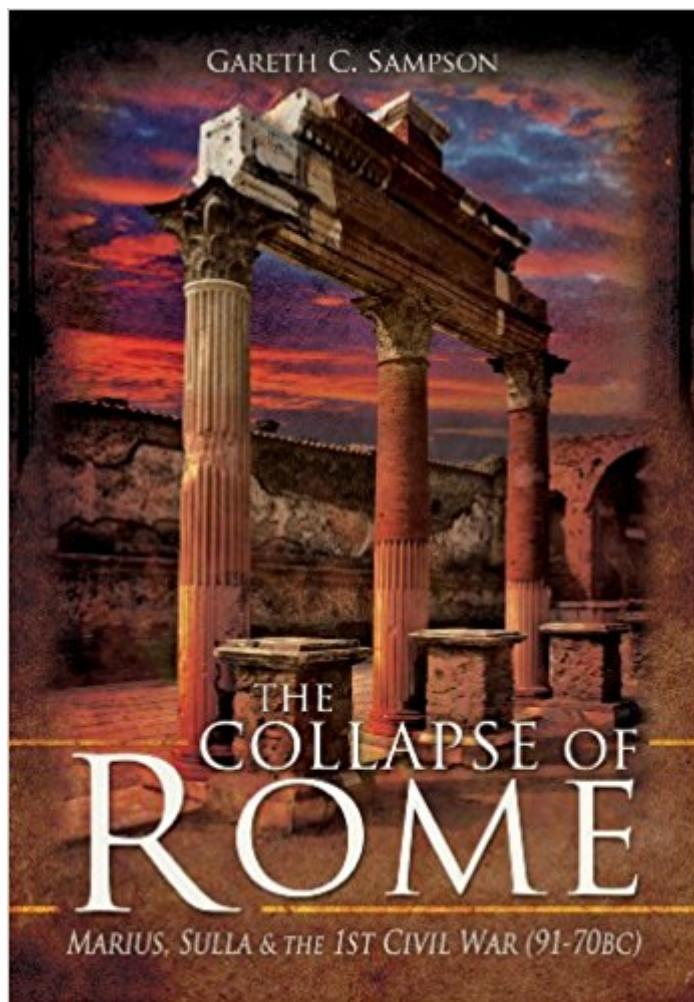


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The Collapse Of Rome: Marius, Sulla And The First Civil War



Synopsis

By the early first century BC, the Roman Republic had already carved itself a massive empire and was easily the most powerful state in the Mediterranean. Roman armies had marched victoriously over enemies far and wide, but the Roman heartland was soon to feel the tramp of armies on campaign as the Republic was convulsed by civil war and rival warlords vied for supremacy, sounding the first death knell of the Republican system. At the center of the conflict was the rivalry between Marius, victor of the Jugurthine and Northern wars, and his former subordinate, Sulla. But, as Gareth Sampson points out in this new analysis, the situation was much more complex than the traditional view portrays it and the scope of the First Civil War both wider and longer. This narrative and analysis of a critical and bloody period in Roman history will make an ideal sequel to the author's Crisis of Rome (and a prequel to his first book, The Defeat of Rome).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After a successful career in corporate finance, Dr. Gareth Sampson returned to the study of ancient Rome and gained his PhD from the University of Manchester, where he currently teaches ancient history. He has made a detailed study of early Roman political history and in particular the political office of the tribunate of the plebs. He is currently engaged in a study of the power struggles and the civil warfare of the late Republic and its expansionist policies in the east.

This is a hard book to read because you have to know a lot about how the Roman Republic worked and while I had a good idea about what happened in the Punic Wars and the time Julius Caesar

and later, I was weak on this area. Bone up on the Roman Republic and its institutions and offices before you start this book and it will flow better. The other problem is that the period of time this book deals with is poorly documented. Most Roman sources are lost or partly lost which puts the author in a tough position in trying to figure out what really happened and why it happened. This book will help you understand how things got to the way they were just before Julius Caesar's entry on to the scene and why the Republic was doomed. I was hoping to get a better idea of who Marius and Sulla were, what they did and why, but alas that is still pretty vague in my mind and perhaps incapable of full resolution. In light of the problems our American Republic is having, this is not comforting.

This is a good well thought out and organized book, not to complex, I suspect my 15 yr old son would have no problems with it, but my only complaint is the title is misleading, Marius is dead fairly early in the book, and Sulla was only a peripheral figure for large portions of the book, while it was a series of continual wars or a long civil war, as the author presents, this was not a civil war between Sulla and Marius, it was a civil war between ideals, in many wars like the US civil war.

The period covered by this book was confusing, with Marius and his supporters, Sulla and his supporters, the Senate and their supporters going to war with each other back and forth for 30 years. Not to mention the several rebellions of the non-Roman Italians. "You can't tell the players without a scorecard" and this book does an OK job of it. But only OK. Maybe the situation back then was so confused that nobody could explain it, but I am still not entirely sure I could say exactly what happened after reading the book. One thing the author did not emphasize was the "Marian Reform" where Roman armies had ceased being militia called to arms for service during a crisis, and had become long-term soldiers loyal to their legions (and their commanders, instead of loyal to Rome). This change made it possible for generals to lead their armies against Rome and other armies, and should have been discussed in more detail. Still, an informative book dealing with the years of crisis leading up to Julius Caesar and the end of the Republic. Worth reading.

This is a fascinating historical period full of what many historians find to be vivid personalities. Mr. Sampson is presumably a good historian -- he seems very familiar with the source material -- but his writing is academic and tedious. He focuses on dry historical facts at the expense of their meaning. He reduces historical figures such as Livius Drusus, Marius, Sulla, Cinna and Sertorius to complete cyphers whose actions are detailed but remain utterly inexplicable to the reader. Apparently these

guys fought each other and killed many of Rome's leading citizens because they had some abstract disagreements about extending Roman citizenship to Italians, plus maybe they had some personality conflicts. This might be a useful book for academics, but it drains the material of any interest.

Excellent book about the struggle between Marius, Sulla & the closing days of the Roman republic.

I found the book very helpful in gaining an appreciation of the events and issues dominating this chaotic twenty-year period. After an excellent introductory chapter, I did find myself getting bogged down in the minutiae of innumerable battles and controversies over the historical record. Thankfully, the author does a good job of summarizing the essential points in each chapter and making clear their significance. This allowed me to bypass some of the detail and concentrate on the analysis of the events. There is some repetition throughout, but I found this a virtue in reinforcing the important elements of the author's argument. The final chapter is a clear, concise overview of the era and its significance in setting the stage for the coming of Caesar.

Essential reading for those who have enjoyed Colleen McCulloch's novels covering this period and want to know how much is possibly or may be true.

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