

Chapter 10: Rome: From City-State to Empire: 10-2b The Punic Wars

Book Title: World Civilizations

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## 10-2b The Punic Wars

Although the Romans were nearly constantly at war between 500 and 275 B.C.E., these conflicts generally dealt with peoples who were similar to themselves and whose conquered lands were adjacent to Roman possessions. Not until the first of the **Punic (PYOO-nik) Wars** ((PYOO-nik) The three conflicts between Rome and Carthage that ended with the destruction of the Carthaginian Empire and the extension of Roman control throughout the western Mediterranean.) (264–241 B.C.E.) did Rome more or less openly embark on imperial expansion. With that war, Rome started down the road to an *imperium* (empire), although it retained the laws and politics of a quasi-democratic city-state. This created internal tensions that ultimately could not be resolved.

The First Punic War broke out over the question of dominance in Sicily and ended twenty years later with the surrender of the important colonies of Sicily and Sardinia to Rome. Carthage, however, was far from completely subdued, and during the ensuing truce it built up its forces and then invaded Italy. The brilliant Carthaginian general Hannibal (HAN-nih-bul) won battle after battle against the desperate Romans but lost the war. Finally, after ravaging Italy for fifteen years in the Second Punic War (218–202 B.C.E.), he was forced to return to Carthage to defend the city against a Roman counterinvasion. The decisive **Battle of Zama** (Decisive battle of the Second Punic War; Roman victory in 202 B.C.E. was followed by the absorption of most of the Carthaginian Empire in the Mediterranean.) in 202 was a clear Roman victory, and Carthage was forced to give up most of its extensive holdings in Africa and Spain. These were made into new provinces of what by now was a rapidly growing empire (see [Map 10.2](#)). The Punic Wars determined that Roman—and not Carthaginian—culture and civilization would control the Mediterranean basin for the near future.

### Map 10.2

#### Expansion of Roman Territories to 100 c.E.

Rome's empire was created not by plan but by a series of wars that had little or no relation to one another. Roman influences were permanently barred from central Europe after a massive defeat in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 c.E. and the establishment of the Rhine and Danube borders thereafter. In Asia the Romans created a series of client kingdoms that relieved them of having to station large numbers of troops there.

#### Thinking About This Map

Which of these areas were obtained from Carthage through conquest?



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