

Alésia and Kalkriese compared and contrasted: local chauvinism, nationalistic fervor, and sober archaeology

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MICHEL REDDÉ et SIEGMAR VON SCHNURBEIN (sous la direction de), *ALÉSIA ET LA BATAILLE DU TEUTOBURG. UN PARALLÈLE CRITIQUE DES SOURCES. Actes du colloque franco-allemand organisé par l'École pratique des hautes études, la Römisch-Germanische Kommission de l'Institut archéologique allemand et l'Institut historique allemand, avec le concours de la Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, du Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche, du Centre national de la recherche scientifique et de l'Université franco-allemande* (Beihefte der Francia Band 66; Jan Thorbecke Verlag, Ostfildern 2008). Pp. 345, figs. 73. ISBN 978-3-7995-7461-7. EUR 64.

This excellent, important, and most enjoyable volume contains 21 articles (9 in French, 12 in German¹) from a Franco-German colloquium held at the Institut historique allemand/Deutsches Historisches Institut in Paris in April, 2005. The colloquium was itself a sequel to the joint Franco-German campaign of survey and excavation carried out between 1991 and 1997 at Alésia (Alise-Sainte-Reine) in eastern France under the direction of the two joint editors of the volume, M. Reddé and S. von Schnurbein. Alésia is where Caesar inflicted upon Vercingetorix in 52 B.C. the decisive defeat that sealed forever the Roman conquest of Gaul.

At the same time as this work was going on at Alésia, excavation was also taking place at Kalkriese near Osnabrück in N Germany, revealed to be the site of the *clades Variana*, long sought but discovered only in 1987 by Major Tony Clunn of the Royal Engineers, using a metal detector.² Here Arminius, a young Cheruscan noble, had inflicted an equally decisive defeat in A.D. 9 on the Romans under Publius Quinctilius Varus *in Teutoburgiensi saltu*.³ Three Roman legions were annihilated and the Romans driven out of N Germany and back across the Rhine for good. It surely ranks with Cannae and Carrhae as the greatest of Rome's defeats, and with Carrhae alone for its long-term consequences.

The evidence from both sites has been published at much greater length elsewhere, but it is useful to have it summarized here. Thus von Schnurbein (195-208) sets out some of the results of the last 20 years' work at Alésia, previously published in two comprehensive volumes edited by the same editors as the present volume.⁴ The Kalkriese evidence is briefly (perhaps too briefly) presented by S. Wilbers-Rost (209-26), while H.-M. von Kaenel (227-43) discusses the coin finds from both sites, S. Sievers (245-59) the weapons and small finds from Alésia, and J. Harnecker (261-76) those from Kalkriese. G. Moosbauer (315-20) traces the development of the Kalkriese project, and the footnotes to his article and that of Wilbers-Rost give references to the many publications arising from the excavations.

This is a rich plum-pudding of a book, written with gusto, as if the contributors believed in what they were doing, and were enjoying themselves. Its aim, as the editors define it (10), is

1 A review of this book that has already appeared in a British journal complains of the lack of summaries in English. This is remarkably insular, even for a Romano-British archaeologist. I have, however, taken the hint and provided a fuller account than usual, in English, of the contents of the various articles, in case it may perhaps be found useful.

2 His account of his own work is extremely interesting and there are some soldierly insights, interspersed with a fictional re-creation of the battle that he must have enjoyed writing: Tony Clunn, *In quest of the lost legions: the Varusschlacht* (London 1999).

3 The only ancient source that preserves the name is Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.60), but what does it mean? *Saltus* is conventionally translated "forest" (*Wald* in German), but Livy uses it of the Pass of Thermopylae, *ubi angustae fauces coartant iter* (25.5.8), and of the Vale of Tempe. In the present context might it not refer to the narrow way between the high ground of the Kalkrieser Berg and the swamps (now drained) of the Grosses Moor?

4 M. Reddé and S. von Schnurbein (edd.), *Alésia: fouilles et recherches franco-allemandes sur les travaux militaires romains autour du Mont Auxois (1991-1997)* (Paris 2001), reviewed at *JRA* 17 (2004) 631 ff.

not so much to give a new account of the battles themselves, but rather to study their impact on the national consciousness of France and Germany, to “évaluer le rôle que ces deux événements ont joué dans l’histoire des deux pays, de voir sur quels arguments, scientifiques ou non, s’appuient leur interprétation ou leur contestation”. We are seldom allowed to forget, as another contributor points out (11), that “dans le contexte des relations culturelles et politiques entre la France et l’Allemagne, Teutoburg et Alésia constituent ... un pôle de référence”. The book is therefore not only for Roman historians and archaeologists, but should be required reading for anyone interested in European intellectual history and the growth of nationalism in the 19th and 20th c.

To “compare and contrast” the two battles (using a phrase familiar from the examination papers of my youth) opens some intriguing lines of thought. Why do Roman historians so seldom bring them together? Might it be because of our pernicious habit in books and courses of ‘bringing down the guillotine’ after 44 or 31 or 27 B.C. and starting afresh, as if a new world then came into being? Was Caesar ever in danger of suffering a defeat of similar magnitude that would have cost him his life and driven the Romans back to the borders of the old Roman *provincia*? Was any of his legates, apart from Sabinus? Did Augustan generals before assuming command in Germany read Caesar? Did Varus? It might have taught him that holding Roman citizenship did not necessarily turn a Gaul or a German into a loyal subject of Rome.

That Augustus aimed to conquer Germany between the Rhine and the Elbe and eventually turn it into a *provincia stipendiaria* still seems to me to be beyond reasonable doubt. I see no reason to recant what I wrote 40 years ago.⁵ With sublime confidence and in the then-state of geographical knowledge, the project may well have seemed feasible; after all, Caesar had conquered Gaul in a mere 8 years. But Gaul was easier prey, already more open to Greek and Roman influence, easier of access from the Mediterranean world, probably more open and less forested, less cumbered with swamps.

On the other hand, Caesar had at his disposal only the resources of Cisalpine Gaul and the transalpine Province, while Augustus had those of the entire empire. The Germans beyond the Rhine had already shown themselves ready to fight on the Roman side, as they did against Vercingetorix. It was German cavalry that won the key battle and drove Vercingetorix to take refuge in Alésia (*BG* 7.67-68). Arminius himself had served in the Roman army, probably commanding a regiment raised from his fellow-tribesmen, perhaps, it is suggested, in the Pannonian revolt, and he had emerged with citizenship and equestrian status. And yet, and yet ... We know so little of how plans were made and decisions taken, or what records were kept and what archives were available at Rome, or where else? At Lugdunum? In army headquarters at Vetera? Were there field reports? Were there maps? We know so little, and so much of what we think we know is guesswork.

At least, after centuries of doubt and decades of envenomed academic conflict, we can now be sure where the decisive battles were fought. One objective of the 1991-97 campaign at Alise-Sainte-Reine was to demonstrate, once and for all, that here, on the Mont Auxois, was indeed the site of Alésia. The scholarly disputes about where Alésia was (though “scholarly” is an inappropriate term for some of the passionate nonsense written on the subject) are amply discussed by Reddé (153-63), who points out, rather unexpectedly, that until 1855, when the claim was made that Alésia was Alaise in the Franche-Comté, virtually no one doubted that it was Alise-Sainte-Reine in Burgundy — an identification which goes back at least to Heric, a monk of Saint-Germain d’Auxerre in the 9th c. A rare exception was the claim that Alésia was Alès in Languedoc, put forward in 1696 by the splendidly named Jean-Pierre des Ours de Mandajors (‘John-Peter of the Bears’), but, says Reddé, nobody believed this “hypothèse farfelue” anyway!

5 C. M. Wells, *The German policy of Augustus* (Oxford 1972); cf. id., “The German policy of Augustus: 25 years on,” in N. Gudea, *Roman frontier studies. Proc. XVIIIth Int. Congress of Roman Frontier Studies* (Zalău 1999) 3-7.

The work carried out at Alise-Sainte-Reine in the 1990s should remove all doubt (it is no longer “un débat pertinent pour un archéologue”) — I should have said “all possible doubt”, but for the evidence that a work entitled *L'imposture Alésia* can still be published in 2004(!), arguing for a new site called Syam/Chaux des Crotenay near Champagnole in the Jura, complaining about the official refusal of funds to test this new and wildly eccentric theory, and denouncing “les instances officielles” and “l'archéologie sous influence”.⁶ Wonderful are the weirdities of local chauvinism, which Chr. Goudineau, in his preface to the two-volume Alésia report referred to above, exposes with magnificent irony, though he is, alas, too sanguine in supposing it a phenomenon limited to France.

Reddé (277-89) also discusses the difficulty of relating Caesar's account of the battle and the events leading up to it to the archaeological evidence. As he points out, those who have in the past rejected the identification of Alésia with Alise-Sainte-Reine, and those few fanatics who still do so, base themselves exclusively on their interpretation of Caesar's account. They maintain a curiously old-fashioned view of archaeology as merely “the handmaid of philology”, of the unquestionable priority of literary texts over archaeological evidence.⁷ Reddé analyses clearly and acutely what Caesar says: he is marching south *in Sequanos per extremos Lingonum fines* (BG 7.66), heading for the Roman *provincia*, when he is intercepted by Vercingetorix at full strength, and a battle ensues, in which Caesar's German cavalry win him the victory, whereupon Vercingetorix retires to seek refuge in Alésia, the *oppidum* of the Mandubii (a tribe who disappear from the record after Caesar, so that we cannot locate the *oppidum* by the location of the tribe). Caesar then goes on to describe Alésia itself and its surroundings.

Some people have found Caesar's account incompatible with that of Dio (40.39), who specifically situates the battle in the territory of the Sequani, while Caesar suggests his army was still in that of the Lingones. This has led them to reject the identification of Alésia with Alise-Sainte-Reine, since the Sequani are commonly supposed to lie on the E bank of the Saône, on what seems to me the somewhat confused testimony of Strabo (4.3), whereas Alise-Sainte-Reine is well over to the west. If Caesar were indeed marching down the E bank and intending to stay on that side of the river, he would be heading for the passes of the Jura — whence the search by local antiquarians along that route for possible sites that might suit Caesar's description. The search is, as Reddé says, “parfaitement stérile, quand il n'est pas ridicule”. Only archaeology, which is “une science autonome”, can settle the question, and has indeed already done so in favour of Alise-Sainte-Reine. How and why Vercingetorix took refuge there after his defeat by Caesar's German cavalry may be unclear, but that he did so admits of no further doubt.

Reddé adds some succinct observations on the merits and demerits of Caesar's text, quoting the geographer E. Desjardins: “la langue latine est à la fois très pauvre et très peu précise quand il s'agit de désignations géographiques” (284). How would you say “north-east” in Latin? What precisely does a writer mean by such general terms as *collis* or *flumen*? Nor is the siege of Alésia the first in ancient warfare, and Caesar models both his conduct of the siege and, to some extent, his description on his predecessors, from Thucydides, through Polybius and Livy, to Appian's account of Scipio at Numantia (286). The *Gallic War* is not a textbook, but a work of rhetoric and propaganda, whose geographic descriptions need be no more detailed or precise than was needed to give a general picture to his audience in Rome, who may be presumed either to have visited Gaul, perhaps under Caesar's own command, and to know what he is talking about, or not to know and not to care as much as modern scholars do.

The victory of Caesar at Alésia and the defeat of Varus *in Teutoburgiensi saltu* were enthusiastically hailed in the nationalistic fervour of the decades after 1848 as being among the

6 A. Berthier and A. Wartelle, *Alésia* (Paris 1990); cf. D. Porte, *L'imposture Alésia* (New York 2004), cited by M. Reddé at 160 nn. 18-19.

7 Forty years ago, when I was starting out teaching, I had a colleague (now deceased) who had learned his Roman history before 1939 in Mussolini's Italy and who believed fervently that the only purpose of archaeology was to elucidate texts, and that without textual evidence there was no archaeology. I think he saw me as a subversive influence.

title-deeds of the French and German nations. Both sites attracted imperial support. Napoleon III, a would-be Caesar himself, sponsored the first systematic excavations on a vast scale between 1861 and 1865 at Alise-Sainte-Reine, directed for 3 years by Colonel Stoffel, who did an excellent job, perhaps somewhat in advance of the general standards of the day;⁸ his results should have put the location of the battle-site beyond doubt, but, paradoxically, the enterprise succeeded only in arousing suspicion of an “official” line, imposed to the detriment of theories favouring other sites. It is not even as if Stoffel’s excavations were the first, since a dig in 1839 had actually brought to light an inscription in the Gaulish language which names ALISIA (*CIL* XIII 2880). As for the Teutoburg, Wilhelm I presided over the dedication of the grandiose monument to Arminius or “Hermann” near Detmold, on what turned out not to be the site of his victory — thereby sanctifying the false identification for the next century or more in the eyes of German patriots and the pages of German school textbooks.

R. Wiegels (165-179) does for the site of the defeat of Varus what Reddé does for that of Vercingetorix, pinpointing certain local lunacies and rightly expressing surprise that Mommsen’s perfectly correct hypothesis locating the battlefield at Barenau, next door to Kalkriese, was not followed up. It was based on the extraordinary number of Roman coins that were constantly turning up in the area, especially gold and silver. Not that this evidence was conclusive: was it my D.Phil. supervisor, Sir Ian Richmond, who once pointed out that chance finds of coins could not prove anything, and if they could, they could be made to prove that the Romans had built all of the main railway lines out of London? But the finds were at least suggestive, and since there was no evidence at all to support any other identification, I myself followed Mommsen, seeing this as “the most likely site for Varus’s defeat” the first time that I addressed the topic in print.⁹

It is worth noting, however, as does S. Rebenich (105-20), that Mommsen in other respects could be more persuasive. He was highly successful in persuading the State to establish and finance the *Reichslimeskommission*, founded in 1892, which he hoped would replace amateurish local initiatives with a centralized and professionalized approach. It would also serve the national interest by casting light on what Mommsen called “the oldest, biggest, historical structure that Germany possesses” (117), which is the Roman *limes* (now proposed to UNESCO for designation as a World Heritage site, along with the Empire’s other frontiers¹⁰).

Local chauvinism, however, naturally led, as in France, to some fanciful claims. As I wrote some years ago, “National pride and local patriotism amounting to obsession ‘identified’ hundreds of sites for the battle with an unwarranted confidence that the topographical vagueness of the literary sources encourages”.¹¹ It was left for Mommsen to be vindicated by Major Clunn, alone near Kalkriese with his metal detector one afternoon in 1987. He reported his finds to the local museum, and further survey and excavation followed, leading to recognition that this was indeed part of *the* battlefield.

In fact, Wilbers-Rost (209-26), admirably clear and lucid, speaks of an area covering 30 sq. km. In the central area, in a field called the Oberesch, an earthen rampart commanded the narrowest point of the passage that the Romans had to take between the Kalkrieser Berg to

8 Archaeology in Gaul and Germany, as in Britain, owed much in the pre-1914 era to soldiers, clergymen, and local notables. In France, men with a university training went on to the *Écoles françaises* in Athens or Rome, or out to N Africa; they did not dig in France. The great Joseph Déchelette lived off the family business: his work at Bibracte (Mont Beuvray) was probably in advance of contemporary work in N Africa (for instance, that of the generally admired P. Gauckler): see M.-S. Binétruy, *Joseph Déchelette* (Lyon 1994); also C. Wells, “L’étude de l’histoire et de la civilisation grecques et romaines,” in M. Lebel (ed.), *Les humanités classiques au Québec* (Québec 1967) 92-110, especially 109 on Déchelette, “mort pour la patrie” in 1914.

9 Wells 1972 (supra n.5) 240-41.

10 D. J. Breeze and S. Jilek (edd.), *The frontiers of the Roman Empire: the European dimension of a World Heritage site* (Edinburgh 2008). The Upper German and Raetian *limes* became a World Heritage site in 2005.

11 C. Wells, “What’s new along the Lippe: recent work in north Germany,” *Britannia* 29 (1998) 457-64.

the south and the Grosses Moor to the north. Beneath the collapsed rampart the finds were thickest, since nobody had been able to gather them up. Elsewhere were bones of men (so far no women, though there were women with the army), horses, and mules. Analysis of equid teeth suggested that the animals had been killed in late summer or early fall, and human bones that had been deliberately buried seemed to have previously been exposed for some years to the elements — consistent with their having been collected and buried at the time of Germanicus's visit to the site. That this is indeed part of the battlefield few doubt, but there remain many unanswered questions.

The chief problem is to reconcile the archaeological evidence with the literary sources discussed by Wiegels (291-301). First of all, as with Alésia, they permit and indeed encourage multiple identifications of the site, and only archaeology can determine the correct one. No account of Varus's route gives even as much information on it as Caesar gives on his, and we have seen how even that can be misinterpreted. We may also suspect that the search for rhetorical effect, the gloomy forests and all that, is even more pronounced in the case of Varus. As for the actual battle, we have no eyewitness account, and the only contemporary source is Velleius, who specifically declines to give details (2.119), reserving them for a later work. How in fact did the news of the disaster get back to Rome, and in how much detail? Were there *any* survivors? That it was sensational news which spread like wildfire over the Roman world is sufficiently attested by Ovid's allusions in the *Tristia* (3.12.45-48; 4.2.1-2; 4.2.37-56), written half a world away and only one or two years after the battle, and predicting the glorious triumph that Tiberius will celebrate over *rebellatrix Germania*.

What, then, of the sources for the battle itself? How well informed were they? Is Dio (56.19-22), in the most detailed account that we have, right to say that the battle lasted 4 days? Is Kalkriese where the survivors were cut down on the third or fourth day trying to escape? Where then was the main battlefield which saw the initial ambush and where the Romans encamped on the spot and burned their wagons (Dio 56.21)? Wiegels rightly points out that such questions "nicht mit Dio in der Hand, sondern nur mittels entsprechender Funde und Befunde gelöst . . . werden können" (299) — that is to say, only archaeology can answer them, not further analysis of Dio's text. This repeats the lesson that archaeology is not merely a handmaid, but a "science autonome" that can sometimes go where literary sources fail us.

The significance of the two battles in stoking nationalist sentiment on either side of the Rhine can scarcely be exaggerated. A. Schnapp (11-26) contrasts the reception of Caesar's *Gallic War* in France with that of Tacitus' *Germania* in Germany down to the 19th c., and a story borrowed from Simon Schama illustrates the continuing fascination that the *Germania* held for Hitler, Himmler, and the SS. Tacitus and the Teutoburg played an enormous rôle in forming and reflecting German nationalism and the attempt to define German culture in opposition to that of Rome and the nations that are heirs to Roman culture, like Italy and France! Not for nothing was "Hermann" on his lofty monument facing west, brandishing his enormous sword, 7 m long, in the direction of France, while the bronze inscription on the base was cast from melted-down French cannon captured at the battle of Sedan in 1870.¹²

Goudineau (53-71) shows how Vercingetorix and the Gauls were similarly enlisted to support French national sentiment in the 19th c. Under the monarchy, the history of France and of the monarchy were seen as identical, going back to the first Frankish kings, which left little place for the Gauls, but the Revolution and the Empire changed all that. Particularly after 1870, with the fall of Napoleon III and the Franco-Prussian War, Republicans lauded the Gauls as a people without king or clergy and Vercingetorix as the first elected leader of the nation, precursor of the Presidents of the Republic. Some of the rhetoric, totally unhistorical, that Goudineau (53-71) quotes from Henri Martin in 1837 or Maximin Deloche in 1860 is representative of the higher lunacy, though his examples are mild compared with some.¹³

12 I owe this striking detail to Cl. Nicolet in the volume under review (342).

13 Note those in A. Simon, *Vercingétorix et l'idéologie française* (Paris 1989). I particularly like the claim (p. 31), dating from 1839, that Vercingetorix "reigned" for 31 years and that the Franks were descended from Gauls who had emigrated to Germany. Note too a century later the lists of the saviours of

He identifies three major themes: the identity of Gaul with that of France; “nos ancêtres les Gaulois”; and the idealization of Vercingetorix as the archetypical national hero. Particularly fascinating under the first heading is the way he traces back the notion that France has “natural frontiers”, citing a text ascribed to Richelieu as invoking the authority of the Gauls for this idea.¹⁴ Goudineau concludes with two illustrations, the famous picture of Lionel Royer, “Vercingétorix jette ses armes aux pieds de César”, marvellously parodied in one of the Astérix books, which shows Caesar hopping on one foot and clutching the other, and the picture of a splendidly mustachioed and helmeted Gaul on a packet of “Gauloises” cigarettes.

Complementary to Schnapp’s and Goudineau’s accounts is J. von Ungern-Sternberg’s discussion (73-103) of the German view of Vercingetorix and the French view of Arminius. His well-chosen quotes are interesting and often amusing — for instance, Mommsen on the character of the Celts, with Camille Jullian’s rebuttal (81-82). French writers tend to contrast “the heroism and greatness of soul” of Vercingetorix with the treachery and cruelty of Arminius. Toutain for instance, writing during the First World War, refers to the “cruauté naturelle” of the Germans (102), as if it were a hereditary taint persisting over 19 centuries. He is not alone in assuming without debate *Germani* and Germans (“les Allemands”) to be identical.

All of this is reflected in school textbooks. C. Amalvi (121-32) traces the construction of the “myth” of the battle of Alésia in popular literature and textbooks from the Second Empire of Napoleon III to the Fifth Republic. The long conflict of the schools between the Church and the lay, republican, anticlerical tradition comes out in the use that each side made of history. In the confessional schools, the key foundation myth was the baptism of Clovis and the resulting pact between God and France, “the eldest daughter of the Church”, with God’s support subsequently manifested above all in the supernatural intervention of Joan of Arc. In contrast, children in the public schools were taught to trace French history back to Vercingetorix, presented as a Christ-like figure who sacrificed himself for his people, a figure consecrated by “une religion civile et laïque” (esp. 127-28). After World War II, Vercingetorix was also presented as a hero of the Resistance, and clerical opinion, especially after Vatican II, rallies to his side at the expense of Clovis (131).

R. Riemenschneider’s article (133-51), the counterpart to Amalvi’s, deals with the place of the Teutoburg in German school textbooks between 1880 and 2004. Despite the subject matter, it is in French. It begins by noting how the change in the actual appearance of the books, with more illustrations and some discussion of sources, reflects a change in objective, from the “cours magistral”, where the pupil simply memorizes the teacher’s or the author’s *ex cathedra* pronouncements and the “facts”, to where textbook and teacher are meant to initiate the pupil to personal reflexion and historical method. Until the last 10 years or so, the vast majority of texts (“l’écrasante majorité”) have no doubt that the battle took place near Detmold, vouched for, as we saw, by the Hermannsdenkmal, itself sanctified by the presence of Kaiser Wilhelm I at its inauguration in 1875: “the Kaiser has spoken, the matter is settled”. Not until 1998, 11 years after the Kalkriese site was discovered, do we find a book which points out that there have been over 700 supposed identifications of the site of the battle, and that “today” archaeologists are “virtually certain” that the battle took place, not near Detmold, but near Osnabrück — which is to say at Kalkriese, 80 km away.

The textbooks reflect the bulk of contemporary scholarly discourse in identifying Arminius’s Germans with the eternal German people, sprung from the sacred soil of Germany. When Tacitus in a famous phrase called Arminius *liberator haud dubie Germaniae*, it was commonly translated “der Befreier Deutschlands”. His idealized “noble savage” portrait in the *Germania* was taken as a true and highly flattering portrait of the German race, “das deutsche Volk”.

Gaul/France, from Vercingetorix through Joan of Arc, culminating in either Pétain or de Gaulle, according to taste and date of publication, whether 1943 or 1945!

14 More surprisingly, he also cites Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, for the view that the natural frontier of France was the Rhine! Compare F. Braudel on natural frontiers: *L’identité de la France I: espace et histoire* (Paris 1986) 287-92, starting from “la Gaule ancienne, premier espace, préfiguration de la France”.

Wilhelm II laid down that the young should be indoctrinated with the German language and German history, so as to turn out "nationale junge Deutsche ... und nicht junge Griechen und Römer". The Romans moreover are equated with the French, the eternal enemy. Riemen-schneider quotes a textbook of the Nazi era which sees Louis XIV and Napoleon as trying to do the same as Augustus, which was to subjugate and "Romanize" Germany. Paris is equated with Rome, a symbol of corrupt urban civilization, and the worthy successors of Arminius are such great German heroes as Luther, Bismarck and, of course, Hitler.

So much for nationalism. One of the most important chapters is that of O. Büchschütz (181-193), who brings us up-to-date on the last 50 or 60 years' work on the Celtic *oppida*. Many Roman archaeologists who have not kept up on the Late La Tène period might be surprised to find it here. One of Büchschütz's most valuable contributions is to stress how uncertain and haphazard were the dating criteria for sites of this period in the 1950s and 1960s. He rightly refers with approval to the work of J. Collis,¹⁵ which has always seemed to me insufficiently recognised in his own country, and warns against accepting uncritically the conclusions of Sir Mortimer Wheeler's highly persuasive and influential *Hill-forts of northern France*, published in 1957 but based essentially on field-work carried out just before World War II.¹⁶ Büchschütz's verdict (184) is that the archaeology is excellent, but "les datations qu'il propose ... sont plus surprenantes".

Finally, A. Rost (303-13) sets out the necessary conditions for the successful archaeological exploration and interpretation of battlefields, with Kalkriese especially in mind, while A. Deyber (321-40) compares Alésia with other historic battlefields, from the Persian Wars to the campaigns of Napoleon, touching, for example, on Hastings, Crécy, Agincourt, and others. Influenced by Keagan and Hanson, he stresses the impossibility of re-creating what the experience of battle was actually like, and is much concerned with the unreliability of figures. Even if Caesar blockaded 178,000 men in Alésia, how many were actual fighters and how many support troops? And even after a great and murderous battle, what remains for the archaeologists to find? Sometimes, it seems, not much: the Russians are said to have undertaken excavations on the field of Borodino, where the battle that took place on September 7, 1812, was "une boucherie monstrueuse", but apparently the archaeologists found very little.

The volume ends with a "postface" by Cl. Nicolet (341-45), who hails the "intuition féconde" that invited the Germans, with their greater experience of excavating Roman military sites, to join in the new campaign of research at Alésia, research which has made the identification of Alésia with Alise-Sainte-Reine "désormais absolument certaine", just as the Kalkriese excavations have confirmed Mommsen's intuition, based on "une utilisation magistrale et alors toute nouvelle des trouvailles monétaires". Nicolet brings together the themes of the book, noting that, while Caesar had finally conquered Gaul and begun to Romanize it, Arminius ensured that neither Augustus nor any Roman after him could do the same to Germany, which was thus destined to remain "libre, c'est-à-dire barbare" for another thousand years. He closes with a summons to cease using the great historical actors of this story to feed nationalistic fantasies: they should in the future be no more than "des objets d'études sérieuses".

There is no index of any kind, which is a great lack. Some readers might also have found it helpful to have clear maps showing Alésia and Kalkriese and the false Alésias and false Teutoburges, and even Caesar's and Varus's possible routes. There is one inexplicable error: the year poor Varus shared the consulship with Tiberius was not 14 B.C. (295), but the following one. Otherwise the volume is well-produced and a credit to the editors.

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15 J. Collis, *Oppida: earliest towns north of the Alps* (Sheffield 1984).

16 R. E. M. Wheeler and K. M. Richardson, *Hill-forts of northern France* (Soc. Ant. Res. Rep. 19, 1957).