



Hannibal

Theodore Ayrault Dodge

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Hannibal is often called the finest general the world has ever known. Setting out from Carthaginian-dominated Spain with a small army of select troops, he fought his way over the Pyrenees and crossed the Alps with elephants and a full baggage train. Theodore Dodge retraced this route from Carthage to Italy, paying particular attention to the famous crossing of the Alps, and wrote what remains unequalled as the most comprehensive and readable study of history's greatest general.

Hannibal Details

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From Reader Review Hannibal for online ebook

Roberto Toro says

A very interesting book about Hannibal. the author seems to discredit Scipio Africanus a bit too much to my liking, but with the amount of information about the second punic war, it is more than bearablr.

JoséMaría BlancoWhite says

review in Spanish for the benefit of Spaniards

En primer lugar, si se ha leído la biografía que ya mencioné de Escipión el Africano, éste debe ser el siguiente libro, porque hay una rivalidad -sino entre los personajes históricos allá en el Olimpo- entre ambos historiadores por llevarse los laureles del primer puesto para su protegido. Dodge es un historiador bastante anterior a Lidell Hart, y le recomé que su predecesor no haya otorgado el respeto que su protegido, Escipión, se merece.

Dodge es también un experto en cuestiones militares, no sólo como historiador. Su pasión por el antiguo héroe cartaginés es muy evidente, un poco demasiado, no lo digo por quitarle la razón, sino porque no queda muy fino que un historiador se demuestre tan acérrimo. La lectura es llevadera, coge impulso cuanto más cerca de las batallas importantes, allá por la mitad del libro. La primera mitad tiene mucho de explicación sobre cómo eran los ejércitos cartagineses, sus soldados, sus armas, etc, etc, y poco sobre el personaje en sí. Cosa que puede interesar, pero que al lector generalista ya no le resulta fácil de seguir.

Las andanzas de Aníbal por Italia y luego por el norte de África las sigue al autor casi al milímetro. Sólo es de lamentar que, finalizadas las batallas, perdida la guerra contra Roma, se pierdan los pasos de nuestro héroe cartaginés y casi sin despedirse. Yo estaba muy interesado en saber algo de su última etapa de vida, como protegido de no sé qué rey, como mercenario, creo. Aún vivió el hombre bastantes años, y se cree que se envenenó para no ser atrapados por su eterno enemigo, Roma, pero de todos esto no nos dice nada. Habrá que encontrarlo en alguna novela histórica, me temo.

Eric Shoemaker says

Outstanding look at the Carthaginian General, Rome's nemesis. I did my Senior Thesis on Hannibal Barca at the University of Nevada-Reno.

Sarahanus says

This book will be liked by those who are interested in the art of war. Battles are loving detailed and diagrammed. For myself, I learned more, very much more, than I ever wanted to know about the Roman legions. And to top it off after 200 pages still had not gotten more than a mention of Hannibal.

For those who are interested in battle strategy, this book can't be beat.

Mark says

Just finished this excellent book. It's a story of a genius (Hannibal Barca) who undertook an impossible mission (defeating Rome) and in the process created what we know today as military strategy. The writer (a Union officer from the US Civil War) describes Hannibal's life in extensive detail. He is especially focused on Hannibal's 16 year war against Rome. There is a detailed and breathtaking description of Hannibal's march across the Alps leading 100,000 soldiers 10,000 cavalry and 200 elephants. That feat alone would place Hannibal in military history. This was followed by several crushing victories over Roman armies which were not prepared for the Carthaginian general's strategic war, his cunning and his power. Hannibal crushed the Romans at Lake Trasimene, at Geronium and of course at Cannae in a battle still studied at military academies for its brilliant strategy and the surrounding and destruction of a much larger Roman army by a brilliant Carthaginian maneuver. Historians often wonder why Hannibal did not march on Rome right after his famous win at Cannae. The author claims this was good strategic thinking by Hannibal who must have known that he would face an army up to 10 times his if Rome had to fight for her life. He was apparently hoping instead to destabilize the Latin Alliance and then dictate peace terms to Rome. He had some successes in this including getting Capua, the second largest city in the alliance, to turn on Rome and side with Carthage. But it would not be enough. For 15 years Hannibal and his army fought in Italy and the Romans eventually stalled the Carthaginian genius by refusing to meet him head on in a battle. Rome was so awed by Hannibal's military skills that they dared not fight him despite having a massive advantage in troop numbers. They simply followed Hannibal around Italy, skirmished occasionally and prevented him from destroying the alliance and sacking Rome. But they dared not fight Hannibal head on. It proved enough. Carthage was run by a group of corrupt oligarchs (does this sound familiar.....) who were more concerned in fighting for Spain and keeping its resources as a trade colony than with supporting the campaign in Italy. For this, Carthage paid a price. Defeated in Spain, Carthage was forced to recall Hannibal to defend the city against the Romans led by Scipio. By this time the Carthaginian army was no match for the Romans having been depleted and exhausted by a 15 year campaign in Italy and the local conscripts were not experienced. The Battle of Zama was Hannibal's only defeat. Even that was based on some luck as the battle had been even until Roman cavalry returned from a pursuit unexpectedly and turned the battle. Hannibal then spent some years in government and was close to returning Carthage to greater power, but the Romans would not let that be. They hounded Hannibal until cornering him and forcing him to commit suicide at age 64.

The author has a deep respect for his subject, almost a reverence. This helps the book also. The subject is well worthy of this reverence in my opinion. Hannibal was truly one of history's great leaders and this book makes his achievements clear in a great way.

Giacomo says

There are many great books on Hannibal, and this is one of them. It is difficult to get through at times, but it provides a great deal of information on this intriguing man who had such an impact on history. Reading this together with a good book on his nemesis, Scipio Africanus, is highly recommended as it puts it all into perspective. While they consider Hannibal one of the world's greatest generals and strategists, the man who defeated him, Scipio, goes almost unnoticed in history.

Ian Mullet says

written by a retired union general, this is the definitive account of hannibal's campaigns. Dodge's Hannibal made me fall in love with the ancient world and was one of the first steps i took that ultimately led me to st. john's.

Christopher Greffin says

Hannibal: A History of the Art of War, written by Theodore Ayrault Dodge, though is not the best book I've read about the Carthaginian general and his campaign against Rome after his brazenly crossing his army through the Alps, is a very respectable and informative one. It takes the reader from the early military histories of both Rome and Carthage, detailing through the centuries of evolution of their respective societies, especially of their armies, briefly summing up the first Punic War and then going into the second Punic War where the title figure comes in to play, and thus is what the bulk of the book is about. Though this was written over a century ago, some probably inflated battle-figure numbers are taken at face value, and some dates of significant events are off, albeit just by a matter of months (for example on the battle of Cannae it lists as June of 216 BC instead of the date assumed by modern historians of August 216 BC) it's still is a strong source on the topic; though it can get a little wordy and repetitive in its expressing of opinion at some points (in I guess an older-fashioned kind of biographical style).

Hannibal is a remarkable figure, certainly earning his rank among the greatest military commanders of all time. The bold decision to trek across the Alps, with an army in the tens of thousands, and successfully doing it by itself would have had him earned him praise in the annals of history. But beyond that, he turned out to be one of the greatest military tacticians in the history of warfare. He bested Roman armies that were multiple times his army's size, and didn't only win but decimated the opposition. But as much effect as he had on his own successes, he had just as much on the Romans, as he forced them to change their strategy, taught them that they should isolate him, and how and when to fight him on the battlefield at selective times. The famed leader Scipio (for whom the book makes the case perhaps gets too much credit for Rome's ultimate success) rose in status, though not him, nor Fabius (of the famed Fabian strategy of war of attrition) nor anybody else can come close to Hannibal's influence of that time.

The Second Punic War was truly regional, stretching from Italy to Spain to Sicily to northern Africa, and contained many more complex dynamics than I can talk about in this review. This book has good information setting up background of conflict, great history on the colossal war itself, and a good if preachy section at the end summarizing the conflict and broadening on certain themes touched throughout. Bottom line: anyone with interest in history of war, or history generally, should read about the remarkable figure and story of Hannibal, whether from a source like this one, or a modern one like *Ghosts of Cannae* or *The Punic Wars*—two of the better non-fiction titles about the war—written by Robert L. O'Connell and Adrian Goldsworthy respectively.

The Pirate Ghost (Formerly known as the Curmudgeon) says

Hannibal by Theodore Ayrault Dodge - Insight Into a Thousand Books

Theodore Ayrault Dodge joined the Infantry as an enlisted soldier in the New York all Volunteer infantry Regiment during the Civil War. He rose to the rank of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel and lost his leg at the Battle of Gettysburg. He had received his military education in Berlin and the University College London and the University of Heidelberg. If you're a Heinlein "Glory Road" fan, he's a Heidelberg man. His military career did not end with the loss of his leg. He served at the War Department from 1864 and received a commission in the US Army in 1866 retiring as a Major in 1870. He wrote a twelve volume work called "A History of the Art Of War" that discussed generals from Alexander to Napoleon. He wrote a sympathetic opinion of Robert E. Lee and his journals written when he was part of the Army of the Potomac and Gettysburg have been cited by noted historians of his age and ages past. The second of his twelve volume observation of the Art of War discussed Hannibal and, this is that volume.

Dodge is a slave to minutia and detail. He tends to run through the supply train then go back over the roles of each different unit and major player, regardless of how much the overlapped. It is easy to get caught up in the attention to detail here, and I nearly did. Then, strangely, Hannibal began to take shape as a person, a very remarkable person. A boy wizard general like Alexander before him, once given the go-ahead to harass and invade the Roman Empire crossed the Alps and did not return again until many years later. He fought the Romans and their Allies, the Lombards, Gauls and other Germanic tribesmen with his own, very diverse multi-national force from North Africa.

Despite his obsession with minute details, Dodge manages sort through differing reports from the two leading Roman Historians who wrote about Hannibal settling disputed evidence with a very practical warrior's sense of what's likely, and unleashed the Romantic Noble Warrior in his heart. One might argue that he blended a romanticized version of Robert E. Lee into his vision of Hannibal and not be far from the truth. One might say that he made up a lot of facts because there is scarce evidence to support any version of Hannibal's conquests. Well you could say that, but it's not exactly true.

And of course, all of those arguments, while even possibly valid, will miss the true value of a book like this.

The beauty of Dodge's work is that it gives those people who write fiction stories, be they fantasy, Science Fiction or historical fiction, a frame that they can use to help imagine a great hero in an impossible situation defying the odds, not for a month or a year, but for more than a decade. Hannibal was the Resistance fighting the Empire in Star Wars. He was "Black Jack Geary" from Jack Campbell's wonderful "Lost Fleet Series" hopelessly lost behind enemy lines, with no hope of relief battling his way back to safe space. He's Adamma from Battlestar Galactica 2005, the television series starring Edward James Olmos leading his rag-tag fugitive fleet, seeking a safe haven from the hoards of Cylons chasing them. He's "Hile Troy" from Stephen R. Donaldson's "Wounded land" series battling the forces of the Despiser (and one of the few heroes we could like from that series). In Dodge's Hannibal I can see Robert E. Lee, faced with a choice between duty and the land that he was born and raised in fighting the overpowering union army as much as Sherman disappearing in South Carolina only to reappear in Vicksburg with Ulysses Grant. I can even see Thorgrim the king leading his riders to rescue Minas Tirith at least for one battle's worth looking like Hannibal, invincible against all Sauron's might.

And here, is one hero, cut much like those I've loved in books, except this one is real taking on the enormous might of the Roman Empire. The best strategy the Roman's ever came up with was, "if it's Hannibal, do not engage, don't' fight and we can't get beat," at least until Scipio Africanus figured out that, with Hannibal in

Italy, then there was nobody guarding Carthage. Her is our charismatic leader who holds the alliance together like Captain Ready in the Destroyermen series by Taylor Anderson. Hannibal. Who else is there?

So, one can read this and yawn at the numbers and details of the soldiers. If you don't like to read about military maneuvers in battles or how Hannibal's Phalanx would have fared against a properly organized and trained Greek Phalanx, then remember. There is so much more in this book. So much to draw from as inspiration if you're a writer who dares to write a hero through impossible odds and needs a realistic example of how it all comes together.

And the best tidbit of information, the one thing that I didn't already know about Hannibal is that he lived as a mercenary general fighting with Judea and other nations in the middle east long after his foray into Italy and died an old man after a long and fruitful life.

It's worth reading at least once.

Tyler Windham says

Just as in his classic work on Alexander the Great, Dodge against impresses, entertains, and captivates his audience with both his thorough detail and his narrative energy that, in this volume, takes the reader from Hannibal's early days fighting the rebellious tribes of the Iberian peninsula, to his daring (and almost reckless were it not so expertly done) crossing of the Alps, through all of his victories bearing testament to the Carthaginian general's near unmatched tactical prowess that shook the marble columns of Rome to their core. This is the definitive work on Hannibal's campaigns and for anyone interested in the man who inhabits the highest echelon of history's strategists, the Punic Wars, or in ancient/classical history in general should read this book!

Jonathan H says

Fair warning: I created this ebook version - but then I only do that for books I love! Dodge was a retired army officer, and puts a lot of thought into explaining Hannibal's strategic problems, and his solutions to them (many of which were "first-evers" in known history, e.g. first-ever army ambush at Trasimene, first-ever double encirclement at Cannae). He also explores the fifteen years of "small war" after Cannae, which many other authors skip over. Finally, he manages to cram in over 200 pictures, maps, and diagrams to keep things moving.

Myke Cole says

Sorry to say that I couldn't finish this one. While I know Dodge is traditionally acknowledged as a heavy-hitter in the field, I found so many glaring errors by chapter 5 that it left me feeling like he was hand-waving, without real command of the sources, relying on the ignorance of his audience to carry the narrative. This left me with a sour taste in my mouth. Pedagogic to the point of being patronizing. Skip it.

***Dave Hill says

I suspect that *Hannibal* reads better than it listens to. As an audiobook, it is a longer, more endless drudge than the Carthaginian General's Journey over the Alps. Dodge spares no detail, and begins his book with a lengthy discussion of the history of the military of Rome and of Carthage, detailing their units and formations and how they evolved over the centuries, as well as their arms and examples of their early wars, all sprinkled with much meticulously pronounced Latin. Further, each chapter begins with a lengthy summary of the chapter to follow, which gives the actual listening to the book an odd sense of *deja vu*.

The information presented is thorough, but -- in audio form -- came across as unengaging, the language a bit end-of-the-last-century stilted. Bill Wallace's narration is clear and precise, but there's not a lot he can do to make it more exciting, esp. when he has to pause a few times seemingly every paragraph to give the original Latin term for an English translation that's just been given.

I made it a quarter of the way through, so perhaps it livens up later on. It does sound like it carries a wealth of information for a military scholar of the era, thus an "Okay" rating, but I cannot recommend it as an audiobook.

Eric S says

First off I'd really like to give this book 3 1/2 stars. It's really in the middle of the two. The book is one of Dodge's 12 volume History of the Art of War which has been broken up into individual biographies. As such it has a significant amount of detail, about 20%, on the history of both Rome and Carthage as well as the differences in their respective military establishments. It is a typical 19th century "popular" history so it doesn't contain numerous footnotes one would expect from a more scholarly work. As this was just one part of a multi-volume work on the art of war, it is often less of a biography and more of a history. The illustrations and maps are very helpful if dated.

I found the author's insights to be well presented. When ancient writers disagree, he does a good job of explaining why he prefers one over the other. He also tends to analyze what data is available and draw his own conclusions. For example, on the second battle of Nola against the Roman, Marcellus, the author does a good job of explaining why it was probably a draw and not a Roman victory. The major drawback, in my opinion, is that the author is too repetitive. He frequently repeats his opinions of persons and political systems. The second weakness is the age of the book. Though the author uses what were "current" examples when written they are now very dated. So for the modern reader this can be confusing if the reader is unfamiliar with the U.S. civil war or Napoleon's campaigns.

In summation, I would recommend this book but with the caveats already mentioned.

Diane L says

The one star rating is entirely for this edition. The Kindle edition is an un-edited OCR with many, many errors. Rome frequently appears as Pome or Borne, Scipio as Soipio or Seipio. But shows as bnt and hut, np is up, beaching is reaching. So many errors make the already dense 19th century history difficult.

The book itself is well-written, well-researched and while Dodge frequently repeats himself I take that to be on a par with the writing of the time. I heartily recommend this narration of the Second Punic War but don't try to do it on the cheap with the buck Kindle edition. Pay the money to get a hard copy.
