marcus' monument surely would have been notable. The composition of the battle scenes may be looked at in the same way. Clearly they looked different from those on Trajan's column, and the designer(s) of Marcus' monument must have been aware of this difference. The question then is, why were the battle scenes executed in this way? Was there a purpose in these novelties? This question is addressed in the conclusion of this work.

⁴⁴ Though these inserts have not survived, evidence of them is everywhere on the column in the form of soldiers fighting and working apparently empty-handed. The metal weapons and tools were originally inserted into holes drilled into these now-empty fists. See for example Coarelli 2000, pls. 19, 31, or 40.

Chapter 7: Meaning and Message

The author Lucian, a contemporary of Marcus Aurelius, in his treatise on the proper way to write history, criticises reports of battle casualties which contradict official reports and which, he says, would not be believed by anyone of sound mind.¹ His example, drawn perhaps from a history of Verus' Parthian war, is a report of 70,236 enemy casualties versus 2 Roman dead and 9 wounded. What then must a viewer have thought when looking on the battle scenes of the Marcus column, where not a single Roman is even wounded? Another of Lucian's admonishments is that a good historian ought to have practical knowledge of things military, either from personal experience or from observation.² Military accuracy, as we have seen, is another area where the Marcus column relief falls short. The discussion in the previous six chapters has hopefully made it clear that other factors were at work in the minds of the designer(s) of the frieze.

The point of bringing up Lucian's pronouncements here is to stress that some observers must have noted these and other characteristics, and that the designer(s) of the column themselves were almost certainly aware of them too. This means that the choice on the part of the designer(s) must have been a conscious, deliberate one. Part of it, in fact, could hardly have been a choice at all. As a survey of the traditions of battle art

¹ Lucian, *Hist. Conscr.* 20.

shows, there was not and had never been an alternative to showing Romans as totally victorious in historical battle on a Roman monument (Chapter 4). Nonetheless, the same survey of battle art also shows that different monuments used different methods of representing battle. Trajan's column is dominated by battles looking more or less even; Adamklissi and the Great Frieze, however, tend much more towards compositions that show massive Roman victory over feeble barbarian opposition.

A first reaction to this pattern might be to try to connect the degree of victory to some underlying message, different for each monument. Trajan's column could thus be seen as intended to reflect the reality of the wars against the Dacians, and to accentuate the degree of resistance and danger which had to be overcome before victory could be achieved. This message would have been aimed at a sophisticated audience in the imperial capital. The Tropaeum Traiani, in contrast, was intended to deliver a simpler message of victory over a dangerous and nearby foe, to a less sophisticated provincial audience. The Great Trajanic Frieze, finally, transmitted a message of the victory of the Divine Emperor Trajan, against whom, naturally, no barbarian could hope to offer resistance.³

There is a danger, however, in putting the concept of "message" always at the forefront of such an analysis, since there were other factors, particularly artistic ones, which could have been as important in determining the appearance and content of the battle scenes, including the degree of victory. The artistic styles in which the carvers

² Ibid., 37.

³ On the message of the Great Trajanic Frieze, see Leander Touati (1987: 35-37 and 77-79), who argues for a simpler message of Roman superiority.

were trained would have been of particular importance, and this is well illustrated by the case of battle scene 112 on Trajan's column. Here we see, in contrast to most of the other battle scenes on the column, near-total Roman domination of the battle. Style explains this contrast: the massive Roman superiority is not due to the real events of any particular battle but rather to the employment of a specific Greek style in its composition, according to whose rules the enemy was always clearly the underdog. Thus, just as on the Great Trajanic Frieze, the Romans are entirely dominant in the fight. In a similar manner, the simplistic message of victory on the Tropaeum metopes can be ascribed to the simple, provincial carvers who executed them, and who were probably used to carving similar scenes on tombstones.

Of course, this does not rob the resulting battle scenes of their ability to convey a message: these styles were certainly chosen with the knowledge of what the end result would look like, how they would be interpreted by a viewer, and what sort of message this would send. The battle scenes of Trajan's column, the like of which were never earlier seen in sculpture, would perhaps have recalled to the viewers the triumphal paintings which they saw in Trajan's triumph, and which perhaps were still on display. The Great Trajanic Frieze employed a style that had already been made popular for honouring Hellenistic rulers, who sometimes considered themselves divine while still alive. Finally, the metopes of the Tropaeum Traiani were admirably suited to the simple style of provincial carvers used to working on the restricted fields of tombstones. To sum up, it is not possible to separate style and message in battle art, nor is it possible to determine which, if either, came first in the mind of the designer. What does seem clear

is that, in general, a designer was more or less dependent on existing styles, from which he could choose according to his intended message. The column of Marcus Aurelius, as we will see, represents a break from this pattern.

1. Meaning and Message of the Marcus Column Battle Scenes

What message (if any) did the designer(s) intend to project to viewers by means of their finished product? What message did the viewers actually receive? Neither of these individual concerns is independent of the other, but their sequence reflects the process of creation and reception dictated by the column itself. That is, the designer(s) first planned the column and supervised its execution, and then an audience viewed it. Therefore, the following discussion proceeds in more or less the same order, beginning with an investigation of the intentions of the designer(s) and ending with the experience of the viewer. To begin, I step back and survey some previous attempts to interpret the meaning of ancient battle art.

2. Messages of Battle Art:

Ancient battle art seems often to have been able to project clear messages to its viewers, and the interpretation of these messages has long been the focus of academic study. Only a few attempts have been made to address broadly the question of meaning in battle art. Bie explained massed formations as characteristic of despotic cultures and

their triumphal art: Assyria, the Hellenistic kingdoms, and Rome.⁴ The *Einzelkampf*, on the other hand, Bie held as a Greek development, reflecting Homeric heroic ideals and the growth of individualism in the polis.⁵ Hölscher, in his analysis of Greek battle art of the 5th and 4th centuries BC, proposed that the stylistic and compositional aspects of a picture also have a message to send.⁶ For example, the independent citizens of the polis are shown as all doing their duty in 5th century battle art; in contrast, the focus on the generals in the Alexander mosaic represents an entirely different mindset. The individual fighters mostly are reduced to heads and body parts in the masses of Macedonian and Persian troops in the background, while the focus of attention rests on only two main characters. This interesting theory perhaps is put into doubt by problems with our evidence: we certainly cannot claim to have a fully representative sample of 5th and 4th century battle art, and thus perhaps ought not to suppose that what we do have is a reflection of the ancient whole. Also, the older style of battle composition continued to exist even when the same general theme was being dealt with (e.g., the Alexander sarcophagus and the South Italian Alexander and Darius vases). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that none of the analysts of the "style" of the column of Marcus Aurelius have attempted to apply this theory to Roman art.

Message could be different from monument to monument, even in a single period with monuments dealing with the same subject, depending on the intention of their designers. Trajan's column projects a different message by means of its battle scenes

⁴ Bie 1891: 29-30.

⁵ Bie 1891: 40-41.

⁶ Hölscher 1973: 20, 222.

from that of the Great Trajanic Frieze, even though both depict combat during Trajan's Dacian wars. They achieve this by employing specific compositional techniques, contrasting contemporary realism with Hellenistic idealism. Content also differs, most clearly in the presence and absence of Trajan, but also in details of Roman and barbarian equipment and fighting technique. On the column we see, for the most part, well-drilled soldiers; on the Frieze, we see near-mythical heroes. The contemporary viewer would understand one to be a representation of the great execution and valorous conduct of the Roman army in a real war, the other to be a demonstration of the virtue of one single man, the emperor, in a heroic context.

3. What the Viewer Saw:

At some point one must ask, just what did the contemporary viewer of the Marcus column see? The question of visibility is a tired one, but it ought to be revisited, however briefly, if we are to speculate about an ancient viewer's reaction to the column's frieze. First, we can be fairly certain that the ancient Romans saw much what we can see today – despite Lehmann-Hartleben's suggestion that, perhaps, their eyes may have been sharper than ours.⁷ Certainly paint, if it had been applied, might have helped make the carvings more visible.⁸ We know that metal tools and weapons were added to the figures on the column of Trajan's frieze, but this technique was not used on Marcus' column. Regardless of such visual aids, the friezes of both the Marcus column and its Trajanic

⁷ Lehmann-Hartleben 1926:1.

⁸ No evidence for paint has been found on the Marcus column, but Del Monte et al. (1998) have cautiously identified two small potential residues of paint on Trajan's column (red on Trajan's cloak in scene 44 and yellowish-orange from a tree trunk in scene 138) using scientific analysis.

predecessor would have remained very difficult to see. Nonetheless, theories about the narrative structure of the column's relief have been developed to a very refined and complex level. Settis proposed a complex theory of scene sequences, "directional impulses," "converging compositions" and vertical alignments of scenes.⁹ The meaning of the battle scenes themselves has been closely investigated by Hölscher, who sees them not only as *exempla* of *virtus*, but also often as bearers of more specific and subtle meaning.¹⁰ For many scenes, argues Hölscher, it is possible to tell why they were placed where they are, and why they were depicted in their particular form. Thus, even scenes of the same type could convey nuances of meaning – for example, the messages of logistical, disciplined, and total victory conveyed through the battle scenes (see Chapter 4). "Each campaign," writes Hölscher, "presents a great arch, in which the ideological and technical superiority of the Romans is displayed. All five campaigns together present an encompassing structure, in which attack and defence, beginning, middle and end, are all dynamically related to one another."¹¹

This has, for the column of Trajan at least, created an apparent paradox: that the relief is organised according to a complex system, but that this can hardly be discerned by an observer on the ground. There have been three main responses to this paradox among modern scholars. One approach, advocated by Gauer, has been to search for and identify vertical correspondences between scenes and figures on the column, which in theory would allow a viewer standing in one spot to read a series of events in the campaign

⁹ Settis 1988: 130-188 for discussion of compositional schemes; 202-219 for vertical correspondences.

¹⁰ Hölscher 1991 (on *virtus* particularly), 2000, and 2002, esp. 135-167.

¹¹ Hölscher 2000: 94.

simply by looking up.¹² Another approach has been to deny one of the very conclusions on which the paradox is based, and to assert, as Veyne does, that through over-analysis we have made the frieze seem much more complex than it really is.¹³ The frieze, in his view, contributes little more than a decorative function to the column, whose overall purpose is to proclaim the glory of Trajan.¹⁴ The third approach, proposed by Hölscher, denies both of these theories. Hölscher maintains that attempts to explain how an ancient observer could read the column are "doubtful excuses" and attempts to reject complex modern theories of interpretation are equally misguided: "a frontal attack on the ambitious research methods of archaeologists."¹⁵ Instead, he proposes that the dichotomy between a complex narrative structure and a visually confounding method of display – the helical frieze – does not indicate a fundamental failure in design. Even if no more than a third of the frieze were legible (as it is, arguably, today), he argues, this was enough for the observer to know the general content, and he or she could be sure that what followed did so in the same manner.¹⁶ The apparent paradox must simply be accepted.

How might these theories apply to the Marcus column and its frieze? In a way, the Marcus column provided Roman architects and artists an opportunity to "remake" Trajan's column, and to improve on any characteristics found deficient. Did they in fact do this? One of the most-cited instances of such "improvement" is the decrease in the

¹² Gauer 1977: 45-48.

¹³ Veyne 1991.

¹⁴ Ibid., 321-322.

¹⁵ Hölscher 1991: 262 and idem 2002: 140, n. 7: "einem Frontalangriff auf die ausspruchsvollen Untersuchungskriterien der Archäologen," in response to Veyne's theory.

¹⁶ Hölscher 2000: 90.

number of spirals. However, as argued above (Chapter 2), this reduction was most likely the result of simple mathematical planning: twenty was close enough to twenty-three to create the same effect, and it was much easier to plot on the actual column. However, the corresponding increase in the height of figures would have made them easier to make out, and the higher relief and reduction of background scenery would have had a similar effect.

Another potential refinement of the Marcus column is vertical alignment. There is clear evidence that the designer(s) of the column gave some attention, however limited, to this factor. In particular, the Victory figure is rotated 180 degrees from its position on Trajan's column, so that it lines up directly over the doorway, and also over the main Danube crossing scene.¹⁷ Conspicuously, the Rain Miracle is also placed along this eastern axis, above the door, facing the Via Flaminia. However, this is the extent of clear vertical alignment of scenes on the Marcus column. While important to a degree, this technique was not widely used in composing the frieze.

The manner of carving may also have been intended to aid visibility.¹⁸ The deep carving (see Fig. 1.4) could have been designed to produce a much more visible result than the relatively flat relief of Trajan's column. However, in practice it seems to me to be generally no less difficult to decipher scenes at similar heights on the Marcus column frieze. The real difference lies in the proportion of detail (much higher on Trajan's column) and the degree of complexity in scene composition. The finer details on Trajan's

¹⁷ Brilliant 1984: 115.

¹⁸ Brilliant 1984: 114; Zanker 1997: 189.

column are often very difficult to appreciate, but need not render the gist of the scenes more difficult to make out.

Finally, there is the issue of scene composition. It has been suggested that some scenes are composed to render them more easy to see. The figures are large, consequently less numerous, and are often arranged in simple patterns.¹⁹ For example, marching groups of soldiers are often (though not always) rendered in simplified double columns of repetitious figures (LXVII and LXXVIII are archetypal, but also XXXIX, XLIV, and CIII).²⁰ When seen from the ground, the nature of these scenes is relatively easy to make out, as long as they are not too high up. The repetition of the figures also adds a sense of motion and progress to the frieze.²¹ The question is, are these effects calculated, or are they more or less unintentional results of a method of composition which had other goals? It is much simpler, for example, to create a marching scene using rows of standard, repetitive figures, than one with variety. Scenes III, XXX, XXXIII, LXXXIV, and CXI are all good examples of marches which incorporate variety in their figures and composition – and they are not, as the scene numbers show, concentrated exclusively in the lower part of the frieze. Repetitive scenes have the advantage of being easier and faster to compose than complex ones. It is possible that ease of execution was as much (or more) a concern of the designers of such scenes as was ease of visibility. A

¹⁹ Zanker 1997: 189.

²⁰ Rodenwaldt 1936: 796; Becatti 1960: 282, who compares scenes LXVII and LXXVIII with reliefs on the column of Arcadius.

²¹ Balty 2000: 201 – though note the skeptical view of Beard (2000: 269) in the same volume.

more thorough art-historical analysis of the frieze would be needed to arrive at a verdict on this question.²²

Does the composition of the battle scenes present any parallels to patterns identified in the march scenes? Five of the six uppermost battles are composed in such a way that the Roman and barbarian troops form more or less homogeneous masses (LXXXIX, XCII, XCVII, IC and CV). These masses would likely be easier for a viewer on the ground to distinguish than would a scene which mixed Roman and barbarian combatants, and thus could be interpreted as a device intended to increase visibility. Scene CIX, however, the highest battle on the column, does mix opposing troops, and may contradict this theory. Moreover, most of these battles are not simply composed, but instead use heavy overlapping and sophisticated figure poses (XCII and IC are particular good examples). Lower on the column one can find much simpler battle compositions, for example in scenes XV, XIX, and XXIII. The battle scenes may have been evolving in complexity. They also may not be closely tied to the overall planning of the frieze – that is, they may have been executed separately, and integrated after the fact. However, as mentioned above, a more thorough analysis of the frieze would be needed to draw firm conclusions on this subject.

Another and more complicated potential aid to visibility is the repetitive sequence of particular scenes (see Chapter 4.2). Hölscher has concluded that the narrative structure of the Marcus column frieze differs significantly from that of the frieze of Trajan's

²² Coulston's (1990: 303) observation that variation in military detail decreases in the second half of Trajan's column's frieze may indicate that a similar simplification occurred in the higher spirals of that monument too.

column. The complex narrative structure of the frieze of Trajan's column becomes, in its Aurelian successor, "*zersetzt*" – corroded, decomposed.²³ The careful structure of consistently ordered scenes – sacrifices, marches, speeches, battles, and so forth, repeated over and over – is not to be seen, at least not with the degree of regularity in which they are employed on Trajan's column. Hölscher argues that the Marcus column dispenses with much of the ideologically-based framework of Trajan's column frieze because it has different messages to deliver, those of punishment and revenge.²⁴ There is, however, another possible explanation for this "decomposition" of structure: that the designer(s) of the Marcus column were unable to appreciate, or were simply unaware, that such a system existed on Trajan's column at all. How, indeed, could they have been aware of it, if the frieze was so difficult to view? Even if prototypes for the frieze existed, in the form of paintings for example, they would almost certainly not have been in the form of a single continuous narrative band. An understanding of the internal structure of the frieze of Trajan's column may very well have died with its designer.

Nonetheless, it is possible to argue for a message-bearing structure in the patterning visible in some of the Marcus column's battle scenes, where we can detect a progression from barbarian resistance below to panicked flight above. Interpreted as propaganda, this progression may be seen as symbolic of the gradual breaking of barbarian will by the Romans. This is, however, only one interpretation of this patterning. It is also possible, as argued (above, and see also Chapter 2) that artistic development during the course of the design process may be responsible for this (limited)

²³ Hölscher 2000: 94.

pattern. From this viewpoint, the simpler, linear and schematic scenes at the bottom of the column progress to the more complex, overlapping and intertwined compositions above. The fact remains that more resistance by barbarians is shown lower on the column than higher up, but given the patterns of composition identified above, it is hard to see this as a specifically intended effect. It is more likely a coincidence, a by-product of artistic evolution.

It is time to bring the focus back to what the hypothetical Roman viewer saw when he or she looked at the column of Marcus Aurelius. The Rain Miracle in the third spiral is clear to a modern viewer, but above this it becomes progressively more difficult to determine exactly what is happening in the various scenes (and it is important to note that the modern ground level is higher than the ancient one). Only the lowest of the battle scenes, then, would have been visible to an ancient Roman in most of their detail. These include the isolated encounter between a fleeing barbarian and a Roman officer in scene VIII, the two barbarians stoutly resisting an attack in XV, two village battles incorporating scenes of resistance and flight (XVIII, XX), a further scene of three barbarians resisting a combined Roman cavalry and infantry attack (XIX). Moving into the fifth spiral, and decreasing visibility, a series of scenes depicting barbarian defeat in the open field begins (XXIII, XXIV, XXVII, XXVIII). These, then, would have been the scenes to catch the attention of a viewer with an eye for battle. They show barbarians being defeated or, if resisting, then doing so in groups so small that defeat seems certain. It is not possible to analyse in isolation the message that these scenes might have

²⁴ Ibid., 95, 105, and *passim*.

projected. Rather, one must take into consideration the viewers themselves, their viewpoints and experiences, as best we can determine them. This is the goal of the following section.

4. Interpretation of the Frieze:

How would the battle scenes, at least the visible ones, have been interpreted by a viewer? What message would he or she read into, or from, them? The only way to assess this response is to do so in the context of the late 2nd century AD: any message would have been perceived by the contemporary viewer in the context of Marcus' wars. These were hard, often brutal, and at times (especially at their beginning) desperate. Pirson stressed the message of Roman superiority projected by the scenes of violence on the column, and connected them to a "need for self-affirmation in insecure times."²⁵ This concept can be more fully refined. The wars of Marcus were very different from the wars of Trajan. Marcus' campaigns against the Germans started with a barbarian invasion, which triggered a war of punishment and revenge. Hölscher has clearly pointed out this difference, and briefly outlined the "ideology of punishment" presented by the Marcus column frieze.²⁶ The following discussion endeavours to go into greater depth in demonstrating not only the validity of such an interpretation but also the historical precedents on which it rested. It also seeks to define more precisely the role of the battle scenes in communicating this message.

²⁵ Pirson 1996: 174.

²⁶ Hölscher 2000: 97-98.

The conduct of a Roman army in a war of punishment was very different from that of one in a war such as those fought by Trajan against the Dacians. The cause of Trajan's first war against king Decebalus and the Dacians is not clear, but a number of factors are possible: an interest in Roman frontier security, a need for gold, or Trajan's own desire for personal glory.²⁷ At any rate, the war was initiated by the Romans, and its first action was the Roman invasion of Dacia. The second Dacian war had clearer causes: Decebalus was declared an enemy by the Senate after it was reported that he broke a number of terms of the peace treaty which concluded the first Dacian war.²⁸ As a result, the Romans again invaded, and the final result was the incorporation of Dacia into the Roman empire. Both wars were effectively pre-emptive. The goal in each case was to subjugate a potential threat and to make physical gains, whether of money or territory, for Rome. The second war also involved punishment for minor transgressions, but this was more of a pretext for invasion than the ultimate goal of the campaign.

In the case of Marcus' wars, the situation was dramatically different. Brutality and punishment were expected, and indeed required. This was because the barbarians had themselves started the war, and by the most horrific means imaginable to a Roman at the time, by invading Italy itself. In the course of this they had laid siege to Aquileia, destroyed the smaller town of Opitergium, and defeated a Roman force and killed its leader, Furius Victorinus, praetorian prefect.²⁹ The barbarians had thus committed a double crime against the Romans: they had broken the peace, and they had invaded

²⁷ See Lepper and Frere 1988: 277-289 for discussion of these and other possible motivations for the first Dacian war.

²⁸ Dio (68.10.3-4) records that Decebalus was rebuilding forts, strengthening his army, and conniving with his neighbours.

Roman lands and slain Roman citizens. There is a clear pattern of Roman action in response to such events during the early empire. An example is provided by Germanicus' exhortation to his troops before their battle against rebellious Germans under Arminius: "There is no use in taking prisoners; only the destruction of the race will end the war."³⁰ The battle ended with slaughter of the barbarians till nightfall. Similar are the instructions of the Roman commander Paulinus to his troops before their battle with the forces of Boudicca: to "furnish to the rest of mankind an example, not only of benevolent clemency toward the obedient, but also of inevitable severity towards the rebellious."³¹ The followers of Boudicca had earned this severity not only by their rebellion, but also by their sacking of a number of Roman cities and the atrocities committed against captured Roman non-combatants. Slaughter was in turn a not uncommon Roman response to rebellion. When the general Corbulo finally captured the key city of the rebellious Armenians in AD 62, he slaughtered all the adults and sold the rest of the population into slavery.³² Domitian himself is reported to have taken pleasure at the report that his governor of Numidia had succeeded in annihilating the rebellious Nasamones, "even destroying all the non-combatants."³³ The Nasamones had earned this treatment by revolting and killing Roman tax-collectors. The purpose of such treatment of the enemy was twofold. For one thing, slaughter and, if possible, extermination was the prescribed (if unwritten) penalty for such offences. In addition, such treatment was meted out *pour*

²⁹ Ammianus (29.6.1) mentions the invasion briefly, and the SHA (*Marcus* 14) records Victorinus' death.

³⁰ Tacitus *Ann.* 2.21: *nil opus captivis, solam internicionem gentis finem bello fore.*

³¹ Dio 67.11.2, trans. E. Cary, Loeb ed.

³² Tacitus *Ann.* 13.39. See Gilliver 1996: 225-226 for slaughter as a usual outcome of a successful Roman siege of a holdout enemy fortification.

³³ Dio 67.4.6, trans. E. Cary, Loeb ed. See also Shaw 2000: 379.

encourager les autres. Agricola clearly had this purpose in mind when he nearly exterminated the Ordovices, a tribe which had massacred a troop of Roman cavalry, "knowing that he depended on the issue of his first campaign to terrorise the enemy for the future."³⁴ The connection between rebellion and horrible punishment was even clear to the vanquished. Josephus, after listing the scenes of slaughter and destruction exhibited in Vespasian's triumph, says in explanation: "For to such sufferings were the Jews destined when they plunged into the war."³⁵

Events such as these must certainly have sprung to the minds of the Roman citizenry of Marcus' day. Their trust and their lands had been violated, their citizens killed, and for this the offenders must pay a harsh penalty. According to Dio, this sentiment was very much in the front of the mind of Marcus Aurelius himself. When the fighting began to go the Romans' way, "envoys were sent to Marcus by the Iazyges to request peace, but they did not obtain anything. For Marcus, both because he knew their race to be untrustworthy and also because he had been deceived by the Quadi, wished to annihilate them utterly."³⁶ When the Iazyges finally obtained a surrender, the emperor still "wished to exterminate them utterly," because "they were still strong and had done the Romans great harm."³⁷ Even individual barbarians were singled out for Marcus' wrath. "Against Arrogæus [leader of the Quadi] Marcus was so bitter that he issued a

³⁴ Tacitus *Agr.* 18; trans. M. Hutton, Loeb ed.

³⁵ *BJ* 7.145-6, trans. H. Thackeray, Loeb ed.

³⁶ Dio 72.13.1-2, trans. E. Cary, Loeb ed.

³⁷ Dio 72.16.1-2, trans. E. Cary, Loeb ed.

proclamation to the effect that anyone who brought him in alive should receive a thousand gold pieces, and anyone who slew him and exhibited his head, five hundred."³⁸

This message, one of harsh and brutal punishment, is then just the sort of message we should expect to see on the frieze of Marcus' column. Art had served as a vehicle for these messages before: Vespasian's triumphal paintings "portrayed the incidents [of the war] to those who had not witnessed them, as though they were happening before their eyes."³⁹ The slaughter, the rivers running red, the burned and destroyed landscape were all displayed to the Roman public as signs of a job well done. That we see very little of this on Trajan's column has to do directly with the nature of Trajan's wars. The column of Marcus Aurelius is another case altogether. It commemorates an entirely different type of war, even if it was fought in a similar geographical area. The Roman audience in the time of Marcus would have expected a much different message from its leaders than would a similar audience in the time of Trajan.

Such a message of merciless punishment can be seen on the Marcus column – the barbarians are again and again defeated in battle, taken captive, or even slaughtered in their villages. Pirson has stressed the greater severity of the Marcus column battle scenes as compared to those on Trajan's column, and the more feeble barbarian resistance depicted.⁴⁰ Some of the battle scenes, such as scene IC, where the barbarians are shown trampled into the ground by a mass of Roman cavalry, make a clear contribution to the message of punishment. The barbarians are totally vanquished, the Romans entirely

³⁸ Dio 72.14.1, trans. E. Cary, Loeb ed.

³⁹ Josephus, *BJ* 7.146, trans. H. Thackeray, Loeb ed.

⁴⁰ Pirson 1996: 172.

triumphant. Many of the remaining battle scenes show only feeble barbarian resistance, and the scenes where resistance appears even partly effective are few (XV, XIX, LIV, and LVII). The battle scenes are not, however, the only vehicles of this message. There are scenes on the frieze which are even clearer, indisputable vehicles for this new message. These are the truly unique scenes of execution and slaughter of unarmed barbarians (LXI and LXVIII), and to a lesser degree violence towards non-combatants (killing of women in XCVII) the repeated depictions of devastation and killing in barbarian villages (XVIII, XX, XLIII).⁴¹ The slaughter and execution scenes are unlike anything seen before in Roman art of any type, although parallels might have been found in Vespasian's triumphal paintings. Neither is connected directly to a battle. Instead, each follows a similar sequence: first a presentation of barbarian prisoners before the emperor (LX and LXVI), then a short march by Roman troops, and then the slaughter. Nonetheless, that these scenes of brutal revenge appear only twice suggests that they reflect isolated events of the campaigns, in tune with the desperate tone of the wars to be sure, but not their dominant melody. Not every band of barbarians was to be slain outright, nor was mercy to be discounted out of hand. Indeed, there are scenes where barbarians appear to consult freely with Marcus (XXXI, XLI), or to beseech his mercy (XVII, XLIX, LVI). Similar scenes can be found on the *Clementia* and *Justitia* reliefs of the Aurelianic panel reliefs. The body postures and actions of the barbarians in these and similar scenes clearly contrast with those of the prisoners presented in LX and LXVI, and on the "Prisoners" Panel Relief. The ideology of punishment is not, therefore,

⁴¹ See Zanker 2000 for discussion of violence towards noncombatants on the column.

ubiquitous, nor is it everywhere pervasive. At some points in the frieze it is glaringly in the foreground, while at others it is at most a subtle sub-current. The implication seems to be that this message was not inserted into all (or even most) scenes on the column by design. Rather, it appeared where appropriate (or perhaps where historically accurate), connected to certain events.

5. Conclusions

Clearly, there is a message projected by the frieze of the column of Marcus Aurelius. This is a message of punishment of rebellious and lawless barbarians, and it is fully in accordance with the established practice of Rome at war with such an enemy. One of the results of this is a vivid contrast between specific elements of the Marcus column frieze and the frieze of Trajan's column. Another is a general influence on most (though not all) of the battle scenes, with the result that the defeat of the barbarians is even more pronounced. It is very difficult, however, to decide whether these effects are carefully calculated by the column's designer(s), or are the result of the actual conduct of the war. The war was one of retribution, and by its very nature would have often focussed on destruction and suppression of the barbarians. That the relief of the Marcus column reflects this then need not be interpreted as a calculated work of propaganda, and indeed this feeling is almost absent from some of the battle scenes, even if it is reflected to some degree in most of the others. The Romans always win; only sometimes this victory is much more clear.

This brings up one final point, relevant to ancient battle art in general, on which I wish to close. At the beginning of this chapter it was noted briefly that never in the history of Greek and Roman historical battle art is a "civilised" protagonist shown vanquished by his opponent. This is particularly interesting when compared to the numerous descriptions of battles in Roman literature where Roman soldiers are worsted in battle, killed, driven to retreat or even to suicide. Certainly no society is eager to display images of its own soldiers defeated, but in the ancient world this was an unbreakable rule. Never once does a Greek or Roman appear defeated in a pictorial representation of an historical battle against a barbarian foe. The fundamental factor seems to have been that of historicity: if a visual battle depiction represented a genuine historical event, the winning side must be entirely unharmed. This rule was adhered to (as far as we can tell) at least from the first depictions of the Persian Wars. Thus it was permissible to show a Greek vanquished by an Amazon, but never by a Persian. Only a deeply set attitude in the mind of the ancient Greeks and Romans can explain this persistent phenomenon. That this attitude was connected only to physical depictions of battle, and not literary ones, suggests that images of real battles had a special significance in the mind of the viewer. The single factor of highest significance was that the protagonists were never shown vanquished.

Within this established framework, however, there was room for movement. In particular, the manner in which victory was shown could be altered within certain parameters, as could the actual details of the battles and their participants. Some of these parameters were governed by the employment of specific styles. The column of Trajan is

remarkable in that it departs from established styles and gives great attention to rendering more or less convincing troop formations and battle compositions. The Dacians are everywhere defeated, but are often shown fighting stoutly and often even outnumber the Romans. Nonetheless, the sanctity of the body of the Roman soldier in battle is maintained. The more or less contemporary Great Trajanic Frieze, on the other hand, adopts a style taken from the Hellenistic kings. The emperor is glorified, and the barbarian enemy is soundly defeated and renders little effective resistance. These two monuments alone are enough to make clear that the most important criterion in the "rules" of Roman battle depiction was that no protagonist could be vanquished. The behaviour of the barbarians was flexible. On neither monument is a Roman shown wounded or killed in battle, and never is there a Roman defeat. The general situation on the Marcus column is the same: no Roman is harmed, and the barbarians defeated. The fundamental difference is the employment of a new style of battle representation – or more precisely, the absence of any particular formal style and the use instead of a series of more or less novel compositions. The degree of defeat of the barbarians is, as a result, variable: from no more than impending (XV, XIX) to total (XCIX). The overall effect is that a strong victorious message is conveyed, but the true extent of this message is only realised when the battle scenes are considered together with the remainder of the column's scenes.

Conclusion

The battle scenes of the Marcus column have been considered from three angles: from the viewpoint of their artistic composition, as historical representations, and as potential bearers of message. When considered as works of art, the battle scenes of the Marcus column can be seen to diverge significantly both from the established classical tradition of battle art, and also from more nearly contemporary battle imagery, and especially from the battle scenes on the column of Trajan. The compositions are extraordinarily varied, from scattered *Einzelkämpfe* to battles between solid formations of troops. This suggests that their designer(s), or the sources used by them, were fundamentally different for each column. The figure types on the Marcus column are of a standardised sort, but the most common of these types were not based on traditional forms. Rather, they are intuitive types, dictated by the actions the figures are shown performing, and liable to be clumsily rendered if the routine is broken – as, for example, by turning the figure to face left instead of right. These observations point to the Marcus column battles being novel creations, fashioned on the spot for this particular monument. Detailed analysis of the figure types making up the scenes also indicates a connection to the contemporary sarcophagus industry based in Rome, suggesting that it was from here that the designer(s) and/or carvers of the column came. The choice of workers from this

industry explains how an artistic style identified by Rodenwaldt as rooted in private art came to appear on a major imperial monument – and how that monument has come to be viewed as the key monument of the Antonine *Stilwandel*. In light of this, it is doubtful that the designer(s) of the Marcus column maintained any clear distinction in their minds between private art and public.

When the battle scenes are analysed as representations of historical events, they prove to give very poor evidence. Military equipment is at best only an approximation of what contemporary troops wore and used. Although there appears to have been some attempt to distinguish between different troop types – particularly between those wearing segmented armour and those wearing scale or chain – this does not manifest itself in scenes of battle, where such distinctions would presumably be most important. General troop behaviour in battle is likewise unfaithful to what we know of contemporary warfare, and for that matter to the apparently more accurate battle depictions on Trajan's column. In comparison to the few literary descriptions of the battles of Marcus' wars, the column offers no parallels.

Finally, the scenes of battle on the Marcus column present a depiction of violence in combat that can be shown to be reflective not only of the nature of Marcus' wars, but also of the harsher set of standards for the treatment of rebellious enemies. These standards of treatment were not exclusive to the late 2nd century AD, but rather were established traditions in the history of Roman warfare. The message of the column's battle scenes is one which would correspond well with the presumed viewpoint of a contemporary, historically informed Roman.

This study began with an examination of the underlying structures of the frieze of the Marcus column. Here I want to return to this analysis, and address its relevance to our basic understanding of the column in light of the conclusions reached regarding the battle scenes. The only direct point of comparison for the frieze as a whole is the frieze of the column of Trajan, and the differences between the two are very deep. The frieze of the column of Trajan is a loose and free-flowing creation, varying in height without any logical pattern and sandwiched between undulating borders. The scenes which fill this frieze are equally unstructured: they may be long or short, they may or may not be clearly divided from the next scene, and these divisions may fall at any place in the spiral. The Marcus column frieze could not be more different. It is the result of rigid, formal planning, it proceeds with a constant rise and is contained between almost perfectly straight borders. The scenes which fill it are, for the most part, subordinated to a rigid scheme of layout on the spiralling frieze, defined by lines which delineate the cardinal axes. The individual scenes are almost never separated from their neighbours by artificial dividers, but nonetheless their existence as distinct units is abundantly clear.

This makes clear that the designer(s) of the column of Marcus Aurelius had a fundamentally different concept of what their monument should be than did the designer(s) of the column of Trajan. This ought to make us reconsider what exactly we can learn from a comparison of the two monuments. Is one monument the successor of the other? Do the two form links in the evolution of Roman art? The answer to the first question is yes, but with strong qualifications. In the mind(s) of the designer(s) of the column of Marcus Aurelius the monument was a successor of Trajan's column, and was

therefore made specifically in its image. However, Trajan's column was a novelty, not merely the most recent example of an established genre. Therefore, the Marcus column was not necessarily the next logical step in the evolution of a class of monuments, but rather a bold attempt to recreate a single unique monument. The challenges faced in this project were substantial. In response, the designer(s) of the new monument introduced a number of simplifications in the architecture and the frieze, and copied some elements of the latter. It is worth noting that when the architects of Arcadius were instructed in the early 5th century to create a triumphal column in honour of that emperor they followed the model of Trajan's column rather than that of Marcus.¹ Where there are differences (and there are many – the number of steps per turn, the number of spirals of the frieze), these appear to be new inventions, and not features taken from the column of Marcus Aurelius. The Marcus column is an interpretation of Trajan's, and not necessarily a step in the evolution of the *columna coelis*. Instead, the designers of subsequent columns returned to the original, the column of Trajan, which was seen as the fundamental model from which its successors were independently derived.

Finally, it must be concluded that since battle scenes constitute only a portion of the many different types of scenes on the frieze of the Marcus column, the results gained by their analysis cannot be assumed to be representative of all. This suggests that there may be much to be gained through analysis of other scenes on the column.

¹ The column of Arcadius has a ground-level chamber, just as in Trajan's column, and the stairway climbs at first in straight flights before beginning its spiral. Most recently on the column of Arcadius see Konrad 2001.

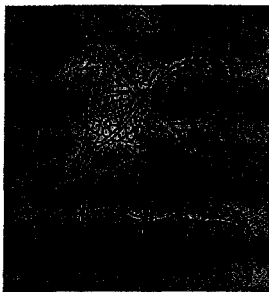
Appendix: The Types of Figures

This Appendix presents a detailed analysis of all of the figure types employed in the battle scenes of the Marcus column. The main figure types identifiable in the Marcus column battle scenes are:

Fighting Romans:	Fighting Barbarians:
<i>Roman cavalryman spearing overhand: A</i>	<i>Barbarian cavalry fighting: a</i>
<i>Roman cavalryman spearing underhand: B</i>	<i>Barbarian infantry spearman fighting: b</i>
<i>Roman infantryman spearing overhand: C</i>	<i>Barbarian infantry swordsman fighting: c</i>
<i>Roman infantryman spearing underhand: D</i>	
<i>Roman infantryman with sword: E</i>	Defeated Barbarians:
<i>Roman archer: F</i>	<i>Barbarian fleeing: d</i>
	<i>Barbarian falling from horse: e</i>
Advancing Romans:	<i>Defensive fallen barbarian: f</i>
<i>Roman cavalryman advancing: G</i>	<i>Pleading fallen barbarian: g</i>
<i>Roman infantryman advancing: H</i>	<i>Semi-prone barbarian: h</i>
	<i>Barbarian fallen on face: i</i>
	<i>Barbarian fallen on back: j</i>

Fighting Romans:

A: Roman cavalryman spearing overhand



There are 19 such figures facing right, 3 facing left, and all are highly standardised in form. In the more common orientation, the Roman rides to the right, his right leg shown in profile but his shoulders turned so that his chest faces the viewer.

His head is shown usually in profile, sometimes in three-quarter view. His right arm is raised and bent at the elbow; in his hand he holds a spear, point down at an angle of 45-60 degrees. The mane of his horse sometimes hides his left shoulder; in 6 cases a shield is visible behind the horses' head.

The main exceptions to the standard type are two figures (72.6, 99.12) that show the rider with head turned to the rear and spearing straight down, one (50.14) which shows the rider turned in the saddle so that the right leg is seen from the front, and one (92.3) which shows the rider's shoulders turned so his back faces the viewer. The left-riding examples follow the same standard type as the right-riding figures, always showing a shield on the left arm of the rider, but in one case (52.8) misplacing the sword (on the left instead of the right hip).

B: *Roman cavalryman spearing underhand*



There are 13 right-facing and 1 left-facing examples of this highly standardised type. The pose of the underhand-spearing cavalryman is much the same as that of the overhand-spearing rider, except that the right arm is shown lowered (bent at the elbow again) and holding the spear at, in most cases, a more or less horizontal angle. As above, in one case (79.1) a figure's shoulders are turned so that his back faces the viewer. The single left-facing rider in this group is depicted, as in the previous group, as a mirror-reversal of the right-facing figure type.

Roman Cavalry – General Remarks:

Attacking Roman cavalry figures are highly standardised, with very few exceptions to the norm, whether they are shown riding to the right (as most are) or to the left, or spearing over or underhand.

C: Roman infantryman spearing overhand



There are 16 right-facing Roman infantrymen shown spearing overhand, and 10 left-facing. In the most standard pose, visible in 13 of the 16 right-facing figures, the figures are shown standing with their left leg forward, their torso and shoulders turned to the viewer, their head in profile or, less often, in three-quarter view. A sword is shown in its scabbard at the right hip. The right arm is raised and bent at the elbow holding a spear angled downward in the same manner as for a standard cavalry soldier. The left arm holds a shield, which is facing towards or away from the viewer. The 3 exceptions show in two cases (70.4, 43.6) figures with spears pointed directly downward (the former is also depicted with legs together and face turned more than three-quarters towards the viewer), and one figure (105.6) who is shown with shoulders turned sideways to the viewer, apparently lunging forwards.

Only 2 of the left-facing overhand spearmen (24.2, 27.8) appear to be simple mirror images of their right-facing counterparts, simply shown from the back and not the front. The other 8 have rather different poses. Two figures (20.15, 23.15) are shown from the front with both right arms and legs thrust forward – an awkward spearing

position. Three others are shown frontally, spearing directly downwards (24.8, 43.7, 50.17). Two are shown from the side, spearing at a high angle (29.4, 57.6). Finally, one is shown from the back with spear raised and pointing upward (24.7).

D: Roman infantryman spearing underhand



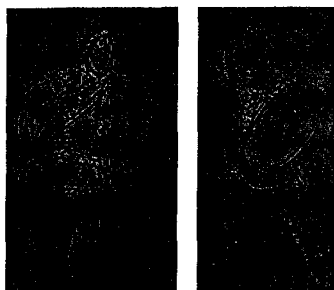
There are 9 right-facing underhand infantry spearmen, and 2 left-facing. As opposed to the overhand spearmen, the underhand spearmen are of a relatively standard type whether facing right or left. They are shown in much the same pose as the standard type of right-facing overhand spearmen: standing with their left leg forward, their torso and shoulders turned to the viewer, their head in profile or, rarely, in three-quarter view. The main difference is in the position of the right arm and spear. The arm is shown lowered at the figure's right side, bent at the elbow, with the right hand grasping the spear and holding it at a horizontal or slightly elevated angle. Even when the spearman is shown engaged with an enemy (e.g., 72.8), these basic fundamentals of the pose are maintained. The two left-facing underhand spearmen (24.5, 27.4) appear to be simple mirror-reflections of their right-facing counterparts.

Roman infantry spearing; General remarks:

As with the Roman cavalry, spear-wielding infantrymen are depicted holding their weapons either over- or underhand, facing either right or left. Again as with the cavalry, overhand poses are more common than underhand. However, left-facing

spearman appear more often than their left-facing cavalry comrades (16/37 in the infantry versus 4/36 for the cavalry). These left-facing overhand spearmen also show much more variety in pose than do the right-facing spearmen, whose poses are in comparison quite standardised.

E: Roman infantryman with sword



Sword-wielding Roman infantrymen are relatively rare, but fall into two standard types: overhand (4 examples) and underhand (4 examples). The overhand slashing type appears three times facing left, once facing right. The underhand stabbing type appears three times facing right, once facing left. In each case the sword is wielded in the right hand and a shield is held in the left. As with the left-facing spearmen, there is some confusion as to which leg should be put forward on the left-facing swordsmen. One other swordsman (79.9) is irregular: he stabs downward while grasping a barbarian by the hair with his left hand.

F: Roman archer



11 archers are depicted fighting for the Romans, although only one (57.3) wears standard Roman dress. The rest are shown clad in trousers, long-sleeved shirts and tunics, with soft pointed caps on their heads – clearly auxiliary or allied troops. They are shown standing, with one leg forward, their torso facing the viewer frontally or, more

rarely, turned to present a side view (this depends on the extension of the arms and the degree to which the bow is drawn). The bow is held in front of the body in the left hand, never higher than chest level. The string can be shown taut or loosely curved, depending on whether the bow is being drawn or has recently been released. The head of the archer is always shown in profile, emphasising his careful aim. This pose is the same whether the archer faces right (7 examples) or left (3 examples); the remaining archer, the one dressed in full Roman armour, is mounted but differs in pose only in that he sits upon a horse.

Advancing Romans:

These figures often resemble their fighting comrades quite closely; the crucial difference is, of course, that they are not shown directly engaged in combat. This has resulted in some small variations in figure execution but, as will be seen, these Romans are most often nearly indistinguishable from many of their fighting comrades.

G: Roman cavalryman advancing



These figures, of which there are 19 examples, do not differ substantially from the standard type of “Roman cavalryman spearing underhand.” The main exception is that the spear is always shown carried at a high (45-60 degree) angle, never horizontal, and the shield, when visible, is always held slightly to the rear of the body (which is, however, not unknown among the fighting cavalry figures). Minor

exceptions include two figures who turn their heads to look back (27.5, 99.3), one figure who gestures forward with one arm while holding both shield and spear in the other (63.1), and one figure who, for some reason, is shown turned with his saddle so that both his shield and spear appear behind his horse's head (27.9).

H: *Roman infantryman advancing*



When shown advancing into battle, Roman infantry always carry spear and shield (never a sword), and all but 2 of them (out of 22) are shown advancing to the right. The shield is carried on the left arm, its front more often visible than its back. The shoulders and torso are depicted in three-quarter view, with the right arm bent so that the spear hand is at about waist level. This type as a whole is relatively standard. Only one figure (50.6) in the entire group is particularly odd, in that he is shown leading a horse; possibly he represents a dismounted cavalryman.

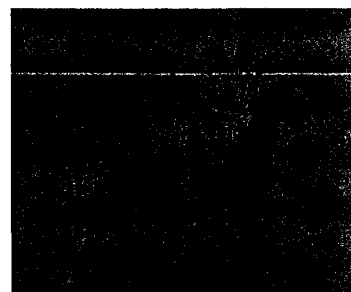
Fighting Barbarians:

The barbarians on the Marcus column do far less actual fighting than the Romans; their more usual activities are fleeing, cowering, or dying. In many cases, the poses of the fighting barbarians closely reflect those of fighting Romans. The exceptional poses (e.g., 97.7, 109.2) usually occur when the fighting barbarian is also in an attitude of fleeing or cowering. The lack of certain very common Roman fighting poses in the

barbarian ranks reflects the fact that barbarians are not generally depicted in acts such as spearing a fallen enemy.

a: *Barbarian cavalry fighting*

The usual activity of barbarian cavalry on the column is flight; they are rarely shown fighting, as the meagre count of 2 or perhaps 3 examples attests. Figure 24.4 is shown attacking with spear underhand, in a perfectly standard “Roman cavalryman spearing underhand” pose. It is possible that figure 12.12 may also be a barbarian attacking to the left on horseback, but the scene is too heavily damaged to be sure. The only other fighting barbarian cavalryman is 97.7, who twists in his saddle while fleeing to stab overhand at a pursuing Roman infantryman.

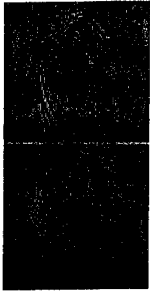


b: *Barbarian infantry spearman fighting*



Six barbarian spearmen are shown in fighting poses on the column, in 4 scenes. There is little standardisation in pose between them, and exact parallels for most cannot be found in the types of Roman spearmen (barbarian 57.7 and Roman 57.6 are a notable exception). Notable is the general lack of downward spearing, which reflects the difference in employment of barbarian and Roman spearmen in the battle scenes: the barbarians never have the chance to spear a Roman on the ground.

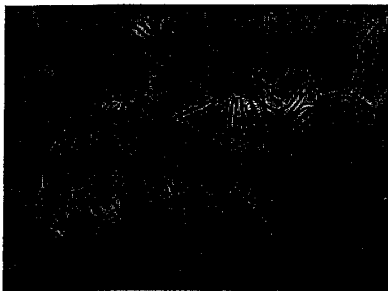
c: Barbarian infantry swordsman fighting



Unlike the barbarian spearmen, the 8 barbarian swordsmen shown fighting are fairly standard in pose, much the same as those of Roman swordsmen. Notably, all barbarian swordsmen fight facing left. Four slash overhand, in a manner much the same as that employed by the Roman overhand swordsmen. Two (52.3, 57.4) stab underhand, much as Roman 77.2. Finally, one (109.2) slashes overhand from a kneeling position with his shield raised in front of his face, and another (50.9) executes an awkward-looking overhand stab from a defensive, partly turned pose.

Defeated Barbarians:

d: Barbarian fleeing



Almost all barbarians who flee do so on horseback, and the majority of these (23 of 30) flee to the right. Most often the barbarian is looking back at his pursuers, and in eight cases he also gestures with an arm extended back. Weapons are seldom shown: in four cases a fleeing rider carries a spear, in one case a shield, and in only one case both a spear and a shield.

There are two common figure types. One, with 6 examples facing right (e.g., 50.5), 1 facing left, shows the barbarian sitting on his horse, his leg in profile, his shoulders turned so that his chest faces the viewer. One arm is hidden behind the horses'

neck, while the other is extended behind the rider as he makes an open-handed gesture towards his pursuers.

The other common fleeing type (e.g., 50.4), with 5 right- and 2 left-facing examples, depicts the rider's exposed arm in a forward position along the horses' neck, as if to control the animal. This is the major difference between this type and the previous one; there are few further minor points of variation. The shoulders are usually squared towards the viewer, but they can appear turned further towards a profile view, and in one case (92.10) the back of the rider is visible. Likewise, the head can be shown turned back or, more rarely, looking forward. Finally, the cloak (if present) commonly billows out behind the head and shoulders of the rider.

The remaining fleeing figures are more varied in pose. One rider (72.7) gestures backward with both arms as his horse falls beneath him. One (92.6) gestures skyward as he is stabbed, in an attitude similar to fleeing footman 8.9 (who is one of only two fleeing footmen; the other is 43.2). Another rider (39.8) is shown struck by an arrow, one gestures forwards (105.7) and two fleeing figures are too badly damaged or obscured by other figures to identify with certainty (23.8, 23.9).

e: *Barbarian falling (usually from horse)*

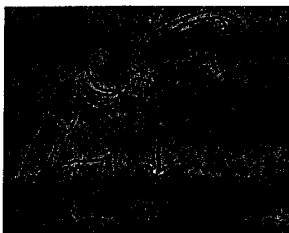
14 barbarians are shown in the process of falling, 12 of these from their mounts, only two (27.1 and 50.18) in a falling pose with no horse in sight. There is no pattern to the way in which these falls are depicted. One rider pitches headlong (24.1), another falls backwards to the side (79.7), while another (35.2) slumps on his mount and yet another

(92.11) lies atop his horse in an entirely improbable position, as if he had been riding facing backwards. The overall impression gained from these depictions is that the artists had no set pattern to follow when depicting falls from horseback or, as seems likely in the case of figures 27.1 and 50.8, from a standing position. In some cases, it appears that conventions normally applied to figures that have simply fallen on the ground are applied to the rarer instances of fall from horseback. Falling horseman 24.4, for example, is reminiscent of the arm-over-head pose of recumbent barbarians like 99.20, and horseman 79.4 lies in a position not dissimilar to figure 73.13, who has fallen face-first over a lump of rocky ground.

Fallen barbarians:

Once a barbarian has fallen to the ground, it is often difficult if not impossible to tell whether he has fallen from a horse or merely from his feet. It is clear, however, that the artist did have a certain stock of favored poses to choose from, the basic distinction being between the “active” fallen barbarians (who attempt to defend themselves or plead for their lives) and the “inactive” ones (who lie in various prone or semi-prone attitudes).

f: *Defensive fallen barbarian*



Only 4 fallen barbarians are shown attempting to use shields in self-defence. Their poses are quite similar: 27.3 and 77.1 each sit on the ground, supporting themselves with their right arms and raising their shields with their left arms to ward

off blows from above; 77.4 is in essentially the same pose, merely shown from the other side with the head further back, and 89.5 has his right arm position altered (he is grasping a spear in his right hand) and holds his shield above his head.

g: *Pleading fallen barbarian*



The pose of the pleading fallen barbarian, of which type there are 6 certain examples, is in 3 cases very similar to that used for the defensive fallen barbarian, discussed above. He sits on the ground, supporting himself with his left arm while gesturing upwards with his right in a motion of, apparently, pleading. Two other examples (20.12, 79.8) differ in that they hold shields on their left arms. Of these two barbarians, the former sits with legs spread while the latter, who is being stabbed in the chest from above, kneels. The sixth certain pleading barbarian (70.8) appears to plead while being stabbed in the back of the head. Three other figures (63.8, 99.7, 18.15) may be making pleading gestures, but their pose and/or preservation make it impossible in each case to be sure.

h: *Semi-prostrate barbarian*



5 fallen barbarians appear in a semi-prostrate position, 2 with their heads to the left, the other 3 with heads to the right. They do not constitute a particularly coherent “type,” since head and arm position vary in each case; they

do however show similar treatment of the lower body, with the legs more or less extended and the upper leg always shown crossed in front over the lower. This distinguishes these semi-prone inactive barbarians from their defensive or pleading fallen counterparts, who are never shown with their lower bodies in this configuration.

i: Barbarian fallen on face

11 barbarians are shown fallen on their faces, 6 with their head to the right, and 5 facing the other direction. They support themselves on their knees and elbows, and even in the two cases (73.13, 109.6) where face-flat barbarians are shown lying upon carefully rendered artificial ground, they are never shown in an entirely prone position. The head is most often placed between the arms, and one knee is usually shown slightly ahead of the other. The back is often distinctly curved.



j: Barbarian fallen on back



13 barbarians are shown fallen on their backs. Unlike the type above, none of these barbarians show any signs of life. The most common basic format is to show the barbarian lying on his back, one or both legs bent at the knee, with the torso and face turned three-quarters towards the viewer. The lower arm (right or left depending on which direction the figure is lying) is always fully extended, usually along the figure's side but sometimes above his head. The upper arm is

sometimes hidden behind the body (105.8, 109.7), but more often is shown extended over the head or, more rarely, alongside or across the torso. The single most common configuration, seen in 4 figures (79.3, 89.7, 99.14, 99.20) has the lower arm parallel to the body and the upper arm extended over the head. Two figures of this type differ significantly from the norm: one (109.3) has both arms extended above his head, and another (50.19) is placed at a near-vertical angle. Both of these figures are perhaps intended to show barbarian infantry in the act of falling.

Other Figures, Roman and Barbarian:

A few figures do not fit into the categories discussed above. The most prominent group consists of 3 barbarians formed into a defensive line in scene XIX (19.10-12), who cannot be identified as either spear- or swordsmen. They do stand in a pose reminiscent of underhand spearmen, and indicate a substantial degree of standardization. Another unique group of barbarians consists of two figures from scene LXXIX (79.5,.6), one of whom supports the other, who slumps limply in his arms. This grouping of two figures is unique on the column. This is reminiscent of depictions of Achilles and Penthesilea on sarcophagi, or perhaps the Pasquino group, although not an exact parallel of either. On the Roman side, notable are the two torch-throwing soldiers from the siege scene LIV (54.1, .2). Their stance has been modified to reflect their throwing action; compare spearman 24.7, who leans backwards to an even greater degree as he prepares to launch his weapon. Figures 20.16 and 20.17 also hold torches, but are not engaged in fighting. Unique among the Roman types is a single figure (99.5) shown wearing a lion-skin

headdress and sounding a long narrow horn. He too has no parallel on the column, but is a not-uncommon feature of sarcophagus decoration. These and other parallels with Roman sarcophagi are addressed in Chapter 5.

CATALOGUE

Scene numbers: The scene numbers are those used by Petersen (1896).

Illustrations: The illustrations are line drawings by the author, traced from the plates of Petersen 1896. Lacunae in the drawings reflect actual damage to the relief. Restorations of the Renaissance period are not drawn.

Scene descriptions: The first paragraph of the text describes the content of the scene, focusing on areas of ambiguity. The intention is to let the reader know who is who and doing what. The second paragraph discusses methods of overall composition (how the battle is arranged in general), and methods of relating the figures to each other (overlapping, interweaving). The third paragraph describes how the battle fits in (or doesn't) with the general flow of the narrative.

Battle VIII

This very small scene is the first incident of fighting on the Marcus column. In it, a Roman soldier (8) prepares to stab with his sword at a fleeing barbarian (9) who gestures upwards with his right arm. The Roman wears a plate cuirass (the usual prerogative of officers), and this is the first and only incident of a soldier wearing such a piece of equipment engaged in combat.

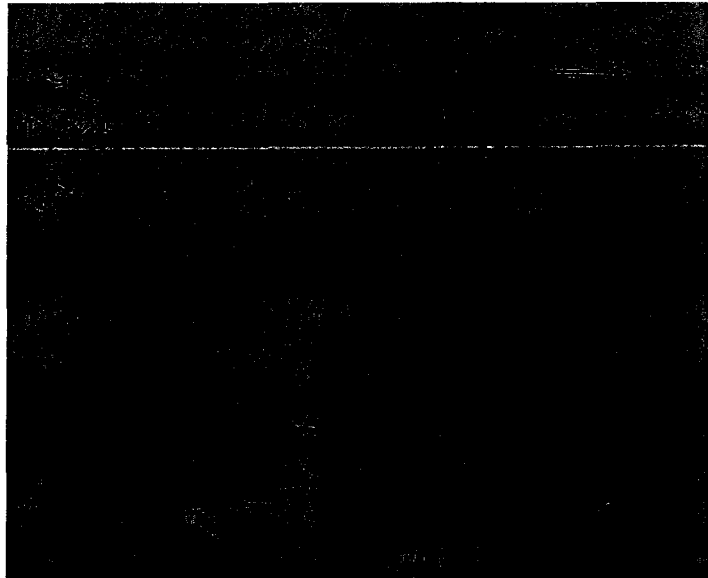
Below and in front of this small group is a party of three Roman soldiers (1-3) leading two barbarians to the emperor, who stands further to the left. Below them lie two barbarians, one on his face and one on his back, apparently dead. Further to the right is an *adlocutio* scene. It is not clear why a Roman officer is shown attacking a barbarian, nor is there a clear connection between this event and the scene depicted below.



Petersen 1896: 55; Caprino 1955: 84-85

Battle XII

This section of the column is heavily damaged, with only the outlines, and in some cases not even them, of the figures being preserved. Nonetheless it is possible to identify the general nature of the battle as an encounter between a mixed force of Roman infantry, cavalry and archers and a barbarian force of infantry and cavalry. At the far left, two Romans (1 and 2) stand together, with heads turned towards each other. At the



lower left a cavalryman (3), identifiable as Roman from his sandal, gallops right. Above him is another figure (4), likely Roman, and above 4 is another mounted figure (5), of whom only the end of his horse is visible. In front of 4 is a Roman soldier (6), identifiable by his short breeches and sandal, who is very likely engaged with a falling barbarian (7) of whom only the trouser-clad legs are visible (Petersen 57). In the top center a Roman archer (8) shoots at fleeing barbarian 12, in front of whom falls another barbarian (10). Below this group a Roman infantryman (9) engages a charging barbarian horseman (11). At the bottom right are three cows. Between figures 5 and 8 there is likely at least one extra figure, maybe more, but the relief here is too damaged to tell.

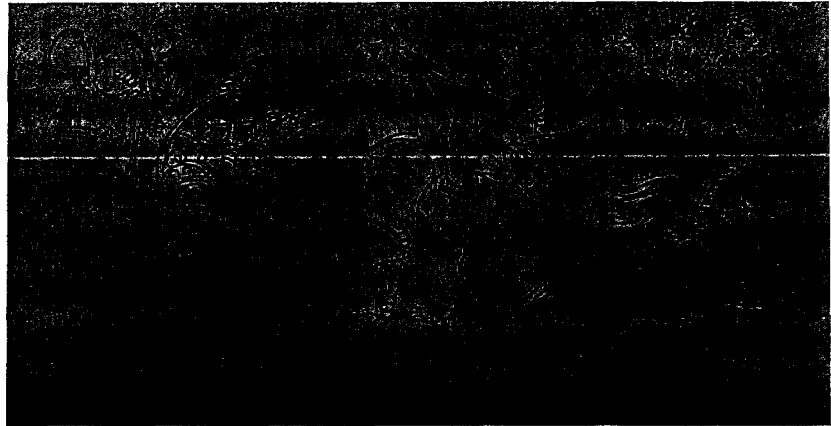
As far as can be determined, the composition of this scene is fairly loose. The Romans are generally on the left and the barbarians on the right, but in at least one case, a Roman (9) is shown in front of a barbarian (7), and there may be a barbarian behind (that is, to the left of) Roman archer 8 (see Petersen's drawing of this scene, Petersen 1896: 57).

This is the first large battle on the column. To the left is a river, on the other side of which Marcus witnesses the lightning miracle (scene XI); to the right is a small scene (XIII) showing the emperor making a sacrifice prior to crossing another river.

Petersen 1896: 57 (with drawing); Caprino 1955: 86-87

Battle XV

This scene shows a small group of two barbarians (7 and 8) attacked from both sides by two groups of three Roman auxiliary or allied archers.¹ The barbarians are simply clad in baggy trousers, both carry shields, and one is armed with a spear, the other with a sword.



The headgear of the Roman archers is notable, and may be compared with the group of three archers in battle scene XXXIX.

Figures 4-6 are part of a group of advancing Roman infantry, and appear to have nothing to do with the combat shown above. Figure 12, a mounted cape-wearing barbarian (12) who is fleeing to the right, may be fleeing from this group of advancing infantry, or may be escaping from the Roman ambush in the upper register. Petersen (58) followed by Caprino (88) suggest that he is a messenger.

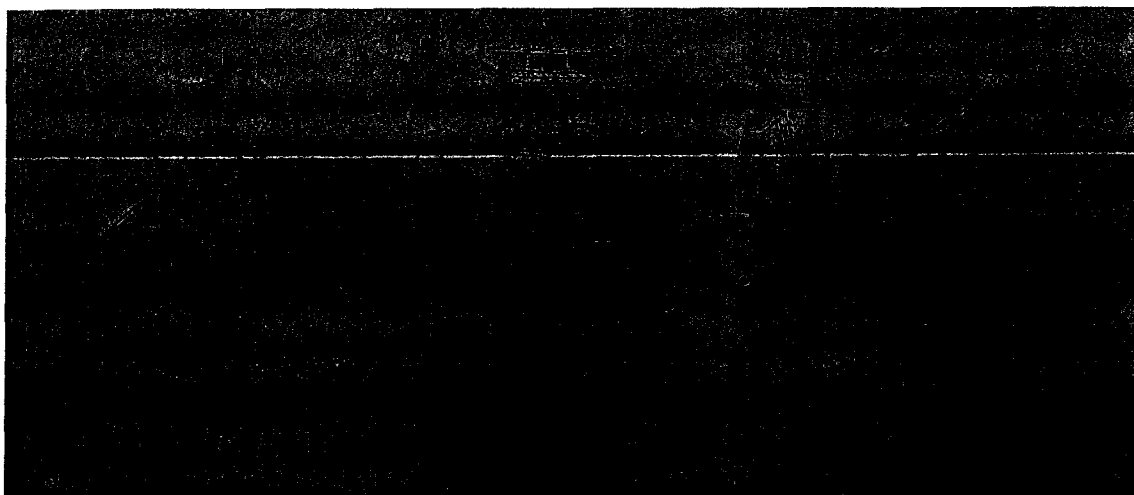
The composition of the battle in the upper register is relatively straightforward, but the result is well balanced. The basic scheme involves a two-sided attack with each party depicted in close formation. The two barbarian figures are carefully interwoven, while the attacking archers are presented in simple overlapping composition.

This small battle occupies only part of the height of the frieze band, and a small part of the entire scene XV. Below to the left a group of Roman infantry (of which figures 4-6 are part) advances from mountainous terrain in a tight mass, while below to the right stands Marcus Aurelius with some officers and soldiers, apparently unaware of the drama behind him. It is possible that this skirmish was meant to be understood together with the advancing mass of Roman infantry, although they are not directly involved in the fighting. The very next scene to the right (XVI) is the Rain Miracle.

Petersen 1896: 58; Caprino 1955: 88.

¹ So identified because they do not wear the standard dress of Roman soldiers. Most Roman archers on the column are of this type, with the notable exception of figure 3 in battle scene LVII (q.v.), who is mounted and wears standard chain mail armour and helmet.

Battle XVIII



The frieze at this point on the column is heavily damaged, particularly in the left hand section of this battle scene. At the upper left we see a Roman soldier (1) leading a horse, which Petersen (60) thinks is riderless. Below this pair are the legs of a supine trouser-wearing barbarian (3), while at the far bottom of the frieze are visible two more barbarian bodies (4 and 5). Above these is a Roman soldier (7; Petersen says mounted), in front of whom is the outline of an upended barbarian (6), depicted falling head over heels. Above and to the right of these figures is a group of two combatants, a Roman (9) who grabs at or attacks a barbarian (8) who has one arm raised. To the right of these figures is a wattle hut with an open door, followed by a Roman rider (10), whose outline suggests that he may be raising a spear. His opponent may be barbarian 11, a cloak-wearing figure who is wielding a sword with his arm bent over his head. Roman 12, a scale-clad infantryman, may also be menacing barbarian 11 with his spear, but it is not possible to tell which way his spear is pointed. In front of figure 12 is another Roman, 13, who along with Roman 14 attacks barbarian 15 with his spear. The barbarian reclines in front of a tree. In the lower or front register, more heavily damaged than the upper, is a Roman infantryman (16) who holds his shield in front of him with an extended arm. With this arm he may be pulling barbarian 17 from his horse. Finally, in the lower right corner, a barbarian (18) lies fallen from his horse, which gallops away above to the right.

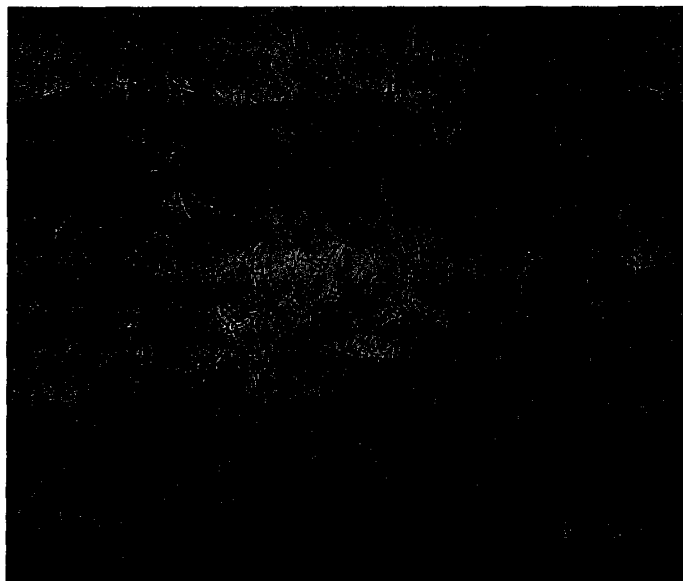
In overall composition, the left half of this battle scene differs substantially from the right. In the left, the figures appear mixed together, the Romans sometimes on the left, sometimes on the right. In the right half of the battle, past the hut, the Romans form a distinct mass on the left and upper sides of the battle, from which position they attack and drive before them the barbarians. The right hand half may be easily divided into two registers, but in contrast to many two-register scenes, the detailed composition of the upper register is more complex than that of the lower, front register. Interweaving is used to combine figures, and the upper register as a whole contains more figures than the lower.

Immediately to the left, that is, before battle XVIII in the narrative is a scene (XVII) of German submission, which itself follows the Rain Miracle. This battle appears to have no direct connection to that scene, but the damage to the frieze makes it hard to tell for certain. To the right of the battle, effectively separated from it by the tree and part of the artificial ground line, is battle scene XIX, which shows a formation of barbarians beset by a group of Roman infantry and cavalry. Following this is yet another village battle scene (XX), which creates a long sequence of village battle-open battle-village battle.

Petersen 1896: 59-60; Caprino 1955: 89-90

Battle XIX

Figures 1-5 are Roman soldiers wearing segmented armour, as far as can be seen from the partially damaged state of the relief. Three of them (2, 4, and 5) brandish their spears against the row of barbarians (10-12) at the lower right. Figures 6 and 7 are apparently not part of the battle line, but are attending to the oxen at right, which are pulling a cart holding a captured barbarian couple. The involvement in the battle of figures 1-5 is indicated only by the raised spears; there is no direct contact between these



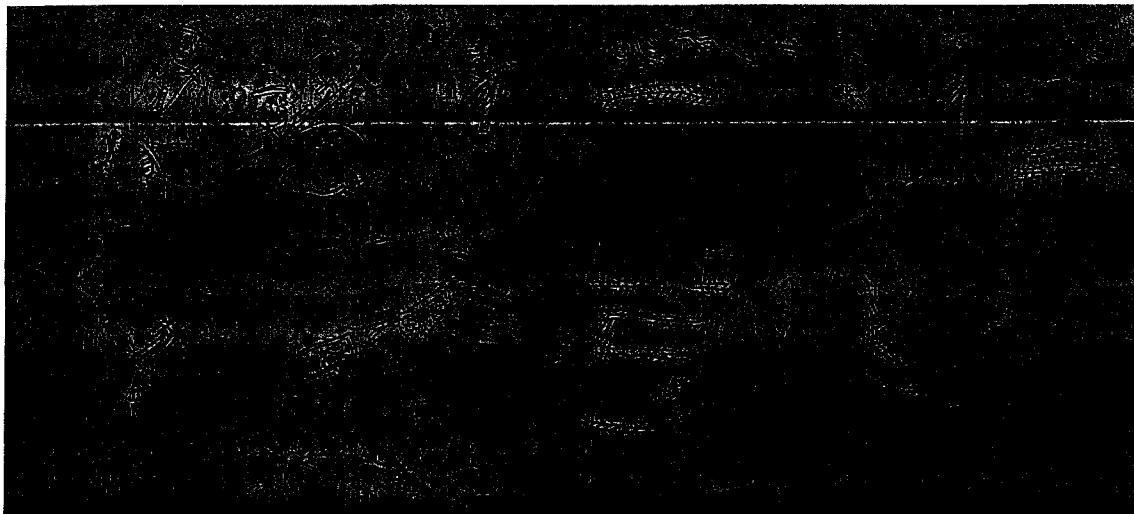
soldiers and the barbarians in the lower register. Figures 8 and 9, both Roman cavalrymen wearing chain mail, are advancing to attack the solid line of barbarians, figures 10-12. All three barbarians wear trousers, and two (10 and 12) wear cloaks in addition. They face their Roman adversaries shoulder to shoulder.

The composition is simple, with tight grouping and nothing more complex in the arrangement of these groups than straightforward overlapping. One gets the impression that battle is about to be joined.

This battle falls in the middle of a long combat sequence, with a village battle (scene XVIII) before it and another (XX) after it; the remainder of scene XIX (to the right) shows Marcus addressing his troops in the background, while in the foreground a barbarian leader flees on horseback. The action of the three barbarians in this battle may be interpreted as covering for their leader's retreat.

Petersen 1896: 60-61; Caprino 1955: 90

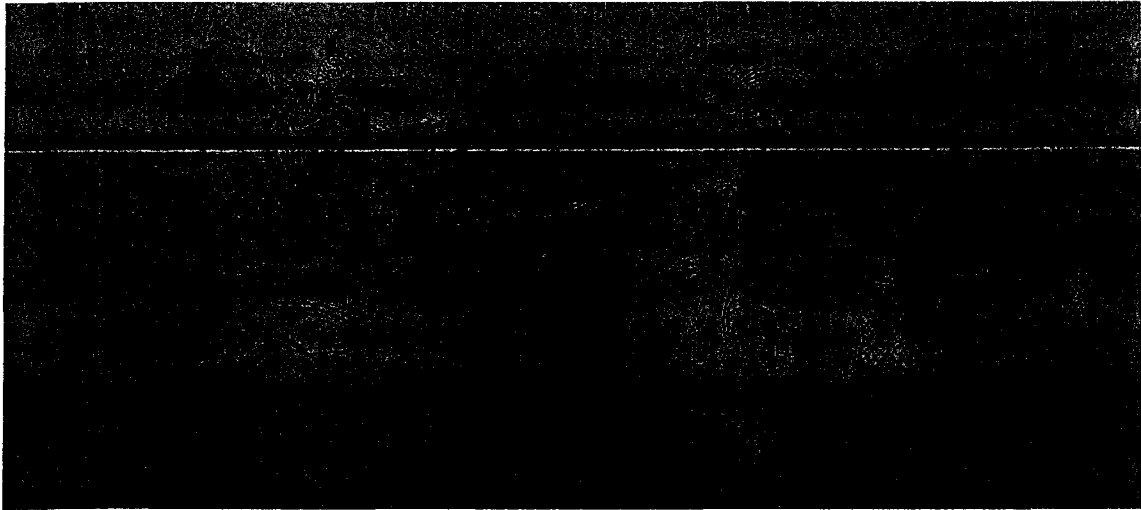
Battle XX



This large scene depicts a Roman attack on a substantial barbarian village, represented by three huts (two in the centre and one to the right). At the far left is a mass of Roman attackers, figures 1-6, two on horseback and the remainder on foot. At the lower left, Roman cavalryman 5 advances on barbarian 8, who defends himself with his shield and, presumably, a sword (his head and upper arm is destroyed by a large metal clamp inserted to repair the column drum). Above this pair, Romans 4 and 6 advance towards a barbarian (7) who gestures with both arms. Behind 7 are two more barbarians, 9 and 10, who wear fringed cloaks and gesture towards a burning hut. Below, in the front register, a single Roman soldier (11) raises his sword to smite a fallen barbarian (12), who leans against a hut and gestures towards his attacker with one hand. Beneath Roman 11 another barbarian (13) has fallen on his face. To the right of the lower hut a cloaked barbarian (14), his sword and shield dropped at his feet, gestures towards a Roman soldier (15) who has his spear raised. Above them two other Romans (16 and 17) set fire to the upper hut with torches extended in their right arms. To their right another Roman (18) prepares to stab a rightward facing and upward gesturing barbarian (19). Finally, in the bottom right corner a Roman soldier grabs a barbarian woman (21) by the hair. The woman holds a boy by his left arm.

The overall composition of this scene is dense, with the barbarians located mostly in the center and the Romans at each side. A two-register format is used throughout. The arrangement of figures is particularly complex to the left of the lower central hut, where extensive interweaving is used. Otherwise, overlapping is the norm.

This battle falls at the end of the village battle-open battle-village battle sequence begun with battle scene XVIII. To the right of this scene we see more barbarian huts, together with a depiction of Marcus watching the execution(?) of a fallen barbarian.

Battle XXIII

This large battle scene, the first incorporating barbarian cavalry, shows a group of barbarians succumbing to an attack by Roman and allied infantrymen. All of the barbarians are shown fleeing, falling, or pleading; none resist. At the left are attacking Romans (1-3); their equipment is too damaged to identify in detail. The object of their attack is a group of barbarians, of which figures 7 and 8 are clearly cavalry while figures 4-6 may be infantry or possibly unseated cavalry. Two barbarians (4 and 5) appear to implore a Roman (3) for mercy, although the rearward facing head of barbarian 4 may indicate that he is appealing to his departing comrades. Two other barbarians (6 and 7) are in the process of falling, although they do not appear to have any direct attackers. In the lower register is a single horse, apparently with a barbarian rider (8). It is possible that there was another figure to the right of 8, but the frieze is too damaged to tell. In the right-hand half of the scene, three Romans (14-16) occupy the foreground, menacing a line of fleeing mounted barbarians (9-11).

Behind and above the regular Roman infantrymen are two figures in barbarian dress (12 and 13), who also seem to be attacking the fleeing barbarian horsemen. Petersen (62) and Caprino (91) identify figures 12 and 13 as Germanic allies of the Romans. Petersen also identifies this scene as the first on the column showing Sarmatians fighting the Romans, whom he identifies not so much by their equipment as by their manner of battle – cavalry, sometimes in linear formation.

The composition of this battle scene appears haphazard, and the fighting in the right hand side of the scene almost seems like a separate scene to itself. Although the extensive damage to the left half of this scene makes it difficult to tell for certain, there appears to be very little use of interweaving techniques to link figures. The figures are fairly widely spaced.

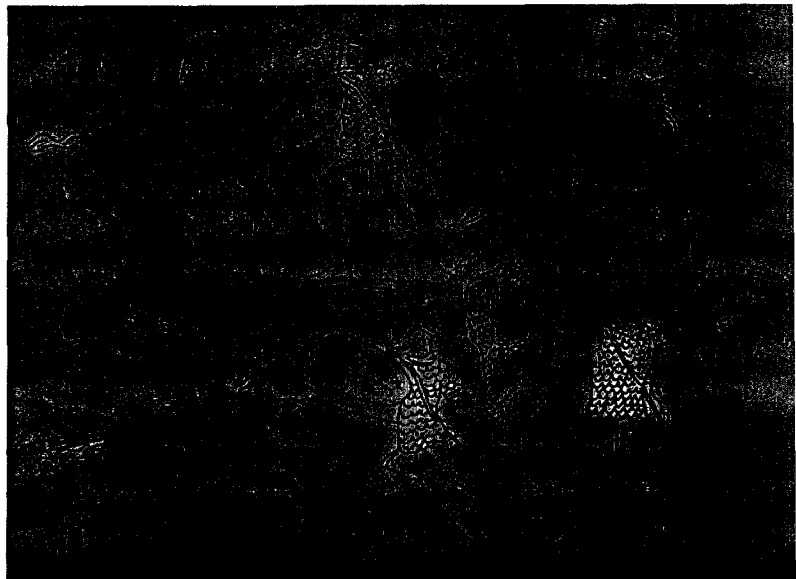
This battle immediately follows a parlay scene (XXII) in which Marcus holds a discussion with barbarians across a river. There is no direct figural connection between the two scenes, but the battle might be read as a result of a failed parlay. Immediately

after this battle is another battle (XXIV), a somewhat confused fight between barbarian cavalry and Roman infantry which Petersen (63) identifies as the repulsion of a barbarian attack on the rearguard of a marching Roman column.

Petersen 1896: 62-63; Caprino 1955: 91-92.

Battle XXIV

This scene depicts a group of Roman infantry, all facing left (in contrast to the usual direction of Roman troops on the column), fighting a group of barbarian cavalry. At the upper left, a barbarian (1) careens headlong over the neck of his falling horse, while his shield flies up into the air. Roman 2 is apparently engaged in attacking the unlucky fellow, advancing with his spear raised. Below, a cloaked



barbarian (3) gallops off to the left while gesturing with his right hand. In front of him, another similarly clad comrade (4) advances on a Roman (5) with spear and shield at the ready. Behind Roman 5 stands another Roman with his sword raised above his head – although the object of this gesture is not apparent. Behind him another Roman (7) makes a menacing gesture with his spear; this is perhaps, but by no means certainly, aimed at falling barbarian 9, above. Barbarian 9 has tumbled right off his horse's back, with only one leg left draped over the neck of the horse. Behind the horse a Roman soldier (8) spears downwards.

This widely spaced scene is clearly divided into two registers by an artificial groundline. The figures in the foreground are more tightly spaced than those in the background, and almost all are linked together by careful interweaving of various parts of their bodies. In contrast, the rear register of figures is so dispersed that only in one instance is there even overlapping of two figures.

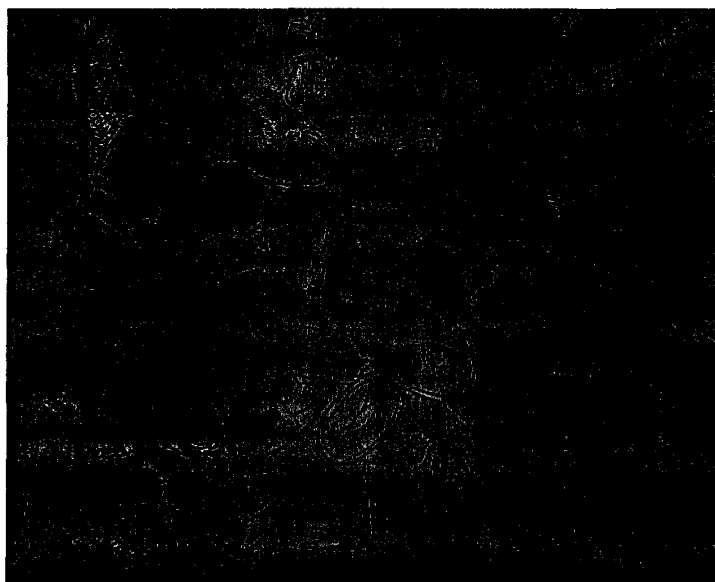
This battle is immediately to the right of battle scene XXIII in the narrative sequence, separated from it only by virtue of the turned backs of the Roman combatants in the earlier scene. To the right a window divides this battle from the scene (XXV) that follows, showing a march in the upper register and a depiction of Marcus receiving captured barbarians in the lower. Thus, Petersen (63) identifies this battle scene as the

repulse of a group of barbarians who have fallen on the rear of the marching Roman column. In my mind, the connection between the two scenes is not clear enough.

Petersen 1986: 63; Caprino 1955: 92

Battle XXVII

This interesting scene is the only one on the column which shows the emperor directly placed in a battle context. The emperor (6, identified by his dress, gesture, and central position) is shown galloping to the left up an inclined artificial ground line. He holds his horse's bridle with one hand and gestures to his front with the other. Slightly in front and to his right rides a Roman cavalryman (5), a spear in his right hand and a shield in his left, his head turned back to the emperor. Further to the



left a Roman swordsman (2) strikes a menacing pose, as if he has just cut down the head-over-heels falling barbarian 1. Behind the emperor ride three Romans, one of whom (8) has his spear raised as if to strike against an enemy. In the center of the lower register, a Roman soldier (4) leans forward with his spear to attack a sitting barbarian (3), who attempts to defend himself with his shield. The defense seems successful, since the Roman's spear disappears behind the barbarian's shield. In the lower right corner an apparently wounded barbarian crouches on the ground.

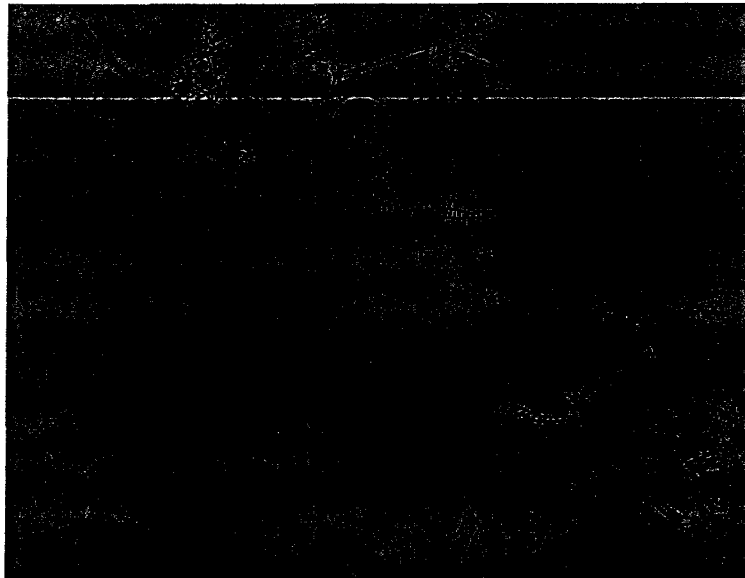
The composition of this scene is ordered in such a way as to highlight the emperor. No other figure overlaps either him or his horse, even though he is in the second register. All his attendant soldiers fall behind him in a pyramidal overlapping structure. In the lower, front register the figures are much more widely spaced, with some overlapping which serves to accentuate the two central combatants.

To the left of this battle is a scene (XXVI) showing a Roman march and the bringing of a prisoner to the emperor. No connection between the two scenes is indicated. To the right is a scene (XXVIII) showing the Romans crossing a body of water in boats, again with no clear connection to the battle.

Petersen 1896: 63; Caprino 1955: 92

Battle XXIX+XXX

This portion of the frieze is heavily damaged, making the identification of some of the figures doubtful. The clearest figures are those in the upper register: a single barbarian swordsman (3), armed with sword and shield, is attacked by three Romans (1, 2, and 4) from both sides. At the lower left, the figure of a fallen barbarian (6) is clear. Above him gallops a rider with a shield (5); Petersen (64) calls him a



barbarian, but there is no clear indication of his nationality. Figure 7 is likewise very difficult to identify. He is considered by Petersen to be a Roman because he has toes visible on his right foot, no toes are visible on the plate. Finally, in the lower right a Roman with a shield and raised spear/sword arm menaces a seated and gesturing barbarian (9). This pair is included by Petersen with the subsequent scene, but may just as well be placed here with the battle. The back end of the horse in front of figure 4 is also part of the following scene, and is being held by a Roman soldier off to the right.

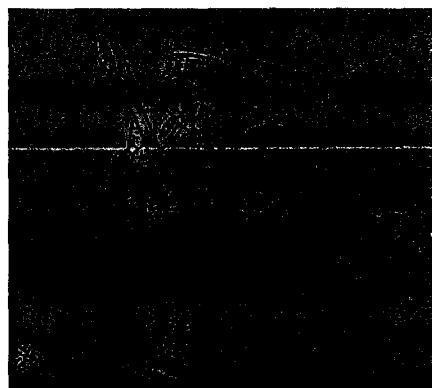
This scene is composed of two registers, the front one heavily damaged. The rear register shows the common technique of overlapping of figures. The front register employs both overlapping and interweaving.

This battle follows immediately a Roman bridge crossing scene (also part of XXIX), and both Petersen and Caprino interpret it as a bridgehead battle. To the right is a scene (XXX) showing Marcus making a sacrifice, while his soldiers march by below. The battle has no direct connection to this scene, but neither are the two clearly demarcated.

Petersen 1896: 64; Caprino 1955: 93

Battle XXXV

In this odd little incident, a Roman soldier leans towards and raises his spear at a barbarian cavalryman, who slumps on his rearing/falling horse. The pair is assembled using simple overlapping. There is no apparent connection between this little fight and the scene which surrounds it. Immediately above is a cart drawn, Caprino (95) believes, by mules. To the left of this is a depiction of Marcus and at least one officer, below whom are Roman infantry standing. To the right, more Romans advance in that direction.

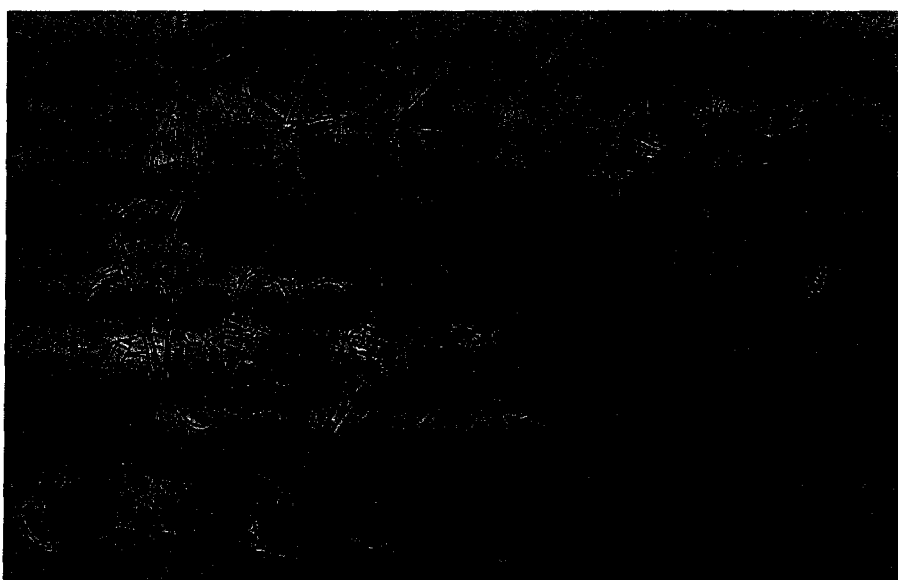


Petersen 1896: 66; Caprino 1955: 95

Battle XXXIX

Three fleeing barbarian horsemen (8-10) are being attacked by two groups of Roman soldiers, four *segmentati* in the foreground (4-7) and three archers (1-3) in the background.

Two of the barbarians are bearded and one



at least (10) appears to wear a cloak, but none are shown with the flying cloaks so popular in other depictions of fleeing barbarian riders on the column. One barbarian (8) has already been wounded by an arrow in the chest. The Roman *segmentati* carry oval shields instead of rectangular ones, although their legs are bare, in keeping with the standard depiction of "legionaries" on the column. The allied(?) archers in the background wear trousers, long-sleeved shirts, tunics, and caps (cf. the similarly attired archers in battle scene XV).

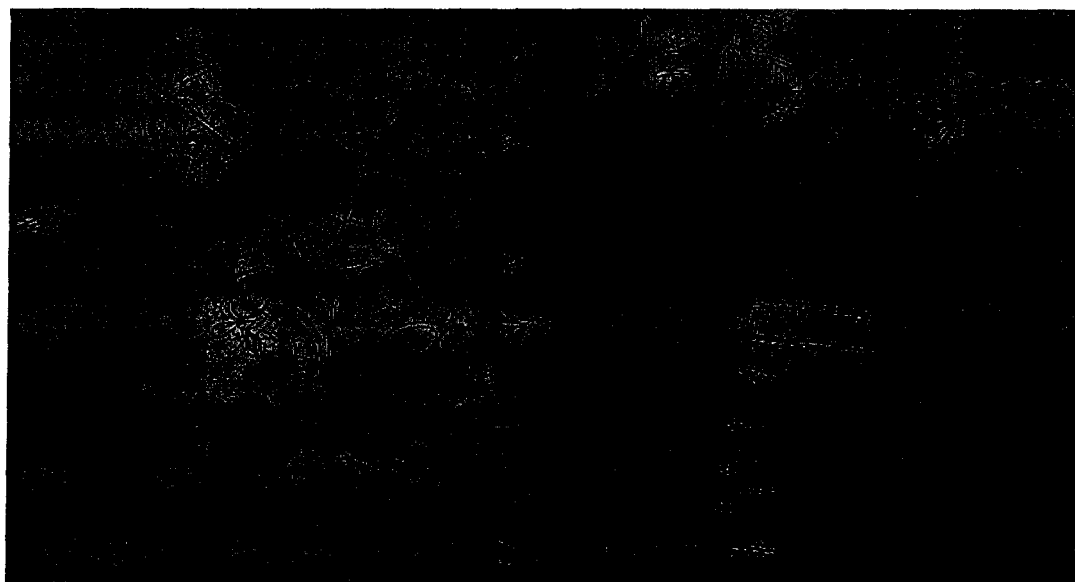
Petersen (67) calls these three barbarians our first clear example of Sarmatians shown on the column. There is more detail visible on these figures than on the three barbarians in battle scene XXIII, which Petersen (62) also identified as Sarmatians because of their dress and "Kampfesweise."²

While the overall composition of this battle is relatively simple, with the figure groups compact and distinct, in detail it is more complex than battle 4b. The foremost two barbarians (10 and 9) overlap the lead Roman infantryman, while the rearmost barbarian is himself overlapped by the lead Roman archer. The row of advancing infantry also shows evidence of complex and thoughtful composition, especially in the interweaving of figures 5 and 6.

The battle makes up only half of scene XXXIX. The remainder of the scene, to the left of the battle, shows a fortified camp from which the Romans in this battle appear to have just exited. The following scene (XL) is likely intended to show the result of the battle, as a group of barbarians beseech the emperor with raised hands in an act of submission and pleading.

Petersen 1896: 67; Caprino 1955: 95-96

Battle XLIII



This scene shows an attack by a force of Roman cavalry and infantry on a barbarian village. At the left, in the foreground, a Roman infantryman aims his spear at a barbarian swordsman (4), while in the background a Roman cavalryman (1) charges with spear

² Followed by Domaszewski (117), viewed as uncertain by Zwicker (267), and neither supported nor refuted by Caprino (96).

raised against a beardless barbarian (2) who flees to the right, hands upraised. At the center right, a lone barbarian (8) stands near a hut, gesturing over it with one arm. The upper body of this barbarian, and the lower bodies of Roman soldiers 6 and 7 above, exist only as a modern inserted restoration. Barbarian 8 is beset by three Romans, 5-7, each of whom aims his spear at the hapless German. Further to the right, a barbarian woman flees from the hut, turning her head to look back, while a Roman cavalryman gallops above her, apparently aiming his spear at her head.

The figures composing this scene are very intermingled – note in particular the back-to-back pose of enemies 4 and 5. The actions of the barbarians, some fleeing while others resist, give the impression of a chaotic encounter. The figures are arranged into one-on-one (or three-on-one) groups using very simple, overlapping composition, and in general are widely spaced.

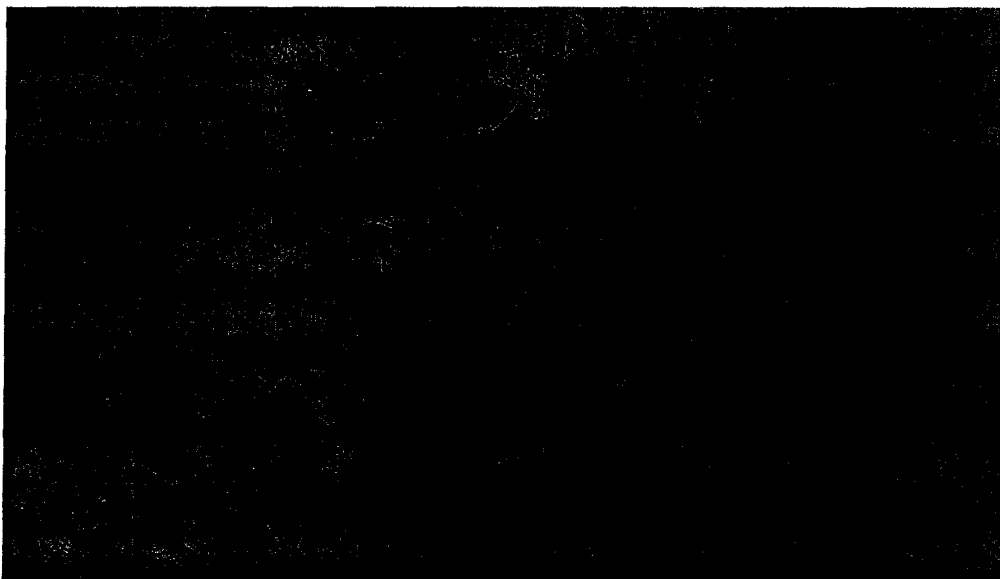
To the left of this battle, and bearing no apparent connection to it, is the obscure scene XLII, which shows Marcus participating in a ceremony with three litter-borne functionaries in attendance. To the right is a rapid-looking advance of Roman cavalry and infantry.

Petersen 1896: 69; Caprino 1955: 97

Battle XLVIII

The surface of this section of frieze is rather heavily damaged, but all the figures can be identified with more or less certainty.

In the upper background, three mounted Roman soldiers (3-5; only 4 is clearly identifiable as wearing chain mail) chase figure 6, identifiable as a barbarian horseman by the rendering of his dangling foot. In the lower register, a Roman infantryman (1) advances with shield and spear at the ready. Figure 7, a Roman cavalryman with spear raised, is in the act of spearing barbarian 8, who has fallen backwards and sideways from his horse. The right-hand end of the scene is made up of a number of inserted restored blocks, but the window



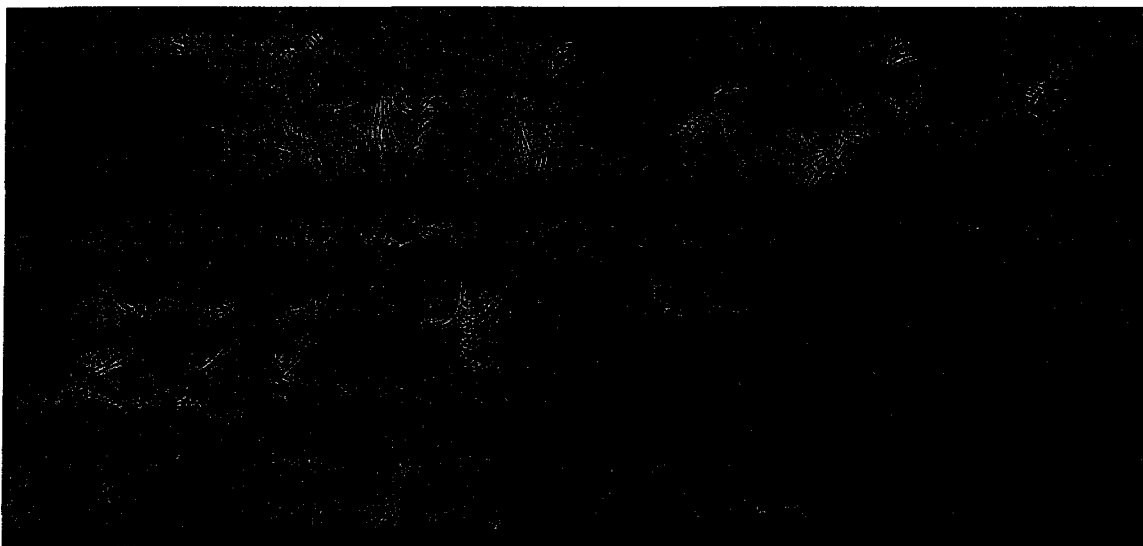
immediately above the right-most reed plant indicates that figures 6 and 8 were the rightmost figures in the original scene.

The composition of this battle is loose, but is made a little more complex by depicting the main foreground Roman cavalryman in the act of riding over a fallen barbarian to spear another in front. The resulting partial mixture of combatants in the lower register weakens somewhat this scene's general two-sided nature; that is, it breaks up the solid Roman and barbarian groups. However, the mixed-in barbarian is dead, and the effect of a dead barbarian on the ground is much less than that of a live one placed directly within the action. This battle appears to show two groups of combatants in rough if dispersed formation, perhaps indicating a later phase in the battle. The arrangement of the figures into two registers is clear, and no figure from one register interacts with any figure from the other. Extensive use is made of interweaving to compose the first register, but only overlapping is used to put together the figures of the second.

The right-hand border of this scene is formed by the above-mentioned window, which divides this battle scene from the Marcus and ambassador scene (XLIX) which follows. To the left of the fighting figures in this scene are a number of Roman soldiers engaged in cutting and burning rushes, while behind them the emperor stands with his comrades and gestures, apparently giving instructions.

Petersen 1896: 70; Caprino 1955: 98

Battle L



This battle begins with three Roman infantry (1-3) marching right in close formation, spears raised. Above them, two barbarians flee right on horseback, with heads turned back. In front, that is, to the right, of these figures, we see more Romans advancing. Figure 6 leads a horse, while slightly above him to the right, figure 7 holds a spear and shield to his front. Above figure 7 is a mounted Roman (8) with raised spear. He is engaged with barbarian 9, a fully clad figure who defends himself with a shield and

sword. Below and in front of barbarian 9 rides Roman 10, shown galloping forward in an alert but neutral pose over the bodies (11 and 12) of two fallen barbarians. The central figure in the main group of combatants is Roman 14, who brandishes his spear against a barbarian (15) defending himself with shield and sword. Above and behind 14 rides another Roman (16), while to his right a Roman infantryman (17) spears a falling barbarian (18), below whom yet another barbarian (19) falls.

The Romans are almost all dressed in chain mail, with the exception of figures 6, 10, and 13, who wear scale armour. All also wear crested helmets with the exception of 10 and, perhaps, 6. With the exception of 11, who wears only trousers, the barbarians are all fully clad in trousers and tunic. Figures 5, 15, and 19 also wear cloaks.

The composition of the scene is dense and complex. No clear registers are used; rather, the main composition is based on two diagonal ranks of opposing figures. The Roman rank is formed by figures 10, 14, and 16, opposed to the crumbling line of barbarian figures 15, 18, and 19. The cascade of falling barbarians is reminiscent of the barbarian bridge defenders in battle LXXXIX. The pose of figure 14, the central attacking Roman, is particularly heroic and is reminiscent of the central figures on some battle sarcophagi.

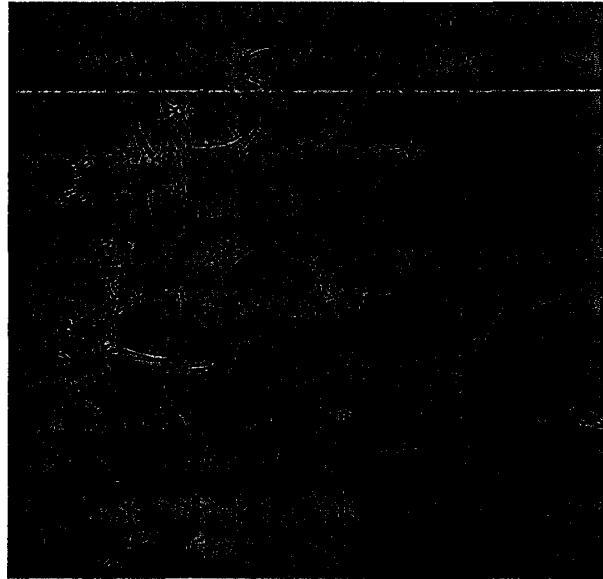
It is hard to determine how closely this battle is related to the preceding action on the column, which shows Roman infantry marching aggressively out from a Roman fortress and driving off barbarian besiegers(?). Figures 1 to 3 are advancing from the gate of the fortress, from which barbarians 4 and 5 appear to be fleeing. Romans 6 and 7 are not directly involved in the fighting, and figure 6 seems particularly out of place in that he is calmly leading his horse while battle rages in front of him. Petersen (70) thinks that the whole action should be understood as a single Roman breakout. However, there is a reflection of figure types very similar to Romans 1-3 and barbarians 4-5 in scene XLIXb on the other side of the fortress, and it is possible that scene L could be broken between figures 3 and 5 on the left and 6-8 on the right. Thus battle L might be better viewed as two incidents, an infantry sortie which drives away some barbarian cavalry, followed by a larger battle incorporating figures 6-19. There is no connection between the battle and the following scene (LI), a meeting between Marcus and a barbarian potentate.

Petersen 1896: 70-71; Caprino 1955: 99

Battle LII

The fighting action in this scene is confined largely to the lower register. There a single barbarian (3), standing over the body of a fallen comrade and armed with round shield and sword, resists the attack of three Roman cavalymen (1, 2, and 8), all of whom have trained their spears on their unfortunate opponent. The remaining Roman cavalymen (5-7) gallop off to the right, without any apparent connection to the fighting below.

It is noteworthy that both the fallen barbarian (4) and his standing comrade (3) wear fringed tunics. The large round shield of 3 is also noteworthy. The Romans are mostly



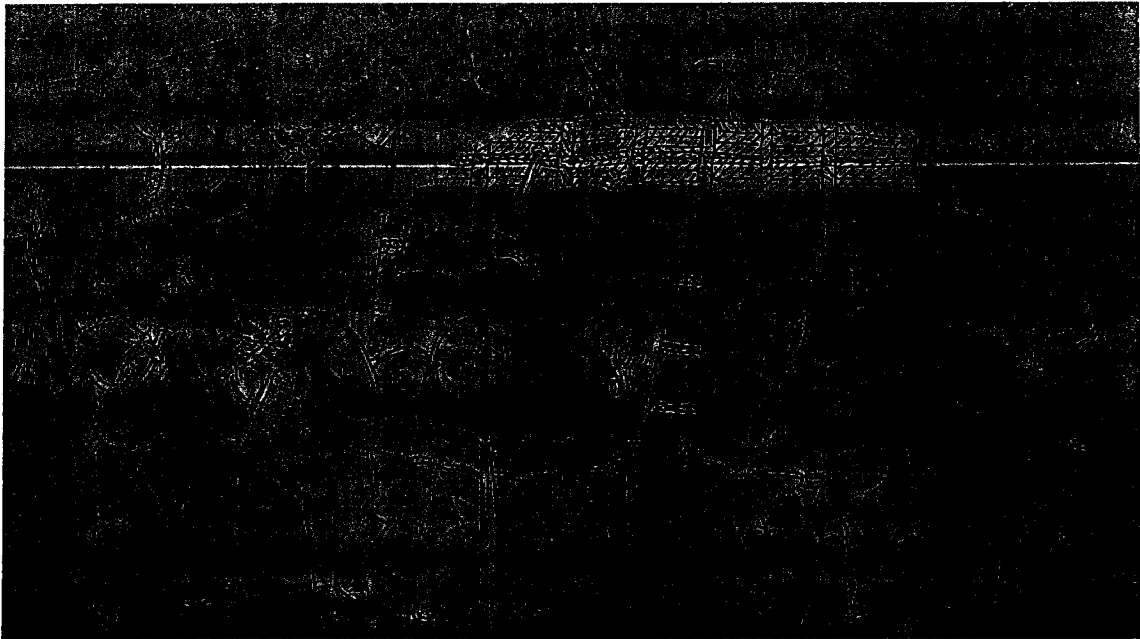
dressed in the standard chain mail, but figure 1 wears scale armour that appears rendered in a slightly unorthodox fashion (the scales in very low relief). He may also wear a loop-topped helmet, while all the other soldiers wear crested ones.

The composition of the lower register, with a central resisting enemy beset from both sides, the Romans overlapping on one side and overlapped on the other, is reminiscent of the single-register combat in battle scene XV. The spearing gesture of 2 ties this figure in to the fighting, and it is possible that he should be considered as distinct from the galloping Romans in the upper right.

This battle does not mesh with scene LI to its right, showing a parlay between Marcus and some important barbarians. The three Romans (5-7) riding in the background may help link this battle with the following submission scene (LIII), since they seem to be herding two barbarians in front of them.

Petersen 1896: 71; Caprino 1955: 99

Battle LIV



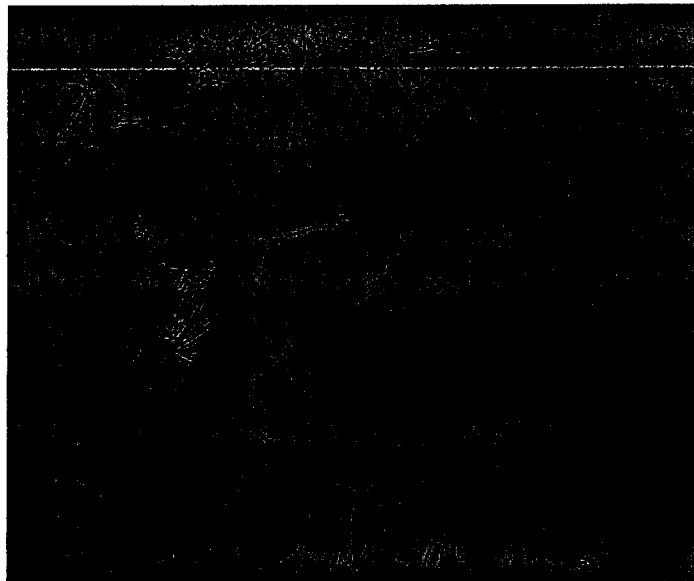
In the center of this scene is a large fortification, apparently built of wattle, which is being defended by four barbarians (5-8). In front of the fort are two formations of Roman infantry. Each consists of twelve men, the hips and legs of four of whom (9-12 and 13-16) may be seen in each formation. The men hold rectangular shields over their heads in an interlocked *testudo* formation. Figures 12 and 13, when viewed at an angle, reveal that they wear segmented armour. Note that at the bottom edge of the shields of the left-hand *testudo* are visible three runnels of liquid, apparently flowing over the shields from the pot visible atop them. To the left of the fort we see an attack by two pairs of Roman soldiers. One pair of infantry (1, 2) prepares to hurl torches, while a pair of cavalry (3, 4) prepares to throw spears. To the right of the fort, two Roman cavalrymen (17, 18) watch events unfold.

Although this scene does not present a standard battle type, its overall composition is clearly well balanced. The attacking Romans on the left are balanced by the observing Romans on the right, and even the *testudo* formations are represented in a pair (contrary to the similar scene on Trajan's column, where only one *testudo* is shown). The details of the composition are also very carefully attended to. Both sets of legs shown under the two shield formations are rendered in the same manner, with the third figure from the center of each formation shown as overlapping the figures on each side of him. The two attacking pairs of Romans to the left are also carefully interwoven.

This scene is clearly separated from both the scene before it, which shows barbarians surrendering themselves to the emperor, and the following scene, which shows a grand imperial *adlocutio* immediately preceding the figure of Victory.

Battle LVII

This battle scene shows a group of barbarian infantry (4, 5, 7, and 8), armed with round shields and spears (4 perhaps has a sword), ensconced in a wood and assailed from two sides by Roman soldiers. The three leftmost attacking Romans (1-3) appear to have their attention focussed on barbarian 4, who defends himself vigorously. Roman 3 is remarkable for being armed with a bow, a rare but not unparalleled tasking for a regular Roman soldier.³ The uppermost barbarian, 5, is clearly fighting



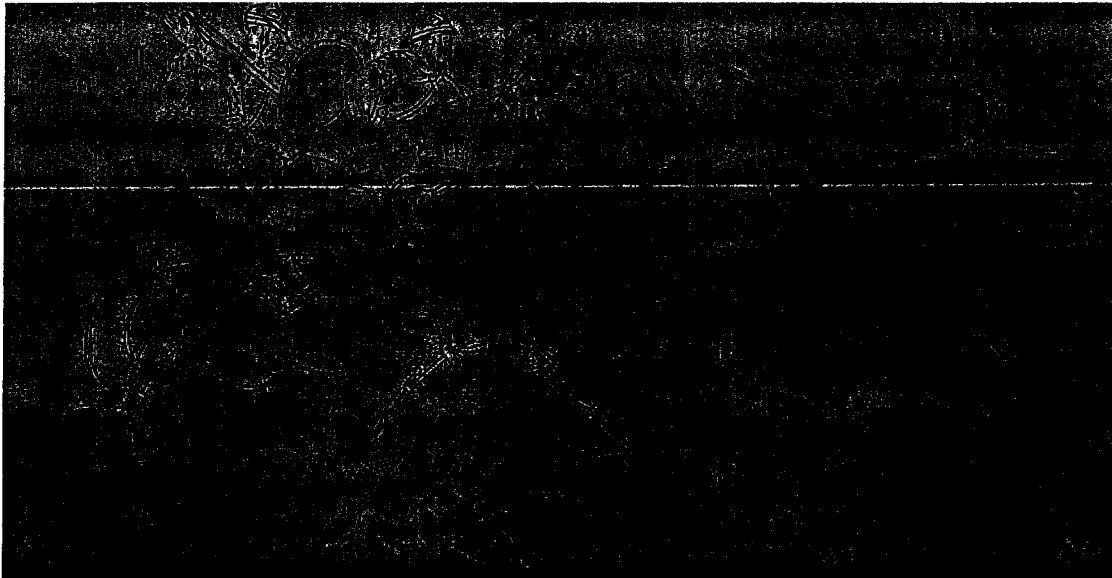
against attacking Roman 6, and their raised spears gives the encounter the air of a Homeric duel. Barbarians 7 and 8 have no clear opponents, and Romans 9 and 10 appear to ride on by without noticing the battle off to their left. They may be intended as escorts for the barbarian captives (11-13) and livestock shown in the lower right portion of this scene.

The composition of this scene is quite complex, and not always clear, particularly since it combines combatants and non-combatants in a very small area. The figures and the landscape are both closely interwoven, and this results in some confusing details, for example the representation of Roman 2 as passing behind the tree in front while Roman 1 appears to be jumping his horse through its branches. This battle is carefully isolated from the scenes before and after it on the column. The left side is bounded by a tree and a window, separating it from a scene (LVI) of Marcus receiving an embassy of barbarians. The right side is bounded by an even more substantial and artificial-looking tree, which serves to separate the battle scene from a scene (LVIII) showing Marcus supervising the hand-over of weapons by some barbarians. This is, incidentally, the first scene of battle after the Victory figure.

Petersen 1896: 72; Caprino 1955: 101

³ For a very similar figure on a tombstone of a member of the *equites singulares augusti*, see Speidel 1994: 367, #684; findspot Mainz.

Battle LXIII



This scene shows a rather confused melee between a mixed force of Roman cavalry and infantry and a predominantly mounted barbarian enemy. Beginning at the left, two Romans, figures 2 and 3, appear to be just riding in, while above them another Roman (1) rides off gesturing to the left. To the right of these figures are two fighting groups. In the foreground, two Roman infantrymen (6 and 7) attack a fallen barbarian with spear and sword. Above them, a Roman infantryman (4) spears a fleeing barbarian (5). Further to the right in the foreground is another fighting pair, composed of a Roman cavalryman (10) who chases a shield-bearing barbarian (9). Above and behind this pair are two mounted figures, a barbarian (11) riding to the right and a Roman riding in front of him in the same direction, with spear raised as if to stab an opponent. Of note are the uniform arms of the Roman soldiers, all of whom are equipped with chain mail.

Though the content of this scene appears scattered and unfocussed, its composition is hierarchical and schematic. As can be seen from the diagram, the figures easily resolve into two distinct registers, the upper one provided with an artificial ground line. The action is very much focussed on one-on-one (or two-on-one) fighting groups. The predominant technique of figure placement is overlapping, especially in the front row, where the careful composition focuses the viewer's attention onto the plight of barbarian 8. The symmetry of the first register is reflected in the second, where the outermost figures each ride out from the center instead of towards it.

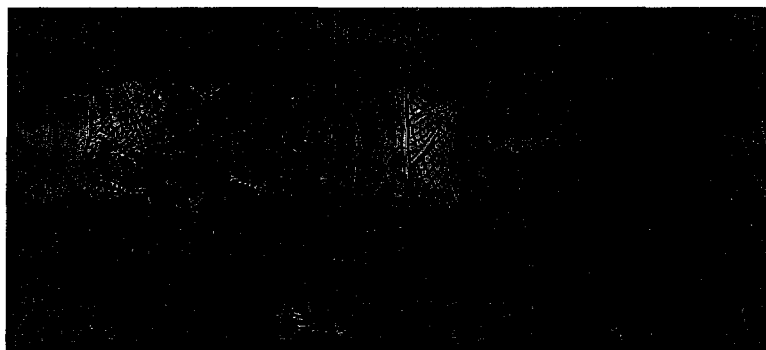
This battle is spatially and thematically isolated from the scene which precedes it (LXII), where the emperor is shown receiving a barbarian delegation. The only indication of a possible connection is the Roman rider (1) galloping and gesturing to the left, as if to alert the emperor to the battle. Immediately to the right is a large area of complete restoration, filled in with a reconstruction of mingling Romans. Just before this restoration, however, can be seen the foreparts of two mounted Roman soldiers, whose

horses stand peacefully one above the other. Their non-bellicose attitude indicates that whatever the next scene was, it was likely not a battle.

Petersen 1896: 74; Caprino 1955: 103

Battle LXX

The entire upper portion of this scene is a reconstruction, so it is impossible to reconstruct the exact nature of the scene's contents or composition. The

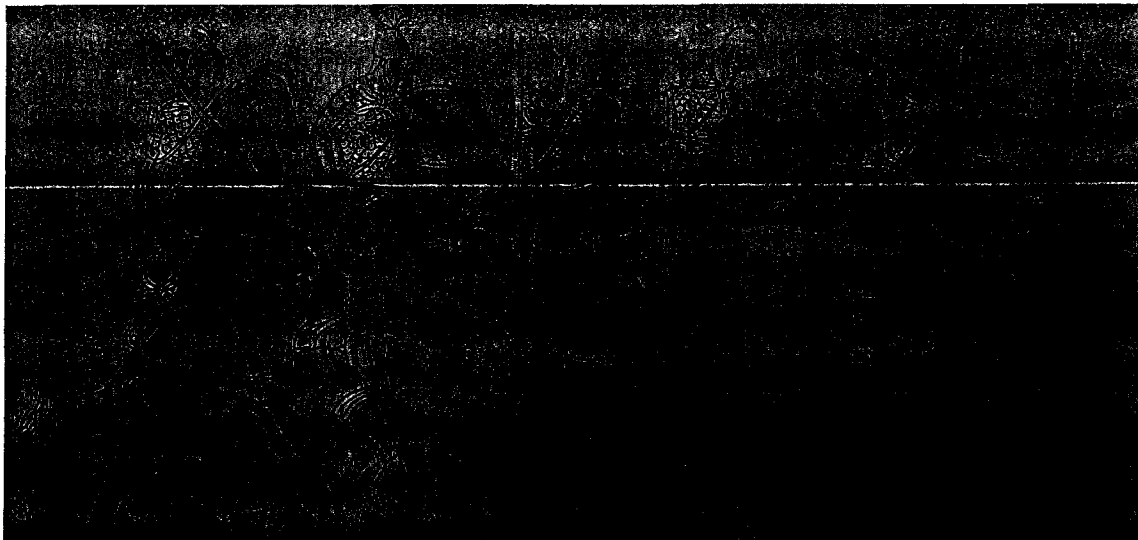


The remaining elements include three Roman infantrymen (1-3), who advance to the right in a threatening manner. To their right are two other Romans. The first Roman, figure 4, is shown striding with spear raised between the bodies of two fallen but not yet dead barbarians. The next Roman, figure 7, is in the act of stabbing a kneeling barbarian (8) in the neck with a sword. Further to the right, a Roman soldier stands holding a horse.

The composition of this partial scene is dense and makes use of much close overlapping – but no interweaving. The group made up of figures 4-8 is particularly complex. The pose of figure 4 is interesting, as he appears to stride like Victory through the bodies on the ground.

This scene is clearly separated from the scene to its left, a slaughter of barbarians by Romans, by a window and by the turned backs of the figures in each respective scene. To the immediate right of the figures illustrated above is a horse, beyond which are the figures of Marcus and two attendants. One of the attendants is reconstructed, as is the entire remainder of the scene to the right of that. As a result it is not possible to determine how this scene fits into the narrative or, indeed, the real nature of the scene itself. It may be part of a battle, or it may be a slaughter scene following the example of scene LXVIII before it.

Petersen 1896; 76; Caprino 1955: 104

Battle LXXII+LXXIII

This battle begins on the left with two Roman cavalrymen, figures 1 and 2, who bear down with spears brandished against two barbarian horsemen (3 and 4). The former gestures towards his attacker, while the latter, already fallen from his horse, looks back at his. Figure 5 rides through at the back of the scene, while figure 6 executes a turn to stab down at a barbarian (7) on a falling horse. Immediately to the right of figure 7 is a large section of modern restoration, of which the upper part of Roman 12 is the only survivor. Above this restoration is a group of two combatants, a standing Roman (8) spearing a recumbent barbarian (9), who lies on a ground line beside a dead comrade (13). Beside this group and behind the ground line is another pair of combatants, a Roman infantryman (10) shown aiming his spear at a fleeing barbarian horseman (11). In front of figure 11 is yet another fleeing barbarian.

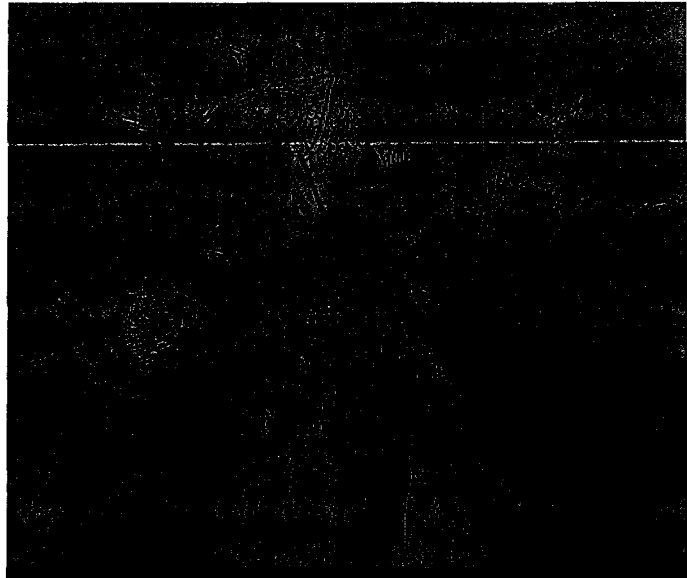
Petersen divided this battle into two scenes between figures 6 and 7 on the left and figures 8 and 9 on the right, and this division is useful in examining the composition. Figures 1-6, although they form two registers, together constitute a tight and self-contained battle composition. The rearmost, upper register is bound into the front register by the spearing and turning attitudes of figures 1 and 6, as well as by the upwards gesture of barbarian 3. To the right, the compositional group is set apart by the addition of a ground line; unfortunately the damage and restoration makes it impossible to get a full grasp of the composition of this section of the relief.

To the left of this battle is the damaged and completely restored scene LXXI. To the right is a group of barbarian captives and livestock, being escorted by Roman troops, to which this battle may be seen as a precursor. Petersen (76) includes figures 8-12 of this battle scene in the captive scene, thus the division mentioned above.

Battle LXXVII

This scene, or partial scene, shows two bearded barbarians (1 and 4) clad in trousers and cloak and reclining on the ground, gesturing defensively with their shields as they are being stabbed or speared by Romans 2 and 3.

The composition is simple and the figure arrangement repetitive, with the upper group reflecting the poses of the lower. We do not know how these pairs of fighting figures fit into an overall battle composition, if they did at all, since the remainder of

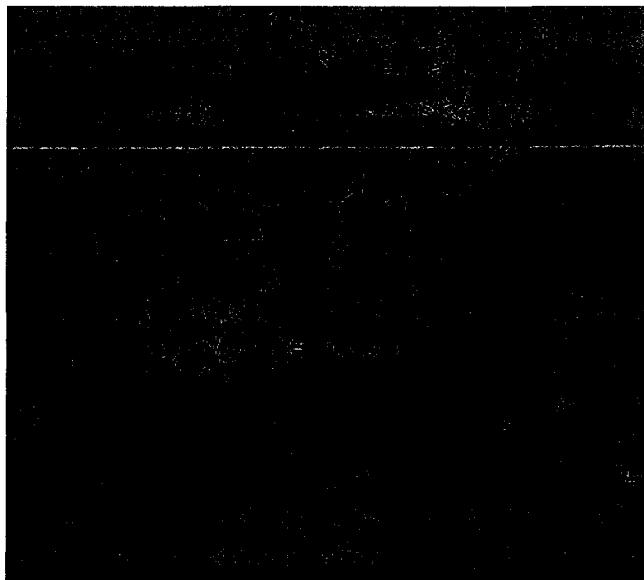


the scene to the left is a restoration. The narrative continuity is also largely lost through this restoration, but the tops of two *vexilla* visible to the left of figure 1 indicate that a strong Roman party is approaching, perhaps (as Petersen proposes) containing the emperor himself. If this is the case, these two fighting pairs must be part of a small isolated event. Both Petersen and Caprino view them as lower-rank soldiers who have fallen in a vain attempt to protect their lords (5, 7, 9), who are shown being led captive at the right.

Petersen 1896: 78; Caprino 1955: 106

Battle LXXIX

This scene represents only a portion of a larger battle: to the right of figures 5, 6, and 10 the frieze is totally restored. The action in the preserved section falls clearly into two registers, divided by a groundline. In the front register, a Roman cavalryman (1) rides to the right, over the body of a fallen barbarian (3). His quarry, the apparently unarmed barbarian figure 2, also gallops right while looking and gesturing behind him, over the body of a comrade who had fallen atop his horse. At the far right, a bearded barbarian (5) supports a



slumping fellow (6) who still has a shield strapped to his arm. In the upper register a barbarian (7) falls from his galloping horse, while to the right a Roman infantryman (9) stabs a kneeling barbarian (8), who gestures in the air. Behind this group and farther to the right, a single Roman cavalryman (10) rides on with spear raised.

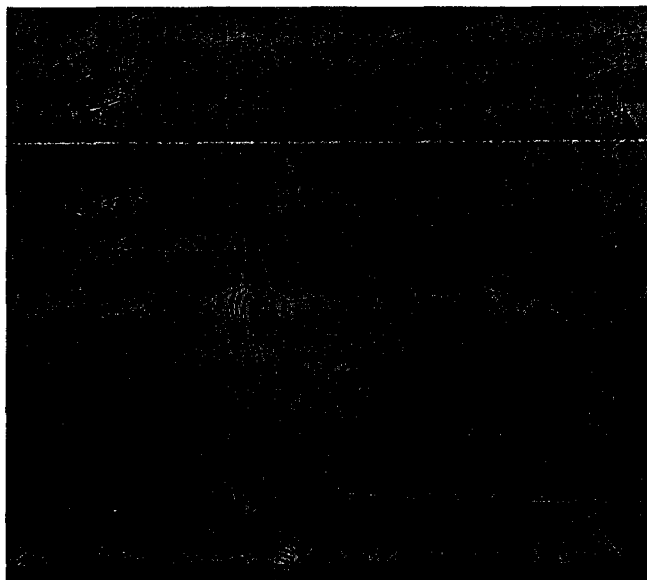
The incomplete nature of the scene makes it impossible to understand the full composition. The preserved portion indicates a two register layout, with interweaving and overlapping used in the lower register, mainly overlapping in the upper. The scene is dense and extremely varied in figure types.

The scene to the left shows a group of Roman soldiers and the emperor marching over a bridge. The connection between the scenes is ambiguous. No cavalry are shown in the bridge march, but it is possible to view this battle as an encounter between an advance party and a barbarian group. The following scene, as noted, is a restoration.

Petersen 1896; 78-80; Caprino 1955: 107

Battle LXXXIX

This battle scene is damaged by a large crack which runs down vertically between the attacking Romans 1 and 2 and bisects fallen barbarian 7, and also by a large iron clamp inserted to repair the crack, which runs at an angle between Romans 1 and 2 and bisects barbarian 5. Nonetheless, all the combatants are readily identifiable. Two pairs of Roman cavalry (1, 2 and 4, 8), all wearing *lorica hamata*, execute a two-sided attack on a group of four barbarian infantry, three dressed simply in trousers and one (3) wearing a cloak also. The details of their disposition, and that of the Romans, is discussed below.

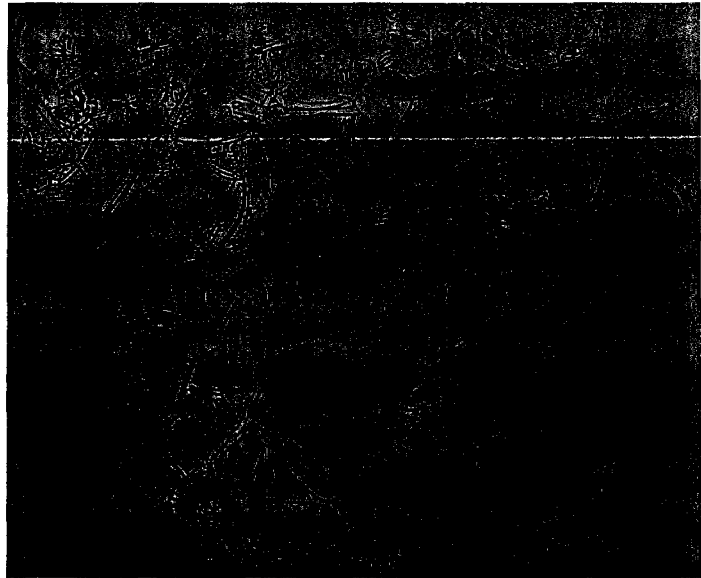


This formation battles presents an interesting and complex composition. The composition is so complex, in fact, that it is not possible to fully represent it in diagram form. The attacking Romans are uniform in type and balanced in pose: the poses of the attacking figures on the left are almost mirror-reflections of those of the figures on the right. They are simply placed in an overlapping arrangement. The four barbarians in the centre, on the other hand, present a fascinating contrast. They are arranged in a waterfall-like composition, with a fighting barbarian at top, a falling one below, then a dying figure and finally a dead one lying sprawled on the ground. The lower two figures are interwoven with the lower two attacking Romans, although neither appear to relate to their attackers in a direct way. In the entire composition, only figures 3 and 4 are personally engaged in fighting each other; the rest are merely posed in fighting (or dying) stances.

This battle scene is segregated from the action before and after it. To the left is a vertical ridge of mountainous-looking rock, from behind which Romans 1 and 2 seem to emerge. To left of this ridge of rock is a scene (LXXXVIII) of barbarian prisoners being rounded up. The right border of the battle scene is formed by a stream, which cascades down and then under the bridge, which does not appear to play a direct role in the battle. To the right of this is a depiction (XC) of Marcus marching with his troops in the direction of the bridge.

Battle XCII

This compact battle scene shows a mass of Roman cavalry, all wearing chain mail, attacking a fleeing group of barbarian cavalry. The front line of the Roman force is formed by figures 3, 5, and 7, each of whom employs his spear against a barbarian adversary. Roman 3 raises his spear over barbarian 4, who has fallen from his horse (seen galloping off to the right), 5 has already lodged his spear in the back of 6, who rears back and gestures upwards, and 7 appears



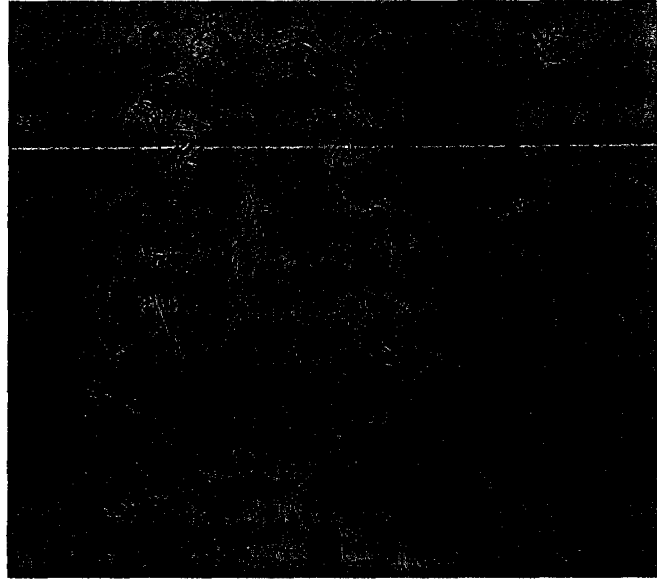
just about to make contact with 8, who looks behind at his attacker. Barbarians 9 and 10 are already in flight, while in the lower right another barbarian (11) falls along with his mount beneath the hooves of his fleeing comrades. The face-up position of 11 is awkward, and can only be explained if he was sitting backwards on his horse. The barbarians are all clad in trousers, long sleeved shirts and tunic, with figures 4, 9, and 10 wearing cloaks in addition. Barbarian 9 is the only one bearing a weapon. The Romans all wear chain mail, and each appears to have a device on his helmet.

Although the components of this scene are simple in nature (only one type of troop each for the Romans and barbarians), they are shown interacting with each other in quite a complex manner. The combatants resolve into three registers, and the figures in the first two are all connected to each other by the use of careful interweaving. In fact, the four figures in the lowest register form, together with the riderless horse, a nearly circular pattern. This is one of the densest compositions on the column.

This battle scene does not appear to connect at all to either the scene before or after. To the left, after a window opening, is a scene (XCI) showing two barbarian horsemen being escorted by a group of Roman cavalry. To the right is a Roman baggage train escorted by infantry wearing segmented armour, into the rear of which the fleeing barbarians seem to gallop.

Battle XCVII⁴

This small scene shows a battle between three Roman infantrymen (two in segmented armour, one in chain mail) and a larger force of five barbarian cavalry. One barbarian (2) has already fallen from his horse and is about to be speared by a Roman soldier (1). A second Roman (6) is engaged fiercely with retreating barbarian 7, who brandishes his spear against his attacker. In front of this fighting pair another barbarian (5) lies on his back over his fallen horse. The third Roman (3) appears to be jogging after the two fleeing barbarians in the upper register. This is one of the few instances on the column of "legionaries" in segmented armour shown in actual combat.



Compositionally, this scene is effectively divided into two registers. The rear register employs simple overlapping of figures, and the figures do not interact directly with one another. The lower or front register, on the other hand, is a rather complicated composition. There is extensive figural interweaving, and four of the five figures are directly interacting in one-on-one combat. Oddly, it even seems that the foremost Roman infantryman (6) is about to be run down by the horse galloping behind him. The composition of this scene has much in common with battle scene XCII. Both show two fallen barbarians in the foreground, in much the same poses, and fleeing barbarians in the background.

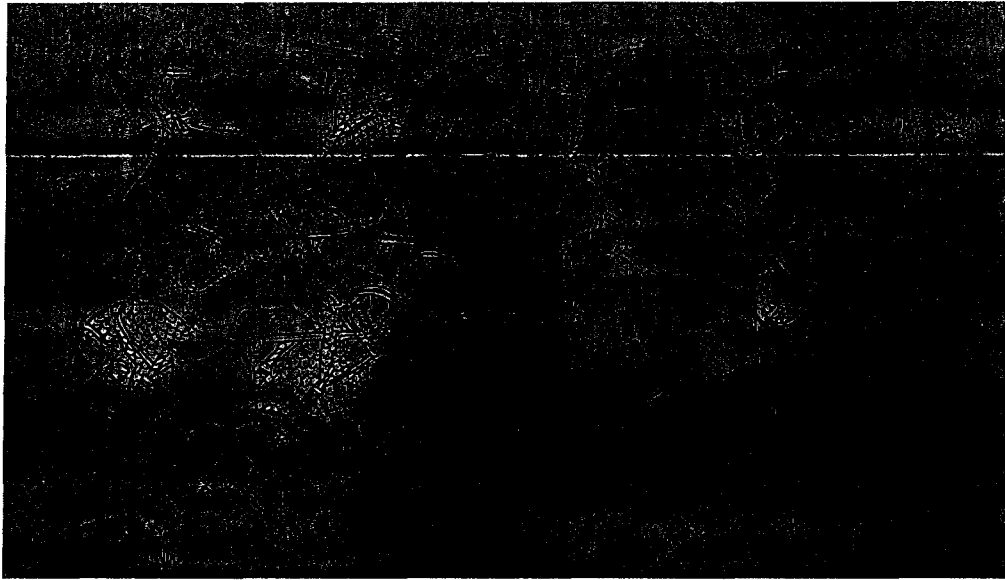
This battle scene shows no particular connection to the scene immediately preceding it to the left, an *adlocutio* (XCVI). There may be some implied connection to the following scene, however, which shows captured barbarian women and a child, some being led off, others being slaughtered.⁵

Petersen 1896: 86; Caprino 1955: 111

⁴ XCVIIa in Caprino's (1955) numbering; see note below.

⁵ Petersen (1896) uses the same scene number (XCVII) to cover both the battle and the capturing and killing of non-combatants, but notes (86) that the scene could be divided into two. Caprino (111) separates the scene into XCVIIa (the battle) and b (the prisoners).

Battle IC



This scene shows a massive Roman attack rolling over a group of fallen barbarians, only one of whom (7) shows any signs of life. The attacking Romans are led by seven galloping cavalymen (at the right, 11-13 and 15-18), the leading three of whom (16-18) have their spears raised as if to stab an opponent. Behind these leading three gallop four more cavalymen, one of whom (12) is posed in an odd manner, stabbing downwards with his spear. This is particularly odd since the figure directly below him (13) appears clearly to be Roman, judging from the trappings of his horse and the tip of a scabbard (there is a polygonal hole in the column at this point, evidently whence an insertion has fallen). Figure 11 is also rather strange in appearance, poorly executed and in a very cramped pose. Behind these cavalymen come a small group of scale and chain-clad infantry (6, 8-10), closely spaced in the foreground, one of whom (6) is engaged in spearing a fallen barbarian (7). This appears to be the only instance of direct person-to-person combat in this scene. In the background a trumpeter (5, a unique representation) blows a call, while three more Roman horsemen (1-3) bring up the rear. Besides the single living barbarian (7), the rest (4, 14, 19, and 20) all appear to be corpses. Figure 19 exists only as a pair of legs, and barbarian 20 appears to have twisted torques about his ankles. As well as can be determined (the lower part of this scene is somewhat damaged and abraded), four of the five fallen barbarians wear only trousers. One, figure 7, wears a tunic and perhaps a cape, and is also bearded.⁶ The Romans are clad in either scale or chain mail; scale dominates in the left half of the scene, while chain is most common to the right.

The composition of this scene is strikingly one-sided, with the group of galloping Romans above and the fallen barbarians below, but the general principle is comparable to

⁶ Zwicker (1941: 272) thinks these may be the same barbarians as shown in XCVII.

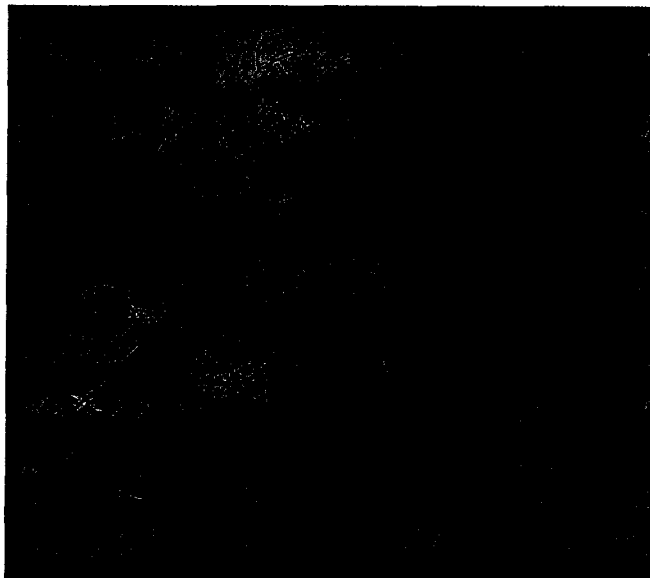
that employed in smaller scenes such as battle XXVII, where Roman cavalry and infantry clear a path for the advancing emperor. The three leftmost attacking Romans (16-18) do not seem to have clear opponents. The only possible candidate, a falling barbarian rider (heavily damaged) who is shown further to the left behind two cows, does not seem to fit in with the general battle scene. Nor do Romans 2 or 12 have any direct enemy, but they still raise their spears in a very menacing manner. Only Roman 6 is shown actually engaged with an enemy, barbarian 7. The density of the figures, the mix of troop types, and their active poses bring to mind the Antonine battle sarcophagi, as do two particular figures, the trumpeter (5) and the downward-stabbing rearward-turning horseman (12), who appears in a central and well-exposed position. Uncharacteristic of battle sarcophagi, however, is the lack of actively resisting barbarians. There is a clear sense of vigorous motion to the left, accented by the recumbent pose of each barbarian, fallen on his back as if bowled over by the mass of attacking Romans. The absence of any weapons or even shields belonging to the barbarians is, as Petersen (87) notes, odd.

There is no apparent connection between this battle and the preceding scene to the left (IIC), which shows the destruction of a village, but there may be an implied connection to the subsequent scene to the right (C), an *adlocutio*. At the base of the *adlocutio* podium, a soldier turned to the left watches as two riders, not part of the battle, approach. Petersen (87) suggests that these may be intended as messengers, bringing news of victory.

Petersen 1896: 87; Caprino 1955: 112

Battle CV

This scene shows a group of Roman infantry (1-4), attacking and putting to flight a group of unresisting barbarians (5-9). The leftmost Romans (1 and 2) advance in a ready pose, while the Romans immediately in front of them (3 and 6) bring their spears into action against two fleeing barbarians. The action of figure 4, another Roman, is unclear. He may be attacking barbarian 5, but on the other hand he may be merely standing in the background. Two of the barbarians (5, 7) are clearly horsemen, one of whom (7) carries a hexagonal(?) shield; their two fallen comrades (8, 9) are most likely infantrymen, since they wear only trousers. Four (1-3 and 6) of the attacking Romans are



Four (1-3 and 6) of the attacking Romans are

shown wearing chain mail, while one (4) is clad in scale armour. The barbarians on horseback are wearing tunics and trousers, while those on the ground wear only trousers.

Petersen (90) finds these barbarians Sarmatian in appearance, but Caprino (114) calls them unclassifiable.

Although its components are relatively simple, when examined in detail the composition of this scene is rather complex. This complexity is perhaps easier seen in the schematic diagram than in the drawing. As indicated by the hatched sections, there is a complicated interweaving of Roman and barbarian figures in each of the two registers. This is particularly evident in the lower register, where a Roman soldier advances astride a fallen barbarian and stabs at a second whose horse is also shown astride the same corpse.

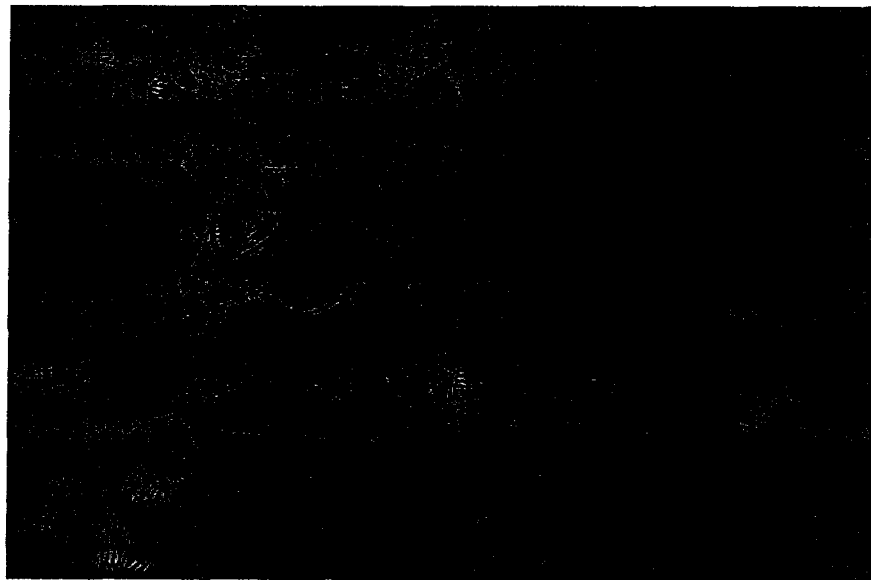
Battle scene CV comprises a scene to itself in Petersen's numbering, and it is distinctly isolated from the scenes before and after it on the frieze. To the left, scene CIV shows a group of barbarian women and children being made prisoner; this scene is separated from the battle by the depiction of a large masonry tower. To the right, after a window, is an interesting group showing Marcus on horseback surrounded by soldiers bearing standards. All these figures face left, as if watching the battle unfold in the previous scene.

Petersen 1896: 90; Caprino 1955: 114.

Battle CIX

This small battle scene shows a group of seven barbarians being defeated and put to flight by a two-sided attack by Roman cavalry and infantry.

Unfortunately, the scene exhibits heavy localized damage to the upper right quarter, which has destroyed one or more figures (likely



attacking Roman infantry, in the pattern of figure 9). Thus, the main area of preserved action lies in the foreground, where a Roman cavalryman wearing chain mail (1) gallops

over the corpse of a falling barbarian to attack a second kneeling enemy (2) with his spear. To the right of this composition are three dead or dying barbarians, towards whom a Roman infantryman (9) advances in an alert but not particularly menacing pose. In the background two barbarians are in full flight, presumably from advancing or attacking Romans in the destroyed area at the upper right of the scene. The clothing and equipment of the two Romans is the same: both wear chain mail and carry spears. The dress of the barbarians is more mixed: four (3, 6-8) wear shirts, trousers, and tunics; two (4 and 5) have cloaks in addition, and one (2) wears nothing at all above the waist (his lower body is destroyed by a cutting made to remove a metal clamp).

This scene does not appear to be logically organized, but the figures are in more than one instance carefully arranged in a complex composition. It is not at all clear who has killed the prone (6) and supine (7) barbarians in the center of the scene, but it is clear that the artist has taken pains to interweave the central dead figure (7) with the kneeling barbarian 2, who in turn is interwoven with the attacking Roman 1. Overall, the composition appears to fall into two registers: fighting in the foreground, flight in the background. The line of recumbent bodies (6-8) in the center, however, breaks this up somewhat awkwardly. Perhaps the advancing Roman(s) on the right should not be considered part of the battle composition.

This incident of fighting is closely interwoven with the scenes both before and (as far as we can tell) after it. To the left is shown a group of Roman cavalry on the march, at the center of which is the emperor himself. It is not possible to separate the attacking Roman 1 from the head of this march, and the two scenes seem part of one and the same action. Petersen (91) suggests that Marcus is himself leading this group of cavalry to relieve the besieged fortress, shown to the right of the battle. From this Roman fortress figure 9 (and the supposed Romans above him) may be issuing, although he is not shown exiting from a door. Petersen (91) suggests that these Romans are issuing from the "*porta decumana*", and that they, not the approaching cavalry, are responsible for the carnage we see in the middle of the scene, while Caprino (115) feels that both parties are equally responsible. This scene may be usefully compared to battle L, where infantry advance from a fort, driving away barbarian cavalry, while another group of barbarians falls under a Roman cavalry onslaught.

Petersen 1896: 91-92; Caprino 1955: 115

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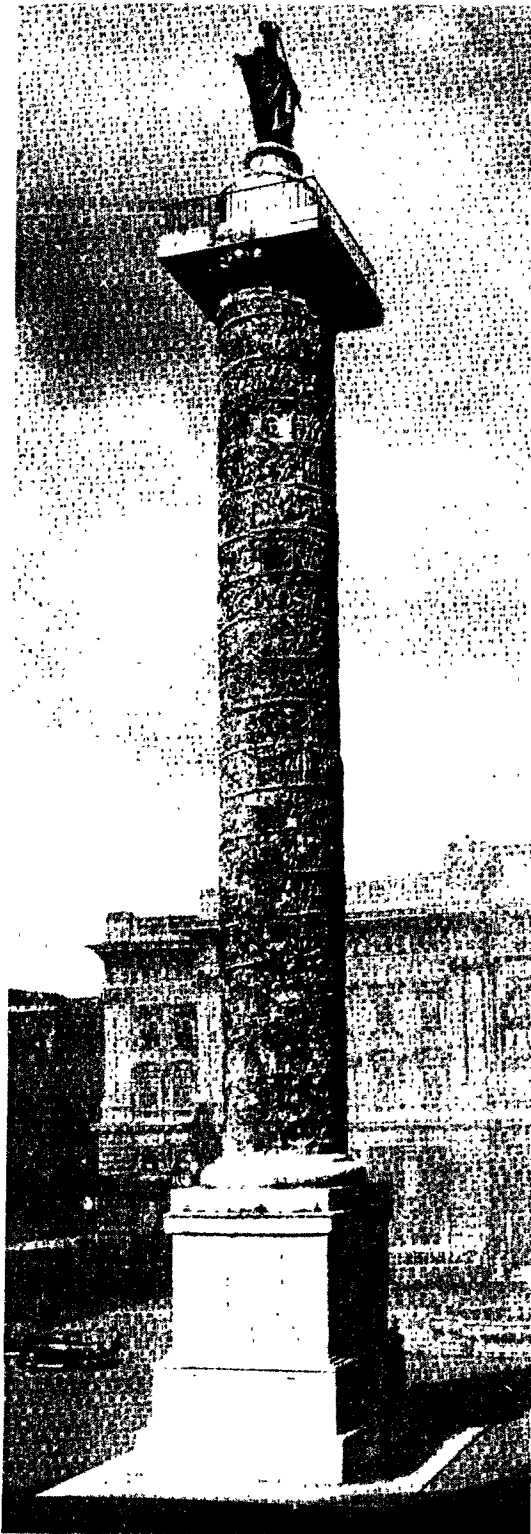
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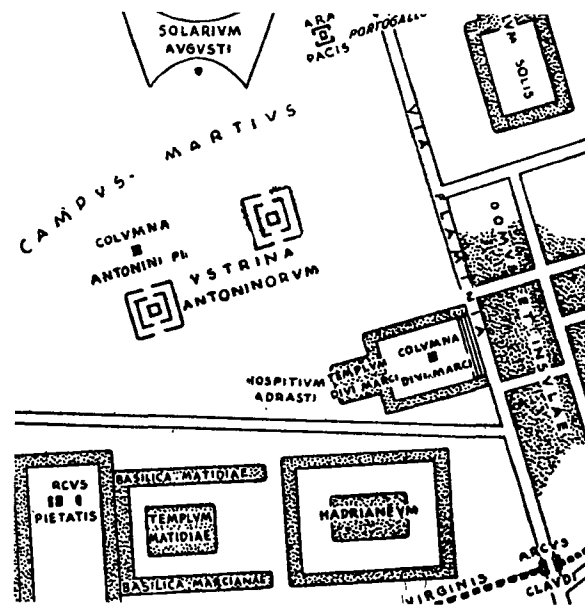
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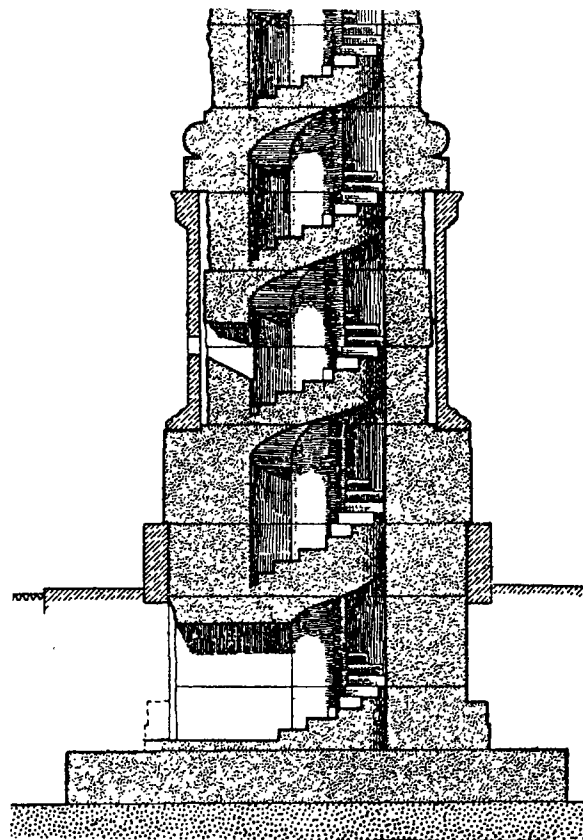
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1.1 - The Column of Marcus Aurelius.



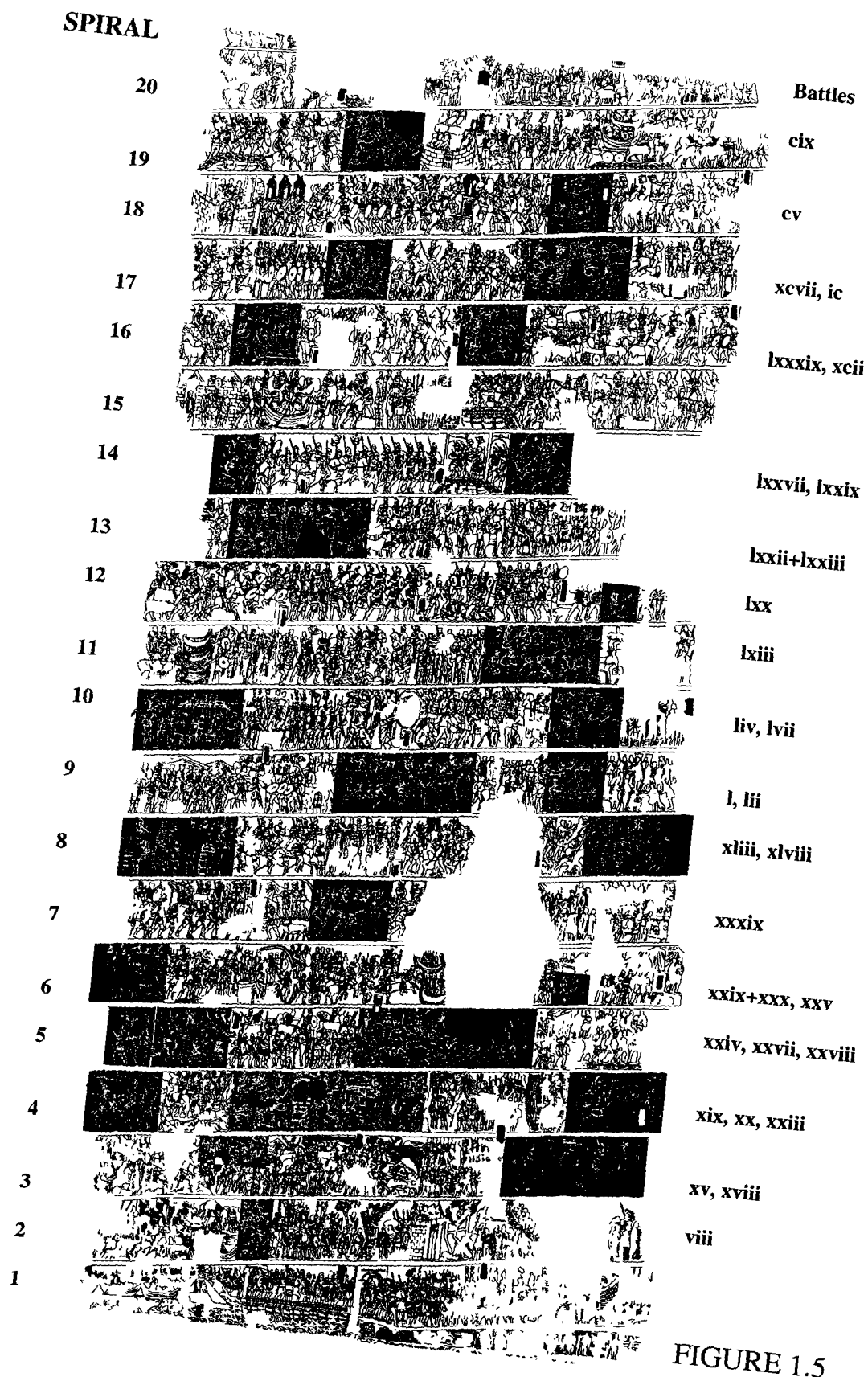
1.2 - The column on the Campus Martius.



1.3 - Cutaway view of base of the column.



1.4 - Scene II, taken from cast.





1.6 - Scene XX.



1.7 - Scene XX, detail.



1.8 - Scene XX, detail.



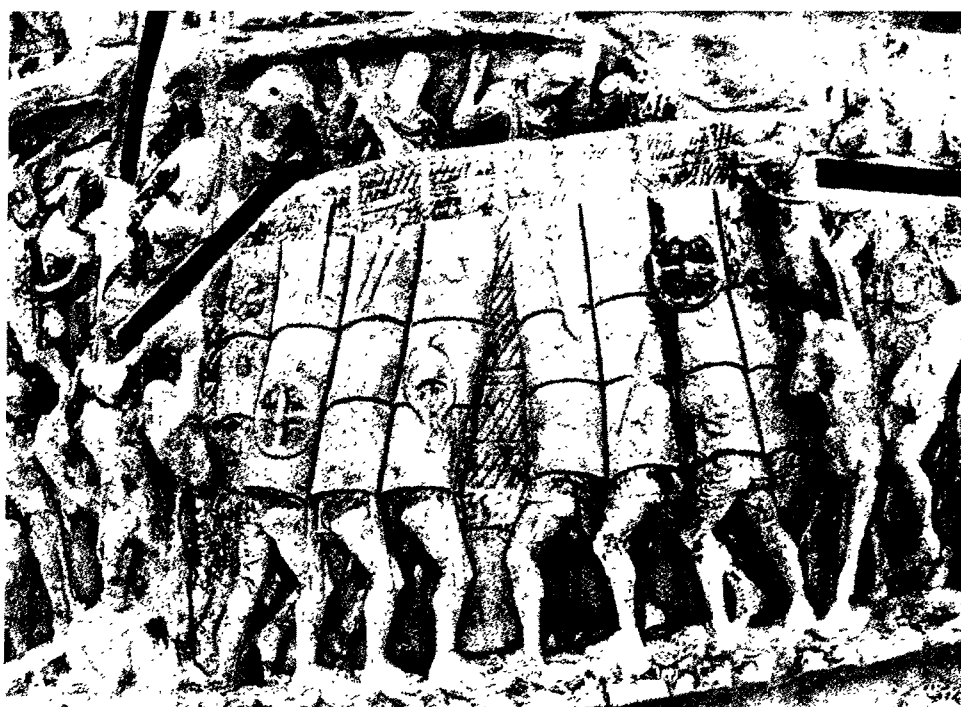
1.9 - Scene XXXIX.



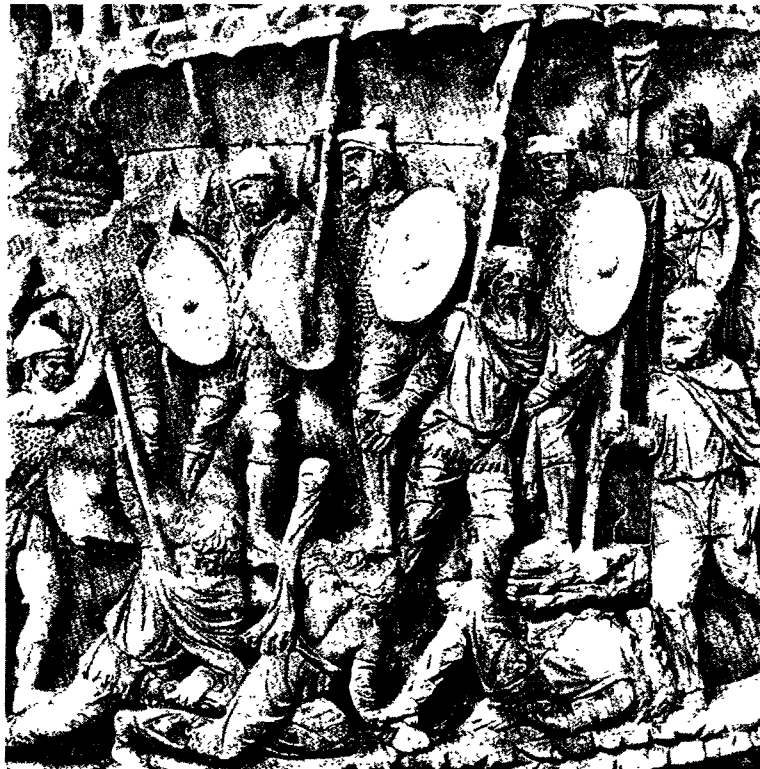
1.10 -
XXXIX
Detail.



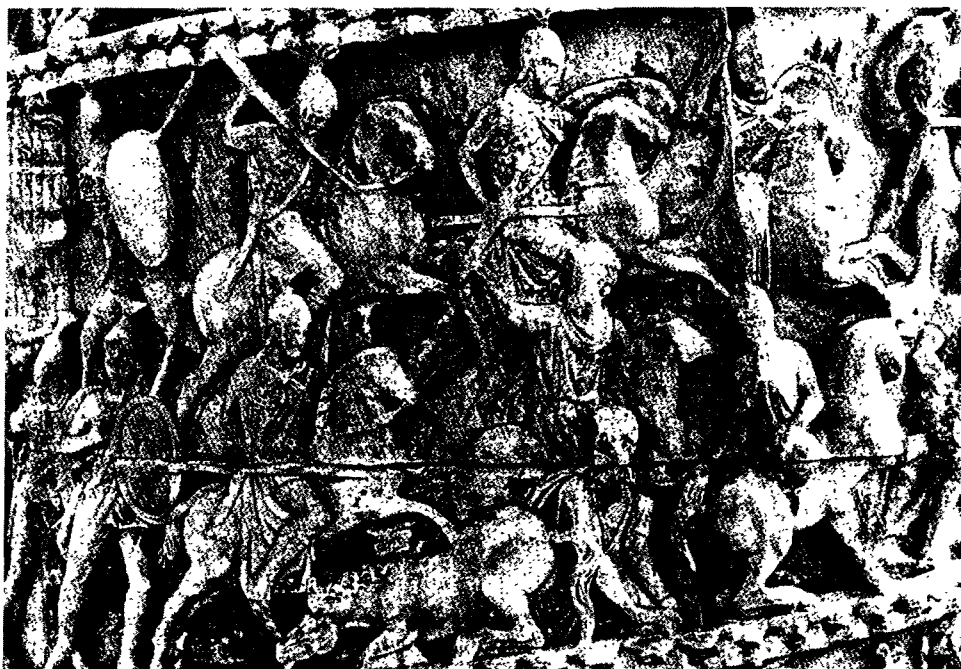
1.11 - Scene LII.



1.12 -
Scene
LIV.



1.13 - Scene LXVIII - Slaughter of barbarians by Roman troops.



1.14 - Scene LXXI/II.



1.15 - Scene LXXVII, detail.



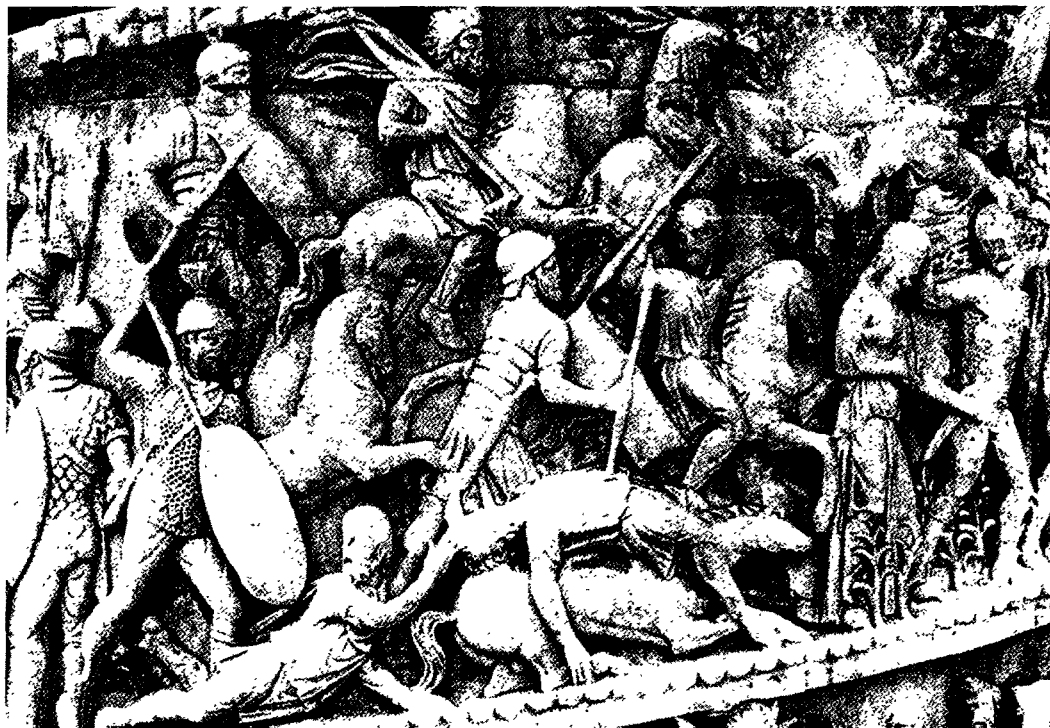
1.16 - Scene LXXIX.



1.17 - Scene XCII, detail.



1.18 - Scene XCII, detail.



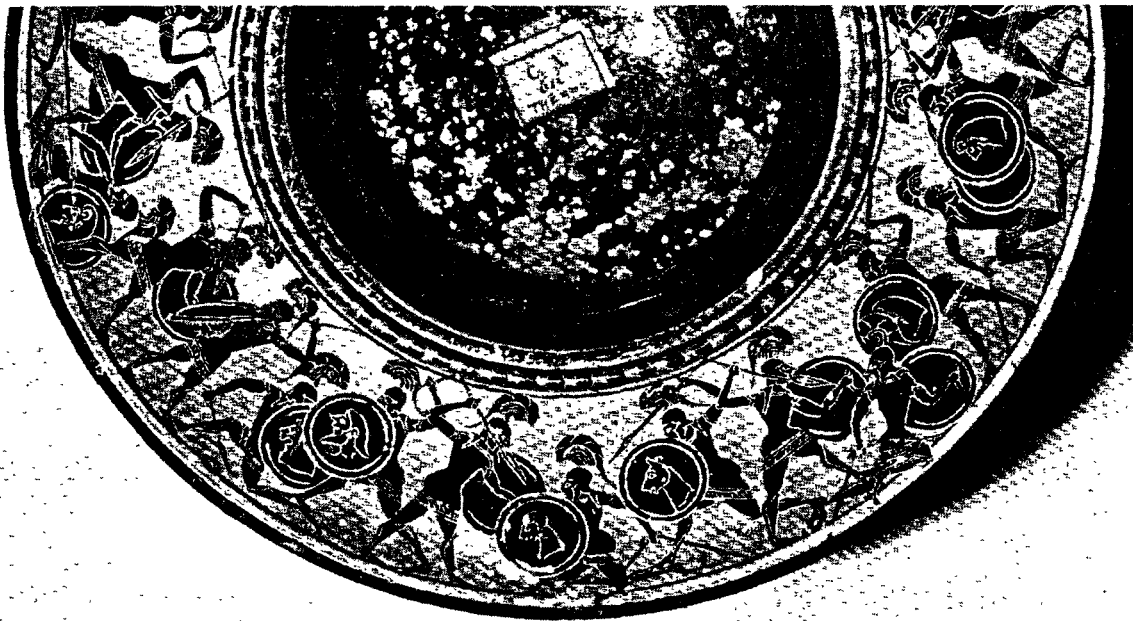
1.19 - Scene XCVI.



1.20 - Scene XCVI, detail.



3.1 - Chigi Vase (650-640 BC).



3.2 - Tripod-kothon by C-Painter (early 6th c. BC).



3.3 - Attic kylix (early 5th c. BC).



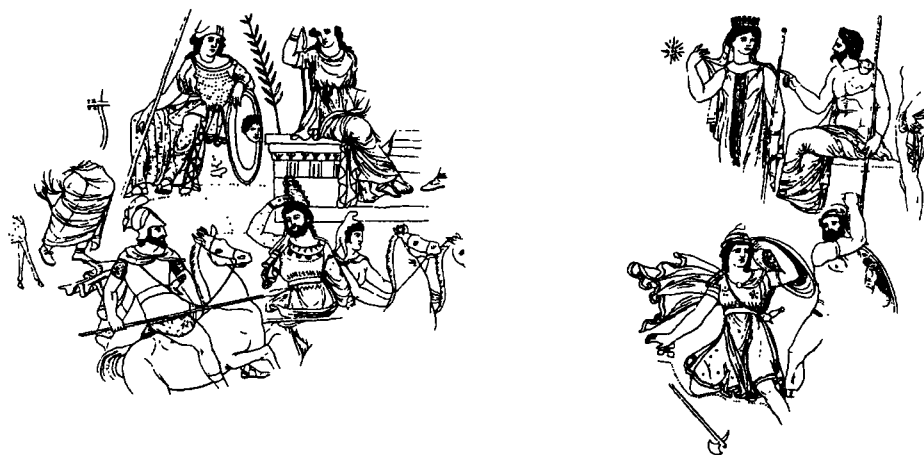
3.4 - Attic amphora by Suessula Painter (ca. 425 BC).



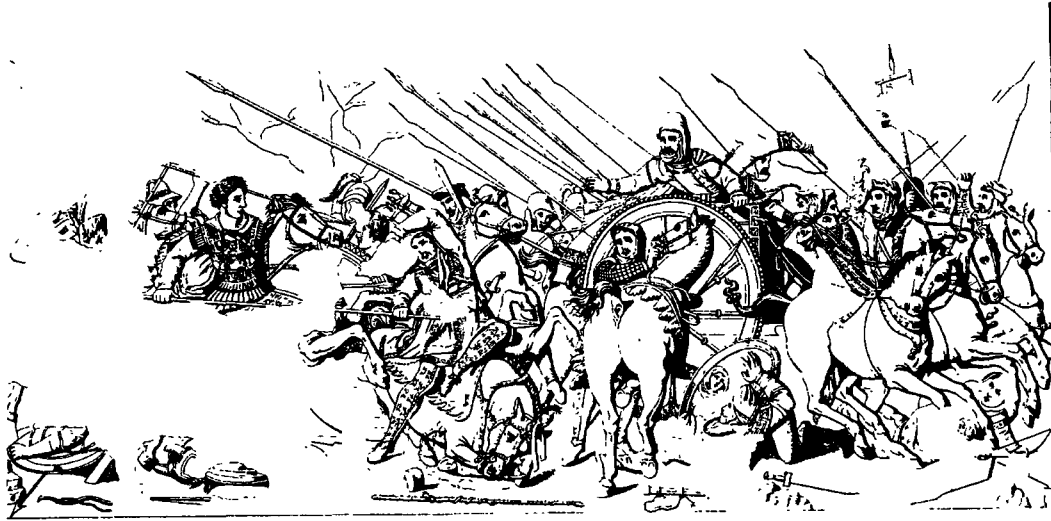
3.5 - Attic pelike (425-370 BC).



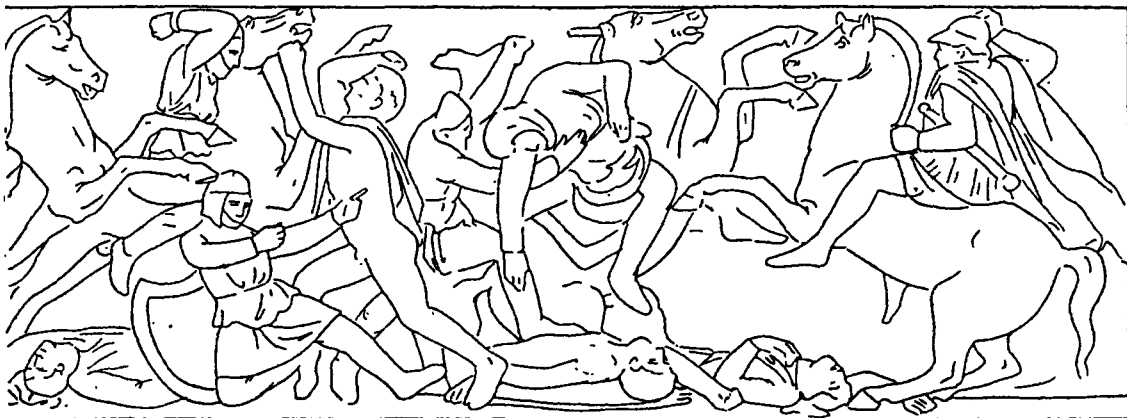
3.6 - Apulian volute crater (late 4th c. BC).



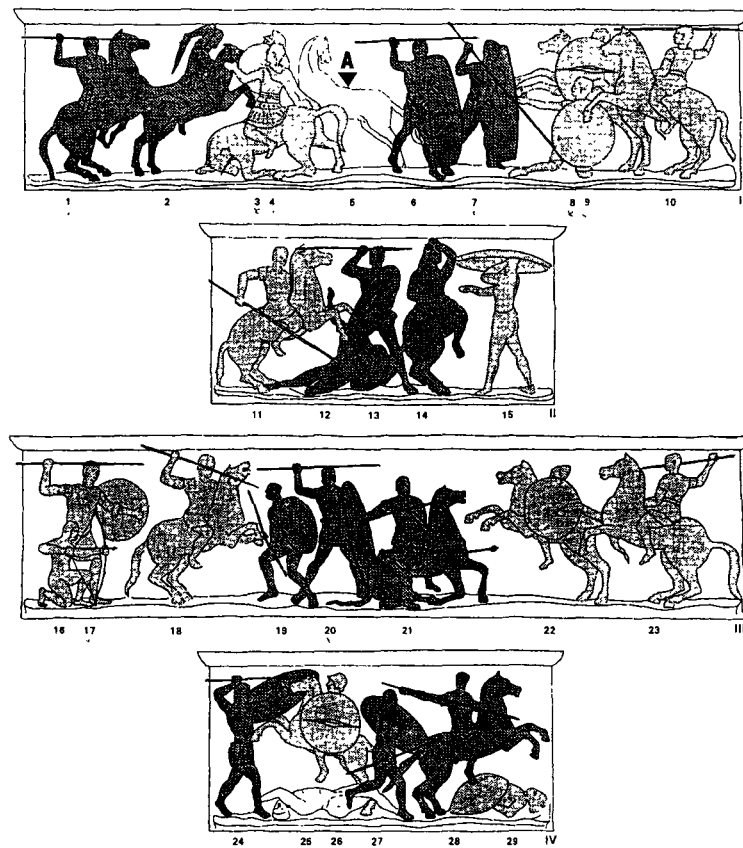
3.7 - Apulian vase (late 4th c. BC).



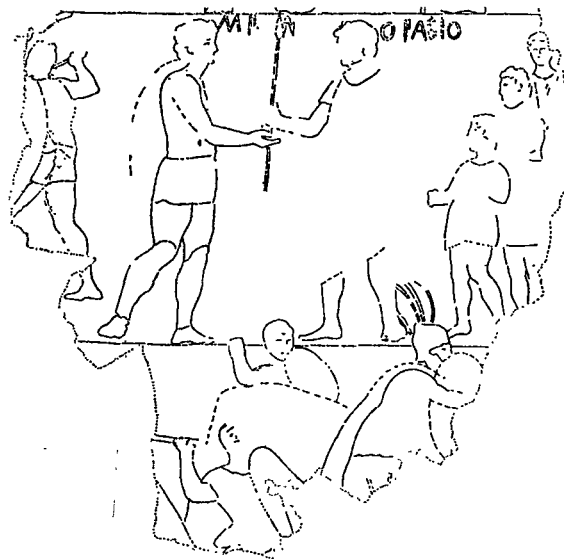
3.8 - Alexander Mosaic, Pompeii (based on late 4th c. BC original?).



3.9 - Alexander Sarcophagus (late 4th c. BC).



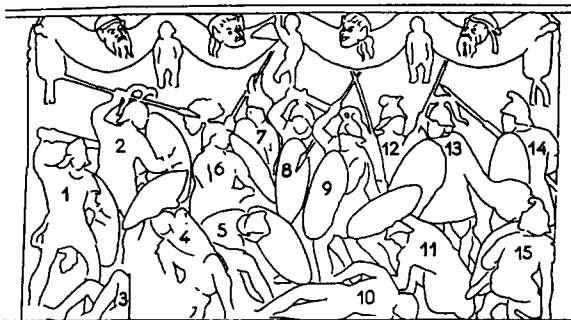
3.10 - Aemilius Paullus monument, Delphi (168 BC).



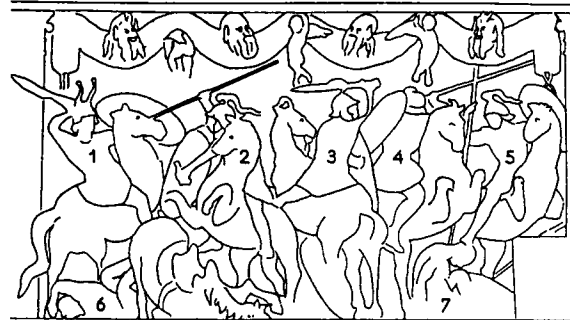
3.11 - Esquiline Tomb fresco, Rome (3rd-early 2nd c. BC).



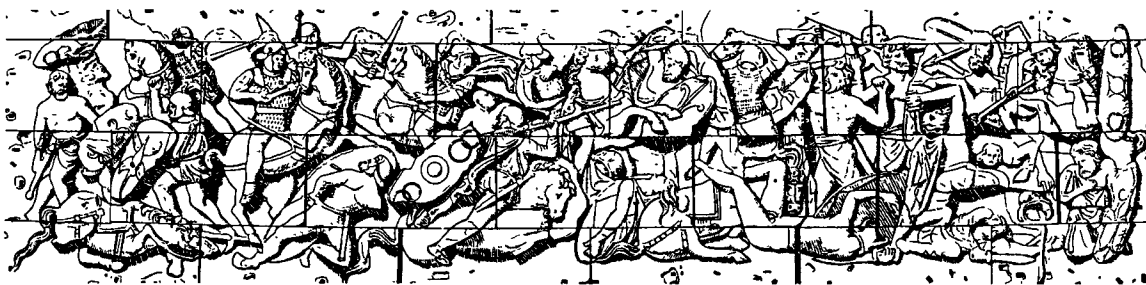
3.12 - Mantua Relief (originally from Rome, Augustan).



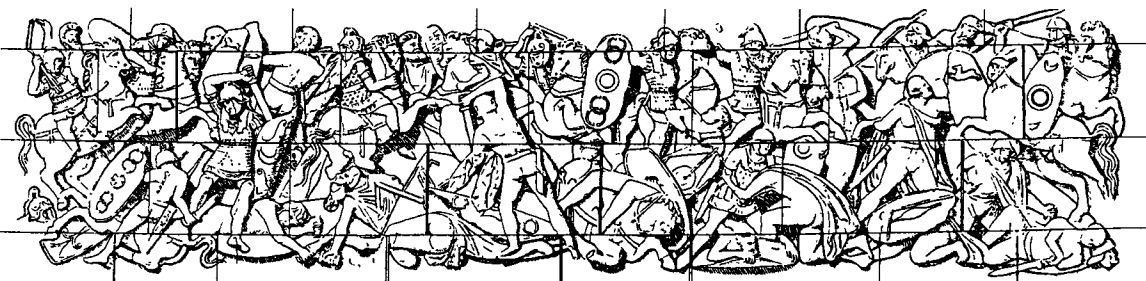
3.13 - Glanum mausoleum, West face
(Augustan).



Glanum mausoleum, North face.

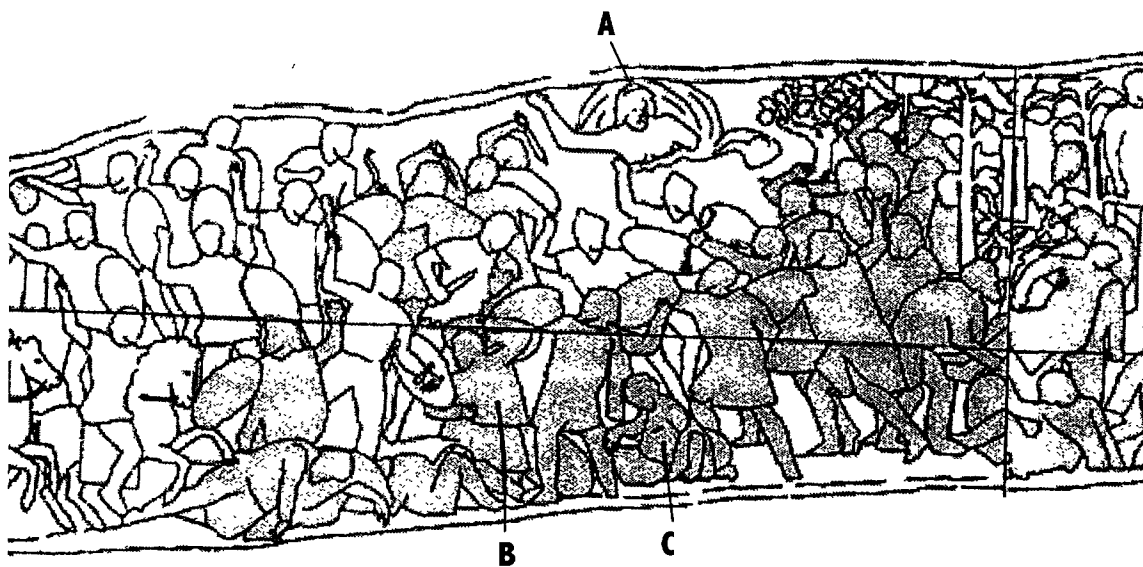


3.14 - Arch at Orange, South face (Tiberian).



Arch at Orange, North face.

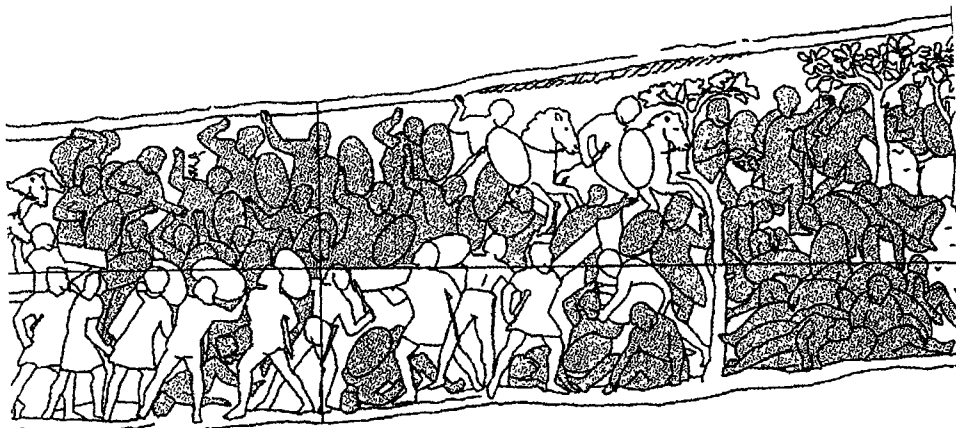
Trajan's Column Battle Scenes (in drawings, shaded figures are Dacians):



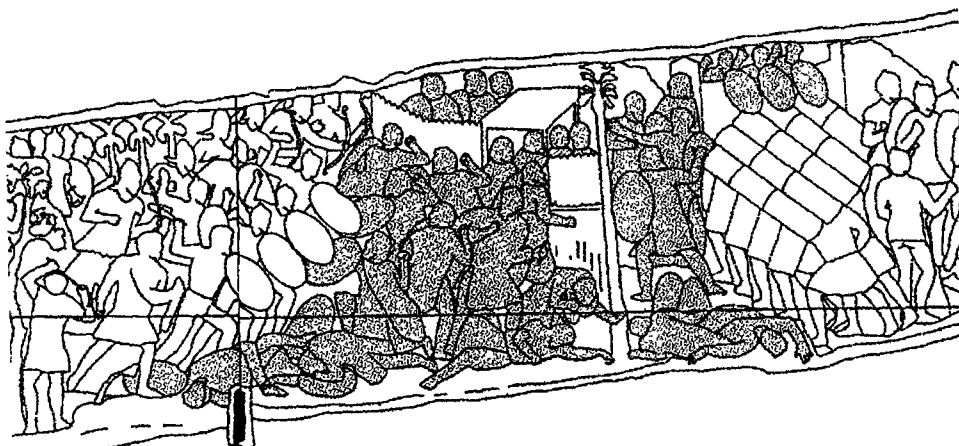
4.1 - Scene 24.



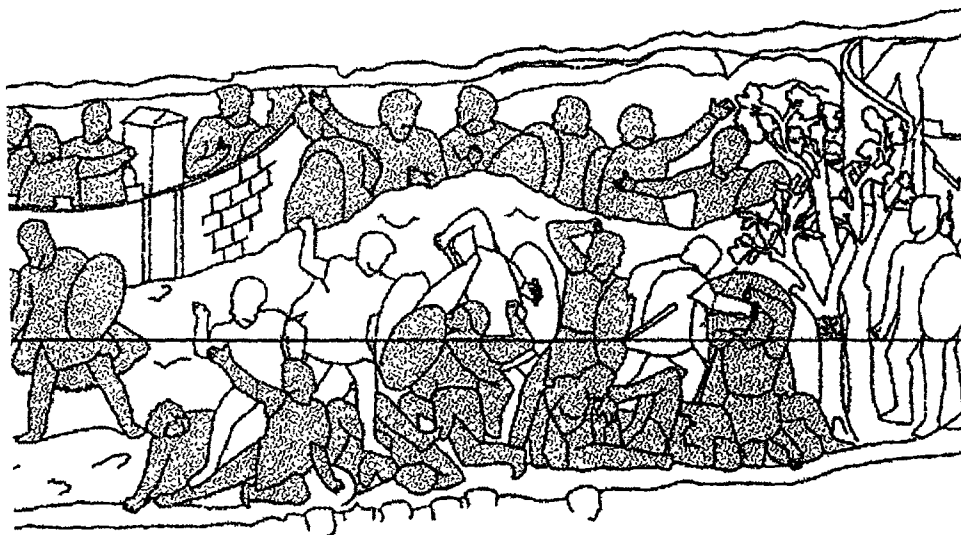
4.2 - Scene 37.



4.3 - Scene 40.



4.4 - Scene 70/71.



4.5 - Scene 112.

Trajan's Column Figure Types and Pairs:



4.6 - Scene 38.



4.7 - Scene 24.



4.8 - Scene 40.



4.9 - Scene 95.



4.10 - Scene 29.

Fallen Barbarians on Trajan's Column:



4.11 - Scene 72.



4.12 - Scene 40.



4.13 - Scene 24.



4.14 - Scene 95.



4.15 - Scene 40.

Figures and Pairs from Scene 112:



4.16



4.17



4.18



4.19

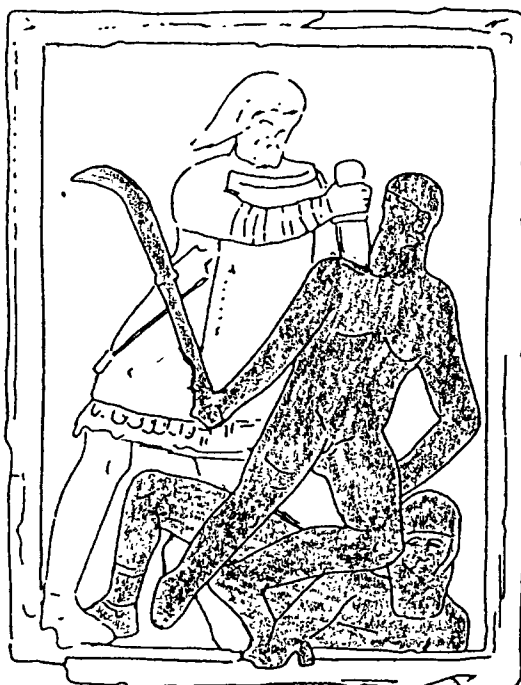
Metopes from the Tropaeum Traiani:



4.20 - Type A Metope (Metope 5).



4.21a - Type b Metope (Metope 17).



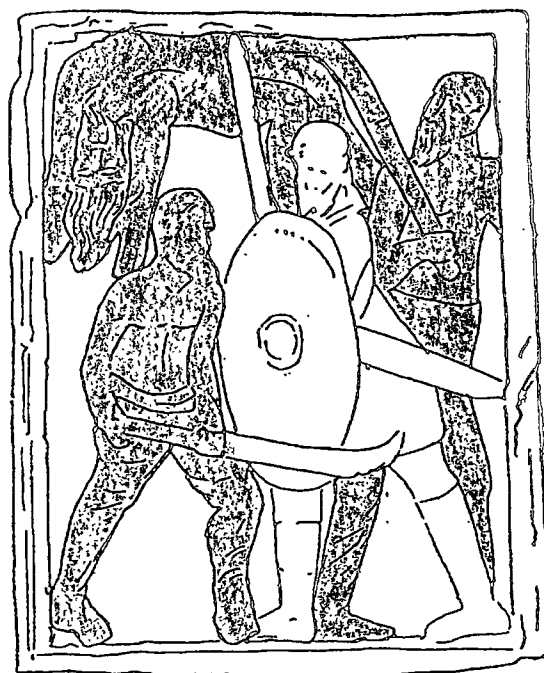
4.22 - Metope 22.



4.21b - Metope 17.



4.23a - Metope 31.



4.24 - Metope 34.

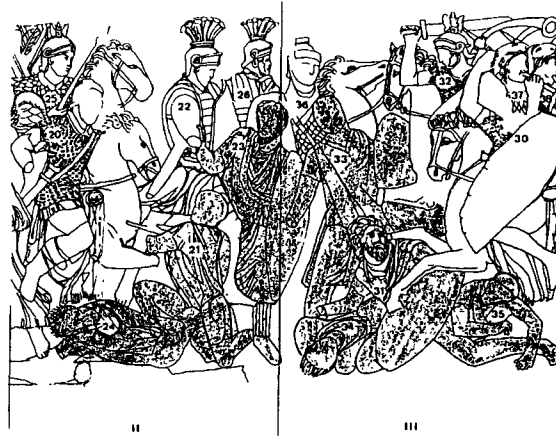


4.23b - Metope 31.

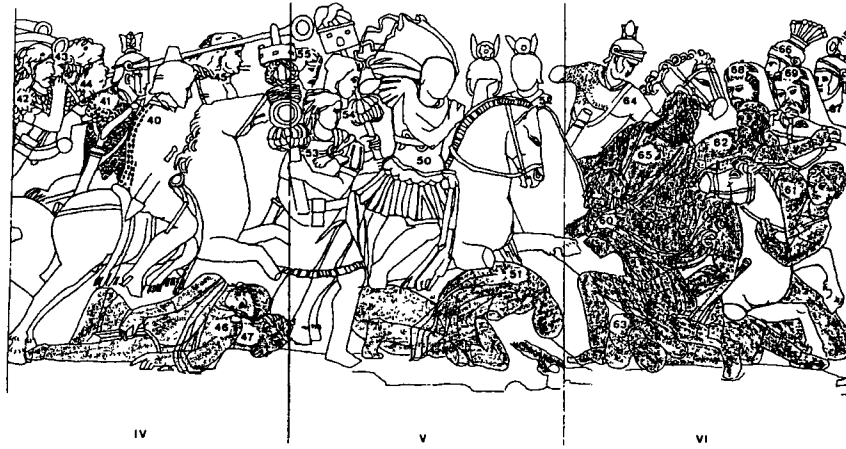


4.25 - Metope 35.

Great Trajanic
Frieze:



4.26



4.27



4.28

Group 1 - Greek vs. Gaul Sarcophagi:



5.1 - Ammendola Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagus.



5.2 - Via Tiburtina Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagus.

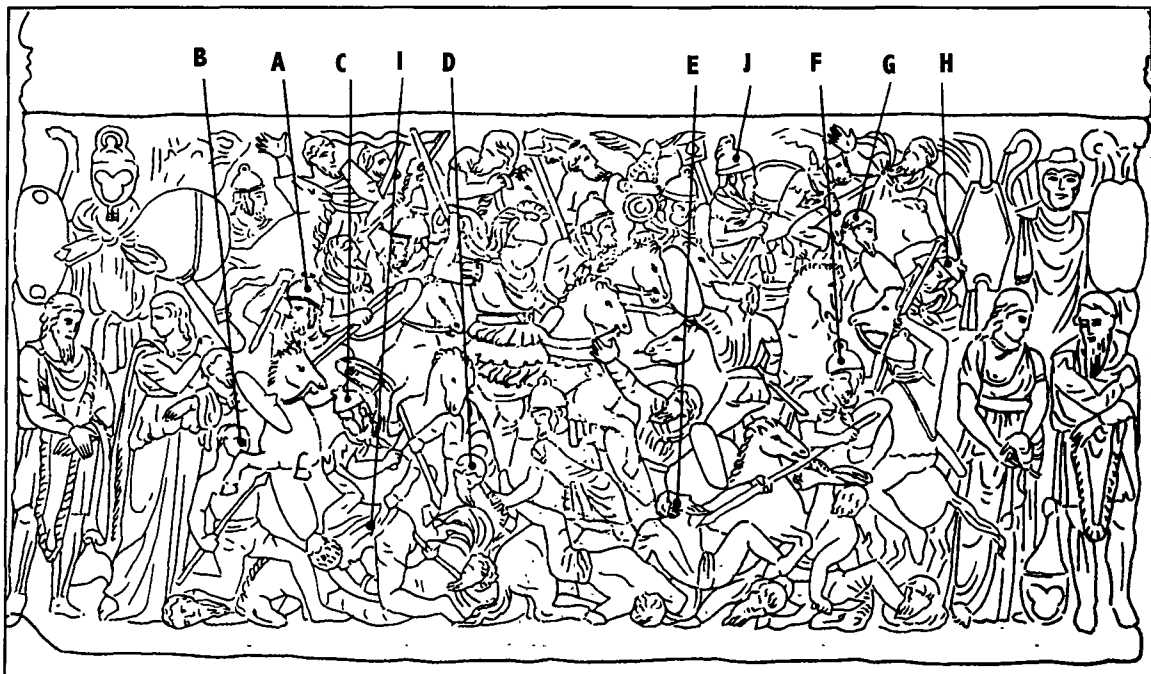


5.3 - Doria Pamphilj Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagus.

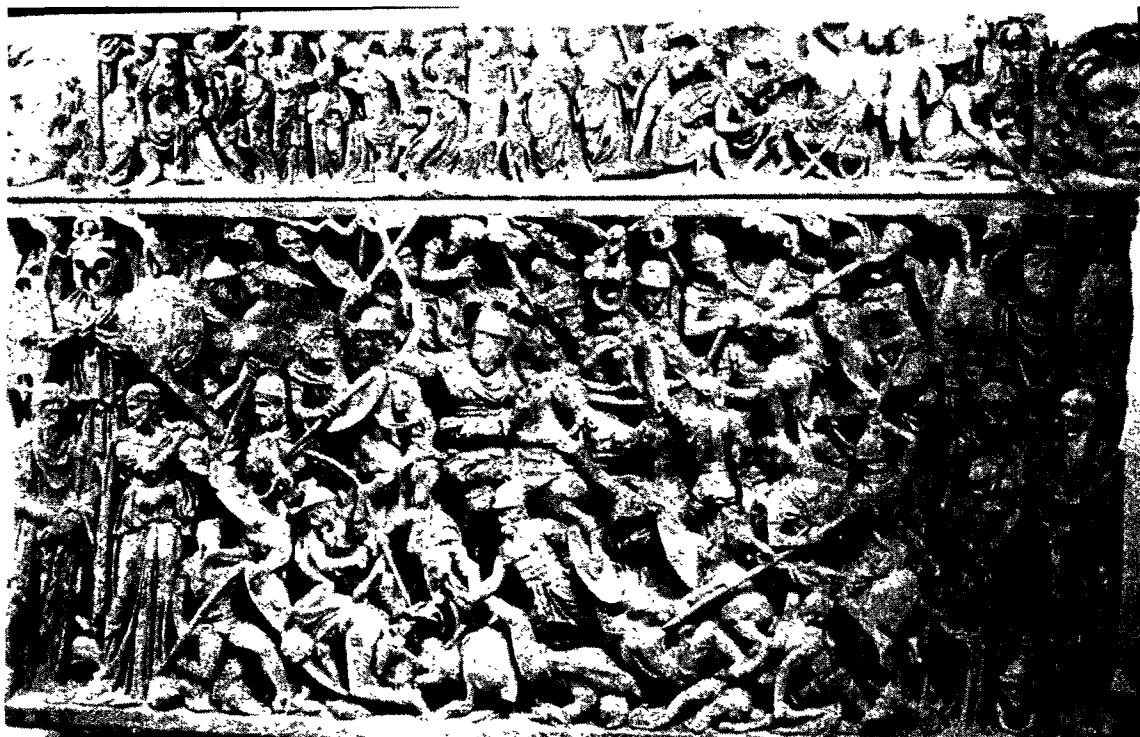


5.4 - Little Ludovisi Greek vs. Gaul sarcophagus.

Group 2 - Roman vs. German Sarcophagi:



5.5 - Portonaccio sarcophagus.



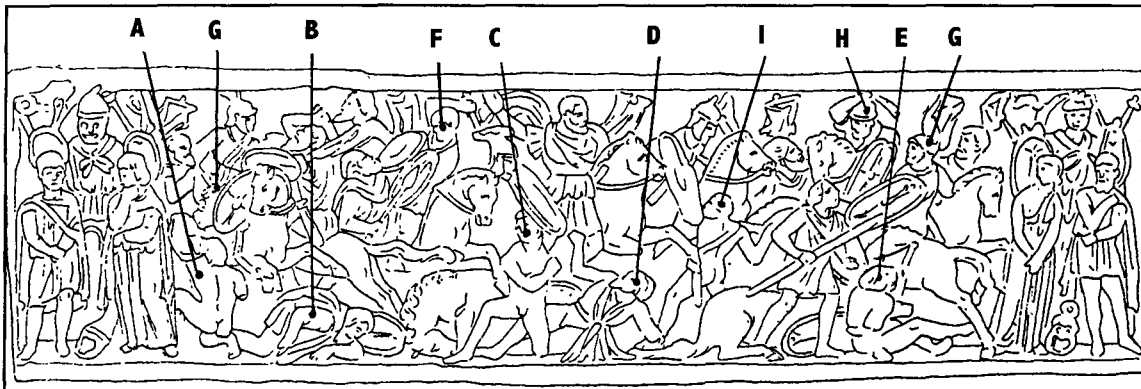
5.5a - Portonaccio sarcophagus.



5.5b - Portonaccio, detail.



5.5c - Portonaccio, detail.



5.6 - Palermo sarcophagus.



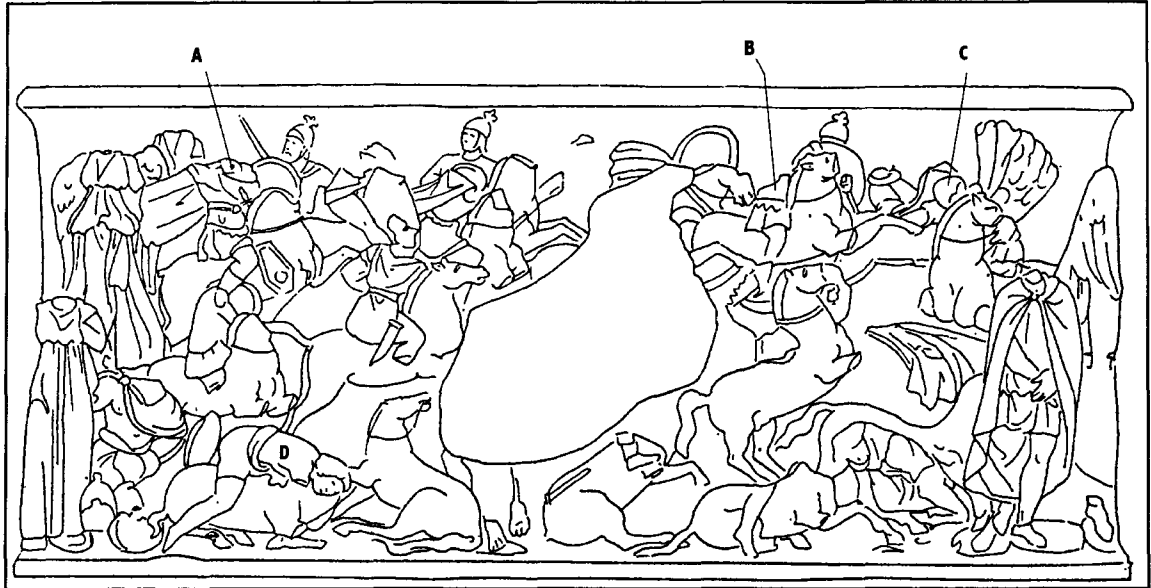
5.6a - Palermo sarcophagus, centre portion.



5.6b - Palermo, left portion.



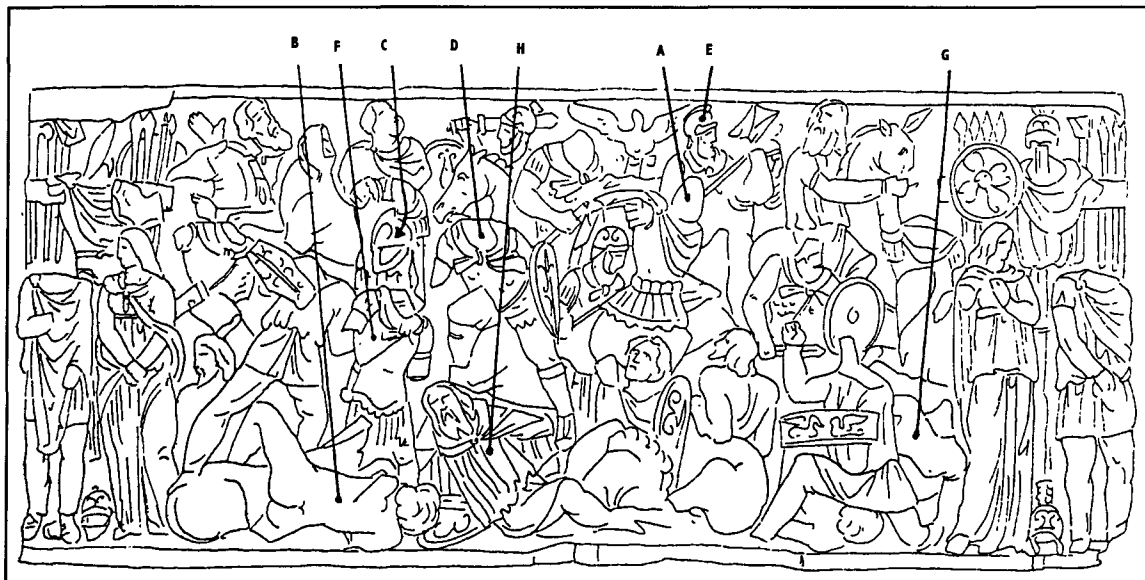
5.6c - Palermo sarcophagus, right portion.



5.7 - Pisa Campo Santo Roman vs. German sarcophagus.



5.7a - Pisa Campo Santo.



5.8 - Borghese sarcophagus.



5.8a - Borghese sarcophagus.



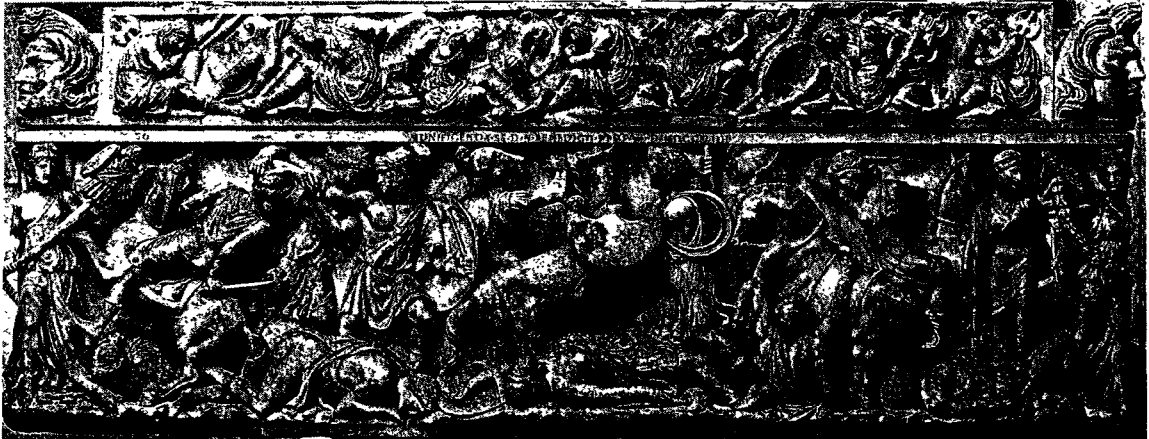
5.9 - Villa Giustiniani Roman vs. German Sarcophagus.

Unclassified Battle Sarcophagi:



5.10 - Unclassified battle sarcophagus, formerly Villa Giustiniani.

Amazonomachy Sarcophagi:



5.11 - Capitoline Amazonomachy sarcophagus.



5.12 - Vatican Amazonomachy sarcophagus.

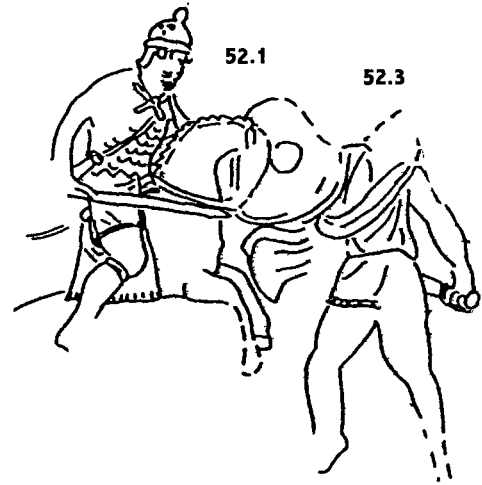


5.13 - Paris Amazonomachy sarcophagus.

Sarcophagus - Column parallels:



6.1 - Amazon Sarcophagus ca. 180.



6.2 - Marcus column, Scene LII.



6.3 - Amazon Sarcophagus, ca. 190.



6.4 - Marcus column, Scene IC.



6.5 - Victoria and trophies, Marcus column.