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**Legion v. Cataphract: The Battle of Magnesia (190 BC)**

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The Battle of Magnesia proved a devastating defeat for the Seleukid kingdom, dramatically reversing the hereto successful restoration of the dynasty's power and prestige under Antiochos III. This talk re-examines the tactical dynamics of the battle, which saw early Seleukid successes before a sudden reverse. Lucius Scipio risked battle from a less than ideal tactical position in the hopes of a victory before his consular command expired. Antiochos' tactics, particularly a targeted cavalry strike against the seemingly less vulnerable Roman left flank, accompanied by a broader cataphract charge against the main infantry line, initially put the Romans in considerable danger. Considering the "face of battle," the heavily armored cataphracts posed a significant threat to the Roman manipular legion, indeed far more than the traditional Macedonian pike phalanx did. It is, in fact, unclear if the main Seleukid phalanx actually directly clashed with the Roman legions in pitched combat. Despite early successes, the Seleukid army was doomed by bad luck, the initiative of Scipio's delegated commanders (especially Eumenes II) and Antiochos' own tactical myopia. Once the enveloped phalanx broke, the Roman legionaries' equipment and fighting styles allowed them to inflict far heavier losses upon the retreating Seleukid troops than was typical in battles between Hellenistic forces.