PHALANGES IN ROME?

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Amid the morass that is early Roman history, the formation of a phalanx in the mid-sixth century has long seemed one of the very few secure footholds.[1] The bases for this belief are well-known, principally the testimony of two ancient authors, buttressed by the evidence of iconography and archaeology. Livy, in his description of the Roman army that faced a force of rebellious Latins in 340 BCE, remarks in passing: "Previously, the Romans used *clipei*; then, after they became *stipendiarii*, they made *scuta* instead of *clipei*; what had been a phalanx like the Macedonian phalanges began to be drawn up as a battle line by maniples with the soldiers in the rear drawn up in more detachments."[2] His assertion is repeated in greater detail by the anonymous, apparently second-century, author of the fragment known as the *Ineditum Vaticanum*, which purports to reproduce a debate prior to the outbreak of the First Punic War between a Carthaginian speaker and a Roman named Kaiso:

> When the Carthaginian had spoken thus, Kaiso replied: 'This is what we Romans are like . . . [W]ith those who make war on us we agree to fight on their terms, and when it comes to foreign practices we surpass those who have long been used to them. For the Tyrrhenians used to make war on us with bronze shields and fighting in phalanx formation, not in maniples; and we, changing our armament and replacing it with theirs, organised our forces against them, and contending thus against men who had long been accustomed to phalanx battles we were victorious. Similarly the Samnite shield was not part of our national equipment, nor did we have

[1] So recently e.g. Richard E. Mitchell, *Patricians and Plebeians. The Origin of the Roman State* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990), 35–41; Stephen P. Oakley, *A Commentary on Livy Books VI–X*. 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997–2005), 2.453; Tim Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome. Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000-264 BC)*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 183–85; Gary Forsythe, *A Critical History of Early Rome* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2005), 113–15. Cf. John E. Lendon, *Soldiers and Ghosts. A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity*. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2005), 183–86.

[2] Liv. 8.8.3: *clipeis antea Romani usi sunt; dein, postquam stipendiarii facti sunt, scuta pro clipeis fecere; et quod antea phalanx similis Macedonicis, hoc postea manipulatim structa acies copeit esse: postremi in plures ordines instruebantur*. On the textual difficulties in this passage, see Oakley, *Commentary on Livy*, (n. 1), 2.459, 467.

> javelins, but fought with rounds shields and spears; nor were we strong in cavalry, but all or nearly all of Rome's strength lay in infantry. But when we found ourselves at war with the Samnites we armed ourselves with their oblong shields and javelins, and fought against them on horseback, and by copying foreign arms we became masters of those who thought so highly of themselves.[3]

Scholars since Fraccaro have generally attributed the establishment of a hoplite phalanx to King Servius Tullius, and his new phalanx in turn becomes the culmination of a package of reforms that also comprised the creation of the *comitia centuriata* and of new tribes in which membership was based on residence rather than descent. The latter, it is usually thought, aimed at expanding the manpower pool from which hoplites for the new phalanx could be drawn, while the former gave it a voice in decisions about war and peace.[4] This reconstruction, finally, forms part of a broader narrative that ascribes Rome's transformation from a backwater into a central Italian powerhouse during the sixth century to the arrival of Etruscans, who introduced a host of innovations that greatly strengthened the city, among which was the hoplite phalanx, long in use among them.

Material evidence would seem to offer strong confirmation—at least of the Etruscan phalanx. Seventh- and sixth-century representations of hoplites are abundant, while the weapons and armor recovered from central Italian burials—for example, the Tomba del Guerriero at Tarquinia, ca. 680, the roughly contemporary Regolini-Galassi tomb at Cervetere, or Tomb 43 from Narce from the mid-seventh century—would seem to embody the reality reflected in these images quite clearly. The Avvolta tomb at Tarquinia is reported to have contained "a full set of body armor (helmet, corselet, greaves), two circular bronze shields… eight javelins, a double-edged sword and, inside a bronze-lidded vase, the remains of a 'killed' chariot."[5]

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[3] *Ineditum Vaticanum*, ed. H. von Arnim, "Ineditum Vaticanum," *Hermes* 27 (1892): 118–30 (= Jacoby *FGrHist* 839 F.1), 3, in Cornell's translation, *Beginnings of Rome* (n. 1), 170. Cf. Diod., 23.2.1; Ath. 6.273 e–f; Sall. *Cat*. 51.37–38.

[4] Plinio Fraccaro, *Opuscula* 4 vols. (Pavia: Presso la rivista "Athenaeum," 1956–75), 2.287–92, summarized in Cornell, *Beginnings of Rome* (n. 1), 181–83. On the reforms of Servius Tullius generally, see recently Cornell, ibid. 173–97, although Cornell believes that Servius simply changed the institutional basis of a pre-existing hoplite army rather than creating a phalanx *de novo*; Forsythe, *A Critical History* (n. 1), 111–15.

[5] P. R. Stary, *Zur eisenzeitlichen Bewaffnung und Kampfesweise in Mittelitalien* 2 vols. (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1981); N. Spivey and S. Stoddart, *Etruscan Italy: An Archaeological History*, (London: B.T. Batsford, 1990), 129 (tombs and quote); Anthony Snodgrass, "The Hoplite Reform and History," *JHS* 85 (1965): 116–19.

A few scholars have voiced doubts about this broad consensus. Momigliano wondered "how the Etruscans ever managed to combine an army of hoplites with their social structure founded on a sharp distinction between nobles and clientes," and William Harris in an aside suggested that the Roman phalanx might be "fictitious."[6] More serious criticisms have come from Spivey and Stoddard's careful reexamination of the Etruscan archaeological remains. They noted of the bronze corselet from Tomb 43 that it was merely "ornamental sheet bronze . . . It is not functional and it is expensive. It is conspicuous display, not advanced military technology." "[A]rms and armour as grave goods," in their view:

> serve as enhancements of burial, as indicators of rank; amongst the deposits of domestic effects, the arms and armour are objects inspiring pride and reverence…. Viewed in this light, the evidence from graves is likely to be misleading when it comes to claiming that the Etruscans fought with hoplite phalanxes. The burial of arms and armour in itself is a form of ritual, but the nature of the armour buried suggests that in the world of the living it was primarily an appurtenance of ritual…. Panoplies such as that from the Osteria necropolis at Vulci . . . datable to 630–620 BC, should be understood as luxury acquisitions either from the Greek world or produced under Greek influence for the same ritual purposes as the extravagant 'Orientalizing' panoplies.[7]

Yet these criticisms only indirectly affect our understanding of the establishment of a hoplite phalanx at Rome, for they question only whether Etruria could have been the source for such a development, not the

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[6] Arnaldo Momigliano, "An Interim Report on the Origins of Rome," *JRS* 53 (1963): 119; William V. Harris, "Roman Warfare in the Economic and Social Context of the Fourth Century BC.," in *Staat und Staatlichkeit in der frühen römischen Republik*, ed. W. Eder (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990), 508. Futher doubts that Etruria's social structure would have permitted the development of a true hoplite phalanx in B. d'Agostino, "Military Organization and Social Structure in Archaic Etruria," in *The Greek City: From Homer to Alexander*, ed. O. Murray and S. Price (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 59–82. Christiane Saulnier, *L'Armée et la Guerre dans le monde Étrusco-Romain (VIII^e-IV^e s.)* (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 1980), 105–15, argues that two components made up the early Roman army, one equipped as hoplites and the other with less expensive weapons and armor, which fought in two separate lines; cf. Peter Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War* (London: Macdonald, 1981), 95, who similarly imagines the Servian army comprising a phalanx and a contingent armed with the various weapons and equipment described by Livy at 1.43.1–7. See also the brief critique in John Rich, "Warfare and the Army in Early Rome," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

[7] Spivey and Stoddart, *Etruscan Italy* (n. 5), 129–31; cf. John Rich, "Warfare in Early Rome," in *Papers from the EAA Third Annual Meeting at Ravenna 1997* 4 vols., ed. Mark Pearce and Maurizio Tosi et al. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1998), 6.

development itself. A much more serious challenge comes from quite a different direction. Hans van Wees has completely redrawn the conventional picture of the evolution of phalanx combat, first in a paper published in 2000 and recently in a book that is surely the most important contribution to the study of Greek warfare in recent years.[8] Van Wees argues that true phalanges did not come into being around 650 BCE, as scholarly consensus has long held. Rather, combat remained fluid and 'Homeric' throughout most of the seventh and sixth centuries. Although hoplite arms and armor and especially the large, round *aspis* were in use all during this time, they do not imply much less necessitate combat in a densely packed mass of uniformly equipped soldiers. Instead, combat was organized around the ties of kinship and dependence that pervaded civilian life. Leading men went to war surrounded by relatives and retainers who might or might not be armed as hoplites, while formations comprising different types of fighters and adapted to a looser style of combat characterized battles. The critical change that transformed these types of battles into true phalanx combat came only at the very end of the sixth century, when the community, acting as the polis, acquired enough authority over the lives of individual citizens to override the social matrices in which they were enmeshed and compel them to take their places in uniformly armed formations regardless of who they were stationed next to. Van Wees has not convinced all doubters, but he has convinced me, and his conclusions if correct put the problem of the Roman phalanx on an entirely different footing.[9] For if the Greeks did not develop a true phalanx until the very end of the sixth century at the earliest, then the possibility that a similar phalanx was established at Rome fifty years earlier becomes vanishingly remote.[10]

This conclusion in turn raises the question of just how and when the phalanx came to Rome. Clearly, this will have to have happened sometime after the turn of the sixth century, but beyond that certainty is difficult. The ancient sources offer little guidance. As we have seen, the

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[8] H. van Wees, "The Development of the Hoplite Phalanx: Iconography and Reality in the Seventh Century," in *War and Violence in Ancient Greece*, ed. H. van Wees (London: Duckworth and the Classical Press of Wales, 2000), 125–66; idem, *Greek Warfare. Myths and Realities* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 166–84, 233–35.

[9] Doubts: Adam Schwartz, "The Early Hoplite Phalanx: Order or Disarray?" *Classica et Mediaevalia* 53 (2002): 31–64.

[10] C. E. Smith, *The Roman Clan: The Gens From Ancient Ideology to Modern Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), 286–89 and Rich, "Warfare and the Army" (n. 6, 17) have drawn similar conclusions about the early Roman army on the basis of van Wees' work.

anonymous author of the *Ineditum Vaticanum* puts the change in the context of Rome's wars with the Etruscans, which could mean anytime from the early fifth century on. Yet the fact that the existence of an Etrurian phalanx is open to serious doubt renders equally dubious his claim that the Romans adopted the tactic from their northern neighbors. The passage from Livy quoted above implies a date prior to the institution of the *stipendium*—that is, payment for military service—but this is of little help as a *terminius post quem* since there is no agreement about when the Romans began paying their soldiers. Opinion is divided between the late fifth century in connection with the siege of Veii, which is where Livy and Diodorus put it; the period of the Second Samnite War, where it fits much better into the longer and more distant campaigns that this conflict entailed; or even later still.[11] Iconographic representations of hoplite weaponry or the items themselves recovered from burials prove equally unreliable, since these cannot in and of themselves demonstrate that they were used in a phalanx. Consequently, we are thrown back on more general considerations.

The adoption of the classical phalanx in Greece appears to be a textbook example of what is often termed 'peer-polity interaction,' which in this case simply means that once one polis adopted it, probably in the context of a major reorganization of the polis itself, other poleis were compelled to follow suit or risk being overcome.[12] So one might search for a Roman military context in which the adoption of phalanx tactics makes sense as a response to some external threat. But unfortunately no likely fifth or fourth century candidate is forthcoming. During the fifth century, Rome's opponents were mainly the Aequi and Volsci, hill-tribes whose military institutions will have been at an even more rudimentary level than Rome's. Fighting seems to have been characterized by repeated raids and counter-raids, a form of conflict that would seem ill-suited for mass-infantry. The various Latin cities that Rome occasionally went to war against in the fifth and fourth centuries are likely to have been no

[11] Liv. 4.59.11–60.8, cf. Diod. 14.16.5. Late fifth century: see for example Michael Crawford, *Coinage and Money under the Roman Republic: Italy and the Mediterranean Economy* (London: Methuen, 1985), 22–24; Cornell, *Beginnings of Rome* (n. 1), 187, 313; Oakley, *Commentary on Livy* (n. 1), 1.630–32; for the late fourth century see Kurt Raaflaub, "Born to Be Wolves? Origins of Roman Imperialism," in *Transitions to Empire. Essays in Greco-Roman History, 360-146 BC, in Honor of E. Badian*, ed. Robert W. Wallace and Edward M. Harris (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 280.

[12] Colin Renfrew, "Introduction: Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-political Change," in *Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-political Change*, ed. Colin Renfrew and David Cherry (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), 1–18.

more tactically sophisticated than their larger neighbor, while as we have seen there is no warrant for postulating an Etruscan phalanx. More importantly, the Republic's overall record against these opponents was one of success, albeit the victories it won were neither easy nor without setbacks. It is difficult to see in the military challenges Rome faced in this period anything grave enough to necessitate a complete change in the way it waged its wars. The Samnites are another matter of course, but in this case scholars generally believe that the struggle against them gave rise to a shift away from phalanges and to a legion organized in maniples, as Livy and the author of the *Ineditum Vaticanum* claim, owing, it is thought, to the deficiencies of the phalanx against an enemy fighting in small, flexible bands on rugged terrain.[13] It seems perverse, then, to stand this proposition on its head and claim that precisely the same sort of tactical problem demanded the phalanx as its solution.

Only the great Roman defeat at the Allia in 390 might seem to have presented a challenge of such magnitude that it could have impelled a major tactical overhaul. Although at least one scholar has suggested that the defeat was the occasion for the switch from phalanges to maniples, it is equally plausible to suppose that the Republic's forces, however they were arrayed, were simply overwhelmed by the mass of the Gauls, and so in anticipation of future combat a stronger, more solid formation was deemed necessary.[14] Attractive as this reconstruction might seem, however, there are objections. The first is from the sources, specifically Livy, who for what it is worth claims that the Romans dropped the phalanx when they began paying their soldiers, which he dates to the siege of Veii, that is, before the defeat at the Allia.[15] This is awkward but not insurmountable. The second problem however seems to me much more substantial, and that is the very notion that a major military defeat would have led the Romans to undertake a wholesale revamping of the way they fought their battles. Rome's record down to that point had been one of overall success. However they had been fighting, that tactical system

[13] E.g. F. E. Adcock, "The Roman Conquest of Italy," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 1st. ed., vol. 7, *The Hellenistic Monarchies and the Rise of Rome*, ed. S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, and M. P. Charlesworth (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1928), 601; Lawrence Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic To Empire* (London, 1984), 18–19.

[14] H. Stuart Jones and Hugh Last, "The Early Republic," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Cook et al. (ed.), (n. 14), 568; Harris, "Roman Warfare" (n. 6, 508) for the Allia as the incentive for the switch to maniples.

[15] Liv. 4.59.11–60.8, cf. Diod. 14.16.5.

had gotten them through a very difficult fifty years in the mid-fifth century, when Rome lost ground against the Volsci and Aequi. Earlier the same system had enabled Rome during the sixth century to establish the hegemony over Latium and the Pomptine region that is reflected in the first treaty with Carthage.[16] So this was a system that worked, and to throw it out because it had failed once, albeit spectacularly, seems quite an extreme step. For behind such a reconstruction lies the assumption that military change in the absence of major technological change is often sudden and transformative, and there is every reason to doubt that this was very often true. Rather, pre-industrial warfare seems very like farming in that each is a matter of life and death, even if in the one case the outcome is swift and in the other much more gradual. But in either case the consequences of failure are dire, which leads to a reluctance to embrace radical change. One stays with what has worked in the past, and when things go wrong, the tendency is not to wipe the slate clean and start fresh but to make smaller, incremental adjustments to correct flaws in a winning formula and try again.

This argument is pure speculation, of course, but it gains credibility from what we know about what the Romans actually did when they lost battles. As is well-known, later Roman tradition put the blame for the Allia on religious flaws, not tactical weaknesses, very much in line with a general tendency to ascribe defeat to a failure to observe proper ritual procedure or to recognize that a complete breakdown in the *pax deorum* had occurred. Where non-religious, human error was identified, the tendency was to see this in moral rather than organizational terms: the soldiers had not displayed sufficient bravery or discipline or their leader had not set them a proper example of courage.[17] Once, it is true, a tactical shift followed a major defeat, when Marius reformed the legions by substituting cohorts for maniples as the basic units of maneuver following the catastrophe at Arausio.[18] But this change seems to me to exemplify precisely the sort of incremental change being suggested here. Cohorts had long been part of the legions' tactical repertoire, used

[16] Polyb. 3.22.1–10; see Cornell, *Beginnings of Rome* (n. 1), 210–14 and Forsythe, *A Critical History* (n. 1), 122–24 for recent discussion.

[17] Nathan Rosenstein, Imperatores Victi*: Military Defeat and Aristocratic Competition in the Middle and Late Republic* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990), especially 73 on the Allia.

[18] Keppie, *Making of the Roman Army* (n. 13), 63–68 for a brief discussion of Marius' innovations. On the earlier employment of cohorts, see M. J. V. Bell, "Tactical Reform in the Roman Republican Army," *Historia* 14 (1965): 404–22.

apparently from time to time as the situation required even though in set-piece battles maniples remained the staple of Roman combat. However, the *socii* who fought alongside the legions apparently were regularly marshaled for battle in cohorts. The legion after Marius remained a formation of heavily-armed infantrymen, only more so because the *velites* were henceforth equipped as regular legionaries. Marius did not eliminate maniples; he simply folded them by threes into the cohorts, apparently preserving within each the traditional division by age into *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii*. And the cohorts themselves continued to be arrayed in the three-line *quincunx* formation (however it may have operated in combat). Marius in other words simply improved upon what was already there; he did not start over from scratch. Indeed, the one instance in which the Romans do seem to have departed significantly from their standard tactical repertoire and tried something rather different was an unmitigated disaster: Cannae, where the gaps between the maniples seem to have been closed up to the point where the legions took on something of the aspect of a phalanx.[19]

If a strictly military perspective does not help us move forward, perhaps we ought to consider the problem from the vantage point of state-formation, as van Wees' reconstruction of the development of the Greek phalanx suggests. The question then is at what point did the Republic gain sufficient loyalty from and control over its citizens to overcome the social bonds that otherwise structured the ways in which they went to war? One might suppose, following a suggestion Nilsson made in the early part of the last century, that this might have occurred in the mid-fifth century.[20] Nilsson argued that the creation of censors for the first time in 443 was the consequence of the introduction of the phalanx, because at that point it became necessary to know each citizen's wealth in order to determine whether he was obligated to serve as a hoplite in it. The theory is ingenious, since Nilsson links the creation of censors to the introduction in the previous year of the military tribunes with consular power, which again might be connected with some type of military reform. However, it is open to criticism on two grounds. The first is that the election of censors for the first time in 443 does not necessarily mean that no census had ever been conducted prior to that date. But secondly,

[19] See Gregory Daly, *Cannae: The Experience of Battle in the Second Punic War* (London: Routledge, 2002), 158–61.

[20] Martin Nilsson, "The Introduction of Hoplite Tactics at Rome: Its Date and its Consequences," *JRS* 19 (1929): 5.

and more importantly, the struggle of the orders was at its height during the mid-fifth century, and whatever else one can say about that poorly understood phase in Roman history, it was certainly not a time when the community was gaining greater control over its citizens. Quite the opposite: the state was in danger of tearing itself apart and was preserved by the need to compromise differences in the face of grave external threats.[21]

The struggle of the orders in fact makes it very difficult to imagine the Roman state at any point during the fifth and much of the fourth centuries gaining the sort of increased control over its citizens that Greek poleis developed in the later sixth that led to the creation of the first true phalanges. Rather, and perhaps surprisingly, Rome had already acquired a 'state' army—as opposed to an assemblage of bands arrayed by clan or some other social tie—well before that date. For if not only the creation of the centuriate assembly and the tribal reform but a fundamental alteration in the composition and organization of the army are correctly dated to the mid-sixth century, then the one thing we can be sure of is that the centuries were its basic tactical units. This must be true not simply because of the obvious link between the army and the centuriate assembly but because of the survival of the century itself as a fundamental part of the Roman army long after centuries has ceased to play any tactical role in battle. Not only the manipular legions of the middle Republic but the cohort-legions of the late Republic and Empire contained centuries. Their preservation exemplifies precisely the sort of incremental change described earlier, and it strongly suggests that the centuries themselves must go back to the very earliest stages of the Roman army. Consequently, there ought to have been some relationship between them and the new tribes, but how the latter were divided up among the centuries is a notorious crux. Cornell has offered what seems the most plausible reconstruction.[22] He theorizes that the members of each Servian tribe were divided into sixty groups. When an army had to be mobilized, every group in a tribe was required to contribute a specific number of men, then the contingents from the groups in each tribe came together with the contingents from the corresponding groups in the other tribes to form the sixty centuries that constituted a Servian legion.

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[21] Raaflaub, "Wolves?" (n. 11), 290–92.
[22] Cornell, *Beginnings of Rome* (n. 1), 192–94.

If Cornell's theory is correct, then it entails a couple of important consequences. The first and most important is that the mechanism for mustering an army combined in the centuries men from the different tribes and hence from different localities—much as the second-century levy that Polybius describes did—and thereby neutralized in a military context whatever social bonds and obligations had structured the soldiers' civilian lives. This conclusion seems confirmed by the oath that until 216 the soldiers within each century swore voluntarily among themselves, vowing that they would not break ranks in battle.[23] Such an oath fits easily into a context in which men who had no pre-existing social ties to one another were called upon to undergo the dangers of combat together and had to assure themselves that they would not fail one another. The obvious point at which such a need would arise is when men from different tribes and regions were thrown together in the centuries under the system for forming them that Cornell conjectures.

The Romans for once therefore appear to have been somewhat ahead of similar developments among the Greeks, who only reached this degree of state-development about half a century later.[24] However—and this is the second consequence—alongside this state-controlled warfare there flourished a way of waging war in which civilian links among the fighters were replicated on the battlefield. The Fabian *gens*' private war against Veii, which as is well-known ended disastrously in 478 at the Cremera, is the obvious case in point, but other examples indicate that similar bands of clansmen or comrades and their dependents were a regular feature of sixth- and fifth-century central Italian warfare.[25] How many of the wars Rome fought during these years were fought by the one sort of army or the other is impossible to say. Livy writes as if the state army marched out time and again to oppose raiding parties during the fifth century, but it may be that clan- or comrade-based forces responded as often as not or were themselves the aggressors. The important point is that once we rule out the possibility that Servius introduced a phalanx to Rome, military operations in defense of the city's territory in either case were carried out by forces organized as small groups that

[23] Liv. 22.38.2–5, cf. Frontin. *Str*. 4.1.4.

[24] Cf. Smith, *The Roman Clan* (n. 10), 290.

[25] Louis Rawlings, "Condottieri and Clansmen: Early Italian Raiding, Warfare, and the State," in *Organized Crime in Antiquity*, ed. Keith Hopwood (London: Duckworth with the Classical Press of Wales, 1998), 97–128; Smith, *The Roman Clan* (n. 10), 290–95.

fought as more or less independent tactical units rather than in a large, undifferentiated mass.

Thereafter the centuriate army appears gradually to have supplanted levies based on other principles, probably as fighting moved away from raid and counter-raid and towards the wars of expansion in the later fifth and fourth centuries. And in view of the difficulty of finding an appropriate context or occasion for its transformation into a phalanx, the most economical solution seems to be to dispense with this phase altogether. While this step entails rejecting the explicit testimony of Livy and the author of the *Ineditum Vaticanum*, it offers one important advantage, and that is the ability to make some sense out of what is otherwise a hopelessly confused tradition about when precisely the shift to maniples occurred. As already noted, Livy puts it at the very end of the fifth or early fourth century, while the *Ineditum Vaticanum* locates it nearly seventy-five years later, and each position has its modern defenders.[26] Plutarch, too, contributes to the confusion when he reports that Camillus introduced several reforms in Roman arms and armor during his fifth dictatorship in 367, which some scholars identify as the date when the change was made, while other sources seem to put it later, in the early third century.[27]

This confusion does not simply mean that the Romans did not really know when the legions first began fighting in maniples. More importantly it suggests that what little they did know offered a number of developments that could plausibly be identified as the transition point. The shift from centuries to maniples in other words was not simple or quick but encompassed a number of stages that gradually transformed Rome's sixth century army into the force that Polybius describes four hundred years later.[28] It is well to remember just how complex that transformation will have been. At some point, two independent centuries had to be brigaded together to form a maniple; the move may initially have been only temporary, since each century in the new maniple preserved

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[26] Late fifth or early fourth centuries, e.g. recently, Cornell, *Beginnings of Rome* (n. 1), 187 and 313, although at 354 he dates the reform instead to the period ca. 311. Late fourth century, recently, Forsythe, *Critical History* (n. 1), 304–6.

[27] In 367: Plut. *Vit. Cam*. 40.3–4; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 14.9–10, cf. Edward T. Salmon, *Samnium and the Samnites* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), 107, but contra Elizabeth Rawson, "Literary Sources for the Pre-Marian Army," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 39 (1971): 27. Early third century: see ibid., 26, followed by Oakley, *Commentary on Livy* (n. 1), 2.454–56, and, further, below.

[28] Cf. John Rich, "Warfare in Early Rome" (n. 7), 6.

its own centurion and perhaps its own standard.[29] Be that as it may, the creation of maniples should be viewed as distinct from the decision to marshal the maniples or centuries in three lines, which may have followed or co-existed with the practice of arraying the army in four lines.[30] This step however may or may not be identical with the institution of the *quincunx* formation, with its distinctive gaps between the units. The positions and weaponry of the *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii* in the earliest three line formation also constitute a notorious crux: to judge by their name, the *principes* ought to have formed the front line, not the second where we find them in the second century, while soldiers called *hastati* ought to have been armed with thrusting spears rather than the swords and *pila* that Polybius reports.[31] Yet none of these innovations need have entailed the organization of the legion by age groups, so that by the mid-second century the *hastati* were composed of younger men, the *principes* of men in their prime, while the oldest recruits made up the *triarii* and the youngest and poorest served among the *velites*.[32] The latter fought as a separate arm of the legion, a step which may go back to the original Servian reform or possibly constituted a subsequent development. The former is more likely if the ancient division between *classis* and *infra classem* distinguished between heavily and lightly armed soldiers. Yet such a distinction is closely bound up with the assumption that Servius' reforms established a phalanx army, so that the *classis* / *infra classem* dichotomy separated the hoplites who would fight in the phalanx from those who would not.[33] Take away the phalanx however, and it is not clear what the *classis* / *infra classem* division would actually have entailed in terms of weaponry or place in the line of battle. Sixth-century Greek hoplites and lightly armed soldiers fought intermingled; there seems no reason why the *classis* could not have contained both. That situation will have ended when the Roman authorities were able to insist upon uniformity of armament among the various categories of

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[29] Standards: Polyb. 6.24.6, although Frank W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1957–79), 1.707 suggests that the second *signifer* was chosen merely as a substitute in case anything befell the first on the basis of Varro, *Ling*. 5.88.

[30] App. *Hisp*. 1.1 for a four-line battle array, dated to 358.

[31] Polyb. 6.23.1–16. On these problems see Rawson, "Literary Sources" (n. 27), 17–18.

[32] Polyb. 6.23.1, cf. Liv. 8.8.6.

[33] On this distinction, see Michel Humm, *Appius Claudius Caecus. La république accomplie* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2005), 256, 261 n. 106 for sources and bibliography.

infantry within the legion. The hypothesis then is that a gradual process of transformation makes for a much more convincing way of seeing the change than the notion that at some point the Romans created a phalanx and then later junked it for maniples.[34]

Unfortunately, the state of our evidence makes it impossible to assign even an approximate chronology to these stages, much less associate them with specific events or military challenges. At a guess, the bulk of them ought to belong in the later fourth and early third centuries, when a number of other developments suggest that the Republic's government began to exercise an increasing degree of control over its citizens. It incorporated the Latins into the citizen body after 338, established several new tribes in the ensuing decades, and oversaw an expansion of the *ager Romanus*, the relocation of several thousand citizens there, and the departure of many more thousands of Romans and allies to colonies throughout Italy. The abolition of *nexum* in 326 or 313 seems to belong to this development as well, in that this legislation intruded in a decisive way into what had previously been a private social arrangement between citizens.[35] The regular collection of *tributum* to fund warfare in this period, even if it had previously been levied from time to time, likewise put the state into a new fiscal relationship with its citizens. Most interesting from this perspective are the efforts to restrict the ascendancy of a few particularly successful aristocrats through laws limiting re-election to the consulship. These attempts were only intermittently effective. The *lex Genucia* of 342 seems to have permitted election to the consulate only once every ten years and to have been observed for about two decades until the surrender of two Roman armies at the Caudine Forks in 321. Thereafter, a handful of leaders dominated the consulship for the remainder of the Samnite Wars, but iteration became increasingly rare after 289.[36] On one level, the struggle for re-election to the consulship represents an effort by some aristocrats to increase their chances of gaining that honor by preventing a few men from monopolizing the office as

[34] On the manipular reform cf. Humm, *Appius Claudius* (n. 33, 268–83) for discussion and extensive bibliography, who, however, assumes the existence of a phalanx from which the manipular army was developed. Humm also suggests a "prémanipulaire" stage in the transition to maniples (275), while Anne-Marie Adam, "Évolution de l'armement et des techniques de combat aux IV^{e} et III^{e} siècles, d'après les sources historiques et archèologiques," in *Guerre et diplomatie romaines (IV^{e} et III^{e} siècles). Pour un réexamen des sources*, ed. Emmanuèle Claire and Silvie Pittia (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'université de Provence, 2006), 247, 250–51 suggests an even more gradual evolution.

[35] Cornell, *Beginnings of Rome* (n. 1), 380–81.

[36] Ibid., 371–72.

well as an attempt by the senate as an institution to increase its control over the conduct of public affairs.[37] Viewed from a somewhat different angle however it is clear from later cases in which a powerful figure succeeded in transgressing these limits that they often represented instances of popular initiative without the approval of the senate.[38] In other words, efforts to limit the political success that any aristocrat could enjoy entailed a restriction on the citizens' freedom to select whomever they wished to lead them to war. All of these developments, taken together, might seem to afford a suitable context for a growing regulation of how the citizens went to war. However, this is all merely speculation. The only thing we can be certain of is that by time of the Pyrrhic Wars the transformation of the army was all but complete.

As Rawson noted some years ago, from this period comes our first apparently reliable evidence for the developed manipular army. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in a fragment probably from his account of the battle at Beneventum in 275, mentions that "the soldiers whom the Romans call the *principes*" were the mainstays of Roman battles.[39] Rawson suggests that Dionysius' ultimate source for the passage was a Greek author, possibly Hieronymus of Cardia, who was a contemporary of the events. Plutarch, also probably drawing on Hieronymus, recounts how a few years earlier at Asculum the Romans fought fiercely with their swords against the sarissas of Pyrrhus' men. Plutarch also mentions the Roman army's "retreats and parallel advances," which may be an attempt to describe maniples in a three-line *quincunx* formation moving forward and falling back during the fighting.[40] Elsewhere, he describes how Pyrrhus was wounded in the same battle by what appears to have been a *pilum*.[41] So apparently the manipular army had arrived. But curiously, the Dionysius fragment recounts how the *principes* fought with "cavalry spears that they held fast in the middle with both hands." Rawson takes this as evidence for the survival of phalanx tactics in the Romans' second line of battle: after the *hastati* had softened up the enemy with their swords and *pila*, they "left it to the phalanx-like *principes* to break up

[37] Rosenstein, *Imperatores Victi* (n. 18), 166–70; Cornell, *Beginnings of Rome* (n. 1), 371–72.
[38] Nathan Rosenstein, "Competiton and Crisis in Mid-Republican Rome." *Phoenix* 47 (1993): 313–38.
[39] Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 20.11.2, cf. Rawson, "Literary Sources" (n. 27), 24–25.
[40] Plut. *Vit. Pyrrh*. 21.6.
[41] Plut. *Vit. Pyrrh*. 21.9.

[the enemy] formation."[42] But as this paper has tried to show, the likelihood that the manipular army ever evolved from a classical phalanx is very remote. Rather, the arresting feature of Dionysius' description lies less in the spears themselves than in the fact that the *principes* needed two hands to use them. They must have been some type of sarissa. The spears that the *triarii* normally carried in Polybius' day he describes as *dorata*, that is the typical thrusting spears that classical hoplites wielded with one hand while the other held their shields.[43] No scholar has ever suggested that the putative archaic Roman phalanx was at any point armed like its Macedonian or Hellenistic counterparts. But as will be recalled, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this paper Livy describes the Roman army before maniples were introduced as arrayed in "a phalanx like the Macedonian phalanges."[44] What may have come down to Livy therefore is a rather garbled memory of what Dionysius reports at Beneventum: that for this battle the Romans, having been beaten twice before by Pyrrhus' mercenaries armed with the sarissa, decided to arm their *principes* with the same weapon to counter the mass-assault that Pyrrhus had employed at Asculum.[45] Although we know of no precedent for this sort of ploy, there is something of a sequel. Half a century later in 225, Polybius reports that the military tribunes in Flaminius' army ordered the *triarii* to pass their spears forward to the front ranks in anticipation of an assault by a much larger force of Gauls.[46] What happened at Beneventum has the appearance of a similar improvisation, one of the many adjustments that the Roman army made over the period between the mid-sixth and the early third century.[47] Some were soon discarded; others, having proved their worth, were incorporated in a long evolution that culminated finally in the manipular legions that would go on to conquer an empire for Rome.

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[42] Rawson, "Literary Sources" (n. 27), 25.
[43] Polyb. 6.23.16.
[44] Above n. 2.
[45] Plut. *Vit. Pyrrh*. 21.6–7.
[46] Polyb. 2.33.1–4. On Polybius' claim that the spears were intended to cause the Gauls' swords to bend and become useless, see Walbank, *Commentary on Polybius* (n. 28), 1.209.
[47] Cf. Adam, "Évolution," (n. 34), 250–51.