

The Legacy of Defeat: The Historical Reception of C. Flaminius, Cn. Cornelius Scipio, and P.

Cornelius Scipio in the Works of Cicero

My study seeks to shed light on the Roman conception of defeat and the crafting of exemplary figures from historical legacies, in order to draw conclusions about historical transmission in Rome. In support of this, I will discuss in this presentation Cicero's crafting of *exempla*, the distinction he made between different forms of courage, and finally the ways in which he represented the deaths in battle of C. Flaminius and the Scipiones. For these men, through the work of Cicero and the like, left drastically different legacies to posterity, the former negative and the latter positive, as *exempla*. The definition of what constituted an *exemplum* changed according to one's circumstances and needs. For an *exemplum* in Roman literature served as a tool to train up young, aspiring Romans, using historical characters and stories as the basis for proper conduct and as guides for one to follow (see Chaplin 2000, Hölkeskamp 2006, and Roller 2004 for *exempla* and memory).

Cicero was one of those who had grown up with the stories of legendary figures and courageous generals, just like every other Roman boy. Yet, he did not simply read, hear, and accept the stories which had been passed down to him, he forged his own interpretations. Though not a military man, he showed his readers what real courage looked like, and how one could avoid being seen as reckless and a danger to all those under his command. As three particular examples, Cicero holds up his own versions of C. Flaminius, Cn. Cornelius Scipio, and P. Cornelius Scipio as men to emulate or reject.

Cicero shows that history and the representations of the outstanding figures which appear throughout his pages were fluid and malleable. He proves that even a moment of death and defeat could be spun into a positive situation, if the author so willed (see Feldherr 2003 and Fox

2007 for discussion of Cicero, historiography, and audience reception). Yet, what caused such different representations to sprout from such similar cases of death and defeat in battle as those of C. Flaminius, Cn. Cornelius Scipio, and P. Cornelius Scipio? Chosen by the Roman people as strong and competent men to lead the armies of the Roman Republic in battle against the Carthaginian Empire, C. Flaminius, Cn. Cornelius Scipio, and P. Cornelius Scipio all lost their lives in battle and caused catastrophic defeats (see Rosenstein 1990 on Roman defeat and disaster). However, Flaminius is presented as an impetuous demagogue, a man who went against reason and the gods' will and inflicted *magno rei publicae vulnere* (*De Natura Deorum* 2.3). On the other hand, the Scipiones are described as freely offering their own bodies as a final sacrifice to defend the state, as Cicero remarks *pro patria cadentes Scipiones* (*Tusculanae Disputationes* 1.37) (see Edwards 2007, Hope 2009, and Huskinson 2011 on Roman conception of death).

Cicero needed material with which he could differentiate between different kinds of courage, material which would allow him to prove that defeat and death were not always such damning situations for one's identity, material to which men could look for guidance as they sought to stay on the correct path and not stray into the brambles on either side. The lives of C. Flaminius and the Scipiones served as just such material which Cicero could craft into *exempla*, creating ripples into the future and back to the past. For, despite changing forms and meanings, *exempla*, constructed by previous generations, shaped later generations and in turn affected the memory and cultural view of the past.

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