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Rome's Missing Legion

David Rocha

Prof. Diane Amoroso-O'Connor

Introduction

History can be a fragmentary field; while historians are able to piece much of history together in a logical and precise way, some areas are still either completely or partially unknown. Reasons could include the loss of a language, a lack of written and/or tangible sources, or the destruction of primary sources from human actions and/or natural decay. Logically speaking, it would make sense that the larger an artifact is, the more likely it is to have survived throughout the ages. As an example, it would be much more difficult to destroy all traces of the Great Wall of China than, say, a Mayan vase. About 1900 years ago, however, there was a major disappearance that occurred: the vanishing of the Imperial Roman Ninth Hispana Legion. At the end of its existence, the legion was stationed in modern-day Britain, but the next military census did not mention the legion, and it was never discussed again in written sources by the Romans.¹ In the following 1900 years, nobody has been able to discover the definitive fate of the legion. This was not from a lack of trying. In the 1800s, the prevailing theory was that the legion had been totally wiped out in Britain.² This was later disputed in the 1940s and 1950s, when historians began to discuss the idea that the legion had been instead destroyed during the Second Jewish Revolt.³ The argument for the legion's destruction in Judea was sorely lacking, mostly being based around a rather vague quote from the Roman historian Cassius Dio with no clear evidence that the legion had been transferred off of the island.⁴ This changed when inscriptions found in Holland were found, as they seemed to corroborate this passage, locating the Ninth close enough

¹ Stephen Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2012), 150

² Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 150

³ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 150

⁴ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 66
150

to feasibly be a part of the Judean revolt.⁵ In this paper, I argue that the Ninth Hispana Legion was either almost completely destroyed fully annihilated; the epigraphs found in Nijmegen were then, presumably, created by either a survivor of the legion or a descendant of one of the legionnaires, honoring the dead legionnaires.

Methodology

This research project will examine archaeological findings and historical records written by Roman citizens and subjects. Primary sources will include both epigraphs and ancient texts written by politically active Romans. An epigraph is, to use Duncan Campbell's definition, "...ancient inscribed texts, chiefly, but not exclusively, those carved onto stone".⁶ These inscriptions are, while visually the same as the modern-day English alphabet, use somewhat different spellings of words than we would use today.⁷ For example, while the name Julius is written starting with a letter J in English, in the Roman world the same name would have started with an I, with the person being called Iulius.⁸ Another point to mention is that the Romans abbreviated words on epigraphs, which could influence how they were read and further translated.⁹ Epigraphs were one of the few ways that mark out where legions were that remain in the modern world, and are part of the archaeological evidence for Roman military history.¹⁰

⁵ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 422

⁶ Duncan B. Campbell, *The Fate of the Ninth: The Curious Disappearance of One of Rome's Legions* (Glasgow: Bocca Della Verità Publishing, 2019), 1.

⁷ Roger Tomlin, *Britannia Romana: Roman Inscriptions and Roman Britain* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017), IX

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1713536&site=ehost-live>.

⁸ Tomlin, *Britannia Romana: Roman Inscriptions and Roman Britain*, IX

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1713536&site=ehost-live>.

⁹ Tomlin, *Britannia Romana: Roman Inscriptions and Roman Britain*, X

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1713536&site=ehost-live>.

¹⁰ Tomlin, *Britannia Romana: Roman Inscriptions and Roman Britain*, 3.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1713536&site=ehost-live>.

However, stone epigraphs are not the only objects that are used as historical markers. Some other examples include imperial Roman coins, which help date an area by showing who the emperor was at the time of the coin's creation, as well as ceramics.¹¹ There is also the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (hereafter referred to as the CIL), a modern compilation of all Roman inscriptions.

Alongside the archaeological evidence for Roman military movements is written evidence from various Romans from both the Republican and Imperial eras. Such writers were, for the most part, politically active, whether being senators, emperors, and even the famous dictator Julius Caesar.¹² Most of the historical writings of these Roman historians and politicians focused on political and/or military history¹³ to inform future Romans of both the successes and failures of the writer's contemporaries and ancestors.¹⁴ This paper will examine and assess multiple primary textual sources, including Julius Caesar, Cassius Dio, Augustus, Tacitus, and Suetonius, each of whom had their own biases. Julius Caesar was, as could be expected, pro-Roman, as he was a Roman aristocrat and later dictator.¹⁵ However, he focused highly on writing

¹¹ Penelope M. Allison, *People and Spaces in Roman Military Bases* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1543571>.

¹² Ronald Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), XVII. Accessed June 1, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047060>.

¹³ Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings*, XVII. Accessed June 1, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047060>.

¹⁴ Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings*, XVII. Accessed June 1, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047060>.

¹⁵ Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings*, 81. Accessed June 1, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047060>.

to make himself good in the eyes of the common Roman people.¹⁶ Cassius Dio, as he was a Roman senator and politician, would have favored the Romans over other cultures. However, he would have also favored some emperors over others, based on how imperial edicts affected the Roman world over time.¹⁷ Similarly, he was not, for some of the history that he wrote about, a “true” primary source; instead, he was using historical knowledge from Roman historians who had come before him.¹⁸ Augustus would have been similar to the former Caesar, as he was the first Roman emperor.¹⁹ Tacitus wrote to honor the old days when the people had more freedoms, but also did not believe that the Roman Republic should return.²⁰ Suetonius was strongly biased in his historical research, as a fair portion of his historical texts were based on records from the imperial archives.²¹ However, because of his focus on biographical histories, he also included rumors and gossip as part of these histories, meaning that it is quite difficult to know what is truth and what is fiction in his texts.²²

¹⁶ Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings*, 81. Accessed June 1, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047060>.

¹⁷ Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings*, 491. Accessed June 1, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047060>.

¹⁸ J. G. F. Hind, "A. Plautius' Campaign in Britain: An Alternative Reading of the Narrative in Cassius Dio (60.19.5-21.2)," in *Britannia* 38 (2007), 1-2. Accessed July 16, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30030569>.

¹⁹ Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings*, 255. Accessed June 1, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047060>.

²⁰ Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings*, 289. Accessed June 1, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047060>.

²¹ Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings*, 395. Accessed June 1, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047060>.

²² Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings*, 395-396. Accessed June 1, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1047060>.

Part 1: The History and Organization of the Legions

Before delving into the history of the Ninth Hispana Legion, it is important to discuss how the legions worked and their history. The legions, as they are most commonly depicted in modern media, were not truly brought about until the time of Gaius Marius, some years before Julius Caesar would begin his rise to power.²³ When the Romans were still a small

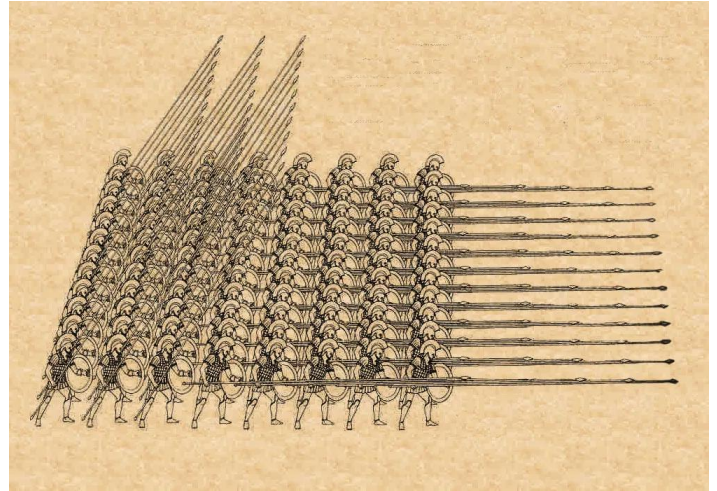


Figure 1. A standard Phalanx formation.²⁶

village near the Mediterranean, their first major military change was to adopt the Greek phalanx as a military tactic.²⁴ The phalanx formation was composed of the army standing in rows who, armed with spears, would march forward and attempt to stab the enemy.^{25,26} However, one of the major downfalls of the phalanx system in use by the Romans was the requirement that soldiers pay for their own gear.²⁷

Marius introduced reforms in the Roman military that greatly benefitted the legions in various ways; fittingly, these changes are called the Marian Reforms. For example, Marius changed how the legions were organized. Originally, the legions were composed of multiple

²³ L. J. F. Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*. (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 57.

²⁴ Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 21.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 22

²⁶ Greek Phalanx Formation. Digital image. Militär Wissen. Accessed June 11, 2021. <https://www.militaer-wissen.de/greek-phalanx/?lang=en>.

²⁷ Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 25.

maniples, which were units made up of different men of differing ranks.²⁸ This method was changed into the cohorts system, in which larger groups of men moved around as individual units.^{29,30} This was not the only change made to the army by Marius, either. For example,

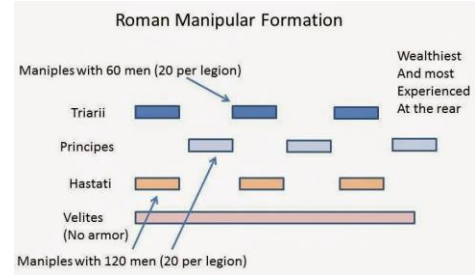


Figure 2. The Roman Manipular Formation.²⁸

Marius removed a qualification in which the potential legionary recruit was required to have

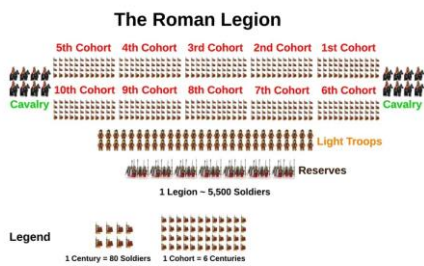


Figure 3. The Roman Cohorts Formation.³⁰

some degree of land ownership before recruitment;

this allowed for many more people to join the

military.³¹ Similarly, troops were given arms and

armor from the state, rather than having to purchase it

themselves; this had the benefit of both keeping

standards for gear at a constant level, as well as

making sure that all legionnaires were all well-equipped.³² Another major reform that Marius

brought about was focusing legion standards to all be that of the eagle. Before this change, there

were multiple standards that different maniples would carry, each one bearing a different

animal.³³ However, of the reforms that Marius pushed out, one of the most iconic changes was

forcing the soldiers to carry tools and supplies, leading to the nickname "Marius' Mules".³⁴

²⁸ Victor, Yuri, Eleanor Barkhorn, and Tyson Whiting. The Roman Manipular Formation. Digital image. Vox. Accessed July 22, 2021. <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/6/19/17469176/roman-empire-maps-history-explained>.

²⁹ Keppie., *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, 64

³⁰ Victor, Yuri, Eleanor Barkhorn, and Tyson Whiting. The Roman Cohorts Formation. Digital image. Vox. Accessed July 22, 2021. <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/6/19/17469176/roman-empire-maps-history-explained>.

³¹ Keppie., *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, 61

³² Keppie., *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, 64

³³ Keppie., *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, 67

³⁴ Keppie., *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, 66

These changes were all in place by the time that Julius Caesar came to power, and so would have been in place when the Ninth Hispana Legion was raised.

The legions were not stagnant forces but able to move efficiently. The biggest handicap that Roman legions faced when on the move was the size of their baggage train(s).³⁵ This was because of the nature of the baggage trains. Roman Legionnaires, while they could carry some food on their back, could not hope to carry enough food by themselves for an entire campaign. To this end, work animals were brought in to help carry the heavy carts and loads that came with needing to feed and supply an army.³⁶ Some pack animals, such as donkeys, were able to march at the same speed as the soldiers, whereas other creatures such as oxen were much slower to move, but could carry heavy burdens.³⁷ On top of that, there were roughly 5000 soldiers in the professional legions, which increased the amount of animals needed to carry supplies for all of the troops.³⁸ The mass movement caused by such a number of humans and animals were counteracted by the creation of roads, which were able to increase the efficiency of movement.³⁹ This number also doesn't include auxiliary units, which were units that were used to help strengthen the army in different ways.⁴⁰ For example, units that weren't infantry based, such as cavalry or archers, were auxiliary units from different Roman provinces.⁴¹ However, while 5000+ men is quite a lot of men to feed, not all legions were at full strength at all times. For example, another legion, the 21st Rapax Legion, had some of its cohorts transferred to the Ninth

³⁵ Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 171

³⁶ Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 171

³⁷ Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 171

³⁸ Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 168-171

³⁹ Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 147

⁴⁰ Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 168

⁴¹ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 50-51

Hispana legion, which meant that the 21st was missing about 2000 soldiers from the full strength of roughly 5000 soldiers.⁴² This would have inherently meant that the legion could move faster, since the baggage train did not have to be quite as large.

After several hours of marching, the legionnaires would have needed to set up camp. The process took some time, but the resulting camps were pseudo-forts that were as mobile as the legion carrying them. The process by which legions created camps was rather simple, but time-consuming. The first step in this process was to find a suitable location for the camp; to this end,

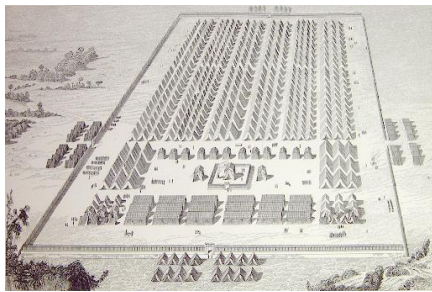


Figure 4. A 19th Century Depiction of a Roman Marching Camp.⁴⁸

scouts were sent out ahead of the legions to find suitable camp locations.⁴³ When a camp location was chosen, the hill was leveled, and then the camp was meticulously created, with each tent being laid out to its exact measurements.⁴⁴ These camps were also very defensible, being unable to be taken without the loss of the occupying Roman legion beforehand.⁴⁵

During the evening and night, the soldiers would live in these camps, which were designed to be mobile fortified cities.⁴⁶ During the first century, when the Ninth Hispana legion disappeared, the legionnaires lived in large leather tents. These tents, made from fine leather and tied down by ropes could each fit 8 people.⁴⁷ There would have been hundreds of these tents to accommodate several thousand legionnaires, as well as the fortifications which were extremely useful in

⁴² Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 184

⁴³ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 66

⁴⁴ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 66

⁴⁵ Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 170

⁴⁶ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 66

⁴⁷ Graham Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 169-170

keeping enemy troops outside of the camp walls.⁴⁸ These sites would have been temporary; after the night had passed, the legions would take down these camps, and march on to the next location, whether that be another campsite or the battlefield.⁴⁹

Overall, there would have been massive amounts of movement from the various legions. There was the movement of the soldiers themselves and the movement from the baggage trains; on top of that, there were many campaigns where multiple legions moved at the same time or split apart to cover more ground quickly. This mobility was, to a degree, what made the Roman legions so formidable; but it also played a fairly major part in the mystery and history behind the Ninth Hispana Legion and what ended up happening to it.

Part 2: The Ninth Hispana Legion

Now this understanding how the legions worked and functioned provides context for the history of the Ninth Hispana Legion, hereafter referred to as the Ninth.⁵⁰ There are no extant records of who originally raised the Ninth; they were already in existence when Julius Caesar (hereafter referred to as Caesar) took command of the legion for his Gallic War.⁵¹ During the war, Caesar

⁴⁸ Florian de Ocampo, A 19th century depiction of a Roman marching camp. Digital image. An Army's Footsteps. Accessed June 25, 2021. <http://anarmysfootsteps.leadr.msu.edu/historical-sources/>.

⁴⁹ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 66

⁵⁰ Andrey Oboev, Ninth Hispana Shield with Bull Emblem. Digital image. 123RF. Accessed June 26, 2021. https://www.123rf.com/photo_95505874_stock-vector-vector-shield-of-ancient-roman-legoin-legio-ix-hispana-on-white-background.html.

⁵¹ Keppie., *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, 81

used the Ninth and other legions against tribes such as the Helvetii and Belgae, as well as in his attempted invasion of Britain.⁵² The Gallic War was won by Caesar.⁵³ However, Caesar's next war would be coming soon after, and with Caesar marched the Ninth. Before leaving for Gaul, Caesar had entered into a political Triumvirate with Crassus, among the wealthiest men in Rome at the time, and Pompey the Great, a legendary Roman general, with all three becoming the most powerful men in Rome.⁵⁴ However, Crassus fell in battle against the Parthians, and so the Triumvirate was broken. After this, Pompey, who had become the Senate's champion, broke the ties of alliance with Caesar.⁵⁵ When Caesar marched into the Rubicon, the Ninth marched with him, and kept marching with him throughout the subsequent Civil War.⁵⁶ The Civil War, famously, ended with Caesar's victory, although there was not merely one victory.⁵⁷ First, he won over Pompey the Great, at the battle of Pharsalus, from which Pompey fled.⁵⁸ Afterwards, he followed Pompey to Egypt. Finding that Pompey had been beheaded already, he was forced into the Egyptian Civil War, choosing to side with Cleopatra over her brother Ptolemy XIII.⁵⁹ According to Suetonius, Caesar decided to side



Figure 5. A Roman shield with a bull. The bull is believed to be the emblem used by the Ninth Hispana Legion.⁵⁰

⁵² Keppie., *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, 82-85

⁵³ Robert F. Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.* (Luton, England: Andrews UK, 2012), ch. XXVIII.

[https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live.](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live)

⁵⁴ Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXIX.

[https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live.](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live)

⁵⁵ Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXIX.

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⁵⁶ Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXIX.

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⁵⁷ Keppie., *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*,

⁵⁸ Keppie., *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, 109

⁵⁹ Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXXIII.

[https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live.](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live)

with Cleopatra, because he suspected Ptolemy of plotting against him.⁶⁰ Afterwards, he needed to face off against other forces: some vying for power in areas under Roman control, and others trying to repair the Roman Republic before Caesar had come.⁶¹ After winning these wars, Caesar was prepared to settle down and rule Rome for life as its dictator; unfortunately for him, members of the Senate assassinated him.⁶² His will called for his nephew, Octavius, to inherit the vast majority of his estate, but was prevented from his inheritance by the late Caesar's lieutenant Mark Antony.⁶³ Using his wealth, he began to popularize himself with the people, as well as with the Senate.⁶⁴ Eventually, Octavius formed a second Triumvirate with Mark Antony and a man named Lepidus; these three went to war against Caesar's assassins, and won.⁶⁵ Presumably, the Ninth marched with him, as they would have wanted to avenge their fallen general. After this, the Triumvirate split apart; Lepidus fought against Octavius first, due to wanting more power and influence, and Mark Antony afterwards, due to Antony becoming enamored with Egypt and its queen Cleopatra.⁶⁶ The split between Mark Antony and Octavius eventually led to yet another civil war; famously, this ended when both Mark Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, "Lives of the Twelve Caesars," in *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Ancient Writings*, compiled by Ronald Mellor, translated by Ronald Mellor, (3rd ed. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 405.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1047060&ppg=426>.

⁶¹ Keppie., *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, 110-111

⁶² Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXXIV.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live>.

⁶³ Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXXV.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live>.

⁶⁴ Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXIX.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live>.

⁶⁵ Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXXV.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live>.

⁶⁶ Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXIX.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live>.

⁶⁷ Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXIX.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live>.

After all of this, Octavius was declared to be Imperator, which is translated to Emperor, Princeps, which translates to Prince or First Citizen, as well as Augustus.⁶⁸ This was the beginning of the Roman Empire.

The first imperial war that the Ninth fought in was the First Cantabrian War in the north of modern-day Spain, then called Hispana.^{69,70} The war was rather brutal, as the Cantabrians took refuge in the mountains and used hit-and-run tactics using javelins, or throwing spears.^{71, 72} The First Cantabrian War seemingly ended a few years after it began with a treaty; however, it truly



Figure 6. The Cantabrian Mountains today.⁷⁰

ended when, in order to avenge soldiers who had been ambushed, captured, and executed by the Cantabrians, the governor of the area cut off the hands of any man who was able to fight.⁷³ Augustus was even able to recover legion standards which had been lost to the Cantabrians.⁷⁴

However, while there was a second Cantabrian War, the Ninth did not take part in it.⁷⁵ The next major war in which

⁶⁸ Pennell, *Ancient Rome: From the Earliest Times Down to 476 A.D.*, ch. XXIX. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=995049&site=ehost-live>.

⁶⁹ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 216

⁷⁰ Dio, LIII, 25, in Dando-Collins

⁷¹ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 217

⁷² Mountains in Cantabria, Spain. Digital image. Monkeys and Mountains Adventure Travel. Accessed July 11, 2021. <https://monkeysandmountains.com/travel-cantabria-spain/>.

⁷³ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 219

⁷⁴ Augustus, "The Achievements of Augustus," in *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Ancient Writings*, comp. by Ronald Mellor, transl. by Ronald Mellor, 261., 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 261. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1047060&ppg=320>.

⁷⁵ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 221-222

the Ninth was involved was the Pannonian War. The Pannonian War took place in Pannonia and Dalmatia, two provinces close to the then-Italian border.^{76,77,78} The province of Pannonia first revolted against the Romans; after this, they were able to convince their neighbors, the Dalmatians, to join their revolt, even planning to march to Rome.⁷⁹ After the initial shock of the



Figures 7 and 8. Above: A map of Pannonia and its surrounding neighbors.⁷⁷ Below: A map of the Roman world, with Pannonia highlighted in dark red.⁷⁸

campaign, however, the Romans were able to muster multiple legions and retired veterans to fight against the rebels.⁸⁰ Eventually, the Pannonian War was also won by the future emperor Tiberius and his brother Germanicus.⁸¹ After this campaign, the Ninth was based in Pannonia, to prevent another revolt from happening in the region.⁸²

The next major incursion that the Ninth would undertake was the invasion of modern-day Britain during Claudius's reign. Of the four Caesars to rule before him, Tacitus explains their various views on Britain as a location. He wrote that Julius left its conquest to future generations; Augustus didn't bother with it as a policy; Tiberius left it alone as a means to follow Augustus's footsteps; and so,

⁷⁶ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 228-230

⁷⁷ Map of Pannonia in the First Century AD. Digital image. WikiWand. June 16, 2007. Accessed July 12, 2021. <https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Pannonia>.

⁷⁸ Map of the Roman Empire, with Pannonia Highlighted. Digital image. WikiWand. June 16, 2007. Accessed July 12, 2021. <https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Pannonia>.

⁷⁹ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 228-229

⁸⁰ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 230

⁸¹ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 234-235

⁸² Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 151

Claudius undertook the invasion, not least because of failed German campaigns.⁸³ He was also encouraged to invade by a chief from Britain named Bericus.⁸⁴ Claudius himself did not partake in the invasion; that was left to the future emperor Vespasian.⁸⁵ The legions involved-2nd Augusta, Ninth Hispana, 14th Gemina, and 20th- were able to quickly and efficiently conquer the country because of their effective use of tactics and much better military equipment.⁸⁶ After the island had been conquered, each of the four legions involved with the invasion built permanent bases, and so that is where the Ninth was based for the rest of its known existence.^{87,88,89}



Figure 9. Roman Britain. The Ninth was originally stationed in north of Camulodunum, which is modern day Colchester.^{88,89}

After this invasion and fortifying themselves, the last major event in which the Ninth Hispana legion was involved was Boudicca’s Rebellion. The rebellion, at its root, was caused by Roman greed. The king of the Iceni tribe, Prasutagus, labelled the Roman emperor Nero as his heir, as well as his daughters; the three of them would be co-heirs, with the idea being that the

⁸³ Cornelius Tacitus, “The Life of Agricola,” in *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Ancient Writings*, comp. by Ronald Mellor, transl. by Ronald Mellor, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 293. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ursinus-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1047060&ppg=320>.

⁸⁴ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 287

⁸⁵ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 287

⁸⁶ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 290-295

⁸⁷ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 295

⁸⁸ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 295

⁸⁹ Map of Roman Britain. Digital image. MyOwnBlog. October 6, 2019. Accessed July 12, 2021. <http://6612springbottomway.blogspot.com/2019/10/a-roman-colony-in-britannia-camulodunum.html>.

princesses would rule together under Nero's protection.⁹⁰ However, this will be misinterpreted, either intentionally or accidentally. After the king passed away, Roman troops came to Iceni lands and looted it, even going so far as to rape the princesses.⁹¹ Queen Boudica herself was stripped and flogged for attempting to stop the rapes of her daughters.⁹² The first attack from the revolt was at Camulodunum; because of this, the Ninth was the closest legion, and so was the first legion to march out and try to stop the revolt in its tracks.⁹³ However, it marched out with only 2000 men, and so it was handicapped; on top of that, the legion was rushing to the town's aid, and so was presumably surprised by the tribesmen. Nevertheless, the legion was almost completely wiped out, save for its commander and some cavalymen.⁹⁴ After the rebellion was subdued, the men of the Ninth were replaced by some men from the 21st Rapax legion.⁹⁵ About six decades after this, in roughly the year 122 CE, the legion disappeared.

Part 3: The Mystery

While nobody today is fully certain of what happened to the Ninth, there are two competing hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that the legion was wiped out somewhere in Britain.⁹⁶ The second hypothesis was that the legion was lost in Judea during the Jewish

⁹⁰ Paul Chrystal, *Roman Military Disasters: Dark Days & Lost Legions* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2015), 169. <https://search-ebscohost-com.spectacled.ursinus.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1164049&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁹¹ Chrystal, *Roman Military Disasters: Dark Days & Lost Legions*, 169. <https://search-ebscohost-com.spectacled.ursinus.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1164049&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁹² Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 304

⁹³ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 305

⁹⁴ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 306

⁹⁵ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 312

⁹⁶ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 421

Revolt.⁹⁷ There is at least some evidence supporting both hypotheses. In order to learn what fate befell the Ninth, it is prudent to look through both the archaeological and written works to see where and when the legion moved around. To learn of the final fate of the Ninth Hispana Legion requires discussion not just on military movements, but also Roman military disasters. Rome was extremely successful at warfare, due in no small part to the fact that the Romans, after a loss, would analyze what went wrong, make any changes to tactics and/ or technology, raise a new army, and march back out to battle.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, there were times when the military losses were extremely bad for the Romans. Of these, three stand out in prominence. There was the Pyrrhic War, in which the Romans lost two battles in a row, but dealt such high numbers that the enemy King Pyrrhus, for whom the war was named, said that “one more such victory would undo him.”⁹⁹ There was the infamous Battle of Carrhae, which was one of the worst Roman military defeats in all of history.¹⁰⁰ Finally, there was the disastrous Battle of Teutoburg Forest, in which three Roman legions were led into a trap and annihilated ; two out of the three never had their numbers used again, with the third being brought back after some time.¹⁰¹ For these

⁹⁷ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 422

⁹⁸ Chrystal, *Roman Military Disasters: Dark Days & Lost Legions*, XXV. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.spectacled.ursinus.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1164049&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

⁹⁹ Chrystal, *Roman Military Disasters: Dark Days & Lost Legions*, 51-53. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.spectacled.ursinus.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1164049&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹⁰⁰ Chrystal, *Roman Military Disasters: Dark Days & Lost Legions*, 114. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.spectacled.ursinus.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1164049&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹⁰¹ Chrystal, *Roman Military Disasters: Dark Days & Lost Legions*, 154-158. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.spectacled.ursinus.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1164049&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

battles, it is important to note the historical writings and objects that were found. At the site of the battle of Teutoburg, there were very few German artifacts found, whereas the Roman artifacts were plentiful, which proves that the Romans had undergone a massacre.¹⁰² The battle of Carrhae does not have any archaeological evidence; the only evidence is written, and different authors wrote about the battle in different ways, either praising or denigrating Crassus.¹⁰³ This is similar to the case for the Pyrrhic War, in that there is some archaeological evidence that has been found, but not the precise location of the two bloodiest battles, where there would presumably be the most amount of evidence.¹⁰⁴ To consider evidence for destruction of the Ninth, another famous disaster, Boudica's Rebellion, can provide comparative archaeological findings.. On top of the various artifacts that a destroyed legion might have left behind, there are also epigraphs that still stand today that are able to indirectly place a legion in a certain place at a certain time. It is important to note how these were written, as they are an important piece of evidence for the movement and histories of legions, and it is important to note some of the phrasing used when discussing the Ninth specifically. One piece to note in epigraphy is that oftentimes, epigraphs from military sources performed two major functions: the first, to mark where a person had been buried, and the second to detail the events of the deceased's career. For example, take the epigraph of L. Novius Crispinus. His epigraph details the various positions that

¹⁰² Chrystal, *Roman Military Disasters: Dark Days & Lost Legions*, 114. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.spectacled.ursinus.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1164049&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹⁰³ Chrystal, *Roman Military Disasters: Dark Days & Lost Legions*, 114. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.spectacled.ursinus.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1164049&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹⁰⁴ Chrystal, *Roman Military Disasters: Dark Days & Lost Legions*, 48-55. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.spectacled.ursinus.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1164049&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

he held, and in which legion he held that position.¹⁰⁵ There is also the use of the phrase “HSE” on epitaphs; this is a shortening of a Latin phrase that is, in essence, the same as the phrase “RIP”, translating most directly to “Here is Buried”. Finally, there is the Ninth’s direct name; it is referred to on epitaphs as “LEG VIII HISP”, which is a shortened form of “Legio VIII Hispaniensis”, literally “Legion IX (9) of Spain”, which we modify slightly to become Ninth Hispana Legion.¹⁰⁶

Evidence for Destruction in Britain

In the search for the Ninth Hispana Legion, it makes sense to see the archaeological findings and written history of a famous disaster that the Ninth was in: Boudicca’s Rebellion. In his text *Agricola*, Tacitus mentions in passing that the various tribes in Britain were led by Boudica although he does not discuss the full revolt in great detail in this text.¹⁰⁷ Tacitus describes the revolt in more detail in the *Annales* as does Cassius Dio in his work. Dio notes that the Ninth was summoned by messengers who escaped from Camulodunum.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, it is Tacitus who notes that the Ninth was destroyed by the Boudiccan army, with only a few cavalrymen and officers escaping on horseback.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ CIL, VIII.2747

¹⁰⁶ Campbell, *The Fate of the Ninth: The Curious Disappearance of One of Rome's Legions*, 37

¹⁰⁷ Cornelius Tacitus, *Agricola*, transl. by Maurice Hutton, edited by Robert Maxwell Ogilvie, in *Tacitus in Five Volumes*, 3rd ed., Vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 57

¹⁰⁸ Cassius Dio, “Book LXII”, *Dio’s Roman History*, 2, quoted in Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 305

¹⁰⁹ Cornelius Tacitus, “Book XIV”, *the Annals*, 33, quoted in Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 306

To supplement the written history, there are also artifacts from modern day Colchester which was attacked and destroyed by Boudica's army.¹¹⁰ For example, a house burnt by the Boudiccan army was discovered in 2014, inside of which was a collection of coins and small trinkets.¹¹¹ These pieces of evidence are very important for one major reason: there are no such artifacts from the Ninth around York, where it was seemingly last positioned. If the evidence left by the Boudiccan Revolt is what is known about the destruction of a legion, and the Ninth specifically, then that evidence is absent for what happened to the Ninth at the end.

As well as the written texts and artifacts, there are also epigraphs, or inscriptions, from Britain that discuss the Ninth and men from it. For example, there is an epigraph in which a 40-year-old soldier named C. Saufeius was honored, with the epigraph being what we would consider to be his tombstone.¹¹² According to Dando-Collins, the last posting of the Ninth was in modern-day York, having been moved some time before its disappearance.¹¹³ This posting follows the archaeological evidence, as there are epigraphs from the Ninth that were found in York. For example, there is another burial epigraph mentioning a 28-year-old soldier; the epigraph mentions that the dead had been a part of the Ninth Hispana Legion.¹¹⁴ There was

¹¹⁰ Nina Crummy, Martin Henig, and Courtney Ward, "A Hoard of Military Awards, Jewellery and Coins from Colchester," in *Britannia* 47 (2016), 1. Accessed July 16, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44336594>.

¹¹¹ Crummy, Henig, and Ward, "A Hoard of Military Awards, Jewellery and Coins from Colchester," in *Britannia* 47, 2. Accessed July 16, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44336594>.

¹¹² CIL, VII.183

¹¹³ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 426

¹¹⁴ CIL, VII.243

another inscription, discovered in 1854, which proved that the Ninth was in York during the reign of Trajan, who reigned from 98-117 CE.¹¹⁵

There are some things to note. One of the major issues when discussing this theory today is its inception; it was created in the 1800s by Theodor Mommsen, a German historian, who has since been discredited for other points of history that he made.¹¹⁶ On top of that, of the written texts mentioning the Ninth, none of them clearly state what actually happened to the legion. However, based on all of the other evidence, the most plausible theory points to the Ninth being somewhere around York and North England from at least after Boudica's Rebellion. However, as there has yet to be an excavation with artifacts that could be presumably from a military annihilation, this can only be a plausible theory.

Evidence for Destruction in Judea

While there is some evidence behind the idea that the Ninth was destroyed in Judea during the Second Jewish Revolt, there isn't much. There were some artifacts found in the Netherlands, such as a medal, which seemed to place the Ninth in Nijmegen.^{117,118} Cassius Dio's *Roman History* also gives some plausibility to this; he notes that, when the revolt first began, one of the generals sent to fight the Jews was the governor of Britain, where the Ninth was

¹¹⁵ Campbell, *The Fate of the Ninth: The Curious Disappearance of One of Rome's Legions*, 19-22.

¹¹⁶ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 154

¹¹⁷ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 426

¹¹⁸ Bronze Object mentioning LEG HISP IX, from Ewijk. Digital image. Livius. Accessed July 18, 2021. <https://www.livius.org/articles/legion/legio-viii-hispana/>.

stationed.¹¹⁹ He also wrote “Many Romans, moreover, perished in this war.”¹²⁰ Although it is a very vague quote, it *is* plausible that the men from the Ninth were all slain, with the emperor

simply choosing not to recreate the legion.



Figure 10. A medal found in Nijmegen. Written on it is "LEG HISP IX", the Latin abbreviation for Ninth Hispana Legion.¹¹⁸

Of these three pieces of evidence, there are two major issues. The first, that of the artifact found in the Netherlands, there is one glaring issue: that is one of only two types of artifacts pertaining to the Ninth.¹²¹ The second group of artifacts, tile-stamps, have yet to be investigated.¹²² Secondly, on the movement of the Roman governor of Britain, he

would have used legions already stationed in the eastern part of the empire for two major reasons. The first was that the emperor, Hadrian, would not have moved legions from the west, as he was more focused on maintaining a safe, stable empire.¹²³ Thirdly, it would have made more sense for the general to move with only a few trusted officers, as they would have been able to move much faster due to the lack of a large baggage train. On top of these points, any legion transfers to the east during this time period is not recorded.¹²⁴ With the third quote, on

¹¹⁹ Cassius Dio, *Book LXIX*, transl. by Earnest Cary, Ph.D., in *Dio's Roman History*, 5th ed., Vol. VIII (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 449

¹²⁰ Cassius Dio, *Book LXIX*, transl. by Earnest Cary, Ph.D., in *Dio's Roman History*, 5th ed., Vol. VIII (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 451

¹²¹ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 431

¹²² Campbell, *The Fate of the Ninth: The Curious Disappearance of One of Rome's Legions*, 124-125.

¹²³ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 431

¹²⁴ Dando-Collins, *Legions of Rome: The Definitive History of Every Imperial Roman Legion*, 426

many Romans perishing, the quote in and of itself is very vague; it could be relating to any of the legions, as well as Roman citizens and freed people living in Judea at the time.

Conclusion

It has been approximately 1,899 years since the Ninth Hispana Legion first disappeared. To this day, nobody fully knows what actually happened to the legion. However, there has been strong evidence that has been discovered to theorize about what happened to the legion. The history of the Ninth is known-where they were from the beginning of Caesar's rise to power, and in what wars they participated in. It is also known where they were stationed. The most plausible explanation for what happened to the Ninth was destruction, with the legion not being recreated. Knowledge about what the archaeology and written history for such an event should look like, from the artifacts and written histories around Boudica and her rebellion. On top of that, there are numerous epigraphs that place the Ninth in modern-day Britain from the original Roman invasion and subjugation to its final disappearance. While there are some artifacts that were found in the Netherlands, it is more likely that they were mementos brought from friends and/ or family of legionnaires from the fallen Ninth after the legion was destroyed. This is the opposite of what Duncan Campbell found in his recent book, *The Fate of the Ninth: The Curious Disappearance of one of Rome's Legions*. Instead, Campbell argues that the legion was transferred sometime during the decade of 120-130 CE, after which they were destroyed in combat against the Judeans during their revolt in the early-mid 130s CE, or against the Parthians in 161 CE.¹²⁵ The history of the Ninth, although relatively short, was most certainly impactful;

¹²⁵ Campbell, *The Fate of the Ninth: The Curious Disappearance of One of Rome's Legions*, 139

unfortunately, we may never be able to fully know what exactly happened to the Ninth Hispana Legion.

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