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## Carthage in the Mediterranean World

Dexter Hoyos

The Carthaginians, writes Plutarch, are ‘bitter, grim, subservient to rulers and arrogant to subordinates, at their worst in moments of fear, at their most savage in moments of anger. Once they have made a decision, they persevere in it. No amusement, no charm softens their severity. [Had a Cleon or Alcibiades treated them humorously], they would have put both of them to death for frivolously insulting them.’ These censorious generalisations about a people 250 years dead give an idea of how the Greeks and Romans viewed the greatest state in the pre-Roman western Mediterranean. The impression is still widespread today, partly thanks to Gustave Flaubert’s *Salammbô* (1862) with its deliberately exotic Carthaginian world of oriental luxury, barbarity and amorality. Hannibal did his country’s memory no good, either, by invading Italy with non-classical resources – African elephants and Numidian cavalry – and winning battles by tricks and ambushes, censured by Livy as *Punicae artes*.<sup>1</sup>

In reality, the Carthaginians were part of the Greek and Roman world from early on, steadily assimilating more and more from it and contributing much in return. The city was founded, traditionally, in 814 or 813 BC by political refugees from Tyre in Phoenicia, led by their queen Dido; and archaeological finds dating to the mid-eight century BC suggest that the tradition was not too far wrong. The Phoenicians had already sprinkled Mediterranean shores with small but significant settlements, like Utica near Carthage and Gades (Cádiz) in Spain. Next came Carthage: *Qart-Hadasht*, the ‘new town’. Its auspicious site, across the narrowest stretch of the Mediterranean from Sicily and at a crossroads of east-west and north-south trade – including the Atlantic Ocean – and its sage trading practices made the new town wealthier and more powerful than all the rest put together.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *Præcepta gerendae rei publicae* 3.6 (= *Moralia* 799), translated by D. Russell, *Plutarch. Selected essays and dialogues* (Oxford and New York 1993) 142-143. Plutarch contrasts the Carthaginians with the more gentlemanly Athenians of, again, the distant past. *Punicae artes*: cf. Livy 21.34.1, 25.39.1. Flaubert’s *Salammbô* (based on Polybius and Flaubert’s own visit to Carthage) tells the story of the savage revolt of the city’s mercenaries against her after the First Punic War.

<sup>2</sup> On Carthage’s foundation date, see e.g. S. Lancel, *Carthage* (Paris 1992) 32-37; and in V. Krings ed., *La Civilisation phénicienne et punique. Manuel de recherche* (Leiden, New York, Köln 1995) 111, 238-239. Earliest archaeological finds: F. Rakob, ‘Karthago: die frühe Siedlung’,

In the fifth century BC the Carthaginians extended their control over neighbouring regions: partly by annexation to enlarge the city's own territory as far as the Cape Bon peninsula, partly by forming hegemonial alliances with other coastal Phoenician cities like Utica, Hippacra (Bizerte) and even Lepcis, far to the east near modern Tripoli. Furthermore they imposed their rule on the native Libyan communities inland (Libya being the name for the lands around the great river Bagradas, the modern Mejerda). By Hannibal's boyhood, around 240 BC, Punic rule extended up to 200 kilometres inland, ending only at the eastern high plateaux of the nomadic and warlike Numidian peoples and, to the south, along the desert's edge. The Libyans did not always put up gladly with this rule, but Carthage weathered every rebellious storm – even the mighty uprising called the Truceless War, of 241 to 237, when her unpaid foreign mercenaries and Libyan conscripts raised most of Libya against her and it required a supreme effort, led by Hannibal's father Hamilcar, nicknamed Barca, to defeat them.

### **Expansion beyond Africa**

Along with Carthaginian expansion within North Africa came expansion beyond. As well as Phoenician colonies dotting the Mediterranean coasts of Africa and Spain, others had been founded at good trading sites in western Sicily and in Sardinia. In the seventh century the Carthaginians themselves founded one on the island of Ebusus (Ibiza). In Sicily, notable Phoenician centres were Panormus (Palermo), Soluntum nearby, and Motya on a small offshore island – Mozia, now a rich archaeological site – just north of today's Marsala. Of the settlements in Sardinia the most important were Tharros on the south-western coast and Carales (Cagliari) on the southern coast. Punic rule, as in Libya, confined itself to taxes, military levies and (perhaps) adjudicating serious disputes. Strongpoints were held by garrisons, locally levied or else mercenary, or both; but the cities, towns and other communities remained locally self-governing. Again as in Libya,

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*Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts (Rom)* 96 (1989) 155-194. Development of the city to 600 BC: Lancel, *Carthage*, chapter II.

Carthaginians might go to live among them and, no doubt, people from such places sojourned or settled at Carthage in their turn.<sup>3</sup>

Strikingly, the Punic overseas ‘empire’ – not an empire in the sense of direct rule – covered not only limited ground (excluding most of Sicily and much of the Sardinian interior, for instance) but limited populations: largely fellow-Phoenician settlements and their hinterlands, but even so not the settlements in Spain, which at best counted as friendly allies until the later third century. The populations in most Punic-dominated towns, trading centres as they were, must have been quite mixed, but the local ruling elites were of Phoenician descent, and the Phoenician language, or its daughter Punic, was dominant. Rather than ruling territories directly, then, Carthage outside Africa – indeed, outside Libya – exerted hegemony over relatives (and any native subjects that they ruled). Her dealings with the rest of the Mediterranean world were quite different.

Sicily, outside its Punic-dominated western quarter and parts of the island’s interior, was heavily settled by Greek colonists from the mid-eight century on. Several of their foundations grew powerful and famous: above all Syracuse and, close to the south-west coast, Acragas (Agrigentum to the Romans, Girgenti today). The development of Greek Sicily in population and economy can only have benefited Carthage and her ‘empire’, thanks to trade; so too did the advance of urbanisation, culture and Greek settlement in Italy. There, the Etruscan cities traded with Carthage and had strong navies to defend their interests. To their south, Rome and the other cities of Latium were vigorous from early on – by 500, Rome was one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean and she too carried on wide-ranging commerce around its lands, including with Carthage again. Greek colonisation, from the eighth century to the fifth, studded Italy’s Tyrrhenian and Ionian coasts with more cities of renown and wealth: among them Naples, Rhegium (Reggio), Croton (Crotona), Tarentum (Taranto), and the notorious if short-lived Sybaris near Croton, replaced later by the more decorous Thurii.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> On Carthage’s overseas dependencies, see e.g. W. Huss, *Geschichte der Karthager* (München 1985) 57-74, 467-474. Carthaginian settlers were periodically sent out into Libya, according to Aristotle (*Politics* 2.11.15; 6.5.9).

<sup>4</sup> Growth of Rome down to 500: T.J. Cornell, ‘Rome and Latium to 390 BC’ in: F.W. Walbank e.a. ed., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 7.2 (second edition; Cambridge 1989) 242-308, there 242-257. At about 426 hectares, Rome ca. 500 BC was smaller only than Athens-Peiraeus (585 ha.) and Tarentum (510): Cornell, ‘Romae and Latium’, 247-248 and Fig. 41.

### Carthage: Italy, the Etruscans and Greece

Relations between Carthage and Italy around 500 BC are vividly illustrated by two documents. The first, discovered at Pyrgi, the port of Etruscan Caere, in 1964, is a gold tablet dating to around 500 BC, with a dedication engraved in Punic to the Phoenician goddess Astarte by the ruler of Caere; two other tablets repeat the dedication in Etruscan. The Greek historian Polybius (200–118 BC) preserves the second in Greek translated from archaic Latin: the text of a trade-treaty between Carthage and Rome made, he claims, in the first year of the new Roman republic, 509 BC. Strikingly, it permitted Roman trade at Carthage and in Sardinia and Sicily, but barred them from more distant African coasts, while it bound the Carthaginians to quite other provisos: not to harm Latin coastal cities allied to Rome, and to hand over any other place they captured to Rome. Both texts – dedication and treaty – reveal the close and constant relations between non-Greek Italy and Carthage. The treaty with Rome plainly shows, too, who had the stronger voice in maritime affairs.<sup>5</sup>

With the Etruscans, Carthage was particularly co-operative for quite some time. Punicum, the name of another port on Caere's coast, indicates it was a trading post, while in 535 BC the two sides' war-fleets joined forces to defeat and expel Greeks from the east who had fled Persian rule and set themselves up in a new colony. This was Alalia (later Aleria) on the east coast of Corsica, and it provoked both Punic and Etruscan annoyance. Dealings with the Romans, meanwhile, involved no such trials. In 348 on the best estimate, another treaty superseded the first. This barred Sardinia, and even Libya outside Carthage itself, to Roman traders, and barred them too from southern Spanish coasts (so it seems) as well as African ones. It regulated what both Carthaginians and Romans must do if they took a city – or a citizen – not subject to the other state: hand the city over (but keep the enslaved population and booty), release the seized citizen if a Roman or, respectively, a Carthaginian should intervene. These provisos might all be viewed as implying constant mutual suspicion; but in fact no Italian city is

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<sup>5</sup> Pyrgi tablets: T.J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome* (London and New York 1995) 212-214, 232; D.W.R. Ridgeway, *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (third edition; Oxford 1996) 1282, with further references. First Roman-Punic treaty: Polybius 3.22; F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, Vol. 1 (Oxford 1957) 339-345; Huss, *Geschichte der Karthager*, 87-92; H.H. Scullard, 'Carthage and Rome' in: *Cambridge Ancient History* Vol. 7.2, 486-569, there 520-526; B. Scardigli, *I Trattati Romano-Cartaginesi* (Pisa 1991) 47-87; W. Ameling, *Karthago. Studien zu Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft* (München 1993) 141-154.

recorded as captured by the Carthaginians in these centuries, or even attacked, while the archaeological evidence of Roman pottery jars reveals that the Romans enjoyed plenty of vigorous trade in the permitted areas, especially at Carthage itself, as well as in those outside Punic sway like the eastern coasts of Spain. But the treaty reveals continuing Punic maritime superiority and a firm resolve – how effectively enforced is debated – to restrict lands under Carthage’s hegemony to trading with Carthage and, presumably, her own allies and subjects.<sup>6</sup>

With the Greek world, Punic relations were strikingly two-sided. Carthage got on well with old Greece and with the great Hellenistic powers from Alexander’s time on. In 406 BC, at the very time that she was making bitter war on the Greeks of Sicily, an inscription records a friendly alliance with Athens (herself bitterly at war with Sparta). And despite a shared border with Egypt – admittedly one very distant, near Cyrene – there was never any friction between the Punic republic and the Ptolemaic kingdom. That Carthage was a republic, at any rate from around the sixth century on, with elected leaders and an elite effectively but fluidly oligarchic, caused Aristotle to include tantalisingly concise comments on its political structures in his *Politics*, around 336 – the only non-Greek state thus described in the work.

Matters were very different in relations with the western Greeks: a notable example of nearness not warming the heart. Whereas over long centuries much of the Mediterranean world, including Greece and Asia, knew the Carthaginians as sophisticated merchants, Greek Sicily in particular also came to know them as dangerous military opponents.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Battle of Alalia: Herodotus 1.166-7. Second Roman-Punic treaty: Scullard, ‘Carthage and Rome’, 526-530; Huss, *Geschichte der Karthager*, 149-155; Scardigli, *I Trattati Romano-Cartaginesi*, 89-127. Evidence of Roman pottery: C.G. Starr, *The Beginnings of Imperial Rome. Rome in the Mid-Republic* (Ann Arbor 1981) 33-34, 49, 62; Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, 388-389. Ameling *Karthago*, 130-134, sees both treaties as revealing that the Carthaginians practised piracy as well as trade; cf. G.-C. Picard and C. Picard, *The Life and Death of Carthage* (London and New York 1968) 189.

<sup>7</sup> Alliance with Athens in 406: H. Bengtson, *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums*, Vol. 2 (München und Berlin 1962) 151, no. 208. Aristotle on Carthaginian constitution: *Politics* 2.11.1-9, 4.7.11.

### Carthaginian military ventures

Carthage had become strong enough to venture militarily overseas by the sixth century. The first efforts are sketchily recorded: successful campaigns in Sicily but defeat in Sardinia, probably not long after 600. Some decades later a general named Mago won more wars in Sicily and used his prestige to establish himself and his descendants as *de facto* rulers of Carthage for 150 years, manipulating her republican institutions to maintain power, rather in the way Hannibal's family later did. These Sicilian wars may well have been, at least partly, a reaction to repeated efforts by Greeks (including, around 510, a prince from Sparta) to expand settlement into the island's far west. The Phoenician cities' hostility to these efforts buttressed, and may have brought about, Carthage's hegemony over them. Once imposed, it endured. It also worsened relations with the leading Greek cities, Acragas – uncomfortably close to the Punic dominion – and Syracuse.

What ensued were two and a half centuries of intermittent, and sometimes bitter, wars. The first great clash, in 480 under the Magonid leader Hamilcar, was shortlived and ended in disaster at the hands of Syracuse and Acragas. It was followed by seventy years of coexistence – an example that might usefully have been imitated in later times – but a new series of Sicilian wars opened in 410 under another Magonid, Hamilcar's grandson Hannibal, and ended only in 367. Syracuse remained Carthage's chief antagonist: it was now the island's most powerful Greek city, ruled from 405 to 367 by the dictator – in Greek, 'tyrant' – Dionysius I, who imposed Syracusan hegemony over most of the other city-states.<sup>8</sup>

More wars followed after 350: against the Sicilian Greek alliance under their general Timoleon of Corinth in the 340s; from 311 to 306 a war with another Syracusan tyrant and later king, Agathocles – who took the boldly unexpected step of invading Libya in 310 and causing much damage there for several years – and then, from the 280s on, fresh conflicts with Syracuse and other states, who this time brought over the adventurer-king Pyrrhus of Epirus from Italy (where he was making no headway in a war with Rome) as their champion. The compromise peace that followed his frustrated departure in 275 lasted only until, almost out of the blue, the Romans themselves – Carthage's ancient treaty- and trade-partners – went to war with her in 264.

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<sup>8</sup> Early relations between Carthage and the western Greeks: V. Krings, *Carthage et les Grecs c. 580–480 av. J.-C.* (Leiden, Boston, Köln 1998).

Carthage's Sicilian wars were on a large scale, although our Greek sources are clearly inclined to exaggerate the size of Carthage's forces. Hamilcar in 480 probably did not command 300,000 men as Herodotus avers (*Histories* 7.165), but later figures look less wildly overstated: for instance 50-60,000 horse and foot in 345, and supposedly 70,000 foot and 10,000 horse, including the 'Sacred Band', an elite division of Carthaginian citizen troops, four years later at the disaster of the river Crimisis. All these armies marched accompanied by large numbers of war-chariots. Greek armies rarely matched the Carthaginians' in size, though Dionysius I supposedly had 80,000 for the campaign of 397 (Diodorus, 14.47.7). Both sides developed advanced siege-engines for attacking each other's cities, a technology with a long if destructive future. Yet, for all their violence and repetitiousness, these wars, lasting over two centuries, invariably ended with both sides in more or less the same positions. The river Halycus (Plátani) west of Acragas regularly remained the frontier, while both sides regrouped and awaited the next, predictably again indecisive, round.

### **Carthaginian armies**

It was a notorious feature of Carthaginian armies that, as early as 480 when we first have details, they included large numbers of variegated levies and mercenaries. Hamilcar the Magonid commanded not only Carthaginian citizen troops but Libyans, Spaniards, Sardinians and Corsicans: contingents evidently recruited from Carthage's areas of influence. As Punic wealth and power grew, so did the ambit of recruitment, with the army that faced Timoleon, for instance, also including Ligurians from northern Italy, Spaniards and Gauls. Troops were even hired from Italy at times, though never Romans (except deserters). Carthaginian citizen troops became fewer, except for senior officers and when emergencies within Libya called for mass recruitment. This happened, for instance, to confront the invading Syracusan army of Agathocles in 310; in 241 after the First Punic War, when Carthage's unpaid mercenaries and Libyan conscripts mutinied and impelled much of oppressed Libya to rebel; and a century later when the city underwent its last doomed test, deserted by all, against the invading Romans. Otherwise, citizens served in some numbers in the republic's naval forces.

By the third century there were other important foreign contingents in a regular Carthaginian army. Small specialist units of slingshot-throwers,

who softened up an enemy before engaging, came from the Balearic Islands. Professional Greek mercenaries – plentiful after Alexander the Great’s time, and the best infantry in the Mediterranean world apart from Roman legionaries – were often hired, though not (it seems) in Hannibal’s day. They were of course expensive. Elephants, apparently of the African species, began to be used from around 280 on (whereas war-chariots disappeared). Most important of all, especially in armies like Hannibal’s, were the Numidian cavalry squadrons, professionals again and outclassing virtually every other belligerent’s mounted arm.<sup>9</sup>

This kaleidoscope of military units from all round the Mediterranean, most varying quite considerably from one another in weaponry, armour, combat methods, and indeed languages, was held together by Carthaginian senior officers and – wherever possible – charismatic leadership at the top. Their widely-varying origins again illustrate how far-flung the Carthaginians’ contacts were across the Mediterranean. Their rule did not extend over every land represented in their armies, but Punic recruiting-agents were always active and Punic pay and terms of service were clearly attractive across the western Mediterranean, and eastward too into the Greek world.

Variiegated though they were, Punic armies were formidable foes. They usually carried the day against ‘barbarian’ opponents, in Africa, the islands and Spain. Against Greek forces, and then Roman, the record was more fluctuating, for those enemies were as militarily advanced as Carthage herself and often more cohesive in equipment and methods. To win major victories Carthage needed generals of unusual quality and (whenever possible) an over-confident opponent—as happened, most memorably, in the Second Punic War, at least until the Romans gradually got Hannibal’s measure.

One paradoxical aspect of Carthage’s war-history over so many centuries is rarely noted. Her traditional reputation is as the ‘queen of the western Mediterranean’, with a reported capacity of up to 220 capital warships (*quinqueremes*, or ‘five-oarers’, in the third century) along with formidable naval expertise. In practice this expertise was seldom called on.

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<sup>9</sup> Punic armies: C. Nicolet, in *Rome et la conquête du monde méditerranéen* (Paris 1977-1978) 2: *Genèse d’un empire*, 600-2; T. Wise, *Armies of the Carthaginian Wars 265-146 BC* (London 1982; reprint 1999) 4-23; Huss, *Geschichte der Karthager*, chapter XXXII; Ameling, *Karthago*, chapters VII–VIII. Greek mercenaries: M. Trundle, *Greek Mercenaries from the Late Archaic Period to Alexander* (London and New York 2004); G.T. Griffith, *The Mercenaries of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 1935). Elephants in Punic armies: H.H. Scullard, *The Elephant in the Greek and Roman World* (London 1974) chapter VI.

Until the wars with Rome, Punic fleets' chief activity was to convoy ship-transporters delivering land armies and supplies (elephants included) to overseas theatres like Sicily, Sardinia and Spain. Even against Rome, only the first war frequently involved powerful fleets. In Hannibal's war, naval fights were few and Carthage's naval performance surprisingly dismal; while the Third Punic War was fought in Libya and outside Carthage herself by land forces again.<sup>10</sup>

The Carthaginians' principal military exertions, from the sixth century on, were on land, using the types of armies discussed above. This perhaps helps to explain how the fleets of the 'queen of the west' could be repeatedly defeated by those launched by an upstart in major maritime war, Rome; and why in Hannibal's war her naval forces were almost unforgivably inept. Her greatest dynasty of leaders – Hamilcar Barca and his three sons, including Hannibal the eldest – were generals who, it can be argued, undervalued the role of warfare at sea while they concentrated on big armies and wide territorial annexations.

### Mercantile and social links

But despite centuries of intermittent wars with overseas powers great and small, the Carthaginians also interacted peaceably and productively with the rest of the Mediterranean. The most vivid evidence is their mercantile, social and even marital links with their Greek and Roman enemies. Not only the treaties with Rome and the finds of Roman ware illustrate mercantile links: Italian traders were soon busy again with Punic and Libyan customers after the First Punic War, and Carthage had a number of Italian residents when the Third erupted. Perhaps a decade after the Second Punic War the playwright Plautus cheerfully put on a comedy, *Poenulus* ('the Carthaginian fellow'), about an elderly merchant, Hanno, seeking his long-lost daughters and characterised as a wholly inoffensive and rather sympathetic, if comically foreign, figure. As for social ties, the Magonid Hamilcar, who terrorised Sicily in 480, had a Syracusan mother, according

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<sup>10</sup> Carthaginian naval strength: cf. Appian, *Libyca* 96.452-5; cf. H. Hurst, 'The war harbour of Carthage', in: *Atti del I Congresso internaz. di Studi Fenici e Punici* (Roma 1983) 2. 603-10; S. Medas, *La Marineria cartaginese* (Sassari 2000) 118-121. For the navies in the first two Punic Wars, the classic studies remain those of J.H. Thiel, *Studies on the History of Roman Sea-Power in Republican Times* (Amsterdam 1946) and *A History of Roman Sea-Power before the Second Punic War* (Amsterdam 1954).

to Herodotus, while one of his sons, Gisco, when sent into exile settled at Selinus, a Greek city not far from Panormus. Two of the great Hannibal's ablest operatives in Sicily from 214 to 210, Hippocrates and Epicydes, were grandsons of a Syracusan exiled at Carthage; and in Italy one of his trusted lieutenants, Carthalo, enjoyed a hereditary guest-friendship (*hospitium*) with no less a family than that of Carthage's dogged opponent, Fabius Maximus the Delayer – though a Roman soldier ignored it to slay the unfortunate officer in the capture of Tarentum in 209. Other Carthaginian and Roman aristocrats had similar connexions, promptly renewed as soon as the war ended. It is not surprising that when Hannibal captured a Roman notable, one Cincius Alimentus, he seems to have treated him almost as a guest: Cincius, later a historian, included in his work an illuminating conversation of theirs.<sup>11</sup>

### Cultural interchanges

Contacts between Carthage and the rest of the Mediterranean led to cultural interchanges, religious ones included. The cult of Astarte at Caere in Etruria has been mentioned. In 396 the Carthaginians, in turn, adopted a Greek cult: to atone for their recent destruction of temples and shrines in Sicily – and the ensuing plague and famine that struck the city – they solemnly instituted the worship of Demeter and her daughter Core (Persephone), deities important among Sicilian Greeks. The oath which Hannibal and his counsellors (and army) took in 215, when forming an alliance with the kingdom of Macedon against Rome, survives in its Greek version in Polybius: it lists a long series of Punic divinities by their Greek equivalents, beginning with 'Zeus and Hera and Apollo'. Identifications are debated, but the first two may well be Ba'al Hammon and Tanit, the prime deities of Carthage, while 'Hercules', later in the list, is generally seen as the city-god Melqart. What is striking is how such Punic-Greek equivalents are treated as normal.

Other Greek influences arrived. The '*quartier Hannibal*' at Carthage, a hillside district inland from the sea which was developed for shops and

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<sup>11</sup> Italian traders and residents: Polybius 1.83.7-10; Appian, *Libya* 92.434. Magonid Hamilcar's mother: Herodotus 7.166. Hippocrates and Epicydes: Polybius 7.2.3; Livy 24.6.2. Carthalo and Fabius: Livy 27.16.5. Other aristocrats' links: Livy 33.45.6 (in 195). Cincius: Livy 21.38.3-5.

housing around the time that Hannibal was chief magistrate (*sufete*) in 196, is laid out in Greek urban style: parallel crisscrossing streets and multi-storey buildings with ground-floor shops, mosaics, peristyle gardens, and apartments equipped with comfortable bathrooms. Up to two centuries earlier, similar living amenities were already in use at a little coastal town – name unknown – at modern Kerkouane, on the Cape Bon peninsula facing Sicily, which was destroyed during the third century (probably by the Roman invasion army in 256) and never reoccupied.<sup>12</sup>

Punic coinage was a relatively late development, later in fact than that of the Sicilian-Phoenician towns Panormus and Motya, which started their issues in the late fifth century. Carthage's coinage originally was minted to pay troops in her Sicilian territories (it bore legends like *s'mmhnt*: 'the folk of the camp') and was struck on Greek models like the tetradrachm. Greek styles continued to influence even coins minted from time to time (the datings are debated) at Carthage itself. Surviving specimens, for instance depicting a divine profile on the obverse and a horse or horse's head on the reverse, are often of fine artistic quality.<sup>13</sup>

It was natural that Greek itself should become known and used by Carthaginians. A story that around 370, in pique against their inveterate foe Syracuse, the authorities tried to ban the language, illustrates its currency. Later on, Hannibal was taught Greek by one Sosylus of Sparta. Sosylus and a Sicilian Greek, Silenus, then accompanied the general through most of his adventurous career, and afterwards both wrote influential accounts of him. Hannibal himself wrote works in Greek: both the famous lost inscriptional account of his wars down to 205, set up in Greek and Punic in the temple of Hera at Cape Lacinium (Capo Colonna) in southern Italy where Polybius consulted it; and years later an account, not likely to have been admiring, of a Roman general's looting expedition in 187 in Asia Minor. The Greek text

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<sup>12</sup> Adoption of Demeter and Core: Diodorus 13.77.4-5. Oath of Hannibal: Polybius 7.9.1-3. Its god-list: F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Comment on Polybius*, Vol. 2 (Oxford 1967) 42- 52; M.L. Barré, *The God-List in the Treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedon* (Baltimore and London 1983); W. Huss, 'Hannibal und die Religion' in: C. Bonnet e.a. ed., *Studia Phoenicia 4: Religio Phoenicia* (Namur 1986) 223-238 (Huss sees the first two as Ba'al Eshmun and Astarte).

<sup>13</sup> Punic coinage, down to 264: G.K. Jenkins and R.B. Lewis, *Carthaginian Gold and Electrum Coins* (London 1963) 1-39; P. Visonà, in: Krings, *La Civilisation phénicienne et punique*, 167-173, with Plate 13, nos. 3-4, 9; L.I. Manfredi, 'Carthaginian policy through coins' in: G. Pisano ed., *Phoenicians and Carthaginians in the Western Mediterranean* (Studia Punica 12) (Roma 1999) 69-78.

of his treaty with Macedon was approved, and may well have been written, by him.<sup>14</sup>

### Carthaginian contributions to the Mediterranean world

Carthage, in turn, contributed significantly, if indirectly, to Greek philosophy. Around 162 BC a young intellectual, Hasdrubal, migrated to Athens, took the name Cleitomachus, and not only became a distinguished philosopher but eventually, in 127, head of the Academy. Interestingly, along with philosophical works he wrote a consolation (not extant) to his fellow-citizens after the destruction of their city in 146: we may wonder who, among the surviving and enslaved Carthaginians, got to read it. Carthage passed on other things to the Mediterranean world. Her adaptation of a Greek style of simple floor-decoration, broken pieces of pottery or marble set into cement (*pavimentum Punicum*), spread widely, even to Rome. The carefully tended prosperity of the Punic hinterland, much admired by Greeks and Romans, led the Roman Senate after the city's destruction to order the 28-book encyclopaedia of agronomy by Mago, a celebrated writer of perhaps the fourth century, to be translated into Latin. It has not survived but, as fulsome citations by Roman authors like the agronomist Columella and encyclopaedist Pliny the Elder show, Mago was revered for centuries as 'the father of rural lore', in Columella's words.<sup>15</sup>

Of course it was not only with Greece and Rome that the Carthaginians had fruitful relations. Egypt influenced their art and perhaps religion in the early centuries. In turn, the Numidian peoples to their west came under Punic influence, though never under their rule. Carthaginian aristocrats intermarried with Numidian princely families: the most famous

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<sup>14</sup> Alleged ban on Greek at Carthage: Justin 20.5.12-13. Sosylus and Silenus: Nepos, *Hannibal* 13.3. On these friends see D. Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty: Power and Politics in the Western Mediterranean, 247-183 BC* (London and New York 2003) 213, 249 n.16, 277-278 n.1, 282 n.4. Hannibal's *res gestae* at Cape Lacinium: Polybius 3.33.18, 56.4; Livy 28.46.16. Account of Manlius Vulso's expedition: Nepos, *Hann.* 13.2 (mentioning that Hannibal wrote other Greek works too).

<sup>15</sup> Hasdrubal-Cleitomachus: K.-H. Stanzel in: H. Cancik and H. Schneider eds, *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* 6 (Stuttgart 1999) 572. *Pavimentum Punicum*: G. and C. Charles-Picard, *Daily Life at Carthage at the Time of Hannibal* (Engl. tr.: London 1961) 51; H.G. Niemayer in *Neue Pauly* 9 (2000) 453. Carthage's prosperous hinterland: Diodorus 20.8.3-4; Appian, *Libya* 69.312. Mago: Columella, *De Agricultura* 1.1.13, 'rusticationis parentem'; Pliny, *Natural History* 18.22-3; Krings, *La Civilisation phénicienne et punique*, 36.

example is Sophoniba (known to moderns as Sophonisba), daughter of one of Hannibal's leading political allies, and married first to Syphax, the king who unified all Numidia around 205. After his overthrow in 203, she became wife to his victorious rival Masinissa, only to be forced to suicide to escape the vengeance of Masinissa's patron Scipio Africanus. Hamilcar Barca, too, wedded daughters to Numidian royalty – kinsmen of Masinissa, it seems. Masinissa, to develop Numidia as a major regional power, used Carthaginian models – and frequent annexations of Carthaginian territory. Punic was Numidia's second language, as inscriptions show, long after the destruction of Carthage herself (as it continued to be in Libya also).<sup>16</sup>

### **Expanding interaction**

In 237 Hamilcar opened a new expansionist era for his city in southern Spain. He and his successors as chief generals of the state – first his son-in-law Hasdrubal and then his eldest son Hannibal – were very much in the mainstream of Hellenistic norms of leadership and imperialism. Their power rested on successful and well-publicised militarism and conquest, and the exploitation of Spanish mineral and agricultural wealth. Hamilcar and Hasdrubal founded more than one new city in Spain, a trait much in vogue in the Hellenistic east. The most memorable was Hasdrubal's *Qart-Hadasbt*, which the Romans called New Carthage and is still called Cartagena, a splendid creation with a magnificent palace on one of its hills. Hasdrubal also took a Spanish wife (perhaps Hamilcar's daughter had died), and so did Hannibal – in his case a lady from Castulo, a wealthy town north of Córdoba. As with Numidian marriages, these unions aimed to confirm the links between Carthaginian leaders and the elites among their neighbours.<sup>17</sup>

The Punic Wars were the somewhat paradoxical culmination of Carthage's expanding interaction with the Mediterranean. Paradoxical, first because it does not seem that either Carthaginians or Romans intended to

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<sup>16</sup> On the extraordinary Masinissa, who reigned from 202 to 148, see E. Storm, *Masinissa: Numidien im Aufbruch* (Stuttgart 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Egyptian influences: Charles-Picard, *Daily life*, 37, 39, 41-42, 51, 131-132, 141-142, 157; Lancel, *Carthage*, 82-91; M.H. Fantar, *Carthage: La Cité punique* (Paris 1995) 30, 32, 93. On the Barcid era and these leaders' achievements (and failures) see, for instance, Huss, *Geschichte der Karthager*, chapters XXIV-XXVIII; J. Seibert, *Hannibal* (Darmstadt 1993); S. Lancel, *Hannibal* (Paris 1995); Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty*; P. Barceló, *Hannibal: Stratege und Staatsmann* (Stuttgart 2004).

clash, in 264 or even in 218; and second, because Carthage attained the historical zenith of power and success during them, only to be brought to defeat and then, in the third war, to genocidal destruction.<sup>18</sup> The First Punic War of 264-241 made the Carthaginians fight not only on land – including on their own territory against Regulus in 256-255, as well as in Sicily – but simultaneously at sea, a military dualism never previously forced on them for so long a period, and so intensively. Despite losing the war, Carthage's resilience was soon vividly revealed. She renewed and increased her strength and prosperity after the ensuing mass revolt of her mercenaries and Libyans in the 'Truceless War'. Hamilcar Barca and his successors built a land empire across the Mediterranean in Spain, while continuing their influence over Numidia and while Carthaginian trade flourished, not least with Italy. Paradoxically again, this huge increase in terrestrial might was inversely matched by the near-disappearance of her traditional sea power. Carthage had armies tens of thousands strong (in 218 she mobilised up to 122,000 men), but when the Second Punic War opened she could float only a poorly-equipped navy less than half the size of Rome's: 87 ships to 220. Though it was built up again, her triumphs in Hannibal's War were entirely thanks to his genius as an army commander.

These triumphs were – temporarily – awe-inspiring enough. For almost a decade, after Cannae in mid-216 to mid-207 when Hasdrubal, Hannibal's brother, lost his army and life invading Italy from the north, Carthage dominated the western Mediterranean from southern Italy to Spain's Atlantic coast. Most of southern Italy abandoned its obedience to Rome in favour of alliance with her; already most of north Italy's Gauls had done so. Macedon and then Syracuse in their turn became Punic allies. Punic fleets, now rebuilt, ranged as far afield as western Greek waters, for the first and only time in history. The Romans were hemmed in on almost every side. They held the heartland of Italy, an expeditionary bridgehead in northern and eastern Spain (almost lost in 211), and some of Sicily; little else. After Cannae, they did look doomed.

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<sup>18</sup> On the much-debated issue of why the first two Punic wars occurred, see W.V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327-70 BC* (Oxford 1979) 63-64, 113-114, 182-190, 200-205, 269-270; K.-H. Schwarte, *Der Ausbruch des Zweiten Punischen Krieges – Rechtsfrage und Überlieferung* (Wiesbaden 1983); J. Rich, 'The origins of the Second Punic War' in: T. Cornell, B. Rankov and P. Sabin eds, *The Second Punic War: a Reappraisal* (London 1996) 1-37; B.D. Hoyos, *Unplanned Wars. The Origins of the First and Second Punic Wars* (Berlin and New York 1998); Barceló, *Hannibal*, chapters II, V-VII.

## Conclusion

Had Carthage turned these extraordinary successes into lasting victory, the future of the Mediterranean would surely have been very different, possibly even until the present. After the war, Rome with astounding speed imposed hegemony over the entire eastern Mediterranean, ultimately to replace it with actual imperial rule. A victorious Carthage might well have spread Punic hegemony eastwards, and with all the more assurance thanks to her own Phoenician ties combined with her significantly Hellenised culture. At the same time Punic mastery of Spain and the islands, and influence over Numidia, would have been confirmed. Carthage would have been a power even greater than Rome was when, between 200 and 188, the latter confronted and shattered the great Hellenistic kingdoms east of the Adriatic. And Hannibal would still have been Carthage's leader.

Instead, the aftermath of the Second Punic War reduced her to virtual satellite status vis-à-vis Rome. Yet prosperity again returned, partly perhaps (paradox again) because she was forbidden to have a navy or, effectively, much of an army, and thus could use her resources elsewhere; partly, too, thanks to Hannibal's financial and political reforms as *sufete* in 196, hitting at corruption and promoting more open government. Even if the city's wealth was less, on the archaeological evidence, than in the great days of the Barcids, it was imposing enough to attract the repeated depredations of Masinissa and, by the late 150s, the censorious and alarmist eye of the Roman leader Cato. Between the two of them, the Carthaginians were harassed and provoked into desperate actions at the end of the 150s, thus giving the again suspicious Romans a pretext for making an end of their old rival in the Third Punic War of 149–146.<sup>19</sup>

Even then Carthaginian culture, and Carthage itself, refused to die. The other Phoenician colonies, the towns and countryside of Libya, and (as mentioned earlier) Numidia maintained much the same culture as well as the language. When a new, Roman, Carthage was founded by Julius Caesar a century after old Carthage's destruction, the city quickly regained pre-

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<sup>19</sup> The relation between military costs and Punic economy is discussed, though too briefly, by A.C. Fariselli in: Pisano, *Phoenicians and Carthaginians*, 59-67. For the suggestion that the famous artificial ports, military and commercial, were built probably during Hannibal's war and afterwards both renovated for seaborne trade, see Hoyos (n. 14), 24, 223-4. On the importance of Hannibal's term as *sufete* see E. Groag, *Hannibal als Politiker* (Wien, 1929; repr. Roma, 1964), 111-28; Lancel, *Hannibal*, 291-7; Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty*, chapter XVI; Barceló, *Hannibal*, 215-23.

eminence as the wealthiest and most advanced in North Africa, after Alexandria. The new Carthage, and Roman Africa, would go on to play leading roles in the history, civilisation and religions of the Roman Empire. For instance, one of the imperial dynasties founded by Septimius Severus (emperor AD 193-211), was of Punic as well as Italian descent.<sup>20</sup> Thus was renewed the interaction with the rest of the Mediterranean world which the first Carthage and her people had so fruitfully practised for nearly a thousand years.

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<sup>20</sup> Severus and his dynasty: A. Birley, *Septimius Severus: the African Emperor* (second edition; London 1988); P. Southern, *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine* (London and New York 2001) 23-63; B. Campbell, 'The Severan dynasty' in: A. Bowman e.a. ed., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 12-2 (Cambridge 2005) chapter I.