

The Greatest Generals of the Second Punic War

A fair comparison between

Hannibal Barcas

&

Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus



Hannibal



Scipio

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Master Thesis ~ Oude Geschiedenis

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Wednesday 18th of July 2012

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The picture on the cover and in the conclusion come from the Japanese Manga *Drifers* by Kitou Hirano. The story focuses on historical characters in an alternative world. Hannibal and Scipio are depicted as two old men who constantly fight over who is the greatest. Hannibal claims that he is the mastermind behind a double envelopment, like at Cannae, while Scipio claims that the winner takes it all. Despite this, both have a deep respect for each other.

"A million men could not make Rome tremble in fear, yet the Rome trembled whenever she heard the name of Hannibal" - Scipio Africanus in *Drifers* page15, volume 1, chapter 8, translation from Japanese.

Introduction

No war has cost Italy more than the Second Punic War. The Carthaginian general, Hannibal Barca, led his army from the Iberian peninsula, across the alps into Roman lands. There he wreaked havoc upon the Romans and their allies. His attacks pushed the Roman resources to their limits. But Rome did not falter. And while Hannibal regrouped in the south, Rome send forces to the Iberian peninsula. The Roman leader on the Iberian peninsula was Scipio, the son of the commander that fell there. Through cunning and dare, he managed to tip the scales in Roman favor. He had learned much from the Roman defeats, fighting in a similar style to Hannibal.

But just how comparable are these two generals? Hannibal and Scipio are destined to fight in the books until the end of times, that much is certain. Both have accomplished feats that most generals can only dream off. When they finally meet each other on the battlefield of Zama, neither general had tasted defeat. They both defeated several numerically superior armies with similar tactics. Of all the battles they both have fought, Zama showed a mere shadow of what they were both capable off.

Many people researched either one of them, captivated by their brilliance. This has led to the tendency to give statements that have no place in the scientific debate: This general is better than the other. Most of the time these statements aren't even shown to be build on scientific research, lacking notes and indeed based arguments. While it might pull in the uninformed, it only serves to make the informed skeptical of certain claims, thus damaging their own work.

This leads to the goal of this thesis: to compare Hannibal and Scipio without this bias. By doing this I wish to find out if comparing them is actually worth it. Of course they're both generals in the same war, but that doesn't necessarily mean they are comparable. There are several points where I expect comparison to either be problematic or the contrary. I do expect to prove that generalized comparisons, encompassing all aspects, to be only damaging to the knowledge of the second Punic war and the combatants.

First of all is the cultural background of both generals. The Carthaginians are a different people from the Romans. The Carthaginians were an Hellenistic state, relying on mercenary forces and oppressing the people they conquer. The Romans on the other hand relied on a civilian militia and made deals with the people they conquer. They both had very different views on conquest and how to fight a war. However their families are different from the dominant culture, even though they're influenced by it.

The second point of focus is the strategic setting. Both generals face strategic challenges and have strategic advantages. But they're not fighting on the same land. Hannibal fights in hostile Italy, where Rome is a dominant force and has many allies. Meanwhile Scipio's first battleground is the Iberian Peninsula, where he finds the oppressed Celtiberian tribes and mighty Carthaginian armies. After subjugating the peninsula, he sails to Africa where he faces the Carthaginian defenders and gets involved into a Numidian civil war.

As a third there is their tactical genius. Both generals are undefeated before their showdown at the plains of Zama in Africa. Since both face numerically superior armies as well, it's hard to say that one army is better than the other per default. In addition to that, the organization of the army reflects their answers to the strategic difficulties and opportunities they face. Both generals learn from the enemies they defeat and are forced to adjust.

Their character will not be discussed since it shows through their actions, implicitly already being compared. Most authors spend different chapters on their character traits, but it's impossible to know. Nor does it really matter. People are fundamentally different, shaped by experience and culture. The Hannibal that leaves Carthage as a young boy, wouldn't recognize the man that leads the army over the Alps, let alone the man that fights on Zama. The very same counts for Scipio.

What this paper won't be about or even attempt to do is answer which general is better. I believe that this has no place in the historic debate, since it serves no purpose within the debate. No matter who anyone thinks is better, Scipio defeated Hannibal at Zama and Rome won the war. It doesn't help us understand the war better either. Both are superior generals, when compared to their peers, which helps explain why they could defeat numerically superior armies. The truly interesting part is how they both deal with challenges they face and how different people, in different situations maybe come to the same solution.

Another thing that requires explanations is the dominance of Richard Gabriel's work as a source. He is the most recent author to study both the lives of Scipio and Hannibal. As such, using his work allows for summarizing what normally would have been extensive debates about the nature of certain actions and decisions.

Chapter 1: Culture and Education

Generals are born in the tradition of their nation. The Second Punic War isn't the first war either of these countries experiences and as such isn't the starting position of the knowledge that Hannibal and Scipio possess. The Carthaginian army is shaped a lot by events during the First Punic War. From Xanthippus' reforms, through Hamilcar's campaigns and Hadrubal's pacification and consolidations and finally in the hands of Hannibal himself. The Roman army doesn't change that much, but her officers do all the more. Scipio witnesses the defeats at the Trebia, Lake Trasimene and eventually Cannae, before he gets the chance to prove himself as a commander.

Before everything is said and done, a word of warning must be given. Our primary sources are based on the works of Polybius and Livy. Livy can hardly be called impartial, being known as a Roman moralistic author. Polybius on the other hand was a Greek in Roman captivity. Due to his status as a Greek scholar, he managed to find himself in the inner circle of the Scipio family. This must have skewed his views a bit, though he's still the most 'neutral' author we have. The other authors have smaller passages about both generals. They are used, because they likely have drawn from sources that no longer exist today.

In addition to a clear Roman bias, there is also the small matter of cultural blind spots. Several things are considered a given in any culture. Both Livy and Polybius for instance don't mention a lot of things about the youth of Hannibal and Scipio, because in ancient times this was not a defining phase of life. Furthermore entire bits of both their careers in the military are missing, both appearing and vanishing from the spot light, though some things can be safely reconstructed.

Heir of the Carthaginian General

The year is 247 BC: after a few years of war with Rome and losses on both sides, things are looking bleak for the Carthaginians. In an effort to regain the upper hand, the senate of Carthage decides to send the brilliant commander Hamilcar Barca to Sicily. Hamilcar is given command of a reformed Carthaginian army. It had been reformed by Xanthippus, a Greek general, train in Spartan discipline, hired in 256 BC to assist in the defence of Carthage.¹ Xanthippus noticed that the Carthaginians were fighting in the Hellenistic fashion: a wall of long spears and big round shields, but highly immobile. Sparta was one of the few poleis in Greece that didn't adopt the Hellenistic style and retained their old formation, with shorter spears, smaller units and higher mobility.²

In addition to the change in formation, Xanthippus also brought tactical changes. He placed elephants in front of the battle line. At the start of battle they would charge in an attempt to break the enemy formation. In addition to the elephants, Xanthippus extended the hoplite battle line to cover the entire line, including the flanks. The units on the flanks were covered behind light infantry and cavalry, hiding them from sight. This way the enemy wouldn't be able to notice that they could

¹ Richard Gabriel, *Hannibal, The Military Biography of Rome's Greatest Enemy* (Dulles, Virginia - 2011) 22

² Polybius, *The Histories* 1.32.1-9

be flanked by heavy infantry until it was too late. Finally, Xanthippus also realized the strength of the Numidian horsemen. These proved to be a superior cavalry force in both power and speed, making them very useful to completely surround and destroy the opposing army.³

Armed with these changes, Hamilcar took his army to Sicily to fight the Romans. He would remain there from 247 BC until 241 BC. In the same year of his departure, he becomes father to a son: Hannibal. During Hamilcar's stay on Sicily it's unlikely he had any contact of significance with his family. The Roman navy preyed on the Carthaginian fleet in order to starve out the Carthaginians on Sicily. In addition to the threat of Rome, nature herself claimed many ships during the war, making the shipping of supplies to Hamilcar dangerous at best. Hamilcar was essentially fighting a war he could not win. He is low on supplies, has a limited treasury, has access to a mere two bases and his army is limited in size. With this he faces a Roman army with superior numbers and territory control. In addition to that, the Carthaginian senate became increasingly dissatisfied with his lack of progress. In reality they had merely been feeling the effects of a prolonged war: money was running out.⁴

Against all odds, Hamilcar managed to keep the Roman army at a distance for six years. Rebellious elements within the Carthaginian army were quelled by Hamilcar. He killed many in their sleep and threw others in the sea. By doing this he had hoped to set an example. His gamble worked out, quelling the feelings of dissatisfaction for the duration of the war. That didn't mean that these feelings would vanish completely, as Carthage would find out after the war.⁵

In order to wage his war in Sicily, he had to trap the Romans in a cat and mouse game. He couldn't win a battle on the open field, being heavily outnumbered and demoralized by the lack of supplies. So he ordered the fleet to raid the Sicilian and even Italian coasts. He himself constructs a position on mount Eryx, from which he attacked the Roman positions. With the changes of Xanthippus and the leadership of Hamilcar, the Carthaginian army manages to trap the Roman army on Sicily for six years. While neither side manages to score a decisive victory, Hamilcar doesn't suffer any defeat.⁶

As the war dragged on, it became clear that the Romans could recover from heavy losses far faster than the Carthaginians. The author Polybius estimates that the Roman fleet loses around seventeen thousand vessels whereas the Carthaginian fleet loses a mere four hundred.⁷ The fleet sent to relieve Sicily is also amongst those lost. While Rome prepares a new fleet to blockade Libya, Hamilcar's main port, the Carthaginian senate sleeps. By the time they act, Rome's fleet is ready and ambushes the Punic reinforcements. The Carthaginian senate realizes that with these latest losses, they're unable to continue the war. In 241BC Carthage sends orders to Hamilcar to sue for peace.⁸

Upon returning to the capital, Hamilcar was greeted by his six year old son. The young boy had been studying hard in his father's absence. Peace was not to be had by the Barca family. Political allegations about the loss of the war and a widespread rebellion amongst mercenaries and soldiers

³ Polybius, *The Histories* 1.33.1-11, 1.34.1-9

⁴ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 67-69

⁵ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 67, 69-70

⁶ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 67

⁷ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 68

⁸ Polybius, *The Histories* 1.62.1-9, 1.63.1-3

who served in the war claimed Hamilcar's attention. He decreed that Hannibal should have a Greek based education, possibly in the light of how Xanthippus' reforms aided him on Sicily. While Hannibal studied, his father fought the rebels. This war would later be known as the mercenary war and be remembered as one of the cruelest wars of his time, even by contemporaries.⁹

The many wars had drained Carthage's might, finance and prestige. Sicily was lost and her fleet was all but destroyed in the First Punic War. To add insult to injury, Sardinia and Corsica were lost to the Romans while Carthage was pre-occupied with the revolt.¹⁰ All these events placed a heavy burden on Hamilcar, feeling that he could have done more to prevent this. In order to restore Carthage to its former glory, Hamilcar prepared to make an expedition to the west, to the largely uncharted, wealthy lands of Iberia.¹¹ When the young Hannibal caught wind of these plans, he requested that he accompany the army. Hamilcar agreed on one condition: Hannibal had to swear to the gods that he'd never become a 'friend to the Romans'.¹²

When all was said and done father and son set sail to Iberia with an army of twenty thousand infantry and two to three thousand horsemen. Hamilcar's orders were simple: strengthen Carthaginian power. The task was significantly more complicated. The Iberian peninsula was populated mostly by Celtic and Celtiberian tribes, as well as a few Gallic tribes. Hellenistic settlements could be found along the east-coast but this included allies to Rome and her allies. The most prosperous city of them all was Saguntum, a Hellenistic settlement which was allied to the town of Masilia, an ally to Rome. But so far, Rome showed little interest in the area.¹³

Hamilcar's campaigns were short but effective. The main source for his campaigns is Diodorus. He describes how Hamilcar used a combination of excessive force and diplomatic gestures to subjugate large areas. The campaigns follow a sort of structure. It all starts with a local warlord or chieftain opposing Hamilcar and managing to raise an army that outnumbers Hamilcar. Their confidence is inspired by their numbers, but Hamilcar was a master strategist and tactician who had played the odds before and didn't lose. With his tactics Hamilcar triumphs and makes an example of the enemy commanders by either killing them or mutilating them. The rest of the army goes free, save for the most promising warriors, whom are recruited to serve in Hamilcar's army. This makes the campaigns feel more like personal feuds than battles between nations and allows the soldiers to convince their people of Carthaginian goodwill.¹⁴

Hannibal must have been awestruck to see his father at work. Hamilcar's advance went very well and the soldiers love a commander that keeps on winning. In addition to seeing the functions of prisoners and captives and the usefulness of recruiting indigenous people, Hannibal also got a taste of what it's like to be a soldier. Hamilcar was the type of general that slept with his troops and ate the same food they ate. It was only natural for Hannibal to follow his father's lead. Furthermore a bond was formed between the soldiers and the young boy. One can easily imagine a seven year old boy asking all kinds of things to the soldiers, about their lives, the battle, the expedition, the

⁹ Polybius, *The Histories* 1.88.9

¹⁰ Polybius, *The Histories* 1.88.8-12

¹¹ Jakob Seibert, *Hannibal, Feldherr und Staatsman* (Mainz 1997) 22

¹² Cornelius Nepos, *Lives of Eminent Commanders* 23.2.230

¹³ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 70-71

¹⁴ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 25.10.1-5

commanders. Hannibal would learn a great deal by just talking to them when he had time off from studying or during meals.¹⁵

It's uncertain whether or not Hannibal was actually there on the battlefield with Hamilcar on the battlefield. It's a wonderful image to picture the young Hannibal on his father's horse, both overseeing the movement of the mighty Carthaginian army. However it's possible and more likely that he learned these things from the book, while remaining behind in Gades, Hamilcar's stronghold.¹⁶ Hannibal's views are very much influenced by the Greeks, due to his father's experience with Xanthippus' reforms. This came into expression with Hamilcar hiring Greek educators for his son. Amongst these is the Spartan Sosylus, who is a general. It's believed he thought Hannibal about Alexander the Great and Phyrus, as well as many of their predecessors.¹⁷ He might very well be the prime source of Hannibal's knowledge, though it will remain unsure.¹⁸

Despite Hamilcar's successful campaigns, some tribes insisted on resisting his rule. Others covertly plotted to assassinate him, hoping that his army would fall in disarray when he is gone. In the year 229 BC they finally succeed. During a battle they manage to threaten the Punic camp. Hamilcar has to make a choice: His life or that of his son. He provokes the enemy who, unaware of Hannibal's presence, takes the bait and follows Hamilcar. Hamilcar and his bodyguards are not seen again.¹⁹

Following his father's death, the army sends word to Carthage that it wishes for Hasdrubal the Fair²⁰, a son-in-law to Hamilcar, to become commander. Even if they wished for Hannibal to take the reins, he's far too young to be able to. Hasdrubal quickly moved against those responsible for Hamilcar's demise, boasting an army of fifty thousand infantry, six thousand cavalry and two hundred elephant riders, the largest elephant corps fielded by a Carthaginian general. At the end of the campaign, the army had its revenge: Hamilcar's goal of extending Punic power to the river Anas had been accomplished and the traitors had been slain or enslaved.²¹

Hasdrubal the Fair was no Hamilcar though and focused his efforts on pacifying and cultivating the conquered lands.²² He took an Celtiberian tribeswoman as a wife, probably having Alexander the Great in mind. Furthermore he moved his base of operations from the Hellenistic city of Gades to the newly build Carthago Nova. The city was defended by nature on all sides and would serve as a testament to Carthaginian might.²³ Hasdrubal the fair was a builder, forming many alliances based on trust with Celt-Iberian tribes, as opposed to what the Barcids would later do.²⁴

Rome had ignored events in Spain for a long time, being pre-occupied elsewhere with Gallic invasions to the north and Illyrian threats to the east and even believing Sardinia to be under

¹⁵ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 7-8

¹⁶ Pedro Barcelo, *Hannibal* (Munich – 1998) 24

¹⁷ Siebert, *Hannibal* 23-24

¹⁸ Cornelius Nepos, *Lives of Eminent Commanders* 23.13

¹⁹ Dexter Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty, Power and politics in the western Mediterranean, 247-183 BC* (New York, New York - 2003) 65-69

²⁰ Also known as Hasdrubal the Splendid or Hasdrubal the Handsome.

²¹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 72-73

²² Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 25.11.1

²³ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 73; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 25.12.1

²⁴ Siebert, *Hannibal* 26

Carthaginian threat. Rome moved quickly to try and stop Carthaginian advance through diplomacy and found a listening ear in Hasdrubal. A deal was made and the Ebro river in the North was to be the border of Carthaginian influence, in a way damning Saguntum and its inhabitants. While Hamilcar or Hannibal would have rejected such a deal, Hasdrubal the Fair didn't have their animosity and accepted. This allowed to him to focus on internal affairs.²⁵

In 221 BC Hasdrubal's reign came to an end through assassination.²⁶ By that time he had pacified much of Iberia and strengthened his army to an astounding strength of sixty thousand infantry, eight thousand horsemen, while retaining his two hundred strong elephant corps. Between them, Hamilcar and Hasdrubal restored the Carthaginian republic and empowered her.²⁷ She now boasted a harbor in the west, far away from Roman sight as well as an experienced and well equipped army. The gold and silver mines as well as vast stretches of farmland had been claimed and were now supplying Carthage.

But most important of all, Hannibal Barcas had been trained to become the next commander of the Carthaginian army. While it's uncertain what Hannibal learned directly, it's known he served in the army of Hasdrubal the Fair and worked his way up to cavalry commander.²⁸ From there he could experience the heat of battle his way and develop his own style of commanding. He was a fierce and impetuous leader, who is described to be the first one to enter battle and the last one to leave.²⁹

Hannibal's first move was against a Celtiberian tribe called the Olcades, a tribe to the north of Carthago Nova. A quick march to their capital saw their resistance crumble before him. Reasons for this attack remain largely speculation but it's believed to demonstrate that the Carthaginians still had a competent commander leading them. Following his victory he marched on another distant tribe, again for mysterious reasons. Using a similar strategy, he captured the capital quickly. On his march there he was ambushed by remnants of the Olcades and the forces of their allies, the Carpetani. He enticed them to follow him across a river where he ambushed them using his horsemen. Crushing those that made it ashore with his elephants.³⁰

Word of these campaigns travelled far, reaching Roman ears. Rome, Masillia and Saguntum had felt the threat of Carthage. It's reported that Saguntum was added to the list of places off-limits for the Carthaginian army somewhere prior to Hannibal taking power. The Romans just wished to make sure that this was the case. However the Romans claimed that Saguntum was now a "client" to the Romans, who had been the arbitrators in a dispute inside Saguntum. This would violate the treaty they made with Hasdrubal. Just like Hasdrubal before him, Hannibal send word to Carthage, asking what must be done.³¹

The senate gave him a *carte blanche*: do what you think must be done. Hannibal must have carefully considered everything. Declining Roman demands would mean war. Accepting would be a humiliation, but would also open the way for Rome to destabilize the Carthaginian held lands in

²⁵ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 73-74

²⁶ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 25.12.1

²⁷ Barcelo, *Hannibal* 30

²⁸ Barcelo, *Hannibal* 26, 29

²⁹ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 25.15.1

³⁰ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 74-75

³¹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 76-77

Iberia. Was Rome even in the position to make such a bold statement? They had been occupied in Illyria, whose people summoned the help of Macedon. In the end, war was deemed inevitable and Hannibal marched on the city. A siege of eight months was the result and Rome did nothing. After eight months the city was broken, having resorted to suicide and cannibalism.³²

After the city fell, Rome remained silent. Hannibal suspected Rome would go to war and took this time to prepare the defences of Carthage. He enlarged the army and prepared the fleet. He shifted troops around so that the people of African descent and those of Celtiberian descent would fight a common war. He split up the large army he had into several smaller groups. The main group was Hannibal's own army, which was preparing to invade Italy should it come to that. Hasdrubal Barcas, Hannibal's younger brother, had matured into a fine commander in his own right and would lead the second army in defence of the Celtiberian held territories. Further troops were sent to strengthen Carthage itself, since Hannibal believed Rome would aim to attack the city quickly to end the war.³³

But Rome did not move fast at all. By June 218 BC, a good few months after the siege had ended, Rome still had not acted. Hannibal had grown anxious and felt that it was time to strike first. He marched his army to the Alps. Note that Hannibal waits. In his mind, Rome is the one that's going to attack Carthage. Despite him making the first move, he knew that the Carthaginian army was far from battle ready, let alone her navy. By pinning the Romans against the only army of veterans Carthage had, Hannibal could have turned their gaze away.

Hannibal's road to commander of the Carthaginian army is dominated by his father. Hamilcar, the master tactician of the First Punic War didn't spare any cost nor effort nor risk to teach his son the essence of generalship. While he himself fought some very brutal battles against rebellious mercenaries and Celtiberian tribes, he most likely kept an eye to not make a monster. Hannibal likely learned from scholars about the Greek tactics, as the battles against the Celtiberians weren't victories to write home about.

When his father died, his brother-in-law took the reins of the Carthaginian army. Hasdrubal the Fair was no war general and after the necessary campaign to avenge Hamilcar's death, spent his time building a state. He created supply lines and the city of Carthago Nova. It's not sure how much Hannibal learned of this, having thus far mostly learned how to fight. Iberia was a hostile land though and Hannibal was at the forefront of fighting against the tribes, earning him the rank of cavalry commander. When Hasdrubal was assassinated, the army selected him to lead them.

Hannibal picked his battles, fighting against the Celtiberians first to get used to it. His siege of Saguntum can be called a failure, since the city and its inhabitants had been wiped out at the end of it, yet the events leading up to his siege were felt by him as an unacceptable provocation. After that he prepared for the worst: a Roman invasion. But nothing happened and afraid of possibly a Roman build-up, Hannibal moved over the Alps. War had long been declared politically.³⁴

³² Gabriel, *Hannibal* 78

³³ Theodore Dodge, *Hannibal, A History of the Art of War among the Carthaginians and Romans down to the Battle of Pydna, 168 B.C., with a Detailed Account of the Second Punic War* (New York – 1995) 156-160

³⁴ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 20.18, Dexter Hoyos, *Unplanned Wars, The origins of the First and Second Punic Wars* (1998) 233-235

Survivor of Chaos

In 241 BC the First Punic War had come to an end. Rome had long struggled and suffered against the Carthaginian fleet and their brilliant generals but it persevered and kept raising new armies. In the end it was Carthage who crumbled before the pressure of a long war. Despite incurring heavy losses to the Roman state, she had the resources to recover. Carthage on the other hand was ill-equipped and organized to face such a war. When the fleet to reinforce Hamilcar on Sicily was lost, Carthage could not recover and was forced to recognize defeat.

The Roman army of the time wasn't something to write home about. As opposed to the mighty legions of Caesar, the army of the Republican era was essentially a militia: property owners who obtained their own weaponry for service to the state. This had been the system from way before the first Punic War and would last till the Marian reforms. In addition to the Roman troops, a commander would also have access a similar number of allied troops. Cities and people that have been subjugated by Rome or had become allies were compelled to send additional support troops. Usually this would account for troops Rome doesn't field in large numbers: cavalry, light infantry, archers and other such forces.³⁵

By doing this, Rome created a joined plight with their allies, but risks always remained. Some areas have just been subjugated and allies could switch allegiance. Rome worked hard to ensure allegiance from their allies, creating a rather strong unified front. The creation of this Roman coalition was essential. Rome was surrounded by enemies. Carthage had been defeated but was by no means vanquished. To the north the Gallic tribes were still eying the wealthy and fertile Roman lands. To the east the Illyrian pirates were still raiding the Roman coast.

This was the world wherein young Publius Cornelius Scipio was born. Rome was under constant threat and his family was on the forefront to defend her. The Scipio family was a scion of the Cornelii family. This ancient family was one of the great old Roman families. As such the Scipiones had a lot of respect from the other families. Furthermore, the Scipiones could count the Aemelii, another ancient family, amongst their allies. The leader of the Aemelii, Aemelius Paulus, had no son. Fate would have it that Scipio would later marry his daughter.³⁶

Despite these allies and the respect of most families, the Scipiones were not beyond criticism. For some time now they had eyed the Greeks with a certain degree of envy. The achievements of the Greeks far surpassed Rome's own achievements. As such the Scipiones studied Greek language, arts and culture. Many Romans had more negative connotations concerning the Greeks. Feminized men and decadence were associated with the Greeks.³⁷ Despite all this, the Roman Republic had a favorable relationship with the Greek ruler of Syracuse.

Scipio himself learned to speak and write Greek himself. Because Greek education was shunned and still in its infancy in Rome, the Scipiones had his teachers come from the Greek mainland. The addition of Greek didn't mean Scipio was spared other subject. Scipio would grow up

³⁵ Richard Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus, Rome's Greatest General* (Dulles, Virginia - 2008) 7

³⁶ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 1

³⁷ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 3

to be part of the educational elite of Rome in his time. He could speak and write Greek and Latin. This meant that he had touched upon works of the Greek masters. Of course the works of Homer spring to mind, but works of the great statesmen like Pericles and Aristides.³⁸

The education for the Roman elite focused on become a statesman. Their career depended on successes both on the field of battle as well as in a civil office. As such Roman education for the elite went beyond merely reading about statesmen and generals. Scipio was in the privileged position to have multiple allies in the senate that would be happy to show him the reins. This unique insight combined with an favorable view on the knowledge of Greek predecessors gave Scipio a definite edge over his Roman peers.

All was well for the young Scipio until word came that an allied city had fallen. In 217 BC Hannibal had sacked the city of Saguntum, an ally of Roman ally. The entire city and it's populace were destroyed. The Roman senate responded by sending father to Hispania. His goal was to capture Hannibal, the commander of the Carthaginian army. A request of the Romans at the address of the Carthaginian senate to hand over Hannibal was turned down. The Roman army left in a hurry, however they arrived too late to prevent Hannibal from crossing the alps. With no options to stop Hannibal from reaching the northern lands of Italy, the Romans sailed back to halt Hannibal's advance from the alpine lowlands towards Rome.³⁹

In Italy the Roman army was slow to move and faced not an exhausted army but a well rested, resupplied Carthaginian force. Hannibal had also bolstered his forces with some Gallic warriors. Furthermore, the Carthaginians took the Romans by surprise, engaging the Roman army before they had even begun deploying. Faced with Hannibal's brilliance, the Roman army was defeated. The Romans were unable to read Hannibal's moves and disaster struck the Roman army. They had no methods to deal with the elephants, nor with the shock of Hannibal's cavalry. While the army was being routed, Scipio's father was in danger of being surrounded and captured or killed.⁴⁰

The young Scipio had been given command of a small cavalry unit. He had accompanied his father and uncle to battle. The command is considered to be symbolic, more for his own protection that for him to use as he sees fit. However when he spotted his father in danger, he didn't hesitate for a moment. He led his horsemen to aid his father. When they got bogged down in enemy soldiers, he went into the fray himself. Eventually he successfully rescued his injured father. While the battle was lost, Scipio had earned the respect of many Romans and more importantly, of many soldiers.⁴¹

After this battle, records of Scipio vanish.⁴² Scipio re-appears in at the battle of Cannae in 216 BC. Scipio has achieved the rank of military tribune at the time of the battle. It's likely that he remained with the army, while his father was recovering, being a Roman soldier before a son. Scipio regroups with the remnants of the army at the garrison of . Amongst these survivors are a group of demoralized youths of the upper class, who are contemplating deserting the army or even defecting

³⁸ Thomas Gartner, "Die praemilitarische Ausbildung des Scipio Africanus" in: *Maia: Rivista di letteratura classica* Vol 55 (2003) 317-319

³⁹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 101-113

⁴⁰ Polybios, *Histories* 10.3.1-5

⁴¹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 8-9, Polybios, *Histories* 10.3.7-9

⁴² Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 10

to Hannibal's side. After yet another complete defeat at the hands of the Carthaginians, they have no more hope. Scipio overhears them and forces them to pledge an oath to Rome, by threatening to end them now. His loyalty is appreciated by the other soldiers and of course the Roman senate and populace.⁴³

His presence after the battle of Cannae gives a good indication on what Scipio might have been doing. First of all it makes it very likely that he was part of the Roman field army at Cannae. The Roman army at Cannae was commanded by the two consuls, Aemilius Paulus and Terentius Varro. It's unknown whose army he was part of, though Aemilius' force sounds the most likely due to the political alliance between their families. The rank of military tribune and his actions after the battle make it likely that he was still a cavalry commander.

The episode at Cannae also hints at another thing. The Roman nobles are willing to listen to him. His family may be powerful, but that doesn't protect him. There is nothing stopping the nobles from killing him. However if Scipio is a respected member of the army, it would make such actions much more difficult, since Scipio and the nobles are not the only survivors. Was Scipio indeed alone when he threatened the nobles? It seems unlikely. If he was indeed alone, or voicing the thoughts of only a minority, then nothing would have stopped anyone from ignoring him and slaying him if he went through. However the nobles follow his orders without question, suggesting they either stood alone in their sentiment or were too afraid of Scipio's authority.

This raises the question where this authority could have come from, if indeed that would be the case. His first known appearance yields him a reward. He saves his father from the clutches of death with risks to his personal safety. But after that he disappears, but events still happen. Hannibal's army crushes the Roman army at Trebia and later Lake Trasimene, and Scipio was nowhere to be found. But what if he had been there? There's no report of Scipio actually leaving the army. So what if he had fought and somehow survived those disasters?

This is what Peter Gabriel suggests: Scipio was part of the Roman army for all those years that aren't recorded. It would give him a sight on promotion and commanders' functions.⁴⁴ Scipio likely worked his way up the chain of command during this time. Furthermore, his status as a veteran would have gained him the respect of the soldiers. A man who fought alongside them during Rome's darkest hours, who suffered losses like the rest of them, who took the same risk as the rest of the army. He was a living symbol of Rome's perseverance, still wanting to fight on after these crushing and almost total defeats.

During the battles though, Scipio must have been able to read the enemies' movements. He was able to escape from all lost battles he was in with little to no injuries. As a cavalry commander, escaping was easier than on foot. Still, he had seen how Carthage defeated the Roman army on at least four occasions: Ticinus, Trebia, Lake Trasimene and finally Cannae. With the oversight granted to a horseman, he has seen how the Carthaginians deployed their troops and enveloped the Roman army. He also must have noticed that the Carthaginian troops included many different races. Hannibal took Lybians, Numidians, Carthaginians, but also Celtiberians, Gauls and Greeks with him to

⁴³ Livius, *Ab Urbe* 22.53, H. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus, Soldier and Politician* (Bristol 1970) 29-30

⁴⁴ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 15-18

Italy. He saw how the cavalry was a dominant factor in their tactics and how hard the elephants were to control.

In addition to the tactical elements of a battle, there is another aspect that hasn't been researched a lot, likely due to the nature of this subject. It's questionable what these battles did to him. The Roman elite was a social elite. Everyone knew everyone and gossip was part of life. This is the life Scipio grew up in. He must have made friends and enemies while growing up. The war against Hannibal changed the social structure of Rome forever. Many were slain in the battles against the Carthaginian army, especially at Cannae. It would be unthinkable that Scipio, and indeed his political block, wouldn't be affected by this.⁴⁵

After Cannae, Scipio retires from the army for some time. He runs for the office of Aedile and manages to achieve it. Aediles are lower officials within the Roman state. Their tasks are defined by the Senate and can range from building maintenance to minor policing roles. As such it's impossible to say in what way Scipio's office helped him prepare for the battles to come, if at all. Regardless it was a necessary step for him on the path to becoming a Roman statesman.⁴⁶

While Scipio was suffering and fighting an essentially losing war in the Roman army against Hannibal, his father and uncle were in Iberia, fighting to prevent the Carthaginian army from sending reinforcements to Hannibal. By now Carthage had reinforced its position on the Iberian peninsula with several thousands of troops, bringing the total to three armies with over seventy thousand soldiers between them. The Scipiones were gravely outnumbered and as such could do little beyond holding the line at the Ebro river. Their positioning was perfect though. The river formed a natural boundary. With the defeat of the Carthaginian navy off the Iberian coast and Roman dominance over the seas was preserved, they could lock down the Carthaginians further south. Furthermore, Hannibal didn't have any ports in Italy to even accept reinforcements by sea. So the only way was past the coast or through the alps. But with northern Iberia locked off, this was impossible.⁴⁷

Gneaus and Publius Scipio, Scipio's uncle and father respectively, were also starved of reinforcements. Hannibal's war in Italy cost the Roman army greatly and they could not spare any men. This was offset by the help of some of the Celtiberian tribes.⁴⁸ While some viewed the Romans as just another conqueror, especially due to their handling of the Saguntum affair, many others welcomed the idea of someone that opposed Carthaginian rule. The Carthaginians were not loved at best. Their system of dominance included oppression and hostages to preserve their rule in northern Hispania.

Sadly for Rome, not all tribes felt that way and some tribes changed allegiance. Hannibal's brother, Hasdrubal Barcas, was the opponent of the Scipiones. He had learned the art of generalship from his elder brother. Before his assault, he managed to convince two of very influential Celtiberian chieftains, Indibilis and Mandonius to defect. When he eventually attacked, they refused orders and

⁴⁵ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 98

⁴⁶ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 14

⁴⁷ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 51-53

⁴⁸ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 51

left the Roman army. Within a few days, Hasdrubal had slain both Scipios and devastated their army. Only due to the quick thinking of their officers was their foothold maintained.⁴⁹

The death of his father and uncle came a few years after the Roman defeat at Cannae. Hannibal's threat was still looming at the horizon but he's been forced south due to the Roman strategy. There he was capturing cities and inciting rebellions, but managed to accomplish little beyond that. However, fear gripped Rome once again now that their last line of defense against the rest of the Carthaginian army was gone. With surprising speed they send reinforcements to the Iberian peninsula, hoping they'd arrive in time.⁵⁰

It was in this hour of darkness and sadness that Scipio rose to the challenge and decided to run for candidate for the position of commander of the Roman forces in Iberia. According to Livius, none dared to challenge his candidature, out of fear of facing the Carthaginians.⁵¹ A more reasonable view is the one presented by Peter Gabriel, who claims that Scipio was elected because, even at his young age, he was one of the few senior officers left in the Roman army.⁵² Regardless of how it happened, Scipio won the senior army position. He consequently set sail to Iberia to assume commander of the Roman forces there.

It can only be assumed that he was comfortable taking on this responsibility.⁵³ One could argue that he worked towards this position from the moment he joined his father's army. He had studied to be a general and a politician. However Rome didn't need politicians when he came off age. Rome needed soldiers and generals and Scipio had the abilities to fulfill that position. It also helped that his name was known amongst the troops, for both his own achievements and those of his father and uncle.

When he arrived at his father's camp on the Iberian Peninsula, he found a demoralized, patchwork army, consisting out of Celtiberian natives loyal to the Romans, the troops of his father and uncle, reinforcements send from Rome following their deaths and his own forces. Presumably the Roman troops also had Italian allied troops with them. It was up to him forge this into an army.⁵⁴ While forging an army he still had those defeats in the back of his head.

Scipio spend about a year doing little more than defending his position and getting to know everyone and everything. He studied the layout of the land, the views of the Celtiberian tribes, the central positions of the Carthaginians and of course, training his soldiers. Scipio took his time to prepare and analyze his surroundings. In that year he learned much of his enemy. The Celtiberian tribes were not fond of the Carthaginians due to the system where the tribes send hostages to the Carthaginians. Furthermore he learned that Carthago Nova was vital to controlling Iberia, having the largest port of the area. He learned about its defenses but also its weaknesses. He had also learned

⁴⁹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 15, 83

⁵⁰ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 15, 83

⁵¹ Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 26.18.

⁵² Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 15-23

⁵³ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 14

⁵⁴ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 83-84

about the better weaponry the Carthaginians and Celtiberians had. When spring came, it was time to take action.⁵⁵

Scipio's road is paved with the bodies of the Roman army. Scipio grew up in a relatively protected environment. His family was at the top of the Roman social ladder and everything was going well. His family had a greater interest in the Greek culture, which he appreciated as well. He has also spend hours listening to the senate and studying how the Roman state functions.

This all came to an end when Hannibal moved against Rome. Scipio, his father, his uncle, alongside many other Romans, were called to arms. They faced Hannibal at the foot of the alps, but the Roman army was crushed. His father was injured but Scipio likely stayed with the army. Serving under various commanders he saw the army being destroyed at Trebia, at the Trasimene lake and eventually Cannae. Rome shook on her foundations but there was still hope. A few years later that hope vanished when Scipio's father and uncle were slain and the road from Iberia to Italy lay open once again.

Scipio rose to the challenge and decided to run for the command of the troops that used to belong to his father and uncle. Seeing little choice, the Roman senate send him to Iberia with one mission: prevent the Carthaginians from reinforcing Hannibal. Once there, Scipio took his time to study more about the land he'd be fighting in, the people he'd need for victory and to train his army so they could withstand the devastating Carthaginian tactics he'd seen years before.

A Wealth of Experience

At first glance, Hannibal and Scipio share many similarities. It's quite easy to see why both are so often compared. They both come from military families, both families have an interest in Greek. The list goes on. But as said, at first glance. Once investigated some major differences show up. Which will make it harder to compare their knowledge and skills learned. Yet they are essential for the development they go through.

The Barcas and Scipio family are both strong political forces in their cities. They had powerful allies but also powerful enemies. As a military man, Hamilcar took care in selecting his second in command, a man by the name of Hasdrubal the Fair. While little is known about him, it's certain he took good care of Hannibal and continued his training. The Scipiones were in a very similar situation. The great family of the Aemelii had taken interest in them. But with power come enemies. Both of them would face distrust. Hamilcar's vision for Carthage was not shared by all. This would not change easily and some opposed Hannibal, even during his most triumphant hours. Scipio would face similar distrust by political enemies. Much of this comes from his young ascension to the position of commander of the troops in Hispania.

A more rare aspect that is typical for both families is their interest in the Greek arts. Both the Carthaginians and the Romans were proud people. Carthage however made widespread use of

⁵⁵ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 84-86

mercenaries. Greeks were amongst those, including Xanthippus. Hamilcar had seen the changes Xanthippus had brought with him and thus his interest was aroused. It weren't the Carthaginian tactics that saved Carthage, but the Greek tactics. Intrigued he studied them and made his sons study it as well. While appreciation of the Greek arts might have been more widespread in Carthage, in Rome they were reserved to a very select few. Many still openly rejected the Greek arts, despite it being part of their education. Scipio's family on the other hand were open to it. Therefore it's safe to assume that Scipio learned more interesting and practical ideas from the Greek masters.

While Greek was part of both of their curricula, Scipio most likely had more book knowledge than Hannibal. Where Hannibal sufficed in learning about strategy and tactics, Scipio had to learn statesmanship. Scipio's road to command would be longer than Hannibal's, even though it was very short by Roman standards. Scipio had to be elected by the nobles of senate, who viewed the military positions as part of the political progression. Thus Scipio was required to hold positions that had nothing to do with commanding an army. Furthermore he needed to impress people while holding those position, so a certain degree of skill was also required. Hannibal on the other hand succeeded Hasdrubal the Fair by will of the army, just like Hasdrubal had done earlier after Hamilcar's death. No political or civil offices were required for Hannibal.

Another major difference is that while Hannibal spend his youth in the army camp. Hannibal was trained from relative young age to be a general. He would learn a lot of things that Scipio would have to learn later on in life. Hannibal learned how to think as a soldier, instead of an aristocrat. As such, he knew what soldiers wished and how they lived. He could identify himself with a soldier. While Hannibal was living as a soldier, Scipio was living more as an aristocrat. He would spend long days at the senate, looking at how they debate and vote. It was a world of change when Scipio became a soldier and was surrounded by death. Something Hannibal had grown accustomed to.

Hannibal's peaceful life ends quite abruptly with the Mercenary war. His father is send away to quell the rebellion, which he does in quite the harsh fashion, even for that time. Afterwards it became clear that Carthage couldn't survive in this manner and his father departed for Iberia, taking Hannibal with him. Scipio is significantly older when his life gets throw upside down, which happens when Hannibal invaded Italy. He was drafted into his father's army to fight the Carthaginians. One could argue that Scipio should be more versed in battle when their lifestyle gets changed, being older than Hannibal when he gets drafted into a war, but that is not the case. Hannibal had been born and raised in the army. The age gap only allowed Scipio, at best, to catch up to Hannibal.

Their combat experience from the moment they actually fight is quite similar. Both are cavalry commanders and thus learn the value of horsemen. It also allows them to have more sight on the battlefield and thus intervene at key moments, with Hannibal using his troops more aggressively and Scipio being ordered to use his more defensively. Regardless, both men use their troops wisely and quickly win the trust of the regular soldiers, while learning from their enemies. They also both spend time with their armies before beginning the war. This would prove vital to the tactics they'll both employ, often requiring knowledge of the limits of their armies.

The major difference in their experience is set by their enemies. Hannibal spends his time fighting crafty but ultimately weaker Celtiberian natives. They're no match for the well-trained army and have to rely on ambushes to beat their better trained opponent. This is further emphasized by

his father's demoralizing tactics. Scipio on the other hand faces one of the biggest threats in the form of Hannibal. His combat experience is marked by three crushing defeats. Yet he lives and learns. As will become apparent later, both learn from their enemies, being placed in their position. Hannibal has to rely on ambushes and the basics of Xanthippus' teachings to prevent crippling losses. While Scipio has to find a way to adapt Hannibal's own tactics for the Roman army, gravely outnumbered in Iberia by, at its worst point, three Carthaginian armies.

It's important to note that the burden of learning lays on Hannibal and Scipio themselves. Hannibal, in service of Hasdrubal, overwhelmed the Celtiberian tribes. The Carthaginians could not be challenged by the people of Hispania. They had to resort to ambushes and assassinations to weaken the Carthaginians. Hannibal could only see their effects on his soldiers and their morale. It was up to him to figure out what to do with that knowledge. Likewise, Scipio had a front row seat of the Roman tactics. He could also see that they didn't work against Hannibal. All he could do was make note of Hannibal's tactics and try to think of a way to beat them.

Unlike Scipio, Hannibal actually commands his army on a few small campaigns. His bonding is done by the time the war starts. Furthermore, he has experience of actually leading an army. An army is far harder to control than a unit. In addition to that, he has already proven him to his army that he is capable of leading them to victory. Scipio doesn't have this when he has to lead his army to battle. He has to win their trust through spending time with them and retraining them to form a fighting force under him.

Both men get their lives turned upside down due to war. Hannibal's father dies in battle against the Celtiberian tribes. Hannibal is not yet old enough to fight when that happens and he's send back to Carthago to finish his study. Hasdrubal the Fair takes the boy under his wing when he's old enough to fight, proving that Hamilcar made the right choice.⁵⁶ This doesn't diminish the incredible awe Hamilcar must have inspired his son with. Hamilcar must have seem a god to the young Hannibal, leading the Carthagian army from one crushing victory to another.

On a personal level, Hannibal's hatred should be directed towards the Celtiberians. They were the ones that killed his father and brother in law. Much focus has been put on Hannibal's oath. It seems plausible that Hannibal did have a certain distrust towards the Romans. But that distrust could have another source. The revision of the Ebro treaty also stings Hannibal. Furthermore he feels provoked when Rome slaughters the Carthaginian faction in Saguntum. Hannibal feels wronged by Rome and acts within his jurisdiction.

For Scipio, the war is almost a personal affair. The war costs Rome a lot in terms of manpower. Amongst these lay men Scipio had grown up with. His future father-in-law lay dead at Cannae. Scipio wasn't the only one who lost much during the Second Punic War, however he is one of the few people whose pain can seen most clearly. Where he was in the position to save his father when Hannibal first invaded, he was far away when his father died at the hands of Hasdrubal Barcas. Though neither Livy, Polybios nor any other author make mention of grief, it's a fair assumption to make that this did affect him in a way. If anything, this made the war personal, especially when he is given his late father's command.

⁵⁶ Dodge, *Hannibal* 150

One thing that is notably absent from both their educations is strategy. Hannibal's campaigns in Hispania are often short. When he actually undertakes a long campaign, he sits before the walls of a city for many months. Diplomatic and strategy were on Hasdrubal the Fair's agenda, but Hannibal doesn't seem to have taken much interest in it, in favour of generalship. Scipio as well, has never seen what it takes to undertake a long campaign. All they had were the Greek book knowledge, where it's still the question if they took interest in it.

In the end they're both well trained generals. Hannibal is more the prototype of the born general. He grew up as a general, living in the army camp and only picking up things that would improve his generalship. Scipio on the other hand is more of a Roman statesman. He has a wide variety of skills. Luckily due to his age he catches up on Hannibal's generalship, mostly due to experiencing battle itself. Both generals are amongst the most experienced when they take command. The differences are either minor, in case of their education, or hard to research, in case of the personal motives. Both generals are well comparable in terms of preparation, both starting out on a similar level. Hannibal arguably starts out on a better position, having completed several campaigns with his army already. Scipio doesn't have that luxury, but does get to train with his forces for a year.

2. The Plans of Men and States

In a war, everyone has a different idea on how to win it, but it's up to the generals to follow their own plan. Hannibal invades Rome with the plan to take out her armies are force her to recognize Carthaginian superiority, but the Roman senate had no intention of doing that. With Rome fighting on, Hannibal is forced to make a new plan but makes a dramatic failure when he does so. Scipio on the other hand is ordered to stay put and prevent any Carthaginian from moving to Italy over land. However inactivity doesn't suit Scipio's own idea's and he orders his forces to march on road that would end at Carthage.

Essential to realize is that Hannibal isn't Carthage and Scipio isn't Rome. Their home cities have fundamentally different ideas of winning the war and thus move on those paths. This also means that sometimes they'll find hinder of their own city when executing their own strategy. On other times they'll find great support. Furthermore, the best laid plans of Hannibal and Scipio are only as good the strategy that supports them. In the end it's the responsibility of Carthage and Rome to support their generals. Rome does so hesitantly, while Carthage is more forthcoming, she ultimately fails to provide Hannibal the support he needs.

The Scourge of Rome

Hannibal arrived in Northern Italy long before the Roman force. His forces could rest and regain the strength they'd lost on the journey over the mountains. By the time the Roman force arrived, Hannibal and his troops were well rested for battle. His forces then proceeded to crush the assembled Roman army at Trebia. By succeeding in this, Hannibal had made the first steps on his perceived path to victory.

With the Carthaginian invasion being a fact, Rome moves against Hannibal. They seek to destroy him on the field of battle, before turning their attention back to Carthage herself. The Roman strategy at the start of the invasion is to weaken Carthage, by attacking all of her points of interest. Rome sends legions to threaten their holdings in Hispania, Sicily and even emissaries to Macedon. Rome is after a complete and total destruction of the Carthaginian realm.

Hannibal's strategy is unknown. He didn't tell anyone what his plans were, so it has to be deduced from his actions. At the start of the invasion the Carthaginian army lures the Romans to battle. They do so at Trebia and Lake Trasimene, as well as the cavalry confrontations preceding or following the battle. Hannibal does a great job at wiping out Rome's forces. This seems to suggest that Hannibal wished to destroy Rome's military potential and thus forcing her to beg for peace.

According to Gabriel this is because Hannibal views Rome as a Hellenistic state. Hannibal was of course raised to become a Hellenistic general. The army he inherited from his father was inspired by those of Alexander. His elite infantry was very reminiscent of the Greek hoplites, while his Iberian horsemen resembled the Macedonian cavalry. Hannibal himself was taught Greek by a Spartan, so

it's not that much of a long shot to believe that Hannibal viewed the world as a Hellene, as such he viewed Rome as a Hellenistic state.

According to Gabriel this is Hannibal's biggest and most fatal error. By viewing Rome as a Hellenistic state, Hannibal believed he could defeat Rome by weakening her. However Rome had proven in the past that it will fight on against all odds. By failing to take Rome, he allowed her to recover and try again after the defeat of Flaminius and again after the defeat at Cannae. In Gabriel's view, Hannibal had to march on Rome or lose. Since Hannibal never placed Rome under siege, he was destined to lose the war.⁵⁷

However the question then rises, could Hannibal besiege Rome efficiently? The first hurdle Hannibal has to take are siege weapons and equipment. These large, often heavy devices are hard to carry around and slow down ancient armies dramatically. It's no long shot to say Hannibal didn't have large siege weapons with him in Italy, considering his journey over the Alpine and the Apennine mountains. But it needs to be said that Carthage possesses some of the finest engineers in the world. They should have no problems making them. Furthermore, Hannibal is indeed shown to have access to light siege weapons on numerous occasions.⁵⁸

Gabriel adds to this that while Rome is well-defended, it's not something Hannibal hasn't faced. He has destroyed Saguntum which was a very well defended city in its own right. In addition to that, Rome had little to defend herself. The garrison was small compared to the forces Hannibal wiped out.⁵⁹ Even with the walls of Rome protecting them, they were too few in number to fight off Hannibal's horde. The promise of the sack of Rome would attract more Gallic warriors than Hannibal could ever dream of.

Another thing Gabriel notices is that Hannibal may have been waiting for a better moment to besiege the city, but doesn't expend on that.⁶⁰ Besieging Rome would put Hannibal in a precarious situation. He would have to give up his mobility and stay put around Rome. A siege would draw the attention of the Roman armies that are abroad. It would also draw the attention of those allies that are loyal to Rome. His rear would be under threat by Rome's many allies and her own armies.⁶¹ Furthermore, hostile territory would mean Hannibal is devoid of resources. An army the size of the one he fielded would be subjected to the same treatment as the citizens of besieged Rome, ultimately breaking.⁶²

What Gabriel also fails to see is the horror that Saguntum was. The city stood its ground for eight long months, waiting in vain for relief. Towards the end of the siege, the city suffered social breakdown with the living eating the dead.⁶³ Upon entering the city, many that were still alive burned themselves with their possessions and loved ones.⁶⁴ The siege of Saguntum was something

⁵⁷ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 211-213

⁵⁸ John Shean, "Hannibal's Mules: The Logistical Limitations of Hannibal's Army and the Battle of Cannae, 216 B.C." from *Historia, Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte Bd. 45, H.2* (1996) 163-166

⁵⁹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 143

⁶⁰ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 83

⁶¹ Nic Fields, *Hannibal, Leadership, Strategy, Conflict* (Oxford 2010) 50

⁶² Shean, "Hannibal's Mules" 184-185

⁶³ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 78

⁶⁴ Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 21.15.

out of a horror story. Add to that, that Hannibal's earlier attempts to storm Saguntum failed and that the city was devoid of any reinforcements and Rome turned into a deathtrap.⁶⁵ Enticing the Carthaginians to besiege the city and then crush any hopes of victory.⁶⁶

This assumes that Hannibal wants to attack Rome. Indeed there are many military sound reasons for besieging the capital of your opponent. Taking Rome would eliminate the strongest party in the Roman alliance system. Furthermore, if Rome fell, what chance would the other cities have? Even if Hannibal had a different goal, eliminating Rome would make his mission a lot easier. It's hard to underestimate the power that the senate of Rome, as a force of influence, had on the region.

Many believe Hannibal did not wish to attack Rome at all.⁶⁷ While she was tempting, Hannibal's goals were different. He aimed to humiliate Rome, to lead her allies in a war of independence against her. Livy even claims that Hannibal told freed captives that he sought Roman ruin, but not the destruction of the city.⁶⁸ Taking apart Rome's alliance so Carthage can rule in her stead. Should Livy's statement be taken for the truth, then Rome is far from Hannibal's mind. However as Grabriel states, Rome is too big of a prize to ignore. However the dangerous nature of that prize makes Hannibal wait until he actually stands a chance. Rome was in his sights, but only as a mere spec on the horizon.⁶⁹

It is the allies that form to key to victory and are most likely the target of Hannibal's strategy. When he first destroyed a Roman legion, Gallic warriors killed their Roman guards and defected to his side. He also released captives whose allegiance lay with Rome's allies. By doing this he gave himself the image of a liberator, rather than a conqueror.⁷⁰ By doing so he had hoped to incite a rebellion amongst Rome's allies. Without the support and resources of these allies, Rome would have been struggling to keep the war going. She'd be isolated and her manpower would have been effectively halved.⁷¹

Erskine argues that the image of Hannibal the liberator is either a misdirected Hellenized propaganda tool or a Polybian construct, with Erskine leaning towards the latter. Erskine believes that Polybios used the Greek propaganda to understand what Hannibal was doing in Italy. While he doesn't take into doubt that Hannibal tried to incite rebellion, he argues that we don't know how exactly Hannibal did this, considering Livy writes little about it.⁷² While weariness is advised, Hannibal's Hellenistic education could very well have led to this. It's worth to note that Carthage had extensive connections in all of the known world, including Greek. Hannibal's teachers may well have thought him this. Regardless, Erskine does note something interesting which may have contributed. If Hannibal did indeed use the Greek rhetoric of liberation, then he was using it on the wrong audience. Rome had no tradition of "liberation", preferring to form alliances.⁷³

⁶⁵ Dodge, *Hannibal* 282

⁶⁶ Dodge, *Hannibal* 384

⁶⁷ Dodge, *Hannibal* 384

⁶⁸ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 83, 234

⁶⁹ Anthony Fitton Brown, "After Cannae" from *Historia, Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte Bd. 8, H.3* (1956) 368-369

⁷⁰ Barcelo, *Hannibal* 53, Dodge, *Hannibal* 281-282

⁷¹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 84-85, Dodge, *Hannibal* 281

⁷² Andrew Erskine, "Hannibal and the Freedom of the Italians" from *Hermes* 121 (1993) 61-62

⁷³ Erskine, "Hannibal and the Italians" 59-60

This initial success is mostly due to the animosity between Rome and the Gallic tribes. When faced with the Rome's more civilized allies, this would not work. Simply because Hannibal fails to address what binds these cities to Rome. While the promise of loot and other riches is appealing to the Gauls, the other cities need more convincing. Convincing power Hannibal did not have. Furthermore, his troops were a burden on the resources of the Gauls, which meant he had to move. He had hope to show them that resistance was futile by destroying Rome's armies. This worked up until the destruction at Lake Trasimene.

Rome no longer cherished the thought of destroying Hannibal in battle. Under the leadership of dictator Quintus Fabius Maximus, Rome began avoiding Hannibal. Instead, the Roman army would follow him around. By doing this, Rome could strike hard and fast against those that dared to defect to the Carthaginians, while providing aid to those that would resist. Rome's strategy paid off, as very few defected and Hannibal's strength was slowly sapped away. However, this strategy had an adverse effect as well. Politicians in Rome felt strong enough to challenge Hannibal and became increasingly dissatisfied with Maximus' progress.⁷⁴

Rome change tactic again and struck at Hannibal at Cannae. A massacre followed and Rome quickly returned to Fabian strategy of stalking him and avoiding battle. By now Hannibal must have realized that Rome would not go down so easily. One of Hannibal's generals certainly did and wished to march on Rome. Hannibal still wished to avoid Rome, leading to the famous line in Livy, ascribed to Marhabal.⁷⁵

With Rome avoiding him, Hannibal had think of a different way to gain support from the Roman allies. After Cannae, there was no-one to oppose him so he travelled to the south of Italy and found many cities and people willing to join him. However they knew that Rome was still out there and simply defecting would leave them worse off. Furthermore, many cities in their area might not do so and might give Rome the chance to retaliate. There were a lot of uncertainties surrounding defecting to Hannibal's side.

In addition to those uncertainties, Carthage didn't have the greatest track record on treating her allies well. The bloody mercenary war, the siege of Saguntum and the Carthaginian treatment of their Iberian and Numidian allies must have been known in Italy. The Carthaginians took important people hostage to assure the loyalty of their forces. Where Rome would merely check up on their allies, Carthage completely dominated them. As Scipio would later find out, many Iberian tribes would gladly defect if it meant the returned of their loved ones.⁷⁶

That is not to say that all of Rome's allies felt treated fairly by Rome. Hannibal has a lot of success recruiting those that felt wronged by Rome⁷⁷. Primarily amongst these were the Samnites. This tribe had a longstanding animosity with Rome, often allying themselves with invaders, like Pyrrhus, or rising up in rebellion, like in the Social war. Amongst the cities that defected to the

⁷⁴ Dodge, *Hannibal* 315-318

⁷⁵ Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 22.51

⁷⁶ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 101-102

⁷⁷ James Reid, "Problems of the Second Punic War: III. Rome and Her Italian Allies" from *The Journal of Roman Studies* Vol. 5 (1915) 124-125

Carthaginians were the large cities of Capua, dissatisfied with their legal position, and Tarentum, feeling animosity towards Rome for the execution of hostages.⁷⁸

Hannibal needed the aid of these towns, but they were afraid of the Roman army. Even after Cannae, Hannibal had to visit every ally personally.⁷⁹ Rome made sure it had a very personal relationship with her allies. It was in her own interest to make sure that all of her allies were well supplied and had the soldiers they should have had ready for battle and equipped. By doing this, Rome showed her allies she cared. Hannibal had to offer something better than protection and legal position to win over Rome's true allies.

At the very least, Hannibal and Carthage needed to offer them the protection they had enjoyed as Rome's ally. As such, Hannibal promises them the protection of his army. But he promises this to many cities, towns and tribes. Even if he decided to defend just the main two cities, Capua and Tarentum, he'd still have to split his army in two across hundreds of kilometers. In reality he had to split up his army into many smaller pieces. Those cities that could field armies, like Capua, would be forced to use it to defend themselves against the Romans.

Hannibal was made to defend too many positions and sacrifice too many troops to it. But despite his best efforts, Capua fell back into Roman hands and the garrison of Tarentum remained loyal to Rome. Soldiers in charge of gathering supplies from Roman allies as well as the farmlands of his own allies were under constant attack by the Roman army. With no respite, his forces became a burden on his allies, like they had been for the Gauls earlier.

The dependence on these Roman allies part of the big problem Hannibal faces throughout his campaign, possibly being the reason he has to go after them in the first place. When he's forced to attack Rome, Carthage is far from prepared for another war, let alone a long drawn out one. Carthage had been suffering under the loss of the islands, as well as the mercenary war. Hamilcar did a valiant effort to replace those lost venues by capturing Hispania and Hasdrubal the Fair contributed by consolidating the area. But that would bring Carthage back to the point where she was when Rome won the First Punic war.

The strategic issue that plays through Hannibal's head throughout the campaign is his supply problem.⁸⁰ Carthage cannot support him, despite her best efforts. The first and most obvious way to gather supplies is of course living off the land and stealing the enemies' supplies. But Hannibal can't do that. The supplies of the land are mostly in the hands of his allies, who would not take kind to their "protector" stealing all of their food.⁸¹ Many would just go after the Roman supplies, but those are beyond his reach. The lands near Rome and to the north of her are safe from Hannibal's attack. Furthermore the supplies coming from the islands are unhindered by Roman naval dominance.⁸²

Hannibal did however have control of one of the wealthier untapped regions in the old world: Hispania. With an abundance in gold and silver mines, as well as a good deal of fertile fields, Hispania would provide Hannibal with all the supplies he needed. Provided that they could defeat the

⁷⁸ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 162-165

⁷⁹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 162-163

⁸⁰ Shean, "Hannibal's Mules" 167

⁸¹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 131, 212

⁸² Gabriel, *Hannibal* 163-165, Fronda, *Between Rome and Carthage* 329-330

pesky Roman forces north of the Ebro river.⁸³ Should they manage to pass them, then a long trek over the Pyrenees and Alps would follow. It would be far from ideal, but it's an option for Hannibal.

So why would the Carthaginians take all the efforts of a journey over the mountains? Wouldn't a seaborne mission be much more efficient? It would, but Carthage couldn't. Not in the least place because Hannibal had failed to acquire functional seaports. Capua and Tarentum boasted good harbours, but Rome had managed to shut them both down. Capua was besieged relentlessly, falling eventually. Tarentum had a Roman garrison trapped inside, overlooking the harbour, making it unusable.⁸⁴ Secondly, while Carthage boasted one of the mightiest fleets of her time at the start of the first Punic War, towards the end there was nothing left of this fleet. The Carthaginian navy had been wiped out in such a manner that not she could not even protect her own shipping.⁸⁵

Africa itself possessed some vast farming fields along the coastlines and had a vast trading network based on Carthage. But without a sizeable navy to protect the mercantile fleet, it was an easy prey for the Romans. While Hannibal succeeded in preventing a Roman invasion of the mainland, the Carthaginian merchant fleet was raided constantly. Carthage did possess the manpower to build and man a fleet. But traditionally it had been a volunteer force that manned the ships. With the Romans preying there was little glory to be had by serving in the navy.⁸⁶

Gabriel accuses Hannibal and his father for not having the foresight and invest in a fleet.⁸⁷ None of the Barcid leaders, Hasdrubal the fair included, bother to create a sizeable navy while in Hispania. The creation of fleet had to be priority number one according to Gabriel. But this only makes sense if Hannibal wished to attack Rome from day one. But this is not the case.⁸⁸ Hannibal and his predecessors were concerned with pacifying the Iberian peninsula. Building a fleet to that end was pointless. The Celtiberian tribes had no fleet worth mentioning.⁸⁹

Even if Hannibal had decided to build a fleet, it wasn't his call in the first place. Hannibal could only invest so much. Ultimate responsibility lay with the Carthaginian senate and war was far from her mind. But even if Carthage and Hannibal would have put all their finances into rebuilding the Carthaginian fleet. Rome would not idly sit by as their enemy was rebuilding a navy. Rome dared to take Sardinia and Corsica from Carthage while they were pre-occupied with their own business, why would Rome idly sit by as their enemy was actively making steps against them?

While Carthage did little to build up a navy until it was far too late, Carthage did want to support Hannibal. They attempted to reinforce him several times, only succeeding twice. Carthage also had ordered Hasdrubal to aid Hannibal. Furthermore, Carthage send emissaries to the enemies of Rome, requesting aid. While much of this aid failed to materialize, Carthage did try.⁹⁰

Hannibal's strategy is shaped by the possibilities he has to gather reinforcements and supplies. In a hostile area, such as the lands around Rome, the ability to replenish ones forces are

⁸³ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 83

⁸⁴ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 90

⁸⁵ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 91

⁸⁶ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 85-88

⁸⁷ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 89

⁸⁸ Dodge, *Hannibal* 145

⁸⁹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 89-94

⁹⁰ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 91, 184

essential. If Hannibal wished to besiege Rome at any point, he needed the manpower to fight the Roman coalition army in the field and keep the siege going. He didn't have this, making Rome a distant goal of his.

In order to move towards that goal, Hannibal needed the loyalty of Rome's allies, specifically those in her coalition. That way he could weaken Rome and strengthen himself. But Hannibal lacked the understanding of what made the Roman coalition tick. It wasn't awe for the Roman military might, it was a mutual understanding between Rome and her allies. Rome promised protection and aid in return for a fraction of the ally's resources.

Hannibal was offered aid by the allies, but in return for protection. This ultimately doomed him. Forced to keep supporting his many allies, Hannibal was bogged down and forced on the defensive. He didn't have the manpower to threaten Rome and keep his allies safe. Trapped in a cat and mouse game, Hannibal could only wait for reinforcements to arrive, or the news that Rome was marching on Carthage.

The Road to Carthage

After a year of studying the lay of the land, making alliances and forging the Roman force into an army, Scipio stepped on the stage that was Hispania. Scipio had been sent there on orders of the Roman senate to prevent Carthaginian reinforcements from reaching Hannibal. He could take over the strategy of his father and uncle and just block the Ebro passage. Yet this meant that the burden of defeating Hannibal lay with the Roman armies, whose strategy involved not engaging Hannibal. Faced by these facts, Scipio could only take one course of action: to destroy the Carthaginian powerbase in Hispania, so they could not send anymore reinforcements.⁹¹

The goal was very straightforward, but Scipio had very little room to maneuver in, considering the presence of the Roman senate. Any failure would be his and his alone and his political enemies will do their best to take away his. His first goal was to obtain a strong base. The closest city with a real port and naval base was Massilia, the Roman ally at the foot of the Alps. Scipio's father did have access to a makeshift port, but it was unsuitable for large supplies. The Carthaginians themselves destroyed the only major city in the region, Saguntum, and had built very little in return. The only settlement with a good functional port would be Hasdrubal the Fair's city of Carthago Nova.⁹²

To reach it Scipio faced three Carthaginian armies, one under the command of Hasdrubal Barca, one under of Hasdrubal, son of Gisgo (henceforth Hasdrubal Gisgo) and one under Mago Barca. Either one outnumbered Scipio's army and all were stationed within a ten days march of Carthago Nova. Carthago Nova itself, lay deep in enemy territory, making it a risky first target. Other targets didn't really present themselves though. Scipio could head for one of the Carthaginian forces, but risk being trapped by the other two. The other Carthaginian garrisons lay deeper into their

⁹¹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 51-52

⁹² Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 85

lands.⁹³ Scipio could opt to campaign against the Celtiberian tribes that were allied to the Carthaginians, but he'd accomplish little in the way of weakening the Carthaginian power.⁹⁴

The decision to attack Carthago Nova was carefully evaluated by Scipio. His fear to be caught in a Carthaginian counterattack was evident. The attack would take the city by storm, giving Scipio some very important strategic advantages. First of all he had taken the Carthaginian supply base and disrupted their direct supply line, while gaining control of the largest naval base in Iberia himself.⁹⁵ Secondly he was now in possession of a well-defended city deep in the Carthaginian held territories. He no longer needed to fear the Carthaginians grouping up and finding him in the open field. In addition to those strategic advantages, he gained some technological advantage as well. The Celtiberian tribes possessed superior swords. Scipio captured a large cache of those weapons as well as siege weapons.⁹⁶

The most important advantage he gained from capturing the city was the host of Celtiberian hostages. Unlike Rome, Carthage forged its alliances through oppression. Many of the Celtiberian tribes had been forced to send important people as hostages to Carthage. In fact, there were hostages of every tribe serving in the Carthaginian army present in Carthago Nova. All of these men fell into Roman hands. Scipio saw the significance of these hostages and send many back to their tribes with the request of asking for support for Rome. Amongst these hostages was the son of the Numidian leader Massinissa, who would not forget this kindness.⁹⁷

His new position on the Iberian peninsula created expectations in Rome. He plead for reinforcements, so he could take on the Carthaginian forces. The Roman senate stuck to their original strategy of merely denying Hannibal reinforcements, since they were engaged to Hannibals coalition on many fronts now. This meant that Scipio couldn't get more Roman troops and had to find another source. Luckily for him, many Celtiberian chieftains responded to his call to arms and large groups of Celtiberians joined the Roman army. Amongst these were also the chieftains that betrayed his father.⁹⁸

The Celtiberian tribes that joined him temporarily fix the problem of reinforcements and Scipio has gained a lot of supplies for his troops.⁹⁹ The Carthaginian forces make no effort to recapture Carthago Nova, seemingly content with the new status quo. This mean that the initiative lies with Scipio. Scipio could do two things now. He could wait until the Carthaginians came knocking at his door at Carthago Nova or the Ebro river. Alternatively he could come knocking at the Carthaginians door.¹⁰⁰

The Carthaginians had failed to respond to Scipios capture of Carthago Nova. Most of their armies were located around the Baetus valley, near Baecula. It was the only place on the Iberian peninsula where large armies could gather. Much of the land was under agrarian cultivation and the

⁹³ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 86-88

⁹⁴ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 40, 45

⁹⁵ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus*, 46

⁹⁶ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 98-101

⁹⁷ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 27.19

⁹⁸ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 101-103

⁹⁹ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 70

¹⁰⁰ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 99, 101

silver mines made sure there was enough money to go around.¹⁰¹ The Carthaginian supply line had been re-established at Gades, the original landing zone of Hamilcar.

Scipio marched towards the same location, where he engaged and defeated one of the three armies. For some reason they failed to join up and defeat Scipio. The army he attack was for strategic importance to the Carthaginians. It is however unlikely Scipio knew he picked the right army to attack. Carthage had given the three generals varying orders. Hasdrubal Gisgo and Mago Barcas were send to the Peninsula to deal with the Roman threat. Hasdrubal Barcas, who was already there, was given the command to cross the alps and join Hannibal. It was Hasdrubal Barcas who would be attacked and defeated by Scipio.¹⁰²

Hasdrubal Barcas was no fool though and wisely kept lots of his soldiers in reserve, careful not to endanger the Carthaginian plans. Shortly after his defeat, Mago and Hasdrubal Gisgo joined him at the valley. The Carthaginians reviewed their plans.¹⁰³ Gabriel suggests that Hasdrubal wished to lure Scipio in combat against the combined Carthaginian forces. As such, Hasdrubal took the bulk of the strongest Carthaginian troops and headed towards the alps, hoping Scipio would follow him, away from his fortifications.¹⁰⁴

Scipio in return weighed his options. He knows that if he pursues Hasdrubal Barcas, he'd get trapped and destroyed. With Rome already being hesitant to send him reinforcements, it's unlikely they could replenish an entire army for the Iberian peninsula. Furthermore, it would damage the Roman position with their Celtiberian allies. Thirdly, Rome would not be able to send an army in time to stop the Carthaginian armies from crossing over.¹⁰⁵ Fourthly, Hasdrubal had been weakened by Scipio's defeat. While he did replenish his troops, a defeat would surely have damaged morale. Perhaps arrogantly and most importantly, it's not part of Scipio's strategy to contain the Carthaginians. His strategy involves getting rid of them and should one pass over the mountains, so be it. It was not an overwhelming disaster in Scipio's mind to let Hannibal pass.¹⁰⁶ Knowing this, Scipio stayed put.

Rome was not too pleased by this strategic failure and was shaking again when Hasdrubal appeared. The Roman armies managed to deceive him and destroy his army before he could join up with Hannibal. With this outcome in Italy, Scipio now held all advantages on the Iberian peninsula. Hasdrubal Gisgo and Mago Barcas had to few troops left to offer an effective resistance against him. They asked for aid from Carthage and received that.¹⁰⁷

In order to resist the Roman army, the Carthaginian commanders split up their forces and garrisoned them in fortified villages.¹⁰⁸ Mago was send off to recruit more soldiers, this time amongst the more warlike Iberians. They had hoped to replenish the losses suffered by Hasdrubals departure. Their strategy relied on deterring Scipio from taking all the garrisons one by one. Scipio however rose

¹⁰¹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 105

¹⁰² Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 112-113

¹⁰³ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 74-75

¹⁰⁴ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 27.20

¹⁰⁵ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 113-114, Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 75

¹⁰⁶ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 83-85

¹⁰⁷ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 115

¹⁰⁸ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 87

up to the challenge and send several commanders to take them down. After a few bloody victories, the Carthaginians regrouped.¹⁰⁹

The Carthaginians regrouped at Ilipa. Keeping his momentum, Scipio advanced towards them. During the battle there, he wiped out the Iberian forces of Mago, though much of Hasdrubal's forces were spared due to a sudden downpour. Despite this, Carthaginian power was broken on the Iberian Peninsula by Scipio's relentless harassing. Mago and Hasdrubal returned to Africa to prepare for the Roman onslaught. Mago was sent away to raise more troops for Hannibal. Hasdrubal Gisco was given another chance to raise troops in the Numidian lands.¹¹⁰

Scipio suddenly fell ill after defeating the Carthaginians and rumor of his death spread. Believing he was dead, several Celtiberian tribes rose up in rebellion, seeing this as a chance to rid themselves of the Romans. Most prominent amongst those were the tribes that betrayed his father. A rebellion in Hispania would hurt his chances on getting troops for an expedition for Africa. Luckily however, Carthage was in no position to take advantage of the rebellion.¹¹¹

But where did Scipio go wrong? How could this rebellion happen? Scipio had been weary of his Celtiberian allies for quite some time, having heard from veterans what happened at Castulo. However, he didn't have a choice but to trust them. Rome denied him reinforcements and these two tribes had sizeable armies. Scipio did keep an eye on them, as will be evident of his formation at Ilipa, where he placed his Celtiberian allies in the centre.¹¹²

No, Scipio had indeed been careful with the Celtiberian allies, but he failed to see what they were after. Many of the tribes that had allied themselves with him, did so to his person. They had no loyalty to the city of Rome or even her people. It was Scipio with his army that aided them, or perhaps more importantly: freed them from Carthaginian dominion.¹¹³ In that case, why would they welcome a new oppressor? They did not mind Scipio the liberator, but they did mind Scipio the conqueror. And once he was gone, they took their chance, no longer burdened by the goodwill he had shown them.¹¹⁴

Scipio was forced march to the Ebro camp which was in hands of the rebels and defeat them. This is one of the darkest pages of his otherwise flawless record.¹¹⁵ Not only did it damage his standing with the Celtiberian tribes, it also damaged his image in Rome. He had to work hard to get his mission to Africa past the senate, who had not forgotten the fiasco from the first Punic war. In fact Rome gave him the legal basis to do so, but hardly troops.¹¹⁶

Having conquered much of Hispania, Scipio wished to take the fight to Africa. Scipio knew that he needed to demoralize Carthage and defeat Hannibal. Defeating Hannibal in Italy would be enough to end the war. Carthage didn't have the military might left to challenge Rome and would sue for peace. However it didn't prevent Carthage from rebuilding. Defeating Carthage alone would allow

¹⁰⁹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 116-117

¹¹⁰ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 122

¹¹¹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 132-134, Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 100-102

¹¹² Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 119

¹¹³ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 39

¹¹⁴ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 132

¹¹⁵ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 132-137

¹¹⁶ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 111

Hannibal to take the reins and rebuild her might. Either way, both had to be defeated for Rome to be secure.¹¹⁷

Scipio went to Sicilia to prepare ships and supplies. He was not allowed to levy more troops in Italy, but Sicily was fine.¹¹⁸ Upon landing he was greeted by the soldiers that had been disgraced after Cannae. They were highly motivated men, eager to regain their honor. He also had access to other veterans and some allied soldiers as well. Scipio's army was not large enough to besiege Carthage or take even fortified cities by storm, so Scipio needed to find another way to bring Carthage to its knees.¹¹⁹

On the Iberian peninsula he had met the Numidian prince Massinissa.¹²⁰ He had been grateful for the return of his son and defected from Carthage. His rival, Syphax, was an ally of Rome and boasted a larger army. The Numidian princes had their lands to the west of Carthage. If Scipio landed in the east, they could catch Carthage in a pincer movement. However Syphax and Massinissa would have to work together in order to accomplish that. They're both after complete rule over the Numidian tribes and Scipio is likely to have known that it would be hard to get both of them to work together.¹²¹

Carthage had seen the same and send Hasdrubal Gisgo in order to gain the support of Syphax. The Numidian king was enamored by the beauty of Hasdrubal's daughter. This was noticed by the Carthaginian who quickly arranged a marriage. Shortly after Scipio received word that Syphax had allied himself with Carthage and pledged to defend Africa. As such, he requested that Rome would not invade Africa, since in that case, he'd pick for Carthage. This must have been a huge blow to Scipio's plans. Not only did he lose valuable troops, but Carthage gained these troops.¹²² Scipio had seen the value of the Numidian horsemen in both the Italian battlefields, but also in Hispania.

While Scipio was preparing his forces, he took a huge risk as well. Locri, a town in southern Italy, was willing to defect back to the Roman side. Refugees asked Scipio for help, however it was a risky venture. The area where Locri lay was a hostile zone. Furthermore it had little to no strategic value. It also lay outside of Scipio's jurisdiction.¹²³ Any attempt to liberate the town would be folly indeed. Yet Scipio does undertake this mission. With a small force he takes the town. He couldn't though, since a rather large Carthaginian army was moving towards the town as well.

This move could have ended in disaster as indeed a few days later Hannibal himself arrived to retake the town. In one move all of Scipio's careful planning could have been undone. In one move Hannibal could prolong the war indefinitely, since the Roman senate saw no salvation in a mission to Africa. However upon learning of the presence of Scipio, Hannibal left, allow Scipio to resume his quest to invade Africa.¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 110-111

¹¹⁸ John Lazenby, *Hannibal's War, A military history of the Second Punic War* (Warminster – 1978) 195

¹¹⁹ Fields, *Hannibal* 26-27

¹²⁰ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 104-105

¹²¹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 146

¹²² Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 150-151

¹²³ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 147-151

¹²⁴ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 112-115

This episode will confuse anyone. While it's understandable why Hannibal moves towards that goal, it's beyond anyone why he would leave his greatest opponent alive. Scipio's name must have become known to Hannibal, since he was the general responsible for the loss of the Iberian Peninsula. Furthermore, Scipio was in no position to hide his build-up on Sicily from anyone. He needed the aid of Numidian tradesmen, who also sought to supply Hannibal and the villages in South Italy.¹²⁵

The risks Scipio takes to relieve this town are enormous. One could even argue that this is the most risky undertaking he has done in the entire campaign, including the siege of Carthago Nova and the expedition to Africa. And to what end? To get the allegiance of a town in the south of Italy, a town with no strategic importance? To raise morale amongst his troops, who are already willing to fight to the death? This is likely one of those things that will remain unknown forever.

Scipio had to move faster than ever. Syphanx defection would make the Roman senate rethink his plans, while the incident at Locri might end up costing him his command.¹²⁶ Scipio left the Sicilian ports with his fleet during the fog. He had assembled many ships bearing food, water, weapons and horses, provided by allies. With Syphanx having defected and thus knowing where he could land, Scipio would have to deceive them. In the fog he altered course towards Utica. The original landing site had been Thapsus, but with Syphanx defection, that site lost its purpose.¹²⁷

Scipio's new plan had already hatched. Utica was a town in the centre of the agrarian lands of Carthage. Capturing it would give Scipio a supply base: granaries and a port, while at the same time denying these to Carthage, similar to what he had done in Hispania. In addition to that, it would serve as a fix to Syphanx' defection, since he could no longer rely on his resources and supplies. Undeterred the Roman forces advanced. Scipio joined up with Massinissa and weakened Utica's militia defences.¹²⁸

However Utica stood strong and even with aid, Scipio could not take the city. When news reached him of Hasdrubal Gisgo and Syphanx approaching the city, Scipio backed off.¹²⁹ The siege cost Scipio momentum. The Carthaginians had raised their armies and gathered them before him. Gabriel suggests that Scipio should have bypassed the city, since his own camp proved to be sufficient in supplying his army. He also adds that Scipio might have thought wrong about Utica supporting Rome, since it had moved against Carthage during the Mercenary war and the First Punic War.¹³⁰

Scipio resorted to building a less than ideal base camp, with as it's only defence a marsh.¹³¹ He was forced to pillage the farms of Utica for supplies and rely on help from Syracuse and Sicily. To capture Carthage he needed a way to threaten it. Scipio wished Carthage to surrender on his terms. The Roman senate would prefer it that way. Hasdrubal Gisgo and Syphanx had another idea. They

¹²⁵ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 151

¹²⁶ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 115

¹²⁷ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 154-156

¹²⁸ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 158-159, Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 120

¹²⁹ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 122-124

¹³⁰ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 162-163

¹³¹ Lazenby, *Hannibal's War* 206

wished to trade Hannibal and Scipio, accepting the loss of Hispania. They had hoped that the war fatigue that was present in Carthage had also affected Rome and in a way they were right.¹³²

Through deception Scipio vanquished the Carthaginian armies under Hasdrubal and Syphanx, burning their camps. Scipio was determined to take Utica and send his forces to besiege it.¹³³ This is a puzzling move for Gabriel, since Tunis is key to blockading Carthage and slowly erode their abilities to fight back.¹³⁴ However that's not what Scipio seeks to accomplish. As Gabriel himself notes earlier, Scipio wishes to do the same to Carthage as Hannibal tried to do with Rome: destroy it's armies to force the city into submission.¹³⁵ Rome had not granted him the troops for an extensive siege, so he had to keep weakening the city until she surrendered.

The Carthaginians regrouped but at the battle of the Great Plains were defeated once more. Scipio had left half his army behind to continue the siege of Utica. After the battle he send off all of his remaining horsemen to harass Syphanx, while he took his army to besiege Tunis. However news travelled fast and Carthage panicked. According to Polybius, they wished to fortify both Tunis and Cartahge, prepare for a siege and recall Hannibal and Mago. All of this before Scipio reached Tunis. Scipio suffered some losses at Utica, but nothing major.¹³⁶

Meanwhile Laelius, Scipio's right hand man, and Massinissa destroyed Syphanx' forces and neutralized Numidia. With this he had broken Carthage's will and they offered peace. Scipio dictated a settlement that would turn Carthage into a regional power, but no longer the imperial force it had been. Carthage agreed and thus word was send to Rome. After a long and heavy debate, Rome agreed to the terms.¹³⁷ But one piece of the puzzle was missing. Carthage still had its strongest and most powerful army. Hannibal Barcas was still out there.

Scipio's strategies in both Hispania and Africa are marked by the Roman senate not agreeing with him. He's forced to move against her wishes on several occasions. Furthermore Scipio is not afraid to take risks, however needless they may be, as is evident with Lorica. Yet through diplomacy he keeps succeeding to off-set the lack of support he gets from the senate. Be it Celtiberian princes or a Numidian king, Scipio entices them all to follow his banner.

There is another thing that marks Scipio's strategy and that is a certain degree of rigidness. While he quickly alters his plans before they are set in motion, once he strategizes something he sticks to it. Concerns from his soldiers and the Roman senate are ignored. His strategies are also very careful, following a rather straightforward formula. First he captures a good supply base and then seeks out to destroy every enemy army in the field. While this worked in Hispania due to the quick and surprising fall of Carthago Nova, in Africa he runs into more trouble when Utica holds out.

¹³² Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 164

¹³³ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 126-127

¹³⁴ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 166

¹³⁵ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 163

¹³⁶ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 171-172

¹³⁷ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 173

In the Shadow of Cities

The campaigns during the Second Punic War are long and mysterious. Most of the time we can only see the effects of a campaign, not what thoughts lay at the foundation of it. It is here though that comparison becomes hard to justify, for a number of reasons. Interestingly enough, Hannibal and Scipio face many similar problems and find similar solutions to them. But they vary in the executions of the solutions.

It can be argued that the central theme of both of their strategies are supplies. Carthage is unable to send Hannibal anything at all. Rome is very efficient at blocking off Hannibal's supply lanes in the sea and over land. Furthermore Hannibal is prevented from scavenging due to his own strategy and the presence of Roman raiders. Meanwhile Rome simply doesn't have any more supplies to send Scipio while he is in Hispania. He needs to make do with what he has. While preparing the expedition to Africa, Rome doesn't wish to get involved, putting their faith in the Fabian strategy they had rejected a few years ago.

Hannibal seeks to gather supplies from Roman allies. Either through force or convincing them to join him. While this gives him some pay-off early on with the Gauls, they feel that Hannibal is abusing them. In the south the tables are turned and the cities and towns tend to abuse Hannibal to pursue their own agenda. With his supply lines disrupted Hannibal is forced to focus on securing these. Without food his army will slowly die off. However this action takes the needle out of Hannibal's offensive putting on the defensive instead.

In Hispania Scipio takes a different approach. Despite the Celtiberian tribes having a lot of resources, he doesn't actively court them in the beginning. They're unreliable and have played a role in his father's death, so Scipio is weary of them. Instead he focuses on the Carthaginian supply base: Carthago Nova. The fall of this city gives Scipio all the supplies he needs for his campaign on the peninsula. When he lands in Africa, he tries the same but the Carthaginian supply base at Utica doesn't fall as easily. The forces there make similar mistakes of sending out their garrison to chase Scipio, but the defenders of Utica are much more tenacious.

Scipio's strategy has one very fortunate side effect. When Carthago Nova falls, Scipio liberates a large group of Iberian prisoners. By doing this Scipio is greeted as a liberator and wins their allegiance for the moment. Hannibal is unable to copy this feat in Italy, because the Romans don't keep prisoners. Hannibal is unable to break the Roman system and win over any substantial amount of allies. The Roman system of alliances is very hard to break. Rome offers aid and respect, something Carthage won't.

But Scipio doesn't entirely win over the Iberian tribes either. When he's believed gone, they rose up in rebellion. It's an alliance of convenience, one that could easily be broken if the Carthaginians tried. They did against Scipio's father, but failed to do so against him. In a twist of fate, Hannibal to has an alliance of convenience. The Gauls in northern Italy don't like their Roman masters and welcome Hannibal as a liberator. However when he fails to advance, they become restless and this is a dangerous situation for Hannibal. Spurred by this he's forced to move south.

An important and overlooked difference is the role of the capital cities. Hannibal faces the full might of Rome and beats her initial strategy into the ground. A quick victory is denied and

Hannibal remains a constant threat. The follow-up strategy is much more effective. The Fabian strategy neutralizes Hannibal completely, denying him a chance to turn the war around. Hannibal cannot catch the Roman army that is just a day's march away, with scouts everywhere. His army is denied the chance to forage food with those scouts harassing them. Most crippling of all, the presence of the Roman army nearby makes cities think twice about defecting.

At the other side, Carthage is unable to lock down Scipio. They have too many problems still pacifying the Celtiberian tribes to move against Scipio and lock him in. When faced with the loss of Carthago Nova, the Carthaginians seem to panic. They send away Hasdrubal Barca, the most seasoned of their generals, to reinforce Hannibal, weakening their position in Hispania. The Carthaginians disperse, to force Scipio to either siege or wait, expecting Hannibal and Hasdrubal to end the war. However Scipio doesn't take the bait and besieges one of the towns. Furthermore Hasdrubal fails and is killed.

When Scipio lands in Africa, Carthage tries to rally defenders but fails, much like Rome did against Hannibal. In a series of engagements Carthage is brought to her knees. Again Scipio went for the supply base, but found more tenacious resistance. But soon Carthage's army is crushed and her will broken as she sues for peace. Ironically beaten by the same strategy Hannibal wished to use on Rome.

Incidentally, neither Hannibal, nor Scipio march on the capitals. Rome and Carthage, while shaking on their foundations, are never directly threatened with a serious siege. Hannibal does march on Rome once, but that's to try and move away the army besieging Capua, which fails. Scipio doesn't threaten Carthage at all, only once marching on Tunis, a fort overlooking the entrance to Carthage, but doesn't capture it.

In both cases Gabriel argues for strategic stupidity. But in both cases both Hannibal and Scipio put themselves at great risk. By staying put, their opponents get weeks, if not months, of preparation, while their armies are stuck in one place. Furthermore, a siege is costly in the lives of men as well as supplies. To do this, it's absolutely essential to have a solid supply line, which neither general has at that point.

Hannibal's lanes are under constant pressure and a siege on Rome would cripple his resources, though he'd probably be able to recruit many Gauls with the promise of spoils. Scipio's position is even more precarious, being devoid of virtually everything, the camp and his troops are all he has. Most losses he suffers cannot be replaced. Both generals know that a siege is long and drains the will of everyone involved. Therefore, their strategies are meant to avoid the siege. It should not be viewed as the final stage, but as the last resort. In that light, both generals are forced to draw on every bit of planning they have to avoid it and bring the war to an end.

The biggest difference between both generals is their theater. Hannibal fights in Italy and Italy alone. Granted, there are different areas, but all of them are within reach of Rome on foot. The threat of Rome is an always present one and this makes it difficult for Hannibal to exploit weaknesses in Rome's formidable alliance. Rome's control over her alliance is strong.

Scipio's theater on the other hand is recently subjugated Hispania, where many independent tribes still have power and many more wish for independence from the Carthaginians. A large part of

Carthaginian's pool of manpower was easily subjugated by Scipio. When he landed in Africa he had a significantly tougher time getting a strong position. Not only did his attacks on Utica took a long time, but he lost one of the most important allies Rome had in north Africa, Syphax.

It is here that any comparison that will be made will have to be careful. A comparison on strategic grounds has to be made carefully and be wary of three things. Primarily, Hannibal and Scipio are not Carthage and Rome. They are part of that faction but have their own ideas on how to bring the war to an end. By putting them on the same level, they gain too many responsibilities and powers, that are technically out of their hands. The construction of a fleet is beyond Hannibal's capabilities, likewise Scipio still has to answer to the Roman senate for his actions, almost losing his chance to invade Africa.

Secondly the presence of the capital cities. Rome in particular plays a dominant role in the Italian theatre. Rome has created one of the most sophisticated alliances in the old world. Mutual trust and gains lay at the foundation of this system. Nothing Hannibal offers can hope to break this alliance. Those he wins over are already dissatisfied. Scipio on the other hand advances quickly in Hispania, far away from Carthage. But as soon as he comes close, Carthage tightens the bonds she has with her neighbouring allies. But Scipio doesn't have this problem in Hispania, giving Rome a huge advantage and giving Scipio the chance to learn and test.

Finally it should be noted that while things seem logic in modern eyes, it should be used sparingly. Gabriel notes that both generals failed to besiege the capitals. While in modern strategy it's a sensible move to begin with bombarding the capitals, for Hannibal and Scipio it would take a lot of strength and will to move against them. A siege will last for weeks if not months. During all of this time, they're stuck in one place, being unable to do anything else. Scipio took Carthago Nova by storm, but that city was barely defended and Scipio even weakened the garrison. In addition to that, Scipio exploits the natural weaknesses of the city. He cannot repeat this feat at Utica.

If anything, Hannibal's siege of Saguntum should be taken as an example of a classical siege. It took eight months to bring the city to its knees and even then he won little by doing it. For a siege, weapons are needed. While both sides have experienced engineers in their armies that could make them, it costs them time. And that's the biggest problem. They need to feed the army during the siege. Neither of them have the supplies to do so.

In the end, both of their campaigns show similarities, with some instances being mirrored. However comparison is made hard by presence of Rome and the Roman system. It's so fundamentally unique to the ancient world and it would be hard for any foreigner to understand, let alone undermine it. Meanwhile the Carthaginian system is quite classic and known to many. It's telling that after Syphax' defection Scipio doesn't bother to win him back. The Roman allies staying loyal to Rome is more a testament of her system, than of Hannibal's inability to defeat it.

3. Blessed by Victory

The taste of defeat is a bitter one that most generals will have to swallow on one occasion or another. It's rare to find generals that are completely undefeated. Yet up to Zama, Hannibal and Scipio are essentially undefeated, though this does not mean they don't suffer failure. Hannibal has a massive list of slain Roman armies, beginning at the Ticinus river, down to Trebia, the ambush at Lake Trasimene and finally the masterpiece of Cannae. Afterwards Hannibal's big battles dwindle as the Romans begin avoiding him. At the same time Scipio takes the city of Carthago Nova by storm, followed by an attack on the heavily defended site at Baecula and finally eradicating the Carthaginians at Ilipa. Afterwards he quelled the rebellion at Numantia, before sailing and defeating the Carthaginians at the Great Plains. Afterwards, the war seemed over but empowered by Hannibal's return, Carthage set out for one final battle, at Zama, where the two generals finally faced each other.

The Armies

The Carthaginian army included many "nationalities", including Numidians, Spaniards and Gauls. This mix was not forged into a single force, but rather kept under the command of their own commanders.¹³⁸ This required a great deal of understanding at the position of the general. He needs to know what every company can and cannot do, since they're all equipped differently.

The core of Hannibal's army were the Liby-phoenician troops. These were the soldiers from around Carthage and her colonies. They were few in number but well trained and fighting with long spears and shields. They are considered to be Carthage's elite troops, since they're hard to replace but have are used at key positions in many Carthaginian battles, as will become evident. They'll slowly vanish from Hannibal's army roster, due to him being unable to replenish these valuable troops and.¹³⁹

The bulk of his forces were made up by the Celtiberian infantry. Many tribes have been subjugated through either battle or diplomacy and were drafted into the Carthaginian armies. Many of the tribes living along the coast had forged relationships with Phoenician colonies and fielded armies that resembled the Greek phalanx. Others wielded high quality swords and had large shields. Most importantly was their courage. The Celtiberian soldiers were known to fight against all odds, making up what they lack in discipline in courage, turning them into a match for the Roman troops.¹⁴⁰

The second most represented soldiers in Hannibal's force were the Gauls. He picked these up while travelling from the Pyrenees to the Alps, as well as in Northern Italy. These were ferocious warriors who, despite possessing advanced metallurgy, fought unarmored wielding swords and shields. They were more unreliable than the other forces, being prone to panic and often abandoning

¹³⁸ Theodore Dodge, *Hannibal* 11,15

¹³⁹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 23-24; Theodore Dodge, *Hannibal* 14-15, 19-20

¹⁴⁰ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 26-28

the battle after their own goals have been achieved. However, they were also terrifying to the Romans, being larger, muscular and savage.¹⁴¹

Hannibal didn't have any substantial amount of Carthaginian cavalry. He relied on a mix of Celtiberian, Gallic and Numidian horsemen. His Celtiberian horsemen are heavily armoured warriors. They wielded long spears and had curved swords, known as *falcata*, as a secondary weapon. They resembled the fearsome Macedonian cavalry of Philip II of Macedon when they were found by Hamilcar, who recruited them in a similar role. They were highly effective against infantry, especially if the infantry was set up with space for a horseman to pass by. His Gallic cavalry was made out of noblemen who were heavily armoured but also hard to control. They were mainly used as shock troops but they were ignored once they engaged combat. The Numidian horsemen were lightly armoured and had very little in terms of weaponry, being armed with a few javelins and a dagger. However they were very fast and excelled at harassing a retreating army.¹⁴²

The Carthaginian army also included a number of African elephants. These were relatively small and ridden by a single man. These riders had a hammer and a chisel with them to instantly kill the elephant. While the elephants were ideal for throwing enemy ranks into disarray, they were prone to panic as well, making them a danger to the Carthaginians themselves. It was the riders' responsibility to kill the elephants quickly should they panic into Carthaginian lines.¹⁴³

The Roman army also included many different "nationalities", ranging from the Romans themselves, to their many allies in north and south Italy. Command was ultimate under the Romans but their allies were similarly equipped on most occasions. Rome had specialized itself in infantry which meant it relied on its allies for cavalry and other specialized troops.

The Roman army was organized in four classes, based on wealth and seniority. The first of these were the Velites, lightly armored skirmishers with javelins. The Hastati formed the second class and were armed with swords and shields. They wore a cuirass and had a set of throwing spears. The third class is armed similarly and were known as the Principes. The final class are the wealthiest and most senior members, the Triarii. While their armour was similar, they used long spears instead of swords as their main weapons.¹⁴⁴

The Romans serving in the army were expected to pay for their own arms. As such, those that had no possession or were slaves had no business being in the army and were excluded. During the Second Punic War this burden becomes too heavy and Rome will begin funding armament. What Rome will not fund are the Roman cavalry. These were lightly armored, spear armed cavalrymen. These citizens had to be wealthy enough to afford a warhorse and as such were often few in number. This army was organized in legions, counting around forty-six hundred infantry and three hundred horsemen.¹⁴⁵

The Romans fielded several of these legions making them the backbone of the Roman army. However they were not the only troops in the Roman army. An equal amount of soldiers were sent

¹⁴¹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 30-31

¹⁴² Gabriel, *Hannibal* 28-32; Theodore Dodge, *Hannibal* 23-24

¹⁴³ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 32-35; Theodore Dodge, *Hannibal* 24-25

¹⁴⁴ Terence Wise, *Armies of the Carthaginian Wars 265-146 BC* (Oxford - 1982) 25-27

¹⁴⁵ Wise, *Carthaginian Wars* 27, Theodore Dodge, *Hannibal* 51

to serve by Rome's many allies. Rome took great care of these allies, sending officials in times of peace to make sure they were up to par with the Roman ones, in terms of training and weaponry. These allied armies were under the command of their own officers. Only the top of the command chain were Roman officers.¹⁴⁶

While the amount of infantry fielded was similar to that of the Roman citizens, the difference was made by the cavalry, of which the allies provided more. The Italian cavalry isn't that much different from the Roman horsemen though. In addition to the cavalry, the allied cities also assisted in recruiting mercenaries, primarily long ranged soldiers, like archers and slingers.¹⁴⁷

Of course both the Carthaginian army under Hannibal and the Roman army under Scipio start seeing changes in their composition as the war carries on. Hannibal, faced with disease and losses as well as Italian defections, begins recruiting Roman style soldiers into his army. Scipio, faced with a lack of reinforcements as well as Celtiberian and Numidian support, begins recruiting Celtiberians and Numidians into his army. Towards the end of the war, both armies must have looked similar to a degree, both generals fielding Numidians, Celtiberians and Italians.

Carthaginian Lightning

After arriving in Italy in 218 B.C. , Hannibal had to resupply and assess his losses. The Roman force was slow to approach him. Scipio left the chance to attack him while descending, likely because he had to enter hostile territory to do so. Hannibal's forces had been greatly diminished, since he left Carthago Nova. His force of ninety thousand infantry and twelve thousand cavalry and a good deal of elephants had been reduced to a more twenty thousand soldiers, six thousand horsemen and thirty-seven Elephants. While not every casualty was due to death or desertion, the force was significantly smaller than the one he set out with.¹⁴⁸

At the foot of the Alps, he entered friendlier territory and managed to rest and replenish his troops. Meanwhile the Roman army under Publius Cornelius Scipio rushed to meet him. The Roman arrival caused some of the tribes that were sympathetic to Hannibal to stay neutral. The Carthaginian force finished crossing two weeks ago and while it had recovered a bit, it was still not a full strength. The Roman force was relatively inexperienced, being only recently levied to fight Hannibal. They had been fishing behind the net for some time now, which didn't help the armies morale.¹⁴⁹

Scipio was still waiting for Sempronius to arrive and didn't deploy his infantry. Hannibal did not deploy his infantry, leaving them to recover. This placed Scipio in a terrible situation, being outnumbered two-thousand to six-thousand. Scipio had some velites in his ranks as well, but faced with Hannibal's superior force, he could do little but stand and fight. Should he turn and flee, his

¹⁴⁶ Wise, *Carthaginian Wars* 27-28

¹⁴⁷ Wise, *Carthaginian Wars* 28-29

¹⁴⁸ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 113-115

¹⁴⁹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 114-115, 119

velites would have been annihilated and Hannibal's Numidian horsemen would have inflicted significant casualties.¹⁵⁰

Seeing his opponents numbers, Hannibal ordered his forces to charge forth. Scipio had deployed the velites in front of the cavalrymen, hoping to act as a screen. however the fearsome charge made them lose their nerve and they fell back. In the chaos, much of the Roman cavalry was dismounted. The Celtiberian cavalry inflicted heavy casualties. The Numidians wheeled around and struck the Roman force in the rear.¹⁵¹

Scipio essentially lost his cavalry in this single encounter. He somehow managed to escape the carnage with help of his son. This was a huge boost to Hannibal's morale. Some Gallic warriors defected from the Roman side and joined him, worrying Scipio. Having felt the strength of Hannibal's cavalry first hand and having lost his own, Scipio moved to rough terrain to regroup, hoping to negate Hannibal's superior cavalry force. Sempronius and his force join him there shortly after.¹⁵²

The size of Hannibal's army had grown in size after his skirmish with the Roman cavalry. Many Gauls flocked to join the winning side in hopes of spoils. Hannibal's forces now counted twenty-nine thousand infantry and a massive eleven thousand horsemen. He had to forage and pillage for food, which allowed the Roman cavalry of Sempronius to harass them. The Roman army on the other hand comprised out of thirty-six thousand infantry and four thousand horsemen, outnumbering Hannibal's infantry but being outnumbered by his cavalry. Despite much of the Gallic lands falling into Hannibal's hands, the Roman raids finally deterred him and he withdrew, giving the Romans a small victory. However Sempronius was ecstatic, possibly leading to his overconfidence in wanting to battle. The badly wounded Scipio advised against it, but was ultimately ignored.¹⁵³

Hannibal prepared for battle. He had an elite strike force assembled and put under the command of one he could trust, his youngest brother, Mago. During the night they hid themselves close to the river. The force likely consisted out of Celtiberian troops, a thousand horsemen with an equal amount of infantry to ride with them. At daybreak, Hannibal send his Numidians to raid the Roman camp and lure them out. Sempronius took the bait, only to find the Carthaginian army assembled at the other side of the river.¹⁵⁴

Sempronius decided to accept Hannibal's challenge, sending his already sleep and breakfast deprived troops through the cold winter river. Hannibal's troops on the other hand were well-rested and warmed by fire. After the battered Roman army crossed the river, the skirmish began, Hannibal sending his eight thousand skirmishers against Sempronius' six thousand. While the skirmish was happening, Sempronius' set up his army. Three rows of Roman infantry, being assisted by a same setup by his Italian allies, and the cavalry on the wings, the default way of setting up the Roman army.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 21.47

¹⁵¹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 118, Michael Fronda, "Hannibal, Tactics, Strategy and Geostrategy" from, Dexter Hoyos, *A companion to the Punic Wars* (Somerset, New Jersey 2011) 14.2

¹⁵² Gabriel, *Hannibal* 119-122; Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 21.54

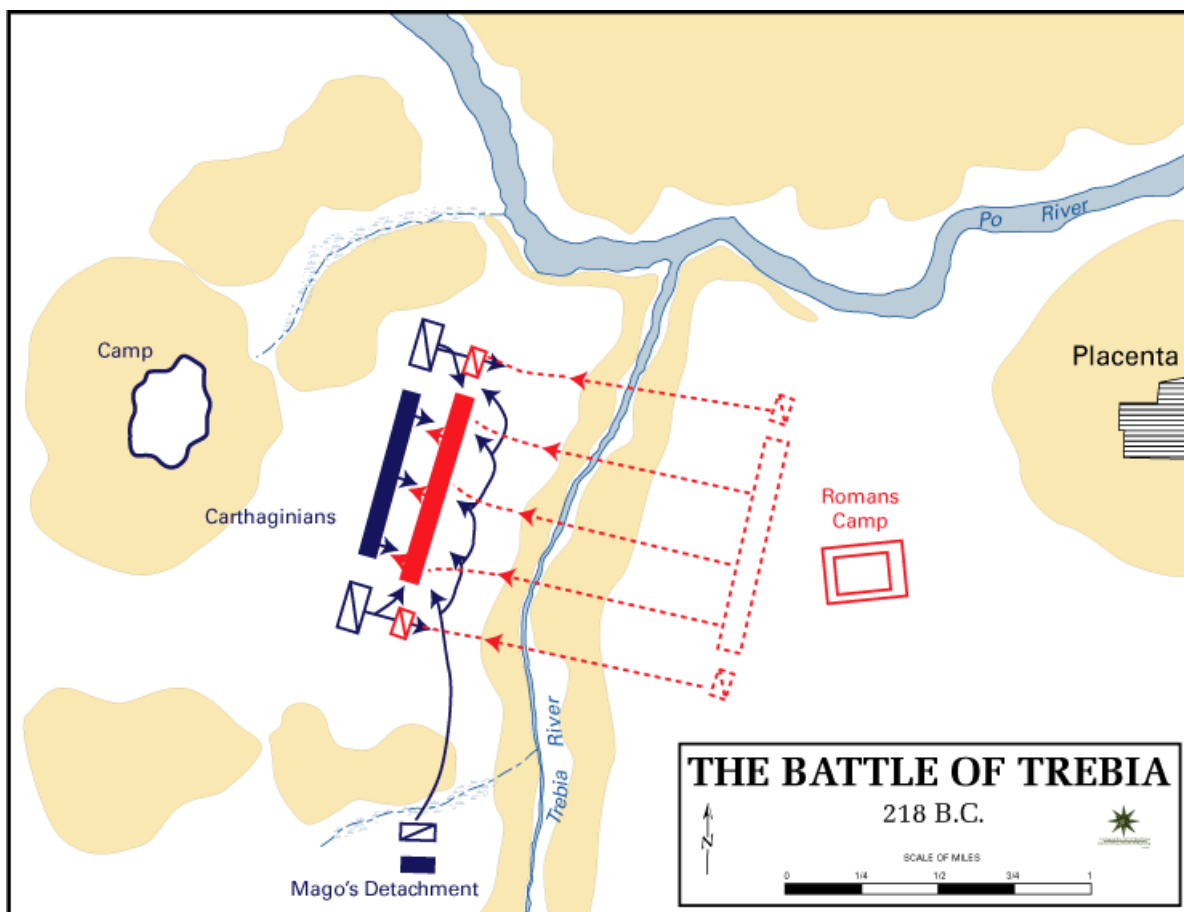
¹⁵³ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 122-123; Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 21.54

¹⁵⁴ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 123-127

¹⁵⁵ Fields, *Hannibal* 34; Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 21.55

Hannibal's formation was a single line: Gauls in the centre, Celtiberians and Libyphoenicians on the sides. The cavalry was equally split up and placed on the flanks. Between the infantry line and the horsemen were the Elephants. This excluded the mobile unit of Mago, having been deployed during the night. With both generals having deployed their armies, it was Sempronius who gave the order to begin the attack, tiring out his forces even more.¹⁵⁶

The Roman army advanced at a decent pace and battle was joined by the infantry lines. Hannibal countered by sending his overwhelming force of cavalry against the Roman wings, who quickly crumbled under the weight of their numbers. At the same time Hannibal moved his elephants against the inexperienced Roman flanks. Together with the skirmishers they succeeded in driving the Roman flanks to the river.¹⁵⁷



Battle of Trebia. Source: Wikipedia (Full path http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/17/Battle_trebia.gif)

With the Romans being hard pressed on the flanks, Hannibal's cavalry wheeled back and crushed the flanks entirely. As icing on the cake, Mago's forces sprung into action, directly attacking the Roman rear. The centre had been valiantly holding its own but was now facing an attack on every side. Mago's horsemen launched Celtiberian troops into battle, which only added to the shock of his sudden appearance. The Roman army, battered, beaten and tired, would not yield yet. A handful of

¹⁵⁶ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 127-128

¹⁵⁷ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 128-129; Fields, *Hannibal* 34; Fronda, "Tactics" 14.2; Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 21.55

soldiers cut their way through the enemy and rejoined the Roman cavalry at Placentia, taking down a good number of Gauls.¹⁵⁸

At the end of the day, more than half of the Roman army lay dead at the banks of the river Trebia. The Romans regrouped quickly, Sempronius quartering in Placentia, while Scipio took his forces to Cremona, allowing them to supply their forces without overburdening the towns. As Rome was raising more troops, many of her allies responded to the call to arms. Meanwhile Hannibal's heaviest losses fell to his new Gallic allies. He moved to take the Roman camp but was forced to abandon it after supplies began running low again. He moved to the capital of one of his Gallic allies and awaited the Roman move.¹⁵⁹

After the winter Hannibal moved south along the west-coast of Italy. The Gauls had become restless, finding little to plunder in their own lands and Hannibal's army eating their produce. Though he recruited some more to his cause, to fill the losses suffered at Trebia and for future battles.¹⁶⁰ The winter had claimed many lives amongst his animals. Hannibal wished to avoid fighting the Roman army on their grounds, so he took a rather risky Apennine pass. The pass ended in a marshland, which claimed the lives of many Gauls, while making others ill, including Hannibal himself. The trek was deadly for his weakened animals and as such his cavalry potential must have diminished dramatically, likely killing off all of his elephants.¹⁶¹

Again the Romans failed to detect Hannibal in time and gave him the time to replenish his losses. He raided the rich Etruscan plains for supplies and materials. The Romans finally detect Hannibal when he begins moving southwards once again. Flaminius, an experienced commander having won his striped against the Gauls, was the commander of the only army between Hannibal and Rome. The legion nearby, under Servilius, had not been send to aid him and remained put.¹⁶²

While on the march, the Carthaginian army walking into a thick fog around the north edge of Lake Trasimene. Knowing that the Romans are after him, Hannibal decided to make camp on the far end of a rather mountainous side of the river edge. The hills were steep and had enough trees to conceal his army. Hannibal took his African and Celtiberian infantry with him to the main camp. He also had two other camps build, one at the entrance, to house his cavalry, and one in the middle for the Gauls. Flaminius was hot on Hannibal's tail and made camp nearby. He observed the valley, being weary of an ambush, but found it unsuitable for one.¹⁶³

The following day, Flaminius' set out to catch Hannibal's rearguard and destroy his army. The mist was still thick but not thick enough to prevent communication. Flaminius' spotted Hannibal's main camp, but mistook it for his rearguard. He ordered the Roman army to advance. Flaminius' army was still in a marching column when the command was given. The soldiers at the head of the column immediately rushed the camp, while the rest was unaware what was going on.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 128

¹⁵⁹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 131

¹⁶⁰ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 22.1

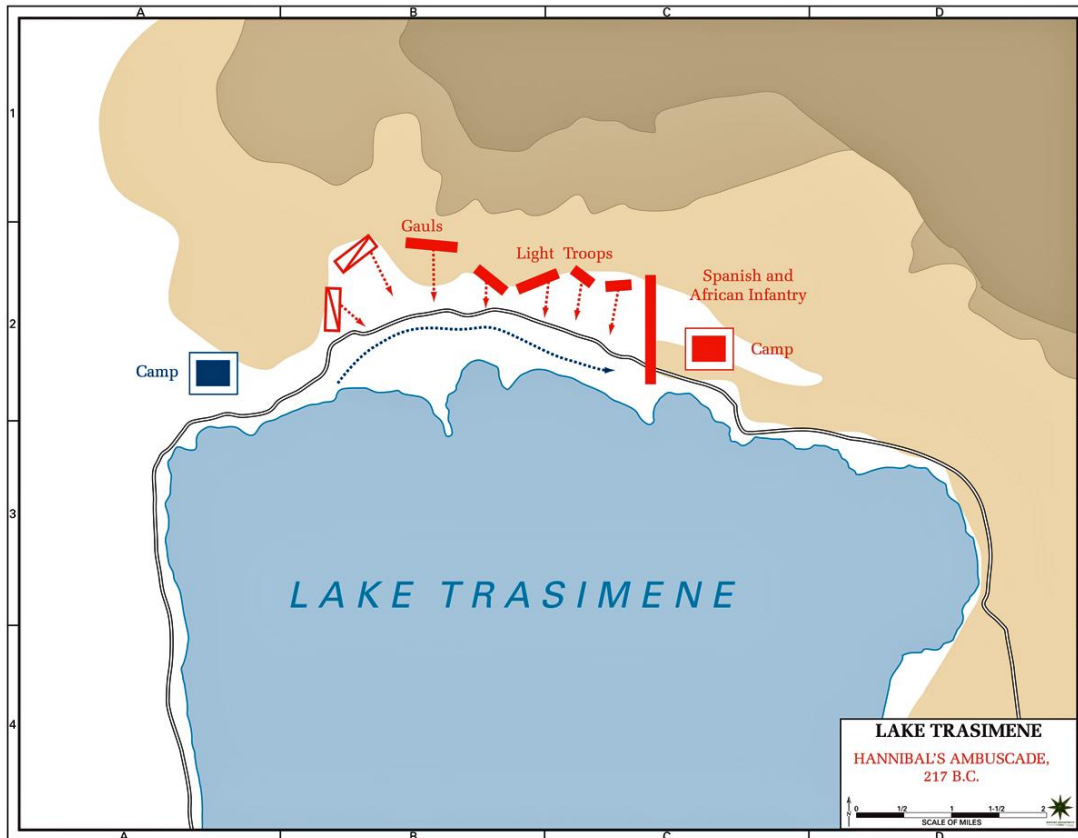
¹⁶¹ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 133-134; Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 22.3

¹⁶² Gabriel, *Hannibal* 135, Fronda, "Tactics" 14.2

¹⁶³ Fields, *Hannibal* 34

¹⁶⁴ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 22.4, 22.5

At the top of the mountain they found Hannibal's elite forces waiting for them. While the Romans were surprised by the resiliency of their foes, Hannibal gave the order to his army to attack. In an instant the Gauls fell on the rest of the Roman army, still arranged in a march column. Desperate to regroup, the Roman army's only escape was sealed when Hannibal's cavalry swung into action. With little ground to regroup on, the Roman army was unable to even form ranks, let alone formulate a counterattack.¹⁶⁵



Ambush at Lake Trasimene. Source: EmersonKent.com (Full Path: http://www.emersonkent.com/images/battle_of_trasimene.jpg)

The destruction was absolute. With nowhere to run the Roman army was destroyed. Thousands died, either to enemy blades or trying to flee in the water. It's estimated that over fifteen thousand soldiers died and over six thousand were captured, at the cost of a mere two thousand, mostly Gallic, warriors on Hannibal's side. Unaware of the disaster that had taken place, Servilius had received orders to join up with the late Flaminius. Servilius send his cavalry to screen for Hannibal. But the craft Carthaginian had heard of Servilius' move and send his own horsemen to crush the Romans. Deterred by the loss of his cavalry, Servilius retired in Arminium.¹⁶⁶

Carthage finally succeeded in sending him aid, with the Carthaginian fleet landing it's army off the northern coast, just a few days after the battle. Hannibal moved back to rendezvous with these troops. Roman losses had been mounting. Upward to forty-three thousand troops had been slain and an unknown amount of Roman soldiers had been taking prisoner, though allied troops were

¹⁶⁵ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 137-138; Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 22.6

¹⁶⁶ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 139; Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 22.8

released. Rome turned to a strategist for help. Under Quintus Fabius Rome regrouped and rebuild, laying in wait for its strength to be large enough to challenge Hannibal. Fabius had learned of part of Hannibal's strategy by word of freed allied prisoners.¹⁶⁷

For a few months Fabius shadowed the Carthaginian force, never engaging in direct battle and harassing Hannibal's foragers and looters. When winter fell, Hannibal's supply problems became graver by the day. Political will is hard to sustain and Fabius' was made to resign his position when his time was up in 216 B.C. . Instantly Rome moved to the offensive again, getting tired of letting Hannibal roam freely. Two new consuls were elected, Aemilius Paullus and Terrentius Varro. Their orders were simple: engage and destroy the Carthaginian army. To this end they were given the command over eight legions, the largest army Rome had ever assembled: eighty thousand infantry and a further six thousand horse.¹⁶⁸

Hannibal's force was significantly smaller, counting thirty-two thousand infantry and ten thousand horse.¹⁶⁹ He had been struggling to gain supplies, so he opted to attack a supply base at the town of Cannae. The Romans were nearby though and thanks to the keen eyes of Varro and Paullus Hannibal failed to draw them into battle and lost the best base site. Hannibal made camp opposite of the Roman camp, still maintaining territorial advantage for his horsemen. The following day Varro deployed the bulk of the Roman army on the opposite side of the river, where a hill overseen by Cannae and the river protected his flanks.¹⁷⁰

Hannibal, having no choice, deployed his army on the other side of the river as well. Due to this, Hannibal had to improvise, which he did, showing that he can do battle without picking the battlefield, unlike Nic Field claims.¹⁷¹ Both sides were slightly weakened by having to leave troops behind to guard their camps. Rome set up relatively traditionally, with an infantry centre and the cavalry on the wings. The infantry had been set up in depth, as to prevent the inexperienced from fleeing. The consuls took command of the cavalry, them being the weakest but most vital part of the Roman formation. Varro took charge of the allied cavalry, while Paullus was to lead the Roman cavalry.¹⁷²

Hannibal placed his heavy cavalry facing the Paullus and his Numidians facing Varro. Hannibals heavy cavalry outnumbered the Roman cavalry, six thousand to twenty-four hundred. The Numidians were likely outnumbered, counting between three and four thousand against thirty-six hundred. His again placed his weakest troops, the Gauls, in the centre, flanked by his African and Celtiberian troops. They were placed slightly in the back so Carthaginian line was shaped like a crescent. Hannibal would command the infantry with his brother, while Maharbal and a certain Hasdrubal commanded the Numidians and heavy cavalry respectively.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 144-147

¹⁶⁸ Daly, *Cannae, the Experience of the Second Punic War* (London - 2002) 28-29

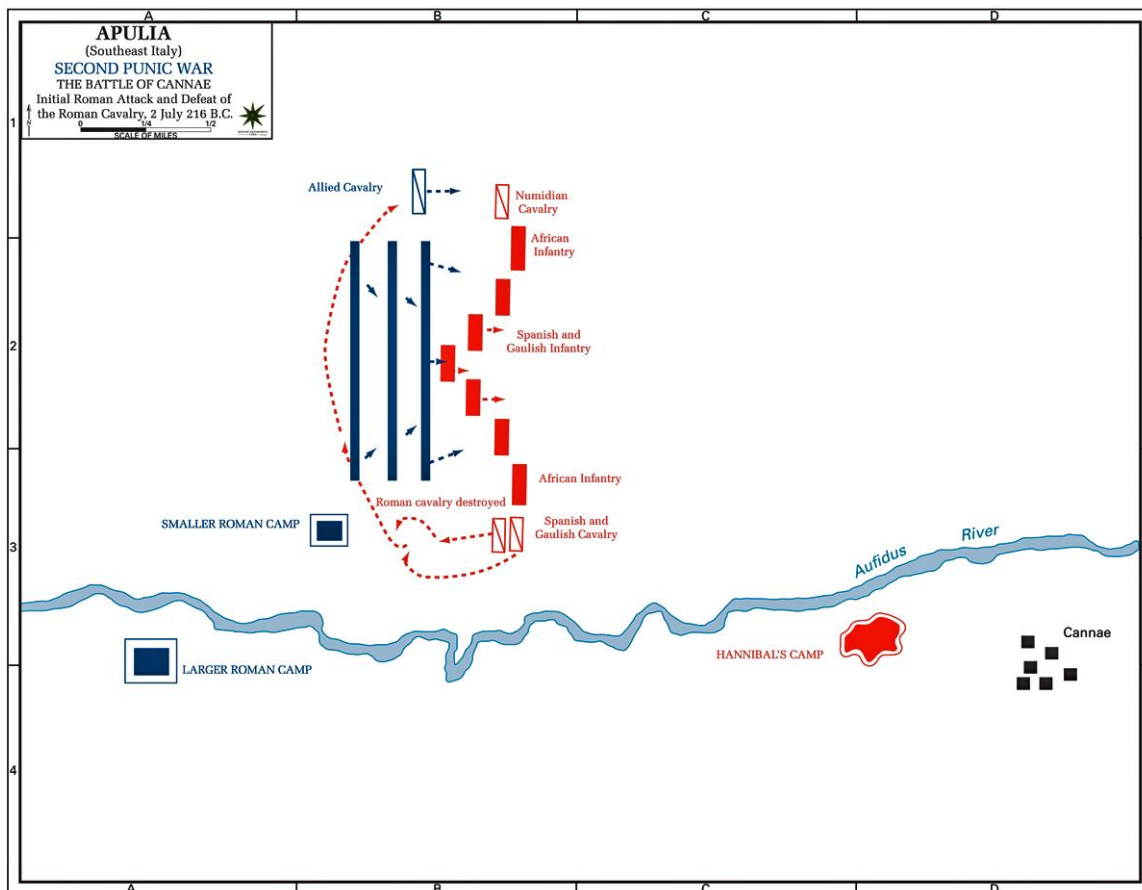
¹⁶⁹ Daly, *Cannae* 29-31

¹⁷⁰ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 148

¹⁷¹ Fields, *Hannibal* 30

¹⁷² Daly, *Cannae* 36-38

¹⁷³ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 147-148; Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 22.45



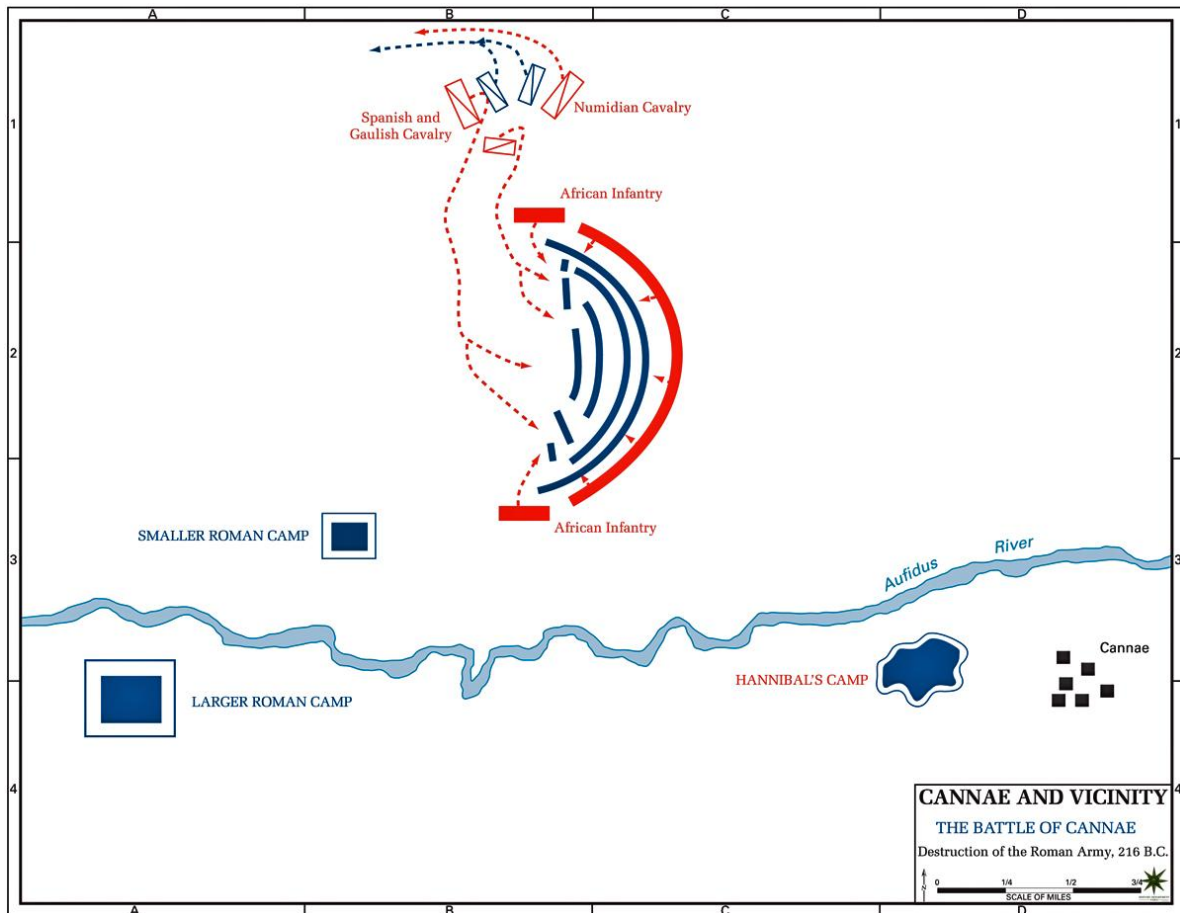
Positioning and initial moves at the battle of Cannae. Source: EmersonKent.com (Full path http://www.emersonkent.com/images/battle_of_cannae.jpg)

The initial skirmishes took their toll on both sides, injuring Paullus. When the skirmish ended, the Roman army began its advance. Hannibal waited patiently. Before the Romans reached his centre, the heavy cavalry charged. A fierce battle close to the river ensued, with it only being a matter of time before the Romans were destroyed. At the same time their cavalry fled, the Roman centre engaged battle. The Numidians were having a harder time against the allied cavalry than Hannibal anticipated though. Hit-and-run was useful against enemies that followed, but Varro kept his cavalry in place to protect his infantry.¹⁷⁴

Meanwhile the Carthaginian centre was cracking. The sheer amount of Roman troops were overwhelming the Gauls and Celtiberians, forcing them back. However the African phalanxes on the far edges stood their ground. This caused the crescent to become mirrored. Slowly the Africans moved inward, trapping the Roman army in the crescent. With the Roman cavalry gone, the Numidians received aid from the heavy cavalry and crushed Varro's forces, forcing them to flee. The Numidians gave chase, while the heavy cavalry turned towards the Roman infantry.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 151, Fronda, "Tactics" 14.2-3

¹⁷⁵ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 152, Fronda, "Tactics" 14.2-3



Hannibal's trap closes in the final stages of the battle. Source: EmersonKent.com (Full path: http://www.emersonkent.com/images/cannae_map_battle.jpg)

The Roman infantry was completely unaware that their own cavalry had been destroyed and were now engaged on three sides. Hasdrubal sealed the trap and engaged the Roman rear. With nowhere to flee, the Roman army fought to the death. Those that could flee did so, but many were trapped between man and horse.¹⁷⁶

The casualties on both sides were staggering. Hannibal had been outnumbered two to one and this would show. The Romans lost over half their force, including one of their commanders, Paullus. Many more aristocrats lay dead, including senators and wealthy property owners. Another substantial number had been taken prisoner by the Romans, estimating around nineteen thousand. In a single blow, Hannibal had taken captive or destroyed, three quarters of the largest army Rome had ever fielded. The result of the battle shook Rome to its very core and from then on, they'd think twice before engaging Hannibal.¹⁷⁷

The price was high. Once again the Gauls took the biggest blow, losing four thousand of their kin in the battle. The Africans and Celtiberians lost a further fifteen hundred foot soldiers, while two hundred men would not ride their horses anymore. This is by no means a small loss, as Gabriel

¹⁷⁶ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 152-154

¹⁷⁷ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 154-155

rightfully assess. But it needs to be taken into account that not only are these losses incurred by a tenacious enemy, but also by an outnumbered force. Even if his losses are higher than what is average for a winning side in antiquity.¹⁷⁸

Through using the Gauls as the centre of his army, Hannibal accomplished two things. First he kept them the losses of his African and Celtiberian troops to a minimum, them being very hard to replace in Italy. Secondly he prevented the Gauls from panicking and fleeing at crucial times. This allowed him to keep going for as long as he did. The second aspect of Hannibal's tactics include using the Celtiberian and Gallic heavy cavalry to crush the Roman lines. They had the fighting prowess to break lines and do so rather spectacularly in the three major confrontations. While his Numidian force is often praised, their strength lay in making sure that units that fled the battle would not return to the battle.

The Roman Wave

A year of studying terrain, talking to natives and training the army had passed and Scipio felt confident to make his move. His goal was Carthago Nova, the Carthaginian supply base. In 209 B.C. he crossed the Ebro river with a force of twenty-eight thousand infantry and sixteen hundred horsemen. A small force of three thousand soldiers and five hundred cavalry was left to block the pass to the north. He advanced quickly to Carthago Nova, with his siege equipment aboard ships. None of the Carthaginian armies had more than twenty-five thousand troops, but they'd be able to trap Scipio between the city and their own force.

The Carthaginians ignored Scipio's force. When Scipio arrived at Carthago Nova, none of the Carthaginian armies made any attempt to move to stop him, apparently putting full faith in the natural defences of the town. His first goal was to demoralize the defenders and to that effect he had to lure out the garrison. A small force of two thousand men was sent to assault the walls. The defenders sallied forth and Scipio pulled his forces back. They were impetuous and followed the Romans too far. Scipio sent out the rest of his force and in the rout, many of the Carthaginian militia were slain.¹⁷⁹

Scipio's next attack drew caused the militia commander, a certain Mago, to focus his troops at the gate. They defended themselves courageously and managed to repel the Romans. In the meantime Scipio had learned of a weakness in the natural defences of Carthago Nova. The lagoon would become crossable towards the evening, allowing a force to attack undetected. Sending his troops through the lagoon, they were able to scale the walls with little to no opposition. At the same time, the Roman fleet under Scipio's right-hand man, Gaius Laelius, arrived and opened a third front. The city garrison crumbled and the city fell into Roman hands.¹⁸⁰

Scipio did not suffer any significant losses and one could argue that Carthage too did not suffer any notable losses in terms of manpower. The big reward was the city's supply depot, filled with weapons and food. The most valuable amongst these were the so-called *gladius hispaniensiensis*.

¹⁷⁸ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 154

¹⁷⁹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 94-95, Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 61

¹⁸⁰ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 95-98

This short sword was of better quality and ideal for close combat. Scipio equipped all of his troops with this new weapon. Furthermore, he ordered the smiths of the city to produce more high quality weaponry and armour for his soldiers. With this great logistics base in hands, he could now look to challenge the Carthaginian armies.¹⁸¹

Following his victory at Carthago Nova, Scipio returned to his quarters at Tarraco. There he received many Celtiberian chieftains and convinced them to defect. Again he managed to bolster his own forces while weakening his enemy at the same time. During the winter he began retraining the Roman army. He had seen that despite its tenacity, the Roman army was no match for the shock attacks of Hannibal's elite forces or his cavalry. To make his forces more robust, he created larger units. The Roman army was organized in maniples, blocks of infantry that were very mobile but also slightly vulnerable. Hannibal fielded large amounts of semi-savage Celtiberians and Gauls, who could shatter a maniple on contact. To be able to keep some sort of cohesion in the maniples, Scipio organized them into cohorts, groups of three maniples.¹⁸²

In this new formation, the velites would screen the heavy infantry. These larger units were stronger and could be used to pin down enemies or drive them back.¹⁸³ He also trained rapid reforming from cohort to maniple and back, as well as having the three Roman battle lines move independent of each other. Confident with his newfound allies and his training, Scipio set out to challenge the Carthaginians. Closest to him was the army of Hasdrubal Barcas, brother to Hannibal. According to his Celtiberian spies, Hasdrubal was based around Baecula but had not made camp yet.¹⁸⁴

Scipio gathered his forces from Celtiberian allies and winter quarters along the road from Taracco to Carthago Nova and marched towards Hasdrubal in 208 B.C. . Scipio's force at this point might have counted up to forty thousand troops, having bolstered his forces Celtiberian defectors. When he arrived at the area, Hasdrubal had not made camp yet, but he did have scout positions set out. When the Roman scouts approached they warned Hasdrubal, who looked for a position to make camp. Hasdrubal quickly picked a well-defended spot and began building. He was able to finish, since Scipio didn't attack out of fear for the other Carthaginian armies arriving in the heat of battle.¹⁸⁵

Hasdrubal Barcas had taken the high ground and hastily prepared his defences. Scipio on the other hand send two cohorts to block the entrances to the valley so he'd be aware of the arrival of the Carthaginian forces. Hasdrubal felt a lot safer than Scipio did. Scipio made camp on a safe place opposite of Hasdrubal, but Scipio lacked a water source, making his stay an uncomfortable one.¹⁸⁶ The Carthaginian camp was on the top of a steep hill with two ridges. If given the time to properly build defences, then it would be nigh impossible for Scipio to take it.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 99-100

¹⁸² Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 100-101, 104-105

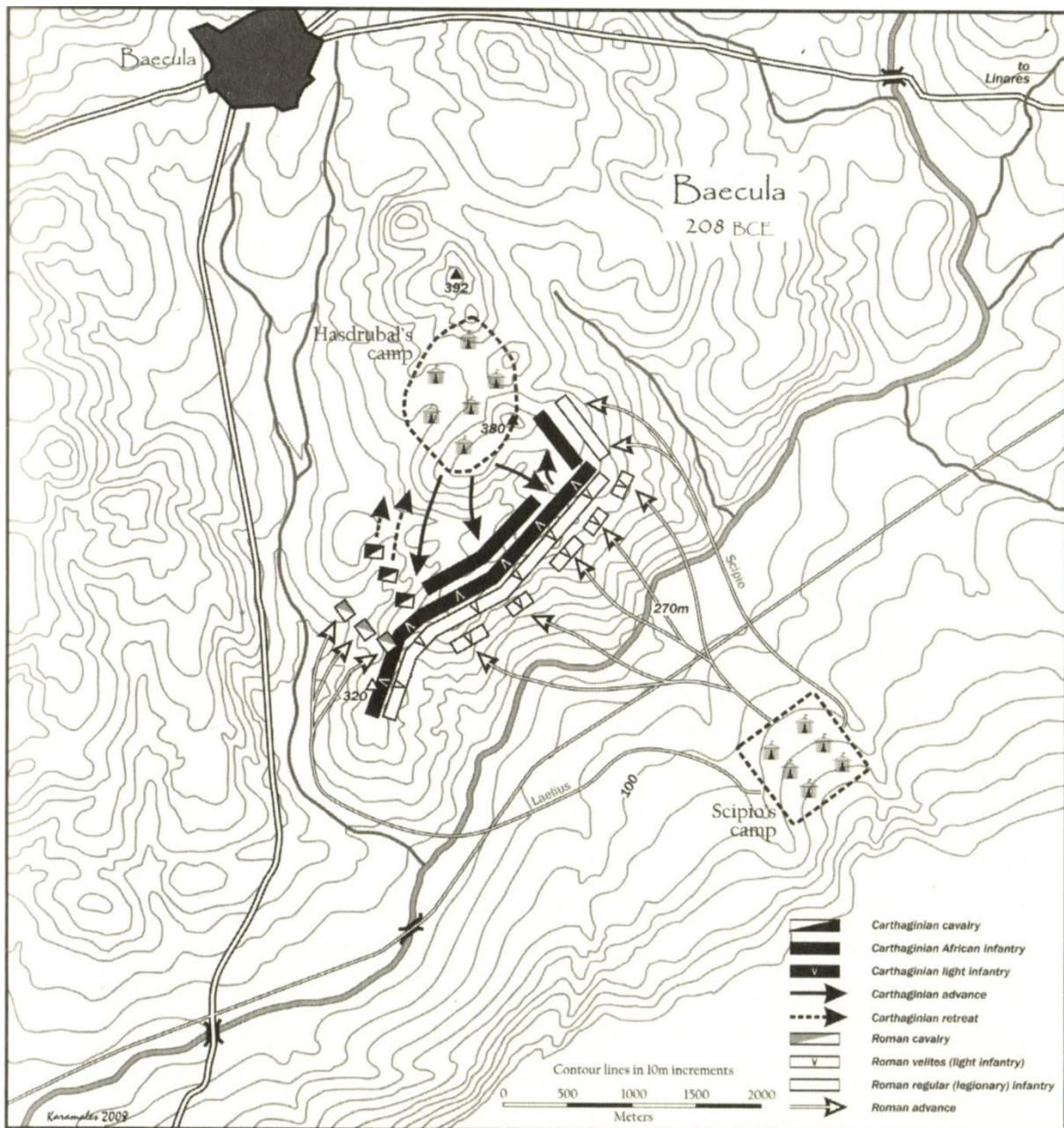
¹⁸³ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 74

¹⁸⁴ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 102-103

¹⁸⁵ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 27.17

¹⁸⁶ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 71

¹⁸⁷ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 107-108



Battle of Baecula. Source: Richard Gabriel, *Scipio, Rome's Greatest General* Page 109

But Hasdrubal waited. He placed his light infantry on the first ridge. Scipio attacked with a small squad of handpicked units, likely Celtiberian allies and velites. After some fierce fighting, Scipio's forces took the first ridge. He then send more troops to aid his front line and began assaulting the second ridge. Hasdrubal had done little to engage or even defend his position, trusting on the natural defences. Scipio had divided the remaining elements of his army into two large units. Scipio would command one unit and charge alongside the battle to the right and then come down on the flanks. Laelius would do the same on the left.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 108-110

While Scipio and Laelius were advancing, Hasdrubal had finally committed some soldiers of his main force to assist in the defence, but this number is negligible.¹⁸⁹ He had not felt so secure as he did at the start of the battle and had begun retreating his elite forces. There had been no contact with Mago and Hasdrubal Gisgo and Hasdrubal Barcas was unwilling to risk so many troops dying here.¹⁹⁰ His orders were to reach Hannibal, not to defeat Scipio, that's what Mago and Gisgo were here for. By the time Scipio and Laelius arrived, much of his army had escaped. He left the rest to be caught within the Roman pincer movement, still losing a third of his strength.¹⁹¹

This escape is viewed as a strategic defeat, but could Scipio really trap Hasdrubal's army?¹⁹² Hasdrubal was no fool and if he had begun retreating before Scipio would begin his march, then it would be unfeasible to catch him.¹⁹³ Scipio's cavalry had to charge up a hill, something they were not used to at all. In fact the Roman cavalry was generally considered poorly when compared to master harassers like the Numidians. Therefore, he could not prevent this tactically and as shown in the strategy section, it's a strategic defeat for Rome, not Scipio.

The battle cost the Carthaginians some ten thousand troops, mostly light infantry, while Scipio's losses were once again light. Scipio was trapped at his new position with Mago and Hasdrubal Gisgo arriving. For the first time the Carthaginian commanders in Hispania grouped up. After some strategic considerations, the command structure changed. Hasdrubal Barcas was to leave for Italy to reinforce Hannibal. Meanwhile Mago Barcas was to recruit troops on the Balearic isles. Hasdrubal Gisgo was to quell a widespread Celtiberian rebellion in the inlands of Hispania, which were still hostile to both Carthage and Rome. The young Numidian prince, Massinissa was to harass the Romans with a force of three thousand men strong.¹⁹⁴

The battle gave Scipio more prestige amongst the Celtiberian chieftains. Scipio cultivated these relationships before returning to his quarters in Taracco for the winter. Carthage did not rest though and a new commander was sent to compensate for Hasdrubal Barcas' departure. Hanno joined with some ten thousand troops and was successful in raising nine thousand more, most like Iberians, vicious barbaric inland tribesmen. Mago had also returned with troops from the isles.¹⁹⁵

The Carthaginians had made two camps, one for the Carthaginians and one for the Iberians. As expected, the Iberian camp was poorly maintained. In an attempt to test their willingness Scipio dispatched a scout force of some ten thousand infantry and five hundred horsemen. They promptly slaughtered the Iberian forces. This caused Hasdrubal to disperse his soldiers in fortified garrisons, which Scipio besieged.¹⁹⁶ Faced with the destruction of Hasdrubal Barcas' army in Italy and Scipio's sieges, the Carthaginian command was forced to take a decision: await behind walls for the inevitable or face Scipio on the open plains?¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁹ Lazenby, *Hannibal's War* 142

¹⁹⁰ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 73

¹⁹¹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 110-111

¹⁹² Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 74

¹⁹³ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 27.19

¹⁹⁴ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 27.20

¹⁹⁵ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 115

¹⁹⁶ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 28.3

¹⁹⁷ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 88

When the spring of 206 B.C. came, Hasdrubal and Mago regrouped their army and marched to Ilipa. A decision had to be forced and with Hasdrubal Barcas gone, there was no other choice.¹⁹⁸ Scipio accepted their challenge and marched his forces towards it, being reinforced by more Celtiberian troops along the way. The Carthaginians boasted a force of sixty thousand infantry, four thousand cavalry and thirty-two elephants. Meanwhile the Roman force could count on forty-five thousand infantry and three thousand horsemen.¹⁹⁹ Both sides made camp opposite of one-another, a small valley dividing them.²⁰⁰

Scipio's combat training was beginning to pay off. Mago Barcas led some of the Carthaginian cavalry to harass Scipio's camp. Scipio had anticipated that and sent his Roman cavalry against them. While the size of their forces is unknown, Scipio wins this skirmish. His Roman cavalry won against Mago's Numidian or Celtiberian cavalry. This must have been a huge blow to Mago, who had seen the Roman cavalry be destroyed on more than one occasion, it being a vital part of Hannibal's tactics. Scipio's horsemen had become very adept at dismounting and killing their foes steed and instantly mounting again.²⁰¹

After the camps were built Hasdrubal positioned his army on the battlefield. Scipio did the same. For three days the Carthaginians and Romans continued this dance, without either side engaging battle. Soldiers believed that this was how the battle would be fought.²⁰² The Carthaginian centre was made up of African and descent, while his wings were made up from Celtiberians, who were divided from the Africans by the elephants. His cavalry was placed on the far side of his flanks. Scipio matched this by placing his Roman and Italian forces to match the Africans, with the Celtiberians in the wings and his cavalry facing the Celtiberian troops of the Carthaginians. Scipio's battle line was shorter since he was outnumbered.²⁰³

On the fourth day Scipio sprung his trap. Before the break of dawn, Scipio had his soldiers rise and eat breakfast. The horsemen were sent to attack the Carthaginians by the break of dawn, while Scipio deployed his forces.²⁰⁴ The Carthaginians were rudely awoken by this move and hastily deployed upon learning that the Roman army was ready in the field. Hasdrubal's army was arranging itself in the usual manner, but the Roman array was completely different. The Romans and the Celtiberian troops had switched places, giving him a weaker centre but a stronger wing.²⁰⁵

The Carthaginian army was anxious but Scipio did nothing for a time, letting them feel their own fatigue and hunger. Both sides had begun skirmishing. At noon, Scipio withdrew his skirmishers and ordered the advance. Cavalry at full speed, the Romans at full speed and the Celtiberian to move as slowly as possible. The Roman horsemen wheeled around and were heading towards the rear of Carthaginian army. At the same time he ordered his light infantry to engage the Celtiberian troops of Carthage, pushing them towards the African line. As his flanks crumbled to the strength of the

¹⁹⁸ Lazenby, *Hannibal's War* 144-145

¹⁹⁹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 117-118

²⁰⁰ Howard Scullard, "A note on the Battle of Ilipa" from *The Journal of Roman Studies Vol 26, Part 1* (1936) 19-23

²⁰¹ Polybius, *Histories* 11.21

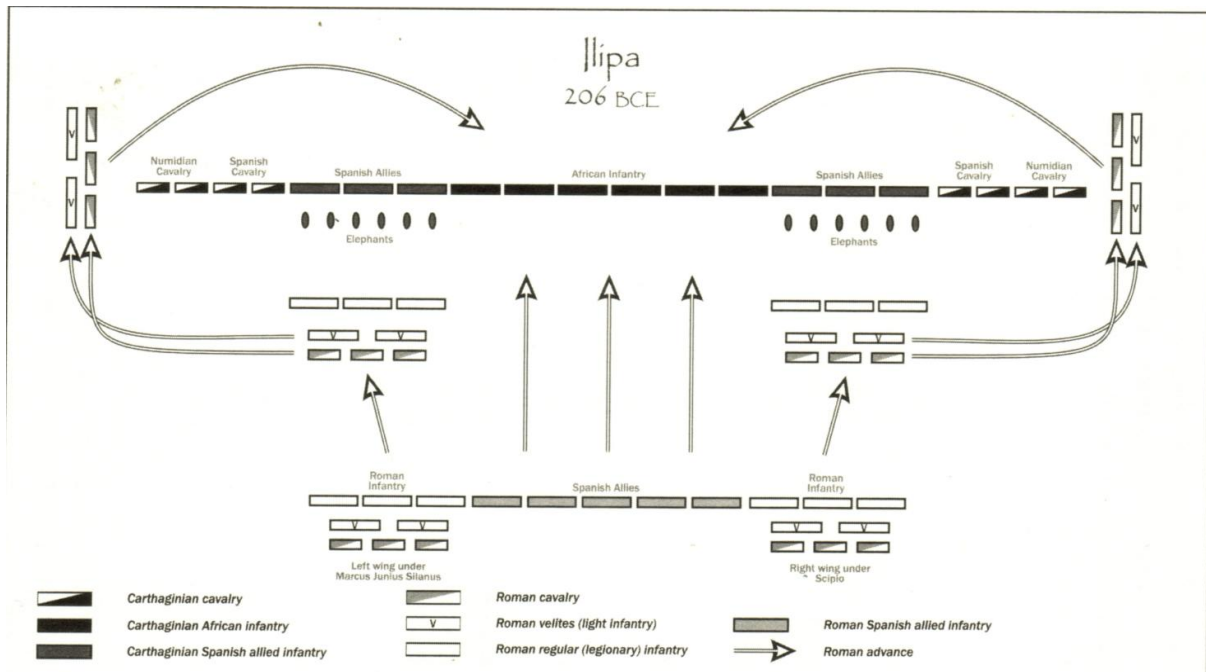
²⁰² Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 89

²⁰³ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 119

²⁰⁴ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 90

²⁰⁵ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 28.14

Roman army, Hasdrubal Gisgo was helpless. He couldn't commit his best forces out of fear of Scipio's Celtiberian centre, which was there but still had not yet engaged battle.²⁰⁶



Battle at Ilipa. Source: Richard Gabriel, *Scipio, Rome's Greatest General* Page 120

The Roman cavalry spooked the elephants into the Carthaginian cavalry, negating them. With the Romans in their rear and the Celtiberians approaching, the African forces began retreating hoping to reach their camp. A cloudburst turned the ground to mud and saved Hasdrubal's army from total annihilation. Demoralized he tried to escape but Scipio placed sentries everywhere and no rest was given to the weary Carthaginians. Scipio gave chase and eventually caught the fleeing army. What followed was a massacre, which would signal the end of Carthage's might in Hispania and indeed the world.²⁰⁷

However his battles in Hispania were not at an end yet. He fell ill and news of his death spread. Seeing their chance the Celtiberian chieftains Indibilis and Mandonius rose up in rebellion.²⁰⁸ Both wished for independence, but Scipio made it clear that Rome would have nothing of it. After dealing with a short mutiny of a garrison, Scipio marched towards the Celtiberian encampment. There he lured some soldiers to battle by releasing cattle. The Roman force fought them to a standstill, when Laelius arrived with the cavalry and crushed them.²⁰⁹

Angered the Celtiberian troops moved down to give Scipio the battle he wanted. The terrain was unsuitable for battle and many troops were placed in depth, since there was no place on the sides. The Celtiberian chieftains placed their heavy cavalry in front of their infantry battle line. Scipio's all roman force was deployed in four cohorts, with the skirmishers behind him and the

²⁰⁶ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 119-121

²⁰⁷ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 121-122, Polybius, *Histories* 11.23

²⁰⁸ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 28.25

²⁰⁹ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 134-135

cavalry hidden again.²¹⁰ The battle was a repeat of the skirmish as the Celtiberian forces weight down on his cohorts. His skirmishers and cavalry wheeled around and fell on the flanks, crushing the Celtiberian troops, ending their rebellion.²¹¹

Scipio travelled to Africa in 204 B.C. . There he engaged in a skirmish with the Carthaginian cavalry, which he won. Afterwards his siege on Utica was interrupted by two Carthaginian armies arrived: the forces of Hasdrubal Gisgo and the Numidians under Syphanx. Scipio negotiated peace with them, but had no intention to go through with it. After gaining knowledge of their camps location and composition, he struck in the night, burning the Carthaginians camps to the ground, with much of their army. Scipio continued his attack on Utica.²¹²

However the Carthaginians regrouped and gathered a new force and in 203 B.C. it was ready to challenge Scipio. The combined Carthaginian-Numidian force counted twenty thousand soldiers. Scipio, in an attempt to protect his main camp and his siege at Utica, marched to meet the new Carthaginian force. Hasdrubal Gisgo decided to give Scipio what he wanted, a battle. For the first time, Scipio deployed his forces in the traditional Roman formation: three lines with the cavalry on the wings. His own on the right, Massinissa's to the left.²¹³

At his command, the cavalry charge and forced Hasdrubal's cavalry into a rout. Scipio's first line of Hastati engaged the Carthaginian line, locking them in place. As soon as that was done, the second and third line formed columns and marched past the battle to the side, encircling the Carthaginians.²¹⁴ The four thousand veteran Celtiberian troops fought well and bought Hasdrubal and Syphanx time to escape, but their army had been destroyed. The road to Carthage lay open and it wasn't long before they accepted Scipio's terms for peace.²¹⁵

Face to Face

Carthage still had one army left for Scipio to defeat. Hannibal Barcas himself returned to African soil in 203 B.C.E. Under his guidance, Carthage took to arms once again, violating the truce with Scipio who was still present. Sending word to Massinissa for aid. While Massinissa was moving towards him, Scipio began attacking Carthaginian locations, wishing to draw Hannibal out. At the urge of the Carthaginian senate he moved. He positioned himself at Zama, hoping to lure Scipio in battle before Massinissa had arrived.²¹⁶

Both men were taking huge gambles. Scipio couldn't afford to do battle against Hannibal without Massinissa's cavalry force. His own horsemen would have been outnumbered and destroyed. Hannibal knew this and could not afford Massinissa to link up with Scipio. Furthermore, Gabriel suggests that Syphanx' son, Verminia, was moving to link up with Hannibal, having remained loyal to

²¹⁰ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 28.33

²¹¹ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 102-104

²¹² Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 156-166, Polybius, *Historiae* 14.5

²¹³ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 166-168

²¹⁴ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 130-131

²¹⁵ Gabriel, *Scipio Africanus* 170-174, Polybius, *Historiae* 14.8

²¹⁶ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 189-191; Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 30.29

the Carthaginian cause. Despite Syphax's defeat, his kingdom still boasted the stronger Numidian horsemen, spelling disaster for Scipio.²¹⁷

They both moved camps nearby, with Hannibal sending spies. Scipio captured them, but released them, both sides now being aware of one-another. By now Hannibal was also aware of Massinissa's arrival, with Verminia nowhere in sight. Both generals knew that a battle was unavoidable. Hannibal could not flee with Massinissa's cavalry nearby. They would constantly harass his army, weakening and eventually destroying it. Thus Hannibal prepared for battle.²¹⁸

Hannibal's army consisted out of three major parts, but there was no single unifying characteristic outside of their Roman enemy.²¹⁹ The first group were his own veterans from Italy. The battle hardened warriors of years of campaigning in hostile land and fiercely loyal to Hannibal. They numbered some fifteen thousand in total. The second group were the forces of his younger brother Mago, who had perished. Mago was a master recruiter and his force consisted mostly out of North Italian mercenaries. While Mago couldn't evacuate all of his forces, he still managed to get around fifteen thousand to Africa, assuming he couldn't bring over his cavalry and some groups of mercenaries returned home. Finally there were the hastily raised troops from Carthage. They were badly trained and were basically just there to fill up the ranks. There were some eight thousand of them. Livy also claims that Hannibal had access to some veteran soldiers from his Macedonian ally but this is most likely a construct of the Romans.²²⁰ His cavalry potential was less than that of Scipio, since he had to destroy much of his force when leaving Rome. Gabriel estimates three thousand horsemen and a further twenty elephants.²²¹

The Roman force on the hand was not a patchwork. Scipio commanded five legions, thirty thousand men in total, and boasted a thousand Roman and Italian cavalry. These men had been trained with the lessons learned in Hispania and had been hardened by many battles and the promise of vengeance. Scipio was joined by his Numidian ally, Massinissa, who brought a force of six thousand infantry and a further four thousand cavalry with him. Other chieftains also lend Scipio aid, adding a further thousand horsemen to his ranks. Forty-two thousand soldiers and three thousand horsemen versus thirty-six thousand soldiers and six thousand horsemen. Scipio had a clear advantage when it comes to cavalry, but Hannibal had more infantry.²²²

Hannibal set up in three lines. Mago's mercenary forces formed the first line, the recruits the second and finally his own veterans the third. The cavalry was placed at the flanks.²²³ Scipio set up in three lines as well, but instead of the usual checkered pattern, they were placed with straight gaps running through their formation. In the first line they were filled up with the velites. To the left was

²¹⁷ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 191

²¹⁸ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 191

²¹⁹ Andreola Rossi, "Hannibal and Scipio in Livy's Third Decade" from *Transactions from the American Philological Association Vol.134, No.2* (2004) 374-375

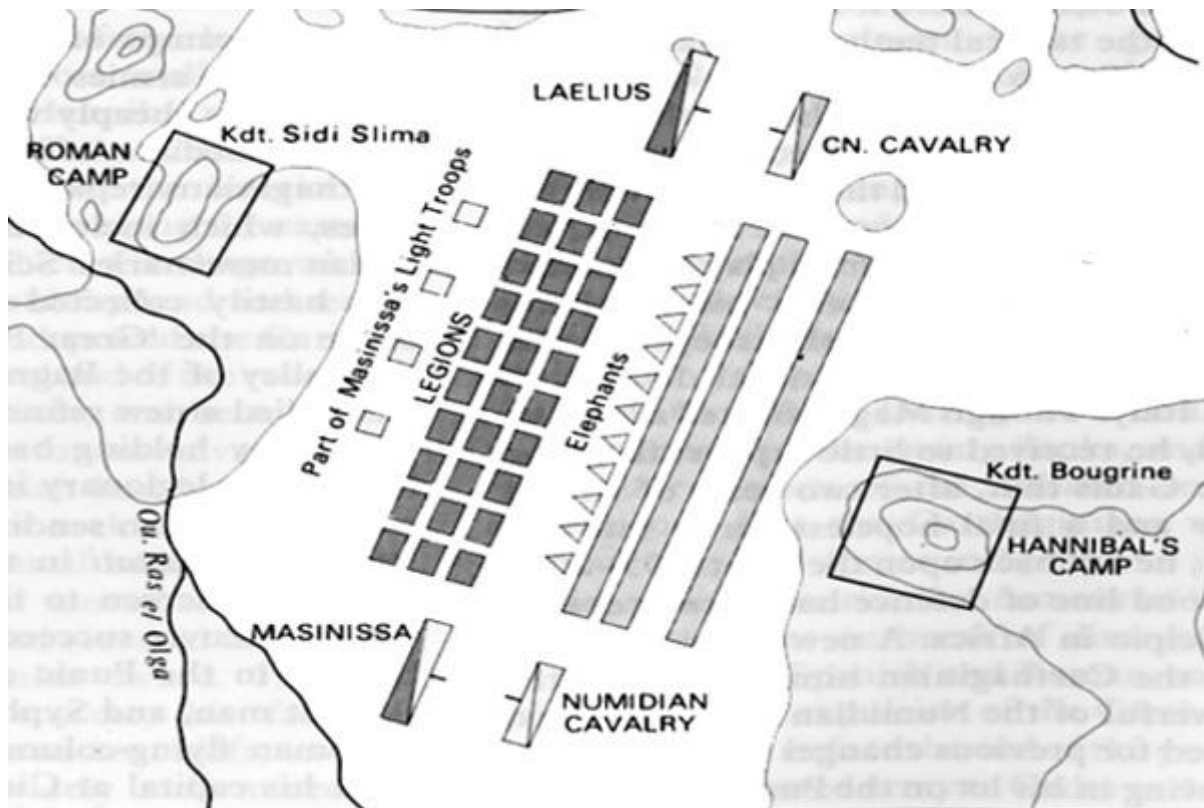
²²⁰ Thomas Dorey, "Macedonia Troops at the Battle of Zama" from *The American Journal of Philology, Vol. 78, No.2* (1957) 185-187

²²¹ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 30.33; Gabriel, *Hannibal* 192-193; Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 143

²²² Gabriel, *Hannibal* 194

²²³ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 192-196, Polybius, *Historiae* 15.9

the Roman cavalry under his trustee Laelius, while Massinissa commanded his own cavalry force to the right.²²⁴



Position at the battle of Zama. Source: Greatmilitarybattles.com (Full Path: http://www.greatmilitarybattles.com/%3A/Users/User/Desktop/GREAT%20MILITARY%20BATTLES/Battle_of_ZAMA_Map.jpg)

Both generals had very sophisticated plans that negated each other. Hannibal had expected Scipio's formation. He also anticipated Scipio to repeat his success of Cannae and try to envelop him. However, his three battle lines prevented that, since Scipio can only lock down two at any given time. Furthermore, he'd let the Roman's come to him while keeping them pressured, not allowing for an envelopment.²²⁵ For victory, he needed his cavalry to kite away the Roman cavalry. His horsemen would turn and regroup when the Romans and Numidians looked as if they would stop the hunt, keeping them engaged at all times. Should Scipio abandon his plan of enveloping Hannibal, then he'd attempt to waste the Roman strength on his front lines, before crushing them with his elites.²²⁶

Scipio had indeed seen a way to envelop Hannibal's army. By drawing his first and second line into battle with only his first, Scipio had hoped to negate Hannibal's advantage. It's the only reason for Scipio to have positioned his troops in the relatively mobile formation they were in. The gaps in

²²⁴ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 144

²²⁵ Fields, *Hannibal* 38-39

²²⁶ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 198-199

between his battle line were for the elephants to safely pass through, bringing no harm to his own army. If all went well, then his cavalry would return in time and trap the Carthaginian force in place.²²⁷

The Numidian horsemen of both sides opened the skirmish. Hannibal tried to take initiative by sending his elephants into Scipio's ranks. Scipio's formation had mixed success, but the elephant attack ended ultimately harmless. After that nuisance was dealt with, Massinissa opened the attack and drove off Hannibal's cavalry. Laelius followed suit and both were caught in Hannibal's kiting tactic. With both sides lacking cavalry and other special forces, it was time for the meleé.²²⁸

Both lines advanced towards each other. As battle was met, Scipio must have been unpleasantly surprised by the tenacity of the Carthaginian main line. The mercenaries inflicted heavy casualties upon the Romans.²²⁹ This forced Scipio to abandon his tactic and sending his second line to assist the main line, but not yet commit to battle. Hannibal's first line eventually cracked and the remnants joined up with the second line. Again the Carthaginians proved to be more tenacious than Scipio had expected and fought for every grain of sand, forcing Scipio to finally commit his principes.²³⁰

The battle was a bloody one and the Carthaginian lines were hardly moving, under strict orders of Hannibal.²³¹ The Roman army had to cross walls of corpses to reach the final line. The remnants of the first and second lines were denied refuge amongst the third line and were forced to flee to the sides, as to not disrupt the formation.²³² Due to the crossing, the formations of the hastati and principes had been shattered, only the triarii holding formation. Scipio had to buy time and quickly regrouped, something he could easily do thanks to his training. He arranged his remaining forces in a single line, hastati in the centre, flanked by the principes and finally the triarii. While Scipio was doing this, Hannibal rallied the remnants of his first and second line and placed them on the wings to offset the numerical advantage Scipio had gained with the destruction of two-third of the Carthaginian army.²³³

As soon as Hannibal was done regrouping, he moved to the attack. A fierce meleé followed with neither side gaining the advantage. One can imagine the beaten hastati taking heavy casualties against the veterans from Hannibal's campaign, but those were off-set by the triarii slaughtering the remnants of the first and second line. If nothing would have happened, they both would have fought to the death.²³⁴

However at the right time Laelius and Massinissa returned. Six thousand light cavalrymen returned and fell upon the tired Carthaginian line. It certainly weren't the formidable Celtiberian riders who cut through enemy lines as a hot knife through butter. These were light riders, more adapt at pursuing than hand to hand combat. However this meant Scipio had more, fresh mobile

²²⁷ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 196-197

²²⁸ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 200

²²⁹ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 149

²³⁰ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 201-202

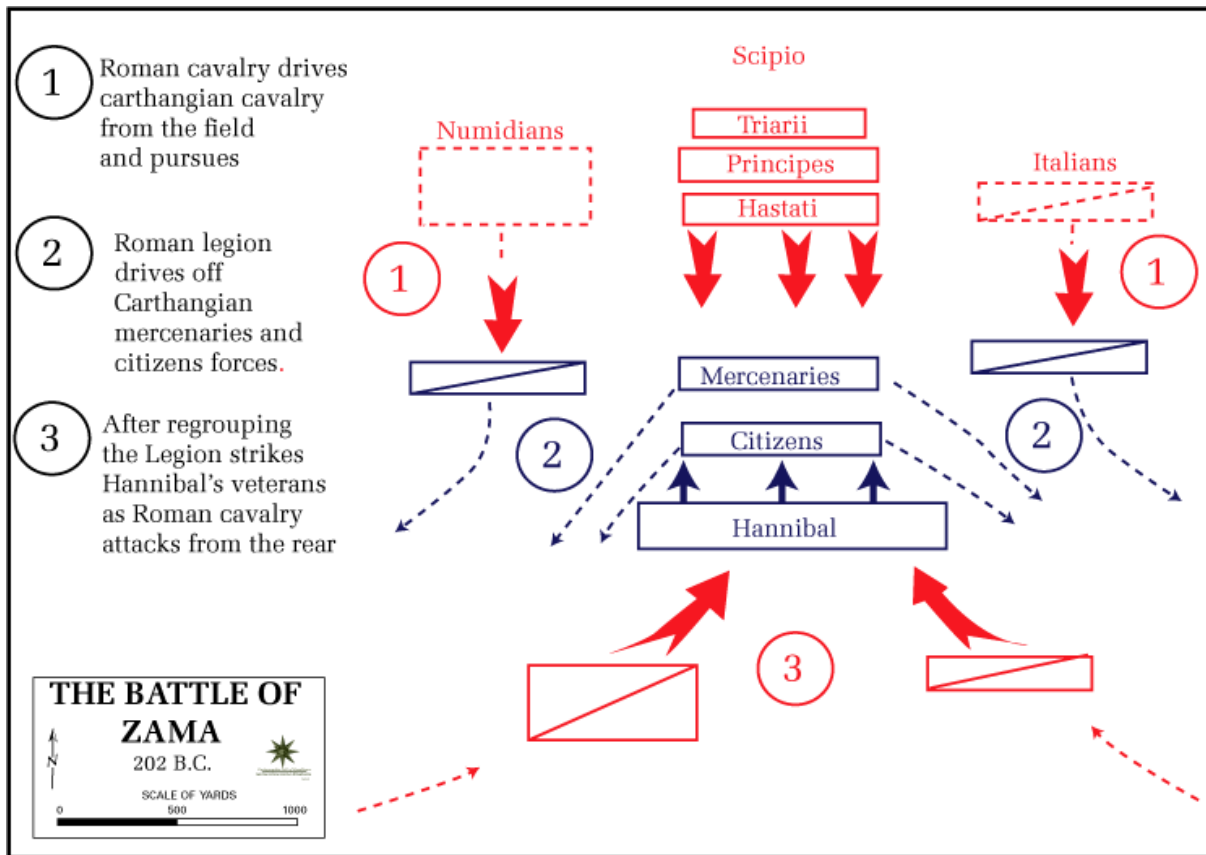
²³¹ Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 151

²³² Polybius, *Historiae* 15.14

²³³ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 30.34, Scullard, *Scipio Africanus* 152-153

²³⁴ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 203-205

troops. The psychological shock of six thousand horsemen thundering towards the battle line might have been enough to seal the fate of Carthage.²³⁵



Progression at the battle of Zama. The appearance of the formations is deceptive, but the progression is correct. Source: Patriotfiles.com (Full path: http://www.patriotfiles.com/gallery/data/646/2battle_zama.gif)

Master and Apprentice?

An army's tactics from one era are almost always comparable, no-one will argue against that. Difference has to be made by discipline and training and in that case, both Hannibal's army and Scipio's army are trained by master tacticians. In this light it's more interesting to see in what way Scipio would have been a copycat. Scipio has often been accused of being a copycat for using a double envelopment as the base for his tactics, since it was Hannibal who used that tactic to crush the Roman army at Cannae, a battle where Scipio was present. This will serve as a justification as to why comparing them is useful.

Even at first glance it becomes obvious that Hannibal and Scipio don't command the same kind of army. Hannibal has his fearsome Celtiberian heavy cavalry, most likely from the Phoenician settlements along the coast that remained loyal to Carthage. In addition to that he commands Numidian horsemen. These two elements are alien to Scipio, yet play an essential role for Hannibal. He can rely on them to harass fleeing enemies and break tough formations. They're also more

²³⁵ Gabriel, *Hannibal* 205-207, Fields, *Hannibal* 39; Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* 30.35

numerable than Rome's horsemen. In all of his battles, Hannibal uses his cavalry to either negate his enemies numbers or refuse them an escape route.

In addition to that, Hannibal has a near endless supply of cannon fodder: the Gauls. Hannibal was well aware of their reputation as fierce warriors that would get distracted. As such he deployed them in the centre and made them carry the heaviest burden of the battle, while sparing his elite troops. The result were high casualties amongst the Gauls, but relatively low ones amongst his other troops. Furthermore, the Gauls proved to be an effective battle unit, being controlled by his other units on the wings.

Another aspect that characterizes Hannibal's tactics are ambushes. Both at Trebia and Lake Trasimene, he effectively ambushed the entire enemy army, allowing his forces to overwhelm them. Hannibal adjust his traps based on terrain and the size of the enemy he faces. At Trebia, Hannibal had hidden two thousand troops and had them join in the battle when the time was right. At Trasimene the entire army was the trap and his elite forces the bait. At Cannae his Gauls were the trap.

As one would quickly notice, Hannibal's tactics are defensive in nature. He always moves after the Roman's begin their advance. He needs his enemy to be certain of themselves and not suspicious of anything. When his enemy suspects something, they could severely hinder his plans, as indeed happens against the careful Scipio.

It's these four points that would work to disprove that Scipio is a copycat. Scipio doesn't work to create a heavy cavalry akin to Hannibal. Instead he begins training his troops to assist the cavalry, while training his cavalry to be more efficient at killing other mounts. Scipio knows he'll not be able to get large amounts of heavy cavalry, especially not on the quality that Hannibal has, simply because none of his allies are trained that way. He does gain access to the Numidian forces and uses them in a similar way to Hannibal. However there is really no other way to use Numidian light cavalry but to skirmish and hunt down survivors.

Scipio doesn't have access to large amounts of cannon fodder, in fact he doesn't have access to any renewable sources of troops. Rome doesn't send him a lot of reinforcements and he doesn't trust the Celtiberian tribes, with good reason. Scipio therefore cannot lure the enemy into that safe zone and spring a trap, in the way that Hannibal can. Instead of wasting time, Scipio needs to move fast, as to prevent demoralization and possibly disintegration of his main line.

Due moving fast, Scipio cannot use ambushes and has to trap the enemy in plain sight or out of sight. This coincides with the biggest point of difference between their tactics: Scipio is always on the offensive. Like the other Roman generals, Scipio makes the first move. He needs to keep his opponent's eyes focused on the battle at hand so he can make his move. Should he be pushed on the defensive, that most of his tactics would have failed, becoming too obvious to miss.

With this in mind, Scipio can no longer be considered a copycat. Of course he might have learned of Hannibal's tactics, just like Hannibal had learned of ambushes from his time in Hispania, but Scipio could not copy it. Instead he had to own it and transform it in a way that he can use it. By training his troops in new formations and new techniques, as well as equipping them with new weapons, Scipio was able to create units that could do the same as Hannibal's elites. However the

biggest issue was still not fixed and that was how to make it work with the Roman army, a force that relied on her offensive power. Scipio solved that puzzle, by utilizing speed and maneuverability. Which of the two tactics is stronger might remain a mystery forever, because when they met on the battle, all that remained of carefully laid plans were a bloody melee.

Conclusion

Throughout the ages, Hannibal and Scipio have been compared and judgments have been made. Hannibal's brilliant performance at Trebia, Lake Trasimene and Cannae have won him the praise of many tacticians, but his ultimate failure to take Rome or win over substantial amounts of Roman allies have led to some people calling him a bad strategist. On the hand Scipio's victory over the Carthaginians in Hispania and Africa, as well as utilizing the Celtiberian troops to replenish his own have caused many to view him as the greatest mind of the Second Punic war, bar none. On the other hand his failure at containing Hasdrubal Barcas, the Celtiberian rebellion and his failure to take Utica have resulted in some weird looks. Ultimately, due to the similarities between Cannae and Scipio's battles, he was branded a copycat and was mostly forgotten by history.

As is proven, there is a lot of generalizations and maybe even preference for one style over the other in these claims. Both men had similar youths, filled with learning Greek and the arts of battle. Hannibal has the definite edge over Scipio, since Hannibal had to become a great commander for his father, while Scipio had to learn about statecraft as well. But can it be said that Scipio's knowledge of statecraft aided him in winning over the Celtiberian tribes?

Simply put, no. The Celtiberians that defected to Scipio lived in the north of Hispania and in the interior. The coastal villages to the south remained allies to the Carthaginians until the end. Those that were dissatisfied or felt oppressed defected to Rome, like those dissatisfied with Rome defected to Carthage. However Scipio failed to read what these men wished for in return. The release of their loved ones was a nice gesture, but in the end they wished for independence, using Scipio as a tool to get rid of the Carthaginians. Even when Rome had something to offer, Carthage would manage to outbid Scipio. Hasdrubal Gisco's daughter caused Rome to lose her most valuable ally in Africa.

Hannibal on the other hand couldn't offer anything to the cities loyal to Rome. His presence allowed for some cities to rise up, but they demanded too much of Hannibal, eventually bogging down his army in the south. He had to defend too many towns across too large a distance against too large a foe. This essentially resulted in Imperial overstretch for Hannibal's coalition in the south of Italy. Rome could hinder his supplies there through raids, while her own supplies were safe in the north.

Both Hannibal and Scipio are accused by Gabriel for failing to besiege the capital cities. While some factors would greatly aid them, in the ancient world a siege would take so much from an army. Saguntum was a disaster. The Carthaginian siege had led to complete social breakdown inside the city. This was not what either general wanted. Furthermore, Scipio had a plan that didn't even involve a siege.

Their tactics are a testament to their own ingenuity and knowledge. They both see how their foes beat their armies in the field. The Celtiberian tribesmen used their ingenuity to ambush the Carthaginians and inflict casualties, even though they were unable to defeat them. Hannibal learned this feat and used it in his own tactics, setting ambushes either hidden or in plain sight, but always on the defensive. Scipio adapted the greatest one for his own army: hiding the trap in plain sight. It took training, reorganizing and testing, but he managed to transform the Roman army into a world conquering force. And he did so by hiding the trap in the attack.

Much of their lives are indeed comparable, but doing so for their strategy would require a careful approach. The territories they fight, the people who they have to win over, the support of their home cities, all look deceptively similar, but on closer inspection reveal worlds of difference. Rome's grip on Italy was tighter than Carthage's grip on Hispania. Carthage did its utmost to support Hannibal, while Rome ignored Scipio, paralyzed by infighting. While aspects are similar, like both of their weakness concerning supplies and the necessity to win over natives, the structure of the land they're trying to invade will cloud any comparison, if not careful.

On the tactical level this is quite the contrary, with both generals showing their own genius, adapted to their own needs and wishes. On paper they look similar, but paper is a treacherous thing that can disintegrate at any moment. While one can argue that Scipio learned from Cannae, one cannot ascribe his accomplishments to just that. He completely adapts it and turns the tactic around, aiming for an offensive trap, rather than a defensive.

But when it actually mattered, they neutralized each other. The battle of Zama is a testament to the power of both of these men. Equal until the final minute, where Rome's strategy overcame that of Carthage. Hannibal and Scipio will always be remembered as eternal enemies even though they only faced each other on the battlefield once.



One note of skepticism must be offered as well. Andreola Rossi argues that the comparative lives of Hannibal and Scipio are a construct of Livy, who wishes to show how even great Romans can

turn into enemies of the republic, something that will inevitably happen in Roman history.²³⁶ But this mostly focuses on details like their oaths to serve their country and the temptations of cities. However it does make one wonder how much is construct and how much is real.

While many historians choose a favorite, more can be seen if one takes a step back and view them from afar. Two generals fighting for the sake of their city. Not always loved or appreciated by her, but loyal to the bitter end. Their brilliance and the heights they reached serving as an inspiration to all.

²³⁶ Rossi, "Hannibal and Scipio" 379-380

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