Carthage
fact and myth

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Punic and Roman ruins on Byrsa Hill. In the background we can just make out the cathedral that the French Missionaries for Africa had built on the hill. Today, the cathedral's spire is the highest point.

1

CARTHAGE: FACT AND MYTH

Pieter ter Keurs

ANCIENT CARTHAGE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION AND OF EUROPE. ITS IMPORTANCE WAS NOT LIMITED TO THE CITY-STATE'S LONG HEYDAY, FROM APPROXIMATELY THE FIFTH TO THE SECOND CENTURY BC; CARTHAGINIAN CULTURE REMAINED IMPORTANT LONG AFTER THAT, EXERCISING A STRONG APPEAL TO THE IMAGINATION. EUROPEAN RULERS AND MILITARY LEADERS DREW INSPIRATION FROM ITS HISTORY. OVER THE CENTURIES, ARTISTS PRODUCED PRINTS, MUSIC, FILMS AND NOVELS THAT KEPT THE CITY-STATE'S FASCINATING PAST ALIVE, FREQUENTLY INFUSED WITH CONTEMPORARY MORALISTIC MESSAGES.

The city of Carthage, on the north coast of present–day Tunisia, is said to have been founded in the ninth century BC by Phoenician merchants from Tyre (now in Lebanon). There are several versions of the myth describing the city's origin. In all these versions, the Lebanese Phoenician Elissa (whom the Romans called Dido) plays a key role. Forced to flee from Tyre for political reasons, along with a few followers, Elissa journeyed by way of Cyprus to the West. The small company eventually disembarked on the coast of North Africa, where Elissa negotiated with the local ruler to acquire a piece of land. By means of a clever trick (see chapter 3), Elissa obtained far more land than had been intended, but the local population accepted it and Carthage was founded. By a few hundred years later, the city had become one of the wealthiest and most prosperous of the Mediterranean. Its strategic location gave Carthage the opportunity to become the nexus of a range of commercial networks, in frequent competition with others, such as the Greeks, but also in harmony with groups such as African merchants from the south and Etruscans to the north.

Although the myth described above contains many elements that bear little relation to reality, the core of the story appears to be correct. For centuries the Carthaginians undertook annual trade missions to Tyre, partly to offer sacrifices to the city's gods, in a clear recognition of Tyre as the 'mother city'. In North Africa itself, it must have been clear for a very long time that the Carthaginians were immigrants. After all, until the fifth century BC they paid rent to the local population for the land on which they lived. They only stopped doing so once they considered themselves strong enough to be able to resist any local opposition to the cessation of payments. It should be noted that the inscriptions on steles in graveyards – even as late as in Roman times – continued to be written in Phoenician script, and contained references to Phoenician gods. This is another clear reference to the origins of the population of Carthage.

Even so, Carthaginian culture is frequently referred to not as Phoenician but as Punic. Possibly the very word 'Punic' had a derogatory meaning. However, Carthage had a hybrid culture that consisted not only of Phoenician elements. It included influences from Africa, from Greece, from the Etruscans, and from Spain. This wide range of external influences left their imprint on everyday life and religious practices in Carthage from a very early stage: Egyptian gods were depicted and worshipped, and Carthaginian products reflect Greek influences and features of cultural expressions from the Eastern Mediterranean region, such as Cyprus. In truth, the hybrid culture of Carthage merits a particular name of its own, but archaeologists generally opt to call it Punic.

The importance of trade made Carthage a vibrant multicultural centre. People flocked to this prosperous city–state both from the African hinterland and from overseas trade regions. It is difficult to estimate the precise size of its population, but some 300,000 to 400,000 people are believed to have lived in Carthage during the various peaks in its prosperity. It was a huge metropolis, in the heart of which were houses with several storeys,

Goddess with lion's head; Tinissut; 1st century AD; Musée National du Bardo.

Some researchers have identified this goddess as Tanit. This seems improbable, since Tanit is generally depicted far more abstractly. The figure might be an expression of Egyptian influence. Many of its features recall those of the goddess Sekhmet. In the Roman period, such figures were seen as personifications of Africa.

2

PHOENICIA: FROM PLACE OF TRANSIT TO TRADING NATION

Lucas P. Petit

ACCORDING TO THE GREEKS, THE BOATS THAT OCCASIONALLY PUT IN ALONG THEIR SHORES CAME FROM PHOENICIA, THE REGION THAT ROUGHLY CORRESPONDS TO PRESENT–DAY LEBANON. THEY WERE MANNED BY GIFTED MERCHANTS, THE PHOENICIANS. IN SPITE OF THEIR LIMITED TERRITORY, WITH JUST A HANDFUL OF MAJOR CITIES, THEY CONTROLLED THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA FROM THE TENTH CENTURY BC ONWARDS AND FOUNDED NUMEROUS NEW CITIES, AMONG THEM THE POWERFUL PORT OF CARTHAGE. THE STORY OF A SMALL NATION THAT PLACED ITS STAMP ON THE HISTORY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN IS ONE THAT TRULY FIRES THE IMAGINATION.

Sid (Iolaus), and Reshef (Apollo, who is not documented in Carthage, however, aside from the temple dedicated to him that is mentioned by Appian).

The earliest images of the Phoenician–Punic gods were generally non–figurative or aniconic. The gods were worshipped in the form of sacred stones called *baetyli* and stone pillars (stelae); later in the form of abstract symbols. Fine examples have been found in the floor of a small sanctuary in the town, dating from the end of the fifth century BC in the excavations carried out by the University of Hamburg. Three of the primary divinities are depicted here using their respective symbols: the stylised small female figure with outstretched arms (Tanit), the sun disk (Baal Hammon) and the star (Astarte).

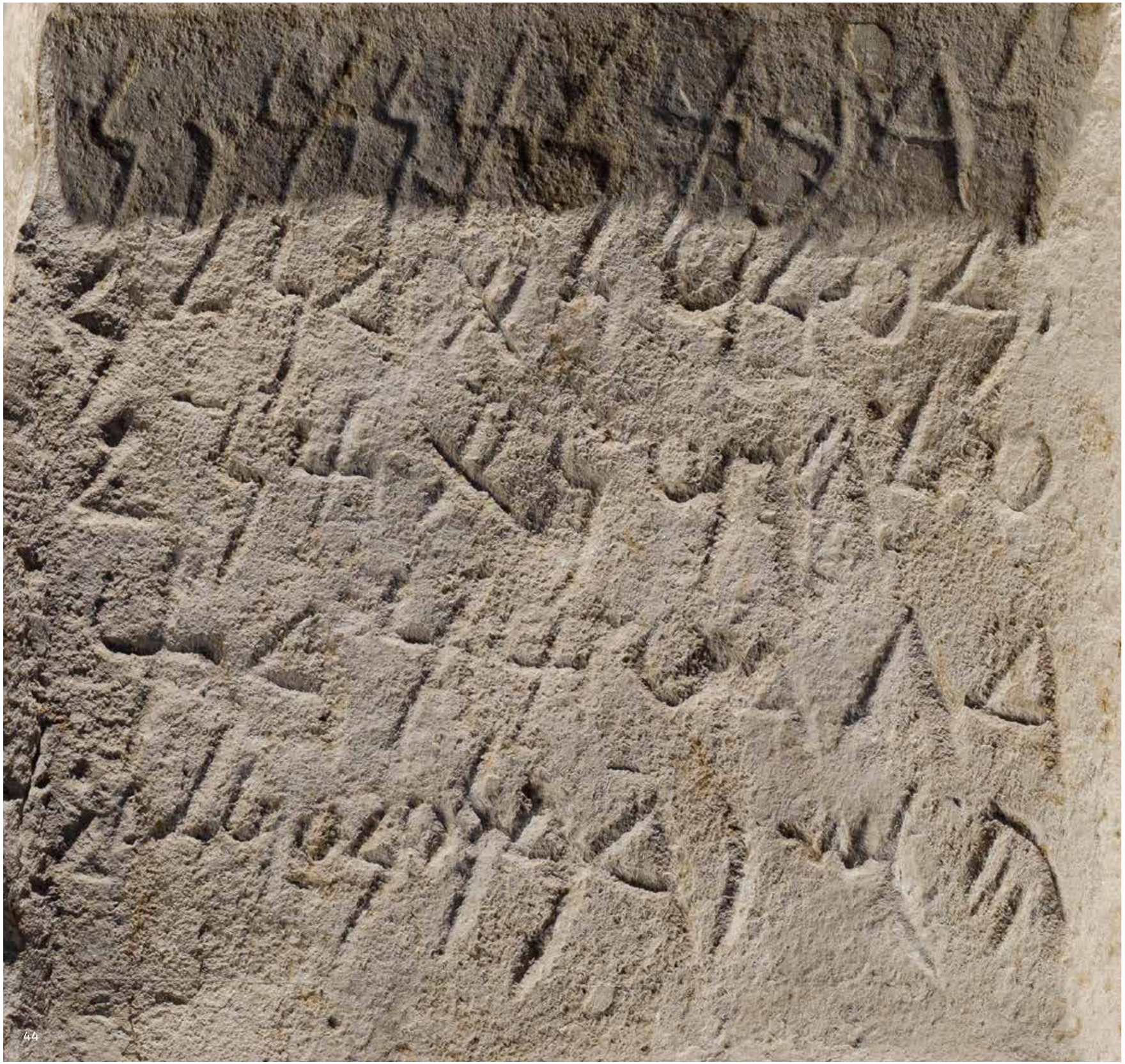
From the fourth century BC onwards, the Punic pantheon underwent a marked assimilation with the world of the Greek gods, certainly in terms of iconography. In 396 BC, the cult of Demeter and Kore (Persephone) was imported into Carthage from Sicily, to atone for the sacrilege committed by Carthaginians in the Greek sanctuaries of Agrigentum and Syracuse and the calamities it had brought down on them. Characteristic of the newly–introduced cult are the terracotta incense burners in the shape of Demeter as a *kernophoros*, one who bears a sacrificial bowl or *kernos*. A terracotta figurine found during the excavations of the German Archaeological Institute in a large Carthaginian sanctuary has an engraved Tanit symbol on the back, which suggests an amalgamation or syncretism of the two goddesses. However, this same sanctuary is known primarily in relation to the discovery of over 3,600 clay seals, which were burnt to terracotta in the devastating fire of 146 BC. These were the seals of rolled/folded papyrus documents in the temple's archives. In all cases, the papyrus structure and the imprint of the binding string are preserved on the backs of the clay seals. About half of the scenes are printed in the wet clay with stone seals or scarabs with the name of the Egyptian Pharaoh Mencheper–Re. This is Thutmosis III, who reigned in the fifteenth century BC, but was extremely popular in the age of the Saite Pharaohs in the seventh and sixth centuries BC. The name is sometimes interpreted cryptographically as Ammon–Re, which may possibly denote the cult of the sun god (in Carthage this is Baal Hammon). These Egyptian Mencheper–Re seals most probably belonged to the temple and were used by the priests to seal contracts. The other half of the scenes on the seals are extremely diverse (no two are identical) and are probably the stamps of specific private individuals, who used their own signet rings to validate contracts. They include Punic, Egyptian, Greek and Etruscan seals.

The priesthood in Carthage was reserved for males of the aristocracy and was hereditary. The chief of the priests or *rab kohanim*, besides his important religious role, also exercised great influence over the workings of the State and economic life. The extent to which religion and society were intertwined is also clear from the remarkable number of theophoric names, certainly in comparison to other ancient cultures. Two examples will suffice here: Hasdrubal ('he who has Baal's help') and Hannibal

Markings of a grave at the Tophet. Stylised image of the goddess Tanit with sun disk and crescent moon.

Signet ring with man's head; Carthage, necropolis in the vicinity of Sainte–Monique; 3rd century BC; Musée National de Carthage.

Statue of Demeter. The cult of Demeter and Kore was imported into Carthage from Sicily. Collection: Musée National de Carthage (photo: E. van den Bandt).



Detail of a Punic grave stela discovered by Jean-Émile Humbert (see chapter 14); Carthage; 3rd -2nd century BC; National Museum of Antiquities; inv. no. H 1 (Photo E. van den Bandt).

4 THE PUNIC WRITING SYSTEM

Ahmed Ferjaoui

THE PUNIC WRITING SYSTEM IS ALPHABETICAL, AS IS THE PHOENICIAN 'MOTHER SYSTEM' THAT FORMS THE BASIS FOR ALL THE ALPHABETICAL SYSTEMS THAT ARE USED IN THE WORLD TODAY. AS THEY EXPANDED THEIR POSSESSIONS AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION, THE PHOENICIANS DISSEMINATED ALL THE VEHICLES AND EXPRESSIONS OF THEIR CULTURE, SUCH AS THEIR LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT, THROUGH THEIR TRADE SETTLEMENTS. AT SOME POINT THIS SCRIPT CAME TO BE DESCRIBED IN THE WEST AS 'PUNIC'.

of these jars is sometimes marked by simple stones or L–shaped sandstone *cippi*. But the items of pottery that are generally regarded as the most important from this early period of the Tophet are those found in the shrine known as the 'Chapelle Cintas'. Recent studies suggest that these miniature vases may have been produced locally. The city's expansion and development appears to have greatly reduced the available space for the deposition of offerings. Several excavations in the Tophet of Carthage have demonstrated that the ground was regularly worked and raised. Whenever there was a lack of space, the ground was raised to the level desired, to make room for the deposition of new urns and the placing of monuments, separated by paths. The urns on the upper levels are less and less elegant. They are increasingly slender, and their decorations are largely rudimentary, in many cases confined to a few painted or scored lines. It is on the basis of this ceramic material that D.B. Harden proposed a classification of the Tophet into three major phases (Tanit I, II and II), which some authors accept as a broad chronological framework.

The question of the significance to be attached to the rituals that were enacted at the Tophet for almost seven centuries still fuels debate to this day. Should we accept that child sacrifices were offered to the gods in Carthage, or reject this explanation as a myth? The subject still divides opinion in the community of experts on the Semitic world.

Many ancient and Christian historians adopted a polemic approach to the subject. Today, some authors search for evidence in the literature that may support the hypothesis of child sacrifices. It should be borne in mind, however, that contemporary historians such as Thucydides and Polybius never mentioned this subject. Furthermore, archaeology has not yet provided any convincing evidence to corroborate the 'literary evidence' that children were sacrificed to the bronze statue of Cronos. One source relates that Carthaginian children were laid in the statue's arms, and would slide down onto a bed of glowing coals below. There have always been two camps. On the one side are the revisionists, who believe that the Tophet was simply a burial ground for children who were stillborn or who died in infancy, on the other side a group of scholars who insist that children were sacrificed. Nowadays a third group has arisen, a group that adopts something of an intermediate position. These are scholars who posit that the Tophet was a sacred necropolis, which may contain some sporadic remains of sacrifices, but that it was essentially a cemetery for children who died from natural causes.

Whatever the case may be, the authors do not believe that discussions of the Tophet should be limited to a controversy about whether or not it was used for sacrifices, leading to research such as a recent study based on osteological analyses of the human and animal bone remains. To gain more insight into the beliefs and the religious outlook of the Carthaginians, it may be of greater importance to focus on the Tophet's archaeology (i.e. its stratigraphy, its component parts, and its topography), to analyse the urns, and to study the Tophet's visual culture, especially the iconography of the stelae and their inscriptions.

Stela with elephant; Carthage; 3rd -2nd century BC; Musée National de Carthage.

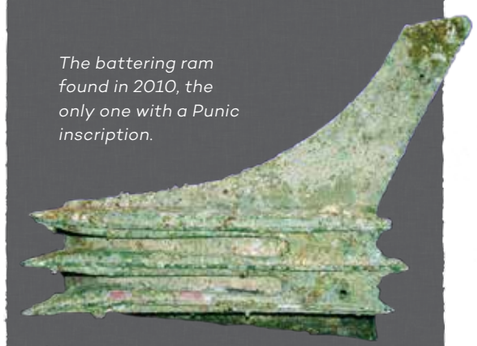
Ceremonial razor, 3rd century BC; Musée National du Bardo.

When a dead body was laid out, the body hair was removed.

PUNIC BRONZE NAVAL BATTERING RAM (Egadi Islands)

Only one of the eleven battering rams that have been found to date in the area of the Battle of the Egadi Islands, to the west of Sicily, is Punic. The others come from Roman ships. This battering ram was found in 2010 at a depth of 81 metres, during a systematic search conducted by the Soprintendenza del Mare (Regione Siciliana) and the RPM Nautical Foundation. Several amphorae, including Greco–Italic and Punic types, were found within a five–mile radius of the battering ram. No large missing parts are discernible; the only damage is a series of V–shaped notches across the horizontal sections. These notches display a furrowed pattern caused by a frontal collision with another ram. This battering ram was made using the 'lost wax' technique, but its lower section, which covered the keel, was evidently added later or repaired, since there are clear signs of parts being welded together.

The carved inscription, in Punic letters, has been studied by the specialist Giovanni Garbini. The inscription consists of one 35–letter line and bears a strong resemblance to biblical Hebrew. It is an adjuration to the god Baal: 'May this [ram] be directed against the ship: with the wrath of Baal, [the god] who makes it possible to reach the mark, may this go and strike the hewn shield in the centre'.
– *Sebastiano Tusa*

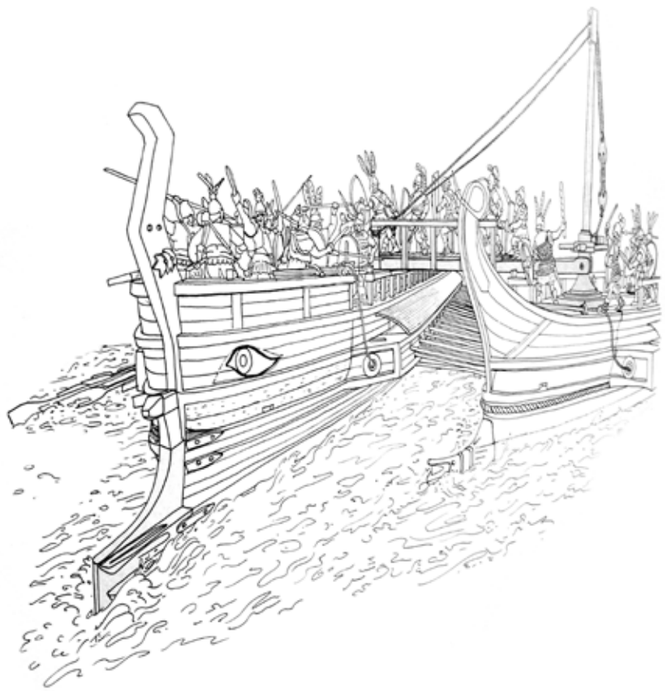


The battering ram found in 2010, the only one with a Punic inscription.

Carthaginian general who crossed the Alps with elephants) carried out a reckless manoeuvre with fifty ships against the Roman fleet, which was sailing in a compact formation. The Romans sank several of the rash Carthaginian's ships and were confident that they could overpower him, but Hannibal escaped, since the Roman ships were too slow in pursuit.

At this point the Roman fleet was without a clear commander, since Scipio had been taken captive and the other consul, Gaius Duilius, was commanding the land forces. Duilius was immediately asked to take over the command of the fleet. He naturally complied, although he must have thought it a thankless task. The fleets clashed near Mylae, a little town on a small peninsula of the north coast of Sicily. What could Duilius, an inexperienced admiral who had little affinity with the sea, accomplish against Carthage's veteran admirals, who knew all the tricks in the book and did not doubt for a moment that they were heading for a glorious victory? The Carthaginians also had the numerical advantage, with their 130 ships as against the Romans' 83 galleys. Most importantly, they were masters in executing tactical manoeuvres. To Hannibal, the outcome was a foregone conclusion. What he did not know, however, was that the Romans, knowing that they could not prevail in a traditional sea battle, had made an important modification to their ships, which had the effect of transforming the encounter into something more resembling a land battle. They had constructed a spiked boarding bridge on each ship, which would become known in the history books as the *corvus* ('raven') engine.

The Carthaginian seafarers rowed self–confidently, in closed formation, towards the enemy fleet, full of contempt for the Romans' inexperience. Even when they caught sight of the boarding bridges on the Roman ships, they did not really suspect that anything was amiss, and continued to sail straight



On the battering ram signs of an impact are clearly visible.

at the foremost Roman ships, full of brash self–belief. Not until the spikes of the first boarding bridges had pierced their decks, and the Roman soldiers had leapt across onto their ships to engage the Carthaginians in hand–to–hand combat, were they gripped by misgivings. The sea battle had become a land battle, and this was a kind of fighting in which the Romans were invincible. By then, however, it was too late to adopt a different strategy; the damage was already done. Hundreds of Carthaginians were killed, while untold others surrendered. Thirty ships were lost. Even then, the Carthaginian admiral still had thoughts of carrying the day. He ordered the crews to carry out a *diekplous*, sailing through the enemy lines. But the Romans defended themselves by turning their boarding bridges in all directions and bringing them down on the enemy ships, sinking another twenty of the Carthaginians' ships.

Aftermath

The defeat at the Battle of Mylae was the greatest humiliation in Carthaginian naval history. The loss of so many ships and men might possibly have been overcome, but the Carthaginians' reputation of invincibility, of power and superiority, a reputation based on many centuries of seamanship, had been dealt a terrible blow. Four years later, their frustrations were increased by a new defeat, this time in the Battle of Ecnomus, off the south coast of Sicily. Over the following few years, the Carthaginians defeated several sections of the Roman fleet, but without gaining a decisive victory. In 241 BC the Romans won the final sea battle in the Egadi islands, to the west of Sicily. The Carthaginians were forced to give up Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. The Carthaginians' golden age at sea was over, a demise underscored by the Second Punic War (218-201 BC), in which the Carthaginian fleet played a far smaller role than its rich past would have led one to expect. After their surrender in 201 BC, they were left with just ten warships: their naval ambitions were consigned to the past. Once they had dreamed of making the Mediterranean *mare nostrum* ('our sea'). Now the Romans ruled the waves, and they could do nothing about it. More mortifying still was the fact that for every military action they wished to undertake with their fleet, they had to seek the Romans' permission in advance.

The Romans were still not satisfied, however. The spectre of another Carthaginian revival still haunted them. They planned to wipe the city from the face of the earth. In 149 BC the Romans declared war on Carthage once again. There was no Carthaginian fleet to stop the Roman legions from crossing the sea to North Africa. Three years later, Carthage was seized and razed to the ground.

Punic cuirass; Ksour Essaf; 3rd -2nd century BC; Musée National du Bardo.

9

THE PUNIC WARS

Fik Meijer and Roald Docter

IN THE YEAR 247 OR 246 BC, HANNIBAL WAS BORN IN WHAT WAS THEN THE LARGEST CITY OF THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN: CARTHAGE. EXACTLY ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, 37 YEARS AFTER HANNIBAL'S DEATH, THIS METROPOLIS CEASED TO EXIST, LAID WASTE IN AN APOCALYPTIC SEA OF FIRE THAT HAD BLAZED FOR SIX DAYS AND NIGHTS. IN THE INTERVENING CENTURY, ROME AND CARTHAGE FOUGHT TWO LONG, BLOODY WARS (218-201 AND 149-146 BC), WHICH ARE KNOWN FROM A ROMAN PERSPECTIVE AS THE PUNIC WARS, BUT WHICH THE CARTHAGINIANS THEMSELVES PROBABLY REGARDED AS THE TWO ROMAN WARS.

of strength, geared towards the permanent elimination of the city that had so long been a thorn in the Romans' side.

The Carthaginians resisted doggedly for over two years, which must have astonished the Romans, who had demanded that their opponents hand over all their weapons in exchange for the promise of peace. The Carthaginians had fulfilled these conditions, but the Romans followed it up with a new demand: the Carthaginians were to abandon their city and found a new one, 20 kilometres further inland. For the Carthaginians this was going too far, and they declared war on the Romans. Their city underwent a true metamorphosis. Temples, public buildings and squares were converted into workshops. Men and women worked day and night in shifts, forging new weapons. Every day, they produced 100 shields, 300 swords, 1,000 catapults and 500 javelins and spears. Women cut their long hair and used it to string their bows.

The tide turned in 147 BC, with the arrival of a new Roman consul, Scipio Aemilianus. He ensured that the Carthaginians' supply lines were watched more closely than before. A dam was built, closing off the harbour. After that, food shortages soon became apparent in the city. From the walls, the Carthaginians could see that the Romans were preparing for a massive offensive. But the Romans were not in any hurry. They had watched as people flocked to the city from the countryside over a period of several months, causing serious overcrowding. It was clear to the besieging forces that the Carthaginians – by then the city had a population of several hundred thousand people (estimates vary from 400,000 to 700,000) – were shut up within their walls. They had nowhere to go. In the packed streets, the people became ever more violent in their efforts to get hold of food. Brawls became commonplace. Not just in the street – fighting was even seen in the Carthaginian Senate.

In the spring of 146 BC, Scipio prepared to launch the decisive attack. The Romans knew that victory could not elude them, and with a great sense of theatricality, Scipio persuaded his soldiers that the gods too were on their side. In a solemn ceremony known as *evocatio*, he exhorted the Carthaginian gods to abandon the city and settle in Rome instead. Now that its gods had forsaken it, Carthage could be seized and plundered without anyone being able to accuse the Romans of sacrilege.

The Carthaginians resisted bravely and even managed to put some of the Romans' battering rams out of action, but eventually the Romans succeeded in cutting them off from the outside world. The Roman troops tore down the walls and ran through the narrow streets, with their high buildings, towards the city centre. Initially they were fired at from the roofs, but once they had taken the first houses, they laid beams and planks over the spaces in between and in this way cleared a path to the market. The rest of the Roman soldiers fought their way through the narrow alleys, spreading death and destruction everywhere. People were shot or stabbed. For a time the Romans were loath to set fire to the city, concerned that their own soldiers on the roofs might be consumed by the flames, but once the operation was progressing steadily, Scipio personally ordered his men to set fire to several alleys.

By then, the city presented a terrifying appearance. Fierce fires blazed everywhere. Any buildings that were still standing were demolished with great ferocity. Women, children and elderly men who had been sheltering inside emerged into the street half–burned or fell from the collapsing roofs. Soon the streets and alleys were littered with bodies. This did not deter the Romans. They had specially trained field engineers who went along efficiently removing obstacles from their path: with pickaxes and spears they cleared the bodies and waste from the streets, tossing them into pits or ditches. The carnage was unspeakable. People lay in pits, some still alive, while Roman horsemen rode over them. The fighting and slaughter carried on for over a week, until the Carthaginians finally capitulated. By then, most of the population were dead. Fifty thousand men, women and children surrendered, and would be taken as slaves. The city continued to burn for days. All that remained was an expanse of blackened ruins. Meanwhile, the Roman war machine thundered relentlessly on. In due course, Scipio ordered his troops to demolish any building that was still standing. The soldiers were given permission to ransack the

city until there was nothing left. Many precious items that came into the hands of the generals were sent to Rome to be displayed in public as a permanent memorial to one of the greatest triumphs of Roman history.

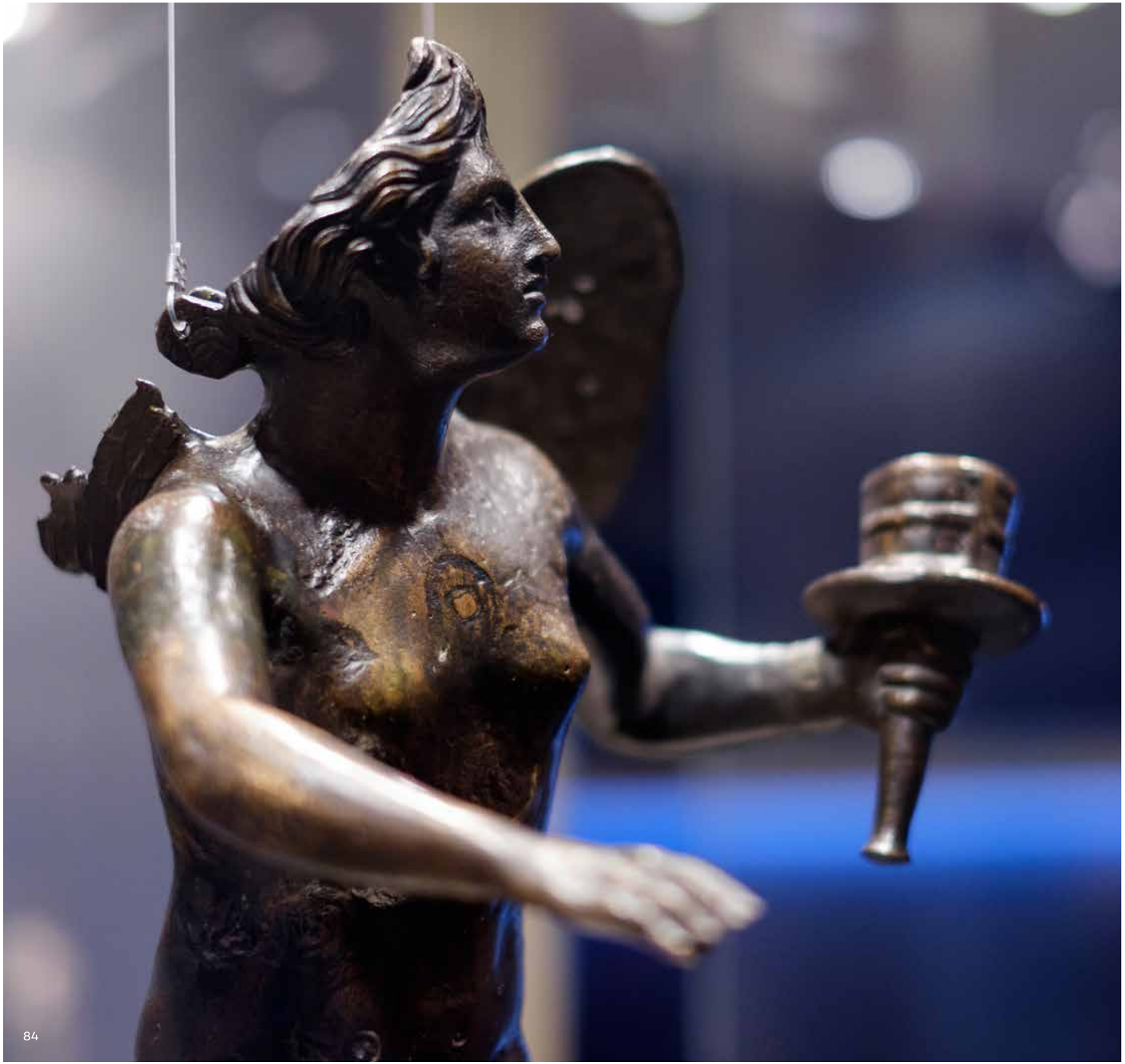
According to the Greek historian Polybius, Scipio could not suppress his emotion when he saw the old city lying in ruins. Scipio, when he looked upon the city as it was utterly perishing and in the last throes of its complete destruction, is said to have shed tears and wept openly for his enemies. After being wrapped in thought for long, and realizing that all cities, nations, and authorities must, like men, meet their doom; that this happened to Ilium, once a prosperous city, to the empires of Assyria, Media, and Persia, the greatest of their time, and to Macedonia itself, the brilliance of which was so recent, either deliberately or the verses escaping him, he said:

A day will come when sacred Troy shall perish,
And Priam and his people shall be slain.

And when Polybius speaking with freedom to him, for he was his teacher, asked him what he meant by the words, they say that without any attempt at concealment he named his own country, for which he feared when he reflected on the fate of all things human. - *Translation: Loeb Classical Library*

When news of the victory reached Rome, people rushed out of their houses to celebrate in the street. For over a century they had lived in constant fear of the Carthaginians. Now it was finally over. They now felt assured that no state would ever be capable of stopping the Romans' ambitions.

Map of Hannibal's march (white line). The dotted line shows the route followed by Hannibal's brother, Hasdrubal, who brought reinforcements but was defeated by the Romans. The red dots indicate the places where major battles between Hannibal's army and the Roman legions took place.



Bronze Eros with lamp; shipwreck of Mahdia; 100 BC; Musée National du Bardo (Photo: E. van den Bandt).

10
THE MAHDIA SHIPWRECK

Ruurd Halbertsma

THE DESTRUCTION OF CARTHAGE IN 146 BC BY THE ROMAN LEGIONS WAS NOT AN ISOLATED EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION. ONCE THE PUNIC THREAT HAD BEEN EXTINGUISHED, THE ROMANS TURNED THEIR ATTENTION TO SUBDUING POCKETS OF RESISTANCE IN THE EAST. A NUMBER OF GREEK CITY–STATES OF THE ACHAEAN LEAGUE WERE IN REVOLT AGAINST ROMAN RULE. THE SENATE SENT TWO LEGIONS COMMANDED BY LUCIUS MUMMIUS TO GREECE. OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF CORINTH, THE ROMAN AND GREEK TROOPS ENGAGED IN BATTLE.

'it is said that Caesar . . . when he had pursued Pompey . . . was troubled by a dream in which he saw a whole army weeping, and that he immediately made a memorandum in writing that Carthage should be colonised. Returning to Rome not long after, and while making a distribution of lands to the poor, he arranged to send some of them to Carthage and some to Corinth. But he was assassinated shortly afterward . . . and his son Augustus, finding this memorandum, built the present Carthage, not on the site of the old one, but very near it, in order to avoid the ancient curse. I have ascertained that he sent some 3000 colonists from Rome and that the rest came from the neighbouring country. – Appian, Punica, 136

The prosperity and opulence that returned to Carthage in the Roman period often found expression in superb mosaics; Roman period; Musée National du Bardo.

One of the episodes [in Virgil's *Aeneid*] that the Romans will certainly have found moving is that in which Virgil describes the love between Dido and Aeneas. The African land on which the queen and the hero first met, and this luxurious city that was being built there, fired the imagination. By a fortunate coincidence, Augustus happened to be extremely interested in Carthage at that time; he invited his subjects to rescue the city from its wretched state and to restore it to its former glory. The Emperor and the poet agreed; the Muses conspired with political ambition. This was all that was needed to make the reconstruction of Carthage a fashionable venture, rather than the partisan undertaking it had been in the past.'– *Audollent 1901. [transl. BJ]*

In Hadrian's biography, we read: 'Though he cared nothing for inscriptions on his public works, he gave the name of Hadrianopolis to many cities, as, for example, even to Carthage and a section of Athens; and he also gave his name to aqueducts without number'. – *Historia Augusta, The Life of Hadrian, 20.4-5.*

When we study the city plans in detail, we see that nothing was left to chance. From the latter half of the second century AD onwards, most of the public buildings, such as the theatre, the amphitheatre and the circus were in use, They were located on the outskirts of the city, probably to spare the city centre the nuisance that necessarily accompanied large crowds, chariots and wild animals.

The role played by the Antonine emperors in enhancing the splendour of Carthage is confirmed by several texts. One of the city's inhabitants, Apuleius (AD 125-175), wrote: 'Behold these charming buildings, so superb in construction, so beautiful in decoration, in which they have invested their capital; behold these villas built on a scale that vies with cities, these houses that are embellished in the manner of temples, these hordes of countless adorned slaves, these sumptuous furnishings. Everything accrues to them, everything breathes opulence' (*On the God of Socrates*, 22.171; transl. BJ)'.

One of the monuments that were built in this dynasty was the aqueduct of Zaghouan, which appears to have been an initiative of Hadrian and which was completed under Antoninus Pius in AD 157. The large Antonine Baths were dedicated in the same year and completed in AD 162. The aqueduct assured Carthage of a daily water supply of 32,000 cubic metres. The other monument that should be mentioned is the harbour complex that was completed under Commodus (AD 180-192). The old Punic harbours were completely redesigned and given a different function. Between AD 98 and 138, the rectangular harbour was enlarged and modified, acquiring a hexagonal shape resembling that of Trajan's inland harbour in Ostia. The circular harbour was completed in the second century AD, when the quayside around the harbour was constructed and the old 'admiralty island' was converted into an open square surrounded by columns, with a small temple and an octagonal building in the middle. This ensemble, built in grand imperial style, was further embellished by a triumphal arch with four openings. This work undoubtedly took place under Commodus, who created, in AD 186, the 'grain fleet' (that is, the fleet that imported grain from Africa), which was probably stationed in Carthage.

Emperor Commodus named the city 'Carthage Alexandria Commodiana Togata' (*togata* signifying 'clad in a Roman toga'. While the large complexes were being constructed on the Byrsa Hill and in the harbour area, it appears that from an early stage the Carthaginian authorities also indulged their love of spectacle by building monumental recreational structures. None of them is precisely dated, but Tertullian (AD 155/170-222) refers to four monumental structures used to stage games or plays: the circus, the theatre, het amphitheatre, and the stadium (*De spectaculis*). Later, Augustinus refers to hunting in the amphitheatre, pantomime in the theatre, chariot races in the circus, and a *naumachia* (sea battle in the theatre, or in the amphitheatre at an earlier stage). If we are to believe the literary sources, this love of games and plays endured, even when King Gaiseric of the Vandals appeared at the gates of the city in AD 439.

The End of Prosperity

All the conditions were in place for the birth of a real Rome – a Rome in Africa, wrote Salvian, in his treatise *On the Government of God* (7.13-17). Carthage was never a rival for the glory of Rome, but from the early third century AD onwards, according to the ancient scribes, it was one of the candidates for the second place, alongside illustrious cities such as Constantinople and Alexandria. From Septimius Severus (193-211) onwards, however, we see the progressive dismantlement of the *pertica* of Carthage: the old cities that had been placed under its authority, such as Dougga, became independent. The regional dignitaries who had previously been required to pay tribute to Carthage for the performance of certain tasks and positions in the Magistracy left the city almost immediately.

To compensate Carthage for these losses, Emperor Caracalla conferred the *ius italicum* on the colony, which was renamed Colonia Concordia Iulia Aurelia Antoniniana Carthago. This placed it on the same footing, with the same fiscal benefits, as a city in Italy. This measure did not suffice, however, since with the exception of the Odeon, which Tertullian tells us was built under Septimius Severus, no more really large public buildings were registered that are comparable to what was achieved in the Antonine period. This grand Carthage would continue to exist for some time. Aurelius Victor (*De Caesaribus* 39.45) writes that Diocletian (284-305) built monumental structures in several cities including Carthage. Under Constantine the Great (307-337), inscriptions refer to multiple instances of restoration work on buildings that were probably destroyed in AD 310 when the soldiers of Maxentius (306-312) plundered the city. The last great structure is the city wall, which the *chronica Gallica* (AD 452) attribute to Theodosius II and Galla Placidia. The wall was evidently not very effective, since Gaiseric had little trouble taking the city in AD 439.

Mosaics from the collection of the Musée National du Bardo, Tunis.

Scipio weeping for Carthage; Ludwig Gottlieb Portman; 1797; Rijksmuseum Amsterdam; inv. no. RP-P-1905-2181.

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DIDO AND HANNIBAL THROUGH WESTERN EYES

Eric M. Moormann

THE HISTORY OF CARTHAGE HAS FIRED THE IMAGINATIONS OF WRITERS AND ARTISTS SINCE THE MIDDLE AGES, BECAUSE OF THE CITY'S HEROIC RESISTANCE TO THE ROMANS. MANY TRIED TO DEPICT OR DESCRIBE EPISODES FROM CARTHAGE'S PAST WITHOUT ANY KNOWLEDGE OF NORTH AFRICA. THE SOURCES THEY CONSULTED WERE FIRST AND FOREMOST ROMAN TEXTS SUCH AS VIRGIL'S *AENEID* AND LIVY'S HISTORY OF ROME, *AB URBE CONDITA*. THEY ALSO DREW ON BIOGRAPHIES OF THE PROTAGONISTS BY THE GREEK WRITER PLUTARCH, WHICH WERE WIDELY DISSEMINATED (LARGELY IN FRENCH TRANSLATION) THROUGHOUT WESTERN EUROPE. FOR MANY CENTURIES, SOURCES ILLUMINATING THE PUNIC SIDE OF EVENTS WERE ENTIRELY ABSENT.

The Battle of Zama; 1567; Cornelis Cort; Leiden University Library; inv. no. PK–P–102.455.

The Dutch tragedy *Didoos doot* ('The Death of Dido'), written in 1668 by Andries Pels, served in turn as a source of inspiration well into the eighteenth century, when the play was still being performed. In a print by Simon Fokke, dating from 1758, Dido is burning at the stake in front of a canal house, while Aeneas is depicted as a modern burgher, complete with the long wig that was fashionable at the time. The aim was probably to ridicule Pels's play, which was regarded as pompous. The scene included several minor characters: a urinating figure of Amor, Dido's wet nurse Anna in the doorway, and Juno riding a chariot across the clouds. None of the artists who produced any of these paintings or prints made the slightest effort to portray Carthage or Dido as foreign. The architecture is classicist, and the characters' dress is quasi–Roman, probably based on stage costumes.

Another popular theme, second only to the dramatic love between Dido and Aeneas, was the history of the Carthaginian Princess Sophonisba, who was forbidden to marry her beloved Massinissa. Sophonisba was Hannibal's niece, while Prince Massinissa was one of Scipio's allies. The Roman general would not countenance this relationship between Massinissa and his arch–enemy's kinswoman, and the couple sealed their suicide pact by drinking poison mixed with wine. This exemplum of lovers driven to seek death by the constancy of their love is frequently depicted in frescoes and paintings. The setting for the tale is a sumptuous palace hall, with a hint at Oriental decadence. Even so, all attention focuses on the couple and their admirable loyalty to one another.

The military qualities of the Carthaginians, starting with valiant Dido herself, greatly appealed to the Baroque artists who worked for kings and other rulers. Hannibal was seen in antiquity as one of the two greatest generals of all time (the other being Alexander the Great), endowed with a mix of tactical insight and great courage. The deployment of elephants gave his battles an added air of spectacle: Cornelis Cort's print of 1567 depicts the Romans utterly unmanned, scarcely capable of defeating any of their opponents. However, the attentive viewer

Josef Stallaert, The Death of Dido, Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium.

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REFLECTIONS OF CARTHAGE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ART

Eric Gubel

THE 1858 PUBLICATION OF THE BOOK VERSION OF THÉOPHILE GAUTIER'S *LE ROMAN DE LA MOMIE*, WHICH HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN SERIALISED IN NEWSPAPERS, WAS A LANDMARK IN THE EGYPTOMANIA THAT HAD SPREAD THROUGH VIRTUALLY ALL BRANCHES OF WESTERN ART SINCE THE CAMPAIGNS OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE. ARMED WITH A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF THE WRITINGS OF CLASSICAL AUTHORS ON ANCIENT CARTHAGE, ONE OF GAUTIER'S MOST ARDENT ADMIRERS, GUSTAVE FLAUBERT – WHO HAD GARNERED SUCH SUCCESS (AND SCANDAL) WITH HIS NOVEL *MADAME BOVARY* (1857) – SET OFF TO TUNIS THE FOLLOWING SPRING TO ACQUIRE A CERTAIN *COULEUR LOCALE* WITH WHICH TO SPICE UP HIS NOVEL *SALAMMBÔ*.