

Punic Wars wars fought between Rome and Carthage

34.4 Overseas Expansion During the Punic Wars, 264 B.C.E. to 146 B.C.E.

During Rome's second period of expansion, it fought three savage wars with Carthage, a powerful city in North Africa, for control of the Mediterranean region.

When the wars began, Carthage held North Africa, most of Spain, and part of Sicily. It also controlled most of the trade in the western Mediterranean. The Greek cities in southern Italy had frequently clashed with Carthage over trading rights. When Rome conquered these cities, it was drawn into the fight with Carthage.

In 218 B.C.E., the Carthaginian general Hannibal led his troops across the Alps to attack Rome.

Rome's wars with Carthage are called the **Punic Wars**, after the Greek name for the people of Carthage. The First Punic War

began in 264 B.C.E. It was fought mostly at sea. Carthage had a very powerful navy. But the Romans built up their own navy by copying and improving on the Carthaginians' ship designs. A decisive victory at sea in 241 B.C.E. won the war for the Romans. The triumphant Romans took over Sicily, as well as other islands.

The Second Punic War started 23 years later. This time, the Carthaginians decided to attack Italy itself. In 218 B.C.E., Hannibal, a brilliant Carthaginian general, surprised the Romans by marching his army from Spain across the Alps (a high mountain range) and into Italy. His troops rode elephants and braved snowstorms, landslides, and attacks by local tribes. For 15 years, Hannibal's men fought the Romans.

In 202 B.C.E., Hannibal returned home to defend Carthage against a Roman army. There he was defeated in the battle that ended the



Territory Controlled by Rome, About 146 B.C.E.



Second Punic War. Carthage was forced to give Spain to Rome along with huge sums of money.

For about 50 years, there was peace between Rome and Carthage. Then, spurred on by Cato, a senator who demanded the destruction of Carthage, the Romans attacked once more.

The Third Punic War lasted three years. In 146 B.C.E., the Romans burned Carthage to the ground. They killed many people and sold others into slavery. Rome was now the greatest power in the Mediterranean region. It controlled North Africa, much of Spain, Macedonia, and Greece.

The Punic Wars expanded Roman power and territory, but Rome's victories came at a price. Families mourned for the countless soldiers who had died in the long wars. In addition, people living outside Rome suffered huge losses. Hannibal's army had destroyed thousands of farms. Other farms had been neglected while farmers went off to fight in Rome's armies. By the time the soldiers returned home, grain was flowing into Italy from Sicily and other places. Small farms were being replaced by large estates where the wealthy planted vineyards and raised livestock. Unable to compete with the wealthy landowners, many poor farmers had to sell their land.

Although riches and slaves flowed into Rome from the conquered lands, so did new customs. Many of the new ideas came from Greece. Wealthy Romans competed with one another to build Greek-style homes and beautiful temples.