

Scipio africanus: the general who defeated hannibal

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Hannibal ante portas! Hannibal is at the gates! Even today that phrase is used to express fear and anxiety. Hannibal was a great general who inspired terror and disquiet among his enemies, yet nothing lasts forever. Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, considered one of the greatest generals ever, is the general who defeated Hannibal.

Scipio was adored by his soldiers; they even treated him as emperor. He had many powerful friends, great military might, power, and the people's love. Most importantly though, he did not abuse his power. Many of his enemies claimed that he took bribes, committed treason, and caused military indiscipline. However, there was no evidence.

He always tried to do what was best for the people, he was well loved by his soldiers, and he had mighty allies from around the world. Scipio was also known to be forgiving of his enemies and interested in women's rights and other cultures. Although Scipio was well liked by the people and his soldiers, the Senate and Roman nobility did not like him. That dislike led to the charges of taking bribes from Antiochus III of Syria, despite being a consul in his later years and his hero's welcome when he returned home from fighting. His political enemies had gained ground while he was away and were being led by Marcus Porcius Cato the Elder. Cato had already targeted Scipio's brother with the same charge of bribery but it was never proved.

One of the reasons Scipio was accused was that he had offered Antiochus very favorable peace terms. Even though the peace terms were later modified, they gave Cato and Scipio's other enemies a reason to say that he was bribed. However, Scipio's enemies had no proof and none of the tribunes

brought by Cato found him guilty. Polybius and Livy (Titus Livius) also remarked on how intelligent and rational he was. In fact, it was even believed that he was favored by Jupiter and Mars. Because of everyone's good opinion of him and the fact that there is no proof of his taking bribes, there is almost no chance Scipio took bribes.

Unsurprisingly, Scipio was accused of other crimes when the bribery charge failed. One of the other charges brought against him was military indiscipline. Scipio was a brilliant general who defeated many of Rome's fiercest enemies of the time, including Hannibal, Hasdrubal, and Mago. He was a powerful leader and his men were fiercely loyal to him. After the defeat at the Battle of Cannae, he retreated and found some 4,000 other survivors. As stated by Britannica, "There he boldly thwarted a plot of some fainthearts to desert Rome," keeping some soldiers from deserting.

His troops even believed that he had divine help and was a favorite of the gods. That belief was reinforced at the battle at Carthago Nova. The water levels around the base of the fort changed daily and they were usually very low in the afternoon. Scipio used this knowledge to storm the lower wall successfully when it was exposed due to the low water level. His soldiers then attributed the clever ruse to Neptune, the Roman god of the water. When he crossed to Sicily, his army was mostly made up of volunteers who had survived the Battle of Cannae.

His soldiers' love for him was so great that as Britannica says, "His position might seem almost kingly; he had been hailed as king by Spanish tribes, and he may have been the first Roman general to be acclaimed as imperator

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(emperor) by his troops.” He was such a great general that he never lost a battle, and because of that it was later said that only a Scipio could win a battle in Africa. That saying caused Julius Caesar to have a descendant of his on staff. Since his men were so loyal and he was such a brilliant general, he could not have had military indiscipline. In addition, Scipio was also accused of treason. Scipio had gained a lot of power, and his political positions as well as his love of Greek culture had earned him a lot of enemies.

According to Britannica, “ He had a great appreciation of Greek culture and enjoyed relaxing in the congenial atmosphere of the Greek cities of Sicily, conduct that provoked the anger of old-fashioned Romans such as Cato,” giving them more reason to move against him. Scipio was also very liberal when it came to women’s rights. His wife Aemilia Tertia had much more freedom than other women at the time, and their daughters both became very well known for their bravery and strength. Scipio in addition had many powerful friends such as Philip V, king of Macedonia, and the native princes of Spain and Africa. He additionally commanded a very loyal army, yet despite that he did not challenge the Roman nobles or the Senate.

His love of Greek culture, his liberal ideas, and his generous treatment of his enemies led to his political downfall, yet he never tried to take over Rome or never tried to harm the people. After all Scipio achieved, the end of his story was not a happy one. Because of the accusations against him, his influence was shaken and his disgust at how he was treated caused him to go into self-imposed exile. He died about two years later and although the cause is unknown, most sources do agree that he was buried outside of Rome, not in

the family tomb, because he was still outraged about how he was treated. To this day people still do not know where his final resting place is.

In short, Scipio was unjustly accused of taking bribes, committing treason, and causing military indiscipline even though he was well loved by his soldiers and the people, had many powerful friends, was interested in different cultures, was interested in women's rights, and was forgiving of his enemies. Although many people tried to ruin his reputation, to this day he is known as the great general who defeated Hannibal. Bibliography Lefkowitz, Mary R., and Maureen B. Fant. "WLGR.

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