

# Romans, Silures and Ordovices: the experience of low intensity warfare in Wales

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Low intensity warfare is the typical strategy used in cases of asymmetrical conflicts: that is, in those wars where there exists a significant imbalance between the enemies. The asymmetry operates on two levels: the first is the imbalance of the fighting parties, which might be economic, political or military; the second refers to the different modes of fighting that the weaker competitor has to make use of if he wants to resist the overwhelming superiority of the enemy.<sup>1</sup> Among these typologies, low intensity warfare, or *guerrilla* warfare, is the most important and efficient. It is the most effective kind of resistance of the weak against the strong and it was the form of fighting adopted by the Welsh against more powerful invaders such as the Romans and centuries later, the English, using all the opportunities offered by this irregular strategy to defend their independence and freedom.

This essay attempts to define the characteristics of the Welsh resistance and the countermeasures adopted by the Roman invaders to subdue it. The first step will be a brief analysis of more recent guerrilla warfare, to see how this might be reflected in the strategy and tactics used by the Iron Age tribes of Wales.

## RULES AND OBJECTIVES OF GUERRILLA WARFARE

Though often seen as a series of random and chaotic attacks, lacking coherent structure, guerrilla warfare, like all human activities, is subject to universal rules and limitations. It presents an internal evolution and exposes some peculiar characteristics. By definition, the following elements need to be present in order for low intensity warfare to exist: long duration,<sup>2</sup> the use of hit-and-run tactics,<sup>3</sup> the avoidance of set battles in favour of a slow but constant harassing of the enemy,<sup>4</sup> taking advantage of the territory, presence of the civil population,<sup>5</sup> and support from an external power.<sup>6</sup> All of these elements are interconnected and the absence of any one of them can prejudice the success of this particular form of warfare. In particular, guerrilla warfare depends on a long duration: it does not base its hopes of victory on a single large battle, but rather on a long series of minor skirmishes, with the aim of gradually sapping the energy and will of the enemy.<sup>7</sup>

The strategy of avoiding battle in the open field, places an emphasis on the use hit-and-run tactics<sup>8</sup> directed against the weak points<sup>9</sup> of the enemy, behind the frontline,<sup>10</sup> against supply convoys and isolated units. Such tactics are better carried out by small groups<sup>11</sup> that have the advantage of speed, greater mobility,<sup>12</sup> and making use of surprise,<sup>13</sup> night fighting<sup>14</sup> and ambushes.<sup>15</sup> A particular quality of these kinds of tactics is the opportunity to make a hasty retreat;<sup>16</sup> this is not seen as dishonourable, but is a way of minimising the loss of life of irregular troops, allowing them to attack another part of the enemy frontline or to reverse their run and counter-attack the pursuant enemy from a position of advantage.<sup>17</sup>

An important factor in the use of hit-and-run tactics is to avoid creating a front-line: this deprives the enemy of obvious targets which are otherwise the primary objectives during a military campaign.<sup>18</sup> The absence of a front-line means that the front is everywhere.<sup>19</sup>

This absence of a regular front-line, with unpredictable skirmishes rather than formal battles, is the essence of guerrilla warfare: it has been defined as ‘lack of form’, a definition that underlines the flexibility and ductility that are fundamental to achieving a beneficial outcome in this form of resistance. Sun Pin, the Chinese military strategist of the third to fourth century BC, describes the lack of form in this way: ‘He who masters the form can defeat every enemy adapting to his form . . . . When form is used to oppose form you are using an orthodox tactic. When what is without form controls what has got a defined form, it applies an unorthodox tactic’.<sup>20</sup>

To be successful in such actions, rebels need to be properly organised in fighting units and to use their territory against the enemy. They can take advantage not only of their knowledge of places, but also by using terrain and peculiarities of weather against the invaders.<sup>21</sup> To maintain their military strength, they may also need the help of allies, who can guarantee constant materiel and political support—providing food, materials, arms, and influencing public opinion to put pressure on the invader.<sup>22</sup> This will all be in vain, however, without the help of the civil population. The civil population can help the rebels in all the stages of a rebellion, giving them cover and food, and many other forms of help that an irregular army needs. Moreover, if the civil population fully engages in the rebellion it will result in total war of a kind that would be very difficult to end.<sup>23</sup> All these expedients have a fundamental target: to force the enemy to divide his forces.<sup>24</sup> A larger, compact invading army will rarely be destroyed if it can maintain its unity; but it will have difficulty in seeking out all the rebel bands and controlling the entire territory.

To win against an irregular strategy, the invaders must divide the army into small units that are able to pursue the agile and lightly-armed enemy and to control the territory. These smaller units now become perfect targets for the insurgents, however, who can attack them or the convoys of supplies destined for them, obliging the enemy to make exhausting marches through difficult territory while tormenting them with a continuous, wasting, agonizing campaign of attrition.

Finally, guerrilla warfare, like all human experiences, has some limitations. For example, it is very useful in woods and on mountains, against regular troops who are unfamiliar with the territory and have difficulty moving on rough ground, but guerrillas struggle to defeat an army in a pitched battle or on level ground.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, irregular troops have difficulty overcoming the fortified base of the enemy if it is strongly defended.<sup>26</sup> To be able to undertake operations on every kind of ground, to be effective not only against the weak points of the enemy, but also against its strongest positions, it is often essential to create a regular army that can operate alongside the irregular troops to complement and enhance its strengths.<sup>27</sup> This evolution, within the ranks of an irregular army, is the fundamental step in defeating the enemy in areas and circumstances in which it feels highly confident.

In this brief summary I have tried to set out some of the most important characteristics of guerrilla warfare, which can now be examined in greater detail in the Welsh historical context.

## THE ROMAN INVASION OF WALES

To the Romans, Wales was not a separate country but simply the western part of Britain,<sup>28</sup> inhabited by tribes that, in their eyes, were similar to the those that had previously been subdued in the south of England. The principal tribes that occupied Wales were the Silures, the Ordovices, the Deceangli and the Demetae (Fig. 1),<sup>29</sup> who first came into direct contact with the Roman army around AD 47, once the conquest of the south-west of Britain had been completed, after a four-year military campaign.

The most important literary source for this period are provided by the Roman historian Tacitus. Although he has once considered to be inexpert in military matters, opinions about him are



Fig. 2. Map showing the Welsh tribes mentioned in the text. Land over 300 metres shaded.

changing.<sup>30</sup> He provides us with detailed information about the irregular tactics that were adopted by the Welsh tribes against the Roman army.

Tacitus says that the first act that prompted the Roman intervention in Wales was a raid conducted against a population allied to the Romans. The name of this tribe is not given, but the fact that as a consequence the Roman governor, Ostorius Scapula,<sup>31</sup> fortified the area between the rivers *Trisantona* and *Sabrina*<sup>32</sup>—that is, the area near the actual Severn and Trent—tells us that operations were mounted

from the area of the Midlands,<sup>33</sup> probably against the Deceangli. The words of Tacitus explain some aspects of guerrilla warfare we have already seen: *'At in Britannia P. Ostorium pro praetore turbidae res excepere, effusus in agrum sociorum<sup>34</sup> hostibus eo violentius, quod novum duces exercito ignoto et coepta hieme obviam iturum non rebantur'* ('In Britain the governor, P. Ostorius, faced a confused situation. The enemy had invaded allied territory with particular violence, since they thought that a new general, encumbered by an unfamiliar army and the approach of winter, would not be able to fight with them').<sup>35</sup>

We can envisage that the raiders, applying one of the fundamental tenets of guerrilla warfare, were taking advantage of their enemy's weakest points. The first was the possible lack of leadership and organization, caused by the arrival of a new commander who was unfamiliar with his troops and the territory; the second is the use of surprise, based on the exploitation of winter. The latter could have a double effect, as the Romans would not expect an attack in a period of the year in which there were usually no military operations, and in case of reaction, they could be slowed down by the bad weather.

The reaction of Ostorius Scapula, was quick and effective, however: *'Ille gnarus primis eventibus metum aut fiduciam gigni, citas cohortes rapit et, caesis qui restiterant, disiectos consecutus, ne rursus conglobarentur infensaque et infida pax non duci, non militi requiem permetteret, detrahere arma suspectis cunctaque castris [cis Tris]antonam et Sabrinam fluvios cohibere parat'* ('He, knowing that the first moves would produce either fear or confidence, hurried on with the hastily mobilized light cohorts, he killed those that opposed resistance, pursued those that were dispersed; fearing that they might muster again and that a suspicious and unsure peace would not give rest to neither general nor soldiers, he prepared to disarm those he thought suspects and took control the whole area south of the rivers Trent and Severn with forts').<sup>36</sup>

The strategy of the Roman general was based on three elements: speed, efficacy and control of the territory. Ostorius used light and fast troops—the auxiliary<sup>37</sup> units—perfect for fighting with the same tactics as the enemy. We have seen in Tacitus's text that the Romans easily destroyed those who tried to resist and pursued the others that were scattering. To achieve such actions, Ostorius needed trained and experienced troops able to fight in the same way as the irregulars,<sup>38</sup> moving easily and quickly even in bad weather or on difficult ground. The auxiliary units, far from being considered expendable or less skilled,<sup>39</sup> were particularly useful for such manoeuvres.

The far-sightedness of Ostorius can also be seen in the speed of his reaction: he knew the importance of crushing low intensity warfare as quickly as possible: guerrilla warfare thrives on a long duration for its success, but anti-guerrilla warfare depends upon a speedy victory.

Finally, Ostorius responded by creating a chain of forts throughout the country:<sup>40</sup> this was a vital decision, since creating fortifications to control the territory is the only way of restricting the movements of the enemy war bands.<sup>41</sup> As we have seen, speed and mobility are peculiar attributes of irregular groups, and to limit these faculties means to cut the principal qualities of guerrilla warfare. Moreover, if irregular troops cannot move easily within the theatre of war, it is easy to intercept and destroy them.

We do not know if the Deceangli acted alone<sup>42</sup> or if they were involved in a more widespread operation against the Romans,<sup>43</sup> but as we will see, most of the tribes were at war with the invaders and they gave each other direct or indirect help. In any case, the problems for the Romans were only just beginning. The construction of a chain of forts limited the sovereignty of other tribes, and Ostorius's decision to disarm the suspect tribes aroused hostility within other populations. The Iceni,<sup>44</sup> in south-eastern Britain, took up arms first and other tribes<sup>45</sup> followed their example. They took the decision<sup>46</sup> to face the Romans in face-to-face combat and chose a place<sup>46</sup> for the battle. The Britons, protected by an unsophisticated rampart and ditch, with a narrow entrance to obstruct the movements of the Roman cavalry, waited for the enemy.

Ostorius, acting as before, attacked quickly with only auxiliary forces; he ordered the cavalry to fight as foot soldiers and, at the first charge, they overwhelmed the defences. The Britons, blocked by the rampart, suffered great losses (Tacitus uses the word '*cladis*', which means massacre or disaster)<sup>47</sup> but, conscious of the gravity of their behaviour and without any way out, they fought with great bravery.<sup>48</sup> Ostorius then came back to the west of Britain to subdue the Deceangli. The description given by Tacitus is full of detail about Roman counter-guerrilla activity: '*Vastati agri, praedae passim actae, non ausis aciem hostibus, vel, si ex occulto carpere agmen temptarent, punito dolo*' ('The territory was ravaged and destructions were made everywhere. The enemy did not dare to engage in open warfare and, if they attempted to plant ambushes, such trickery was punished').<sup>49</sup>

The first targets of the Roman army were the supplies of the enemy and, in particular, their food, without which nobody can fight: the destruction of the territory, using the verb '*vasto*', expresses the Roman determination to annihilate the enemy's strength, depriving it of the fundamental sources of survival.<sup>50</sup> The same policy was adopted by Julius Caesar during his campaigns against the tribes in the north of Gaul. He responded to the low intensity warfare they were waging by destroying their territory with fire and sword, with an action that he defined as '*vexare hostes*'.<sup>51</sup> The ravages of Ostorius's soldiers were clearly the similar to those of Caesar's army.

In response, the Deceangli adopted guerrilla tactics. They avoided open battles and prepared ambushes against the Roman army: Tacitus uses the words: '*ex occulto carpere agmen*' to convey the Roman opinion of this kind of warfare. The native enemy did not fight '*iusto proelio*'—facing the opponents in a battle under the rules—but preferred to molest ('*carpere*') the Roman in their marching columns ('*agmen*'), being hidden in secret places. However, Ostorius was very efficient at intercepting and destroying these groups of warriors with his light troops. The campaign was a success, and the Deceangli were not to create any further problems.

At the same time, the Brigantes,<sup>52</sup> the most powerful tribe of northern Britain, were aroused. They were ruled by Cartimandua,<sup>53</sup> a queen client of the Romans, but within her kingdom there were some parties that disapproved of this alliance and fomented disruption ('*discordiae*') on many occasions.<sup>54</sup> Scapula, after a forced march, easily restored order, killing the rebels and forgiving the others. The general's plan was an astute one. Before attacking Caratacus, the most dangerous enemy, Ostorius Scapula deferred making new conquests until his earlier achievements had been consolidated ('*ne nova moliretur nisi prioribus firmatis*').<sup>55</sup>

It is always a risk to attack an enemy if you yourself can be attacked from behind. Ostorius knew this and acted accordingly, though in my opinion his strategy was more far-reaching and sophisticated. He subdued the Deceangli and ensured calm among the Brigantes: his earlier chain of forts proved useful to maintain control of the area between the Severn and the Trent in particular, effectively isolating north Wales from the rest of Britain<sup>56</sup> and depriving the Welsh tribes of any help from the north of Britain. Ostorius was now free to focus his attention upon Caratacus.

## ROME AGAINST CARATACUS

Caratacus<sup>57</sup> was one of the fiercest enemies of Rome. Defeated easily in open battle during the governorship of Aulus Plautius,<sup>58</sup> he organized a vicious guerrilla war, which occupied the Romans for about nine years. Caratacus clearly interrupted the rapid conquest of Britain that the Roman invaders had hoped to achieve.<sup>59</sup> After the fall of his own kingdom, culminating in the Roman conquest of *Camulodunum* (Colchester), its capital, in AD 43, Caratacus did not surrender. As Tacitus says he '*tot per annos opes nostras sprevisset*',<sup>60</sup> defying the Roman army by the use of unorthodox strategies.<sup>61</sup> In

AD 47 he was in the territory of the Silures, the most important tribe of south Wales.<sup>62</sup> He was accepted as a leader and organized opposition in Wales, creating a ‘multi-tribe resistance’.<sup>63</sup> How could he achieve this? Tacitus can help us: *‘Itum inde in Siluras, super propriam ferociam Carataci viribus confisos, quem multa ambigua, multa prospera extulerant, ut ceteros Britannorum imperatores praemineret’* (‘In this period started the campaign against the Silures, whose natural fierceness was reinforced by their faith in the support of Caratacus, who with many battles, some of uncertain result and some clear victories, had been raised to a position of pre-eminence amongst the other British chieftains’).<sup>64</sup>

Caratacus was clearly a man and warrior of great renown, obtained in several years of war against Rome. It is thus likely that the tribes of Wales acknowledged that he was the right man to organize resistance to the Roman forces. Because of his experience, Caratacus was familiar with the Romans and their fighting techniques: his skills enabled him to survive and to continue the fight the enemy that had already taken his own kingdom.

There could, however, be a further reason why peoples who were often warring amongst themselves might accept a foreign king as their leader. The Druids,<sup>65</sup> the most important religious group within the Celtic world, probably created a bond—a *fil rouge*—enabling the tribes to overcome their differences and fight together against the common enemy. Druidism provided the embryo of a shared cultural cause, in opposition to the alien Roman Mediterranean civilization, and it is likely that Caratacus was the man they needed to react and defend what remained of the free Celtic world.<sup>66</sup>

How did Caratacus obtain the victories that made him so famous in Britain and through the Roman Empire?<sup>67</sup> We can find the answer, once again, in the words of Tacitus, who, talking about Caratacus’s military skills, said that he was: *‘Astu locorumque fraude prior, vi militum inferior’* (‘He was better for his ability to take advantage of the difficulties of the ground but was inferior in military skill’).<sup>68</sup> Caratacus was easily defeated in open battles, but he obtained successes with low intensity warfare, using, as we have already seen, the nature of the terrain. The geographer Strabo used a specific term to indicate this kind of warfare, *‘τοπομαχέω’*<sup>69</sup>—a composite word that links fighting activity (*‘μάχη’*) and the terrain (*‘τόπος’*), which properly employed is important in creating difficulties for the forces of the opposition.

## THE WELSH TERRAIN

When the Romans invaded Wales, they would have readily understood the differences between the territory that they had subdued until that point and the new area they were approaching. Much of England is easily accessible, being composed largely of lowland plains. The Welsh landscape, by contrast, is dominated by natural obstacles such as mountains, woods, marshes and large rivers like the Severn, the Wye and the Usk,<sup>70</sup> the mountains in particular being ideal for guerrilla warfare.<sup>71</sup>

Military operations in this environment favour the use of lightly armed and quick-moving troops familiar with the area and can turn this advantage against the enemy. In such a context, a small group of warriors can readily halt a large and powerful army.<sup>72</sup> A primary facet of mountainous terrain is that it is very difficult to penetrate and move through it. The narrow paths, the valleys, the overhanging rocks and the broken and slippery ground create great difficulties of movement for many military units and completely preclude the use of many heavily-armed troops. Only light infantry can operate easily in mountainous areas; heavy infantry can only move slowly and it is often impossible to use heavy cavalry. For a large attacking force, advancing with all its baggage, a march through the mountains is a slow and dangerous operation that exposes the soldiers to continuous attacks from every side and which makes it quite impossible to line up the army to face sustained attacks.

There are other advantages for the defenders. Firstly, a defensive war is ideally suited to mountainous territory.<sup>73</sup> A more intimate knowledge of the territory allows the defenders to make confident manoeuvres, to organize feints, ambushes and diversions, and resolve the best way to cut off the retreat of the enemy. Secondly, being already in position, they can control the highest ground, an advantage that gives them a perfect view and the possibility to control the few routes of access to these natural fortresses.

The possession of mountainous territory offers an obvious but fundamental advantage to the defender: the consciousness of a superior strategic power, generated by the fact that any physical action is much more difficult from the lower to the higher ground. This is based on three important causes. The first is that every climb is an obstacle to movement; the second is that the missiles have more power and can reach longer distances from above; the third, as we have just seen, is that field observation is much enhanced.<sup>74</sup>

All these aspects can be useful only if they are based on the concept, typical of guerrilla warfare, of *relative* defence.<sup>75</sup> It is an error to persist in the defence of a stronghold if the enemy is close to victory. Following the rules of guerrilla warfare, it is much better to withdraw the fighting force and, using a knowledge of the territory, slip away and recommence fighting in another position.

The Romans had a negative perception of mountainous environments. For them, a mountain was a '*solitudo*',<sup>76</sup> an empty place, a *durus* ('hard') and *asper* ('severe') landscape,<sup>77</sup> inhabited by hard, fierce and warlike men,<sup>78</sup> especially if compared with the Mediterranean world, which for the Romans was densely settled, cultivated and civilized. A mountain was the archetypal '*locus horribilis*'.<sup>79</sup> Woods, swamps and the weather conditions of northern Europe were viewed in a similar vein. A wood was a dark place,<sup>80</sup> perfect for ambushes: visibility is poor and, because of the presence of the density of trees of all dimensions it is difficult to maintain a defensive formation. Similar opinions were held about that other great obstacle to the Roman military operations—marshes<sup>81</sup>—the '*locus iniquus*' ('the unequal/unfair place') par excellence, where the heavy infantry sank in the soft, damp ground, which limited its movements and its fighting ability.

Peoples who lived in places such as these were able to exploit them in their resistance to invaders.<sup>82</sup> In addition, Celts and Germans were generally taller than the Romans, their swords and spears were longer than Roman arms and their light infantry could fight comfortably on soft ground using their physical superiority and longer weapons, made specifically for fighting in such environments.<sup>83</sup>

A terrain like this created disorder and chaos,<sup>84</sup> destroying the Roman idea of fighting in a '*locus aequus*'<sup>85</sup>—a place in which the opponents start from a position of equality. It also isolated the population living there, rendering them and their environment unknown and mysterious.

To subdue Wales, the Romans had to contend with both the enemy and the territory;<sup>86</sup> they had to break the isolation, while at the same time conquering the landscape and their ignorance of it.<sup>87</sup> The legionaries approaching Wales also faced the rigours of the cold, inclement British weather as opposed to the climate of the generally sunnier and more and temperate lands bordering the Mediterranean.<sup>88</sup>

The ancient historians had a perfect understanding of all these factors. It is no coincidence that the historian Cassius Dio stressed all these elements in the words he put in the mouth of another famous British leader, the queen Boudica. Addressing her warriors, she encouraged them not to fear the Romans because: 'If we are victorious we can capture them; if we are defeated we can flee. Everywhere we decide to go, we can hide in marshes and mountains so inaccessible that we cannot be discovered or captured'.<sup>89</sup>

We can now begin understand better why Tacitus said that Caratacus was '*Astu locorumque fraude prior*' and why he, exploiting his '*peritia locorum*', obtained so many successes against the most powerful fighting machine the ancient world had known.

## THE LAST BATTLE OF CARATACUS

Scapula was now ready to penetrate Wales and destroy Caratacus. As we have seen, he had isolated Wales from the tribe of the Brigantes by building a chain of forts; his next step was the creation of a colony of veterans at *Camulodunum*,<sup>90</sup> with the dual aim of accelerating the Romanization of the conquered area and making his rear more secure and protected. He then brought in a legion, probably the XX Valeria,<sup>91</sup> to keep the Silures under control and establish a military base near to the area of the campaign he had planned.<sup>92</sup> The base of the legion was probably at Kingsholm near Gloucester,<sup>93</sup> a perfect site from which to keep control of the lowest part of the Severn.<sup>94</sup>

Tacitus's narration continues. About Caratacus, we know that: '*Transfert bellum in Ordovices, additisque qui pacem nostram metuebant, novissimum casum experitur*' ('He transferred the war to the territory of the Ordovices. He recruited from those who feared the establishment of the Roman peace and made an extreme attempt').<sup>95</sup>

Why did he transfer the war to the territory of the Ordovices? We can identify several probable reasons, all connected with each other. The first one is related to the Roman manoeuvres. Scapula penetrated the Silurian territory, probably following the river Wye;<sup>96</sup> it would have been normal for him, leading an army composed of a great number of legionaries, to march through a river valley, on level ground, and in an area less exposed to irregular attacks.

It is highly likely that the Roman fleet, which dominated the Bristol Channel, was following a parallel course to support the army's advance, creating a pincer movement that could encircle Caratacus's forces.<sup>97</sup> To avoid being surrounded, Caratacus moved north, forcing the Romans to follow him far away from the coastline and from the Roman bases, through territory well known to his supporters, where he could assemble other troops and select a battleground—turning the terrain, as usual, against the legions. This was a battle that Caratacus could not avoid: Wales was isolated and the Roman army was by now deep inside the territory of the people who were fighting for him.

Guerrilla warfare is ideal in defensive contexts, but it has a high price to pay: the invading force is able to sack and destroy the territory it is moving into, including settlements, crops, livestock, and exact punishment from the native population. As is well known, the Roman army was quite capable of brutal behaviour.<sup>98</sup>

Under the pressure of these conditions, Caratacus, like other rebel leaders, was forced to engage in battle to maintain his precarious hold on power, a position that in tribal society could often only be maintained through military success.<sup>99</sup> Tacitus, in fact, says that Caratacus made a '*novissimus casum*', an 'extreme attempt'. Acting in this way, he abandoned the first rule of guerrilla warfare, accepting battle and offering a clear target for the enemy and making it easy for Ostorius Scapula to track him down. Now, Caratacus could only rely his momentary advantage, the number of his men and the place he had chosen for his last stand.

We are unsure of the number of soldiers in the Roman army employed in this engagement—Tacitus, as usual, says only that there were both legionaries and auxiliaries involved<sup>100</sup>—but for such an important task it is likely that Ostorius brought with him a powerful force. Webster suggests that he had two legions at full strength, the XIV Gemina and the XX Valeria, with the auxiliary units and other detachments of the other legions, suggesting a total number of 20,000–25,000 men.<sup>101</sup>

Similarly, we do not know the number of Caratacus's warriors, but there is little doubt that they outnumbered the Romans.<sup>102</sup> Tacitus speaks of the native force including '*gentium ductores*' ('the chiefs of the tribes'),<sup>103</sup> implying that there were several tribes represented, each led by a chieftain. They were, for the major part, light infantry soldiers, skilled in the use of missile weapons, particularly slings, but less powerful in the close combat because they did not have '*nulla loricarum galearumve tegmina*'



(‘without breast plates or helmets’).<sup>104</sup> This was a fighting force perfectly equipped for low intensity warfare being forced into a contest in high intensity warfare.

Caratacus placed his hope of victory in the terrain he chose: ‘*Sumpto ad proelium loco, ut aditus abscessus, cuncta nobis importuna et suis in melius essent, hinc montibus arduis, et si qua clementer poterant, in modum valli saxa praestruit; et praefluebat amnis vado incerto, caterva[e]que [ar]matorum pro monimentis constiterant*’ (‘He choose a place for the battle where the entrances and exits were a problem for us but an advantage for his own troops. On one side there were high mountains, and where there were easier approach routes he blocked them with a sort of wall made by piled stones. There was also a river of uncertain depth flowing in front of the hill and there were bands of fighters to reinforce the defences’).<sup>105</sup>

Caratacus’s choice was a good one: the place possessed all the qualities inherent in mountain warfare described above. Obeying the precept of ‘*loca capere*’—that is, to occupy the highest and favourable parts of the battlefield<sup>106</sup>—he dominated the ground from a high position. From there, he controlled the access routes to the hill and blocked them with a rude wall of stones and with large bands of warriors. His troops would have had a clear view of the Roman army and would have been able to launch their missiles over long distances and with greater strength than the enemy.

The Roman legions, in order to fight in the close combat that was their principal strength, had first to cross a river, under the rain of missiles of the enemy, and then fight from a lower position, against a force protected by a wall and who could repel assaults by concentrating most of their troops in the few strategic points of access.

Caratacus’s plan appears perfect, and indeed it scared the Roman general: ‘*Obstupescit ea alacritas ducem Romanum; simul obiectus amnis, additum vallum, imminet iuga, nihil nisi atrox et propugnatoribus frequens terreat*’ (‘This ardour astonished the Roman general. At the same time he was alarmed by the obstacle formed by the river, by the rampart, by the threatening mountains, by the presence of so many places full of dangers and the hordes of defenders at every point’).<sup>107</sup>

Ostorius must have been well aware of the strength of the enemy. In the battle against the Iceni he had had little problems in attacking them, even though they were at the top of the hill, in a defended enclosure and he had with him only auxiliary troops. Here, the situation was different. The location the native forces had chosen was good, difficult to reach and well defended by natural and artificial obstacles. He would also have been daunted by the threatening mountains (the ‘*horridi montes*’) that could conceal other troops and obstruct the movements of his heavy infantry.

‘*Sed milites proelium poscere*’ says Tacitus<sup>108</sup>—the Roman soldiers wanted the battle and Ostorius directed it in the best way. He did not send his men on a foolhardy charge for victory or death; rather, he personally checked the river and found the best route for his army. It was a characteristic behaviour of the Roman generals, ‘to evaluate the *opportunitates locorum* with *sapientia*’.<sup>109</sup> Then, at the head of the most hardened men, he crossed the river without serious difficulty.<sup>110</sup> But when the Romans arrived at the base of the wall, they encountered major problems: ‘*Ubi ventum ad aggerem, dum missilibus certabatur, plus vulnere in nos et pleraeque caedes oriebantur*’ (‘When they reached the rampart, while the fighting was conducted with missile weapons, we suffered more wounds and more casualties’).<sup>111</sup>

The first part of the battle, fought with a dense exchange of missiles from both sides, was in favour of the Britons who, as has been said, were able to launch their missiles from a superior position and inflict greater damage than the Romans soldiers were able to. They probably used slingshot, widely used at this period and ideally suited for fighting from hillforts<sup>112</sup> and similar vantage points, like the one described. The sling was a weapon that could also be lethal against armoured soldiers; for example, a violent knock to the head could dent the helmet and, even if there were no visible signs of blood or of wounds, the blow could cause serious damage to the head.<sup>113</sup>

But the situation rapidly changed when the Romans, joining their shields, adopted the well-tryed *testudo*, a formation that, protecting them from every side, allowed them to reach the enemy's wall and to destroy it without losses: '*Postquam facta testudine rudes et informes saxorum compages distractae parque comminus acies, decedere barbari in iuga montium*' ('But when they had formed the formation called the tortoise, they started to destroy the rough and irregular Britons' wall of rocks and the battle was engaged on more balanced terms in close combat. The barbarians were pushed to withdraw to the mountains').<sup>114</sup>

When the legionaries broke down the rampart, they had overcome the last obstacle afforded by the terrain. Now the fight was in a situation of equality because both the contenders were on a '*locus aequus*'<sup>115</sup> and the victory passed to the hands of the Romans. The Britons went to the top of the mountains, trying to take advantage of the slope, '*Sed eo quoque inrupere ferentarius gravisque miles, illi telis adsultantes, hi conferto gradu, turbatis contra Britannorum ordinibus, apud quos nulla loricarum galearumve tegmina; et si auxiliariis resisterent, gladiis ac pilis legionariorum, si huc verterent, spathis et hastis auxiliarium sternebantur*' ('But here also both the lightly-armed and the heavy-armed troops charged; the former launching javelins, the latter, advancing in close order, broke up the ranks of the Britons that did not have breast plates or helmets. If they tried to resist against the auxiliary troops, they were massacred by the swords and javelins of the legionaries, if they turned against these, they were killed by the long swords and the spears of the auxiliaries').<sup>116</sup>

The first words of the Roman historian give us the reason for the Roman victory. Both the light and the heavy infantry could also pursue the enemy inside ('*eo quoque*') the mountainous terrain. If this was normal for light infantry, the words of Tacitus are full of admiration for the capacity of legions to fight on difficult ground. The cohort, in fact, had sufficient flexibility to maintain the order of the ranks on every kind of terrain, and these are the qualities that allowed this formation to fight also in the most daunting terrain for heavy infantry. This was undoubtedly the advantage that eventually handed victory of Ostorius Scapula against Caratacus.

Ultimately, the Britons were unable maintain their position and the order of their ranks. Tacitus described them as a '*caterva*',<sup>117</sup> a word that indicates a large group of warriors which lacks discipline: they could not resist the disciplined Roman cohorts, who '*confertu grado*' ('closed ranks') advanced through their disordered lines. The British fighting force did not have heavy arms and so had no hope of breaking the front line made by the Roman legionaries. Moreover, the fact that Tacitus speaks about the use of '*hastae*' (heavy spears useful for stabbing rather than throwing) among the Roman auxiliaries, may indicate that lightly-armed Roman units in closed ranks were also used to repel the Britons with the sheer force of their forward momentum.

From this point onwards, the Roman legionaries and auxiliaries faced no further serious danger and spent the rest of the battle slaughtering the enemy, who because the potential escape routes were few and narrow, probably suffered heavy casualties.

Caratacus's most serious error was to chose to fight to the bitter end in a place that was probably better suited to 'relative defence'. Rather than asking his men to fight and, in case of danger, to withdraw to another place, he had evidently decided that all hope of victory rested on this single engagement. Because of this, before the battle had even commenced, his men swore '*non telis, non vulneribus cessuros*' ('They would not yield before any weapons or any wounds'),<sup>118</sup> the kind of strategy likely to result in high casualties.

Using mountains, he did not foresee the use of the paths for withdrawal, but only to create difficulties for the climbing legions; when the latter broke the wall, the Britons did not have space to withdraw but could only try—as they did several times, against the legions and against the auxiliaries—to pierce the Roman line. Comparing this battle with the battle of the Mons Graupius, we can see that even if the latter

was also a clear Roman victory, the Caledonians were able to leave the battlefield in small groups and also to make some ambushes against the Romans.<sup>119</sup> In these circumstances, however, the warriors of Caratacus had no hope of winning in close combat and they were cut to pieces.

After the battle, Caratacus was able to escape, and he went to Queen Cartimandua to ask for refuge, but, as we know, she betrayed her guest and delivered him to the Romans.<sup>120</sup> As Tacitus says, Caratacus appeared in the Roman triumph in Rome nine years after the beginning of the war in Britain.<sup>121</sup>

It is important to note that Caratacus had resisted the Romans for nine years and that he was defeated only when he decided to transform the irregular tactics, which had allowed him to defy the Roman power for so many years,<sup>122</sup> into a regular fighting model. Ostorius Scapula obtained the '*ornamenta triumphalia*' for such a great victory, but just as the Romans were beginning to think that the war had been brought to an end, the Silures rose again against them.<sup>123</sup>

We can read in the *Annales* that after the capture of Caratacus, the Romans, thinking that the war '*quasi debellatum foret*' ('the war was completely finished')<sup>124</sup> relaxed the discipline of the army. It is likely that the victory was so great that they did not imagine that the Britons could have the strength to react, and in any case, the death or the capture of the resistance leader was often sufficient to break the resistance itself.<sup>125</sup> The Silures, not demoralized but rather inflamed by the sad destiny of Caratacus,<sup>126</sup> began a guerrilla campaign that caused a great deal of damage to the Romans.

#### THE SILURES AND LOW INTENSITY WARFARE

The kind of guerrilla warfare adopted by the Silures illustrates all the attributes of low intensity warfare discussed above. They took advantage of the legions' lack of discipline and attacked the enemy just after the victory against Caratacus, at the least predictable moment. By surprising the enemy they inflicted heavy losses on the Romans, who were engaged in building forts to be used in the control of the territory of south Wales.

In the words of Tacitus: '*Praefectus castrorum et legionaria cohortes exstruendis apud Siluras praesidiis relictas circumfundunt, ac ni cito nuntiis et castellis proximis subventum foret copiarum obsidioni, occubuissent: praefectus tamen et octo centuriones ac promptissimus quisque [e] manipulis cecidere. Nec multo post pabulantis nostros missasque ad subsidium turmas profligant*' ('They surrounded the legionary cohorts who had been left behind under the commander of the military camp to build forts in the Silurian territory and, if the neighbouring forts had not sent help to the besieged troops, immediately they received the news, they would have been completely massacred').<sup>127</sup>

This short account reveals some important information. The Romans were building a chain of forts with the aim of isolating Wales and creating a barrier capable of stopping the Welsh raiders. Acting in this way, the Romans evidently tried to establish a network of strongholds to control the territory, the strategic points and the most important routes of communication.<sup>128</sup> But to do this they were obliged to divide their forces and unwittingly created the kind of weakness which low-intensity warfare seeks to exploit: 'If the enemy gathers he loses ground, if he disperses he loses strength'.<sup>129</sup> These circumstances enabled the Silures to launch a surprise attack on a single detachments of the Roman army at precisely the moment the soldiers were engaged in the construction of fortifications.<sup>130</sup>

The Silures had the capacity to concentrate their forces to attack the Romans in a condition of great numerical superiority. We know, in fact, that they besieged the legionaries. The Romans usually preferred to fight against the enemy in an open field, but if they remained in the fort and organized a resistance inside it this could indicate that the Silures were too numerous to be faced in a regular fight in the field. Only the arrival of reinforcements from other forts saved the besieged soldiers, but the Romans had

suffered heavy losses, which included the commander of the camp, eight centurions and a good number of the most valorous men. The second *coup de main* was directed against a group that was foraging; the Silures overpowered them and put to flight the squadrons of cavalry that tried to help them.

We see here further attributes of guerrilla warfare tactics: the capacity to maintain the initiative by constant attacking;<sup>131</sup> the use of the element of surprise and the concentration of larger forces to create an overwhelming numerical superiority, in a specific place and at a specific time, and to destroy the divided enemy forces when they are more vulnerable.<sup>132</sup> The ambush of a foraging party, is often one of the preferred targets of guerrilla warfare: to intercept, destroy or capture the enemy's convoys of food and supplies means to reduce the occupying army to starvation and to powerlessness. Moreover, it is often easy to attack convoys, which are usually far away from their bases and with relatively small escorts. Actions like these are much easier when the lines of communication of the enemy and the distance from its stronghold are attenuated.

Tacitus goes on to reveal the transformation from a war managed by small groups to a 'war of movement'<sup>133</sup> in which large companies of native warriors offer a relative defence to a large Roman army: '*Tum Ostorius cohortes expeditas opposuit; nec ideo fugam sistebat, ni legiones proelium exceperissent: earum robore aequata pugna, dein nobis pro meliore fuit. Effugere hostes tenui damno, quia inclinabat dies*' ('Ostorius then sent his most fast cohorts against the enemy, but even with them he would not have stopped the rout without the intervention of the legions. Their strength balanced the battle that, finally, was in our favour. The enemy fled but, because the night was coming, they suffered light casualties').<sup>134</sup>

Firstly, Ostorius sent fast auxiliary troops that engaged the enemy, with difficulty, until the legions arrived; with them the battle passed in favour of the Romans. The first thing we have to observe is the fact that, after the ambushes against the foraging party, the Silures faced the Romans in an open battle. Tacitus uses the term '*pugna*', which indicates a normal battle, fought on the field, not an ambush or something similar. In this fight the Silures won quite easily against the auxiliary troops, who were highly trained, experienced and well armed.<sup>135</sup> The Silures continued the fight only up to the point that they still had some hope of winning: when the legions changed the balance of the forces, they withdrew, taking advantage of the terrain and using the night as a cover for their retreat.

The tactics of the Silurian native forces were clearly evolving: they continued to use irregular tactics but they were now better organized, which allowed them to collect larger forces and to face the Romans in open battles. This battle was not like the previously discussed case when Caratacus was defeated, but it was based on the concept of relative defence that we have just seen, and with this attitude, the Silures saved their retreating army. To execute a perfect retreat, they used the territory against the enemy; in the case we are analysing, the night is a natural ally of the irregulars, as only they could use it successfully, thanks to their light arms and deep knowledge of the territory.<sup>136</sup> It is no coincidence that Frontinus, who fought against the Welsh guerrillas, uses in his *Stratagemmata*<sup>137</sup> the word '*delitescere*', which literally means 'disappear', to describe the capacity of the irregular troops to become invisible in their own environment. The Romans did not pursue them because it was a deadly risk to follow the enemy in unknown territory in the dark and also no doubt because of the risk of ambush.

The will to retreat, as we have indicated above, is itself a very important passage. To the western mentality, retreat is often perceived as a weak and cowardly action, but in asymmetrical wars, it is the basis for victory and is considered 'The best stratagem' and 'A way to advance. The wise man does not fight a lost battle'.<sup>138</sup>

The peoples of Wales clearly retained a skill for irregular warfare well into the Middle Ages. In *Descriptio Cambriae*, Gerald of Wales, speaking of '*turpis fuga*', that is dishonourable retreat, says that 'their courage manifests itself chiefly in the retreat' and that 'their mode of fighting consists in chasing

the enemy or in retreating'.<sup>139</sup> The retreat would further disperse the bands that, using predetermined paths, could gather in an agreed place,<sup>140</sup> where, if they so wished, they could prepare an ambush or reverse their march to counter-attack the pursuing enemy.

We can note that the Romans were not entirely unprepared to face the actions of irregular forces. Evidently, they suffered more problems and they stayed on the defensive, leaving all the initiative to the Silures, but their strategy was valid enough to limit the damage inflicted. They created a network of fortified points that were sufficiently close together to provide assistance when necessary,<sup>141</sup> even in the absence of a substantial army in the neighbouring regions.

Despite inevitable losses, in both cases the Romans saved their forts and their army; they had fast troops that could keep contact with the enemy in a very short time while they waited for the intervention of the legions.

The legion was a unit of heavy infantry that could also be successfully employed against irregular forces. Although the legions had problems regarding speed and, as we have seen, in tackling some kinds of terrain, they had certain strengths that allowed them to be used also in guerrilla warfare. The first quality was fluidity,<sup>142</sup> that allowed the Romans to adapt their formation to different situations and to different kinds of terrain—even marshes and mountains.

The basic unit of the legion, the cohort, was created in Spain to face the guerrilla warfare encountered there.<sup>143</sup> Each legionary was trained not only to the fight inside the formation, but also in single combat<sup>144</sup> and each cohort was a self-sufficient unit that could fight without the protection of the full battle-line. The Romans could divide the legions into small detachments that were able to fight against irregular formations without the risk of losing cohesion, rigidity or mass momentum.

The Romans had the instruments to fight in low-intensity warfare but, as we have seen before, this kind of fighting is very difficult to terminate. In fact, the situation in Wales gradually worsened: '*Crebra hinc proelia, et saepis in modum latrocinii per saltus per paludes, ut cuique sors aut virtus, temere proviso, ob iram ob praedam, iussu et aliquando ignaris ducibus*' ('From that moment, there were a series of skirmishes, generally fought in the way of the bandits in the woods or in the marshes. The result was based either on the luck or on the courage of the individual soldiers; sometimes the fight was entered on casual orders, for revenge or for greed of booty, and sometimes the operations were conducted completely without the knowledge of the officers').<sup>145</sup> This was the essence of the guerrilla tactics adopted by the Silures: hit-and-run raids performed by small groups that created a chaotic situation, multiplying the hostile actions in the whole war zone and,<sup>146</sup> as usual, with the use of the terrain in their favour. There was no front line and so the Romans had no clear targets against which to direct their operations.

Ostorius Scapula was facing great difficulty: if he had to leave more space to fortune than to strategy, it meant that he was in a position of passive defence, a situation in which the courage and the skills of every single soldier and officer, in the defence of the Roman garrisons and in the reactions against the raiders, became more important than a common strategy.

The fact that the Romans were in serious trouble is conveyed by the expression '*modum latrocinii*' ('in the way of the bandits'). The definition of bandit ('*latro*') is a term often used by more organized forces to denigrate those employing more irregular tactics. The use of the word in this context help us to understand the essence of guerrilla tactics from the point of view of those afflicted by this form of warfare that has no rules, that avoids set battles, that is incessant and tires the opposing forces with continuous attacks. The Roman army never fully came to terms with guerrilla warfare, the most important instrument of resistance in the hands of populations that were intent upon subduing. To the Romans, the '*rebellis*', the man who takes arms again before he has put them down, was a subject who violates the '*fides*' and that, in a fraudulent way, stabs in the back those who had saved him before.<sup>147</sup> Thus, the use of

expressions this kind<sup>148</sup> is often indicative of the incidence of low intensity warfare in the ancient literary sources.

The guerrilla operations of the Silures were so painful for the Romans that Ostorius Scapula probably considered exterminating or deporting them,<sup>149</sup> as the Romans had done with the Sugambres in the past,<sup>150</sup> and is a typical reaction to the effects of low-intensity warfare.<sup>151</sup> The conduct of the war by the regular Roman forces often became truly indiscriminate, drawing few distinctions between the native warriors and the civil population. Such extreme measures, however, probably also indicate the high degree of involvement of civil populations in such warfare—an involvement that was often too significant to be overlooked by the Roman military authority.<sup>152</sup>

The brutality of the Romans did not subdue the will of the Silures, however, who, in this period of the resistance, achieved the most important successes and the highest evolution within their army. Tacitus says that they: '*Igitur duas auxiliares cohortes avaritia praefectorum incautius populantes interceptere; spoliaque et captivos largiendo cetera quoque nationes ad defectionem trahebant*' ('They therefore made a surprise attack on two auxiliary cohorts who were sacking without any caution because of the greed of their officers and, by generous distributions of spoils and prisoners, they encouraged other tribes to revolt as well').<sup>153</sup> The Silures once more had the capacity to transform from a war of small groups to a 'war of movement' performed by large war bands;<sup>154</sup> they ambushed two cohorts and destroyed them totally.<sup>155</sup>

Ostorius Scapula died during this period, perhaps due to the stress of his responsibilities and the military operations.<sup>156</sup> Didius Gallus, the new governor sent by the emperor Claudius, found on his arrival that '*adversa interim legionis pugna, cui Manlius Valens praeerat*' ('The legion, led by Manlius Valens, had been defeated').<sup>157</sup> Once again, the Silures took advantage of the absence of the governor and they succeeded in their exploit to defeat a legion.

Tacitus did not describe this battle, so we do not know exactly whether they achieved victory '*iusto proelio*' ('fair battle') or if they again defeated the Romans in an ambush, though it is arguable that their irregular units had by now evolved into a more organised fighting force that was capable of facing the Romans on equal terms. Tacitus is most precise in his use of the military terms. To indicate an ambush or an irregular tactic, he used, as we have seen, expressions like '*latrocini modo*' or '*ex occulto carpere agmen*', verbs like '*intercepere*' or definitions like '*dolus*' and '*fraus*'. In this instance, he said that the legion was defeated in a '*pugna*', that is in a battle. As I have said, we do not know what form this battle took, the importance of the terrain or the tactics that were used, but it is also possible that the Silures, continuing in their use of hit-and-run tactics, reached such good organization that it allowed them first to create a large force for more important military actions and, at the end, to create an army that was also capable of fighting pitched battles on the field.<sup>158</sup> In their previous victories against the Romans they had obtained a good quantity of arms of excellent quality, perfect to face the well-armed legions; their ability to fight with speed and agility could be applied to a big battle with the creation of a fluid yet cohesive battle line.

The legion was not destroyed,<sup>159</sup> but the fact that it was obliged to leave the field demonstrates the high quality attained by the army of the Silures:<sup>160</sup> '*latesque persultabant, donec adcursum Didii pellerentur*'.<sup>161</sup> The defeat is likely to have been quite heavy if the Silures were free to spread everywhere, probably over the borders of the Roman province,<sup>162</sup> until Didius repelled them.

Tacitus does not leave us a good account of Didius's military operations. However, we can see that he repelled the Silures over the borders and that he reinforced the frontier, building a chain of forts that blocked the most important routes through the valleys.<sup>163</sup> His attention was focused on the north of Britain, where he was obliged to send his troops to fight against the rebels led by Venutius,<sup>164</sup> the husband of the Queen Cartimandua.<sup>165</sup> This displacement of military operations from Wales to the north

of England<sup>166</sup> gave the Silures some respite, which was the result of the indirect help that they obtained through the rebellion of the Brigantes.

In AD 57 a new general, Quintus Veranius, was sent to complete the conquest of Wales. Tacitus describes the activity of this general as '*modicis excursibus Siluras populatus*' ('he devastated the Silurian territory with modest raids'),<sup>167</sup> before his death which occurred within a year of his arrival in the province.<sup>168</sup>

It is likely that the operations of Veranius were highly successful since, few years later, a new governor, Suetonius Paullinus,<sup>169</sup> was able to invade Anglesey, the island of *Mona*, indicating that the Ordovices and the Silures had by now been subdued.<sup>170</sup> Veranius was in fact an expert in anti-guerrilla and mountain warfare,<sup>171</sup> having previously fought against the warlike mountainous tribes during his governorship of Lycia and Pamphylia. He probably also had a good theoretical grounding in how to face irregular warfare. The philosopher Onasander dedicated to him a treatise on military science, the *Strategikòs*.<sup>172</sup> This work, although based more on the Greek than on the Roman experience, contains much advice about trickery and psychological war, amongst which the most interesting is the point in which he invites the general to adapt the equipment and the disposition of his troops to the equipment and the tactics of the enemy:<sup>173</sup> we are again in the presence of the lack of form described by Sun Pin.

Veranius did not start from scratch as Scapula had; he started with his strategy, based on the construction of '*praesidia*', from the frontline created by Scapula and Gallus. As we know, we do not have enough information, but it was possible that Veranius was able to isolate the Silures from the Ordovices and, devastating the human and agricultural resources ('*pabulatus*'), took the initiative of the attacking war operations with the lack of form that he could apply to confront the unorthodox strategy of the enemy. He moved a legion, probably the XX Valeria, to a new base at Usk.<sup>174</sup> His death brought an end to his action in Wales.

We find, in the narration of Tacitus, that his successor, Suetonius Paullinus, was about to invade the island of Anglesey (*Mona*).<sup>175</sup> This invasion took place in AD 60, indicating that after the death of Veranius in AD 57, Paullinus took about two years to complete the pacification of the Ordovices. In fact, only with the control of north Wales could he launch and attack on the druidic sanctuary at Anglesey.<sup>176</sup> We only have a very brief account of the operations directed by Paullinus in the *Agricola*, where Tacitus uses the words '*subactis nationibus firmatisque praesidiis*'.<sup>177</sup> Paullinus was an expert in irregular and mountain warfare.<sup>178</sup> he had fought during the Claudian conquest of Mauretania<sup>179</sup> and was sent to Britain, like Veranius, because the Roman intelligentsia had understood what kind of war they were facing in Wales. His skills were proved in the mountains of Snowdonia, a true natural stronghold, that Suetonius faced with the approach we have learnt to recognize: he subdued the tribes, building '*praesidia*' in the strategic points, to keep the control of the territory and to limit the movement of the guerrilla forces and, as usual, he destroyed the alimentary resources of the enemy to reduce them to powerlessness.<sup>180</sup> Although this account suggests an impression of simplicity and ease, this campaign, as we have seen previously, needed at least two years of careful action, which Paullinus achieved by securing the possession of the coastline and of the most important valleys of mid and north-east Wales.<sup>181</sup>

The attack on *Mona* is likely to have been motivated by two strategic reasons. The first is the fact that this island was a '*receptaculum perfugarum*'<sup>182</sup> that '*vires rebellibus ministrantem*':<sup>183</sup> *Mona* was a place in which the rebels could find any kind of help to continue their fight and a place where they could take refuge to reorganize their ranks. The second reason is the fact that, as we have seen, the Druids were the focus for the cultural resistance to Rome.<sup>184</sup> Paullinus, with an amphibious operation undertaken by his auxiliaries, probably the Batavians,<sup>185</sup> massacred the Druids and destroyed all the sacred groves. At this point he knew about the revolt of Boudica. This is not the place to talk about this revolt; we can only note the impact that it had on the military operations in Wales. We know that, after the destruction of the cities

of *Camulodunum*, *Londinium* and *Verulamium*, Boudica was defeated in a big battle somewhere in the Midlands by Suetonius Paullinus, who had with him only the XIV legion part of the XX legion.<sup>186</sup> He had sent some messengers to the II Augusta legion but the commander of this unit, Poenius Postumus, refused to join the principal army of his general.<sup>187</sup>

Scholars are uncertain where this legion was based: some have suggested that the legion was at Exeter;<sup>188</sup> while others suggest Gloucester,<sup>189</sup> others consider that it was divided into several detachments and some of them were in south Wales.<sup>190</sup> We can agree on the fact that the legion was in the south of the province and that it needed some days of marching to reach the principal army.

But why did Poenius Postumus not obey the order of his general? Probably because the tribes of that area, Silures, Ordovices and Durotriges, despite the losses and the tiredness caused by years of guerrilla war, had the strength to contain and to immobilize the legion.<sup>191</sup>

### THE LAST CAMPAIGNS

The final subjugation of the Silures was realized by Julius Frontinus.<sup>192</sup> Tacitus, as with the campaigns of Veranius and Paullinus, does not give many particulars, saying only that this very good general ‘*magnam et pugnacem Silurum gentem armis subegit, super virtutem hostium locorum quoque difficultates eluctatus*’ (‘Frontinus subdued with the arms the numerous and fierce tribe of the Silures, fighting against the valour of the enemy and the difficulties of the terrain’).<sup>193</sup>

After the analysis of the Tacitean texts, we can now understand all the difficulties that Frontinus had to face during this war. He needed four years to complete the conquest of the south (and probably also of the central)<sup>194</sup> Wales. We have no signs of big battles or great sieges, elements that could favour a quick resolution of the war; once again, the Silures used the tactic of low intensity warfare, for which the correct use of the terrain, as Tacitus underlines here, is very important but this was their only advantage. The campaigns of Petilius Cerialis had had the result of permanently subduing the powerful tribe of the Brigantes<sup>195</sup> isolating Wales again from external help. Rome was not engaged in other conflicts in Britain, so Frontinus had all the time and the tools<sup>196</sup> to concentrate his attention in the anti-guerrilla warfare against the Silures. He transferred the legion II Augusta to the new base of Caerleon,<sup>197</sup> a place near to the operation field and in a strategic position on the road between the Usk valley and Breconshire, and then he waged war against the enemy and the terrain, building all the infrastructure that we know. The struggle for Frontinus was, as it was for the other generals, a struggle to cut the link between the hostile forces and the territory.<sup>198</sup>

Frontinus won this war because he completed the transformation of the environment from a hostile place that helped the irregulars to a ‘*locus aequus*’, made passable by roads and bridges, divided into closed compartments by the forts<sup>199</sup> built in strategic positions that, slowly but inexorably, trapped the rebels in ever-smaller places, where they were easy to find and destroy. Obviously this was not an easy task and the long duration of this war is further proof of the validity of the guerrilla warfare operated by the Silures.

The final campaign was led by the great general Julius Agricola and was directed against the Ordovices, who had destroyed a unit of Roman cavalry operating in their territory<sup>200</sup> before his arrival. The campaign of Agricola was very quick; he surprised the rebels with his rapidity and, as Ostorius had done years before, took the initiative and attacked the enemy even though the summer was finished. He was helped by the Roman infrastructures, which, in this campaign, displayed all their importance and efficacy. Agricola, in fact, found the enemy gangs easily; the Roman fortifications prevented them from using the hit and run tactics with their typical speed and with the use of natural hiding places, but gave



Agricola the opportunity to intercept them: *'contractisque legionum vexillis et modica auxiliorum manu, quia in aequum degredi Ordovices non audebant, ipse ante agmen, quo ceteris par animus simili periculo esset, erexit aciem'* ('Agricola collected the legionary detachments and a small number of auxiliaries, because the Ordovices didn't dare to come down on the plain, posed himself at the head of the line and, in order that the danger was the same for all the soldiers, led the army into the hills').<sup>201</sup> Agricola had little need for light auxiliary units, because he could face the enemy in an open battle; the Ordovices did all they could do to use the advantage of the high position on the hills, but the legions, as we know, had no problem climbing them and massacring the enemy.

The possibility for Agricola to find and destroy a large gang of enemies was presented, in my opinion, not only by the use of strategic strongholds and infrastructures, but also by his ability to neutralize the irregular tactics. For example, after the battle of Mons Graupius, the Caledonians, collecting themselves in big groups and familiar with the terrain, used the forests to organize ambushes against the Romans, who were pursuing the warriors fleeing from the battlefield: *'Nam postquam silvis adpropinquaverunt, primos sequentium incautos collecti et locorum gnara circumveniebant'*.<sup>202</sup>

Agricola's answer to these tactics is a perfect example of a counter-guerrilla manoeuvre, *'Quod ni frequens ubique Agricola validas et expeditas cohortis indaginis modo, et sicubi artiora erant, partem equitum dimissis equis, simul variores silvas equitem persultare iussisset, acceptum aliquod vulnus per nimiam fiduciam foret'* ('Had not Agricola, who was present everywhere, ordered a force of lightly-armed cohorts to create a net and, at the same time, to a part of the cavalry to dismount where the forest were thicker, and if he did not order to the rest of the cavalry to go around there where the forests were not so thick, because of the excess of confidence, we could suffer some damage').<sup>203</sup>

Agricola assigned a specific role to every part of his auxiliary units, adapting them to the qualities of the terrain; the cavalry were sent where there were few woods, to the kind of ground on which they would be able to express all their potential; he ordered other cavalry units to dismount and to advance carefully deep in the wooded ground. Their combined action created a tactical net (*'indaginis modo'*) that obtained the dual result of avoiding the enemy's trickeries and advancing in a way that limited the movements of the irregulars at the same time, allowing the Romans to find and destroy every single gang. The barbarians had no other choice than to abandon their purposes and leave the battlefield.<sup>204</sup>

As we have seen, Agricola had the capacity to apply to his tactical schemes the strategic principles inherent in the control of the territory and in the correct use of the ground; in this case the idea of a net able to trap the enemy to force him to accept the battle under the rules of the regular army was successful. We have seen this tactic applied during the campaign in Scotland, but in my opinion, Agricola had an excellent knowledge of anti-guerrilla tactics, *'Loca castris ipse capere, aestuaria ac silvas ipse praetemptare; et nihil interim apud hostis quietum pati, quo minus subitis excursibus popularetur; atque ubi satis terruerat, parcendo rursus invitamenta pacis ostentare'* ('He personally selected the best places for the military camps; he explored personally the woods and the estuaries of the rivers; at the same time, he never gave rest to the enemy, tormenting him with unexpected and fast raids and, when he had sufficiently terrorized them, he, acting with mildness, showed them the advantages of peace').<sup>205</sup>

Agricola's first step was the exploration of the territory because only in this way could he choose the best way to advance and the strategic points for his military camps; he personally undertook the exploration<sup>206</sup> of places like woods and estuaries that favoured the irregular tactics, showing his good knowledge of the fundamental link between low-intensity warfare and the terrain. Moreover, knowing that the guerrilla is a war of attrition, he fought in *'non haud dissimili modo'* ('in a not too different way')<sup>207</sup> to the enemies, tormenting them with surprise attacks that, with massacres and devastations (again the verb *'populo'*), aimed to destroy their will to fight.

The last step to pacify Britain performed by the Romans was the construction of baths, roads, temples, schools, squares, the Roman education imparted to the sons of the local aristocracy, the attractions of the Roman fashion and luxury; these were the advantages of the *Pax Romana* useful to ‘eradicate the causes of the wars’<sup>208</sup> and to complete the work that had been started with the use of arms, which in a long-term process brought to the Welsh tribes, in a more acceptable way, their final submission to Rome.<sup>209</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The character of war that the Romans had to face in Wales was different from those they had met during the invasion of southern Britain. In Wales, in fact, they fought against the irregular tactics of low-intensity warfare. Through an analysis of the pages of Tacitus, we can now confirm that the way of fighting used by the Welsh tribes against the Romans presented all the attributes that characterize the unorthodox strategy. The Romans, after a range of events, took about thirty years to complete the submission of this small land, confirming the fact that the war had a long duration.

The Welsh tribes, particularly the Silures and Ordovices, were able to protract their resistance for a very long time, using the tactical and strategic rules of asymmetrical warfare: use of the terrain, avoidance of big battles, use of hit-and-run tactics, speed and fluidity, lack of form, help from other tribes and the involvement of the civil population. The application of these military aspects enabled the Welsh tribes not only to effectively resist the Roman penetration and occupation, but also to collect a number of impressive victories against the most powerful army of the ancient world.

In particular, the long duration of the war and the progressive knowledge of the enemy allowed the Silures to undergo an evolution amongst their ranks, transforming a band of irregulars into an army able to fight battles in the open field. Moreover, they obtained help, usually indirectly, from other tribes, which had the result of relieving the Roman pressure when it was becoming too heavy for the tribes of Wales.

On the other hand, they had to face an army that was perfectly trained to face asymmetrical conflicts. The combined use of the legions and the auxiliary units; the presence of a clear counter-guerrilla strategy, based on the capacity to build a net of infrastructures able to limit the movements of the bands and to oblige them to accept the frontal battle in conditions of tactical inferiority; the capacity to annihilate the will of the population to support the rebellions with bloody military operations; and the use of the Roman cultural assimilation: these were the tools that ensured the final victory to the Romans.

Understanding the Roman way of fighting against low-intensity warfare can help us today to understand how to apply the most successful tactics and strategies in this kind of conflict, which have not changed significantly over the centuries, presenting the same challenges today as it did two thousand years ago.

## NOTES

1. See: V. Bellino, ‘Ex occulto carpere agmen. La guerriglia antiromana in Britannia e in Giudea’, PhD thesis, University of Bologna, 2012, 6; Q. Liang and W. Xiangsui, *Guerra senza limiti. L’arte della guerra asimmetrica tra terrorismo e globalizzazione* (Gorizia: Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 2001), 183–4.
2. W. Hahlweg, *Storia della guerriglia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1977), 52, 283; E. Cecchini, *Storia della guerriglia* (Milano: Mursia, 1990), 6; Sun Pin, *I metodi militari*, in Sun Tzu and Sun Pin (ed. R. D. Sawyer, trans. S. Di Marino), *L’arte della guerra* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1999), XXVI, p. 327;

- Vo Nguyen Giap, *Guerra del popolo, esercito del popolo* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1968), 8, 22, 33, 79, 107.
3. Hahlweg op. cit. (note 2), 20–1; T. Argiolas, T., *La guerriglia. Storia e dottrina* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1967), 14.
  4. E. Bocchi, ‘La guerriglia come forma di lotta a sé stante’, *Rivista militare* 22, no. 4 (1966), 503–15; K. Clausewitz, *Della Guerra* (Milano: Mondadori, 1970), I, I, 2, p. 47; E. ‘Che’ Guevara (ed. Laura Gonzalez) ‘La guerra di guerriglia’, in *Scritti, discorsi e diari di guerriglia* (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1969), 292.
  5. Hahlweg op. cit. (note 2), 234–6.
  6. For a fuller treatment of all these arguments see: Bellino op. cit. (note 1), 6–24; G. Breccia, ‘Grandi imperi e piccole guerre. Roma, Bisanzio e la guerriglia’, *Medioevo Greco* I, VII, (2007), 13–68.
  7. Mao Tze Tung, *La stratégie de la guerre révolutionnaire en Chine* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1950), 68; Clausewitz op. cit. (note 4), I, I, 2, p. 47; Sun Pin op. cit. (note 2), 327; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 5, 12, 22, 33, 53, 79, 108–9.
  8. Hahlweg op. cit. (note 2), 40–1; Argiolas op. cit. (note 3), 21; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 10, 33, 55.
  9. Sun Tzu op. cit. (note 2), VI, 134.
  10. Clausewitz op. cit. (note 4), I, IV, 5, p. 262; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 8–9, 28–9, 114, 155.
  11. Hahlweg op. cit. (note 2), 20–1; Argiolas op. cit. (note 3), 14; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 10, 56, 60.
  12. Cecchini op. cit. (note 2), 137; Sun Tzu op. cit. (note 2), XI, 169; Hahlweg op. cit. (note 2), Guevara op. cit. (note 4), 295; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 55–6; 88.
  13. Sun Tzu op. cit. (note 2), I, 107: ‘Attack when they are not prepared. Advance on the point where they do not expect you’; G. Cascarino (ed.), *Maurizio Imperatore, Strategikon: manuale di arte militare dell’Impero Romano d’Oriente* (Rimini, 2006), IX, 104–14; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 33–4, 55–6, 88.
  14. Clausewitz op. cit. (note 4), I, IV, 8, 319; Guevara op. cit. (note 4), 296; Hahlweg op. cit. (note 2), 34; Argiolas op. cit. (note 3), 21; N. Sheehan, *Vietnam: una sporca bugia*, (Italian edn, Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 2003).
  15. Sun Pin op. cit. (note 2), XIV, 270; Frontinus, *Stratagemmata* II, V; Cascarino (ed.) op. cit. (note 13), IV, 68–72; N. Machiavelli (ed. Alessandro Capata), *Dell’arte della guerra* (Roma: Newton and Compton, 1998), V, 198; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 116.
  16. Cecchini op. cit. (note 2), 43. G. Magi (ed.), *I 36 stratagemmi: l’arte segreta della strategia cinese* (Vincenza: Il Punto D’Incontro, 2003); Frontinus, *Stratagemmata* XXXVI, 279; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 22, 34, 55, 113.
  17. Frontinus, *Stratagemmata*, II, 5, 7; Breccia op. cit. (note 6), 31–4; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 55, 88, 113.
  18. Bocchi op. cit. (note 4), 508.
  19. Giap op. cit. (note 2), 27.
  20. Sun Pin op. cit. (note 2), XXX, 349.
  21. Mountains, woods and marshes are quintessential theatres for guerrilla warfare: they are easy to defend; they are difficult for a regular and heavy army to cross; and they offer good protection to irregular soldiers and limit the sight of the invaders: see Clausewitz op. cit. (note 4), II, VI, 16, 548; Argiolas op. cit. (note 3), 11. Machiavelli op. cit. (note 15), V, 198, 590; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 6, 18, 26–7, 47.
  22. Giap op. cit. (note 2), 27, 41, 112; G. Brizzi, *Il guerriero, l’oplita, il legionario. Gli eserciti nel mondo classico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002), 170–1.

23. Clausewitz op. cit. (note 4), II, VI, 26, 630–7. Brizzi op. cit. (note 22), 187–8; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 8, 64–5, 192–5.
24. Hahlweg op. cit. (note 2), 65; Sun Pin op. cit. (note 2), XIX, 297; Magi (ed.) op. cit. (note 16), 36, 55; Machiavelli op. cit. (note 15), VI, 218; Clausewitz op. cit. (note 2), II, VI, 28, 651; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 9: ‘If the enemy gathers he loses ground, if he desperses he loses strength’.
25. Clausewitz op. cit. (note 4), II, VI, 25, 537.
26. Argiolas op. cit. (note 3), 38.
27. Mao Tse Tung, *Selected military writings* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1963), 119ff; idem 1950 op. cit. (note 7), 95–103; Clausewitz op. cit. (note 4), II, VI, 25, 537; Argiolas op. cit. (note 3), 6–9, 38; Hahlweg op. cit. (note 2), 295–6; Giap op. cit. (note 2), 10, 55–7, 112.
28. W. Manning, ‘The conquest of Wales’, in M. Todd, *A Companion to Roman Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 60; W. Manning, *Roman Wales. A Pocket Guide* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 1.
29. Ibid.; B. Cunliffe, *Iron Age Communities in Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 115, refers to another tribe, called the Gangani, settled in the Lleyrn peninsula; see also G. Webster, *Rome against Caratacus* (London: Batsford, 1981), 19.
30. K. Wellesley, ‘Tacitus as a military historian’, in T. A. Dorey (ed.), *Tacitus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 63–97.
31. For more informations about him, see Webster op. cit. (note 29), 15–6; A. R. Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 42–4.
32. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 31, 3 (edn Garzanti, Milano, 2000).
33. Manning 2001 op. cit. (note 28), 9; Manning 2008 op. cit. (note 28), 62; C. J. Arnold and J. L. Davies, *Roman and Early Medieval Wales* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 4–5; D. Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession. Britain and the Roman Empire* (London: Penguin, 2006), 101, suggests the raiders were the Silures; Webster op. cit. (note 29), 20–1, suggests the raiders were the Durotriges, allies of Caratacus.
34. The *socii* were probably the Dobunni; see Webster op. cit. (note 29), 20.
35. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 31, 1.
36. Ibid., XII, 31, 2–3.
37. For these units see M. A. Cheesman, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army* (Roma: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1968) (facsimile of the 1914 edn). M. Biancardi, *La cavalleria romana del principato nelle province occidentali dell’impero* (Bari, 2004); J. Spaul, *Ala. The auxiliary cavalry units of the pre – Diocletianic imperial Roman army* (Andover, 1994); J. Spaul, *Cohors. The evidence for and a short history of the auxiliary infantry units of the imperial Roman army*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series 841, (Oxford 2000).
38. Argiolas op. cit. (note 3), 39–40. For a complete analysis of the foundations of counter–guerrilla warfare see Bellino op. cit. (note 1), 24–7.
39. The auxiliary units were often élite troops: see C. M. Gilliver, ‘Mons Graupius and the role of auxiliary units in battle’, *Greece and Rome* 43 (1996), 54–67.
40. For the Roman camps and forts in Wales see J. L. Davies and R. H. Jones, *Roman Camps in Wales and in the Marches* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006) and B. C. Burnham and J. L. Davies (eds), *Roman Frontiers in Wales and the Marches* (Aberystwyth: RCAHMW, 2010).
41. Hahlweg op. cit. (note 2), 289; Argiolas op. cit. (note 3), 35–8.
42. Manning 2001 op. cit. (note 28), 9.
43. Webster op. cit. (note 29), 20–1.

44. In particular the anti-Roman party, see: A. L. F. Rivet, 'The first Icenian revolt', in B. R. Hartley and J. Watcher (eds), *Rome and her Northern Provinces* (Gloucester, 1983), 202–9, 205.
45. Probably the Trinovantes, cf. P. Salway, *Roman Britain* (Oxford 1981), 101.
46. Probably Stonea Camp, Cambridgeshire, *ibid.* 101–2; M. Todd, 'The Claudian Conquest and its Consequences', in M. Todd, *A Companion to Roman Britain* (Malden, 2004), 50; R. P. J. Jackson and T. W. Potter, *Excavations at Stonea, Cambridgeshire, 1980–85* (London, 1996).
47. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 32, 1.
48. *Ibid.* This is another example of the high quality of the Roman auxiliary units that, on this occasion, played the role usually assigned to the legions; see: Gilliver *op. cit.* (note 39), 55.
49. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 32.
50. Breccia *op. cit.* (note 6) 66.
51. Caesar, *De bello gallico*, VI, 34, 1; *Idem* VI, 6; L. Loreto, 'Pensare la guerra in Cesare. Teoria e prassi', in D. Poli (ed.), *La cultura in Cesare*, Macerata–Matelica, 30 aprile–4 maggio 1990 (Roma: Il Calamo, 1993), 328. See also Hahlweg *op. cit.* (note 2), 86; Argiolas *op. cit.* (note 3), 35ff.
52. Cunliffe *op. cit.* (note 29), 118–120; 131–2.
53. See I. Richmond, 'Queen Cartimandua', *Journal of Roman Studies* 44 (1954), 43–52; D. Braund, *Ruling Roman Britain: kings, governors and emperors from Julius Caesar to Agricola* (New York, 1996).
54. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 32, 2; see Webster *op. cit.* (note 29), 22.
55. *Ibid.*, XII, 32, 1–2.
56. Cunliffe *op. cit.* (note 29), 131–2; Webster *op. cit.* (note 29), 23.
57. For Caratacus see Webster *op. cit.* (note 29), esp. 14–15; G. De la Bédoyère, *Defying Rome: the rebels of Roman Britain* (Stroud: Tempus, 2003), 35–41.
58. Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, IX, 19–23; J. G. F. Hind, 'The invasion of Britain in A. D. 43. An alternative strategy for Aulus Plautius', *Britannia* 20 (1989), 1–21; A. R. Burn, 'The battle of Medway A. D. 43', *History* 39 (1953), 105–15; J. Peddie, *Invasion: The Roman Conquest of Britain* (New York, 1987), 1–163.
59. *Ibid.*, 118–19.
60. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 36, 2.
61. It is not known precisely where Caratacus organized his resistance and where he achieved his victories against the Romans until AD 47, when we find him among the Silures; one hypothesis of the pattern of events in Peddie *op. cit.* (note 58), 124–9; Salway 1981 *op. cit.* (note 45), 103–4.
62. R. Howell, *Searching for the Silures: an Iron Age tribe in South-East Wales* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006).
63. Peddie *op. cit.* (note 58), 39; Arnold and Davies *op. cit.* (note 33), 3–4; Salway 1981 *op. cit.* (note 45) 103; G. De La Bédoyère, *Defying Rome: the rebels of Roman Britain* (Stroud, 2003), 39.
64. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 33, 1.
65. S. Piggott, *The Druids* (London, 1968); R. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: the history of the Druids in Britain* (New Heaven, 2009).
66. Webster *op. cit.* (note 29), 28, 30, 36; M. Aldhouse–Green, *Boudica Britannia: Rebel, War-Leader and Queen* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006), 144–71; G. Zecchini, *I druidi e l'opposizione dei Celti a Roma* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1984), 90–5.
67. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 36.
68. *Ibid.*, XII, 33, 1.

69. Strabo, *Geography*, 1, 1, 17: ‘*topomakèo*’ (‘fighting using the terrain’); F. Borca, ‘Adversus ipsam rerum naturam: note on Tacitus, *Agricola* 33’, *Britannia*, 27 (1996), 339; L. Loreto, *Per la storia militare del mondo antico. Prospettive retrospettive* (Napoli: Jovene, 2006), 137.
70. Peddie op. cit. (note 58), 164.
71. Clausewitz op. cit. (note 4), II, VI, 16, 548; Argiolas op. cit. (note 3), 11; Bellino op. cit. (note 1), 15–17.
72. Clausewitz op. cit. (note 4), II, VI, 16, 548.
73. *Ibid.*, II, VI, 15, 536–59.
74. *Ibid.*, 438.
75. *Ibid.*, 536–44.
76. F. Borca, *Horridi montes. Ambiente e uomini di montagna visti dai Gallo – Romani* (Aosta: Keltia, 2002), 18–20.
77. *Ibid.*, 52.
78. *Ibid.*, 51, 66.
79. *Ibid.*, 7–52.
80. Tacitus, *Germania*, 5, 1; M. A. Giua, *Contesti ambientali e azione umana nella storiografia di Tacito* (Como: New Press, 1988), 80–1.
81. F. Borca, ‘Gnara vincentibus, iniqua nescis palus. Il soldato e l’acquittrino’, *Geographia Antiqua* 5 (1996), 63–3; Gilliver op. cit. (note 39), 56.
82. The Romans used the expression ‘*bellum silvestre*’ to underline the particularity of the fighting in this contest: see Borca op. cit. (note 76), 69; Borca op. cit. (note 69), 78–9.
83. Tacitus, *Annales*, I, 63–4; Borca op. cit. (note 76), 67; Giua op. cit. (note 80), 49.
84. Giua op. cit. (note 80), 84.
85. Borca op. cit. (note 76), 77.
86. Tacitus, *Agricola*, 17, 4 (edn BUR, Milano 1998); Giua op. cit. (note 80), 82; Borca op. cit. (note 76), 70.
87. Tacitus, *Agricola*, 25, employs the expression ‘*secretum apertum*’ (‘revealed secret’) to indicate the Roman conquest of isolated and undiscovered places; Giua op. cit. (note 80), 82; Borca op. cit. (note 76), 70.
88. Tacitus, *Agricola*, 12, 5; 12, 10.
89. Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, LXII, 5, 3–4: ‘Ἐξ οὐπερ ἡμεῖς μὲν καὶ κρατοῦντες αἰρούμεν αὐτοὺς καὶ βιασθέντες ἐκφεύγομεν, κὰν ἄρα καὶ ἀναχωρήσαι ποι προελώμεθα, ἐς τοιαῦτα ἔλη καὶ ὄρη καταδύομεθα ὥστε μήτε εὑρεθῆναι μήτε ληφθῆναι’.
90. Colchester.
91. Webster op. cit. (note 29), 24; Manning 2001 op. cit. (note 28), 9; Manning 2008 op. cit. (note 28), 62.
92. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 32, 2: ‘*Id quo promptius veniret, colonia Camulodunum valida veteranorum manu deducitur in agros captivos, subsidium adversus rebelles et imbuendis sociis ad officia legum*’.
93. Manning 2001 op. cit. (note 28), 9; Webster op. cit. (note 29), 42–4; Burnham and Davies (eds) op. cit. (note 40), 184–7.
94. Webster op. cit. (note 29), 24, 42.
95. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 33, 1.
96. Webster op. cit. (note 29), 28.
97. *Ibid.*
98. Mattingly op. cit. (note 33), 92.

99. Cf. the strategy of Sertorius (Frontinus, *Stratagemmata* I, 10, 1–2); Breccia op. cit. (note 6), 28 and 58 n. 101. Other scholars, such as Mattingly, think that Ostorius Scapula forced Caratacus to give battle with his smart manoeuvres: see Mattingly op. cit. (note 33), 102.
100. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 35, 3.
101. Webster op. cit. (note 29), 30.
102. Webster op. cit. (note 29), 30, suggests that they were four or five times the number of the Romans.
103. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 34, 1.
104. *Ibid.*, XII, 35, 3.
105. *Ibid.*, XII, 33, 1. The site of the battle was in the territory of the Ordovices and therefore in central Wales, but the precise location is not given by Tacitus. Some scholars, basing their hypotheses on the description of the place, have made suggestions: see, for example, Webster op. cit. (note 29), who thought that it should be near Newtown; Mattingly op. cit. (note 33), who proposed Llanymynech; Peddie op. cit. (note 58), 167, and J. K. St Joseph ('Aerial reconnaissance in Wales', *Antiquity* 35 (1961), 270–1) who thought that it could be Caersws.
106. Caesar, *De bello gallico*, III, 23, 6; VII, 51, 2; Borca op. cit. (note 69), 339; Gilliver op. cit. (note 39), 57.
107. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 35, 1.
108. *Ibid.*
109. Borca op. cit. (note 69), 339.
110. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 35, 2: '*Tum Ostorius, circumspectis quae impenetrabilia quaeque pervia, ducit infensos amnemque haud difficulter evadit*'.
111. *Ibid.*
112. J. B. Finney, *Middle Iron Age Warfare of the Hillfort Dominated Zone c. 400 BC to c. 150 BC* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2006), 64–75.
113. V. D. Hanson, *L'arte occidentale della Guerra* (Milano: Mondadori, 1990), 268–9.
114. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 35, 2–3.
115. Borca op. cit. (note 69), 77.
116. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 35, 3.
117. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 33, 1.
118. *Ibid.*, XII, 34.
119. Tacitus, *Agricola*, 37.
120. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 36.
121. *Ibid.*, XII, 36, 1: '*Nono post anno, quam bellum in Britannia coeptum*'.
122. *Ibid.*, '*tot annos opes nostras sprevisset*'.
123. *Ibid.*, XII, 38, 1–2.
124. *Ibid.*
125. The death of Viriatus and Tacfarinas was followed very soon by the conclusion of the hostilities; see: Appianus, *Iberiké*, LXXIV; Tacitus, *Annales*, IV, 26.
126. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 38, 3.
127. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 38, 3.
128. J. Jarrett (ed.), *The Roman Frontier in Wales* (2nd edn, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1969), 50–1; S. Frere, *Britannia. A History of Roman Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 80.
129. Giap op. cit. (note 2), 9.
130. Frere op. cit. (note 128), 81 has suggested that the place where they were building the fort was Clyro.

131. Sun Tzu op. cit. (note 2), VI, 134, 173; Mao Tze Tung op. cit. (note 7), 68.
132. Giap op. cit. (note 2), 55–6.
133. Ibid., 10, 35, 55, 107, 117.
134. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 39, 1–2.
135. Gilliver op. cit. (note 39), 62.
136. Cf. Judas Maccabaeus tactics (2 *Maccabees*, 8); Breccia op. cit. (note 6), 41–3.
137. Frontinus, *Stratagemmata*, II, 1, 13. Breccia op. cit. (note 6), 42–3.
138. Magi (ed.) op. cit. (note 16); *Stratagemma* XXXVI, 279; Chinese war precept, ibid.
139. Giraldus Cambriensis, *Descriptio Cambriae*, II, 3, in J. F. Dimock (ed.) *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera* (London 1864), vol. VI, 209–10: ‘*In fuga nimirum . . . animosa virilitas magis apparet*’, ‘*Totum itaque vel fugando vel fugiendo certamen eorum*’; translation by Sir Richard Colt Hoare in T. Wright (ed.), *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambriensis* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913), 511–12.
140. Clausewitz op. cit. (note 4), I, IV, 8, 317; Machiavelli op. cit. (note 15), IV, 182.
141. Cf. Tacitus, *Agricola*, XXII, 2–3.
142. For the importance of fluidity see Sun Tzu op. cit. (note 2), VI, 136.
143. Brizzi op. cit. (note 22), 107–18; M. V. J. Bell, ‘Tactical reform in the Roman Republican army’, *Historia* 14 (1965), 404–22.
144. A. Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC–AD 200* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 264–76.
145. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 39, 2.
146. For similar characteristics see: Tacitus, *Annales*, III, 21, 4; Breccia op. cit. (note 6), 44.
147. Brizzi op. cit. (note 22), 184–6; G. Brizzi, *Prolegomeni ad una definizione della guerriglia antica*, in B. Cabouret, A. Gros Lambert, and C. Wolff, *Visions de l’Occident romain. Hommages a Yann Le Bohec* (Paris, 2012), 426.
148. See, for example, the contempt of Sallustius about the irregular tactics adopted by the Numidians: *Bellum Iugurthinum*, 97, 5: *pugna latrocinio magis quam proelio similis*; Flavius Iosephus, *Bellum Judaicum*, III, 7, 9 (169), uses the word ‘*ληστυκός*’, that is ‘in the way of bandit’ to indicate the hit-and-run tactics used by his own soldiers! The same expression is also found in: Plutarch, *The Life of Sertorius*, 18, 1; Appianus, *Iberiké*, 68 e 71; the guerrilla as ‘*furtum e latrocinium*’ also in Tacitus, *Annales*, III, 74, 1; XIII, 37, 2; Tacitus, *Agricola*, 34, 1; Tacitus, *Historiae*, IV, 56, 3. See E. Wheeler, *Stratagem and the Vocabulary of Military Trickery* (Leiden: Brill, 1988). About highway robbery see R. McMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1967), 255ff; Breccia op. cit. (note 6), 30, 35; E. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (rev. edn, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000); D. Shaw, ‘Il bandito’, in A. Giardina (ed.), *L’uomo romano* (Roma–Bari: Laterza, 2006), 337–84; the Germans, during the Second World War, called the Italian partisans ‘*Banditen*’ (see L. Loreto, *Per la storia militare del mondo antico. Prospettive retrospettive* (Napoli: Jovene, 2006), 135. For the juridical aspects of this phenomenon see ibid. 134; L. Loreto, *Il bellum iustum e i suoi equivoci. Cicerone ed una componente della rappresentazione formale del Völkerrecht antico* (Napoli: Jovene, 2001), 41, 51. About bandits see: R. Mac Mullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Cambridge (Mass.), 1967, 255–268; E. Hobsbawm, *I banditi* (Torino: Einaudi, 1971); B. D. Shaw, ‘Il bandito’, in A. Giardina, *L’uomo romano* (Roma–Bari: Laterza 2006), 337–84; T. Grünwald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire* (London, 2004). About the fundamental difference between guerrilla and bandits, see Loreto 2006 op. cit., 136: the fundamental difference between the two being that the former directed their assaults against statal structures as political target while the latter only seek to profit from robbery.



149. This can also be read as a decision taken by Claudius himself.
150. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 39, 2.
151. Mattingly *op. cit.* (note 33), 103–4.
152. See page 16.
153. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 39, 3.
154. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 38, 3.
155. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 39, 3.
156. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII; 39, 3.
157. *Ibid.*, XII, 40, 1. The legion was probably the XX, see Salway *op. cit.* (note 45) 107.
158. W. Manning, ‘The conquest of Wales’, in M. Todd, *A Companion to Roman Britain* (London 2008); W. Manning, *Roman Wales* (Cardiff, 2001), 1; Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 38, 3. Cf. Tacfarinas’s tactics (Tacitus, *Annales*, II, 52) and Sertorius’s tactics (Plutarch, *The Life of Sertorius*, XII, 6 and XIV, 1).
159. Tacitus, *Annales*, XX, 40, 1.
160. Webster *op. cit.* (note 29), 88–9.
161. *Ibid.*
162. Mattingly *op. cit.* (note 33), 104.
163. Fortresses were built at Wroxeter, to give the Romans the control of the upper Severn, and at Usk, a place crossed by the most important road from England. Forts were built at Monmouth, at Abergavenny, blocking the valley that cross the Black Mountains and the Brecon Beacons; other forts at Kentchurch and Abbey Dore controlled the Golden Valley and the eastern part of the Black Mountains; in the north were the Roman fortifications at Clyro, Brandon Camp, Stretford bridge, Llansanffraid-ym-Mechain, Abertanat, Rhyn Park. See Manning 2001 *op. cit.* (note 28).
164. De la Bédoyère *op. cit.* (note 57), 74–82.
165. Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 40.
166. Webster *op. cit.* (note 29), 87–103.
167. Tacitus, *Annales*, XIV, 29, 1.
168. *Ibid.*; Tacitus, *Agricola*, XIV, 4.
169. Birley *op. cit.* (note 31) 50–4.
170. Webster *op. cit.* (note 29), 105; Mattingly *op. cit.* (note 33), 104–5; Manning *op. cit.* (note 28), 68.
171. Webster *op. cit.* (note 29), 104–5; Mattingly *op. cit.* (note 33), 104.
172. D. Ambaglio, ‘Il trattato “sul comandante” di Onasandro’, *Athenaeum* 59 (1981), 353–78; A. Galimberti, ‘Lo strategikòs di Onasandro’, in M. Sordi (ed.), *Guerra e diritto nel mondo greco e romano*, Contributi dell’Istituto di Storia antica 28 (Milano, 2002), 141–53; C. J. Smith, ‘Onasander and how to be a general’, in M. Austin, J. Harries and C. Smith (eds), *Modus operandi. Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Rickman* (London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1998), 151–66.
173. Onasander, *Strategikòs*, XXX.
174. Webster *op. cit.* (note 29), 104–18; Cunliffe *op. cit.* (note 29), 131–2.
175. Tacitus, *Annales*, XIV, 29, 3.
176. Mattingly *op. cit.* (note 33), 105.
177. Tacitus, *Agricola*, XIV, 5.
178. Mattingly *op. cit.* (note 33), 105; D. R. Dudley and G. Webster, *The Rebellion of Boudicca* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 59; Birley *op. cit.* (note 31), 54–5; Breccia, *op. cit.* (note 6), 59.
179. D. Fishwick, ‘The annexation of Mauretania’, *Historia* 20 (1971), 467–87.

180. One of the reasons that induced Suetonius to invade Mona was that the island was the ‘granary’ of the rebels: Dudley and Webster op. cit. (note 178), 52–60.
181. Manning 2008 op. cit. (note 28), 68; Davies and Jones op. cit. (note 40), 52.
182. Tacitus, *Annales*, XIV, 29, 3.
183. Idem, *Agricola*, XIV, 5.
184. Mattingly op. cit. (note 33), 105–6.
185. M. W. C. Hassal, ‘Batavians and the Roman conquest of Britain’, *Britannia* 1 (1970), 131–6.
186. Tacitus, *Annales*, XIV, 31–9; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, LXII, 1–12.
187. Tacitus, *Annales*, XIV, 37, 3.
188. Aldhouse-Green op. cit. (note 66), 194.
189. Dudley and Webster op. cit. (note 178), 64.
190. Mattingly op. cit. (note 33), 110.
191. I. A. Richmond, *Roman Britain* (Harmondsworth, 1963), 38; Dudley and Webster op. cit. (note 178), 64; K. Branigan, ‘Britain after Boudicca’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 126 (1977), 56–8.
192. Birley op. cit. (note 31) 69–72.
193. Tacitus, *Agricola*, XVII, 4.
194. Arnold and Davies op. cit. (note 33), 13; Manning 2008 op. cit. (note 28), 70.
195. Tacitus, *Agricola*, XVII.
196. Salway op. cit. (note 45) 138, says that Frontinus led three legions against the Silures.
197. Manning 2001 op. cit. (note 28), 24–6.
198. Breccia op. cit. (note 6), 54.
199. Like Cardiff, Neath and Carmarthen and seven marching camps built in the Glamorgan uplands: Frere op. cit. (note 128), 102; Davies and Jones op. cit. (note 40), 53.
200. Tacitus, *Agricola*, XVII, 2. The Ordovices were probably settled in mid-Wales: Davies and Jones op. cit. (note 40), 53.
201. Tacitus, *Agricola*, XVIII, 3.
202. Ibid., XXXVII, 6.
203. Ibid., XXXVII, 7.
204. Agricola completed his campaign in Wales with the definitive conquest of the island of Mona, an aim that he completed easily with the use of his Batavian auxiliary units: Tacitus, *Agricola*, XVIII, 4–5.
205. Ibid., XX, 2. Tacitus described Agricola with the qualities of the perfect general but, in my opinion, Agricola was really a very good general and he had all the skills presented by Tacitus as we can see from the excellent results of his campaigns in Wales, England and Scotland.
206. N. J. E. Austin and N. B. Rankov, *Exploratio. Military and Political intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 61–2.
200. Tacitus, *Annales*, III, 73. Tacitus uses this expression to describe the Roman tactical performance against the guerrilla of Tacfarinas.
208. Ibid., *Agricola*, XIX, 1: ‘*causas bellorum excidere*’.
209. Ibid., XXI, 3.