



Good day Worthy Knights,

In this part 43, the Battles of Constantine, 2 of 4: Milvian, Cibalae and Mardia (Wikipedia)

MILVIAN BRIDGE

The Battle of the Milvian Bridge took place between the Roman Emperors Constantine I and Maxentius on 28 October 312. See Parts 7 and 8.

CIBALAE

The Battle of Cibalae was fought on October 8, 314 between the two Roman Emperors Constantine I and Licinius. The site of the battle was approximately 350 kilometres within the territory of Licinius. Constantine won a resounding victory, despite being outnumbered.

Background

The hostilities were prompted by Constantine's appointment of his brother-in-law, Bassianus, as his Caesar. Bassianus was discovered to be intriguing against Constantine, perhaps at the prodding of his own brother Senecio, a close associate of Licinius. When Constantine demanded that Licinius hand over Senecio, Licinius refused. Constantine marched against Licinius, who responded by elevating another associate, Valens.

The Battle

The opposing armies met on the plain between the rivers Sava and Drave near the town of Cibalae (now Vinkovci, Croatia). The battle lasted all day and opened with Constantine's forces arrayed in a defile adjacent to mountain slopes. The army of Licinius was stationed on lower ground nearer the town of Cibalae, Licinius took care to secure his flanks.

As the infantry of Constantine needed to move forward through broken ground the cavalry was thrown out ahead, to act as a screen. Constantine moved his formation down on to the more open ground and advanced against the awaiting Licinians. Following a period of skirmishing, the opposing main bodies of infantry met in close combat and fierce hand-to-hand fighting ensued.

This battle of attrition was ended, late in the day, when Constantine personally led a cavalry charge from the right wing of his army. The charge was decisive, Licinius' ranks were broken. As many as 20,000 of Licinius' troops were killed in the hard-fought battle. The surviving cavalry of the defeated army accompanied Licinius when he fled the field under the cover of darkness.

Aftermath

Peace negotiations were initiated, but they broke down. A further battle was then fought, the Battle of Mardia

MARDIA

The Battle of Mardia, also known as Battle of Campus Mardiensis or Battle of Campus Ardiensis, was most likely fought at modern Harmanli (Bulgaria) in Thrace, in late 316, early 317 between the forces of Roman Emperors Constantine the Great and Licinius.

Background

Open civil war between Constantine and Licinius broke out in 316 when the former invaded Licinius' Balkan provinces. After his crushing defeat at the Battle of Cibalae on October 8, 316, Licinius fled to Sirmium then further south to Adrianople. There he collected a second army under the command of an officer named Valerius Valens whom he raised to the rank of Augustus. Simultaneously, he tried to negotiate with Constantine but the latter, insulted by the elevation of Valens and confident from his recent victory, rejected the peace offer.

The battle

In the meantime, Constantine had moved through the Balkan Mountains and established his base at Philippi or Philippopolis.

He then led the bulk of his army against Licinius. In the ensuing fierce battle, both sides inflicted heavy injuries on each other until darkness interrupted the indecisive struggle.

Reportedly, Constantine decided the issue by sending a force to attack Licinius in the rear, forcing him to retreat. However, his well-disciplined troops kept ranks, withdrawing in good order, and both sides suffered heavy losses.

During the night, Licinius managed to keep his army from disintegration and retreated north-west towards Beroe (Augusta Traiana.) Thus, Constantine was again victorious but not decisively.

Another possible location for the battle place is a few km west-south-west of Adrianople (modern Edirne), at the basin of the Ardas River.

Aftermath

Constantine, thinking that Licinius was fleeing to Byzantium in order to retreat to his Asian base, headed to that direction, unintentionally placing Licinius between himself and his communication lines with the West.

It seemed that his aggressiveness had turned against him this time. However, both belligerents had reasons to come to terms since Licinius was still in precarious position, so he sent a certain Mestrianus to negotiate with Constantine.

Even then, Constantine delayed the discussions until he was made sure that the outcome of the war was indeed uncertain. A critical point might be when he received news of a sudden enemy raid that captured his baggage and the royal entourage.

According to the peace finalized at Serdica on 1 March 317 (a date chosen deliberately by Constantine as it was the anniversary of his father's elevation), Licinius recognised Constantine as his superior in government, ceded to him all European territories except for Thrace and deposed and executed Valens.

Constantine named himself and Licinius consuls while his two sons Crispus and Constantine II as well as Licinius' son were appointed Caesars. The peace lasted for about seven years.

