

Introduction

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Scholars interested in Hellenistic history have investigated many aspects of King Pyrrhus' political and military enterprises. This is undoubtedly because an ancient biography – Plutarch's *Life of Pyrrhus* – has been passed down to us in its entirety; moreover, a variety of other testimonies concerning the Epirote king survive in both Greek and Latin literature.¹ These have contributed to scholars' considering his military campaigns (especially those in the West) as a turning point in the history of the third century BCE.² Unsurprisingly, a number of comprehensive analyses of the literary evidence regarding Pyrrhus' life and deeds were published in the twentieth century, most notably those by Giuseppe Nenci and Pierre Lévêque, which remain the reference works on the subject.³ In addition, various edited volumes and journal special issues have appeared over recent decades, examining crucial moments in the Epirote king's career.⁴ Within the last few years, Patrick A. Kent has published a monograph that offers an updated review of the phases of the 280–275 BCE Pyrrhic War and its immediate politico-military consequence: the annexation of southern Italy into Rome's sphere of influence.⁵ In contrast, however, little attention has so far been paid to the socio-political and cultural impacts of the Pyrrhic War on the Italian peninsula in the short or long term, a surprising fact, given that many cities and peoples of southern Italy suffered directly from Pyrrhus' presence.⁶ Furthermore, archaeological

1 Among these, the fragments or summaries from the works of Diodorus (books 21–22), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (books 19–20 of the *Roman Antiquities*), Livy (*Per.* 12–14), Pompeius Trogus (books 16–18 and 23–25), and Cassius Dio (books 9–10) are of fundamental importance for any study of Pyrrhus' accomplishments. See e.g. Schettino (1991); Barnes (2005); Roth (2010), with a focus on surviving Latin accounts of Pyrrhus' deeds. The most comprehensive commentary on Plutarch's *Life of Pyrrhus* remains that of Nederlof (1940).

2 See Mitchell (1985).

3 Nenci (1953); Lévêque (1957). Garoufalas (1979) is more recent but less convincing. Among encyclopaedic chapters and articles, see Kienast (1963) and Franke (1989).

4 See Hackens (1992) and Soueref (2014), to which one may add the contributions collected in *Pallas* 79 (2009) 147–266. A few conferences have also recently been organised by the Pyrrhus Research Group, with proceedings expected to be published soon.

5 Kent (2020); consider also the relevant chapters in Raviola (2025) 78–220.

6 To be sure, the war extended into Sicily in 278–276 BCE, but the consequences of the war for the island will not be addressed in this volume, because Sicily did not enter the Roman sphere of influence at the end of the conflict: see e.g. López Sánchez (2025).

research is vastly enriching our knowledge of the lives of those communities in the period after the war by specifically illustrating how they renewed their social structures and reshaped their identities in response to the hegemonic power of Rome, which makes it possible to partially fill in the silences of our literary sources.⁷ Lastly, memory studies are now seeking to outline the cultural processes through which Pyrrhus and the Pyrrhic War so long remained at the core of Roman political discourse.⁸ Therefore, a fresh interdisciplinary investigation of Pyrrhus' "legacy" in Italy, in which *facts* and the *representation of facts* are combined, is decidedly welcome.

This volume comprises eleven chapters, which are the revised versions of the papers originally delivered at the international conference "Pyrrhus' Legacy: Socio-Political Interactions, Mobility, and Identity Formation in South Italy", held at the University of Verona on 2–3 December 2024 as part of the PRIN-2022 project *Mediterranean Multipolarity and Roman Unipolarity. Power Competition and Collaboration in Graeco-Roman Geopolitics (3rd–2nd century BCE)*.⁹ They are divided into three thematic parts, which are heavily interconnected: I. *Socio-Political Interplay and Historiographical Writing*; II. *Shaping Collective Identities: Constructions and Representations*; and III. *Pyrrhus in the Political Culture of the Late Roman Republic*. The chapters in part I analyse how the upheavals of the Pyrrhic War affected the socio-political organisation of the Italic and Italiote communities and their relationships with Rome. They also examine how the evolving situation in the peninsula was translated on the level of historiographical writing, which, as is well known, intensified during the third century BCE and counted Timaeus of Tauromenium among its most important exponents. As a corollary to this development, the employment of the Trojan myth by Greek authors to explain the origins of Rome is carefully examined. The chapters in part II pay due attention to those episodes of coercive mobility (population displacements and city relocations) which occurred in Italy in the aftermath of the Pyrrhic War, but they also aim to reveal how the war influenced the construction of identities, primarily civic and ethnic in nature, as far as can be traced through literary and archaeological records from the Italic and Italiote communities. Finally, the chapters in part III study how the memory of the Pyrrhic War was exploited in Roman political discourse of the late Republic and early Empire, granting close con-

7 See *Atti del Cinquantaduesimo Convegno di Studi sulla Magna Grecia* (ACSMG 52, 2015).

8 See Walter (2004) 65, 125, 267, 275, 300.

9 I am thankful to all the authors for participating enthusiastically in the conference and cooperating to the fullest in the transformation of the proceedings into the present edited volume. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers for helping improve individual chapters with their insightful comments.

sideration to the most relevant passages from Greek and Roman authors such as Polybius, Cicero, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Such an analysis is also expected to clarify when and how the notion of Italy as an integral part of Roman hegemony emerged.

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Part I opens with **Daniele Miano**'s chapter on "The 'Foreign Generals' of Taras and the Legacy of Pyrrhus". There, the author frames Pyrrhus' campaign in Italy within the context of the political-military initiatives undertaken in the peninsula by various "foreign generals" (*xenikoi strategoi*) from the 340s to the early third century BCE: Archidamus, Alexander the Molossian, Cleonymus, and Agathocles.¹⁰ First, Miano discusses the adequacy of the two terms usually employed to describe these generals, "*condottieri*" and "warlords", and argues that neither is fit for purpose, as both are anachronistic and reductive. Rather, the "foreign generals" should simply be considered Hellenistic rulers, whose political-military activities were a typical expression of early Hellenistic *basileia*. Second, Miano addresses the extant ancient historiographical traditions on these same "foreign generals" who crossed to Italy before Pyrrhus, identifying the fascinating (but underestimated) point that they were often represented similarly to Pyrrhus, which may be explained as the result of authors' using common and recurrent literary *tropoi* (such as the theme of the *imitatio Alexandri*). What is crucial, however, is that modern historians have frequently compensated for the paucity of information on these men by applying to them interpretative keys drawn from the much better-known Pyrrhic experience – a conspicuous exemplification of Pyrrhus' legacy.

Francesco Maniglia's chapter on "Roman-Italiote Alliances before and after the Pyrrhic War" focuses on the *foedera* Rome signed with the Italiote cities from the end of the fourth century BCE onwards. As the author aptly recalls, the first known case is that of Neapolis, whose *foedus* with Rome dates to the Second Samnite War (327 BCE);¹¹ interestingly, all other cases date to the period of the Pyrrhic War, although each alliance's precise chronology and terms (including the provisions for military assistance) remain uncertain. That is probably because, as Maniglia argues, the terms of these alliances were maintained (or re-established) without significant modification throughout the third and second centuries BCE. The *foedus* between Rome and Heraclea is particularly evocative in this respect: signed in either 282 or 278 BCE, it

¹⁰ Strabo 6,3,4 applies the term *xenikoi strategoi* to these generals.

¹¹ Liv. 8,25–26.

was a *foedus aequissimum*, a “very equitable treaty”. Although the term *foedus aequissimum* should no longer be interpreted in a strictly technical sense, Maniglia maintains that the agreement was favourable to Heraclea. Cicero seems to confirm this point by defining it as *prope singulare* (“almost unique”), which may indicate that Heraclea was exempted from the obligation to provide military aid to Rome.¹²

Beyond individual cases, signing *foedera* with allied cities provided a means for the Romans to better define and maintain their control of southern Italy. Another way to achieve this was to establish Latin colonies in the area, including those of Paestum and Beneventum. This phenomenon lies at the core of Saskia T. Roselaar’s chapter, “Pyrrhus’ Legacy? Colonisation and the Creation of Roman Institutions in the Third Century BCE”. As Roselaar reminds us, the literary sources indicate that the inhabitants of Latin colonies were provided with a precise set of entitlements, including the *ius conubii*, the *ius commercii*, and the *ius migrationis*, at least from the time of the Second Punic War, but scholarly opinions diverge on when this “package” of rights was first introduced. According to some, it was enacted in the aftermath of the Latin War; in Roselaar’s view, however, emphasis should be given to the years immediately following the Pyrrhic War. The Romans were then faced with implementing new strategies not only to manage land taken from their defeated enemies but also to ensure that joining the new colonies was attractive to settlers. Consequently, it is perhaps no coincidence that a group of twelve colonies (including Ariminum, according to Cicero) was founded from 268 BCE onwards and enjoyed special privileges.¹³ Moreover, it is not to be overlooked that Latin colonies began minting coins towards the middle of the third century BCE, as numismatic evidence clearly suggests. All of this seems to indicate that the Pyrrhic War favoured – even if it did not trigger – a process of defining institutional relations between Rome and her colonies.

Closing part I, Ana Mayorgas devotes her chapter, “Timaeus of Tauromenium and the Search for Trojan Evidence in Italy”, to analysing how the developing socio-political situation in southern Italy influenced contemporary historiographical writing. Her focus lies primarily on Timaeus of Tauromenium, who not only wrote a general history of the Western Greek world until the early third century BCE (*Histories*) but also composed a monograph about Pyrrhus’ campaign in the West (*Pyrrhika*). It is broadly accepted that Timaeus was the first Western Greek author to grant Rome considerable prominence in his historical writing; in addition, a few fragments of his work about the inter-

¹² Cic. *Balb.* 22,50, 50,6; *Arch.* 4,6.

¹³ Cic. *Caec.* 102.

pretation of Roman religious rituals (including the *Equus October*) in relation to the Trojan myth have prompted many scholars to consider the Romans as already accepting their supposed Trojan ancestry by the end of the fourth or beginning of the third century BCE.¹⁴ Mayorgas' view is less optimistic. Beyond any difficulties in how exactly we are to interpret Timaeus' fragments, no proof exists that he faithfully represented the Roman standpoint regarding the Trojan myth, which is nothing but a product of Greek ethnography. Indeed, it is not even certain that Timaeus offered a comprehensive account of the early history of Rome in either of his historiographical works. Central to Mayorgas' view is the point that Timaeus was a Greek and not a Roman author. Thus, as knowledgeable as he may have been about Roman customs and practices, he is likely to have described them as his Greek cultural background encouraged and his Greek audience expected him to do.

Mark Thatcher's chapter on "Greekness in Hellenistic Italy: Between Rome and the Mediterranean" introduces the discussion of identity matters in third-century BCE Italy, studying how the Greek *poleis* of southern Italy reacted to the changing cultural scenario following the Pyrrhic War and to what extent they insisted on their Greek identity at a time of political subjugation to Roman rule. As Thatcher rightly outlines, the *poleis* adopted a variety of solutions, with some resorting to the classic Greek-versus-barbarian duality and others preferring to put such oppositions aside and instead enhance their capacity for political decision-making and mediation. This variety is demonstrated by what we know of contemporary diplomatic activities. The most instructive case emerges from the relations between Taras and Thurii during the Pyrrhic War. In *ca.* 284 BCE, Thurii was militarily threatened by the Lucanians and requested Roman protection against them. Accustomed to their role as the defenders of Greekness in Italy, the Tarantines were angry at the Thurians' choice, expecting all the Greeks of southern Italy to be united against the aggressors.¹⁵ The Thurians did not much care about this reaction; indeed, they wanted two honorific statues to be placed in Rome for those Romans, P. Aelius and C. Fabricius, who had personally helped them in their fight against the Lucanians.¹⁶ This unequivocal stance was proper to show that, as a *polis*, the Thurians could still conduct autonomous political action beyond any sense of shared Greekness.

Looking to the far south of the peninsula, my own chapter, entitled "Bridge or Divide? The Strait of Messina from the Time of Pyrrhus to the First Punic

14 Tim. *FGrHist* 566 F 36, F 59.

15 App. *Samn.* 7,2.

16 Plin. *HN* 34,32.

War”, continues the theme of the shaping of collective identities. As the strait was a “crossing space” between the northeastern tip of Sicily and the toe of Italy, I analyse how it was experienced and perceived by the political actors active in the area during the third century BCE, specifically from Agathocles’ death to the outbreak of the First Punic War. Two different phases can be identified within this period, the first of which approximately corresponds to the Pyrrhic War years. At that time, the cities of Messana and Rhegium were taken over by Oscan-speaking military units – the Mamertines and the *legio Campana*, respectively – which cooperated with one another and made the strait, with the tacit approval of the Romans and Carthaginians, into a bridge between Sicily and Italy. That cooperation was sanctioned by a *symmachia* between Messana and Rhegium, which may, as a fragment of Alfius’ *Bellum Carthaginiense* suggests, have resorted to identity discourse to emphasise the Campanian/Italic origins of their respective occupants.¹⁷ The second phase began when, after defeating Pyrrhus, Rome decided to dismantle the *legio Campana* in Rhegium and restore the city to its Greek inhabitants, which prevented the Mamertines from again projecting their ambitions onto the toe of Italy. From then on, the strait was deemed a divide between Sicily and Italy, a construct that, if one trusts Polybius, the Romans made their own at the outbreak of the First Punic War.¹⁸

At the end of part II stands Luis Silva Reneses’ chapter, entitled “Shaping Italy: Population Transfers and Urban Relocations as a Roman Imperial Strategy in the Aftermath of the Pyrrhic War”. Silva Reneses observes that after defeating Pyrrhus, the Romans promoted various population displacements and resettlements across Italy from 268 to 241 BCE. The most heavily debated cases are those involving the Picentes, who were apparently transferred from Picenum to the area around the Latin colony of Paestum, and the Sallentini, who may have been transplanted from the Sallentine peninsula to the territory of the Sarsinates in Umbria. On the former, the author analyses a famous passage of Strabo’s *Geography* on the subject and compares it with the archaeological evidence from Picentia (modern-day Pontecagnano): since this site shows traces of a profound transformation towards the middle of the third century BCE, there is no reason to deny that the Picentes were displaced to the area after the Romans triumphed over them in 268 BCE.¹⁹ Likewise, in Silva Reneses’ view, Pliny the Elder is right when he speaks of a community of “Dolates surnamed Sallentini” who inhabited Umbria: these were the

17 Fest. 150 Lindsay, s.v. *Mamertini* = *FRHist* 69 F 1.

18 Polyb. 1.10.9.

19 See Strabo 5.4.13; Degrassi, *Inscr. Ital.* 13.1, 546–547 (Roman triumph over the Picentes).

descendants of the Sallentini who were evicted from their land and relocated hundreds of kilometres further north after being defeated by the Romans in 266 BCE.²⁰ In general terms, Silva Reneses convincingly argues that these population transfers should be seen as one of the strategies embraced by Rome to make Italy “Roman”.

Part III opens with **Filippo Carlà-Uhink**’s chapter on “The Pyrrhic War, Roman Cultural Memory, and the Idea of Italy”. This chapter offers an insightful analysis of when and how the Pyrrhic War was used in Roman political discourse to better define the concept of Italy as a territorial and ethnic reality “naturally” connected to (and dependent on) the hegemonic power of Rome. Arguing that the development of such a definition was a long process concluded only in the imperial period, Carlà-Uhink identifies the third century BCE as a crucial phase in this process. In particular, the Second Punic War can be seen as the moment when Hannibal’s invasion of Italy reframed Pyrrhus’ earlier invasion as a precedent, encouraging a comparison which contributed to the idea of Italy as a territory, now extended to the Alps, to be defended by Rome from “foreign invaders”.²¹ What is decisive in Carlà-Uhink’s view, however, is that Pyrrhus himself may have played a role in the cultural and ethnic definition of Italy. That is because Pyrrhus presented his struggle against the Romans as that of a new Achilles against the Trojans, thus putting the Romans on an equal footing with the Trojans.²² As Carlà-Uhink stresses, it is uncertain whether the Romans had already accepted that they were descendants of the Trojan Aeneas at this time; nevertheless, Pyrrhus’ self-representation as a new Achilles may have functioned as a “trigger” or “catalyst” for such acceptance on their part during and after the war. Whatever the case, a significant long-term consequence emerged: the Greeks of the peninsula, in whose defence the king of Epirus had led his army there, found themselves excluded from the concept of Roman Italy based on their essential otherness from Roman-Italic consanguinity.

Relations between Rome and the other peoples of the Italian peninsula are also at the core of **Eloisa Paganoni**’s chapter, devoted to “Hannibal, Pyrrhus, and the Romans: Traces of Samnite Cultural Memory in Livy?” There, the author analyses at length a passage from Livy’s book 23, which recounts the 215 BCE embassy to Hannibal of two Samnite communities, the Hirpinians

20 See Plin. *NH* 3,113; Degraffi, *Inscr. Ital.* 13,1,546–547 (Roman triumph over the Sallentini).

21 The term *rex externus*, applied to Pyrrhus, significantly appears in a confrontation between the Roman Scipio and the Carthaginian Hannibal, as reported by Liv. 35,14.

22 This is confirmed by literary and numismatic evidence (Paus. 1,12,1; *BMC Thessaly* to Aetolia, 111 and 121).

and Caudinians.²³ The embassy reportedly took place during a phase of the Hannibalic War in which the Samnites were under attack by the Romans and appealed to their ally Hannibal for help against them. One of the striking aspects of the speech attributed to the Hirpinian and Caudinian envoys is their evocation of two years (*biennium*) in their peoples' history in which Pyrrhus was an ally to the Samnites and their comparison of his role to that presently played by Hannibal. In Paganoni's view, the envoys' speech is not Livy's own invention but was already present in the literary sources he used to develop the episode, which should be identified as the works of early first-century BCE historians such as Q. Claudius Quadrigarius and Valerius Antias. Specifically, Livy's positive depiction of the Hirpinians and Caudinians may be due to Quadrigarius' or Antias' having given a voice to a fragment of pro-Samnite tradition in their works, which would fit the historical context of the Social War: in this case, Livy would testify that Rome's enemies were able to exploit the memory of Pyrrhus' deeds for political purposes at the beginning of the first century BCE.

Elisabetta Lupi's chapter on "Pyrrhus as an *Exemplum* in the Political Culture of the First Century BCE" further demonstrates the still-living memory of Pyrrhus in the last century of the Roman Republic. After reminding us that the Pyrrhic War was much represented in both poetry and historiography throughout the second century BCE (including Ennius' masterpiece, the *Annales*), Lupi investigates how and why it provided a set of *exempla* in many of Cicero's writings.²⁴ The essential point that arises is that commemorating the war could serve to celebrate the merits and virtues of the Roman *nobilitas*, which explains Cicero's insistence on presenting the exploits of famous Romans who distinguished themselves in the conflict with Pyrrhus, including C. Fabricius Luscinus, Ap. Claudius Caecus, M'. Curius Dentatus, and Ti. Coruncanius.²⁵ It is no coincidence, in this context, that Cicero always provides brief pictures of the Roman *nobiles* involved in the war rather than an overall account of it. As for Pyrrhus, Cicero often compares him with Hannibal, especially in the *Laelius de amicitia* and *De officiis*. What emerges from a careful examination of the relevant passages is that both generals appear there as Rome's exemplary enemies, but they do so in different ways: Pyrrhus is considered the paradigm of the "good" enemy by virtue of his *probitas*, whereas Hannibal is the paradigm of

23 Liv. 23,42–43.

24 Regarding Cicero's view of *exempla*, Lupi rightly points to Cic. *Part. or.* 96, where the distinction between *exempla vetera* and *exempla recentia* is deployed.

25 See e.g. Cic. *Leg.* 2,58 (Fabricius); Cic. *Caecin.* 54 (Ap. Claudius); Cic. *Cato* 43 (Dentatus and Coruncanius).

the “bad” adversary by virtue of his *crudelitas*.²⁶ It follows that for Cicero, a fundamental difference in character existed between the two, an aspect also echoed in historiographical traditions.

The influence of such historiographical traditions in constructing the portrait of the Epirote king can be seen clearly in the works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Plutarch.²⁷ In the final chapter, “Pyrrhus in Italy: Liberator or Tyrant? The Stakes of a War of Image”, Nicolas L. J. Meunier demonstrates that the account of the Pyrrhic War provided by these two authors revolves around the ideological contrast between “liberty” and “tyranny”. In this regard, the story can be divided into three phases. The first corresponds to the outbreak of the conflict between Taras and Rome, with Pyrrhus coming to Italy as the liberator of the Tarantines from Roman peninsular expansionism but soon becoming an arrogant oppressor by imposing strict discipline on them. The second corresponds to the actual war, in which Pyrrhus not only proved to be a valiant general but also sought to follow diplomatic channels and reach a settlement with the Romans, thus appearing as a noble mediator rather than a tyrant. The third phase, however, mirrors the first: during his expedition to Sicily, Pyrrhus progressively ruined his relations with the Greeks to the point of appearing again as a violent oppressor. This fluctuating portrayal of the Epirote king is, of course, a way of accounting for the changing fortunes of the war before its climax in Pyrrhus’ final defeat at Maleventum. As Meunier convincingly argues, however, it is also to be considered the product of multiple traditions that merged over time, moulded by the ideological construction of memory.

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²⁶ See Cic. *Lael.* 28 and *Off.* 1,12,38.

²⁷ This is true even though books 19–20 of Dionysius’ *Roman Antiquities* are fragmentary: see above, fn. 1.

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