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A legionary of the early 2nd Century shown here
on the march with all his personal belongings on a
pole over his shoulder.

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I found a mistake in AW that’s hardly worth an erratum, but that I’d still like to point out. The Gilgamesh epic dates from about 1100 BC. The subject of this epic lived around 2500 BC or perhaps a little earlier. There are indications for a written tradition of the Gilgamesh epic in the third millennium BC, but these writings do not deal with subjects mentioned in the epic. The epic itself, however, has information pertaining to the Babylonian flood which was written around 1700 BC (plus or minus a century). The Gilgamesh epic, therefore, is a creation from the second and not the third millennium BC.

Jona Lendering

The Battle of Magnesia
I was delighted to see in issue 2 of Ancient Warfare, an article about my favourite period of Mediterranean warfare, namely ‘The Battle of Magnesia’. The author is to be congratulated on his attempt to analyse the action, but I was less impressed as I read along, since I believe the article contains many flaws, both of method and of interpretation. I hope the author will not mind if I use his article as an illustration of some common faults. It would take a complete article to put forward an alternative to the author’s hypotheses, so I will confine myself to a few examples.

Firstly, the author puts forward a hypothesis, namely that Antiochus’ army couldn’t have been as large as stated or it would have significantly overlapped the Roman army and thus outflanked it. Then he arbitrarily ‘chops’ out units through discrepancies between Livy and Appian. This is to distort the evidence to suit the hypothesis, and is an error. As he says, they were drawing on a single source, thus the original can not have had ‘discrepancies’, and will have been in great detail if it was Polybius writing about the Scipios! Elsewhere in our sources, Antiochus III has armies just as big – 63,000 at Raphia 27 years before and Antiochus IV 61,000 at the Daphne parade 24 years after Magnesia. Clearly the author has not taken a broader view of the sources, as other examples will remind us.

Then there are some possible factual errors. He calls the Achaeans ‘light infantry’, but at this date Achaean ’Peltasts’ were a Macedonian style phalanx. He gets Roman cavalry units mixed up – a turma is thirty men, ten of which make up the 300 legionary cavalry. Allies supplied double, so there will have been 1800 ‘Roman’ cavalry. Placing 120 on the left will have left almost 1680 for the right, which added to Eumenes 800, makes up ‘the rather less than 3000’ that Livy records. No ‘discrepancy’ there, then. He then decides to follow Appian and allocate only 1500 Galatians, on the grounds that Appian records their tribal names. However, Livy too records the tribal names elsewhere, and so does not repeat himself here. Furthermore Livy records 4,000 Gauls in Antiochus’ army the year before, and at the Daphne parade, after Anatolia and Galatia