

## Hannibal, elephants and turrets.

The *Suda* is a 10th century Byzantine historical encyclopaedia of the ancient Mediterranean world, written in Greek. Adler's *Lexicon* shows that the excerptors drew much of their 'Hannibal material' from certain ancient Greek texts, and helpfully indicates a number of passages in the 'Hannibal' entry, α 2452, which correlate almost exactly word for word with passages from one or other of Polybius, Cassius Dio or the fourth century Eutropius.<sup>1</sup> The focus for this paper, however, is another entry in the *Suda* relating to Hannibal known as *Suda θ 438* [Polybius Fr. 162].

Θ 438 Θωράκιον: τὸ τοῦ ἐλέφαντος. ὅτι Ἄννιβας ὁ Καρχηδονίων στρατηγὸς φέρων τῶν ἐλεφάντων τὰ θωράκια καὶ τοῖς τῶν θηρίων οἰκιδίοις ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ὕψος τοῦς κλάδους ἀποκόπτων ἀσφαλῆ καὶ βῆδιαν τὴν ὁδοποιρίαν κατεσκεύαζεν.

*Hannibal, the Carthaginian general, by carrying the turrets of the elephants and making use of the beasts' litters to cut away the branches to the greatest height, made the route secure and easy.*

Rance, 2009, 91

The passage is located under *θ* (not *α* for Hannibal) indicating the excerptor's interest in the word *θωράκιον*, meaning turret or parapet on a war-elephant.<sup>2</sup> The only other ancient text that refers to Hannibal using turrets as part of the equipment on his elephants is Silius Italicus' *Punica*. This paper considers the implication of this common feature between the two texts in terms of a possible connection between the earlier source text for *Suda θ 438* and the *Punica*.

There are obvious differences between the two texts: in particular, language and genre, as well as the context in which the turrets are being used. However, it is well-established that Silius Italicus represented material from a range of earlier texts to create the *Punica*, and this fragment supports the view that Silius Italicus responded to Greek historical texts as well as Latin ones.

In terms of context, the excerpt from the *Suda* illustrates Hannibal's resourcefulness as a general because the elephants and their turrets are adapted for

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Adler, 1971, 218-9, α 2452 *Hannibal the Carthaginian* n2452 indicates which sections of entry 2452 are directly copied from an earlier text: Polybius 23.13.1-2; Cassius Dio 1 p.119 cf.112; Eutropius 63.

<sup>2</sup> Rance, 2009, 96-7 for a recent discussion of this term.

route clearance duties in a wooded area. Silius Italicus, on the other hand, only presents the turreted elephants fulfilling another role, as implements of battle.

The *Suda*  $\theta$ 438 fragment has not been definitively attributed to an earlier text but there are four main contenders who are most likely to have been consulted by the *Suda* excerptors: Polybius, Diodorus, or either of two later historians, Appian (Antonine period), or Cassius Dio (Severan period).<sup>3</sup> Historically the fragment has been most closely associated with Polybius, albeit with much doubt and variance among editors over whether or not it should be accepted as Polybian.<sup>4</sup> Walbank, for example, excludes it even among the fragments that have insufficient context to be certainly attributed to Polybius.<sup>5</sup>

In 2009 Philip Rance made a fairly strong case for Diodorus as the source text in an article published by *Classical Quarterly*.<sup>6</sup> Apart from Rance's analysis of word count that favoured Diodorus over any of the other texts, another of his points in favour of the *Suda*  $\theta$ 438 originating from an early text such as Polybius or Diodorus in preference to a later one is based on the description of the turret. The framework clearly consists of two parts, a detail which Rance believes could only come from autopsy or an eye-witness testimony by someone acquainted with technical aspects of managing war elephants and their equipment.<sup>7</sup> However his opinion that the fragment derives from a Carthaginian witness of a section of the journey from Spain to Italy rather than Roman intelligence of enemy activity in Italy is less convincing. It is based on the view that the elephants feature primarily in the narratives on Hannibal's journey from Spain to Italy (and, as Polybius' narrative for that section is considered to be complete, the fragment cannot be from his text). Given that the extant Greek narratives covering much of Hannibal's period in Italy are either fragmented or missing, the argument becomes more tenuous.

In addition, there are a couple possibilities for the fragment originating from eye-witness accounts written in Greek because two of Hannibal's companions, Sosylus

<sup>3</sup> See Gowing, 1992, esp Chaps 12, 15, 16 for comparison of Appian and Dio.

<sup>4</sup> Rance, 2009, 91, summarises the attempts to locate the source text: 'the fragment was first identified as Polybian by Casaubon in 1609 and retained until Schweighäuser (1789-95) and restored by Büttner-Wobst (1904) but marked in square parenthesis as dubious. It so remains in the Teubner among the *fragmenta ex incertis libris* [162b].' Casaubon (ed.), *Polybii ... Historiarum libri qui supersunt* (Paris, 1609), 1027; J. Schweighäuser (ed.), *Polybii Megalopolitani Historiarum quidquid superest* (Leipzig, 1789-95), 5.60-1, fr. 22; T. Büttner-Wobst (ed.), *Polybius, Historiae* [Bibliotheca Teubneriana] Leipzig, 1904; repr. Stuttgart, 1967), 4.535, fr. 162.

<sup>5</sup> Walbank, III, 745, 753.

<sup>6</sup> Rance, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Rance, 2009, 97.

and Silenus, are known to have written about Hannibal's exploits in Greek. Sosylus was reputedly Hannibal's tutor in Greek and wrote a seven-book history about Hannibal which was criticised later by Polybius as well as referred to by Diodorus and Cornelius Nepos (*Hist.* 3.20.5; also Nepos, *Hann.* 13.3; Diodorus, 26 fr. 6). Thus, for these reasons, Polybius cannot be entirely dismissed as the source for the *Suda* fragment. The practical detail given in the fragment describing how Hannibal overcomes a natural obstacle is in accord with both Polybius' and Diodorus' interests in such logistical matters, and it is the type of item that either might place in a digression or character portrait to illustrate a point about Hannibal's skills (Diodorus describes Hannibal avoiding main paths and tracks for fear of ambush).

On the other hand, in addition to the arguments put forward by Rance against the later authors, Cassius Dio<sup>8</sup> or Appian, as source material for the *Suda* fragment, the narrative styles in their extant texts argues against the fragment coming from either of their works. It is not the type of minutiae that they include in their texts.

Given the scarcity of references to Hannibal's equipment in the ancient texts generally, it is unfortunate that Rance's acknowledgement of the *Punica* is so oblique:

'... excepting some demonstrably fictive allusions in later Latin poetry, this fragment (i.e. *Suda* θ 438) contains the only explicit and unequivocal statement that Hannibal's elephants were furnished with turrets.'<sup>9</sup>

If the *Suda* fragment is derived from Polybius or Diodorus then the appearances of turreted elephants in the *Punica* may be poetic allusions to an alternative historical tradition. Consequently they deserve more attention for their indication of Silius' adaptation of his source material. If the fragment is derived from a later text, such as Appian or Cassius Dio, the *Punica* may have been more influential than is currently credited.

The *Punica* is a complex poem, and, like many of the features within the poem, the various appearances of the turreted elephants in the battle scenes may be interpreted to serve a number of purposes. They first appear in battle at the Trebia River as Hannibal's exotic weapon that tests the mettle of an idealised Roman soldier, Fibrenus:

<sup>8</sup> See Millar, 1964, 29-72 for general discussion on style in Cassius Dio.

<sup>9</sup> Rance, 2009, 92.

*Accumulat clades subito conspecta per undas  
 vis elephantorum turrito concita dorso.  
 namque vadis rapitur praeceps, ceu proruta cautes  
 avulsi montis, Trebiamque insueta timentem  
 prae se pectore agit spumantique incubat alveo.  
 explorant adversa viros, perque aspera duro  
 nititur ad laudem virtus interrita clivo.  
 namque inhonoratam Fibrenus perdere mortem  
 et famae nudam impatiens: 'spectabimur,' inquit,  
 'nec, Fortuna, meum condes sub gurgite letum.  
 experiar, sitne in terris, domitare quod ensis  
 non queat Ausonius, Tyrrhenave permeet hasta.'  
 tum iacit assurgens dextroque in lumine sistit  
 spicula saeva ferae telumque in vulnere linqvit.  
 stridore horrisono penetrantem cuspidis ictum  
 belua prosequitur laceramque cruore profuso  
 attollit frontem ac lapsa dat terga magistro.  
 tum vero invadunt iaculis crebraque sagitta,  
 ausi iam sperare necem, immensosque per armos  
 et laterum extensus venit atra cuspide vulnus;  
 stat multa in tergo et nigranti lancea dorso,  
 ac silvam ingentem, concusso corpore, vibrat,  
 donec, consumptis longo certamine telis,  
 concidit et clausit magna vada pressa ruina.*

*Punica 4.598-621*

The crowning disaster came suddenly in sight, when a troop of elephants, with towers upon their backs, were driven into the river. For they rushed headlong through the water, like a cliff falling down from a shattered mountain. They drove the Trebia, dreading dangers unknown till now, before them with their forequarters, and lay down above the foaming channel. Manhood is tested by trial, and valour climbs unterrified the rocky path and difficult ascent that leads to glory. So Fibrenus disdained to die to no purpose, unhonoured and unsung. 'For the eyes of men shall behold me,' he cried, 'and Fortune shall not hide my death beneath the flood. I shall find out whether there is aught on earth which a Roman sword cannot master or a Roman spear cannot pierce.' Rising to his full height he threw his cruel shaft and planted it in the right eye of one great beast; and the weapon remained in the wound. When the point of the spear went in, the monster met it with a hideous trumpeting; then it raised its wounded and bleeding head, threw its rider, and turned in flight. But now the Romans, daring at

last to hope that they might kill it, assailed it with darts and showers of arrows. Soon the vast expanse of its shoulders and sides was covered with wounds from the cruel steel; many a lance stuck in its dusky back and rump; and, when it shook itself, the huge forest of missiles waved. At last, when the long contest had used up all their weapons, it fell, and the huge carcass blocked the stream beneath it.

Duff, 1996, 214-5

Fibrenus' brave response, when faced with this unexpected opponent, is, like any good soldier, to search out a weak spot in his enemy; he does not run away. Nonetheless it is a struggle and takes an enormous amount of effort on the part of the Romans to kill one elephant. The elephant, by contrast, is shown to be unreliable in battle especially when wounded, because it throws its rider and turns away from its enemy, the Romans, in its distress.

Spaltenstein considers this section of the *Punica* to be an adaptation of Livy 21.55.11. However, it is Dio (Zonaras, 8.24), not Livy, who wrote that Hannibal used his elephants to dam the flow of water and enable his army to cross more easily (cf. *Pun.* 4.600-2), and Polybius, not Livy, who wrote that most Roman casualties and fighting at the river itself was against the elephants (*Hist.* 3.74.7). None of these authors mention the elephants' turrets or any equipment associated with the elephant, but only Livy describes how the Romans attack the elephants. Thus this passage in the *Punica* may be said to combine elements from all three traditions, although the weak-spot sought out by Livy's Romans is not the eye, as in the *Punica*, but the area under the elephant's tail:

*tamen in tot circumstantibus malis mansit aliquamdiu immota acies, maxime praeter spem omnium adversus elephantos. eos velites ad id ipsum locati verutis coniectis et avertere et insecuti aversos sub caudis, qua maxime molli cute volnera accipiunt, fodiebant.*

Livy, 21.55.10-11

Nevertheless, amidst all these evils, the line held for a time unshaken, and even —what no one had dared to hope for —against the elephants. Skirmishers, expressly posted to deal with the beasts, would throw darts at them and make them turn away, and then pursuing them would strike them under the tail, where the skin is softest and it is possible to wound them.

Foster, 1949, 165

Spaltenstein suggests that Silius chose the eye instead of the elephant's tail-end as the 'weak-spot' because the eye is 'more in keeping with the dignity of epic.'<sup>10</sup> There are, however, differences on this point among other extant texts. Appian presents Roman soldiers attacking the elephants to divert them, then hamstringing some of them (Appian, *Hann.*, 7). In my view, the variations in the traditions more closely reflect the different treatments of the Romans by Polybius, Livy, Silius and Appian, rather than a concern with the physiology of the elephant and its potential weak-spots. Polybius' Romans are killed without killing any elephants; in Livy and Appian, the Roman soldiers first divert the elephants by throwing spears at them before attacking them from behind. In the *Punica*, an idealised Roman, represented by Fibrenus, makes a frontal attack.<sup>11</sup> Silius' representation highlights the weakness of the elephant as a weapon through its unpredictable response when wounded. It is shown to be liable to create as much damage against its own side as against the opposition.

Turreted elephants next appear in the *Punica* at Cannae. It is a significant difference in representation from Polybius and Livy, neither of whom place elephants at that battle. Cannae is, however the centrepiece of the *Punica*, and as such, receives extended treatment by Silius, and as Spaltenstein remarks, the traditional image of Hannibal's army includes elephants.<sup>12</sup> Spaltenstein suggests that Silius reinterpreted a passage in Livy, 23.13.7, where Carthage approved sending additional elephants as reinforcements to Hannibal. The difference is that in Livy's text the approval comes after, not before, Cannae.

According to Silius Italicus, in Hannibal's battle array at Cannae, the elephants are placed close to the river, in a similar position to the one they held at the Trebia:

*sed qua se fluvius retro labentibus undis  
eripit et nullo cuneos munimine vallat,  
turratas moles ac propugnacula dorso  
belua nigranti gestans, ceu mobilis agger,  
nutat et erectos attollit ad aethera muros.*

*Punica*, 9.237-241

But where the river, falling back with retreating stream, offered no protection to the combatants, there the elephants bore huge towers and upper-works on their sable backs, swaying to and fro like a moving rampart and raising the tall structures to the sky.

Duff, 1989, 21

<sup>10</sup> Spaltenstein, 1986, 317.

<sup>11</sup> Scarborough, 1976, 176 Hannibal used his elephants as shock forces in pursuit.

<sup>12</sup> Spaltenstein, 1990, 25.

Once the gods have left the field the elephants take part in Hannibal's charge:

*Ut patuit liber superum certamine tandem  
laxatusque deo campus, ruit aequore ab imo  
Poenus, quo sensim caelestia fugerat arma,  
magna voce trahens equitemque virosque feraeque  
turrigerae molem tormentorumque labores.*

*Punica*, 9.556-560

When the field was free at last from the contending gods, and Mars no longer filled the plain, Hannibal rushed up from the remotest part of the battle, whither he had fled step by step before the divine weapons. With a great shout he brought with him horsemen and footmen and heavy siege-engines, and the huge beasts that carry towers on their backs.

Duff, 1989, 43

The description of the elephants as beasts reinforces the barbaric nature of Hannibal's army facing the Romans.

The elephants' great height is further increased by the turrets. Silius implies that there are many animals and the combined effect with the turrets is to assimilate the elephants with a moving wall. The elephants' tusks, fixed with blades, form a long line of serrated ivory, compared by Meurig Davies to a 'thin red line' in battle (*Pun.* 9.581-3).<sup>13</sup> The elephants and their armoury are intended to inspire fear into their enemies and, they can indeed be murderously lethal *when* the elephant follows its driver's instructions, as shown by the fates of Ufens and Tadius:

*Nec ferro saevire sat est: appellitur atra  
mole fera, et monstris componitur Itala pubes.  
nam, praevectus equo, moderantem cuspide Lucas  
Maurum in bella boves stimulis maioribus ire  
ac raptare iubet Libycarum armenta ferarum.  
immane stridens agitur, crebroque coacta  
vulnere, bellatrix properos fert belua gressus.  
liventi dorso turris, flammaque virisque  
et iaculis armata, sedet; procul aspera grando  
saxorum super arma ruit, passimque volanti  
celsus telorum fundit Libys aggere nimbum.  
stat niveis longum stipata per agmina vallum  
dentibus, atque ebori praefixa comminus hasta*

<sup>13</sup> Meurig Davies, 1951, 155. Davies suggests that elephants ranged in a battle line may have been proverbial in Roman military lore since the wars against Pyrrhus and Carthage.

*fulget ab incurvo directa cacumine cuspis.  
 hic, inter trepidos rerum, per membra, per arma  
 exigit Ufentis sceleratum belua dentem  
 clamantemque ferens calcata per agmina portat.  
 nec levius Tadio letum: qua tegmine thorax  
 multiplicis lini claudit latus, improba sensim,  
 corpore non laeso, penetrarunt spicula dentis  
 et sublime virum, clipeo resonante, tulerunt.  
 haud excussa novi virtus terrore pericli.  
 utitur ad laudem casu geminumque citato  
 vicinus fronti lumen transverberat ense.  
 exstimulata gravi sese fera tollit ad auras  
 vulnere et erectis excussam cruribus alte  
 pone iacit volvens reflexo pondere turrim.  
 arma virique simul spoliataque belua visu  
 sternuntur subita, miserandum, mixta ruina.  
 Spargi flagrantes contra bellantia monstra  
 Dardanius taedas ductor iubet et facis atrae,  
 quos fera circumfert, compleri sulphure muros.  
 nec iusso mora: collectis fumantia lucent  
 terga elephantorum flammis; pastusque sonoro  
 ignis edax vento per propugnacula fertur.  
 non aliter, Pindo Rhodopeve incendia pastor  
 cum iacit, et silvis spatiatur fervida pestis,  
 frondosi ignescunt scopuli; subitoque per alta  
 collucet iuga dissultans Vulcanius ardor.  
 it fera candenti torrente bitumine corpus  
 amens et laxo diducit limite turmas.  
 nec cuiquam virtus propiora capessere bella:  
 longinquis audent iaculis et harundinis ictu.  
 uritur impatiens et magni corporis aestu  
 huc atque huc iactas accendit belua flammas,  
 donec vicini tandem se fluminis undis  
 praecipitem dedit et, tenui decepta liquore  
 stagnantis per plana vadi, tulit incita longis  
 exstantem ripis flammam; tum denique sese  
 gurgitis immersit molem capiente profundo.  
 At qua pugna datur, necdum Maurusia pestis  
 igne calet, circumfusi Rhoeteia pubes  
 nunc iaculis, nunc et saxis, nunc alite plumbo  
 eminus incessunt, ut qui castella per altos  
 oppugnat munita locos atque assidet arces.  
 ausus digna viro, fortuna digna secunda,  
 extulerat dextram atque adversum comminus ensem  
 Mincius, infelix ausi; sed stridula, anhelum  
 fervorem effundens, monstri manus abstulit acri  
 implicitum nexu diroque ligamine torsit  
 et superas alte miserum iaculata per auras  
 telluri elisis afflixit, flebile, membris.*



Nor was the steel enough to gratify his rage. The huge black beasts were brought up, and the Roman soldiers were matched against monsters. For Hannibal rode along the line, and ordered the Moors, whose goads controlled the Lucan kine (elephants) in battle, to prick their charges to speed, and to hasten forward the herd of elephants. Trumpeting wildly, and compelled by many a stab, the great beasts of war came quickly on. A tower, freighted with men and javelins and fire, was borne on each dusky back and discharged a fierce hail of stones over the distant ranks; and the Libyans, seated aloft, poured a shower of darts all round from their moving rampart. The line of white tusks stretched far in serried ranks; and to each tusk was fastened a blade, whose point came close and flashed down straight from the curved upper part. Here, in the general alarm, an elephant drove its murderous tusk through the armour and body of Ufens and carried him shrieking through the trampled ranks. Nor had Tadius an easier death: where the corslet with its many folds of linen protected his body, the persistent point of a tusk bored its way in by degrees and then swung the man aloft unwounded, while his shield rang. The brave man was not terrified by the danger in this strange form, but turned it to glorious account: when close to the elephant's forehead, he stabbed both its eyes with quick thrusts of his sword. Maddened by the grievous wound, the beast rose on its hind legs and reared up till it threw off the heavy tower on the ground behind it. A piteous sight, when weapons and men and the blinded beast suddenly came crashing down together to the ground!

The Roman general ordered his men to hurl lighted torches against the fighting monsters, and to shower dark sulphurous brands upon the moving forts carried by the elephants. They obeyed at once: the backs of the beasts sent up smoke and flame, as the fire grew; and fed by the roaring wind, it spread over the fighting towers and devoured them. Even so, when the shepherd burns grass on Pindus or Rhodope, and the fierce blaze spreads through the woods, the leaf-clad heights catch fire; and suddenly the flame of fire leaps from point to point and shines over all the lofty range. Scorched by the burning pitch, the beasts ran wild and

cleared a wide path through the ranks. Nor was any man bold enough to fight them at close quarters: to attack from a distance with javelins and showers of arrows was all they dared. Maddened by the heat, the huge beasts in their torment tossed the fire on all sides and spread it, till they plunged headlong into the stream beside them. But deceived by the shallow water that overflowed the plain, they rushed far along the banks, and the flame, rising above the water, went with them. At last they dived beneath the stream, where the water was deep enough to cover their huge bodies.

But, where battle was possible, and before the Moorish monsters were set on fire, the Roman soldiers surrounded them at a distance and assailed them with javelins and stones and flying bullets, like men besieging a citadel or attacking a fortified place on high ground. Mincius showed courage worthy of a warrior and worthy of better fortune: coming close, he raised up his drawn sword; but his brave deed miscarried; for the trunk of the trumpeting monster, discharging hot and panting breath, wound its angry coils round him and lifted him up; then it brandished his body in that dreadful grasp, and hurled it high in the air, and dashed the crushed limbs of the poor wretch upon the ground – a mournful sight.

Duff, 1989, 45, 47

The elephants' trumpeting reminds the audience of their wildness but they have to be forced to charge by being stabbed. The Roman Tadius attacks an elephant by stabbing it in the eye as he was caught and lifted up by its tusk. Once wounded, the elephant reared and threw off its turret and the warriors within; they have no protection when the force of the elephant is turned against them. Nor do the warriors in the turrets have any protection against another deadly weapon, Roman fire-brands. Fire causes the elephants to panic and leave the field, or, in one case, the burning elephant is killed by multiple wounds:

*unanima inde phalanx, crudo ducente magistro,  
postquam hominum satiata nece est, prostraverat ictu  
innumero cum turre feram, facibusque secutis  
ardentem monstri spectabat laeta ruinam,  
cum subitus galeae fulgor conoque coruscae  
maiore intremuere iubae; nec tarda senectus  
(agnovit nam luce virum) rapit agmina, natos,*

*saeva parens ultro in certamina et addere passim  
tela iubet nec manantes ex ore feroci,  
aut quae flagrarent galea, exhorrescere flammas.*

*Punica* 10.98-107

And now this band of brothers, led by their hardy instructor, had glutted themselves with slaughter of men, and then laid low with countless wounds an elephant with a tower on its back. Then firebrands followed, and they were watching with joy while the fallen monster was burning, when suddenly a helmet flashed and plumes waved bright above a higher helmet. The old man, who recognised Hannibal by the light he shed, was no laggard: willingly he urged on his troop of sons into the fierce conflict, bidding them hurl their weapons thick and fast, and disregard his fire-breathing nostrils and the flames that came from his helmet.

Duff, 1989, 59

The use of firebrands against Hannibal's elephants is found elsewhere in another context. Appian refers to their use against elephants during an attack on the Roman camp at Capua. Hannibal ordered his elephant drivers to mount their animals, break into the Roman camp in the dark and create as much tumult as possible. Once the Romans lit torches and saw what was happening, they used the torches to attack the elephants, causing the animals to panic, throw off and trample on their riders before breaking out of the camp (Appian, *RH*, 7.41-2). Livy, 26.5.10-26.6.2, relates a slightly different tradition (no mention of fire) as those on guard at the earthworks managed to kill three elephants that were attempting to break into the camp. Unfortunately their large bodies filled the trench and created a ramp for the enemy to enter the camp.

Elephants appear in battle at Zama according to Polybius; Livy and Appian. Appian describes the elephants at Zama as decked out in fearful panoply (is this the influence of the *Punica*?). In this tradition, Hannibal's elephants on the two wings were wounded by Scipio's Numidian horsemen (their horses were accustomed to elephants). The elephants on the wings panic and were pulled out of battle by their riders before they could damage their own side.<sup>14</sup> The elephants in the centre caused more trouble for the Romans, trampling the heavy armoured infantry, until Scipio ordered the Italian cavalry to dismount and attack the elephants by hand. Scipio heroically sets the example by attacking and wounding an elephant (Appian, *RH*,

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. The elephant riders at the Metaurus River who were given mallets and stakes to kill their animals in the event of the elephant panicking and turning against its own side.

8.43). Unfortunately Appian becomes even more far-fetched as he goes on to describe personal combat between Hannibal and Scipio (Appian, *RH*, 8.45). Nonetheless, his version of events is indicative of the variety of traditions for these events.

Polybius and Livy, however, only refer to elephants at Zama to the extent of explaining how the Romans had learnt to deal with them and neutralise their impact on the outcome of the battle. Polybius explains how the Romans made a lot of noise and caused the elephants to stampede either against their own side or down the channels created between the Roman maniples (Polybius, *Hist.* 15.12). Livy says that Hannibal had 80 elephants, more than he had ever had before, and, like Polybius, says that the noise created on the Roman side frightened the elephants so much that some turned against their own side while others continued against the Romans. However, Scipio ordered his men to step aside and create a pathway; they hurl their missiles against the elephants as they passed through (Livy, 30.33.13-15). There are no elephants at Zama in the *Punica*, yet Silius shows his awareness of the narrative traditions in Polybius and Livy when he describes wide passages opening up between the spears – but the reason the passages develop is because of the increasing number of soldiers being killed, not soldiers stepping aside to create passages for elephants (*Pun.* 17.422-4).

The numismatic evidence for Hannibal's elephants as turreted is not helpful because Carthaginian coins generally depict either an elephant alone or in a stylised form with a single rider. Scullard identified three pieces of external evidence for turreted elephants in Italy of which one might be Hannibalic while the third is earlier.<sup>15</sup> A terracotta model from Pompeii consists of a Negroid figure riding an elephant which suggests that the reference is Carthaginian. The elephant has a turret on its back with a shield fixed on the side. A *patera* from Campania, however, is less distinctly Carthaginian and may equally refer to an event from the Hellenistic east. It depicts a turreted elephant with a figure inside it and the elephant has a bell around its neck.<sup>16</sup> The third piece, known as the Capena plate, currently on display in the Villa Giulia, also shows a tower on the back of an elephant.<sup>17</sup> The plate predates Hannibal, and is thought to commemorate Manius Curius Dentatus' triumph for his victory over

<sup>15</sup> Scullard, 1974, 33, especially Figs. 7 and 10.

<sup>16</sup> Scullard, 1974, 33. Fig 7b is a terracotta model of a turreted elephant from Myrina, Asia Minor. The elephant is attacking a Celtic soldier and the model possibly commemorates the 'Elephant victory' of Antiochus I over the Galatians.

<sup>17</sup> Image: [http://digitool.haifa.ac.il/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=65079&local\\_base=GEN01](http://digitool.haifa.ac.il/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=65079&local_base=GEN01)

Pyrrhus near Benevento in 275 BC.<sup>18</sup> There is another, later, possibility for such a celebratory plate as L Caecilius Metellus, consul 251BC, celebrated a triumph the year following his consulship for his defeat of the Carthaginians in which he captured sixty elephants that were sent to Rome (Diodorus, 23.21.21).

Nevertheless the Capena plate, the *patera* and the terracotta model in particular, all suggest that turreted elephants are not a figment of Silius' imagination. If the *Suda* fragment is from either Polybius or Diodorus, the references to turreted elephants in the *Punica* are not 'demonstrably fictive' but poetic allusions to an alternative historical tradition. Indeed, Silius Italicus' placement of turreted elephants in battle scenes reflects their *intended* role as implements of warfare. His battle scenes between elephants and Romans are designed to show that the discipline, training and courage of the individual Roman soldier will eventually lead them to success over the barbarians and their beasts. At the same time, Silius shows why the elephant's unreliability as a weapon meant that it was not adopted for long term use by the Romans.<sup>19</sup> If, on the other hand, if the *Suda* fragment originated from a later text, such as Cassius Dio or Appian, the reference in the *Punica* remains an intriguing earliest extant reference to elephant equipment in the Second Punic War.

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<sup>18</sup> Green, 1976, 189; Moretti, 70. The Museum records the findspot; Tomb 233 *necropolis dell macchie*.

<sup>19</sup> Scullard, 1974, discussed the advantages and drawbacks of elephants as instruments of warfare. See esp. 178ff for the Roman response to the elephant. Scullard did not read the representations of the elephants in the *Punica* in these terms.

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