

CLAH4006

**From Village to Empire: An
Introduction to the History of Rome**

The Second Punic War 218-201 BC

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Inevitability of Roman Conquest?

- Polybius (1.1.5) – reasons for the whole world coming under Roman rule – defeats to Hannibal a test of Roman endurance (Livy 22.54.10) – expansion from city state to Empire seen as a linear process.
- Impact on modern scholarship – Roman land power vs. Carthaginian sea power – frugal vs. the luxurious?
- Did contemporaries really see this as a struggle for world power?
- Given experiences of the First Punic War it is unlikely that the Romans conceived of this war being over quickly.

Broader and Specific Causes

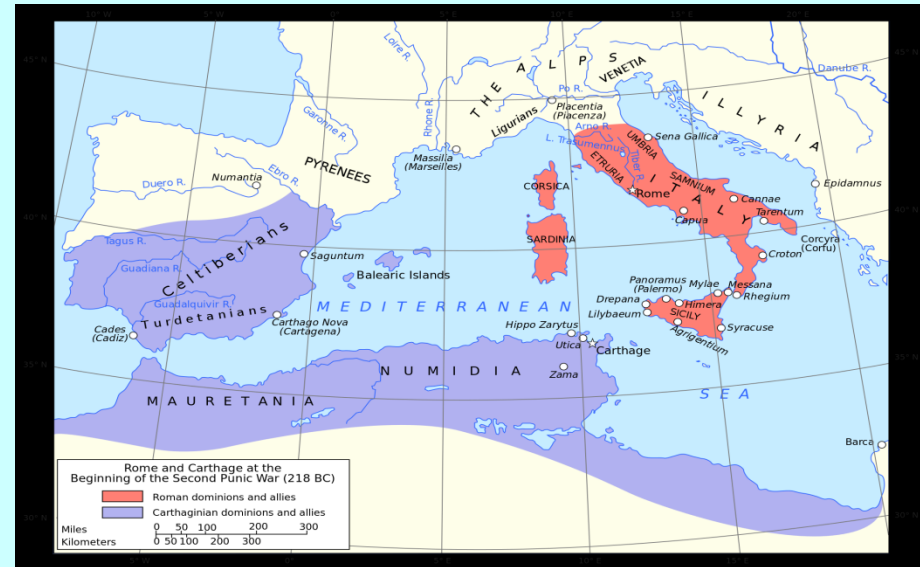
Underlying Issues

- The “wrath of the Barcids” – acting independently of Carthaginian home government?
- Harsh indemnity after First Punic War causing initial economic problems (total equated to 80 tons of silver) – “Truceless War”.
- Loss of Sardinia.
- Expansion in Spain for new resources.

“He said that at the time when his father was about to start with his army on his expedition to Spain, he himself, then nine years of age, was standing by the altar, while Hamilcar was sacrificing to Zeus... calling Hannibal to him asked him kindly if he wished to accompany him on the expedition... led him up to the altar, and bade him lay his hand on the victim and swear never to be the friend of the Romans.” – **Polybius 3.11.5, 7.**

Carthaginian Conquests in Spain

- Exaction position of Hamilcar Barca – *de facto* military monarchy?
- Foundation of Carthago Nova in 225 BC.



Carthago Nova. Under the Carthaginians. c220-205 BC.
AR Shekel. Bare head of Hannibal(?) left / Horse right,
palm tree behind. SNG Cop 295; Villaronga 64.



Carthago Nova, Spain, AR shekel, ca. 228 BC. 7,09 g. Diademed male head (Hasdrubal?) left / Prow of galley right, oval shield on the bridge, two sailors on deck; dolphin right below. Villaronga 19.

Immediate Causes

- Roman view: capture of Saguntum seen as act of aggression.
- Did Saguntum make an agreement with the Romans prior to Ebro treaty?
- Hannibal attacked Saguntum in the spring of 219 BC – laid siege for 8 months – Livy (21.15.1-5) places events all in 218 BC.

Polybius 3.29.3 – “the Carthaginians will not cross the Ebro River under arms”



Declaration of War

“...the Roman ambassadors were at Carthage. After listening to the Carthaginians' statement of their case, they made no other reply but the following. The oldest member of the embassy, pointing to the bosom of his toga, told the Senate that it held both war and peace for them: therefore he would let fall from it and leave with them whichever of the two they bade him. The Carthaginian Suffete bade him let fall whichever the Romans chose, and when the envoy said he would let fall war, many of the senators cried out at once, "We accept it." The ambassadors and the Senate parted on these terms.” – **Polybius 3.33.1-3.**

War in Italy

Hannibal Marches West

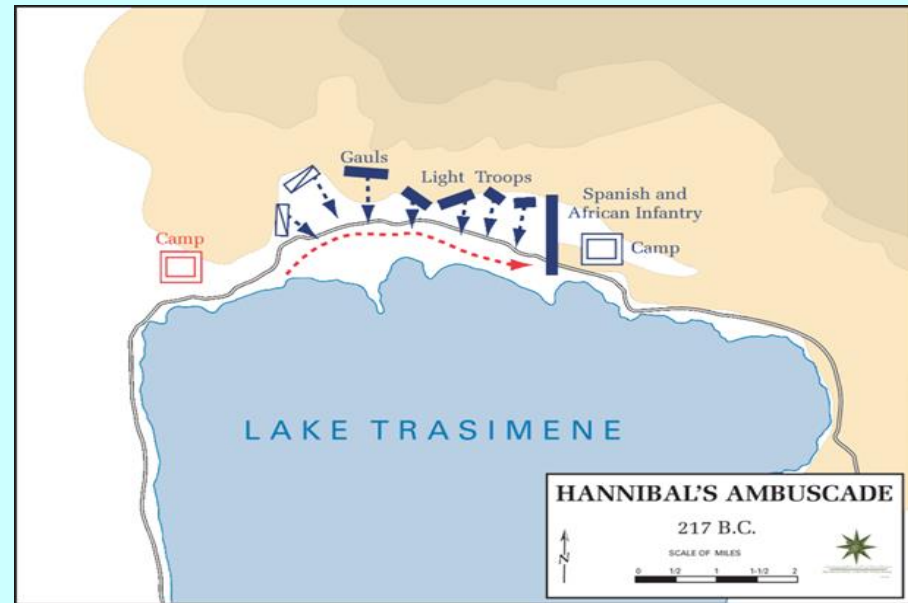
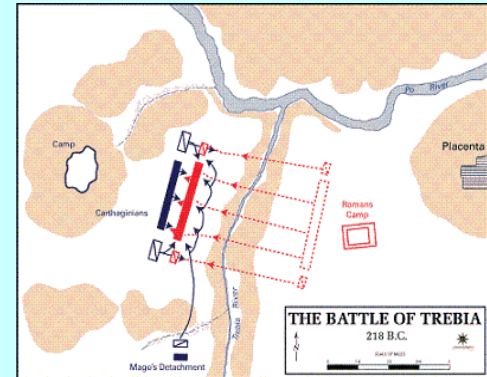
- Hannibal sets out from Spain before embassy to Carthage concluded.
- P. Cornelius Scipio sent to Spain – passing at the Rhone.
- Ti. Sempronius Longus to be sent to Sicily.
- Hannibal crosses the Alps – possibly through a pass which lay via Mt Genevre, Mt Cenis or the Col de Clapier.
- Gauls of Po valley welcome Hannibal as liberator.



“Some of the writers who have described this passage of the Alps, from the wish to impress their readers by the marvels they recount of these mountains... By representing the Alps as being so steep and rugged that not only horses and troops accompanied by elephants, but even active men on foot would have difficult in passing, and at the same time picturing to us the desolation of the country as being such, that unless some god or hero had met Hannibal and showed him the way, his whole army would have gone astray and perished utterly...nor are they aware that there is a considerable population in the Alps themselves; but in entire ignorance of all this they tell us that some hero appeared and showed the road... the Allobrogian chieftains got together a considerable force and occupied advantageous positions on the road by which the Carthaginians would be obliged to ascend...He had lost many of his men by the hands of the enemy in the crossing of rivers and on the march in general, and the precipices and difficulties of the Alps had cost him not only many men, but a far greater number of horses and pack-animals. The whole march from New Carthage had taken him five months, and he had spent fifteen days in crossing the Alps, and now, when he thus boldly descended into the plain of the Po and the territory of the Insubres, his surviving forces numbered twelve thousand African and eight thousand Iberian foot, and not more than six thousand horse in all, as he himself states in the inscription on the column at Lacinium relating to the number of his forces. - **Polybius 3.47.6, 9, 48.7, 50.3, 56.2-4.**

Roman Disasters

- Cornelius Scipio joined by Longus at Placentia.
- Engage forces of Hannibal at Trebbia c. Dec 218 BC.
- Battle of Lake Trasimene (c. June 217 BC).
- Flaminius dead along with c.15,000 troops.



Q. Fabius Maximus “the delayer”

- Appointed dictator in 217 BC – tactics of shadowing and harassing Carthaginian forces.
- Blockade at Mt Massicus – oxen and flaming torches.
- Minucius (the *magister equitum*) given equal *imperium*.

“The Romans who were guarding the gorge, thinking that Hannibal was pressing on rapidly in that direction, left the narrow part of the pass and advanced to the hill to meet the enemy. But when they got near the oxen they were entirely puzzled by the lights, fancying that they were about to encounter something much more formidable than the reality.” – **Polybius 3.94.1.**

Battle of Cannae

- Hannibal seizes citadel of town of Cannae in 216 BC.
- Army of c.80-85,000 only c.14,500 escape death or captivity.
- L. Aemilius Paullus falls in battle – negative tradition surrounding C. Tarentius Varro.
- Many places in Campania and southern Italy defect.



Fears for Rome

“...and the eyes of all were now turned to the Carthaginians, who had great hopes of even taking Rome itself at the first assault. The Romans on their part owing to this defeat at once abandoned all hope of retaining their supremacy in Italy, and were in the greatest fear about their own safety and that of Rome, expecting Hannibal every moment to appear. It seemed indeed as if Fortune were taking part against them in their struggle with adversity and meant to fill the cup to overflowing; for but a few days afterwards, while the city was yet panic-stricken, the commander they had sent to Cisalpine Gaul was surprised by the Celts in an ambush and he and his force utterly destroyed. Yet the Senate neglected no means in its power, but exhorted and encouraged the populace, strengthened the defences of the city, and deliberated on the situation with manly coolness.” – **Polybius 3.18.**

- Hannibal does not march on Rome until 211 BC in a failed attempt to relieve Capua.

Overview (1)

- Romans engaged with Hannibal / Carthaginian forces in Italy 22 times:
 - Outright defeats at Trebia, Traismene, Cannae, and twice at Herdonea.
 - Most of the other contests minor successes or set-backs.
- Cannae as a “Pyrrhic Victory” – he loses 5,700 troops out of 50,000 – 12% loss of his total forces (comparable ratio to that suffered by many defeated armies in antiquity).
- Frequency of battles show that knock out blows difficult to achieve.
- Carthaginians destroying 400 towns in Italy? – **Appian *Lib.* 63.280, 134.635.**
- Use by Romans of many strongholds to store provisions, enabling grinding warfare – Hannibal needed to shift around to avoid exhausting local forage.

Overview (2)

- Between years 215-205 there were between four and seven two legion armies in Italy accompanied by *socii* (in 208, two at Lucania and Tarentum, also Cisalpine Gaul, Etruria and Venusia, and a legion at Capua).
- Contra Hannibal whose forces never normally operated with more than three large armies – Hannibal could face substantial armies while others waged war on his allies.
- Attempts to maintain (Roman) or tempt away (Carthaginian) allies in Italy.
 - Two legions stationed in Etruria (to prevent wavering).
 - Use of hostages (e.g. Romans took 120 children of senators from Arretium in 208 BC – Livy 27.24).
 - Harsh penalty for rebels – execution of leaders of Capua and other Campanian towns, Capuan land being *ager publicus* – selling of inhabitant of Vercellium, Viscellium and Sicilinium at auction.

Overview (3)

- Hannibal only once entered into the *ager Romanus* for a few days in 211 (Polybius 9.6; Livy 26.9-11, 26).
- *Socii* sometimes compelled to fight without Roman support – conflict between communities on different sides, e.g. raids between Rhegium and Bruttian communities.

“...ambassadors of Placentia and Cremona, who complained that their lands were being invaded and laid waste by the neighbouring Gauls; that a large portion of their settlers had dispersed; that their cities were thinly inhabited, and their lands devastated and deserted.” – **Livy 28.11.10.**

“The Romans sent envoys to Ptolemy wishing to procure a supply of corn, as they were suffering from a great scarcity of it, all the crops in Italy up to the gates of Rome having been destroyed by the armies, and no help from abroad having been forthcoming, since all over the world except in Egypt there were wars in progress and hostile forces in the field. The scarcity at Rome had reached such a pitch that the Sicilian medimnus cost fifteen drachmae. But in spite of this distress the Romans did not neglect their military preparations...” – **Polybius 9.11a.**

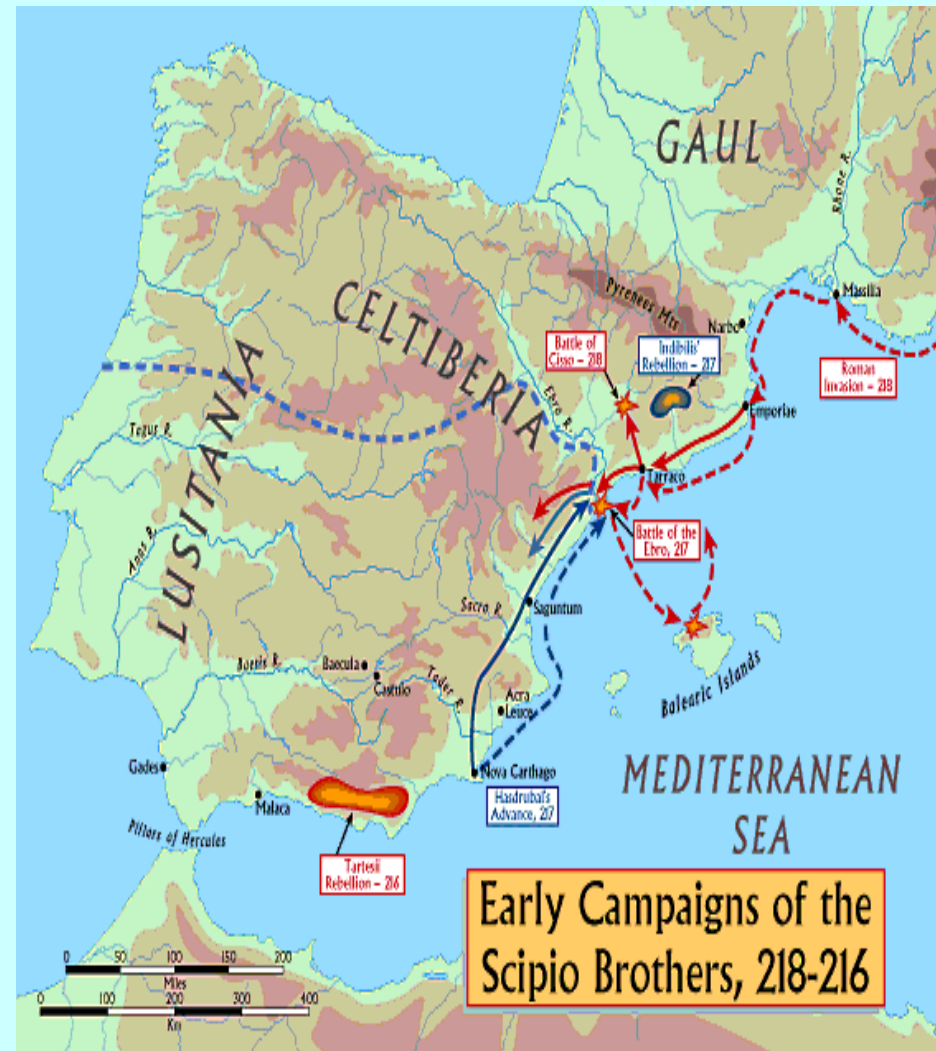
War in Foreign Territory

Roman Naval Dominance

- Carthage unable to frequently send reinforcements by sea.
- Carthaginians muster a naval force during Roman siege of Syracuse (212 BC) but Bomilcar fails to press advantage.
- Roman naval victories in 208 (Clupea) and 207 BC (Utica).
- Roman aims, harass North African coast and prevent supplies reaching Hannibal in Italy.
- Interception of Macedonian ship in 215 BC – draft treaty between Philip V and Hannibal, one of “friendship”.
- Roman fleet at Apulia (S. Italy, Adriatic Sea) strengthened by 30 ships (50 in total).
- Laevinus’ success at Oricum and Apollonia – Philip V burns his *Lembi*.

The War in Spain

- Aim of Gnaeus and Publius Scipio to keep Carthaginian forces in Spain occupied.
- 214 or 213? – revolt of Syphax of Numidia.
- Largely successful for Rome – though death of Publius and Gnaeus in 211 BC (upper Baetis and Ilorci).

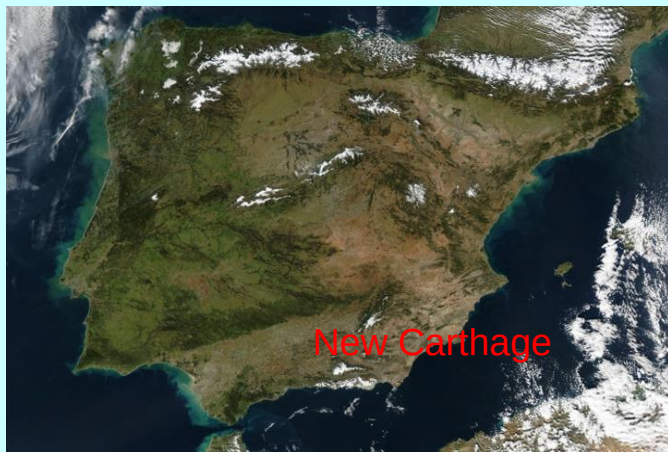


Scipio Africanus

- P. Cornelius Scipio sent as *privatus cum imperio*.
- Siege of Carthago Nova in 209 BC.
- Capture of significant number of supplies and release of Spanish hostages.
- Scipio defeats Hasdrubal at River Baetis but latter escapes with army and heads to Italy (208 BC).
- Decisive battle at Illipa (207 BC).

“Next he heard that the Carthaginians kept the bulk of their money and their war material in this city, as well as their hostages from the whole of Spain, and, what was of most importance, that the trained soldiers who garrisoned the citadel were only about a thousand in number, because no one dreamt that while the Carthaginians were masters of nearly the whole of Spain it would enter anyone's head to besiege the city...” – **Polybius 10.8.3-4.**

“When Scipio thought that a sufficient number of troops had entered he sent most of them, as is the Roman custom, against the inhabitants of the city with orders to kill all they encountered, sparing none, and not to start pillaging until the signal was given. They do this, I think, to inspire terror, so that when towns are taken by the Romans one may often see not only the corpses of human beings, but dogs cut in half, and the dismembered limbs of other animals, and on this occasion such scenes were numerous due to the numbers of those in the place.” – **Polybius 10.15.4-6.**



Affairs in Sicily

- Death of Hiero in 215 BC – succeeded by Hieronymus.
- Hippocrates and Epicydes elected as magistrates (214 BC).
- Marcellus captures Syracuse (212 BC).
- Carthaginian army of Himilco affected by plague.

“But what most of all afflicted Marcellus was the death of Archimedes. For it chanced that he was by himself, working out some problem with the aid of a diagram, and having fixed his thoughts and his eyes as well upon the matter of his study, he was not aware of the incursion of the Romans or of the capture of the city. Suddenly a soldier came upon him and ordered him to go with him to Marcellus. This Archimedes refused to do until he had worked out his problem and established his demonstration, whereupon the soldier flew into a passion, drew his sword, and dispatched him.” – **Plutarch *Marcellus* 19.4-5.**

War comes to Africa

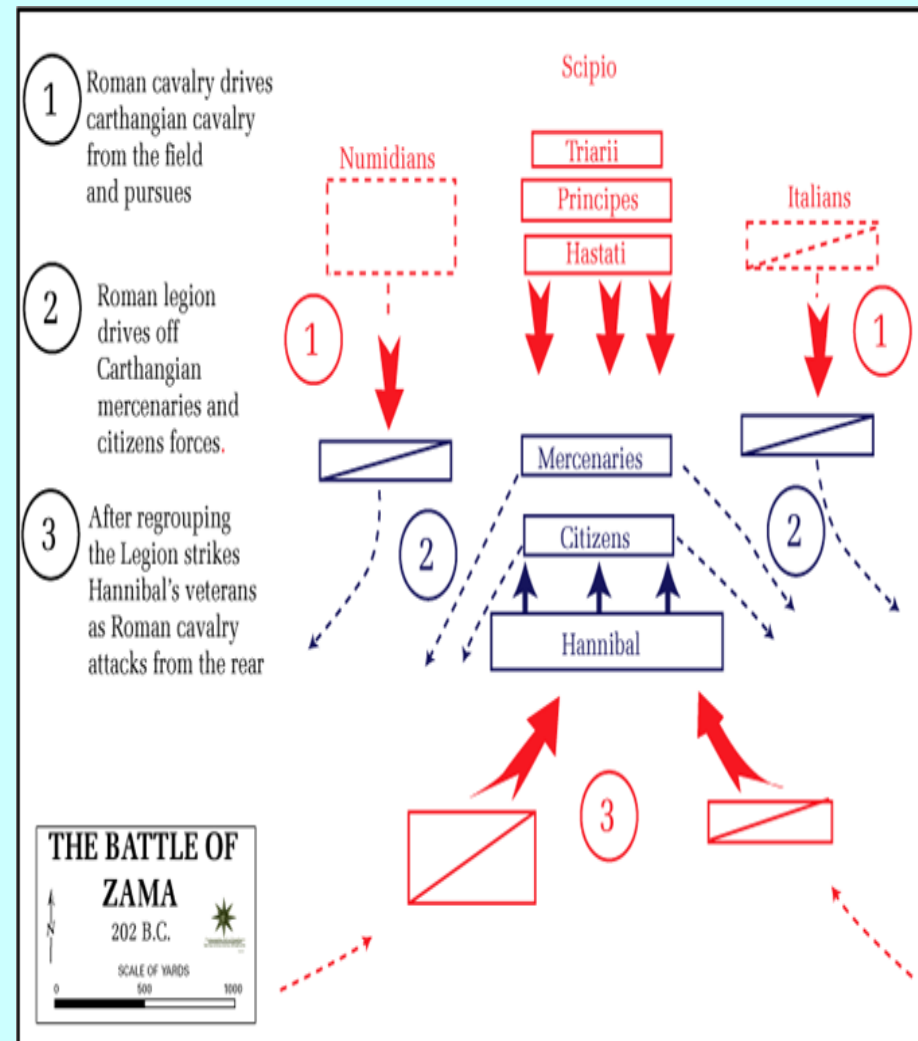
- Syphax king of Masaesyli (transfers allegiance to Carthage) – Massinissa king of Massyli (transfer allegiance to Rome).
- Scipio lands in Africa in 204 BC.
- Armies of Scipio and Hasdrubal meet at “Great Plains” (120 km west of Carthage) – Massinissa restored to his kingdom.

Hasdrubal, though he had by levies, conducted with the utmost diligence, made up as many as thirty thousand infantry and three thousand horse, yet dared not move nearer to the enemy before the arrival of Syphax. Syphax came with fifty thousand foot and ten thousand horse, and, immediately decamping from Carthage, took up a position not far from Utica and the Roman works. Their arrival produced, however, this effect, that Scipio, who had been besieging Utica for forty days, during which he had tried every expedient without effect, left the place without accomplishing his object...” – **Livy 29.35.10-12**



The Battle of Zama

- In 203 BC Hannibal and Mago are recalled from Italy.
- Initial attempt at peace terms, but attack by Carthaginians on a Roman supply convoy, and then on ship carrying Roman envoys.
- Battle of Zama – October 202 BC.



Terms of Peace

- Carthaginian territory to remain within pre-war boundaries.
- Forbidden to launch attacks outside its own territory without Roman permission.
- Prisoners and fugitives to be handed over.
- All Carthage's elephants and ships to be surrendered (except 10 triremes).
- 10,000 talents indemnity to be paid over 50 years.

“On this occasion it is said that when one of the [Carthaginian] senators was about to oppose the acceptance of the terms and was beginning to speak Hannibal came forward and pulled him down from the tribune...As it seemed to all that his advice was wise and opportune, they voted to make the treaty on the above conditions, and the senate at once dispatched envoys with orders to agree to it.” – **Polybius 15.19.**

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