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The Attalid victory at Magnesia on a lost plaque from Pergamon

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Abstract

This article explores the battle scene on a small bronze plaque recovered during the 19th-century excavation of Pergamon, initially published in 1913 and subsequently lost. It argues that the most likely identification of the scene is the Battle of Magnesia, fought in 190 BC. The scene features Attalid cavalry riding to the rescue of distressed Roman legionaries, both fighting in opposition to Antiochus the Great's heavy phalanx and Gallic cavalry. The heroics of the Attalid cavalry are central to the scene, and likely reflect a courtly narrative that gave Eumenes II and his small contingent outsized credit for the joint victory.

Özet

Bu makalede, 19. Yüzyılda Pergamon kazılarında bulunan, 1913 yılında yayınlanmış ve daha sonra kaybolmuş küçük bir bronz levha üzerindeki savaş sahnesi incelenmektedir. Bu sahnenin büyük olasılıkla M.Ö. 190 yılında gerçekleşen Magnesia Savaşı'nı betimlediği ileri sürülmektedir. Sahnede, Büyük Antiochus'un ağır piyadelerine ve Galya süvarilerine karşı savaşan Roma lejyonerlerini kurtarmaya giden Attalid süvarileri gösterilmiştir. Sahnenin merkezinde yer alan kahraman Attalid süvarileri büyük olasılıkla, birlikte kazanılan zafer için haddinden fazla itibar gösterilen II. Eumenes ve onun küçük birliğinin hikayesini yansıtmaktadır.

The German excavation of the upper acropolis of Pergamon (1878–1886), led by Karl Humann and Alexander Conze, unearthed a small bronze plaque that featured a dynamic Hellenistic battle scene. The plaque has on occasion received oblique attentions from art historians using it as an esoteric *comparandum* and from military historians interested in its depiction of Hellenistic panoply. It has not, however, been the subject of a focused study as an important artefact in its own right. While small, it is a rare surviving example of a complex historical battle scene in Hellenistic art. Furthermore, a confluence of iconographic and literary evidence suggests that it represents a specific event of great importance: the Battle of Magnesia-ad-Sipylum (190 BC), in which the Roman legions, commanded by Lucius Scipio and reinforced by King Eumenes II of Pergamon, resoundingly defeated the massive Seleucid army of Antiochus III (see fig. 1 for a map of Asia Minor). It therefore commemorates a major Roman military victory from the unique perspective of Rome's allies, and embodies a nuanced cultural response to Rome's military intervention in the eastern Mediterranean.

Unfortunately, the Pergamon bronze plaque is missing in action, possibly lost during World War II (Proeva 2008). The only surviving visual record is the original pen-and-ink illustration from the initial publication (Conze 1913: 250–51). In this report, the plaque was grouped under miscellaneous bronze pieces, with no findspot specified. Even if we cannot place the Pergamon bronze plaque more precisely, the broader context of the upper acropolis itself (fig. 2) positions the plaque in the midst of an ideologically charged set of interlocking monumental structures that embodied the secular and divine power of the Attalid dynasty, including the Great Altar to Zeus, the Sanctuary of Athena Nikephoros, a series of palaces, an arsenal, a royal library and a theatre (Strootman 2014: 83–88). It is unclear what the bronze is; the excavators posited that it was some sort of 'appliqué' (*beschlagstuck*). The scene has much in common with combat scenes on metal belt buckles

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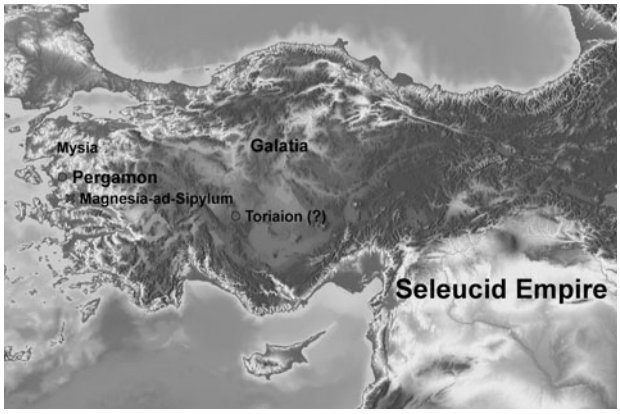


Fig. 1. Map of western Asia Minor (StepMap).

from Illyria (Proeva 2008: 585). It is tempting to think that the Pergamon bronze is a belt buckle as well, although, given its size (24cm), it could also have been fitted as an appliqué buckle on a larger-than-life bronze statue.

H. Polenz (1978: 200–01) has argued that the plaque is in fact Celtic, brought to Pergamon as booty. But there are critical differences from the Celtic/northern Balkan models cited by Polenz and Proeva. These tend to have large crude figures, sometimes veering towards the abstract. The figures on the Pergamon bronze plaque, however, are far more fine and precise, even accounting for the distortion of the illustration. The Celtic/Illyrian plaques also feature a variety of animals mixed in with the fighters: serpents, dogs, birds, etc. The Pergamon plaque is notably free of fauna, save the snake-hair on the Gorgon at the right-hand end. While it is not unlikely that the concept of a combat scene on a plaque/buckle was indeed appropriated from Pergamon's Celtic neighbours, thus explaining the many northern Balkan *comparanda*, the Pergamon bronze plaque itself is unquestionably Hellenistic.

The battle scene

Reading the iconography of the battle scene involves squinting through three veils. The ancient composer(s) of the scene by necessity used weapons and equipment to differentiate between combatants, but we must account for imperfect knowledge of contemporary military panoply, as well as the compromises in terms of detail necessary to render the scene in miniature. Next, the plaque itself suffered moderate damage prior to excavation, further distorting the fine details of the metalwork; a small portion of the plaque is missing altogether, decapitating one of the figures in the scene. Finally, the scene survives only through an archeological illustrator's pen-and-ink drawing. The illustration is of high quality and professionalism, but the act of rendering would have added, inevitably, further distortions. Thus while minor differentiation in armour or clothing might under ordinary circumstances be a factor for the identification of a particular figure, my discussion of the scene's iconography will focus on macro-features that survive the damage and distortion that lies between the artist's ancient conception of the scene and the archaeologist's modern rendition.

It has been suggested in passing (Callaghan 1981: 117; Markle 1999: 248) that the scene likely represents the Battle of Magnesia. Other identifications have been posited, in particular that the scene might be a Celtomachy (Marszal 2000: 209–10) or even a battle between Macedonians and Illyrians (Sekunda 2013: 96–98).

The battle as depicted has the following features (fig. 3; the combatants of the scene have been numbered (1) to (12) for reference in the text).

A A cavalry charge of two Hellenistic-style lancers with shields – (4) and (7) – as well as one unshielded horseman: (8).

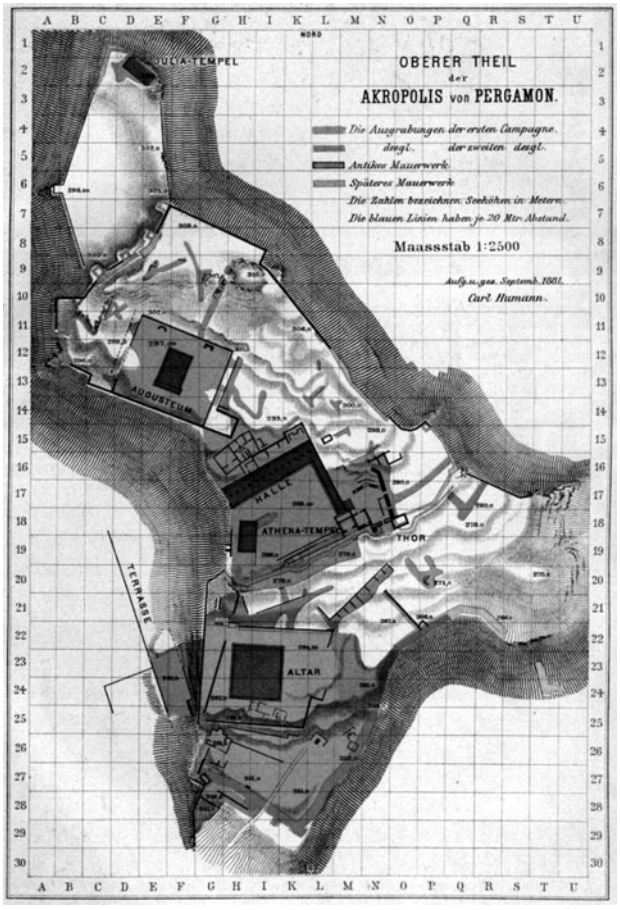


Fig. 2. Map detailing the first two campaigns of excavation on the upper acropolis of Pergamon. A third campaign, from 1883–1886 focused on the western slope, processing fill from earlier excavations for small objects and uncovering a theatre. The exact findspot of the Pergamon plaque is unknown (Wikimedia Commons; map by Carl Humann, first published in Conze et al. 1882).

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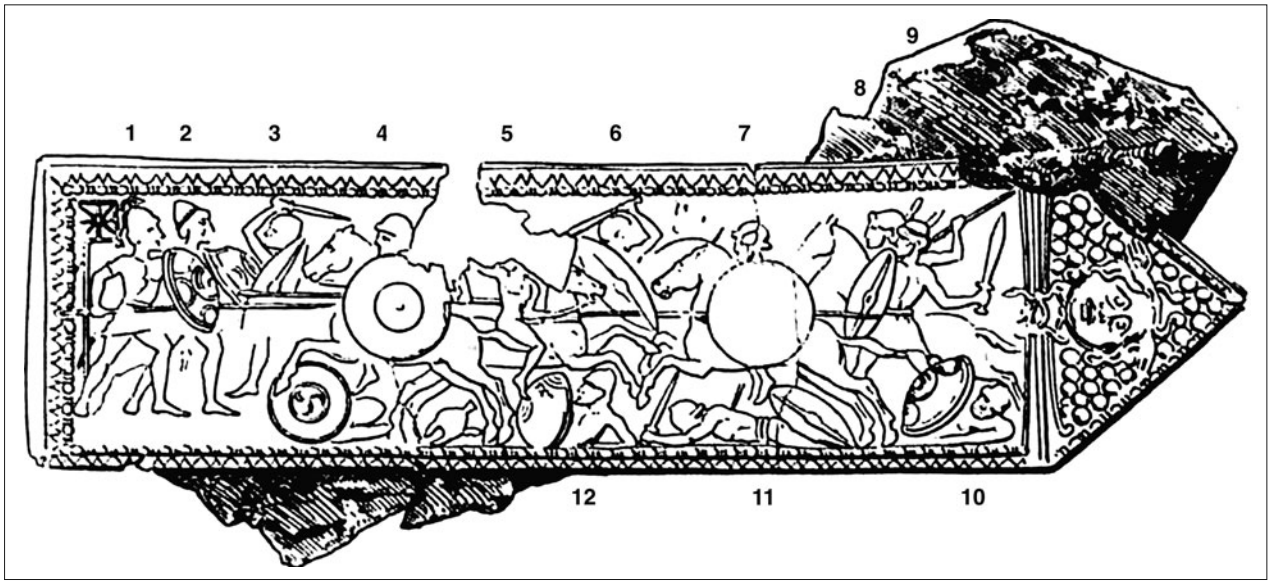


Fig. 3. The bronze plaque from Pergamon (Conze 1913: 251). Author's identifications: (1), (2), (10) and (12) = Seleucid phalangites; (3), (6), (9) and (11) = Roman legionaries; (4) and (7) = Attalid cavalryman; (5) = Gallic cavalryman; (8) = Roman cavalryman.

B Swordsmen with plumed helmets (topped with large feathers, rather than a crest), wearing tunics and carrying oval shields: (3), (6), (9) and (11).

C A Hellenistic-style infantry phalanx on the defensive, with several phalangites already dead: (1), (2), (10) and (12).

D A nude cavalryman riding counter to the Hellenistic horse: (5).

The Hellenistic cavalry – (4) and (7) – are clearly doing very well, riding roughshod over fallen bodies and ready to impale the surviving phalangites with their lances. But they attack from the right, whereas the victorious side in ancient Mediterranean battle scenes usually attacks from the more propitious left.

In the case of a scene fashioned onto a worn object, however, such as a belt buckle, there are two lefts for the artist to choose from, the viewer's left and the wearer's left. I suspect in this case the cavalry attack from the left of the wearer. For comparison we may note the scene on the decorated armour worn by a bronze statue of Germanicus unearthed in Amelia, Italy, in 1964, which features Achilles' triumph over Troilus (see fig. 4, with discussion in Rocco 2008, who interestingly suggests that the images on the breastplate may have been produced in Pergamon). In most depictions of the incident, Achilles stages his successful ambush from the left side of the scene. On Germanicus' armour, however, Achilles attacks from the viewer's right – but the prince's left.

The Gorgon head may also offer a clue as to who is the victor and who is the vanquished. One always wants to fight facing away from the Gorgon's petrifying scowl, which is usually directed at the designated enemy. On this scene the Gorgon stares down the Macedonian phalanx, while the Hellenistic cavalrymen and swordsmen have their backs turned safely towards her gaze (Andrew Stewart, personal communication January 2015).

It does not seem an unfair starting postulate, given the general findspot on the upper acropolis at Pergamon, that the successful Hellenistic cavalrymen, victorious and central to the scene, are Attalid. Indeed, I think we would be very surprised if any artistic representation found in this courtly locus prominently featured any other victorious cavalry besides Attalid riders. Now the Attalids did not



Fig. 4. A scene on the decorated armour worn by a bronze statue of Germanicus unearthed in Amelia, Italy. Achilles attacks Troilus from the viewer's right – but from the left of the wearer of the armour (Wikimedia Commons).

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often triumph in pitched battle against Hellenistic opponents. In wars against Achaeus (Polybius 4.48.8–12), Philip V (Polybius 16.1) and Prusias II (Polybius 32.15), Attalid kings retreated back to their citadel, rather than fighting and winning set-piece battles (Ma 2013: 59–61). There is one exception: Magnesia, where Attalid cavalry contributed to the encirclement and defeat of the Seleucid phalanx. Magnesia is indeed one of the few battles in which we can say for certain that the Attalid cavalry faced off against a Hellenistic pike phalanx.

The swordsmen carrying oval shields with vertical 'barleycorn' spines further strengthen the association with Magnesia. The overall panoply of the swordsmen corresponds well to that of the mid-Republican Roman legionary. Indeed, compare (3), (6) and (9) with the Roman soldier imprinted on the late second-century BC coin of Minucius Thermus (fig. 5; Crawford 1974: no. 319.1), as well as the Roman infantrymen on the Pydna monument of Aemilius Paullus at Delphi, ca 167 BC (discussed below, see fig. 9). On the bronze, the oval shields with vertical spines could certainly represent the curved oval Roman *scutum*, as, for example, illustrated on an early third-century BC bronze currency bar (fig. 6; Crawford 1974: no. 7; on the Roman shield, see Eichberg 1987; Feugère 2002: 92–96; Bishop, Coulston 2006: 61–63). The infantry short-swords are perfectly compatible with the Roman *gladius hispaniensis* (Quesada-Sanz 1997), which Polybius (6.23.7) reports is well suited to the sort of slashing blows that the swordsmen on the bronze make (cf. Livy 31.34.4).

All of the swordsmen wear helmets, the shape of which, in most instances, is poorly preserved. Several of the helmets seem to have at least one plume on them, in particular those of (8) and (9); this is in keeping with Polybius' report (6.23.12) that Romans wore upright ostrich feathers on their helmets. The most clearly depicted helmet is that on (11), a fallen swordsman, and its conical shape and knobbed top closely match the distinctive profile of the Montefortino helmet commonly (although not exclusively) used by Roman and Italian troops



Fig. 5. A Roman infantryman, on a denarius of Minucius Thermus, ca 103 BC (© Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; Kathleen Boone Samuels Memorial Fund and Ceres Foundation, Inc; photo by Travis Fullerton).



Fig. 6. A Roman aes signatum*, early third century BC, showing a Roman* scutum *with the vertical 'barleycorn' boss, similar to the shields on the Pergamon bronze plaque (Trustees of the British Museum).*

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(Junkelman 2000: 93–123; Bishop, Coulston 2006: 65–66). While it is difficult to determine details of clothing on the plaque, the swordsmen on the Pergamon bronze plaque are not naked; (9) wears a belted tunic, not dissimilar to the belted tunics worn by Republican Roman soldiers on the Pydna monument (fig. 9) as well as the so-called Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus (Stilp 2001). Another Roman soldier (11) certainly wears a belt, and, while he appears to be topless, he could be wearing the sort of muscle cuirass worn by some of the Roman figures on the Pydna monument (fig. 9, far left-hand side). Furthermore, some depictions of third-century BC Roman infantrymen show them fighting without armour, wearing only a belted tunic and helmet (Sekunda 1996: 15–17).

According to Livy, the first phase of the Battle of Magnesia was a resounding Seleucid success, as Antiochus III personally commanded a successful cavalry charge against the Roman left flank, driving the Roman and Italian infantry units on Lucius Scipio's left wing back to the walls of their camp (Livy 37.42.7–8). This may be why the three Roman infantrymen on the Pergamon bronze plaque are largely out of formation, fighting in haphazard melees, in contrast to the disciplined close-order Seleucid phalanx on the left-hand edge. The initial Roman setback would further explain why a Roman soldier (11) is prominently featured amongst the fallen, despite overall reports of light Roman casualties (324 according to Livy 37.44.2). The fatal blow has come from an arrow, and Antiochus deployed thousands of Mysian and Elamite archers at Magnesia (Livy 37.40.8–10). The dead Roman infantryman, with an arrow rather shamefully in his back, harkens to the failure and retreat of the Roman legionary elements in the opening phases of the battle.

P.J. Callaghan curiously posits that the swordsmen are Mysian light infantry fighting on the Attalid side. They certainly are not if the scene is indeed Magnesia; the Mysians all fought on the Seleucid side, as archers, not swordsmen (Livy 37.40.8; Markle 1999: 248). We could entertain the possibility that the swordsmen are Hellenistic *thureophoroi*, a form of light infantry deployed in the East and increasingly common over the course of the second century BC (Sekunda 2001). Yet one of the swordsmen (3) assails the two phalangites directly. Ancient historians are quite adamant that light *thureophoroi* infantry were not in a position to combat heavy phalangites (Plutarch *Philopoemen* 9.2). The image of the swordsman hacking his way into the pike phalanx evokes a battlefield trope assigned specifically to Roman legionaries (Plutarch *Pyrrhus* 21.6; *Aemelius* 20.3).

J. Marszal (2000: 209–10) argues that the swordsmen are in fact Celts fighting as *thureophoroi*, and that the scene should be viewed as a Celtomachy. He himself notes a major problem with this identification: it would feature 'Celts' fighting alongside Pergamene cavalrymen, and it would be odd for the dynasty to celebrate officially collaboration with Celtic warriors, given that it devoted so much propaganda to celebrating victories over the Gallic other (see below). Furthermore, when Hellenistic armies did use Gallic mercenaries, they tended to use them as skirmishers on the flanks (Livy 37.40.5–10; Marszal 2000: 209) and not to confront the enemy's heavy infantry directly. A scene featuring Attalid cavalry fighting alongside Roman legionaries against an enemy phalanx, however, would be both ideologically and tactically unproblematic.

At Magnesia, the dire situation on the Roman left wing was salvaged by the cavalry charge against the horse and light infantry on the Seleucid left, personally spearheaded by Eumenes and his 800 Pergamene cavalry (Livy 37.39.9–10; Appian *Syriaca* 34). The Pergamon bronze plaque features three equestrian figures charging from right to left, two of which have unfeathered helmets and carry long lances held underhand. These two figures – (4) and (7) – likely depict Attalid cavalrymen, carrying the Hellenistic 'whittled down' cavalry version of the Macedonian sarisa (*xustos*; Polybius 5.53.2; Asclepiodotus 1.3) and round cavalry shields (Sekunda 2013: 69–71). A third cavalryman (8), charging leftwards on the far right, has a plumed helmet and carries a spear wielded in an over-handed fashion. This figure is perhaps one of the 2,200 Roman and Italian cavalrymen grouped under Eumenes, armed with a shorter cavalry spear (*doru*; Polybius 6.25.8). The close pairing of this horseman with a legionary swordsman (9) may be designed to reinforce the notion that the third cavalryman is Roman. Note that this cavalryman does not carry a shield, just like the shieldless Roman cavalrymen on the Pydna monument (fig. 9, right-hand side).

Two Seleucid phalangites stand firm in the left-hand corner, representing the main phalanx, which at Magnesia found itself trapped between the flanking attack of the Romano-Attalid cavalry and the legionary infantry to its front (Appian *Syriaca* 35). Both carry a Macedonian-style decorated shield, which was widely used across the Hellenistic East (Liampi 1998). Behind the close-order phalangites on the Pergamon bronze plaque is a battle standard with the 'Vergina star' emblem. This is the earliest attestation of a Hellenistic battle standard (Sekunda 2007: 337), and, while it is unclear when standards came into wide use amongst Hellenistic armies, the need for unit standards may correspond to the somewhat unique Seleucid tactical disposition for the battle. Antiochus divided his main phalanx at Magnesia into ten divisions of 1,600 men apiece, each of which might require its own banner (Livy 37.40.1–2). The presence of the sunburst does not suggest that the phalanx is Antigonid Macedonian, rather than Seleucid, as the star/sunburst was a common symbol, not exclusive to the borders of Macedonia. It appears, for

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example, on the well-known Cybele medallion from the Seleucid colony of Ai Khanoum (National Museum of Afghanistan no. 04.42.7). Perhaps more pertinently, the spoils displayed on the balustrade of the Sanctuary of Athena in Pergamon almost certainly come from the war with Antiochus the Great (Bohn 1885: pl. 44; Kähler 1948: 138–39), including ship rams suggesting the sea-fight at Myonessus, a broken chariot referencing the thwarted chariot assault at Magnesia and heavy cavalry armour, alluding to the 6,000 Seleucid armoured cavalrymen present at the same battle. Amongst these Seleucid spoils is a shield with a sunburst blazon similar to the one on the Pergamon bronze plaque. Ideologically, the star/sunburst emblem was perfectly compatible with the Seleucid dynasty's close identification with Apollo, god of light and sun (for example Justin 15.4.3–6).

The Pergamon bronze plaque is very explicit about the slaughter of Seleucid soldiers. Two dead phalangites are clearly visible – (10) and (12) – while Macedonian-style shields, helmets and greaves lie strewn on the battlefield. Livy (37.44.1) reports some 53,000 Seleucid soldiers were killed, although this figure is undoubtedly a gross exaggeration. Nonetheless, Seleucid losses were presumably heavy, and the Pergamon bronze plaque emphasises the carnage and detritus of the battlefield.

The politics of victory

The Pergamon bronze plaque therefore portrays a Roman victory, with a twist: the primary heroes of the scene are Attalid cavalrymen, riding to the rescue of discombobulated and even dying Roman infantry. Certainly the Battle of Magnesia was an event that Eumenes and his successors had great reason to commemorate, as it cemented their status as the preeminent Roman allies in the eastern Mediterranean and secured for them a dominant geopolitical position in Asia Minor.

The Romans largely acknowledged the Attalid contribution to the war with Antiochus the Great. The Peace of Apamea forced Antiochus III to provide indemnity payments to the Attalid fisc and provide rations to Eumenes' army (Polybius 21.42.20–22). Seleucid territorial concessions were split between Pergamon and Rhodes, Rome's primary allies. The Attalid kingdom was thus greatly enlarged, transformed overnight from a petty duchy with royal aspirations into the pre-eminent regional power. At the conclusion of his Galatian campaign, Manlius Vulso told Galatian ambassadors that they would have to wait for the arrival of Eumenes before he would grant peace terms, a deliberate nod to a loyal collaborator (Livy 38.37.6).

Yet Eumenes' close associations with the Romans carried domestic liability as well. Still reeling from the unexpected expansion of his kingdom, he sent an effusive letter to the city at Toriaion insisting, 'I have full authority over the land, by virtue of having received it from the Romans who prevailed both in war and in treaty' (Jonnes, Ricl 1997). Such deference to Rome was unbecoming of a Hellenic king, who was supposed to win his land by his own spear. Instead, the Scipio brothers' invasion of Asia Minor had salvaged a dire domestic military situation, as Antiochus III had penned Eumenes within the walls of Pergamon until the arrival of the legions altered the strategic dynamic (Livy 37.18). The Pergamon bronze plaque, however, puts the king's dependence on the Romans in a more flattering light, emphasising Eumenes' vital manoeuvres in the battle and portraying him not as some Roman toady, but rather as an architect of the very Roman victory that so dramatically extended his realm.

One of the Seleucid units defeated by Eumenes' combined Attalid-Roman charge was a brigade of 2,500 Galatian cavalry (Livy 37.40.13), and it is notable that there is a single cavalryman facing right (5), opposing the main cavalry charge, who is completely nude, suggesting a Galatian warrior (Callaghan 1981: 117). Galatian contingents supplied some 3,000 heavy infantry and 2,500 cavalry to Antiochus' total force of 60,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry, representing a little less than 8% of the total Seleucid force (Bar Kochva 1976: 166–70). The role of the Galatian cavalry in the surviving battle narrative is negligible, but their presence was convenient for the purposes of propaganda, as it evoked the carefully constructed Hellenistic trope of the Celtic menace (Marszal 2000; Mitchell 2005; Strootman 2005). The celebration of victories over the Celts was already central to Attalid propaganda prior to the Battle of Magnesia (for example Pausanias 10.15.3; Dittenberger 1903–1905: 273). Eumenes no doubt wished to follow in his father's footsteps. Attalid claims also competed with old Seleucid propaganda about Antiochus I's victory over the Galatians at the so-called Battle of the Elephants, which formed an ideological pillar for Seleucid control in Asia Minor (Coşkun 2012). Even the Romans actively embraced the notion of the Galatian menace after Magnesia. The consul Manlius Vulso engaged in a brutal campaign against the Galatians in 188 BC, supposedly in retaliation for their support of Antiochus III (Grainger 1995). On the Pergamon bronze plaque, it is the Attalid horsemen who sweep away the Galatian rider, not the plumed Roman foot soldier or horseman, thus establishing Eumenes' credentials as a king capable of vanquishing the Galatians in his own right.

The Pergamon plaque and Hellenistic battle scenes

Callaghan suggests that the Pergamon bronze may replicate the content of a larger battle painting (1981: 117). While his hypothesis is unprovable, it is certainly plausible. We do know of at least one large Pergamene

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mural containing a battle scene, celebrating a victory over the Gauls (Pausanias 1.4.6). Regardless, the Pergamon bronze plaque embodies a particular genre in Hellenistic narrative art: the 'royal battle scene' (Pollitt 1986: 45). The origins of this genre can be traced to works celebrating the exploits of Alexander the Great (Pliny *Natural History* 35.93, 96, 99, 110), but only a few examples survive of battle scenes that are at once historical (based on specific battles/campaigns/wars) and complex (numerous and variegated combatants). In particular, we have the so-called Alexander sarcophagus, decorated with a frieze depicting combat between Persians and Macedonians (fig. 7; Schefold 1968), and the Alexander mosaic from Pompeii, widely believed to preserve the content of a Hellenistic painting depicting Alexander's triumph over Darius (fig. 8; Stewart 1993: 130–50; Cohen 1997). Cavalry features prominently on both these surviving royal battle scenes, as it does on the Pergamon bronze plaque, in no small part because Hellenistic kings from Alexander onwards fought mounted and personally commanded their cavalry in battle. While the Alexander sarcophagus is given over entirely to melee combat, the Alexander mosaic, like the Pergamon bronze, incorporates an organised infantry formation around which more fluid fighting takes place. In the mosaic, the diagonal rows of pikes looming in the background hint at the approaching Macedonian phalanx, suggesting that Darius is trapped between the hammer of Alexander's cavalry and the anvil of his advancing phalanx. The Pergamon bronze, meanwhile, shows the Seleucid phalanx with its back against the wall, pinned in the far corner of the scene as the Attalid cavalry bears down upon it.

The 'royal battle scene' on the plaque interfaces with another genre in contemporary Mediterranean art: Roman triumphal scenes. The Romans commissioned historical paintings and relief scenes to celebrate their great victories, increasingly employing Greek artists to produce works in Hellenic styles (for example Pliny *Natural History* 35.135; Holliday 1997). The Roman war with Antiochus the Great inspired at least two pieces of celebratory artwork. Lucius Scipio commissioned and displayed a painting of the Battle of Magnesia on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, which Eumenes may have seen on his various visits to the city (Pliny *Natural History* 35.22). Even men in the ranks celebrated their glorious deeds with art; the Latin colonists at Fregellae commemorated the war with now fragmentary reliefs featuring phalangites, legionaries, war elephants and warships (Coarelli 1996: 239–57). Roman triumphal art was very similar in form to its Hellenistic models (Gruen 1992: 143–44), but essentially stood the 'royal battle scene' on its head: instead of celebrating the victory of Hellenistic kings, it appropriated the genre to revel in their defeat.

I have already mentioned in passing one surviving example of Roman triumphal art (although not produced for the specific purpose of a Roman triumphal parade), namely the frieze on Aemilius Paullus' Pydna monument at Delphi, where it was constructed specifically for a Hellenic audience (see fig. 9 for one of the four panels of the frieze; Kähler 1965; Taylor 2016). Shortly after the battle in 168 BC, Paullus appropriated a pillar that he found under construction in honour of the defeated Macedonian king Perseus (now Paullus' captive) and topped the monument with his own statue. The statue base was



Fig. 7. Panel from the Alexander Sarcophagus, featuring combat between Macedonians and Persians (Art Resource).

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Fig. 8. The Alexander mosaic from Pompeii, widely believed to be based on a Hellenistic painting commemorating one of Alexander's victories over the Persian king Darius (Art Resource).

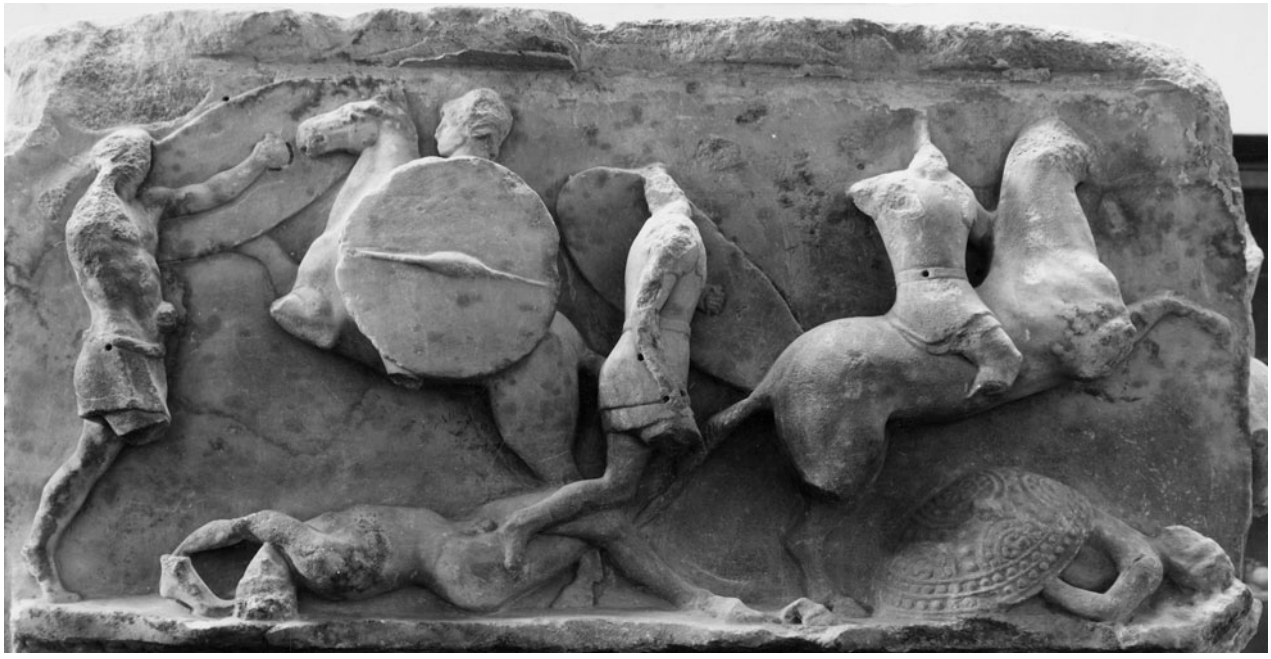


Fig. 9. Panel IV of the frieze decorating Aemilius Paullus' Pydna monument (Art Resource).

decorated with a frieze depicting a combat scene between Roman and Macedonian soldiers. The Pydna frieze emphasises cavalry combat, keeping with the tradition of royal battle scenes, and in spite of the fact that Pydna was predominantly an infantry fight (although Roman cavalry were deployed in the pursuit). There is no sign of the Macedonian phalanx that features so prominently on the Pergamon bronze plaque. This may be because the Roman legions were in fact roughly handled by the Macedonian phalanx at Pydna, just as they were previously at Magnesia. The combatants on the Pydna frieze include nude Gallic warriors (fig. 9, bottom left), taking advantage of the fact that Perseus had a small number of Gallic mercenaries in his army.

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The Pergamon bronze makes a delicate negotiation between the genres of 'royal battle scene' and 'Roman triumphal art'. Magnesia, after all, did not involve one king defeating the barbarian other, but one civilised king defeating another, with the help of a huge horde of Italian barbarians. Furthermore, Magnesia was ultimately a Roman victory, in the sense that the Romans committed the vast preponderance of the troops and achieved the sort of decisive outcome that Eumenes could never hope to have won on his own. The scene's solution to this tricky negotiation is surprisingly effective; it features Attalid cavalry making an Alexandrian style charge, but depicts only Seleucid infantry, giving no hint of Antiochus' own dashing equestrian exploits in the battle. The bronze prominently features a barbarian warrior fighting for the vanquished king, whose savage nudity puts Eumenes' own barbarian allies in good light. While it was necessary to admit the Romans into the scene, it depicts the Romans in un-triumphant disarray, so unlike the confident killers that stride across the frieze of the Pydna monument.

It is not impossible that the Pergamon bronze plaque (or the hypothetical work it was based upon) is contemporary with the Pydna monument. The down-dating of the Great Altar to the 160s (Callaghan 1981; Rotroff 1996; Andreae 1997) suggests that this decade was particularly important for dynastic self-fashioning in Pergamon, while the splashy showiness of Aemilius Paullus' victory prompted its own cultural counter-response from other Hellenistic powers, for example Antiochus IV's ostentatious parade through Daphne in reaction to Paullus' lavish games at Dium (Polybius 25.1). If the Pergamon bronze plaque does indeed date to the 160s BC, it may represent an ideological rejoinder as relations between Eumenes and the Roman senate deteriorated during that decade (Polybius 30.19, 31.1.2–7), in part over disagreements about the king's aggressive Gallic campaigns. The plaque might therefore evoke the military benefits Eumenes had brought to the Roman people, and recall a moment when the Galatians had been unproblematic mutual enemies. Even if the plaque dates to happier times in the 180s or 170s BC, it nonetheless represents a fascinating depiction of a major Roman military victory from the point of view of a Hellenic collaborator.

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