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*Von Richard A. Gabriel*

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# SCIPIO AFRICANUS

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*Rome's Greatest General*

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**Von Richard A. Gabriel : Scipio Africanus: Rome's Greatest General** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Scipio Africanus: Rome's Greatest General:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. An

outstanding analysis of Roman general Scipio Africanus' contribution towards Rome's victory over Carthage in the Second Punic War. The perfect companion for all Roman military history enthusiasts is the ROMA VICTRIX WINE BEAKER. Roma Victrix Wein Becher Recommended for anyone who enjoys Republican Roman history or military history. This is the very well written and well researched biography of Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, focusing on his adult years as one of the preeminent generals of his day. An innovative strategic thinker, Scipio Africanus is perhaps best understood through his battles, and this book takes great pains to understand the battles from a variety of perspectives. The sources for Scipio's early life are scant, which is a shame, because it would have been good to know more about what made him into the masterful general that he ultimately became. The book focuses on the public, rather than the private life of Scipio, and his wife and children are mentioned only in passing. A surprisingly engaging work for a subject so potentially dry and dull, I really enjoyed this book. 2 von 3 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. For the glory of Scipio? Von Achdulieber Augustin Richard Gabriel is a distinguished military historian who writes well and in this book provides a wealth of information and speculation concerning Scipio. Most noteworthy are the logistical analyses, which in general are well researched and highly informative. There are some problems with this book, though, despite its overall high quality. The author tells us that a lot of the best research on the Second Punic War is in German, which fortunately he is able to read. Wunderbar, I told myself. But examining the bibliography at the end of the book I was surprised to discover several German titles rendered ungrammatically, a children's book by Donauer included as if it were a scholarly work, and the works of the top scholars of the Punic Wars publishing in German over the past few decades (Jakob Seibert, Pedro Barcelo, Karl Christ usw.) blatantly missing. Gabriel's attempts to present Scipio as a "brilliant" operational commander and "brilliant" strategist greater than Hannibal fail to convince (as do equally misguided attempts by others to portray Wellington as greater than Napoleon--Napoleon, by the way, regarded Hannibal as the greatest general of all, see the Memorial de Sainte-Helene by the Comte Emmanuel de las Cases). As the author suggests, the brilliance of a general depends on the quality of his defeated opponents, but the only great opponent Scipio ever defeated was Hannibal at Zama, a victory scored by luck and the fortunate arrival of Massinissa's cavalry at the battlefield in the nick of time (even Gabriel concedes that Hannibal had the better battle plan). To boost Scipio's credentials Gabriel claims repeatedly that the incompetent Carthaginian generals Scipio defeated in Spain were actually competent, especially the bungling Hasdrubal Gisco, surely the sorriest excuse for a commander in the Punic Wars. He credits Scipio with great military innovations, but fails to mention that he copied these from the organization of Hannibal's army, which Scipio experienced at the Roman defeats at the Ticinus, Trebbia, and Cannae. Scipio's victory at Ilipa owes more to Hannibal as a model than to any ingenuity on Scipio's part. The author even tries to credit Scipio with deriving the gladius hispaniensis from the Spanish falcata, although anyone who has held a falcata and a gladius in hand can tell they are totally different weapons. The gladius was based on a Spanish sword, but it is unlikely it was the falcata. Scipio is presented as an honorable man, and unfortunately Gabriel whitewashes his atrocities in ordering the butchery of the civilians in three cities (excusing the terrorism because "it served his strategic ends"), not to mention the scourging and beheading of his own officers after they rebelled because of lack of pay, even though he had promised them clemency if they surrendered. (Hannibal, by the way, although he fought in enemy territory for 15 years without ever being defeated, during which time he often could not pay his mercenaries, never suffered mutiny, which perhaps shows which commander was better able to inspire loyalty in his forces). Gabriel attributes Scipio's refusal to engage Hannibal in Italy to some grand strategic plan concerning Rome's future security, which supposedly demanded he be defeated in Africa, when there is a much simpler explanation, namely that Scipio was afraid he would be defeated if he faced Hannibal in Italy and needed to get him to return to Africa minus his cavalry in order to have a chance of victory. Scipio was clearly an opportunist concerned with his personal glory and refused peace overtures (even betraying the Carthaginians when he pretended to consider their very reasonable proposals, and then burning their camps in a treacherous night attack). He was willing to sacrifice countless lives (of his own soldiers and those of the enemy) in order to win a triumph for narcissistic glory. Hannibal was definitely the greater commander and the better man, a patriot who sacrificed everything for his country. The notion of his being motivated by hatred of Rome is a myth created by Roman propaganda, bent upon demonizing Hannibal and the Carthaginians. This is evident in the writings of Livy and particularly Silius Italicus, a poet and not a historian, whose versified fictions Gabriel accepts as reliable historical sources. Even among Roman generals, Marius, Sulla, Pompey, and above all Caesar far outshine Scipio. Gabriel's claim that Caesar displayed no originality or innovation in the battlefield is belied by that brilliant defense in the siege of Alesia, to mention just one example. Gabriel's book, although in many ways a significant contribution to the field, suffers of bias in his efforts to achieve "majorem Scipionic gloriam." And as to the claim that Rome's victory over Carthage was good for posterity, the reader is urged to peruse Neil Faulkner's excellent book "Rome: Empire of the Eagles" to evaluate the destructive and predatory imperialism of Rome which can be contrasted with the tolerance of Carthaginian culture, destroyed in a frenzy of genocide and ethnic cleansing by the Romans in 146 BCE.

KurzbeschreibungThe world often misunderstands its greatest men while neglecting others entirely. Scipio Africanus, surely the greatest general that Rome produced, suffered both these fates. Today scholars celebrate the importance of Hannibal, even though Scipio defeated the legendary general in the Second Punic War and was the central military figure of his time. In this scholarly and heretofore unmatched military biography of the distinguished Roman soldier, Richard A. Gabriel establishes Scipios rightful place in military history as the greater of the two generals. Before Scipio, few Romans would have dreamed of empire, and Scipio himself would have regarded such an ambition as a danger to his beloved republic. And yet, paradoxically, Scipios victories in Spain and Africa enabled Rome to consolidate its hold over Italy and become the dominant power in the western Mediterranean, virtually ensuring a later confrontation with the Greco-Macedonian kingdoms to the east as well as the empires expansion into North Africa and the Levant. The Roman imperium was being born, and it was Scipio who had sired it. Gabriel draws upon ancient texts, including those from Livy, Polybius, Diodorus, Silius Italicus, and others, as primary sources and examines all additional material available to the modern scholar in French, German, English, and Italian. His book offers a complete bibliography of all extant sources regarding Scipios life. The result is a rich, detailed, and contextual treatment of the life and career of Scipio Africanus, one of Romes greatest generals, if not the greatest of them all.

PressestimmenProvides a clear and concise account of Scipio s military ventures."Gabriel has crafted an energetic narrative that remains true to the evidence. . . . [He] does a superb job of connecting major conclusions to events on the ground, dealing with load capacities of ships, land battle formations, and the broader implications of such matters for Roman strategy and policy. . . . A vibrant addition to the corpus of materials on the Second Punic War." "Gabriel has always been a great storyteller, and his biography of Scipio Africanus continues that tradition. He presents the Roman general's life in a style that is interesting and easy to read." "The prolific Gabriel . . . has specialized in writing well-researched, readable works on ancient military history as well as a number of very good military biographies. This worthy tome adds to both categories. . . . Overall, this biography is a well-crafted, much-needed examination of the Roman Republic s most gifted commander." "Worth reading." "Written in a fluid narrative style making it accessible to general readers as well as historians." "What Wellington was to Napoleon, Scipio was to Hannibal, a great captain of true genius and innovation, and the Republic's greatest general. We have had to wait until now for a noted scholar to produce a complete and accurate account of Scipio's military and political life in the detail that the subject deserves. Richard Gabriel's biography of Scipio does just that and makes a unique contribution to our understanding of this great Roman general."--Mordechai Gichon, professor emeritus of military history and archaeology, Tel Aviv University, and Fellow of the Society of Antiquities "An exciting book from one of the country's leading military historians. Gabriel has given us a well-written treatment of the life and military campaigns of one of Rome's most important historical figures that will be enjoyed by military historians, classicists, and general readers alike. An important and original work of military biography, especially dealing with the day-to-day aspects of soldiering in antiquity."--David George, professor of classics senior fellow at the American School of Classics in Athens, Greece "A brilliant work of research and analysis from one of the country's leading military historians. A comprehensive, original and important work of scholarship and military biography that is certain to become the definitive work on Scipio."--Steve Weingartner, editor of the Cantigny Military History Series and author of "Chariots Like a Whirlwind" "What Wellington was to Napoleon, Scipio was to Hannibal, a great captain of true genius and innovation, and the Republic s greatest general. We have had to wait until now for a noted scholar to produce a complete and accurate account of Scipio s military and political life in the detail that the subject deserves. Richard Gabriel s biography of Scipio does just that and makes a unique contribution to our understanding of this great Roman general. Mordechai Gichon, professor emeritus of military history and archaeology, Tel Aviv University, and Fellow of the Society of Antiquities--Mordechai Gichon (05/30/2008) "An exciting book from one of the country s leading military historians. Gabriel has given us a well-written treatment of the life and military campaigns of one of Rome s most important historical figures that will be enjoyed by military historians, classicists, and general readers alike. An important and original work of military biography, especially dealing with the day-to-day aspects of soldiering in antiquity. David George, professor of classics senior fellow at the American School of Classics in Athens, Greece--David George (05/30/2008) "A brilliant work of research and analysis from one of the country s leading military historians. 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