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SCIPIO IN SPAIN AND THE SUCRO INCIDENT

The Carthaginian threat in pre-Roman Spain was eliminated by Scipio before he had earned the *cognomen* Africanus. The events leading up to the great Republican hero's campaigns there can be briefly reviewed.

Scipio, it will be remembered, served in the Second Punic War from its very outset. While still far short of his twentieth birthday he had fought in the opening engagement of the war at the river Ticinus in 218 and greatly distinguished himself. In the battle his father, who as consul for the year was in command of the Roman forces, was badly wounded; and, according to Laelius, escaped with his life only through Scipio's swift and courageous intervention [1]. Two years later, in 216, young Scipio fought as a military tribune at Cannae and after that disaster managed to make his way to Canusium where he helped to rally 4000 other survivors from the shattered Roman army. Together with another military tribune, Appius Claudius Pulcher, he assumed command of these remnants and reported to the surviving consul, M. Terentius Varro, who had himself found refuge at Venusia and was no more ready than the youthful Scipio to despair of the Republic.

Meanwhile Scipio's father had left Italy and joined his brother Gnaeus, Scipio's uncle, in Spain. With his arrival the Romans had two armies with which to challenge Carthaginian power there, and for a time they scored some brilliant successes. But at a critical moment in 211 their Spanish allies turned treacherous and Scipio's father was defeated and killed; and twenty-nine days later the same fate befell Gnaeus Scipio.

These blows, although crippling, did not bring about the complete collapse of Roman power in Spain. Tiberius Fonteius, *legatus* to Scipio's father, at once assumed command of what remained of the latter's army. But, according to Livy, credit for saving the situation really belonged to L. Marcius Septimus, a Roman *eques* who had been serving in Gnaeus' army. Marcius restored the morale of the 9000 or so survivors of the Scipionic army and they elected him their leader with the highly irregular title of "propraetor of the senate" [2]. He managed to hold on precariously to the line of the river Iberus (Ebro) in the north [3].

Meanwhile events in Italy and Sicily had been going well for the Romans, and this emboldened them now to send as reinforcements to Spain some of the troops that had just recaptured Capua: *non Italiae iam maior quam Hispaniae cura erat* [4]. They would serve under the pro-

[1] According to Coelius Antipater a Ligurian sclave rescued Scipio's father. But Laelius, as Scipio's lifelong friend and fellow soldier must have known the truth and apparently he described the incident to Polybius (10.3.3). Scipio's exact age at the time is uncertain, the year of his birth being disputed (F. W. Walbank, *Commentary on Polybius* [Oxford, 1967], 2. 199).

[2] *Ca.* 9000 is the reasonable estimate of H. H. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus: Soldier and Politician* (London, 1970), 38.

[3] It cannot be demonstrated that any points south of the river, such as Castulo and Saguntum, remained in Roman hands.

[4] Livy 26. 18. 2.

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praetor C. Claudius Nero, who had also commanded them at Capua, and they reached Spain by late summer of 211.

During the winter of 211/210 Nero and Marcius, the other "propraetor" in Spain, firmly reestablished Roman authority north of the Iberus. But they could not stop the build-up in Spain of Carthaginian forces intended for use against Italy, especially after Hasdrubal Barca, Hannibal's younger brother, outmanoeuvred Nero.

The men directing policy in Rome therefore decided to appoint a commander-in-chief with proconsular *imperium* in Spain who would have authority over both propraetors. Their choice fell on Scipio and to render his appointment as uncontroversial as possible they engineered his election by the Centuriate Assembly, probably in the early summer of 210. According to Livy, Scipio was the only candidate and, although still only in his mid-twenties, he was unanimously and enthusiastically chosen [5]. The alleged dearth of other candidates, if not a mere exaggeration on Livy's part, is to be attributed to the growing reputation of Spain as a country best avoided [6]. Its ill-repute, however, did not frighten Scipio off. He was eager to go there, partly no doubt in order to finish what his father and uncle had begun, but chiefly because he realized that Spain could prove a stepping-stone to a command of infinitely greater consequence.

So far Scipio's only known magisterial office had been the curule aedileship, which he seems to have held in 213 when little more than 20 years old and therefore exceptionally young for such an appointment: there is no record of his ever having served as quaestor [7]. For someone well under thirty, who had held only one relatively minor magistracy, to win proconsular *imperium* and so important a command was quite unprecedented and a striking tribute to the military renown of the Scipionic clan, but above all to the demonstrated energy and courage of Scipio himself [8].

Claudius Nero now returned to Rome, there soon to become consul (for 207), and was replaced as propraetor in Spain by M. Junius Silanus, who arrived there with Scipio before the end of 210 [9].

Scipio soon justified the confidence of his backers. Carthaginian forces in Spain outnumbered his own, but were split into three field armies widely separated from one another, one in the country of the Carpetani in central Spain under Hasdrubal Barca, another in the far south under Mago, Hannibal's youngest brother; and a third in the far west, the Portugal of today, under another Hasdrubal, the son of Gisgo. Each of the three was ten days' march or more from New Carthage (Cartagena), the principal Carthaginian base in Spain. Noting this Scipio planned to seize New Carthage before any one of them could intervene.

[5] Livy 26. 18. 4.

[6] By the second century Romans rioted to avoid being conscripted for Spain. Note the events of 151 and 138: Cicero *de leg.* 3.20; Livy, *Per.* 48. 55; *Ox. Per.* 55; Appian, *Iber.* 49.

[7] Polybius (10.4. 1f.) says that Scipio's brother Laelius was curule aedile with him, but this seems unlikely (T.R.S. Broughton, *M.R.R.* 1. 267, n. 4).

[8] Scipio was refused a triumph for his exploits in Spain precisely because his magisterial career had been so modest (S. Weinstock, *Diuus Iulius* [Oxford, 1971], 109).

[9] The chronology of the events in 211 and 200 is badly jumbled by Livy 26. 17–20.

This daring scheme called for the capture of his objective by swift assault rather than after a siege, and any failure or even delay on Scipio's part would have involved both him and his army in irreparable ruin.

Scipio spent the winter of 210/209 north of the Iberus at Tarraco (Tarragona) preparing and training his men and trying to win over Spanish tribes to his side. Then, in the spring, his forces converged rapidly on New Carthage by land and sea without any interference from the enemy armies. New Carthage fell to a skilful manoeuvre and Carthaginian prospects in Spain were seriously damaged. In the following winter (209/208) Scipio strengthened and extended his alliances with native chieftains.

In 208 Scipio overtook and defeated Hasdrubal Barca at Baecula in the interior of Spain, but his victory was not complete, since Hasdrubal managed to slip away with all his elephants, most of his army, and a large war chest. Ultimately he crossed the Pyrenees by one of the western passes and then made for Italy and Hannibal.

During the winter of 208/207, the Carthaginians sent reinforcements from North Africa under a general called Hanno. These joined Mago who moved westwards to link up with Hasdrubal Gisgo, and by 207 the two had consolidated a strong position in the south-west in and around Gades (Cadiz). Later in that year, however, Hanno was captured in the far west by Junius Silanus. Scipio's brother Lucius also scored a notable success in 207 at Orongis in the southern mining district. And yet another blow to Carthaginian fortunes in 207 was the news that Hasdrubal Barca had been defeated and killed in Italy before he could ever link up with his brother.

Scipio spent the winter of 207/206 preparing for the final ejection of the Carthaginian forces from the Iberian peninsula and for the subjugation of their Spanish allies.

The campaigns of 206 proved decisive [10]. Scipio's brilliant victory over the numerically superior troops of Hasdrubal Gisgo at Ilipa [11], about 16 km north of Seville, caused Punic power to disintegrate everywhere in Spain, except in Gades and its vicinity. Scipio's forces proceeded to subdue opposition elsewhere, sometimes with great brutality according to Livy; Ilurgia, Castax [12] and Astapa were among the places they overran. Scipio himself was involved in attempts to detach native peoples from Carthage. To that end he made his celebrated trip to North Africa to win over the Masaesylian king Syphax. In this he was not immediately successful, and he was lucky to get back safely to Spain. There, towards autumn, he fell ill and grossly exaggerated reports of his condition were soon circulating. A rumour placed him at death's door, whereupon his Spanish allies, Mandonius and Indibilis [13], chieftains of the Lacetani and Ilergetes respectively, now deserted him, just as they had previously deserted the Carthaginians. Much more serious, however, was the revolt of some of his own troops.

[10] For the date see F. W. Walbank, *Commentary on Polybius*, 2. 17 f.

[11] For Ilipa see Strabo 3.2.3, C142; 3.5.9, C174 and Pliny *N. H.* 3.11; in Polyb. 11.20.1 it appears as Ilinga and in Livy 28.12.4 as Silpia.

[12] Livy 28.19f. confuses the names Ilurgia and Castax with the better known Illiturgi and Castulo.

[13] Polybius (9.11.3 etc.) gives his name in the variant form Andobales.

The mutiny and Scipio's suppression of it do not seem to have generated any inordinate interest among modern scholars. Far otherwise was it with the ancient authors, who represent it as the most critical situation that Scipio so far had ever had to face. Polybius' account contains some lacunae, but even so is quite detailed. Livy is even more elaborate : essentially he reproduces Polybius, but he does supply some additional details. Appian and Cassius Dio also recount the incident at length, without however giving much further information. All four authors are agreed as to the essentials of the story [14].

The unruly soldiers numbered no fewer than 8000. They were part of the force that Gnaeus Scipio had brought to Spain in 218, and in 206 they were under the command of Marcius Septimus [15]. They were stationed at Sucro, some 160 km north of New Carthage and about 20 km inland from the sea. Their assigned duty must have been to safeguard Roman communications along the Mediterranean coast of Spain [16].

Their garrison duties had left these soldiers with plenty of time to foster grievances and brood over them. They had spent more than ten years in the country and by 206 felt resentful and frustrated. Whilst other Roman forces in Spain and Italy were engaged in victorious battles, they were kept in relative idleness and grew restless, disgruntled and disorderly. Furthermore, to aggravate their mood of pent-up discontent were preoccupations of a more immediate and concrete kind. One was the defection of Scipio's Spanish allies ; another, much belaboured, was the back pay owed to them, from as far back as Gnaeus' Scipio's day according to Polybius [17]. Moreover their employment as garrison troops was depriving them of the chance to enrich themselves by plunder. All of these factors contributed to the outbreak of the mutiny. But it was the news of Scipio's illness and expected death that really sparked the revolt. Ceasing any longer to obey the commands of their legally appointed officers, the military tribunes, the seditious troops chose two common soldiers as their leaders, not only elevating them above the tribunes, but actually conferring upon them the supreme Roman symbols of authority, lictors and fasces. They are even said to have set up camp elsewhere and entered into relations with Rome's enemies in Spain [18].

Word of the riotous goings-on quickly reached Scipio, now recovered from his illness, at New Carthage through the loyal tribunes, but he took no immediate action against the mutineers. Instead he despatched the military tribunes ostentatiously among the neighbouring tribes to collect money with which to pay the soldiers. He then sent seven of the tribunes to the mutineers to tell them that he understood and sympathized with

[14] Polyb. 11.25–30 ; Livy 28.24–29 ; Appian, *Iber.* 34–36 ; Cassius Dio fr. 57.47 ; cf. Zonaras. 9.10.

[15] Livy 28.24.6 ; 28.28.13. According to Appian (*Iber.* 34), when Scipio fell ill Marcius assumed command of all Roman forces in Spain ; but Appian may be confusing the events of 206 with those of 211.

[16] Geographical considerations rule out Livy's contention (28.24.5) that the purpose of the garrison at Sucro was to protect Roman interests north of the Iberus.

[17] Polyb. 11.28.4. Oddly enough, Livy, eloquent on other causes of the mutiny, does not particularly stress the pay grievance (28.25.6).

[18] Either Scipio's renegade Spanish allies (Livy 28.28.5) or Mago's Carthaginians (Appian *Iber.* 34).

their grievances and that all would get back pay, if they came to him at New Carthage either in small groups or in a single body. The news of Scipio's recovery startled the rebels, but the conciliatory tone of his message reassured them, and refraining from any further acts of outrage they voted to go to New Carthage en masse. By Scipio's design word came to them, even before they reached their destination, that the troops at New Carthage were being sent against Indibilis; and when the mutineers arrived, they found these soldiers fully armed and, ostensibly, about to set out under Junius Silanus. With their departure, so it seemed, Scipio would be unable either to resist the mutineer's demands or to punish their misdeeds, and so they grew cockily confident.

Scipio, however, had consulted his *consilium* and had a shrewd, if ruthless, plan for dealing with the mutiny. Each of the seven tribunes invited five of the more militant rebels to dine and drink in his own quarters, and the militants readily accepted [19]. But once out of sight of their comrades they were seized and tied up. The next morning the mutineer rank and file, without serious qualms, obeyed Scipio's summons to a meeting to receive pay in the open space in front of his headquarters. There they found Scipio in obvious good health, but they also found themselves at once surrounded by armed troops. For Silanus' force, instead of marching against the Lacetani, had remained near New Carthage and set up road-blocks at all its gates and key points.

Scipio then gave the by now terrified mutineers, not pay, but a furious tongue-lashing, carefully worded, however, so as not to alienate the loyal troops[20]. He ended by telling the mutineers that he would spare them, but that their instigators and leaders would be put to death. Only after the grim sentence had been gruesomely executed were the men called up individually to receive their pay. But each of them had to swear an oath of allegiance to Scipio. With that the Sucro incident was over.

Only Livy names the two soldiers chosen as leaders by the mutineers but he does so six times. Modern scholars, however, reject the names he gives, C. Albius Calenus and C. Atrius Umber, as unhistorical since, if genuine, they would mean that a Private White and a Private Black headed the mutiny, an improbable pair [21]. Both *gentilicia* are undoubtedly known from Republican Italy, but that both were found at Sucro seems quite unlikely [22]. In combination *albus* and *ater*, like their English equivalents, were used as a cliché; and transformed into names, they suggest the proverbial way of referring to an obscure person of no importance, familiar to readers of Catullus, Cicero and Quintilian: *non scio utrum*

[19] According to Appian (*Iber.* 35) the hosts were senators serving in Scipio's army, but this is not necessarily at variance with Polybius (11.27.3f.) and Livy (28.26.5).

[20] Polybius' version of Scipio's speech is straightforward; Livy introduces many allusions to Roman progress in Spain.

[21] See, e.g., H. H. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus in the Second Punic War* (Cambridge, 1930) p. 148 n. 1.

[22] Note the senator Albius (from the Tribe Quirina) in the *SC de agro Pergameno*: R.K. Sherk, *Roman Documents from the Greek East* (Baltimore, 1969), 69; Albius, the friend of Horace (*Sat.* 1.4.109; *Epp.* 1.4.1); the poet Albius Tibullus; and Q. Atrius, an officer in 54 under Julius Caesar (*B.G.* 5.9.1; 5.10.2).

albus an ater sit [23]; and when to each the *praenomen* Gaius, the conventional label for the unknown man in the Roman street, is attached, it is difficult not to conclude that Albius and Atrius are just names for a couple of nobodies and were merely invented, presumably by an unknown annalist whom Livy used [24].

Livy describes these alleged leaders, not only as insignificant "nobodies", but also as non-Roman [25]. Albius is a Latin from Cales and Atrius an Italian from Umbria. Yet the garrison at Sucro were Romans. Both Polybius and Livy make that clear [26]. Polybius accuses the mutineers of revolting against their fatherland. For Livy the mutiny was a *ciuilis furor* and the mutineers were *ciues* revolting from their *patria*; and his statement that they were garrison troops also suggests that they were Romans, since second century casualty figures indicate that Roman soldiers tended to be so used in Spain [27]. Appian and Dio are not explicit, but neither in them nor anywhere else is there clear and unequivocal evidence, apart from Livy's names for the two leaders, of non-Roman Italians participating in the mutiny [28].

The invention of non-Roman leaders was no doubt intended to exonerate Romans from all responsibility for starting the mutiny [29]. Such patriotic fictions do appear on various occasions in the annalistic tradition. Nevertheless such shifting of the blame would hardly have been attempted had it been more likely to provoke readers' derision for its absurdity than gratify their Roman pride [30]. Thus it would appear that our unknown annalist, and Livy too, believed that Italian leaders for a Roman mutiny were not a ridiculous impossibility.

The composition of the forces under Roman command may well have provided the reason for this belief. Roman readers, well aware that contingents from non-Roman Italy invariably served with the field armies of the Roman Republic[31], might not be entirely surprised if told that these Italians supplied leaders in overseas countries where serving non-Romans

[23] Catullus 93.2; Cicero *Phil.* 2. 16; Quintilian 11.1.38.

[24] Coelius Antipater is known to have been a source for Livy for events in Spain (P.G. Walsh, *Livy* [Cambridge 1967], 124); but he is cited only once in this book of Livy (28.46.14) in a passage totally unrelated to the Sucro incident.

[25] Livy 28.24.3; 28.27.14; 28.28.4.

[26] See, e.g., Polyb. 11.28.6f.; 11.29.4f.; Livy 28.24.5; 28.27.4; 28.28.8.

[27] In 181 Italians killed in Spain outnumbered Romans by more than four to one (Livy 40.32.7) and in 180 by more than two to one (Livy 40.40.13). Consider, too, the implications of the figures for 189 (Livy, 37.46.7 and 47.50.11). Under the Empire generals liked to boast of their glory in winning battles without shedding Roman blood (*uictoriae decus citra Romanum sanguinem*: Tacitus, *Agricola* 35).

[28] The *externus* of Livy 25.28.12 clearly refers to Scipio's Spanish allies, not Rome's Italian allies.

[29] As was noted long ago by U. Kahrstedt, *Geschichte der Karthager* (Berlin, 1913),3.321.

[30] Cf. G. De Sanctis, *Storia dei Romani* (Florence, 1968), 3.2.625: "C. Albio Caleno e C. Atrio Umbro, certo inventati, perchè non è credibile che un esercito romano eleggesse a comandanti due soci".

[31] Readers would not know and probably would not reflect, that for individual local operations, such as the garrisoning of Sucro, the troops employed might be exclusively Roman (or exclusively Italian).

greatly outnumbered Romans. In Spain as a whole they seem to have done so by almost two to one [32].

Gnaeus Scipio's force, when originally despatched there in 218, consisted of 17800 Italians and 8600 Romans. Since then casualties and reinforcements may have redressed this disproportion, but not substantially, Scipio's father had brought 8000 when he joined Gnaeus in 217, undoubtedly a mixture of Italians and Romans; Claudius Nero had added another 13100 in 211, the majority of them Italian, and Scipio and Silanus a further 11000 in 210; and even if it be assumed that these latter were preponderantly Roman, they would be offset by the largely allied naval personnel that had transported them and that remained in Spain[33]. This lopsided pattern of the forces in Spain persisted into the second century and was evidently a regular feature of Roman operations there. Livy reveals that between 206 and 167 when his text breaks off, reinforcements and replacements for Spain amounted in all to 205250 men, of whom 136950 were non-Roman [34].

But even this marked Italian complexion of the forces in Spain would not have made Italians plausible as leaders of the Roman mutiny, unless they could be presumed to be fluent in Latin. This was obviously the case with the fictitious Albius. Someone from a Latin Colony was bound to be Latin-speaking and possibly even of Roman origin. As for the so-called Atrius, he is Umbrian in the story; and he too can be assumed to be familiar with Latin, especially after years of service with Roman troops and coming from a region which offered little resistance to the spread of Rome's language. Thus Albius and Atrius, fictitious though they are, provide some evidence for the progress of romanization in the Middle Republic.

Scipio's handling of the mutiny at Sucro confirms what we learn from other episodes in the great general's career: that he was skilful, prudent and stern like a true Roman, but was also ready, if need be, to resort to stratagems worthy of a Carthaginian [35]. Perhaps, however, the most striking aspect of the whole incident is the appearance in Livy's account of a Latin and an Umbrian ringleader. It is significant that Livy, whose requirements in choosing his sources included credibility [36], mentions the two Italians repeatedly without commenting on their origins. They are objectionable and degrading, not because they are not Roman, but because they are of low condition. Their Italian background serves merely to identify them as individuals and to Livy did not appear unna-

[32] Usually, the Italian troops equalled, or slightly exceeded, the Roman in number, according to Polybius (3.10.12 and elsewhere). Those in Spain were of excellent quality: at the capture of New Carthage a *socius naualis* may have been the first man over the wall (Livy 26.48.6f.).

[33] Livy 21.17.5f.; 21.32.3; 22.21.1; 26.17.1; 26.19.10.

[34] The relevant passages of Livy are conveniently collected by A. Afzelius, *Die römische Kriegsmacht* (Copenhagen, 1944), 66f.

[35] Scipio's readiness to adopt Punic methods is well discussed by G. Brizzi, *I sistemi informativi dei romani* (Historia Einzelschrift 39, 1982), 82f.

[36] As reasonably pointed out by T. J. Luce, *The Composition of Livy's History* (Princeton, 1977), 147.

tural for his narrative. Seen against the many thousands of Italian soldiers who were so large a factor in the development of Roman Spain, the Umbrian and the Latin at Sucro illustrate, even though indirectly and not in the best light, the assimilation that went on in the Roman army [37] and could already be taken for granted even in the third century B.C. [38]

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[37] *Non disciplinae tantummodo, sed linguae quoque notitia Romanae,* as Velleius Paterculus (2.110.5) was later to express it.

[38] Almost immediately after the Sucro incident, Gades too passed under Roman control and Punic power in Spain came to an end.