

WEEK NINE:
The Formidable Opponent – Hannibal I

Thursday: Hannibal at a Glance; Elephants in Snowshoes? – Crossing the Alps

For the second half of this week, we begin our in depth look at the enigmatic, exciting, and enthralling figure of Hannibal Barca, the Carthaginian general who terrorized Rome for 17 years during the Second Punic War (218-201 BCE) [PW2]. First, here is a brief summary of the Punic Wars (so called from the Latin word for “Carthaginian” – *Punicus*): In the fourth and early third centuries BCE, Rome’s power spread throughout the Italian peninsula. The Romans eventually get dragged into a civil conflict in Sicily that had endangered some of their past allies. This action pits them against the other great power of the western Mediterranean: Carthage. The ensuing war (known as the First Punic War [PW1]) lasted over twenty years and left Rome in complete control of Sicily and in possession of a decent navy, while Carthage was financially broke and militarily crippled. Soon thereafter Rome also takes possession of Sardinia and Corsica and Carthage turns to Spain to begin to rebuild its empire. One of the Carthaginian commanders in PW1, Hamilcar Barca, oversaw the Punic expansion in Spain. After Hamilcar’s death, his son Hannibal took over his command and—according to our sources—began immediately preparing for a war with Rome, eventually attacking Saguntum (a Roman ally in Spain) and then invading Italy from the North. After initial, overwhelming success against the Romans, Hannibal continues a protracted campaign in Italy, where he makes little progress undermining the support that Rome has from its allies in throughout the Italian peninsula. Eventually Hannibal is forced to retreat to his homeland when an enterprising young Roman general, Publius Cornelius Scipio, invades Africa to attack Carthage directly. After Scipio’s victory at Zama, Carthage surrenders and agrees to pay crippling war indemnities and is forbidden from reestablishing its military forces. About fifty years later, Carthage is under attack from neighboring Numidians and raises an army to defend itself. Rome responds (in the Third Punic War [PW3], 149-46 BCE) and in very little time succeeds in sacking Carthage and selling its surviving citizens into slavery.

For Thursday, begin by reading Cornelius Nepos’ biography of Hannibal. Nepos had avid antiquarian interests and wrote widely in several genres. Among these writings were sixteen books of biographies (*de Viris Illustribus*). These biographies were organized by the professions of the subjects (kings, poets, historians, and generals, for example) and then into pairs of books, one each on Roman figures and another on notable foreigners of each profession. Most of what remains of Nepos’ work is his book on “Foreign Generals,” who are mostly Greek, with the exceptions of Hamilcar and Hannibal. Nepos’ biography provides a brief and accessible introduction to Hannibal’s life. Read it with a focus on the overall narrative that it provides about the Carthaginian general. Next, read Livy’s brief character sketch of Hannibal (*AUC* 21.4).

Last, we will read Livy’s narrative of Hannibal’s crossing of the Alps. After sacking the Spanish city a Saguntum (a Roman ally), Hannibal organizes his troops to march east, planning to attack the Italian peninsula by coming into it from the North. This Carthaginian advance is initially met by resistance at the Rhone by the Roman troops under the command of Publius Scipio (the father of the one who will end the war) and then by the Alpine tribes and other Gauls around the Alps. We pick up the narrative when Hannibal gives a speech to encourage his men to dismiss their fears of crossing the Alps and press forward on their campaign.

Assignment:

- **Hannibal at a Glance: Nepos, *Hannibal*** (= Rolfe trans. pp. 259-81-*odd pages only*); the Character Sketch: Livy *AUC* 21.4 (= Yardley trans.* pp. 5-6)
 - **Elephants in Snowshoes?: Livy, *AUC* 21.30-47** (=Yardley trans.* pp. 30-47)
- *Livy *AUC* Books 21-30 = our text, *Hannibal's War*, translated by Yardley.

Reading Questions:

- How does Nepos characterize Hannibal? What sort of figure does he describe Hannibal to be? Do the narratorial descriptions concerning Hannibal match up with the actions and behavior that he demonstrates throughout the work?
- What is the focus of Nepos' biography? What does this focus suggest about how the Romans perceive of Hannibal about 150 years after his death?
- What sort of picture does Livy's character sketch paint of Hannibal? What qualities does he possess? Do they seem positive or negative? Do any of these come to fruition in the ensuing narrative (keep this in mind for the next couple of weeks as well)? How do these compare to the qualities that Nepos describes of Hannibal?
- How does Hannibal encourage his troops to obey his commands throughout Livy's narrative? What kinds of behavior do the Carthaginians (generally) and Hannibal (specifically) perform?
- How does Hannibal respond to the various kinds of opposition that he faces throughout his crossing of the Alps? How does his speech before the crossing compare to what his army actually faces in their crossing?
- How do the two speeches given before the Battle at the Ticinus characterize the two commanders, P. Cornelius Scipio and Hannibal? How does each general try to motivate and exhort his troops? Who is more successful and why?

People, Terms, Events and Concepts, to know from Week Nine:

Punic Wars 1-3	Hamilcar Barca	Cornelius Nepos
<i>Punicus</i>	Hannibal Barca	<i>de Viris Illustribus</i>
Carthage	P. Cornelius Scipio (son)	
Antiochus, King of Syria	<i>suffete</i>	Publius Cornelius Scipio
Hannibal's oath	Crete	(father)
the Alps	Hannibal's death	Monomachy of the Gallic
Trasimene	Livy's Character Sketch	prisoners
Cannae (in Apulia)	Allobroges	portents at the camp
Q. Fabius Maximus	Rhone River	Battle at the Ticinus River
Zama		