

ANTONY'S LETTER TO HYRCANUS AND THE BATTLE OF PHILIPPI

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Abstract

This thesis introduces a letter from Mark Antony thus far absent from the scholarly discussion on the Battle of Philippi. The introduction of this letter helps to correctly situate the battle and better understand how the narrative writers on the battle interacted with the tradition. Chapter 1 follows the narrative history of the battle and provides the context required to understand how the armies of the Caesarians and Liberators met and then fought in October of 42 BC. A discussion of the previous scholarship follows. Chapter 2 aims to understand what makes Appian different, and in his difference, how did he impact our understanding of the battle. This chapter reveals that Appian made a mistake in his understanding of the geography, but, as a skilled writer, created an internally consistent narrative. This fact has shaped our understanding of the battle for over a century. Chapter 3 argues for Antony to take Appian's place. This Chapter begins with arguments for understanding Antony's letter as authentic and follows it with an analysis of each narrative on Philippi in light of what Antony said about the geography. As a result, Antony's letter should now take the principal seat from Appian, whose account, although tactically sound, does not reflect the geography and must be set aside.

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List of Abbreviations

AJ: Jewish Antiquities

Ant: Life of Antony

App: Appian

BC: *Civil Wars*

Brut: *Life of Brutus*

Caes: *Life of Caesar*

Dio: Cassius Dio

NH: *Natural History*

Plut: Plutarch

Suet: Suetonius

Vel.Pat: Velleius Paterculus

Introduction

In the fall of 42 BC., the Battle of Philippi decided the future of Rome. It was fought in two battles in which the Caesarians, Gaius Caesar (“Octavian”) and Marcus Antonius (“Antony”), vanquished the so-called Liberators, Marcus Junius Brutus (“Brutus”) and Gaius Cassius Longinus (“Cassius”). The historical records left from antiquity contradict one another, which has led to a long controversy over the battle’s location and the events leading up to them.

This thesis will introduce a letter from Josephus’ *Antiquities* to correctly understand the battle of Philippi. Thus far absent from the discussion, the letter is written by Antony himself, providing a first-hand account from one of the four commanding generals at the battle. In this letter, he outlines an explanation of the battle and provides a geographical survey of the plains of Philippi. Earlier interpretations of the battle followed Heuzey and Daumet, who prioritized the location Appian reveals in his account. Antony’s words constitute sufficient evidence to cast doubt on Appian’s geographical description and so his account of the location should be set aside. In Appian’s place, Antony’s account of the battle will serve as the main reference point for comparing the subsequent literary depictions, as they were written much later in history. As the general who witnessed the battle firsthand, no other author would have a better understanding of the event and its geographical context.

Narratives of the battle are found in four historians. The first of these is Velleius Paterculus, who wrote a history of the Romans in two books from the mythological past to AD 29, when his work was published. Writing under Tiberius, Velleius is the earliest historian whose account survives. Although his first book is almost entirely lost, the second book remains mostly intact. As Velleius approaches his own times, his account

becomes more detailed. Velleius likely had a personal connection to the war. His paternal uncle, the senator Capito, aided in prosecuting Cassius for the murder of Julius Caesar.¹ Velleius' work has been criticized for its thinness and sycophancy towards Augustus and Tiberius. The sections of his narrative relevant to the battle of Philippi, however, are fuller than other similar events which happened earlier, and his treatment of Octavian is rather neutral, knowing that he had little to do with the battle's outcome (relative to Antony, of course).

Plutarch, who wrote around the end of the first century AD, provides the second surviving account of the battle of Philippi. Plutarch was a Greek biographer, philosopher, and historian interested in the virtues of the people he wrote about. In his work, *Parallel Lives*, he compares the characters of select Romans and Greeks to show similarities in virtue. Plutarch's *Life of Brutus* details the highlights of Brutus' life, ultimately climaxing at his place in the Battle of Philippi. Although not the main goal of the work, Plutarch relates a sufficient narrative of the battle, which cannot be ignored.

The most influential treatment of the Battle of Philippi comes from Appian's *Roman History*. Appian was a Greek historian who wrote a comprehensive history of the Romans sometime before AD 165. Although sections from the beginning and the end of his work are lost, his full account of the Roman civil wars survived antiquity. Little is known about Appian's life, but he devoted his time to writing a comprehensive history of Rome in Greek under Antoninus Pius. Appian cites both Augustus' memoirs and Maecenas for his treatment of the battle of Philippi, but these works are lost to us.

¹ Vel. Pat. 2.69.5. Velleius (4) Capito.

Appian's treatment of the battle could be the most informed of all the ancient authors, but it relies on the degree of his manipulation and augmentation of the information he curated.

The last author who wrote an account of the battle is Cassius Dio ("Dio"), a Greek senator and historian born in the latter half of the second century AD. Dio hailed from Bithynia. After a successful political career in Rome and in the provinces, he retired, and wrote his work in 80 books documenting Rome's history from its inception to AD 229. Dio devotes most of book 47 to the preliminary actions of the Liberators and Caesarians and the remainder to the battle itself. Like his predecessors, Dio was interested in portents and supernatural occurrences, as well as the characterization of notable individuals. Dio is probably the only historian on this list who has visited the region. The Via Egnatia is the sole route for crossing from Asia to Europe, so he must have seen the city and the area around it personally.

These works have been the main literary sources in scholarly discussion about the Battle of Philippi, especially Appian and Dio. The narratives of the battle have several inconsistencies, including geographical confusion and a focus on non-historical aspects such as supernatural events and characterizations of the generals. These differences make it challenging to accurately understand the battle's details. Finally, the last and most relevant source on the battle is a letter written by Antony. This letter details an explanation of the geography in which the battle was fought. This description reveals how the battle should be located in the southeastern section of the plain around Philippi, near Mt. Symbolon, and thus, more effectively blocking the only route from west to east. This relocation casts many of the sequences of events in Appian into

question. With this letter, the battle can be understood more accurately as the other narrative writers are subordinate to Antony's description instead of Appian's. Even though Antony's letter has more authority over the other sources on the battle, it does not provide sufficient detail to gain a general understanding of the course of the battle and the key events which defined it. The agreements within the narrative writers, however, can serve this purpose.

Chapter 1: The Battle of Philippi in its Historical Context

The Battle of Philippi directly resulted from the actions taken on the ides of March in 44 BC. The assassination of Caesar split the Roman people into two camps: The Caesarians, led by Octavian and Antony, and the Liberators, led by Brutus and Cassius. Both sides considered the other enemies of the state, and it would only take a year for the gears of war to begin turning. The final confrontation began its approach in 43 BC, when Cassius besieged Dolabella in Laodicea.² Dolabella was the governor of Syria and, at the time, was allied with Antony. Dolabella took his own life during the siege, leaving his men, the region's plunder, and undisputed control of the east, in Cassius' hands.³

When Cassius was preparing for the war, he required the Judeans to pay tribute to his cause at 700 talents, even though they were an autonomous kingdom.⁴ When they could not comply with this demand, Cassius sold their inhabitants into slavery.⁵ Plutarch recounts a letter in which Brutus writes to Cassius to advise against his expansion into Egypt, encouraging him to press on to Italy and remember their real purpose: to restore freedom to their state.⁶ Following this, the Liberators convened in Smyrna, a city on the west coast of modern Turkey, to discuss a plan for the coming

² Vel.Pat. 2. 69, 2; App. BC 4. 78.

³ Holmes 1928. 77.

⁴ Richardson 2012. 44.

⁵ Ibid. See also Josephus. AJ 14. 271-276.

⁶ Plut. Brut. 28.3-5.

war in the West. While Sextus Pompey would present an ongoing issue to the Caesarians close to Italy, Cassius and Brutus would begin their push toward the Hellespont, subduing the Cappadocians, Rhodians, and Lycians, who were sympathetic to the Caesarians.⁷

The Caesarians, attentive to the movements of the Liberators, sent two generals, Norbanus and Saxa, as a vanguard to oppose Brutus and Cassius.⁸ Their mission was straightforward: advance into Thrace and prevent Brutus and Cassius from pressing further westwards.⁹ Norbanus and Saxa accomplished this goal by occupying positions along the Via Egnatia, which would be difficult to circumvent: the Corpili and Sapaei passes.¹⁰ They first occupied the Corpili pass, about 100km from Philippi.¹¹ Their position was hastily compromised, which forced their retreat to the Sapaei pass, about 10km northeast of Neapolis.¹² Both positions highlight the geographical limitations of the region which impacted the strategy which the armies had to employ. There was only one road on which an army could reasonably move westwards. Norbanus and Saxa needed their positions to be secure from any flank, so they chose to fortify sites which were spanning the only road and at a significant geographic advantage. Their

⁷ Plut., Brut., 28, 4; App. BC 4, 65, 276-7; Dio. 47. 32, 1. 3-4; 33, 1-2.

⁸ Dio. 47.35-36.

⁹ Syme 1939. 202.

¹⁰ App. BC 4, 87, 368; Dio, 47. 35, 2.

¹¹ Holmes 1928. 82.

¹² Holmes 1928. 82.

fortification of a chokepoint would give them a distinct strategic advantage against the advancing army. This was especially the case at the Sapaei pass because it was protected by mountains on the one side, and the sea on the other.

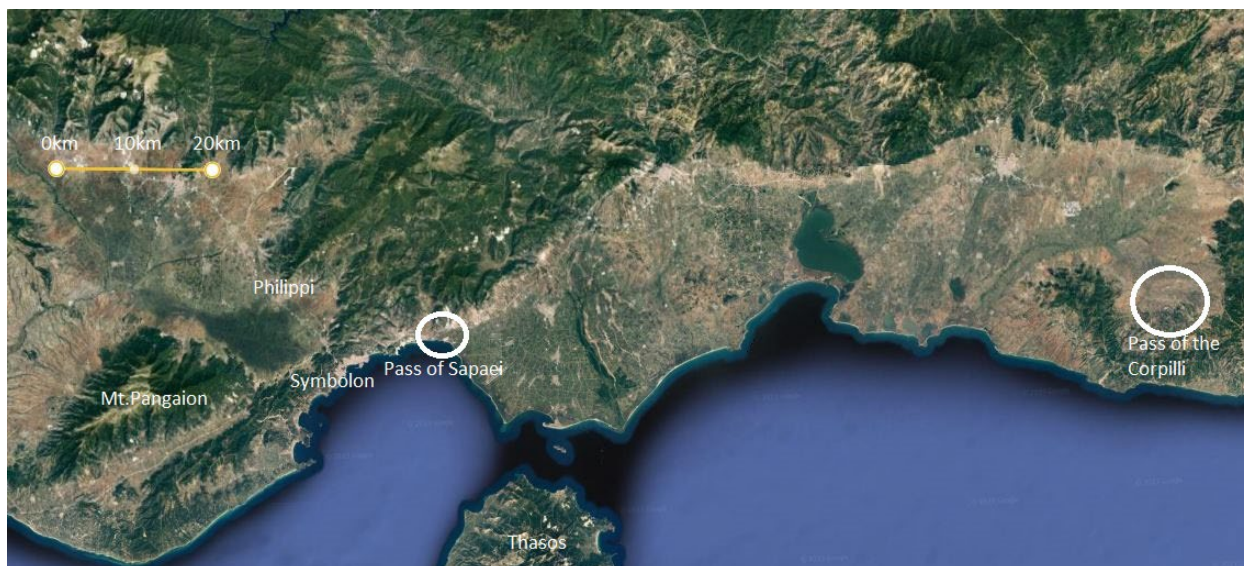


Figure 01. The Defensive Positions of Norbanus and Saxa.

With a stroke of good fortune, Brutus and Cassius were not forced to assault the powerful defensive position of Norbanus and Saxa. They trusted in the advice of Rhascuporis, a local who revealed a trackless path around the Sapaei pass, circumventing the mountains and compromising Norbanus and Saxa's position.¹³ Brutus and Cassius agreed to this plan and led themselves on a difficult four-day march around the mountain. Once Norbanus learned his position had been compromised, he withdrew his forces to Amphipolis, lifting his blockade of the Sapaei Pass and the lesser fortification on the pass through Mt. Symbolon.¹⁴

¹³ App BC 4.101, 424-6; 102-3; Dio, 47, 35, 4.

¹⁴ Plut., Brut., 38, 1; App. BC 4, 104; 105; Dio. 47, 36, 1.

The Liberators assumed and fortified this position over Mt. Symbolon, blocking the Via Egnatia en route to Neapolis.¹⁵ With Neapolis as their port, the Liberators were protected within the mountains and supplied by the sea via Thasos.¹⁶ Near to where the battle took place ran the river Gangites, and in antiquity, there was a marsh spanning much of the plain to the south-west of Philippi. Brutus occupied a hill north of Cassius, placing him on the right flank for the battle, and Cassius encamped on a southern hill taking the left flank. Between the two camps ran a wall and a ditch, connecting the two as if they were one entity on the Via Egnatia. Their position created a one-way gate from Europe to Asia; any land movement eastwards would now have to pass through them.

The Caesarians, now forced to react to the advances of the Liberators, began their march from Dyrrachium, a city on the west coast of modern Greece, to convene with Norbanus and Saxa and begin their counter-offensive. Octavian was ill and stayed behind at Dyrrachium while Antony pressed forwards to Amphipolis.¹⁷ Upon his arrival, he established Amphipolis as his supply base and approached the Liberators. Antony took the road south of Mt. Pangaion, ultimately encamping in the plain southeast of the marsh and close to Brutus and Cassius' fortifications.¹⁸

¹⁵ Plut. Brut. 38.2-3.

¹⁶ App. BC 4. 105, 439-40; 106; Dio, 47, 35, 5-6; 36,1; 45, 4; Heuzey and Daumet, *Mission archéol. de Macédoine*, pp. 102.

¹⁷ Dio. 47.37.1.

¹⁸ See Sears and Butera 2017.

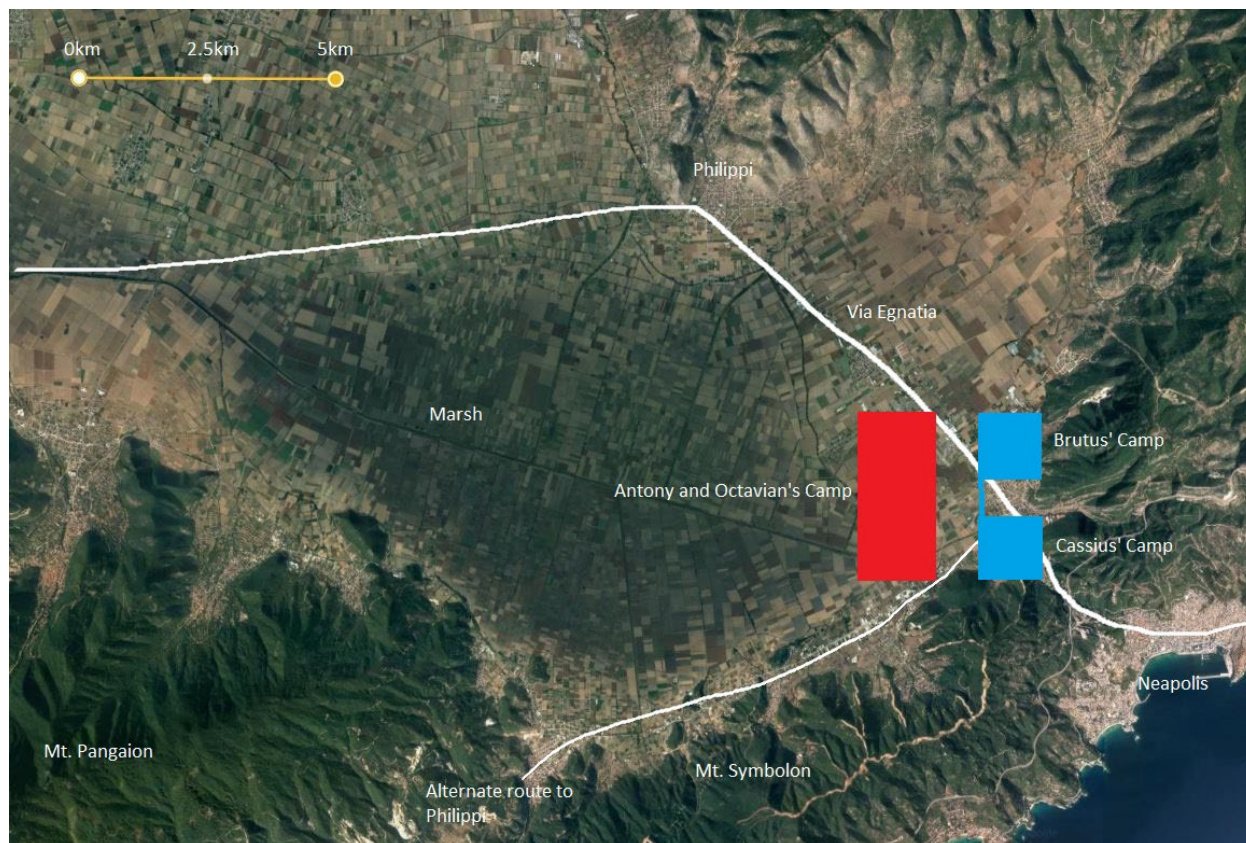


Figure 02. The Positioning of the Camps

When he took up this position, Antony built a wall, palisade, and ditch as the defenses of his camp, matching the defenses already established by Brutus and Cassius.¹⁹ The Caesarians' positions were inferior to the Liberators in all respects. Although their fortifications likely matched their opponents, the region's geography was not on their side. Their supply base was Amphipolis, a port much farther away from the plain than Neapolis for the Liberators. Thus, the Caesarians' supplies moved much further over land, and their position relative to the Liberators was on exposed low-ground. Furthermore, command of the sea lay in the Liberator's hands, and they were directly

¹⁹ App. BC 4. 107.

supplied from Neapolis. The Caesarians' lack of natural defenses compounds with their distance from their supply base; retreat would have been disastrous.

Both sides began skirmishing in the space between their armies with their cavalry. Although Brutus and Cassius arrayed their troops, they stayed on top of their hills, delaying the confrontation for their position was superior, and they knew that the enemy would lose a battle of attrition.²⁰ Octavian finally arrived, joining Antony's camp and taking command of his forces against Brutus, even though he needed to be carried in a litter.²¹ On the field, the Caesarians had command of 19 full legions, with a total of approximately 110,000 legionaries.²² The Liberators had command of 17, though they were not filled, giving them about 80,000.²³ The Caesarians had around 13,000 cavalymen, and the Liberators had approximately 20,000.²⁴ These figures exclude the number of *auxilia* which would have accompanied both sides.

The engagement began when Antony attempted to circumvent Cassius' flank and gain access to the Liberator supply base of Neapolis.²⁵ This was ultimately checked by Cassius' counterworks, forcing Antony to assault Cassius' encampment. Meanwhile, Brutus' troops, ignoring any signal for battle, engaged with the remainder of the

²⁰ App BC. 4. 108.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Brunt. 1971. 487.

²³ Ibid. See also App. BC 4. 88.

²⁴ App BC. 4.108.

²⁵ Plut. Brut. 41. Appian has a similar sequence which will be discussed at length below.

Caesarian forces.²⁶ Ultimately, the actions of Antony forced the Liberators to forfeit their war of attrition in exchange for a contest of arms. The result was a spectacular stalemate. Indeed, the engagement was a split battle; Brutus fought Octavian in the field, and Antony assaulted Cassius' palisade.

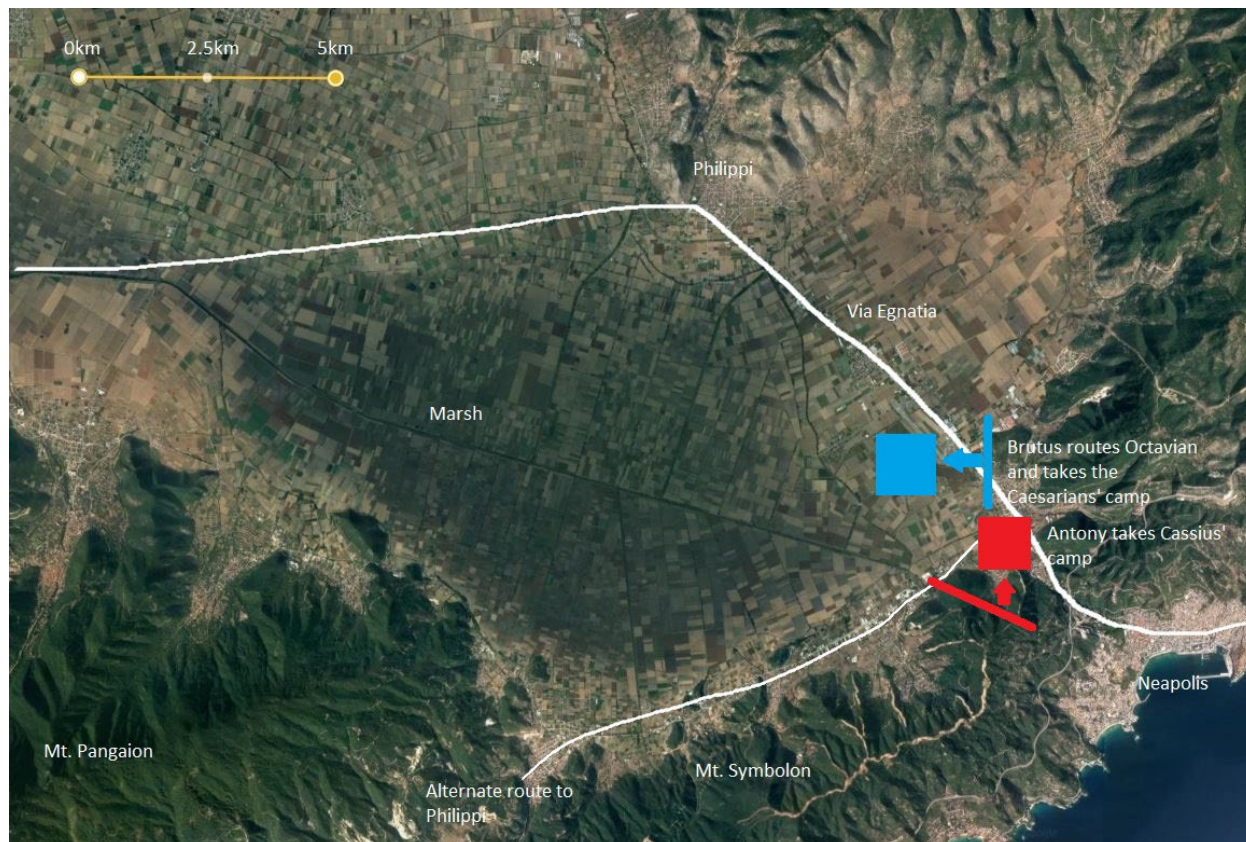


Figure 03. The First Battle of Philippi.

Antony was successful in his assault of Cassius' fortifications, routing his enemy and capturing their camp. Brutus routed Octavian's forces in the field and captured his enemy's camp. Both sides failed to halt their advances and support their co-commander. The battles, however, were quite distant from one another, and the dust kicked up by a few hundred thousand men would have clouded visibility throughout the

²⁶ App. 4.109-110.

plain.²⁷ Both victorious commanders recognized that their triumph was a shared one, and they returned to assist their fellow soldiers. The first battle of Philippi ended with victory and loss on either side.

The battle was indecisive, but there was a slight advantage for the Liberators. The Caesarians had lost approximately 16,000 men, and the Liberators half that figure.²⁸ A serious miscommunication occurred, however, between the camps of the Liberators. When Cassius abandoned his camp during the battle to later return and find it sacked, he sent a centurion to discover the fate of Brutus.²⁹ The centurion's delay caused Cassius to take his own life, thinking that Brutus' army had been defeated at the same time as his. Even though the Liberators were now bereft of one of their commanders, their position remained superior. Octavian's camp was overrun as well, but he was not in the camp during the battle, leaving the leadership on the Caesarians' side intact.

Unable to outlast the Liberators' better supplied and more secure position, the Caesarians had to coerce the enemy into fighting another pitched battle. Brutus was still aware of his superior position and wanted to continue holding out. Nevertheless, the Caesarians managed to force Brutus' hand, and he would come to offer a second pitched battle. The reason for this is likely three-fold. The Caesarians occupied a hill within the missile range of Brutus' camps to coerce them to fight. This aggressive

²⁷ Dio. 47.45.3-4.

²⁸ Plut. Brut. 45.1; App BC. 4. 128, 137. Brunt 1971, 477-488. If you follow Appian, it was a ubiquitous slaughter, equaling about 20,000 men lost on either side.

²⁹ Dio. 47.46.3-4

skirmishing maneuver would have been oppressive, forcing a response if he did not want to exchange missiles continuously. Brutus knew how his position advantaged him, but those around him were persuading him to take the chance of another battle.³⁰ Also, Brutus may have feared that Antony would compromise his supply line.³¹ Regardless of the reason, Brutus marshalled his men in front of his defences to chance a second pitched battle.

Just as in the first battle, both right flanks were initially victorious in the second battle, but this time, Antony and his forces did not pursue routing troops opposing them and instead encircled Brutus. Brutus' line was over-extended and thus was attacked from the front and rear, leading to his defeat. With both flanks defeated, the Caesarians won the battle. After crossing a river, Brutus retreated to high ground towards Philippi, where he was aided in taking his own life, marking the end of the conspirator's leadership against the Caesarians.³² The conflict was now over, and the Caesarians absorbed the now-leaderless armies of the Liberators.

Velleius Paterculus' assessment summarizes the devastating effect the battle had on Roman nobility: "There was no other battle more blood-soaked in the slaughter of the most distinguished men" (*non aliud bellum cruentius caede clarissimorum virorum fuit*).³³ As we know, both Cassius and Brutus took their own lives during the battle, but

³⁰ App BC, 4. 121; Dio 47, 2.

³¹ Holmes 1928. 87.

³² Plut. Brut. 52., App BC 4. 125. Dio. 47.49.

³³ Vel.Pat. 2.71.2.

added to the list of the noble fallen were the younger Hortensius, Cato the Younger's son, Livius Drusus, Lucullus, Sex. Quinctilius Varus.³⁴ Other notable men including Marcus Favonius were led out in chains and coaxed into saluting Antonius as *imperator*.³⁵ Other nobles had fled the battle and made their way to Thasos, the supply base of the Liberators. Some fled from there, but others committed themselves to the care of Lucius Calpurnius Bibulus and Marcus Valerius Messalla.³⁶ From Thasos, they negotiated their surrender to Antony, disbanding the remainder of the Liberators' leadership, and some even entered Antony's service.³⁷

An early and convincing literary interpretation of where the Battle of Philippi took place was proposed by Heuzey and Daumet in 1876. For them, it was Appian's specificity that seemed to have proved most reliable in describing the Battle of Philippi. In their section concerning the study of the field of battle and the texts describing it, they outline their support for Appian's account:

“Appian has left a fine account of this great military feat, full of details, which affects, even in the indication of the topography, a precision uncommon among historians of antiquity.”³⁸

³⁴ Vel.Pat. 2.71.2. See also Syme 1960. 206.

³⁵ Suet. Aug. 13.1-3.

³⁶ App. BC 4.136.

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ Heuzey and Daumet. 100: “*Appien a laissé de ce grand fait militaire un beau récit plein de détails, et qui affecte même dans l'indication de la topographie une précision peu commune chez les historiens de l'antiquité.*”

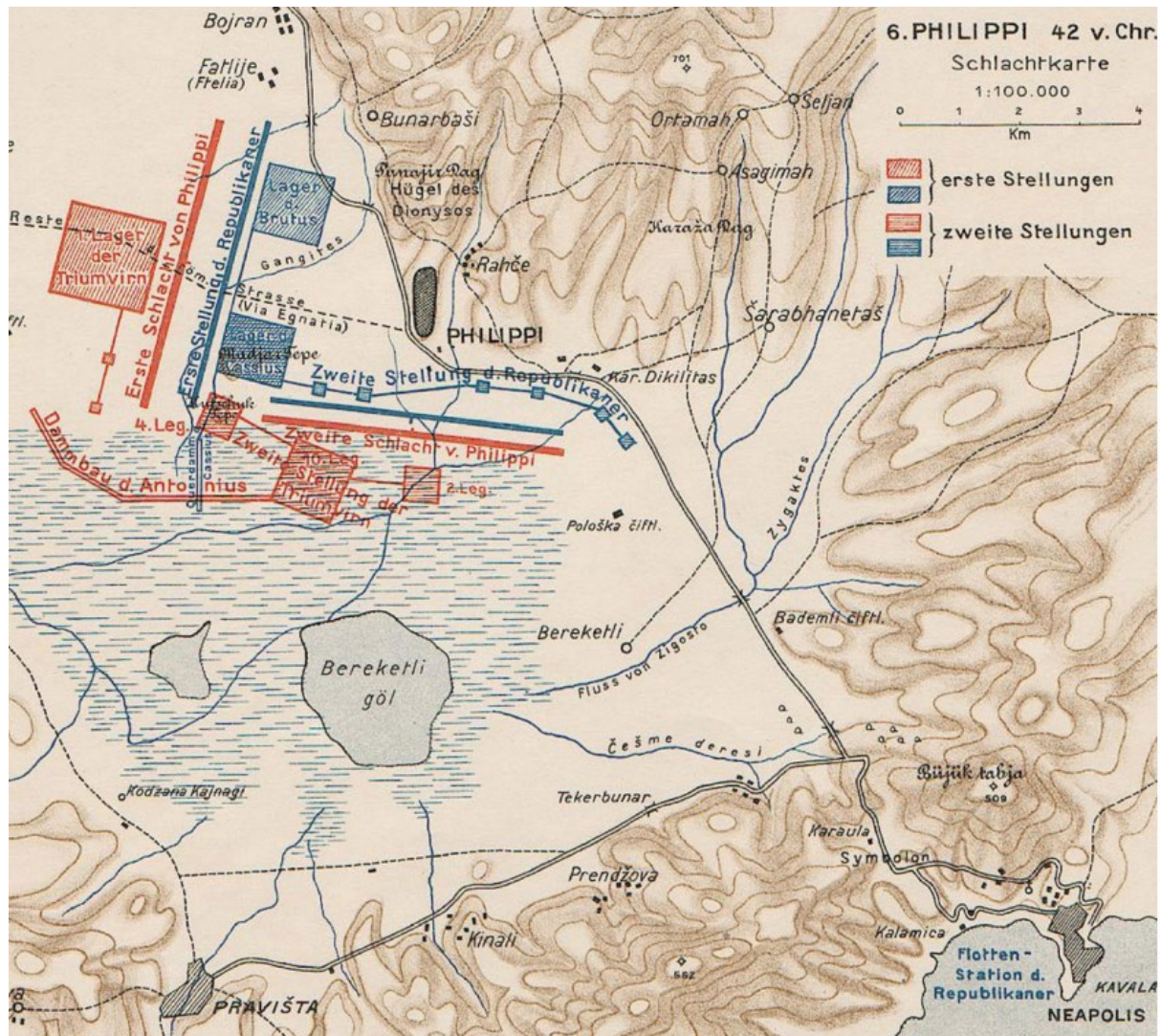


Figure 04. The Traditional Location.³⁹

It is notable that Heuzey and Daumet expressed hesitation with trusting other narrative sources, yet fixated on Appian's account for its level of detail. Nevertheless, they followed Appian's account almost exclusively.⁴⁰ In their personal observation of the region, they discovered a series of hills that seemed to corroborate Appian's

³⁹ Kromayer and Veith pl.23 map 6.

⁴⁰ Heuzey and Daumet 1876. 100-116. They refer to Dio and Plutarch sparingly for events of the battle. See 106,112, 114.

description.⁴¹ While describing where these hills were located, Heuzey and Daumet justified the discrepancies between Appian's account and the actual geography, explaining that first-hand witnesses would describe the battle after the fact with a natural symmetry.⁴² Thus, faith in Appian's account requires both a trust in his scientific approach and forgiveness for his inaccuracy.

This tradition surrounding the Battle of Philippi strengthened with the support of a few later scholars and, from then on, has become common knowledge. Holmes was one such example who elaborated on Heuzey and Daumet's proposal with a fuller bibliography regarding the other ancient sources on the battle and maintained the same narrative that Appian provided.⁴³ The reiteration of Heuzey and Daumet's initial hypothesis manufactured support for Appian's account, creating an ever-strengthening consensus. This tradition places the battle to the west of Philippi, above the marsh within the mountains, near the Gangites river, and the Liberators' defences spanned across the Via Egnatia, acting as the gate from Europe to Asia.

A recent article by Sears and Butera, however, revives the argument of Leake, an early 19th-century scholar, and challenges Heuzey and Daumet's widely accepted model for the battle's location. Instead of positioning the battle to the west of Philippi,⁴⁴

⁴¹ 100-103

⁴² Heuzey and Daumet 1876. 101.

⁴³ Holmes. 1928. 80-90. For similar accounts, see also Collart 1929. 351-36,4 who focuses on the movements prior to the battle and Kromayer and Veith 1924-31. 654-661.

⁴⁴ See figure 04.

they propose that it took place to the south, near modern Amygdaleonas.⁴⁵ Sears and Butera cite three reasons for this:

"(1) there are no hills in the traditional location corresponding to the hills mentioned in the ancient sources; (2) there are two hills in the southeastern section of the plain, near modern Amygdaleonas, that fit the ancient descriptions much more closely; and (3) an alternate route into the plain, south of Mount Pangaion, renders the traditional location strategically unfeasible."⁴⁶



Figure 05. The Alternate Route to Philippi.⁴⁷

Sears and Butera point out that most maps of the conventional location do not show enough of the plain, hiding the path's existence.⁴⁸ Even more interestingly,

⁴⁵ Sears and Butera 2017. 359. See also Leake 1835.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Sears and Butera 2017. Figure 7.

⁴⁸ Sears and Butera 2017. 369.

Kromayer and Veith have the alternate route on their map, but do not acknowledge it as a problem for the location.⁴⁹ Therefore, a defensive position to the west of Philippi with a supply train coming from Neapolis would be impossible to defend. The alternate route would have lead the Caesarians to the Liberators' flank and supply lines, ending the conflict before it could begin.⁵⁰

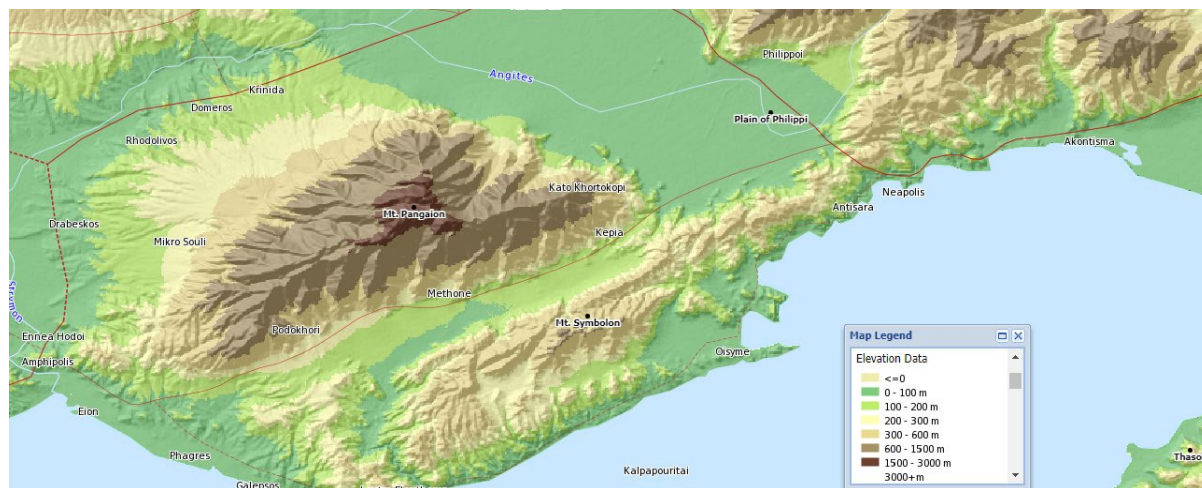


Figure 06: Elevation Map of the Northern Aegean.⁵¹

Sears and Butera also point out that Saxa's and Norbanus' retreat from Brutus' flanking maneuver would likely have been on the alternate route to Amphipolis, going along the southern side of Mt. Pangalon.⁵² This was also commented on by Holmes, who followed the traditional interpretation. He casts doubt on Dio who recorded this retreat since Norbanus' forces would have met Brutus' should he have taken the

⁴⁹ Kromayer and Veith pl.23 map 6.

⁵⁰ See also Sears and Butera 2017: 368.

⁵¹ Base map from Antiquity À-la-carte.

⁵² Ibid. 368

traditional route on the Via Egnatia.⁵³ Furthermore, Saxa's and Norbanus' old position near Neapolis would have been a logical location to fortify because they could not be flanked by an army coming from the west, unlike Norbanus and Saxa, since Brutus and Cassius came from the east. The passes over Mt. Symbolon were a perfect position; mountains on either side, the nearby sea and supply base to the rear, and on the one road passing through the region – precisely as Antony described it.⁵⁴

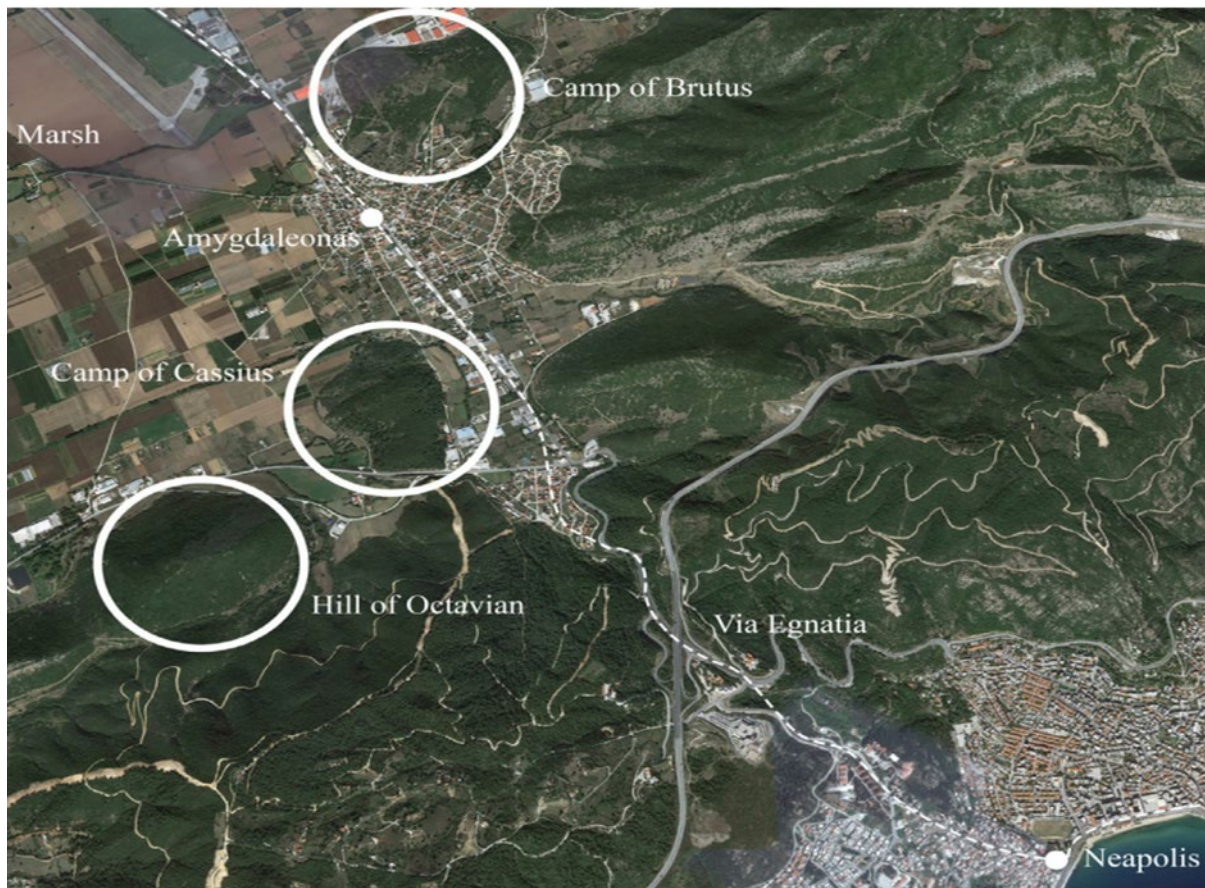


Figure 07. The Hills of Philippi near Amygdaleonas.⁵⁵

⁵³ Holmes 1928 83.

⁵⁴ See Figure 06 for the elevation of the plain.

⁵⁵ Sears and Butera 2017. Figure 6.

Sears and Butera argue that their visitation of the two sites in question helps to show the illegitimacy of the western location and the primacy of their Amygdaleonas location. Their fieldwork concludes that the so-called western hills could not hold the tens of thousands of soldiers involved in the battles, and the defensive capabilities of the positions proved insufficient.⁵⁶ Their firsthand experience of the sites is an invaluable piece in building a more conclusive statement about where the battle was fought. This southeastern location in the plain of Philippi must be where the battle occurred despite the textual differences clouding the truth behind the story. They identified hills in the area which could correspond with most of the literary descriptions of the battle.

Antony's response to Hyrcanus, however, reveals the evidence required to locate the battle southeast of the city, near modern Amygdaleonas, which has previously been absent from the discussion on the battle.

But their god-defying plots, which Macedonia received as though its climate were proper to their unholy crimes, and the confused mob of half-crazed villains whom they got together at Philippi in Macedonia, where they occupied places naturally favourable and walled in by mountains as far as the sea, so that the passage could be controlled through only one gate.

ἀλλὰ τὰς ἐπιβουλάς αὐτῶν τὰς θεομάχους, ἃς ὑπεδέξατο ἡ Μακεδονία καθάπερ ἴδιος αὐτοῖς τῶν ἀνοσίων τολμημάτων ἀήρ, καὶ τὴν σύγχυσιν τῆς ἡμιμανοῦς κακοηθείας ἦν κατὰ Φιλίππους τῆς Μακεδονίας συνεκρότου,

⁵⁶ Sears and Butera 2017. 369-372

τόπους εὐφρεῖς καταλαμβανόμενοι μέχρι θαλάσσης ἀποτετειχισμένους ὄρεσιν, ὡς πύλη μιᾶ τὴν πάροδον.⁵⁷

Josephus. *AJ* 14. 310.

Josephus recorded this letter within his *Jewish Antiquities*, but did not narrate the Battle of Philippi in any detail, limiting himself to a description of its aftermath.⁵⁸ In the *Bellum*,⁵⁹ Josephus reports that embassies, including some from Judea, approached Antony in Bithynia. This is repeated in his *Antiquities*,⁶⁰ but Josephus reports another embassy in Ephesus. Appian, Plutarch, and Dio corroborate Antony's presence in Ephesus in the spring of 41.⁶¹ Indeed, Antony was likely not present in Bithynia at all, and this mistake seems to have been carried over into the *Antiquities* from his earlier work.

Antony's primary intention of writing this letter was not to discuss the battle of Philippi. He was tasked with mediating the aftermath of the war and making decisions regarding the legitimacy of Cassius' actions during his unlawful control. An ally of the Roman people was wronged, and the Jewish people intended to support the most powerful governor closest to their region.⁶² Antony could rely on them while he managed the other inhabitants of the region and solidified his position. Josephus notes

⁵⁷ Except where noted, translations are from the Loeb, sometimes with minor adaptations.

⁵⁸ Josephus. *AJ* 14.301-302,

⁵⁹ 1.242.

⁶⁰ Josephus. *AJ* 14.301-302.

⁶¹ App. BC 5.4., Plut. Ant. 24., Dio. 48.24.

⁶² Richardson 2012. 44.

that Antony also sent edicts to Sidon, Antioch, and Aradus, and if we assume they were similar in character, he wanted his decision copied and conspicuous.⁶³

The letter reveals a few geographical considerations for understanding where the battle occurred. According to Antony, the battle was near Philippi, and the Liberators held a position that was walled off from the sea with mountains and the approach to which consisted of “a single mountain pass” (πύλη μιᾶ). The description can only refer to a specific area in the plains near Philippi, located south of the city at the passes through Mt. Symbolon. The site to the west of the city is too far from the sea and is instead walled in by a marsh. Indeed, if the marsh was, as Appian says it is, the strategic focal point of the battle, the general who was supposed to have overcome it would have mentioned it in his assessment of the region.

Antony's description of the region's topography is more credible since he did not intend to create a formal account of the battle. The letter he wrote was part of a diplomatic mission, and he did not exaggerate his already impressive victory. Still, Antony's letter has remained outside of the discussion on the battle's location. Only Osgood has included Antony's letters in his discussion of the aftermath of Philippi, but limits his comments to the rhetoric Antony employs to enhance his position after the battle.⁶⁴ Osgood claims that Antony deliberately exaggerated the topography at the battle to make his victory more impressive, and in reality, heavily taxed the region.⁶⁵

⁶³ Josephus AJ. 14.323.

⁶⁴ Osgood 2006. 104-105.

⁶⁵ Osgood 2006. 105.

Osgood sees this letter as a juxtaposition between the self-proclaimed saviour and remedy to a regional illness, with his assumption of rule.

This interpretation of the letter is coloured by trust in Appian's account. The removal of this trust reveals how Antony, as the victorious general, remains to us as the only surviving first-hand account from antiquity that describes the geography of the battle. His letter accidentally confirms the location to the south-east of Philippi which was convincingly proposed by Sears and Butera without this evidence. Their proposal revealed that more emphasis on this document is required for understanding the battle. The introduction of this letter allows for a better understanding of the textual issues found in the other narratives when positioned in light of Antony's own words. The following chapter will re-evaluate Appian to show that his account needs to be set aside because his understanding of the region is inconsistent with Antony and the remaining authors.

Chapter 2: Removing Appian from the Battle

This chapter will consider the detailed narrative elements in the literary depictions of the battle of Philippi. First, I will show that Appian's description of the geography differs from the other narrative writers, but in this difference, he is internally consistent. Second, I will argue that the narrative details provided by the other writers better reflect the information Antony provides, and therefore, any reconstruction of the battle must depend primarily on them. My final section will assess the issues of using the other historical narratives for the events of the battle.

How is Appian's internal consistency is different from other writers' accounts?

Appian's account contains a number of specific details which are absent from our other narrators.

1. He places the battle near the city of Philippi at a distance of 70 stades from the Liberators' supply base at Neapolis and 100 stades from Thasos,⁶⁶ their depot. (This is actually correct, Google gives 11 km for the distance from Philippi to Kavala, but Thasos is quite a lot farther than Appian assumes (which is about 25km from Kavala))
2. He describes the precise location of the hills on which Cassius and Brutus encamped relative to one another and Philippi itself.⁶⁷ (the actual location of the hills is unclear, see Sears and Butera 2017). Appian says they are 8 stades from

⁶⁶ Heuzey and Daumet 1876 raised concerns over the round numbers which Appian provided, but justified them because symmetry was only natural coming from first hand accounts. 101.

⁶⁷ App BC. 4. 106.

one another and 18 stades from Philippi. The hills proposed by Sears and Butera match Appian's dimensions to a relatively accurate degree. They are 1.2km (7.6 stades) from one another, but 5.5km (35 stades) from the city.

3. He asserts that their control of these two hills was sufficient to block the path from Europe to Asia effectively acting as a gate.⁶⁸
4. Most importantly he positions the battle to the west of the city. When he explains the area around Philippi, he describes the large plain in the west in which the hills are located:

The town is situated on the crest of a hill with cliffs all around and its size is exactly that of the area of the hilltop. To the north there are thick woods through which Rhascupolis led Brutus' men. To the south is a marsh and then the sea. To the east lie the Sapaeian and Corpilian passes, and westward is a very fertile and beautiful plain extending some three hundred and fifty stades to the towns of Murcinus and Drabiscus and the river Strymon.

ἔστι δὲ ἡ πόλις ἐπὶ λόφου περικρήμνου, τοσαύτη τὸ μέγεθος, ὅσον ἐστὶ τοῦ λόφου τὸ εὖρος. ἔχει δὲ πρὸς μὲν ἄρκτω δρυμούς, δι' ὧν ὁ Ῥασκούπολις ἤγαγε τοὺς ἀμφὶ τὸν Βροῦτον· πρὸς δὲ τῇ μεσημβρίᾳ ἔλος ἔστι καὶ θάλασσα μετ' αὐτό, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἔω τὰ στενὰ τὰ Σαπαίων τε καὶ Κορπίλων, ἐκ δὲ τῆς δύσεως πεδῖον μέχρι Μυρκίνου τε καὶ Δραβήσκου καὶ ποταμοῦ Στρυμόνος,

App. BC 4. 105.

In summary, these details are unique to Appian and seem to reflect his desire to offer a narrative rooted in facts. Appian writes with measurements and geographical markers, which creates a solid foundation in which the events of the battle occurred.

⁶⁸ App. BC 4. 106.

These details help the reader imagine where the battle took place, and once they understand his version of the geography, he concocts an entertaining sequence of events that reflect this geography. Appian seems well informed and likely had access to earlier accounts of the battle. The way he understands the area of Philippi, however, impacted how he portrayed the way the battle progressed. For Appian, Philippi had a plain to the west and a marsh to the south that reached the sea. This is not actually true, but Appian's understanding of this prevented him from locating the battle in any other location. There was nowhere else to fight a battle, the participants needed places to encamp and a field in which to position. Therefore, when Antony attempted to circumvent Cassius' defences, as Appian understood it, he had to move through the marsh in the south. Appian took this understanding of the area and expanded on it to create an internally consistent narrative. No other author provides a similar account of the geography, even though they share certain narrative elements of how the battle progressed.

Appian's narrative is consistent with the way in which he describes the geography. This consistency was a significant reason that his account was favoured over others.⁶⁹ Appian's marsh sequence in which Antony attempts to deceive and out-manuever Cassius' flank is not corroborated by any other author, but as seen above, perfectly fits his understanding of the area:

He formed a plan to see if he could in secret make the marsh passable, in order to get behind the enemy without their knowledge, and deprive them of their supply route from Thasos. So while drawing up his forces for battle again, on each occasion he included all the military standards, to create

⁶⁹ Heuzey and Daumet 1876. 100.

the belief that his entire army had been marshaled. With one unit, however, he worked day and night to carve a narrow path in the marsh, cutting down reeds, building a causeway on top with rocks on either side to prevent the bank subsiding, driving piles into the deep parts and bridging them, and all the while keeping the deepest silence.

καὶ ἐπενόησεν, εἰ δύναιτο βásiμον τὸ ἔλος ἐργάσασθαι λαθῶν, ἵνα κατόπιν τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἔτι ἀγνοούντων γενόμενος τὴν ἀγορὰν σφᾶς ἀφέλοιτο τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς Θάσου κομιζομένην. ἐκτάσσων οὖν αὖθις ἐκάστοτε ἐς μάχην τὰ σημεῖα τοῦ στρατοῦ πάντα, ἵνα ὅλος ἐκτετάχθαι νομίζοιτο, μέρει τινὶ νυκτός τε καὶ ἡμέρας ἔκοπτεν ἐν τῷ ἔλει δίοδον στενήν, κείρων τε τὸν δόνακα καὶ χῶμα ἐπιβάλλων καὶ λίθους ἐκατέρωθεν, ἵνα μὴ τὸ χῶμα διαπίπτει, τὰ δὲ βαθέα διεσταύρου καὶ ἐγεφύρου μετὰ σιωπῆς βαθυτάτης.

App. *BC* 4.109.

After Cassius discovered this, he built counter-walls to cover his exposed flank.⁷⁰ This forced Antony to engage his men in assaulting the wall and thus goaded Brutus' and Octavian's line to follow in the engagement.⁷¹ Antony was delighted because the Caesarians needed to force a pitched battle because of their exposed position and supply situation.⁷²

Antony likely attempted to circumvent Cassius' position to begin the conflict because there needed to be a reason for the Liberators to abandon their secure position. Appian reflects this, but his maneuver through the swamp is unique to him and coincides with his understanding of the area. Furthermore, the nature of Appian's engagement differs because it focuses on how Antony would have besieged a fortified

⁷⁰ App. *BC* 4.109-110.

⁷¹ App. *BC* 4.110.

⁷² App. *BC* 4.110-111.

encampment, the tools involved, and the obstacles he would have had to overcome.⁷³ The level of detail Appian employs is not matched by any other of the narratives, who tend to generalize these sorts of topics.

The result of Appian's first battle was mostly the same as the other narratives: Cassius' camp was captured just as the Caesarians', Octavian was not present because of the dream of Artorius, his physician, and Cassius took his life before knowing the result of the battle, the only difference is that Cassius retreats to Philippi, a fact not corroborated by the other narrative writers.⁷⁴ This is not surprising, the only place that he could have retreated within his framework was Philippi. Appian's positioning of Cassius places him directly southwest of Philippi with a clear route of retreat for those who were engaged with Antony's forces.

The consistency which Appian has within his narrative reflects his persistence as a writer to include facts, details, and numbers. They all work together to create an interesting and self-contained account, which, unfortunately, does not accurately reflect the reality that was the Battle of Philippi. Appian's lack of corroboration proves that his account is not the most accurate, it is the most creative.

How the other narratives better reflect Antony's description of the geography

Only Appian located the battle precisely. Dio, Velleius Paterculus, and Plutarch place the battle near the city of Philippi. Plutarch and Dio, however, seem to understand

⁷³ App. BC 4.111.

⁷⁴ Appian. 4.110-113. Vel.Pat.2.70. Cassius retreats to higher ground. Plut. Ant. 22. Mentions Cassius's assisted suicide but does not mention his retreat. Dio. 47.46.3-4 Has Cassius retreat to an indiscriminate location before returning to see that his camp was seized.

the entire area within the mountains as near Philippi. Plutarch describes the area between the encamped forces of the Liberators and Caesarians as the plains of Philippi.⁷⁵ As Antony portrays it, the area is indeed walled in completely from the sea by mountains. The obstruction of vision must have forced the beholder within the area to see the extant plain, the marsh, the mountains walling them in, and the city at the top of it all. Philippi was the only relevant city within the mountains and was divorced from the ports of Amphipolis and Neapolis, both of which could not be seen from the battlefield.

Cassius Dio explains the geography well, but fails to provide sufficient geographical markers to place the battle in any one location. For Dio, Philippi is situated at the top of the plain, Mt. Symbolon is in between it and Neapolis, and the strategic focal point of the conflict was the pass, already fortified by Norbanus, over Mt. Symbolon, through which the Via Egnatia ran.⁷⁶ It would make sense that Brutus and Cassius assumed control over the pass to their supply base after forcing Norbanus and Saxa to retreat. Dio also states, however, that the Liberators encamped near the city of Philippi and Dio's depiction is unclear enough to assume he meant a location closer to the city of Philippi itself.⁷⁷

And inasmuch as Saxa and Norbanus, as it chanced, had already occupied the most direct pass across, Brutus and Cassius did not even try to get through that way but went round by a longer road that passes by a place called Crenides. Here, too, they encountered a garrison, but

⁷⁵ Plut. Brut. 38.4. So too does Pliny the Elders when he refers to a letter of Brutus written there. Plin. HN. 33.39.

⁷⁶ Dio. 47.35.2-3.

⁷⁷ Dio.47.35.5.

overpowered it, got inside the mountains, approached the city along the high ground, and there encamped, nominally each by himself...

καὶ ἔτυχον γὰρ τὴν συντομωτάτην αὐτοῦ ὑπερβολὴν ὃ τε Σάξας καὶ ὁ Νωρβανὸς προκαταλαμβάνοντες, ταύτη μὲν ὁ Βροῦτος ὃ τε Κάσσιος οὐδὲ ἐπείρασαν διαβῆναι, ἑτέραν δὲ τινα μακροτέραν κατὰ τὰς Κρηνίδας ὠνομασμένας περιελθόντες φυλακῆ μὲν καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐνέτυχον, βιασάμενοι δὲ αὐτὴν εἴσω τε τῶν ὄρων ἐγένοντο, καὶ πρὸς τὴν πόλιν κατὰ τὰ μετέωρα ἐπιπαρελθόντες ἐνταῦθα χωρὶς ἑκάτερος, ὡς γε τῷ λόγῳ εἰπεῖν, ἐστρατοπεδεύσαντο...

Dio. 47. 35.4-5

For Dio, Norbanus' position forced Brutus and Cassius to take the alternative route northeast of the pass as they were too well situated for an assault.

After circumventing the position, Dio reports that Brutus and Cassius approached via the higher ground and encamped "there" (ἐνταῦθα). It is not sufficiently clear whether or not they encamped at the city or in the positions which Norbanus and Saxa had fortified. Nevertheless, Dio presents the best understanding of the geography and describes the area almost perfectly. It was likely that on his way from Bithynia-Pontus, his place of origin, to Rome, he would have passed through the area and gained his understanding from his firsthand travel on the Via Egnatia.

Dio's description of the battle's location is similar to how he refers to Norbanus and Saxa's positioning:

And they found that Gaius Norbanus and Decidius Saxa had anticipated them by crossing the Ionian Sea before Staius arrived, occupying the whole country as far as Mt. Pangaeum and encamping near Philippi.

καὶ αὐτοὺς Γαίος τε Νωρβανὸς καὶ Δεκίδιος Σάξας ἔφθησαν τὸν τε Ἴόνιον, πρὶν τὸν Στάιον ἐλθεῖν, περαιωθέντες, καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν μέχρι τοῦ Παγγαίου γῆν προκατασχόντες, καὶ πρὸς τοῖς Φιλίπποις στρατοπεδευσάμενοι.

47.35.2

Dio seems to have understood the geography of the battle better than the other narrative writers, although he did not express his understanding clearly. In this passage, however, we can see that Dio's "near Philippi" includes the pass over Mt. Symbolon, which had been fortified by Norbanus and Saxa as a place of retreat. Norbanus and Saxa's secondary fortification was at the Saepei pass east of Mt. Symbolon. The precise location of this fortification is uncertain from our narrative writers, but the function was consistent: blocking Brutus and Cassius' path west into the plains of Philippi and forcing them to take the dangerous path over the mountain. Knowing that Norbanus and Saxa's encampment was at a greater distance than that of the Battle of Philippi illuminates that Dio understood Philippi as the entire area within the plain and not the city itself. Thus, when positioned in the context of Antony's letter and the location it supports, Dio's understanding of the region was actually quite good. His description matches where the mountains and sea are in reality, and better reflects how Antony described the area.

The events of the battle without Appian: the issues in historical narratives

Velleius' Account. Velleius' *Roman History* contains the shortest version of the battle of Philippi. His account relates the expected narrative events of the battle but does not expand beyond the basic facts. The account can only be described as a point form list.

Then Caesar and Antonius transported their armies to Macedonia, and met Brutus and Cassius in battle near the city of Philippi. The wing under the command of Brutus, after defeating the enemy, captured Caesar's camp...

On the other hand, the wing commanded by Cassius had been routed and roughly handled, and had retreated with much loss to higher ground...

A few days later Brutus met the enemy, and was beaten in battle.

Tum Caesar et Antonius traiecerunt exercitus in Macedoniam et apud urbem Philippos cum Bruto Cassioque acie concurrerunt...

id autem, in quo Cassius fuerat, fugatum ac male mulcatum in altiora se receperat loca...

Post paucos deinde dies Brutus conflixit cum hostibus et victus acie...

Vel.Pat. 2.70.1-4.

Velleius holds a unique temporal position in comparison to the other authors. He would have been producing this work about 70 years after the event occurred. Although not a contemporary of the battle himself, he would have likely known people alive at the time. These individuals could have been eyewitnesses and therefore, could better inform his account. Nevertheless, Velleius' account captures the expected details of how the battle progressed: there were two battles, Brutus and Antony successfully defeated their opposing flanks, and the second battle ended in a complete victory for the Caesarians. Velleius does not expand on this like the other authors detailed below. Although Velleius' account is known for its summary treatment of topics, it is significant that his position to write a detailed narrative was the best. Despite this, however, he writes the least detailed account. This either reflects that his readers already knew how the battle progressed and it was insignificant to include it in an account, or, there was little care for such details.

Plutarch's account. Plutarch's *Life of Brutus* has a summary account of the battle which seems to suggest a similar sequence to Appian. When considered on its own and

without Appian’s misleading description, Plutarch’s account supports the location south-east of the swamp.

The soldiers of Antony were engaged in running trenches from the marshes, around which they were encamped, into the plain, thus cutting off Cassius from access to the sea. Octavius was quietly watching the course of events,—not being present in person, owing to sickness, but his forces for him; they had no expectation at all that their enemies would give battle, but thought they would merely sally out against the works and with light missiles and clamorous cries try to disturb the workers in the trenches.

Ἔτυχον δ’ οἱ περὶ Ἀντώνιον ἀπὸ τῶν ἐλῶν, οἷς περιεστρατοπέδευον, ἐμβάλλοντες τάφρους εἰς τὸ πεδῖον καὶ τὰς ἐπὶ θάλασσαν ὁδοὺς 2τοῦ Κασσίου περικόπτοντες. ἐφήδρευε δὲ Καῖσαρ, οὐ παρῶν αὐτὸς δι’ ἀσθένειαν, ἀλλ’ ἡ δύναμις, οὐ πάνυ μαχεῖσθαι προσδοκῶσα τοὺς πολεμίους, ἀλλὰ μόνον ἐκδρομαῖς χρῆσθαι πρὸς τὰ ἔργα καὶ βέλεσιν ἐλαφροῖς καὶ θορύβοις τοὺς ὀρύσσοντας ἐπιταράσσειν·

Plut. *Brut.* 41.

It is important to note that Plutarch did not position the armies before explaining the sequence of the first battle. Plutarch only reveals that Brutus was to be in command on the right wing, and Cassius on the left. Plutarch’s description of Antony’s flanking maneuver is not the same as Appian’s. Antony’s men were running trenches “away from the swamp around which they were encamped” (ἀπὸ τῶν ἐλῶν, οἷς περιεστρατοπέδευον). And for Appian, “with one detachment, he cut a single path in the swamp day and night” (μέρει τινὶ νυκτός τε καὶ ἡμέρας ἔκοπτεν ἐν τῷ ἔλει δίοδον στενήν). This distinction is significant because Plutarch’s account is not sufficiently clear

to corroborate Appian's marsh sequence. In fact, his account is clearer if it describes Antony's attempt to circumvent Cassius at Mt. Symbion.⁷⁸

Furthermore, Plutarch reports that Antony's men were seen and heard as they built their fortifications around Cassius. Appian's account has Antony creating walkways and fortifications through the swamp in secret. Indeed, for Appian's understanding, the swamp itself would have provided a natural cover. The idea behind this maneuver, as portrayed by both writers, was to strip Cassius from access to the sea by circumventing his fortifications because the Liberators were reluctant to give a pitched battle. This sequence of events provides a reason for the Liberators to fight a pitched battle as it is difficult to see why they would surrender their advantage. Strategically, their position was by far the superior, and the Caesarians had to make the first move, and this had to have been it. Although Dio and Velleius ignore this fact, it makes the most tactical sense for the Liberators and Caesarians given the battle's location. As already pointed out by Sears and Butera, if the Liberators' position had been west of the city, it would have already been compromised because of a major route running to the south of Mt. Pangaion, rendering the flank through the marsh redundant. The position in the south-east at the pass within Mt. Symbion would have forced Antony to flank Cassius conspicuously, drawing the Liberators out for a pitched battle.

Dio's Account. Unfortunately, Dio's description of the battle is of low value, but does eventually corroborate the basic details of the conflict. Dio's account best reflects the expected knowledge on part of the audience to understand the usual way these

⁷⁸ Sears and Butera 2017. 374.

sorts of set piece battles tend to occur; a fact which is less obvious to the modern historian:

The contest took place as follows. Although no arrangement had been made as to when they should begin the battle, yet as if by some compact they all armed themselves at dawn, advanced into the space between the two camps leisurely, as though they were competitors in a game, and then quietly drew themselves up in battle order.

Ἐπράχθη δὲ ὧδε. οὐχ ὠμολόγησαν μὲν ὅποτε τὴν μάχην ποιήσονται, ὥσπερ δὲ ἀπὸ συκκειμένου τινὸς πάντες ἅμα ἔω ἐξωπλίσαντο, καὶ ἕξ τε τὸ χωρίον τὸ μεταίχμιόν σφων καθάπερ ἀγωνισταί τινες σχολῆ προῆλθον, κἀνταῦθα ἡσυχῇ παρετάξαντο.

Dio. 47.42.1

Following this, Dio explains how the exhortations reflected the types of things men would say in such circumstances, assuming that the audience knows what to expect. Then, Dio juxtaposes the motivations of the two sides: the Liberators spoke of the prize of freedom and the benefits of their democracy, the Caesarians spoke of vengeance for the patricide, the accumulation of their belongings, and 20,000 sesterces apiece for their victory.⁷⁹ Dio's moralization of the conflict becomes a significant part of the work and evidently impacts the historicity of his information concerning the actual battle itself. Most of his account follows these sorts of political consequences, and on top of that portents, dreams, and omens, all of which have little value for understanding the battle's location and tactical progression. Indeed, as with most other narratives writers of battles, he seems less than interested in the tactical details, which he describes in a formulaic way:

⁷⁹ 47.42.3-5.

Then the heavy-armed troops gave the war-cry, beat their shields with their spears and then hurled their spears, while the slingers and the archers discharged their stones and missiles. Then the two bodies of cavalry rode out against each other and the cuirassiers following behind them came to close quarters with each other...

κάκ τούτου ἀλαλάξαντες οἱ ὀπλίται τάς τε ἀσπίδας τοῖς δορατίοις ἔκρουσαν καὶ ἐκεῖνα ἐπ' ἀλλήλους ἐξηκόντισαν, καὶ οἱ σφενδονῆται οἷ τε τοξόται βέλη καὶ λίθους ἤκαν. καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα τό τε ἵππικὸν ἀντεξήλασαν καὶ τὸ θωρακοφόρον συνεπισπόμενὸν σφισιν ἐν χερσὶν ἐγένετο.

Dio. 47.43.3.

Dio continues his description of generalized combat for all of chapter 43 and ends it with a comment concerning engagements of this magnitude:

“they wounded and were wounded, slew and were slain, until late in the day. And if each side as a whole had joined in the conflict with the other as a whole, as generally happens in a struggle like this,”

ἐτίπρωσκον ἐπιπρώσκοντο, ἐφόνευον ἐφονεύοντο μέχρι πόρρω τῆς ἡμέρας. καὶ εἶγε πάντες πᾶσιν, οἷα ἐν τῷ τοιοῦτῳ συμβαίνει, συνεμεμίχσαν

Dio. 47.45.1-2

Dio is not able to provide a detailed account of the battle as it is likely that he did not have one upon which he could rely. Paradoxically, directly following this generalization of conflict, Dio breaks this narrative to relate what he seems to have actually known to have happened in the first battle which contrasts his extended description of a unified and formulaic battle:

Brutus forced Caesar, because of his sickness, to yield ground, while Antony vanquished Cassius, who was by no means his equal in warfare. And so at this time, since they were not opposing each other as united armies, but each side was in part defeated and in part victorious, the result was practically the same for each; for both had conquered and had been defeated,

νῦν δὲ ὁ τε Βροῦτος τὴν τοῦ Καίσαρος ἀρρωστίαν ἐξεβίασατο, καὶ ὁ Ἀντώνιος τὸν Κάσσιον οὐδὲν ἴσους ὄμοιον τὰ πολέμια ὄντα ἐξενίκησε. καὶ τότε δὲ τῷ μὴ πάντας ἅμα τοὺς ἑτέρους, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ μέρει ἀμφοτέρους καὶ ἠττηθῆναι καὶ κρατῆσαι ταῦτόν ὡς εἰπεῖν ἐγένετο· καὶ γὰρ ἐνίκησαν ἀμφοτέρωθεν καὶ ἠττήθησαν

Dio. 47.45.2-3

Although Dio seems to be more than willing to relate details concerning how this engagement actually progressed, he turns to a generalized battle scene. No matter the reason, his engagement with the fighting in the battle reflects an interest in relating such details and his lack of evidence to supply them. For his (but probably his readers') interest, he has supplemented the fighting with what would be expected and does not attempt to hide this fact. The section quoted above shows the facts that he knew about the battle, and everything else he had to fabricate. Though the battle scenes are standard and seem expected, the general thinness of tactical details across multiple authors means that any authors writing later than previous ones found little such detail for their own narratives.

As we have seen, Appian is a problematic source for understanding the Battle of Philippi. He believes incorrectly that the only plain in which a battle could be fought was west of the city. This simple mistake shaped his understanding of how the battle must have progressed and impacted the sequence of events he relates. Appian's internal consistency creates a persuasive narrative that could only be challenged with Antony's description of the battle. The other narrative writers have their own issues: Velleius' and Plutarch's accounts are too short, and Dio's too generalized. As a collective, however, they maintain the familiar sequence of events, which every writer seems to have known.

While engaging with this tradition, however, they do not corroborate Appian's narrative and this fact forces us to understand that he has created a battle sequence which followed his understanding of the geography. With Appian set aside as the primary comparandum, any account of the battle must now rely on Antony's letter as the source to which the other narratives must be related.

Chapter 3: Replacing Appian with Antony

The following chapter will address what Antony's letter to Hyrcanus adds to our understanding of the location and tactical evolution of the battle. First, we will assess why we should accept this letter as authentic. The letter matches the form from a tradition that had long been accepted by the time it was written. Although the letter matches this form perfectly, the letter has an unusual passion, unlike the cold and bureaucratic language one typically finds in such letters. The letter also contains climatological references specific to the time period which are unlikely to have been a fabrication. Second, given that Antony's letter is now the fixed point in our mapping of the narrative details found in our literary authors, this better influences our understanding of where to locate the battle and how the events unfolded. Furthermore, Antony's letter opens further consideration for each of the sources and our understanding of the narrative and geographical elements of Philippi in Velleius, Appian, Plutarch, and Dio.

The letter Antony sent to Hyrcanus, which was introduced in chapter one, was recorded in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*. Josephus introduces the letter of Antony to Hyrcanus by describing an encounter in Ephesus.

Meanwhile Cassius was conquered by Antony and Caesar at Philippi, as has been related by others. And after their victory Caesar proceeded to Italy, while Antony departed for Asia...

When Antony came to Ephesus, the high priest Hyrcanus and our nation sent an embassy to him, bringing a golden crown and requesting that he would write to the provincial governors to set free those Jews who had been taken captive by Cassius in violation of the laws of war, and restore to them the territory of which they had been deprived in the time of Cassius. These demands Antony decided the Jews were justified in

making, and so he immediately wrote to Hyrcanus and the Jews. He also sent to the Tyrians a decree to the same effect.

Κάσσιον μὲν οὖν χειροῦνται Ἀντώνιος τε καὶ Καῖσαρ περὶ Φιλίππους, ὡς καὶ παρ' ἄλλοις δεδήλωται. μετὰ δὲ τὴν νίκην Καῖσαρ μὲν ἐπ' Ἰταλίας ἐχώρει, Ἀντώνιος δὲ εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν ἀπῆρε...

ἐπεὶ δ' εἰς Ἔφεσον ἦκεν Ἀντώνιος, ἔπεμψεν Ὑρκανὸς ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ τὸ ἔθνος τὸ ἡμέτερον πρεσβείαν πρὸς αὐτόν, στέφανόν τε κομίζουσαν χρυσοῦν καὶ παρακαλοῦσαν τοὺς αἰχμαλωτισθέντας ὑπὸ Κασσίου Ἰουδαίους οὐ νόμῳ πολέμου, γράψαντα τοῖς κατὰ τὰς ἐπαρχίας, ἐλευθέρους ἀπολύσαι, καὶ τὴν χώραν ἣν ἐν τοῖς Κασσίου καιροῖς ἀφηρέθησαν, ἀποδοῦναι. ταῦτα κρίνας Ἀντώνιος δίκαια τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἀξιῶν, παραχρῆμα ἔγραψεν Ὑρκανῶ καὶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις, ἐπέστειλε δὲ ἅμα¹ καὶ τοῖς Τυρίοις διάταγμα περιέχον ταῦτά.

Josephus. *AJ* 14.306-309

Josephus included this letter in his history which contains clear information about the battle of Philippi. Nevertheless, the letter did not influence the way in which he portrayed the battle within his own narrative. That he does not mention the opposing generals' strategies or any geographical specifics is consistent with the narratives of those writers we considered in chapter two, albeit to a greater degree. Instead, he introduces the battle simply: Antony and Octavian were victorious, Octavian departed to Italy, and Antony left for the east. His description mentions other narratives of this battle, which implies that if Josephus had wanted to elaborate, he had the means. The narrative details, however, did not concern him. Josephus' motivation for including the letter has nothing to do with Philippi. Rather, he wants to include a letter from a high

Roman official to the Jewish high priest because this demonstrates the high regard the Romans of this period had for the Jews, a point that he makes clear elsewhere.⁸⁰

The first letter from Antony which Josephus records is the one sent to Hyrcanus. This letter details the embassies sent to Antony and the response he sent with them. This letter goes beyond what might be expected, and outlines crucial details describing the Battle of Philippi. (I add the lettering in brackets to facilitate the discussion below).⁸¹

³⁰⁶(A) Marcus Antonius, Imperator, to Hyrcanus, high priest and ethnarch, and to the Jewish nation, greeting. (B) If you are in good health, it is well. ³⁰⁷I also am in good health, as is the army. (C) The envoys Lysimachus, son of Pausanias, Josephus, son of Mennaëus, and Alexander, son of Theodorus, who met me at Ephesus, have renewed the mission previously carried out by them in Rome, and have conscientiously discharged their present mission on behalf of you and the nation, making clear the goodwill you have for us. ³⁰⁸Being, therefore, persuaded by both deeds and words that you have the friendliest feelings for us, and being aware of your obliging and pious nature, I regard your interests as my own. ³⁰⁹(D) For when our adversaries and those of the Roman people overran all Asia, sparing neither cities nor temples, and disregarding the sworn agreements they had made, it was not only our own battle but that of all mankind in common that we fought when we avenged ourselves on those who were guilty both of lawless deeds against men and of unlawful acts against the gods, from which we believe the very sun turned away, as if it too were loath to look upon the foul deed against Caesar.³¹⁰But their god-defying plots, which Macedonia received as though its climate were proper to their unholy crimes, and the confused mob of half-crazed villains whom they got together at Philippi in Macedonia, where they occupied places naturally favourable and walled in by mountains as far as the sea, so that the passaged could be controlled through only one gate—these

⁸⁰ Cf. Jos. AJ 14. 265-7. Pucci ben Zeev. M. 1998, Jewish rights in the Roman World: The Greek and Roman Documents Quoted by Josephus Flavius (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck), pp. 230-3

⁸¹ To follow the lettering, (A): Salutation, (B): Wish of good health, (C): Reference to the envoys, (D): Main body, (E): Closing statement.

plots and this mob,³¹¹condemned by the gods for their unjust enterprise, we have overcome. And Brutus, who fled to Philippi and was hemmed in by us, shared the ruin of Cassius. Now that these men have been punished, ³¹²we hope that henceforth we shall enjoy peace and give Asia respite from war. We are therefore ready to let our allies also participate in the peace given us by God; and so, owing to our victory, the body of Asia is now recovering, as it were, from a serious illness.³¹³Having, therefore, in mind to promote the welfare both of you and your nation, I shall take care of your interests. And I have also sent notices throughout the cities that if any persons, whether freemen or slaves, were sold at auction by Gaius Cassius or by those subordinate to him, they shall be released; and it is my wish that you shall enjoy the privileges granted by me and Dolabella. And I forbid the Tyrians to use violence against you, and command that they restore whatever they possess belonging to the Jews. (E) As for the crown which you have sent, I have accepted it.”

³⁰⁶(A) Μάρκος Ἀντώνιος αὐτοκράτωρ Ὑρκανῶ ἀρχιερεῖ καὶ ἔθνάρχη καὶ τῶ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνει χαίρειν. (B) εἰ ἔρρωσθε, εὖ ἂν ἔχοι, ³⁰⁷ἔρρωμαι δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς μετὰ τοῦ στρατεύματος. (C) Λυσίμαχος Πausανίου καὶ Ἰώσηπος Μενναίου καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος Θεοδώρου πρεσβευταὶ ἐν Ἐφέσω μοι συντυχόντες τὴν τε ἔμπροσθεν ἐν Ἑρώμῃ τελεσθεῖσαν αὐτοῖς πρεσβείαν ἀνενεώσαντο, καὶ τὴν νῦν ὑπὲρ σοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἔθνους σπουδαίως ³⁰⁸διέθεντο, ἣν ἔχεις εὖνοιαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐμφανίσαντες. πεπεισμένος οὖν καὶ ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ ἐκ τῶν λόγων ὅτι οἰκειότατα ἔχετε πρὸς ἡμᾶς, καὶ τὸ ἀραρὸς ὑμῶν ἦθος καὶ θεοσεβὲς κατανοήσας, ἴδιον ἡγήμαι· (D) ³⁰⁹καταδραμόντων δὲ τὴν Ἀσίαν ἅπασαν τῶν ἐναντιωθέντων ἡμῖν τε καὶ τῶ δήμῳ τῶν Ῥωμαίων, καὶ μήτε πόλεων μήτε ἱερῶν ἀποσχομένων μήτε ὄρκους οὕς ἐποιήσαντο φυλαξάντων, ἡμεῖς ὡς οὐχ ὑπὲρ ἰδίου μόνον ἀγῶνος, ἀλλ’ ὡς ὑπὲρ ἀπάντων κοινοῦ, τοὺς αἰτίους καὶ τῶν εἰς ἀνθρώπους παρανομιῶν καὶ τῶν εἰς θεοὺς ἀνομημάτων ἡμυνάμεθα, δι’ ἃ καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἀπεστράφθαι δοκοῦμεν, ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἀηδῶς ἐπεῖδε τὸ ἐπὶ Καίσαρι μύσος. ³¹⁰ἀλλὰ τὰς ἐπιβουλάς αὐτῶν τὰς θεομάχους, ἃς ὑπεδέξατο ἡ Μακεδονία καθάπερ ἴδιος αὐτοῖς τῶν ἀνοσίων τολμημάτων ἀήρ, καὶ τὴν σύγχυσιν τῆς ἡμιμανοῦς κακοηθείας ἦν κατὰ Φιλίππου τῆς Μακεδονίας συνεκρότουν, τόπους εὐφυεῖς καταλαμβανόμενοι μέχρι θαλάσσης ἀποτετειχισμένους ὄρεσιν, ὡς πύλη μιᾶ τὴν πάροδον ταμιεύεσθαι,³¹¹τῶν θεῶν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀδίκοις ἐγχειρήμασιν κατεψηφισμένων ἐκρατήσαμεν. καὶ Βροῦτος συμφυγῶν εἰς Φιλίππου καὶ συγκλεισθεὶς ὑφ’ ἡμῶν ἐκοινώνησε Κασσίῳ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀπωλείας. τούτων κεκολασμένων εἰρήνης τὸ λοιπὸν ἀπολαύσειν ³¹²ἐλπίζομεν καὶ ἀναπεπαῦσθαι τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐκ τοῦ πολέμου. κοινὴν οὖν ποιούμεθα καὶ τοῖς

συμμάχοις τὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν εἰρήνην· ὥσπερ οὖν ἐκ νόσου μεγάλης τὸ τῆς Ἀσίας σῶμα νῦν διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν νίκην ἀναφέρει. ³¹³ἔχων τοίνυν καὶ σὲ διὰ μνήμης καὶ τὸ ἔθνος αὔξειν, φροντίσω τῶν ὑμῖν συμφερόντων. ἐξέθηκα δὲ καὶ γράμματα κατὰ πόλεις, ὅπως εἴ τινες ἐλεύθεροι ἢ δοῦλοι ὑπὸ δόρυ ἐπράθησαν ὑπὸ Γαΐου Κασσίου ἢ τῶν ὑπ' αὐτῷ τεταγμένων ἀπολυθῶσιν οὗτοι, τοῖς τε ὑπ' ἐμοῦ δοθεῖσιν καὶ Δολαβέλλα φιλανθρώποις χρῆσθαι ὑμᾶς βούλομαι. Τυρίους τε κωλύω βιαίους εἶναι περὶ ὑμᾶς, καὶ ὅσα κατέχουσιν Ἰουδαίων ταῦτα ἀποκαταστῆσαι κελεύω. (Ε) τὸν δὲ στέφανον ὄν ἔπεμψας ἐδεξάμην.”

Josephus. *AJ.* 14.306-313.

Official correspondence in the form of letters between Rome and foreign cities became common at the beginning of the second century BC.⁸² Greek cities began inscribing letters from Hellenistic monarchs and their officials for many decades prior to Roman control of the region, and doing so for Roman officials seems to have merely continued that practice.⁸³ Official Roman correspondence followed this trend from the tradition's onset and maintained it until later into the imperial period.

Antony's letter is introduced with a usual salutation (A), beginning with the sender's name in the nominative: Μάρκος Ἀντώνιος αὐτοκράτωρ followed by the addressee in the dative: Ὑρκανῶ ἀρχιερεῖ καὶ ἐθνάρχῃ.⁸⁴ In place of the more usual name of the recipient city in the genitive, this letter has what Sherk would call an organization in the dative which still follows the usual pattern: καὶ τῷ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνει. Like most letters, the salutation is ended with a simple χαίρειν.

⁸² For more information regarding the appearance of letters in the second century see Sherk 1969. 186.

⁸³ See Welles 1966.

⁸⁴ For more information regarding the parts of a typical letter, see Sherk 1969. 189-197

The formula valetudinis follows the greeting (B). This formula was mostly absent in Hellenistic official correspondence but appeared in official Roman correspondence in the middle of the first century BC.⁸⁵ The appearance of this convention is period specific, hinting further that this letter is authentic. Following the χαίρειν, which is present in all periods both of private and official correspondence, letters written during the Caesarian period often make both a reference that a recipients good health is a positive thing, and that the writer of the letter too is in good health alongside their army. This reference to the good health of the army is something only found during the Caesarian and triumviral period.⁸⁶

As we might expect given the context, Antony lists the ambassadors with whom he engaged and the reasons for writing this letter:

Λυσίμαχος Πausανίου καὶ Ἰώσηπος Μενναίου καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος Θεοδώρου πρεσβευταὶ ἐν Ἐφέσῳ μοι συντυχόντες τὴν τε ἔμπροσθεν ἐν Ῥώμῃ τελεσθεῖσαν αὐτοῖς πρεσβείαν ἀνενεώσαντο, καὶ τὴν νῦν ὑπὲρ σοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἔθνους σπουδαίως διέθεντο, ἦν ἔχεις εὖνοιαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐμφανίσαντες. πεπεισμένος οὖν καὶ ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ ἐκ τῶν λόγων ὅτι οἰκειότατα ἔχετε πρὸς ἡμᾶς, καὶ τὸ ἀραρὸς ὑμῶν ἦθος καὶ θεοσεβὲς κατανοήσας, ἴδιον ἡγημαὶ

The envoys Lysimachus, son of Pausanias, Josephus, son of Mennaeus, and Alexander, son of Theodorus, who met me at Ephesus, have renewed the mission previously carried out by them in Rome, and have conscientiously discharged their present mission on behalf of you and the nation, making clear the goodwill you have for us. Being, therefore, persuaded by both deeds and words that you have the friendliest feelings

⁸⁵ Sherk 1969. 190.

⁸⁶ See Sherk #86 pp.106-9. #87 pp109-10 for this inscription, see also Reynolds 41-8. #91 pp. 112-113. Reynolds #12 pp. 101-3.

for us, and being aware of your obliging and pious nature, I regard your interests as my own.

In this section of the letter, we learn the names of the ambassadors and where they met the magistrate (C). In this case, the ambassadors are Lysimachus, Josephus, and Alexander, who all met Antony in Ephesus. The context under which a letter was written alters this section, so it is less formulaic than the salutation and wish of good health. The order of this letter, however, is precisely the same as others composed in the latter half of the first century BC.

The main body of the letter follows, and it is here where Antony deviates from expectation (D). After starting the letter with bureaucratic formalities, Antony describes the type of adversaries he faced, the criminality of their actions, and the outcome of the battle. Antony's fury reflects the recent nature of this exchange. The battle was over, but now he had to address the damages Cassius left in his wake. After his extended description of Brutus and Cassius and the battle, the remainder of the letter is the expected response: how Antony would remedy the issues the embassies brought forward (E).

Overall, Antony's letter follows the expectations of Roman official correspondence, only deviating from the expected norm in the main body, the section with the most variability. Fortunately, Antony's letters are not the only ones from the period; a letter to the people of Aphrodisias and Plarasa nearly duplicates the first few opening lines. This document was inscribed on two pieces of marble which were found at Aphrodisias, and first copied in the early 18th century. The letter was written sometime between 39 BC and 38 BC by Octavian who was also a triumvir. The salutation is partially reconstructed, though there is sufficient definite text following it

which perfectly aligns with the formula, and the wish of good health is almost the same as the one recorded by Josephus:

εἰ ἔρρωσθε, εὖ ἂν ἔχοι· ὑγιαίνω δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς μετὰ τοῦ στρατεύματος...⁸⁷

Letter to the peoples of Aphrodisias and Plarasa. OGIS 453-4;RDGE 28 A

εἰ ἔρρωσθε, εὖ ἂν ἔχοι, ἔρρωμαι δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς μετὰ τοῦ στρατεύματος.

Letter to Hyrcanus. Josephus. *AJ* 14.306-307.

Were it not for the similar verbs: ὑγιαίνω and ἔρρωμαι, these lines would be identical. The references each have to the army show their similar engagement with the norms of the first century BC. It is significant to note that not only does Antony engage with this pattern indicative of his own time period, but also, that it was a trend upheld by another triumvir. This examination of Antony's letter to Hyrcanus reveals that this letter should be considered a copy of a letter which Antony sent in the aftermath of Philippi, and that this copy has remained, to a reasonable degree, faithful to the original.

Antony wrote the letter only a few months after the battle and this prompted a more emotional response. This level of emotion is not typical of official correspondence, which makes it all the more authentic when considering how Antony is described by other ancient writers. His characterization prior to his engagement with Cleopatra seems to supplement the nature of his response to Hyrcanus which is intense and righteous. Plutarch summarizes his character, highlighting his zealous accountability:

⁸⁷ For the full text and the discussion of the inscription and its attribution to Octavian see Reynolds 1982 41-48, Sherk 1968, 1989.

For there was simplicity in his nature, and slowness of perception, though when he did perceive his errors he showed keen repentance, and made full acknowledgement to the very men who had been unfairly dealt with, and there was largeness both in his restitution to the wronged and in his punishment of the wrong-doers. Yet he was thought to exceed due bounds more in conferring favours than in inflicting punishments.

Ἐνῆν γὰρ ἀπλότης τῷ ἦθει καὶ βραδεῖα μὲν αἴσθησις, αἰσθανομένῳ δὲ τῶν ἀμαρτανομένων ἰσχυρὰ μετάνοια καὶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐξομολόγησις τοὺς ἀγνωμονηθέντας, μέγεθος δὲ καὶ περὶ τὰς ἀμοιβὰς καὶ περὶ τὰς τιμωρίας. μᾶλλον γε μὴν ἐδόκει χαριζόμενος ἢ κολάζων ὑπερβάλλειν τὸ μέτριον.

Plut. *Ant.* 24.6

Plutarch's characterization of Antony's personality emphasizes his righteous demeanor both for his own actions and against his enemies' faults. This zeal is precisely the trait which Antony emphasizes most in his letter to Hyrcanus. Antony condemns the actions of the Liberators as crimes against the gods and all of mankind and stresses that he enacted vengeance upon them.⁸⁸ Antony could hardly contain his anger and let it spill onto the page in which he was discussing the diplomatic issues resulting from his enemies' actions. Indeed, it was because of Cassius that he now had to handle the leftover situation of wronged allies and the restitution of their property. Furthermore, Antony writes that Cassius had broken treaties in the process of despoiling Judea.⁸⁹ Considering Plutarch's characterization of Antony, the crimes of his enemies were likely a particularly aggravating topic. If Plutarch's assessment of Antony is to be trusted, Antony's letter to Hyrcanus demonstrates his hatred of wrong-doers (at least according to himself) and his restitution to the wronged. Antony instantly offers the Judeans

⁸⁸ Josephus AJ. 14. 309

⁸⁹ Josephus AJ. 14. 309-318.

everything that they had lost during Cassius' occupation and provides measures to enact his ruling quickly. The character of the letter matches how Plutarch describes him.

Even Plutarch, however, was not immune to believing the infamy which befell Antony both during and after the civil wars. Antony's popularity was undermined when he engaged in dealing with the Cleopatra, providing rhetorical ammunition for his patriotic and traditional opponent, Octavian.⁹⁰ Even more damning for Antony's memory was Cicero's *Philippics*, a series of published letters written to condemn Antony. Even Velleius Paterculus comments on the devastating effect that the *Philippics* had on Antony's memory in a brief excursion from his narrative: "All posterity will marvel in the speeches written against you, what you did to him will be detested" (omnisque posteritas illius in te scripta mirabitur, tuum in eum factum execrabitur).⁹¹ Syme summarized the *Philippics* as a "series of speeches in which he assailed an absent enemy...(and) an eternal monument of eloquence, of rancour, of misrepresentation."⁹² Syme was right, many of Cicero's charges against Antony were either trivial, ridiculous, or conventional.⁹³ Cicero's version of Antonius as a drunk or coward is mere rhetoric delivered at a distance to undermine his character. Indeed, the second *Philippic* which condemns Antony's character most directly, was not delivered in Rome and was simply

⁹⁰ Syme 1939. 104.

⁹¹ Vel. Pat. 2.66.5.

⁹² Syme 1939. 104.

⁹³ Ibid.

a treatise written away from the city.⁹⁴ For later writers, it seems to have heavily influenced their perception of Antony anyways. Antony's strength was in his leadership and soldiering, not his statesmanship.⁹⁵ Plutarch too engaged with this narrative of Antony's character:

Antony at once gained the favour of the soldiers by sharing their exercises, living with them for the most part, and making them presents as generously as he could; but to everybody else he was odious. For his easy disposition led him to neglect the wronged, he listened angrily to those who consulted him, and he was in ill repute for his relations with other men's wives.

ὁ δὲ τοῖς μὲν στρατιώταις εὐθὺς προσφιλὴς ἦν συγγυμναζόμενος καὶ συνδιαιπώμενος τὰ πολλὰ καὶ δωρούμενος ἐκ τῶν παρόντων, τοῖς δὲ ἄλλοις ἐπαχθὴς. καὶ γὰρ ἀδικουμένων ὑπὸ ῥαθυμίας ὀλιγώρει, καὶ πρὸς ὀργὴν ἠκροᾶτο τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων καὶ κακῶς ἐπὶ γυναιξὶν ἀλλοτρίαις ἤκουε.

Plut. *Ant.* 6. 5.

Overall, Plutarch demonstrates Antony's polarizing character. He is a successful general and does well by his allies but, is especially hateful to the other statesman of the opposite faction. It is apparent that Cicero's condemnation of Antony's character has crept into Plutarch's understanding of him. Nevertheless, the core of Antony's character was his passion and lack of grace which is normally befitting a statesman. His unpopularity amongst his enemies reflects this: he was not a regular statesman. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the letters reflect Antony's character,

⁹⁴ Chamoux 1986.128-131

⁹⁵ Syme 1939. 104.

demonstrating his skill as a governor, his intensity as a soldier, and perhaps, his abrasive nature.

A final consideration in support of the authenticity of Antony's letter relates to its description of contemporary climatological phenomena. Antony describes the weather reflecting the nefarious actions of the Liberators, a common belief quite similar to the significance of dreams and portents.

it was not only our own battle but that of all mankind in common that we fought when we avenged ourselves on those who were guilty both of lawless deeds against men and of unlawful acts against the gods, from which we believe the very sun turned away, as if it too were loath to look upon the foul deed against Caesar. But their god-defying plots, which Macedonia received as though its climate were proper to their unholy crimes

ἡμεῖς ὡς οὐχ ὑπὲρ ἰδίου μόνον ἀγῶνος, ἀλλ' ὡς ὑπὲρ ἀπάντων κοινοῦ, τοὺς αἰτίους καὶ τῶν εἰς ἀνθρώπους παρανομῶν καὶ τῶν εἰς θεοὺς ἀνομημάτων ἠμυνάμεθα, δι' ἃ καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἀπεστράφθαι δοκοῦμεν, ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἀηδῶς ἐπεῖδε τὸ ἐπὶ Καίσαρι μύσος. ἀλλὰ τὰς ἐπιβουλάς αὐτῶν τὰς θεομάχους, ἃς ὑπεδέξατο ἡ Μακεδονία καθάπερ ἴδιος αὐτοῖς τῶν ἀνοσίων τολμημάτων ἀήρ,

Josephus. *AJ* 14. 306-313.

The sun, in Antony's view, was as upset at the crimes committed by the assassins of Caesar. The air too reflected the criminality of their actions. One might expect that this connection may have been rhetorical, or simply an exaggeration designed to divide guilty from innocent. Other similar references dating to the same period, however, describe something peculiar happening with the sun and the weather. Virgil, advising farmers to pay more attention to the sun, writes:

Who dare say the Sun is false? ... He and no other was moved to pity Rome on the day that Caesar died, when he veiled his radiant face in gloom and darkness, and a godless age feared everlasting night.

Virgil. *Georgics* 1.466-473.

Plutarch too relates a similar reference concerning the year following the death of Julius Caesar, portending doom on his assassins:

and among events of divine ordering, there was the great comet, [and] also, the obscuration of the sun's rays. For during all that year its orb rose pale and without radiance, while the heat that came down from it was slight and ineffectual, so that the air in its circulation was dark and heavy owing to the feebleness of the warmth that penetrated it, and the fruits, imperfect and half ripe, withered away and shriveled up on account of the coldness of the atmosphere.

Plut. *Caes.* 69.3-4.

Plutarch's climatological references appear almost as if they were an expanded version of Antony's: the sun was obscured, and the climate was affected too. Both of which were taken later to have portended doom for the defeated Liberators.

Even Pliny the elder suggests that some climatological event has interrupted the usual climate.

Portentous and protracted eclipses (or, probably better, 'failures') of the sun occur, such as the one after the murder of Caesar the dictator and during the Antonine war which caused almost a whole year's continuous gloom.

Pliny *NH.* 2.30.98

Pliny was likely influenced by earlier, literary, descriptions of the phenomenon, but his description is prosaic, and avoids the moralistic overlay found in Antony's letter

and the *Georgics* and poses that this simply happened after Caesar's death. Pliny explains yet another symptom of the bizarre weather:

In former times, three suns have often been seen at once, for example in the consulships of Sp. Postumius and Q. Mucius [174 BC], of Q. Marcius and M. Porcius [118 BCE], of M. Antonius and P. Dolabella [44 BC] and of M. Lepidus and L. Plancus [42 BC].

Pliny *NH.* 2.30.99.

Three suns are also mentioned in Dio, who, in the midst of enumerating the various portents of 43 BC, reported:

Then the light of the sun seemed to be diminished and even extinguished, and at times to appear in three circles, one of which was surmounted by a fiery crown of sheaves.

Dio. 45.17.5

The bizarre weather during this period now includes a darkening of the sun, disrupted and cooler climate, and sun dogs, which are caused when sunlight refracts through ice crystals in the upper atmosphere.⁹⁶

These symptoms which portended doom for the assassins of Caesar hint at the atmospheric effects of volcanic eruptions. An eruption at the beginning of 43 BC is certainly the cause. A recent article identifies the connection between the changing climate after 43 BC with the massive eruption of the Okmok volcano in Alaska, which explains why the years of 43 and 42 BC were among the coldest of the last few millennia, up to seven degrees below the average temperature coupled with unusually wetter conditions. They then posit that these conditions likely resulted in crop failures

⁹⁶ Less colloquially called parhelia

and famine and were so significant that they likely played a role in the changing political structure of the period.⁹⁷

This helps explain why Antony referred to the bizarre climate within his letter. The battles of Philippi occurred during October of 42 BC, so the preliminary movements and the battle itself happened during this unusually cold and wet weather. Antony then connects the unpleasant climate with the crimes committed by the Liberators. Interestingly, later writers seemed to have pushed this climatological event back a year to coincide more closely with the death of Caesar. Both Virgil and Plutarch place the weather event alongside Caesar's death in 44 BC. Indeed, antiquity seems to have connected this event with the crimes against Caesar, and the fact that the actual change happened about a year later seemed to have mattered less, especially since his assassins had yet to be confronted.

The features within Antony's letter to Hyrcanus, then, support the recognition of it as authentic. The letters themselves have faced some doubters which was likely the reason it had not been considered for locating the battle.⁹⁸ It is easy to imagine that Antony would refer to these significant climatological phenomena in a contemporary letter, the very phenomena which he experienced in the field while marching and managing supplies – both of which would be impacted by poor conditions. It is unlikely that a forgery made decades later would contain such a reference.

⁹⁷ McConnell et al. 2020. 15443-15449.

⁹⁸ Willrich 1924, Moehring 1975, 1984, et al.

It seems appropriate now to illustrate what the letter reveals about the battle that should be accepted as certain.

1. The weather was particularly cold and wet, which would have had an impact on Antony's side of the battle. He was more pressed to force the battle from his position.
2. The Liberators occupied places naturally favourable, which were walled in by the mountains as far as the sea.
3. The passage through the Liberators' defences was a single gate, blocking movement from Europe to Asia.
4. There were two battles, and Cassius died in the first one.
5. Brutus fled to Philippi after the second battle and was pursued by Antony's forces.
6. In the aftermath, Antony worked to free those wrongfully enslaved.
7. The Judeans were granted protection from the Tyrians and their property was to be restored.

These certainties allow a better understanding of the tradition handed down from our narrative writers.

Velleius' Account. Velleius' narrative, as mentioned before, is short, but still relates the typical details which defined this battle. One anecdote makes his account

worth mentioning: Cassius, after the first battle, retreated to higher ground.⁹⁹ In contrast to Appian, when he indicates that Cassius would have had to retreat to Philippi, Velleius' assertion that he simply retreated up the mountain coincides well with how Antony describes the region. If Antony's men successfully circumvented Cassius' encampment, the only way the retreating forces could move, would have been up the mountains to the east – there was a battle happening westwards and the dust made it impossible to see the outcome leading to the miscommunication between the forces of the Liberators.

Appian's account. The credibility of Appian's account is detrimentally impacted by Antony's letter. It is clear that Appian's account was well informed, and matches every fact presented by Antony save one. Indeed, Appian even mentions that the Liberators had occupied the single gate from Europe to Asia.¹⁰⁰ The mistake that he made was that he did not understand where the plain extended, and how there existed a significant plain in which to fight in the area north of Mt. Symbolon. For Appian, the marsh extends right into the sea, and his misrepresentation of the geography, however, does not necessarily problematize his entire account.¹⁰¹ Indeed, he seems to have understood how battles often occurred, the tools involved, and the strategies employed. Appian has Antony flank around Cassius' defences to assault from the Liberators' rear and cut off access from their supply base. This seems consistent and logically sound considering the Liberators' superior position, but again, Appian invents the remainder of the episode

⁹⁹ Vel.Pat. 2.70.1.

¹⁰⁰ App. BC 4. 106.

¹⁰¹ App. BC 4. 105. 440. "To the south is a marsh, and after it the sea." (πρὸς δὲ τῇ μεσημβρίᾳ ἔλος ἔστι καὶ θάλασσα μετ' αὐτό).

in keeping with his geographical misunderstanding. For example, Brutus retreats north towards the mountains and away from Philippi after the second battle in Appian's account.¹⁰² As seen above, Antony chases Brutus to Philippi which would only make sense if the battle happened close to the pass at Mt. Symbolon. Because Appian does not understand the region well enough, even if he had sources which corroborated Brutus' retreat to Philippi, he likely ignored them in favour of his internal consistency.

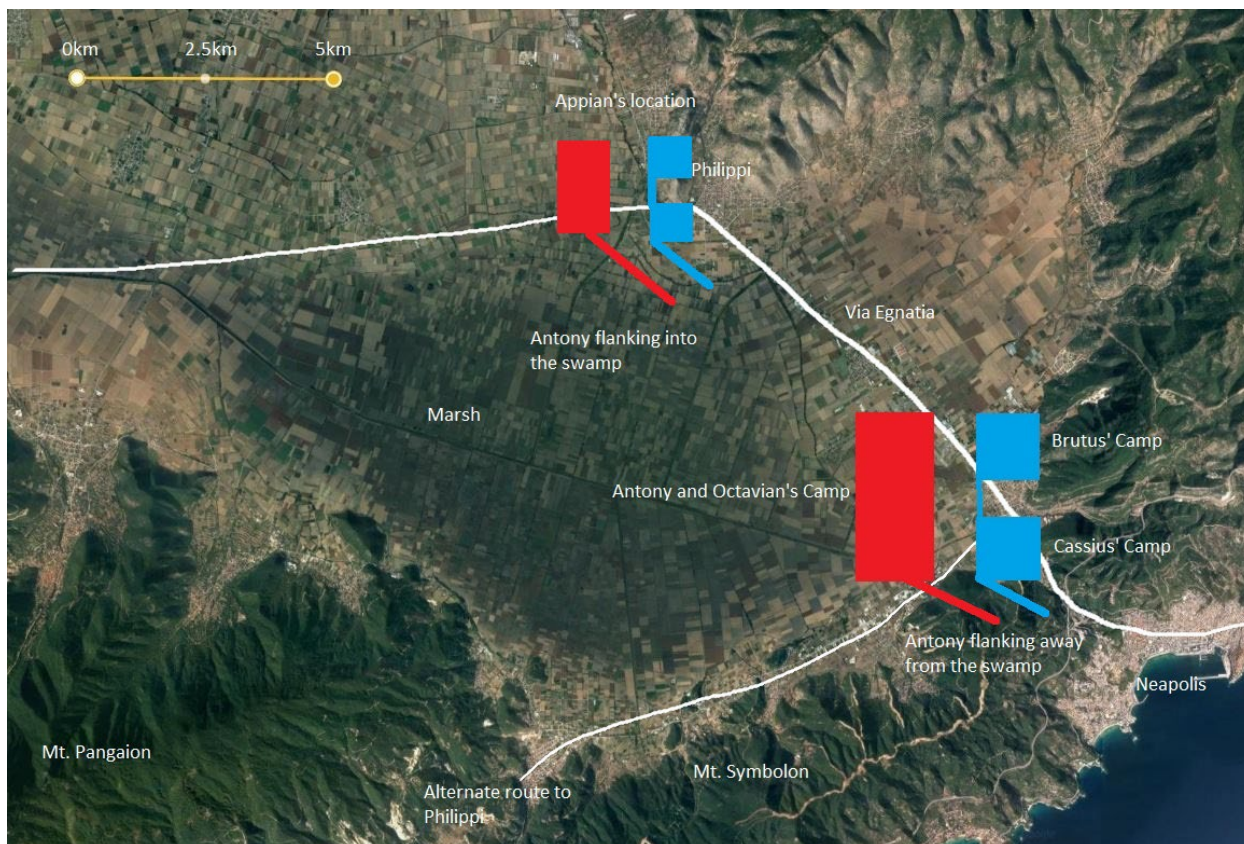


Figure 08. Antony's Flank According to Antony's Letter (lower) and Appian (upper)

Plutarch's Account. The account which Plutarch relates in his lives of *Brutus* and *Antony* captures the key events which defined the battle. As mentioned in chapter 2, his

¹⁰² App. BC4.130.

most notable inclusion is within his *Life of Brutus* where he describes the flanking maneuver that Antony attempted in the first battle. It is only with the introduction of Antony's depiction of the geography that Plutarch's description seems well informed. Plutarch reveals that Antony's flanking maneuver is both away from the swamp and around Cassius' encampment: a fact that only makes sense if the location is in the south of the plain.

The positioning that Antony's description of the geography permits illuminates that Plutarch's account reflects the tactical necessity at the heart of the battle's initiation: Antony had to force the engagement to happen, and he did this by attacking the Liberators' supply line. Furthermore, Plutarch relates two facts about the first battle which better reflects a position south of Philippi. The first, Cassius' cavalry retreated to the sea after being overwhelmed in the first battle.¹⁰³ It is worth noting that a retreat is often to a location where a unit can rendezvous so that they can regroup to fight again. This is exemplified by Cassius, who retreated with some of his infantry. They tried to stay close to the battle to potentially return in its aftermath.¹⁰⁴ The cavalry retreating to the sea is not too far if the battle was in the south, near the port city of Neapolis, the Liberators' supply base, and a logical place of retreat. Conversely, however, a retreat from the west of the city is unlikely given the distance required (about 11km). These narrative elements seem more probable considering Antony's description of the battle. Finally, the second fact, Cassius himself was enveloped by Antony's flank and forced to

¹⁰³ Plut. Brut. 43.3.

¹⁰⁴ Dio has Brutus perform a similar action after the second battle of Philippi. Dio.47.49. The veracity of this is not significant, but its relation reflects the expectation of returning to the battle.

retreat to a hill overlooking the plain.¹⁰⁵ This echoes Velleius' account and is consistent with the geography. There were mountains directly east of Cassius' fortifications and they would be able to look down on their encampment from there.

The result of the second battle reveals that Plutarch, like Velleius and Dio, (but unlike Appian) is not internally consistent. In Plutarch's account, when Brutus retreats after his army was being enveloped by Antony's right flank, he escapes to an undisclosed location after crossing a river.¹⁰⁶ Antony has Brutus flee to Philippi after the battle, and this is logically sound. Brutus was initially successful in the second battle which would have pushed him west of his and Cassius' encampment. When Antony flanked from the rear, the only direction Brutus could retreat was north. As we have seen above, it seems that Plutarch's account is consistent with where Antony locates the battle, but like other narrative writers, does not make this clear.

Dio's Account. Dio's generalizations, coupled with his many excursions from the battle itself, obscure what he seems to have known about the battle. Dio relates the expected: that there were two battles, the first a stalemate, and the second a complete defeat of the Liberators. Indeed, Dio especially relates the omens, dreams, and non-tactical events of the battle to a greater degree than that of the other narratives. Once all of these are set to the side, Dio's geography is what stands out. He describes the area and the mountains perfectly, and this matches how Antony describes the region.

¹⁰⁵ Plut. Brut. 43.4.d

¹⁰⁶ Plut. Brut 51.

This city is situated near Pangaeum and Symbolon. Symbolon (“Junction”) is the name they give the place where the mountain mentioned joins on (syballei) to another that extends into the interior, and it is between Neapolis and Philippi; for the former town was near the sea, opposite Thasos, while the latter is situated within the mountains on the plain. And inasmuch as Saxa and Norbanus, as it chanced, had already occupied the most direct pass across...

Ὡτὸ δὲ δὴ ἄστυ τοῦτο παρά τε τῷ Παγγαίῳ καὶ παρά τῷ Συμβόλῳ κεῖται· Σύμβολον γὰρ τὸ χωρίον ὀνομάζουσι καθ’ ὃ τὸ ὄρος ἐκεῖνο ἐτέρῳ τινὶ ἐς μεσόγειαν ἀνατείνοντι συμβάλλει, καὶ ἔστι μεταξύ Νέας πόλεως καὶ τῶν Φιλίππων· ἡ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς τῇ θαλάσῃ κατ’ ἀντιπέρας Θάσου ἦν, ἡ δὲ ἐντὸς τῶν ὄρων ἐπὶ τῷ πεδίῳ πεπόλισται. καὶ ἔτυχον γὰρ τὴν συντομωτάτην αὐτοῦ ὑπερβολὴν ὃ τε Σάξας καὶ ὁ Νωρβανὸς προκαταλαμβάνοντες...

Dio. 47.35.3-4.

Frustratingly, Dio’s understanding of the region does not translate into his positioning of the battle of Philippi. With Antony’s description, however, transposing the battle of Philippi to the location in which Norbanus and Saxa had already fortified previously is logically sound. They had already identified the area as the most strategically viable in order to prevent movement from Asia to Europe (and now we must assume vice versa). Their encampment spanned one road, it was walled in by mountains, and it was beside the sea. When it came to narrating the rest of the battle, however, Dio is more interested in the celebrity details of Octavian, Brutus, Cassius, and Antony and in exchange for that interest, tactical sequences were set aside.

Dio’s emphasis on the size of the conflict is also notable. This conflict hosted hundreds of thousands of combatants, and its very magnitude shaped the outcome.

For, as the combatants were many, they stretched far out over the plain, so that they could not see each other distinctly; and not alone in the battle could each one recognize only what was opposite him, but also when the

rout took place both armies fled in opposite directions to their respective camps, which were separated from each other by a considerable distance, without stopping to look back. Because of this fact and of the immense quantities of dust that rose they were ignorant of the outcome of the battle.

τοῦ τε γὰρ πεδίου ἐπὶ πλεῖστον, ἅτε καὶ πολλοὶ ὄντες, ἐπέσχον, ὥστε μὴ καθορᾶν ἀλλήλους· καὶ οὔτε ἐν τῇ μάχῃ πλὴν τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἕκαστος ἔγνω, ἐπεὶ τε ἡ τροπὴ ἐγένετο, ἕς τε τὰ οἰκεῖα ἐρύματα πολὺ ἀπ' ἀλλήλων ἀφεστηκότα δτὴν ἐναντίαν ἐκάτεροι ἀμεταστρεπτί ἔφυγον, καὶ ἀπὸ τε τούτου καὶ ἐκ τοῦ κονιορτοῦ ἀπλέτου γενομένου ἠγγνόησαν τὸ τέλος τῆς μάχης.

Dio. 47.45.4-5.

As narrated in every other account, both right flanks managed to successfully assault the enemy camp without wheeling about to flank for their losing co-commander. Regardless of if this was on account of their obstructed vision, or the difficulty in controlling the movement of this size of an army, this narrative event shows that the magnitude of the armies involved, and the distance between the flanks shaped this first battle into one which was more like two simultaneous and completely separate, conflicts. Of course, this helps explain why Cassius mistakenly takes his own life. He did not know the outcome of the battle on the right flank, and from his position on the hills, the returning army could have been Octavian's.

The information within Antony's letter to Hyrcanus best represents the Battle of Philippi. The fact that this letter upholds the standards of typical letter writing during its period, reflects a genuine response to a civil conflict that coincides with Antony's reported character, and refers to climatological phenomena that we know happened during the years of 43 and 42 BC, plainly displays its authenticity. Understanding this letter as authentic paves the way for prioritizing the facts it contains about the Battle of Philippi and thus, reveals the problematic nature of our literary narratives. Appian's

location for the battle is his own machination, and the other narrative writers do not reflect him.

Conclusion

Antony's letter to Hyrcanus forces us to relocate the battle of Philippi and reshape our understanding of the events which defined it. Instead of locating the battle to the west of the city, the battle should be located south of Philippi and east of the marsh. The Liberators encampment blocked the Via Egnatia over the pass at Mt. Symbolon and was positioned as a one-way gate from Europe to Asia. They could not be circumvented easily, and this positioning best reflects how Antony described the geography. When Antony arrived in Macedonia, he followed the path along the south of Mt. Pangaion and encamped in the plain against the fortifications of the Liberators. It was from this first-hand experience that he described the region in his letter to Hyrcanus. Antony describes the geography in a way that can only refer to a location closer to the port city of Neapolis.

This letter allows for a re-evaluation of our narrative sources of the battle, which had previously held a place of significance for its location and tactical progression. They are still required, as Antony's letter only relates a few certain facts. It is within these facts, however, that the narrative sources must relate to his letter, and where they cannot, they may be safely set aside. The literary accounts are not to be disregarded for the battle because they share commonalities that reflect the location Antony reports. They are allowed a secondary role in supplying the narrative that Antony's letter omits. This allows for a better understanding of the battle because these elements must fit into the framework Antony's letter has provided. The battle must be located south of Philippi; anything that suggests otherwise argues against the most authoritative source of the battle.

A significant result arising from introducing Antony's letter into this discussion is its impact on how we perceive Appian's account. Appian was most noteworthy amongst his narrative writing peers because, unlike them, he maintained an internal consistency and a focus on tactical and geographical details. The other narrative writers are inconsistent and focused on different aspects of the battle such as the characterization of the commanders and the portents foretelling the outcome. Appian's differentiation from the expected norm made his account more believable than the confused accounts related by Velleius, Plutarch, and Dio. After Appian's account is removed from its place of primacy, and when Antony's letter replaces it, Appian becomes more obviously mistaken in his geographical understanding of Philippi, a mistake which has informed our understanding of the battle for over a century. In general, however, the narratives of the battle that have survived to us strongly resemble one another, and the differences between them reflect the complications, motivations, and shortcomings of each. The accounts, which the narrative writers relate, are not ideal and clearly had little care for a question such as this when they were composing. Antony's letter helps anchor these issues, tying the battle to a few basic facts from which we may expand using a collection of consistencies between the narratives.

This question has also provided the opportunity to take a closer look at this letter of Antony. When the dust had settled in the aftermath of Philippi, those who were no longer under the control of the Liberators would have sought to send embassies to the new leadership of the region. The Judeans were one such people wronged during the war, and the letters Antony sent in the exchange are a natural result. As we have seen, its form, tone, and specific references to climatological phenomena guarantee its

authenticity, and the information it provides exposes the weaknesses of our literary narrative accounts which is especially true for Appian.

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Appendix A: The Sources for the Battle of Philippi

Josephus

Josephus *AJ* 14: 306-314

³⁰⁶ Marcus Antonius, Imperator, to Hyrcanus, high priest and ethnarch, and to the Jewish nation, greeting. If you are in good health, it is well. ³⁰⁷I also am in good health, as is the army. The envoys Lysimachus, son of Pausanias, Josephus, son of Mennaëus, and Alexander, son of Theodorus, who met me at Ephesus, have renewed the mission previously carried out by them in Rome, and have conscientiously discharged their present mission on behalf of you and the nation, making clear the goodwill you have for us. ³⁰⁸Being, therefore, persuaded by both deeds and words that you have the friendliest feelings for us, and being aware of your obliging and pious nature, I regard your interests as my own. ³⁰⁹For when our adversaries and those of the Roman people overran all Asia, sparing neither cities nor temples, and disregarding the sworn agreements they had made, it was not only our own battle but that of all mankind in common that we fought when we avenged ourselves on those who were guilty both of lawless deeds against men and of unlawful acts against the gods, from which we believe the very sun turned away, as if it too were loath to look upon the foul deed against Caesar.³¹⁰But their god-defying plots, which Macedonia received as though its climate were proper to their unholy crimes, and the confused mob of half-crazed villains whom they got together at Philippi in Macedonia, where they occupied places naturally favourable and walled in by mountains as far as the sea, so that the passaged could be controlled through only one gate—these plots and this mob,³¹¹condemned by the gods for their unjust enterprise, we have overcome. And Brutus, who fled to Philippi and was hemmed in by us, shared the ruin of Cassius. Now that these men have been punished, ³¹²we hope that henceforth we shall enjoy peace and give Asia respite from war. We are therefore ready to let our allies also participate in the peace given us by God; and so, owing to our victory, the body of Asia is now recovering, as it were, from a serious illness.³¹³Having, therefore, in mind to promote the welfare both of you and your nation, I shall take care of your interests. And I have also sent notices throughout the cities that if any persons, whether freemen or slaves, were sold at auction by Gaius Cassius or by those subordinate to him, they shall be released; and it is my wish that you shall enjoy the privileges granted by me and Dolabella. And I forbid the Tyrians to use violence against you, and command that they restore whatever they

possess belonging to the Jews. As for the crown which you have sent, I have accepted it.”

³⁰⁶Μάρκος Ἀντώνιος αὐτοκράτωρ Ὑρκανῶ ἀρχιερεῖ καὶ ἐθνάρχῃ καὶ τῶ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνει χαίρειν. εἰ ἔρρωσθε, εὖ ἂν ἔχοι, ³⁰⁷ἔρρωμαι δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς μετὰ τοῦ στρατεύματος. Λυσίμαχος Παισανίου καὶ Ἰώσηπος Μενναίου καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος Θεοδώρου πρεσβευταὶ ἐν Ἐφέσῳ μοι συντυχόντες τὴν τε ἔμπροσθεν ἐν Ῥώμῃ τελεσθεῖσαν αὐτοῖς πρεσβείαν ἀνενεώσαντο, καὶ τὴν νῦν ὑπὲρ σοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἔθνους σπουδαίως ³⁰⁸διέθεντο, ἣν ἔχεις εὖνοιαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐμφανίσαντες. πεπεισμένοι οὖν καὶ ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ ἐκ τῶν λόγων ὅτι οἰκειότατα ἔχετε πρὸς ἡμᾶς, καὶ τὸ ἀραρὸς ὑμῶν ἦθος καὶ θεοσεβὲς κατανοήσας, ἴδιον ἠγῆμαι ³⁰⁹καταδραμόντων δὲ τὴν Ἀσίαν ἄπασαν τῶν ἐναντιωθέντων ἡμῖν τε καὶ τῶ δῆμῳ τῶν Ῥωμαίων, καὶ μήτε πόλεων μήτε ἱερῶν ἀποσχομένων μήτε ὄρκους οὓς ἐποιήσαντο φυλαξάντων, ἡμεῖς ὡς οὐχ ὑπὲρ ἰδίου μόνον ἀγῶνος, ἀλλ’ ὡς ὑπὲρ ἀπάντων κοινοῦ, τοὺς αἰτίους καὶ τῶν εἰς ἀνθρώπους παρανομῶν καὶ τῶν εἰς θεοὺς ἀνομημάτων ἡμυνάμεθα, δι’ ἃ καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἀπεστράφθαι δοκοῦμεν, ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἀηδῶς ἐπέιδε τὸ ἐπὶ Καίσαρι μῦσος. ³¹⁰ἀλλὰ τὰς ἐπιβουλάς αὐτῶν τὰς θεομάχους, ἃς ὑπεδέξατο ἡ Μακεδονία καθάπερ ἴδιος αὐτοῖς τῶν ἀνοσίων τολμημάτων ἀήρ, καὶ τὴν σύγχυσιν τῆς ἡμιμανοῦς κακοηθείας ἣν κατὰ Φιλίππους τῆς Μακεδονίας συνεκρότουν, τόπους εὐφυεῖς καταλαμβανόμενοι μέχρι θαλάσσης ἀποτετειχισμένους ὄρεσιν, ὡς πύλη μιᾶ τὴν πάροδον ταμιεύεσθαι, ³¹¹τῶν θεῶν αὐτοῦς ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀδίκοις ἐγχειρήμασιν κατεψηφισμένων ἐκρατήσαμεν. καὶ Βροῦτος συμφυγῶν εἰς Φιλίππους καὶ συγκλεισθεὶς ὑφ’ ἡμῶν ἐκοινώνησε Κασσίῳ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀπωλείας. τούτων κεκολασμένων εἰρήνης τὸ λοιπὸν ἀπολαύσειν ³¹²ἐλπίζομεν καὶ ἀναπεπαῦσθαι τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐκ τοῦ πολέμου. κοινήν οὖν ποιούμεθα καὶ τοῖς συμμάχοις τὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν εἰρήνην· ὥσπερ οὖν ἐκ νόσου μεγάλης τὸ τῆς Ἀσίας σῶμα νῦν διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν νίκην ἀναφέρει. ³¹³ἔχων τοίνυν καὶ σὲ διὰ μνήμης καὶ τὸ ἔθνος αὔξειν, φροντίσω τῶν ὑμῖν συμφερόντων. ἐξέθηκα δὲ καὶ γράμματα κατὰ πόλεις, ὅπως εἴ τινες ἐλεύθεροι ἢ δοῦλοι ὑπὸ δόρυ ἐπράθησαν ὑπὸ Γαΐου Κασσίου ἢ τῶν ὑπ’ αὐτῶ τεταγμένων ἀπολυθῶσιν οὗτοι, τοῖς τε ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ δοθεῖσιν καὶ Δολαβέλλα φιλανθρώποις χρῆσθαι ὑμᾶς βούλομαι. Τυρίους τε κωλύω βιαίους εἶναι περὶ ὑμᾶς, καὶ ὅσα κατέχουσιν Ἰουδαίων ταῦτα ἀποκαταστήσαι κελεύω. τὸν δὲ στέφανον ὃν ἔπεμψας ἐδεξάμην.”

Velleius Paterculus

2.70.1-4.

Then Caesar and Antonius transported their armies to Macedonia, and met Brutus and Cassius in battle near the city of Philippi. The wing under the command of Brutus, after defeating the enemy, captured Caesar's camp...

On the other hand, the wing commanded by Cassius had been routed and roughly handled, and had retreated with much loss to higher ground...

A few days later Brutus met the enemy, and was beaten in battle.

Tum Caesar et Antonius traiecerunt exercitus in Macedoniam et apud urbem Philippus cum Bruto Cassioque acie concurrerunt...

id autem, in quo Cassius fuerat, fugatum ac male mulcatum in altiora se receperat loca...

Post paucos deinde dies Brutus conflixit cum hostibus et victus acie...

Appian

BC 4. 105:

The town is situated on the crest of a hill with cliffs all around and its size is exactly that of the area of the hilltop. To the north there are thick woods through which Rhascupolis led Brutus' men. To the south is a marsh and then the sea. To the east lie the Sapaeon and Corpilian passes, and westward is a very fertile and beautiful plain extending some three hundred and fifty stades to the towns of Murcinus and Drabiscus and the river Strymon.

ἔστι δὲ ἡ πόλις ἐπὶ λόφου περικρήμνου, τοσαύτη τὸ μέγεθος, ὅσον ἐστὶ τοῦ λόφου τὸ εὖρος. ἔχει δὲ πρὸς μὲν ἄρκτω δρυμούς, δι' ὧν ὁ Ῥασκούπολις ἤγαγε τοὺς ἀμφὶ τὸν Βροῦτον· πρὸς δὲ τῇ μεσημβρίᾳ ἔλος ἔστι καὶ θάλασσα μετ' αὐτό, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἔω τὰ στενὰ τὰ Σαπαίων τε καὶ Κορπίλων, ἐκ δὲ τῆς δύσεως πεδῖον μέχρι Μυρκίνου τε καὶ Δραβήσκου καὶ ποταμοῦ Στρυμόνος,

BC 4.109:

He formed a plan to see if he could in secret make the marsh passable, in order to get behind the enemy without their knowledge, and deprive them of

their supply route from Thasos. So while drawing up his forces for battle again, on each occasion he included all the military standards, to create the belief that his entire army had been marshaled. With one unit, however, he worked day and night to carve a narrow path in the marsh, cutting down reeds, building a causeway on top with rocks on either side to prevent the bank subsiding, driving piles into the deep parts and bridging them, and all the while keeping the deepest silence.

καὶ ἐπενόησεν, εἰ δύναίτο βάσιμον τὸ ἔλος ἐργάσασθαι λαθῶν, ἵνα κατόπιν τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἔτι ἀγνοούντων γενόμενος τὴν ἀγορὰν σφᾶς ἀφέλοιτο τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς Θάσου κομιζομένην. ἐκτάσσω οὖν αὐθις ἐκάστοτε ἐς μάχην τὰ σημεῖα τοῦ στρατοῦ πάντα, ἵνα ὄλος ἐκτετάχθαι νομίζοιτο, μέρει τινὶ νυκτός τε καὶ ἡμέρας ἔκοπτεν ἐν τῷ ἔλει δίοδον στενήν, κείρων τε τὸν δόνακα καὶ χῶμα ἐπιβάλλων καὶ λίθους ἐκατέρωθεν, ἵνα μὴ τὸ χῶμα διαπίπτει, τὰ δὲ βαθέα διεσταύρου καὶ ἐγεφύρου μετὰ σιωπῆς βαθυτάτης.

Plutarch

Brut. 38.

There Norbanus and his army were encamped, at what were called The Narrows, and near Symbolum; but they surrounded him and compelled him to withdraw and abandon his positions...

The plains between the armies the Romans call Campi Philippi,

ἐκεῖ δὲ τῶν περὶ Νορβανὸν ἐν τοῖς Στενοῖς λεγομένοις καὶ περὶ τὸ Σύμβολον στρατοπεδεύοντων, περιελθόντες αὐτοὺς ἠνάγκασαν ἀποστῆναι καὶ προέσθαι τὰ χωρία...

Τὰ δ' ἐν μέσῳ τῶν στρατοπέδων πεδία Ῥωμαῖοι κάμπους Φιλίππους καλοῦσι·

Brut. 41.

The soldiers of Antony were engaged in running trenches from the marshes, around which they were encamped, into the plain, thus cutting off Cassius from access to the sea. Octavius was quietly watching the course of events,—not being present in person, owing to sickness, but his forces for him; they had no expectation at all that their enemies would give battle, but

thought they would merely sally out against the works and with light missiles and clamorous cries try to disturb the workers in the trenches.

Ἔτυχον δ' οἱ περὶ Ἀντώνιον ἀπὸ τῶν ἐλῶν, οἷς περιεστρατοπέδευον, ἐμβάλλοντες τάφρους εἰς τὸ πεδῖον καὶ τὰς ἐπὶ θάλασσαν ὁδοὺς 2τοῦ Κασσίου περικόπτοντες. ἐφήδρευε δὲ Καῖσαρ, οὐ παρῶν αὐτὸς δι' ἀσθένειαν, ἀλλ' ἡ δύναμις, οὐ πάνυ μαχεῖσθαι προσδοκῶσα τοὺς πολεμίους, ἀλλὰ μόνον ἐκδρομαῖς χρῆσθαι πρὸς τὰ ἔργα καὶ βέλεσιν ἐλαφροῖς καὶ θορύβοις τοὺς ὀρύσσοντας ἐπιταράσσειν·

Cassius Dio

47.35.2

And they found that Gaius Norbanus and Decidius Saxa had anticipated them by crossing the Ionian Sea before Staius arrived, occupying the whole country as far as Mt. Pangaeum and encamping near Philippi.

καὶ αὐτοὺς Γαίος τε Νωρβανὸς καὶ Δεκίδιος Σάξας ἔφθησαν τὸν τε Ἰόνιον, πρὶν τὸν Στάιον ἐλθεῖν, περαιωθέντες, καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν μέχρι τοῦ Παγγαίου γῆν προκατασχόντες, καὶ πρὸς τοῖς Φιλίπποις στρατοπεδευσάμενοι.

47.45.2-3

Brutus forced Caesar, because of his sickness, to yield ground, while Antony vanquished Cassius, who was by no means his equal in warfare. And so at this time, since they were not opposing each other as united armies, but each side was in part defeated and in part victorious, the result was practically the same for each; for both had conquered and had been defeated,

νῦν δὲ ὁ τε Βροῦτος τὴν τοῦ Καίσαρος ἀρρωστίαν ἐξεβίασατο, καὶ ὁ Ἀντώνιος τὸν Κάσσιον οὐδέν 3οἱ ὅμοιον τὰ πολέμια ὄντα ἐξενίκησε. καὶ τότε δὲ τῷ μὴ πάντας ἅμα τοὺς ἑτέρους, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ μέρει ἀμφοτέρους καὶ ἠττηθῆναι καὶ κρατῆσαι ταύτων ὡς εἰπεῖν ἐγένετο· καὶ γὰρ ἐνίκησαν ἀμφότεροι καὶ ἠττήθησαν.

47.35.3-5

This city is situated near Pangaeum and Symbolon. Symbolon ("Junction") is the name they give the place where the mountain mentioned joins on

(symballei) to another that extends into the interior, and it is between Neapolis and Philippi; for the former town was near the sea, opposite Thasos, while the latter is situated within the mountains on the plain. And inasmuch as Saxa and Norbanus, as it chanced, had already occupied the most direct pass across, Brutus and Cassius did not even try to get through that way but went round by a longer road that passes by a place called Crenides. Here, too, they encountered a garrison, but overpowered it, got inside the mountains, approached the city along the high ground, and there encamped, nominally each by himself...

τὸ δὲ δὴ ἄστυ τοῦτο παρά τε τῷ Παγγαίῳ καὶ παρά τῷ Συμβόλῳ κεῖται· Σύμβολον γὰρ τὸ χωρίον ὀνομάζουσι καθ' ὃ τὸ ὄρος ἐκεῖνο ἐτέρῳ τινὶ ἐς μεσόγειαν ἀνατείνοντι συμβάλλει, καὶ ἔστι μεταξὺ Νέας πόλεως καὶ τῶν Φιλίππων· ἡ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς τῇ θαλάσῃ κατ' ἀντιπέρας Θάσου ἦν, ἡ δὲ ἐντὸς τῶν ὄρων ἐπὶ τῷ πεδίῳ πεπόλισται. καὶ ἔτυχον γὰρ τὴν συντομωτάτην αὐτοῦ ὑπερβολὴν ὃ τε Σάξας καὶ ὁ Νωρβανὸς προκαταλαβόντες, αὐτῇ μὲν ὁ Βροῦτος ὃ τε Κάσσιος οὐδὲ ἐπείρασαν διαβῆναι, ἐτέραν δὲ τινα μακροτέραν κατὰ τὰς Κρηνίδας ὀνομασμένας περιελθόντες φυλακῇ μὲν καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐνέτυχον, βιασάμενοι δὲ αὐτὴν εἴσω τε τῶν ὄρων ἐγένοντο, καὶ πρὸς τὴν πόλιν κατὰ τὰ μετέωρα ἐπιπαρελθόντες ἐνταῦθα χωρὶς ἑκάτερος, ὡς γε τῷ λόγῳ εἶπεῖν, ἐστρατοπεδεύσαντο...