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Titus Livius (59 BCE-17CE), also known as Livy, was a Roman historian. His work on the history of Rome was done under the patronage of Augustus, and the body of his work was written roughly between 27 and 25 BCE. Only the educated Romans would have read his work. However, Livy's writing style suggests it might have been recited in public as oral history. Livy's writing may have been used as propaganda to control Roman virtues and morality.

In Book 21 of his history of Rome, Livy crafts a narrative of the Second Punic War's origins. He opens by declaring the scale of the conflict, 'No states, no nations ever met in arms greater in strength or richer in resources.'¹ Livy believed that both sides were the best prepared and at their highest power that had ever been in the history of warfare. He acknowledged that this preparation was needed 'to stand the strain of a long war.'² This statement sets the stage for the rivalry between the two ancient states and depicts the desperate stakes for both sides.

Livy describes the feelings and emotions of the two sides driving the conflict. He writes, 'The Romans were furious with indignation because the vanquished had dared to take the offensive against their conquerors.'³ Livy tactically expresses some of the subtle political and social views and introduces Hannibal as a central figure in the conflict. Livy describes the poignant event in which Hamilcar asks his nine-year-old son Hannibal to swear an oath of enmity against Rome.⁴

¹ Livy, *The History of Rome*, Vol. 3 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1905), p.21.1

² Livy, *History of Rome*, p.21.1

³ Livy, *History of Rome*, p.21.1

⁴ See Livy, p.21.1

Livy's writing describes Hannibal character and how he developed into a leader. By showing Hannibal's virtues, it references Rome's difficult task in facing, fighting and conquering its Enemy. Livy is generous to Hannibal and gives some understanding why his men loved him and made him a great leader. Livy says 'He was fearless in exposing himself to danger and perfectly self-possessed in the presence of danger.'⁵ Hannibal resilience and mental strength, also good Roman virtues, were described. Livy extols Hannibal almost unconquerable strengths, he was without, 'bodily or mental fatigue.'⁶ Hannibal, Livy tells us, 'was equally indifferent to heat and cold.'⁷ Hannibal was virtuous in his needs, not greedy, only eating and drinking what he needed. Hannibal was exemplary in stamina, he didn't care if he rested day or night. Livy points out that Hannibal was never in need of a soft couch and his men, 'often saw him lying on the ground amongst the sentinels and outposts, wrapped in his military cloak.'⁸ Livy is painting a picture of a military hero worthy of been Rome's enemy. But Livy also quick to point out Hannibal's flaws to his Roman audience and to bias his descriptions. Hannibal and his fellow Carthaginians displayed 'inhuman cruelty'⁹ and 'an utter absence of truthfulness, reverence, fear of the gods, respect for oaths, sense of religion.'¹⁰ Livy, therefore, gives an insight into what Roman propaganda needed to humble Hannibal's achievements, while showing Rome's greatness and its superior values in defeating an almost superhuman enemy.

Livy demonstrates an understanding of military operations in his account of Hannibal's campaigns. His description of the river battle against superior numbers reveals both tactical insight and narrative skill. Livy details how Hannibal used terrain and timing to neutralise the enemy's numerical advantage. He says 'The infantry, feeling their footing insecure, even where the river was fordable, could have been ridden down even by unarmed horsemen.'¹¹

The account of Hannibal's campaigns against the Olcades shows an understanding of strategy. Livy notes that Hannibal, 'wished to make it appear that Saguntum was not his immediate object.'¹² but that Hannibal was eventually drawn into he was drawn war, 'by the force of circumstances.'¹³ Livy drew attention to strategic deception and political maneuvering. Livy's understanding of warfare and its tactical and strategic uses are shown in this writing. But at all

⁵ Livy, History of Rome, p.21.4

⁶ Livy, History of Rome, p.21.4

⁷ Livy, History of Rome, p.21.4

⁸ Livy, History of Rome, p.21.4

⁹ Livy, History of Rome, p.21.4

¹⁰ Livy, History of Rome, p.21.4

¹¹ Livy, History of Rome, p.21.5

¹² Livy, History of Rome, p.21.5

¹³ Livy, History of Rome, p.21.5

times he uses his descriptions to make the point of how deadly Hannibal was to face in battle and the threat he posed to Rome.

Livy gives us examples of the politics of the time using the eight years of Hasdrubal in supreme command. Livy says ‘Trusting to policy rather than to arms, he did more to extend the empire of Carthage by forming connections with the petty chieftains’¹⁴ rather than ‘by force of arms or by war.’¹⁵ Livy points out that ‘Owing to the marvellous tact’, Hasdrubal had shown almost Roman skills in winning over the tribes and incorporating them into Carthaginian dominions. The Romans renewed their treaty with Hasdrubal. Under the renewed treaty, the River Ebro formed a boundary between the two empires. The city of Saguntum was to be a ‘Free City’¹⁶ as it occupied an intermediate position; its tactical position effectively became a bargaining chip, as well as a peace-keeping venture. Livy wanted it understood that Rome was trying to keep the peace, if Hasdrubal had not been killed, peace with Carthage could have been upheld. By Livy relating Rome's effort of eight years of peacekeeping, it fits Livy's narrative of Hannibal as a warmonger. Hannibal's thirst for war may have also been a warning to those Romans listening to keep to the Roman virtues and not become like Hannibal.

In conclusion, Livy documents his understanding of the build-up to the Second Punic War. The work shows Livy's understanding of the politics between Rome and Carthage as seen in his time. Livy discusses his contemporary understanding of the tactics and strategies used by Hannibal, which are shown in his writings about the Olcades campaign. Livy also sets out examples of Hannibal's character, where he contrasts the Carthaginians moral ideals against Rome's as a possible warning against moral transgression in Livy's time. Livy is writing for his Roman audience, this is not an unbiased account. It is propaganda and its accuracy is debatable as it is written 200 years after the event, it is not a primary source. Livy's primary source may be Polybius but it is not credited. Livy's work is one of the few surviving accounts of the era. There is no way to critically address its accuracy and we can only view the work from a standpoint of situated knowledge. The work gives insight into Livy's perspective of Roman values and historical methodology. Overall, this work gives insight into Roman thinking and culture at the time of Livy, the rest is supposition.

¹⁴ Livy, History of Rome, p.21.2

¹⁵ Livy, History of Rome, p.21.2

¹⁶ Livy, History of Rome, p.12.2

Bibliography

Livy, The History of Rome, Vol. 3 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1905)