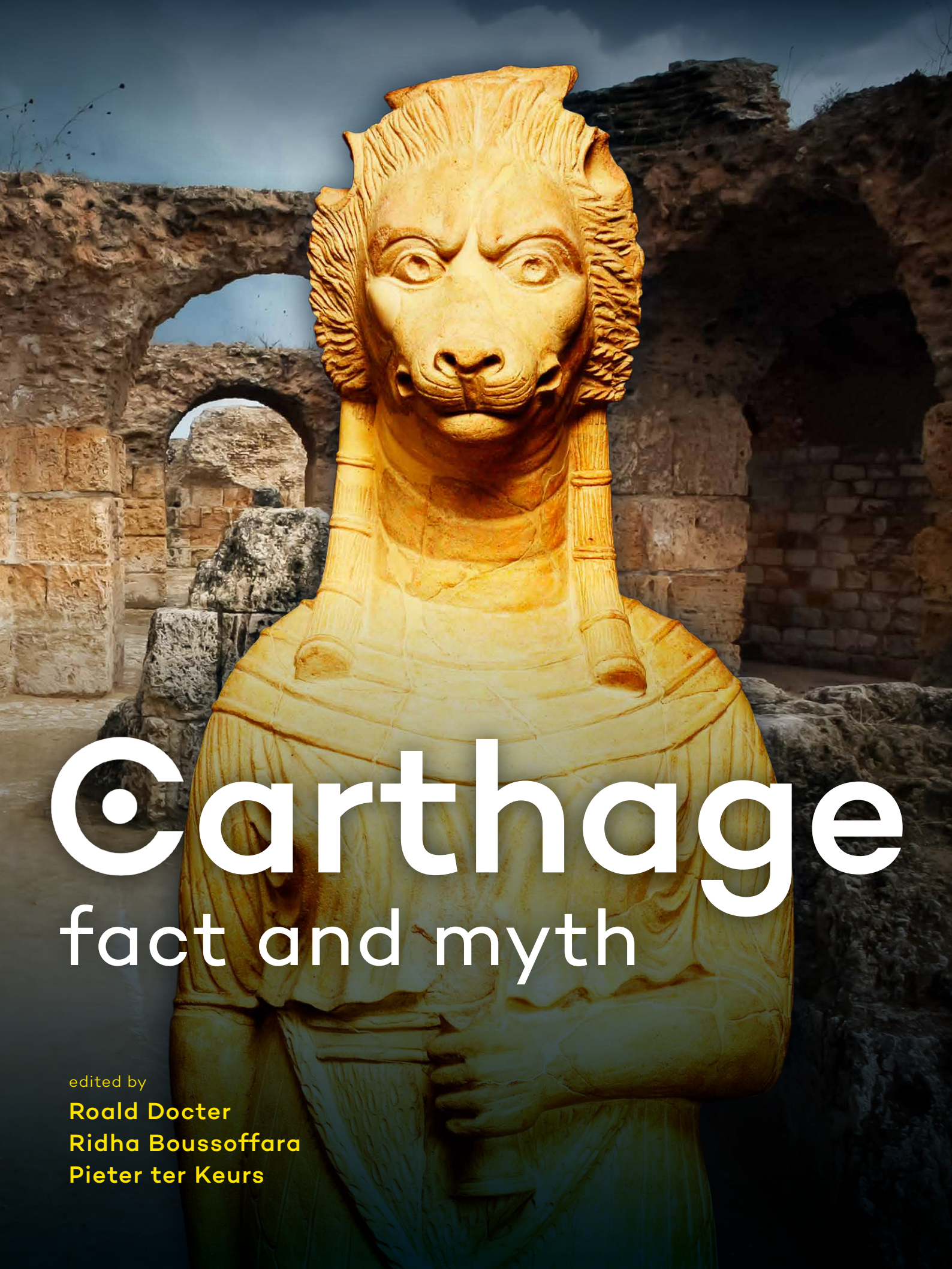

Carthage

fact and myth

edited by
Roald Docter
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Pieter ter Keurs

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AGO
Roman Carthage from 146 BC
After the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC at first the intention was to never rebuild the city again. After some time this changed. Under emperor Augustus the new Roman Carthage quickly grew into a metropole. Again the city became the pivot of an extended trading network. In the Christian era, Carthage remained a city of importance.

PREFACE

In March 1796, the Dutch military engineer Jean-Émile Humbert (1771-1839) arrived in Tunis. He had been hired by Hamouda Pasha, the Bey van Tunis, to modernise the city and large sections of the fortifications. When not busy with his official activities, Humbert pursued an interest in archaeology, particularly in relation to Ancient Carthage. His long stay in what is now called Tunisia would eventually produce spectacular results.

Humbert would become known as the man who rediscovered Punic Carthage, collecting large numbers of Punic and Roman antiquities for the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. These included large statues of Roman emperors, which Humbert shipped via Utica to Leiden with the Bey's permission. The Punic stelae he discovered, which made it possiable to pinpoint the location of Ancient Carthage, also found their way to Leiden.

In the partnership between the Institut National du Patrimoine in Tunis and the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, the long-standing ties between Tunisia and the Netherlands play an important role. Historical ties alone cannot sustain a partnership in the 21st century, however. Both partners are well aware of this, and are constantly searching for vibrant and inspiring modes of cooperation. The exhibition on Carthage at the museum in Leiden is one result – a visible testimony to this relationship. In 2015 a sequel to this exhibition will open at the Musée National de Carthage, in the form of an exhibition on Jean-Émile Humbert.

Every country attaches importance to the fascinating details of the history in which it is rooted. For Tunisia, where great political changes are taking place at the moment, the past is an essential part of the present. Our partnership plays an important role in this. We are proud of this role, and look forward to setting up many more activities in the future.

In 1963 a collaborative venture between the National Museum of Antiquities and the Musée National du Bardo produced an exhibition on mosaics. The current event is the first exhibition about Carthage ever to be held in the Netherlands.

Most of the items on display as part of the Leiden exhibition, aside from the National Museum of Antiquities' own collection, come from the collections of the Musée National du Bardo and the Musée National de Carthage. In addition, objects were provided on loan by the Louvre, the British Museum, Soprintendenza del mare, Palermo, De Nederlandse Bank, the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the University of Leiden, the Allard Pierson Museum, Eye Film Institute, the National Library of the Netherlands (Koninklijke Bibliotheek), the Royal Antiquarian Society, Groningen, Museum (Veenkoloniaal Museum, Veendam), Museum Boymans van Beuningen, and a private collection in Leuven. We should like to thank all lenders for their generosity in making parts of their collection available for this exhibition.

Nabil Kallala
Institut National du Patrimoine
Tunis

Wim Weijland
National Museum of Antiquities
Leiden

The exhibition 'Carthago' in the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, was open to the public from 27 November 2014 to 10 May 2015. It consisted of three parts. The first room presented the story of Punic Carthage from its founding in the ninth century B.C. to the end of the Second Punic War in 201 B.C. The second room started with Cato's campaign for the destruction of Carthage and mainly dealt with the Roman period. Separately, there was a presentation on the history of archaeological research in Carthage, from the rediscovery by Jean-Émile Humbert (1817) to the work of archaeologists from the University of Amsterdam in 2000/2001.

The exhibition was made possible by the support of the Institut National du Patrimoine in Tunis. Many important loans came from the Musée National du Bardo and the Musée National de Carthage.

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 of the Byrsa.

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.

arts and crafts aplenty, and a flourishing religious life with particular attention for the gods venerated in Tyre. Carthage was protected by robust walls, and from the second century BC it possessed a characteristic harbour, composed of a rectangular commercial and a circular military harbour, which are still visible in the landscape today.

The Carthaginian fleet was invincible in the Mediterranean until the First Punic War. On the Italian mainland, however, Rome was a power that could not be ignored. The Romans' interest in Sicily brought them into conflict with the Carthaginians, who included the entire western part of the island within their sphere of influence. In 264 BC the tension exploded into open conflict in the First Punic War, with Rome largely prevailing on land and Carthage at sea. The crushing defeat of the Carthaginian fleet off the coast of Sicily was therefore utterly unexpected (see chapter 7). Rome had become unassailable, and the power of Carthage would gradually decline.

Then, during the Second Punic War (218-201 BC), the most famous Carthaginian of all time appeared on the scene: Hannibal. Born in 247 or 246 BC as the son of the general Hamilcar, Hannibal was more or less predestined for a military career. While still young he followed his father to Spain and witnessed the successful campaigns that consolidated the Carthaginian presence on the Iberian peninsula. The Carthaginians had had trade settlements in southern Spain for centuries, but under Hamilcar came a great wave of territorial expansion. After Hamilcar's death, Hannibal's brother initially took over as commander of the armies, but when he was killed in battle, Hannibal – though still a young man – became the unchallenged leader of the Carthaginian armies in Spain (see chapter 9).

Hannibal's military expedition through Spain to northern Europe, first crossing the Rhône and then marching over the Alps to northern Italy, took the Romans completely by surprise. They had already tried to halt Hannibal's army in Spain and France, but after this they had 'lost track of it'. When the army suddenly appeared in northern Italy, complete with a herd of elephants, the Romans suffered a severe psychological shock. Hannibal dealt a series of defeats to Roman forces and threatened Rome itself, but was unable to clinch victory.

With the counter–attack through Spain to North Africa, the Romans finally turned the tables on the Carthaginians. The Roman general Scipio Africanus defeated Hannibal in 202 BC at Zama, to the southwest of Carthage.

At the end of the Third Punic War, in 146 BC, Carthage was laid waste by the Roman troops. The glorious era of this proud city–state was over, never to revive.

Since few written sources from Punic Carthage have been preserved, there are many gaps in the existing historiography. While archaeolog-

'Hannibal's district'. Part of the ruins of Carthage, with a view of the suburbs of Tunis. This part of Punic Carthage was built in the time when the city was ruled by Hannibal.

Signet ring, woman with bird; Carthage, necropolis in the vicinity of Sainte–Monique; 3rd century BC; Musée National de Carthage.

ical research can fill in parts of Carthaginian history in greater detail, the picture remains fragmentary, leaving many questions unanswered. Partly because of this, the reality is often obscured by the mythical past. Sometimes the picture painted is dominated by aggression, violence and child sacrifices (for instance in the work of the French novelist Gustave Flaubert), while at other times Carthage is glorified. Some writers discuss the democratic nature of the city–state's governance, or the fact that the first agricultural treatise is said to have been written there (by Mago, a manuscript of which only fragments have survived, in Latin translation rather than the Punic original).

While it is true that Carthage had a range of administrative bodies within which affairs of state could be debated at length, decisions were mainly the prerogative of the wealthiest families. Later on there was a kind of representative body that was able to enforce its will in certain issues, for instance regarding the appointment of military leaders, but there was probably no democratic governance with voting rights for the population.

As for Mago's treatise on agriculture, it should not be seen solely in the context of an idealisation of the land and rural life. On the one hand, it was a practical manual on agriculture, and on the other hand, it reflected the custom of Carthage's wealthy elite to build mansions in the countryside, while administering and deriving profit from the surrounding estates. The land was fertile and hence yielded a welcome supplementary income, frequently achieved by the deployment of numerous slaves. Carthage long had a reputation as the granary of the Roman Empire.

Slave bracelet; Bulla Regia; 4th century AD; Musée National du Bardo.

The Carthaginians imported large numbers of slaves from regions such as Central Africa for domestic and agricultural work.

Carthage would endure for a long time. After the devastation the city was rebuilt by the Romans and enjoyed a new period of great prosperity. Later in the Byzantine period, too, Carthage remained important. After that, however, Tunis would emerge as the major city in this part of North Africa. Many houses and other buildings would be constructed using stones from Carthage, which gradually slipped into decline as a result. By the end of the eighteenth century, when the Dutchmen Jean–Émile Humbert was hired as a civil engineer by the Bey of Tunis, Hammouda Pacha, the location of the ancient Punic city of Carthage was no longer known. It appeared to have vanished from the face of the earth (see chapter 14).

In the course of the nineteenth century, however, Dutch, Danish, French and British archaeologists discovered more and more about the city's past. Even today, we are still steadily expanding our stock of knowledge of the location, infrastructure and material culture of Carthage. Much work remains to be done, and we may not be able to fill in every blank. Still, however rudimentary our understanding of Carthaginian material culture, we should bear in mind that Carthage never disappeared entirely. It endures in the collective memory of the local population, and in the European imagination it indeed plays a leading role. In prints produced in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries we find a wealth of images representing Carthaginian mythical themes, generally with some moralistic import. Great rulers and military leaders identified with generals from the Punic wars. Charles V, who was eager to conquer parts of North Africa, modelled his ambitions on Scipio Africanus. Napoleon saw himself as marching in the footsteps of Hannibal, in his expedition across the Alps. Carthage still appeals to the popular imagination to this day. The history of this city–state and its position in the Mediterranean region is evidently a living legend.

Statues from Idalion, Cyprus. Collection British Museum, London (photo: E. van den Bandt).

Phoenician silver–gilt dish. c. 700–675 BC. National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

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.

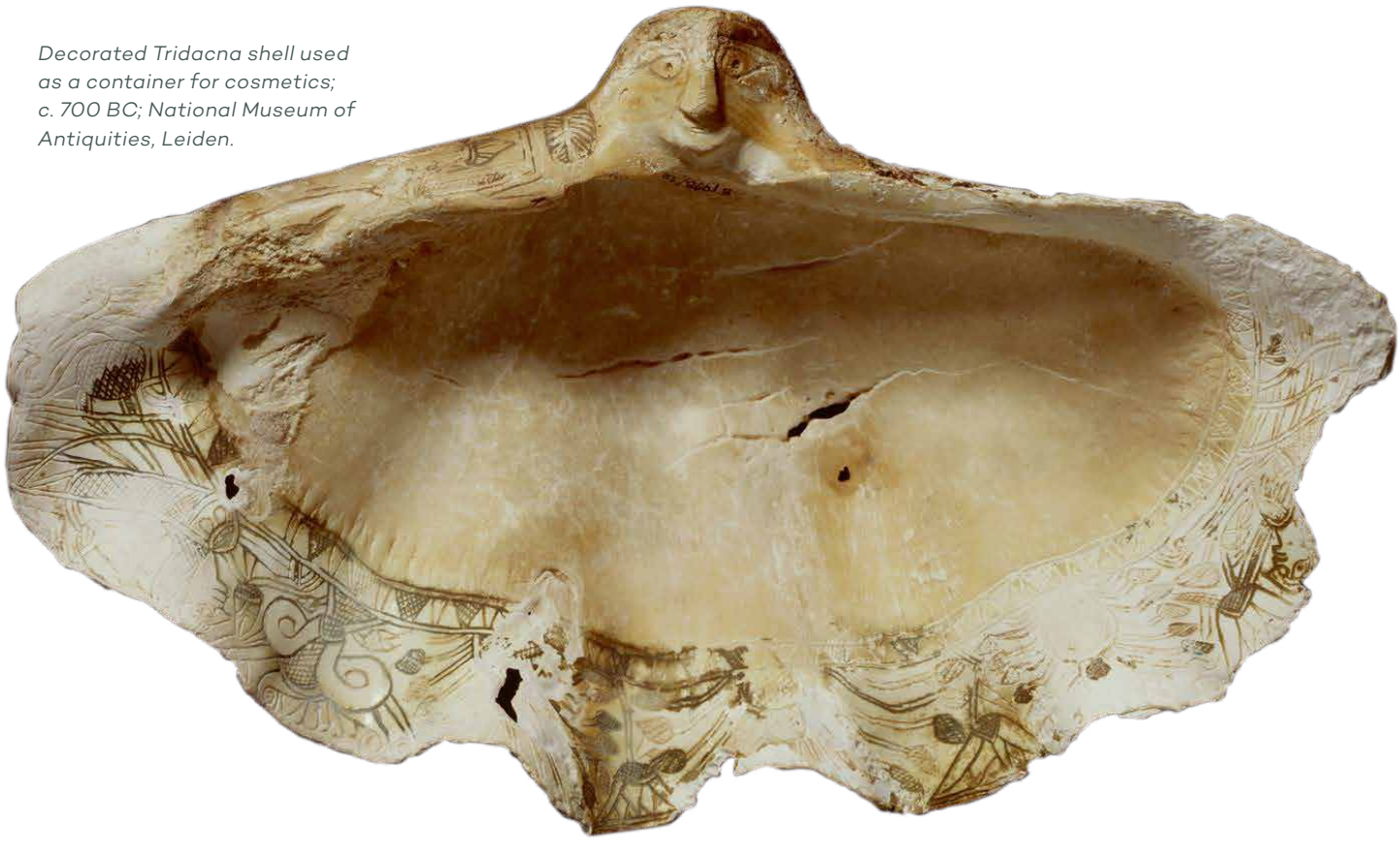
Canaan and Lebanon

From archaeological research and very early texts, we know that Phoenicia was a strategic location in the ancient Near East as far back as the third millennium BC. The coastal region was a narrow fertile corridor through which everything and everyone – most notably merchants – had to pass on the way to Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Egypt. On clay tablets found in Ebla in present–day Syria, this coastal strip is called *Ganane* (Canaan) or *Labanaan* (Lebanon), and its biggest city was Gubla. This city is better known by its Greek name of Byblos/Βύβλος. It has been said that this was an Egyptian settlement, but it may have merely been a place of transit for cedarwood and lapis lazuli. Archaeological remains prove that there were in any case close and frequent ties with Egypt in this period. Other major settlements around this time were those of Sidon and Tyre. This means that over a thousand years before the first references in the sources to Phoenician merchants, their ancestors were already playing a key role in the economy of the ancient Near East. Around 2200 BC these coastal cities sank into a malaise and were abandoned. Like other cities, they were unable to respond adequately to the severe regional crisis that was caused, among other things, by deteriorating climate conditions. This led to major economic and political tensions in the region, partly caused by waves of migration.

An Egyptian Place of Transit

At the beginning of the second millennium BC, most of the cities in the coastal region experienced a revival. Byblos still proved to be of great strategic importance to Egypt. Sumptuous graves filled with gold and silver have been found in the city, and the Egyptian–inspired Obelisk Temple, where the city–goddess Ba'alat–Gubla was worshipped, dates from the second millennium BC. Much of our information about this period comes from the Egyptian correspondence archives at El–Amarna. These archives are a vast storehouse of diplomatic correspondence on clay tablets between Egyptian and foreign officials, including inhabitants of the cities of Tyre and Byblos, and provide a unique picture of the economic life of the fourteenth century BC. We learn from these texts that cities in Phoenicia were crucial partners and trading centres for the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Sarcophagus of Ahiram, with decorations and inscriptions honouring the memory of Ahiram, King of Byblos.



Decorated Tridacna shell used as a container for cosmetics; c. 700 BC; National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

Around 1200 BC began an almost 200–year period of decline during which many of the important cities of the Near East crumbled into ruins. The explanation for the turbulence may lie, perhaps, in the diverse regional changes: the Egyptian Empire had collapsed, the Israelites were strengthening their power base in the Southern Levant, the Philistines and other maritime peoples settled in the coastal region, and the Arameans conquered large swathes of what had been Canaan. While many other settlements, especially those within the Philistines' direct sphere of influence, were abandoned, the Phoenician cities withstood the pressures of the times. They certainly suffered from the tense situation in the eastern Mediterranean, but Phoenician society did not collapse. There are some indications that trade continued in this period, not only with the interior, but also with the islands and coastal regions in the Mediterranean. Nonetheless, there was certainly a shift in the balance of power: Sidon had taken over from Byblos as the most important city in Phoenicia. It was in this period that the Phoenician language and script developed and became disseminated.

A Very Early Alphabet

Phoenician is a Semitic language, which strongly resembles the (later) Aramaic and biblical Hebrew. Of particular interest was its use of an alphabetical script consisting of twenty–two letters. There was a kind of alphabet in Ugarit as far back as the fifteenth century, which used cuneiform script, but most linguists assume that Phoenician script derives from the Proto–Sinaitic of the Middle and Late Bronze Age

TYPICAL PHOENICIAN CRAFTS

The Phoenicians were not just successful merchants; they were also highly skilled in glassmaking, ivory carving, and metalworking. They created a hybrid culture, which spread through their large trade network, permeating the entire Mediterranean region by about 700 BC. Their silver–gilt dishes have been found in graves from Italy to Mesopotamia. These Phoenician works of art display a mixture of styles: Egyptian charioteers driving Hittite chariots, a hovering bird of prey depicted in Egyptian style above a Mesopotamian hill, and Assyrians sporting long beards alongside clean–shaven Egyptian soldiers.
– Lucas Petit

Tyre. Ruins of Roman Palaestra, with columns made of Egyptian granite. (© Ddkg | dreamstime.com)

Map of Phoenicia.

THE WORD 'PHOENICIAN'

The Phoenicians did not refer to themselves by that name. They were *can'ani* or Canaanites. It was the Greeks who thought up the name *phoinix* for the inhabitants of present–day Lebanon. The word's etymology remains unclear. It may refer to the crimson dye of the colourful cloths for which the Phoenicians were known. Alternatively, it may derive from the name of the hero Phoenix, the Phoenicians' primogenitor. The Romans, basing themselves on Greek literature, used the terms *poenus* and *phoenix*. The former, from which the English word Punic derives, refers to the Phoenicians' North African descendants.

– Lucas Petit

Temple of the obelisks in Byblos.

(c. 2000-1200 BC). The oldest known Phoenician inscription is the Ahiram epitaph, an inscription on a royal sarcophagus dating from c. 1200 BC. It would appear that the language and script were not fully adopted by society, however, until the eleventh century BC. The script was written entirely without vowels, in contrast to Aramaic and biblical Hebrew.

Thanks to the city–state's commercial network, the Phoenician language spread throughout the Mediterranean region from the ninth century BC onwards, a process that was naturally assisted by the fact that this alphabetical system, unlike cuneiform script and Egyptian hieroglyphics, was not only easy to learn but could also be used in other languages. Both the Greek and Latin alphabets are based on the original Phoenician script. As the various colonies acquired greater independence, the script changed. For instance, around the third century BC the script in Carthage, also known as Punic, was cursive (see chapter 4).

A Trading Nation

Trade flourished, and the explosive population growth in the Phoenician coastal region meant that many were compelled to migrate west. What happened in their home country over the next two centuries is partly veiled in obscurity. It is striking that we know more about the Phoenicians' western commercial relations and colonies than we do about Phoenicia itself. This is mainly because very few original texts have been found in the mother country. Most of the information we possess about Phoenicia comes from Assyrian annals, biblical texts and later Greek works. Partly for this reason, we do not find any references to important cities such as Tyre until a relatively late period, whereas we know that they had played an important part long before that. It can be assumed that Tyre was the most powerful city in the coastal region from the tenth century BC onwards, having overtaken Byblos and Sidon. It was situated on an island just off the coast and possessed a satellite city on the mainland. In addition to two large harbours, a market and a palace, Tyre also possessed several temples that were dedicated to the city's most prominent deities: Melqart, Astarte and Ba'al–Shamem.

The Phoenician Deities

The Phoenicians' gods were closely linked to the pantheon of other Levantine cultures. Chief among them were the mother goddess Astarte – also known as Ishtar – and Asherah, the fertility goddess, who was frequently depicted with a tree of life. As the Phoenician world gained in importance, we see a growth in the number of male gods. Thus, Asherah acquired a husband named El, and other gods too appeared on the stage, such as Adonis (the god of bread), Yam (the god of the sea) and Reshef (the god of lightning and plagues). Each of the major Phoenician cities had its own city–god, who was worshipped in one of the main temples. While Adonis was of great importance in Byblos, and somewhat later also on Cyprus, it was Melqart, the god of the sea and the underworld, who prevailed in Tyre and Carthage.

Kition. In the Phoenician period, Kition, like Carthage, was known as the 'New City'. Phoenician temple of Astarte, Temeros.

From East to West

The colonisation process in the Mediterranean to which the Phoenicians owe their fame appears to have been initiated primarily by the city of Tyre. It was there, in the tenth century BC, that King Hiram I acquired a trade monopoly, giving rise to an expansion that made the city the most important Phoenician port in the eastern Mediterranean. He started by focusing on trade with the interior and the Red Sea. But written sources show that Hiram also exercised control on Cyprus. Still, the island was not a real colony at this point. It was not until the mid–ninth century BC, under his successor, that the first settlement was built on Cyprus: Kition. The presence of copper on the island was a major attraction at first. But Cyprus was also used as

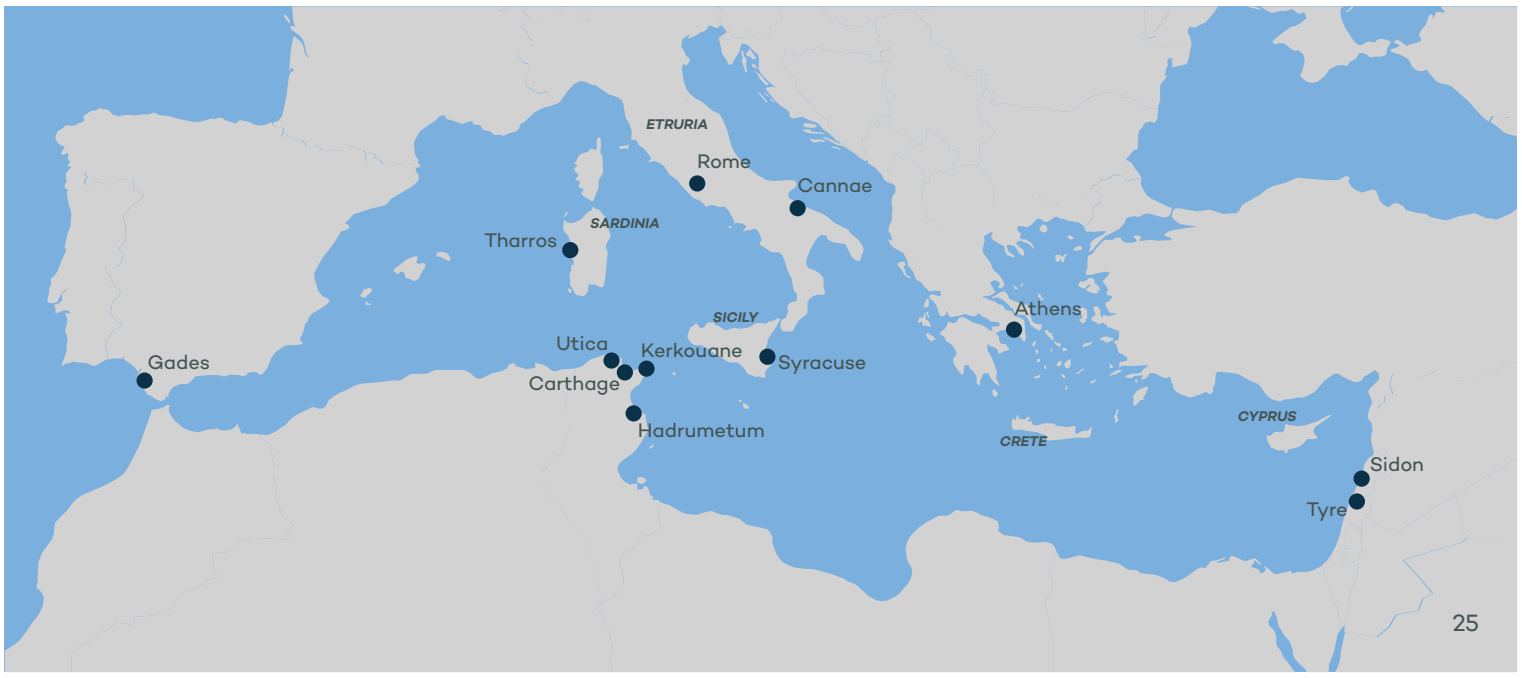
Phoenician silver–gilt dish. c. 700-675 BC. National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

a transit port and later as a place for the growing population to live. Besides being skilled in commerce, the Phoenicians were also known for their excellent craftsmanship, producing products that were much in demand, many of which were soon reaching Cyprus. Not only Cyprus: from the eighth century BC, Phoenician products were turning up everywhere: carved ivory in Megiddo, silver dishes in Mesopotamia and Italy, decorated Tridacna shells in Palestine, and glass in Egypt.

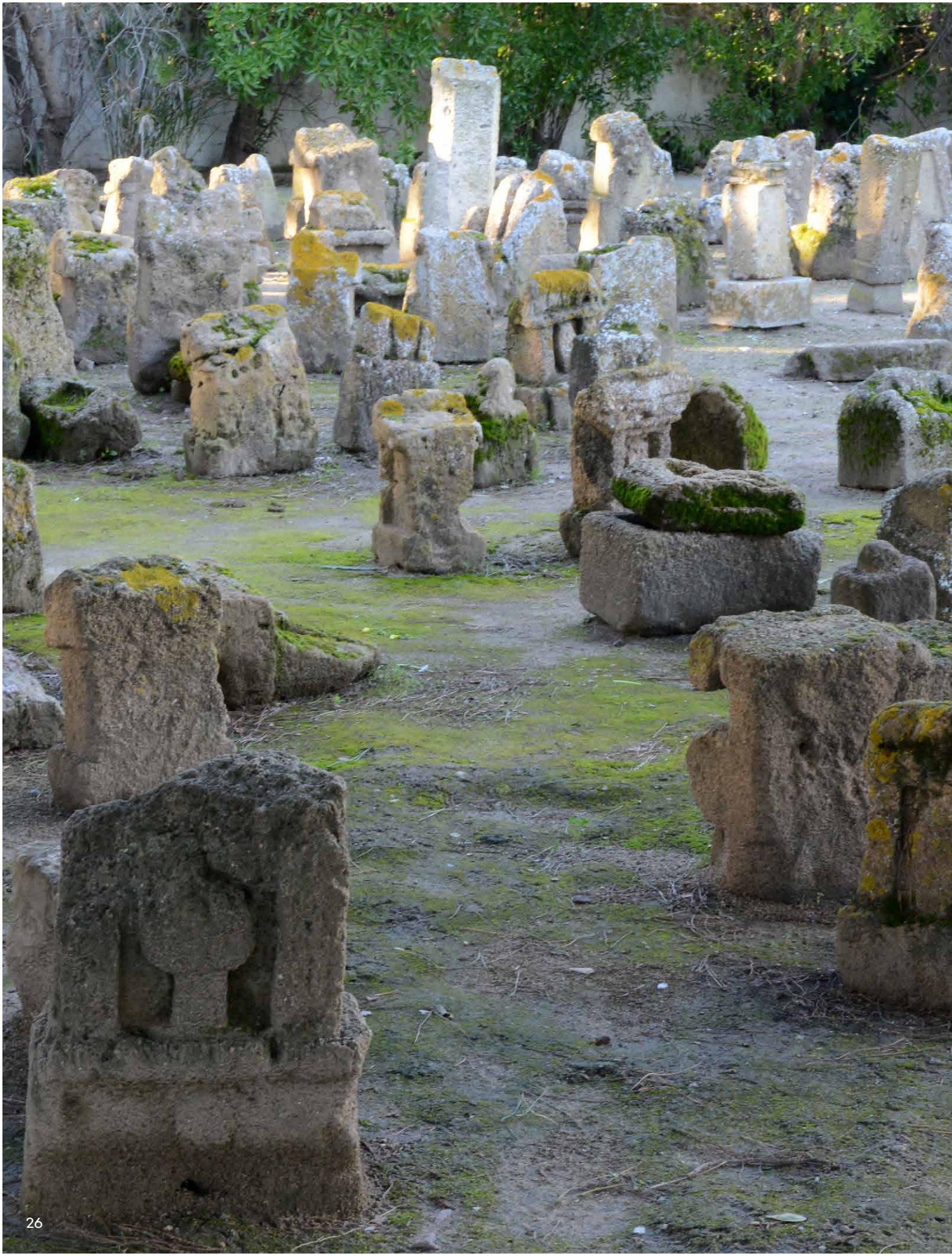
From Cyprus, the Phoenicians sailed along to Crete, Sardinia and even Spain, probably motivated more than anything else by a desire to obtain raw materials, especially metals. Because of the rapid growth of Tyre and other cities, there was a growing need for food for the homeland, and soon the trade expanded to include grain, olive oil and other vegetable products. This diversity of merchandise led to the enormous Phoenician trade network in the Mediterranean and numerous settlements with a Phoenician presence, extending as far as Spain and Northwest Africa. The question of precisely when the Phoenicians started colonising territories still provokes debate to this day. Some scholars believe that the process was already under way before 1000 BC, but no convincing evidence has been presented so far. A careful review of the data cannot place the colonisation process any earlier than the late tenth century BC, a hypothesis that seems to be confirmed by recent archaeological research in the southern Spanish city of Huelva. With the explosive growth of Phoenicia's population, and under pressure from the Assyrians, the Phoenicians were compelled to turn westward. In consequence, the Phoenicians acquired control of territories they already knew. The many contacts they had built up in trade during the twelfth and eleventh centuries BC undoubtedly guided their choices for certain colonies rather than others.

The End of the Phoenician Mother Country

In the first half of the first millennium BC, the Phoenician coastal cities benefited from their Mediterranean trade contacts. Partly by concluding shrewd agreements, their inhabitants could operate with a fair degree of autonomy; something that scarcely changed with the rise of the Neo–Assyrian Empire in the eighth and seventh centuries BC. Though they were obliged to fend off a number of attacks, and had to pay tribute, the people of Phoenicia had a fairly peaceful existence. Still, Phoenicia's influence in the Mediterranean gradually declined. In the west, Carthage was in the ascendancy. Towards the end of the sixth century BC, the Persians conquered the coastal region. They would control the cities and their immediate Mediterranean trade contacts until the advent of Alexander the Great in 332 BC. Finally, the plundering of these cities by the Greeks signalled the real demise of the once so powerful Phoenician Empire.



The Mediterranean region in the Phoenician-Punic period.



The Tophet, the Carthaginian burial ground in the south of the city. Many remains of young children were found here, fuelling hypotheses about child sacrifices.

3 PUNIC CARTHAGE

Roald Docter

ACCORDING TO LEGEND, THE PUNIC METROPOLIS OF CARTHAGE WAS FOUNDED WITH THE AID OF A CRAFTY TRICK AND AN OX HIDE. THE EARLIEST VERSION OF THE STORY IS TOLD BY TIMAEUS OF TAUROMENIUM (TAORMINA), A GREEK WRITER FROM THE LATTER HALF OF THE FOURTH CENTURY BC. AFTER A STRUGGLE FOR POWER AMONG THE NOBLES OF TYRE (IN PRESENT–DAY LEBANON), PRINCESS ELISSA (DIDO) AND A GROUP OF ARISTOCRATIC COMPANIONS BOARDED SEVERAL SHIPS AND SAILED WESTWARDS TOWARDS THE COAST OF NORTH AFRICA, WHICH WAS KNOWN IN ANTIQUITY AS LIBYA.

Statue from Idalion, an old Phoenician settlement on Cyprus. British Museum, London.

They planned to found a new capital city there, a new Tyre. On the way to Africa, the refugees dropped anchor at the island of Cyprus, where they took on board the High Priest of Astarte and eighty girls who were involved in temple prostitution. After all, the successful expansion of a colony requires women as well as men.

Timaeus relates that the company arrived on the coast of Libya (present–day Tunisia) in the thirty–eighth year before the first Olympiad, that is, in 814/13 BC. There, they entered into negotiations with the local population, who agreed to sell them a piece of land as large as could be covered by an ox hide. With devious cunning, however, the newcomers cut an ox hide into tiny strips, laying them down so as to encircle the hill of Byrsa, a far larger area than the Libyans had intended. This should almost certainly be regarded as an apocryphal story, invented because Byrsa sounds similar to the Greek word βυρσα for ox hide. Even so, the story contains elements that chime perfectly with the negative image of the Phoenicians in antique sources – right back to Homer, who describes the Phoenicians as a crafty and mendacious people who will seize every opportunity to make a profit wherever they go, and who will not scruple, for instance, to combine abductions with slave trade. Even the reference to an ox as part of the foundation of an ancient city may contain a grain of truth. Among the Greeks and the Romans, and probably the Phoenicians, the boundaries of a future city were marked out in a ritual ceremony with the aid of a plough drawn by a bull and a cow.

The current name of Carthage derives from the Phoenician Qrt–hdšt (Kart–Hadasht), meaning 'new city' – a parallel to Νεάπολις (Naples) among the Greeks. In this context it is certainly not unimportant that Carthage is the only city in the Phoenician–Punic world of which we possess an elaborate legend about its foundation. This ancient tradition clearly contains elements, added primarily to create a non–Greek and non–Roman representation of Carthage in the later Greek and Latin sources. Even so, the story also contains elements that are so typically Oriental and non–classical that they are very unlikely to come from Greek or Roman historians. The 'monarchic' explanation underlying the colony's foundation in this myth is certainly atypical in this regard, but possesses a certain logic – particularly for a settlement named 'New City'. Earlier Phoenician colonies in the central and western Mediterranean had been founded for commercial reasons, for instance because of the proximity of ore–mining areas. Real agricultural colonies, such as those so often encountered in Greek colonisation, were quite uncommon in the Phoenician world. Carthage moved into the ascendancy among the Punic colonies, certainly from the end of the sixth century BC onwards; before then, it had been obliged to share this preeminent position with other great colonial settlements mentioned in ancient sources: Cádiz in Spain, Utica in Tunisia, and Lixus in Morocco.

Not so long ago, the early date of the city's foundation, as suggested by the ancient sources, could not be corroborated by archaeological finds. Traces of the oldest city could not be dated any earlier than the second quarter

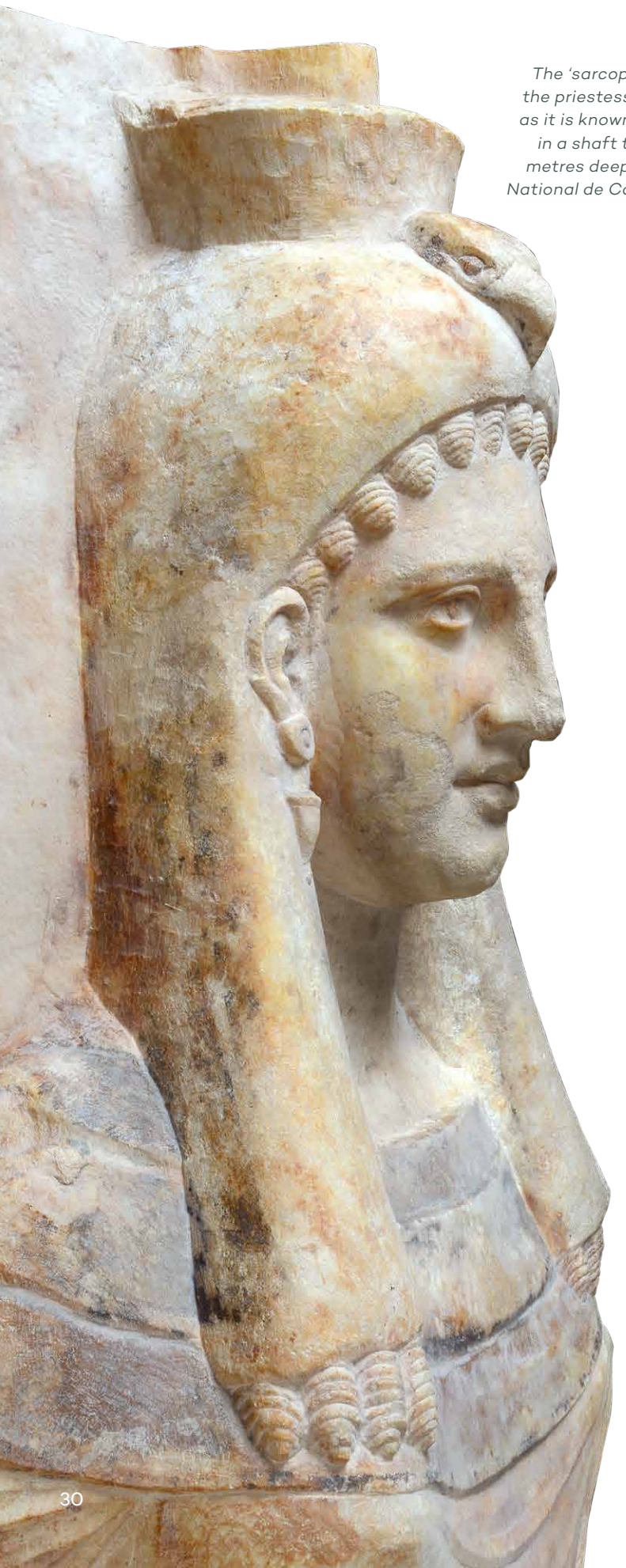
of the eighth century BC, on the basis of meticulous studies of Greek ceramic sherds. Quite recently, however, animal bones from the earliest layers of the settlement have been dated, using radiocarbon dating technology, to the end of the ninth century BC, which would be compatible with the city's foundation in 814/813 BC.

Urban Development and Living Culture

With the benefit of some two centuries of archaeological research (since Humbert), we are fairly well informed on what the Punic city looked like and how it developed. Since the 1970s in particular, there has been an upsurge in research on the structure of the ancient city. It is striking that the earliest city was not built on the peak of the later central hill of Byrsa, but on the hill's southeast and eastern slopes, facing the sea. The earliest traces of human presence have been found here in layers as deep as six metres below the current ground level. This early settlement area lies on a peninsula extending into the Gulf of Tunis, a highly strategic position that duplicated the characteristic model of Phoenician coastal cities of the Levant, especially the mother city of Tyre, with its two landing areas for ships – one to the south, the other to the north. These were probably also the areas where the peripheral parts of the settlement were located, with all the diverse functions that are typical of harbours: warehouses, shipyards, houses for sailors and merchants, inns and brothels. Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to examine these parts of the city, which may be called, by analogy with the Levantine examples, the 'Lower City' (or perhaps 'Lower Cities'). A marketplace (*maqom*) in the vicinity of these harbours can also be reconstructed, by analogy with the famous Eurychoros in Tyre.

Finds from excavations enable us to estimate the surface area of Carthage in its earliest phase at approximately 25 hectares. This urban region

Glass beads, Carthage; 4th -3rd century BC; Musée National de Carthage. Pendants like this, made from glass paste, were found in graves.



The 'sarcophage of the priestess of Isis', as it is known. Found in a shaft tomb, 12 metres deep; Musée National de Carthage.

would have had a population of 5,000 to 8,000 in the seventh century BC, which is very large in the context of ancient civilisations. By the second century BC this figure had grown to at least 50,000, if not 100,000, and even 300,000 is mentioned. From at least the seventh century BC onwards, the 'Upper City' was surrounded by city walls with gates and bastions. In the fifth century BC, these walls were renewed and expanded to enclose a larger surface area. As was customary in the ancient world, the burial grounds and some of the artisans' quarters lay beyond the city walls (*extra muros*). The Tophet of Carthage was also initially *extra muros*. On this sacred site, the cremated remains of tens of thousands of infants were laid to rest in urns: child sacrifices or – as some believe – the graves of children who were too young to be regarded as members of society (see also chapter 5). Not far from the Tophet, an artificial canal, 15 to 20 metres wide and two metres deep, ran parallel to the coast. Since this was built before the mid–fourth century BC, this canal too must have been within the later city wall. It was filled in after c. 350 BC and replaced by a double harbour southeast of its course. The final version of this double harbour is described in ancient literature (by Appian) and can be dated archaeologically to just before the outbreak of the Third Punic War. A small canal connects the rectangular commercial harbour to a circular naval harbour and sheds that could accommodate 170 to 180 warships (triremes). This number is quite close to the 220 ships mentioned by Appian as the harbour's capacity.

All this suggests that the city was built from the outset according to a well–defined structural design, with rectangular houses sharing their outer walls and arranged in blocks (*insulae*) surrounded by streets. It appears that the first colonists had already divided up the urban area according to a rational design based on a radial, fan–shaped built–up area with streets leading to the slopes of the Byrsa. An orthogonal pattern of building is also found in the lower–lying coastal plain. From the earliest years, the streets of Carthage were paved with stone chips and had irregular, open drainage conduits. Towards the last quarter of the fifth century BC, at least

some of the streets were reconstructed in a strikingly monumental form, with large limestone plates and central drainage conduits. The final renovation of the streets, at the beginning of the second century BC, even included drainage conduits consisting of limestone plates with carefully–carved channels. Monumental street paving of this kind could last for generations and put an end to the unregulated periodic raising of the road surface that had been customary before then, using sherds and other waste materials from the settlement. Since there was no longer any reason to fear the constant raising of the street level, which caused rainwater to run into the houses, we also see a halt in the rapid succession of floor levels in the houses. Instead of the tamped–down limestone floors that had been customary until then, people started investing in more expensive lime mortar and tessellated (mosaic) floors, the 'Pavimenta Punica', which would likewise endure for several generations. An essential condition for maintaining a permanent street level was the organisation of a garbage collection service. Dung and garbage collection services are familiar from written sources relating to ancient Greek cities such as Athens: the workers who provided this service were known as *koprologoi*. It is no coincidence that the remains of toilets that have been found in diverse parts of the city date from this period. The collected dung was probably used in the irrigated horticultural area to the west of the city, in Megara. Whether urine was also collected separately and used in tanneries, as was common in Roman times, is not known but highly probable.

Left: *Mask, Demeter or Medusa; Carthage; 3rd-2nd century BC; Musée National de Carthage.*

Right: *Mask; Carthage, necropolis of Dermech; late 6th century BC; Musée National du Bardo. Masks of this kind were found in graves. They were probably intended to ward off evil spirits.*

THE BLACKSMITH'S SECRET

Excavations carried out by the University of Amsterdam in Carthage revealed the remains of a large industrial site dating from the 7th to 5th century BC. A wealth of iron objects were produced here in small forges. The Amsterdam metallurgist Hans Koens analysed the waste from this site (e.g. of terracotta bellows pipes), and discovered that all the samples were rich in organic limestone – that is, calcium. Similar iron waste from this period in Syria and Etruria, and on Elba and Ischia, contains only sporadic traces of calcium. This is the pattern still found in the mediaeval Netherlands, and in England even until the early nineteenth century. These small quantities reflect natural impurities in the ore or the material from which the forges were made.

Many types of iron ore contain sulphur in their natural state. The presence of sulphur, however small the quantity, leads to a brittle end product. Even minor stresses produce cracks that weaken the iron object. Until the mid–19th century, sulphur was removed by heating the sulphurous iron ore in the presence of air in roasting furnaces until it was red–hot, but without melting it.

The first patent for the production of high–quality steel from raw iron, in one uninterrupted process, was granted to Henry Bessemer on 17 October 1855. Importantly, this patent was later expanded to include a method to neutralise sulphur during production by adding calcium, thus removing at a stroke the need for the roasting process, saving both time and fuel. The Amsterdam research project shows that the Carthaginian forges had already mastered this 'secret' procedure. This was confirmed by the findings of Koens's earlier analyses of iron objects from Punic Carthage, which also turned up high percentages of calcium. The excavations revealed that this calcium probably derived from the crushed shells of Murex sea snails. All the evidence suggests that the early Carthaginians could produce iron of high or indeed superior quality, and that they did so on a large scale. With the Roman conquest, this knowledge was lost.
– Roald Docter

The water supply of the urban population initially came from deep wells dug out of the virgin soil. Certainly by the mid–fourth century BC, these wells had been replaced by cisterns. Such was the technical perfection of these Punic cisterns and the hydraulic mortars needed to operate them that the Romans continued to use them for many centuries after the fall of the city. In the final years of Carthage, in the first half of the second century BC, every house had at least one cistern.

The floor plans of the Carthaginian houses largely followed the customary design in the 'mother cities' of the Levant, certainly in the first few centuries after the city's foundation. House designs that are known to us include the courtyard house and – from the second quarter of the seventh century onwards – the four–room house. Not until the late fourth century BC does the architecture start to incorporate Greek, Hellenistic elements such as the larger open courtyard known as a peristyle and the

Baal–Hammon; sanctuary of ancient Thinissut; 1st century AD; Musée National du Bardo.

Baal–Hammon was one of Carthage's most important gods. The worship of this deity was imported from Tyre.

wall decorations in the so–called 'Constructive Style' (in the Vesuvius cities better known as the First Pompeian Style). This type of decorative work makes ample, exuberant use of Greek mouldings in stucco relief. In Carthage and in other Punic cities in North Africa, the continuing popularity of the Doric order is particularly striking. But we also see Egyptian influences in the wall decorations, especially in the mouldings. Notwithstanding these international influences, in essence the floor plans remained typically Punic, largely because of the long connecting corridors between rooms (giving rise to the name 'Corridor houses'). To Greek and Roman visitors, the city must have presented an Oriental aspect, because of the sea of flat roofs that was so unlike the urban landscape in other parts of the Greek and Roman world; indeed, people lived part of their lives on the roof. Scarcely any roof tiles have been found during the excavations of the Punic city, making it extremely unlikely that there were any gable or saddle roofs. From at least the latter half of the eighth century BC, the houses were several storeys high. Appian's account of the siege and capture of the city in the Third Punic War states that some of the houses were six storeys high. This may not be true: possibly the Romans were confused by a certain optical distortion. Looking at the city from a great distance, they saw houses built in terraced form against the side of the hill; in reality, each may have been only two or three storeys high.

Incense burner, Baal–Hammon; Carthage, from the Tophet; mid–2nd century BC; Musée National de Carthage.

The Kingdom of the Dead

Many studies have been made of the Carthaginian necropolises since the nineteenth century, although not all are based on solid scholarship. In the earliest known phase, the grounds extended around the city in an arc: in the west on the Byrsa, and in the north and northeast on the Juno and Dermech hills. Recently a joint Tunisian–Belgian team working on the Bir Messaouda site discovered the remains of an eighth–century necropolis, which appears to close the circle around the city in the south. This burial ground was already being cleared to make way for a large industrial site in the seventh century BC. Although one might assume that the local population would have preferred cremation in the city's early days, following the custom of the mother country, in fact most of the known graves consist of interments. However, the recent discovery of the cleared cremation burial ground on the Bir Messaouda site means that this mode of burial may have been more common than the older excavations suggest. Some of the interment graves consist of wooden or stone coffin graves in a deep shaft, many of which have a separate niche for burial goods, and a sizeable proportion consists of tombs made of hewn stone blocks buried deep below the surface. These tombs were even covered with a layer of plaster and finished with wooden panels. With the growth of the population

The Tophet, in the south of the city.

> *The 'sarcophage of the priestess of Isis', as it is known. Found in a shaft tomb, 12 metres deep; Musée National de Carthage.*

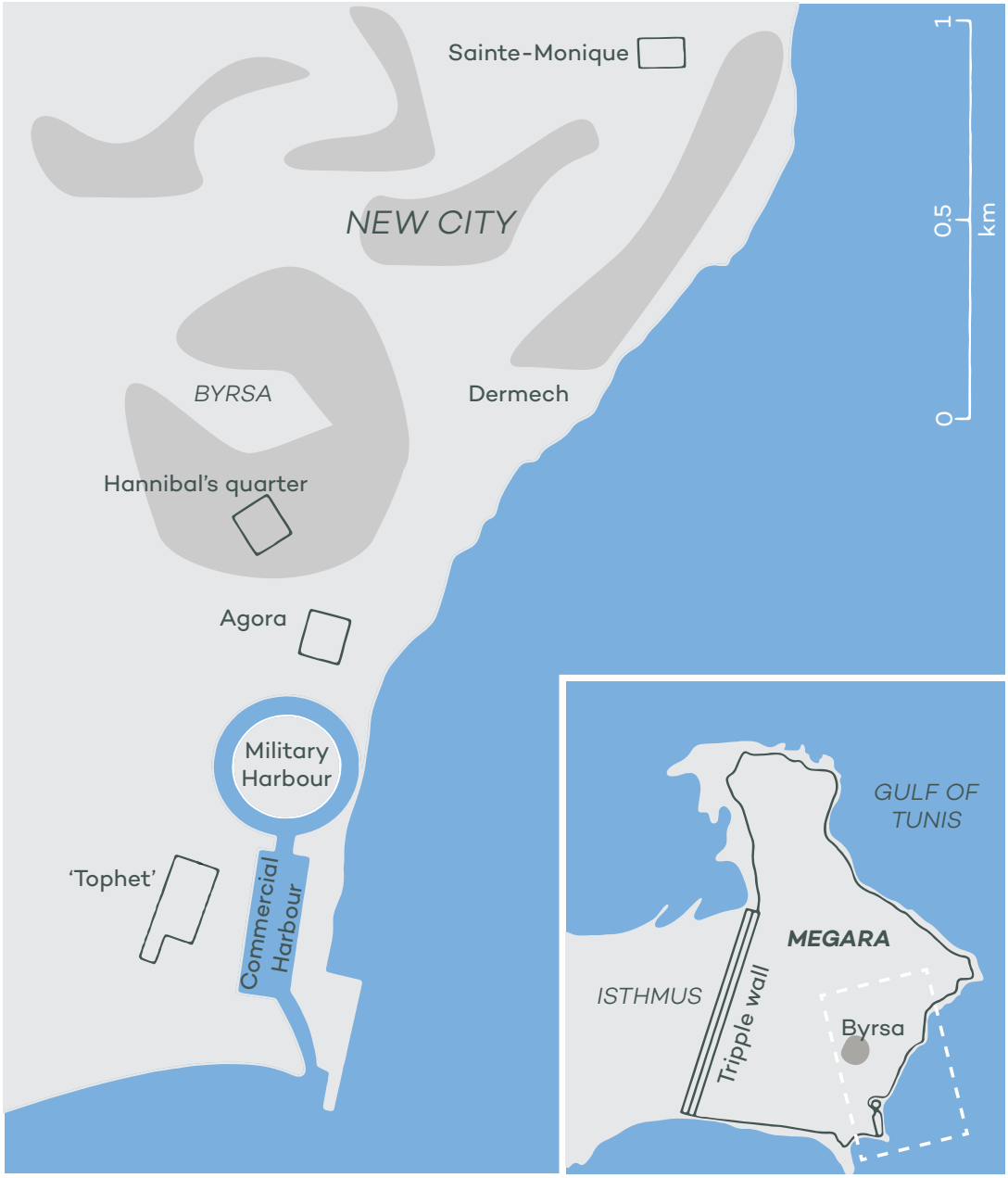
Oenochoe, wine jug with female figure; Henchir Beni Nafa; example of Greek influence on Punic ceramics, 3rd century BC; Musée National du Bardo.

and the city's expansion, the necropolises shifted further north, to the hill of Sainte Monique and the plateau of Borj Jedid. From the fifth century BC onwards, cremation became the rule, possibly because of a lack of space; in the fourth to third centuries, the cremated remains were frequently buried in a small limestone box with a lid shaped like a saddle roof. This most probably reflects the influence of the Greek world, as certainly applies in the case of the Necropolis of the Rabs, where the graves of high–ranking administrative officials and religious leaders lay in Hellenistic Carthage. Grave gifts tend to be highly standardised and traditional, but differ in quality and number according to the status of the deceased. The strong link with the mother country is reflected in the city's burial rituals. For instance, the custom of smashing plates at the grave after the funeral meal as well as funerary inscriptions point to burial rites intended to preserve the deceased's memory among the living.

Land Use, Trade and Food Supply

An extensive archaeological survey in a radius of thirty kilometres around Carthage has shown that small settlements and farms did not appear in the rural hinterland until the mid–sixth century BC, and even then they were few in number. This picture appears to derive confirmation from several ecological studies at Dutch universities. Research on the animal bone material originating from Carthage reveals that bird hunting played a major role in the earliest period. In addition, the importance of cattle and horses in this period gives an impression of the immediate hinterland, since these are large mammals that need considerable grazing space. What is more, studies of incinerated wood residues in Tophet urns prove that the interior was still covered with wild vegetation well into the sixth century BC; it was only later that prunings from olive trees started to predominate. In other words, it seems that Carthage initially made little use of its immediate hinterland, relying instead on the sea and on overseas territories such as Spain, Sicily, and Sardinia. So in its earliest period at least, the city fits the 'scattered hinterlands' model that is so typical of the Mediterranean region from antiquity until early modern times.

Analyses of transport amphorae, the most common food containers in ancient times, largely confirm this picture. In the earliest layers of Carthage, a majority of amphorae come from Nuragic Sardinia, Central Italy and the Phoenician region of southern Spain. In the subsequent period (c. 675-530 BC), Carthage's immediate hinterland was already providing half of the transport amphorae, a shift that has been recorded with a slight delay in the major survey mentioned above. The trend towards growing self–sufficiency continued in the following century, in which 80–85% of the amphorae were made locally or regionally. A relative rise to c. 30% of imported transport amphorae between c. 430 and 300 BC can be explained by imports of specialised produce (especially wine) from southern Italy (Calabria and Lucania), the Ionian–Adriatic region (Apulia, Corfu and Albania), Sicily, Sardinia, and the Northern Aegean. The third century BC is poorly documented in Carthage, but in the final period (from 200 to 146 BC) we



The Byrsa was the centre of ancient Carthage. South of the hill the commercial and military harbour were located. The Tophet *is the place where many urns were found with remains from young children.*

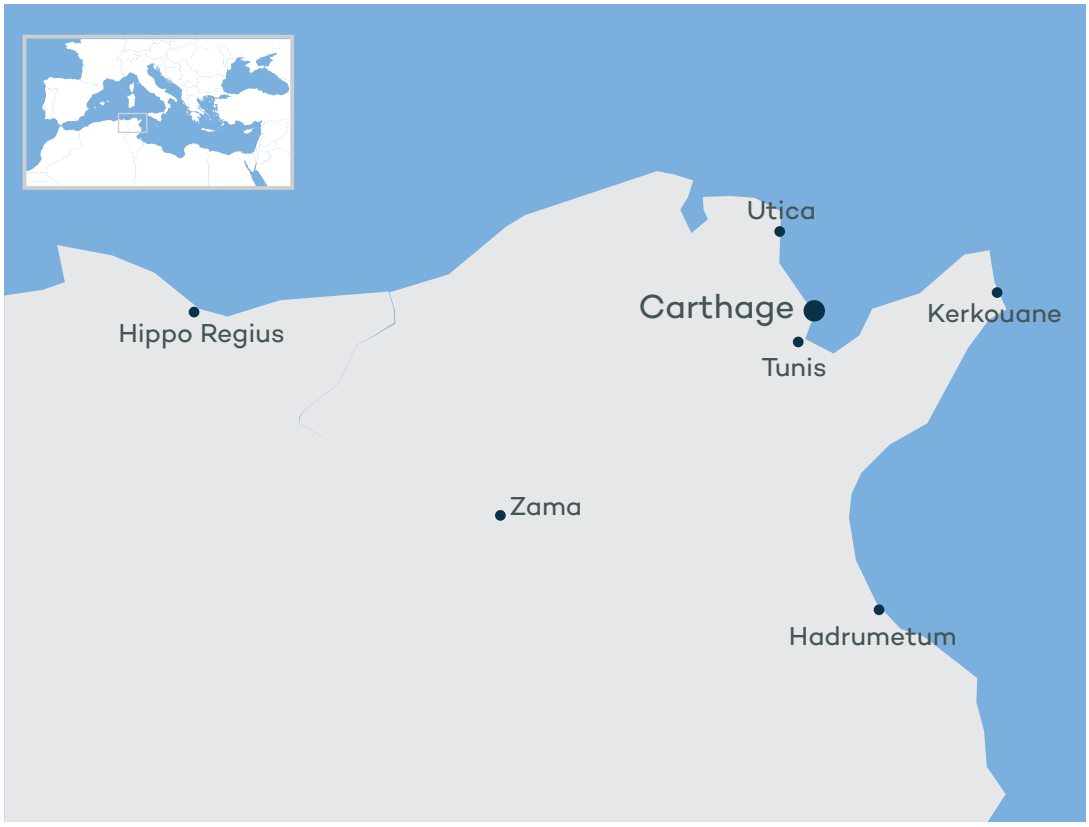
again see a preponderance of local and regional produce (c. 85%). With the definite loss of its overseas territories after the Second Punic War, Carthage was compelled to greatly expand its rural settlements in the interior of North Africa. The archaeological survey mentioned above has provided convincing evidence of this.

It is therefore fair to ask what Carthage had to offer in exchange for the imports of such large quantities of food produce. In part, Carthage paid for these goods with tribute collected from dependent regions, but this cannot possibly be the whole explanation, certainly not in the earliest period. Inscriptions on gravestones and votive stelae, classical sources and archaeological remains all give a clear picture of an urban society that relied heavily on craftsmanship and the processing of primary raw materials into high–quality products. Recent research has supplied important evidence of ivory carving and textile working combined with purple extraction and the making of very high–quality iron products.

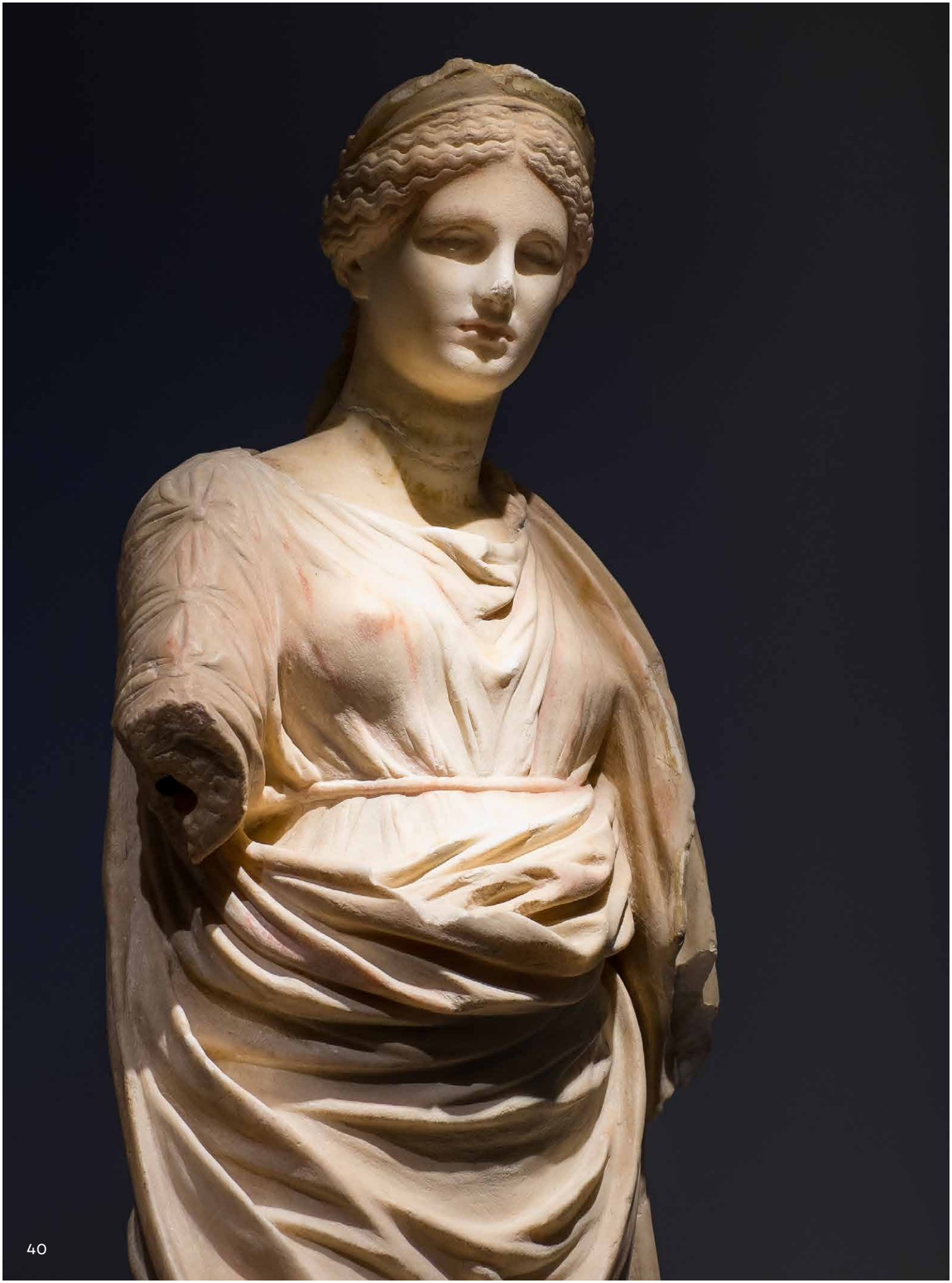
Religion and Society

'King of the City' Melqart – whom the Greeks identified with Heracles – was the tutelary god of Tyre and its monarchy. He was also the pivotal divinity that linked Carthage to its mother city. Well into the Hellenistic period, the great temple dedicated to Melqart in Tyre received annual tributary gifts from Carthage and other colonies. In Carthage too, there was a clear connection with the local monarchy, and Melqart's role remained important, even after the end of the fourth century BC, when Carthage adopted a more 'democratic' polity.

The Punic pantheon included numerous other gods besides Melqart, which can likewise be identified (with varying degrees of confidence) with Greek gods and mythical beings: Eshmoun (Aesculapius), Astarte (Aphrodite, Hera?), Baal Hammon (Zeus), Tanit (*daimon* of the Carthaginians), Baal Shamin ('Lord of the Heavens' – Zeus?), Baal Magonim ('Lord of the Shields' – Ares?), Baal Haddad (Ares), Baal Malage (Triton), Baal Saphon (Poseidon),



Map of northern Tunisia.



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).

Large mask; Carthage, from the Tophet; 3rd -2nd century BC; Musée National de Carthage.

('he who enjoys Baal's favour'), names that occur with great frequency, also among the most prominent ruling families.

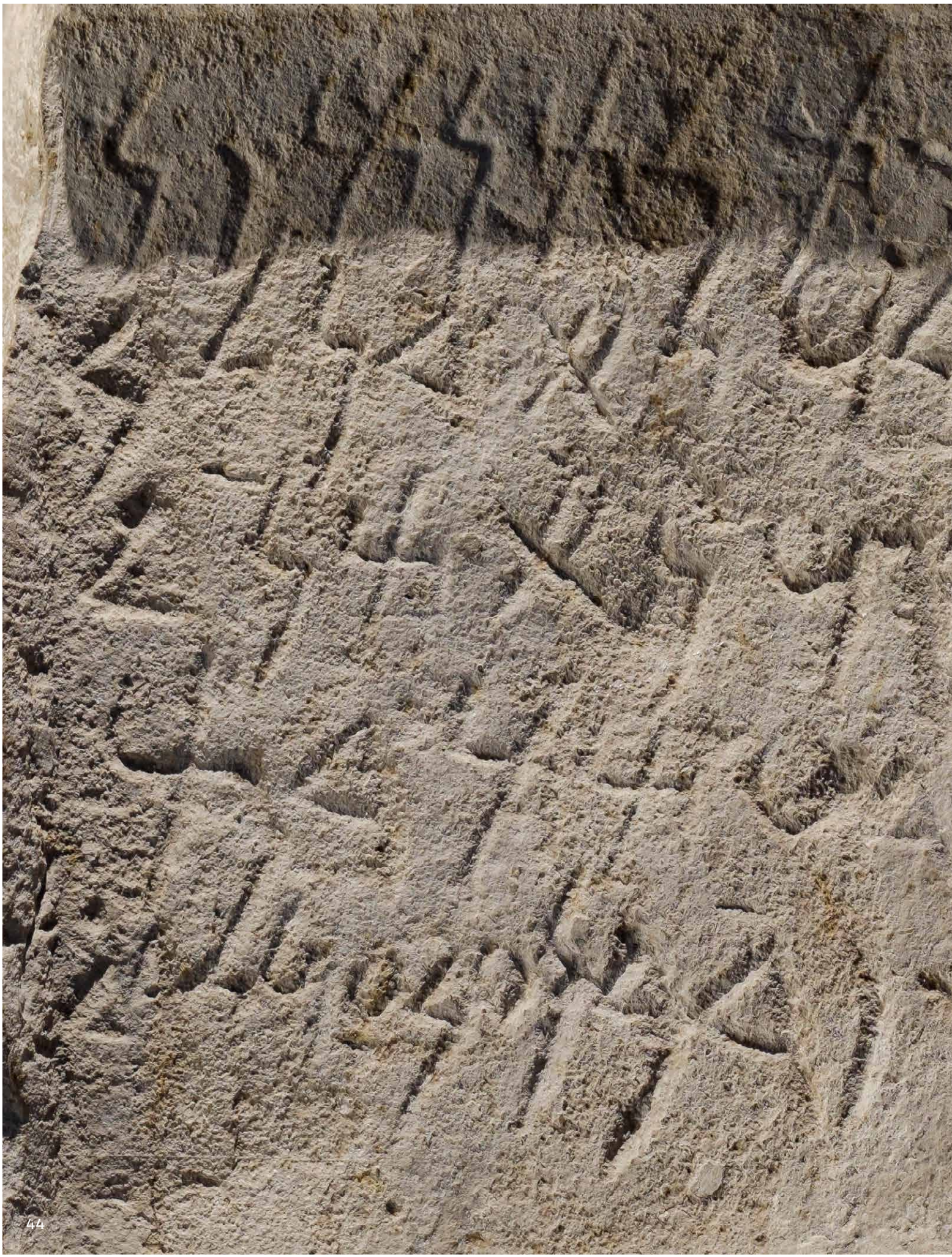
We owe our knowledge of the Carthaginian constitution largely to Greek and Latin sources (e.g. Aristotle and Polybius), but the labels they use for the various functions and organs of State cannot always be linked unambiguously to the reality of Punic governance. The supreme executive magistrates or suffetes performed the most important tasks. The Greeks saw the suffete, who also commanded the army, as the 'King' (βασιλεύς), while the Romans referred to him as *rex* or *princeps*. Although the monarchy was certainly not hereditary, the most important positions were reserved for the members of certain families, which had the effect of creating dynasties. The religious changes made in 396 BC, with the introduction of the cult of Demeter and Kore cult, were a direct consequence of the disastrous course of the campaign on Sicily and the suicide of the Carthaginian general, King Himilco, ending the Magonid dynasty. After this, Carthage appears to have developed into an aristocratic republic in the fourth century, with existing institutions acquiring a clear role: in addition to the 'Kings', the city–state was governed by a Council of Elders (*adirim*, comparable to the Greek gerousia/γερουσία or the Roman Senate), the 'Tribunal of 104', and a parliamentary assembly or *ham*, comparable to the Greek demos/δῆμος). From the late fourth century BC onwards, Carthage was governed by two annually–elected suffetes, similar to Roman consuls, and the parliamentary assembly also appears to have increased in importance.

The End of the City

The city's wealth and luxury in both the public and private domains, which is so obvious from its archaeological remains, was a thorn in the side of the Romans. When a committee of the Roman Senate, including Cato the Elder, visited Carthage in 157 or 153 BC, this opulence made a great impression on him. Even though Carthage had been defeated in the Second Punic War, forced to pay enormous sums in war indemnities for almost half a century, it did not seem reduced to sackcloth and ashes; quite the contrary. With the end of the fifty–year treaty between Roma and Carthage looming, at which point the payments would cease, the Romans feared the worst. The expansion or reconstruction of the great harbour complex with a separate circular naval harbour in this period will have exacerbated these fears. In this context, Cato's immortal, oft–repeated phrase 'ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam' – 'Moreover, I consider that Carthage must be destroyed' – is easy to understand. Although this version, with its threefold alliteration, was not reconstructed until 1821, by the German historian Franz Fiedler, it is true to the spirit of Cato's words. Plutarch wrote that Cato had said 'Δοκεῖ δὲ μοι καὶ Καρχηδόνα μὴ εἶναι', 'I believe that Carthage must not continue to exist'.

After a three–year siege, Roman troops finally seized the city and completely destroyed it. The Roman general Scipio then had salt scattered around the whole area and the ground ploughed up, symbolising a curse on the city's renewed inhabitation. An entire metropolis and its cosmopolitan culture ceased to exist for all time, living on only as a memory.

Statue of a Kore, a young woman. This statue was found in the 'Maison de la Cachette' in Carthage. It was probably hidden in early Christian times, to prevent it from being destroyed by fanatic Christian sects. Collection: Musée National de Carthage.



Detail of a Punic 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'.

Punic stela discovered by Jean–Émile Humbert (see chapter 14); Carthage; 3rd –2nd century BC; National Museum of Antiquities; inv. no. H 1.

We may recall that the word 'alphabet' is made up of the first two letters of the Semitic alphabet (*aleph* and *bet*). It is appropriate to start by giving a brief overview of the origins of this alphabet in its original surroundings, and of the historical and cultural conditions that fostered this invention.

The earliest evidence dates from the first half of the second millennium BC and comes from Syria–Palestine and Egypt. The peoples inhabiting the former, such as the Hebrews, the Phoenicians and the Arameans, spoke languages related to the Semitic family of languages from the West, such as Ugaritic and Canaanite. It was from these that Hebrew and Phoenician developed in the first millennium BC, with a Punic variant in the western Mediterranean region. The eastern Semitic branch (Akkadian) which was spoken in Mesopotamia (present–day Iraq), and the southwestern Semitic branch (Ancient and Classical Arabic with its dialects, South Arabian and the Ethiopian languages) existed alongside them.

In the second millennium BC, the northwestern region of the Middle East, that is, the Mediterranean region that was bounded by Anatolia and Egypt, was dominated by the political and cultural influence of the two major regional powers: Mesopotamia on one side and Egypt on the other. However, Akkadian was the prevailing language in the Middle East, particularly in diplomatic circles. Akkadian had many similarities to other languages in the region, with a syllabic, cuneiform script – notwithstanding the large number of characters – that was more accessible than Egyptian hieroglyphics. Hieroglyphics were not only more complicated, but they did not belong to the Semitic group.

It was in this political and cultural context that alphabetical script was invented in the first half of the second millennium BC. There are too few surviving documents to date the invention more precisely. The new script was consonantal: that is, with a specific grapheme or letter for each consonant. This is perfectly suited to the consonantal structure of Semitic languages. The consonants are grouped in threes, producing a three–letter root that expresses a word's fundamental meaning. Consonants attached to the root as prefixes and suffixes convey derived meanings, moods (i.e. active/passive/subjunctive) and grammatical forms. The vocalisation of words took place in a natural way, and the meaning of each word was immediately clear. This consonantal structure of the Semitic languages provided the basis for the invention of the alphabet. The phonemes (sounds) of each word are indicated by the consonants. By isolating these, and by writing down each one as a separate character or letter, it became possible to convey a word by using the letters that represented the consonants – in other words, in script. This writing is termed alphabetical since the vowel signs were only added later.

Origins of the early alphabet

According to documents that are available to us today, the oldest full consonantal alphabet was used in the fourteenth century BC in Ugarit, the ancient kingdom whose remains can be found at Ras Shamra, close to the city of Latakia in the north of present–day Syria. With its thirty cuneiform characters, which are simpler in shape than those of Akkadian, this alphabet represents the consonants of Ugaritic, which belongs to the Northwest Semitic family of languages. Hundreds of mythical, legal, diplomatic, and religious texts that are drawn up in this script show that the inhabitants of the region had a good command of it and that its invention dated from an earlier age. Certain similarities suggest that the inventors adapted the Western alphabetical system to the cuneiform technique. The Ugaritic *'ayin*, for instance, resembles the Phoenician *'ayin*. In addition, the letters in the Ugaritic and Phoenician alphabets appear in a similar order. Clearly, then, Ugaritic did not provide the basis for Phoenician script.

Similarly, we exclude the scripts which are not yet deciphered and in which are written some so–called proto–Canaanite texts. These date from the mid second millennium BC. Then there is another script, which uses a limited number of characters, some in the form of sche-

matic pictograms and others more geometrical. This script can be dated to no later than the fifteenth century BC, on the basis of thirty–one inscriptions found in the southwestern Sinai, on the plateau of Serabit el–Khadim, in a mine from which the Egyptians extracted turquoise. These inscriptions were engraved like hieroglyphic texts on the walls of mine galleries and on sandstone plaques and statues, but written in a different script. This script is believed to be alphabetical, based on the theories put forward by Flinders Petrie and most notably Gardiner; it uses a limited number of characters that represent consonants, which can be assumed to derive from hieroglyphics. The deciphered sequences reveal that this script is an expression of a western Semitic language. We do not know who wrote these inscriptions. They may have been Semitic workers in the service of the Pharaohs, or high–ranking officials who supervised these workers or who belonged to an expedition led by a prince from a region on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. Two other inscriptions, which were recently found at Luxor in the vicinity of the Nile, make it clear that this script did not originate from the Sinai, where the natural environment was not suited to the development of urban and cultural life.

This script uses pictograms to render the consonants in written form. Each consonant is represented by an abstracted drawing of an object whose name begins with this consonant. The letter *aleph*, for instance, is represented by the head of an ox, which is called *aleph* in this western Semitic language. This is known as an 'acrophonic' system, and is different from the hieroglyphics system. In the latter, the signs representing consonants were used to transcribe foreign names, and particularly as phonetic supplements to ideograms.

From these inscriptions we can infer that an alphabetical system was developed and used in and around the region of Syria–Palestine at some point in the latter half of the second millennium BC. This probably took place just before the time in which the Proto–Sinaitic inscriptions were made, the shapes of whose letters still greatly resembled pictograms. This develop-


CB.a2
CAa1

ment is very clear from the first Phoenician inscriptions which date from the eleventh century BC at the earliest, and which reveal that the Phoenicians had long been using an alphabet.

This alphabet consists of twenty–two letters, whose shapes continued to develop over the years, both in the east and west of the Phoenician territories. As the Phoenicians expanded towards the west – according to Greek and Roman literary sources, explorers from Tyre embarked on this westward expansion in the twelfth century BC – they took their writing system with them.

According to the inscription on a grave dating from the ninth century BC, they initially settled on Cyprus, which forms the first step in this expansion. Other epigraphs reveal that the script was used on Crete and Sardinia in the ninth century. There are a great many inscriptions dating from the eighth and especially the seventh century BC, which prove that the script was very common in the western Phoenician world.

The largest number of inscriptions, however, were found in Carthage. Over six thousand inscriptions were found in the Tanit and Baal Hammon sanctuary or Tophet (see Chapter 5). A large literary oeuvre was produced in this script, but it has sadly perished almost without trace, leaving only echoes in the writers of the antique world.

From the seventh century BC onwards, these inscriptions and other cultural expressions of the western Phoenician world are classified as 'Punic' on the basis of certain distinctive features. Studies of these epigraphs reveal that it was in the seventh century that Punic script started to display a number of characteristic details in certain letters (*aleph*, *yod*, and *kaf*). In the latter half of the sixth century BC, these changes also influenced the shapes of other letters, such as *gimel*, *zayin*, *lamed*, *mêm*, *nun*, *samek* and *qoph*. This phenomenon continued in the following centuries, with the shapes of these letters gradually becoming more flexible, with a tendency towards lengthening and elegance.

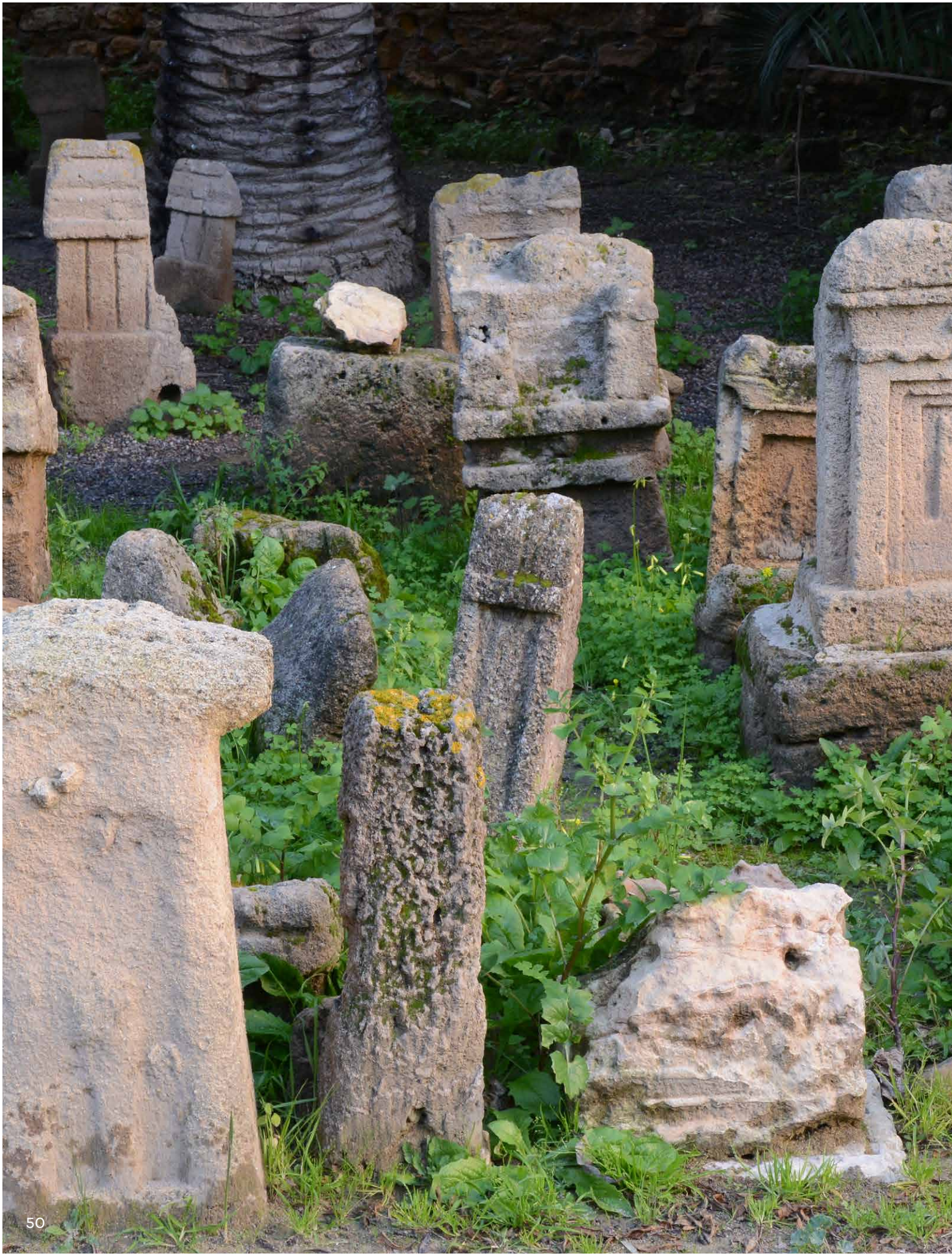
Under the influence of cursive script, the shapes of certain letters in some inscriptions were simplified towards the end of the third century BC. After the destruction of Carthage, this development spread around North Africa. The trend towards more schematic shapes became so universal that the script of these texts is classified as neo–Punic. Some letters, such as *bet*, *daleth* and *resh*, were indicated only by small dashes, making inscriptions confusing to read.

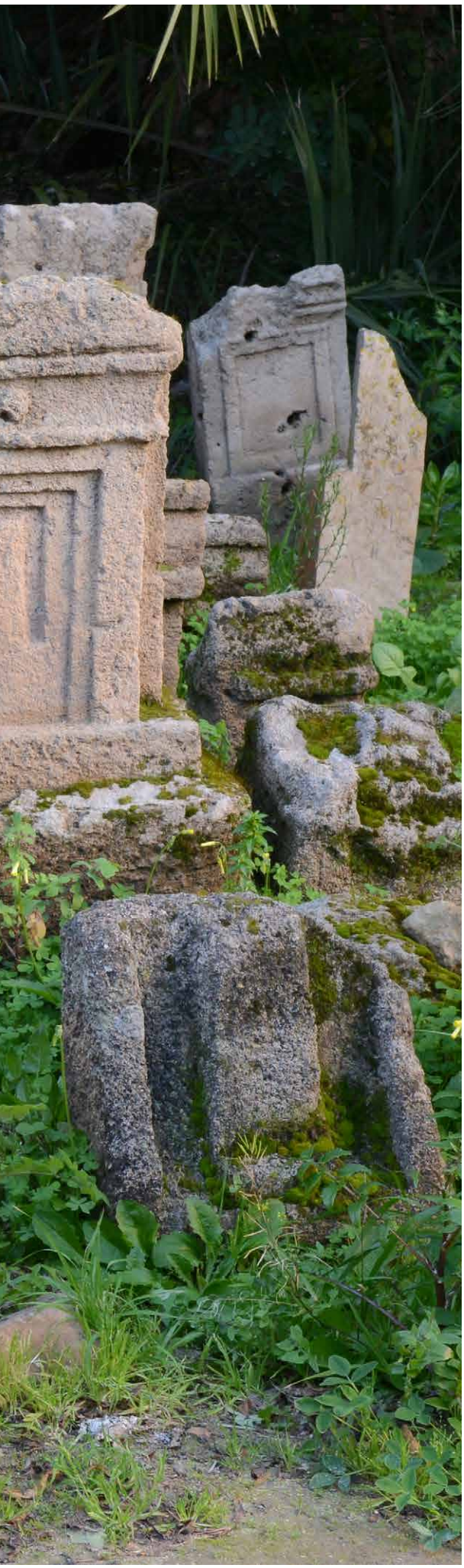
In addition, the phonetic system started to disintegrate. The guttural sounds were frequently omitted or used interchangeably. This indicates that their role in pronunciation was declining. At the same time confusion arose with other phonemes, such as sibilants and hissing consonants.

Further research indicates that these gutturals had another function. They denoted vowels as well as consonants. The vowel /o/ is rendered by an *aleph*, the /a/ by one of the consonants *'ayin*, *het* and *hé*. These gutturals were therefore not real vowels; rather, they facilitated pronunciation and reading, indicating vowels as what are known as *matres lectionis*.

The creation of this vocalisation system in neo–Punic undoubtedly took place under the influence of Latin. However, it was known well before this. The Arameans started using the semi–consonants *waw* and *yod* to indicate vowels at the beginning of the first millennium. The neo–Punic script continued to be used in North Africa until at least the third century AD. It was because of this that the Phoenician alphabet, which had long become extinct in the East, was able to survive here.

Punic stelae discovered by Jean-Emile Humbert with his portrait in the background (photo: E. van den Bandt).





Tophet with stelae from different periods.

5
THE TOPHET OF CARTHAGE

Imed Ben Jerbania

THE TOPHET OF CARTHAGE, WHICH GUSTAVE FLAUBERT IMMORTALISED IN HIS NOVEL *SALAMMBÔ* (1862), WAS SPIRITED INTO TOPICALITY IN 1921 WHEN FRANÇOIS ICARD, A POLICE INSPECTOR IN TUNIS, AND THE LOCAL MUNICIPAL OFFICIAL PAUL GIELLY DISCOVERED A PIECE OF LAND THAT WAS STUDDED WITH *CIPPI,* AND EPIGRAPHIC AND ANEPIGRAPHIC STELAE, AND CINERARY URNS WHICH CONTAINED INFANT AND ANIMAL BONES FOR THE *MLK* SACRIFICE.

This discovery made it possible to locate the site that was known from ancient literature. The existence of this Tophet with its thousands of memorials and urns was already well known in the mid–nineteenth century, since several parts of it had been uncovered during clandestine excavations. The discovery of the famous stela with priest and child, which is now in the Bardo Museum, prompted Gielly to conduct his own research, and he purchased the piece of land on which the object had been found. This purchase marks the start of regular excavations in the Tophet.

Since then, several projects have been carried out on the adjacent plots of land, which had been acquired earlier. Between the first excavations under the supervision of Icard in 1922 and the last ones conducted by Lawrence Stager in 1972 as part of the international campaign for the preservation of Carthage, several others were carried out: those of Byron Khun de Prorok, Jean–Baptiste Chabot, Francis Willey Kelsey, Donald Harden, G.G. Lapeyre, and finally Pierre Cintas. The results prove that this sacred site was important from the Archaic period until the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC. The Tophet has been the primary focus of attention in the research conducted on the Phoenician and Punic world. The close connection between this site and the child sacrifices that are described in the Bible and in several literary sources has generated a debate on the significance of the ritual practices that once took place here, a debate that continues to this day. Fuelled by the numerous excavations on the site, recent researchers have set out to gain a better understanding of the different forms of worship that took place on this sacred site.

Mask, 4th century BC; Musée National du Bardo.

We should begin by noting clearly that modern authors have linked the term 'Tophet' to passages in the Old Testament referring to the Valley of Ben–Hinnôm, near Jerusalem, as a place where boys and girls were slaughtered as sacrifices (Jeremiah 7:30–31). It is therefore curious that these sacred sites should have been discovered instead in the western Mediterranean region, most notably in Carthage. Archaeologists define the term 'tophet' as an enclosed sacred place in the open air, or a plot of land that is separated from the secular world by a particular configuration of the terrain. In the Punic metropolis of Carthage, this place occupied the southern periphery of the city from the Archaic period onwards. Not until the late Punic period, when the circular and rectangular harbours were built, was the Tophet enclosed within the built–up fabric of the city. From then on, it also lay within the city walls.

It seems that since its earliest days, the Tophet in Carthage possessed a key role in shaping the city's identity. It was first and foremost a burial ground for urns containing the cremated bones of children or animals (mainly sheep, although the remains of fowls and other small creatures have also been found), and sometimes of both together. These urns, which were sealed and protected by clay bungs or placed inside other earthenware vases, also contained small objects such

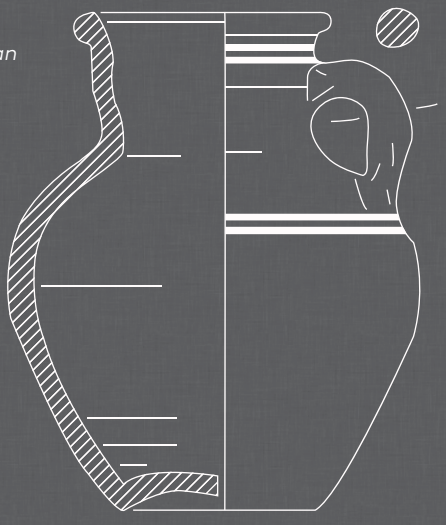
as amulets or pieces of jewellery. The cremated remains that were buried in this way were frequently marked by monuments erected on top, but in the earliest phase of the Tophet this was done only in select cases. These markers, which are found in the deepest layers, are monoliths, large river stones or *cippi* (columns). The stelae, some of them bearing inscriptions, start appearing frequently in the fourth century BC. They are decorated with ritual images (emblems and divine attributes, idols, and occasionally sacrificial scenes) and votive inscriptions intended to preserve the memory of the sacrifice to the gods Baal Hammon and his consort Tanit. The wording of the prayers and thanks to these divinities, which are often preceded by genealogies of the dedicant, are highly standardised and repetitive. The relationship between the stelae and the urns is variable, and it would be wrong to assume that every urn must have had a memorial stone of some kind. Indeed, the excavations have brought to light a variety of combinations: one or more urns beneath or beside a memorial stone, one or more urns without any memorial stone at all, and memorial stones with or without one or more urns. What is more, efforts to establish the direct stratigraphical relations between these important elements of the tophet have not yet succeeded. The inscribed and in some cases sculpted motifs that are visible on the *cippi* and stelae generally possess a symbolic and/or decorative function. The most common emblems are the sign of Tanit and the so–called 'bottle idol'. They were usually placed in a shrine on the altar. Determining the place of these iconographical scenes in Punic religious symbolism is not always simple, and their significance is more obscure still.

The various excavations that have been conducted on the sacred site reveal that each level, or layer, contains certain fixed types of depositions. In other words, different types of urns, *cippi* and stelae have been found in successive layers with different dates. The oldest layer dates from the eighth century BC. The urns that occur most frequently in this layer are pots based on Oriental examples. They are egg–shaped or spherical, and have two symmetrically–placed handles on the shoulders. They have a ring–shaped base and are decorated with geometrical motifs. The presence

An Urn in Leiden and the Excavations of Kelsey and Khun De Prorok

The National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden possesses a number of cremation urns from the Tophet of Carthage. One of them, according to its label, comes from the excavations conducted by Francis W. Kelsey in 1925, which were financed by the flamboyant self–styled 'Count' Khun De Prorok, an American of Hungarian descent and a typical exponent of the 'Roaring Twenties'. He had purchased the land on which François Icard and Paul Gielly conducted their first excavations in the Tophet in 1922. The urn bears Kelsey's inventory number S1466. According to the numbering in the Journal with Inventory of Objects Found that is preserved in Harvard, it was one of 74 urns excavated on 15 April 1925. Three numbers are missing from the list in Harvard, including S1466, which is now in Leiden. How did the urn end up here? The likeliest explanation is that it was given or sold to a visitor, during or shortly after the excavation. In fact we probably know that visitor's identity. For the collection of Tophet vases to which this urn belongs was purchased by the museum on 20 February 1952 from Mr G.A.H. Bisseling, who was curator of the Dutch Museum of Education (the precursor of Museon). According to the information recorded at the time of the sale to the National Museum of Antiquities, he had acquired the items himself in Carthage. The British Museum in London and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford also possess urns from these excavations. The label also refers to a location number, 316, which showed where the urn was buried in relation to those excavated just before and just after it. Unfortunately this contextual information can no longer be reconstructed.

The urn can be dated to the sixth or fifth century BC and contains the cremated remains of a newborn baby and a lamb.
– Roald Docter



Drawing of an urn from the Tophet.

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.

Terracotta statue of a sphinx; 7th century BC; Musée National de Carthage (photo: E. van den Bandt).

6

EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE IN CARTHAGE

Taoufik Redissi

THE PAST THIRTY YEARS HAVE SEEN A GROWING INTEREST IN RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCE OF EGYPTIAN CULTURE ON OTHER REGIONS AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA. OF ALL THE PLACES IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION, IT IS IN CARTHAGE THAT THE LARGEST NUMBER OF AMULETS, SCARABS AND SCARABOIDS HAVE BEEN FOUND. THE PAST THIRTY YEARS HAVE SEEN A GROWING INTEREST IN RESEARCH ON THE INFLUENCE OF EGYPTIAN CULTURE ON OTHER REGIONS AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA. OF ALL THE PLACES IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION, IT IS IN CARTHAGE THAT THE LARGEST NUMBER OF AMULETS, SCARABS AND SCARABOIDS HAVE BEEN FOUND.

Ivory plaque from Carthage; 900-700 BC; British Museum (photo: E. van den Bandt).

The findings and conclusions of recent research now place us on firmer ground in discussing the diverse categories of objects from Carthage reflecting Egyptian influence. These Egyptian–style artefacts or *Aegyptiaca* circulated around the Mediterranean in the first millennium BC. Objects found in Carthage that are either Egyptian or produced under Egyptian influence occur mainly in graves and sometimes in the Tophet, and most are amulets and seals.

They illustrate the role that the Punic metropolis played in the dissemination of Egyptian culture. This took place not only in the territory of present–day Tunisia, but also much further afield, by way of Phoenician and Punic settlements in the western Mediterranean region.

The use of amulets in Carthage demonstrates the influence of Egyptian religion and magic. These items were mainly used to protect individuals, whether dead or alive, from evil forces. While many of the amulets found in Carthage came from Egypt, others originated from the coastal regions of the ancient Near East. Comparative studies enable us to identify similarities with amulets found in Carthage and archaeological finds from the Nile Delta, the coast of Phoenicia–Palestine, and Cyprus.

Most of the amulets originating from Egypt and the Orient date from the early Iron Age III (600-333 BC). From the mid–seventh century to the fourth century BC, amulets of this kind were found in Carthage primarily in funereal contexts. In general, the Egyptian or Eastern prototypes, made in quartz–bearing paste from the sixth century BC, served as an inspiration for Punic imitations in soapstone, and remained popular until the end of the third century BC. The first amulets produced by Carthaginian and Punic artisans were also initially made from quartz–bearing paste. These date from the end of the fifth century BC, but were found more frequently from the early fourth century BC onwards. In contrast to the Egyptian amulets and the rare specimens from the Near East, the Punic imitations are characterised by a more rudimentary mode of execution, which is easy to identify from the highly stylised and distorted facial features displayed on them.

The use of scarabs in Carthage derives from Ancient Egypt. The scarab symbolises the afterlife, and is used especially in funerary contexts. Administrative bodies also used it on seals to authenticate written documents. The scenes carved into the seals are either Egyptian or based on Egyptian examples: they depict gods, the names of the pharaohs, and legends or symbols. This is suggestive of the ritual use of Egyptian magic. According to the relative chronology of the graves, the scarabs and scaraboids made of quartz–bearing paste or soapstone found in Carthage date from the seventh and sixth centuries BC. The seal imprints of the classical Egyptian type, which are copied after iconographic models dating from the second millennium BC, are rare in Carthage. However, an impressive number of seal imprints in clay from Carthage bear the first name of Thutmose III (Mn–hpr–Rc) and that of the Hyksos king (M3c–ib–Rc). This proves that seals made after Egyptian examples were used from at least the fifth century BC onwards.

The presence of different kinds of seals, either classical Egyptian or produced under Egyptian influence, in the first millennium BC on the Phoenician coast and on Cyprus, Crete, Rhodes,

Malta and in other parts of the central and western Mediterranean region, lends support to the hypothesis that shipping routes between islands played a key role in the movements of Aegyptiaca during the first millennium BC. Carthage was an important centre for the import and distribution of seals made in the workshops of the Nile Delta, on the coast of Syria–Phoenicia, and on Cyprus. Yet the diverse classical Egyptian, Phoenician, Greek and Oriental types of scarabs and scaraboids have not been found here. This shows that the network of islands that distributed the Egyptian and Egyptian–inspired examples did not necessarily pass through Carthage.

The typological and iconographical origins of scarabs and scaraboids made of green jasper (a variety of quartz) lie in the Orient. Seals made of various hardstone types are first encountered in the Iron Age II (1000-600 BC). They are the harbingers of the production of Phoenician carved stones, which were first produced in the ninth and eighth centuries BC. In addition, they greatly influenced the development of the figurative carvings of scarabs and scaraboids in green jasper and other hardstone types in Oriental workshops. These workshops were extremely productive in the Persian period (sixth to fourth centuries BC). Between the fifth and third centuries BC, craftsmen working in the western Mediterranean region, some of them from Tharros, others from Ibiza or Carthage, made specimens of fine quality from the same raw materials.

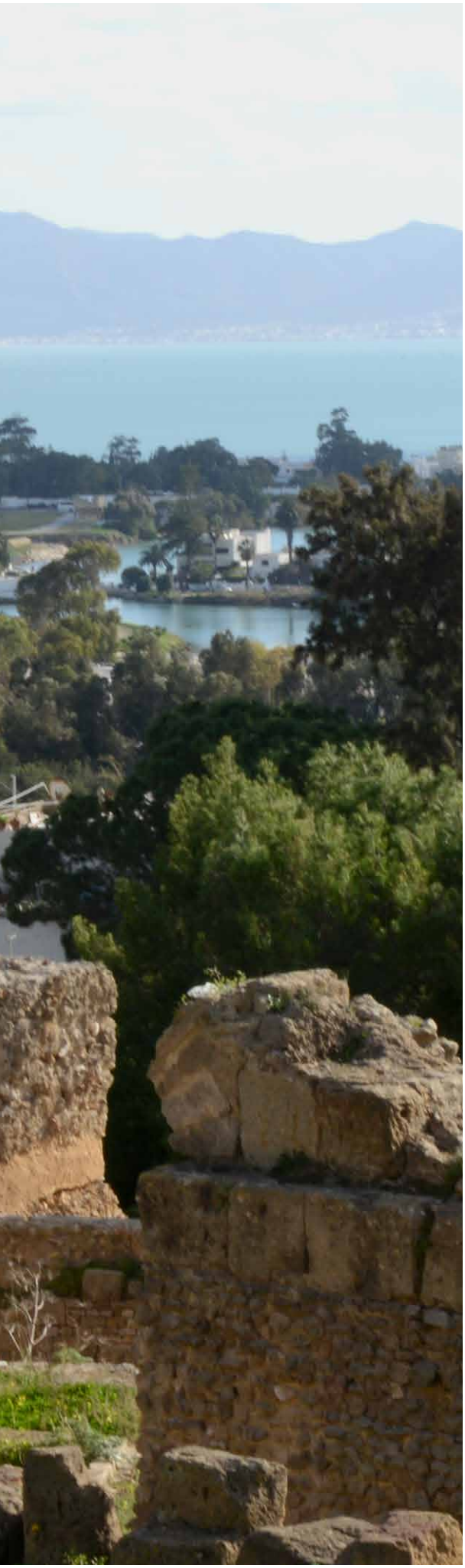
From the seventh/sixth centuries BC onwards, carved seals made of green jasper appear sporadically in Carthage in Archaic funerary and votive contexts. They were probably imported from the Orient and display a pronounced mix of Egyptian and Oriental iconography. From the fourth/third centuries BC onwards, the influence of Hellenistic iconography becomes noticeable.

Besides the scarabs and scaraboids carved in green jasper, specimens appeared in Carthage that had been cut in other hardstone types. These have been found in reasonably large quantities in Carthaginian graves dating from the seventh and sixth centuries BC. Iconographical themes inspired by Egyptian examples are prominent among them. Similar types can be traced to the Phoenician coast in the East. Although specimens with Oriental motifs are found in Carthage from the seventh/sixth centuries BC onwards, they are few in number.

Evidence of ancient Greek stone–carving in Carthage is extremely scarce; the oldest examples date from the sixth century BC. By the usual standards of Greek stone–carving, the specimens assigned to the sixth and fifth centuries BC are remarkable for the care with which the minutest details of the scenes were executed. The only images on the numerous Carthaginian seals with Hellenistic settings dating from the fourth and third centuries BC are warriors and male heads. Though the number of Carthaginian seals from the 4th-3rd c. BC decorated with Hellenistic decor is important, its repertoire is very limited, representing only warriors and male heads.

Thanks to its strong relations with the leading Phoenician merchants, Carthage built up a material culture, in the first millennium BC, that was greatly influenced by the Egyptian civilisation. The iconography of the amulets and the repertoire of carvings are the most important expressions of that influence. With the collapse of the Persian Empire in the last quarter of the fourth century BC, and the advent of Hellenism, several categories of *Aegyptiaca* vanished from the Near East. Even so, Carthage continued to play a leading role in producing imitations. For many years, it would stimulate the distribution and dissemination of the values of Egyptian culture in the western Mediterranean region.

Seal ring with Egyptian scene; Carthage, Byrsa; 7th -6th century BC; Musée National de Carthage.



View to the south from Byrsa Hill, with the contours of the Punic harbours clearly identifiable amid the modern villa landscape.

7

CARTHAGE AS A MARITIME POWER

Fik Meijer

THE SEA WAS IN THE CARTHAGINIANS' BLOOD. THEY DESCENDED FROM PHOENICIAN SEAFARERS OF THE PORT OF TYRE. IN 814 BC THEY HAD BOARDED THEIR SHIPS AND PUT TO SEA IN SEARCH OF NEW PLACES TO LIVE. THEY HAD SAILED ALONG THE COAST OF NORTH AFRICA AND FOUNDED CARTHAGE, IN WHAT IS NOW TUNISIA. AT LENGTH, THE CITY'S NEW INHABITANTS FOUNDED OTHER COLONIES IN THEIR TURN. WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME, A NETWORK OF SETTLEMENTS WITHIN CARTHAGE'S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE GREW UP ALONG THE COAST OF THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN. FROM THESE BASES, SPAIN, THE BALEARIC ISLANDS, SARDINIA, CORSICA AND THE WEST OF SICILY WERE ALL BROUGHT UNDER CARTHAGINIAN RULE.

Tightly–organised administration was at the heart of this rule. Nothing was left to chance. A largely mercenary army kept firm control of the population in the interior, while the warships' crews did the same for the colonial territories. From the second century BC onwards, the policy on the fleet was coordinated from the war harbour, which was out of bounds for all non–Carthaginians. Foreigners approaching Carthage from the sea sailed into the commercial harbour through a channel and saw only the circular double walls enclosing the war harbour. There were boat sheds on the harbour quaysides and on the little central island, accommodating over two hundred warships in total. On the front of each boat shed stood two Ionian columns, which gave the harbour and the island the appearance of a single continuous arcade. From his house, rising high up on the island, the admiral could see everything that happened at sea.

Other harbours in the territories under Carthaginian rule probably had boat sheds too. From there, the warships patrolled in the immediate surroundings, so that any incipient revolt could be nipped in the bud. When the population became restive, warship crews protected the numerous cargo vessels that sailed in all directions, bringing precious metals to Carthage in exchange for grain, fish and olive oil. The Carthaginians refused to allow their rivals' ships to sail certain routes. The far west of the Mediterranean, in particular, they regarded as their special domain. The passage through the Straits of Gibraltar was closed to non–Carthaginians.

Triremes

The war fleet that served as the primary instrument of Carthaginian imperialism was composed at all times of the most modern types of ships. The Carthaginians kept a close eye on the types of warships being used by other cities, and put their knowledge to good use. They were particularly keen to watch new trends in Greece, Egypt, and Etruria. They themselves also experimented with new types of ships. The transition in the seventh century BC from monoremes (ships with one level of oarsmen) to biremes, with a second level, was prompted in part by such experiments. In the sixth century BC, the Carthaginians noted the rapid rise of the trireme, a ship with three rows of oarsmen above one another. They immediately expanded their fleet to include the new model.

It is curious how little we know about the trireme, the standard ship of the fleets in the ancient Mediterranean. We are not even sure of its precise length or width. From the dimensions of the boat sheds in Piraeus, the harbour of Athens, it can be inferred that the trireme was 37 to 40 metres long. The full contingent of oarsmen consisted of 170 men seated on three levels: 54 *thalamioi* at the bottom, with 54 *zugioi* above them, and a further 62 *thranitai* on top. The trireme's coat of arms was the ram.

The Carthaginians soon became masters of tactical manoeuvres with the trireme. The object was to disable enemy ships by ramming them, preferably in their vulnerable flanks, and breaking off the oars. The tactics favoured by the attackers – the Carthaginians' most frequent role – were *diekplous* (sailing through the lines and back again) and *periplous* (encirclement). The best results were achieved when triremes forced their way through the lines and then immediately turned in a semicircle. This put them behind the enemy, making it far less hazardous to ram the enemy ships than doing so from their initial positions. Attacking from behind, they smashed their foes' oars, after which they returned to their own lines. The more ships in a fleet performed a *diekplous* of this kind, the greater the chance that the enemy would be forced to engage.

Admirals who found themselves confronting the Carthaginians would tend to keep their ships in a very close, compact formation, primarily as a defensive strategy. They often formed a defensive circle or *kuklos*, the ships radiating like the spokes of a wheel, their sterns close together and battering–rams facing outward. The answer to this formation was encirclement. The Carthaginian helmsmen would row around the defensive circle in the hope of finding weak links. It was always possible that a ship might break away from the circle formation and attack one of the besieging vessels.

Still Larger Warships

At the beginning of the fourth century BC, there was a clear shift in the focus of the experiments with new warships. The primary target was now Sicily. A fierce struggle was taking place between Syracuse, which had gained supremacy over the other Greek cities on the island under the tyrant Dionysius, and the Carthaginians, who controlled the western part of the island. The newly–designed ships were quadriremes/fours, quinqueremes/fives and hexaremes/sixes. Even these new types of ships were never rowed by more than three levels of oarsmen, however. The innovation consisted of placing more oarsmen at each oar. Only the man at the end of the oar needed to possess expertise, in order to set the rowing pace. The other oarsmen simply followed him. A quadrireme could be rowed with three levels of oarsmen by having one man at the lowest and middle oars and two at the top. In some cases, a quadrireme had two layers of oarsmen. In that case there were two oarsmen at the bottom oar and two at the top. Similar arrangements were used for quinqueremes and hexaremes.

Even today we do not know precisely what these ships looked like. It is thought that the quadriremes had approximately 300 oarsmen, while quinqueremes and hexaremes had even more. Almost everything else about these ships is uncertain. The most important reason for this gap in our knowledge is that no substantial remains of war galleys have been found. All our conclusions must be distilled from the few texts we possess by ancient authors and, from the frequently

The battering ram found in 2010, the only one with a Punic inscription; Soprintendenza del Mare, Palermo.

imprecise images on coins, vases and reliefs. The discovery of the hull of a Carthaginian warship off the west coast of Sicily, near Marsala, did not furnish any clarity, since this is a smaller type of vessel without any rowing benches at all.

The Arrival of the Romans

For many centuries, the Carthaginians had ruled over the western Mediterranean. What happened in Carthage and the territories it controlled scarcely registered with people in the outside world. That the Carthaginians were prospering, however, was clear to everyone. The city grew, its population swelling to perhaps 300,000, most of whom were involved in some way in trade and industry. Large squares, the many wide and narrow streets that led to them, and monumental buildings all testified to the city's wealth.

Not a single Carthaginian can have suspected, as the fourth century drew to a close, that their maritime supremacy was almost at an end. They certainly never entertained the idea that it would be the Romans who would seal their fate. After all, what did the Romans know about the sea? They had conquered the entire Italian peninsula without a single ship. Around 270 BC, looking out from Rhegium (present–day Reggio Calabrio), the Romans could see Sicily lying on the other side of the Strait of Messina. No doubt the thought of sailing to that large island with its plentiful grain occasionally crossed their minds, but not for long. The Carthaginians and the Syracusans struck fear into them. The Romans realised that it was pointless to engage these foes in battle on Sicily if they did not have a real fleet of their own.

In 264 BC the Romans adopted a new strategy. A conflict for the city of Messina in the north of Sicily unleashed a war that would utterly transform the balance of power in the western Mediterranean. There was a rapid escalation of tension between the Romans and Carthaginians. After long hesitation, the Romans finally de-

The battering ram found in 2010 in situ. Photo: Soprintendenza del Mare, Palermo.

cided to dispatch an army to Sicily. It was a risky venture. Defeat on Sicily would give the Carthaginians an opportunity to cross the water in the opposite direction and threaten the coasts of Italy.

The Romans well understood the crucial importance of building up a good fleet. But how could they acquire enough ships? They had neither shipyards nor oarsmen. Yet within the space of six months, they succeeded in stationing 120 new warships in the city harbours of southern Italy. The historian Polybius, who praises the Romans for daring to confront the rulers of the sea, finds it well–nigh impossible to believe that they achieved all this unaided. He suggests that chance played a great role in their victory – the Romans acquired a Carthaginian warship, a quinquereme, that had run aground, and had shipbuilders copy its design. This version is a little too glib to be true; it leaves out of consideration the skill of the Greek shipbuilders in southern Italy. The likeliest explanation is that the Romans sent orders to ship's architects in several of Italy's Greek cities, commissioning from them dozens of the warships that were most in use – triremes, quadriremes and quinqueremes.

The Battle of Mylae

By 260 BC the Romans had at their disposal a war fleet of 100 quinqueremes and 20 triremes in the waters around Sicily. They had recruited over 30,000 oarsmen from all parts of the peninsula. Still, the chance of success seemed small, since the Roman admirals and their crews were less skilled and experienced than their Carthaginian counterparts. The first skirmishes seemed to confirm the differences in strength. The Roman consul Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio found himself and his seventeen ships hemmed in by twenty ships of the Carthaginian fleet and surrendered. This setback weakened the Romans' morale. Their dejection increased when the Carthaginian admiral Hannibal (not to be confused with the

View from the Byrsa towards the south. The ancient harbours are still visible in the landscape.

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.

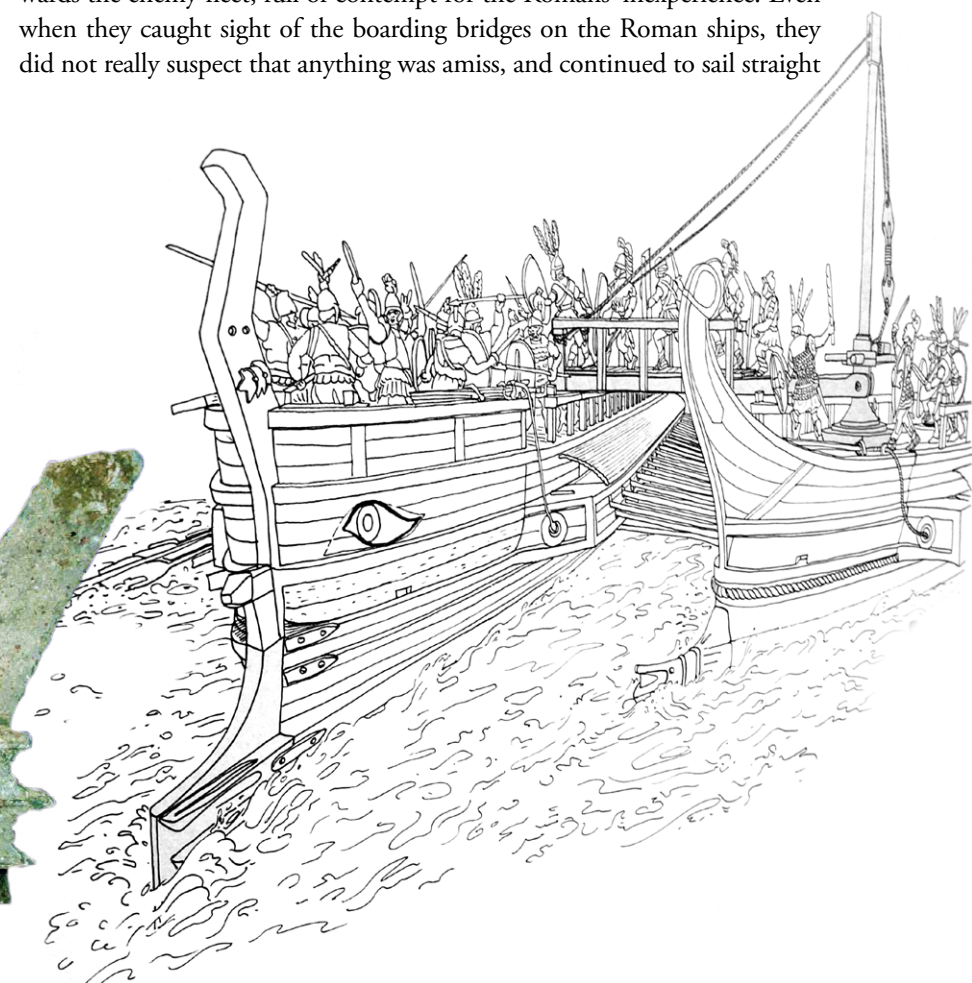
The Carthaginian seafarers rowed self–confidently, in closed formation, towards the enemy fleet, full of contempt for the Romans' inexperience. Even when they caught sight of the boarding bridges on the Roman ships, they did not really suspect that anything was amiss, and continued to sail straight

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

Below: The battering ram found in 2010, the only one with a Punic inscription. Left: Drawing of a Carthaginian warship with a battering ram.



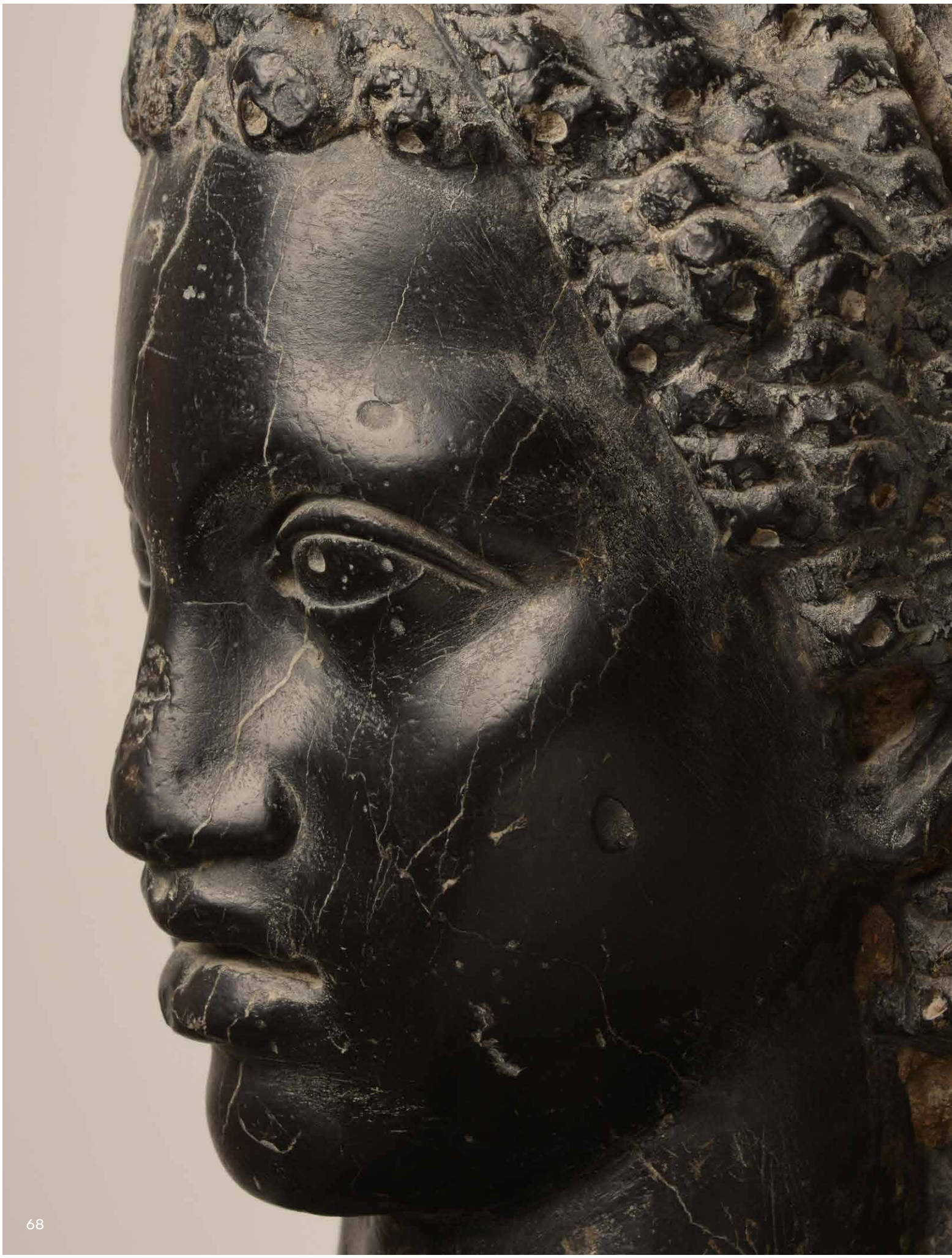
On the battering ram signs of an impact are clearly visible (photo: E. van den Bandt).

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.



Herm with image of an African; 2nd century AD; Musée National du Bardo, Tunis; Inv. no. 3018.

8

CARTHAGE & THE LOCAL LIBYAN-NUMIDIAN POPULATION

Nabil Kallala

HISTORY IS OFTEN WRITTEN FROM THE ONE-SIDED AND SIMPLISTIC PERSPECTIVE OF DOMINANT NATIONS, WHICH HAVE DETERMINED THE COURSE OF HISTORY AND, TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, "MADE" IT. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE FOR AFRICA DURING THE PRE-ROMAN ERA. IN FACT, THOSE NATIONS LEFT US TWO TYPES OF SOURCES AND STUDY MATERIALS. FIRST, THERE ARE THE ACCOUNTS OF ANCIENT HISTORIANS WHICH PRESENT A FUNDAMENTAL SOURCE OF MATERIAL FOR TODAY'S ANTIQUITY HISTORIANS. SECOND, THERE ARE PHYSICAL TRACES LEFT BEHIND BY ANCIENT PEOPLES.

These tend to be those of conquerors and rulers, who – even where they have not tried to impose their culture outright – have at least sought to create the political, institutional and social framework that would encourage its adoption. Historians and archaeologists necessarily rely on these sources, and have to base their research and reasoning on them. For instance, the history of Carthage is known to us only from the writings of Roman historians (the Punic libraries went up in flames), just as the Libyan–Numidian history is written from the Carthaginian and Roman perspectives.

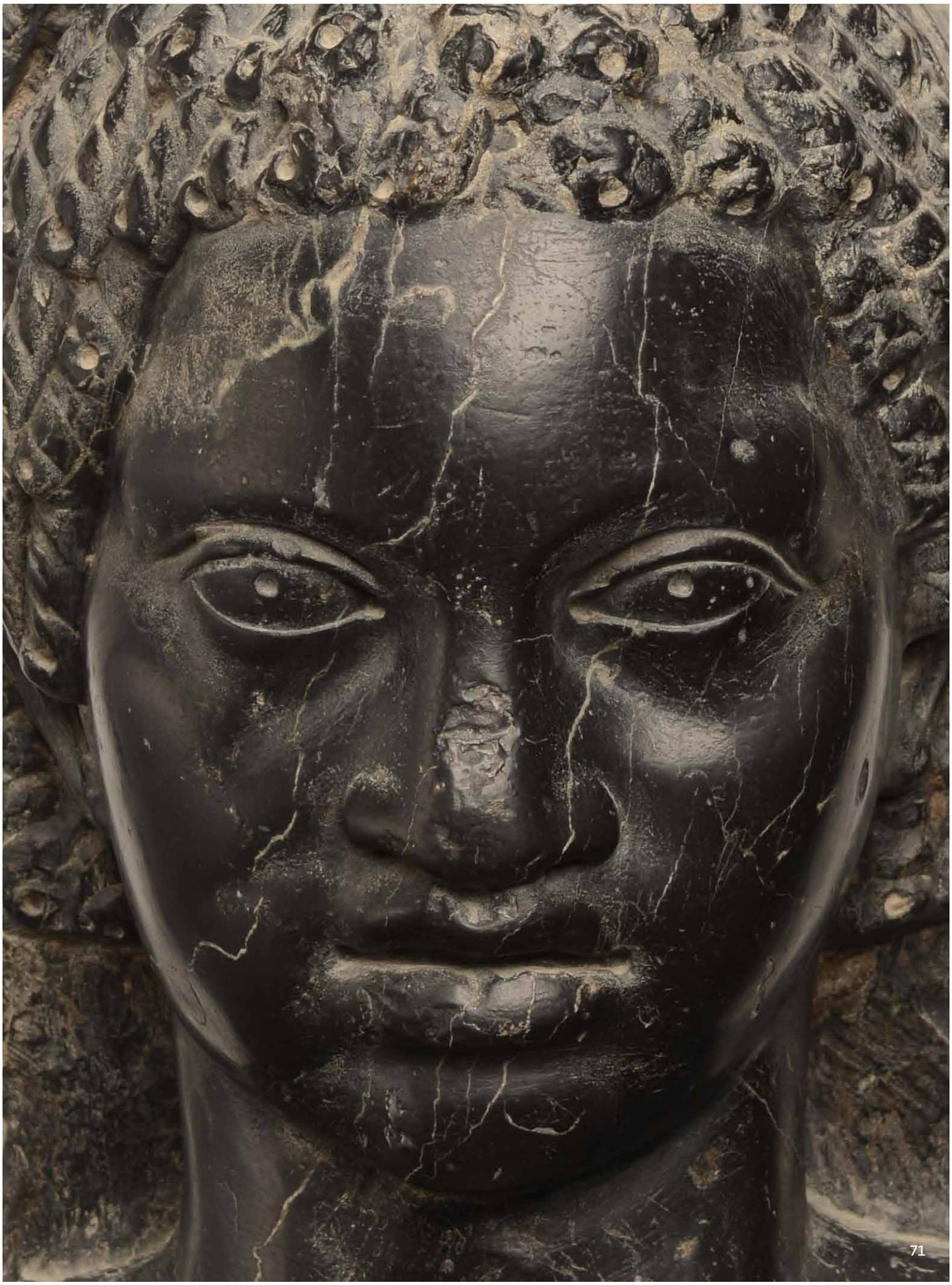
However, the many and diverse ties that Carthage had with the indigenous Libyan–Numidian peoples may shed light on the history of Carthage. As a matter of fact, history of dominant civilizations – such as Carthage – could only happen at the expense of colonized and dominated peoples that are often acculturated but sometimes are evolving in a cultural interaction mode, generating a hybrid culture that also influences the dominant civilization. This creates a cultural interface that allows us a better knowledge of history.

New approaches within a large number of history disciplines, such as onomastics, toponymy, historical and cultural anthropology, recent developments in the study of pottery and other materials, new prospection methods and the contributions made by history's 'sister disciplines', such as zooarchaeology, archaeobotany, physical anthropology, archaeometry, palynology, carpology etc., have helped improve our knowledge of the history of Ancient peoples. This applies, for instance, to the subjugated Libyan–Numidian peoples who crossed paths – and sometimes swords – with Carthage. Such approaches must also, of course, take the literary sources into account.

Literary sources continue to figure prominently in modern research on Ancient Carthage, in spite of often being mythical, non–Carthaginian, partial, and the fact that they date from a later period. Didn't Justin tell us that when Elissa, the founder of Carthage, anchored in one of the Gulfs of Africa (nowadays known as the Gulf of Tunis), she 'sought to make friends with the locals, who greeted the strangers joyfully and saw their arrival as presenting opportunities to barter and trade'. She bought some land there to found her city in exchange for paying tax on that land, while she refused to marry the Libyan king, Hiarbas, and committed suicide by burning herself alive. In fact, she wanted to remain faithful to her husband, who had been murdered in Tyre, and more importantly, she wanted to pass on her incarnated power to her people. Over the time, people in the region were attracted by the reputation of the new city, and the population rapidly grew. This growth took place in the years following 814/813 BC. After that, we find no traces of the indigenous population for a century and a half; they reappear in the sixth century BC. Justin tells us that the Carthaginians fought the Libyans, gaining a victory that ended the obligation to pay taxes on the land, which they saw as a humiliating imposition.

Such passages offer no more than fleeting glimpses, but their message is clear. Besides bearing witness to the undeniable presence of the local population during the founding of Carthage, they also portray the Carthaginians as interacting with the Libyans and later flourishing at their expense. This interaction took both peaceful and violent forms. The Libyans, who had a certain political, social and possibly civic organisational structure, pursued economic and commercial activities, based largely on agriculture. The newcomers did not intend Carthage to become a simple trading settlement, of course. They planned to build a fully–fledged city, for which Elissa's company had insufficient manpower. She probably brought with her scarcely more than eighty men – which is the number of girls they abducted from Cyprus on the way to Africa and intended to serve as their brides. The oarsmen were left out of consideration in this arithmetic. Thus, we could assume that Libyans were somehow part of the foundation of Carthage as were the Afro–Punic later on part of the founding effort of roman Carthage. Carthage is almost always described as a purely Phoenician venture, an enterprise that developed internally and organically like other Phoenician colonies, but this fails to give credit to the Libyans. It gives the impression that this part of Africa was a kind of empty desert, or that it was populated solely

Detail of a herm with the image of an African; 2nd century AD; Musée National du Bardo.



Herm with image of an African; 2nd century AD; Musée National du Bardo, Tunis; Inv. no. 3018.

by simple nomads. This is clearly contradicted, however, by the ancient texts themselves and more importantly by recent archaeological discoveries.

It is true that no evidence has been found in Carthage of any indigenous habitation earlier than the eighth century BC. But at the same time the kitchen utensils that have been excavated don't disprove the existence of such habitation. For the research into the oldest archaeological layers is impeded by the remains of phases of land use, and by overlaps in the archaeological layers of Carthage's rich history. In addition, Carthage was destroyed and rebuilt several times. The earth–moving and disruptions of the archaeological layers that accompanied such cycles have also hampered research. It is fair to ask whether anyone has ever tried to reach the pre–Phoenician and pre–Carthaginian levels, given that research has always focused on Punic or Roman Carthage. This tendency is also observed for other coastal sites. Of course, starting such a research presupposes the existence of specialists who feel attracted to the material.

In spite of the relative paucity of research on this subject, a hybrid or acculturated population can be shown to have existed. This is clear from diverse burial grounds in the Tunisian Sahel (el–Hakayma among others) which contain evidence of 'Liby–Phoenicians'. It is also demonstrated by imports of Phoenician pottery, which have been found in Carthaginian graves dating from the eighth to sixth centuries BC. In fact, in the interior parts of Tunisia, especially in the "Haut Tell", evidence has also been found of pottery imports: Phoenician items in Althiburos (a sherd of a stylised Phoenician sacrificial bowl in red slip ware dating from the late eighth century BC), pottery from Massalia (Marseille) in Zama (latter half of the sixth century BC), Attic pottery in Mididi (latter half of the fifth century BC), and also a bronze sphinx found in Cirta (sixth century BC, possibly imported by a local leader). Even so, this is far too little to demonstrate the existence of trade relations between the Libyan–Numidian peoples and the Carthaginians in the Archaic period. Mutual exchanges certainly speeded up from the fifth century BC onwards, after the Carthaginians' conquest of the Numidian territory, which probably took place in the aftermath of the Carthaginians' defeat in the Battle of Himera, in Sicily, around 480 BC.

The findings made in the recent excavation project in Althiburos have greatly added to our knowledge of Numidian society, its activities and its organisational structure. This project focuses specifically on studying the social development and formation of Numidian states as well as the relations that existed between the indigenous population and Phoenician–Punic society. It has now been demonstrated that the earliest traces of human habitation there undoubtedly go back to the tenth century BC. Stone structures in Althiburos and exchanges with the Phoenician world on the coast can confidently be dated back to the eighth century BC (based on the pottery found). It has now been established that the region was inhabited almost without interruption up to the Roman period, although the population density varied. There was probably a gap in the seventh century. The region's urban development began as early as the eighth century BC, a period that corresponds to the settlement of the people of Althiburos (modern Abbah Quṣūr), who devoted themselves

to a number of crafts and agricultural activities from then on: pottery, ironworking, weaving, livestock breeding, the cultivation of olive trees and grain, as well as winegrowing and various kinds of horticulture (largely fruits).

Althiburos was, in fact, an independent Numidian city, which may have served at some point as a vanguard garrison for Carthage, since it is believed to have been involved in some way in Hannon's expedition to Hecatompylos (Theveste) in the year 247 BC. This means that Carthage, and possibly other Phoenician coastal settlements, had to deal from the beginning not only with nomadic or semi–nomadic peoples, who were naturally there as well, but also with sedentary peoples whose society had a certain degree of organisational structure. These sedentary groups certainly influenced Carthage and the Carthaginians.

We can assume, in fact that a process of acculturation took place in both directions: Carthage, as the dominant entity, most probably imposed Punic as the official language, but Libyan remained in use. This is clear, for instance, from the two bilingual inscriptions of Thugga, including that of the famous mausoleum (late third/early second century BC) and numerous Libyan inscriptions. Libyan names occurred in the Punic and even the Roman periods, sometimes in their original form and sometimes with Punic influence, or Latinised. A final piece of evidence comes from Libyan toponymy, which was largely adopted by the Romans; the latter probably learned the names from the Carthaginians. In addition, certain institutions, such as the Council of Elders and the tribunal of three suffetes (magistrates) in the Roman period, are reminiscent of Libyan forms of administrative organisation in Punic–Numidian cities such as Mactaris and Althiburos. The Dii Maurii (Moorish gods) continued to be worshipped until the end of the third century AD.

More significant still is the superb synthesis that the Libyan religion underwent in an *interpretatio punica*, expressing a spirit of mutual religious toleration. In this transformation, the Carthaginian god Baal Hammon is actually a Punic–Berber god. His consort Tanit, who is sometimes mistakenly identified as Ashtart (Astarte), is said to have been of Libyan origins. Ashtart (Astarte) who is also referred to as Athena, Venus and so forth might also have Libyan origins. Whatever the case may be, the dissemination of the cult of Astarte in the Numidian world was facilitated by the existence of a related Libyan deity. Such examples are numerous.

Some Numidians adopted Punic names or modified their own names in line with Punic examples. They also adopted beliefs and Punic cults, and therefore built tophets dedicated to Baal Hammon in many Numidian cities, such as Mactaris, Zama, Cirta, Henchir Hami, Sicca Veneria, Althiburos, and Mididi. These sacred sites were widespread even after the fall of Carthage, in the second and first centuries BC, and in some places even during the first two centuries AD. Although the iconography of Numidian stelae exhibits Numidian features, the language of the epigraphic inscriptions is Punic – generally neo–Punic. Some cults remained strictly indigenous, however, and continued to be practiced as such during the Punic and Roman periods: these include those of the Dii Maurii, Dii Magifae, Giddabae Deo Augusto (GDA), Ifru, Monna, Bacax, and the worship of the mountains, caves, stone etc. Libyan–Numidian burial customs survived the period of Carthaginian domination: they included the monumental graves in territories controlled by Carthage and adjacent lands, as well as the Hellenistic graves in the Numidian regions of Chemtou, Kbor Klib (near Zama), and more recently Jebel Brouag (near Althiburos).

It may be concluded that – in spite of the aborted plan of marriage between the Phoenician princess Elissa and the Libyan king Hiarbas, and the troubled relation between both people, which sometimes erupted into ferocious violence, such as during the Mercenaries' War after the First Punic War – it appears that there has been, however paradoxical it may seem, a 'cultural marriage' or cultural coexistence, or some form of acculturation, which worked in both directions. Cultures and religions, it is fair to conclude, do not respect administrative or political frontiers. They transcend the world of politics.

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.

A PUNIC COIN MOULD FROM THE SECOND PUNIC WAR

During excavations carried out by the University of Amsterdam in the centre of Carthage, in the year 2000, a limestone mould was found among the rubble of the devastated Punic city. It was almost certainly used to mint coins. Engraved in its surface are at least twelve identical images of horses looking back, the primary symbol of Carthaginian coinage. The Swiss numismatic expert Susanne Frey–Kupper has established that the mould was used to mint bronze coins at the end of the third century BC. The immediate precursors of this specific type of coin were the Carthaginian coins minted between 221 and 210 BC over coins of Hiero II of Syracuse (274-216 BC), seized as spoils of war. At some point the stock of Syracusan coins in use for this purpose evidently ran dry, and coins were therefore minted of the same Punic type, using this mould. The object is also interesting from a technological viewpoint. Research conducted by the Amsterdam metallurgist Hans Koens and Roel Janssen of Amsterdam Medical Centre has demonstrated that it is impossible that bronze was ever cast directly in this limestone mould. This would have caused far too much heat damage to the surface to produce a sharp image. They suspect that the mould was used to make beeswax models. These models were subsequently wrapped in clay, after which the wax was melted out, leaving a mould for bronze coins. This process can easily be repeated ad infinitum, and is known as the 'lost wax' technique.

– Roald Docter

Punic mould used to mint coins.

It should be added that the earlier conflict, known as the First Punic War (264-241 BC) – concluding with the Peace of Lutatius in 241 BC – also falls, marginally speaking, within this period of time. For Carthage, this treaty did not mean immediate peace, since immediately afterwards, the discontented mercenaries unleashed a war against Carthage that did not end until 238/237 BC. In the Second Punic War, Hannibal moved the theatre of war to the Italian peninsula, pushing Rome to the edge of ruin. The spectacular campaign in which he crossed the Alps with elephants has continued to fire the imagination for centuries, taking on mythical proportions. The same applies to the destruction of the city at the end of the Third Punic War. Less well known among the public at large, however, are the events that led to the First Punic War and the course it took. Let us start, then, by focusing on these events.

First Punic War

By around 270 BC, the Romans had conquered the entire Italian peninsula. Whether they were already cherishing ambitions to seize Sicily as well is not entirely clear. In any case, they were afraid that the Carthaginians, who controlled part of the island, might cross to Italy. The Carthaginians in their turn feared that the Romans might seek to expand their sphere of influence to include Sicily. The difficulties experienced with former mercenaries from the army of Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, kept the mutual fears alive. The mercenaries had entrenched themselves in the northernmost city of the island, Messina. When this city was besieged by Hiero's troops, the Mamertine mercenaries called on the Carthaginians to come to their aid. The Carthaginians came, but then declined to leave, prompting the Mamertines to turn to Rome for assistance. The Romans hesitated for some considerable time, but in 264 BC they crossed to Messina.

At that stage, no one could suspect that the incident would escalate into a major conflict: the First Punic War (264-241 BC). When war erupted, the outcome was almost impossible to predict. The Roman legions were certainly as good as the Carthaginian troops, but the Roman fleet

was regarded as far weaker than that of its opponents. It therefore came as a shock when the Romans triumphed in the first confrontation at sea. This was the Battle of Mylae, in 260 BC, which they won thanks to the invention of the boarding bridge.

Fortune continued to favour the Romans. They secured several victories, but their aim of occupying the west of Sicily remained elusive. To bring the Carthaginians to their knees, they adopted an audacious plan in 256 BC, and invaded North Africa. This invasion ended in a debacle for the Romans. The war dragged on over the next few years, without either party securing a decisive advantage. The Romans suffered a blow of a different kind, when violent storms destroyed a large part of their fleet.

The Romans appeared to be staring defeat in the face in 247 BC, when the Carthaginian general Hamilcar Barcas unleashed a new offensive on Sicily, which extended to the very coasts of Italy. Gathering all the forces at their disposal, the Romans mustered a new fleet, which defeated the Carthaginians near the Egadi islands in 241 BC. Cut off from help by sea, the Carthaginian cities on the west coast of Sicily had no choice but to surrender to the Romans.

The battle for hegemony on Sicily had been fought and won. The island became the first province of the Romans. Four years later, the Carthaginians also had to give up Sardinia and Corsica.

Shekel, Heracles/ Melqart on the right, an elephant on the left; 213-210 BC; Sicily; National Numismatic Collection, De Nederlandsche Bank; inv. no. GR-10250.

Tetradrachme, depicting Arethusa on the left and a horse on the right; 320-300 BC; Sicily; National Numismatic Collection, De Nederlandsche Bank; inv. no. GR-01798.

Hannibal: The Second Punic War

Hannibal's political career is fairly well known from the Roman and Greek sources. Born in Carthage as the son of Hamilcar Barcas, he accompanied his father to Iberia, present–day Spain, in 237 BC, when he was almost ten years old. He therefore must have spent his earliest years in Carthage and the immediate surroundings. Although he cannot have consciously experienced the tail–end of the First Punic War against the Romans, the war against the mercenaries – which was fought out in the hinterland of Carthage – will undoubtedly have placed its stamp on his boyhood. Until 224 BC he spent most of his time in Spain, but he may have sometimes stayed in Carthage. After that he became second–in–command to his brother–in–law Hasdrubal. After the latter's death in 221 BC, the troops proclaimed him commander over Libya and Iberia, which decision was later endorsed by Carthage. He was then about twenty–five years of age. Six months after Rome had declared war on Carthage (in the autumn of 219 BC), Hannibal set off with his troops on a long march: they crossed the Ebro, the Pyrenees, and eventually the Alps. Then, in the course of the improbably–long period of fifteen years, he and his army advanced through Italy. In 203 he was called back to Africa when Scipio's armies were threatening Carthage. The decisive battle took place at Zama in the late summer or autumn of 202. Hannibal was defeated, after which a treaty was concluded in 201. At the end of this Second Punic War, Carthage also lost Spain for good; its territory had been reduced to the African hinterland.

Although defeated Carthaginian generals usually came to a bad end – that is, they were murdered or pressured into suicide – Hannibal made a remarkable comeback into Carthaginian politics. In 196 BC he was elected suffete, and immediately set about removing the rot from the system, purging the political institutions and rooting out corruption. The Romans will have watched this vigorous exercise with suspicion, and a year later they were pressuring Carthage to extradite Hannibal to Rome. With this threat hanging over him, he went into exile in Tyre (the 'mother city' of Carthage), in present–day Lebanon, after which he hired himself out as a strategist to Antiochus III and other Hellenistic rulers in the East. In 183 BC, at almost 64 years old, he committed suicide at the court of King Prusias of Bithynia to avoid the disgrace of falling into the Romans' hands. He thus joined a long line of Carthaginian kings and aristocrats who opted for death, a tradition that started with Elisa/Dido and ended in 146 BC, when the wife of the younger Hasdrubal killed herself and her two small sons.

The Carthaginian elite – and consequently the Barcas family and Hannibal himself – were open to influences from the Greek–Hellenistic culture. Hannibal is known to have received lessons in Greek literature from the Spartan Sosylos, and his retinue also included another Greek, Silenos, from Kale Akte in Sicily. He may have had even more Greeks among his entourage, but this is pure speculation, since the Greek–Roman sources are biased and not very informative. Most of the information about the Spartan Sosylos, for instance, is provided by Polybios (3.20.5), who expresses himself contemptuously about the Spartan's writings: 'the common gossip of the barber's shop.' The fact that Hannibal was able to operate without any problem whatsoever during his period of exile in the Greek–speaking East suggests that he was well versed in Greek. The period he spent in Greek–ruled southern Italy (Magna Graecia) would have been helpful in this respect. He probably spoke Latin as well.

This historical sketch of Hannibal's life is based on the elements that most interested the Romans, which naturally related mainly to military and political events. The accounts convey little about the Punic world in which Hannibal lived and grew up, however. Archaeological finds, most notably in Carthage, have helped to amplify and clarify this picture (see also chapter 3).

Hannibal's Carthage

The Punic archaeology of North Africa is characterised by an 'urban bias', a heavy emphasis on urban culture, especially that of the metropolis of Carthage. This makes perfect sense, since from

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

the very moment at which colonists from Tyre founded Carthage (= 'New City') in 814/13 BC, Carthaginian culture was pre–eminently an urban culture with a strong connection to the sea. In this sense it differed fundamentally from virtually all other Mediterranean cultures (Greek, Etruscan, etc.), in which the urban or pre–urban centres were embedded far more clearly in agricultural societies. Hannibal himself is a typical product of this urban culture.

Nowhere in Carthage is the name of Hannibal more clearly linked to archaeological remains than in the so–called 'Hannibal Quarter' on the southeast slope of the Byrsa hill. It was here that French archaeologists excavated a Punic urban district in the 1970s and 1980s, a district that must have been built in the years around 200 BC. This archaeology–based date tallies well with Hannibal's period as suffete of Carthage and the vigorous administration attributed to him. More importantly, it tallies with his reputation as an urban planner during his later exile. Indeed, he is said to have planned the city of Arthashat (Artaxata) in Armenia. In Carthage we can see clearly that the new district is based on a tightly–designed rectangular plan with streets enclosing relatively small blocks of houses: a good example of Hippodamian planning. The urban dwellings are long and narrow, and each has its own small courtyard and a small cistern for water storage. These houses will have been several storeys high, and the analysis of the excavated material reveals that they were inhabited by an affluent middle class, which would have included craftsmen. The French made many discoveries, including the

The Battle of Zama has been the subject of several paintings and prints in European art history. The prints were widely distributed. Cornelis Cort; 1567.

remains of a place for milling grain and a workshop used by a craftsman who fashioned items in red coral. Many of the houses are decorated with Greek–Hellenistic murals in the 'Constructive' style, which is known in the cities around Mount Vesuvius as the First Pompeian Style. It is striking that the streets in the 'Hannibal Quarter' are unpaved. Stone slabs were laid only at the junctions, probably to prevent erosion.

War Debt

In the peace treaty signed in 201 BC, the conditions imposed on the defeated Carthaginians were draconian, particularly in financial terms. Rome demanded that Carthage pay an immediate sum of 1,000 talents, plus an additional sum of 250 Euboic talents annually for fifty years. This Greek monetary unit of weight was used as the international standard and was equivalent to about 26 kilograms of silver. The total debt imposed was therefore 13,500 talents, which amounted to approximately 350,000 kilograms of silver! For purposes of comparison: at the end of the First Punic War in 241 BC, the Carthaginians paid a one–off sum of 1,000 talents to Rome, plus another 2,200 talents spread over a ten–year period. This sum of 3,200 talents (or 83,000 kilos of silver) was already a high price for losing the war, but the quadrupling of that sum in 201 BC produced an astronomical debt. The raising of the annual sum from 220 to 250 talents a year might conceivably be regarded as a kind of correction for inflation; it was above all the duration of the imposed payments that was unprecedented. The Romans' objective was most probably to humiliate Carthage and to incapacitate it for a very long time, both economically and militarily. This latter aspect in particular will certainly have played a role in the setting of the amount and duration of the debt. For Carthage had always relied primarily on mercenaries for its permanent army. An impoverished Carthage would probably be unable to muster a large mercenary army, and would certainly not be able to maintain it for any length of time. Militarily too, Carthage was now bound hand and foot. The war fleet was reduced to the symbolic number of ten triremes, the war elephants had to be handed over, and Carthage was not permitted to wage war outside Africa. Even within its own territory – in other words, in Africa – it had to seek consent from Rome before engaging in military action.

In spite of all this, and contrary to all Rome's expectations, the heavy war debt did not reduce Carthage to penury. Hannibal's reform of the state's income evidently furnished the Carthaginian state with a larger, constant source of revenue. In addition, the military restrictions imposed by Rome actually gave Carthage a great economic advantage. There was no longer any need to pay for a permanent army of mercenaries or expensive military campaigns. Carthage appears to have redirected its energies to investments in agriculture and trade, as Appian suggests. Another important, albeit speculative, explanation should be mentioned in this context. It can be assumed that far more money was available for such investments since many wealthy citizens from the former Punic territories in Spain and Sicily, now annexed by Rome, had fled to Carthage.

The City that Must be Destroyed: the Third Punic War

In the year 157 or 153 BC, the ageing senator Cato the Elder visited Carthage as a member of a Roman mission. As he walked around the harbour and the city centre he was struck by the prosperity he saw everywhere, and – something that greatly alarmed him – sheds full of timber, which he took to be intended for the construction of new warships. After his return to Rome, he became the spokesman for a group that sought the total destruction of Carthage. Whatever subject was being debated in the Senate, Cato is said to have ended every speech he addressed to the floor with the words: 'Ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam' ('Moreover, I consider that Carthage must be destroyed'). Although this phrase was probably thought up by the German historian Franz Fiedler in the nineteenth century, the message itself certainly chimes with the views held by Cato, who left no stone unturned in his efforts to persuade his fellow senators of the threat posed by Carthage. A few years later, in 149 BC, the Romans decided to wage war against Carthage for the third time within a little over a century. What followed was a series of steps involving provocation, intimidation, deception and a show

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.

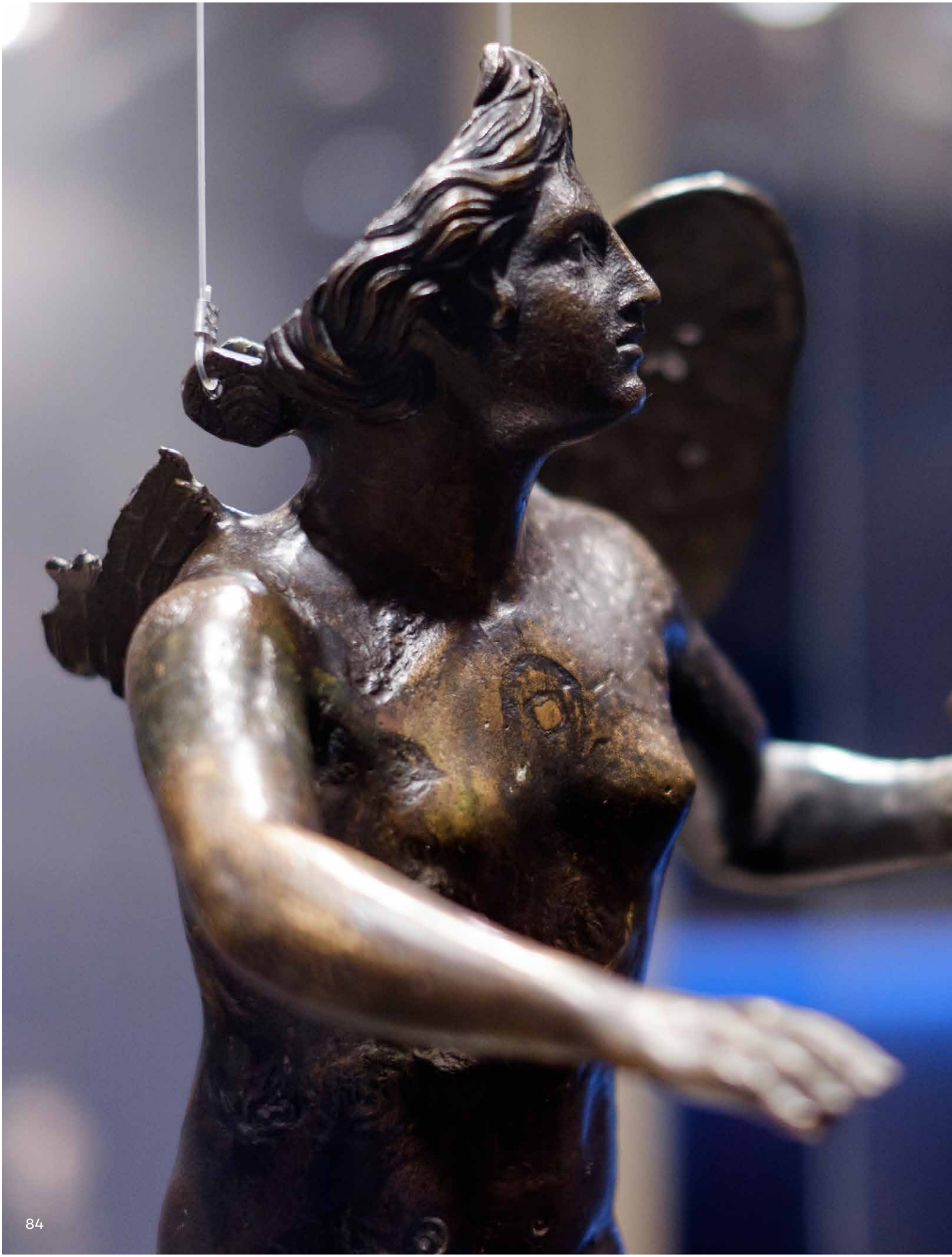
According to the Greek historian Polybius, Scipio could not suppress his emotion when he saw the old city lying in ruins. Scipio, when he looked upon the city as it was utterly perishing and in the last throes of its complete destruction, is said to have shed tears and wept openly for his enemies. After 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:

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.

"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.



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.

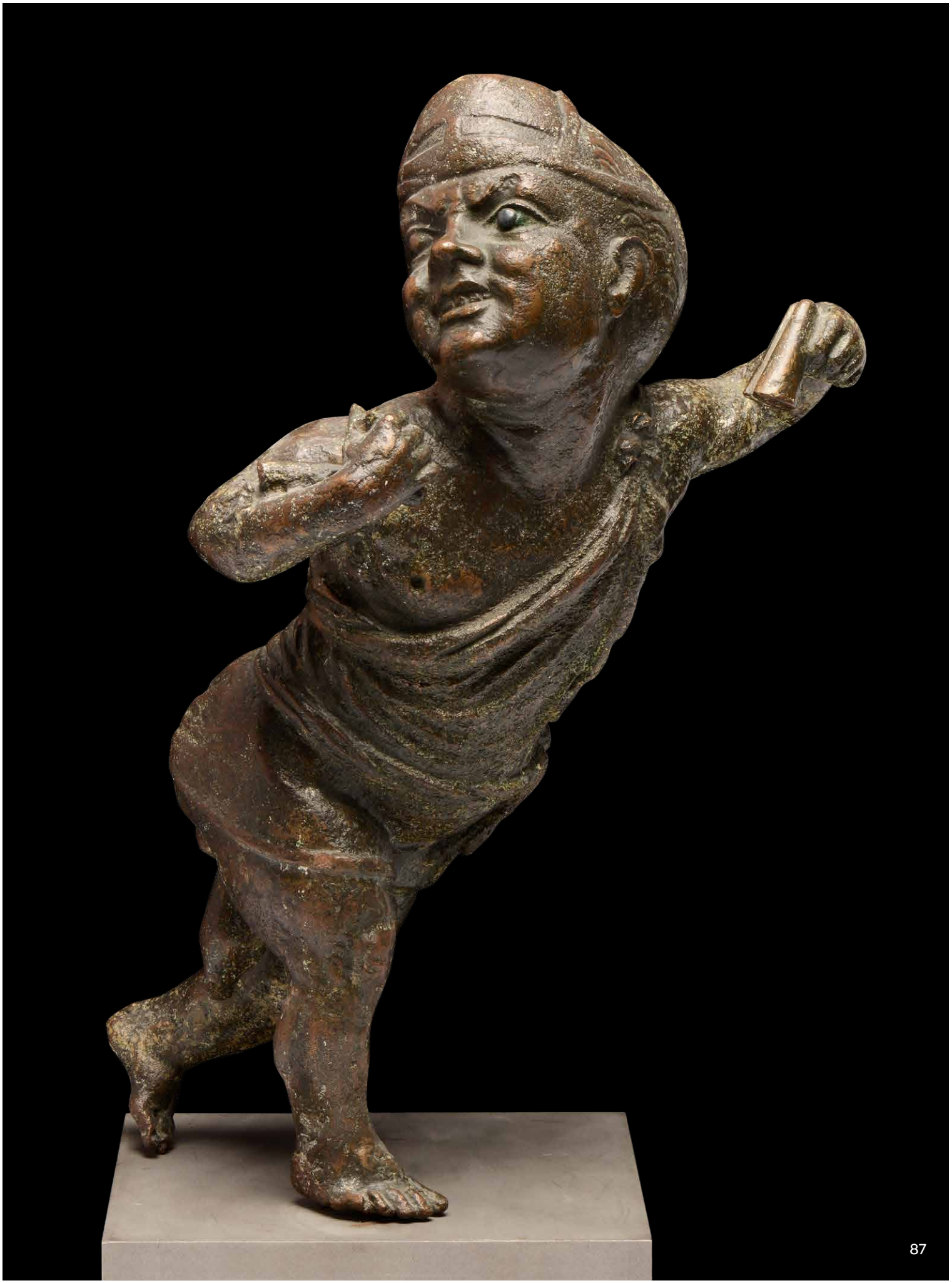
› *Bronze figure of a dwarf; shipwreck of Mahdia, 100 BC; Musée National du Bardo.*

The Greek general Diaeus fled, leaving Corinth undefended. To set an example, Mummius razed the city of Corinth to the ground. The news that both Carthage and Corinth had been destroyed in the same year struck fear into many rulers, who were concerned for their own territories. King Attalus III drew up a will stating that upon his death the kingdom of Pergamon was to come under Roman rule. This took place in 133 BC.

Sixty years after the Battle of Corinth, another battle raged in Greece. King Mithridates VI of Pontus had unleashed a revolt against Rome and had conquered several parts of Greece. He had placed Athens under the rule of one Aristion, a Greek ally. General Lucius Cornelius Sulla advanced from Rome to halt the advance of Mithridates and to punish the Greek insurgents. After a long siege, Sulla took Athens in 86 BC and ordered his troops to plunder the cultural capital of antiquity for several days. The finest works of art were taken to Rome as spoils of war, to be sold there. But not all the ships carrying their precious cargoes safely reached the Italian harbours for which they were bound.

In 1907, Greek sponge divers off the coast of Tunisia discovered the wreck of a ship from antiquity. The ship was not carrying the usual cargo of transport amphorae: the divers saw bronze and marble limbs poking out between pieces of seaweed and coral. They retrieved some statues of exceptional beauty and brought them on land at the little port of Mahdia. The Tunisian archaeological service subsequently launched a number of diving expeditions, which continued until 1913. The finds were outstanding: Greek sculptures in bronze and marble from the Hellenistic period, luxury items of furniture, intact columns and capitals, inscriptions, decorative vases, candelabras and lead ingots. Items of 'ordinary', everyday pottery dated the shipwreck to the first half of the first century BC. This soon led the scholars to link the finds to the plundering of Athens and the artworks shipped to Rome. They put forward the theory that the ship may have been

› *Bronze Eros with lamp; shipwreck of Mahdia; 100 BC; Musée National du Bardo.*



blown off course in a gale, and when the cargo started to slide (it included 60 stone columns!) it capsized off the coast of Tunisia. It is thought unlikely that the ship was actually heading for North Africa. Carthage was in ruins and there were no other cities in the vicinity with wealthy local elites. The 'treasure of Mahdia' was displayed in the Bardo Museum in Tunis. In 1994 all the finds were exhibited at the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Bonn, after first undergoing restoration there.

The exhibition *Carthage* includes three remarkable bronze pieces from the shipwreck: a satyr, a dancing female dwarf, and an Eros bearing a torch. According to the German scholar Werner Fuchs, who published an inventory of the ship's contents in 1963, these three bronze statues originate from a studio in Athens that was run by the famous sculptor Boethus of Calchedon. His signature is found on another piece from the shipwreck.

The satyr, half man, half animal, is a fine example of Hellenistic sculpture. This was a period in which sculptors experimented with depicting human bodies in the most complicated of poses. The satyr in the exhibition exemplifies a surprising blend of movement and stillness. He appears to have come to a sudden halt after rushing at top speed, stopped in his tracks by something he sees in the distance. His eyes have an alert expression, his mouth is open, gasping for air, and his arms are thrown forward by the sudden stop. His hair is unruly and bristly. He is one of the followers of the god of wine, Dionysus. Has he glimpsed his lord and master in the distance? Or has he seen a beautiful girl, a maenad, for which satyrs are constantly searching? Possibly the satyr once belonged to a larger group of sculptures.

The dancing girl has all the features associated with dwarfism: short legs, a long torso, short arms and a disproportionately large head. Dressed in a long robe she executes dance steps. Her head is thrown back towards her neck, almost in ecstasy. She dances to the rhythmic accompaniment of the *krotala* or castanets in her hand. Renderings of human beings with unusual proportions were also popular in Hellenistic sculpture. After the classical period with its perfect representation of the perfect body, Greek artists turned their attention to different, distinctive kinds of bodies: they depicted children, for instance, but also people with disabilities or deformities. People afflicted by dwarfism provided musical and acrobatic performances at festivities in antiquity. Egypt had a long tradition in this regard. This figure belonged to a group of three small dancers found in the shipwreck of Mahdia. They were dancing to the music of a fourth figure, a winged Eros with a splendid lyre. There is a ring on his back, to which a chain must originally have been attached. One of the dwarf figures also has a ring of this kind. Perhaps the entire group was once suspended as a kind of mobile, depicting Eros playing music, surrounded by 'comical' dancing dwarfs.

The third figure from the shipwreck of Mahdia is an Eros with a torch. This is an androgynous figure, carrying the torch in the left hand. This Eros has a companion–piece: a hermaphrodite depicted running, also carrying a torch. The two runners allude to the typical Athenian sports event *Lampadedromia*, a relay race between the boys' teams of the different districts or *phylai* of Attica. The boys would start their race outside the city towards dusk, at the altar of Prometheus and Hephaestus. The 'baton' was a burning torch. At set times during the two–kilometre race they had to hand the torch to the next member of the team until they reached the finish in the city. They were not permitted to allow the fire to go out. Upon reaching the finishing line, the winner would use his torch to light a fire on the altar. The spectacle appealed to the Greeks' aesthetic tastes, their love of the sight of young athletes, and was frequently depicted in the art of ancient Attica, in various periods. The running Eros discussed here combines male and female beauty, which – like the fire in the torch – is only transient. The torch of this statue could really burn. The back of Eros's head (which has been lost) was actually a lid into which oil could be poured. This oil passed through the left arm into the torch, where it could be ignited with a taper. These torch–bearers, standing in banquet halls with an abundance of food and drink, recalled the ephemeral nature of earthly delights.

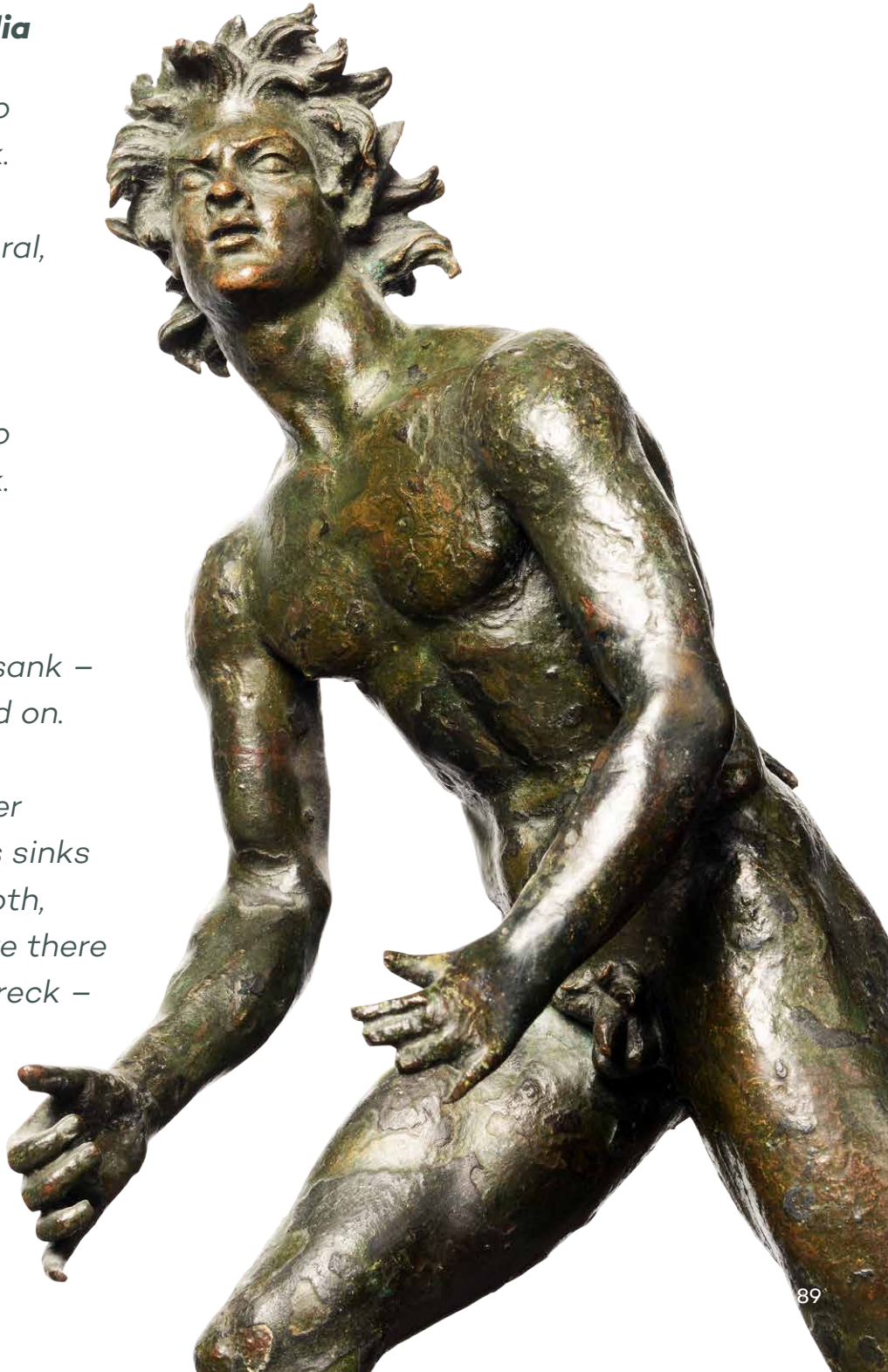
In his collection of poems *Catacomben* ('Catacombs'; 1980) the Dutch poet, archaeologist and former curator of the National Museum of Antiquities, Frédéric Bastet, wrote a poem inspired by the shipwreck of Mahdia. He was fascinated by the tragic fate of these ancient masterpieces, while at the same time he was well aware that the shipwreck ultimately led to their preservation. He compares the descent into the sea and the eventual retrieval of the art treasures by divers to the descent and retrieval of his most personal feelings – which he prefers to keep to himself:

The Shipwreck of Mahdia

Two thousand years ago
the ship of Mahdia sank.
the bronze god of love,
lying in seaweed and coral,
sang as a water gong –
with ever open lips.

Two thousand years ago
the ship of Mahdia sank.
The great marble urn
with its satyrs and its
maenads,
whispering, whelk–like, sank –
and all their feet danced on.

Two thousand years later
the ship of my thoughts sinks
to an unfathomable depth,
and let no diver ever dive there
to retrieve the timber wreck –
their imaginings live on.



Bronze satyr; shipwreck of Mahdia; 125-100 BC; Musée National du Bardo.

Particularly in Roman times the art of mosaic making reached exceptional quality. Often the richness and wealth of northern Tunisia is depicted. Collection: Musée National du Bardo, Tunis.

11 ROMAN CARTHAGE: HISTORY AND MONUMENTS

Samir Aounallah

AFTER SCIPIO AEMILIANUS HAD WON A GREAT VICTORY OVER CARTHAGE IN 146 BC, HE ADDRESSED THE SENATE, ASKING: 'I HAVE CONQUERED CARTHAGE. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO WITH IT?' THE REST OF THE STORY IS WELL KNOWN. CATO'S WARNING WAS HEEDED (POSTHUMOUSLY) AND VELLEIUS PATERCULUS RELATES (IN HIS HISTORIAE BOOK 1, 12:L. 27): 'EVEN AFTER ROME HAD CONQUERED THE WORLD, SHE COULD NOT HOPE FOR SECURITY SO LONG AS THE NAME OF CARTHAGE REMAINED AS OF A CITY STILL STANDING'. A TEN–MAN COMMITTEE OR DECEMVIRATE WAS ORDERED TO RAZE THE CITY TO THE GROUND.

The tale of the ensuing expedition is told by Appian (in *Punica* 135.639-642): 'They decreed that if anything was still left of Carthage, Scipio should obliterate it and that nobody should be allowed to live there. Direful threats were levelled against any who should disobey and chiefly against the rebuilding of Byrsa or Megara'.

Carthage remained out of bounds for almost twenty–five years. In the meantime, a major epidemic swept through Africa in 125-124 BC, killing animals and crops. In this region it claimed 200,000 human lives, opening up large swathes of empty land (Orosius Book 5, 11.4). Meanwhile, in Rome it was reported that the suspension of grain supplies had led to famine and insurgency. In 123-122 BC conflicts erupted between *optimates* and *populares* (roughly: aristocrats and populists) over the vacant tracts of land. The tribune Gracchus, who belonged to the latter group, put several draft laws to the vote in the Senate. Two of them provided for the redistribution of part of the Italian public land to the Roman citizenry (plebs) and for the founding of new colonies. The idea of founding a colony in Carthage was born.

Gracchus sailed to Africa with 6,000 colonists to found a new colony there. If we are to believed Plutarch (*Caius Gracchus*, 32), the new colony was set up in just seventy days, with each colonist being assigned 50 hectares of land. It enjoyed the protection of the goddess Juno, and was named 'colonia Junonia Carthago'. The land thus allocated in this ambitious project covered a total of 300,000 hectares, a surface area comparable to the peninsula of Cap Bon, opposite Carthage. It foundered, however, because of political conflicts in Rome and the assassination of Gracchus, and just twelve months later the colony was abandoned.

Ten years later, in 111 BC, an agricultural law, lex Thoria, privatised the public land, to the clear benefit of the Roman aristocracy. A large number of colonists sold the lands thus obtained and either returned to Rome or opted to go and live in Utica, then the capital city of Africa.

What happened to this first colony? Was it abandoned, or was it simply its status as a colony that was abolished? There is some archaeological evidence, but none of it conclusive: the existence of a large rural land allocation (*centuratio*) that is attributed to Gracchus; the discovery, some five kilometres to the west of the Byrsa Hill, of walls that can be connected to Gracchus's colony; and a series of anepigraphic gravestones that may have belonged to these early colonists. The systematic archaeological excavations that took place as part of the 'Save Carthage Campaign' did not yield anything from the pre–Augustan Roman era.

The literary evidence is scarcely more illuminating. The testimony of Eutropius and of Solinus points to the continued existence of the 'city' after the abortive venture led by Gracchus: a Roman presence in the form of a village, possibly mixed with Africans and Romans, survived the colonia Iunonia Carthago, but the significance of their presence cannot be evaluated on the basis of today's knowledge.

Golden Age: From Caesar to Commodus: 46 BC - AD 192

The situation remained unchanged until Caesar's victory over King Juba I of Numidia in 46 BC. Rome, with rather more verve this time, finally decided to found a colony in Carthage: colonia Concordia Iulia Carthago. Appian (136) and Solinus (27.9) relate that having destroyed Carthage, the Romans rebuilt it 102 years later – that is, in 44 BC. At Caesar's instigation, the project was carried out by his adopted son, Octavius, the future Emperor Augustus (27 BC - AD 14). Octavius consolidated this colony in 29 BC by sending more settlers and lifting the curse that had lain on the land since 146 BC. From the moment of its

Stela of Saturn; AD 323; Musée National du Bardo. In the Roman period, the Phoenician god Baal–Hammon was transformed into Saturn.

The Roman amphitheatre of Carthage.

Byrsa Hill. On the remains of Punic houses and workshops stand the foundations of Roman buildings. The concrete pillars used to 'reinforce' the enormous platform are visible here.

1. Abundance; Carthage; Musée National de Carthage.

2. Sleeping Eros; Carthage; 3rd century BC; Musée National de Carthage.

3. Abundance; Carthage; 3rd century AD; Musée National de Carthage.

foundation, Carthage was allocated a vast territory (the *pertica Carthaginiensium*) with a circumference of over a hundred kilometres, and granted immunity from taxation. Several settlements in Africa, including Dougga and Thibar, were partly annexed to Carthage.

This meant that Carthage had everything it needed to become one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire and the capital city of Africa. The first public works began on the Byrsa Hill and were undoubtedly devoted to building the residence of the proconsul of Africa and the administrative buildings in which he could perform his duties. A Latin inscription excavated here refers to 'proconsular baths' (ILTun. 1093). An amphora wall found on the southeastern flanks attests to this initial construction work. It was erected between 43 and 19 BC at the earliest: seven to eight layers of horizontal nesting amphorae that were filled with soil and separated by a thick layer of soil (some 50 to 60 cm). The wall was about 4.4 metres wide.

The construction work evidently went on for decades, since the governor of Africa was still living in Utica in 12 BC. This proconsul's house may well be the residence mentioned by Victor de Vita (*Bellum Vandalorum*, 1.20): 'the building dominates the city and serves as a residence for the kings of the Vandals; there is a prison in the cellars'. The hill's development began with two symbolic acts. The remains of Punic Carthage and everything that bore witness to the past, to the city's former power and the curse on the land, had to be erased. The Punic buildings were not removed but buried beneath enormous artificial embankments and foundations that levelled out the terrain: thousands of tons of material, reinforced with concrete pillars, were needed to elevate the ground level. This is one of the largest artificial platforms in the Roman world: at 336x223 metres, an area slightly over three hectares, it is three times the size of Augustus's Roman Forum.

The growing city also needed a framework in which to construct new buildings: essentially an urban development plan, with the central point corresponding to the choir screen of the present–day St Louis Cathedral. This map defines the spaces designated for public buildings and private houses. It is almost a perfect square, measuring 1,776 metres from north to south and 1,656 metres from east to west, approximately 250 hectares of four large rectangles, each of which is divided into 120 smaller ones. The small and large rectangles are separated by roads, some of which are wide (11.8 metres) and others narrow (7 metres), depending on the adjacent rectangles. The road network of Roman Carthage covered an estimated length of 60 kilometres. Although few excavations have been conducted there, the most important development phases of the settlement can be deduced from the results.

The first phase started with the founding of the colony and lasted about a hundred years, the second witnessed the building of the library in the west and the basilica in the east. Eventually the settlement would be divided into three parts. In the north was a large forum, with a surface area of over 13,000 m^2, the long sides of which were flanked by porticos while its east side was dominated by the basilica, of which only the foundations and a few elements of the floor can still be seen today. This monumental structure measured 3,600 m^2, making it the third largest basilica in the Roman Empire, after the Basilica Ulpia and the Basilica Julia in Rome. In the south was a large terrace. This was probably a promenade, to which a temple was added in the second century AD. In the middle of the settlement was a second square, almost as large as the forum, with a temple dedicated to Aesculapius. In the second century AD a large library was added to this structure.

This, in a nutshell, is all that can be said about this settlement, which retains its symbolic significance to this day: from the earliest excavation and foundations to the almost complete restoration after the fire that destroyed the city under the principate of Antoninus Pius (138-161). The central square, like the rest of the urban space, was undoubtedly an enormous construction site for many years, given that many buildings had to be constructed. It seems likely that this situation continued for half of century,or more.

1.

2.

3.

'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.

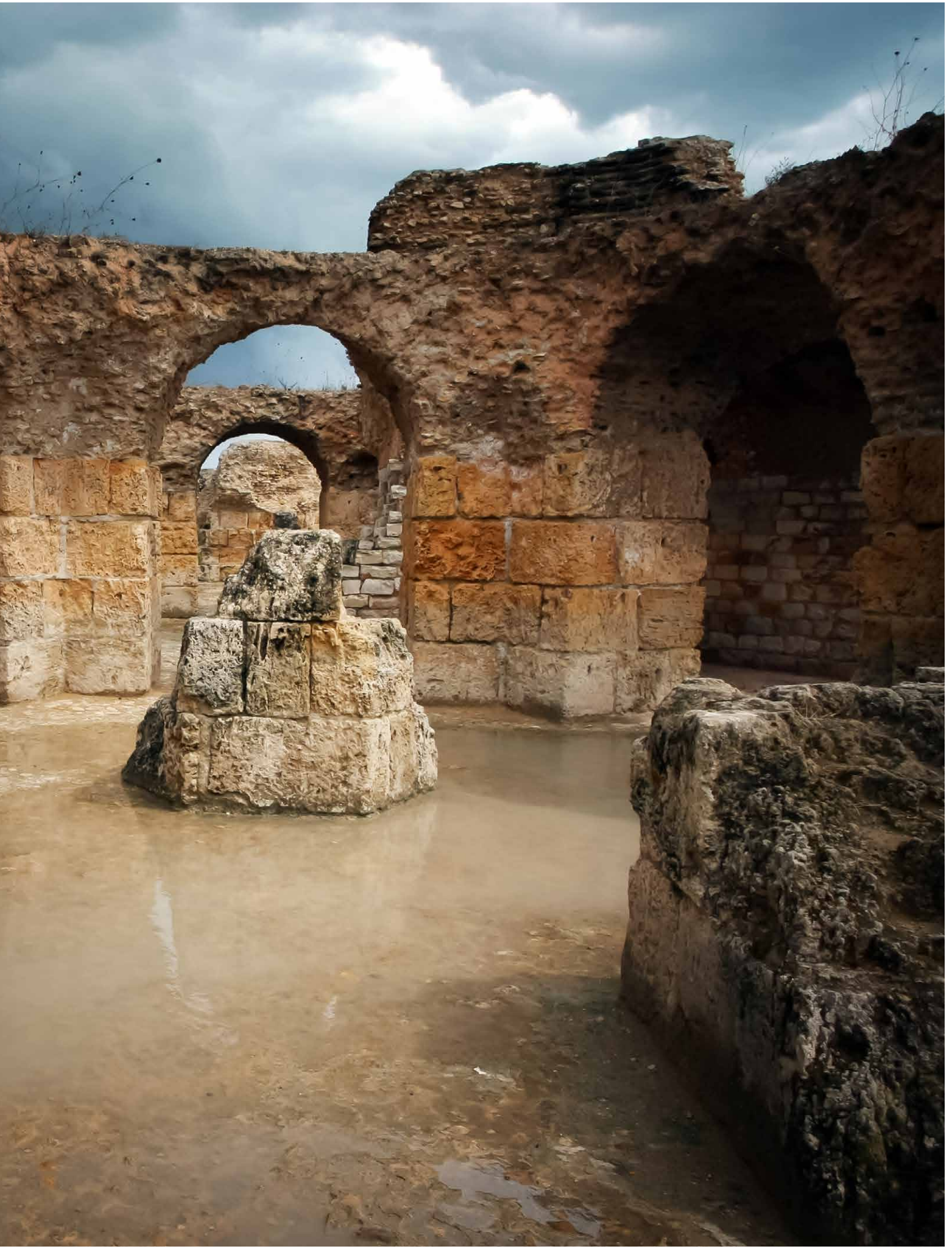
The End of Prosperity

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.

Ruins of Roman Carthage. Baths of Antoninus Pius. Built in the Second century AD (© Canonman29 | dreamstime.com).



In the Christian period, many buildings were decorated with tiles depicting Biblical scenes. Musée National de Carthage.

12 CHRISTIAN CARTHAGE

Fathi Bejaoui

THE EARLIEST RELIABLE EVIDENCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA, AS FAR AS WE KNOW TODAY, DATES FROM THE SECOND CENTURY. UNDERSTANDABLY, IT ORIGINATES FROM CARTHAGE, WHICH WAS THE REGIONAL CAPITAL AT THAT TIME. THE DOCUMENTATION ALL RELATES TO THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS. IN AD 180, TWELVE CHRISTIANS (SEVEN MEN AND FIVE WOMEN) WERE BEHEADED IN CARTHAGE, BECOMING THE FIRST KNOWN AFRICAN MARTYRS IN CHRISTENDOM. TWO OTHERS – THE FAMOUS PERPETUA AND FELICITAS – MET THE SAME FATE IN AD 203, POSSIBLY, AS LEGEND HAS IT, IN THE CITY'S AMPHITHEATRE.

Daniel in the den of lions; ivory; Musée National de Carthage.

These dramatic events have come down to us primarily through the copious writings of Tertullian (before 160-122), the first Christian to have written in Latin. An orator, legal scholar, priest and early Christian apologist, Tertullian was known for his rigour and steadfastness. From his work and from that of Cyprian, another African Church scholar, we can be certain that Carthage already had a fairly large Christian community in the third century. Cyprian was an ecclesiastical writer who rose to become bishop of Carthage, and organised a major Episcopal Synod in 256, which was attended by the representatives of over eighty African dioceses. We can therefore conclude that Christianity had become firmly embedded in this part of the Empire by this point in time. Cyprian himself died a martyr's death under Emperor Valerian in the year 258.

At some point in the fourth century, we find that an official ban on paganism had been in force for several decades, and Carthage had converted almost entirely to the new religion. This is clear from the writings of St Augustine (354-430), one of the most important Church Fathers, who left not only a voluminous body of correspondence but several works that are central to Christian orthodoxy, of which he was a passionate champion. Throughout his life, Augustine fought against schisms within the African Church that were caused by the Manichaean, Pelagian and most notably the Donatist heresies.

Donatism, a separatist movement named after bishop Donatus Magnus, which originated in Carthage in response to the persecutions of Christians under Diocletian, precipitated a serious religious crisis. It made itself felt in urban and rural settlements alike, and at some point almost every city had buildings dedicated to both sides in the controversy, in which the rival parties celebrated their cults. This information can be distilled from the report of the Conference of Carthage, held on the initiative of St Augustine in 411 and attended by just under 600 bishops, almost half of whom were Catholic and the other half Donatist. This was the beginning of the movement, which did not vanish entirely until the advent of the Vandals, who reached Carthage in 439 and settled there for a hundred years. The writings of Victor de Vita, bishop of Byzacena (in present–day central Tunisia) describe the years 480-484, and tell of the razing of buildings, abuses of power and persecutions in the city of Carthage that ensued from this invasion. The Odeon district and the theatre, for instance, were partly laid waste at the beginning of this occupation, as the archaeological record confirms.

With the Byzantine reconquest of Africa, at the behest of Justinian in 533, the Bishop of Carthage was once again Primate and guardian of the unity of the African Church. This position was gradually lost, however, after the city fell to Arab–Islamic armies in the years 697-698. From certain sources, however – papal correspondence in particular – we know that the old metropolis still had bishops well into the tenth century. Thanks to the writings of such learned clerics and the rapid and effective organisation of the local Church, the name of Carthage has been inscribed forever in the annals of history alongside those of Rome and Constantinople, as the place where the Latin Bible was first created and developed.

The archaeological records of Christian Carthage

A large quantity of diverse archaeological evidence has been preserved of the Christian era of Carthage: architecture, epigraphs, diverse art forms, such as sculptures, mosaics, pottery, glass, jewellery in precious metals etc. Excavations and research that started in the nineteenth century (with Alfred Louis Delattre and Paul Gauckler) and continued to the end of the twentieth century (mainly conducted by Noël Duval, Susan Stevens and especially Liliane Ennabli, who produced several treatises on Christian Carthage that examine Christian inscriptions and religious architecture, teach us that no fewer than 23 or 24 churches were established here. Some are named, for instance in sermons and in the letters of St Augustine. Today, more than ten religious buildings are visible in the known area of the ancient city, which was divided into seven or eight ecclesiastical regions. They include the basilica of Damous El Karita, which was probably one of the largest in Africa (65 metres long and 45 metres wide, not counting the numerous annexes),the basilica of St Cyprian, which was built on the site of the saint's grave, and the Dermech complex near Anthony's thermal baths. There were also chapels and monasteries. Most of the floors of these buildings were decorated with mosaics in various geometrical, floral, animal or symbolic motifs (cross, peacock, kantharos etc.) or with illustrations of Biblical stories, after the example of the theme of the rivers of

Late Antique tile, with an image of Adam and Eve. Collection: Musée National de Carthage.

Paradise, three examples of which were found in a single church, namely Bir Ftouha. The roofs, and undoubtedly the walls too, were covered with terracotta tiles (an African specialty) on which believers could admire images of the most popular subjects from Early Christian art: Adam and Eve, the sacrifice of Abraham, Daniel in the lion's den, Jonas in the whale, the Miracles of Christ, and the Virgin Mary. These same subjects were fashionable towards the end of the fourth century for the decorations on African pottery lamps. Thousands of these objects, which were made virtually in an assembly line, were discovered during excavations on this site. Epigraphs (thousands of inscriptions in stone or mosaic documented in inventories) have provided us with important information about the role played in Carthage by the cults of saints and martyrs, the apostles Peter and Paul, the martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas, Stephen and Menas. These epigraphs and dedications have also acquainted us with the names of bishops and other clerics who are mentioned in the reports of the numerous councils and synods that were organised in this city. The precise date of the first of these meetings is not known, but it was probably in the early third century.

This distinguished past of the greatest Christian metropolis in Africa is reflected today in the historic buildings that are open to the public. The memory of this past is also preserved in two museums, one on the Byrsa Hill, close to the cathedral that was built in the nineteenth century to commemorate St Louis, and another that is dedicated to Christian Carthage.

Byzantine basilica of Dermech I, to the west of the Antonine Thermal Baths.

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

13

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.

Part of the appeal of Dido, Hannibal, Sophonisba, Massinissa and others who were involved in the wars between Rome and Carthage was the exoticism of these men and women, who were sometimes portrayed as dark–skinned Africans and who were 'nonetheless' capable of wreaking havoc among the forces of the noble Romans. Dido was the mysterious queen who succeeded in detaining Aeneas at her court until the gods sent their messenger, Mercury, ordering him to return to Italy. She was clever, beautiful and alluring, as courageous as a man, and she consequently possessed almost superhuman gifts. She could serve as an example to kings and queens alike, but she was also described in the sources as an immoral and perverse temptress and a suicide. Dido's Carthage would later become the powerful opponent of Aeneas's descendants. The Queen cursed the future Rome as she burned at the stake.

Dido was seen as the equal of rulers and soldiers of military fame. She built a city, fought against the surrounding tribes, and went hunting, all supposedly 'male' activities. Aeneas broke into this happy pioneering world, and his passion seems initially to have enriched it. One of the high points in their stormy relationship, as related by Virgil, is a hunting trip during which a torrential downpour and thunderstorm force them to take shelter in a cave. The two are in every respect a match for each other, and in the sketch produced by Romeijn de Hooghe, Dido wears a suit of armour over her royal robe. This

Female personification of Africa; Crispijn van de Passe; 1589-1611; Rijksmuseum Amsterdam; inv. no. RP–P–1938-1492.

is a highly atmospheric sketch, with its sarcophagi bearing imaginary inscriptions in Greek. Dido's assistant Anna withdraws discreetly, and the heroes have laid their weapons aside.

Her counterpart, Aeneas, was generally described in glowing terms, despite his weakness in succumbing to Dido's charms. His first meeting with Dido was sometimes depicted in cycles of paintings or tapestries, such as the series made for the negotiations of the Peace of Nijmegen in 1678 (now in Museum Het Valkhof, Nijmegen). The pictures were reproduced in cheap copies – prints, sold separately or included as illustrations in books. Crispijn de Passe's series, one print of which is included in the exhibition, consisted of at least thirteen prints. It is clear from the caption to the anonymous classicist print dating from around 1700 that Aeneas is also depicted here as devious. He plays the gallant when the queen meets him in the harbour or in her throne room, but meanwhile he pursues his own goals. For Dido, the future has only death in store.

Aeneas's entrance into Carthage is in itself a miraculous event. Tiepolo depicts Venus showing Aeneas and Achates the way to the city, in his sketch for a ceiling painting. She is sitting on a cloud that obscures Aeneas's fleet. In the print by Thomassin, dating from the middle or late seventeenth century, two lines from the *Aeneid* (1.588-589) clarify the action: Achates asks Dido to come to the aid of the castaways, and after he has spoken, Aeneas appears to descend from the clouds. Dido's throne is in front of some buildings that are under construction; on the left, a labourer is busying himself with a marble column. The eighteenth–century fan depicts the same scene; for its erudite owner, the allusion to the storm in which Aeneas appears may have been a delightful association with the fan that cooled her brow, and that was furthermore an important instrument in lovemaking. All these scenes emphasise the contrast between Aeneas's fiery temperament and Dido's restraint.

^ *Dido in the throes of death, with a moralistic caption beneath the print. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.*

> *Dido and Aeneas; Paper; Romeyn de Hooghe; 17th century; Leiden University Libraries; inv. no. PK-T-306.*

Crispine vand broeck inuentor

Crispyn van pas fecit

Prima lŭce feras dire, Carthaginis arces
martius armata vicit prope littora turma
Scipio, et oblatum metit Insatiabilis agmen.

A la puissante Cite Cartago lassau
par scipio de grand force, voyant en
fist tant q̄ ladite Cite, au premier
Jour

The Taking of Carthage; Barbara van den Broeck; 1560-1580; Rijksmuseum Amsterdam; inv. no. RP–P–1994–80.


Raph. Vrbin inu.
Cornelio Cort fe.

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

Vn des Tableaux de la grande Gallerie du Palais Royal.

The arrival of Aeneas in Carthage; Simon Henri Thomassin; 18th century; Leiden University Libraries; inv. no. PK–P–126.471.

knew that Publius Cornelius Scipio would eventually secure a decisive victory here, at Zama, following peace negotiations with Hannibal that also found their way into prints. In honour of his victory, Scipio was surnamed Africanus.

Scipio himself was also a popular subject in Baroque art. His life history was always closely linked to the slow decline in the power of Carthage. Besides being an effective military commander, he is also depicted in the sources – and therefore by the artists who portrayed him – as a wise man, someone who did not pursue gain for himself. The *continentia Scipionis* (Scipio's self–restraint) is one of the episodes of his life that is depicted most frequently: when a girl was given to him as part of the spoils of war after the conquest of the Spanish city of Numantia, he returned her to the young man to whom she was betrothed. Some versions refer to the couple as Lucretia and Allucius.

Other Roman soldiers, Marcus Atilius Regulus and Fabius Maximus Cunctator, served in art as exemplars of patience and caution, their actions furnishing monarchs and others in positions of leadership with food for thought. Fabius refused to rush into battle against Hannibal; his long delay and wary approach averted much greater losses, eventually weakening Hannibal's forces. He was also a paragon of fearlessness, as is clear from a print by Portman dating from 1795, one of a series depicting figures of extraordinarily noble character, the others being Hannibal and Regulus.

When we look at the images of these figures, it is striking that they always served as examples: the scenes demonstrated the true meaning of courage and virtue. Rulers possessed precious artworks such as tapestries, fresco cycles and series of paintings depicting leaders that could serve as examples. Sequences of episodes from the lives of Hannibal and other heroic commanders, if displayed in great palace halls used for audiences and meetings, might encourage those attending to emulate their great deeds. On a smaller scale, some paintings and prints, or other products derived from them, served to inspire conversations in the home, or in clubs and societies, about themes such as courage and virtue, faithfulness and sincerity, or vices such as falseness and hypocrisy. In images such as these, Carthage was an 'ordinary' classical city. Its Oriental features would not become attractive until the nineteenth century. Until the Enlightenment, two nations – the Carthaginians and the Romans – were constantly held up as shining examples of virtue. Aeneas was generally forgiven for his youthful lapses, but as a military commander he would never achieve the glory of the later heroes.

Roman statues from Utica, purchased by J.E. Humbert in 1823; Collection of the National Museum of Antiquities.

14

FOREIGNERS ON AN UNFAMILIAR COAST: THE REDISCOVERY OF CARTHAGE

Ruurd Halbertsma

ON 18 AUGUST 1815, THE FRENCH FRIGATE FLEUR DE LYS ARRIVED IN TUNISIA. ONE OF THOSE TO DISEMBARK WAS A POLITICAL REFUGEE NAMED CAMILLO BORGIA, A DESCENDANT OF AN OLD NOBLE FAMILY FROM VELLETRI. DURING THE POLITICAL CONVULSIONS TRIGGERED BY NAPOLEON'S CONQUESTS IN EUROPE, COUNT BORGIA HAD SIDED WITH THE FRENCH. IN ROME HE HAD SERVED AS COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, AND LATER HE BECAME THE CONFIDANT OF THE 'REVOLUTIONARY' KING JOACHIM MURAT.

After the fall of Napoleon in 1815, Murat was taken prisoner and executed by firing squad. Borgia managed to escape, but was sentenced to death in absentia. He had no choice but to leave his wife Adelaide and their two children behind in Naples.

Because of the old ties between his family and the Danish royal house, Borgia had been issued with a Danish passport in Naples, and upon arrival in Tunisia he was received and given accommodation by the Danish consul, A.C. Gierlew. In the first weeks of his stay in Tunis, Borgia concentrated on introducing himself to the local *corps diplomatique* and an array of dignitaries. He enjoyed watching wrestling matches and was astonished by the voluptuousness of the belly dancers. In the letters he wrote to his wife, he praised the tolerant attitudes towards the Jewish and Christian communities that prevailed in Tunis, and the people's moderate approach to 'the laws of the prophet'. It was his first visit to a North African country, and he included vivid descriptions of the rich flora and fauna of these exotic parts. He accompanied the Danish consul Gierlew on a visit to the ruins of Carthage and Utica, and the visit rekindled his old passion for archaeology. In Velletri the Borgia family had built up a large collection, including objects of ethnological and archaeological interest[1]. Camillo Borgia, who had grown up amid these art treasures, had never lost his love for objects that resonated with history, and he decided to spend his time in Tunisia usefully by researching the country's ancient history.

The Count and the Engineer

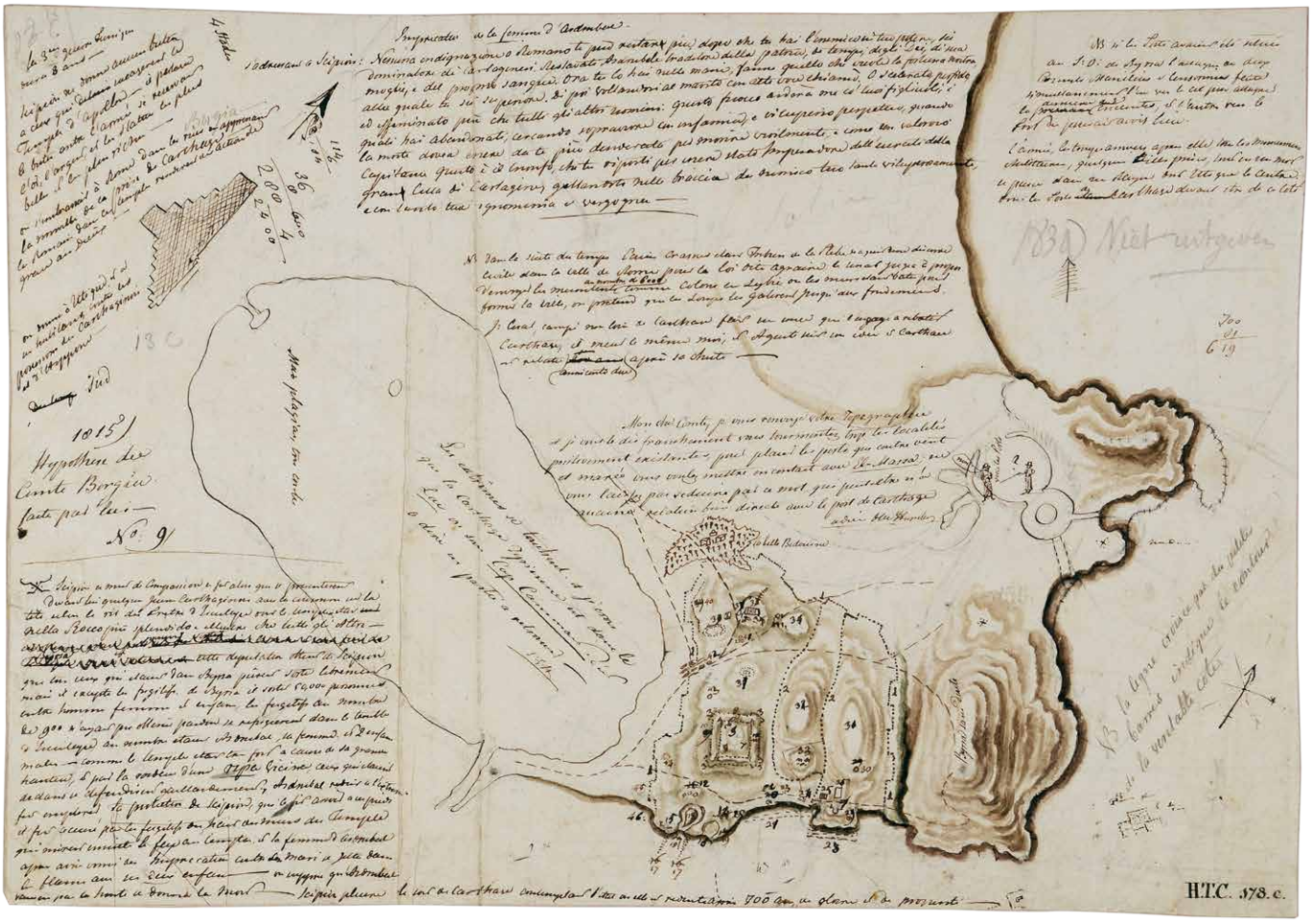
During a reception at the Dutch Consulate, the consul Antoine Nijssen introduced Borgia to a Dutch engineer who had been working in Tunisia for almost twenty years: Jean–Émile Humbert. Humbert, born in The Hague in 1771, had trained as a military engineer, but as a supporter of the House of Orange he had been compelled to leave the Netherlands after the Batavian Revolution of 1795. The following year, he and two other Dutch soldiers arrived in Tunis, where the Bey had commissioned them to build a new harbour. Within the space of ten years, the three engineers built a modern harbour that was called La Goulette ('gullet'), after the bottleneck channel between Lake Tunis and the Mediterranean. Life in Tunisia agreed with Humbert: he married one of the younger sisters of the Dutch consul Nijssen, and once the harbour was complete, he was offered the position of chief engineer by Hamouda Pascha, Bey of Tunis. In his leisure time, Humbert studied geography and ethnology and explored the Carthaginian peninsula.

Portrait of Jean Émile Humbert; artist unknown; 1800-1824; Netherlands Institute of Art History (RKD); inv. no. IB71282.

The difficult relations that existed between the North African or 'Barbary' states and the Europeans made studying Carthaginian topography awkward and sometimes dangerous terrain, and few travellers had ventured into it. The first serious researcher had been the Englishman Thomas Shaw, who had sailed to Tunisia in 1727. Shaw had studied theology in Oxford before being appointed chaplain at the British trade mission in Algiers. From there he travelled to Egypt, the Levant, Cyprus and the coast of North Africa. In 1738 he published his *Travels, or, Observations Relating to Several Parts of Barbary and the Levant*, an encyclopaedic work with accurate descriptions of the natural history, customs and traditions, and antiquities of the countries he visited. The second edition of his book was translated into Dutch, French and German. Shaw was the first to formulate the question of where the famous Byrsa Hill, the centre of Punic Carthage, was located: was it the low, southern hill that still bore this name, or could it be the high, northern Cape Carthage, on which perched the little village of Sidi Bou Said? According to the writings of ancient authors, whom Shaw quoted at length, the famous double harbour lay close to the Byrsa. This meant that determining which of the hills had been the Byrsa would also have implications for the location of the double harbour.

Humbert's long stay in Tunisia and his position as engineer at the court gave him ample opportunity to study the topography of Carthage. When foreigners arrived in Tunisia, he took them on tours of ancient Carthage: excursions that might take up an entire day, made especially enjoyable by the generous lunches that were served at the Roman cisterns, where Humbert regaled his guests with

1. The collection was later purchased by Museo Borbonico in Napels, now the Museo Nazionale.



Sketch of the Carthaginian peninsula by J.E. Humbert, with topographical notes; Archives of the National Museum of Antiquities.

songs about the famous queens of Carthage. One of these guests was the French writer François René de Chateaubriand, whose ship docked in the harbour of La Goulette on 12 January 1807 on the way back from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which he later turned into a literary travel journal, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1812).

Humbert's theory, that it was the southern hill that was the famous Byrsa, was adopted by Chateaubriand. Borgia too was impressed by Humbert's topographical knowledge, and suggested that they produce a joint publication on Tunisian antiquity: a collection of all the material remains, with separate chapters on the topography of Carthage and Utica, the two cities that had played such an important role in antiquity.

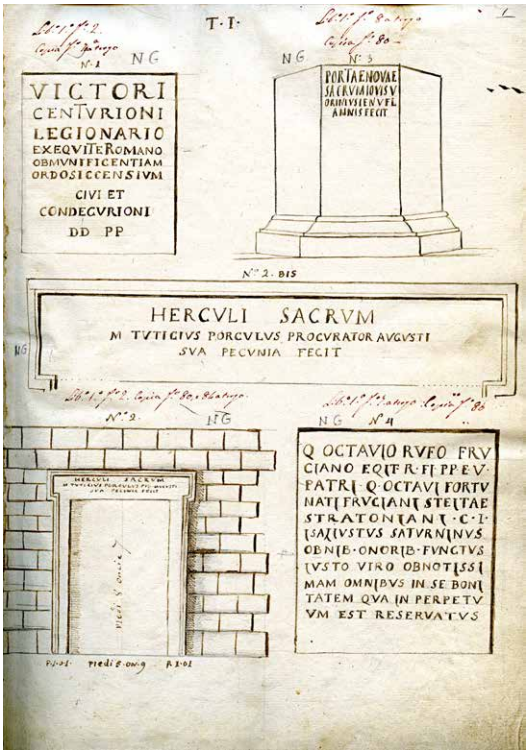
As an engineer, Humbert undertook frequent working trips into the interior of Tunisia. He built a series of fortresses there to protect the frontier with Algeria. For security, he always travelled under military escort. Camillo Borgia was granted permission to join these excursions into the interior. Humbert and Borgia went on three major expeditions around Tunisia. The records of these journeys can be found in Borgia's diaries and travel papers, which were to serve as the basis for their joint publication: sketches of ruins, drawings of inscriptions, detailed floor plans of temples, triumphal arches and Christian basilicas. The notes made by Borgia and Humbert provide a rich overview of the antiquities that could still be seen in the interior of Tunisia around 1815. In 1817, Camillo Borgia received news from Naples. The king had revoked his sentence, and he was free to return to his family in Italy. He composed a poem about 'Carthage and Humbert', which he inscribed at the back of his Dutch friend's album, took all his notes and set sail for Naples, where he planned to have the drawings engraved and the notes elaborated into a book. Sadly, the project

was never completed: Borgia died shortly after arriving in Naples, probably from the effects of malaria, which he had contracted in the swampy regions around Utica.

That same year, 1817, Humbert made the discovery of his life. In excavations between the Roman amphitheatre and the village of La Malga, he discovered six objects from the Punic period of Carthage: four virtually intact stelae with inscriptions and sculptural work, and two fragments of similar stones. These were the first Punic objects to have been discovered on the site of the Punic city, and provided important clues to the location of the oldest settlement on the peninsula. Now that his hopes for a joint publication with Borgia had been dashed, Humbert decided to present the stelae and his portfolio with notes to the Dutch government, to have them published by a Dutch scholar. In 1819 the Bey granted him an honourable discharge from his service, and Humbert sailed to The Hague to find a buyer for his important collection.

Caspar Reuvens and Archaeology

In 1818 the young scholar C.J.C. Reuvens was appointed by royal decree to an endowed chair at the University of Leiden (fig. 9). His field of study was 'Archaeology, or the knowledge of antiquity, as illuminated by surviving monuments, a subject that has thus far never been the explicit subject of instruction'. He became the first professor of archaeology in the world. He was also given responsibility for the Archaeological Cabinet, consisting of Greek and Roman sculptures, some Egyptian antiquities, and prehistoric finds, all of which were the property of the university. Reuvens created order in the collection and made an inventory of its contents. He was given a modest–sized museum building to put it in.



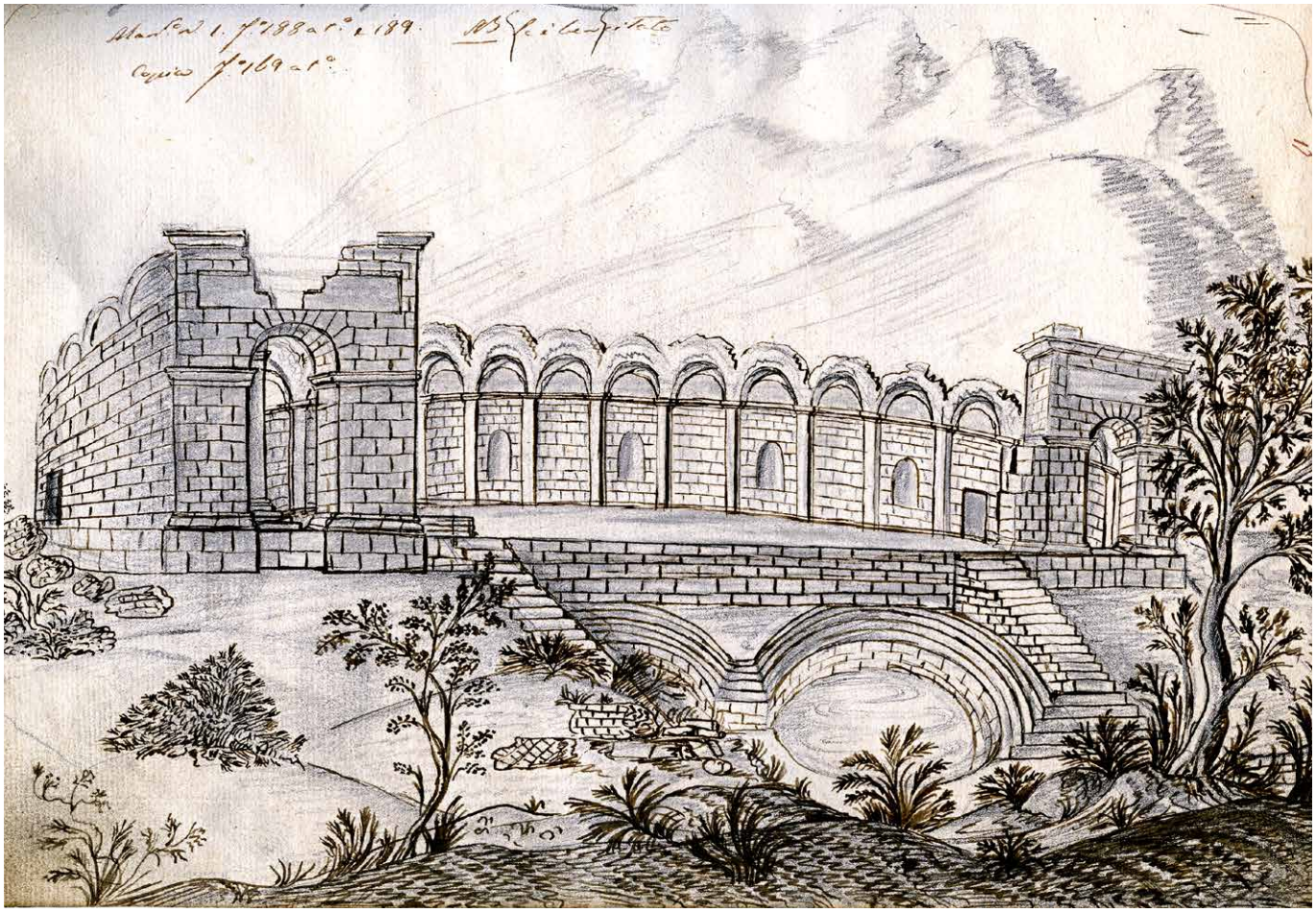
Drawing by Camillo Borgia: Latin inscriptions from the interior of Tunisia; Archives of the National Museum of Antiquities.

Inspired by the great examples of the Louvre and the British Museum, Reuvens dreamt of a large, national collection of antiquities to rival the institutions that existed in other countries. At the end of 1820, the education minister, Anton Falck, wrote to say that one Major Humbert had come to see him in The Hague, claiming to possess a remarkable collection of antiquities. Reuvens was asked to determine the collection's value to scholarship. On a freezing winter's day, the professor and the major met in Leiden. Looking at the Punic stelae and the files full of drawings, and listening Humbert's stories, Reuvens felt his head begin to spin. He described the experience as 'catching sight of a new horizon'. He suddenly glimpsed the possibility that he might become the first scholar to unveil the topography of Carthage, and the first museum director to possess those Punic objects from Carthage in his collection. The education minister agreed to purchase the entire collection from the public purse. Reuvens proposed to Humbert that the latter return to Tunisia in the service of the Dutch government, to conduct archaeological research and to purchase antiquities. The Dutch winter almost threw a spanner in the wheels of these new plans: Humbert fell gravely ill, and through his feverish dreams he could speak only two words: 'Carthage' and 'Reuvens'!

Engraving depicting Humbert and Borgia on horseback on their Tunisian expedition; c. 1815; Archives of the National Museum of Antiquities.

Expeditions to Tunisia and Italy

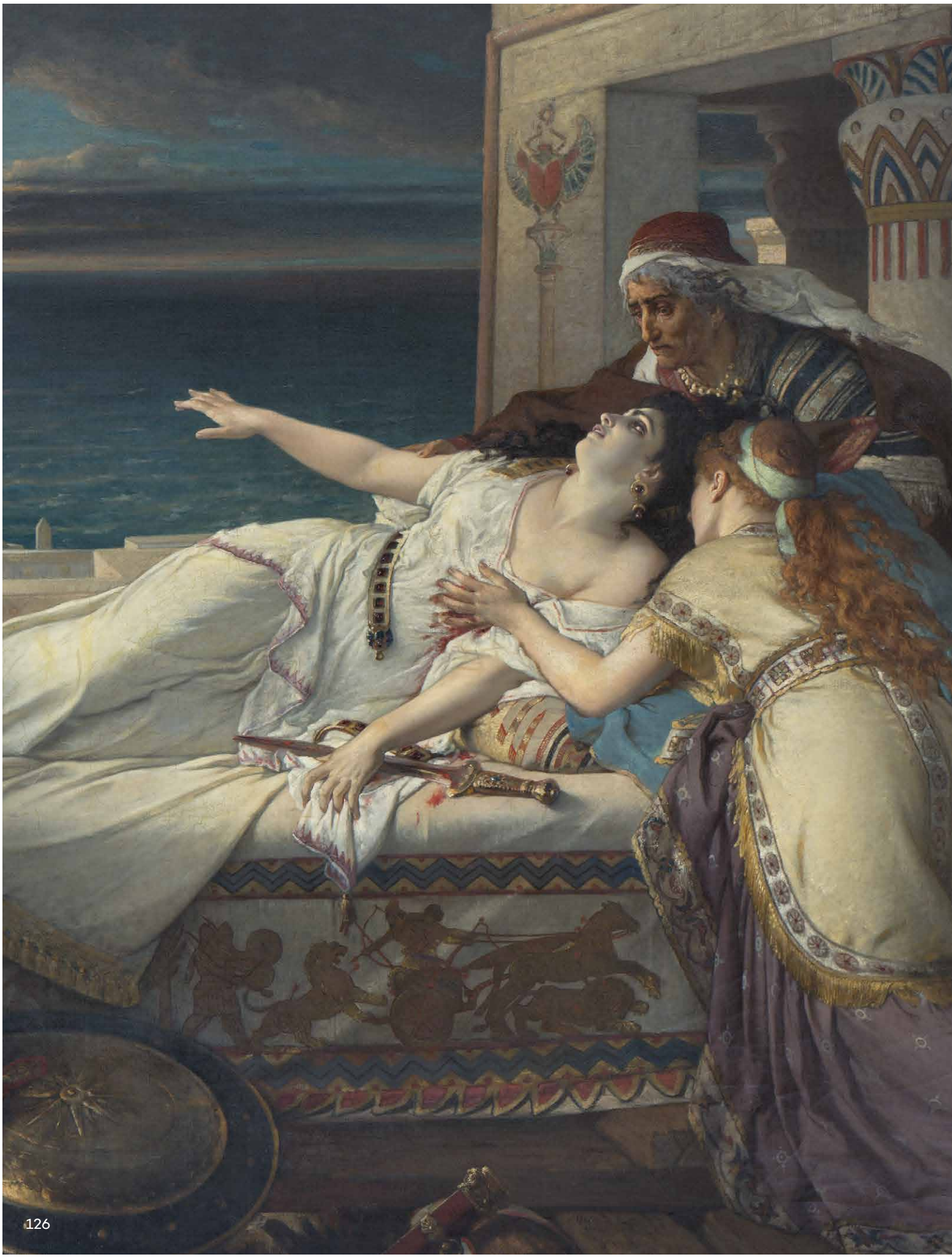
Humbert received a royal distinction for his scholarly achievements, was promoted in rank to lieutenant–colonel, and set sail for Tunisia in 1822. The Bey granted him permission to conduct excavations in Carthage and Utica, in exchange for some work on the harbour of La Goulette. With the authorities' consent, he purchased a large number of objects for the Leiden museum. Besides a superb collection of eight imperial statues from Utica (fig.10), these also included Punic–Roman art from the interior and objects used in everyday life: plates, drinking bowls, tableware, cutlery and oil lamps. The provenance was noted down in each case, as far as it was known. Excavations brought to light more Punic material. Humbert also solved the topographical questions that Reuvens had formulated. In the hope that sufficient material had been collected for a publication, Humbert returned to the Netherlands in 1824. But Reuvens had the ambition to achieve a complete picture. Rather than confining himself to Carthage, he wanted to incorporate the other antiquities of Tunisia into his publication. Furthermore, he



Drawing by Camillo Borgia: Nymphaeum near Zaghouan; c. 1815; Archives of the National Museum of Antiquities.

wanted to present Tunisia in the context of the surrounding regions. In short, a second expedition was called for, the aim being to chart the entire north coast of Africa in archaeological terms. Reuvens also wanted to purchase Camillo Borgia's notes, as a supplement to Humbert's notes and floor plans. Humbert himself, who was by then 55 years of age and in poor health, sighed that 'an armchair scholar could have no idea' how hard it was to achieve all these objectives in reality. He set off nonetheless, in 1826, on a mission that would last for four years. Arriving in Livorno, he was informed that some important Etruscan collections were being offered for sale in Volterra and Cortona. There was also an Egyptian collection from Livorno. He obtained permission to remain in Italy for a year to secure these purchases. In 1827 he had an opportunity to acquire an extremely large Egyptian collection – the third largest in Europe, after those in Paris and Turin. Reuvens set his sights on gaining possession of it. The negotiations lasted a year, and were finally concluded successfully. Humbert spent the final year of the mission travelling around Italy, picking up smaller purchases. By then, Leiden had already acquired several magnificent Etruscan and Egyptian collections through his exertions.

Reuvens's publication never materialised. In 1834 the Danish researcher Christian Falbe published his study 'Recherches sur l'emplacement de Carthage', after which Reuvens lost interest in the subject. His time was now taken up with the publication of the Egyptian collections and excavations in the Netherlands. His sudden death in 1835 brought the Tunisian adventure to an end. Humbert spent the last few years of his life in Livorno, where he died in 1839. In his will he had expressed his desire to have the name of Carthage included in the inscription on his gravestone. He bequeathed his private collection of antiquities to the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden.



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

15

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*.

Et là–bas, sous le pont, adossé contre une arche,
Hannibal écoutait, pensif et triomphant,
Le piétinement sourd des légions en marche.

J–M. de Heredia (1842-1905), 'La Trebbia' (from Les Trophées, 1893).

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

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.* While it is true that Flaubert succeeded in finding details that would bring to life the city's topography (including information derived from Charles–Ernest Beulé), his correspondence repeatedly boils over with frustration: he was distressed to find so few traces of the material culture of Hamilcar and Hannibal's contemporaries. 'We know nothing about Carthage', he wrote in one letter, dated October 1858, to the disconcerted writer and archaeologist Ernest Feydau, and writing to the critic Charles–Augustin Sainte–Beuve in December 1862, he declared: 'Archaeology makes me laugh'.

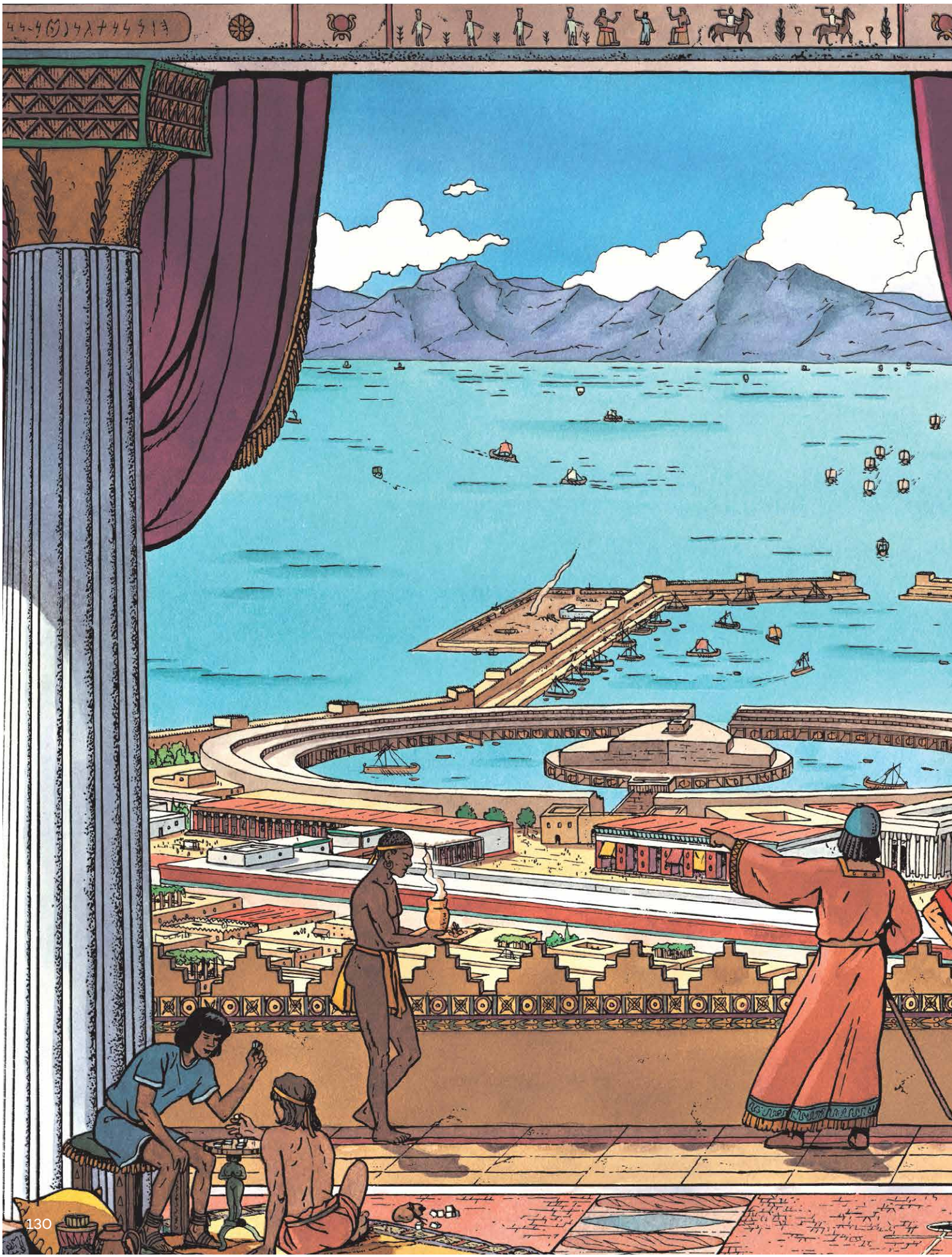
Flaubert's *Salammbô* immediately joined the steamy ranks of *femmes fatales* in world literature, inspiring numerous artists to depict her: Mucha (lithograph in Paris, compositional sculpture in Karlsruhe), Rodin (watercolour in Paris, Musée Rodin), Rochegrosse (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France) and Prouvé (Nancy), the latter two as illustrators of editions of his novel in the age of Art Nouveau. Among the most striking sculptures of Salammbô were those by Ferrary (Liverpool), Rivière (Paris, Musée d'Orsay; Cologne, Wallraff–Richartz) and Idrac (Toulouse, Musée des Augustins), while Constant and Strathmann (Weimar) depicted her in paintings. In 1863, Paris indulged in unbridled mockery with the operetta parody *Folammbô ou les Cocasseries carthaginoises* (Mad–ammbô, or Carthaginian High Jinks) by De Clairville and Laurencin long before Ernest Reyer's opera *Salammbô* (1890) was performed in the theatres of London, Paris and Brussels. In Anatole France's *Le crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*, the protagonist's two cats, Hamilcar and Hannibal, doze contentedly, utterly unmoved by the action going on around them. Salammbô also became a popular mannequin at French *bals masqués*, and possibly supplied welcome fodder for the Frisian self–styled 'baron' Tinco Martinus Lycklama à Nijeholt, who had a weakness for such entertainments. Through all these representations, the fictional tragic heroine Salammbô acquired a permanent place alongside the heroic Punic generals Hamilcar and Hannibal (and their antagonist Scipio).

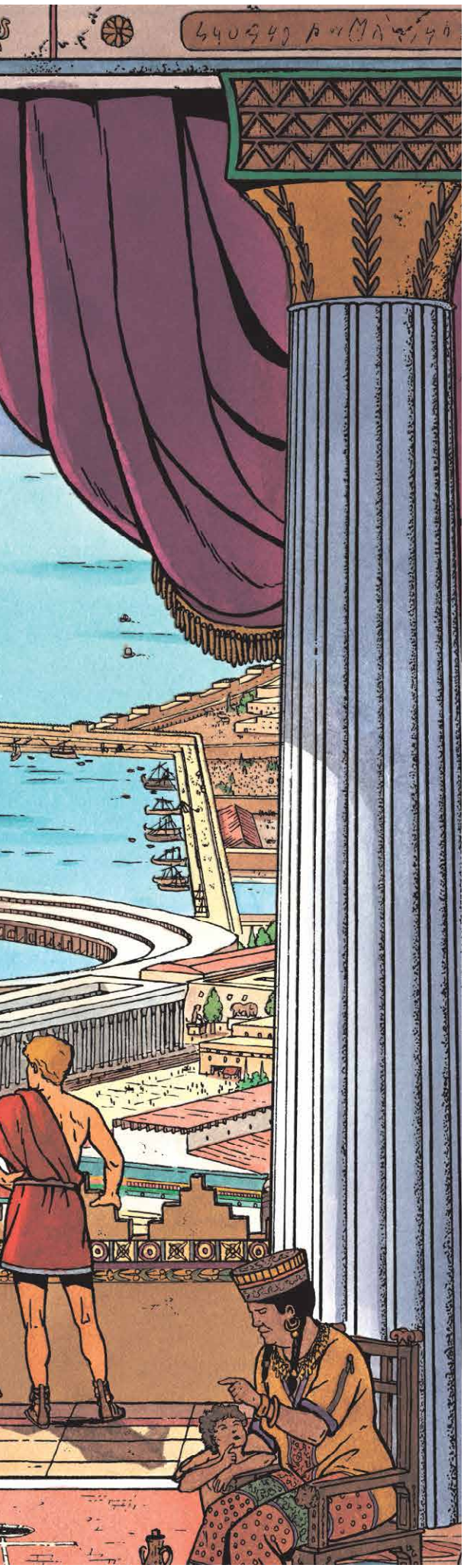
Salammbô;1923; François–Louis Schmied; Koninklijke Bibliotheek (National Library of the Netherlands), The Hague; inv. no. KW KOOPM M 804.

Ever since the Middle Ages and throughout the Renaissance, these generals' glorious deeds (Zama, Cannae, the crossing of the Alps) had been etched into the collective memory with numerous incunabula, frescoes, tapestries and other artworks, by artists who were all too eager to depict the siege and fall of mighty Carthage from the Judeo–Christian viewpoint that blamed its downfall on hubris. Partly from this perspective, Salammbô was a version of the mythical founder of Carthage, Elissa (also known as Dido, 'the refugee'), whose doomed love for Aeneas had been a popular motif in the arts since classical antiquity (Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, v,17, 5), a popularity that endured well into the nineteenth century. Her supposed blood ties with the Phoenician royal family of Tyre, as the daughter of King Mattan I (840-832) and the sister of his successor, Pygmalion (known to the Phoenicians as Pumayyaton, 831-738 BC), often inspired paintings by European artists. Another popular subject for painters was the cunning trick she used to secure a large piece

of land after her flight to North Africa. After first agreeing to accept a piece of land that could be encompassed by an ox's hide, she had the hide cut into tiny strips with which she encircled the entire hill of Byrsa, creating the centre of what would become Carthage. The English artist William Turner (1775-1851) regarded his 1815 oil painting *Dido building Carthage* (London, National Gallery) as his greatest masterpiece. Other artists added a dramatic dimension to their images of Dido by focusing on her romance with Aeneas as described by Virgil. These images frequently feature the bitter end of her life: Dido is shown burning herself on the pyre just as Carthage is poised to acquire a key role in embedding Phoenician power in the Western Mediterranean. As far as artists from the Netherlands are concerned, the painting *The Death of Dido* by Jozef Stallaert (c. 1872) cannot be omitted from this brief survey. For Stallaert depicts the palace of the first queen of Carthage decorated with Egyptian columns (an allusion to the work *The Death of Cleopatra* by Alexandre Cabanel, now hangs the Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp). The attentive viewer will also discern an Assyrian *lamassu* (a winged sphinx with the body of a bull) as well as an embroidered hunting scene copied after an example of an Assyrian relief in the British Museum. This painting may therefore rightly be classified as a visionary work, since it would not be for another decade that the excavations at Carthage would prove that the Phoenician founders of Carthage (the name derived from Qrt–hdšt or Kart–Hadasht, meaning 'new city') had introduced traditions from the East that were grafted onto centuries–old ties with the civilisations of the Nile, just as in the region between the Tigris and Euphrates. Stallaert's painting thus heralded the assumptions encapsulated in *Ex Oriente Lux*!

It remains difficult to give a concise impression of Carthage as seen through nineteenth–century eyes. Indeed, such an enterprise is as doomed as the frustrating love life of Salammbô and her distant ancestor Elissa. Fortunately, nowadays we have the benefit of powerful internet search engines that I hope the reader will use to delve into the life and 'afterlife' of Carthage and to enjoy, each in his or her own way, the myriad facets of this fascinating subject.





Cover of the comic book Les voyages d'Alix: Carthage (V. Henin & J. Martin 2000; © Jacques Martin / Casterman 2014).

16

IMAGES OF CARTHAGE IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES: FILMS, COMICS AND GAMES

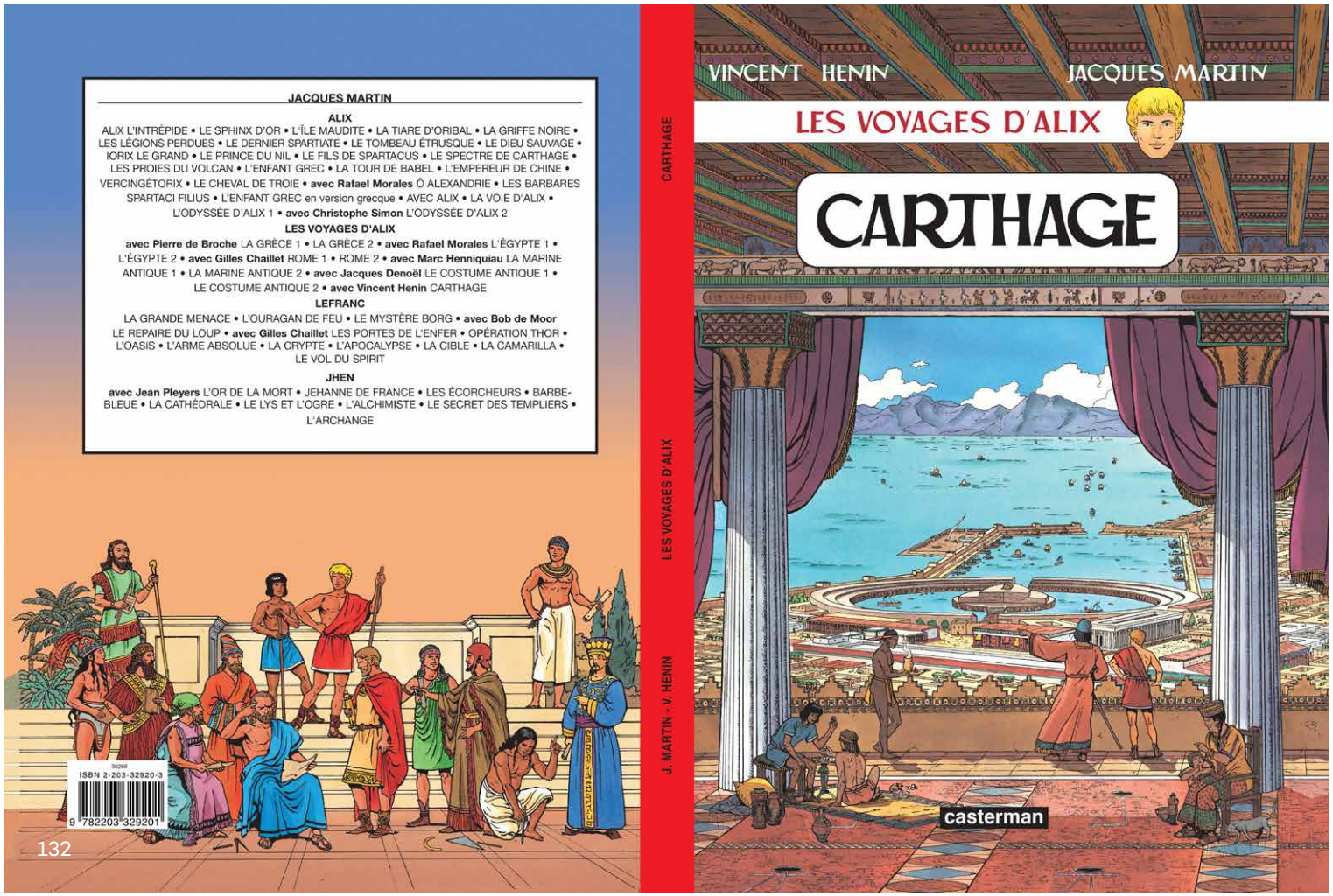
Vanessa Boschloos

DIDO AND AENEAS, SALAMMBÔ AND MATHÔ, HANNIBAL … IN THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY–FIRST CENTURIES, TRAGIC LOVE STORIES AND WARS HAVE REMAINED THE PRIMARY THEMES THAT INSPIRE ARTISTS SEEKING TO REVIVE ANCIENT CARTHAGE. SINCE THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY, ANY REFERENCE TO CARTHAGE HAS AUTOMATICALLY EVOKED THE NAMES OF LARGER–THAN–LIFE CHARACTERS SUCH AS SALAMMBÔ, HANNIBAL AND BAAL–MOLOCH, AS A RESULT OF FLAUBERT'S TREATMENT OF THE SUBJECT AND THE TRAGIC HISTORY OF THE CITY THAT VIED FOR SUPREMACY WITH ROME.

Add a dash of Orientalism, and it is immediately apparent why Carthage makes such frequent appearances in paintings and operas, and later in films, comic strips and graphic novels. Furthermore, our knowledge of the ancient city and its history is still growing today, thanks to archaeological and epigraphical research, producing more accurate and detailed representations – or at least preparing the ground for them in the future.

In the early twentieth century, Flaubert's novel *Salammbô* (1862) was still inspiring Orientalist painters such as Adrien Henri Tanoux (1921) and the French symbolist painter Gaston Bussière (1907), who also illustrated several of Flaubert's novels. To this day, the novel continues to inspire the composers of operas, from Josef Matthias Hauer (1929) to Philippe Fénelon (1998), but it is in comic books and films that Carthage appears most frequently.

The silent movie *Cabiria* by Giovanni Pastrone (Italy, 1914), as well as the films *Salammbo* by Arturo Ambrosio (Italy, 1911), Domenica Gaido (Italy, 1914), Pierre Marodon (France–Austria, 1925) and Sergio Grieco (Italy–France, 1959/1960) are based on Flaubert. Inspired by the imposing scenography, exotic costumes and dramatic personifications from opera (and possibly even the references to them in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*, 1941) and the cinema, the first adaptations of the story started to appear in comics in the 1940s: comic strip magazines published short stories or weekly episodes depicting events from the novel, by comic book artists such as René Gahou (in *Cendrillon* no. 26 of 1943), Raymond Poïvet (in *Vaillant* nos. 248-265 of 1950), Christo (in *Héroïc Albums* no. 29 of 1952), Novi (in *Mondial Aventures* no. 2 of 1953) and Chevanel & Deverchin (*La revolte des mercenaires* in *Tintin* no. 40, 1965). The temptress Salammbô and the horrific scenes of human sacrifice were central features of these versions, set in a Roman or Arabising scenery. Christo wrote in a note that he had drawn on an opera libretto, whereas Poïvet used cinematic camera angles and gave every episode a title, by

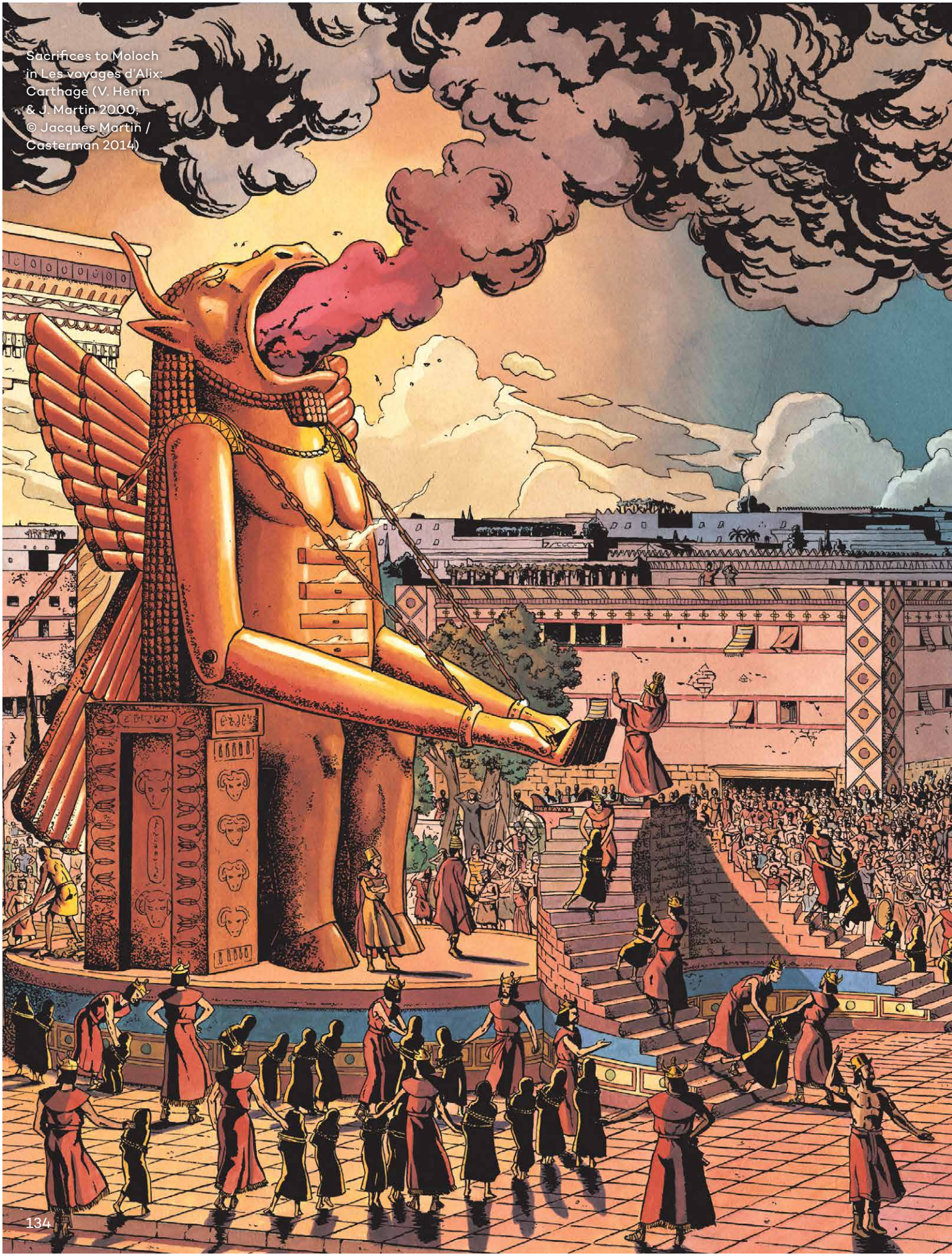


Album cover of Les voyages d'Alix: Carthage (V. Henin & J. Martin 2000; © Jacques Martin / Casterman 2014).

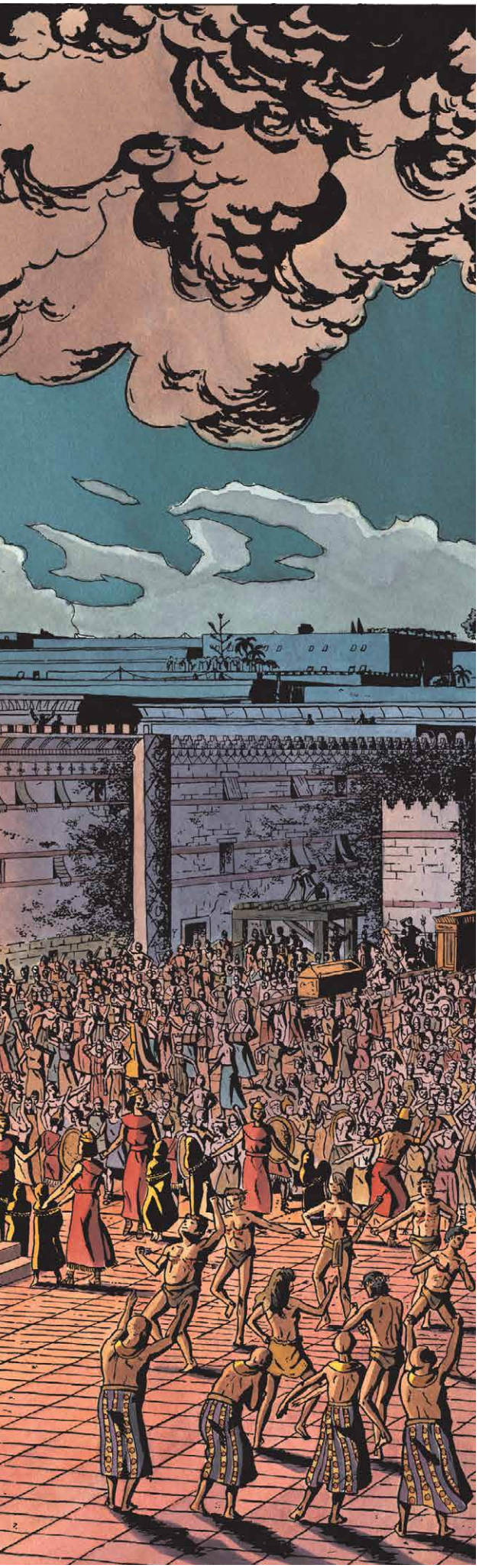
analogy to a scene or act. Thierry Robin plainly stated that in making his comic strip *Koblenz 2: Marcher dans Carthage une nuit sans lune* (2000), he had drawn inspiration from the films of Pierre Marodon and Sergio Grieco about Salammbô as well as Flaubert and the Orientalist paintings of the nineteenth century. Robin was one of the few authors of comic strips who actually travelled to Tunis to make sketches and to get a feel of the ancient city, as Flaubert had done. Of course, in 1999 he was able to see far more archaeological remains than Flaubert and he could study objects in the local museums.

We also encounter museum objects in the comic strip *Les voleurs de Carthage* by Apollo and Hervé Tanquerelle (2013). This two–part series revolved around several characters presented as caricatures (the anti–heroes, a Gallic and a Numidian mercenary, recall Matho and Spendius, whereas the thief who accompanies them could hold her own with Salammbô). In the background we recognise architectural remains, stelae and reliefs from Tunisian museums, including the sculpted lion–headed Tanit that – though of gigantic proportions – serves as a cult statue in the temple they are trying to rob. To the three main characters from Flaubert's novel is also referred to in the flashbacks that Freddy Lombard, the hero in the comic strip series by Yves Chaland and Yann Lepennetier has in a delirious dream (*Freddy Lombard: La comète de Carthage, 1986*).

The Carthage series by Fabrice David, Grégory Lassablière and Mauro De Luca is very well illustrated and documented. Two albums have appeared to date: *Le souffle de Baal* (2010) tells the story of the aftermath of the First Punic War and the revolt of the mercenaries in Carthage. We are shown the harbour and the temple of Tanit, where child sacrifices take place. In *La flamme de Vénus* (2011), we read about Hannibal and the Second Punic War. This is also the backdrop for the story in which Sirius's hero Timour sees Hannibal's city and imposing army (*Les Timour: Le captif de Carthage*, 1956).



Sacrifices to Moloch in Les voyages d'Alix: Carthage (V. Henin & J. Martin 2000; © Jacques Martin / Casterman 2014)

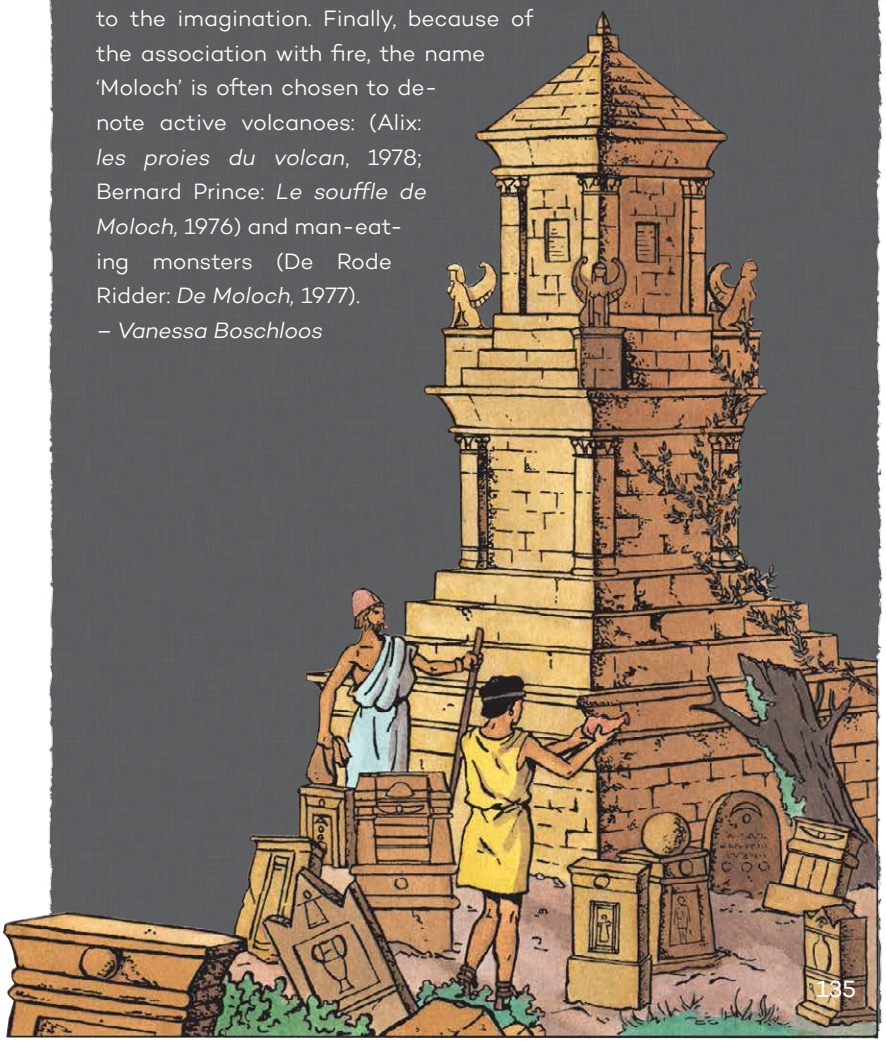


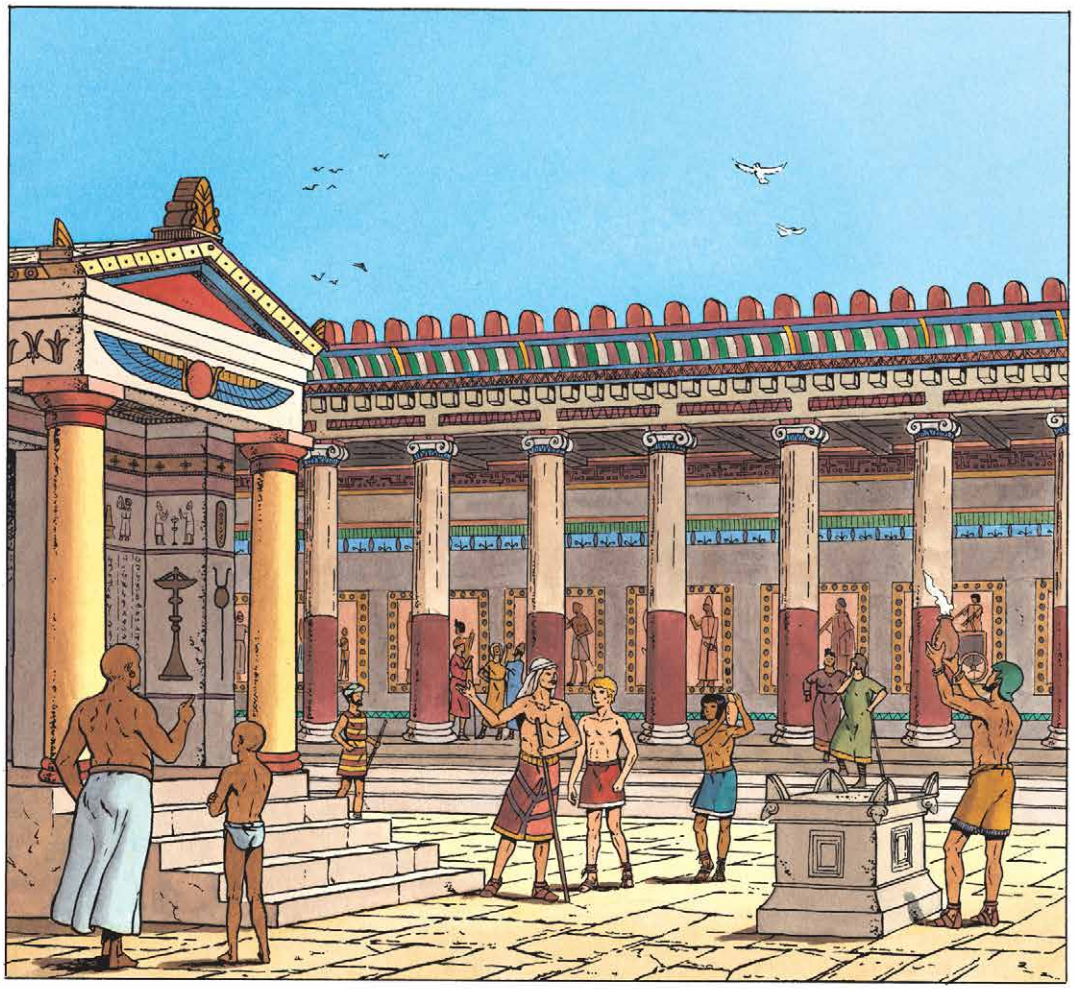
HUMAN SACRIFICES TO MOLOCH IN COMIC STRIPS

In comic books, neither children nor beautiful maidens are safe from the gaping, fire–breathing jaws of the statue of Moloch. The story owes a debt to Flaubert, who in turn drew on classical sources, coloured by Roman propaganda. The statue turns up in various places: Carthage (*Salammbo* in Héroïc–Albums no. 29–1952; Alix : *l'Ile maudite*, 1957; Alix : *Le spectre de Carthage*, 1977; Freddy Lombard: *La comète de Carthage*, 1986; Carthage: *Le souffle de Baal*, 2010); but also in Rome (Alix: *Le tombeau etrusque*, 1968; Alix: *La conjuration de Baal*, 2011); Egypt (Aviorix le Gaulois: *Dans l'antre des sacrifices* in Héroïc–Albums no. 43-1956); and Phoenicia (Alix: *Le tombeau étrusque*, 1969; *Le triérarque sans nom*, 1985; Corian: *Les fous de Baal*, 1989; Silvain de Rochefort: *Prisonniers de Baalbek*, 1993). For the overview of the Moloch cult given in Alix: *Le tombeau* ***étrusque***, Jacques Martin went so far as to consult the *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* (Daremberg & Saglio 1870-1911).

Scenes set in Atlantis (Jean d'Armor in Wrill nos. 103-133-1947/1948), parallel dimensions (Koblenz: *Marcher dans Carthage une nuit sans lune*, 2000) and futuristic cities (Res Punica: *Baal*, 2001; *Le dernier troyen: Carthago*, 2006) have an even stronger appeal to the imagination. Finally, because of the association with fire, the name 'Moloch' is often chosen to denote active volcanoes: (Alix: *les proies du volcan*, 1978; Bernard Prince: *Le souffle de Moloch*, 1976) and man-eating monsters (De Rode Ridder: *De Moloch*, 1977).

– Vanessa Boschloos





Alix and his friend Enak in Carthage (© Jacques Martin / Casterman).

Alix and Enak overlooking the tophet (© Jacques Martin / Casterman).

The best–documented comics that pay tribute to Punic and Roman Carthage are without a doubt those created by Jacques Martin. When the grand master of historical comic strips was asked what had first aroused his passion for history and antiquity, he replied without hesitation: Flaubert's novel! The impact of this work on Martin's oeuvre is already visible in the third album in the Alix series, *L'Ile maudite* (1957), in which Caesar sends Alix to Carthage to investigate some mysterious events, which are eventually found to be the work of his nemesis, Arbaces. in this work the cityscapes still allude to Roman models or spring from the artist's own imagination, Martin will adjust this in *Alix: Le spectre de Carthage* (1977). In this album we recognise diverse monuments, while Alix and Enak wander around the city, which is ruled by a Roman governor, with flashbacks to its Punic past (the harbour, the Byrsa hill, the Tophet). Alix's adventures in Carthage reached an apogee in 2000 with the publication of *Les voyages d'Alix: Carthage*, prepared by Martin and written and drawn by his assistant Vincent Hénin. The latter based the detailed reconstructions on books about Phoenician and Punic art and history, on studies and accurate reconstructions of Roman architecture (by scholars such as Jean–Claude Golvin and Pierre Gros) and the ruins and scale models he saw in Tunis during a study trip in the late 1990s. Only in the pictures of the sacrifices to Moloch and the siege of the mercenaries in the valley 'of the Axe' do any lingering echoes of Flaubert's novel remain.

We catch a glimpse of Carthage and Utica in the age of the late Roman Republic and the Numidian kings in the first Jugurtha album (*Le lionceau des sables,* 1967), drawn by Hermann with a script by Jean–Luc Vernal. It seems that only ruins remain of ancient Carthage. The same applies to medieval Carthage, which we barely get to see when Karel Biddeloo's Red Knight goes off on a treasure hunt, accompanied by a beautiful Berber princess (*De Rode Ridder: De schat van Carthago,* 2002). Finally, we should mention that Robin's *Koblenz: Marcher dans Carthage une nuit sans lune* (2000) is the only comic strip with views of the nineteenth–century city (including the ruins of the military harbour, the souq and Bab el–Bahar, casually embellished with antiquities such as double bull capitals, ivory furniture elements, Phoenician–Punic masks, and funerary stelae. Each chapter of the story is prefaced by a bookplate designed in art nouveau style, depicting Elissa and Salammbô.

It is apt to conclude with futuristic visions of Carthage, in particular the comic picturing the city in the 2814th year after its foundation, created by the Cosset brothers in *Res Punica: Baal* (2001). Here, a class society is oppressed by a Council of Elders that seeks to reintroduce the tradition of sacrificing young children to the god Baal. Also worth mentioning is the double planet 'Carthago–Ogahtrac' in *Le dernier troyen: Carthago* (2006) by the artist Thierry Démarez and the historian Valérie Mangin. This is loosely based on Virgil's *Aeneid* and is one of the few examples of comic–book art in which Elissa/Dido plays the leading role: Aeneas's spaceship is stranded on the planet and the queen seals the fate of her city by falling in love with the last Trojan, whose descendants will found Carthage's nemesis, the city of Rome.

The comic book artist Philippe Druillet, a pupil of Poïvet's who published a three–part science fiction version of Flaubert's story in the early 1980s, was neither aiming for historical accuracy. Rather, he set out to produce a space opera that confronted human beings with their ambitions and their weaknesses. Druillet was closely involved in the development of a video game based on his series, *Salammbo: Battle for Carthage* (Cryo Interactive Entertainment, 2003). Finally, the extent to which Carthage – including its rivalry with Rome – lives on in the popular imagination is clear from the theme's popularity in board games: *Hannibal: Rome vs. Carthage* (Valley Games, 1996), *Carthage: The First Punic War* (GMT Games, 2005), *Traders of Carthage* (Japon Brand Z–man Games, 2006) and *Porto Carthago* (Irongames, 2010).

The personification of Africa. Note the wealth and at the same time the dangerous, evil elements of the image. Crispin van de Passe; 1589-1611; Rijksmuseum Amsterdam; inv. no. RP-P-1938-1492.

17 ANCIENT CARTHAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A TIMELESS MESSAGE

Mustapha Khanoussi

THE WORLD OF THE EARLY TWENTY–FIRST CENTURY WORLD IS INCREASINGLY DOMINATED BY GLOBALISATION. SOMETIMES OUR PLANET SEEMS TO HAVE SHRUNK TO THE DIMENSIONS OF ONE LARGE VILLAGE. DOES THE ANCIENT CITY OF CARTHAGE, OF WHICH ONLY ARCHAEOLOGICAL RUINS REMAIN, MANY OF THEM SUBMERGED BENEATH A MODERN CITY, NONETHELESS HAVE A MESSAGE FOR US? WE MAY INITIALLY BE INCLINED TO THINK IT DOES NOT. UPON REFLECTION, HOWEVER, WE ARE MOVED TO RECONSIDER.

Carthage, which Aristotle praised as a democracy, was the home of Hannibal Barca and 'a melting pot of illicit passions' to the young Augustine, the future bishop of Hippo and a fervent opponent of the Donatists. Today, UNESCO recognises Carthage as a World Heritage Site of outstanding universal value. This means that it is inscribed on the World Heritage List under criteria II, III and VI of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

Under criterion III, UNESCO explains that 'The site of Carthage bears exceptional testimony to the Phoenico–Punic civilisation, being at the time the central hub in the western basin of the Mediterranean. It was also one of the most brilliant centres of Afro–Roman civilisation'. Under criterion VI, it states: 'The historic and literary renown of Carthage has always nourished the universal imagination. The site of Carthage is notably associated with the legendary princess of Tyre, Elyssa–Dido, founder of the town, [whose praises were sung] by Virgil in the *Aeneid*; with the great navigator–explorer, Hannon, with Hannibal, one of the greatest military strategists of history; with writers such as Apuleius, founder of Latin–African literature; with the martyr St Cyprian; and with St Augustine, who was trained there and visited [the city] several times.'

This recognition of the importance of Carthage serves to illustrate the vitality and topicality of the message that the ancient city of Elissa–Dido continues to propagate, many centuries after the city's repeated destruction. It is a memorable site, on which the archaeological remains of Carthage and its present–day historic buildings and monuments constitute the tangible evidence of almost three thousand years of history. A history that was frequently racked by conflict, but that had an abundance of glorious moments. Still, many of these are scarcely known to the world beyond Tunisia, and even within it.

Most people are familiar with the legend that Carthage was founded by a princess who had fled from Phoenicia, the country of her birth. This female initiative in the city's origins can be said to be reflected in the prominent position of women within society. Today's Tunisian women lay claim to be the lawful heirs to the legacy of Elissa and all the great female figures who have played key roles in the country's changing fortunes. The general public is also well aware that Hannibal Barka was born in Carthage. Hannibal has been universally recognised since antiquity as one of the greatest military geniuses of all time. His crossing of the Pyrenees and the Alps with elephants has become embedded in the collective imagination.

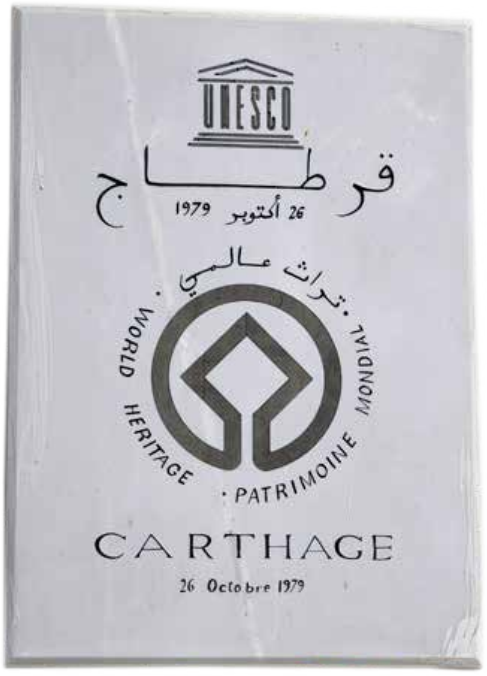
Other facts are less well known, however. One is the role of Punic Carthage as a beacon of light in the benighted Western Mediterranean region, which forged its place in history by introducing and consolidating alphabetical script throughout the region, and disseminating written documents. The role of Carthage in agriculture is also little known. One name stands out here: that of Mago the agriculturalist. Mago's major work on agriculture was a seminal textbook that remained the primary reference work in this field for many centuries. Such was its value that it was the only book in the Punic library to be taken back to Rome by order of the Roman Senate after the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC. The Romans translated it into Latin, in which version it became the most important source of inspiration for many other works of this kind.

Another topical message from Carthage is personified by Apuleius. He came from Madaure (today M'daourouch in Algeria) and was proud to be 'half Numidian and half Gaetulian'. However, he was raised in the Roman–Carthaginian mould, with a Graeco–Roman cultural background. In this respect he was the precursor of what would become, many centuries later, a fixed identity for a growing multitude.

One of the most famous Carthaginians is Augustine. He rose to a position of great esteem in the Mediterranean region and his message was universal in its scope. He was born in Thagaste (Souk Ahras in eastern Algeria), to a pagan father and a Christian mother. He spent his boyhood years in Carthage and later studied there. In his *Confessions*, he described Carthage as a 'melting pot of illicit passions', in open acknowledgement

that he had strayed from the path of virtue more than once in his youth. 'At times the desire rose in me to saturate the universe of my youth with infernal pleasures, and I did not turn aside from voluptuous passions, which are as fickle as they are bleak'. After some time in Roman Italy, where he converted to Christianity, he returned to Africa, eventually becoming Bishop of Hippo. But the face he chiefly showed to the world was that of the indefatigable traveller who went from one city to the next proclaiming the Gospel and defending the Catholic Church.

For the Tunisians living in today's post–revolutionary times, the Carthage of the age of the Philaeni brothers is important. They were known for their heroic patriotism, something that today's Tunisians may well wish to emulate. Their self–sacrifice, which was frequently related by the writers of antiquity, took place against the backdrop of a border conflict between the Punic metropolis and the Greek city of Cyrene (in the vicinity of Benghazi, on the east coast of Libya). Sallustius tells the story in his work *The Jugurthine War*. The Cyrenian and Carthaginian envoys had agreed to set out at the same time from their respective regions and to fix the frontier between their territories at the place where they met. When the Cyrenians realised that they had been too slow, they dreaded the vengeance of their countrymen, who might blame them for the failure of their mission. They began to wrangle with the Carthaginians, whom they accused of setting out before the appointed time, and declared they would submit to any terms, rather than depart defeated. The Philaeni brothers, on behalf of the Carthaginians, asked them to set fresh conditions, provided these were fair and reasonable, but the Cyrenians gave them only one choice: either to be buried alive on the spot which they required as the boundary of their dominions, or to allow them to advance as far as they thought proper, on the same terms as before. The brothers accepted these terms and, sacrificing their lives to the good of their country, were buried alive there. The Carthaginians erected an altar on this site in memory of the Philaeni brothers and bestowed other honours upon them in Carthage.



Carthage has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1979.

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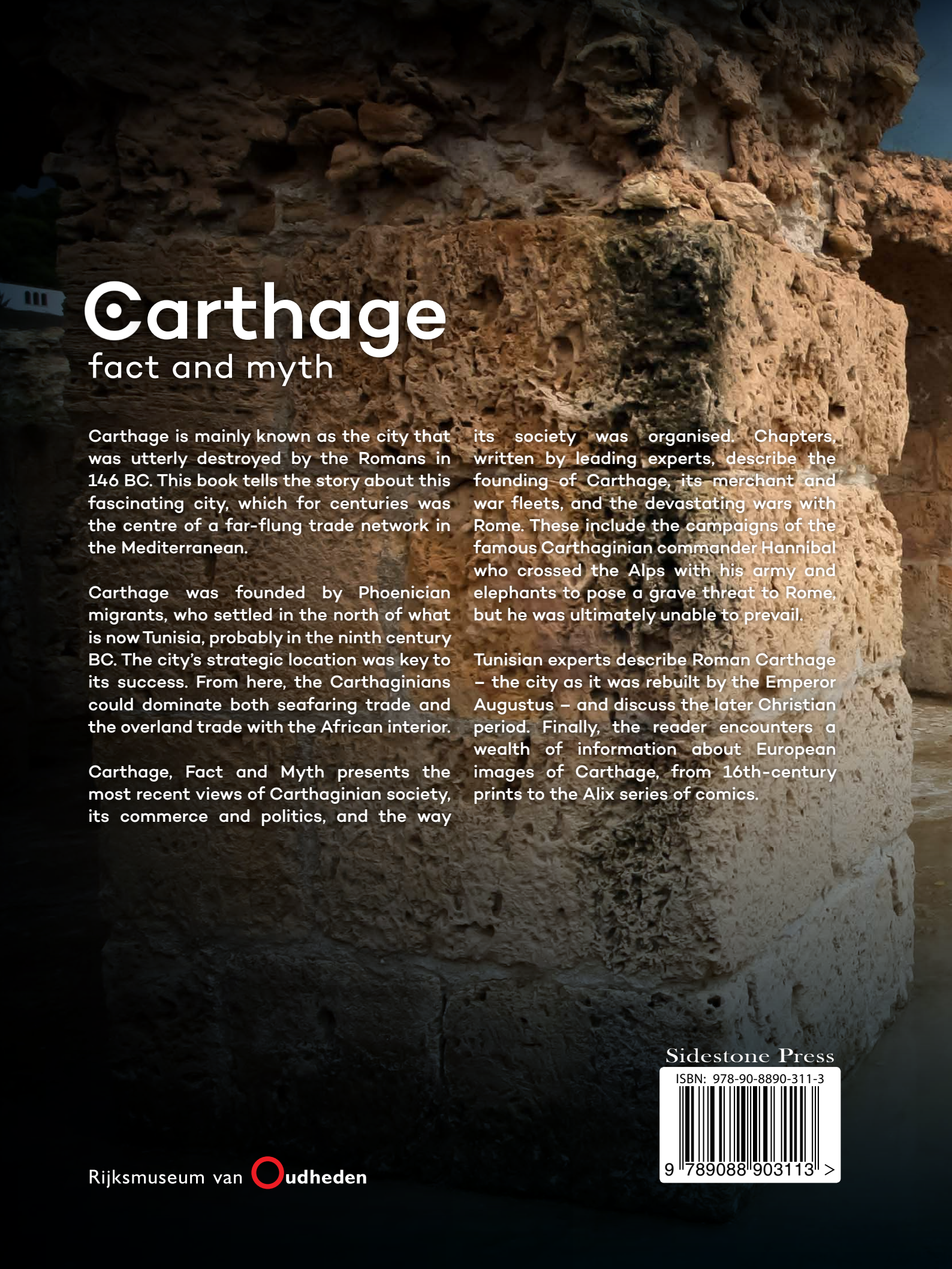

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