

## A Comparative Study of Xiang Yu and Hannibal's Strategic Thinking with that of Shaka the Zulu of South Africa

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### Abstract

*The name of Ji Xiang Yu occupies an important place in the history of strategic thinking in Chinese history. His rise into limelight was occasioned by the opportunity provided by the decline in the political fortunes of the Late Qin Dynasty. Like Xiang Yu, Hannibal Barca, the famous North African military strategist was brought up to accept strict and hard military discipline. He was excellent in military and diplomatic activities and helped to build a formidable force that could hold its own in the then Mediterranean World. Several centuries after the exploits of these two great strategists, Africa south of the Sahara produced a military strategist of world acclaim. Shaka the Zulu was as shrewd and militarily strategic as both Xiang Yu and Hannibal to merit a place in the annals of the "fathers of strategic thinking". This work analyzes the historical forces that shaped the strategic thinking of these historical figures and discusses their tremendous contributions to the development of military science and history.*

**Keywords:** Xiang Yu, Hannibal, Shaka, Strategic Thinking

### Introduction

About the 3rd century BC, both the East (Asia) and West (Europe) were active on the stage of numerous wars that produced two outstanding heroes who changed the direction of warfare and strategic studies. The Chinese people are familiar with the king of Western Chu, Xiang Yu (BC 232 BC - 202 BC) who contributed to the military and political development of the area. In 208 BC, the anti-Qin rebellion led by Yijun gradually broke the defense of the Chu commander Xiang Liang, who died afterwards. Thereafter, the fortune of the Qin state hit the rocks. At this critical moment, Xiang Yu rose to the occasion and turned the tide of the Chu State. He led his troops in the Julu area and defeated the invaders of the Qin State in 207 BC. This act of bravery was the main indelible contribution of Xiang Yu to the evolution of the Chinese political system. At the same time in North Africa, ancient Carthage produced the famous military strategist, Hannibal, in about 247 BC. These two heroes not only lived in the same era, coincidentally, the fate of their history and the trajectory of the wars they fought were very similar in both the way they organized their armies and how they deployed them in battlefields. Thus, both men are sometimes referred to as "masters of strategic thinking" (Yan, 1992: 20).

But the third character in this analysis, Shaka the Zulu was successful all the way until his death caused by his bodyguard and his half brothers. Although there is no evidence to indicate that Shaka ever read the lessons of strategy from the examples of

Xiang Yu and Hannibal, his military innovations and tactics survived long after he left the scene. He is credited with creating the first professional standing army in southern Africa, because before him there was no strict division between those who fought in the wars and ordinary citizens. The military and strategic exploits of Shaka had some striking similarities and differences with those of Xiang Yu and Hannibal.

### **The Concept of Warfare**

Although war may have been dreaded by many, the reality is that history is replete with numerous communal, national and international violent conflicts and confrontations, with a heavy toll on lives and material resources. In fact, warfare is an aspect of the evolution of settled communities and the history of the human struggle for control of resources in their environment (Goynes, 2002: 31). People and communities fight wars for numerous reasons, including economic, political, social, religious, cultural and strategic considerations, among other factors. Military historians and other analysts have opined that methods of war stand on a scale between maneuver warfare and attrition, both of which are essentially the focus on achieving victory through defeating, killing or capturing an adversary. Although there are technical differences between the two, in reality maneuver warfare involves both maneuver and attrition (Simpkin, 2000: 3-16, 139-186; Leonhard, 1991: 1-5; Lind, 1985: 3-7). However, a key requirement for success in maneuver warfare on the part of the country or group executing the war is accurate, up-to-date intelligence on the disposition of key command, support and combat units (Leonhard, 1991). War theorists and strategists such as Philipp Gottfried von Clausewitz (1780-1831), Antoine-Henri, baron Jomini (1779-1869), Sun Wu or Sun Tzu (c. 544 B.C.-496 B.C.), Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), Xiang Yu, Hannibal and Shaka, among others were aware of these facts (Gray, 1991: 85-91). The last three military strategists occupy a central position in this paper.

The Battle of Julu provides an insight into the strategic thinking of Xiang Yu, who was an ancient Chinese strategic thinker and military commander. In that battle, Xiang Yu's forces carried out unprecedented attacks against the forces of the Qin Dynasty Emperor (221 B.C.-207 B.C). For an extremely ambitious youth of barely 24 years old, that feat by Xiang Yu was unprecedented in the history of warfare in China. Along with his uncle, Xiang Liang, Xiang Yu commanded a number of peasant armies against the Qin Dynasty Emperor, Chen Sheng. He believed in accurate, up-to-date intelligence, reliance on and the mobilization of local peasants and adequate preparations, coupled with surprise attacks in defeating the adversary.

Like Xiang Yu, Hannibal understood the importance of accurate, up-to-date intelligence and surprise attacks on the adversary as indispensable parts of warfare. He demonstrated this in most of his battles, including the Battle of Cannae (Liddell Hart, 1967). Though, Shaka lived several centuries after both Hannibal and Xiang Yu, but his approach to warfare bore some similarities with the approaches of the former. He is perceived as a heroic and protean nation-builder, whose activities helped to shape the politico-military configuration of southern Africa in the nineteenth century



and thereafter (Chanaiwa, Dec. 1980: 1-20). The experience of growing up without a biological father and the humiliation and cruel treatment he received from his mates probably shaped the warlike character of Shaka. He believed in accurate, up-to-date intelligence, surprise attacks and total annihilation, which earned him the nickname *Nodumehlezi* ("the one who when seated causes the earth to rumble") (Chanaiwa, Dec. 1980: 1-20). Like both Hannibal and Xiang Yu, he emphasized merit over family background as the easiest way to motivate his soldiers, most of whom were recruited from among the peasants. His association with his military godfather, Dingiswayo under whose leadership he gained most of his military experience was instrumental to the formation of his military regiments. In fact, at the death of Shaka's father (c. 1816), Dingiswayo lent him the military support necessary to oust and assassinate his senior brother Sigujana, and make himself chieftain of the Zulu. At Dingiswayo's death in c.1818, Shaka immediately assumed leadership, added the forces to his own and conquered the surrounding chiefdoms, thus uniting more than a hundred chiefdoms in southern Africa.

### **Basic Strategic Maneuverings of Xiang Yu, Hannibal and Shaka**

Xiang Yu's strategic maneuverings manifested during the conflict between the Han Chinese and the rulers of the Qin Dynasty. The Qin dynasty was mainly composed of a group of linguistically related ethnic minorities in southwest China. The Qin State became strong during the Warring States after it successfully implemented political and economic reforms that enabled it to dislodge the other states, including Han, Zhao, Wei, Yan, and Chu to form the first unified multi-ethnic China. In order to consolidate power, the Qin leaders carried out harsh political, economic and cultural reforms, which later provided the impetus for the challenge of the regime by the Han Chinese. For instance, the people resented the Qin's tyranny, endless military service, heavy hard labour and taxes such as the construction of many palaces, and severe punishment. This caused peasant uprising, but the most successful one was led by Xiang Yu.

After the initial success, Xiang Yu had to act decisively to establish the Han Dynasty. However, Xiang Yu faced all kinds of unfavorable conditions at the Battle of Julu. First, the opponent's strength was unusually strong. Indeed, Xiang Yu faced hundreds of thousands of elite regular army of the Qin Dynasty, as well as some of the most famous generals of the Qin. Second, the strength of Xiang Yu's own army was extremely weak. His army constituted a complex but weak force. Although his army numbered between 50,000 and 60,000, their combat effectiveness in general was difficult and poor to command. Third, the army faced fatigue due to the distance of the battle front. In essence, Xiang Yu was more or less fighting in a "foreign land". It took his army three months to reach Julu and so there was fatigue on the part of the army. Fourth, his allies were wary of war and marched cautiously in order to preserve their strength. The brightest of them, the prince of the army did not mobilize the full force of his army.

Faced with such a perilous situation, Xiang Yu had to act decisively to capture the weakness of the Qin and dislodge the Qin layout. He decided to implement the Black Tiger tactics by cutting off the contact lines of the two allies of the Qin. He concentrated on a possible win and advised the Po general to bring 20,000 troops to cross the river to attack the Qin corridor. The general lived up to his expectations and defeated the guard corridor of the Qin army. Xiang Yu then took advantage of the

situation, seized the opportunity and attacked the Qin army. Furthermore, he led his forces to cross the river and gave a speech to boost the morale of his troops. Chinese historians believe that Xiang Yu was very clever in the art of warfare. He wrecked all ships that approached him and burnt farmhouses (Si, 1959:307). In essence, he effectively combined the Black Tiger tactics with the scorched earth strategy, also used by Shaka several centuries later. That battle fully demonstrated the determination and indomitable spirit of Xiang Yu.

Thereafter, Xiang Yu was confident of victory, and how to attack the main corridor of the Qin Dynasty became his major focus. When Zhang of the Qin Dynasty heard the news, he immediately took his army to the corridor to wait for Xiang Yu at the entrance to the kingdom, but Zhang's army was defeated. Records of the historian, Zhang Er Chen reports that: "The army of Xiang Yu attacked Zhang's corridor. The king and the army lacked food, but Xiang Yu learned that the ability to lead his troops to cross the river would break Zhang" (Si, 1959:307). Indeed, Xiang Yu repelled Zhang's army and immediately killed them. He made the necessary tactical deployment, and interspersed with the scattered Qin army. The leaders of the other states earlier conquered by the Qin Dynasty immediately joined with Xiang Yu to build on this effort. In the end, Xiang Yu prevailed and won the war. He was later defeated and forced to commit suicide.

A different but related strategy was employed by Hannibal Barca in projecting and defending the military might of ancient Carthage. When Hasdrubal was assassinated in 221 BC by the Celts (Celts), Hannibal took over military power and was formally appointed to the government of Carthage. He sent troops to capture the Spanish city of Sagunto, thus marking the beginning of the Second Punic War. Although Hannibal used the scorched earth strategy to weaken the enemy, his most important strategic thinking was to dare external enemies of his territory by deploying the strategy of surprise attack (Ayrault-Dodge, 1995). With the help of infantry and cavalry, he often used the strategy of joint attacks made up of ambush and surprise attacks (Cottrell, 1965; Yang Jun-ming, 1993: 5). This clever use of cavalry to ambush opponents stood Hannibal out among ancient military strategists. At the Battle of Lake, Hannibal cleverly employed this strategy. He led his army to attack the Italian peninsula by taking the war to the enemy's territory. In order to avoid anti-Hannibal sentiments in his anticipated attack against the city of Rome, Hannibal tried not to attack the common people and unarmed peasants, but Rome sent the newly appointed consuls Gaius Flaminius to station their troops in the two war-fronts leading to the main city of Rome.

Hannibal encountered great difficulties crossing the Arno River because of swamp and other climatic and geographical problems. In spring the melting snow ensured that the Arno River flooded the path that Hannibal intended to take. Indeed, this was like a poisonous gas that filled the air, filling the dangerous road with death. Therefore, the shortest path, but also the most combat-prone path, was to face the Roman legion along their line of formation. This caused his army much fatigue owing to lack of sleep because they marched through the swamp and crossed it after four days and three nights. He also crossed the Apennines, but unlike in the case of the Arno River,



he encountered less difficulty. When he passed through the marshland, Gaius Flaminius was shocked because he had no idea that Hannibal could lead Carthaginian army along that path so soon in his left-wing.

When Hannibal had arrived Etruscans (Etruria), he decided to lure Gaius Flaminius in battle with him by deliberately wreaking havoc around the farmland estate. He opened his army to the left of the Roman army to cut off the road leading to the city of Rome. He also decided to march toward Apulia expecting Gaius Flaminius to come along. Thereafter he retreated to Lake Trasimeno where Gaius Flaminius sent troops to ambush him under the setting of the northern shore of Lake Trasimeno. Lake Trasimeno was surrounded by mountains and the landscape was a narrow path leading to the valley from west to east. By night, Hannibal used his cavalry formation to ambush Gaius Flaminius in the lane at the entrance to the mountain. The light infantry configuration was placed in the steep hill at the exit of the eastern end of the valley (De Beer, 1974).

Thereafter, Hannibal led the remaining troops to attack the Roman front. The next morning, the Roman army entered the narrow mountain pass. Gaius Flaminius led the Roman army to the column through the narrow channel of the lake. Hannibal immediately attacked and caught the Romans unaware. The Roman army was taken off guard and was suddenly in confusion. With the violent attacks carried out by the Carthaginians, Roman soldiers were killed, even though the fighting only lasted a few hours (Michael Grant, 1990: 99). Hannibal with his military genius and a flexible strategy and tactics brought victory to the Carthaginians. This campaign marked a turning point in the history of war and ambush strategy in the Western world (Ayrault-Dodge, 1995; Zhang Xiao-xiao, 1992, 5).

Hannibal's approach to the strategy of surprise and attack was slightly different from that of Shaka. Shaka demonstrated this strategy of surprise and attack during his first major battle with Zwide of the Ndwandwe after the death of Dingiswayo and his emergence as the leader of the combined forces of the Mthethwa and the Zulu clan. Zwide had plotted to defeat Shaka. He moved all his army into Zululand in April 1818. Shaka wore out the invaders by pretending he was retreating. He drew Zwide's forces deep into his own territory and successfully exhausted them. He then flung his own regiments on them and defeated them conclusively at the Mhlathuze River. In 1826, under Zwide's successor, Sikhunyane, the Ndwandwe again fought the Zulu, but were totally routed forcing the majority of them to submit to Shaka. Shaka was able to recruit additional warriors from among them and proceeded to train them in his own methods of close combat. During his brief reign, his regiments continuously went on campaign, steadily extending their assaults further afield (Omer-Cooper, 1965: 12–15).

Shaka introduced new military tactics, by arming his warriors with short-handled stabbing spears and trained them to move up to their opponents in a close formation with their body-length cowhide shields forming an almost impenetrable barrier to spears thrown at them. Although the throwing spear was not discarded, it only served as an initial missile weapon before close contacts with the enemy were made and the shorter stabbing spear was used in hand to hand combat (Hamilton, 1998: 5-34). The

crescent-shaped formation was highly favoured and a number of regiments extending several ranks deep formed a dense body known as the chest, while on each side a regiment moved forward forming the horns. The main purpose of the horns formation (or the bull horn formation) was to make it curve inward around the enemy so that the main body would advance killing all those who could not break through the encompassing lines.

The whole military arrangement was generally partitioned into three levels: regiments, corps of several regiments, and “armies” or bigger formations. With this tactics in place, Shaka’s war cry was “victory or death” (Guttman, 2008: 23). He taught the Zulus that the most effective way of becoming powerful quickly was by conquering and controlling other tribes. This motivated the social outlook of the Zulu people and helped to build a “warrior” mindset in them, which Shaka turned to his advantage.

### **Organization, Mobilization and Defence Plans**

Efficient organization, mobilization and defence plans are essential in the success of armies and the three strategists examined in this work were aware and conscious of their importance in military strategies. When Xiang Yu was faced with a sinister political and military environment, he adopted the option of developing the idea of a bold strategic plan. He concluded that he needed large forces to fight the army of the Qin emperor. The commander of the army of the Qin, Liu Bang was encouraged by the mobility of his cavalry. He led thirty thousand (30,000) elite troops to reach Pengcheng southwest of Xiaoxian. At this point, most of his coalition was to attack Pengcheng by deploying defense systems in the north of the city. Xiang Yu chose the opportunity to launch a surprise attack in the morning during the cover of night. Xiang Yu was outstanding in this regard and his tactical early morning raids on the enemy fully demonstrated his superb strategy of mobilization and artistic prowess, although he faced some unprecedented crises.

First, Xiang Yu had to face two fronts. First, the Qin Dynasty was not yet put down. Second, there was a great disparity in forces between the two armies in favour of the Qin Dynasty, which had a total strength of about 16 million people, an unprecedented grand scale, while Xiang Yu’s full strength at this time was numbered far less than 560,000 (Zhang Xiao-xiao, 1992: 6-8). Third, the political foundation of the Chu state (which was part of the coalition led by Xiang Yu) was weak. The Qin’s coalition waited at the fortifications to resist the return of the Chu army. Fourth, Xiang Yu’s allies betrayed him and forced the political environment into the situation of extreme isolation.

It is instructive that Xiang Yu preferred to raid Liu Bang’s command center instead of the outposts, resulting in paralysis of Liu Bang’s coalition command system. The Pengcheng war became a one-sided situation (Si Ma-qian, 1959: 321). The death toll of Liu Bang’s soldiers far outweighed that of Xiang Yu (Li Wei-tai, 2011:312).



Hannibal experienced a similar victorious and well coordinated battle in 216 B.C. He led about 40,000 infantry and a thousand cavalry from northern Apulia, south to promote pre-emptive capture of the Romans' supply powerhouse, Cannae to cut off the food supply of Rome. The development forced the Roman Senate to elect two new consuls: Sterling Gaius Terentius Varro and Lucius Aemilius Paullus with the express directives to mobilize the huge historical might of the Roman Republic in support of coalition forces in order to completely eliminate Hannibal. The two consuls marched immediately to Cannae to face the Carthaginian army. In August 2, 216 B.C., the battle in Cannae started. Rome put a full strength of infantry numbering about eighty thousand (80,000) and six thousand (6,000) cavalry to face the Carthaginian military, which had invested forty thousand (40,000) footmen and 14,000 cavalry. Hannibal himself commanded the center all the way, while his nephew, Hanno commanded the right-wing (Michael Grant, 1990: 88-99). Hannibal's brother, Mago commanded the left wing. Three thousand (3,000) cavalry of Hannibal's army was also selected as a reserve force. Hannibal also designed an arrangement to make five hundred (500) lightly armed soldiers carry spears, shield and dagger to carry out the task of fake surrender, a strategy also used by Shaka centuries later.

Moreover, in that war, Hannibal used his world-famous crescent tactics, which was like a convex toward the enemy. The infantry was deployed in the center to weaken the army of the opponent while the two wings were manned by powerful cavalry (Liddell, 1967: 12-34; Yu, 1988: 96). When the fighting began, the Roman army encountered a strong opposition from the Carthaginian side. They had to temporarily change strategy, narrowing the front, increasing depth, to strengthen the power of the central square, in an attempt to defeat Hannibal's central square in one fell swoop.

It was important for Hannibal to understand the weather of Cannae because it was a major factor in the battle. For instance, at noon a strong southeast wind was blowing and the south-east of the Roman infantry was blown by the wind with great consequences on their sight because they could not easily open their eyes. As a result of this, the wind greatly enhanced the killing effect. Suddenly, the Roman soldiers were faced with chaos. Hannibal's army attacked with various weapons such as spears, archery, slings and so on. Consequently, the Carthaginian army formation into a crescent depression surrounded by the Roman main force was impressive. Hannibal also ordered the left-right step, riding with the attack from both wings surrounded by enemies. Further, he quickly defeated the heavy cavalry of the left-wing right-wing cavalry of the Roman army, and then divided his own forces toward the lateral of the Roman army left wing cavalry. The Roman army's left wing cavalry stood up before and after the attack, and quickly fled. At the same time, five hundred (500) Carthaginian prisoners of war also took the opportunity to pull out their daggers to attack. The Romans were thrown into a battle chaos, while the Carthaginian cavalry fled in pursuit of the enemy cavalry and other troops with the infantry encircling the Roman infantry (Ayrault-Dodge, 1995; Ren, 1962: 94). This was to become the most painful defeat in Roman history. It is also one of history's most severe battle

casualties in a single battle. Thereafter, the Romans of the post-Cannae war worked hard to reintroduce the Fabian strategy in order to avoid a decisive battle of the magnitude of the Cannae Battle.

Most of Shaka's successes rested on the mobility of his army, his ability to organize the forces and to close in on the opponents when they were less prepared. By means of much drilling and discipline, he built up his forces, which soon became the terror of the land. For example, he is said to have prohibited the wearing of sandals, but toughened his warriors' feet by making them run barefoot over rough thorny ground and in so doing secured their greater mobility. Although this record may have been over exaggerated, it nevertheless indicates the level of discipline and training that Shaka subjected his army to. In this connection, unlike both Xiang Yu and Hannibal, Shaka ensured that the young men were taken away to be enrolled alongside others from all sections of the kingdom in an appropriate age-regiment. This strategy produced a sense of common identity among the fighters. Similarly, a female age-regiment was also organized. Members took part in ceremonial dancing and displays. They were given permission to marry members of the male regiments when it was necessary (Chanaiwa, Dec. 1980: 1-20). This combination of male and female regiments to balance the gender structure of his army separated Shaka from both Xiang Yu and Hannibal.

Moreover, Xiang Yu, Hannibal and Shaka developed a strong strategic decision-making structure and a high level of meticulous planning. They understood the techniques and flexibility in the use of military experience to bring about the fall of opponents. They all employed bold and surprise moves to achieve the desired strategic objectives. In addition, they took full account of the use of terrain and weather characteristics, although the later applied more to Xiang Yu and Hannibal. Specifically, both Xiang Yu and Shaka made use of early morning attacks against their adversaries, while Hannibal capitalized on the southeast strong winds to decimate the rank of the Roman army.

### **The Strategic Thinking of Xiang Yu, Hannibal and Shaka: Some Comparative Notes**

From the various wars analyzed above, we can make the following observations: First, the Battle of Julu and the Battle of Lake Trasimeno were both successful warfare and attacking ventures because of the unique strategies and tactics deployed by both Xiang Yu and Hannibal. Specifically, Xiang Yu and Hannibal demonstrated extraordinary courage in their ability to plan surprise attacks against the enemy's hinterland. Secondly, the two battles revealed excellent use of raids, maneuvering and secret attacks beyond the enemy's imagination. Again, at the two battles, both Xiang Yu and Hannibal demonstrated superior battlefield commanding ability and were both good at capturing the insight and long-lasting endurance of the fighters. They both led the armored cavalry and motivated the infantry division to carry out their order and command successfully.



In the same vein, Shaka deployed unique strategies and tactics in the execution of his battles. Like both Xiang Yu and Hannibal, he made excellent use of raids, secret attacks and maneuvering. He also deployed the scorched earth policy to devastate the enemy camps, and his armies raided their targets in the process. In the course of time, raiding and collection of booties became part of the whole military arrangement of Shaka. He encouraged looting, which was part of his military victory and celebration. Like in ancient times, Shaka's spoils of war included the defeated populations, which were often enslaved, and the women and children, who were often absorbed into his army.

In another sense, both the Pengcheng Battle and the Battle of Cannae represented great moments in the history of world's military encirclement. They both destroyed the enemy's well-arranged plans and designs. The battlefield and the choice of tactics, the excellent riding techniques, the use of the infantry, and the collaborative combat and other aspects of the battles can be called the masterpiece of the history of warfare. These two battles show that Xiang Yu and Hannibal were excellent commanders of war and masters of the art of warfare and strategic thinking. At the Battle of Cannae, for instance, Hannibal used the "encirclement strategy" and wiped out the enemy. In contrast, Shaka developed a new strategy of military encirclement. He had seen that the traditional type of spear, a long-handled known as *assegai* thrown from a distance, was not the best for the regulated fighting in close formation he introduced and therefore replaced it with *iklwa*, a short stabbing spear with a long, sword-like spearhead. It is possible that Shaka inherited this idea from his mentor, Dingiswayo, but it was refined by him (Shaka) and developed into an enduring pre-colonial traditional military strategy. His army usually deployed the crescent tactics by gradually encircling the adversary. That way it was difficult for the enemy to escape.

In specific instances, we can argue that Shaka was closer to Hannibal than to Xiang Yu in the use of a combination of warfare and diplomacy. For instance, even though Shaka's hegemony was primarily based on military might, he supplemented this with a mixture of diplomacy and patronage. He incorporated friendly chieftains such as Jobe of the Sithole, Zihlandlo of the Mkhize, and Mathubane of the Thuli. He did not wage heavy war against them, but won them over by subtler tactics, such as patronage and reward. In the same vein, Hannibal employed diplomacy in his dealings with some powers in the Mediterranean world. He believed that commanders would do well to be shrewd in both war and politics as they must use diplomacy and cunning to appease and satisfy their political leaders. He demonstrated this during the Punic War when he cultivated key alliances with Gaul and Syracuse. In contrast, Xiang Yu relied on the peasants for his warfare, but in some instances, he needed to court the relationship of the other minor groups in China in his battles with the Qin rulers.

Both Shaka and Hannibal also shared the military ingenuity of deploying elephants at crucial moments of the campaigns. While Shaka was fighting Zwide of the Ndwandwe, at the Battle of Gqokli Hill, he sealed his victory by sending elephants in

a sweep around the hill to attack the enemy's rear. The same tactics was deployed by Hannibal in several of his battles, but there is no evidence that Xiang Yu made use of the same tactics. Instead, the latter used the impact of force of cavalry to break up the enemy's stronghold.

### Conclusion

It is fascinating how Xiang Yu, Hannibal and Shaka shared remarkable military ingenuity in the prosecution of their respective battles, even though there is no evidence that they had any knowledge of one another. The three military strategists employed the strategy of fast-moving surprise attacks and ambushes, the use of crescent tactics to encircle the opponents, and use of knowledge of military planning and logistic. In this connection, Shaka turned warfare in the area of Southern Africa from a ritualized exercise into a true method of subjugation and wholesale slaughter. He also turned warfare into a professional endeavour. He shared this reputation with Hannibal, who lived all his life either fighting or thinking about how to fight and overrun the adversaries. In contrast, Xiang Yu simply reacted to the event of the moment. His mission was to overthrow the Qin Dynasty and replace it with the rule of Han Chinese.

Moreover, Shaka's "buffalo horns" attack formation that involved surrounding and annihilating enemy forces can be likened to that of Hannibal's crescent formation and the Roman legionaries' use of *gladius* and *scutum* (Guttman, 2008: 23), as well as the encirclement tactics used by Xiang Yu at the Pengcheng Battle. There is no evidence that Shaka copied the tactics from either the Romans, the Carthaginians or from Xiang Yu. What this implies is that the genius in the three leaders was obvious in the way they managed their forces into an organism to achieve victory for them. In that connection, Hannibal's genius is unanimously affirmed by both ancient and modern historians. The Greek historian Polybius paid him tribute saying:

Who can help admire this man's skillful generalship, his courage, his ability; ... he kept vast numbers under control like a good pilot, without any sign of dissatisfaction towards himself or friction amongst themselves. And the troops under his command, so far from being of the same tribe, were of many diverse races who had neither laws nor customs nor language in common (Howe and Howe, 1987: 219).

The same ability to mobilize people from different clans was exhibited by both Shaka and Xiang Yu in building their armies. Hannibal is also seen as setting a model of military art (Niu, 2003: 170; Ralph, 1987: 297), in the same way as both Shaka and Xiang Yu introduced unprecedented innovations in their military planning and executions. To this end, both Shaka and Xiang Yu have been called military geniuses for their reforms and innovations in military science and their understanding of a need for efficient organizational machineries in warfare (Omar-Cooper, 1965: 12-86; Wang



Zuan-zhong and Wang Min, 2009: 7-8).

Unfortunately, both Xiang Yu and Hannibal had a strikingly similar tragic fate. Both men were forced to commit suicide when they were defeated by their opponents. Hannibal committed suicide when the Roman authorities attempted to extradite him in 183 B.C. Similarly, Xiang Yu committed suicide to avoid being captured by enemy forces (Wang Zuan-zhong and Wang Min, 2009:9). On the other hand, Shaka was murdered by his half-brothers and body-guard for what they perceived as his high-handedness, brutality and cruelty. In a nutshell, the three men ended their military careers tragically, just as their contributions to strategic thinking and military science have been spectacular.

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