Universidade de Lisboa
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VESPASIAN'S WAY OF WAR:

A MILITARY BIOGRAPHY OF TITUS FLAVIUS VESPASIANUS (9 A.D. - 79 A.D.)

Mestrado em História Militar

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Maps and Illustrations

Maps

Illustrations

Note on Abbreviations

References to Latin sources generally follow abbreviations in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*.

References to Greek sources generally follow abbreviations in the *Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*.

Abstract

The present work represents an analysis of Titus Flavius Vespasianus in his military dimensions. Part I begins with a look at Vespasian's origins until his first military post in Thrace and evaluates in what ways those realities influenced Vespasian's command. Then it offers a conventional description of the Roman army at the time of Vespasian, questioning that same picture with examples from Vespasian's campaigns. This is followed, in Part II, by an overall view of Vespasian's military action, before and after becoming emperor, divided by geographical area. After that, it presents an analysis of Roman grand strategy, in the context of Vespasian, with an emphasis on military resource allocation. In Part III, firstly it offers a strategic analysis of Vespasian's role in the three campaigns he was a part of: the invasion of Britain; the crushing of the Jewish rebellion and the civil war against Vitellius. Secondly, it looks at the battles that fall outside the realm of siege warfare and of which there is enough written evidence: the battle of the Medway River and the naval battle of Lake Gennesaret. Finally, it analyses Vespasian's behaviours as a commander and relates them to some of the main Roman virtues, namely *uirtus*, *labor militaris*, *auctoritas* and *gloria*. Part IV deals with some aspects of Vespasian's generalship, some of which that have been neglected by the academic world. It begins with an analysis of Vespasian's Poliorcetics, then continues with the use of auxiliaries, with an emphasis on cavalry; proceeds to the role of logistics and intelligence, and ends with diplomacy and the notion of *fides*. Part V, which is the final section of the thesis, looks at the *Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma*, which is a major example of Vespasian's military legacy in literature.

Keywords: Vespasian; Roman Warfare; Ancient Rome; Roman Empire; Military History.

Resumo

A presente dissertação representa uma análise de Titus Flavius Vespasianus nas suas dimensões militares. Na Parte I observam-se as origens de Vespasiano até ao seu primeiro posto militar na Trácia, e avalia-se o impacto destas no seu comando militar. De seguida, oferece uma descrição convencional do exército Romano ao tempo de Vespasiano, questionando essa mesma imagem com base em exemplos das campanhas do próprio. Isto é seguido, na Parte II, por uma visão geral da acção militar de Vespasiano, antes e depois de se ter tornado imperador, dividida por área geográfica. A seguir, é apresentada uma análise da *Roman grand strategy*, referente a Vespasiano e com ênfase na alocação de recursos militares. A Parte III inicia-se com uma análise estratégica de Vespasiano no contexto das três campanhas em que participou: a invasão da Britânia; a pacificação da revolta Judaica e a guerra civil contra Vitélio. Em segundo lugar, observa as batalhas lideradas por Vespasiano, que não representam casos de guerra de cerco e sobre as quais existe suficiente evidência escrita: a batalha do rio Medway e a batalha naval do Lago Gennesaret. Por último, analisa os comportamentos de Vespasiano enquanto comandante, e relaciona-os com algumas das mais importantes virtudes Romanas, nomeadamente *uirtus*, *labor militaris*, *auctoritas* e *gloria*. A Parte IV lida com alguns aspectos do comando de Vespasiano, alguns dos quais têm sido negligenciados pelo mundo académico. Começa com uma análise da poliorcética em Vespasiano, continua com o uso de auxiliares, com ênfase na cavalaria; segue-se o papel da logística e da informação, e termina com a diplomacia e o conceito de *fides*. A Parte V, que é a última secção da dissertação, observa a *Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma*, que constitui um importante exemplo do legado militar de Vespasiano na literatura.

Palavras-chave: Vespasiano; Guerra na Roma Antiga; Roma Antiga; Império Romano; História Militar.

Introduction

A military biography can be an unsafe historiographical design, as the biography dimension is sometimes seen as outdated, with the real danger of turning into a self-aggrandising project of the object of study, and the military dimension is somewhat neglected and downplayed as it pertains to the stigma-enveloped topic of war. Regarding the former, one needs but to expand the concept so that it is a biography that, as José Mattoso wrote, "(...) não se limite a reconstituir o itinerário individual do protagonista, mas averigue até que ponto ele é influenciado e exprime a sua época."[1] Regarding the latter, it is a reality that has been accompanying mankind from at least as early as sedentarism, therefore, far from being ignored, it should be studied in depth, especially in Ancient Rome, and especially in Vespasian.[2]

The idea, promulgated by academics such as John Keegan, who almost single handedly renewed the world of military history, that an army is an expression of the society that created it, is vital to understanding the importance of the study of warfare in all its dimensions.[3] In the context of the study of generalship, for example, if we manage to unravel what characteristics or behaviours made a commander successful or not, we are simultaneously revealing what the soldiers responded to positively and negatively. We are understanding what virtues they valued and what vices they despised, in their respective historical contexts, we are getting a raw look into their culture.

In Ancient Rome, the study of warfare, and more specifically of generalship, becomes even more relevant as "Military attributes remained common in society and culture", and military command was both eagerly pursued and glorified.[4] Economically, the Roman army was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, source of state expenditure, which speaks to its relevance in yet another dimension of Roman society.[5] It was Vegetius who said that "(...) we see no other explanation of the conquest of the world by the Roman People than their drill-at-arms, camp-discipline and military expertise."[6] Taking all of the above into consideration, the pertinence of a military biography of Titus Flavius Vespasianus becomes self-explanatory. This was a man that served in the contentious *limites* of the Danube and the Rhine, who participated

[1] Mattoso 2019, 64, "(...) does not limit itself with the reconstruction of the protagonist's individual itinerary, but that ascertains to what extent he is influenced by and expresses his epoch.", translated by the author of this thesis.
[2] Goldsworthy 2007a, 15-20, on the importance of the study of generalship in Ancient Rome. Lee 2020, 1, on the importance of the study of war in Ancient Rome.
[3] Keegan 2009, 16.
[4] B. Campbell 2002, 12-3.
[5] Le Bohec 1994, 212; Rathbone 2007, 175.
[6] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 1.1.

in the invasion of Britain and who commanded a campaign in the East; almost covering the entire Empire in his military career. A man who was a tribune, a legate, an army commander, and an emperor. A man who dealt with battle tactics, campaign strategy and Empire strategy. A man who served and led. A man who challenged an emperor and lived to tell the tale. All this Vespasian did in the context of warfare; one can look at other relevant factors to help explain his life's trajectory and impact in History, however one would always end up with an incomplete picture unless with his military dimension at the core of the interpretation.

This thesis, as the title suggests, aims at an in-depth analysis of the different facets of warfare in Vespasian. By doing so, Vespasian's convergence with or divergence from Roman traditional military practice will be revealed, as well as his military impact in Roman history, warfare and future perception. Part I begins with an overlook of Vespasian's origins until his first military post in Thrace, where an argument is introduced regarding the implications that both those realities had in Vespasian's ability to command men and to wage siege warfare. Continues with a description of what a legion would have looked like at the time of Vespasian, to serve as a basis for the rest of the work, and with the problematization of the proposed numbers resorting to some examples from Vespasian's campaigns. This is followed, in Part II, by an overall view of Vespasian's military action, before and after becoming emperor, divided by geographical area. After that, I present an analysis of Roman grand strategy, in the context of Vespasian, with an emphasis on military resource allocation. Part III is concerned with aspects of Vespasian's command. Firstly, I present a strategic analysis of the three campaigns of which we know Vespasian to be involved, those being the invasion of Britain, the crushing of the Jewish rebellion and the civil war against Vitellius. Secondly, I look at the battles that fall outside the realm of siege warfare and of which we have enough written evidence, those being the battle of the Medway River and the naval battle of Lake Gennesaret. Finally, I analyse Vespasian's behaviours as a commander and relate them to some of the main Roman virtues, namely *uirtus*, *labor militaris*, *auctoritas* and *gloria*. Part IV deals with a series of specific aspects of Roman warfare, some of which that have been neglected by the academic world. It begins with an analysis of Vespasian's Poliorcetics, then continues with the use of auxiliaries, with an emphasis on cavalry, proceeds to the role of logistics and intelligence, and ends with diplomacy and the notion of *fides*. Part V, which is the final section of the thesis, looks at the *Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma*, which is a major example of Vespasian's military legacy in literature.

1. State of the Art

The work that is presented here has not been done before. That is not to say that some aspects of it have not been studied independently and from different points of view. However, in the format, perspective, scale and depth that I have tried to give, it cannot be found in the academic world up to this point in time. This does not mean that it is beyond criticism or further research, for as it is pointed out in distinct chapters of the thesis, there is more to say about many of the aspects analysed, but it does offer an almost uncharted perspective and the gateway into neglected topics of research.

A state of the art regarding Vespasian cannot be complete without highlighting Barbara Levick's monograph of the same name. It is an exhaustive work of research where Vespasian's life itinerary is systematised with great detail and skill, and it served this thesis well. However, the majority of the military aspects, with the exception of some strategic analysis, are mostly descriptive, which makes sense given the nature of the work. Matters related to Vespasian's command style, poliorcetics, use of auxiliaries, logistics and intelligence are mostly neglected in Levick's work, and analysed in this thesis. There is also a first attempt at a grand strategy analysis for Vespasian's reign, focused on military resource allocation, which is only introduced by Levick. Finally, the *Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma* which is only mentioned in passing by Levick, is analysed in this dissertation.

One other work should be highlighted for its scale and pertinence to this topic, which is *A Companion to the Flavian Age of Imperial Rome*, edited by Andrew Zissos. Although comprehensive in the analysis of the majority of Vespasian's dimensions, it neglects the military one, concentrating most of the discussion into one chapter which is focused on Imperial strategy. Naturally, given the nature of the work, Vespasian's life prior to becoming emperor bears little mention, except for the year of the civil war. Considering that it is concerned not only with Vespasian, but also with Titus and Domitian, it opted for a more holistic approach of the three reigns in detriment of deep analysis. None of the topics that are missing in Levick appear in this work and once again the *Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma* is only mentioned in passing, referencing Levick.

Outside these two main works, relevant information for the topic of this thesis can be found in studies that are not necessarily focused on Vespasian. That is the case of chapters in histories of Rome, such as Nuno Simões Rodrigues' chapter regarding the Flavians inserted in *História de Roma Antiga* of Coimbra University Press, which offers valuable insight into the civil war and Vespasian's rise to power. Other instances include histories of Roman warfare, such as Jonathan Roth's, A. D. Lee's or Adrian Goldworthy's. These are quite valuable for their insight into the workings of the Roman army and its relations to society, culture and

economy, although they do not go into detail regarding Vespasian. This is also true for more extensive works, such as *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* and *A Companion to the Roman Army*. Yann le Bohec's *The Roman Imperial Army* still holds as one of the most extensively detailed systematisations of the Roman army, and was useful as a basis and to cross-reference with more recent works.

For more specific events of Vespasian's military career, one has to look, once again, at sections of monographs and thesis as well as articles. Webster's *Roman Invasion of Britain* offers some insightful interpretations of Vespasian's role in the invasion of Britain, as well as some important archaeological information of the same. Saddington's work on auxiliaries has plenty of relevant information regarding these unit types. However, the overview that it offers of Vespasian's use of auxiliaries in the campaign to crush the Jewish revolt, is very incomplete. Campbell's thesis regarding Roman siegecraft does an excellent job of cataloguing an extensive sample of Roman sieges and in that way leading to conclusions that were quite relevant for the present thesis. Campbell analyses some of Vespasian's sieges, although in a very restrictive and technical framework that, for the purposes of this thesis, is incomplete. Levithan's *Roman Siege Warfare* is valuable for the perspective it presents regarding the morale and psychological landscapes of siege warfare, although it makes little to no mention of Vespasian. Jodi Magness's chapter "The First Jewish Revolt against Rome" in *Masada,* does a decent summary of Vespasian's campaign in Galilee and Judaea, although with little detail or interpretation. It does, however, offer some good insight to Flavian propaganda on the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem. This is also true of Cody's chapter in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*. Jonathan Roth's *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C. - A.D. 235),* even though only mentioning Vespasian sporadically for examples, offers a detailed picture of Roman army logistics that proved quite valuable for this thesis. There are a series of more technical papers that were helpful for the archaeological insight they offered, these include M. Har-El's *The Zealots' Fortresses in Galilee* and Bezalel Bar-Kochva's *Gamla in Gaulanitis,* amongst others. Regarding the topic of command, its contexts and perspectives, the works of Keegan and Goldsworthy (2007a) were very helpful. Finally, regarding the *Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma* one needs to highlight Rodrigues' chapter in *Optimo Magistro Sodalium et Amicorum Munus*.

2. Sources

This work was primarily based on the written evidence, although, whenever possible, further substantiated with physical evidence from archaeology, iconography, epigraphy and

numismatics. The first contributed with vital topographical information as well as valuable interpretations of the military physical remains. The other three were of great help to matters related to propaganda and imperial ideology, although also playing an important role in fact-checking some of the written sources' claims.

There is one major written source for the study of Vespasian's military dimension, which is Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*; two others that still hold a great deal of valuable information, those being Tacitus' *Historiae* and Suetonius' *De uita Caesarum*, and a final one that is less helpful for this topic, which is Cassius Dio's *Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία* (*Roman History*). Other sources were also consulted and used to a minor extent. Before continuing with the analysis of the aforementioned works, it is important to comment on the military sources.

Three main military treatises were consulted: Onasander's *Strategikos*; Vegetius' *Epitoma rei militaris* and Frontinus' *Strategemata*. The three works complement each other well and allow for effective cross-referencing, covering most military fields. Onasander and Frontinus were Vespasian's contemporaries, which makes their works more relevant to the topic of this thesis, however, Vegetius is vital for more technical aspects, such as the matter of numbers, which is discussed in chapter 2 of Part I. Onasander's work, since it deals with generalship, which is the topic of this thesis, was more often observed. All of the above were, of course, complemented by the readings of other military sources and selected bibliography.

We will leave Josephus for last, as his work deserves a lengthier analysis, for reasons already explained, and we will make a brief commentary on the other three. Ancient Roman historiography, with its roots extending to Ancient Greece, had a series of methodological problems, according to the standards of modern historiography. One of them is related to the inclusion of speeches that are mostly, it not entirely, a matter of fiction; a judgement of what the authors deemed appropriate to be said in a particular moment of the narrative and that served the purpose of dramatising the latter while at the same time displaying the author's rhetorical skills.[7] Tacitus makes a very good use of this literary technique, for example.[8] The fact that historical works were also written in order to be read in front of interested citizens meant that sometimes the historicity of an event would be sacrificed for the sake of entertainment.[9] Finally, the inherent partiality of each historian could jeopardise his work, as it would be influenced by opinion and speculation instead of evidence. Tacitus makes a declaration of interest statement right in the beginning of his *Histories*:

[7] Ash 2009, 28-9.
[8] See Ash 2009, 27-8, for some examples of this use.
[9] Master 2012, 88.

> "My official career owed its beginning to Vespasian, its progress to Titus and its further advancement to Domitian. I have no wish to deny this; but writers who claim to be honest and reliable must not speak about anybody with either partiality or hatred."[10]

This is different from his earlier work, where there is a clear and unhidden hatred of Domitian, who is depicted as the villain in *Agricola*.[11] However, the latter is not a historical work *per se*, nor does it try to be, as it had as its main goal to honour Cn. Julius Agricola's life (Tacitus' father-in-law).[12] Nevertheless, for the purpose of the *Histories*, Tacitus, at least implicitly, claims he will be impartial, even though he will be writing about the men who effectively built his career.[13] Surprisingly, he does manage to do so for the most part; a proof of it being the fact that he places Vespasian's first plans to take power in Rome still during Otho's reign, which goes directly against the pro-flavian accounts that delayed it until Vitellius' reign with the objective of making Vespasian appear as the saviour of Rome from the excesses of the former.[14] Overall, not forgetting the fact that we are witnessing history through Tacitus' interpretative lenses, Tacitus' narrative serves as a solid historical foundation for the study of this period[15]; it is unfortunate that the sections of the *Annals* that would be most relevant for the study of Vespasian did not survive.

Cassius Dio's *Roman History* suffers gravely from the methodological problems already referred to, leading to a mostly rhetorical and superficial writing of history. Furthermore, whereas Tacitus was a contemporary of the overwhelming majority of people and events analysed in this thesis, Cassius Dio wrote more than one hundred years after Vespasian's death, which, given the methods of Ancient historiography, made his writing less reliable. Finally, the bulk of the relevant information for the present work is inserted in epitomes of his *Roman History*, acting as replacements for the books of his history which have been lost, that come to us from Mediaeval sources (i.e. Zonaras and Xiphilinus), which further puts its reliability into question.

Suetonius, as a biographer, wrote in a genre that was not necessarily preoccupied with creating a historical narrative; it was more a collection of unembellished facts, entertaining stories, character traits and the highlights of the subject's political and military action. However, it does serve to cross-reference information with the other sources and sometimes provides interesting details and/or information that is not in the other sources. One example

[10] Tac. *Hist*., 1.1.
[11] Tac. *Ag*., 2-3, 7.2, 39-43 et 44.5-45.2; Sailor 2012, 26-9.
[12] Sailor 2012, 40. See Sailor 2012, 23-44, for a deeper analysis of Tacitus' *Agricola*. The information taken from this source for the present work can be taken, for the most part, as axiomatic, since it is politically neutral information.
[13] Master 2012, 87-8.
[14] Tac. *Hist.*, 2.1-9; Ash 2009, 36.
[15] Master 2012, 88. See Master 2012, 84-100, for a deeper analysis of Tacitus' *Histories*.

that is relevant for the topic of this thesis is Suetonius' mention of the conquest of the Isle of Wight by Vespasian, which effectively places the latter in the south-west of Britain on a second phase of the invasion.

The works of Flavius Josephus are of great value when studying Vespasian, and especially when talking about his military dimension. Naturally it is necessary to highlight *Bellum Judaicum* as the other written sources bear little to no reference to the man. Upon reading the manuscript one cannot help but to remember the Athenian historian Thucydides. As Hammond puts it, "it echoes the first words of Thucydides' history, which by Josephus' time had become so familiar that it was a cliché."[16] The similarities are profuse and yet there exists a considerable gap between the two texts.

Starting with the similarities, these are mostly concentrated on issues concerning methodology and motivation, of which Josephus tells us about in the beginning of his work (as does Thucydides for that matter[17]). "The war fought by the Jews against the Romans was not only the greatest war of our time but could well be one of the greatest collisions between states or nations of which word has come down to us."[18], the affinities between Thucydides and Flavius Josephus in this first sentence of *Bellum Judaicum* are striking. In both authors there is a belief that the wars they are reporting about will live on in memory as the greatest of their times and that with them so will their respective historians.[19] In both men there is a desire to achieve immortality through their work. There is, however, another reason for Josephus to begin his writings in this manner, and that is to evoke Thucydides himself. He wants it to be clear that his aim is that of a scientific history and at the same time he searches for legitimacy for his work. The answer for both problems is found by Josephus in summoning the paradigm for this school of historiography. This could lead us to believe that we would find a reincarnation of Thucydides' writing of history in Josephus, however that would be a false premise to go from. After all, the sobriety and stoicism of Thucydides' historiography are not easy to find, especially in Ancient History, and Josephus gives us note of just that:

> I shall record the actions of both sides with strict impartiality, but my comments on the events will owe something to my own situation, and I shall allow personal sympathies the expression of sorrow at the fate that befell my country.[20]

Josephus excuses himself in advance for the emotion that he knows will influence certain sections of his writing. The recognition of his shortcomings performing this task serve

[16] Goodman 2017, 28.
[17] Th., 1.20-2.
[18] J. *BJ*, 1.1.
[19] Th., 1.1.
[20] J. *BJ*, 1.9.

the modern historian well, as it prepares his awareness for the analysis of the text. Looking from another perspective, this statement of culpability serves the strengthening of Josephus' *fides*, which in turn accredits reliability to his work. Besides the influence of emotion on account of Josephus' blood ties to the Jewish cause, there is a second force in play that one should take into consideration when analysing *Bellum Judaicum*: Roman public opinion.

Josephus explicitly tells us that this version of his work is meant for the citizens of the Roman empire.[21] Having been treated with a lot of care by the Romans (Vespasian and his sons in particular), even though he had been their enemy and prisoner, it is only fair that he would feel obliged to return the favour through his writing.[22] Even if Jospehus would not go as far as to purposefully change the narrative in order to make the Romans, or some Romans, appear better represented, he without a doubt would never do the opposite, with fear of what that could mean for him. At the time of this translation, Josephus was essentially living off of the good will of the emperors. Having that in mind, common sense dictates that Josephus would not do anything to jeopardise that equilibrium. Both his personal and public affiliations need to be taken into account when reading his work.

A final point regarding Josephus' motivation to write *Bellum Judaicum* is linked to his desire to portray most of the Judean population, himself included, as innocent of any blame in the start of hostilities against Rome; a few bandits being the responsible party. However, the aforementioned argument has been eloquently revoked by Steve Mason.[23] After all, Josephus is not shy about his involvement in the war, in fact, one could even argue that there is a sense of pride and exaggeration regarding his role in the Jewish revolt, something we will soon discuss. In addition to this, he is not absolute in his moral judgement of the intervenients, instead searching for a variety of explanations. "Thus Josephus does not claim that evil men *generated* the war. He writes as the survivor of a massive trauma, searching for what hindsight allows him to identify as the war's causes."[24]

It is true of Josephus as it is true of Thucydides that both men were in a privileged position to write about their respective wars. Both were eyewitnesses of a good portion of the events, both were in positions of military command, and both were part of the higher social groups of their respective societies. This means that they had the memory, the knowledge, the contacts and the access to the necessary sources to write their texts.[25] It is also, unsurprisingly,

[21] J. *BJ*, 1.3. What we have is actually a Greek version of the original (J. *BJ*, 1.3.), presumably written in aramaic and that would have looked a lot different than the one we possess (Mason 2016, 16-17)
[22] J. *Vit.*, 75-6.
[23] Mason 2016, 17-23.
[24] Mason 2016, 21.
[25] In the case of Thucydides, his main source is eyewitness accounts, differing from Flavius Josephus, who besides using witnesses, resorts to the written sources he had available (Mason 2016, 23-5).

that Josephus uses it as his argument of authority, leaning once again on Thucydides.[26] However, Josephus differs from his Athenian counterpart in the amount of attention given to himself throughout the narrative. Where Thucydides barely spends a paragraph describing his own role and fate in the war, Josephus fills entire pages, especially in the description of his final stand in the siege of Jotapata. Roth does well to point out that Josephus uses his work as a way to defend his military career, having this in mind, it would not be unreasonable to argue an exaggeration of the defensive capabilities of his men at the aforementioned siege.[27] By doing so, Josephus not only justifies his decisions as a Jewish general, but also inflates the Jewish spirits by making them appear more effective in battle than they probably were; by consequence he praises the Romans as they were the final victors against such 'brave men under prudent leadership'. It is certainly difficult to be objective about oneself, which could maybe be the reason why Thucydides decided to keep his comments to a minimum necessary, but at the same time it was too good an opportunity for Josephus not to take it. Prudence is therefore the keyword when analysing this particular passage.

Finally, I need to address the matter of Josephus' legitimacy as a military historian. It is a fact that Josephus did not have a military background. He was a priest, descendent from a long line of priests, chosen to lead men into battle because of the nobility of his blood.[28] His lack of military experience needs to be noted, however it is not grounds to cast aside his writings on the topic.[29] In one interesting passage of *Bellum Judaicum*, Josephus talks about how he tried to train his men in the roman style; identifying discipline, drill and a solid command structure as the main strengths of the roman war machine.[30] Later on, he writes, a now famous, description of the roman army, "It would not be an exaggeration to describe their training exercises as bloodless battles, and their battles as exercises with added blood."[31] Regardless of Josephus actually having been able to replicate some of the qualities of the Roman army in his men, it does not change the underlying reality that he possessed a good understanding of military practices. This knowledge could have been accessed by him through informal instruction, an insightful eye or a mix of both, however the fact remains that he was not at all oblivious to the intricacies of war.[32] Josephus also provides us with a fairly accurate

[26] J. *BJ*, 1.3; Th., 1.22.2-4.
[27] Roth 2016, 200-1.
[28] Cf. J. *BJ* 1.3. et *Vit.*, 1. Loftus (1977, 94-5) makes it clear that Josephus' appointment to Galilee can only be explained through his Hasmonaean ancestry.
[29] Roth 2016, 200.
[30] J. *BJ*, 2.577-84. Interesting to note that he breaks his forces down into smaller groups, each with a man in charge (much like a roman centurion), perceiving the benefits of delegation and manoeuvrability (Roth 2016, 205).
[31] J. *BJ*, 3.75.
[32] That informal education could have taken the form of military literature that he had access to; conversations with veterans of war; his visit to Rome; amongst others.

depiction of the roman army, being guilty of minor inconsistencies.[33] This speaks to his military knowledge, probably gained through observation, conversation with roman soldiers and the reading of available written sources.

A more detailed analysis and critique of the works of Josephus will be facilitated in the relevant chapters, as the historiographic method demands. The same will also be provided for the remainder of the sources, focused on specific passages, whenever the situation so requires.

[33] I am referring to the matter of numbers, where Josephus gives a different estimate than other military historians, such as Vegetius, and the passage in which Josephus tells us that the *gladius* is positioned on the left side when in fact it should be on the right (J. *BJ*, 3.93-4), although he could be referring to the centurions.

Part I – The Man and His Weapon

"It might perhaps be expected that those men who cannot take pride in their ancestors would become even better generals; (...) those who have no ancestral renown to begin with, desiring to make up for the obscurity of their lineage by their own zeal, are more eager to take part in dangerous enterprises."

(Onos., 1.24)

1. Sic Parvis Magna

Loosely translated as "Greatness from small beginnings", it is best known as Sir Francis Drake's motto, but it could well have been Vespasian's. In this chapter, we will go through the latter's humble origins, as well as his family's, to understand what, if any, impact it might have had in his military greatness.

Titus Flavius Vespasianus was born on the 17th of November of the year 9, in *Falacrinae*, a small village in Sabine country.[34] According to Suetonius, we find Vespasian's ancestry in Titus Flavius Petro, a man who had served as a centurion in Pompey's army, during the civil war (49 B.C. - 45 B.C.).[35] Apparently not staying until the end of the conflict, as Suetonius tells us that he ran from the battlefield at Pharsalus (48 B.C.), T. Flavius Petro became a money-collector upon having received a pardon from Caesar.[36] The life of his son, Vespasian's father, T. Flavius Sabinus, seems to be enveloped in uncertainty.[37] This lack of knowledge regarding Vespasian's origins "brings out the obscurity of the family".[38] This obscurity was, more often than not, seen as a vulnerability in Roman society, used for political attacks.[39] However, Vespasian does not seem to have made any efforts to hide his origins. Instead, he used them, "His own career and principate, combining military achievement with administration that was notably canny over money, recalls the preoccupations of his father and grandfather."[40] Suetonius goes as far as saying that "(...) he [Vespasian] never tried to hide his former modest background and he often even flaunted it."[41]

One other benefit for Vespasian, resulting from his acknowledgement of his own humble beginnings, can be linked to his military command. For the thousands of men that served in the legions, being themselves of lower birth, it would come easier for them to establish a bond of obedience and loyalty to a man they could relate to. Of course there was still a significant political and social distance between Vespasian and the men he commanded. Also, Vespasian would need to prove himself as a good commander first, before the link with the soldiers was established. However, a psychological factor originating from the circumstances referred to, could have made Vespasian appear as more likeable and thus worthy of greater loyalty and obedience.[42] It brings to mind the memory of Gaius Marius, himself a

[34] Suet. *Ves.*, 2.
[35] Suet. *Ves.*, 1.
[36] Suet. *Ves.*, 1.
[37] Suet. *Ves.*, 1. See Levick 2017, 5-6, for detail on that discussion.
[38] Levick 2017, 6.
[39] *Id.*, 5.
[40] *Id.*, 7.
[41] Suet. *Ves.*, 12.
[42] Onasander, 1.11, highlights the importance of reputation for command, "(...) for if men have a spontaneous and natural love for their general, they are quick to obey his commands, they do not distrust him, and they cooperate with him in case of danger."

"new man" in Roman politics, of humble origins, tribune of the plebs and member of the *populares* party, who was immensely successful on the battlefield.[43] It is curious that both men had their name associated with the same animal - the mule. Marius, due to the introduction of the *furca* in the legions, which resulted in his men being nicknamed "Marius' Mules", and Vespasian, because he reportedly had to "stoop to retail trading" for financial reasons, leading him to be "popularly called 'the muleteer'".[44] Both men of obscure origins, associated with an animal that symbolised hard work, but also manual labour. For the same reason that they were looked down upon by the aristocracy, they were highly respected by the soldiery.[45]

On his mother's side, Vespasian was the descendent of the Vespasii, a family of "distinction and antiquity".[46] His mother, Vespasia Polla, was the daughter of Vespasius Pollio, a three-time military tribune and Camp Prefect.[47] It was this line of ancestry that allowed Vespasian and his brother, T. Flavius Sabinus, to aspire to senatorial positions. It is also the origin of Vespasian's *cognomen*. Vespasian's brother advanced to the Prefecture of the City and Vespasian, as we know, reached the very top of Roman society.[48]

Vespasian took the toga of manhood around the year 25-6. However, Suetonius tells us that he refused to apply for the permission to wear the *latus clavus* for a long period of time (the exact longevity of this refusal is uncertain).[49] Vespasian did eventually seek the broad stripe, but only after suffering repeated psychological abuse from his ambitious mother, according to Suetonius.[50] Vespasian's *cursus honorum* will be the subject of analysis in Part II. Vespasian married Flavia Domitilla, the daughter of Flavius Liberalis, a man of respectable stance, and had three children: Titus, Domitian (both went on to become emperors) and Domitilla.[51]

[43] "New man" - meaning that he had no ancestors who had been members of the senatorial nobility (Roth 2009, 91). Goldsworthy 2007a, 17.
[44] Suet. *Ves*., 4. *Furca*: "(...) a forked stick to help the soldier carry his equipment more easily." (Roth 2009, 92); see Roth 2009, 92, for more detail.
[45] A commander's origins and family bonds were not just a matter of discussion amongst the elites, but with the soldiery as well. Soldiers had knowledge of that information regarding their military leaders, and it was not indifferent to them. An example appears in Tac. *Hist.* 3.10, where *Tempus Flavianus*, legate of the *VII Galbiana*, faced the wrath of his men (Tacitus makes it clear that these were the legionaries and not the officers), who, already discontent with his leadership, accused him of treachery on account of his family relations.
[46] Suet. *Ves*., 1.
[47] Suet. *Ves*., 1. See Levick 2017, 6, for more detail.
[48] Suet. *Ves*., 1. Up to the point of Vespasian's nomination in Judaea and the subsequent challenge for the Empire, it was Flavius Sabinus who was the most prominent figure amongst the Flavians (Rodrigues 2020, 112-3; Nicols 2016, 60).
[49] Suet. *Ves*., 2. The reasons for this refusal can be tied to a scarcity of funds, a difference in ambition, or the inherent danger of Roman politics at that time (Levick 2017, 10).
[50] Suet., *Ves*., 2. This abuse was in the form of insults, diminishing Vespasian's status when compared to his brother's, by calling him "his brother's footman".
[51] He was a quaestor's clerk, "an official post that itself was not closed to freedmen, although often held by knights" (Levick 2017, 14).

2. Vespasian's Legions

In this chapter we shall look at the state of the Roman army during Vespasian's lifetime. In doing so, we will get a clearer idea of the men he led as a commander, and of the legions he managed as an emperor. This will serve as a practical tool and as background information for the rest of the chapters presented in this thesis.

The place to start this analysis of the Roman imperial army can be no other than with the founder of the regime itself: Caesar Augustus. Vespasian was not even five years old, when Augustus died and yet, militarily, he already bore a debt of gratitude to the deceased emperor, for, as le Bohec says, "(...) the prodigious amount of work accomplished under Augustus must be emphasized, which was no more than tinkered with by his successors for a long time."[52]

Augustus' main contributions to the Roman imperial army have to do with its organisation. He formalised the professionalisation of the army by fixing wages and setting times of service.[53] Additionally, he split the army into two major divisions, the garrison in Rome and the provincial forces. The latter was in turn divided into legions and auxiliaries. To this, we can add the navy as the remaining branch of the Roman military.[54]

The elite force of the garrison at Rome was the Praetorian Guard. It was a prestigious unit, open only to Roman citizens from Italy, and whose job was to ensure the emperor's security.[55] It was composed of nine cohorts of 500 men each and commanded by a prefect from the *praetorium* (equestrian rank). The number of cohorts was increased to a maximum of sixteen by Vitellius, during the civil war, boosting each unit's numbers to 1000.[56] However, upon seizing power, Vespasian was quick to return to the Augustian design.[57] Inside the city there were three urban cohorts of 500 men each, who served as a police force.[58] Their numbers were once again raised by Vitellius to 1000 and then brought back to their original amount under Vespasian.[59]

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[52] Le Bohec 1994, 182. This does not mean that all military reforms during Augustus' reign were a mere result of individual inspiration of the emperor in question, as he was surrounded by experts in these matters, but that he had the final word in the approval of said reforms and also with regards to the choice of which experts to surround himself with, and, as le Bohec affirms, "In this respect Augustus made good choices" (Le Bohec 1994, 182).

[53] Suet. *Aug*., 49; Gilliver 2007, 186-7. Initially the enlistment period under Augustus lasted for sixteen years in the front lines, plus another four as *evocati*. However, it was raised for twenty years of active duty, plus five as *evocati*, still under Augustus, and it remained so until the end of the empire (with notable exceptions depending on the type of service) (Roth 2009, 138-9). See also, le Bohec 1994, 209-218, for an in-depth analysis of the evolution of military pay, as well as its impact on the empire's economy.

[54] See Suet. *Aug*., 49, for a full description of the aforementioned reforms.

[55] There were additional requirements, such as a height minimum; see Roth 2009, 135-6, for more detail. The emperor would, many times, make use of additional bodies of security, recruited amongst the subjugated peoples (le Bohec 1994, 23-4; Rankov 2007, 49-50).

[56] Rankov 2007, 47.

[57] *Ibidem*.

[58] *Id*., 47-8.

[59] See le Bohec 1994, 20-4, for a full description of the garrison at Rome. See also, Roth 2009, 135-6 et Rankov 2007, 43-50.

The provincial army was the backbone of the empire, it served the offensive and defensive needs of Rome, it maintained peace and controlled commerce in the *limes*.[60] The legion, each one composed of around 5.240 soldiers, only 120 of those being cavalry, was the main force in the provinces.[61] Their numbers and command structure were stabilised by Augustus. The core unit was the *contubernium*, made up of eight men, ten of these constituted a century, commanded by a centurion with the assistance of an *optio*; six centuries formed a cohort and ten cohorts a legion. The first cohort of every legion had only five centuries, but each of them with double the number of soldiers (160).[62] The centurion of the first century of every cohort commanded the cohort as well as his century; the centurion of the first century of the first cohort, called *primus pilus*, held one of the most prestigious and respected positions in the Roman legion, and with it some added benefits, as he was "much better paid, and his lifestyle was more luxurious than that of other centurions."[63] Above the centurions there were five *angusticlauii* tribunes (equestrian rank), one camp prefect, one *laticlauius* tribune (senatorial rank), and one legate who was the supreme commander of each legion.[64] Every legion would have siege machines allocated to it; one catapult (arrow-firing) per century and one ballista per cohort (stone-projector), making it a theoretical total of 69 artillery pieces per legion.[65] Augustus reduced the number of active legions from 60 to 31, a value that would decrease to 28, as the three legions lost in the Teutoburg disaster (9 AD) were not replaced. The following emperors consistently maintained the total number of legions around 30; under Vespasian there were 29.[66]

Accompanying the legions, and with a similar amount of men, there were the auxiliaries.[67] They were recruited from non-citizens, generally receiving said citizenship upon completion of the time of service, and were divided into wings (*alae*), cohorts and mixed

[60] Roth 2009, 148-9.
[61] Rankov 2007, 37-8. J. *BJ*, 3.20, for the cavalry unit number. This number for the legions does not account for military slaves or other members of the *impedimenta*. Roth 1994, 361, proposes the number of 5.280 soldiers by subtracting the cavalry, as he argues that it was included in the numbers of the centuries, and adding a sixth century to the first cohort. Since it does not contradict our numbers in a grave way, I decided to opt for the established numbers as the evidence is not strong enough to justify a change. These numbers were, of course, theoretical. Due to casualties, retirement, leave of absence and desertions, amongst other circumstances, a legion was seldomly represented in full strength, especially in active war zones.
[62] Pseudo-Hyginus *De munitionibus castrorum*, 3.1; Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, II 6.8. By Vespasian's time this reform would have already happened (Roth 1994, 358). Roth 1994, 359-60, argues that the first cohort had the same six centuries as the rest, however, the evidence is not strong enough to discard the written sources.
[63] Roth 2009, 142; Rankov 2007, 40-1.
[64] le Bohec 1994, 24-5; Rankov 2007, 38-9.
[65] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 2.25, sets the rule of allotment in this way, but he reaches a total number of 65. Depending on the campaign, other types of siege machinery could be found, however those were generally built on the battlefield, in an *ad hoc* perspective.
[66] Levick 2017, 165.
[67] This idea regarding the numbers of auxiliaries is a matter of convention, but it lacks definitive evidence (Goldsworthy 2007b, 117-8; Gilliver 2007, 193); some examples are discussed below.

cohorts (*equitatae*).[68] The *alae* were cavalry units of 500 or 1000 men organised in squadrons (*turmae*), although it was not until the Flavians that the latter became customary (the auxiliary forces under Vespasian will be the topic of analysis later on).[69] The cohorts were infantry units, this included a variety of specialities, such as archers, slingers or javelin throwers, but also regular infantrymen for close combat.[70] They were organised in centuries of 500 or 1000 men, the latter once again only becoming common with the Flavians. Finally, the *equitatae* cohorts were composed of both infantry and cavalry and were organised in similar fashion as the rest (i.e., units of 500 or 1000 men).[71]

The Roman navy had as its main responsibility the control of the Mediterranean Sea. Under Augustus, two major fleets were assembled, one anchored at Misenum and the other at Ravenna; protecting the Western and Eastern Mediterranean, respectively.[72] Additionally, a number of smaller fleets would assert Roman dominance over the peripheral seas and larger rivers.[73] Despite being generally underappreciated when in comparison with the legions or the praetorian guard, the navy still represented an essential dimension of the Roman army.[74]

The question that imposes itself now, is: were the forces led by Vespasian in any way similar to what has been presented here as the padron? The short answer would be yes. However, there are a number of idiosyncrasies that should be understood under the framework of theory versus practice. After all, the theoretical numbers presented, seldomly passed the test of reality. Either by retirement, leave of absence, injury, sickness, desertion or death, the legions could not, and neither were they expecting to, maintain the perfectly round numbers that have been mentioned. The same could be said of the allocated artillery pieces, which, on the one hand, depended on availability, and on the other hand, could be damaged or even destroyed. The legions, as well the auxiliaries, which were the more active sectors of the army, have to be seen as living organisms. The padron served as a guideline, but that demanded adaptation depending on the circumstances. Those circumstances could be related to internal limitations, such as the ones I have mentioned, or external necessities, such as the type of enemy to be faced or the type of warfare to be waged.[75] The design of the legion was

[68] It was not until Claudius' reign that citizenship as a reward for service in the auxiliary forces became a rule (Roth 2009, 139; Gilliver 2007, 187). Although rare, some Roman citizens did join auxiliary units (Rankov 2007, 51). See B. Campbell 2002, 29; Le Bohec 1994, 25-7 et Rankov 2007, 50-5, for more detail on auxiliary organisation and unit types.
[69] McNab 2010, 165; Le Bohec 1994, 26.
[70] Goldsworthy 2007b, 80.
[71] See le Bohec 1994, 25-9, for a deeper analysis of the internal organisation of the auxiliaries, and Roth 2009, 36-7 et 39-41, for their conditions of service.
[72] Suet. *Aug*., 49; Rankov 2007, 56.
[73] Le Bohec 1994, 29; Rankov 2007, 56-7.
[74] Varandas 2008, 177-8.
[75] Goldsworthy 2007b, 95.

tremendously useful to serve as a rule and most likely to "ease logistical planning".[76] However, it was the circumstances that dictated the actual, adapted, picture of the Roman legion and army, in an *ad hoc*-like fashion.[77]

A few examples are in order. We have no written evidence for the number of artillery pieces allocated to the *II Augusta* in the context of the invasion of Britain. We know, from archaeology, that Vespasian had at his disposal catapults, as remains of bolts have been found in the wreckage of some of the stormed towns.[78] However, this tells us nothing of the number of machines. Levick writes that Vespasian took with him 55 catapults, a number no doubt taken from Vegetius; Webster, on the other hand, talks about 60 catapults, using a rule also set by Vegetius and that has been mentioned before.[79] Curiously, Vegetius does not seem to follow his own rule, for if we took it to the letter, we would not reach the number 55 or 60, but 59 (the first cohort had five centuries instead of the typical six, so we need to subtract 1 to the 60 proposed by Webster). It seems more probable that, by presenting 55 as the common number of catapults per legion, Vegetius is illustrating the "theory versus practice" point that has been previously argued. In other words, the military theorist is claiming that one would much more likely find the legions incomplete than perfectly stacked. Nonetheless, in the context of the invasion of Britain, we are looking at one of those rare occasions in which the legions would most probably be in top shape, as it was the eve of a new campaign. Vespasian's *II Augusta* would then be carrying 59 catapults with it into Britain. But what about the stone-projectors? For Vegetius also claims that every legion was equipped with this heavier type of artillery, at a rate of one per cohort.[80] The reason why they were not added to the calculations, is because there is no archaeological evidence of their presence in this campaign. If we were to look at it simply from the theoretical point of view, we would not be able to make sense of it. However, we need to observe it from a practical standpoint and understand that either due to availability, necessity or lack thereof, or any other circumstances, the *II Augusta* was sent to Britain without *ballistae*.[81]

A secondary example can be found in Jospehus' *Bellum Judaicum*. Here, there is a clear mention of the number of artillery pieces available to Vespasian, which Josephus sets at 160, divided amongst the three legions.[82] This number presents its own challenges. Firstly, is it an

[76] Roth 1994, 361-2.
[77] Gilliver 2007, 193.
[78] Webster 1993, 108-10.
[79] Levick 2017, 22; Webster 1993, 109.
[80] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 2.25.
[81] The term *ballista* is used to refer to stone-projectors, as that was their nomenclature in the period of the early empire; the term later developed to mean artillery with different types of projectiles (D. Campbell 2002, 170-1).
[82] J. *BJ*, 3.166.

estimation by Josephus? Rounded up or down for simplicity's sake? It is, no doubt, plausible that it could be a rounded figure. On the other hand, it is an overwhelming consensus amongst Josephus' scholars that a part of his sources were roman officers, field reports and even Vespasian's *commentarii*.[83] To this we could add that Josephus himself was an eyewitness to this artillery at work, both as an enemy to the Romans, on top of the walls of Jotapata, and as their ally, with an initial captivity phase, which would have allowed him to take a close look at these machines. Furthermore, this number is not politically charged, as for example those concerning casualties, and it is also not an exaggeration, as it goes below Vegetius' prescriptions. All of this goes a long way to reassure us of Josephus' reliability in this situation. Assuming this number to be true, other questions emerge. Namely, how was the artillery divided amongst the three legions? After all, at least one of them would need to have less machines than the other two. Why didn't the three carry the same amount of artillery? And why, in the age of Roman military standardisation, do we find numbers considerably below the prescription (following Vegetius' rule, there should be between 195 and 207 artillery pieces)? Once again, we must move away from theory and focus on practice, so that we may make sense of this. Unlike in Britain, this was not a planned campaign, but a reaction to an aggression by the rebellious Jews. This meant that swiftness was of the essence; no time to replenish troops or material that might have been missing. Only *Legio XV*, out of the three, would have potentially been up to standard, as it came from the relatively peaceful Alexandria.[84] Therefore, looking at the overall numbers, we would conclude that Vespasian's army was undersupplied with artillery, in the context of the Jewish War. However, in comparison to the campaign in Britain, one could argue that he was oversupplied, for, and unlike in Britain, he possessed stone-projectors. Not only that, but the XV appears to have been equipped with a heavier *ballista*, with a higher calibre than the machines of the other legions.[85] The simplest answer is many times the right one, as it seems to be in this case. The existence of stone-projectors (including the heavier one from the XV) in Vespasian's contingent to combat the jews, as well as their absence in the Britain campaign, are a consequence of necessity. It was the difference between the turf and wooden ramparts of Britain to the stone and brick walls of Galilee that demanded an adequate response in terms of siege machinery. Other factors that have been mentioned were of significance, but this seems to be the one carrying more weight, especially when taking into consideration that, according to Josephus, the siege engines were specified by Vespasian.[86]

[83] Huntsman 1996-7, 396-7.
[84] J. *BJ*, 3.64.
[85] D. Campbell 2002, 170; J. *BJ*, 5.269-70.
[86] J. *BJ*, 7.308.

One final example also comes from Jospehus' works regarding the Jewish rebellion. When describing Vespasian's army, Josephus mentions in detail the numbers of the auxiliary forces that were under his control.[87] Given that Vespasian had at his disposal three legions, so around 15.720 if they were complete, one would expect the number of auxiliaries to match those of the legions, as it is conventionally held in scholarship.[88] However, the number of auxiliary troops vastly outnumbered those of the legions. Just counting Roman auxiliary forces, there were around 22.360, which would already be a significant difference, but to this we need to add the 15.000 produced by the client kingdoms of the region, giving us a grand total of 37.360.[89] Also we need to note the large numbers of cavalry units, around 8.560, and of archers/slingers, around 11.000.[90] The circumstances alone can explain the disparity between these numbers and the theoretical ones. Naturally, Vespasian would not refuse the addition of troops from the client kingdoms, thus explaining the high numbers of auxiliary forces. The types of units are explained by topography and availability, as the cavalry was useful to cover the plains and the archers/slingers for siege warfare, plus the decision had to be made based on what was available. Once again, we find a picture of the Roman army which differs from the prescription, because it was adapting to the necessities and circumstances of warfare in that particular context.[91]

[87] J. *BJ*, 3.66-8. The numbers mentioned by Suetonius (*Ves*., 4), that refer to only 10 cohorts and 8 *alae*, are in reference to the units that were added to the existing forces already under Vespasian's control, which means that they are incomplete and do not contradict Josephus' account (Saddington 1982, 49).
[88] Goldsworthy 2007b, 117-8.
[89] J. *BJ*, 3.66-8.
[90] J. *BJ*, 3.66-8.
[91] Gilliver 2007, 193.

Part II – A Life of Military Service to Rome

"(...) the empire had been long unsure and, as it were, wandering without direction. It was the Flavian family that finally picked it up and consolidated it (...)"

(Suet. *Ves*., 1)

1. Spheres of Military Action

Vespasian set foot on the four corners of the empire before taking power in Rome. His career took him from the humidity of Britain to the aridness of Galilee and Judaea, with layovers in centre and southeastern Europe, and even the North of Africa. He had military command with different levels of control and responsibility, revealing himself as a gifted tactician. Later on, as an emperor, Vespasian managed the same army and provinces he had fought with and in, showing that he had learned from experience and that the strategist in him was every bit as successful as the younger tactician.

In this chapter we will travel through every region of the empire in which Vespasian had any sort of military impact, both before and after becoming emperor. This will be an important tool for the rest of the thesis, as it will present an overview of Vespasian's military dimension. The analysis will be divided by region first, and inside each section by simple chronology. As stated before, it will be a holistic approach, an attempt to encapsulate the whole of Vespasian's military action, leaving the details for subsequent chapters.

There is a common denominator that deserves special attention when dealing with Vespasian's strategic decisions as an emperor, and that is the civil war of 68-9. This conflict, which will be summarily examined here, led to the displacement of legions and to a general sense of instability that culminated, in some cases, in open revolt. Vespasian's first actions as *princeps* will, therefore, be a response to the generalised disturbances in the empire; a struggle for peace and stability.

In the year 68, Galba, who was then the governor of *Hispania Tarraconensis*, set himself up as a challenger to the emperor Nero, thus initiating the period that will become known as "the year of the four emperors".[92] Nero committed suicide shortly after, leaving the way to the throne of Rome unencumbered.[93] In his description of the state of the Roman legions in the context of Galba's *coup d'état*, Tacitus highlights the danger presented by the armies in Germania, due to their strength and unhappiness with the state of affairs.[94] There were other instances of instability, but none as menacing to Galba's security as his own nominee for governor of lower Germany, Aulus Vitellius. The armies of Germania were quick to revolt against a seemingly weak leadership in Rome.[95] Not only that, but Galba was considered too old and feeble to be emperor[96]; it is the matter of his succession that will be the catalyst of his own assassination.

[92] D.C., 63.23.
[93] Suet. *Nero*, 49; D.C., 63.29.2.
[94] Tac. *Hist.*, 1.8-9.
[95] D.C., 64.4.2.
[96] Tac. *Hist.*, 1.12.

The Germanian legions' call for a new emperor was the main cause for Galba's rule to disintegrate. However, it was Galba's decision not to choose the ambitious Otho as his heir that ultimately led to his death.[97] Otho resented Galba and took "the fatally step from evil ambition to evil deeds"[98] on the 15th of January of the year 69, when the plot was revealed and Galba assassinated in Rome.[99] Tacitus goes on to tell us that "The Forum was still blood-stained and littered with bodies when Otho was carried through it to the Capitol, and from there to the palace."[100] Otho's rise to power did not bring any more stability to Rome, quite the contrary, for the Germanian legions' unwillingness to accept Galba as emperor had turned into abject disapproval of Otho, leaving the people in panic with the prospects of a new civil war.[101] Vitellius' armies were already on the way when news of Galba's assassination and Otho's accession reached them.[102] The empire split itself in favour of one contender or the other: Germania, Britain and Gaul supporting Vitellius; the African, Eastern and Danube provinces supporting Otho (although it was mostly a nominal support); Hispania was unclear and it seemed to have switched sides. War naturally ensued, displacing legions and adding to the instability of the empire.

The initial confrontations between the two armies were inconclusive, leading to a stalemate that was only decided in favour of the Vitellian forces on the 14th of April of the year 69, in the battle of Bedriacum.[103] An overall five legions were involved in this conflict, another four were on their way from Moesia and Dalmatia, which meant both instability in the Italian Peninsula and weakness in the defence of the *limes*. Even though the war was not lost for Otho, he assumed it as such, and soon after "he fell upon his dagger"[104].[105] Vitellius, who was not present in the fights mentioned, swiftly made his way to Rome, apparently drawing a blind eye to all sorts of indiscretions and atrocities perpetrated by his legions, where he inaugurated his reign in a Nero-like fashion.[106] Nevertheless, his despotic rule did not last for long, for almost simultaneously, Vespasian had challenged him in the East.

On the 1st of July of the year 69, the Egyptian legions swore loyalty to Vespasian, prompted by Tiberius Alexander.[107] The Judean and Syrian armies soon followed, Mucianus

[97] Suet. *Otho*, 5; D.C., 64.5-6.
[98] Tac. *Hist.*, 1.22.
[99] Tac., *Hist.*, 1.27-41; Suet. *Gal.*, 19-20.
[100] Tac. *Hist*., 1.47.
[101] Tac. *Hist*. 1.50.
[102] Tac. *Hist*., 1.64.
[103] Tac. *Hist*., 2.14-5, 2.21-2, 2.24-6 et 2.39-44; Suet. *Otho*, 9.
[104] Tac. *Hist*., 2.49.
[105] Suet. *Otho*, 9-10; D.C., 64.15.1.
[106] Tac. *Hist*. 2.56 et 2.87-91; Suet. Vit., 10-11.
[107] Tac. *Hist*. 2.79; Suet. Ves., 6.

being of great help in achieving this as well as the loyalty of the Eastern client-kingdoms.[108] The same Mucianus was sent to Rome in front of the army, while Vespasian took power in Egypt and Titus kept Judea under control.[109] The news of Vespasian's bid for power spread quickly throughout the empire, both by chance and design.[110] Either due to their loyalty to Otho or due to their discontent with Vitellius, the armies of Dalmatia, Moesia and Panonnia also took the imperial oath and joined Vespasian; *Legio III Gallica*, from Ilyricum, leading the way.[111] Additionally, Vespasian counted on the support from the navy, thus controlling the sea, a vital dimension if Rome was to be taken.[112]

The Flavian march to Rome was led by Antonius Primus, who opted for a blitzkrieg-like manoeuvre in the North of Italy, disobeying Vespasian who had ordered caution and for all the forces to be combined before the final approach.[113] Despite an initial success, Primus' advance was halted by Caecina, who had been sent by Vitellius ahead of the Germanic, Italian and part of the Britainian legions.[114] Apparently Caecina could have crushed Primus' forces, however, he chose to betray Vitellius instead and swear allegiance to Vespasian.[115] His army did not take his treachery well, deposing him and keeping up the fight, both out of loyalty to Vitellius and due to an unwillingness to surrender to those who they deemed inferior in matters of war.[116]

The new leaders of the Vitellian army decided to give battle to a reinforced Antonius Primus, once again in the vicinity of Bedriacum. This bloody event took many Roman lives and ended in a decisive victory for the Flavian party.[117] Two sieges followed, first of a fort near Cremona and then of the city itself; the last resistance of the Vitellians was thus crushed and Cremona was sacked and burnt to the ground.[118] Upon hearing the news of the Vitellian defeat, the hitherto ambivalent armies of Britain, Spain and Gaul made their final decision to support Vespasian.[119] Vitellius now resorted to diplomacy, as he saw no other escape from his predicament. Negotiations were held, and in exchange for a peaceful transition of power and the return of Flavius Sabinus and Domitian unscathed, Vitellius would be granted his life and

[108] Tac. *Hist.* 2.80-1.
[109] Tac. *Hist.* 2.82-3; Suet. *Ves.*, 7.
[110] Letters from Vespasian were sent to the different corners of the empire, urging the legions outside of Rome to join him (Tac. *Hist.*, 2.86).
[111] Tac. *Hist.*, 2.85-6; Suet. Ves., 6. The Ilyricum forces had had their centurions executed under Vitellius' orders, which helps to explain their eagerness to join Vespasian (Tac. *Hist.*, 2.60).
[112] Tac. *Hist.*, 3.1 et 3.8.
[113] Tac. *Hist.*, 3.6 et 3.8-9.
[114] Tac. *Hist.*, 3.6-9.
[115] Tac. *Hist.*, 3.9 et 3.13.
[116] Tac. *Hist.* 3.13-4.
[117] Tac. *Hist.*, 3.21-5.
[118] Tac. *Hist.*, 3.26-33.
[119] Tac. *Hist.* 3.44.

a retirement pension.[120] The defeated emperor happily agreed and publicly renounced his titles.[121] However, the same cannot be said of his supporters in Rome, who refused to respect his decision and reacted violently, besieging Sabinus and his men in the Capitol hill.[122] The Capitol was burnt and nearly destroyed, Sabinus captured and then executed with the consent of Vitellius; only Domitian was able to escape in disguise.[123] Caught off guard by this turn of events, Antonius Primus swiftly ordered the invasion of the capital of the empire. Rome was taken shortly after and Vitellius captured and executed.[124] The civil war had ended, but the consequences of it were still very much alive.

Vespasian was awarded the imperial titles and with it the responsibility to restore an unstable and injured empire.[125] The civil war had created a generalised feeling of uncertainty throughout the provinces, many legions had left their posts and marched to Italy (in the second battle of Bedriacum alone the greater part of fourteen legions had been involved, including a similar amount of auxiliaries), and Rome's enemies took advantage of this perceived weakness to act. As Suetonius tells us, "Because of the revolt and deaths of three emperors, the empire had been long unsure and, as it were, wandering without direction. It was the Flavian family that finally picked it up and consolidated it (...)".[126]

1.1 The Danube

The Danube river, along with the Rhine, dissected Europe in an almost uninterrupted line, leading the Romans to turn what was a natural border into a political one. This *limes* was, of course, not static and allowed for advancements and retreats. However, each river will be, nonetheless, representative of a distinct region of the empire. We shall start with the Danube, as it encapsulates the place of Vespasian's first military post.

Upon taking the toga of manhood, aspirants to the senate were expected to serve as military tribunes. Vespasian, as Suetonius tells us, completed this vital step of the *cursus honorum* in Thrace, around the year 27.[127] Situated in the lower Danube, this province was recuperating from the disturbances that had assailed the region in the years prior to Vespasian's arrival. Some of the Thracian tribes had rebelled against Roman authority on account of their

[120] Tac. *Hist*. 3.63.
[121] Tac. *Hist*. 3.67-8.
[122] Tac. *Hist*. 3.68-9.
[123] Tac. *Hist*. 3.71-4; D.C., 65.17.
[124] Tac. *Hist*. 3.82-5; Suet. *Vit*., 17.
[125] Tac. *Hist*. 4.3; D.C., 66.1.1.
[126] Suet. *Ves*., 1.
[127] Suet. *Ves*., 2; Levick 2017, 10.

intolerance of troop conscription, and C. Poppaeus Sabinus was sent to crush them.[128] His success earned him triumphal decorations in 26, which means that by the time Vespasian arrived, the region was mostly pacified.[129] However, what is of more significance here is not the impact that Vespasian had on the events, as he held a minor military post in a virtually peaceful situation, but the impact the events had on him. After all, the military training of the aristocracy was mainly informal, "carried out through the socialization of youth by those with a military background, and through the reading of military literature of various types."[130] These were, therefore, prime learning years for Vespasian, comprising themes that went from strategy, logistics and discipline, to combat and siege warfare. The implications on Vespasian's career are difficult to assert, but no doubt profound, some of which are analysed somewhere else (Part IV, Chapter 1.4). For around three years Vespasian served and learned in Thrace, integrated in the *Legio IV Scythica*.[131] However, it was only upon becoming emperor that his military impact was truly felt.

The ever-aggressive Dacians were Vespasian's main concern in the Danube.[132] These tribes started causing Vespasian problems even before he had made his way to Rome. As we have seen, the civil war led to a neglect of the empire's borders and that weakness was perceived as an invitation to Rome's enemies. The Dacians were not an exception and Tacitus makes that abundantly clear, "(...) at that time they [the Dacians] feared nothing as the Roman army had been withdrawn from Moesia."[133] They were responsible for a series of incursions into Roman territory, occupying both banks of the Danube, in the year 69.[134] The *VI Ferrata* was sent to crush them and it was mostly successful.[135] However, stability did not last for long as the Sarmatians took up the challenge, unsuspectingly crossing the Danube the following year and slaughtering many Roman soldiers.[136] The governor of Moesia, Fonteius Agrippa, was killed in an attempt to reply to the attack, prompting Vespasian to act.[137] The *princeps* entrusted Rubrius Gallus with the task of restoring Roman control over the region.[138] Gallus seems to have been quite successful[139], not only defeating the Sarmatians but also improving the defences on the river "to make it quite impossible for the barbarians to cross over."[140]

[128] Tac. *Ann*., 4.46.
[129] Levick 2017, 10.
[130] Roth 2016, 200; Goldsworthy 2007a, 12-3 et 17; Lee 2020, 90; Gilliver 2001, 13.
[131] Levick 2017, 10.
[132] Conflict had already started in the last years of Nero's reign (Dart 2016, 214).
[133] Tac. *Hist*., 3.46.
[134] Tac. *Hist*., 3.46; Levick 2017, 125.
[135] *Ibidem*.
[136] J. *BJ*, 7.89-90.
[137] J. *BJ*, 7.90-1.
[138] J. *BJ*, 7.92.
[139] J. *BJ*, 7.93-5; Levick 2017, 125.
[140] J. *BJ*, 7.94.

The events of the civil war and of the Civilis revolt, which will be analysed in the next section, had left the Danube vulnerable. Even though Vespasian managed to react promptly and effectively against the threats presented, there was an urgent need to secure a border that was being assaulted by a growing menace. After all, it was upon the *pax romana* that roman ideology and prosperity stood. An emperor that could not deliver that could be put into question.

Vespasian reinforced the Danube with seven legions, concentrating the majority of them in the critical regions of Moesia and Pannonia. The selection of which legions to relocate, although likely constrained by logistics, was not an innocent one, combining ex-Vitellian forces, loyal veteran troops and even recent creations. The *I Italica* and part of the *V Alaudae* had supported Vitellius against Vespasian (the rest of the *V Alaudae* was almost entirely destroyed in Civilis' revolt[141]). These were two defeated legions, possibly resentful towards the new emperor and that were still in the Italian peninsula; the potential for trouble was great and Vespasian's solution was elegant. He placed them far from Rome, so as not to create instability, and in a location where they would be serving the interests of the empire. The Danube region, along with the Rhine, were the most belligerent borders of the empire, which meant that these two legions were going to be constantly occupied with what they had been bred for: war. On the one hand, Vespasian knew that idleness leads to indiscipline and that the latter could in turn lead to mutiny. Therefore, stationing them in this region would solve that problem. On the other hand, by investing these legions with significant military responsibility, as the Danube represented the main gateway to Rome, Vespasian showed his favour upon them and allowed them to regain the sense of honour they had lost in their earlier defeat, all the while keeping the empire safe. Tacitus summarises it well, "To distribute this army [*I Italica* and *V Alaudae*] among the provinces and to tie it down in a foreign war was an act at once of statesmanship and peace."[142] The *I Italica* was stationed in Novae, Moesia and the *V Alaudae* most likely somewhere in Pannonia, in order to ensure some distance between the two.[143]

In order to ensure order and an effective control of the *limes*, Vespasian sent four legions of proven valour and loyalty to the region. The *V Macedonica* and the *XV Apollinaris* had served under him in the Jewish War; the *VII Claudia* and the *XIII Gemina* had supported his bid for power and been a part of the victorious march to Rome, the latter had inclusively participated in the army that was sent to crush Civilis' revolt[144]. Their triumphant and veteran status assured success in the military struggle of the region. Their loyal dedication to Vespasian

[141] Tac. *Hist.*, 4.18 et 4.22.
[142] Tac. *Hist.*, 3.46.
[143] Dart 2016, 215.
[144] Tac. *Hist.*, 4.68.

guaranteed stability amidst the army of the Danube. The *V Macedonica* was stationed in Oescus, Moesia; the *XV Apollinaris* in Carnuntum, Pannonia; the *VII Claudia* in Viminacium, Moesia and the *XIII Gemina* in Poetovio, Pannonia.[145]

Finally, there is the interesting case of the *IV Flavia Felix*. This legion was Vespasian's creation, as the use of his *nomen* or family's name suggests, resulting from the reform of the *IV Macedonica*. The latter had sent cohorts to support Vitellius in Italy while the rest of it had disgraced itself during the Civilis revolt, as we shall see in the next section. This legion had been defeated both in Italy and the Rhine (in this last case, it had gone so far as to betray Rome), the number of loyal troops was depleted, and its name fallen into ill-repute; it was a legion in need of a fresh start. Vespasian gave it just that: changed its name to associate it with him, thus showing his favour; filled its ranks with new recruits, eager to prove their value in combat, and gave it a new home in Burnum, Dalmatia, far from Rome and the Rhine, but still in a region where they could regain their honour through battle.[146]

A final note needs to be added regarding the navy. After all, it was of vital importance to secure a border which was essentially a river. There were two fleets in the Danube, one in Pannonia and one in Moesia. Besides controlling enemy movements across the river, "the fleets provided lateral lines of communication and facilitated the movement of forces and goods."[147] It was under Vespasian that the Danube fleets were awarded the title *Flavia*, for their service in defending the region from the Dacian incursions during the civil war.[148]

The region that saw Vespasian's first military post, was in this way stabilised by the same man as *princeps*. And so it remained, virtually unscathed by enemy incursions, apart from the notable exceptions previously referred to, until the end of Vespasian's reign. The Danube continued to be, nevertheless, a highly belligerent *limes*, as Vespasian's son, Domitian, came to realise in the late 80s.

1.2 The Rhine

The Danube was the place of Vespasian's first military post, but the Rhine was the site of his first legion command. Vespasian was sent to Germania, Argentoratum, around the year 42, and apparently only due to Narcissus' influence[149], to take command of *Legio II Augusta*.[150] He only stayed there for a year, as he was summoned for the invasion of Britain, and as far as

[145] Tac. *Hist*., 4.39; Dando-Collins 2010, 139-40, 148-9, 175 et 182.
[146] Dando-Collins 2010, 131-2; Dart 2016, 215.
[147] Dart 2016, 219.
[148] *Id*., 220.
[149] Suet. *Ves*., 4.
[150] Tac. *Hist*., 3.44; Webster 1993, 85; Levick 2017, 18.

we know he was not involved in any major conflict in the region. Josephus does mention that "(...) he [Vespasian] had pacified the West for Rome when the Germans were threatening to destabilize it (...)"[151]. However, it appears to be an exaggeration with the goal of augmenting Vespasian's career and name. There were in fact conflicts with the Germans in the beginning of Claudiu's reign, but those were mostly under control by the time Vespasian arrived in the area, or else he would not have been able to leave, no more than a year after, for an offensive campaign elsewhere. Moreover, Josephus' claim can be confidently put down to an amplification of Vespasian's role in this matter when we consider that he was in command of a single legion, hardly the necessary force to have "pacified the West". Nevertheless, there is no reason to question that the *II Augusta,* under Vespasian, still had an important role to play in the region allocated to it.[152] After all, the campaigning stage was always followed by a consolidation phase that was no less vital to the security of the *limes*. This is what Silius Italicus is probably referring to when he mentions that Vespasian "(...) set banks to restrain the Rhine (...)"[153]; meaning controlling the river and strengthening fortifications.

The Germanic tribes were the Dacian homologous in the Rhine. They caused no less problems to the Romans and refused to submit entirely, no matter how many pacification campaigns were sent against them. The ones that lived beyond the Rhine, still outside Roman grasp, were always on the lookout for an opportunity to cause damage to Rome and enrich themselves with plunder. Civilis' revolt was one of those occasions.

Julius Civilis was a prominent Batavian of royal descent and, Tacitus tells us, with a personal vendetta against Rome.[154] However, what prompted the revolt was a combination of different factors. The main source of dissent was without a doubt the civil war. On the one hand, because it lessened the Roman army presence in the area, as we have previously seen, thus enhancing the perception of a crumbling empire and emboldening treacherous feelings[155]; and on the other hand, because Civilis was apparently instructed by Antonius Primus to dissimulate a German revolt in order to delay Vitellian reinforcements, as attested by Tacitus.[156] Additionally, complications related to the conscription of Batavian forces to the Roman army had deepened the resentment of these peoples.[157] Civilis persuaded the Batavians to follow him and soon after other tribes from both within and beyond the Rhine joined the

[151] J. *BJ*, 3.4.
[152] Levick 2017, 18.
[153] Sil., 3.599.
[154] He is said to have been imprisoned by Nero and close to executed by Vitellius' armies (Tac. *Hist*., 4.13).
[155] J. *BJ*, 7.78-9.
[156] J. *BJ*, 7.78-9.
[157] Tac. *Hist*., 4.14.

revolt.[158] Civilis' initial victories against understrength Roman units served only to encourage the rebellious party and to entice the Germanic tribes to cross the Rhine. In this way, "(...) Germany awoke to the call of spoil and glory."[159] It is important to note that Civilis still claimed to be fighting for Vespasian against the Vitellians.[160]

The siege of the legionary camp at Vetera marked Civilis' greatest military undertaking of the revolt.[161] In the events that circumscribed this ultimate victory of the "Gallic Empire" over the Roman forces in the Rhine, four legions (*I Germanica*, *IV Macedonica*, *XVI Gallica*, *XXII Primigenia*) surrendered to Civilis, their officers killed or imprisoned and their allegiance switched from Rome to the rebellious alliance.[162] The recently victorious Flavian party did not take this affront lightly. In the place of the absent Vespasian, Mucianus sent Annius Gallus and Petilius Cerialis ahead of an impressive force composed of the *VIII Augusta*, *XI Claudia*, *XIII Gemina*, *XXI Rapax* and *II Adiutrix*, that were to be reinforced by the *XIV Gemina*, from Britain, and the *VI Victrix* and *I Adiutrix*, both coming from Hispania.[163] The size of the army sent to crush the revolt is illustrative of how it was seen as the main threat to the newly empowered Vespasian. After an ambiguously successful start, the Roman army gained momentum, collecting victories, and forcing Civilis to retreat to beyond the Rhine. The *XXI Rapax*, who had fought for Vitellius, proved its loyalty to the new emperor by leading Cerialis' forces to victory in one of the pivotal battles of the conflict.[164] Civilis' retreat and Rome's show of strength was enough to crush the rebellion and to bring back order to the Gallic and Germanic provinces. However, there were still internal and external matters that deserved the emperor's attention, after all, the threat beyond the Rhine was still very much alive and even though the revolt was under control, that did not change the fact that some legions had committed treason. Nicols rightly points out "(...) that the Flavians understood well that the conventional military values could not be restored in those units that had betrayed the empire."[165]

The *IV Macedonica* was, as we have seen, reformed into the *IV Flavia Felix* due to its mutinous role in the revolt. The *XVI Gallica* suffered a similar fate, as it was reformed by Vespasian into the *XVI Flavia Firma* and relocated to a region far from the Rhine. This was another legion in need of a fresh start. Vespasian could not ignore the depth of its betrayal, but still needed to be pragmatic for the sake of the empire's integrity. Once again, he gave the

[158] Tac. *Hist.*, 4.15.
[159] Tac. *Hist.*, 4.21.
[160] Levick 2017, 119.
[161] Tac. *Hist.*, 4.22-3.
[162] Tac. *Hist.*, 4.59-60; Levick 2017, 165.
[163] Tac. *Hist.*, 4.68, Nicols 2016, 63.
[164] Tac. *Hist.*, 4.77-8.
[165] Nicols 2016, 70.

disgraced legion a new name, a new location, new recruits and the opportunity to regain its honour. The *I Germanica* did not deserve Vespasian's benevolence and it was disbanded; turned into a footnote in the annals of History. This decision should be understood primarily as punishment for their proactive stance in the revolt, as they did not only mutinize, but were also directly responsible for the plot and murder of the Roman army commander, Dillius Vocula.[166] The *XV Primigenia* was also abolished for desertion coupled with its involvement in an earlier mutiny that resulted in the death of Vocula's predecessor, Hordeonius Flaccus.[167] The fact that the legion was already almost completely depleted made the decision easier. The *XXII Primigenia* was the only legion to have been spared of any reforms and to remain in the Rhine. It was stationed in Vetera where it replaced the base lost to the rebels with a new one.[168] The only way to make sense of this decision, is to infer that the legion was found innocent of treason and that it was simply forced to surrender; Vespasian would not have allowed for a provenly disloyal legion to go on as if nothing had happened.

Having dealt with the rebellious bunch, Vespasian went on to consolidate the region by redeploying troops along the Rhine. Apart from the *XXII Primigenia*, seven more legions were stationed in this *limes*. The *I Adiutrix*, that came from Hispania, and the *XIV Gemina*, that made its way from Britain, were to share a home in Mogontiacum. They were both legions of proven loyalty and the *XIV Gemina* was quite experienced, it had inclusively shared the field of battle with Vespasian in the context of the invasion of Britain. The *X Gemina* built a new fortress to the North of Vetera, in Noviomagus, where it remained. This was in the heart of Batavian territory and a clear gesture of assertion of domain by Vespasian amongst those who had enflamed the rebellion. The other four legions were placed in strategic positions along the Rhine to deter further uprisings or incursions and to prepare a possible push forward. The *VI Victrix* was stationed in Novaesium, the *VIII Augusta* in Argentoratum, the *XI Claudia* in Vindonissa and the *XXI Rapax* in Bonna.[169] Each of these had proven to be loyal and dependable legions, which was exactly what Vespasian needed in a region that had been unsettled by a revolt.

With one more legion than it had in 68, the Rhine was, under Vespasian, the region of the Empire with the greatest number and concentration of legions.[170] If we add the Danube forces, then we find that more than half the legions of the Empire were stationed along the two rivers. This represented a shift in the strategic importance of both regions, something that will

[166] Tac. *Hist.*, 4.57-9.
[167] Tac. *Hist.*, 4.36.
[168] Dart 2016, 213.
[169] *Ibidem*.
[170] *Id.*, 212.

be analysed in the next chapter. Indeed, after consolidating the region, Vespasian began pushing towards unconquered land, more precisely in the direction of the region known as *Agri Decumates*.[171] This was an area that encroached on Roman territory and that could become a major vulnerability if not under control, as it allowed for a number of flanking manoeuvres against Roman fortresses on the Rhine and Danube. This policy would be followed successively by Vespasian's successors.

1.3 Britain

Vespasian's *II Augusta* was chosen to join Aulus Plautius, the supreme commander of the force appointed by Claudius, in the invasion of Britain of 43.[172] This was Vespasian's first post as a legate, and he took advantage of the opportunity to make a name for himself. The four-legion army (*IX Hispana*, *XIV Gemina* and *XX Valeria* were the other three) converged in Gesoriacum, North of Gaul, and prepared for the amphibious assault. After a delay caused by soldiery superstition, the army crossed the channel and set foot in Britain with no initial opposition.[173] The brothers Caratacus and Togodumnus were successively defeated by the Roman army and driven back North where they had gathered a major armed contingent just beyond the Medway river.[174] In the battle that followed, Vespasian and his *II Augusta* seem to have played a preponderant role, leading the assault on the enemy position and holding-fast.[175] The remaining enemy forces retreated to the Thames and Roman presence in Britain was subsequently established with the conquest of the Catuvellauni capital of Camulodunum.[176] Aulus Plautius decided to consolidate his position before advancing further North and entrusted Vespasian with the task of pacifying the Southwest of the island. This was not an easy job, but Vespasian seems to have excelled at it, according to Suetonius, "(...) he [Vespasian] was transferred to Britain and engaged the enemy on thirty occasions. He brought under our authority two very strong tribes, more than twenty townships and the Isle of Wight, which is next to Britain (...)".[177] The extent of Vespasian's success in this task can be measured by his rewards, for he was granted the *ornamenta triumphalia* in addition to a double priesthood.[178]

[171] *Ibidem*.
[172] Tac. *Hist*., 3.44.
[173] D.C., 60.19.1-5.
[174] They were the two sons of the late Cunobeline, king of the Catuvellauni, and led the resistance against Rome; see Webster 1993, 73-4, for more detail.
[175] D.C., 60.20.2-4; Webster 1993, 99.
[176] D.C., 60.21.2-4.
[177] Suet., *Ves*., 4.
[178] Suet., *Ves*., 4.

The seemingly unproblematic conquest of the south of Britain was but a clever disguise, hiding the storm of complications that the newly founded province would reveal. The events of the civil war had once again encouraged Rome's enemies to rise against her. In this case, internal strife amongst the Brigantes had led an anti-Roman king to power, causing instability throughout the province.[179] Upon becoming emperor, Vespasian did not leave the Roman army of Britain in idleness, instead he appointed competent commanders to maintain a policy of expansion and pacification towards the North, which was followed by his successors.[180] Petillius Cerialis, who had proven his competence when dealing with the Civilis revolt, was sent to Britain by Vespasian to assume governorship of the province.[181] At his disposal he had the *II Augusta*, *IX Hispana* and *XX Valeria*, all of which had been there since the initial invasion of 43, and so with experience and knowledge of combat in Britain. Additionally, Cerialis brought with him the *II Adiutrix* from the Rhine, to replace *XIV Gemina* who had been called to assist in crushing the Civilis revolt, as we have seen.[182] Between 71 and 73/4, Cerialis pushed North and subjugated the Brigantes.[183] His successor, Sex. Julius Frontinus (73/4-77) moved westward into Wales, conquering the Silures. Frontinus' successor, Cn. Julius Agricola (77-84), whose governorship extends beyond the reign of Vespasian, consolidated the conquest of Wales, and extended Roman control further north, already into Scottish territory.[184]

The four legions of Britain moved around the province depending on the needs of war, however, we can pin-point their camps' most probable locations in the mid-70s. The *II Augusta* was stationed at Isca, in an effort to consolidate the conquest of Wales. Assisting with the control of recently conquered Wales and at the same time positioned to keep the pressure to the North, there was the *II Adiutrix* in Deva. At the edge of the northern *limes*, the *IX Hispana* was placed in Eburacum, with a clear focus on the offensive campaigns. Finally, the *XX Valeria* was most likely centralised, either at Viroconium or Lindum, functioning in an *ad hoc* capacity.[185] What Vespasian had started as a young legate, he finished as *princeps*.

1.4 The East

The East was the site of Vespasian's chief nomination and the base from which he launched his bid to become emperor of Rome. In 66, the Jewish rose in rebellion, "They slew

[179] Tac. *Hist*., 3.45.
[180] Dart 2016, 218.
[181] J. *BJ*, 7.82; Levick 2017, 173; Dart 2016, 219.
[182] Dart 2016, 218-9.
[183] Tac. *Ag*., 17.
[184] Tac. *Ag.*, 17-41; see Levick 2017, 172-5, et Dart 2016, 218-9, for more detail on the different campaigns in Britain.
[185] *Ibidem*.

their governor and on top of this routed the consular legate of Syria as he was bringing aid, seizing a legionary eagle."[186] Vespasian was the man chosen by Nero to reassert Roman control in the region of Judea. He began by pacifying Galilee between the years of 67 and 68, as it was the major area of dissent and filled with enemy strongholds, so that he could then advance towards Jerusalem.[187] However, the events of the civil war prevented him from putting his plans into action. Since Vespasian was now emperor and his responsibilities were of a more holistic nature, he placed his son Titus in charge of the Jewish campaign, urging him to take Jerusalem with swiftness.[188]

The siege of Jerusalem, in the year 70, was a brutal event that lasted almost five months and resulted in a crushing victory for the Romans.[189] After that, the already weak Jewish resistance crumbled. Reduced to a few isolated strongholds, the Jewish revolt was finally extinguished in 73 when its last fortress, Masada, was taken by Flavius Silva.[190] The elimination of the East's main pole of internal contention, was a vital step to stabilise the region and to legitimise the Flavians in Rome. However, this was not the only source of instability in the area. In Pontus, a royal fleet commander by the name of Anicetus used the civil war as an excuse to start an uprising in the name of Vitellius.[191] The unexpected character of his call to arms allowed for an initial phase of success, where an auxiliary cohort was slaughtered, as Tacitus reports.[192] Vespasian sent Virdius Geminus ahead of a strong contingent of legionaries that swiftly put an end to the rebellion.[193]

The principal military changes operated in the East by Vespasian were a result of strategic necessity given the threats posed by Parthia, who had been a nuisance to Rome ever since Carrhae, and by the Alani, a tribe of the Scythians who had started to venture further west in their incursions.[194] In order to consolidate Roman presence in the north of the Euphrates, thus diminishing vulnerabilities in the *limes* while maintaining the option of an offensive operation eastward (which in itself strengthened the Roman position), Vespasian took a series of calculated steps.[195] First, he annexed Lesser Armenia and the client kingdom of Commagene, in the north of Syria. Josephus claims that the official reason for the invasion of the latter was related to an accusation of treason against Antiochus IV[196], however, it seems more likely that

[186] Suet. *Ves*., 4.
[187] J. *BJ*, 4.490-1; Tac. *Hist*., 2.4 et 5.10.
[188] J. *BJ*, 4.658; Tac. *Hist*., 2.82.
[189] The description of the siege of Jerusalem lasts for all of Book 5 and 6 of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*.
[190] J. *BJ*, 7.275-407.
[191] Tac. *Hist*., 3.47.
[192] Tac. *Hist*., 3.47.
[193] Tac. *Hist*., 3.48.
[194] J. *BJ*, 7.244-51.
[195] Levick 2017, 182.
[196] J. *BJ*, 7.220-2.

it was a false pretext. After all, Antiochus had supported both Vespasian and Titus against the Jewish, sending troops on both occasions.[197] Additionally, Vespasian received Antiochus and his family in Rome, after the invasion had been secured, and treated them with the utmost diligence[198], unlike he would treat a traitor. Nevertheless, these two conquests allowed for a better control of the Euphrates, as it permitted the posting of legions in the area, and reduced Parthian influence, thus eliminating a neuralgic vulnerability in the *limes*. Secondly, he reinstated the province of Galatia-Cappadocia under a consulate legate in charge of two legions.[199] This was a way to delegate control in a manner which allowed for a quicker and more effective response to external threats, having the added benefit of diminishing the governor of Syria's influence and responsibility in the region.[200] Finally, a total number of six legions were placed in strategically advantageous positions. In Cappadocia there were two, the newly created *XVI Flavia Firma* in Satala and *XII Fulminata* in Melitene.[201] The former near the place of Anicetus' revolt and defending a possible Alani point of entry[202], the latter embedded in the northern Euphrates *limes*. Two others supported *XII Fulminata* in northern Mesopotamia: *VI Ferrata* in Samosata, which was the capital of the recently annexed kingdom of Commagene, and *IV Scythica* further south in Zeugma.[203] The vanquished city of Jerusalem became the home of one of its conquerors, namely *Legio X Fretensis*, a necessary posting given the dimension of the Jewish War.[204] The *III Gallica* stayed in Syria, although its exact position is not clear from the sources[205]; most likely in *XII Fulminata*'s former base in Raphanaea[206], given its strategic position to control the greater part of the province.

The region that Vespasian last knew before becoming emperor was reformed, expanded and consolidated in the manner described. The East thus turned from chaos to order during Vespasian's reign.

1.5 North Africa and Hispania

In Hispania there were no major military developments as a result of Vespasian's action. The province remained peaceful throughout the events of the civil war and also after, to the point that it was with ease that both its legions were called to assist in crushing the Civilis

[197] J. *BJ*, 2.500 et 3.68.
[198] J. *BJ*, 7.238-44.
[199] Suet. *Ves*., 8; Levick 2017, 182.
[200] Levick 2017, 182-3.
[201] J. *BJ*, 7.18; Dart 2016, 216.
[202] Suet. *Ves*., 8.
[203] J. *BJ*, 7.225-30; Dart 2016, 217; Levick 2017, 183.
[204] J. *BJ*, 7.5 et 7.17.
[205] Tac. *Hist*., 4.39.
[206] J. *BJ*, 7.18.

revolt.[207] Eventually, *VII Gemina* was sent to Hispania to replace the two that had left, showing once again that this was a region with a low level of disturbance and of military importance at this time.

The same cannot be said about North Africa. Here, disturbances started in the year 70, when an apparent plot to revolt against Rome was discovered and crushed.[208] The senatorial governor, Lucius Piso, was accused of sedition and assassinated at the hands of Valerius Festus'[209] men, in Carthage.[210] Trouble did not end there, for a belligerent tribe, called the Garamantes, executed a series of incursions into Roman territory, around the city of Leptis Magna, forcing Festus to intervene and ultimately causing their retreat.[211] This tribe had been an inconvenience to Rome for some time and it was during Vespasian's reign that they were defeated definitively. This allowed for a pacification of the North-West of Roman Africa and for a further expansion towards the South.[212]

Three legions were stationed in the North of Africa: *III Augusta*; *III Cyrenaica* and *XXII Deiotariana*. The last two did not move from their posts in the relatively peaceful, but very important province of Egypt, although the two did send some cohorts to assist in the taking of Jerusalem.[213] The *III Augusta* moved from its home in Ammaedara a few kilometres south-west to Theveste, in Numidia.[214]

2. Roman Grand Strategy

Edward Luttwak did a great service to the study of Roman history by introducing the field of grand strategy.[215] Of course his work based itself on a series of false assumptions that have been sufficiently disproved over the years by different scholars.[216] However, where some have reached the misguided conclusion that the study of Roman grand strategy is therefore "anachronistic and inappropriate"[217], others have chosen to redefine it to better frame the Roman world and in that way not to deprive Ancient history from an enriching field of study.[218]

[207] Tac. *Hist*., 4.68.
[208] Tac. *Hist*., 4.48-50.
[209] Valerius Festus was the legate of III Augusta (Tac. *Hist*., 4.49).
[210] Tac. *Hist*., 4.48-50.
[211] Tac. *Hist*., 4.50.
[212] Plin. *HN*, 5.5; Levick 2017, 172; Dart 2016, 218.
[213] Tac. *Hist*., 5.1; J. *BJ*, 5.44.
[214] Levick 2017, 172.
[215] Luttwak 1976, *Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third*.
[216] Kagan 2006, 335-46, does an excellent job of summarising Luttwak's arguments and offering their respective rebuttals, basing herself on the most prominent critics of each of Luttwak's assumptions.
[217] *Id.*, 348. See Kagan 2006, 334 et 346-8, including notes, for an overall list of scholars who adopted this view.
[218] Namely, Kagan 2006, 333-62.

In this chapter, following Kagan's suggestion[219], I will focus on a specific approach to the study of Roman grand strategy, which is tied with military resource allocation. This choice is, on the one hand, a result of necessity due to time constrictions for the present thesis and, on the other hand, a consequence of the available sources, as this is the perspective that is better supported by evidence[220]. The objective is to try to understand, through the analysis of the distribution of the army, what Vespasian's main military objectives were – his strategic priorities from an imperial point of view. Resource allocation will also shed light on the balance between stability and conquest throughout Vespasian's reign, thus clearing the way for the identification of the similarities and distinctions in policy in the different provinces. Furthermore, I will consubstantiate my analysis with sources of a more symbolic or ideologic nature that have strong implications in an interpretation of Vespasian's grand strategy with regards to public opinion.[221]

2.1 Vespasian's Grand Strategy

Vespasian's grand strategy can be summarised as one of stability over conquest.[222] From this it does not follow that conquest did not happen during Vespasian's reign or that it was not still a vital principle of imperial ideology, it only states that stability was the priority. The option for this policy has its roots in the events of the civil war as well as its consequences, all of which have been described in the previous chapter. There was destruction in Rome, rebellion in the provinces and an empire-wide perception of instability.[223] In this context, Vespasian decided to make his main priority the consolidation of imperial territory.

Tacitus starts his fourth book by stating that Vitellius' death "had stopped the war without initiating peace"[224], and even though the Roman historian was referring to the events in the capital of the empire, the same could have been said about the majority of the Roman territory in this period. There were multiple disturbances and points of dissension throughout

[219] Kagan 2006, 354-61.
[220] *Id*., 354.
[221] See B. Campbell 2002, 132-5, for detail on the management of public opinion with regards to war after Augustus.
[222] Resource allocation as well as decisions on war and peace were strictly the emperor's responsibility, although probably with the help of advisers (B. Campbell 2002, 9-10; Kagan 2006, 350-1). This could prove to be a problem for emperors with no military experience, even putting into question the notion of grand strategy (B. Campbell 2002, 17), however in this case that is not a matter of concern, as Vespasian was not only well versed in military matters, but had also covered the greater part of the empire from tribune to army supreme commander. It is also acknowledged that some strategic measures were taken in an *ad hoc* context (B. Campbell 2002, 17-8; Kagan 2006, 347), but that does not put into question the overall policy, as those instances were in accordance with it.
[223] Suet. *Ves*., 1.
[224] Tac. *Hist*., 4.1.

the provinces and limited resources to aptly respond to such threats.[225] Therefore, there was a need to establish a goal and then prioritise objectives, so that the different resources could be effectively allocated. The goal, as we have seen, was stability through consolidation and peace. The objectives to reach said goal were many, but Vespasian prioritised one: crushing Civilis' revolt. The proximity to Rome, the size and depth of the rebellion, given that it had forced the surrender of four legions (*I Germanica*, *IV Macedonica*, *XVI Gallica*, *XXII Primigenia*, as described in the last chapter)[226] and its potentially problematic geographical position, as it could galvanise the Danube to follow in its path and block communications between Rome and Britain, were all strong reasons that most likely had an impact on the contemplation and making of this decision.

The analysis of Roman military resource allocation for this period seems to leave no doubt that this was in fact the policy chosen by Vespasian in detriment of all others. Campaigns were put on hold until the revolt was taken care of, no offensive movements elsewhere in the empire were set in motion and several legions were relocated from their provincial stations. *I Adiutrix* and *VI Victrix* were called from Hispania, leaving this region depleted of any legions.[227] This speaks to the prioritising character of Civilis' revolt in a grand strategic perspective, as one region is neglected in favour of another, and to the way in which Vespasian viewed Hispania: as a low-risk and low-priority province. *XIV Gemina* was summoned from Britain, leaving the province temporarily under strengthened.[228] Once again we witness a prioritisation of a region over another, aiming at a specific objective that if successful will ultimately benefit both. The three legions that remained in Britain were considered enough to hold imperial possessions in the area, but not enough to begin any offensive operations. Therefore, by allocating military resources in this way, we can infer that Vespasian is putting his plans of conquest in Britain on hold, for he deems stability as the priority. This can be attested by the fact that Petilius Cerialis, one of the men entrusted with crushing the rebellion, had instructions to assume the position of governor of Britain and to begin the pacification and annexation of the area beyond Roman control, taking *II Adiutrix* with him to replace *XIV Gemina* which stayed in the Rhine.[229] This he did, between 71 and 73/4, but only after dealing

[225] Disturbances in the Italian Peninsula (Tac. *Hist*., 2.56 et 4.3); Civilis' revolt in Northern Gaul and the Rhine (Tac. *Hist*., 4.12-37, 54-79 et 5.14-26; J. *BJ*, 7.75-88); the Jewish revolt in Judea (Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*); Anicetus' revolt in Pontus (Tac. *Hist.*, 3.47); Dacian/Sarmatian incursions in the Danube (Tac. *Hist*., 1.79 et 3.46; J. *BJ*, 7.89-95); Disturbances in North Africa (Tac. *Hist*., 4.48-50) and disturbances in Britain prompted by the Brigantes (Tac. *Hist.*, 3.45) are the highlights.
[226] Tac. *Hist*., 4.59-60; Levick 2017, 165.
[227] Tac. *Hist*., 4.68.
[228] Tac. *Hist*., 4.68.
[229] J. *BJ*, 7.82-3; Tac. *Hist*., 4.68; Tac. *Ag*. 17.

with Civilis' revolt.[230] The existence of plans to enhance Roman dominion in Britain is further substantiated by the fact that the successors of Cerialis, at least until Vespasian's death, maintained the same policy of conquest.[231] *XIII Gemina*, which was meant to reinforce the Danube, was also diverted to the Rhine to join Cerialis' forces, after which it moved on to Pannonia.[232] In fact, the region of the Danube, which was being assailed by Dacian and Sarmatian incursions since the year 69, was not fully reinforced until after the Civilis revolt was under control.[233] This was done, in addition to the already mentioned *XIII Gemina*, with the deployment of *IV Flavia Felix*, a newly created legion from the ashes of the disgraced *IV Macedonica*, and again the product of the end of Civilis' revolt (more detail regarding these two legions in the previous chapter).[234] Almost the entirety of the empire was thus managed for the pursuit of a distinct priority, which once it was achieved, opened the way to a series of other minor objectives of consolidation and peace that ultimately led to the prime goal of stability. All of this can be inferred through the analysis of military resource allocation.

Consolidation of territory does not imply a defensive policy, instead it implies the pursuit of stability, which is the proper basis for any defensive or offensive actions.[235] In Britain, this consolidation led to the conquest of Wales and of a greater portion of the north of the island; in the Rhine, it led to advancements in the region of *Agri Decumates*; in North Africa, it led to a push towards the south of Numidia and in the East, it led to annexation of Lesser Armenia and Commagene.[236] The reign of Vespasian was not devoid of conquest, as the previous examples show, but all of the former was predicated on a stability which was prioritised, a policy chosen for its contrast with the years of the civil war. It was prudent of Vespasian to not want to enter any external conflicts when there was still internal instability. In fact, all the aforementioned conquests were achieved after the empire was again in a state of general stability, meaning after Civilis' revolt was down and all the legions were redistributed into their respective provinces. This relocation of the army also gives us an insight into which provinces were prioritised by Vespasian, either for their conquest potential or for their stability or lack thereof. There were essentially three major changes from the times of Nero. The first was the demotion of Hispania from the list of military priorities, as it was from there on secured by a single legion, emphasised by the fact that it only arrived there a few years after the end of Civilis' revolt. The second was the establishment of the Rhine and Danube as the two main

[230] Tac. *Ag*., 17; J. *BJ*, 7.82-3; Levick 2017, 172-5; Dart 2016, 218-9.
[231] Tac. *Ag*., 17-22; Levick 2017, 172-5; Dart 2016, 218-9.
[232] Tac. *Hist*., 4.68.
[233] Tac. *Hist*., 1.79 et 3.46; J. *BJ*, 7.89-95.
[234] Dart 2016, 215.
[235] B. Campbell 2002, 15.
[236] Tac. *Ag*., 17-22; J. *BJ*, 7.219-43; Plin. *HN*, 5.5; Levick 2017, 172.

regions of interest. The Rhine went from seven legions under Nero to eight under Vespasian, the new addition stationed in Batavian territory (Civlis' homeland), and the Danube similarly reinforced with one more legion, bringing the total number from six to seven.[237] This meant that fifteen of the twenty-nine legions available empire-wide, were stationed between the Danube and the Rhine. Thirdly, the confirmation of the emergence of the East as a high priority region. This is evident from the reinstatement of the province of Galatia-Cappadocia under a consulate legate in charge of two legions, from the improved military presence with a total of six legions and from the offensive manoeuvres against Lesser Armenia and Commagene.[238]

There is, however, an apparent exception to the stability argument that can be found in the taking of Jerusalem by Titus. This event, which marked the official end of the Jewish War (what followed was the extermination of the last isolated cells of resistance), even though it was a struggle to bring back stability to the East, as it represented the retaking of Roman territory that had been lost in a revolt, was treated by Vespasian as a situation of conquest. The extent to which this is true can be judged by Josephus' extensive account of the ostensible triumph celebrations that happened in Rome following the fall of Jerusalem.[239] To this we could also add the numismatic evidence of this period that makes reference to the conquest of Judaea, repeating the terms IVDAEA CAPTA (see images 3 and 4)[240]; the construction of *Templum Pacis* in 75, which was both a symbol of the stability achieved and a reminder of the aforementioned conquest[241]; Vespasian's Arch, celebrating the triumph over the Jewish; the *Amphitheatrum Flauium*, with one of its inscriptions stating that it had been partly built with Vespasian's booty from the Jewish War, and Titus' arch (see image 7), that still commemorated the capture of Jerusalem in the year 81.[242] Once again we need to bring back a previous idea that although stability was prioritised, conquest did not lose its place in the strategic landscape of the empire and neither in the latter's ideological premises. Stability for the empire was not only dependent on the military achievements of the army, but also in the security of power in

[237] Dart 2016, 212-5.
[238] Suet. *Ves*., 8; J. *BJ*, 7.219-43; Levick 2017, 182.
[239] J. *BJ*, 7.123-57; also mentioned by Suetonius (*Ves*. 8).
[240] Hekster (2007, 349) states that it is clear that imperial coinage served the purpose of propagating the ruling regime's ideological claims. The numismatic evidence reveals yet another interesting insight to Vespasian's propaganda that is well studied by Cody (2003, 103-23); through a comparison with pre-Flavian coinage, Cody found that there was a correspondence between the types of coins that were coined by Augustus and by the Flavians, mostly Vespasian and Titus, which illustrates a clear attempt of Vespasian to associate his conqueror status with that of Augustus, and at the same time to associate the stability of Augustus reign with that of Vespasian.
[241] Lee 2020, 37.
[242] D.C., 66.15.1; Suet. *Ves*., 9; J. *BJ*, 7.158; B. Campbell 2002, 139 et 141-2; Hekster 2007, 342-3. Josephus (*BJ*, 7.158-62) tells us that much of the spoil gathered after the siege of Jerusalem was on display inside the Templum Pacis and so reminded the viewers of Rome's military achievements. See B. Campbell 2002, 135-40, for the role of construction in the public perception of war and power, and Hekster 2007, 342-6, for military propaganda in monumental construction.

Rome and in the projection of strength and order both inwardly and outwardly.[243] Treating the capture of Jerusalem as the culmination of a great conquering campaign, solved both these problems without pressuring Vespasian to enter an actual large-scale offensive campaign. The ideological necessities of the Roman empire were thus satisfied, the new dynasty in power was legitimised and, in that way, stabilised Rome's political game, while at the same time, a message was broadcasted, in the several ways referred to above, to every corner of the empire and beyond stating that Rome was strong again and that order had been restored.[244]

Finally, a more literary look at the different written sources can offer us some insight into the topics discussed in this chapter, as they will reveal the public perception of Vespasian's grand strategy. Starting with Suetonius, the biographer highlights stability as the priority and most important achievement of Vespasian, firstly at the very start of his narrative, "Because of the revolt and deaths of three emperors, the empire had been long unsure and, as it were, wandering without direction. It was the Flavian family that finally picked it up and consolidated it (...)"[245]; secondly, and in a much more explicit way, "(...) throughout the whole period of his rule he [Vespasian] regarded nothing as having higher priority than first of all to stabilise and then also to beautify the virtually shattered and tottering state."[246] On the other hand, the conquest of Judea and the subsequent triumph earn solely a passing mention.[247] In Tacitus' *Histories* there is the implicit idea of disorder being turned to order with Vespasian's arrival to power, however, in *Agricola* that idea is made clearer, "But when Vespasian recovered Britain, together with the rest of the world, the generals were great, the armies outstanding and the hopes of our enemies diminished."[248] Regarding the Jewish War, most of Tacitus' work on it is gone, nevertheless, the little that we do have illustrates the importance of this conquest for the fate of the Flavians, "It also seemed advisable that Titus should remain in control of the armies to confront all developments affecting the new dynasty, whether these were good or bad."[249] Josephus, in his *Bellum Judaicum*, makes a reference to the stability and peace achieved by Vespasian in: "After the triumphs, and with the Roman Empire now established on an absolutely firm foundation, Vespasian determined to build a temple and sanctuary of Peace."[250] Furthermore, his entire work on the Jewish revolt, purposefully or not, enhances the

[243] Hekster (2007, 339) summarises it well: "All Roman emperors waged war. If not in reality, certainly in the public perception. Roman leaders, in republic and empire, had to abide by a well-developed system of political values, in which military success, alongside and above other cardinal *virtutes*, was paramount."
[244] Goldsworthy 2007a, 369-70. Le Bohec (1994, 208), describes Roman imperial ideology insightfully, stating that it "(...) was built mainly on a string of advantages, victory – peace – prosperity."
[245] Suet. *Ves*., 1.
[246] Suet. *Ves*., 8.
[247] Suet. *Ves*., 4 et 8.
[248] Tac. *Ag*., 17.
[249] Tac. *Hist*., 5.10.
[250] J. *BJ*, 7.158, Josephus is referring to the aforementioned *Templum Pacis*.

significance of the aforementioned conflict to the category of a proper conquest campaign, while at the same time legitimising the Flavians through the repeated praise and highlight of both Vespasian and Titus' achievements.

These examples represent only a small sample and are not, by themselves, conclusive proof of Vespasian's grand strategy of stability over conquest (the Jewish War being a way to maintain this same grand strategy while suppressing the ideological and political needs of the Empire, as previously argued). However, when placed against the background of the remaining evidence discussed in this chapter (military resource allocation plus numismatics, public construction under the Flavians and the triumph) it strengthens the argument. The topic of Roman grand strategy, and more specifically of Vespasian's grand strategy, has a lot of potential and deserves further research. However, as it is not the sole object of study of this thesis, that will not be done here.

Part III – Profile of a Commander

"All in all, apart from his avarice, he was a match for the generals of old."
(Tac. *Hist*., 2.5)

1. The Campaigns

Vespasian was involved in three major campaigns as a commander. The first was the invasion of Britain, in which he served as the legate of *Legio II Augusta*; the second was the Jewish War, in which he was the supreme commander of a vast force composed of legions, auxiliaries and allied soldiers, and the third was already as emperor in the civil war against Vitellius, although in this case his command was an indirect one. In this chapter, we will look at the strategy behind the three campaigns through Vespasian's eyes.

We will try to reconstruct the thought process that led to the different strategic options in the context of each campaign as a whole (the tactical element will be dealt with in subsequent chapters), so that we can make sense of them. This will also be an opportunity to analyse Vespasian's military management characteristics, both as legate and as commander of an army, and whether there were notable changes in this with the passing of the years or the increase in responsibility.

1.1 Britain (43-47)

The command of the army that invaded Britain in 43 was entrusted, by Claudius, to Aulus Plautius, "a senator of great renown".[251] Vespasian held a second most prominent position, as legate of *II Augusta* (the other three legions involved were *IX Hispana, XIV Gemina* and *XX Valeria*). Since this chapter deals only with Vespasian's campaign strategy, we will not be looking into the landing operations or the initial confrontations in the rivers Medway and Thames, as all of the above were Aulus Plautius' strategic decisions, although most likely advised by Vespasian and the other legates. Accordingly, we shall focus on the second phase of the invasion of Britain, in which Vespasian was sent to the South-west of the island with instructions to pacify the region.[252] In this context, even though he had a main strategic directive from his superior in command, Vespasian was free to choose the route he considered best to achieve the aforementioned objective. In this consolidation phase of the campaign, Vespasian had an autonomous command of his legion, and it is, therefore, a good place to pursue our analysis of his strategic mind.

The literary sources that concern this campaign are, unfortunately, very scarce. Moreover, the material sources, although helpful, can only take us so far in the understanding of the strategy involved, as they give little to no evidence for a timeline of the events. Nevertheless, we can still reach some important and well-founded conclusions with the

[251] D.C., 60.19.1.
[252] Suet. *Ves.*, 4.

evidence that we do possess. First, we need to understand why A. Plautius deemed it necessary to send Vespasian and his legion on this south-western detour; knowing this will give us important insight for our analysis. The answer is directly related to logistics, on the one hand, and to security on the other.

Vespasian took on this task presumably after the fall of the Catuvellauni capital of Camulodunum.[253] This meant that a great effort northward had been made by the Roman army, but that the western and southern flanks had been neglected (see map 1). This, of course, with the goal of disabling Cunobeline's sons, who represented the *casus belli* for the invasion, and to present an opportunity for Claudius to use the conquest as a means of legitimation in Rome.[254] However, this left some threats to Plautius' army and the general success of the Roman enterprise in Britain unattended. The existence of an anti-Roman sentiment amongst some of the most belligerent tribes of the south of Britain, namely the Durotrigues, was highly problematic. On the one hand, the position of these tribes along the south coast could put into question Roman logistical support, as the army was mostly dependent on reinforcement and resupplying coming by sea from Northern Gaul, in addition to possible incursions targeting Plautius' inland supply line, that was stretched all the way to the initial landing point at Richborough. And on the other hand, there was a more straightforward threat of an unexpected flanking attack by one of these tribes that could prove fatal to the Roman war effort. Therefore, Vespasian's assignment aimed at securing these two objectives: ensuring the security of the Roman supply/reinforcement lines while at the same time covering the south-western flank of the main army.

Vespasian identified two ways of completing his mission. First, through the relentless conquest of the southernmost enemy townships or hill-forts; Suetonius sets the number of captured *oppida* at over twenty.[255] This was of vital importance to open additional friendly ports, in order to secure reinforcements, supplies and ultimately commerce, and to ensure that ships coming from Gaul, that would accidentally be carried astray, would invariably land on friendly shores. Tacitus, in his *Agricola*, is quite explicit about the difficulties in navigating the sea that separates Gaul from Britain, and Cassius Dio further substantiates this claim when he reports that the Roman fleet was driven back when on their way to invade Britain.[256] The option to prioritise the conquest of the southern coast, as opposed to going further inland, is supported

[253] Levick 2017, 19; Webster (1993, 107) suggests an earlier timeline, placing Vespasian in the South-west even before Claudius' arrival. However, it seems more likely that the whole army (or at least its highest-ranking officers) would have been gathered to receive the emperor and accompany him in the official capture of Camulodunum.
[254] D.C., 60.19.1, 60.20.1 et 60.21.2-5; Webster 1993, 73-4 et 103.
[255] Suet. *Ves*., 4.
[256] Tac. *Ag*., 10; D.C., 60.19.4.

by Suetonius, who refers to the capture of the Isle of Wight, which is situated off the southern coast of Britain, by Vespasian.[257] If we assume, as we have in this chapter, that Vespasian aimed to control the southern coastline, then the Isle of Wight, due to its position, was of paramount importance (see map 1). Further evidence is found in the location of the hill-forts of Maiden Castle, Hod Hill and Waddon Hill; all confidently proven to have been taken by Vespasian's *II Augusta*, and all located within a short distance of the southern coast (see map 1).[258] To this we can also add the location of the main Roman operational bases used by Vespasian during his campaign. These included Fishbourne as the headquarters of the *II Augusta*, a fort at Hod Hill for one of its cohorts, two navy bases at Hamworthy and Topsham and the later legionary base of Isca Dumnoniorum (see map 1).[259] Once again, all of the above were located in the southern coast of Britain, thus adding weight to the remaining evidence in supporting the argument that Vespasian prioritised the control of the southern coast, as well as confirming the reasoning behind it.

The other way to effectively pacify the South-west, and that was adopted by Vespasian, was to target specific troublesome tribes in the region. Taking in consideration Vespasian's strategic objectives, confrontations with local tribes were naturally inevitable. However, the pursuit of the abject destruction, or alternatively, the absolute submission of said tribes, was taking it a step further, and moving from an *ad hoc*-like approach to a premeditated, strategic decision. That is why Suetonius mentions that "He [Vespasian] brought under our authority two very strong tribes (...)"[260], a very specific number that does not appear adulterated. The first of these tribes has been confidently identified as the Durotriges, but the second is still a matter of debate; Webster proposes the Belgae due to their geographic position and the shape of the defensive structures, while Levick leaves it undetermined.[261] We can infer that these tribes were deemed too dangerous to be left in an ambiguous state of conquest and were, therefore, targeted to exhaustion so as not to represent a continuous threat for Roman operations in Britain.

Vespasian expanded Roman dominion over a great section of land in the south of Britain, and he did so in a relatively short amount of time. Given that these were enemy infested lands, one could argue that it was imprudent of Vespasian to move so fast, as that meant stretching out the supply lines and leaving his forces vulnerable to all sorts of flanking manoeuvres. However, in the competitive political life of Rome, men like Vespasian were not

[257] Suet. *Ves*. 4; Webster 1993, 107.
[258] Levick 2017, 22; Webster 1993, 109-110.
[259] Levick 2017, 22; Webster 1993, 124.
[260] Suet. *Ves*., 4.
[261] Levick 2017, 22; Webster 1993, 107-8.

given a lot of opportunities, therefore he had to take advantage of the ones that he earned. Evaluating the balance between risk and reward, a young legate like Vespasian, probably did not think twice before opting for a high-risk high-reward strategy, which if successful, would establish his career, over a more prudent approach that would most likely have kept his name in obscurity. For Vespasian, the strategy paid off, as his success impressed his superiors all the way to Claudius himself, who granted him *ornamenta triumphalia* and a double priesthood on account of his campaign in the south-west of Britain.[262]

1.2 Galilee and Judaea (67-69)

The campaign to crush the Jewish rebellion was Vespasian's most prestigious nomination of his career, but also the most challenging one. Opposing him were a series of impregnable strongholds filled with men who had almost entirely destroyed a Roman legion, and that would rather die than submit to Rome.[263] Additionally, there was immense pressure for a decisive victory, as the revolt was both an embarrassment for Nero and the Roman army, but it could also galvanise anti-Roman sentiments throughout the empire and possibly grow to a bigger threat level should Parthia become involved.[264]

Vespasian took charge of Judaea's fate in Antioch, in the spring of 67.[265] By this time, the revolt had spread beyond Judaea, covering virtually all of Galilee. Therefore, Vespasian decided to muster his forces in Ptolemaïs.[266] This city was located by the coast of Galilee (see map 2), which prevented it from being cut off from supplies and reinforcements, as it controlled access to the sea, and at the same time, it was in close proximity with the main poles of dissension in the region, allowing for swift military action, if necessary; overall, it was well balanced strategic location for Vespasian's base of operations.[267] This time, unlike in Britain, he was the supreme commander of an imposing army. Under his command there were three legions: *V Macedonica* and *X Fretensis*, which he had brought with him from their initial assembling location in Antioch, and *XV Apollinaris*, which was brought from Alexandria by Vespasian's son, Titus, who was one of the legates.[268] *XII Fulminata* was probably not chosen by Vespasian due to its recent disgrace, as it would have been under strengthened and with very low morale; there was no room for failure and *XII Fulminata* was most likely deemed a

[262] Suet. *Ves*. 4.
[263] Suet. *Ves*. 4; The legion mentioned was Cestius Gallus' *XII Fulminata* and it was crushed while retreating from the failed siege of Jerusalem of 66 (J. *BJ*, 2.540-55; Suet. *Ves*., 4).
[264] Levick 2017, 32.
[265] J. *BJ*, 3.29.
[266] J. *BJ*, 3.29.
[267] Skinner 1996-7, 123.
[268] J. *BJ*, 3.64-5.

vulnerability by Vespasian.[269] Accompanying each legion, it was standard to find a similar number of Roman auxiliary troops, which are not to be mistaken for the auxiliary forces that were made available by Rome´s client kings in the region, those being Antiochus of Commagene, Soaemus of Emesa, Malchus of Nabatea and the anticipated Agrippa II.[270] The numbers for Vespasian's army, that are given by Josephus, have been discussed elsewhere in this Dissertation (Part I, Chapter 2), therefore we will just do a quick review here.

The core of the army was composed of about 15.720 legionaries, including a 120-legionary cavalry per-legion detachment (if the legions were fully operational, which was rare), divided amongst the three legions.[271] This highly trained heavy infantry represented the backbone of any Roman contingent and had a distinct ability to adapt to the circumstances of warfare. In this case, siege warfare would be their main occupation, and for that the three legions were equipped with a total of 160 pieces of artillery, ranging from catapults to ballistas of different calibres (these numbers have also been discussed in Part I, Chapter 2).[272] Supporting the legionaries, there were 23 cohorts of auxiliary infantry, 10 cohorts numbering 1.000 men, and the remaining 13 numbering 600 men, for a grand total of 17.800 auxiliary infantry.[273] Additionally, there were 13 squadrons of 120 Roman auxiliary cavalry, these belonging to *cohortes equitatae* and therefore paired with the 13 units of 600 auxiliary infantry, and 6 independent *alae* that were probably 500 strong, which made up a total of 4.560 Roman auxiliary cavalrymen.[274] Finally, we need to take into account the forces provided by the four client kingdoms referred to before, which numbered an overall total of 15.000 men.[275] Of these, 4.000 were cavalry and the remaining 11.000 were archers and slingers (although, mostly archers).[276] Josephus reaches a final estimation of 60.000 soldiers, however, a more appropriate number would be 50.000.[277]

The presence of such a great amount of cavalry units (around 8.500 in total) and of archers/slingers (a total of around 11.000), was the result of availability, as the client kings would offer what they could dispose of, but possibly also the result of Vespasian's direct

[269] This legion had fallen into disgrace after being humiliatingly defeated after the failed siege of Jerusalem of 66, inclusively losing its eagle (J. *BJ*, 2.540-55; Suet. *Ves*., 4); it was naturally not in good conditions and could prove detrimental for morale.
[270] J. *BJ*, 3.68.
[271] J. *BJ*, 3.65. We reach this number if we use the values proposed in Part I, Chapter 2. The use of other common values for the numbers of the early imperial legion would have minimal effect on the overall estimations and thus do not jeopardise the argument or narrative in any way (see Part I, Chapter 2).
[272] J. *BJ*, 3.166 et 5.269-70; D. Campbell 2002, 170.
[273] J. *BJ*, 3.66-7.
[274] J. *BJ*, 3.66-7.
[275] J. *BJ*, 3.68.
[276] J. *BJ*, 3.68.
[277] J. *BJ*, 3.69; Levick 2017, 37. Following Josephus' numbers, we reach a total of 53.080, which he then rounded up to 60.000. However, the number should be rounded down to account for deaths, injuries, leaves of absence, desertions and other factors that would lead to under strengthened units, as was normal in any operational army.

request, as Josephus tells us that one squadron was summoned from Caesarea and five others from Syria.[278] The reinforcement of Vespasian's army with these types of units reflected the needs of the campaign, as the archers and slingers would prove invaluable in the several instances of siege warfare, and the cavalry to cover the wide plains of Galilee, improving communication and readiness of action.

Vespasian's campaign in Galilee is presented as a prelude to the conquest of Jerusalem, in Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*.[279] The city was in fact the heart of Jewish resistance, not only due to the strength of its defences, but mostly because of its political and religious importance to the Jews. However, laying siege to such an imposing city without first securing the surrounding area was a strategic mistake, as C. Gallus had proven the year before Vespasian arrived.[280] The siege would no doubt take a long time, thus leaving the besieging Roman army susceptible to rearguard attacks and engaged in at least two fronts (much like Caesar's siege of Alesia, although probably without the final glorious victory). Galilee was fully invested in the revolt, reportedly only the city of Sepphoris favoured peace.[281] Therefore, conquering Galilee represented a strategic objective in its own right, and not just a platform to prepare the advance on Jerusalem. Furthermore, Galilee represented the north-most point of the revolt, which meant that once subdued, the push south would be invulnerable to any flanking manoeuvres. In face of immense pressure to crush the revolt rapidly, Vespasian did not risk more than he should, opting for prudence over glory (unlike in Britain); a gradual and constant advance, balanced by a solidification of each conquest. The result of this judicious strategy would be to have Jerusalem blockaded before the siege had even begun, for all the other rebellious cities and strongholds would have been captured as a natural result of the movement southwards.

Vespasian's first action as he arrived at Ptolemaïs was to support the only favourable city in the region, Sepphoris.[282] Josephus argues that Vespasian made this decision because Sepphoris was "the largest city in Galilee and an exceptionally strong position inside enemy territory, which could be the centre of control over the whole of the population."[283] Whereas the first two reasons probably did bear some weight on Vespasian's decision-making, Sepphoris hardly appears to have been perceived by Vespasian as the *de facto* campaign base, as Josephus seems to imply. This is evident from the small garrison appointed, given the city's size and importance, which "consisted of 1,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry , under the command

[278] J. *BJ*, 3.66.
[279] Josephus (*BJ*, 4.120) goes as far as saying that the conquest of Galilee "(...) had given the Romans some arduous training in preparation for Jerusalem.", illustrating in a very clear way this view of his.
[280] Levick 2017, 33.
[281] J. *BJ*, 3.30.
[282] J. *BJ*, 3.30.
[283] J. *BJ*, 3.34.

of the tribune Placidus."[284], and from the fact that their main task was a defensive one.[285] Vespasian's decision to support Sepphoris also illustrates his pragmatic mind, for he could have been tempted to refuse help since this was a pacification campaign against a people who had wronged Rome deeply. However, he understood the benefits of "mercy". Besides taking one city from Jewish control, which was naturally positive, this gesture would send a hopeful message to all those cities who were not yet fully committed to the revolt and that could still change their minds, should peaceful surrender to Rome with guaranteed protection from repercussions be an option. Furthermore, it was a way to prevent future revolts and secure the locals' loyalty, as their perception of Rome would be positively influenced. The message to the ones who refused Rome's gift of peace and protection would soon follow.

The countryside of Galilee was ravaged by Roman soldiers in the following days, which prompted an attempted assault on Sepphoris by Josephus and his men, and then yet more Roman pillaging.[286] It was a common place in ancient warfare to ravage the enemy's countryside, and it could serve a variety of purposes.[287] Plunder and sustenance for the attacking force were two of the main reasons, although this was more frequent in campaigns deep in enemy territory where there was not assured logistical support. In this case it appears to serve a few distinctive purposes. First, it created a climate of terror amongst the Galileeans, which had the effect of spreading fear to the enemy, thus giving Vespasian's army a morale advantage in the war, while at the same time turning the Jewish against one another; between the ones who craved peace and were witnessing their lands ravished and their families killed, and the ones who refused to surrender and so indirectly perpetuated the destruction.[288] A second intention could have been to test the enemy's reaction and tactics, this would offer the Roman high command very valuable information for the upcoming battles. And thirdly, it could be a way to push the enemy into hiding, thus cornering him and clearing the way for the army to move with more security.

The first large-scale confrontation between Vespasian and Josephus' forces was in the city of Gabara. Vespasian had moved out of Ptolemaïs in orderly fashion with his entire army, and the simple sight of it, Josephus reports, was enough to make the defenders of the town of

[284] J. *BJ*, 3.59.
[285] Josephus (*BJ*, 3.34) is very clear in stating that Vespasian sent a "force of cavalry and infantry large enough in his view to repel any attacks if the Jews tried retaliatory action."
[286] J. *BJ*, 3.59-63. The same Josephus who wrote *Bellum Judaicum*, was the Jewish general in charge of the Galilee region.
[287] See Roth 1999, 148-53 et 305, on the topic of pillaging in Roman warfare.
[288] Josephus (*BJ*, 3.63), paints a gory picture: "The whole of Galilee was a welter of fire and blood, put to every conceivable form of suffering and tragedy: the one refuge for the persecuted people was in the cities which Josephus [the author himself] had fortified."

Garis flee.[289] A victory without losing any sweat or blood was welcomed by Vespasian; an indication that the Romans held the morale high ground. Without further ado, Vespasian moved on the city of Gabara where he was met with a first sample of resistance.[290] Since Galilee was virtually all under control of the rebels, it was natural and prudent to begin the campaign with what was closest to the Roman base, as Garis and Gabara were (see map 2). The main point here would be to achieve a steady and consistent advance with relative safety, as mentioned before, and the best way to do so, was to ensure that the only threats came from the frontline, hence the option for the closest target for the start of the campaign. Gabara was taken at the first assault and a brutal sack ensued, culminating in the burning of the city and of "all the surrounding hamlets and villages.", as Josephus states.[291] This was the first contact after Gallus' humiliating defeat, and it was a message that highlighted Rome's military prowess and mercilessness to those who would not submit. It was a show of strength and determination and kept Rome on the winning side of the morale and psychological landscapes.

Vespasian's next natural move, still in the spring of 67, was to target Jotapata. This city was located in close proximity with the recently conquered Gabara, and it stood in the way between Ptolemaïs and Sepphoris (see map 2), which was an additional motivation to prioritise its capture. Furthermore, as Josephus tells us, "the largest concentration of the enemy had gathered there for refuge, and it had always been a strong base for their operations."[292] Military intelligence, which will be considered with more detail at a later stage of this Dissertation, played an important role, both in collecting the previously mentioned information, but also in pinpointing the location of high-profile enemy individuals, such as Josephus. The approach to Jotapata gives us some insight into how new information weighed in on Vespasian's strategy and the balance between risk and reward.

For Jotapata, Vespasian maintained his prudent approach, not rushing its capture, and instead preparing the route with time. To this end, he "(...) sent out a taskforce of infantry and cavalry to level the approach route, which was a stony mountain path difficult enough for footsoldiers and impossible for cavalry."[293] These works reportedly lasted for four days, after which the army finally initiated its march.[294] It was at this point that new information revealed that Josephus had joined the defence of the city.[295] Even though the capture of Josephus was probably not as high in Vespasian's priority list as Josephus himself seems to believe, he was

[289] J. *BJ*, 3.128-31.
[290] J. *BJ*, 3.132.
[291] J. *BJ*, 3.132-4.
[292] J. *BJ*, 3.141.
[293] J. *BJ*, 3.141.
[294] J. *BJ*, 3.142.
[295] J. *BJ*, 3.142-3.

no doubt a person of interest, both for his leading role in the revolt and for all the valuable information that he held due to his position. In this way, Vespasian recognised it as a good opportunity to strike a major blow in the rebellion's organisation and morale. However, Vespasian still judged it as not a scenario that was rewarding enough to justify excessive risk. In accordance with this, he maintained the prudent plan of approach for the main army, but sent a detachment of 1.000 cavalry to prevent Josephus and any others from fleeing the city before his arrival.[296] It is a good example of how strategy could shift, to a greater or lesser extent, based on specific circumstances, in an *ad hoc* fashion. At the same time, it shows that Vespasian was not taking any chances, he was there to do the job well and not fast, for there was no room for failure.

The main army arrived a day after the aforementioned detachment and the assault began the day after that one. Once again, this illustrates Vespasian's calm and prudence under pressure, as he would rather have a well-rested army that would get the job done, than rushing into an assault with tired soldiers and risking a humiliating defeat. As the siege of Jotapata prolonged itself, Vespasian saw fit to pacify the vicinities of the besieged city, and sent Marcus Ulpius Traianus, the legate of *XX Fretensis*, with a detachment of 1.000 cavalry and 2.000 infantry to subdue the town of Japha.[297] This town was close enough to Jotapata to become a nuisance for the siege operations and had challenged the Roman army, prompted by Jotapata's resistance, as Josephus states.[298] However, what seems more probable, given the size of the force sent and the events that followed, is that Traianus was tasked with securing Japha and not with its capture. Japha was reportedly well defended, as it was "(...) well placed to withstand attack, as in addition to the natural strength of its site it was protected by a double ring of walls."[299]; it hardly seems appropriate to send a contingent of 3.000, where a third was cavalry and so not as valuable in siege warfare, to capture such a well defended town. It is more likely that Traianus was sent to analyse the threats and opportunities of Japha, and then to act accordingly, either exploring those opportunities or sending for reinforcements, all the while not allowing for that town to jeopardise the siege of Jotapata, as it was the priority. The following events described by Josephus support this hypothesis. Traianus found the town's inhabitants ready to meet him in battle, therefore he took that rare opportunity and forced them back all the way to the second ring of walls, as they were not fast enough to close the gates of the first ring upon retreat.[300] Faced with an unexpected victory, Traianus saw an opportunity to

[296] J. *BJ*, 3.144.
[297] J. *BJ*, 3.289.
[298] J. *BJ*, 3.289.
[299] J. *BJ*, 3.290.
[300] J. *BJ*, 3.290-7.

take the town for good and so sent for Vespasian, who replied with his son Titus and an additional force of 500 cavalry and 1.000 infantry.[301] The town fell that same day, following an intense struggle.[302] Once again, we witness Vespasian opting for the strategically safe approach, by securing the surrounding area of his army's operations, but at the same time recognising a good opportunity to gain further advantage in the war.

The siege of Jotapata was not yet concluded when Vespasian sent Sextus Cerealis Vettulanus, legate of the *V Macedonica*, against a gathering of Samaritans with a force of 600 cavalry and 3.000 infantry.[303] Josephus explains that the whole region of Samaritis was pacified and garrisoned, but that Vespasian did not want to risk another rebellious front emerging.[304] Once more, we observe a prudent approach by Vespasian, not leaving anything to chance.

Jotapata fell shortly after, the population was massacred and Josephus captured.[305] Whereas in Gabara the destruction of the city was probably aiming at the psychological end goal that has been proposed, as there was not enough resistance to justify such punishment, in Jotapata it was simply the organic unfolding of victory after a long siege ("the sack" will be considered in depth in Part IV, Chapter 1.3), although it still had the same morale impact. Vespasian's next move was to bring his army back to Ptolemaïs and then to move it further south to Caesarea, the location selected for *V Macedonica* and *X Fretensis'* winter quarters, and *XV Apollinaris* was sent to Scythopolis, its home for the winter.[306] There are a few perspectives, that while differing from one another are not entirely mutually exclusive, and that can help us make sense of this decision, as it was still early in the season to retire from warfare. Firstly, we can infer that Vespasian envisioned a long campaign, which meant accumulated fatigue for his troops. Therefore, this would be a way for Vespasian to reward them for their recent exploits while guaranteeing that the army was well rested and with a strong morale. This would benefit his prudent "low-risk guaranteed-reward" strategy. In support of this idea, Josephus tells us that Vespasian granted them twenty days of rest, at this time, while he visited Agrippa II.[307]

Another perspective is to observe the strategic advantages of this placement of his forces. Caesarea and Scythopolis are in an almost perfectly straight line, dissecting Samaritis down the middle (see map 2). This meant that Vespasian was effectively isolating Galilee and Judaea from each other, breaking any lines of communication and preventing enemy

[301] J. *BJ*, 3.298-9.
[302] J. *BJ*, 3.300-6.
[303] J. *BJ*, 3.310.
[304] J. *BJ*, 3.307-9.
[305] J. *BJ*, 3.336-9 et 391-3.
[306] J. *BJ*, 3.409 et 412-3.
[307] J. *BJ*, 3.444.

reinforcement from one region to the other. With both Galilee and Judaea debilitated, the positioning of the legions also made for a quicker and easier military response to either direction. Lastly, one could observe this relocation of Vespasian's army from yet another perspective, although it is predicated on the assumption that Vespasian already considered Galilee as a pacified region. If this were true, then Caesarea and Scythopolis would be natural locations to serve as bases for the following stage of the campaign moving south towards Judaea. This interpretation is well supported by Josephus, in his *Bellum Judaicum*, as he reports that Vespasian's next move was to send a detachment south to subdue the city of Joppa, illustrating a perceived strategic interest to develop the campaign southwards, and effectively initiating military operations in Judaea.[308] Furthermore, Vespasian only moved his forces back to Galilee when requested by king Agrippa II (diplomacy in warfare will be considered in Part IV, Chapter 4), as the latter was confronted with the rebellion of the cities of Tiberias and Tarichaeae.[309] Both cities were part of Agrippa II's kingdom and so, as far as Vespasian was concerned, not his responsibility. Therefore, the assumption that Vespasian deemed Galilee pacified is fair and supported by the sources, for he had in fact subdued the part of Galilee that was under direct Roman responsibility. The rest, that was under Agrippa II's control, he did not concern himself with, for he did not have to, since he was respecting the client king's authority in the region. That is until Agrippa II sought his assistance, while Vespasian was already making preparations to conquer Judaea. Therefore, the operations in Galilee that followed, should be understood as a detour from Vespasian's original strategy to crush the Jewish revolt, which included only the part of Galilee that had already been pacified and then the whole of Judaea; something that is recognised and justified by Josephus himself in this way: "(...) he [Vespasian] thought that a campaign against these people would serve his general plan of crushing Jewish revolt wherever it broke out and also repay Agrippa's hospitality by disciplining two of his cities."[310]

Vespasian sent his son Titus to get the two legions from Caesarea and assembled the whole army in Scythopolis to move on Agrippa's cities of Tiberias and Tarichaeae.[311] Tiberias was quick to open the gates in a sign of submission, causing the escape of the small faction that

[308] J. *BJ*, 3.414-31, the rebellious population of Joppa had turned to the sea, building a pirate fleet that was causing trouble for Roman local maritime trade routes; the Roman forces sent there crushed the rebels with ease. Levick (2017, 38-9) emphasises the capture of the coastal line as Vespasian's plan, however, the attack on Joppa appears to be prompted by circumstance, given the interest in moving south, and not design. It seems more likely that the choice of which city to move on was predicated on proximity to the main army front and to opportunities or threats (in an *ad hoc* fashion), as proposed already in this chapter.
[309] J. *BJ*, 3.442-45.
[310] J. *BJ*, 3.445.
[311] J. *BJ*, 3.446-7.

was instigating war.[312] The city was spared from massacre upon Agrippa's plea, but also to reinforce the message that the remaining rebellious locations should choose the same path.[313] The army then moved south, in pursuit of the rebellious bunch, in the direction of the second defiant city.[314] The confrontation turned into two separate conflicts, a maritime one in Lake Gennesaret, and a land one for the city itself. Vespasian took charge of the former, while his son Titus was entrusted with the latter, at the head of a detachment from the main army (around 1.000 cavalry and 2.000 archers).[315] The Romans were victorious on both accounts and Tarichaeae was thus pacified, leading to the surrender of a number of other rebel strongholds.[316]

Vespasian continued clearing Agrippa II's kingdom of all rebel activity, and his next move sent him further north, to the city of Gamala.[317] Earlier that same year, Agrippa had attempted to take the city by force, which gives more weight to the previously stated idea that this part of Galilee was outside of Vespasian's plans and responsibility, but had failed to do so due to the city's strong defences and insufficient military resources.[318] Gamala fell after an initial setback, while Placidus, under Vespasian's orders, took Mount Tabor with a detachment of 600 cavalry.[319] This left Agrippa II's kingdom with only one more pole of dissension at the city of Gischala.[320] However, Vespasian considered that it was not enough of a threat to commit the main army to it and, therefore, he sent Titus with 1.000 cavalry to deal with it.[321] Also, it seems clear that Vespasian wished to resume his original plan of conquering Judaea, as he restored the three legions to their respective winter quarters so they could rest and prepare, for, says Josephus, "He [Vespasian] was aware that he still had to tackle the major task presented by Jerusalem."[322] Although this campaign detour had delayed Vespasian's timeline, there were some strategic benefits, as it guaranteed that the revolt would not spread back into Galilee and that Rome maintained good relations with one of their client kingdoms.

This same year of 67 did not end before Vespasian put another foot in Judaea, reducing Jamnia, Azotus and Lydda.[323] This represented a declaration of intent and placed more pressure over the remaining rebellious cities in Judaea, while at the same time starting to isolate Jerusalem, which was the main destination of all rebels and war refugees.[324] The ever

[312] J. *BJ*, 3.458-9.
[313] J. *BJ*, 3.461.
[314] J. *BJ*, 3.462.
[315] J. BJ, 3.467-71 et 3.485-6.
[316] J. *BJ*, 3.487-504, 3.522-31 et 4.1.
[317] J. *BJ*, 4.11.
[318] J. *BJ*, 4.4-10; J. *Vit*, 114.
[319] J. *BJ*, 4.13-83.
[320] J. *BJ*, 4.84.
[321] J. *BJ*, 4.87.
[322] J. *BJ*, 4.87-91.
[323] J. *BJ*, 4.130 et 4.444, Josephus mentions this only as a passing note.
[324] J. *BJ*, 4.89.

approaching Roman presence also had the added benefit of creating internal dissension amongst the Jewish, as Josephus reports, "the people [the Jewish] turned against each other, and there was bitter contention between the militants and the advocates of peace."[325] Besides weakening the enemy through division, it could lead to *stasis*, which could prove vital particularly in instances of siege warfare. The news of internal strife in Jerusalem reached the Roman camps, probably through deserters, whose number increased by the day.[326] Josephus tells us that given the dire state of affairs in Jerusalem, Vespasian's officers urged him to take advantage of the opportunity and assault the city.[327] However, Vespasian decided otherwise, instead opting to wait and reap the benefits of that internal dissension, arguing that an attack would most probably reunite the Jewish.[328] This was again a show of prudence and experience, basing himself on the maxim that an external threat promotes internal unity.

The following campaigning season began early, in February of the year of 68.[329] Vespasian maintained his plan of isolating and blockading Jerusalem, and to that end he first moved on the city of Gadara, the capital of Peraea.[330] There was no resistance, as the peace-seaking population of the city surrendered on demand, and the rebellious faction fled the location.[331] In pursuit of the latter, Vespasian sent Placidus with 500 cavalry and 3.000 infantry, as he did not want to leave any potentially problematic "loose ends", and then returned to the winter quarters with the remainder of the army.[332] The fugitives from Gadara halted their escape in the village of Bethennabris and prepared to face the pursuing Romans, leaning on the village's forced assistance.[333] The rebels, along with the villagers, were handed a crushing defeat by Placidus, who besides taking Bethennabris, brought under Roman control the whole surrounding area to the northeast of the Dead Sea until Machaerus to the south, including Abila, Julias and Besimoth.[334] Meanwhile Vespasian had been "securing the villages and small towns with garrisons, posting decurions in the villages and centurions in the towns, and he also restored many of the places that had been ruined."[335] This was a way of maintaining a tight control over Judaea until Jerusalem was subdued in order for the army to be safeguarded during the siege and at the same time not concerned with other instances of rebellion, while

[325] J. *BJ*, 4.131.
[326] J. *BJ*, 4.377.
[327] J. *BJ*, 4.366-7.
[328] J. *BJ*, 4.368-71.
[329] J. *BJ*, 4.413.
[330] J. *BJ*, 4.413.
[331] J. *BJ*, 4.414-8.
[332] J. *BJ*, 4.419.
[333] J. *BJ*, 4.420-1.
[334] J. *BJ*, 4.422-39.
[335] J. *BJ*, 4.442.

simultaneously controlling all the communication routes, which would improve Roman intelligence gathering and isolate Jerusalem.

Vespasian's next actions, which are pertinent to transcribed in full from Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*, only make sense if we assume that Vespasian was planning on assaulting Jerusalem very soon (most likely that same year) and therefore, was preparing the grounds as best he could to ensure military success:

> Then at the very beginning of spring he took the bulk of his army from Caesarea and marched it to Antipatris. In two days he imposed order on the town, and the next day moved on, ravaging and burning the whole area. After reducing the district of Thamna and its surrounds, he proceeded to Lydda and Jamnia: both of these towns had been conquered earlier, and he now repopulated them with an appropriate number of those who had submitted at the time. He then reached the district of Emmaus. Here he established control of all the approaches to the capital town, built a fortified camp, and left the Fifth Legion in place there. With the rest of his army he advanced to the district of Bethleptenpha, which, together with the neighbouring district and the edges of Idumaea, he devastated with fire. He built fortified guard-posts in strategic positions, and captured two villages deep inside Idumaea, Betabris and Caphartoba, where he killed over 10,000 of the inhabitants, took over 1,000 prisoners, 448 drove out the rest of the population, and stationed there a large company of his own troops, who then overran and laid waste the entire hill-country. He himself returned with his remaining forces to Emmaus, and thence through Samaritis, past Neapolis, as it is now called (the local name is Mabartha), and down to Corea, where he made camp on the second of the month Daesius. On the next day he reached Jericho, and was joined there by Trajan, one of his generals, bringing with him the force he had commanded in Peraea, as the whole country on the far side of the Jordan was now subjugated. Most of the local population had already fled Jericho before the Romans arrived, and had taken refuge in the hill-country facing Jerusalem, but a good number were left behind in the area, and they were killed: the Romans found the city itself deserted.[336]

Here, we witness Vespasian devastating a series of minor rebellious positions in Judaea, which was standard practice to eradicate a revolt. However, it's the aftermath that should be highlighted in this excerpt, as there is an explicit strategic effort directed at Jerusalem. Fortifications were built with guard-posts in strategic positions, the routes leading to and from Jerusalem were placed under direct control of the army and an entire legion, the *V Macedonica*, was inclusively left in the vicinities of the capital, inside a fortified camp. Jericho and Adida also had camps built on their grounds, stacked with detachments from the main army. Josephus himself claims that this was all done in order "to ring Jerusalem with outlying forts on all sides (...)"[337]; there is no doubt that Vespasian's next step would be to move on the city itself.[338]

[336] J. *BJ*, 4.443-52.
[337] J. *BJ*, 4.486.
[338] Josephus (*BJ*, 3.490-1) concludes the same, first by stating that "Now that the whole region, both hill-country and plain, was caught up in the war, all ways out of Jerusalem were blocked(...)", and then by writing that "Vespasian had returned to Caesarea, and was preparing to march in full force against Jerusalem itself (...)"; Before returning to Caesarea, Vespasian had also sent Lucius Annius with a detachment from the main army to to pacify Gerasa and the surrounding area; Annius was rapid in completing his task (J. *BJ*, 4.487-9).

However, the long-prepared and hoped-for assault did not happen that year, as it was prevented by events in Rome.

Nero had committed suicide and Galba was the new emperor of Rome, which meant that Vespasian needed to confirm whether he was still in command of the armies in Judaea, as he had been appointed by Nero.[339] It was not strategically beneficial, for the campaign in Judaea, to wait too long to advance on Jerusalem, but it was protocol that needed to be followed by Vespasian, therefore he sent his son Titus along with Agrippa II to pay his respects to Galba and inform themselves on the state of affairs in Rome.[340] However, according to both Josephus and Tacitus, Titus never reached Rome, for when he was in transit in Greece, in early January of the year 69, he was informed that Galba had been murdered and that Otho was now emperor.[341] After returning, Vespasian went on a final pacification campaign in Judaea before making his challenge for the throne of Rome.[342] This last military operation in the region was dubiously placed in time by Josephus, as the historian appears to have wanted to spread the narrative that Vespasian's bid for power had been spontaneous and prompted by the armies of the East against Vespasian's wishes.[343] However, the more reliable Tacitus has the Flavians planning a *coup d'etat*, along with Mucianus, the governor of Syria, already in the reign of Otho, simply waiting for the "right time" to move.[344] The most likely scenario, in accordance with Levick, is that the campaign was well dated, but that Josephus simply postdated Vespasian's knowledge of Vitellius' accession with the same goal in mind that has been previously stated.[345] This would account for the period of inactivity in the Judaean campaign, as Vespasian needed a healthy army if he was to challenge the emperor. Furthermore, the final pacification campaign, in the year 69, would be seen, strategically, as a form of preparation to move on Rome and not Jerusalem. It was most likely a way of stabilising the area before depleting it of a sizeable portion of the army, that was now going to be needed to secure the main objective that was Rome, and in this way guaranteeing that all of Vespasian's work in the region would not come undone. A prudent manoeuvre that brought an end to Vespasian's

[339] J. *BJ*, 4.491 et 4.497-8; Suet. *Nero*, 49; Levick 2017, 44.
[340] J. *BJ*, 4.498.
[341] J. *BJ*, 4.499-501; Tac. *Hist*., 2.1.
[342] J. *BJ*, 4.550-5.
[343] Josephus (*BJ*, 4.588-91) claims that Vespasian was infuriated by Vitellus' grab for power, and in that way the historian is placing Vespasian as a defender of Rome, even though he was about to do the same thing. Later on (J. *BJ*, 4.601-4), Josephus states that Vespasian had no intentions of taking power in Rome, but that the soldiers urged him to it, to the point of threatening to kill him if he did not, which seems like Josephus' way of distancing Vespasian's rise to power from those of Galba, Otho and especially Vitellius; See Levick 2017, 44-5, for a summary of the main interpretations regarding the problems with Josephus' dating of this final campaign, along with the most likely solutions.
[344] Tac. *Hist*., 2.1, 2.4-7 et 2.74-78.
[345] Levick 2017, 45.

Judaean campaign and a beginning to his campaign for control of the Empire, which will be analysed in the next sub-chapter.

1.3 Rome (July to December of 69)

A description of the events of the civil war has been presented in Part II of this work. Therefore, we will restrict this analysis to a few selected passages that make reference to Vespasian's strategic decisions in this period. The insight offered by them will shed light on the strategy designed to take power in Rome, regardless of having been followed by the players on the field or not.

On the 1st of July of the year 69, Tiberius Alexander, governor of Egypt, was the first to take the oath of allegiance to Vespasian, thus setting the Flavians' plans in motion.[346] With the armies of the East supporting Vespasian, "It was decided that Titus should maintain pressure on Judaea while Vespasian should take hold of Egypt, which was the key to power."[347] At the same time, Mucianus began the march on Rome, ahead of the main Flavian army.[348] It is interesting how Vespasian came to play such a secondary role in the campaign for his own accession, especially since he was a "born soldier", as Tacitus puts it.[349] One would expect Vespasian to be leading the army that was risking its life to make him emperor. Tacitus offers the explanation that Egypt was the "key to power", as we have seen, thus justifying Vespasian's decision.[350] Josephus, on the other hand, claims that, even though recognizing Egypt's vital strategic importance, Vespasian saw no rush in travelling to Alexandria, instead identifying Rome as the number one priority, "as Alexandria looked secure and Rome was in chaos under Vitellius."[351] However, Josephus goes on, Vespasian proceeded to send Mucianus ahead of the army that was to march on Rome instead of assuming that glory and responsibility himself.[352] None of the above justifications seem convincing enough. Both historians mention the relevance of Egypt at an Empire-wide strategic level as the "granary of Rome", and yet both also inform us that it was a secured region with a favourable army and governor, after all Tiberius Alexander had been the first to officially support Vespasian's bid for power.[353] As we know, Vespasian did not find any resistance when he arrived in Alexandria, quite the opposite,

[346] Tac. *Hist*., 2.79; J. *BJ*, 4.616-7.
[347] Tac. *Hist*., 2.82. After Egypt, the armies of Judaea and Syria also took the oath of allegiance to Vespasian (Tac. *Hist*., 2.80-1).
[348] Tac. *Hist*., 2.82-3; J. *BJ*, 4.631-2.
[349] Tac. *Hist*., 2.5.
[350] Tac. *Hist*., 2.82.
[351] J. *BJ*, 4.631.
[352] J. *BJ*, 4.632.
[353] Tac. *Hist*., 2.79 et 82; J. *BJ*, 4.605 et 631.

as Josephus reports.[354] There can be no doubt that securing Egypt was not a task that demanded Vespasian's presence, it could have been done by any of his seconds in command.

The real reason for Vespasian to have stayed behind was most likely tied to matters of public opinion and reputation.[355] He did not want to be directly responsible for an invasion of Italy and of Rome itself. The stability of Vespasian's reign, especially being from an obscure origin, was very much dependent on public opinion and on the respectability of his image and reputation. That is why Vespasian is presented as the "saviour of Rome" in *Bellum Judaicum,* and that is why Vespasian chose to remain in the East, as he did not want to be linked to the death and destruction that his rise to power would entail.[356] The sack and destruction of Cremona and the invasion of Rome are two good examples of what Vespasian aimed to dissociate himself from.[357] The scapegoat was inevitably Antonius Primus, who was sidelined by Vespasian once Rome was stabilised.[358]

Egypt was secured by Vespasian, most likely due to the reasons we have just advanced, while Mucianus started his march on Rome, as we have also seen, but what was the premeditated strategy designed by the Flavian party? Because, as stated in a previous chapter (Part II, Chapter 1), it was Antonius Primus who ended up taking the lead and making it to Rome. Tacitus starts by commenting that "Vespasian's initial plans were accelerated by the eagerness with which the army of Illyricum joined his party."[359] With this, the Roman historian is referring to the legions of Pannonia and Moesia, who, prompted by A. Primus, decided to march on Rome before the arrival of Mucianus and the remainder of the Flavian army.[360] There is a clear implication that Primus is acting in disregard to Vespasian and Mucianus' plans. Tacitus confirms as much when he says, referring to Primus' actions, "These steps were taken either without Vespasian's knowledge or else against his instructions."[361] It is finally after this that Tacitus reveals the Flavians' plan that never came to fruition due to Primus' irreverence:

> "For his [Vespasian's] orders were to halt the advance at Aquileia and to wait for Mucianus, and he reinforced his command by an explanation of his strategy. Now that he had at his disposal both Egypt, which held the key to the corn supply, and the revenues of the richest provinces, Vitellius' army could be forced to its knees by lack of pay and supplies."[362]

[354] J. *BJ*, 4.656.
[355] Levick 2017, 53, mentions this in passing.
[356] Hekster 2007, 343.
[357] Tac. *Hist*., 3.33-4 et 3.82-4; J. *BJ*, 4.639-44.
[358] Josephus (*BJ*, 4.650-4) places the blame for the slaughter of Roman lives that happened after the invasion of Rome, firmly on Antonius Primus; Tacitus (*Hist*., 4.80) makes Primus' fate clear by saying that he "gradually came to be regarded as relatively unimportant and worthless, although outwardly the emperor remained friendly."; Nicols 2016, 64.
[359] Tac. *Hist*., 2.85.
[360] Tac. *Hist*., 3.1-3; J. *BJ*, 4.633, mentions that Primus appeared to be in a hurry to give battle to Vitellius' forces.
[361] Tac. *Hist*., 3.8.
[362] Tac. *Hist*., 3.8.

Vespasian's strategy is therefore exposed as one of containment. He wanted to break the Vitellians through a blockade of the grain supplies from Egypt and the income from the Eastern provinces.[363] Tacitus reports that when Vespasian finally sent shipments with corn to the capital, Rome did not have more than a 10-day supply left, which means that his original plan was still put in practice to some degree of success.[364] It also had the added benefit of making Vespasian look like the "saviour of Rome" once again.

The option for a temperate strategy, that would presumably avoid major military confrontations, contrasts with what we know of Vespasian to this point. Both in Britain and in Judaea an aggressive approach had been favoured, a trend that persisted after Vespasian became emperor. In fact, the civil war is the only military episode where we witness Vespasian adopting a more passive strategy. One interpretation is that Vespasian was not convinced by his army's chances of defeating the very experienced Germanic legions, therefore he wanted to build an advantage by imposing "famine and dissension on the enemy."[365] Another interpretation, which should complement the first and not exclude it, is that Vespasian did not wish to cause more internal harm than he had to in order to emerge victorious. If he could have a bloodless victory, he would take it. The reason for this, besides what has been argued before regarding his image and reputation, is that Vespasian knew that winning the Empire was merely the first and easier step, to keep the Empire was the real challenge. The innumerable disturbances that Vespasian had to deal with after becoming emperor, and that have been analysed in a previous chapter, speak to that effect. Furthermore, Vespasian's long-term view, looking not only to gain the empire, but also to maintain and enhance it, is visible in the pre-civil war-campaign preparations. In the East, before allowing his armies to leave for Rome, Vespasian made sure that the entire region was stabilised. The last pacification campaign in Judaea, discussed in the previous sub-chapter, is one example. To which we could add the levy of troops and the recall of veterans to replace the soon to be absent legions, the diplomatic efforts to make sure peace was maintained with Armenia and Parthia, and the fact that Vespasian even left his own son, Titus, in Judaea.[366] When the Danubian armies joined Vespasian's side of the contest, he proceeded to take similar steps in that region. One of the strongest Sarmatian tribes was enrolled into the Flavian army, so that it would not cause trouble while the legions were absent, and treaties were established with the Suebian kings, Sido and

[363] Tacitus mentions the same strategy again in *Hist*., 3.48, emphasising the importance of the grain supplies coming from Egypt.
[364] Tac. *Hist*., 4.52.
[365] Tac. *Hist*., 3.48.
[366] Tac. *Hist*., 2.82; Saddington 1982, 114-5.

Italicus, as Tacitus reports.[367] All precaution measures to ensure that there was still something to rule over once power had been grabbed.

The main difference between this campaign and the two others that preceded it, was that in this one Vespasian was not only looking to secure victory, but also to ensure a prosperous aftermath. It is in this framework that his decision to remain in Egypt should be understood, as well as the more passive and prolonged strategy that he designed and envisioned.

2. The Battles

Vespasian was no stranger to a battlefield, throughout his career, he led men into combat on several occasions. Unfortunately, only a fraction of those have left any details regarding the different stages of each battle, as well as the tactics involved. The majority come from Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*, and refer overwhelmingly to siege warfare. The only other account is found in Cassius Dio, regarding the Britain campaign, and is very short. The slim amount of evidence makes it very difficult to confidently portrait Vespasian's command in situations of open battle. Nevertheless, a reconstruction of such occasions can still be attempted with some degree of validity.

In this chapter we are forced to analyse only two different battles, as they constitute the sole eligible events: the battle of the Medway River, in Britain, and the battle of Lake Gennesaret, in Galilee. All instances of siege warfare are considered in a subsequent chapter (Chapter 1, Part IV) and the situations where command was delegated by Vespasian are of no concern to the objectives of this chapter.

2.1 Medway River (43)

This battle occurred in the context of the invasion of Britain led by A. Plautius in the year 43. Vespasian was one of the legates, in command of *Legio II Augusta*, as was previously stated. The brothers Caratacus and Togodumnum, Rome's main enemies in this campaign, had been pushed back on two separate occasions and had decided to combine forces beyond the river Medway.[368] The river presented a natural defence, as it would presumably slow down the Romans and make them vulnerable to attacks while the crossing was being made. Cassius Dio comments that "The barbarians thought that the Romans would not be able to cross it without

[367] Tac. *Hist*., 3.5.
[368] D.C., 60.20.1-2.

a bridge, and consequently bivouacked in rather careless fashion on the opposite bank (...)".[369] This shows that the river was most likely wide and deep enough to be regarded as a serious obstacle.[370] At the same time, it illustrates the lack of knowledge Britons had of Roman military pragmatism.[371]

Plautius would not want to attempt a crossing of the river with active opposition, as that would put the Romans in serious disadvantage, risking what would be a crushing defeat.[372] Therefore, Plautius and his high command, which included Vespasian as one of the legates, came up with a solution that deployed a diversion to create space for the main army's crossing. To this end, the Batavian auxiliary cohorts, who were specialists in river crossing while wearing their full military equipment, were sent across to target the Britons' rearguard and divert their attention from the place where the main army aimed to cross.[373] The Batavians, Cassius Dio reports, caught the Britons by surprise, causing mayhem in the enemy's position, as they presumably thought that they had been outflanked by the Romans.[374] However, the real threat was yet to be deployed, in the form of Vespasian and his *II Augusta*, who were now sent across the river to establish a position on the other side of the Medway, with the assistance of Flavius Sabinus, Vespasian's brother, leading another legion.[375] Dio's account is unclear as to how and where this crossing took place, but one can assume that a narrower and shallower point of the river was chosen, otherwise it would have taken too much time and the element of surprise would have been lost.[376] The Flavian brothers set foot on the opposite margin and "(...) killed many of the foe, taking them by surprise.", and then prepared to hold their ground against the Catuvellauni brothers and the main Briton army, while the rest of the Romans crossed to join the conflict.[377] The unsuspecting enemies killed by Vespasian and Sabinus were perhaps Briton

[369] D.C., 60.20.2.
[370] Webster 1993, 98, estimates a width of up to 500 yards (around 457m) and a depth of between 5 and 20 feet (1.5m - 6m, approximately), comparing it to its current dimensions.
[371] Roman ability to overcome natural obstacles is well documented, from Julius Caesar's many river crossing techniques (Caes. *Civ*. 1.64.5-6 et Caes. *Gal.*, 4.17), to Flavius Silva's siege tower ramp in Masada (B.J., 7.305-7). Webster (1993, 98) makes the same comment regarding Briton's ignorance of Roman military practices. Goldsworthy 2007b, 101.
[372] Vegetius (*Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.7) describes several ways in which an army should cross a river, however, he assumes that the crossing is at least initially unchallenged, which is different from what would happen here, as space had to be created to allow for a detachment to cross and hold the other bank. Webster 1993, 98.
[373] D.C. (60.20.2-3) comments on this "Batavian speciality" as he narrates the events. A description of this ability also appears in Tacitus (*Hist*., 4.12; *Ann*., 2.8 et *Ag*., 18).
[374] Dio's account of this diversion tactic (60.20.2-3) leaves doubts as to whether the Batavians may have missed their predetermined target, for Dio writes that "(...) instead of shooting at any of the men they [the Batavian cohorts] confined themselves to wounding the horses that drew their chariots (...)". Regardless of having followed the plan or not, the Batavians did fulfil their main objective, which was to create a diversion for the main army to cross. Deceptive tactics such as this are documented in ancient military theorists (Fron. *Str*., 1.4.8-10). Webster 1993, 98-9.
[375] D.C., 60.20.3-4; there is no way of knowing which legion Flavius Sabinus commanded.
[376] Webster 1993, 99.
[377] D.C., 60.20.3-4; Webster 1993, 99-100.

guard detachments. The plan had worked to perfection, but if Vespasian and his brother could not hold their ground it would all have been for nothing. This first clash across the river probably happened some time at the end of the day since Dio claims that the Britons only reorganised themselves to charge the Romans the day after, probably at dawn when the Romans had a better footing on the enemy margin.[378] A strenuous combat followed, that remained inconclusive until Gnaeus Hosidius Geta, managed to break through the enemy line with his legion and force their retreat, thus securing a victory for Rome.[379] We can imagine a tired Vespasian exhorting his exhausted men (they had fought the day before and most likely had no time to rest, given the conditions of high-alert and stress) to hold the enemy charges behind the tight formation of their shields so they could then slowly, but consistently push forward, until victory was secured. It was a major victory for the Roman army, as it officially settled Roman presence in Britain.[380]

2.2 Lake Gennesaret (67)

This battle, which was in fact a naval encounter, happened in the context of the siege of Tarichaeae, during Vespasian's campaign to crush the Jewish revolt, in the year 67. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Vespasian laid siege on Tarichaeae as a diligence to king Agrippa II, for this city was in the latter's territory. Tarichaeae was a city built on the margins of Lake Gennesaret, also known as the Sea of Galilee, and "The occupants had a fleet of boats ready on the lake as a refuge if they were defeated on land, and equipped, if need be, for a naval battle."[381] Before siege operations could begin, the Roman encampment was attacked by a numerous group of Jewish rebels led by Jesus, son of Saphias.[382] However, once they saw the Romans forming up to give them battle, they fled, but instead of going to Tarichaeae, they retreated to the lake, and "(...) put out just far enough to keep the Romans within range, then dropped anchor with their boats lined up close together like an infantry phalanx, and fought a sea battle with their enemies on land."[383]

This was no doubt a nuisance, but a manageable one. Therefore, the reply was delayed until the city was captured and secured, as it was the main priority. Once this was achieved, Vespasian blocked all exits from the city, to prevent any more of its inhabitants from escaping,

[378] D.C., 60.20.4.
[379] D.C., 60.20.4-5; Webster 1993, 100. Same as with Flavius Sabinus, it is impossible, given the existing evidence, to identify which legion G. Hosidius Geta commanded.
[380] Webster 1993, 100.
[381] J. *BJ*, 3.466. Josephus (*BJ*, 3.506-21) offers a long and detailed description of the lake as well as of its surrounding area.
[382] J. *BJ*, 3.467.
[383] J. *BJ*, 3.468-9.

as some had managed to reach the boats and were actively fleeing across the lake.[384] Methodic as he was, Vespasian knew he could not let anyone escape, as they could spread the rebellion elsewhere. Josephus tells us that, the day after the fall of Tarichaeae, Vespasian ordered the construction of wooden rafts to be employed in the pursuit of the rebel fugitives.[385] This leads us to infer that Vespasian was not dealing with a small number of fugitives, as it would not justify such an effort otherwise. Josephus' account sets the number of enemies killed at 6.700, however he does not discriminate between the ones slaughtered in Tarichaeae and in Lake Gennesaret.[386] We know little of the structure or number of these Roman "rafts", besides the fact that they were made of wood, as unfortunately Josephus does not give any specifications. However, we can make some decently grounded inferences from the short description of the naval battle.

The first piece of information that we can gather is that the Roman rafts were sizable platforms, for Josephus describes the Jewish boats as "(...) small and built for piracy, so no match for the rafts (...)", therefore, the rafts being of superior dimensions.[387] The second bit of information that leads us to the same conclusion is that the Roman vessels were "heavily manned", not only that, but the soldiers aboard the rafts were a mix of archers with legionaries in full armour; the weight and sheer number of men leaves no doubt about the superior size and sturdiness of the Roman vessels.[388] This is further substantiated by the fact that some of the Jewish boats were crushed when caught in the middle of two colliding rafts, which confidently speaks to the strong nature of the Roman vessels.[389] The fact that the Romans managed to create a line of attack with the rafts, implies a manoeuvrability that would be tremendously difficult without oars as the propulsion mechanism.[390] Finally, the Roman vessels were probably not very high above the water or protected on the sides, since the Jewish managed to hit some of the Romans with rocks on their armour while other rebels tried to climb aboard the rafts.[391] Regarding the number of Roman vessels, the only conclusion to which we can arrive is that they were most likely less than the number of Jewish boats, since Josephus describes the rebels circling around the Roman rafts, which implies numerical superiority.[392] Vespasian opted for quality over quantity, in a typical demonstration of Roman pragmatism.

[384] J. *BJ*, 3.502-4.
[385] J. *BJ*, 3.505.
[386] J. *BJ*, 3.531.
[387] J. *BJ*, 3.523.
[388] J. *BJ*, 3.523 et 3.525.
[389] J. *BJ*, 3.526.
[390] J. *BJ*, 3.526.
[391] J. *BJ*, 3.525 et 3.527.
[392] J. *BJ*, 3.524.

Looking at the battle itself now, the first question that arises is: why was Vespasian so confident that he could wait until the vessels were built? After all, the rebels would not wait for the Romans, seeing as they were running for their lives. The obvious conclusion is that Vespasian had no cause to feel pressured, and Josephus explains why: "The Jews were surrounded, with no hope of escaping to land, which was all in enemy hands (...)".[393] There were Roman patrol detachments all around the lake, ready to end the life of anyone who tried to come to shore, which allowed Vespasian to calmly build his ships and prepare the naval battle to come.

The naval encounter followed a predictable course, with the Romans never losing the upper hand. Vespasian decided to man each vessel with a mix of archers and legionaries, which means that he wanted to be prepared for both close and long range fighting.[394] He appears to have placed his rafts in a single line, which helped with manoeuvrability, but also meant that Vespasian did not fear this enemy, seeing as this disposition could prove vulnerable to flanking and "breaking-through" manoeuvres, should the enemy be more formidable.[395] Rome's superiority was clear not only to the Romans, but to the Jewish as well, who at first avoided confrontation.[396] The archers had been chosen for this exact reason, with a bigger range and much higher efficacy than the Jewish who were simply throwing stones, they would force one of two reactions out of the rebels: either to approach the Roman vessels and try their luck in close range combat against the experienced legionaries, or to attempt to make their escape to shore where they would also find Roman contingents waiting for them.

Staying in their boats but maintaining their distance from the Roman vessels was a death sentence, as they would be picked off one by one by Roman arrows. Nevertheless, this was their first option, which they quickly regretted, as they were losing men without causing the Romans any casualties.[397] This first moment of long range combat probably saw the legionaries serving as protection for the archers, absorbing the unimpactful rocks thrown, thus allowing the archers to safely do their job.[398] The Jewish rebels changed tactics and made several desperate attempts to bring the fighting to close quarters.[399] The Romans were in the comfortable position of just needing to react as best suited them. In some cases the legionaries used their spears to pierce the incoming enemies, who were attempting to break through the

[393] J. *BJ*, 3.522.
[394] J. *BJ*, 3.525-6. Josephus does not name the units used by Vespasian explicitly. However, he does mention arrows, which places archers on the scene and also "body armour, pikes and swords", which, with the addition of a shield, would constitute the entire panoply of a legionary.
[395] J. *BJ*, 3.526.
[396] J. *BJ*, 3.523.
[397] J. *BJ*, 3.524-5.
[398] J. *BJ*, 3.525.
[399] J. *BJ*, 3.525-6.

Roman line.[400] In others, they went to the point of boarding the enemy boats so they could then make use of the *gladius*.[401] Finally, there were some instances where none of this was necessary, as the rebels' boats were crushed by colliding rafts.[402] This was the decisive moment of the battle, the two forces clashed repeatedly, but the Romans prevailed on all accounts.

Josephus says that not even the men who fell on the water were given any mercy, killed as they struggled not to drown.[403] What remained of the enemy boats were forced to shore, where the survivors made a hopeless attempt to escape, only to be put down by the Roman forces in waiting.[404] It was a crushing victory for Vespasian and the Roman army in a battle where, and Josephus stresses this point, "(...) not a single man had survived."[405] The scene that was left after this bloody event was so gruesome that, and Josephus emphasises this as well, "(...) even the perpetrators felt some disgust."[406] This victory was also significant enough for Vespasian to have included a reference to it in his triumphal celebrations after becoming emperor, in the form of some of the captured boats.[407]

3. The Virtues

Scholars tend to attribute Vespasian's success to factors beyond himself, most commonly to the *partes Flauianae*, focusing on his accession to power in Rome.[408] Although this is true in a broader political perspective and for Roman high society, it is an unsatisfactory explanation when looking at his military command and his relation to the soldiery. There is a tendency to conflate Vespasian's political stance with his military stance, committing the error of concluding that the political elites' view was the same as the soldiers' view; this would lead us to the conclusion, which is common amongst contemporary and ancient historians alike, that Vespasian suffered from a bad reputation.[409] However, this "bad reputation" is a partial view based on factors that were only relevant for Roman political elites.[410] A soldier would not give

[400] J. *BJ*, 3.526.
[401] J. *BJ*, 3.526.
[402] J. *BJ*, 3.526.
[403] J. *BJ*, 3.527.
[404] J. *BJ*, 3.528-9.
[405] J. *BJ*, 3.529.
[406] J. *BJ*, 3.530.
[407] J. *BJ*, 7.147.
[408] Levick 2017, 59-74; Nicols 2016, 60-75.
[409] Suetonius (*Ves*., 2, 4 et 7) mentions Vespasian's unimpressive first career stages, allegations regarding his handling of money, the "lowliness of his birth and name" and later of the lack of "authority and a certain majesty", all of which are described in the context of Roman high society and that would only tarnish his reputation amongst the elites; Nicols 2016, 60; Levick 2017, 61.
[410] I am referring to Vespasian's origins; first career steps; his administration of Africa that ruined his economies, making him have to resort to retail trading; his lack of tact in the context of Roman imperial court; among others; all of the above were either irrelevant or most likely positive amongst the soldiery.

too much importance to that, instead he would focus on Vespasian's military record and generalship, both of which were excellent, as it is shown in this thesis.[411] This means that at the soldiery level Vespasian most likely had a good, and not bad, reputation, as even the allegedly negative periods of his life, such as the "muleteer" episode, could be construed as positive by the soldiers (Part I, Chapter 1). In my view, one should look at Vespasian's inner traits to answer the question of why he was successful at a military level, which in turn will also help us to understand his rise to power, as one should not forget that it was, first and foremost, a military operation.

The Romans ruled their lives, both individually and socially, on the basis of a series of values, concepts and ideas. These values, some of Roman origin and others of Greek influence, permeated all dimensions of Roman society, from socio-political to religious and military.[412] They, of course, did not exist in a vacuum and were intertwined with one another in most situations. However, for the sake of the distinctively Roman pragmatism, in this dissertation we will focus on a select few of these values that are more closely related to Vespasian's military command and that are more evident in the available sources (referring to other values or concepts of relevance when deemed necessary). Those being: *gloria*; *labor militaris*; *auctoritas* and *uirtus*.[413]

Gloria, sometimes seen as a higher degree of *honor*, for the purpose of this chapter, will be defined as the public recognition of a man's qualities and achievements, although in this case, highlighting the military qualities and achievements.[414] *Labor militaris*, will be seen as military labour, this in the perspective of one who toils honestly and relentlessly to earn his military post and to become worthy of his community.[415] *Auctoritas*, a quality which was deeply linked to Caesar Augustus, is an intrinsic value that can be simplified as status or authority, it is predicated on *uirtus* and can be related to a series of conditions set by Cicero: "(...) but on his age there are many things which confer authority [*auctoritas*]; genius, power, fortune, skill, experience, necessity, and sometimes even a concourse of accidental circumstances."[416] Lastly, *uirtus*, which can be defined as the state of being a man (not in terms of age, but of quality), will be mostly used in this chapter for its original meaning of valour and

[411] Goldsworthy 2007a, 374. Beard (2016, 404-6) makes a similar point, although referring to the emperors' vices in general in relation to the inhabitants of the empire in general.
[412] Pereira 2009, 338-9.
[413] These are, and I would argue not coincidentally, almost exactly the qualities prescribed by Cicero (*Man*., 28): "For I think that these four qualities are indispensable in a great general,—knowledge of military affairs, valour, authority and good fortune." The "knowledge of military affairs" did not employ formal education, and was being referred to by Cicero as knowledge acquired through practical experience (Lee 2020, 89-90), which is another way of saying "through *labor militaris*".
[414] See Pereira 2009, 331-5, for a deeper analysis of this concept.
[415] See Pereira 2009, 388-97, for a deeper analysis of this concept.
[416] Cic. *Top*., 19.73. See Pereira 2009, 351-8, for a deeper analysis of this concept.

courage in military contexts, which was still in use at the time of Vespasian, and less for the meaning that it gained from the influence of the Greek *arete*.[417]

3.1 **On the path of *Gloria***

"For this should not be concerned, which cannot possibly be kept in the dark, but it might be avowed openly: we are all influenced by a desire of praise, and the best men are the most especially attracted by glory."[418] It was in this grandiose way that Cicero defended the pursuit of *gloria*, a task best suited for the best of men. Exactly one hundred years after his death, a young legate by the name of Vespasian was, in Britain, taking his first steps on the path to achieve it.

Gloria meant having one's excellence publicly recognised, it meant leaving a mark in History and effectively beating mortality; in this context, Cicero's assertion that all men are in some way haunted by it, rings true, and Vespasian does not seem to have been any different. His way of achieving such a goal was through the military, which was perhaps the most common way to do it. Vespasian's first encounter with *gloria* was in the context of the invasion of Britain of 43. A legate debutant in search of recognition in a highly competitive political context. Vespasian's first chance to show his worth was in the battle of the river Medway, where he in fact played a major role in securing victory for the Romans. However, his efforts were overshadowed by his colleague, Gnaeus Hosidius Geta, who ended up collecting all the praise.[419] Vespasian's breakthrough came shortly after, when he was entrusted with pacifying the South-West of Britain.[420] He was sent alone with his legion, which meant that he bore all the responsibility in case of failure, but that at the same time there was no one who could steal the spotlight in case of utter success. We already know from previous chapters that this campaign was tremendously successful for Vespasian, so much so that he was awarded the *ornamenta triumphalia*.[421] The triumph symbolised the epitome of the consecration of *gloria*, however, since the Principate that this honour was reserved for the emperors alone.[422] Nevertheless, the emperors did not leave the generals empty handed, and would award the *ornamenta triumphalia* as a form of recognition for the very best of them.[423] This is illustrative of the significance of such a commendation, as it was the highest honour that any general would

[417] Grimal 2019, 72; Lee 2020, 62-3 et 66-7. See Pereira 2009, 397-407, for a deeper analysis of this concept.
[418] Cic. *Arch*., 11.26.
[419] D.C., 60.20.3-5.
[420] Suet. *Ves*., 4.
[421] Suet. *Ves*., 4..
[422] Pereira 2009, 335; Grimal 2019, 143-4; Hekster 2007, 347; Lee 2020, 34-5.
[423] Grimal 2019, 143-4; Lee 2020, 34-5.

hope to achieve, and officially places Vespasian as a man who successfully walked the path of *gloria*.

Vespasian was most likely not expecting to be awarded such an honour on account of his rank, but that does not mean that he was not pursuing the idea of *gloria*, the material reward was just its symbol.[424] Suetonius does not hide this desire when he mentions that "(...) in his old age, he [Vespasian] had been so absurdly eager for a triumph, as though it was either owed to his ancestors or had ever been hoped for by himself."[425] The road to achieve it was bound tightly together with *uirtus*, Cicero goes so far as stating that "magnanimity [uirtus] looks for no other recognition of its toils and dangers save praise and glory [gloria] (...)".[426] Vespasian's commendation leads us to conclude that his *uirtus* was recognised, however, for this campaign in Britain that is very difficult to analyse, given the slimness of evidence. What we can observe is the *labor militaris*. This is rather clear from Suetonius' description of Vespasian's achievements in Britain: "(...) he [Vespasian] was transferred to Britain and engaged the enemy on thirty occasions. He brought under our authority two very strong tribes, more than twenty townships and the Isle of Wight (...)".[427] The number of battles fought and of *oppida* captured, which were most likely rounded, although not necessarily up, speak to the vastness and intensity of Vespasian's toiling. Furthermore, if we place Vespasian's nomination as legate in its rightful context of a "new man" with obscure family origins, who only secured this position due to the influence of Narcissus, we understand Vespasian's motivation to show that he was worthy of that post and that he had a place in Roman high society.[428] In this way, we see how *labor militaris* marked Vespasian's command from the very beginning.

The campaign in Judaea, which was the cause of Vespasian's triumph (the final consecration of *gloria*, as we have said), offers us better insight into the workings of these virtues or concepts. The one which is more evident from an analysis of the sources is *uirtus*. The most common form of *uirtus* demonstrated by the commanders who possessed it, was to lead by example; placing themselves in front of their troops, sometimes going so far as even entering the combat.[429] The front line was not a common place to find a general, as that was

[424] Levick 2017, 23.
[425] Suet. *Ves*., 12.
[426] Cic. *Arch*., 11.28; Pereira 2009, 332.
[427] Suet. *Ves*., 4.
[428] Suet. *Ves*., 1 et 4. Onasander (1.24) makes the exact same argument, although in a general way: "It might perhaps be expected that those men who cannot take pride in their ancestors would become even better generals; for men who glory in their forefathers, even if they are themselves failures, believing that the fame of their family is theirs forever are often too careless as administrators, whereas those who have no ancestral renown to begin with, desiring to make up for the obscurity of their lineage by their own zeal, are more eager to take part in dangerous enterprises."

[429] Onasander (13 et 33) highlights the importance of the general's disposition with regards to the morale of the army, adding that the general should show courage in front of his troops, although he should be cautious not to

not expected of them given their rank, so to do it was invariably seen as an example of *uirtus*. This demonstration of *uirtus* is visible in two distinct moments of the Jewish War.[430] The first one appears in the siege of Jotapata where Vespasian's presence near the front line seems unquestionable, because "(...) one of the defenders on the wall hit Vespasian with an arrow on the flat of the foot."[431] He was close enough to the walls to be targeted by enemy projectiles, which was in itself a demonstration of courage, but after being hit, Vespasian quickly recomposed himself, and "Suppressing the pain, Vespasian made a point of showing himself to all who had been alarmed for his safety (...)"; a gesture that further reaffirmed his *uirtus* while at the same time bolstering morale (the perspective of troop morale will be further analysed in the chapter regarding siege warfare).[432] Suetonius, in a more exaggerated way and most likely referring to this same episode amongst others, also makes a note of Vespasian's *uirtus* as a commander: "(...) he [Vespasian] engaged in one or two battles with such resolution that he received a blow on his knee from a stone and several arrows in his shield during the storming of a fortress."; naturally, this sort of injury would only be possible if Vespasian was in fact in the front line.[433]

The second example comes from the siege of Gamala:

> Meanwhile Vespasian, staying all the time in close contact with his hard-pressed troops, and appalled to see the town collapsing in ruins on top of his army, had forgotten about his own safety and without realizing where he was heading had gradually reached the highest part of the town.[434]

Once again, there is no doubt that Vespasian was accompanying his men from the front line, to the point of placing himself in danger. This was an explicit display of *uirtus* that was recognised by Josephus and inarguably by the soldiery. One last piece of evidence comes from Tacitus, where we can observe a summary of what has hitherto been argued:

> "Vespasian was a born soldier. He marched at the head of his troops, chose the place to camp and struggled against the enemy night and day by his generalship and, if occasion required, by personal combat, eating whatever food happened to be available and dressed much the same as a private soldier."[435]

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place himself in danger. Frontinus (*Str*., 2.8.12-3) and Vegetius (*Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.9) are also quite clear about the important role of the commander's example to restore and maintain friendly morale. Lee 2020, 90-1.

[430] There is a third, less clear moment, where Josephus (*BJ*, 3.151) mentions in passing that Vespasian "(...) himself took his infantry to push up the slope at the point where the wall was most vulnerable." Josephus does not shed any more light on the position of the commander, but it seems like he was at least in a position to be seen by his men in the front line.

[431] J. *BJ*, 3.236.

[432] J. *BJ*, 3.239.

[433] Suet. *Ves*., 4.

[434] J. *BJ*, 4.31.

[435] Tac. *Hist*., 2.5.

In a military context, this is exactly what one would expect as a description of a general's *uirtus*.[436] Tacitus effectively gives the final verdict on Vespasian's *uirtus'* judgement. The Roman historian highlights Vespasian's soldier-like behaviour, meaning a general that led by example and that would weigh his valour against any of his men's, and by not neglecting to mention his willingness to be personally involved in combat if necessity should call. A final note should be made regarding the ever-present *labor militaris* in Vespasian's command, which is visible in this description as well; for Vespasian is characterised as one who relentlessly toils to perform his duties with distinction, even at the price of food and comfortability. In another passage that illustrates both Vespasian's *uirtus* and *labor militaris*, Tacitus refers to the way in which Vespasian prepared his men, stating that he "(...) made inspections, encouraging efficient men by praise and spurring on the idle by example rather than correcting them (...)".[437]

Another one of the proposed virtues that can explain Vespasian's success as a general as well as his standing amongst the army, not to mention his rise to power in Rome, is *auctoritas*. It is a difficult virtue to assess in practical terms, therefore we have tried to perceive it from the relations between Vespasian and his men, in matters of obedience, respect and loyalty. Once again only the campaign in Judaea offers sufficient evidence to make these assertions. Although, it would make sense that only in Judaea had Vespasian achieved this elusive virtue of *auctoritas*, as he would possess at least three of the conditions set by Cicero[438]: age, as he was in his late 50s when he took over in Judaea; experience, after many years of service to Rome (military, religious and administrative); and skill, as no doubt Britain's *gloria* still followed him wherever he went.[439]

The first instance in which we can observe *auctoritas* in Vespasian, appears in the siege of Tiberias. The decurion Valerianus had been sent ahead of the army with a small cavalry detachment to propose terms to the city of Tiberias before the main army approached, thus making it too late for a peaceful resolution.[440] A group of Jewish rebels left the city and moved on Valerianus and his men with aggression, however, instead of giving battle, as Josephus concludes that Roman victory would be certain, Valerianus retreated, for he "(...) thought it unsafe to engage an enemy against his general's orders, even if victory were certain (...)".[441]

[436] Onasander (1) gives a description, regarding the qualities that a good general should possess, that particularly resembles Tacitus' description of Vespasian.
[437] Tac. *Hist*., 2.82.
[438] Cic. *Top*., 19.73.
[439] Cassius Dio (65.8.3-4) summarises this well in: "For not only was the popular feeling strong in his [Vespasian's] favour—since his reputation won in Britain, his fame derived from the war then in hand, his good nature, and his prudence, all led men to desire to have him at their head (...)".
[440] J. *BJ*, 3.448.
[441] J. *BJ*, 3.449-52.

This is illustrative of the level of obedience and respect that Vespasian commanded amongst his men. A reality that was not rooted on *potestas*, but on *auctoritas*, as this was a straightforward case of self-defence, and in that way easily justifiable by Valerianus. The conflict over Tiberias offers us yet a more convincing example of *auctoritas* in Vespasian. As a consequence of the previously described altercation, Valerianus had his horses stolen by the rebels.[442] This was an insult to the Roman *fides*, as the decurion and his men had approached only to negotiate a surrender and had been met with aggression. The expected response, and that had been the policy in Galilee to that moment, would be to punish the city by way of a sack. The sack, which will be analysed more thoroughly in a subsequent chapter, was both a punishment for those who offered resistance and a reward for the Roman soldiers, as that was the only moment in which they could keep the spoils.[443] Therefore, it was not something the soldiers would give up without protest, sometimes leading to mutiny or an ignorance of the general's orders, which would obviously undermine the latter's command.[444] However, in the case of Tiberias, Vespasian "(...) issued orders that there was to be no looting or rape (...)", and the soldiers obeyed with no backlash; the proof of this being that the same soldiers were soon after involved in another siege with the same resolution.[445] The main motivation to prevent the sack of the city was to accommodate king Agrippa II, in a clear demonstration of the Roman *fides* (this will be analysed in a subsequent chapter regarding diplomacy), but that does not change the fact that in order to accomplish this while maintaining the soldiers' obedience and diligence, Vespasian needed to have an established *auctoritas*.

Vitellius is a striking example of one who did not possess *auctoritas*, and who was aware of that. His way of gaining the Germanic legions' loyalty was through an "excessive and imprudent generosity", as Tacitus calls it.[446] This meant buying their support, which could take the form of promotions or regular payments and prizes, but also by indulging the legions' demands, which included executions.[447] Vitellius was effectively being led by his men, instead of leading them, in a clear demonstration of lack of *auctoritas*.[448] This culminated in Caecina's betrayal, and then in Vitellius' men, in Rome, refusing to accept his decision of stepping down

[442] J. *BJ*, 3.452.
[443] Tac. *Hist*., 3.19; Levithan 2014, 215-6.
[444] Tacitus (*Hist*., 3.19) makes it very clear that the Flavian troops at Cremona "(...) would mutiny if they were not led onwards.", as they were looking to plunder. Later on (*Hist*., 3.32-3) the commanders do not manage to prevent the men from sacking the city of Cremona. Caes. *Civ*., 2.12–3 and J. *BJ*, 6.252-60, are two other instances of such events; Vegetius (*Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.4) dedicates a long chapter on how to prevent mutiny, showing that it was in fact a real problem; see also Levithan 2014, 219-222, for a deeper analysis of this issue.
[445] J. *BJ*, 3.461.
[446] Tac. *Hist*., 1.52.
[447] Tac. *Hist*., 1.52 et 1.58.
[448] Tacitus (*Hist*., 1.62) goes as far as saying that Vitellius' troops "(...) carried out the general's duties themselves (...)" instead of Vitellius, that is.

as emperor and forcing him back into the post.[449] Vitellius' *auctoritas* was in shambles. Vespasian, on the other hand, is presented as the opposite of Vitellius in this passage of Tacitus' *Histories*:

> "As for a bounty to the troops, Mucianus had only conjured up the prospect of a modest sum at the initial parade, and even Vespasian offered no more under conditions of civil war than other emperors had in peacetime. He was impressively resistant to bribing the troops and therefore he had a better army."[450]

Vitellius conceded to the legions' whims and had gotten contempt, disobedience and treason in return. On the other hand, Vespasian held the legions' obedience, loyalty and respect without indulging them, to the point that Suetonius claims that Vespasian "(...) paid late even their legitimate rewards."[451] One cannot conceive this if not through an *auctoritas* that Vespasian had gained the hard and righteous way. Vespasian's standing amongst the soldiers was so revered that they decided to follow him in his attempt to take control of the Empire without any instant material reward.[452] Cassius Dio, in a passage that summarises a lot of what we have been discussing, is quite clear about this: "For not only was the popular feeling strong in his [Vespasian's] favour—since his reputation won in Britain, his fame derived from the war then in hand, his good nature, and his prudence, all led men to desire to have him at their head (...)".[453] The legions were living organisms and they did not have the same respect for every commander, nor would they follow any general blindly.[454] Vespasian's status with the army, as well as the success of his command, cannot be fairly explained without taking into consideration the role of *auctoritas*.[455]

Finally, two other instances that pertain to Vespasian's *labor militaris* need be mentioned. One comes to us from the battle of Lake Gennesaret, which has already been

[449] Tac. *Hist*., 3.13 et 3.67-8.
[450] Tac. *Hist*., 2.82.
[451] Suet. *Ves*., 8.
[452] The role of Mucianus in motivating support for Vespasian should be mentioned (Tac. *Hist*., 2.80); in the same way, the rumours that had been spread in the East (asserted publicly by Mucianus himself) that Vitellius was planning to move the Eastern legions to the Rhine had an obvious effect on the soldiers (Tac. *Hist*., 2.80; Goldsworthy 2007a, 368). However, none of these reasons are sufficient to explain the army's support of Vespasian's bid for power, and they should be complemented by his inner traits as a general, as has been shown in this chapter.
[453] D.C., 65.8.3-4.
[454] Tacitus (*Hist*., 3.13-4) offers a good example of how the legions were in fact living organisms by describing their reaction to Caecina's betrayal. Instead of uncritically accepting their general's decision, they first protested and, not happy with that, they proceeded to imprison their own general and to elect new leaders.
[455] Suetonius (*Ves*., 7) mentions that "Because he [Vespasian] was, so to speak, an unexpected and still new emperor, he was lacking in authority and a certain majesty.", which seems to imply that Vespasian was lacking in *auctoritas*. However, this was regarding Vespasian's standing amongst his peers, as in Roman high society, and not amongst the soldiery, where his *auctoritas* was deep-rooted and well established. See Nicols 2016, 66-8 et 73-4, for the topic of authority amongst the elites.

analysed, and so we won't be repeating it here, except for one relevant moment. Josephus reports that when Vespasian was faced with an enemy that had taken to the water, instead of allowing for their escape or waiting for them in land, he immediately ordered the construction of a small fleet to crush said enemy.[456] It is another clear example of *labor militaris*, of Vespasian's willingness to make the extra effort in order to fulfil his duties. The other instance is of a more symbolic nature and is related to the two new legions created by Vespasian: *IV Flavia Felix* and *XVI Flavia Firma*. Both were given the emblem of the lion, an animal that was associated with one of Vespasian's favourite deities, a demi-god who was known for his "labours" – Hercules.[457]

Vespasian first demonstrated his *uirtus* and *labor militaris* in Britain, qualities that followed him to Judaea and that helped establish his *auctoritas*. Three virtues that were fundamental for the success of his generalship. Vespasian did end up having his long-awaited triumph, the final reward after a career walking on the path of *gloria*.

[456] J. *BJ*, 3.505.
[457] See Grimal 2020, 205-23, on Heracles and Hercules; Dando-Collins 2010, 131 et 187.

Part IV – Aspects of Vespasian's Generalship

"For it is not by chance, as it seems to me, that they [the Romans] have overrun the boundaries of Italy and extended their sway to the limits of the earth, but by deeds of generalship."
(Onos., Prooemium 5)

1. Vespasian's *poliorketika*

"A siege demands courage on the part of the soldiers, military science on the part of the general, and equipment of machines of war."[458] It is in this way that Onasander starts his digression on siege warfare, and it is also the way in which I chose to begin. However, contrary to Onasander, I will neither dwell on the first nor the last of his premises of *poliorketika*. Instead, I will focus my analysis on the role of the commander, resorting to the other aspects for context and depth.

Ancient siege warfare had a unique quality in that it allowed for a much tighter tactical control on the part of the commander.[459] The static nature of the target and the viewpoint of the general offered a far clearer landscape of operational options than open battle ever could. "(...) he [the general] was firmly in control of the sequence of events, able to choose each new tactic, plan each assault, and observe and respond to any individual action."[460]; a perfect opportunity for a historical analysis of military leadership.

The objective is to go through the different sieges in which Vespasian was involved in, in order to ascertain in what ways, he reflected, diverged from and/or improved the military practice of his time. In this, some of his command patterns will be revealed, along with their propensity for success. Consequently, this will speak to Vespasian's level of mastery regarding siege warfare, leading to some implications in the understanding of his military career.

1.1 The Decision

Rome did not take the decision of mounting a siege lightly. Open battle was the Roman way of deciding wars, a place where men who were about to kill each other could meet their adversary's gaze; it was a show of courage and honour, of *uirtus*.[461] On the other hand, an enemy that chose to take refuge behind its walls instead of capitulating or marching out to give battle was considered a coward, acting shamefully.[462] By doing so, they were depriving the Roman army of a "fair fight", making it go to great lengths to secure victory. And in the process, time would be wasted and many Roman lives would be lost; meeting their deaths in unhonourable and unglorified circumstances on numerous occasions.[463] Each general had to choose, "to retreat in the face of defiance would be unmanly, but to invest a city and fail to take

[458] Onos., 40.1.
[459] Levithan 2014, 8-9; Levithan 2020, 142.
[460] *Id*., 9.
[461] Levithan 2020, 142-3.
[462] *Id*., 143.
[463] Cf. Levithan 2014, for a more detailed analysis on the psychology, moral and morale issues of siege warfare.

it would be a great embarrassment, and careful calculation was needed to avoid undertaking too difficult a siege."[464]

Once the decision had been made, it was time to approach and submit the target. Campbell has shown that, contrary to popular belief, the Romans chose the aggressive option of direct assault overwhelmingly more than that of blockade and starvation of the enemy.[465] Vespasian goes even further with this military tradition, opting for the direct assault in virtually all the sieges of which he was in command. In a minor number of these, the assault did not happen due to a precocious surrender of the besieged.[466] However, it does not change the fact that Vespasian's decision was still the same; the surrender being prompted by fear of an imminent assault.

Majority of the written evidence for this absolute propensity of Vespasian to attack the walls comes from Josephus in his *Bellum Judaicum*. He tells us that the cities of Gabara, Jotapata, Tarichaeae, Gamala and Antipatris were all taken by force as a result of a direct assault under the command of Vespasian.[467] To these we could add the small towns of Bethel and Ephraim as well as the villages of Betabris and Caphartoba. However, Josephus is too succinct in his description of these events, thus not allowing for a good judgement of how those locations were taken and if they even had defensive walls of some kind (if they did not, then it would not be accurate to include them in the world of siege warfare).[468] Outside of the vanquished localities already accounted for, only three remain; those being the ones that I have referred to as precocious surrenders.[469] The times in which Vespasian delegates the conquest of a certain enemy stronghold to one of his generals are excluded from this analysis, as we are only looking at the mind of the commander in direct control of the siege.

The other instance in which we know Vespasian to be involved in siege warfare, was in the invasion of Britain (43 - 47). In command of *Legio II Augusta*, Vespasian is ordered by Aulus Plautius to impose the *pax romana* over the tribes in the southwest of Britain (see Part I, Chapter 1). It is in this context that Suetonius tells us that Vespasian "(...) brought under our authority two very strong tribes, more than twenty townships and the Isle of Wight, which is

[464] Levithan 2014, 6.
[465] See D. Campbell 2002, for a systematic approach to roman siege warfare; he reaches the aforementioned conclusion after analysing 225 Roman sieges (see his work's appendix 1 for the catalogue of sieges).
[466] I am referring to the conquest of the city of Tiberias (J. *BJ*, 3.445-61) and of the small towns of Jamnia and Azotus (J. *BJ*, 4.130).
[467] Gadara (J. *BJ*, 3.132-4); Jotapata (J. *BJ*, 3.141-288 et 3.316-408); Tarichaeae (J. *BJ*, 3.462-505); Gamala (J. *BJ*, 4.11-53 et 4.62-83); Antipatris (J. *BJ*, 4.443).
[468] Bethel and Ephraim (J. *BJ*, 4.551); Betabris and Caphartoba (J. *BJ*, 4.447).
[469] See note 466.

next to Britain (...)".[470] The aforementioned "townships" (*oppida*) can be better described as hill-forts, which means that even though the defences were not as developed as the ones in Judaea, they still demanded siegecraft.[471] The written sources give us nothing more, regarding siege warfare in Britain, than this passing mention by Suetonius.

Nonetheless, archaeological evidence has allowed us to go a bit deeper in the analysis of this aspect of Vespasian's command. More than 50 hill-forts have been found in the territory of the Durotriges, and Vespasian's was not the only campaign in these parts, which means that it is difficult to identify the relevant sites.[472] At the same time, we cannot take the figures given by Suetonius at face value, as they were no doubt rounded. However, we do not intend to present an exact number of sieges, as that would be impossible without further evidence, but to give more weight to the previously argued point of Vespasian's propensity for direct assault. Two distinct examples serve that objective: the hill-forts of Maiden Castle and Hod Hill.

In both sites, extensive defensive works, consisting mostly of ditches and ramparts, have been found.[473] This would mean that the defenders were expecting an assault. The finding of catapult bolts in both locations (in one particular case the catapult bolt was found embedded in the back of one of the skeletons) leave no further doubt that the two hill-forts suffered a direct assault by the *II Augusta*.[474] The only dissimilarities being that in Maiden Castle a war cemetery has been uncovered, whereas in Hod Hill it does not exist. Adding to this the discovery that a concentration of fire had been directed at the chieftain's hut, in Hod Hill; it seems to suggest that in the second case the besieged surrendered after a "bombardment" of Vespasian's artillery, choosing not to follow through with their opposition to Rome.[475]

An additional argument can be made as to the anti-roman aggressive nature of the Durotriges tribe.[476] This sentiment was most likely fostered by druidism that came from Gaul.[477] The strong religious and political grasp of the druids over some of the tribes, including the Durotriges, would have created a powerful sense of unity, rooted in hate against Rome.[478] Having this in mind, common sense would lead us to the conclusion that they would not choose

[470] Suet. *Ves*., 4. Webster (1993, 107) has proposed the two tribes to be the Durotriges and the Dubonni. The first is of overwhelming consensus whereas the second remains unclear; Levick (2017, 22) holds the view that besides the Dubonni it could also have been a branch of the Dumnonii.
[471] Webster 1993, 108.
[472] *Ibidem*.
[473] *Id*., 109-10.
[474] *Ibidem*. Webster mentions *ballista* bolts, however, catapults fired bolts whereas *ballistae* fired stones; it is only from the second century onwards that a new type of catapult, using *ballista* technical principles, was referred to as a *ballista* as well (D. Campbell, 170-1; Grimal 2019, 136-7).
[475] See Webster 1993, 109-110, for more detail.
[476] Webster 1993, 61 et 73-4.
[477] *Id*.,74.
[478] See Webster 1993, 74-5, for more detail. He suggests that the druids were the ones with more to lose since druidism and Rome were incompatible, and so their opposition to Rome could be seen as an "all or nothing" contest; no doubt a powerful motivation to have.

the diplomatic route as a general rule, thus leaving Vespasian with no other option but to assault their positions. We cannot say whether the "more than twenty *oppida*" were all taken as a result of a direct assault; however, evidence certainly suggests that to be the case in the majority of situations (leading to a struggle for dominion of the hill-fort or to a quick surrender).

1.2 The Siege

Roman sieges followed a somewhat standardised progression, escalating in tactics and aggressiveness proportionally to the determination of the besieged.[479] What we are then expecting to find, is a series of well-defined tactical steps chosen by the commander and performed by the soldiers. Generally speaking, the first step was the approach and the setting of camp, followed by a decision to blockade or assault the target (here we will only consider the latter for reasons explained in 1.1), from there the commander would try an array of different tactics to force the submission of the besieged (based on necessity, of course) and upon success the sack would almost inevitably ensue.[480]

Vespasian followed standard Roman practice in his siege warfare, with a few exceptions that we shall observe. The changes that he did bring should be seen as a consequence of his experience, pragmatism and adaptability to the different circumstances, as it was the way with the more successful Roman generals.[481]

1.2.1 The Approach

The initial stage of every siege was the approach. While the main army would move steadily in the direction of the target, some units would go ahead of it, namely the scouts and what we shall call the negotiators.[482] The former had as their job, on the one hand to secure the way to the target and on the other hand to report on the enemy's position and possible weaknesses in the defences; the latter would offer terms to the enemy, laying the way for a bloodless surrender.

This appears to be standard practice for the roman army, with exceptions amongst less prudent or overconfident commanders.[483] Vespasian is no different; in the siege of Jotapata,

[479] Levithan 2014, 47-8.
[480] See Levithan 2014, 47-79, for a more comprehensive analysis of "siege progression".
[481] Goldsworthy 2007a, 12-3.
[482] These were not specialised units, but regular soldiers who would be selected *ad hoc*; upon completion of the mission, they would go back to their normal stations; usually cavalry would be chosen (auxiliary or legionary) for their mobility (Onos., 6.7; Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.6).
[483] D. Campbell 2002, 86-7; Levithan 2014, 54-6.

"He [Vespasian] sent out a taskforce of infantry and cavalry to level the approach route (...)".[484] The work of making the road more accessible for the army, also meant making it secure for it, as it would offer better manoeuvrability and visibility in case of enemy movement or ambush. Later in the same approach to Jotapata, Vespasian sends another force ahead of the army to close off the city.[485] Josephus tells us that Vespasian's objective in doing so was to not allow Josephus to escape, as he was one of the Jewish generals.[486] However, one can also look to the intelligence and psychological benefits of this action, as it would bring panic to the hearts of the inhabitants of Jotapata and allow for Vespasian's envoys to have a report on the defences of the city prepared upon his arrival. In the siege of Tiberias, "He [Vespasian] sent the decurion Valerianus with fifty cavalry to hold peaceful discussions with the townspeople and induce them to offer guarantees of loyalty (...)".[487] This passage leaves no doubt as to the nature of the task, which was a common formality in Roman siege warfare and was followed by Vespasian, as we have seen.[488]

A distinct and vital stage of the approach was the setting of camp. Roman legionaries were experts in the use of the *dolabra* to the same extent as the gladius, leading to Domitius Corbulo's famous quote, "(...) the pick [*dolabra*] was the weapon with which to beat the enemy".[489] Corbulo is particularly right when it comes to siege warfare, this tool being used for ends that ranged from camp-building to siege engineering (the latter will be analysed later). Setting up camp before a city that was going to be attacked served many purposes. Primarily, a siege was generally a prolonged event, lasting for enough time to justify sleeping quarters. Secondly, for safety; as Vegetius tells us, a camp was like a movable walled city, providing security throughout the night and safe haven in case of a retreat.[490] Adding to this, was the ability to build siege engines in a controlled and secured environment. Visibility was another benefit of a well-positioned camp, allowing for better decision-making and tighter control of enemy movements. Finally, it also served a psychological purpose which will be discussed shortly. The totality of Vespasian's sieges in Judaea, of which we have a detailed account, are preceded by a setting of camp.[491]

[484] J. *BJ*, 3.141.
[485] J. *BJ*, 3.144.
[486] J. *BJ*, 3.143-4.
[487] J. *BJ*, 3.448.
[488] D. Campbell 2002, 86-7; Levithan 2014, 54-6.
[489] Fron. *Str*., 4.7.2; McNab 2010, 185-8.
[490] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 1.21; Goldsworthy 2007b, 100.
[491] Gabara (J. *BJ*, 3.127); Jotapata (J. *BJ*, 3.146); Tiberias (J. *BJ*, 3.447); Tarichaeae (J. *BJ*, 3. 462); Gamala (J. *BJ*, 4.13).

The positioning of the camp was also of the utmost importance, "In many cases, the army was initially encamped some way off, no doubt to maintain secrecy and security."[492] Vespasian appears to preoccupy himself more with the latter than the former. In only one siege there is a clear miscalculation on his part. In Tarichaeae, Josephus lets us know that "While the Romans were still building the wall round their camp Jesus and his gang made a quick attack, quite undaunted by the numbers and the military efficiency of the enemy."[493] The aforementioned safe distance was not respected by Vespasian in this case and that led to a pre-emptive attack by the besieged. At the same time, he does not appear to have left a part of his forces in guard duty while the rest worked, as it seems to be common practice when setting camp under threat.[494] The best explanation for this lack of prudence on the part of Vespasian can be linked to an excess of confidence based on the success of the campaign to that point and to an underestimation of the enemy's abilities and resolve. It is, however, an exception to the standard prudence shown by Vespasian in approaching a target.[495] Even though security was paramount for Vespasian, secrecy was not. Furthermore, secrecy was not only dismissed by Vespasian but even contrary to his objectives. He wanted his camp(s) to be seen so as to install panic in the besieged. It was a demonstration of military power in its crudest expression. Besides panicking the enemy, which would have obvious benefits for the besiegers, this display of strength heightened friendly morale and could lead to an enemy surrender.[496] The positioning of the camp also abided by the demands of visibility, where sometimes more than one camp was necessary to achieve optimal control of the target.[497]

Vespasian shows that he was well versed in both psychological warfare and the setting of camp in a strategically beneficial locale:

> "There he [Vespasian] set up camp, disappointing his troops' keenness to get started on the war: his plan was to intimidate the enemy with a view of the force he could deploy, and give them time for second thoughts, in the hope that they might change their mind before it came to battle. At the same time he was making his preparations for the siege of their strongholds. The visible arrival of the commander-in-chief did indeed cause many to think again about the revolt, and all were filled with alarm."[498]

[492] D. Campbell 2002, 86.
[493] J. *BJ*, 4.467.
[494] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 1.25; Onos., 15.2-3.
[495] The regular use of scouts and advanced units; the setting of fortified camps; intelligence gathering; these are all examples that illustrate Vespasian's prudence (some of these aspects are analysed in greater depth in other chapters).
[496] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 4.12; Levithan 2014, 56-60.
[497] D. Campbell 2002, 87-9. The sieges of Gamala (J. *BJ*, 4.12-3), Jerusalem (J. *BJ*, 5.68-70) and Masada (J. *BJ*, 7.275-7) are good examples of this reality, even though the last two were not commanded by Vespasian.
[498] J. *BJ*, 3.127-8.

Josephus offers us here a good example of the use of psychological tactics by Vespasian. Which seems to have worked, as he proceeds to take the town of Gabara with ease, finding it "devoid of any significant body of defenders".[499] This passage also illustrates a previously mentioned point of the camp as a place of preparation for siege warfare. In Jotapata we find a very similar practice:

> He [Vespasian] took his army round to the north side and made camp on a hill three-quarters of a mile from the city, in a deliberate attempt to intimidate the enemy by making his presence as conspicuous as possible. The desired effect on the Jews was immediate, and none ventured outside the walls.[500]

Once again, Vespasian sets camp in a location from where he is completely visible to the besieged. He is demonstrating his military power as well as his intentions, thus causing, if not outright panic, at least a generalised sense of fear in his enemy, leading to a paralysis inside the walls. Additionally, the spot chosen for the camp is imposed by the principles of strategy. On top of a hill, as it provides better security and visibility, and 1.2km from the city, so that the psychological impact is still effective without compromising the safety of the army. All these concerns with the location of the camp are supported by military theorists of classical antiquity, demonstrating a premeditated decision on the part of Vespasian.[501]

In Tiberias, "(...) [Vespasian] advanced with all three legions to make camp at a billet called Sennabris, about three miles from Tiberias and in full view of the rebels."[502] Here we find the same *modus operandi* as in the previous examples; it's clear the importance of finding a place which is both safe, with good visibility and close enough to the target for psychological tactics to work. Finally, in Gamala, "(...) he [Vespasian] posted detachments of guards wherever possible, and occupied the mountain overlooking the town. Here the legions built and fortified their camps in the usual way (...)"[503] The camps are built as prescribed, in a vantage point, invulnerable and with good visibility. The positioning of the camps would be enough to, once again, serve as a means of intimidation to the besieged. It is interesting that Josephus refers to multiple camps in this particular passage, although it is reasonable to assume that to be the case in sieges where more than one legion was employed (not excluding, of course, the reasons explained earlier about the need for more than one camp for optimal control of the target).

[499] J. *BJ*, 3.132.
[500] J. *BJ*, 3. 146-7.
[501] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 1.21-2 et 4.12; Onos., 8.1-2; Pseudo-Hyginus *De Munitionibus Castrorum*, 56.
[502] J. *BJ*, 3.447.
[503] J. *BJ*, 4.12-3.

1.2.2 The Assault

The approach was over; the camp was set; the terms of surrender refused; the psychological displays inconsequential; only one option remained for the commander: to assault the walls. A *sine qua non* condition of every successful assault was good morale. That could be achieved in a variety of ways (the psychological tactics mentioned before could have that effect, for example), however we are only concerned with the ones pertaining to the commander.[504]

The commander managed his soldier's morale by, on the one hand, inspiring them through words and example and, on the other hand, by reading their will to combat so as to make the best tactical decision.[505] Furthermore, he served as an eyewitness to his men's behaviour, which could mean promotions and prizes for the ones that excelled at their job.[506] According to Onasander's military treatise:

> "(...) the general must inspire cheerfulness in the army, more by the strategy of his facial expression than by his words; for many distrust speeches on the ground that they have been concocted especially for the occasion, but believing a confident appearance to be unfeigned they are fully convinced of his fearlessness; and it is an excellent thing to understand these two points, how to say the right word and how to show the right expression."[507]

Vespasian shows that he is familiar with this principle of generalship. In Jotapata he presents himself in plain sight of both friend and foe, in a clear demonstration of fearlessness. He is close enough to the enemy to be within missile range, because, as Josephus tells us, "(...) one of the defenders on the wall hit Vespasian with an arrow on the flat of the foot."[508] Vespasian takes this opportunity to reinspire his men, as he knows how valuable good morale really is:

> Suppressing the pain, Vespasian made a point of showing himself to all who had been alarmed for his safety, and in so doing raised their war on the Jews to a new intensity. Everyone now wanted to be in the forefront of the action to avenge their general, and with shouts of collective encouragement they stormed at the wall.[509]

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[504] See Levithan 2014, 22-46, for a comprehensive look into soldier morale.
[505] Vegetius (*Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.12) focuses an entire chapter called "One should find out how soldiers are feeling before battle", to this judgement of the soldier's will to combat by the general, and also mentions the importance of the commander's example for troop morale (*Epitoma Rei Militaris,* 3.9). Frontinus (*Str*., 2.8.12-3) illustrates how the general's example can restore troop morale. Onasander (33.6) summarises it well: "The duty of the general is to ride by the ranks on horseback, show himself to those in danger, praise the brave, threaten the cowardly, encourage the lazy, fill up gaps, transpose a company if necessary, bring aid to wearied, anticipate the crisis, the hour, and the outcome." Goldsworthy 2007a, 15.
[506] Levithan 2014, 36; Goldsworthy 2007a, 15.
[507] Onos., 13.3, a similar description is present in 33.6 of the same work.
[508] J. *BJ*, 3.236. This might be the assault referred to in Suetonius (*Ves*., 4), "because he [Vespasian] engaged in one or two battles with such resolution that he received a blow on his knee from a stone and several arrows in his shield during the storming of a fortress." Even though it appears to be an exaggeration to enhance Vespasian's qualities, it shows that the idea of "leading by example" is very much present in Vespasian's imagery.
[509] J. *BJ*, 3.239.

The result of this performance of leadership by Vespasian was an army with a morale not only still intact but also highly strengthened. Later on, in the same siege, Vespasian shows us an example of effective management of the soldier's will to combat:

> Vespasian set out to bolster morale after these reverses, but when he saw his troops angry enough to want action rather than encouragement, he ordered them to raise the height of the earthworks and to construct three towers, each fifty feet high and entirely covered in sheets of iron, so they would be virtually fireproof and sufficiently heavy to keep a stable base.[510]

Reacting to a setback in the siege operations, Vespasian is initially inclined to use his time in an attempt to reinforce friendly morale. However, after an assessment of his men's will to combat, he observes that it has increased. Readily enough, Vespasian changes his course of action and opts for an immediate preparation of a new assault. This skill of management of soldiery is vital in a good commander, and Vespasian performs it well.

Moving on to the siege of Gamala, Vespasian is the protagonist of an inspired speech to lift his troops morale after a costly unsuccessful first assault. However, as the speeches in *Bellum Judaicum* are more a demonstration of Josephus' rhetorical skills than an actual account of what was said, we will have to leave them out of this analysis.[511] Nevertheless, Vespasian is of the same opinion as Onasander, who puts actions before words. In this siege, Vespasian is seen once again leading his army from the front. In fact, he does this to an extreme, as he puts himself in danger:

> "Meanwhile Vespasian, staying all the time in close contact with his hard-pressed troops, and appalled to see the town collapsing in ruins on top of his army, had forgotten about his own safety and without realizing where he was heading had gradually reached the highest part of the town. Here he found himself in deep danger and virtually alone—only a few men with him (...)"[512]

It was perhaps poor judgement on the part of Vespasian to put himself in a position where he was not safe. As a commander, he "can aid his army far less by fighting than he can harm it if he should be killed".[513] However, it is highly likely that Vespasian was simply caught off guard. With the walls breached and his men inside the city, he must not have considered any other outcome than outright victory. Regardless, it is no doubt with the idea of leading by example and of lifting his troop's morale that Vespasian was in the front lines.

[510] J. *BJ*, 3.283-4.
[511] Mason 2016, 30-2.
[512] J. *BJ*, 4.31.
[513] Onos., 23.1.

The assault could take many forms. Campbell concludes that embankments, to deploy both men and siege engines (of these, battering-rams being the most common) to the walls, were the primary choice amongst Roman commanders.[514] Additionally, he states that artillery was in no way critical for Roman siege operations.[515] This marks the point where Vespasian starts to grow apart from Roman siege warfare tradition. Not so much in the use of ramparts and battering-rams, which he employs more than once as we shall see, but in the role played by artillery.

Artillery plays a major role in Vespasian's *poliorketika*.[516] In Britain, commanding only one legion, Vespasian had at his disposal fifty-nine pieces of artillery.[517] As a direct result of their use, Vespasian forced the capitulation of the *oppida* of Hod Hill. This was achieved through the concentration of artillery fire on the chieftain's hut, as we have previously seen. In other hill-forts, such as Maiden Castle, artillery is not the protagonist. However, it is still present and extremely relevant.

One needs to differentiate between the effectiveness of the defensive works in Britain and in Judaea. The level of impact of Vespasian's artillery would have naturally decreased substantially from the turf and wooden ramparts of Britain to the stone and brick walls of Galilee and Judaea. For that reason, Vespasian adapted his artillery to distinct uses in order to maintain its performance. Whereas in Britain it took centre stage, going so far as to decide the outcome of some sieges, in Judaea it was relegated for a secondary position. Nevertheless, it did not lose its critical importance, it just shifted the way in which its cruciality can be evaluated.

Roman artillery did not have the power to breach properly built walls, the best it could do was demolish its battlements.[518] Vespasian knew this, and in Judaea he employed his artillery with two very specific objectives. Firstly, as a means to crush enemy morale. And secondly, to serve as suppression fire for all siege operations. The sizable number of pieces of artillery available to him (around 160 between the three legions) ensured that both goals could be achieved.[519] It is important to note that Vespasian had requested specific siege machinery

[514] D. Campbell 2002, 213; Levithan (2020, 142) confirms this conclusion.
[515] *Ibidem*.
[516] Vespasian had 59 catapults with him in Britain and 160 pieces of artillery in Judaea, between catapults and *ballistae*. See Davies 2008, 698-9 et Wilson 2008, 346-50, for a description of such siege machinery.
[517] Levick (2017, 22) mentions the number 55 (as prescribed by Vegetius (*Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 2.25)), Webster (1993, 109) on the other hand talks about 60 (using Vegetius' rule, but with an error in calculations). Given the context, and the arguments made in Part 1, chapter 2, the number 59 seems more likely.
[518] D. Campbell 2002, 175-6.
[519] J. *BJ*, 3.166.

for this campaign, showcasing his knowledge of siege warfare and the significance that he clearly placed on this machinery of war.[520]

The psychological impact of being bombarded with projectiles from Roman artillery was at the very least demoralising, if not outright crushing. The events at Hod Hill demonstrate exactly that. Artillery effectively scarred Rome's enemies, thus creating an atmosphere of terror upon their sighting outside the walls. This almost "myth" regarding the deadliness of Roman artillery was perpetuated by the exacerbated accounts of those who had faced it and lived to tell the tale. Such is the case with Josephus, who writes:

> "Any body of troops, however well protected, hit by the force of one of these massive stones would be flattened right through to the rearmost ranks. An idea of the power of this machine can be gathered from some incidents during that night. One of the men standing with Josephus on the wall had his head taken off by a stone fired from it, and as if thrown by a sling his skull was sent flying for a third of a mile; and when a pregnant woman, just leaving her house at dawn, was struck in the stomach, the baby blasted out of her womb was hurled a hundred yards. That was the power of the ballista. More terrifying than the machines themselves and the projectiles they fired was the whistle of the incoming missiles and the crash when they landed."[521]

It is hard to believe that the events portrayed by Josephus took place in precisely the way they are depicted. However, what this account illustrates is the psychological trauma that stemmed from the carnage created by Roman artillery. It was not so much the amount of casualties produced by these machines that left a lasting impression, but the way in which those deaths occurred; the gruesomeness of it. Josephus goes even further, suggesting that it was the "whistle" from the projectiles that carried the most weight in the creation of this climate of terror. It is interesting to note that the "bombardment" did not stop during the night, thus ensuring that the enemy would not rest or ever feel safe. The benefits for the Roman army were clear. On the one hand, a frightened enemy with damaged morale and, as a consequence, less willing to fight than to surrender; on the other hand, an enemy with less presence on the walls, as they would not want to be hit by Roman artillery, which would allow better conditions for the Roman approach. This leads us to the second objective of the use of artillery: cover fire for the assault.

Josephus' account is abundantly clear regarding the use of artillery to this end. In Jotapata, a missile barrage is set in place to accompany every assault.

> "But then Vespasian brought up his archers and slingers and the whole complement of his long-range weaponry, and ordered a constant barrage while he himself took his infantry to push up the slope at the point where the wall was most vulnerable."[522]

[520] J. *BJ*, 7.308.
[521] J. *BJ*, 3.244-7.
[522] J. *BJ*, 3.151.

This passage pertains to the first attempt at taking the walls of Jotapata, and already we find the use of artillery, combined with missile auxiliary troops, as a means to cover ground operations. Later in the same siege:

> "Vespasian now brought up his artillery engines - 160 in all - and set them in a semi-circle with orders to fire on the defenders on the wall. In one concerted barrage the catapults sent their spears whistling through the air, the stone-throwers hurled hundredweight rocks, and both flaming and regular arrows flew in a hail. This made it impossible for the Jews to stay on the wall or indeed anywhere behind it within range of the missiles - the artillery bombardment was accompanied by volleys of fire from the massed Arabian archers and the whole body of javelin-men and slingers."[523]

Artillery combined with missile auxiliary forces is once again placed as a deterrent of enemy fire. Only this time it was not to cover an assault, but for the protection of the men who were too busy with earthworks to protect themselves. The expected result is thus achieved; Roman artillery effectively denying the Jewish defence from the walls. In one of the final stages of the same siege:

> "So the Romans moved the catapults and the rest of their artillery closer, to come within range of the defenders on the wall (who were doing their best to stop them), and opened fire: the archers and slingers likewise moved forward into range. While the resulting barrage ensured that none of the Jews could get near the ramparts, a separate party brought up the ram under a full-length carapace of linked hurdles covered by skins, for the protection of both men and machine."[524]

We saw artillery covering an initial man powered assault, then protecting the building of an embankment, and now we see it suppressing enemy fire to allow for a machine-based assault on the walls. Again the same task, only now for a different type of assault. Josephus still mentions the use of artillery in the same manner for a subsequent assault.[525] Finally, we find artillery in a different position, although still with the same job at hand:

> "He then had these towers erected on the earthworks, and mounted on them the lighter artillery pieces together with javelin-men, archers, and the most powerful slingers. These then, screened from view by the height of the towers and their metal skirts, opened fire on the defenders on the wall in clear view below them. Given the difficulty of dodging the missiles raining down on their heads, or of retaliating when they could not see their attackers, and recognizing that the height of the towers put them out of range of handthrown missiles and their iron casing ruled out any attack by fire, the Jews abandoned defence from the wall and resumed their sorties to meet any attempted ground-level assaults."[526]

[523] J. *BJ*, 3.166-8.
[524] J. *BJ*, 3.219-20.
[525] J. *BJ*, 3.256.
[526] J. *BJ*, 3.284-7.

The "lighter artillery", which means the arrow-firing catapults, were moved to the top of the recently built siege towers in pursuit of a better firing angle. The result was a brutal carnage that forced the overexposed enemy to effectively abandon the defence of the walls.

Moving on to the siege of Gamala, we find artillery being employed with the same intention by Vespasian:

> "Even so, their leaders told them not to worry, and led them out onto the wall, where for a time they managed to keep back the teams bringing up the siege engines, but then the fire from the catapults and stonethrowers forced them to retreat inside the town."[527]

Jewish defence of the walls is once again denied by Roman artillery, thus allowing for a steady and successful approach of the siege engines. In Vespasian we see an overwhelming use of artillery, adapting to the demands of enemy defences and contributing to Roman victory. By making artillery a fundamental aspect of his approach to siege warfare, Vespasian distances himself from Roman military tradition.

With the exception of this use of artillery, Vespasian shows no clear innovation to the art of taking enemy fortifications. In this regard, he resorts to proven Roman military tactics. Before employing siege machinery and earthworks, it was common practice to test enemy defences with a simple man-powered assault. Despite its "testing" character, this type of assault still aimed at victory.[528] Maiden Castle is taken in this manner; the legionnaires pushing the tops of the ramparts into the ditches, thus destroying enemy defences and at the same time creating an accessible route for conquest.[529] However, it is not certain whether this was accomplished in the "testing" stage of the siege, or if it took a few more attempts. Gabara is also taken in the first assault, although Josephus does not go into detail as to how.[530] Nevertheless, given the reduced mass of defenders, we can assume a simple man-powered assault, as every other option would have taken a lot more time and resources. Tarichaeae also fits the category of a first-assault victory. However, in this case the walls are not taken, instead a neglected section of the defences is exploited by Vespasian's son, Titus.[531] In Jotapata we find an initial man-powered assault to test the defenders resolve, but, in this case, it is followed by four days of continuous waves with the same tactic, something rather unusual.[532] Either it is an exaggeration on the part of Josephus, in order to value, *a posteriori*, his command and

[527] J. *BJ*, 4.19.
[528] Levithan (2014, 60-2) - "The main intent of a testing assault is to test the capabilities of the defenders and the morale of both sides rather than to take the city (although the city might suddenly fall if the defenders panicked)."
[529] Webster 1993, 109.
[530] J. *BJ*, 3.132.
[531] J. *BJ*, 3.497-502.
[532] J. *BJ*, 3.150-7.

Jewish courage; or it was a decision made by Vespasian on the basis of his soldiers' will to combat. It would not be rational, having the same information, to employ an identical tactic repeatedly and to expect a different result.

The natural progression of a Roman siege would take us from "(...) the hope of capitulation to light assaults and on to the assaults which use embankments, towers and rams."[533] The idea would be to keep raising the intensity of the assault until the enemy was overpowered. After the first unsuccessful light assaults at the walls of Jotapata:

> "To meet the challenge presented both by the physical nature of the site and by the determined resistance of the Jews, Vespasian's resolute response was to intensify the siege, and he called a meeting of his officers to discuss the means of assault."[534]

It is in Jotapata where we see a clear evolution of assault tactics employed by Vespasian. First the light assaults that we have already looked at, then:

> "It was decided to build a ramp against the accessible section of the wall, and Vespasian sent out the entire army to gather the necessary material. (...) Then another party constructed a screen of wicker hurdles fastened over rows of upright stakes as a protection against missiles from above, and began the earthworks under this cover, with little or no injury caused by the bombardment from the wall, while others dug up the adjacent hillocks and brought them a constant supply of earth. So with this triple division of labour no soldier was short of a job. (...) The ramp was now rising and had almost reached the battlements."[535]

Through this "triple division of labour", Vespasian ordered the building of an embankment which could serve both to take men over the walls or battering-rams through it, as it was meant to be as high as the enemy defences. However, what follows this stage of the siege creates some doubts:

> "Ultimately Vespasian called a halt to direct engagement by his army, and decided on a blockade to use starvation as the means of capturing the city - either the inhabitants would sue for mercy when the privations began to bite or, if they were stubborn enough to see it through to the end, they would die of hunger. And if it came to a battle, he reckoned that he would have a much easier victory if he waited a while and attacked them again when exhaustion had worn them down. So he ordered a close guard on all the exits."[536]

Levithan tells us that "the progression to a new level of effort precludes a return to a less intense tactical and moral stage", but Josephus informs us that the exact opposite occurred

[533] Levithan 2014, 53.
[534] J. *BJ*, 3.161.
[535] J. *BJ*, 3.162-4 et 171.
[536] J. *BJ*, 178-80.

in Jotapata.[537] Vespasian goes from light assaults to an embankment, raising the intensity and aggressiveness, but then goes back to a more passive option, that of the blockade. In order to make sense of this, there are two perspectives to take into account. First, that this represents an exception to the rule, as sieges are complex and not completely predictable. To this we can add Josephus' own judgement of Vespasian's decision, which seems quite reasonable. The other perspective would be that this was a simple error in interpretation by Josephus. Josephus sees the temporary slowdown of hostilities as a deliberate step back by Vespasian. However, it can also be seen as a necessary period of preparation for a more aggressive stage of the siege, that of the battering-ram assault. When, a few paragraphs later, Josephus says, "(...) since the earthworks were now coming close to the walls, he [Vespasian] decided to bring up the 'ram'."[538], he makes it clear that the works on the embankment never really stopped; Vespasian was simply waiting until the grounds were prepared for the next, more intense, stage of the siege. This view is further substantiated by Campbell's already analysed conclusion that the Romans were overwhelmingly more aggressive than passive in sieges, and my own conclusion that Vespasian took this idea even further.

The embankment having gained access to the walls, Vespasian ordered the advancement of the battering-ram. This war machine and its use are fairly accurately depicted by Josephus, as the reliefs in Septimius Severus' arch, in Rome, and in Trajan's column corroborate (see image 5 and 2, respectively), which serves to improve Josephus' value as a military historian.[539]

> "While the resulting barrage ensured that none of the Jews could get near the ramparts, a separate party brought up the ram under a full-length carapace of linked hurdles covered by skins, for the protection of both men and machine. The very first impact rocked the wall, and there was a lot of shouting and screaming inside as if the town had already fallen."[540]

This passage illustrates not only the physical impact of a battering-ram, but also its psychological dimension. It holds an almost apocalyptical weight, as if marking the point from which there was no more hope for the besieged.[541] It is interesting to note that Josephus refers

[537] Levithan 2014, 53.
[538] J. *BJ*, 3.213.
[539] Josephus (*BJ*, 3.214-6) gives the following description: "This is an immense piece of timber, as big as a ship's mast, tipped with a mass of iron shaped in the form of a ram's head—hence the name. At its centre point it is suspended, like the beam of a balance, by ropes attached to another timber which is supported at either end by posts driven into the ground. A large team of men pull the ram back and then, with all their combined weight, swing it forward to smash its iron nose into the wall." See Varandas 2006, 136-40, for the evolution of this war machine.
[540] J. *BJ*, 3.220-1.
[541] This could lead us to the conclusion that the battering-ram did in fact mark the start of a siege, and that that moment of initial battering was somehow regulated by law (Goldsworthy 2000, 145). However, as D. Campbell

only to one battering-ram. We know that later in the same year (67 A.D.), Vespasian employs a plural number of these machines in the siege of Gamala, as we shall see. Additionally, as Onasander puts it:

> "(...) the general must make feints and threats at many points, worrying and deceiving his opponents, here and there, at many places, striving, by securing a firm hold upon one part, to overturn the whole structure of the city."[542]

Vespasian apparently focuses his entire assault on one position with one machine, thus making the besieged defensive task immensely easier. This meant that the Jewish defenders could concentrate all their strength and cunning on a single piece of machinery. And this they did, frustrating the Roman advance.[543] Why, then, did Vespasian not employ more than one battering-ram in this assault? It was not due to a lack of machinery, as Josephus tells us that once the first ram was crippled, it was quickly replaced.[544] It could be that there were in fact more than one battering-rams employed, but Josephus chooses to single it out with a rhetorical goal in mind. From a literary point of view, it is rather more impactful to speak of "The ram" than of rams generally. The former transcends its own physical reality, becoming a symbol of doom, whereas the latter is unidimensional. Josephus would want his work to be both informative and, I believe, appealing; this symbolic use of events would achieve that goal. One other explanation is that Vespasian was coerced into opting for this course of action by the demands of the terrain. Josephus tells us that the city of Jotapata was utterly inaccessible through all sides except for one, as a result of its topography.[545] Thus, it would logically follow that the only point of approach did not have the necessary space and quality of terrain for the deployment of more than one battering-rams simultaneously. This last interpretation seems to be more reasonable, as archaeology has proven Josephus' topographical description to be mostly accurate.[546]

The progress was slow but steady and after some persistence, Vespasian's battering ram had breached the walls of Jotapata.[547] What succeeded was a major assault, predicated on Roman military tradition, and organised as follows:

> "At dawn, after allowing them a short rest from the exertions of the night, Vespasian reassembled his troops for the final push to capture the town. His aim was to draw off the defenders who

(2002, 207-8) explains, the fate of any target was entirely in the hands of the commander; the battering-ram, at this level, had only a symbolic and literary weight.
[542] Onos., 42(3).6.
[543] J. *BJ*, 3.222-8.
[544] J. *BJ*, 3.235.
[545] J. *BJ*, 3.158-60.
[546] Har-El 1972, 127.
[547] J. *BJ*, 3.251.

were blocking the breach in the wall. To this end, he had his crack cavalrymen dismount and take up position, in full protective armour and with their pikes at the ready, in three companies opposite the ruined wall, so that they could spearhead the incursion as soon as the scaling-ramps were laid: and behind them he ranged the pick of his infantry.

Other squads were detailed to bring up ladders and set them against the undamaged stretches of wall, so that some of the besieged would have to abandon the defence of the breach in an effort to repel this other threat, and the rest would be forced by concentrated fire to give way and leave the entrance open."[548]

Vespasian divides his forces into different detachments. The "pick of his infantry", he concentrates on the breach created by the battering-ram, having the embankment with the scaling-ramps as a means of access. What remained was ordered to attack distinct points of the wall, using ladders to climb the defences. It is clear from the way the assault was planned that Vespasian was hoping to break through the damaged section of the wall. Otherwise, why would he have spent the time and manpower in creating that breach? The squads bringing up ladders are identified by Josephus as distractions. This is a fair assumption, supported by Roman siege warfare tradition and military theorists such as Onasander, as we have seen. However, these "distractions" could mean the demise of a city, if not properly handled, part of the reason why they were so successful in diverging enemy attention and scattering the defenders.

Nevertheless, the defenders of Jotapata held out. Vespasian's next step was to elevate even further the intensity of the siege:

"(...) he [Vespasian] ordered them to raise the height of the earthworks and to construct three towers, each fifty feet high and entirely covered in sheets of iron, so they would be virtually fireproof and sufficiently heavy to keep a stable base. He then had these towers erected on the earthworks, and mounted on them the lighter artillery pieces together with javelin-men, archers, and the most powerful slingers. These then, screened from view by the height of the towers and their metal skirts, opened fire on the defenders on the wall in clear view below them."[549]

Siege-towers were thus raised by Vespasian on top of the earthworks. This served both a tactical purpose of eliminating the enemy missile-throwers from the walls and forcing the rest of the defenders into hiding, but also a psychological one. War being a struggle of wills, this was Vespasian's way of showing that he was not impressed with the enemy's resolve and that he would not leave until he had his victory. He was making a move on the tactical and morale battlefields simultaneously. Not to mention the positive effect that it would have on his own troops, as this decision was also grounded on the soldier's will to combat.

Jotapata falls, at last, following a final assault with the apparent assistance of a deserter. The phenomenon of *stasis*, so prevalent in Thucydides, also exists in Vespasian's siege

[548] J. *BJ*, 3.253-5 et 257.
[549] J. *BJ*, 3.284-6.

warfare, although not with the same weight. It is generally observed from an "intelligence" point of view, seldomly being the direct cause of a city's demise.

> "But then on the forty-seventh day of the siege the Roman earthworks reached and overtopped the height of the wall, and on that same day a deserter brought Vespasian a report of the small numbers and weakened state of the men still left in the city. He said that they were utterly spent with constant lack of sleep and end-to-end battles, and were now incapable of meeting an open assault: there was also for consideration a way of taking them by surprise. Round about the last watch of the night, he said, when some respite from their troubles was looked for and exhausted men tend to fall into their deepest sleep just before dawn, the sentries also drop off, and that was the time when he advised the Romans to make their attack."[550]

The forty-seven days referred to by Josephus leave doubts, seemingly more a way to legitimise himself as a prophet than an actual statement of fact. The inclusion of this deserter as the catalysing factor for Roman victory is suspicious. It serves Josephus' narrative too well, as it creates the idea that hadn't that betrayal happened, Jotapata would possibly not have fallen. And yet, the conquest of the city by the Romans seems inevitable. From Josephus' own words, the walls had been overtopped ("coincidently" on the same day as the betrayal) and the besieged were in no condition of sustaining another general assault. Both, the circumstances and Roman military culture, dictated another attack. Vespasian would not have needed an excuse to opt for what was the most sensible tactical decision under those conditions. Regardless of it being prompted by the word of a deserter or by military maxims, the assault was final and successful; the city was conquered.

In Gamala, we witness an uncommonness in relation to the standard Roman approach to siege warfare. Here, there was no testing stage of any kind, and neither was there an initial man-powered assault. Instead, Vespasian decides to begin earthworks right away, resorting to battering-rams before trying other, less committing forms of assault.

> "Construction to the east of the ridge, opposite the highest tower in the town, was undertaken by the Fifteenth Legion, while the Fifth started work on a ramp facing the town centre, and the Tenth began filling in the trenches and ravines. (...) With so many experienced hands at work the ramps were soon completed and the siege engines moved into position. (...) The Romans brought up their battering rams at three separate points and broke down the wall, then poured in over the debris with a tremendous noise - trumpets blaring, arms clattering, men shouting their battle cry - and piled into the defenders."[551]

There is a myriad of factors that could shed light on this decision, as Josephus gives no discernable explanation. However, based on the information that we do have, one interpretation is still possible. The description of Gamala that Josephus offers is quite similar to that of

[550] J. *BJ*, 3.316-9.
[551] J. *BJ*, 4.13, 17 et 20.

Jotapata; a comparison which he makes repeatedly.[552] Gamala also benefited, "yet more than Jotapata on the inherent challenge of its location."[553] It was protected on all sides except for one by its topography. The approachable flank had been secured with walls and trenches by Josephus himself. That meant that any assault would first need to have the trenches filled so that the army could access the walls. Considering that earthworks were then indispensable, it would make sense to take advantage of that time to have the embankment and siege engines ready. Additionally, Vespasian's own experience dealing with a city of similar defensive capabilities, as was Jotapata, had taught him that a heavy assault was in order. Lastly, the defenders' resolve rivalled that of the ones in Jotapata, which meant that they would not be scared into submission by a simple show of strength. In this framework, a battering-ram assault to start off siege operations in Gamala does not seem so inappropriate.

The Roman assault is initially successful in penetrating enemy defences. However, an unchecked eagerness for victory led to confusion amongst friendly troops and to an eventual retreat with heavy losses.[554] A fresh assault was prepared, although with an additional point of attack:

> "The fighting men still resisted the siege, until at around the dawn watch on the twenty-second of the month Hyperberetaeus three soldiers of the Fifteenth Legion crept up to the base of the tower projecting opposite them and began quietly undermining it. It was dark, and the sentries above failed to notice their approach or their activity on arrival. With minimal noise the soldiers prised out the five main load-bearing stones and then jumped back. The tower suddenly collapsed with a tremendous crash, bringing the sentries hurtling down with it."[555]

It is not clear whether these three soldiers acted out of their own volition or if they were ordered to. Whatever the case may be, they managed to undermine one of the towers causing its ruin and creating a new breach in the defences to be taken advantage of by the Romans. This is the only siege, of which Vespasian was the commanding officer, where we find an explicit use of this type of engineering. Given the ambiguous account, that seems to suggest voluntary action on the part of the three soldiers mentioned, and the knowledge of the remainder of Vespasian's sieges; it would not seem that it was part of Vespasian's *modus operandi* in siege warfare to resort to this type of tactic.[556]

[552] J. *BJ*, 4.4-10.
[553] J. *BJ*, 4.4.
[554] J. *BJ*, 4.22-30.
[555] J. *BJ*, 4.63-5.
[556] Lendon 2005, 237.

A second assault, using the fallen tower as the initial point of entry, is ultimately successful. Having analysed Vespasian's way of taking enemy cities by force, it is now important to look at the aftermath of the sieges he commanded.

1.3 The Aftermath

The aftermath of a Roman siege was almost exclusively characterised by pillaging, slaughtering and raping. This was a reality that was expected by both besiegers and besieged alike.[557] The sack was a gruesome event, but nonetheless unavoidable, and it can only be understood in a framework of reward and release. As Levithan puts it,

> "it was, to a large degree, the promise of the sack that made the prosecution of difficult and drawn out sieges possible. The desire for valuable booty and the need for an explosive release of psychological tension were inseparable from the continued participation of the soldiers in the siege. The same soldiers that are praised elsewhere for discipline and courage commit rape and murder in the wake of their victory."[558]

For all the technological, political, or economic advances, human nature has remained almost entirely immutable to this day. Even though we have more control, harsher punishment and a different cultural landscape, atrocities such as this are still common in the modern battlefield, as evidence from the Ukraine War suggests.[559] The main difference being that nowadays it is against the law, whereas throughout Antiquity it was considered as part of the "laws of war"; in a way explaining its greater abundance.[560]

In the context of Roman siege warfare, the sack occurred virtually every time the enemy chose not to give battle in the open.[561] The longer the siege went on, forcing Roman soldiers to fight in an unfair position, the more destructive the sack would be. This is explained by reasons of material reward for the effort and pent-up rage on the part of the soldiers, as previously seen, but also by a very practical and strategic motive. It was of paramount importance to make sure that every potential enemy of Rome knew what to expect if they offered resistance. In a strictly practical way, the massacre of one city could mean the sparing of many others, as they would

[557] Tac. *Hist*., 3.19; Levithan (2014, 205-6): "it is a curious hazard of military history that—whether reading of ancient, medieval, or early modern sieges—the latter stages of the narrative are likely to feature a statement (usually generalized and unsourced) that the sack was well known and understood to be the inalienable right of assaulting troops, and that this has always been the case."
[558] *Id*., 207.
[559] Gall 2023.
[560] Tac. *Hist*., 3.19; Goldsworthy 2000, 145; regarding this topic, see Levithan's epilogue (2014, 205-27).
[561] Le Bohec 1994, 214.

surrender in order not to face the same fate.[562] It is now time to ascertain whether and in what circumstances this reality happened under the command of Vespasian.

It comes as no surprise to acknowledge that Vespasian did not innovate in this regard. In fact, in all the sieges where fighting took place and of which we have enough information, victory was always followed by a sack. After the taking of Gabara:

> "Once inside the town he [Vespasian] killed all its people, whatever their age: neither young nor old met with any mercy from the Romans, such was their hatred for the whole Jewish nation and their lasting resentment at the outrage inflicted on Cestius. Vespasian set fire not only to the town itself, but also to all the surrounding hamlets and villages. Some of these he found completely deserted: in others he took the inhabitants into slavery."[563]

Josephus is quite clear that no one was left alive inside Gabara. The town was then razed to the ground, along with the surrounding villages. It is no doubt a sack taken to the furthest extreme. If one looks only at the siege that preceded the destruction, one will not find reasonable grounds to justify such a harsh punishment. After all, the town was taken fairly easily, with apparently thin resistance. In this sense, the arguments regarding release and reward would not be very effective. But the answer, in this specific case, is found in the context prior to the siege and in the strategic demands that derive from it. Gabara was the first siege in which Vespasian became involved after being appointed by Nero to crush the Jewish rebellion. The last encounter between Rome and the rebellious party had ended in a crushing defeat for the legate Cestius Gallus, as Josephus points out, losing an entire legion along with its *aquila* (*Legio XII "Fulminata"*).[564] Strategically, Vespasian needed not just a victory, but a crushing one as well. The sack of Gabara can then be understood as a setting of tone with the arrival of the new commander-in-chief. The message sent was that Rome had come back stronger, more determined, and merciless. Vespasian wanted to win the battles that were to come before they had even begun. By completely obliterating Gabara he was striking fear, doubt, and hopelessness into the hearts of the Jewish rebels that still resisted.

Moving on to Jotapata:

> "Fresh with the memory of what the siege had cost them, the Romans were in no mood to spare anyone or entertain any pity. They herded the people downhill from the citadel and set about their slaughter.
>
> (...)
>
> On that day the Romans massacred all they found in plain sight. During the next few days they searched out all the hiding places and went after everyone concealed in the sewers and caves, killing without regard to age, and sparing only infants and women. Twelve hundred of these captives were

[562] Goldsworthy 2000, 145-6.
[563] J. *BJ*, 3.133-4.
[564] J. *BJ*, 2.540-555 et 3.133-4; Suet. *Ves*., 4.

> rounded up: as for the dead, the total number killed in the final capture and the previous fighting was reckoned at 40,000. Vespasian ordered the demolition of the city, and had all its fortifications burnt to the ground. Such was the end of Jotapata, captured on the first of the month Panemus in the thirteenth year of Nero's reign."[565]

Whereas the siege of Gabara was over in a day, that of Jotapata extended for weeks. Along with the time expenditure, there was a heavy human and material price to be paid by Vespasian's forces. The level of pent-up rage and the desire to be handsomely compensated, must have been overwhelming amongst Roman soldiers. Josephus himself refers in the first passage, that it is "the memory of what the siege had cost them [Romans]" that set about the slaughter of the people of Jotapata. Therefore, it is in these two motivations, rather than in any strategical gain, that we find the most reasonable explanation for the ferocious sack that followed the conquest of Jotapata. And ferocious it was, as it apparently lasted for days, "sparing only infants and women" with the obvious objective of profiting from their enslavement. Vespasian then proceeded to order the demolition of Jotapata, razing another enemy stronghold to the ground.

In Tiberias we are faced with a peculiar situation,

> "As soon as he [Vespasian] was assured that the population at large was of one mind with the suppliants, he mobilized his army and marched it to the city. The people opened their gates to him and went out to meet him with acclamations, calling him their saviour and benefactor. The narrow entrances were too constricting for the mass of troops, so to give them wide enough access Vespasian had a breach knocked through the south wall. In deference to the king he issued orders that there was to be no looting or rape, and it was the king too who persuaded him to spare the walls by giving his personal guarantee that the people behind them would remain loyal for the future."[566]

Even though the people of Tiberias surrendered without giving a fight, and Vespasian was acclaimed as their saviour, the latter still had to give an explicit order for his men not to sack the city. Additionally, Vespasian only decided to issue this command out of strategic sympathy for his ally, king Agrippa II. It is true that a show of bad faith on the part of a rebel party that was inside the city had vexed Vespasian.[567] However, that same group was gone by

[565] J. *BJ*, 3.329 et 3.336-9.
[566] J. *BJ*, 3.459-61.
[567] J. *BJ*, 3.448-52, "He [Vespasian] sent the decurion Valerianus with fifty cavalry to hold peaceful discussions with the townspeople and induce them to offer guarantees of loyalty: he had heard that the people at large wanted peace, but were dominated and pressured into war by one particular faction. Valerianus rode up to the town, stopped short of the wall, and dismounted, making his cavalrymen do likewise: this was to dispel any thought that they were there to start a skirmish. Before any talks could take place the principal members of the rebel party ran out fully armed to confront him, headed by one Jesus, the son of Saphias, who was the ringleader of this terrorist gang. Valerianus thought it unsafe to engage an enemy against his general's orders, even if victory were certain, and very risky to take a small body of men into battle with a larger force, when the enemy were clearly prepared and they were not: and, besides, he was flummoxed by this unexpected aggression from the Jews. So he made his escape on foot, and five of his men also abandoned their horses. Jesus and his people brought the horses back to

the time the city gates were opened and there had been no casualties and no lasting material damage. Nevertheless, a challenge to the Roman *uirtus* had been made and the enemy chose to hide behind its walls, instead of facing the Roman army in open battle. That embodied enough grounds for the soldiers to consider themselves entitled to a sack, even though there was no actual fighting. The fact that Vespasian needed to give an explicit order to prevent his army from pillaging, raping and killing, leads us to infer that the sack was the natural final stage of development of a siege, as we have been observing in this chapter.

In this passage, we come across a rare occasion in which a commander of a Roman force has actual control over the sack. This was not common, for as Levithan says, "indiscipline – total chaos, the sudden snapping of psychological bonds – defined the sack both as a release and as a threat."[568] After a sack had started, any notion of control from the commander was illusory.[569] The best one could hope for, as a commander, was to stop it before it started. However, commanders seldomly would want to stop their men from exerting their "right" to a sack. A general wanted his soldiers in the best morale conditions possible, and denying them a sack could mean insatisfaction, demoralisation and, in extreme cases, mutiny.[570] Even if the enemy surrendered, the soldiers would be expecting a sack and would act on it, regardless of the commander's orders.[571] The fact that Vespasian managed to keep his army disciplined in the face of a denied sack is very telling of his status amongst the soldiery and of his leadership abilities. Although, it is fair to assume that had there been any fighting, the army's reaction would have been a lot more severe in their demonstration of displeasement.

A final inference that transpires from the reading of this passage is related to the treatment of the walls. Josephus tells us that the only reason Tiberias was allowed to keep its defences, was due to an appeal made by King Agrippa II next to Vespasian. The relationship between Vespasian and Rome's allies is the topic of another chapter (see Part IV, Chapter 4), what is important to reflect upon here is the standard approach to an enemy stronghold that had been taken by Vespasian. What we can conclude from this passage, and also from the evidence of the remainder of Vespasian's sieges (the ones we have looked at and the ones we'll analyse soon), is that a city which did not immediately surrender and was then conquered as a consequence, lost the right to keep its walls. This was a symbolic gesture, as it signified the

the town in triumph, as if they were the spoils of battle rather than the side effects of surprise."; this was a clear offence to the Roman *fides* and a challenge to their *virtus*.

[568] Levithan 2014, 221.

[569] *Id.*, 221-2.

[570] *Id*., 218-20.

[571] Tacitus (*Hist*., 3.32-3) describes one such example in the context of the civil war of 69, where the victorious Flavian soldiers sacked the city of Cremona against their commander's wishes.

total submission of the targeted location. However, it also served a rather obvious and practical point, as it would prevent the enemy from re-utilising those defences against Rome.

In Tarichaeae, even though it is Vespasian who orders the assault, it is his son Titus who is in charge at the time of the sack, which places this episode outside the scope of our investigation. The next siege is that of Gamala. A relatively short-lived siege, but nonetheless costly, and in its' aftermath,

> "Before they knew it the Romans were up and on them. Some tried to fight back, others held out their hands for mercy, but all were quickly surrounded and the Romans made no distinction, their murderous fury exacerbated by the memory of those lost in the first attack. Corralled on all sides, and despairing of any escape, most threw themselves, their children, and their wives over the edge into the ravine which had been excavated to a huge depth straight down from the citadel. As it happened, the results of Roman rage turned out less extreme than the frantic self-destruction of their captives: 4,000 were slaughtered by the Romans, but the number throwing themselves over the cliff proved to be 5,000."[572]

As stated before, the siege was over in two assaults, but nonetheless many Roman lives were lost and materially, much was invested in the capture of Gamala. In that sense, the sack was inevitable, for the soldier's pent up rage and desire of adequate compensation for their efforts so demanded it. Josephus, once again, makes reference to what the Romans had lost as the principal motivation behind the slaughter. Even the reaction of the inhabitants of Gamala testifies to their knowledge of what their fate was. After all, many of them chose to leap to their deaths, as they expected no mercy from the Romans.

Vespasian saw the sack as the natural end to a siege. He understood it as a "right" for his soldiers; a way to reward them for their effort and discipline, and at the same time contributing to the maintenance of good morale. The aggressiveness of each sack would depend on the difficulties of the siege, but also on the demands of strategy. In the end, he followed Roman military tradition, placing *uirtus* before mercy; secure practical gains before hypothetical diplomatic ones; enabling moments of undisciplined chaos in order to guarantee discipline and a strong morale the rest of time.

1.4 The Nomination

The study of Vespasian's *poliorketika* revealed a highly aggressive and successful commander. In all the sieges of which we have enough evidence to reach solid conclusions, there was a clear intention to assault the walls. The only reason that it did not come to fruition

[572] J. *BJ*, 4.78-80.

in the totality of the sieges led by Vespasian, was due to the occasional quick surrender that prevented it. Additionally, not one of the sieges mentioned ended in defeat; victory in the world of siege warfare has been shown to be, for Vespasian, nothing short of an inevitability. Having this in mind, to what extent could Vespasian's mastery of siegecraft have influenced his nomination to crush the Jewish rebellion?

Nero's decision to entrust Vespasian with the conduct of war against the rebellious jews, has been mostly put down to political reasons.[573] On the one hand, it is argued that Vespasian's origins made him "in no way to be feared because of the lowliness of his birth and name."[574] On the other hand, Vespasian's possible connections in the East would have paved the way for his appointment.[575] It is true that the years prior to Vespasian's nomination were of intense internal strife for Nero, and therefore it would not be logical for him to increase any of his political enemies' influence with a prestigious military appointment. It is also correct to assume that the "right" connections could bear a significant weight on particular decisions within the emperor's court. A final argument takes into account geography. The emperor would have wanted a swift reply to the rebellion and Vespasian was just in the vicinity (Greece).[576] However, the final decision had to be viewed through the lens of the military.

The Roman imperial army was as much sustained by the emperor as the emperor was sustained by the Roman imperial army. Firstly, because "The army was one of the largest factors of state expenditure."[577] The weight of this spending was great enough to unbalance the state's budget.[578] This meant that the emperor suffered from a constant pressure to justify such a voluminous expenditure, thus making military failure a "death sentence" for the *princeps*.[579] And secondly, because "Imperial ideology was built mainly on a string of advantages, victory - peace - prosperity."[580] It was the army who conquered victory and it was also the army who kept the peace (the controversial *pax romana*); this would make the army not only the basis for the possibility of prosperity but of imperial ideology itself. The army's victories alongside its' losses, reflected directly on the ruling emperor, consolidating his reign, or condemning it.[581]

[573] Levick 2017, 32-3.
[574] Suet. *Ves*., 4.
[575] Levick 2017, 32-3.
[576] *Id*., 32.
[577] Le Bohec 1994, 212; Rathbone 2007, 175.
[578] *Id*., 217; B. Campbell (2002, 85) talks about a share of up to 40% of the disposable income of the state; Rathbone (2007, 175) is more conservative and, although admitting it to be the largest item of state expenditure, argues that when taking into account "(...) the revenues and civilian expenditure of the myriad local civic governments (...)" the real number was probably around 25%.
[579] It is true that a part of this expenditure would be "re-invested" in the empire's economy, through soldier consumption, however it was never to the extent that it would cease to be a problem for the imperial budget. On this matter, see le Bohec 1994, 207-27 et Rathbone 2007, 173-6.
[580] Le Bohec 1994, 208.
[581] This statement could almost be taken as axiomatic, as we are not short on examples of emperors who used military victories to cement their place or gain legitimacy, nor of emperors who suffered the final consequence as

So, for Nero, more important than any of the other factors (which still held a considerable weight, as I have mentioned), it was the ability to bring him a resounding victory that motivated his choice.

The Romans knew that the greatest challenge when fighting the rebellious Jews, would not come in the form of numbers, tactics, or weaponry, but in the impregnability of their fortified strongholds. Nero needed a general that could face the enemy's walls and come back victorious, he needed an expert in siege warfare. This would have been the decisive factor for Vespasian to be nominated for this command position.

There are three arguments that substantiate this claim. First, one could look at the effects and infer the cause. In this way, the fact that Vespasian was highly effective and successful in taking enemy strongholds in Galilee and Judaea, as we have seen, would make us infer that his mastery of siege warfare predated the appointment and was fundamental in securing it. Additionally, one could interpret Vespasian's predisposition to assault the walls as a consequence of his confidence in his own siegecraft abilities. To this, we can also add the fact that it was Vespasian himself who specified the siege machinery that he was to use in the campaign, illustrating a profound knowledge of *poliorketika*.[582] However, to avoid the risk of falling into a circular argument, we need to look at the beginning of Vespasian's *cursus honorum*. Levick places Vespasian in Thrace around the year 27, serving as a tribune in one of the Moesian legions.[583] This would be just around the time disturbances had broken out in that area. This is of significance, because we know the military training of the aristocracy to be "(...) traditionally informal, carried out through the socialization of youth by those with a military background (...)".[584] This meant that, even though by the time Vespasian arrived the conflict would have been mostly over, the military knowledge that would be passed on to him, would be no doubt related to the recent conflicts. Those conflicts involved siege warfare, as evidence from the siege of Mons Haemus (carried out by C. Poppaeus Sabinus in the year 26) demonstrates.[585] Vespasian's first military experience was thus his initiation into the world of siege warfare, although still in a theoretical form. Finally, there is the command in Britain. This was Vespasian's first opportunity to showcase his siege warfare abilities as a commander. The result, as we have seen to this point, was overwhelmingly positive. The extent of Vespasian's

a result of military defeats. However, for the sake of method, we can see Vespasian's use of the conquest of Jerusalem as an example of the former, and his son Domitian's failure to defeat the Dacians as an example of the latter. Goldsworthy 2007a, 29.

[582] J. *BJ*, 7.308.

[583] Levick 2017, 10.

[584] Roth 2016, 200; Goldsworthy 2007a, 12-3 et 17; Lee 2020, 90; Gilliver 2001, 13; this was complemented with the reading of military literature.

[585] Tac. *Ann*., 4.49-51; D. Campbell 2002, 295.

success can be judged by the fact that he was the recipient of the *ornamenta triumphalia* in addition to a double priesthood.[586] Suetonius makes it clear that this was in part due to the subjugation of more than twenty *oppida*, the analysis of which has been the subject of this chapter.[587] However, what is important to highlight, is that Vespasian's achievements in the world of siegecraft were public knowledge; his name and success were thus associated with siege warfare.

In light of these arguments and evidence, it seems reasonable to postulate that Vespasian's military success, but more precisely, his success and knowledge in siege warfare was of paramount importance to secure his appointment to crush the Jewish rebellion. It does not dismiss the political and geographical aspects mentioned, that were also vital to reach a decision, it simply proposes a new hierarchy of importance that better adjusts to the Roman world as well as the characters involved.

2. Vespasian's Auxiliaries

Accompanying every Roman legion there was another force with similar numbers that, although many times neglected in the sources, was vital to the success of the Roman military: the auxiliaries.[588] These units were, at the time of Vespasian, mostly composed by non-citizen men from the subjugated provinces and were divided into cohorts and *alae*, depending on whether they were infantry or cavalry, although there were also mixed cohorts of cavalry and infantry (*cohortes equitatae*).[589]

In this chapter, we look to analyse Vespasian's use of auxiliary troops in the field of battle and on campaign. The analysis will be focused on the Jewish War, as it is the only context in which the available sources offer enough information to reach any solid conclusions.[590] Only the strictly necessary context for each instance analysed will be given, as the campaign has already been described and analysed in full elsewhere (Part III, Chapter 1.2). The forces made available by Rome's client kingdoms of the East will be included, with due mention, as auxiliaries. This will be done because, even though they were not technically auxiliaries, for

[586] Suet. *Ves*., 4.
[587] Suet. *Ves*., 4.
[588] See Le Bohec 1994, 25-9, McNab 2010, 164-9, Rankov 2007, 50-5 et Roth 2009, 139-41 et 147, for an in-depth description of this branch of the Roman army.
[589] Goldsworthy 2000, 118; Roth 2009, 136-7; these were the two main types of units, see Le Bohec 1994, 26-8 et Rankov 2007, 50-5, for the full scope of auxiliary units.
[590] Saddington (1982, 103-4) offers a small recount of the use of auxiliaries by Vespasian in this campaign, and claims that the conflict cannot be studied in detail, however he does not offer any explanation as to why. The reasoning that Saddington employs to identify some of the auxiliary forces can certainly be used in the remainder of occasions, as it is done in this chapter with the addition of other indirect evidence.

all military intents and purposes of the campaign, they were *de facto* auxiliaries, serving in the same roles and under the same orders and commanders.

2.1 Numbers. Theory and Practice

Vespasian had at his disposal a substantial auxiliary force to assist the legions in crushing the Jewish revolt. The total number, counting the client kingdom's troops, was around 37.360, according to Josephus.[591] We have already analysed these numbers twice, but we can remind ourselves that about 11.000 were archers and slingers, 8.560 were cavalry and the rest, around 17.800, were infantry.[592]

In the majority of Josephus' account, it is very difficult to ascertain whether we are in the presence of auxiliary troops or of men from the legions, seeing as only in a few passages the historian refers to that explicitly. Nevertheless, from the context and the knowledge of Roman military practice we can reach a fairly solid identification in most cases. Although it is true that the legions were responsible for the majority of the heavy fighting in this campaign, with some notable exceptions, it is also true that Vespasian would not have been successful in crushing the Jewish rebellion without the auxiliaries.[593] The latter's many roles in this campaign show why Roman military historiography should not neglect the study of such versatile and relevant units.

Auxiliary troops are relevant right from the beginning of the campaign, being responsible for the first contact with the enemy in Sepphoris.[594] As Vespasian was still gathering his army, but nevertheless did not want to lose Sepphoris, which was the only friendly city in Galilee, he sent an auxiliary force that "(...) consisted of 1,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry, under the command of the tribune Placidus."[595] We know this was an auxiliary contingent for a number of reasons: the high cavalry numbers (legionary cavalry were numbered at 120 per legion)[596]; the high infantry numbers in relation with the nature of the mission, as it did not make sense to send this many legionaries for guard duty (each legion had

[591] J. *BJ*, 3.66-8; Suetonius (*Ves*., 4) refers to only 10 cohorts and 8 *alae*, however it seems clear that the biographer is merely referring to the forces added to the ones already present, which does not contradict Josephus' account (Saddington 1982, 49). The high number of auxiliaries contradicts what the theory prescribed (Gilliver 2007, 193).
[592] J. *BJ*, 3.66-8. Saddington (1982, 102-3) reaches slightly higher numbers, however he accounts for legionary cavalry, which is an inadequate addition in this context, and also tends to round the numbers up instead of down (it was normal for active military units to under depleted due to deaths, injuries, desertions, etc.). Auxiliary infantry was not necessarily composed only of light infantry, in fact, we find units with similar training, equipment and weapons to that of the legions, however auxiliary equipment was very diverse (Goldsworthy 2000, 120; Gilliver 2007, 194-5). See Part I, Chapter 2, for the aforementioned analysis of the numbers.
[593] It was the auxiliaries' main function to support the legions (Saddington 1982, 184).
[594] J. *BJ*, 3.33.
[595] J. *BJ*, 3.29-34 et 3.59.
[596] J. *BJ*, 3.120.

around 5.240 men, if completed); the fact that it was a tribune, instead of a legate, who was sent ahead of what was still a large force; and also it appears, from Josephus' description, that this force was sent in support of Sepphoris before the whole army, especially the three legions which are mentioned by name, had arrived in Ptolemais, which means that they wouldn't have been available for this mission.[597] This auxiliary force had one main task which was to guard the city of Sepphoris and prevent it from falling into rebel hands.[598] This was, of course, vital to the war effort, as one needed not only to take the enemy strongholds, but also to maintain them under control; we will find auxiliary contingents playing this role many times throughout the campaign. The city was in fact attacked by Josephus, the author of *Bellum Judaicum*, but the auxiliary units did their job and repelled the assault effectively.[599] This was achieved mostly by the infantry, which was less mobile, while the cavalry devastated the enemy countryside, something that was common in warfare and that served a series of purposes that have been discussed in an earlier chapter (Part III, Chapter 1.2).[600] The first contact with the enemy in Vespasian's campaign was therefore through the use of auxiliaries, who secured a friendly city and caused damage to the Jewish rebels, preparing the ground for the arrival of the main army.

The march of Vespasian's army, as described by Josephus, gives us insight to another function of these units: "The light-armed auxiliaries and the archers were sent out in front, to see off any impromptu enemy attacks and search any suspect woodland capable of concealing an ambush."[601] What Josephus is describing here is essentially the role of scouting, a dangerous, but very important task that ensured the survival of the entire army.[602] Lightly armed troops were chosen for this task primarily for their mobility, as they did not have to carry heavy equipment and could move faster and more freely, but also for their disposability; it was no secret that the legions were better valued primarily due to their status (as they were Roman citizens), but also due to their equipment and training, which meant that this type of tiring, less decisive, although still dangerous, missions were left for the auxiliaries.[603] Usually one would find auxiliary cavalry doing this job, as they were naturally more mobile than light infantry and archers, however, in this case the latter were sent probably due to the topographical conditions, as it was most likely an area with tough terrain for cavalry.[604] Their task, as Josephus describes,

[597] J. *BJ*, 3.29-33 et 3.64-5.
[598] J. *BJ*, 3.59.
[599] J. *BJ*, 3.62.
[600] J. *BJ*, 3.59-60 et 3.62-3.
[601] J. *BJ*, 3.116.
[602] Onasander (6.7) is peremptory about the need for scouts, although he does advise that cavalry should be used. Vegetius (*Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.6) is of the same opinion, also highlighting the scouts' importance in reconnaissance missions, but still advising for the use of cavalry. Goldsworthy 2000, 124-5.
[603] Saddington 1982, 180.
[604] Josephus (*BJ*, 3.141) when describing the approach of Vespasian's army to Jotapata states that Vespasian needed four days of his troops' labour to level the approach route, as it was "(...) a stony mountain path difficult

was primarily to seek out threats to the main army and evaluate the terrain, or in other words, to secure the approach route. It was an essential job, even though naturally less glorious than battle. A final interesting aspect of the order of march here described and that relates to the less valuable stance of the auxiliaries in the Roman army, is that they occupied both the vanguard and the rearguard, the two most vulnerable positions in a march (the ambushes usually targeted one of these sections, and sometimes both).[605]

The siege of Jotapata bears witness to auxiliary troops, under Vespasian, taking yet other roles. Before even reaching the city, Vespasian "(...) sent out a force of 1,000 cavalry under Placidus and the decurion Aebutius, one of the junior officers noted for energy and intelligence, with orders to close off the city and make sure that Josephus could not sneak away."[606] This auxiliary cavalry unit had the vital task of blockading the city to prevent the rebel leader in Galilee from escaping, a task that would not have been possible to accomplish with the main army, as their approach would have been too slow. Once again, not the most glorious of tasks, but nonetheless crucial for the war effort. In the siege itself, some auxiliary troops finally had the chance to take up a more active job, that of giving coverage to the legions. There was not much that the auxiliary cavalry units could do during a siege except for protecting the camp and the rearguard of the infantry as they assaulted the walls, as well as devastating the surrounding area to gather supplies for the besiegers.[607] However, as the cavalry lost relevance, the archers and slingers reached for it. Josephus is unmistakable about how these units, along with the artillery, provided a barrage of missiles that allowed for the infantry to move on several occasions.[608] The missiles took the enemies from the walls, both by killing them and by making the defenders retreat with fear of death, and it was much appreciated by the infantry who were able to approach the walls with greater security. Josephus first describes them covering a man-based assault, then covering the building of a ramp and then with the exclusive task of repelling enemy raids outside the walls.[609] All of the above was done in order to allow for the infantry, here probably being the legionaries, to maintain the struggle for the capture of Jotapata, and to do that with the least amount of friendly casualties possible. Finally, these auxiliary troops took the spotlight in the final effort to capture the city, as Vespasian ordered the building of towers and "(...) had these towers erected on the earthworks, and

enough for footsoldiers and impossible for cavalry." Given the proximity between Jotapata and Ptolemais, one can expect similar challenges of the terrain.

[605] J. *BJ*, 3.116 et 3.126; Saddington 1982, 48.

[606] J. *BJ*, 3.144.

[607] Josephus (*BJ*, 3.255) mentions the use of cavalry to block any escape route from the city of Jotapata in case the city should fall.

[608] J. *BJ*, 3.151, 3.168, 3.211.

[609] J. *BJ*, 3.151, 3.168 et 3.211.

mounted on them the lighter artillery pieces together with javelin-men, archers, and the most powerful slingers."[610] From that advantaged position, the auxiliaries mercilessly targeted the Jewish defenders, and they were so effective that they forced the latter to abandon the defence of the walls, which was a major turning point in the siege, and soon followed by victory for the Romans.[611] The variety of tasks that these auxiliary troops accomplished during the siege of Jotapata shows how valuable they were and how more effective a Roman army could be with their presence. Vespasian recognised that reality and made an intelligent use of these troops.

During the siege of Jotapata, Josephus mentions two independent operations taken up, presumably, by auxiliaries. This was uncommon, as auxiliary troops were usually responsible for secondary tasks, leaving the heavy fighting for the legions.[612] They were mostly found in an assistant role, however, under Vespasian in this campaign, they are the protagonists of a series of high-profile operations. It is true that the main targets were still primarily the legions' responsibility, but we witness, in Vespasian's command, a shift towards a more recurrent use of auxiliaries and in increasingly more important military situations. In this campaign it appears to be a simple case of pragmatism on the part of Vespasian, as he did not want to overwork the legions, and being able to depend on the auxiliaries for some of the fighting meant having the possibility of moving on several targets at the same time, as it was the case with the two instances we are about to look at. Josephus sets the stage for the first of these operations in this way:

> "During these days a town called Japha in the same area took the surprisingly successful resistance of Jotapata as the cue for its own revolt, and Vespasian sent Trajan, the commander of the Tenth Legion, to deal with it, giving him 1,000 cavalry and 2,000 infantry."[613]

We can assume the cavalry to be an auxiliary unit, once again, due to its size, as the legionary cavalry of the three legions combined would not amount to such high numbers. The infantry does not present a problem in terms of numbers, however, the legions are described as being in active duty in the siege of Jotapata, as it made sense considering their training and military capacity, and since they could not be in two places at the same time and Vespasian had a lot of auxiliary infantry to spare, it is almost certain that these were auxiliaries.[614]

[610] J. *BJ*, 3.284-5.
[611] J. *BJ*, 3.286-7.
[612] Vegetius (*Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 2.2) is quite clear about the role of the auxiliaries as an aid to the legions.
[613] J. *BJ*, 3.289.
[614] Up to this point Josephus makes five clear mentions to the legions as being the ones who were actively enduring the siege. In *BJ*, 3.208, he mentions "legionaries" as being the ones receiving orders from Vespasian; in *BJ*, 3.233, he mentions the *Legio X Fretensis*; in *BJ*, 3.234, he mentions *Legio X Fretensis* again, along with *Legio V Macedonica*; in *BJ*, 3.255, Josephus makes a reference to "(...) the pick of his [Vespasian's] infantry.", which has

Furthermore, Josephus generally mentions by name whenever the legions are involved in a specific conflict.

This auxiliary force, led by Trajan, one of the legates, which adds to the idea that it was an important operation, advanced on the rebels from Japha and forced them to retreat into the final line of defences of the city, causing the enemy many casualties in the meanwhile.[615] The capture of the city was imminent, and it was not a minor occasion, as Trajan sent for Vespasian so that his son Titus could receive the glory of officially conquering Japha.[616] Titus was sent to reinforce Trajan with what we can assume, based on the evidence previously given, was another auxiliary contingent of 500 cavalry and 1.000 infantry.[617] The two legates, leading a force of only auxiliary units, stormed the city and took it after many hours of fighting.[618] This was a major accomplishment by a type of unit that was generally given only secondary, assistant responsibilities, which shows how much Vespasian relied on the auxiliaries, something that was quite unprecedented.

The second operation also to have happened while the siege of Jotapata was still unresolved was against Mount Gerizim, where many thousands of Samaritans had congregated.[619] Cerialius, the other legate, which, once again, adds some weight to the importance of this action, was sent with a force of 600 cavalry and 3.000 infantry.[620] We can assume this to be an auxiliary force for the same reasons that have been given before. Cerialius and his men, after having their offer of a peaceful surrender refused, resorted to violence, killing all the Samaritans that had gathered there.[621] This represents another instance of auxiliaries being used independently from the legions to pursue major targets, which was one of the main traits of Vespasian's command in his campaign against the Jewish.

After Jotapata, Josephus tells us that the three legions were settled in their respective winter quarters.[622] However, at the same time, an unspecified detachment of cavalry and infantry was sent by Vespasian to deal with some rebel activity in the remains of the city of Joppa.[623] The fact that the legions had just been quartered leads us to believe that this was an auxiliary force. Josephus does not offer the numbers of the units, which could have helped in the identification, however, the fact that he does not make any mentions to legions or

to be the legionaries; in *BJ*, 3.270, there is a description of the *testudo* tactical formation, which is a clear indication of legionaries at work.

[615] J. *BJ*, 3.290-7.
[616] J. *BJ*, 3.298.
[617] J. *BJ*, 3.299.
[618] J. *BJ*, 3.300-6.
[619] J. *BJ*, 3.307-9.
[620] J. *BJ*, 3.310.
[621] J. *BJ*, 3.311-5.
[622] J. *BJ*, 3.412.
[623] J. *BJ*, 3.414-7.

legionaries seems to point in the same direction. Finally, the fact that this same detachment was left guarding the city and ravishing the countryside, assures us that it was an auxiliary force at work in this situation.[624] In Vespasian's Jewish campaign, this is the most common job in which we find auxiliaries. We saw that in Sepphoris already and will find more examples of the same role further along. As we have stated before, it was not enough to conquer a city, it was imperative to maintain that control. The legions did most of the heavy fighting to take the most powerful enemy strongholds and cities, however they had to leave afterwards, as they were needed in the subsequent sieges. Therefore, another force had to make sure that that target would not fall back into enemy hands, as it had happened with Joppa, where the Romans were forced to capture it twice since Vespasian's predecessor had not left a garrison in place after conquering it. It was in this type of scenarios that the auxiliaries became invaluable; they freed up the legions to keep conquering while securing the previous conquests.[625] If doubt still subsisted regarding this identification, the fact that the legions were moved to Caesarea Philipi while the same detachment was still in Joppa, clears it away.[626] This auxiliary contingent had two missions, as we have seen, first to reconquer Joppa, and then to secure it, by leaving the infantry as garrison and the cavalry ravishing the countryside.[627] They accomplished both tasks efficiently, proving once again their value to Vespasian's strategy in this campaign and that they were active players and not just assistant troops.

The siege of Tarichaeae is the set of maybe the greatest auxiliary victory of this campaign, even trumping the conquest of Japha. Here, Josephus tells us that "(...) the great bulk of the Jewish opposition had gathered in the plain facing the town, Vespasian sent his son with 600 picked cavalry to deal with them."[628] Upon seeing the number of enemies, Titus requested reinforcements, and "(...) Trajan arrived before the engagement with 400 more cavalry (...)", plus "Vespasian also sent Antonius Silo with 2,000 archers to occupy the hill opposite the town and keep the defenders back from the battlements."[629] The fact that Josephus mentions "picked cavalry", together with Titus mentioning in his speech that they were heavily armed, might

[624] J. *BJ*, 3.430.
[625] Josephus (*BJ*, 3.414 et 3.428) is quite clear that the rebels had reused the remains of Joppa, thus leading to a second conquest of the same target by the Romans.
[626] J. *BJ*, 3.442-4.
[627] J. *BJ*, 3.414-31.
[628] J. *BJ*, 3.470.
[629] J. *BJ*, 3.485-6. This placement of the light infantry on the hill goes according to the principles of warfare; Onasander (18) is quite clear about this: "If the battle should happen to be in a country that is level in some places but hilly in others, then the light-armed troops should by all means be stationed in the uneven section (...) from the uneven ground they can more easily hurl their weapons and retreat, or they can very easily charge up the slopes, if they are agile."

lead us to think that these were legionary cavalry.[630] However, given the numbers proposed by Josephus that would not be possible, as the combined legionary cavalry would only make up about half the number of men in Titus' first detachment, and if we add the ones brought by Trajan even less possible it becomes. It could be that there were some units of legionary cavalry involved, but the great majority had to be auxiliary cavalry. The archers, as they are specified by name, were naturally auxiliaries.

Josephus reports that the archers did their job effectively, which was to prevent enemy fire by targeting the defenders on the walls, so that the cavalry could charge the grounded enemy in security: the vital task of giving coverage, as we have seen before.[631] The joint cavalry force of Titus and Trajan charged the enemy and obtained a crushing victory, forcing the Jewish rebels to retreat towards the city.[632] But not satisfied with this, Titus led this same force of cavalry through the waters of Lake Gennesaret (presumably he chose a place where the depth was low), around the walls and entered the city in a place where the besieged thought the lake would serve as a natural barrier and sufficient deterrent of invasion.[633] What we witness here is a battle won followed by a city captured while employing only auxiliary cavalry with the support of auxiliary archers, which is something extremely rare if not completely unprecedented in Roman warfare to this point in time. Vespasian seems completely aware of the capacity of these auxiliary forces, otherwise he would not have deployed them in challenging engagements such as this one. The battle and conquest of Tarichaeae follows a trend of greater dependence and usage of auxiliary forces for not just secondary and light operations, but also for heavy combat, in Vespasian's command style in the context of his campaign to crush the Jewish rebellion.

The conflict with the survivors of Tarichaeae, who had fled to their boats on Lake Gennesaret, also had the assistance of auxiliary troops. In this case the archers were the ones chosen and they played both a primary and a secondary role in different stages of the naval encounter. Since this naval battle has already been analysed, we will be very succinct. While the rebel boats were keeping their distance from the Roman vessels, the archers opened fire on them, covered by the legionaries' armour, causing many casualties.[634] As the rebels approached, the legionaries took up the fight, leaving the archers to take on the secondary role

[630] J. *BJ*, 3.477, although the speeches in *Bellum Judaicum* represent a platform for Josephus to show off his rhetorical skills, rather than give an accurate account of what was said, this type of information can be taken as axiomatic for they are merely props, not something he would have an interest in or could get away with creating.
[631] J. *BJ*, 3.487.
[632] J. *BJ*, 3.487-91.
[633] J. *BJ*, 3.492-502.
[634] J. *BJ*, 3.525.

of killing the ones that fell to the water or tried to escape.[635] The auxiliary troops involved in this conflict proved invaluable to fulfil Vespasian's tactics and bring victory to the Romans, as has been argued in the subchapter regarding this naval battle.

The siege of Gamala is the setting of a similar situation as the one in Jotapata, for while the legions were busy with the siege operations, an auxiliary detachment was sent on an independent mission.[636] In this case, "(...) Vespasian sent Placidus with 600 cavalry (...)" to deal with a group of rebels who had fortified themselves on Mount Tabor.[637] The reason to assume this as an auxiliary force is, once again, related to the high numbers involved, as has been explained multiple times already. This is another good example of Vespasian's use of auxiliary troops for independent operations of considerable importance for the campaign. It is strange that he would send a force composed of only cavalry to capture a fortification, as they would have a lot of trouble making any good use of their horses, which is something that Josephus points out himself.[638] One reason could be tied with the distance between Gamala and Mount Tabor, as the cavalry would have an obvious advantage, or maybe Vespasian could not dispose of his infantry, as the siege was demanding a lot of manpower. Regardless, Placidus and his cavalrymen managed to lure the Jewish rebels down from their stronghold through a devious use of diplomacy, and crushed them in battle after that, employing the age-old tactic of the false retreat.[639] Another enemy stronghold was thus captured with the singular use of auxiliaries. In the siege of Gamala the auxiliaries receive but one mention, when in the final stages of the assault Josephus states that the wind "(...) gave carrying power to the Roman arrows (...)", thus placing at least one group of auxiliaries on the scene.[640]

The next appearance of auxiliaries comes right after Gamala, when Vespasain dispatched Titus with 1.000 cavalry to subdue the small town of Gischala.[641] The numbers alone would be enough to understand that this was auxiliary cavalry. However, Josephus even tells us that at the same time, Vespasian sent the three legions to their winter quarters so they could rest, which assures us of the validity of our identification.[642] This is another example of auxiliaries working independently from the legions to secure important strategic objectives for Vespasian's campaign against the Jewish rebels. It also illustrates how reliable these units could be even without the support from the legions and their significant stance in Vespasian's

[635] J. *BJ*, 3.527.
[636] J. *BJ*, 4.54.
[637] J. *BJ*, 4.54-57.
[638] J. *BJ*, 4.58.
[639] J. *BJ*, 4.58-61. See Onos., 11.1 et Fron. *Str*., 2.5, for different descriptions and examples of this tactic.
[640] J. *BJ*, 4.76.
[641] J. *BJ*, 4.84 et 4.87.
[642] J. *BJ*, 4.88.

strategy. The rebel group that was occupying Gischala fled from the town after deceiving Titus, prompting this one to send a detachment of cavalry in pursuit.[643] The latter caught up to the majority of the fugitives, causing many casualties and enslaving the rest, nevertheless some still escaped.[644] With the rebels gone, the people from Gischala opened their gates and received Titus with acclamation.[645] In turn, Titus left a garrison in place to prevent any further rebellion and protect the pro-Roman citizens of that town.[646] Gischala was another target subdued solely through the use of auxiliary units, cavalry in this case. The task of securing the new conquests, in the form of garrison detachments, continued to be the auxiliaries' main responsibility.

Further along in *Bellum Judaicum*, Josephus writes in a very succinct way that "(...) Vespasian had marched from Caesarea to reduce Jamnia and Azotus, securing them with garrisons and returning with a large number of the inhabitants who had surrendered under treaty."[647] The description is too brief to even attempt to speculate on what part the auxiliary forces may have played in the capture of the two targets. Nevertheless, we know them to have been present in the aftermath, as both Jamnia and Azotus were garrisoned after being captured. Josephus does not explicitly state that the garrisons left in place were composed of auxiliary units. However, that is the most likely scenario considering the type of mission, as garrison duty was the main task entrusted to auxiliaries in this campaign, as we have seen on many occasions already. Additionally, the legions are explicitly mentioned by Josephus on a number of different locations and missions after the garrisons were left in Jamnia and Azotus, which makes it highly improbable that they contributed with men to these garrisons; plus, Vespasian would not want to have his legions weakened for the sake of minor tasks such as garrisoning and he had an abundance of auxiliary infantry and cavalry at his disposal.

This type of assignment to garrison captured locations is again visible after the city of Gadara surrendered to Vespasian. Here, "(...) he [Vespasian] gave them formal guarantees of their safety, and a garrison of horse and foot to protect them against retaliatory action by the fugitive party."[648] Josephus is again ambiguous as to the identification of the garrison detachment, but it was almost assuredly composed of auxiliary troops for the same reasons mentioned above regarding the garrisons at Jamnia and Azotus.

The aftermath of Gadara was the start of the main auxiliary campaign of the Jewish War. It began in a standard way when "Vespasian sent Placidus after the men escaping from

[643] J. *BJ*, 4.97-115.
[644] J. *BJ*, 4.115-6.
[645] J. *BJ*, 4.117.
[646] J. *BJ*, 4.120.
[647] J. *BJ*, 4.130.
[648] J. *BJ*, 4.417.

Gadara with a force of 500 cavalry and 3,000 infantry (...)".[649] It was, of course, quite common to dispatch auxiliary forces in pursuit of fugitives. However, the fact that this contingent was mostly composed of infantry, leads us to believe that the assignment did not envision just the capture of the fugitives, as a greater cavalry force would have been sent otherwise. Therefore, the subsequent capture of several towns and villages on the Northeast of the Dead Sea could have been premeditated and not just a matter of opportunity as Josephus claims.[650] The high numbers of cavalry lead us to the conclusion that this was auxiliary cavalry, for reasons already explained. Regarding the infantry, it also seems highly probable that it was auxiliary infantry since Josephus makes no mention of any of the legions being present in these events, and claims that Vespasian returned to winter quarters with the bulk of the army.[651] Additionally, the presence of a tribune at the head of this force also implies that this was most likely an auxiliary infantry force, the legions would have accompanied Vespasian and their respective legates.[652] Placidus and his men chased the fugitives until the village of Bethenabris where they were faced with resistance.[653] A victory in open battle was followed by the capture of the village and its subsequent destruction.[654] Still some rebels managed to escape, joined by people from other villages who had fallen into a state of panic, and Placidus kept up the chase, pushing the rebels all the way to the river Jordan.[655] There, a battle ensued leading to a crushing Roman victory.[656] Josephus highlights the role of the Roman cavalry in both the chase and the battle that followed.[657] The historian estimates that more than 15.000 enemies were killed and about 2.200 captured, stating that "This was as heavy a blow as any that had befallen the Jews (...)".[658]

This auxiliary force had already accomplished a great deal, but they did not stop there. Placidus then proceeded to attack all the neighbouring towns and villages, of which Josephus mentions only Abila, Julias and Besimoth.[659] This campaign was so effective that Josephus ends his account by saying that "So it was that the whole of Peraea as far as Machaerus either surrendered or was captured."[660] We do not know whether this campaign, as described by Josephus, was the result of premeditation on the part of Vespasian and his high command, or if instead Placidus was only charged with capturing the fugitives and the rest was the result of

[649] J. *BJ*, 4.419.
[650] J. *BJ*, 4.438.
[651] J. *BJ*, 4.419.
[652] Le Bohec 1994, 26-7; Rankov 2007, 53.
[653] J. *BJ*, 4.420-1.
[654] J. *BJ*, 4.422-30.
[655] J. *BJ*, 4.431-3.
[656] J. *BJ*, 4.433-4.
[657] J. *BJ*, 4.433-4.
[658] J. *BJ*, 4.437.
[659] J. *BJ*, 4.438.
[660] J. *BJ*, 4.439.

opportunity. Nevertheless, the reality is that an auxiliary contingent, working independently, managed to subdue an entire region. This was of vital importance for the fate of Vespasian's campaign to crush the Jewish rebellion. It is another clear example of how valuable the auxiliaries were in terms of Vespasian's strategy, and of how the latter used them for more than secondary missions and assistance to the legions.

At the same time as Placidus' campaign was happening, Josephus reports on Vespasian's movements:

> "So while it was still winter he [Vespasian] spent the time securing the villages and small towns with garrisons, posting decurions in the villages and centurions in the towns, and he also restored many of the places that had been ruined."[661]

Securing the different locations with a garrison was a job to be secured by the auxiliaries, as has been argued and observed throughout this chapter. The fact that Josephus then mentions, implicitly or explicitly, a series of actions that involved the legions, builds up the same conclusion.[662] The mentioning of centurions and decurions should not fool us into thinking that this work of garrisoning was done by the legions, because it was standard practice for the Roman army to have the auxiliary cavalry squadrons and the auxiliary infantry cohorts be under the command of decurions and centurions, respectively.[663] This work of pacifying the area surrounding Jerusalem and then of securing it with garrisons continued, with the auxiliaries most likely in charge of the latter.[664] After all, this was being done in order to prepare the assault on Jerusalem and Vespasian was going to need the full capacity of the legions for that challenge, so it did not make sense to deploy them in garrison duty in small villages and towns.

There are two specific cases in which Josephus mentions with a bit more detail the composition of the garrisons: "To ring Jerusalem with outlying forts on all sides Vespasian now built camps at Jericho and Adida, garrisoning each with a mixed force of Romans and allied auxiliaries (...)"[665]. The allied auxiliaries are easily identifiable as the client kingdoms' forces, regarding the Romans, we have no reason to believe they were not still auxiliaries. Firstly, because there were Roman citizens serving as auxiliaries; secondly, because the non-Roman citizen auxiliaries are probably still referred to as Romans by Josephus, as the historian

[661] J. *BJ*, 4.442.
[662] Josephus (*BJ*, 4.443-4) mentions a series of conquests, including the city of Antipatris, which implies the use of the legionary force, as Vespasian was in direct command. Josephus (*BJ*, 4.445) also mentions *Legio V Macedonica* by name, as the legion set camp in Emmaus.
[663] Le Bohec 1994, 26-7; Rankov 2007, 51.
[664] J. *BJ*, 4.443-52.
[665] J. *BJ*, 4.486.

makes no attempts to formulate that distinction; and thirdly, because the point mentioned above, regarding the preparation to assault Jerusalem still stands.[666] There were two final pacification campaigns before Vespasian challenged Vitellius for power in Rome, both very succinctly described by Josephus. The first led by Vespasain himself and in which we witness auxiliary forces serving in their usual role of garrisoning the captured localities.[667] The second, led by the legate Cerialius, about which the text unfortunately does not give enough evidence to identify whether or not auxiliaries were employed and in what ways.[668]

Vespasian revealed himself as an unorthodox commander with regards to the use of auxiliaries. Majority of the missions in which these troops were involved were still standard deployments for auxiliary forces, those being: garrisoning, devastating enemy countryside, scouting, assistance to the legions in battle with secondary roles and chasing fugitives or retreating enemies. All the above were less glorious responsibilities, but nonetheless vital for the war effort, as Vespasian's strategy was very much dependent on it; without the auxiliaries playing their traditional roles, the campaign would have been a lot less effective and would have prolonged itself in time, as has been shown in this chapter. However, we also witness the auxiliaries being employed by Vespasian in highly uncommon roles, that one would expect the legions to assume. These were missions accomplished independently from the legions, but that still involved heavy-fighting and the capture of high-profile strategic objectives. In this, we ought to highlight the role of auxiliary cavalry, who won open battles and conquered cities, towns or villages with little, or sometimes no assistance from infantry, which is, in itself, very uncommon for the period.[669] With Vespasian we witness a shift towards more dependency on the auxiliaries, but also of more trust in them. This is the result of necessity, as he had limited forces and needed to prioritise the use of the legions, which is linked to a desire to spare the latter by risking less valuable troops[670]; but also the result of pragmatism and opportunity, as Vespasian recognised the potential of the auxiliaries, and especially of cavalry, to contribute to make the campaign faster and more effective.

The traditional view places the military dependence of the Empire on auxiliaries as a trend that increased from the Flavian period onward, and we can already see that reality in Vespasian's campaign in Judaea, which is technically still outside that period.[671] We also observed how auxiliary units were often used independently, in contrast with standard

[666] Le bohec 1994, 26-7; Rankov 2007, 51.
[667] J. *BJ*, 4.550-1.
[668] J. *BJ*, 4.552-4.
[669] Saddington 1982, 184-5.
[670] See Saddington 1982, 180, on the expendable condition of the auxiliaries.
[671] Le Bohec 1994, 26; Lendon 2005, 42-7; Saddington (1982, 195-7) mentions the use of this practice from Tiberius' time onwards, but does acknowledge an increase under the Flavians.

practice.[672] Despite the fact that less Roman citizens joined the legions as the 1st century progressed, thus leading to a greater use of auxiliaries in order to spare the others, Vespasian's own experience during the Judaean campaign could have given him the confidence to place further responsibility on the auxiliaries on an empire-wide perspective when he took power in Rome.[673]

3. Vespasian's Logistics and Intelligence

The roles of logistics and intelligence were of paramount importance for the success of any campaign. The former ensured that the army was well supplied and connected so that it could present itself in the best possible shape to face the enemy; the latter was the basis for the campaign's strategy, providing all the necessary information for the high command to be able to make sensible and grounded decisions. Without either of these dimensions working in good conditions, the campaign would suffer, and in extreme cases, utterly fail.

In this chapter we will look into these two aspects of Roman warfare in the context of Vespasian's command. The objective is to try to understand in what ways logistics and intelligence influenced Vespasian's strategy, and whether they were amongst the latter's priorities. Once again, the campaign to crush the Jewish rebellion is the only one that gives us enough information to reach any solid conclusions. Nevertheless, the campaign in Britain will also be briefly considered.

3.1 Logistics

In one of his aphorisms, Vegetius states that "He who does not prepare grain-supplies and provisions is conquered without a blow."[674] The military theorist, who then dedicates two chapters to this matter, could not have been more peremptory about the importance of logistics for success in warfare.[675] In his campaign against the Jewish, Vespasian was leading a substantial force, of around 50.000 men, as we have seen. All of these men had to eat and drink, which implied many thousands of kilos of supplies, they had to build secure camps when on route to a target or in case of a prolonged siege, which implied construction material and tools for tents and defences, and they needed to carry siege engines (at least catapults, *ballistae* and

[672] Saddington (1982, 183-5) emphasises this standard practice, although also referring to instances in which the opposite did occur.
[673] Goldsworthy 2000, 121; Lendon 2005, 247.
[674] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.26.
[675] Those chapters are 3.3 and part of 3.9 of Vegetius' *Epitoma Rei Militaris*. Onasander (6.14) also notes the importance of supply lines, whether by sea or land.

the battering-rams' heads).[676] To this we need to add fodder for the horses and pack-animals. The way to transport all of this was in baggage trains (*impedimenta*).

Josephus makes a very detailed description of Vespasian's baggage train and marching order, which we will transcribe in full here:

> "But Vespasian was determined to invade Galilee himself, and now set out from Ptolemaïs with his army deployed for the march in the regular Roman order. The light-armed auxiliaries and the archers were sent out in front, to see off any impromptu enemy attacks and search any suspect woodland capable of concealing an ambush. Then came a detachment of heavy-armed Roman troops, both infantry and cavalry. They were followed by a contingent consisting of ten men from each century, who carried, as well as their own kit, the instruments for marking out the campsite: after them came the corps of engineers, whose job was to straighten out twists in the road, level rough stretches, and cut down any woods in their way, to spare the army the fatigue of a difficult march. Behind these Vespasian positioned his own personal baggage and that of his senior subordinates, with a strong protective escort of cavalry. He himself rode behind this section, accompanied by the elite contingents of infantry and cavalry and his guard of lancers. After him came the legionary cavalry (each legion has a dedicated squadron of 120 cavalry attached to it), and then the mules carrying the siege engines and other artillery pieces. Next came the legates, the prefects of the cohorts, and the tribunes, surrounded by an escort of picked troops. Behind them were carried the standards, ranged round the eagle which in the Roman army goes at the head of every legion—as the king of birds and the most powerful of them all, the eagle is regarded as the symbol of empire and an omen portending victory over any enemy against whom they take the field. These sacred emblems were followed by the trumpeters, and after them the main body of troops marching in column six abreast, with, as usual, a centurion alongside to see that proper formation was maintained. The servants attached to each legion followed the infantry in a body, in charge of the mules and other pack-animals carrying the soldiers' baggage. Behind all the legions came the bulk of the mercenaries, and then finally a protective rearguard of light and heavy infantry and a substantial force of cavalry."[677]

This was the baggage train of Vespasian's full army, a rare sight since, as we have seen, throughout the rest of the campaign, Vespasian sent many detachments on different missions, some of which were not even meant to return, as they were in garrison duty. It followed in "regular Roman order" and the position of each unit gives us insight to Vespasian's army's hierarchy. The safest place to travel was in the middle of the marching column, as ambushes generally targeted the vanguard, rearguard or both.[678] We can identify three safety priorities: that of Vespasian and his high ranking officers; that of their collective baggage, and that of the siege engines; this third priority can be explained by the expectations of the campaign, as Vespasian was aware that siege warfare was going to occupy most of his time. From the description we also understand that the army train was not composed only of officers and soldiers, which would already make it quite extensive, but also of servants, pack-animals and

[676] See Roth 1999, 7-115, for an in-depth analysis of all the logistical needs of the Roman army and the way in which they were organised and transported.
[677] J. *BJ*, 3.115-26.
[678] This was generally the section where the baggage, pack-animals, servants and wagons were placed (Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.6; Roth 1999, 79-80). Onasander (6.6) warns that "The general must place his medical equipment, pack animals, and all his baggage in the centre of his army, not outside."

wagons.[679] This means that it was a very long column that extended for kilometres, which made it vulnerable to possible attacks and created some mobility issues. The first problem was solved in part by the intelligently placed escorts in the most vulnerable sections of the baggage train and by the scouts, of which we have spoken in the last chapter, that were on the lookout for ambushes. The second problem was harder to solve, as it was not an easy task to move rapidly and freely with such an extensive army.[680] Additionally, the terrain often created problems for the horses, pack-animals and wagons. One solution was to reduce the size of the baggage train, which was not always possible.[681] This problem could, however, be lessened with the help of a group of men referred to by Josephus as the "corps of engineers". Their job was essentially to level the approach route so that the whole army train could advance. It was not just to make it easier for the march, as Josephus claims, but sometimes to even make it possible. One example of this, was the approach to Jotapata:

> "He [Vespasian] first sent out a taskforce of infantry and cavalry to level the approach route, which was a stony mountain path difficult enough for footsoldiers and impossible for cavalry. They completed the work in four days and opened up a wide avenue for the army."[682]

The job was done, and the logistical problem solved. However, the mobility issues of a big army train were only lessened by the work of the engineers, since it still took four days to solve, which is a long time in warfare and can bring about many changes. In this case, it allowed for Josephus to arrive at Jotapata with reinforcements.[683] This was taken as good news by Vespasian, given the military superiority of his forces, but it could not have been. The lack of mobility of a large army, also serves to explain Vespasian's use of smaller detachments during this campaign. Each detachment, depending on its size and mission, would usually have their own baggage train, although a lot smaller and therefore more mobile.[684]

Having determined how supplies and equipment were transported during this campaign, it is of interest now to ascertain what were the sources of those supplies. Standard practice was to provision the troops with supplies from the province they were in.[685] However, considering that Vespasian's army was in a province that was in a state of rebellion, that seems unlikely. Alternatively, each unit could have gathered their provisions in their province of origin, Egypt

[679] Josephus (*BJ*, 3.69) does not give any estimation on the number of servants, pack-animals and wagons accompanying Vespasian's army; however, he does mention an undetermined "(...) huge number of attendant army servants (...)".
[680] Roth 1999, 81-2.
[681] *Ibidem*.
[682] J. *BJ*, 3.141-2.
[683] J. *BJ*, 3.142.
[684] Roth 1999, 81.
[685] *Id*., 237.

and Syria being the likely suspects.[686] One other option is that a tax could have been raised for the purpose of that specific campaign, as sometimes happened in the Early Principate.[687] Additionally, the allied/client kingdoms of Rome, who provided troops for Vespasian's army, could potentially contribute with provisions, although unlikely and only to their own forces.[688]

While on campaign there were essentially three ways in which the army could be continually supplied: foraging, pillaging and through supply lines. The Romans did not opt for foraging unless in cases of necessity or opportunity, since it was an unreliable source of provisions and led to mobility issues and possible tactical and strategic disadvantages.[689] Vespasian, in his campaign against the Jewish, seems to have mostly resorted to pillaging and supply lines. Josephus, in his *Bellum Judaicum*, makes little to no mention of the latter. However, considering that when Vespasian arrived, the hinterland of both Galilee and Judaea was in a state of rebellion, and the fact that Vespasian chose as his initial base of operations Ptolemais and as one of his winter quarters Caesarea (two cities on the coast), we can assume that Vespasian's supply lines, at least in the beginning of the campaign, were sea-based. This made sense as Egypt was in close proximity to Palestine and could offer plenty of grain supplies.[690] Vespasian's move on Joppa gains another level of strategic importance and understanding when considering the matter of supply lines. Here, Josephus reports on a group of Jewish rebels that had turned pirates:

> "Denied access to the land which was now under enemy control, they decided to switch to the sea. They built themselves a large fleet of pirate vessels, and began raids on the traffic plying along the coast of Syria and Phoenicia and on the route to Egypt, making it impossible for anyone to sail in these waters."[691]

These pirates were most likely blocking, either by design or chance, Vespasian's supply lines, therefore Vespasian eliminated them and secured the city and by consequence his army's provisions.[692] Pillaging, on the other hand, is mentioned by Josephus on multiple occasions, most of those done by auxiliaries, as we have seen in the last chapter.[693] These instances, however, had more of a strategic and psychological objective, as has been explored elsewhere

[686] Josephus (*BJ*, 3.29 et 65) mentions *Legio XV Apollinaris* coming from Egypt and the other two from Syria, plus many of the auxiliary forces are mentioned as also coming from Syria (J. *BJ*, 3.66).
[687] Roth 1999, 237.
[688] *Id*., 239; Goldsworthy 2007b, 103.
[689] Onasander (10.7-8) warns against the dangers involved in foraging expeditions. See Roth 1999, 293-8, for an in-depth analysis of the military implications of foraging when in campaign.
[690] Josephus (*BJ*, 4.605) nicknames Egypt as the "granary of Rome" and Tacitus (*Hist*. 3.8) also mentions the province's importance in that regard.
[691] J. *BJ*, 3.415-6.
[692] J. *BJ*, 3.422-31; Roth 1999, 300-1.
[693] J. *BJ*, 3.62-3; 3.430 et 4.436; these are some examples of pillaging in *Bellum Judaicum*.

in this thesis. Vespasian intended them as a way to strike terror into the enemy, following what was common practice amongst Roman generals.[694] Nevertheless, the two objectives were not mutually exclusive and a terror-striking raid could, and would many times, provide supplies for the army.[695] One example comes from Vespasian's campaign against the Jewish, where, after a long expedition that involved a lot of pillaging, Placidus is said by Josephus to have captured "(...) a vast haul of donkeys, sheep, camels, and oxen."[696] Some of these animals might have been sold and others used as pack-animals, but no doubt at least the sheep served as a supply of meat for Vespasian's army. In Britain, Vespasian's campaign in the south-west was motivated in part by a need to secure the sea-based supply lines through the control of the coast, but this has been considered with more depth in a previous chapter (Part III, Chapter 1.2).

Another logistical aspect to take into account is the establishment of winter quarters in the context of long campaigns. During the winter season (December, January and February), it became more difficult to transport supplies and to gather fodder for the animals, so Roman armies usually retired into winter quarters.[697] It was standard practice to place the latter in towns or cities, and Vespasian was no different.[698] Josephus is very clear: "Of his [Vespasian's] three legions he settled two in winter quarters in Caesarea, seeing that the city was ideal for that purpose, and sent the Fifteenth to Scythopolis, to avoid burdening Caesarea with the entire army."[699] It is interesting to note that Vespasian's concern in dividing the three legions between the two cities is directly related to their ability to supply the soldiers, meaning that this placement of the legions was as logistical as it was strategic. Also, presumably one of the factors that led to the decision for Caesarea was its position near the coast and with a harbour that could guarantee the survival of the campaign's supply lines.

Logistics also had an offensive dimension when it aimed at blocking the enemy's supply lines to debilitate its army.[700] We observe this quite clearly at a tactical level in several sieges of the Jewish War, where Vespasian purposefully blocked all supply routes to the target in order to gain an advantage in the fighting.[701] However, we also observe it at a more strategic level, when Vespasian was preparing his eventual assault on Jerusalem. As Josephus says:

[694] Roth 1999, 305.
[695] *Ibidem*.
[696] J. *BJ*, 4.436.
[697] Roth 1999, 177-8.
[698] Onasander (9.1) mentions that the army is in "huts" during the winter, as opposed to tents like in the remaining seasons. Roth 1999, 178.
[699] J. *BJ*, 3.412.
[700] Roth 1999, 298, emphasises how common this strategy was in ancient warfare based on the accounts of several sources. Goldsworthy 2007b, 102.
[701] J. *BJ*, 3.144 et 3.148 ; 4.12; these are some examples of this tactic in Vespasian's sieges of the Jewish War.

> "Here he [Vespasian] established control of all the approaches to the capital town, built a fortified camp, and left the Fifth Legion in place there."
>
> "To ring Jerusalem with outlying forts on all sides Vespasian now built camps at Jericho and Adida, garrisoning each with a mixed force of Romans and allied auxiliaries (...)"[702]

Vespasian isolated Jerusalem by subduing all the neighbouring regions and controlling the routes that led to the capital city, effectively blocking Jerusalem's supply lines and in doing so, diminishing their potential to resist a siege. An even clearer use of this strategy by Vespasian is revealed to us by Tacitus in the context of Vespasian's campaign to take power in Rome:

> "Now that he [Vespasian] had at his disposal both Egypt, which held the key to the corn supply, and the revenues of the richest provinces, Vitellius' army could be forced to its knees by lack of pay and supplies."[703]

This was a common and effective strategy that Vespasian employed with success on many occasions throughout his career, as we have seen. Logistics was, therefore, a vital dimension of warfare that could change the course of a battle or even a war, and Vespasian showed awareness of that reality, taking advantage of it for his army's benefit.

3.2 Intelligence

"We should reconnoitre assiduously, sollicit traitors and deserters so we can find out the enemy's present and future plans (...)".[704] All decisions, whether they were strategic, tactical, or logistical, were made based on one thing above all others and that was information. Information could make an army change its route, hurry their pace or slow it down, it could lead to an attack or a retreat, to a change of target and to the sending of supplies or reinforcements. Information was, and still is, all-encompassing and highly relevant in warfare.

In the campaign to crush the Jewish rebellion, Vespasian's intelligence gathering took three forms: allies/client kingdoms, scouts and deserters. Rome had several allies and client-kingdoms in the East. These had contributed with troops and potentially supplies to Vespasian's campaign, as we have seen. However, they were also in an advantaged position, as local kingdoms, to provide valuable information to Vespasian regarding the enemy, the topography and whatever else that proved relevant.[705] Of the four kings listed by Josephus,

[702] J. *BJ*, 4.445 et 4.486.
[703] Tac. *Hist*., 3.8.
[704] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.6.
[705] Vegetius (*Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.6) highlights the importance of getting information from the locals regarding the country's topography before leading an army on a march through it, given the dangers that can arise from that lack of knowledge. Goldsworthy 2007b, 82-3 et 99.

king Agrippa II is the only one who is described as performing this task in *Bellum Judaicum*. This makes sense, as his kingdom was the one which was more directly involved in the rebellion; it bordered Galilee, and the revolt had in fact spread to its territory.

Josephus states that "Vespasian now went on a fact-finding visit to Agrippa's kingdom, invited by the king (...)"[706], which is the same as saying that Vespasian went on an intelligence gathering mission to the territory of a client kingdom. The information collected here, although still concerning the Jewish revolt, was mostly related to Agrippa II's kingdom. Vespasian was thus informed of the disturbances that assailed that territory and decided to deal with them himself, even though it was outside his area of responsibility and not according to his plans, as has been argued in a previous chapter (Part III, Chapter 1.2).[707] Therefore, information provided by a client kingdom ends up changing the course of Vespasian's campaign in the region.

Scouts also played a relevant role in intelligence gathering. We have already discussed these units in the last chapter, so we will not extend for long here. The information collected by the scouts had a short-ranged application, usually more at the tactical level rather than strategic.[708] They went ahead of the main army and assessed for difficulties in the terrain and enemy activity, which could mean a change in tactics or route, but one could not build a campaign strategy based solely on the information they gathered. The many detachments that Vespasian sent on different missions throughout the campaign, also served the role of scouts even though it was not their main purpose.[709] We find several occasions in which a detachment is sent without knowing exactly what to expect, and only upon arriving at the location and assessing for opportunities decides whether to engage the enemy or call for reinforcements.[710] Even though these detachments are originally sent to accomplish a specific objective, they end up having to gather the necessary information first before acting.

The most valuable information to have reached Vespasian during the campaign to crush the Jewish revolt came undoubtedly from deserters. They could have a major impact in both the tactical and strategic dimensions of any given campaign, to the point that Vegetius even claims that "(...) deserters harm the enemy more than casualties."[711] The most notable example of this comes from the siege of Jotapata. Even before Vespasian's army had arrived to the walls of the city, a tactical decision had been made based on information gathered from a deserter:

[706] J. *BJ*, 3.443.
[707] J. *BJ*, 3.445.
[708] Vegetius (*Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.6) underlines the scouts' vital job of reconnaissance for a safe march.
[709] Onasander (11.6) emphasises how the general should always be available to receive information reports, regardless of it coming from the proper channels (scouts) or not.
[710] J. *BJ*, 3.290 et 3.298-9; 3.471; these are some examples of the aforementioned practice.
[711] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.26.

> "A deserter brought Vespasian the welcome news of Josephus' movement and urged an immediate attack on the city, as the fall of Jotapata, with Josephus taken captive, would bring with it the fall of all Judaea."[712]

This was very valuable information, as Josephus was the revolt's leader in Galilee. As a result, Vespasian sent a detachment of cavalry to make sure that he was not able to flee the city before the main army's arrival.[713] It is a prime example of intelligence gathered from a deserter that led to a shift in the tactical landscape and that benefited Vespasian and the Romans. Still in Jotapata, the final Roman assault that led to victory was allegedly (the veracity of this event has been discussed in another chapter) prompted by another deserter:

> "(...) on that same day a deserter brought Vespasian a report of the small numbers and weakened state of the men still left in the city. He said that they were utterly spent with constant lack of sleep and end-to-end battles, and were now incapable of meeting an open assault: there was also for consideration a way of taking them by surprise. Round about the last watch of the night, he said, when some respite from their troubles was looked for and exhausted men tend to fall into their deepest sleep just before dawn, the sentries also drop off, and that was the time when he advised the Romans to make their attack."[714]

The suggestion of the deserter was, according to Josephus, followed by Vespasian and Jotapata at last fell.[715] The impact of the information shared by this deserter was of immense tactical value, leading to the conquest of an entire city. There are many other instances in which Josephus implies that Vespasian is informed of a certain situation by deserters. However, we will focus on one more example, that illustrates their importance at a more strategic level. On two instances Josephus tells us about a recurring event, which was the consequence of Vespasian's approach to Jerusalem:

> "(...) as every day brought in numbers of defectors who had managed to get away from the Zealots."
>
> "Vespasian was kept informed of the situation by deserters. Though the insurgents guarded all the exits and killed anyone approaching them for whatever reason, some still got out undetected and escaped to the Roman camp, where they urged the commander-in-chief to come to the defence of the city and rescue what remained of its people (...)"[716]

Josephus makes it clear that Vespasian is kept informed of what is happening in Jerusalem by deserters that managed to escape the city undetected. Since, by this time in the

[712] J. *BJ*, 3.143.
[713] J. *BJ*, 3.144.
[714] J. *BJ*, 3.317-19.
[715] J. *BJ*, 3.322-8.
[716] J. *BJ*, 4.377 et 4.410.

campaign, Vespasian was preparing to approach the capital city, all of this information, which could be corroborated given the large number of testimonies, was most valuable. The deserters carried a common message of dissension and civil war inside Jerusalem. In this case, Vespasian opted not to act on it and to stick with his plans (the reasons for it have been addressed elsewhere), but the important thing to note is that he could have acted if he wanted. His high command urged him to do it and Vespasian decided against it, but the reality is that he had that option because he was well informed.[717] This information also allowed him to make other strategic decisions, such as pacifying other regions and/or cities, seeing as Jerusalem was not a threat. These two examples illustrate well the importance of deserters in the context of intelligence gathering, being of vital significance for the functioning and success of Vespasian's command in this campaign.

All that is left to do, is to try to ascertain how this information was extracted from the deserters. Both Vegetius and Onasander seem to agree that the best way to deal with a deserter and to assure that the information given is trustworthy is to present the option for punishment or reward. Vegetius states that:

> "Furthermore he [the general] should collect' at the risk of those responsible for choosing them able guides, knowledgeable of the roads, and keep them under guard having given them a demonstration of punishment and reward. They will be useful when they understand that there is no longer any chance of escape for them, and that there is ready reward for loyalty and retribution for treachery."[718]

Onasander says that:

> "If any deserters arrive in camp to tell of a suitable opportunity or hour for attack, or if they offer to act as guides over a road and assert that they will lead the army along it, unseen by the enemy, the general should lead these deserters with him securely bound, making it plain to them that, if they are truthful and bring safety and victory to the army, he will set them free and present them with fitting rewards, but that if they attempt to deceive him and wish to betray his army into the hands of their own friends, at that same 'suitable opportunity' they will be slain in their bonds by the endangered army. Confidence may be most safely placed in the word of a deserter, when he knows that his life is not in his own hands, but in the hands of those whom he leads."[719]

In the context of Vespasian's campaign to crush the Jewish revolt, it appears as though Vespasian followed this prescribed method. Many of the deserters seem to be willing to share information without threat of punishment, as they were simply trying to survive.[720] After all,

[717] J. *BJ*, 4.366-7.
[718] Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 3.6.
[719] Onos., 10.15.
[720] Josephus (*BJ*, 4.378 et 4.410) illustrates this struggle for survival by noting how many of the deserters were killed by other Jews as they tried to escape Jerusalem.

Josephus informs us that the punishment for desertion amongst the Jewish was death, therefore these people were risking their lives by trying to escape, which was more than enough motivation to divulge whatever information they had to the Romans in hopes of getting their lives and freedom as a reward.[721] However, there is one passage in which, even though it does not technically apply to a deserter, we understand that Vespasian did have and on occasion employed means of punishment in order to procure reliable information:

> "(...) one of the Jotapatans had been captured earlier, and he had withstood the worst the torturers could do, refusing even under interrogation with branding irons to tell the enemy anything at all about conditions inside the town, and when finally crucified he had met his death with a smile."[722]

This passage also shows that sometimes neither punishment nor reward were enough to extract information from the enemy. However, deserters, due to their circumstances, would naturally be more willing to talk and therefore both tactics would probably have a high percentage of success. A final note should be left regarding Josephus' own role as an informant for Vespasian. Even though the historian does not state any such actions in his work, as that would tarnish his reputation amongst the Jewish, it seems likely that, given his privileged position as one of the revolt's leaders, he would have ensured his survival next to Vespasian by providing valuable information to the Romans. After all, in the siege of Jotapata he had chosen to live rather than face an honourable death alongside his countrymen, it would only be natural to keep the same strategy after being captured.[723]

4. Vespasian's diplomacy

Diplomacy, as Carl von Clausewitz would much later famously conclude, was deeply connected to warfare.[724] The Romans reached that same conclusion very early in their history, part of the reason why the concept of *fides* was so fundamental for the prosperity of both Republic and Empire, serving as its base.[725] It can be translated as "trust", "assurance", "honour" or "good faith", it had religious weight and it was what compelled the Romans to respect their oaths and duty as well as be loyal (in a political sense).[726] It was Cicero who claimed that "(...) the highest ambition of our magistrates and generals was to defend our

[721] J. *BJ*, 4.383.
[722] J. *BJ*, 3.321.
[723] J. *BJ*, 3.391.
[724] Carl von Clausewitz, 8.6: "(...) war is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse, with a mixture of other means".
[725] Pereira 2009, 326; Grimal 2020, 170.
[726] Grimal 2019, 75-6. See Pereira 2009, 320-6.

provinces and allies with justice and honour [*fides*].”[727] From this we can understand how it was the basis of all Roman diplomacy, allowing for strong relations with allies and client kingdoms, but also to negotiate with peoples that were outside those two categories.[728] Vespasian proved to be a devoted observant of *fides* in his diplomatic efforts as a general.

The most notable example of the importance of diplomatic relations and by extension of *fides* in Vespasian’s command, comes from *Bellum Judaicum*, visible in the relationship between Vespasian and king Agrippa II (one of Rome’s client kings):

> Vespasian now went on a fact-finding visit to Agrippa’s kingdom, invited by the king, whose double purpose was to entertain the general and his army in the luxurious style afforded by the wealth of his house, and then to use them to put down the disorders in his kingdom. So Vespasian set out from the Caesarea on the coast to the other Caesarea, known as Caesarea Philippi. There he rested his troops for twenty days while he enjoyed fine living and made thank-offerings to God for the successes he had achieved. But when he was informed that Tiberias was threatening to revolt and Tarichaeae had already seceded—both these cities part of Agrippa’s kingdom—he thought that a campaign against these people would serve his general plan of crushing Jewish revolt wherever it broke out and also repay Agrippa’s hospitality by disciplining two of his cities.[729]

Vespasian was in the middle of a campaign to which he had been appointed by the emperor himself, but still he judged it best put it on hold and go visit king Agrippa. This has many explanations, some of which have been discussed already, such as the need to gather information or the opportunity to allow his army to rest. However, one cannot understand it without taking into consideration the idea of *fides*. After all, king Agrippa had fulfilled his duties as a client kingdom of Rome by providing troops and possibly provisions for Vespasian’s campaign, thus Vespasian was obliged by *fides* to uphold his duty towards king Agrippa.[730] In this case, it meant defending the client kingdom in question by restoring order to some of Agrippa’s rebellious cities.[731] There were other benefits that have been analysed, as Vespasian would still be crushing the Jewish revolt, just outside his area of responsibility, however there was also an obligation that was rooted in his very being as a Roman citizen and general, and that was called *fides*. We should not forget that Vespasian was representing Rome itself, so from a diplomatic point of view this would be well perceived by current and prospective client kingdoms; Rome, through Vespasian, would maintain its reputation of a people who respected *fides*.

[727] Cic. *Off*., 2.8.27.
[728] Sidebottom 2007, 25-6.
[729] J. *BJ*, 3.443-5.
[730] Sidebottom 2007, 4 et 26.
[731] *Id*., 26.

Vespasian ended up developing a long campaign in Agrippa's territory and he demonstrated a *fides*-inspired diplomacy throughout, the siege of Tiberias standing as solid example of just that:

> "The general [Vespasian] yielded to these entreaties, though he was angry at the whole city for the seizure of the horses—but he could see that Agrippa was desperately concerned for the place."
>
> "In deference to the king he [Vespasian] issued orders that there was to be no looting or rape, and it was the king too who persuaded him to spare the walls by giving his personal guarantee that the people behind them would remain loyal for the future."[732]

Even though Vespasian had been deceived by the rebellious Jews of Tiberias, he decided not to punish the entire city, as was standard practice and had been done to that point, out of deference to king Agrippa. This was, once again, a diplomatic gesture inspired by *fides*. In the end, the way in which Vespasian dealt with Agrippa, was enough to win the latter's loyalty, who later supported Vespasian's challenge for the Empire.[733]

Vespasian's diplomatic efforts are also visible in his preparation to challenge Vitellius for power. Unlike Vitellius, Vespasian did not allow for his army to abandon the provinces before taking precautions, some of which were of a diplomatic nature. Tacitus states that:

> "Ambassadors were sent to Parthia and Armenia, and precautions were taken to protect their backs while the legions were preoccupied with civil war."
>
> "However, in order to transfer operations to Italy safely and efficiently, written instructions were sent to Aponius Saturninus to move up quickly with the army of Moesia, and in case the now defenceless provinces should be left open to threats from the barbarian tribes, the rulers of the Sarmatian Iazyges, who hold absolute power in their community, were enrolled in the Flavian army. They also offered to raise a mass levy and to supply a force of cavalry, their one effective arm, but the contribution was rejected for fear that during the dissensions they might engineer a foreign war or abandon their obligation and honour if offered greater rewards by the other side. The Flavians secured the support of the Suebian kings, Sido and Italicus, who had shown long-standing compliance to Rome and whose people were more ready to keep faith than to break it."[734]

Vespasian, through the use of effective diplomatic action, made sure that the biggest threats to both the Eastern provinces and the Danubian provinces were thus diffused. These measures excluded the need for active military action and allowed for Vespasian's army to move unencumbered towards Rome. Of course, diplomacy did not have the same effectiveness as it has nowadays, but nevertheless was useful to minimise exposure.

[732] J. *BJ*, 3.455 et 3.461.
[733] Tac. *Hist*., 2.81.
[734] Tac. *Hist*., 2.82 et 3.5.

Part V – Vespasian's Legacy

"(...)
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."
(Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1818)

1. Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma

Vespasian's memory, history and works lived on after he died on the 23rd of June of the year 79 from an age-related illness.[735] Vespasian and his sons left a lasting impression on the world that was afterwards used and reshaped in many ways and for many purposes. As Zissos says, "the significance of the Flavian age for subsequent cultural and historical developments is out of all proportion to its brief temporal span."[736]

In literature, in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the topic of the destruction of Jerusalem took an overwhelming preponderance, and with it, so did Flavian memory, more specifically that of Vespasian and Titus.[737] In this chapter, we will focus on one specific romance that was printed in Portugal in 1496, called *Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma*.[738] The analysis of Vespasian's overall legacy would be too extensive to deal with in this thesis. The choice for this source is linked to its content as it relates more to Vespasian's military dimension and that will be the focus of this analysis, and to the fact that it has been somewhat neglected by the academic world.[739] We will start by briefly contextualising the romance as well as giving a short summary of its content, to then analyse the aspects which have proven more relevant to the knowledge of Vespasian's military dimensions, as has been the topic of this dissertation.

1.1 Context and Story

The romance was printed by Valentim Fernandes in 1496, in Lisbon, already in the reign of D. Manuel I.[740] The story was known throughout Europe, where different versions had been published in several languages and with diverse titles.[741] The common themes and storyline reveal that this romance was in fact based on two other, more ancient, stories: the *Cura sanitatis Tiberii Caesaris Augusti* and the *Vindicta Saluatoris*.[742] The story deals

[735] Suet. *Ves*., 24; D.C., 67.17.1. Suetonius (*Ves*., 24) claims that as Vespasian was about to die, he said that "(...) an emperor ought to die standing up.", and as he was struggling to do just that, he perished; a story that, regardless of being true or not, has a clear objective of showcasing Vespasian's respect for duty; in summary, declaring that Vespasian died as he lived. Another interesting aspect related to Vespasian's death, is the fact that he was the only emperor in the first two dynasties to die without any rumours of foul play (Beard 2016, 414-5), which is a testament to the stability of his reign.
[736] Zissos 2016, 487.
[737] *Id*., 491.
[738] "Story of the very noble Vespasian Emperor of Rome", translated by the author of this thesis.
[739] Notable exceptions include Nuno Simões Rodrigues' chapter "Ficção, tipologia e anacronismo na composição das personagens da História do mui nobre Vespasiano imperador de Roma" in *Optimo Magistro Sodalium et Amicorum Munus*; M. H. T. Ferreira's *Estoria de Vespasiano emperador de Roma. Estudo fonético, morfológico e sintáctico, seguido de um Glossário*, and J.B. Machado's introductory study to his edition of the work. Both Levick (2017, 1) and Zissos (2016, 493) only mention it in passing.
[740] Rodrigues 2022, 275.
[741] Machado 2013, 12-13; Rodrigues 2022, 275-6.
[742] See Rodrigues 2022, 276-8, for a deeper look into the two stories mentioned.

primarily, as we shall see, with the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Vespasian and Titus, here depicted as the rightful avengers of the death of Jesus Christ.[743]

Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* cannot be missed as the main historical influence behind *Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma*, albeit with serious alterations that served the purposes of the author.[744] One example of such influence is clearly visible in the episode which involves a fortress named Jafel and its leader, a man of the same name. Here, we read that a defeated Jafel hid inside the fortress with ten other survivors and that when faced with the option between committing suicide or surrendering to Vespasian, he chose the latter.[745] Well, if we changed "Jafel" for "Josephus" and "ten survivors" for "forty survivors", we would have the exact account given by Josephus in his *Bellum Judaicum*.[746]

The story follows a pretty straightforward plot. Vespasian, who is introduced as the reigning Emperor in Rome, is suffering from a terrible illness that has disfigured his face and left him close to dying. In order to save his life, he is told that he must renounce the worship of idols and embrace the Christian faith. To this end, Vespasian sends for a woman, named Veronica, who was said to have in her possession a healing cloth; a property that it had gained because it was used to clean Jesus' face when he was carrying the cross to be crucified. Veronica agrees to visit the emperor in Rome and the miraculous cloth performs its duty, curing Vespasian of his malady. In return, Vespasian vows to avenge Jesus' death by punishing both the Jews and Pontius Pilate and to then convert to Christianity. This he does by destroying the city of Jerusalem and by capturing Pilate. Vespasian is baptised in Rome and the whole Empire soon follows its Emperor in embracing the Christian faith. The story ends with Pontius Pilate's death.

This work was written and printed during the reigns of D. João II and D. Manuel I, two monarchs that ordered the expulsion of the Jews from Portugal, which could mean that, as Machado says "(...) the work served as a way to legitimise this action."[747] This could also be the version of the story of which D. Manuel I sent one hundred copies to the king of Ethiopia in 1515, which would place Vespasian in the heart of the Portuguese discoveries, most likely with an evangelising purpose.[748]

[743] Rodrigues 2022, 278-9.
[744] Machado 2013, 7-8; Rodrigues 2022, 279.
[745] *Estoria*, XV.
[746] J. *BJ*, 3.387-91; Rodrigues 2022, 297.
[747] Machado 2013, 6, translated by me from the original: "(...) a obra poderia funcionar como uma espécie de legitimação desse ato."
[748] Machado 2013, 10.

1.2 A perception of Vespasian

In *Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma* we are given an image of Vespasian that, regardless of it being historically accurate or not, was popular amongst the European elites of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. An image that was born out of ancient sources combined with Mediaeval religion and ideology. As Nuno Simões Rodrigues states "(...) the narrative that we read in the text that was printed in Lisbon, in 1496, not only amplifies what the ancient documents say, but also fabricates and distorts the information, adapting it to the objectives of its author(s)".[749] Therefore, it is quite pertinent to ascertain what that perception of Vespasian was and how it differed from or resembled his historical self, focusing on his military dimension.

Two topics need to be addressed before we move on to the analysis of the action of the romance. The first is related to Vespasian's origins. In the story he is said to be the son of a "Caesar Augustus", in this case probably Tiberius, which is a piece of information that highly contrasts with Vespasian's historical humble origins (a topic that has been addressed at the start of this dissertation).[750] This is explained by Rodrigues as a consequence of the assimilation of information from the other two texts upon which this story bases itself.[751] One can also understand how an association with Caesar Augustus would aggrandise Vespasian's image, which in turn would only do the same for Jesus Christ, since the "son of Caesar Augustus" ends up converting to Christianity. However, we cannot say whether this was done accidentally or purposefully. The second topic is the matter of the *casus belli*. In the story, we are told that Vespasian departs to Jerusalem, after being cured through the action of God, in order to fulfil the promise of avenging Jesus' death and punish the Jewish for the part they took in it; Pontius Pilate's refusal to pay a tax to the emperor is regarded as a secondary reason.[752] Therefore, we can observe a purely religious *casus belli*, which naturally served the purposes of the author(s) of the story.[753] However, by this point in the dissertation we know that the war against the Jewish that culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem was, above all, a political and military issue.

Having this in mind, it is interesting to note that, in this part of the story, one of Vespasian's traits, that has been analysed elsewhere, is depicted under the guise of religious devotion:

[749] Rodrigues 2022, 281; translated by me from the original: "(...) a narrativa que lemos no texto impresso em Lisboa, em 1496, não só amplifica o que os documentos antigos dizem, como ficciona e distorce a informação, adaptando-as aos objectivos do(s) seu(s) autor(es)."
[750] *Estoria*, III; Rodrigues 2022, 281-2.
[751] Rodrigues 2022, 281-2.
[752] *Estoria*, XIV.
[753] Rodrigues 2022, 277.

> "But you should know that I [Vespasian] will not get baptised until I have avenged the death of Jesus Christ. And I promise you that, as soon as I come back from Jerusalem, if God so wishes that I should take my vengeance on the cruel Jews, I will immediately baptise with all my people; because I will not be joyful or happy until I take my revenge and have fulfilled all that I have promised to our Lord (...)"
>
> "Mas vós sabei que eu me não bautizarei até que eu não vingue a morte de Jesus Cristo. E prometo-vos que, logo tanto que eu vier de Jerusalém, se a Deus apraz que eu tome vingança dos cruéis Judeus, eu logo me bautizarei com todo o meu povo; que por certo eu não serei alegre nem contente até eu tomar vingança e ter cumprido tudo o que prometi a nosso Senhor (...)"[754]

Vespasian is shown taking an oath/promise in good faith and then proceeds to fulfil it, as the story later reveals to us.[755] This could be interpreted as a depiction of the Roman *fides*, although almost assuredly not intended by the author(s) of the story. Nevertheless, it portrays Vespasian as a man who upholds his word and oaths, or in other words, as a man who lives by the *fides*. Therefore, even though we observe it in the context of Christianism as opposed to Roman paganism, Vespasian's image, in this particular aspect, survived, in essence, the passage of time.

Even though the story is incorrectly contextualised, there are a great many instances in which a higher degree of historical accuracy is observed. Not only that, but several aspects of Roman military practice, as well as of Vespasian's command, as has been analysed in this work, are surprisingly present. This further emphasises the relevance of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* as a source for this romance.

The first aspect that is present right from the prologue is Vespasian's association with his son Titus.[756] This is a common theme in Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*, where Titus is introduced as a complement to his father's command in Judaea.[757] The importance of Titus' role alongside Vespasian in the campaign to crush the Jewish revolt is overwhelming, not to mention that he is the one who ends up capturing Jerusalem when Vespasian was already emperor. In the XV century romance, we observe the same association, as Titus accompanies Vespasian in every step of the expedition to subdue Jerusalem. It is another idea that prevailed from I century Rome to XV century Lisbon.

The siege and capture of the city of Jerusalem is, without a doubt, the highlight of the story, however, the siege of the fortress of Jafel, which is the only other instance of warfare

[754] *Estoria*, XIV, translated by me; the original is below the translation.
[755] *Estoria*, XXIV.
[756] *Estoria*, prologue.
[757] J. *BJ*, 3.6: "To Nero this record augured well, and he appreciated the stability inherent in Vespasian's age and experience; he noted too the value of Vespasian's sons as a guarantee of his loyalty, and saw how their youthful vigour could be the muscle to match their father's brain."; Josephus writes in the plural, however, Domitian did not participate in any way in this campaign. Tacitus (*Hist*., 2.4-5) also highlights Titus' qualities and role alongside his father.

depicted in the romance, is of greater interest to the purposes of this analysis. Vespasian and Titus, the story narrates, travelled to the Near East to attack Jerusalem; they disembarked in the city of Acre and before assaulting the capital, they decided to move on the fortress of Jafel, which was under the control of a Jewish knight who was also named Jafel.[758] The episode of the siege of Jafel, that abruptly cuts the narrative with no apparent reason, was the author(s) attempt to incorporate the core of *Bellum Judaicum*, which entails all of Vespasian's actions in the region from the year 67 until the siege of Jerusalem, in a very summarised way. It is in this part of the story, for example, that we find the already mentioned episode of Josephus' surrender to Vespasian, here portrayed as Jafel. Nevertheless, the siege of Jafel is still quite valuable for our analysis in that it reveals to us both the author(s)' and their readers' perception of Vespasian as a commander.

The fact that this "summary" is presented in the form of a siege is quite appropriate, for as we have seen, siege warfare was Vespasian's main concern when dealing with the Jewish revolt. The Roman army approached the city of Jafel and started to prepare siege operations, however, before any assault was made, Jafel tried to surrender:

> "And as Jafel saw that the emperor had so strongly besieged him, he appeared before the emperor with three knights and said: «Lord, take me in your mercy and do with the castle [fortress] as you wish.» And the emperor told him that he would not take him in his mercy. But a few days after the emperor took the castle [fortress] by force (...)"
>
> "E como Jafel viu que o imperador o tinha assim cercado tão fortemente, veio com três cavaleiros ao imperador e disse-lhe: «Senhor, tomai-me em vossa mercê e fazei do castelo o que for vossa vontade.» E o imperador lhe disse que o não tomaria em sua mercê. Mas daí a poucos dias o imperador tomou o castelo por força (...)"[759]

Vespasian is shown refusing the surrender of the fortress so that he can take it by force a few days afterwards. This decision does not make sense from a military point of view unless we take into consideration Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*. Two ideas that have been argued in this dissertation can help understand this passage. First the fact that Vespasian was responding to a revolt, which was a serious military event but also an insult to Roman values. Therefore, he needed to win not only the material war, but also the psychological and morale ones as well; this would be seen as punishment for their revolt and as an example for others.[760] The second idea has to do with Vespasian's mastery of siege warfare. In *Bellum Judaicum*, as we have

[758] *Estoria*, XV. The city referred to here could be Jafa, as it is translated in the Castilian version (Rodrigues 2022, 297).
[759] *Estoria*, XV, translated by me; the original is below the translation.
[760] The punishment mentioned in the story seems directed at the Jews in Jerusalem and at Pontius Pilate, as they had a direct influence in Jesus' death. Therefore, it would not constitute a reasonable cause for this treatment. Also, Jafel is presented as an independent fortress ruled by a man that is depicted as friendly and wise, which, once again, makes Vespasian's actions in this context appear irrational.

seen, we observe a Vespasian who always opted for the route of the direct assault and that always captured his target. This reality was most likely impactful enough to have compelled the author(s) of the story to adopt it from Josephus' work. Therefore, what the story does, is perpetuate the idea, taken from *Bellum Judaicum*, of Vespasian as an aggressive general who opted for the assault on most occasions and that had an abundant enough knowledge of *poliorketika* to subdue his targets; in all, it is a summary of Vespasian's command style in the campaign to crush the Jewish rebellion.

The progression of the siege of Jafel is not specified, however, its aftermath once again resembles what we know of Roman standard practice and, more specifically, of Vespasian's command in the context of the Judaean campaign. The story first says that Vespasian "(...) ordered the death of every Jew, except for ten that managed to hide.", and then that "(...) the emperor brought down the castle [fortress] and its defences."[761] The sack, as we have seen in this thesis, inevitably followed a successful assault in the overwhelming majority of sieges. Vespasian's treatment of conquered targets throughout *Bellum Judaicum* followed this same pattern, as has been shown elsewhere, which illustrates that another facet of Vespasian's command was transferred into this story. After the sack, as a symbol of conquest and to prevent the reuse of the place that had just been conquered, Vespasian and his generals, in the context of the Jewish War, would either bring down the walls or destroy the target all together, as we have seen in another chapter. Even though there is not an explicit mention of walls being torn down in the story, it is clearly implied, and it is conceptually the same. This adds further accuracy to the perception of the author(s) of the story, taken from *Bellum Judaicum*, regarding Vespasian's command in the campaign to crush the Jewish rebellion.

The textual similarity between the story and *Bellum Judaicum* that is visible in the already mentioned episode in which Jafel can be seen as an imitation of Josephus, has another level of interest when observed from the perspective of intelligence gathering. In the chapter of this dissertation regarding information and how it was attained in the context of warfare, one of the main conclusions reached was that, in the campaign to crush the Jewish rebellion, Vespasian depended a great deal on deserters. These were many times the holders of privileged information that was then taken into consideration to make certain tactical and strategic decisions. In the story, we see Vespasian making use of the same exact strategy, for after capturing the leader Jafel and two others, he says to them: "From here on out I want you to be my advisers."[762] Jafel is, later in the story, of vital importance to solve a logistical problem in

[761] *Estoria*, XV, translated by me from the originals: "(...) mandou matar todos os Judeus, salvo dez que se esconderam." and "(...) em tanto o imperador fez derribar o castelo e derribaram as cavas."
[762] *Estoria*, XV, translated by me from the original: "Agora quero que daqui em diante sejais meus conselheiros."

Vespasian's army regarding the lack of drinkable water, proving the value that deserters could have for the success of a campaign, whether that was Vespasian's historical campaign or the one portrayed in the story.[763] This reliance on deserters to improve the decision-making process is further substantiated in an episode of the story already concerning the siege of Jerusalem, in which Jacob, who was inside the city, from where he was freed by an angel, advises Vespasian on the best course of action, giving him valuable information[764]:

> "The emperor took advice from those he could trust on how to take the city. He wanted Jacob to speak first, who had been blessed by God's mercy that day, and told him about it in front of everyone. And the emperor took great pleasure and said: «Tell us of Pilate and of those who are inside the city and what they say of us.» «Lord – said Jacob –, in the city there are few supplies and there are so many people there that there isn't a Jew who is worth anything other than coming here to honour the feast very wonderfully. Due to your blockade no one can get out, for which reason they are very discouraged one with another and cannot have much of one another. And you, lord, order the construction of deep and wide ditches, so that no jew can escape or approach your camp against your will. And when they run out of supplies, they will surrender, because, lord, you cannot take it by force. And it is imperative that the ditches should be built right away."
>
> O imperador tomou conselho com aqueles que eram do seu segredo como poderia tomar a cidade. E quis que primeiro falasse Jacob, ao qual Deus tinha feita muita mercê aquele dia, e contou-lha diante de todos. E o imperador tomou mui grande prazer e disse: «Contai vós de Pilatos e de todos que dentro são e que falam de nós.» «Senhor – disse Jacob –, na cidade há aí poucas viandas e há aí muita gente que em toda esta terra não fica judeu que alguma cousa valha que não seja aqui vindo por honra à festa mui maravilhosamente. E por vosso assentamento não pode nenhum sair, pelo qual são muito desmaiados uns e os outros, e não se podem muito ter. E vós, senhor, mandai fazer derredor do muro grandes valas e fortes e bem largas, por tal que nenhum judeu não possa sair nem se chegar ao arraial sem vossa vontade. E dês que as viandas lhes falecerem, eles se vos darão, porque, senhor, por força não a podeis tomar. E há mester que as valas se façam logo."[765]

Vespasian was thus advised by Jacob, who was essentially a deserter, and he changed his tactic to capture Jerusalem based on that information, as the story then reveals.[766] In the historical campaign, Vespasian is continually informed by deserters, leading to shifts in tactics and strategy, which places this aspect of Vespasian's command as another who is accurately embodied in the story. The siege of Jafel, therefore, serves as a decently accurate summary of Vespasian's campaign against the Jewish with regards to the characterization of his command.

In the siege of Jerusalem, however, we observe a break between the story and Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* with regards to historical accuracy, which makes sense considering that this episode had a religious rather than historical goal. The first aspect has to do with the way in which the city is eventually taken. As we have seen, Vespasian follows Jacob's advice and

[763] *Estoria*, XVII.
[764] *Estoria*, XVIII et XIX.
[765] *Estoria*, XIX. Translated by me; the original is below the translation.
[766] *Estoria*, XIX.

essentially sets up a blockade to Jerusalem by way of ditches.[767] This was quite rare to find in Roman military tradition and virtually nonexistent in Vespasian's siege warfare, given the available evidence. If we exclude Vespasian from the picture with the argument that it was Titus who led the siege of Jerusalem, we still arrive at the same conclusion, for Titus ended up taking the city by force.[768] In the story, the blockade ultimately leads to Pontius Pilate's surrender and to the capture of Jerusalem, which, as we have said, contradicts both the historical account and the analysis of Vespasian's command.

One final aspect to be taken into account is Vespasian's relationship with Rome's allies. In the story we are introduced to king Arquileu, a descendent of king Herod I, who, although historical, is anachronistic with regards to Vespasian's reign.[769] In Vespasian's campaign to crush the Jewish rebellion we are introduced to a similar character: king Herodes Agrippa II. Both are introduced as kings of a similar region, although in the story that is left in ambiguity, as Arquileu also serves as a personification of the Jewish people as a whole;[770] both are part of the same family, as descendents of Herodes, the Great. However, whereas Herodes Agrippa II is one of Vespasian's greatest allies and supporters in the area, Arquileu is Pontius Pilate's ally and Vespasian's enemy. This, of course, is one aspect of the story that does not bring justice to the historical perception that we have of Vespasian's diplomatic dimension with regards to Rome's allies.

The *Estoria de muy Nobre Vespesiano Emperador de Roma* inspired the production of goldsmithery pieces such as the XVI century "prato de água-às-mãos" that belonged to the Portuguese crown (see image 6). Here, many of the scenes described in the story are depicted with great detail, although with the natural renaissance imagery. It stands as another example of the popularity of this story, which, with all its anachronisms, lapses and distortions, still managed to keep a reasonably accurate picture of some aspects of Vespasian's generalship.

[767] *Estoria*, XIX.
[768] J. *BJ*, 6.68-70, marks the moment when the first wall was taken by the Romans.
[769] See Rodrigues 2022, 285-7, for more detail on king Arquileu and its relation to the story and the different sources.
[770] Rodrigues 2022, 287.

Conclusion

Vespasian was an outstanding Roman commander for he displayed those characteristics which were more distinctive of the Roman military: courage, hard-work, and pragmatism. The latter allowed him to select what traits, behaviours, tactics, and strategies improved his success as he learned and grew more experienced. Ultimately, it was his relationship with the military, the reciprocal influence between individual and institution in all its dimensions, that gave him the Empire and allowed him to keep it.

Vespasian understood that a successful command was about understanding the soldiers. About earning their loyalty, respect, and obedience; earn and not buy or impose through fear and punishment, as the last two were fleeting and could backfire whereas the first was abiding and held unmeasurable potential.[771] As we have already seen, Vitellius lost all authority over his men because he decided to buy their loyalty. One other of Vitellius' decisions was to execute the leading centurions of the armies of Ilyricum that had supported Otho, in a demonstration of excessive punishment which, as Tacitus says, "(...) above all caused the armies of Illyricum to become estranged from Vitellius."[772] Minicius Justus, who was the camp prefect of *Legio VI Galbiana*, is said by Tacitus to be "(...) a disciplinarian who kept the troops on too tight a rein for civil war (...)", his excessive severity when dealing with the soldiers led him to have to be "(...) rescued from the anger of his troops and sent to Vespasian."[773]

Vespasian, on the other hand, earned his men's respect and loyalty. He did that through his example, courage, decisiveness, reputation but also *clementia*. We have already discussed this to some extent, but we can look at two illustrative examples. One is how he is described by Tacitus as a "born soldier", "(...) eating whatever food happened to be available and dressed much the same as a private soldier."[774] In this way, Vespasian is lowering himself to the soldier's level in appearance and behaviour so that they witness that their commander's commitment to the army was the same, if not greater, to that of any soldier; for, as Onasander explains, "(...) no one voluntarily submits to a leader or an officer who is an inferior man to himself."[775] The other example being the *clementia* Vespasian demonstrated towards the legions that had supported Vitellius, as instead of punishing them, he placed them in

[771] Punishment was, of course, a vital condition for discipline in the Roman army, but what is argued against, in this sentence, is excessive punishment; the type that creates resentment and disobedience, as illustrated in the subsequent examples. On obedience and mutiny, see Lee 2020, 97-105.
[772] Tac. *Hist*., 2.60.
[773] Tac. *Hist*. 3.07. Lee (2020, 99) notes that excessive punishment often could lead to an unhelpful level of resentment, stating that discipline was primarily instilled through physical labour (e.g., camp construction).
[774] Tac. *Hist*. 2.5.
[775] Onos., 1.17.

strategically advantageous positions for the Empire's war effort. Regarding this action, Tacitus says it all, "To distribute this army among the provinces and to tie it down in a foreign war was an act at once of statesmanship and peace."[776]

In this thesis I have attempted to show the importance of the Roman military in Vespasian and of Vespasian in the Roman military. Not only to narrate the series of events, but to link them to their respective contexts; to understand in what ways Vespasian was the product of his time and of Roman military tradition, and in what ways he differentiated himself from that basis or improved upon it; to unearth the causes, implications, and consequences of his military action. Many avenues of research opened here still require further deepening, nevertheless we have reached several solid and interesting conclusions.

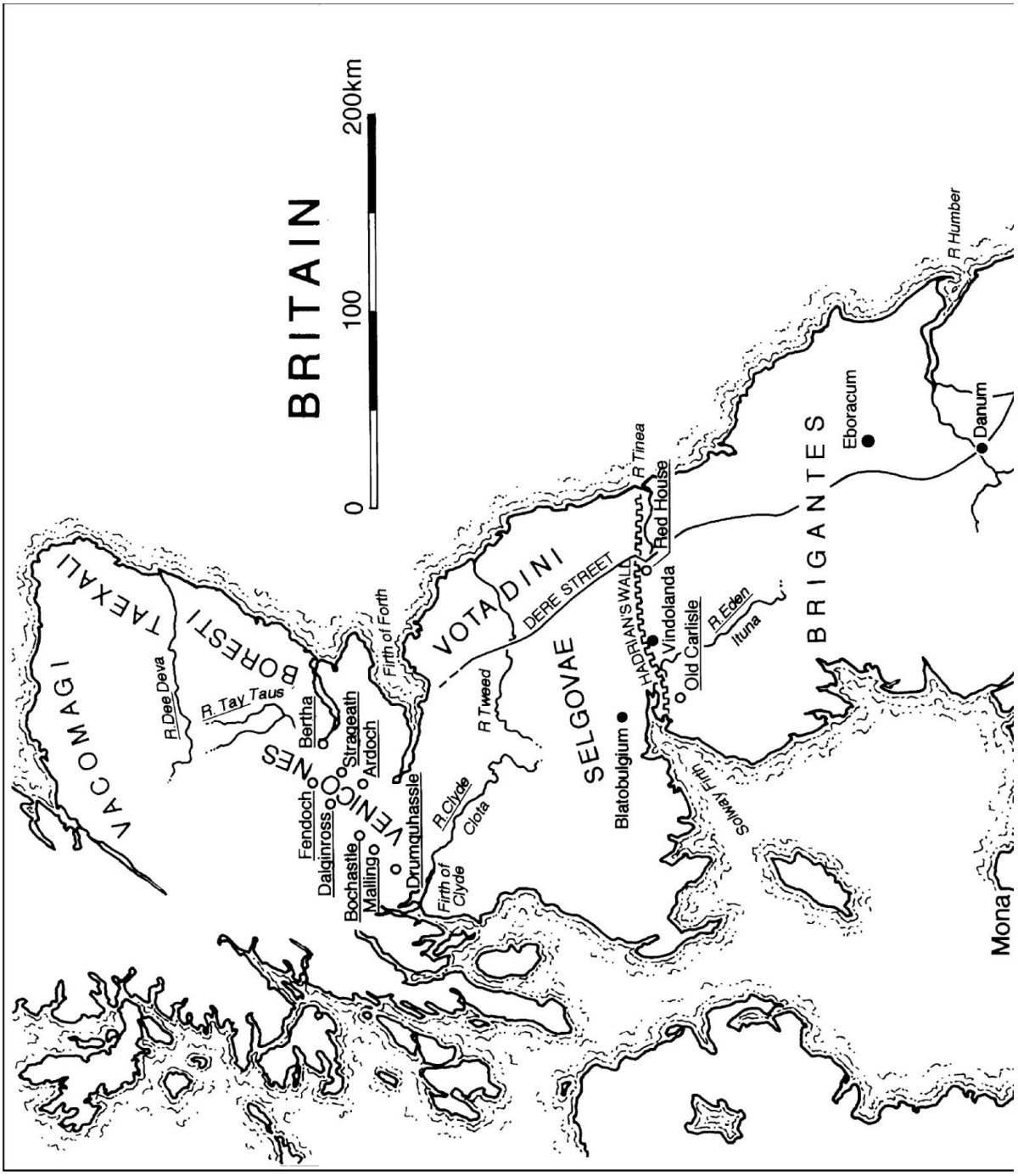
Vespasian was, above all, a military man, that is not to say that his life can be summed up solely by the one dimension. However, it was no doubt the driving factor of his existence, defining his political and social stance in the Empire, revealing, and strengthening his traits, and ultimately becoming the main cause of his remembrance. His humble origins made him relatable to his men, forced him to work harder and kept the arrogance at bay, allowing him to be open to advice. His first military experience in Thrace, where he was introduced to the world of warfare and more specifically to that of siege warfare. The first legion command in the Rhine and then Britain, where his abilities and ambition were first put to the test with praiseworthy results. The first army command in Judaea, where his experience and reputation allowed him to be prudent and extremely effective and successful, combining a mastery of siege warfare and expert use of artillery with an unprecedented employment of auxiliary forces. A *labor militaris* and *uirtus* that were always present in the pursuit of *gloria*, and the *auctoritas* that developed as his career progressed. The growing importance of logistics, intelligence, and diplomacy in his strategy as he grew older and established his career and the reward no longer justified the risk. The patience and prudence in his challenge for power in Rome, itself only possible given the respect and loyalty that he inspired in the soldiery. A struggle for power that did not make him forget his responsibilities and that it was only worth it if there was still something to rule over by the end. An Empire in shambles that was made strong again through a grand strategy of stability over conquest. Military action throughout the Empire that both consolidated and expanded Roman territory. A legacy that survived in the form of his military achievements. In all, Vespasian was a "born soldier", as Tacitus says, and no matter his status, he did not forget that, for even when acclaimed emperor by his army, "Vespasian himself

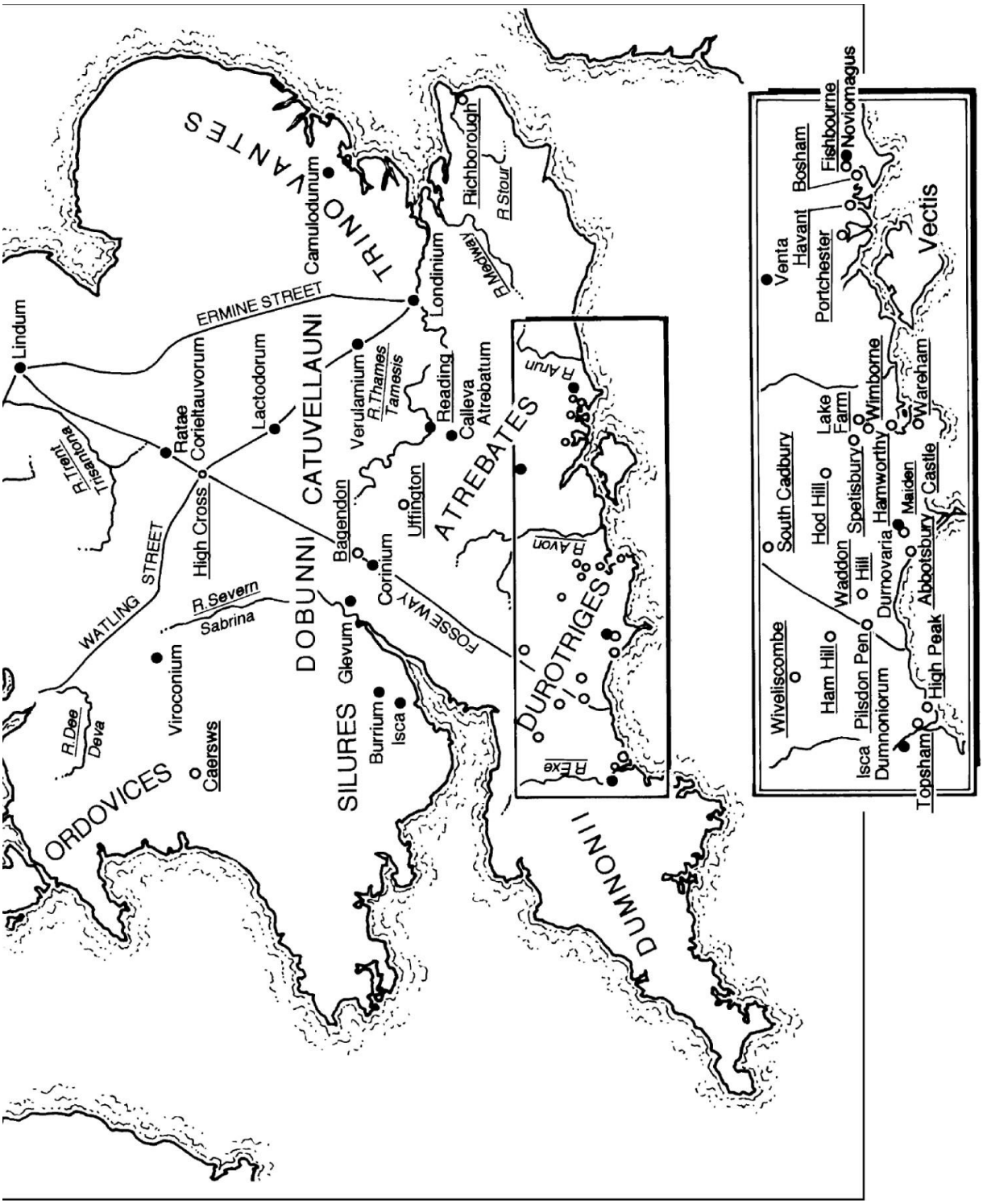
[776] Tac. *Hist*. 3.46.

showed no sign of pride, arrogance or transformed personality in the face of his transformed situation." and instead "(...) he addressed his men in the manner of a soldier (...)".[777]

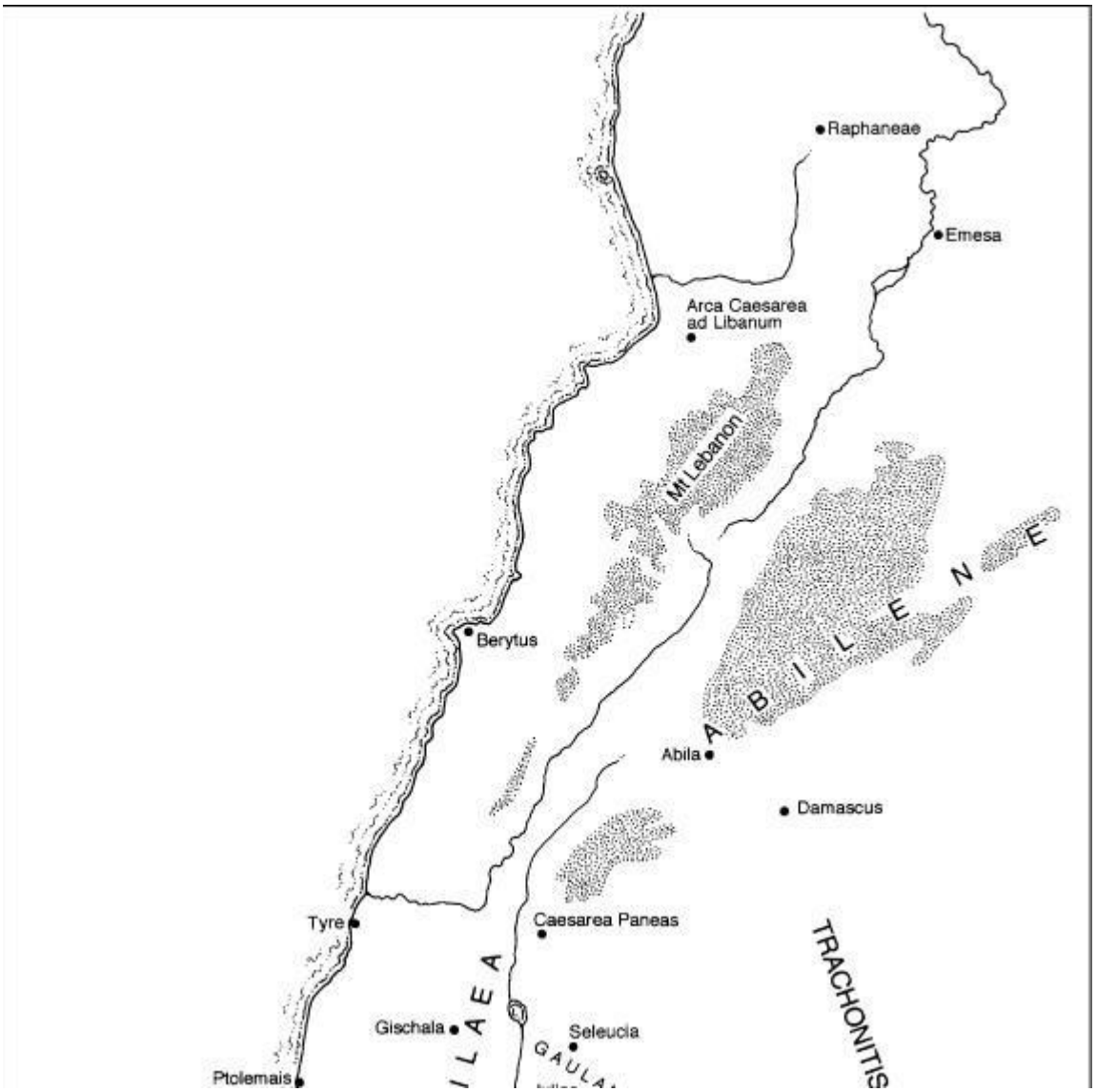
[777] Tac. *Hist*., 2.80.

Appendix 1: Maps





Map 1 – Britain (In Levick 2017, 20-1).


Raphaneae
Emesa
Arca Caesarea
ad Libanum
Mt Lebanon
Berytus
ABILENE
Abila
Damascus
Tyre
Caesarea Paneas
TRACHONITIS
Gischala
Seleucia
Ptolemais

Map 2 – Palestine (In Levick 2017, 34-5).

Appendix 2: Illustrations

Image 1 – Representation of a ballista in Trajan's Column. Scene LXVI. © 2023 Roger B. Ulrich

Image 2 – Representation of a battering ram from Trajan's column; it is a Dacian battering ram but depicted according to Roman specifications. Scene XXXII. © 2023 Roger B. Ulrich

Image 3 – Coin depicting Vespasian in the front (left) and a palm tree surrounded by military equipment and spoils of war representing the conquered Judaea, in the back; the inscription reads IVDAEA CAPTA (right). It is one of many with an identical inscription and style. Year 71. © The Trustees of the British Museum

Image 4 – Copper alloy coin with the same IVDAEA CAPTA inscription as well as a similar representation of Judaea (right), although this time the man depicted is Titus, Vespasian's son (left). Year 77-8. © The Trustees of the British Museum

Image 5 – Depiction of a battle scene in the arch of Spetimius Severus in Rome (panel 4); we can observe an assault tower on the bottom square with a battering ram incorporated in it; the ram's head is quite distinctly visible. (c) LiviusOrg | Jona Lendering

Image 6 – Prato de «água-às-mãos» depicting scenes from the *Estoria do Muy Nobre Vespesiano Imperador de Roma* that belonged to the Portuguese crown from the XVI century onward (c. 1540-1550; gold-plated). PNA, inv. 4818. ©DGPC/ADF João Silveira Ramos

Image 7 – Relief panel, from the Arch of Titus in Rome, showing a representation of the spoils of Jerusalem being brought into Rome (81 C.E.). Photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

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