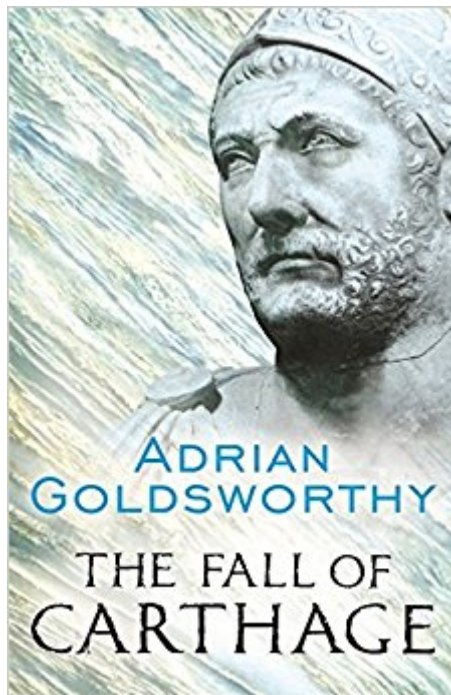




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The Fall Of Carthage: The Punic Wars 265-146BC (Cassell Military Paperbacks)



Synopsis

“Adrian Goldsworthy is one of the best young historians writing today.”

John Keegan
The Fall of Carthage was the greatest conflict of the ancient world, and thanks to one of the finest historians of our time, this sweeping saga comes to life anew for modern audiences. The cast of endlessly fascinating characters includes the generals Hannibal and Scipio, as well as treacherous chieftains, beautiful princesses, scheming politicians, and tough professional warriors.

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Customer Reviews

Adrian Goldsworthy is one of our most promising young military historians today

Adrian Goldsworthy has a doctorate from Oxford University. His first book, THE ROMAN ARMY AT WAR was recognised by John Keegan as an exceptionally impressive work, original in treatment and impressive in style. He has gone on to write several other books, including THE FALL OF THE WEST, CAESAR, IN THE NAME OF ROME, CANNAE and ROMAN WARFARE, which have sold more than a quarter of a million copies and been translated into more than a dozen languages. A full-time author, he regularly contributes to TV documentaries on Roman themes. Visit www.adriangoldsworthy.com for more information.

One problem in presenting accounts of the Classical World is the scarcity and/or incompleteness of

Primary Sources. Given that, it's a challenge to write a credible book. I have come to like Adrian Goldsworthy for giving us a balanced and nuanced account of things while reminding the reader that certainty is near impossible in the absence of more detailed information. Like others before me I admire Hannibal for his tactical prowess. Now I have come to see that it is possible (although not certain) that Rome's ability to contain and survive his devastating attacks is but one of many factors that may have contributed to its successful transition from a Mediterranean power to a greater power. Whether that was ultimately in the best interests of the peoples that Rome dominated, i.e. was it a good thing or not, or whether other, perhaps better, options were foreclosed or not, those are things that one can only speculate upon. I also wonder whether Hannibal considered the "big" picture or was he just out to break Rome but got the opposite instead with global consequences. That is, his campaigns may have ended up whetting Rome's appetite to reach for a lot more real estate than just its backyard. Indeed, even through the dark and murky haze of ancient History the consequences of war seem to be unpredictable for victors and defeated alike. It's also noteworthy that despite Hannibal's sixteen-year stay in Italy, especially in the Southern part of the peninsula, the people in that region just didn't seem convinced enough to want to join forces with him and turn against their former conqueror Rome. Was that the final nail in the coffin of Hannibal's expectations? Hmm. As I said, these are just speculations. Nothing more. Even so it's to the credit of Goldsworthy's book that his *modus operandi* allows one such options.

Adrian Goldsworthy is a scholar, literary critic and historian. He does not present the dramatic and patriotic portrayal of Livy, for example, and call that the history, as romantic as that would be. He presents the data, explaining what we know and what we don't know. It makes the tale less titillating, but more interesting, because you get a sense that what he says did happen, really did. For this reason, Adrian Goldsworthy is one of my favorite authors.

Cons: After starting reading this, I stopped reading it at one point because it was confusing. Carthage only had five or six names available and they reused them over and over again. I think someone may have been named Rebecca or something at some point, but she was soon denounced as a freak, and laughed out of town. Some of the most famous Carthaginians in history were the following: Hannibal and Hannibal and Hannibal and Hamilcar and Hamilcar and Bomilcar and Hamilcar and Hamilco and Hamilcar and Bomilcar and Hamilco and Hannibal. I know it sounds simple, you just call everyone by the same name and you want get confused about who you are talking about. In practice, as logical as it sounds, it just doesn't work out very well. However, once you get past the First Punic War, which is not well-documented, you become bogged down with documentation, which

slows history to a crawl and renders excessive name reuse no longer an issue; mostly. There are exceptions. I do remember reading that Hamilcar supplanted the other Hamilcar sometime around the Third Punic war. What struck me about this was that neither Hamilcar, nor Hamilcar, was Hamilcar (and I speak of Hamilcar Barca, that is, who was "the" Hamilcar • Hamilcar, Hannibal Barca's father (and Mago's father and Hasdrubal's father)). Note: When I say Hasdrubal, I mean Hasdrubal Barca, not Hasdrubal, Hasdrubal, or Hasdrubal, all of whom I consider to be lesser Hasdrubals. Pros: The story of Carthage is beyond fascinating. It is a bit dry leading up to the Second Punic War, but after that, there is not a dull moment. Prior to that we had little credible history, so there is too much guess work. The campaigns of Hannibal are Caesar-esque in many ways and the tenacity of a defeated Rome that simply refuses to breathe its last is astonishing. The end of the Third Punic War, one of the greatest tricks in history, is also fascinating. If you don't want the story spoiled, stop reading here, but Rome tricked Carthage into turning over the bulk of its arms and the bulk of its allies and the bulk of its territory and then informed them that now that they were helpless they had to abandon Carthage so Rome could level it. Carthage thought they were complying with treaty stipulations by a victorious enemy. They did not realize that their actions were cementing their own destruction. Carthage never had to surrender out all. They just did because they were not united in commitment to continue the fight. After the Roman trick and the sacking of Carthage, this is the rest of the Carthage's story:

I have a thorough background in the history surrounding the mid-Republic era of Ancient Rome, so that may be why I found this book to be tedious. If you want detailed accounts (play-by-plays) of the military actions of the Punic Wars then this is a good book for that. However, I feel that this book lacks the ability to show the broader picture and address many of the larger plots that were going on during the time period. The histories for this period (Polybius, Livy, etc.) offer such great accounts (though not all true) that it's almost a shame not to give them their due credit. Simply put: be aware of what you're getting into with this title. It's quite good, but rather dry and tedious.

Goldsworthy is the perfect author for someone (like me) who is fond of ancient history, but not to the point of consulting the originals or the best histories written by big name historians. Goldsworthy writes well, even if sometimes is a little prolific. In this history, he narrates the Punic Wars, i.e. the 3 wars between Carthage and Rome, eventually ending with the destruction of Carthage. His sympathy goes (I think) to Hannibal, although he is obviously impressed by the exploits of the

23-year-old Scipio, who moved to North Africa and eventually defeat there Hannibal himself.

Hannibal is a grand and tragic figure, and some of his victories (especially at Cannes) are the talk of today's generals; he deserves Goldsworthy's attention. In general, the three wars are well narrated, and Goldsworthy makes sure to consider all the available versions of each battle, whether maritime or terrestrial. I enjoyed this book, immensely and although I have known the Punic Wars from high school, this is the first time I read them consecutively, in a single book. Highly recommendable..

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