



HANNIBAL'S STRATAGEMS

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Rome's fiercest enemy, the one who defeated Rome on its own in the Second Punic War, Hannibal was one of the most special warriors of all time, so we can call the Second Punic War, his war. It was through all the actions he really took his war with Rome, both after all the outstanding theories about the war, but especially by the fact that the talented Carthaginian general defeated Rome at her home, shattering the myth of her invincibility, as a city of Mars. We are not wrong when we claim that Hannibal would have defeated the god of war in this conflict as well.

From the beginning of military hostilities to their end, the perfect strategist of the Puns fully controlled the theatre of operations, even being its sole director, putting his enemy, Rome, in the most disastrous situation of all time. Basically, Hannibal eliminated the echelon of command of the Roman army, but also the Roman army that is shattered in three successive battles at Trebia, Trasimenus and Cannae, ending up threatening Rome itself through the famous ante portas episode. Even though Hannibal's war did not result in Hannibal's peace, the intention of the brilliant general was to eliminate Rome as an armed force and economic strength, an objective fully accomplished during the military operations. The detail that eluded him was the Roman tenacity, the one that stole his peace, but Hannibal has entirely the paternity of the second war between the Puns and the Romans, being to this day a genius of the art of war, unmatched yet.

Keywords: conflict; strategy; disaster; surprise; Pun; ability; special; warrior.

DEDICATIO:

We dedicate this study about one of the most special ancient warriors to all the special warriors of Romania

This study continues our preoccupations about the great military personality of the ancient world, Hannibal, analysing so far other studies dedicated to him about his strategic talent (Strechie 2016, 72-78), or about the Roman-Punic conflict, the real "clash of civilizations" (Strechie 2015, 370-375) in which he was the main part, or about the emotion produced by him in Rome (Strechie 2020, 99-105), or about the use of terrorism on Rome during his confrontation with the Romans, Punic terror being the most painful for Rome (Strechie 2019, 161-168). This study does not repeat the subject of the other studies, so it does not insist on its italic campaign, on the confrontations or on the psychological effect on the Romans, but wants to frame the second Punic war, Hannibal's war, in the main theories about the art of war, precisely to prove its paternity on this Puno-Roman clash of the charismatic Carthaginian general, especially since the subject was not treated by the Romanian researchers. So, we propose an original theme and try to prove that the art of war was well known in

the ancient world, the generals of the ancient world being still today models worthy of follow, Hannibal being one of the most effective warriors of all time.

We will prove below that after all the military operations, according to the plan and tactics, the second Roman-Punic confrontation is truly Hannibal's war with the Romans, he is being *pars pro toto Carthaginae* (part for the whole of Carthage - our trans.)

1. The Fatherhood of the Second Punic War

The second Roman-Punic conflict that unfolded between 218-201 B. C. was Hannibal's because he was the grey eminence, his commander and tactician. The first argument over this paternity is that Hannibal becomes commander of the troops in Spain, a territory under Carthaginian rule, after the assassination of Hasdrubal. At the age of 25, Hannibal is the commander of the joint Punic troops, based in Spain. The first action in the position of commander is the occupation of Sagunt, an ally of Rome, thus unofficially declaring war on Rome who immediately sent envoys to negotiate peace. Peace talks did not even begin, and the Roman expedition was a failure. Hannibal had already made a war plan and began to put it into

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practice by "marching on Italy" by crossing two mountain ranges (the Pyrenees and the Alps) and not at sea as the Romans expected (Bagnall 2018, 70-72).

In this Second Punic War, Hannibal is *a pater*, as all his tactical plans have been fulfilled, and his goal, annihilating his opponent and blocking him from opposing him appropriately, was successful. The only detail that escaped the brilliant strategist was the perseverance and regenerative capacity of Rome, which not by chance had the following creed of life: TU NE CAEDE MALIS, SED CONTRA AUDENTIOR ITO! (You do not kneel in the face of evil but move forward with more boldness! – our trans.). Hannibal had no way of suspecting that Rome would be reborn as a Phoenix from his own mud in which he plunged it, especially at Trasimenus and Cannae, it was the hazard of war, which cannot be predicted even by the gods. It was precisely this hazard that brought peace to Rome, although Hannibal's war was lost in the most emphatic way by the Eternal City.

Thus, Hannibal signs with his name the Second Punic War for the main reasons:

1. the effect of surprise: crossing the mountains and attacking Rome where it least expected it;
2. the division of Rome from its allies, which Hannibal draws into a genuine coalition against it;
3. The establishment of a veritable Punic terror within Roman society, not only within the Roman army, which weakened their morale and fighting capacity, establishing a genuine chaos;
4. the use of new weapons, the fighting elephants, with a devastating effect, precisely because of what is called the shock of technology, which disturbed the Romans and blocked them because they did not know how to fight back to this platform of struggle;
5. speed of action and successive victories;
6. The choice of the battlefield was always imposed by Hannibal, the Romans were forced to fight only where the great general wanted, although they were at home;
7. the division of the forces of the Roman army and the establishment of disorder within them;
8. the financial strength of Hannibal's army, compared to the army of the Roman state, Hannibal taking care to properly finance his war;
9. Hannibal's masterpieces of strategy: Trasimenus, Cannae, posting at the gates of Rome,

with catastrophic effects on the Eternal City;

10. the destruction of the Roman army and its myth of great power in front of its neighbours and allies.

2. The purpose of Hannibal's war

Hannibal's war had only one purpose, namely the elimination of Rome, an emerging power at the time, which was looming as a serious competitor of Carthage in the Mediterranean Sea. That is why he made one of the "boldest military plans" (Mills 2008, 14), and at the same time so surprising. His tactical plan was so simple, but so perfect, being conceived in two stages: marching over the mountains and attacking Rome on land (Mills 2008, 16), not at sea as expected by everyone, especially since Punic superiority was undeniable, and Rome had no chance in a naval battle. The attack was planned from Spain, the European territory of Carthage, which here secured an especially important basis of power, precisely because here in Spain the Carthaginians believed that Rome could attack them, being close in region (Mills 2008, 16). On the principle that the best defence is the attack, Hannibal attacked him first. Therefore, he thoroughly prepared the attack and began with the attraction to his side of the Allies of the Romans, especially from Italy. The best "allies" of the conjuncture for Hannibal in Italy were the Gauls, old rivals of the Romans, who allied themselves with her for objective reasons, not out of conviction. Attracting the Gauls to the Punic side, thus breaking their alliance with the Romans and at the same time providing Hannibal with the best connoisseurs of the mountains he had to cross (Mills 2008, 17-18), thus providing him with guidance through the unknown mountains.

The composition of Hannibal's army was based on the hard core of the veterans, who had previously fought under his father's command, in the First Punic War most of them, and besides this nucleus he also attracted what were called the "silver spears", in fact well-trained mercenaries grouped in this distinct corps of army. (Mills, 2008, 18).

In addition to the Gauls, Hannibal also made other allies of his conjuncture, from Spain, namely the Iberians, slightly armed with slingshots, an unbelievably cheap weapon because it did not require ammunition supplies, this being replenished

on the ground, stones being found everywhere, especially in the mountains that were to be passed (Mills 2008, 18).

The cavalry was provided by the most qualified for this weapon, namely the Numidians, who later made a career in the Roman army, after the integration of Numidia into Roman power. (Mills, 2008, 19). The elephants, his weapon of devastating novelty for the Romans, were from Syria and Egypt, which were the most effective platforms of battle (Mills 2008, 19).

This was Hannibal's army, made up mostly of Africans, of course from multiple nations, with multiple weapons, a combined force, lethal for those times, which had at its head the most well-trained general, who knew how to form a coalition based on hatred against the Romans. Rome did not confront a single man, Hannibal, faced a coalition, led by one man, which had numerical superiority, weapons, and technologies (elephants) and the fastest cavalry. Rome had only his infantry and a lower cavalry in many respects, the command of his troops was not a unitary one, which also led to the successive disasters of his army. We can say that Hannibal's war was which, although he was operationally successful, politically, Hannibal lost a peace, which he never wanted.

3. Hannibal's War Stratagems, a model in the patterns of the art of Mars

3.1. Hannibal and his War Stratagems in the pattern of Sun Tzu's Art of War

In his war, Hannibal fully respected the laws of war described by the Chinese sage Sun Tzu, laws that are still current today. Thus Hannibal, although from another era and another civilization, fits perfectly together with his war into the philosophy of the brilliant Sun Tzu. Hannibal evaluated the war with Rome according to the five factors of the art of Mars described by the Chinese theorist of the war, namely: 1. moral influence; 2. atmospheric conditions; 3. the land; 4. the commander; 5. Doctrine (Tzu 2004, 7). Moreover, it was Hannibal who forged the fifth factor of the war, namely the doctrine. In the Chinese thinker's explanation, the "doctrine" was "organization, authority, promotion of officers to the proper rank, security of supply routes, and care to meet the essential needs of the military" (Tzu 2004, 9).

Hannibal excelled at all five factors in his war

with Rome, but especially at the fifth. The attraction of the allies of the Romans in his coalition ensured, on the one hand, the security of the supply routes and the back, on the other hand he made sure the expedition of the march from the mountains by co-opting the connoisseurs of those mountains, he offered everyone what he wanted, but especially he made himself respected by all and followed by all, through the "moral influence" that was the hatred towards the Romans, a common feeling not only for the Puns, but also for the Iberians, Gauls, even for some Latin nations other than the Romans.

The Carthaginian general also took into account the atmospheric conditions always, because both when crossing the mountains, he did not travel this distance during the winter, and during his great victories at Trasimene and Cannae he took into account the weather, the position of the sun, the wind, he did not attack with the sun in front, so as not to be blinded or with his back to the wind, lest he be disturbed by the dust.

The Carthaginian general always chose the land, with great care, both at Trasimene and at Cannae forced the Roman army to sink into a marshy terrain that not only made it difficult for it to react, but also led it to perish.

Hannibal was the commander par excellence, possessing all the qualities described by the Chinese theorist of war, the unparalleled Sun Tzu: "By command – authority I mean the qualities of justice, humanity, courage and severity of the general" (Tzu 2004, 9). To the qualities described by Sun Tzu, we allow ourselves to add two more: the capacity for foresight and genius, innate qualities rather than acquired. How could we equate these two native qualities of Hannibal on the battlefield? We find the answer also to the brilliant Chinese thinker, who describes how to devise a war plan, which Hannibal also did masterfully, namely he conceived all his war on "deception", simulated "disorder and hit" the enemy where he wanted, avoided him on land, where the Romans were superior in training, forcing them to fight in the swamps, but mostly he attacked the Romans "where they were not prepared" and "acted when they did not expect it" (Tzu 2004, 10-13).

The fiercest enemy of Rome fought his war with only one objective, the victory, he never sought peace with Rome, for a remarkably simple reason, he wanted the destruction of Rome,



therefore he cannot be reproached for losing the peace of his war. He was a man of war, not a man of peace. Through the objective of war pursued by the redoubtable opponent of the Romans, he fits perfectly into Sun Tzu's theories regarding the objectives pursued by a war: "Victory is the main objective of the war. If she is late, the weapons are chopped and morale grinds down" (Tzu 2004, 17). What Hannibal did not sense was the time of grinding the morale of the Romans, which did not go according to the theories of war. If he could be blamed for an error in his war plan and in military operations it was the lack of an additional objective, in addition to victory. He did not want the submission of Rome, he wanted the elimination of Rome, whose morale was granite, exceedingly difficult to grind.

Although he fulfilled his main objective in his war, almost personally, he obtained not a single victory, but victories in every confrontation with the Romans, thus being an "expert", defined by the same always current Sun Tzu: "Impalpable and immaterial, the expert leaves no traces, mysterious as a deity, he cannot be heard. Thus, the enemy is at his will" (Tzu 2004, 41). The Romans were as a nation, not just as the military force, at the will of Hannibal, who even knocks them at the gates of the city.

War, in the ancient world, was a matter of utmost importance, therefore there were social categories that had as their duty this phenomenon. Hannibal has long prepared this Punic war, which is why he turns it into a personal war. Since childhood little Hannibal (whose name is composed with the name of the god Bal, the Phoenician god of Heaven, it seems that the general's name translates as "grace to Bal") planned to fight the Romans, especially since the first Punic war was underway, then followed a period of peace, in fact a truce desired on both sides. It was during this time that Hannibal mentally prepared his war by acting exactly according to the theory of the Chinese sage: "When there is peace in the world, a man of good keeps his sword by his side" (Tzu 2004, 58). Hannibal not only held the sword by his side, sharpened this sword and gathered other swords with him, he trained day by day, until the war for him became an automatism, a reflex, which ensured his rapidity, and Sun Tzu described that "rapidity is the very essence of war" (Tzu 2004, 78).

So, according to Sun Tzu's war theory, the second Punic war is truly Hannibal's war. We can say that in this Chinese "art of war", Hannibal, the grace of the Carthaginian Sky, fits best, almost fully respecting the art of Sun Tzu, as after a textbook.

3.2. *Hannibal and his War Stratagems in the pattern of the Art of War of Niccolo Machiavelli*

The brilliant strategist of the Puns also successfully fits into the theories of the art of war by one of the most famous ideologues of the Renaissance, Niccolo Machiavelli. Like any Renaissance scholar, in addition to theories about the state, state leadership, politics in particular, Machiavelli also theorized *The Art of War*, in which he makes observations, analyses, and provides models for how to wage war. Hannibal also fits into this philosophy, being very versatile, which proves once again his talent in the art of Mars, always current, both in antiquity and in the Renaissance, then also in the period of Modernity, as we will see.

Thus, Hannibal wages his war, on his own with the Romans, he represents the power of Carthage, the state, and his government, falling within the main idea of the talented Renaissance scholar: "War must be only the business of governments." (Machiavelli 1999, 9). Fair, because Hannibal was able to wage his war with the Romans in the name of Carthage, as he was the representative of the government. Also, as a political and military leader, Hannibal demonstrated his extraordinary worth through war, if he had not been the Carthaginian commander in military confrontations, he would have been mentioned marginally in some commercial acts, as a representative of the Carthaginian power, which ruled the Mediterranean Sea and trade there. The war brought him world notoriety and immortality, he remains today through his strategies an example. Machiavelli described in his *Art* about war on this issue: "War makes values, and peace makes them disappear" (Machiavelli 1999, 11). Basically, if it wasn't for the war, Hannibal wouldn't have gone down in history.

The weapon skill highlighted his native talent in the art of Mars, a skill that he acquired as a child, animated by a fierce hatred of the Romans, thus coming to make art from this skill: "... the appropriation of the art of war, as an exercise, an object of study in the time of peace..." (Machiavelli 1999, 13).

Hannibal was worthy of his name, being a

true god on the battlefield, having an extraordinary ability in the field of war because he proved that he can "fight the enemy that he sees, or that he implies" (Machiavelli 1999, 51). He always acted in this way in confrontations with the Romans, which is why he did not even force the gates of Rome, because he assumed that the despair of the Romans could turn the result. He took all the necessary precautions, not knowing what awaited him on Italian land, so that he "would not rely on luck" (Machiavelli 1999, 99).

In the theatre of operations Hannibal took into account all the elements, even those related to the sun and wind, which may seem insignificant details on the battlefield, but they can disturb a belligerent army, just as Machiavelli advised: "... when you have your army,... think about it... that the sun or the wind will not blow in your face, for they will disturb your visibility by rays and by the dust that will lift it up in front of you. In fact, the wind reduces the effect of weapons acting at a distance" (Machiavelli 1999, 101). The weapons that struck at a distance were in Hannibal's time the bows, extremely necessary for him to force them through the rain of arrows to force them to sink into the Lakes Trasimene and Cannae.

Hannibal, as we have stated in the studies of the undersigned quoted above, caused what is called terror within Roman society, not just among the Roman weapon, thus respecting Machiavelli's indication in his art of war: "If during the fight you want to cause disturbances in the enemy's army, you must suggest an event that will terrify him" (Machiavelli 1999, 105). Hannibal not only suggested the terror, but applied it, because he "terrified" Rome through the successive massacres of Trasimene and Cannae, but also with the march on Rome, reaching the gates of the city without encountering any resistance. It is not wrong when it is considered that Hannibal applied to the Romans what is now called psychological operations.

The Roman army was a very well-established one, especially in terms of organization, so Hannibal attacked it "undefensible", as the Italian Renaissance scholar suggested that it should be done with an orderly army. By using elephants in combat, Hannibal perfectly calculated that it would also have the effect of surprise and would cause a shock to the Roman army, which had never before faced such combat platforms. And in this

respect the brilliant Carthaginian man of arms fits into Machiavelli's theories: "New and unforeseen things terrify an army" (Machiavelli 1999, 182).

Incidentally, Hannibal was not only a general who knew the psychology of the military, but he was also a good manager in finding the means, using goods, and financing his army, made up in the largest proportion of mercenaries, thus respecting what Machiavelli considered to be the energy of war: "Soldiers, weapons, money, bread: here is the vigour of war" (Machiavelli 1999, 183). Hannibal had it all in his confrontation with the Romans.

We see once again how universally valid Hannibal's methods were in his "war" with Rome because they are pretty much in any war textbook, whether they are from antiquity, the Renaissance, or the modern era.

3.3. Hannibal and his War Stratagems in the pattern of the war theory of Carl von Clausewitz

The talented Punic general also fits into the famous military art written by Carl von Clausewitz. Hannibal through his war continued the political rivalry between Carthage and Rome, just as the well-known modern theorist described in the art of Mars: "War is but a continuation of politics by other means" (Clausewitz 2014, 18). Basically, Hannibal continued the Punic policy, which he also coordinated, with violent means. His war has always had a "political purpose, as the original reason for the war" (Clausewitz 2014, 13). This goal was the elimination of Rome as a competing power with that represented by him. His war had no personal purpose, but was the purpose of his state, which did not want any threat in the Mediterranean Sea, and Rome was a threat that was growing, slowly but surely.

Hannibal's tactical plan had its purpose, theorized by Carl von Clausewitz as: "The armed force (of the enemy – our words) it must be destroyed", but also "the country and the will of the enemy" (Clausewitz 2014, 19). His war was a total one, that's why he had "methodism," (Clausewitz 2014, 55) along with passion or "hostile feeling" (Clausewitz 2014, 77).

The main engine of the second Roman-Punic war was its commander, namely Hannibal he is being the "talent of the high commander" (Clausewitz 2014, 77), we allow ourselves to complete Clausewitz in terms of the adjective, Hannibal was the titanic commander not only of



the conflict he led, but of the whole history, being among the first in the gallery of illustrious generals of all time.

The model strategist had everything in his war, however everything Clausewitz thought he should have: "boldness" (Clausewitz 2014, 80), for two mountain ranges passed, an action considered impossible up to him; he held the "means of superiority" (Clausewitz 2014, 85), because from beginning to end he was at an advantage, never in retreat; he also practiced the "economy of forces" (Clausewitz 2014, 93), because both at Trasimenus, as well as at Cannae, he had minimal casualties in his troops compared to the Roman army which was crushed and left without the echelon of officer ship.

Conclusions

These are the theories of war in which I framed Hannibal with his war and stratagems because I wanted to prove that *bellum Punicum secundum* has the fatherhood of the titanic commander of armies, but also that it fits into the most famous textbooks on the art of Mars. It took a selection of the war arts by the undersigned precisely for the economics of our study. I selected war arts

from different civilizations and different periods to demonstrate Hannibal's genius.

Hannibal was more than a general, more than a ruler of Carthage, he was for the entire world a veritable "jewel", because as masterfully defines Sun Tzu: "The general ... it does not pursue his personal glory... but it has only one goal, to protect... it is a precious jewel to the state" (Tzu 2004, 72). He was for Rome, not only the most fierce and capable opponent, but he was also the best teacher, perhaps the most brilliant in *ars belli*. From the confrontations with him, the Roman army and all Roman society hardened its morale, tenacity, and willpower. The Roman army learned its lessons through the supreme sacrifice from the disasters in which Hannibal plunged it, taking over many of its tactics, but especially the attack on the flanks and the use of psychological operations on the opponent.

Not only by chance, but Hannibal is also always up to date, being described by many arts of war, the teacher of all the military, of all times, proves each time that he is a totally special warrior, the one who honours his name, being like the god, especially that of war.

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