



## The Ancient World: Extraordinary People in Extraordinary Societies

### Zama, Battle of

**Date:** October 202 BCE

**Locale:** Zama, in northern Africa and west of Carthage

**Related civilizations:** Carthage, Republican Rome

**Significance:** Rome's victory over Carthage in the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE) made it the major power in the western Mediterranean.

**Background:** After Carthage lost its first war against Rome, its most successful general, Hamilcar, departed for Spain. His son Hannibal assumed command there in 222 BCE and invaded Italy from the north by going over the Alps in 218 BCE.

**Action:** Hannibal defeated Roman armies at the Trebia River, Lake Trasimene, and Cannae. Capua, Syracuse, and Macedonia allied with him. Though Roman forces never defeated him in battle, they pushed Hannibal into southern Italy and defeated invasions by Hannibal's brothers Hasdrubal in 207 BCE and Mago in 205.

In 204/203 BCE, Scipio Africanus invaded Africa, defeated the Carthaginian defensive army, and Hannibal was called home. Hannibal marched west and met Scipio at Zama (ZAY-muh). Scipio turned back an elephant charge by blowing trumpets. The elephants stampeded and disrupted Hannibal's cavalry. Scipio's legionnaires overwhelmed Hannibal's first and second lines and engaged his third line of Italian veterans. Soon after, Scipio's cavalry returned to encircle Hannibal's army.

**Consequences:** Scipio's victory ended the Second Punic War and eliminated Carthage as a major power. Rome was supreme in the western Mediterranean.

**See also:** Cannae, Battle of (10.3331/CWEP\_0545); Carthage (10.3331/CWEP\_0549); Hannibal (10.3331/CWEP\_0625); Punic Wars (10.3331/CWEP\_0726); Rome, Republican (10.3331/CWEP\_0738); Scipio Africanus (10.3331/CWEP\_0748).

—James O. Smith

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