

The Source of the Sound: *Fama* and *Rumor* in Livy

1.) The Falsity of *Rumor* (36.12. 10-11)<sup>1</sup>

**et peropportune ad confirmandos Acarnanum animos** Cn. Octavius missus a Quintio, cum praesidium et paucas naves ab A. Postumio, qui ab Atilio legato Cephallaniae praepositus fuerat, accepisset, **Leucadem venit, implevitque spei socios M'. Acilium consulem iam cum legionibus mare traiecisse et in Thessalia castra Romana esse. hunc rumorem quia similem veri tempus anni maturum iam ad navigandum faciebat, rex, praesidio Medione imposito et in quibusdam aliis Acarnaniae oppidis, Thyreoo abscessit et per Aetoliae ac Phocidis urbes Chalcidem rediit.**

Very opportunely, Gnaeus Octavius arrived in Leucas to bolster the resolution of the Acarnanians, filling the allies with hopes that Manius Acilius had already crossed the sea with his legions and that there was a Roman camp established in Thessaly. (Octavius had been sent by Quintius and had received a body of troops and a few ships from Aulus Postumius, who had been put in charge of Cephallenia by the legate Atilius.) Since this rumor was made plausible by the fact that it was now a seasonable time of year for sailing, the king installed a garrison at Medion and certain other towns of Acarnania, left Thyreum and returned to Chalcis by way of the cities of Aetolia and Phocis.

2.) *Rumor* of Valerius Antias (37. 48.1-7)

**M. Fulvio Nobiliore et Cn. Manlio Vulso consulibus Valerius Antias auctor est rumorem celebrem Romae fuisse et paene pro certo habitum, recipiendi Scipionis adolescentis causa consulem L. Scipionem et cum eo P. Africanum in conloquium evocatos regis et ipsos comprehensos esse, et ducibus captis confestim ad castra Romana exercitum ductum, eaque expugnata et deletas omnes copias Romanorum esse. ob haec Aetolos sustulisse animos et abnuisse imperata facere, principesque eorum in Macedoniam et in Dardanos et in Thraciam ad conducenda mercede auxilia profectos. haec qui nuntiarent Romam, A. Terentium Varronem et M. Claudium Lepidum ab A. Cornelio pro praetore ex Aetolia missos esse. subtexit deinde fabulae huic legatos Aetolos in senatu inter cetera hoc quoque interrogatos esse, unde audissent imperatores Romanos in Asia captos ab Antiocho rege et exercitum deletum esse; Aetolos respondisse ab suis legatis se, qui cum consule fuerint, certiores factos. rumoris huius quia neminem alium auctorem habeo, neque adfirmata res mea opinione sit nec pro vana praetermissa.**

Valerius Antias records under the consulship of Marcus Fulvius Nobilior and Gnaeus Manlius Vulso that there was rumor widely circulating in Rome and accepted almost as fact that the consul Lucius Scipio and, along with him, Publius Africanus had been invited to a discussion with the king with a view to recovering the young Scipio. They had been arrested, according to the rumor and, the generals now being prisoners, a Syrian army had been immediately led to the Roman camp, which was then stormed and the Roman troops entirely wiped out. As a result the Aetolians had gained some

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<sup>1</sup> All Latin text and translations are from the Loeb Classical Library.

Alex Stephens  
aas16d@my.fsu.edu  
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confidence and had refused to carry out the orders they had been given. Their leaders had left for Macedonia, Dardania and Thrace to hire mercenary forces, it was said, and Aulus Terentius Varro and Marcus Claudius Lepidus had been sent from Aetolia to Rome by the propraetor Aulus Cornelius to make this report. **Antias then appends to this piece of fiction that the Aetolian envoys were, in the senate, asked among other things where they had heard about the capture of the Roman generals in Asia by King Antiochus and the annihilation of the army. The Aetolians are supposed to have answered that their information had come from their own ambassadors, who had been with the consul. Having no other source for this rumor, I feel the tale is neither to be accepted as true nor rejected out of hand.**

### 3.) *Doubting Valerius Antias (36. 19. 11-13)*

nec praeter quingentos, qui circa regem fuerunt, ex toto exercitu quisquam effugit, etiam ex decem milibus militum quos Polybio auctore traiecisse secum regem in Graeciam scripsimus, exiguus numerus; **quid si Antiatu Valerio credamus, sexaginta milia militum fuisse in regio exercitu scribenti, quadraginta inde milia cecidisse, supra quinque milia capta cum signis militaribus ducentis triginta? Romanorum centum quinquaginta in ipso certamine pugnae, ab incursu Aetolorum se tuentes non plus quinquaginta interfecti sunt.**

In fact, from the entire army no one escaped, apart from 500 who were with the king, a tiny fraction even of 10,000 soldiers, the number that I, following Polybius, gave above as that which the king brought over to Greece with him. **Imagine if we accept Valerius Antias' account that there were 60,000 men in the king's army, that 40,000 of them lost their lives, and that more than 5,000 were captured, along with 230 military standards? One hundred and fifty of the Romans were killed actually fighting in the battle and no more than 50 defending themselves in the assault made by the Aetolians**

### 4.) *Fama as Fact (36.17. 10-11)*

“Rex ipse confessus nusquam aequo campo non modo congregari se ad pugnam audere, sed ne castra quidem in aperto ponere, relicta omni ante se regione ea quam se nobis ac Philippo ademisse gloriabatur, condidit se intra rupes, ne ante fauces quidem saltus, **ut quondam Lacedaemonios fama est**, sed intra penitus retractis castris; quod quantum interest ad timorem ostendendum, an muris urbis alicuius obsidendum sese incluserit?

“The king himself has clearly acknowledged that he cannot even risk an encampment in the open, let alone commit himself to battle anywhere on level ground. He has abandoned all the area that lay before him, which he used to boast he had taken from us and from Philip, and has buried himself among the rocks. And he has done that not even at the opening to the pass, **as they say the Spartans once did**, but has brought his camp back into the depths of it. In terms of showing funk, what difference is there between this and shutting oneself up within some city's walls to face a siege?

Alex Stephens  
aas16d@my.fsu.edu  
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**5.) *Fama Without a Direct Source (37.58.7-8)***

**erant qui fama** id maius bellum quam difficultate rei fuisse interpretarentur: uno memorabili proelio debellatum, gloriamque eius victoriae praefloratam ad Thermopylas esse. ceterum vere aestimanti Aetolicum magis ad Thermopylas bellum quam regium fuit; quota enim parte virium suarum.

**There were some who claimed** that the war enjoyed a greater reputation than its difficulty warranted: it had been finished off with a single notable encounter and furthermore the glory of that victory had been forestalled at Thermopylae. But, to look at it fairly, the battle at Thermopylae was more with the Aetolians than the king—for it was with what fraction of his forces.

**6.) *Fama from Fiction to Fact (37.51.8-9)***

**Fama** dein de rebus in Asia gestis temere volgata sine auctore, et post dies paucos nuntii certi litteraeque imperatoris Romam allatae, quae non tantum gaudium ab recenti metu attulerunt—desierant enim victum in Aetolia Antiochum metuere—, quam a vetere fama, quod ineuntibus id bellum gravis hostis, et suis viribus et quod Hannibalem rectorem militiae haberet, visus fuerat.

**Idle and groundless gossip** then circulated about the campaign in Asia; but it was followed a few days later by some reliable news in a dispatch brought to Rome from the commander. The great elation that this occasioned was not so much because of the recent crisis—the Romans had ceased to fear Antiochus after his defeat in Aetolia—as because of the king’s reputation of old, for when the Romans entered the war he had seemed a fearsome enemy both on account of his own strength and because he had Hannibal directing his campaign.

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Alex Stephens  
aas16d@my.fsu.edu  
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