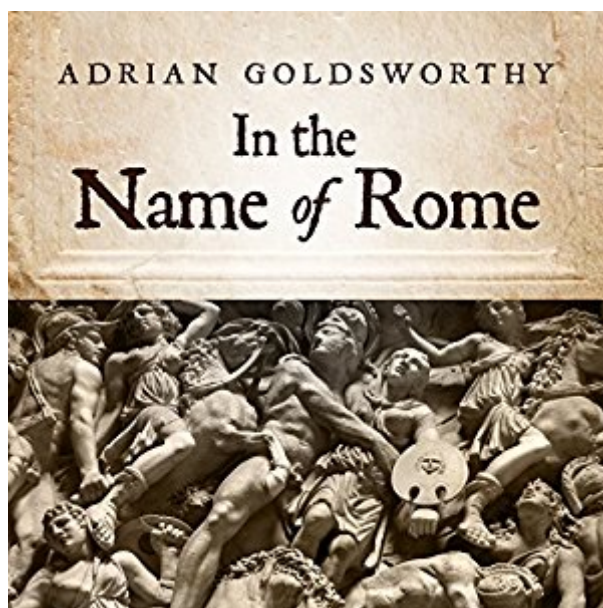


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In The Name Of Rome: The Men Who Won The Roman Empire



Synopsis

Adrian Goldsworthy has received wide acclaim for his exceptional writing on the Roman Empire - including high praise from the acclaimed military historian and author John Keegan - and here he offers a new perspective on the empire by focusing on its greatest generals, including Scipio Africanus, Marius, Pompey, Caesar, and Titus. Each chapter paints a fascinating portrait of a single general, offering in-depth insight into his leadership skills and victories as well as each one's pioneering strategies, many of which are still used today. In the process this absorbing, accessible history tells the complete story of Roman warfare, from the bitter struggle with Carthage in the third century BC to the last desperate attempt to win back the Western Empire in the sixth century AD.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 17 hours 48 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: February 23, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01BNV6BT8

Best Sellers Rank: #90 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Ancient #259

in Books > History > Europe > Italy #317 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Europe

Customer Reviews

In this book, Goldsworthy seeks to answer the questions, why some Roman generals succeeded outstandingly and what lessons we can draw. To answer them, he looks at a series of generals from the Punic Wars (3C BCE), which ensured Rome's survival and determined its future course, to the last great general, Belisarius, who tried and failed to recapture the western portion of the Empire in the 6C CE. Each general had different styles and faced unique circumstances, but shared certain traits, namely, they ensured that their troops were logistically prepared and well trained; they shared the risks but more often maintained distance for purposes of command with an overview; and they instinctively knew where and when to press an engagement. Not all of them were popular with the men, many suffered distrust and neglect by the politicians they served, and their popularity and

glory were fickle at best. Each chapter offers a detailed portrait of one general, told in a narrative style and within the broader context of what was going on, with comparisons to their immediate rivals for power and how well they fit with current circumstances. For example, to counter the seemingly unbeatable Hannibal, Fabius Maximus developed a strategy of delay and avoidance, buying time for Rome to rebuild its forces after a series of defeats and thereby taking advantage of his adversary's mistaken assumption that Rome would sue for peace and come to reasonable terms. Though disdained as a dishonorable coward, he enabled Marcellus and later Scipio Africanus to pursue more offensive strategies. In contrast, Julius Caesar fought to enhance his own glory, to become one of the most powerful and famous Romans of all time. They are wonderful studies of character and leadership. That makes it a very different book from Goldsworthy's classic *Roman Warfare*, which offers neither narrative nor individual portraits, but concentrates instead on more technical detail. The history of Rome is also brilliantly encapsulated. When its period as Mediterranean superpower began, the greatest threat it faced came from Carthage, a trading empire opposite it. At that time, the Roman army was composed of land-owning farmers, clearly amateurs who needed to return for the harvest season or face financial ruin. Once triumphant, Rome turned to conquest, eventually dominating the entire Mediterranean region, this time with a massive popular army that became a career for the poor and an almost managerial profession for aristocrats. It then became stable, a sprawling geographical patchwork that required a very different army to defend it; here, it was composed of smaller forces of different ethnicities and even mercenaries. As countries were absorbed, local aristocrats were allowed to take part as participants and citizens, ensuring their loyalty and widening the base of talent. While it helps if the reader knows this context already, it is not necessary. The political calculus is also explained in perfect detail. Generals almost always came from the aristocrats, who were born to rule. During the time of the Republic, victory and glory were fundamental to the cultivation of political power: you had to win to rule for a limited time at the top of the hierarchy. However, highly competent generals were also feared as would-be kings or dictators, which led to their mistreatment at the hands of jealous senators. Though Scipio and others grudgingly retired into obscurity after outstanding careers, this later resulted in genuine threats to the political order: as armies became professionalized (a gradual process, Goldsworthy argues), they became loyal more to their generals than to the Republic itself, which was regarded as quasi-religious but proved politically unable to provide for retired soldiers. With his war on Pompey and the Boni, Julius Caesar definitively ended this, of course, but he had predecessors who waged civil war, i.e. Caius Marius and Sulla. Following the death of the Republic, there was a constant tension between the Emperor and his generals: the former needed them to

fight effectively, but feared that they would usurp power. Because Generals still came from the largely reconstituted Senate, it remained a hotbed of political intrigue that required constant attention. Often, by acclamation from their men or via their own ambition, they did indeed seize power, particularly when the Empire was so big that generals had to operate in faraway regions for lengthy periods of time. This resulted in periods of catastrophic instability, draining resources from defense and soon even maintenance of its vast territories. That is one reason why Rome declined over a long period of time. Though it is not my subject, there is also plenty about military tactics and strategy. The reader can study grand wars of attrition (Gaul), skirmishes that led to negotiated peace or fealty (Parthia), and sieges (Jerusalem). Throughout, the limitations of the time - slow communications, difficult transport, and muscle-dependent weaponry - offer interesting contrasts with present day technologies. Goldsworthy even addresses the relevance of classical studies to the conduct of modern war in his concluding chapter. This is a thoroughly engrossing read by a master writer and scholar. Goldsworthy is setting the standard for popular histories of Rome. Recommended warmly.

Very good. Goldsworthy weaves mini-biographies of Rome's greatest captains into a compelling historical narrative describing the rise and fall of the empire itself. Moving effortlessly between strategic context and tactical detail, the reader is carried along by the author's brisk but lucid pace. This book is scholarly in tone, but can be easily read and understood by the layman. Although Goldsworthy leans heavily on other historical texts, he is hardly a slavish follower of them and highlights those areas where the historical record is in doubt or dispute. Goldsworthy helpfully includes a useful glossary that allows his readers to identify and differentiate the Roman terms for titles and formations that may seem ancient but still resonate today. In fact, as Goldsworthy concludes, the Roman way of war is very much akin to what we now call small wars or insurgencies and, for this reason, may still contain lessons for us today.

Goldsworthy is always worth reading, but he is also always "just a touch" - just a touch more verbose than he needs to be, and his prose just a touch too dense to allow his sentences to disappear so that his readers can be swept up in his narrative flow. "Late Goldsworthy" is a more purely enjoyable read than "Early Goldsworthy," as his later works suffer less from this than their predecessors. This is an early work - recently republished - yet still worth reading as an enjoyable look into the political and military webs some of Rome's "Not Just the Great" commanders spun, lived and died within. The insights gained from this work are more innately understood with the

march of Rome's Legions in Goldsworthy's later books (his biography of Caesar is superb; his chapters on Caesars Gallic wars are worth the purchase of the book alone). Still, the greatest gift readers receive in "In the Name of Rome" is learning about the men who, while not all Caesars, Pompeys, or Scipios, were still impactful players in one of history's most magnificently compelling stories.

I stumbled upon this on overdrive and was only half way through it when my time ran out and I immediately bought this with the audible audition. It is a great read/listen. Excellent fast paced analysis of the great Roman commanders of both the republic and empire. I can't wait to listen to it again to let more of the facts and stories sink in. So much information presented so smoothly.

Biography on the level of Plutarch and beyond! Dr. Goldsworthy offers the most famous heroes of Rome and their defense of both republic and empire. Certainly a must-have addition to any ancient history library.

Although it's not a concise history of Rome, the author gives a good overview of the political developments of the roman history whenever it is needed to read on informed on the important details. The military decisions are always presented in context of the international and roman political situation. The book sheds light not only the military abilities of these roman generals, but their skills as politicians and diplomats are also discussed in detail. Also you can get a fair bit of understanding of how the roman legions operated and what units were their backbones. Also there are descriptions of specific battles, sieges and the tactics employed by the forces involved. All in all it's a great overview of roman military history with the focus on Rome's best generals and the evolution of the tactics and forces at their disposal. I'd recommend this book even for those who are not interested that strongly in history or military history, as there are plenty of fascinating examples of different leadership and problem solving techniques - not to mention the fact that in Rome a general couldn't remain only a good soldier and military leader, one had to be a cunning, intelligent and sharp politician too.

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