

## II

# CARTHAGE: FOUNDATION AND GROWTH

### TALES OF THE FOUNDATION

When the first colonists from Tyre established themselves on the great headland overlooking the Gulf of Tunis, they named their ‘new city’ appropriately, *Qart-hadasht*. To the Greeks this was ‘Carchedon’ and to the Romans ‘Carthago’.

One Greek literary tradition about the foundation began as early as Euripides in the 5th Century BC and the historians Philistus and Eudoxus in the 4th; it is mentioned too by the 2nd-Century AD historian Appian as one of Carthage’s own foundation-legends. It dated the city’s beginnings thirty to fifty years before the sack of Troy – thus between 1234 and 1214 BC, far earlier even than the dates claimed for Gades and Utica – with two co-founders, Zorus and Carchedon. But as the Phoenician name of Tyre was Sor and Carthage’s Greek name was Carchedon, while a 13th-Century date is out of the question, this version has little to recommend it, save as a warning of how inventive (not to mention perilous) some Greek and Roman tales can be.

A group of late 9th-Century datings is a different issue. Menander of Ephesus dated the event to 816 or thereabouts. Additionally he set it ‘in the seventh year’ of Pygmalion king of Tyre, whose forty-seven-year reign is variously dated from 831 or 820. A short work about natural wonders, from the time of the philosopher Aristotle or not long after, sets the foundation two hundred and eighty-seven years after Utica’s, which would match Pliny’s date of 1101 for the latter and 813 for Carthage herself, the year stated by Timaeus, a distinguished Sicilian historian who died around 260 aged over ninety. Timaeus placed it in ‘the thirty-eighth year before the first Olympiad’: thus thirty-seven before 776. The Augustan-era historian Pompeius Trogus, whose history of the Mediterranean world

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survives in Justin's abridgement, reported its first year as seventy-two before Rome's, in other words between 825 and 819 (the Romans oscillated over dates between 753 and 747 for their city). This literary near-euphony looks impressive. But how Timaeus got his date is unknown (he lived before Menander, but there were other, obscurer Greek writers on Phoenician affairs) and, rather unsettlingly, he dated the foundation of Rome to the same year. Trogus' source is equally unknown, although it looks as though it was a different one from Timaeus'.

Such dates, far distant from the authors' own times and based on earlier sources of untestable reliability, can hardly be accepted merely on trust. But the archaeological evidence from Carthage goes back at least to the decades before 750. Remains of stone houses built in the second quarter of the 8th Century have been unearthed at the foot of the hill which the Greeks and Romans called Byrsa (now the Colline de St Louis), 360 metres from the water's edge and the most southerly of a range of low coastal hills behind the ancient city-site. Again, very recently published carbon-14 analysis dates cattle and sheep bones found at the same site to the second half of the 9th Century, most likely between 835 and 800 – a result that is striking but also controversial, because associated with the bones are fragments of Greek Late Geometric pottery normally classified as 8th-Century. The debate on the likeliest date for Carthage's founding goes on, but that the late 9th Century may be right after all is now a real possibility.<sup>4</sup>

## LEGENDS AND TRUTHS

Carthage's standard foundation-legend in Greek and Latin literature is famous. Elissa, afterwards named Dido, flees from her evil brother Pygmalion king of Tyre and settles with her followers in North Africa at a site they call Carthage. The most detailed version is found in Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus. The young king, having first cheated his sister out of an equal share of rule, afterwards murdered her husband, their uncle Acherbas (Sicharbas in another writer) – in Phoenician, Zakarbaal, Latinised as Hasdrubal – who was high priest of Tyre's chief god Melqart ('Hercules' in Justin). His hope of finding Acherbas' hoarded wealth was frustrated, for Elissa and a number of her supporters then left the city for exile overseas, taking with them the hoard and also the ritual objects sacred to Melqart. Their flight took them via Cyprus, there to be joined by the high

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priest of 'Jupiter' – probably the Phoenician chief god Baal, who was also worshipped on Cyprus – and eighty virgins, originally meant to be sacred prostitutes until marriage but now chosen by Elissa to be the first wives in the new community.

On arriving in Libya, the emigrants received a welcome from both the colonists already at Utica and, initially, from the local Libyans who (according to Justin) welcomed the prospect of 'mutually beneficial dealings'. They offered the newcomers, however, only such ground as an ox's hide could cover – but the resourceful Elissa cut this into thin strips to enclose the hill of Byrsa as her citadel (*byrsa* being Greek for oxhide), and the natives agreed to this on condition of a yearly rent. Later, with Carthage starting to prosper, the queen – loyal to Zakarbaal's memory – avoided being forced to marry a neighbouring king by committing suicide on a funeral pyre.

Whether any of this colourful story can be believed is debated. A constant problem with ancient accounts of Carthaginian history is that they are all supplied by authors writing in Greek or Latin; and only Josephus, or rather his source Menander of Ephesus, claims a Phoenician basis for his. The grounds for doubt and suspicion are potentially great, for (as noted above) Greek and Roman writers could bring imagination and inventiveness to their task; nor have we many ways of assessing their truthfulness. The Roman poet Virgil contributes memorably, but unhelpfully, by dating Dido to the time of the fall of Troy again, and telling of a passionate affair between her and the wandering Trojan hero Aeneas; her suicide was due to his sailing away to Italy. Many modern scholars grant nearly as little trust to the non-poetic ancient accounts.

Pygmalion, though, looks like a historical figure (the Phoenician name is Pumayyaton, derived from Pumay the god) even if, in Josephus' version, he became king aged nine and so was only a teenager when Elissa with her followers fled from Tyre, in his seventh year of misrule. There is more of a problem with his sister. She is famous under her alternative name Dido, which various Greek authors explained as Libyan for 'wanderer', though its real meaning and origin – and why she should bear two alternative names at all – are quite unclear. Nor, as far as we know, did the Carthaginians in historical times have (or do) anything to commemorate her as foundress, though Justin claims that they paid her divine honours. Certainly they had no other queens in their history or legends. The tale of the 'oxhide', *byrsa*, must in turn be a later Greek confection, for neither Phoenician migrants nor Libyan landlords in the 9th or 8th Centuries would have been using Greek.

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Elissa's stratagem with the hide might well be an inventive Greek dig at her people's proverbial habit of slippery bargaining. These items and some others (Elissa's conscription of Cypriot girls, for instance – argued to be too akin to the first Romans' rape of the Sabine women) lead most modern scholars to dismiss Troglodytes' foundation story more or less entire.

Several features of it deserve thought, all the same. As even a summary shows, a strong Cypriot connection colours it. The name Elissa, in Phoenician Elishat, means 'woman of Cyprus' (the island's Phoenician name was Alashiya) while Pumayyaton is a name attested at Citium, including its last king in the later 4th Century. Citium was probably Cyprus' *Qart-hadasht*, as mentioned above, though its older name eventually won out. The girls saved by Elissa from sacred prostitution could be seen as intended servitors of Astarte the widely-venerated Near Eastern goddess (called elsewhere by other versions of the name, such as Astoreth, Attart, Atargitis). Her priestesses did indeed perform that function, and she was worshipped in Cyprus. So was Baal, whom Greeks and Romans generally identified with their Zeus and Jupiter, and it was his high priest who brought heavenly favour on the exiles by agreeing to accompany them along with his family – interestingly on the proviso that his priesthood be hereditary to his descendants, a practice common in Phoenicia.

With Elissa reportedly also taking Melqart's sacred objects with her from Tyre, Justin's story shows itself therefore alive to key aspects of Carthaginian religion, in which all three deities were important. Worth noting again is that it presents the Libyans as not just rejoicing in the prospect of 'mutually beneficial dealings' with the newcomers but indeed as starting a prompt trade with the new city – a natural and plausible detail, for Phoenician trade was already well established and colonists already dwelled not far away at Utica and perhaps Hippacra. A further stage in Justin's account is interesting too. Though the initial settlement, he implies, was on Byrsa itself, a warning omen then impelled the Carthaginians to move to another site, where they prospered. It has been suggested that the animal bones found near the shore below Byrsa and carbon-dated to the late 9th Century, yet with pottery fragments normally dated a century later, may have been dislocated from an initial settlement higher up the hill, perhaps in the course of urban development. This is hypothetical, for what stood on Byrsa before 146 BC is largely untraceable: its summit was cleared away in Roman times. Even so, it is intriguing that the report of a first and then a second site for the early city may not be pure imagination.

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The name Byrsa itself is open to various explanations relevant to Phoenician colonists: a possible Phoenician word for measuring out, *parša* or *perša* (thus ‘the measured space’ – if so, a further sign that the Elissa story had a real Phoenician basis, while it would contribute too to the more fanciful Greek etymology), or one akin to Aramaic *birta*, a fortress; or as a third possibility, the Phoenician for ‘sheep-well’, *birša* (assuming that such a well, on the hill or the nearby shore, was important for the first settlers).

There are other points of interest. So far as we can tell, only the Carthaginians remembered a woman founder for their city. A woman leading men in any enterprise was rare in legend: apart from Elissa-Dido, perhaps only the legendary Assyrian queen Semiramis figures thus – and Elissa is favourably portrayed as a leader devoted, resolute and resourceful. If she was simply an invention, we might wonder what the point was, for the Carthaginians did not use it in propaganda form (for instance, to differentiate themselves from their Greek or Roman rivals), nor was Elissa given divine parentage or ancestry like Rome’s founder. Timaeus claimed that the name Elissa meant *Theiosso* in Greek: ‘divine woman’ or the like, as *theos* was Greek for ‘god’. The Phoenician word *ʾlt*, vocalised approximately as *elit*, did mean ‘goddess’; some of Timaeus’ information, then, may have come indirectly from Phoenicia or Carthage (even if partly wrong or distorted). His remark also recalls Justin’s idea that Elissa became revered as divine.<sup>5</sup>

Another item merits mention: a gold pendant discovered in 1894 in an early burial at Douimès, one of the hilltops north-east of Byrsa. Inscribed in Phoenician letters of – it seems – the 9th Century, it offers a ritual greeting, ‘for Astarte and for Pygmalion [*Pgmlyn*]’ by a soldier named Yadomilk son of Paday or Pidiya (*Ydʾmlk bn Pdy*) ‘whom Pygmalion equipped’. If correctly dated – though some scholars are doubtful – it could attest a Tyrian military officer at Carthage’s site around the foundation-date claimed by Timaeus. Livy, the Roman historian who was Pompeius Trogus’ and Virgil’s contemporary, in a lost part of his work named the commander of Elissa’s fleet as one Bitias – so at least the ancient Virgil-commentator Servius attests – and it has been pointed out that Bitias could be a Greek form of *Pdy*. Livy’s remark probably came in his survey of Carthage’s history and culture prefacing his narrative of the First Punic War. The source that told him of Bitias and Elissa could, in turn, have been the one that Trogus was also to use.

It has even been argued that here we have evidence for Pygmalion and the kingdom of Tyre, not his sister with a breakaway group,

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being the real founders of the New City. The suggestion is not compelling, for if many important Tyrians migrated with Elissa, as Justin says, we should expect some military officers too – and a gold pendant was a valuable possession (all the more so in an era before coinage), not to be discarded even if Yadamilk had renounced his allegiance to the king. It was found amid items of rather later date, 7th or 6th Century, suggesting that it was kept by Yadamilk's descendants until placed in a grave on Douimès.<sup>6</sup>

The pendant itself does lend at least modest added support to the basic foundation story. That story, while clearly given dramatic colouring in Justin – notably the repeated theme of Elissa outwitting those who seek to exploit her, and her suicide-for-love – in essence tells how internal dynastic strife at Tyre caused the defeated party to emigrate and found a new city which quickly prospered. As a Phoenician colony instigated by civic dissension, Carthage was not unique, given the tradition that Lepcis Magna was another. Items in the story can relate to features known from elsewhere: thus Elissa's Cyprus stopover recalls the existence of Phoenician communities in the island and their religious cults. The possible archaeological evidence for a first settlement on Byrsa followed by a later move to lower ground could fit Justin's similar claim, though the broad hilltop continued to serve as Carthage's citadel until the end. Such features of the story suggest that even its dramatic colouring may go back to his and therefore Trogus' original sources.

The dynastic stresses at Tyre sketched by Justin, if they did occur, must have occurred alongside the social, economic and international factors actuating Phoenician colonising migrations over a century and more. As noted earlier, over-population may have been one factor. Another would be the pressure put on the Phoenicians by the resurgent empire of Assyria, which as early as 870 was receiving lavish gifts from them (seen by the Assyrian kings as tribute). By the mid-8th Century the Assyrians were exacting still more massive regular payments, notably of gold, silver, bronze, copper, iron and tin – raw materials which the Tyrians and their kinsmen could best acquire from the western lands but were now required to provide in quantities and regularity greater than the long-existing, often seasonal trading outposts could supply.

How to develop Mediterranean trade further and more profitably, how far to appease or to resist Assyria (both attitudes were tried during the 8th and 7th Centuries) and how to cope with population strains, were all interlinked issues for the ruling élites to handle and sometimes, no doubt, to disagree over. Again, with Greek traders

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travelling around the Mediterranean and doing good business at trading-posts like that on the island of Pitheculae (Ischia) near the bay of Naples, added need may have been felt for a more permanent Phoenician presence in or near resource-rich lands. When Greek colonies in their turn came to be founded in the western Mediterranean – the earliest at Cumae near Naples around 740, soon followed by Syracuse and others in Sicily and southern Italy – trade between them and the colonies from Phoenicia also developed, to mutual benefit.

On current evidence, then, which dates Phoenician colonies in the Mediterranean mostly to the century after 800, Carthage was not a late foundation as Greeks, Romans and perhaps Carthaginians themselves believed, but one of the earliest. She dates to no later than the earlier half of the 8th Century and may yet prove to have been founded in the late 9th. The romantic and dramatic story of Elissa quite possibly rests on a basic historical reality, even if efforts to treat all its details as sober fact should be avoided (especially those in poets, Virgil included). After a time, the Carthaginians re-established proper relations with their mother city, sending a yearly delegation with gifts (reportedly a tenth of the revenues) to Melqart's temple there. They also paid their annual rent to the Libyans, according to Justin; although in later times both sets of payments ceased.

#### CARTHAGE: SITE AND POTENTIAL

The early site of Carthage was Byrsa, its eastern slope and the narrow plain between the shore and this hill and its companions to the north-east – the hills now called Douimès, Junon, Borj-el-Jedid, and above it Sainte-Monique, these latter two beside the sea (Maps 1A and 1B). The area was the south-eastern side of a great arrowhead-shaped peninsula pointing into the gulf of Tunis, a deep arm of the Mediterranean. The site consists of the hills and the shore below them, while high ground to their north forms the capes now called Sidi bou Said and Gammarth. Rain was erratic, but fresh water could be had from a spring called 'the fountain of a thousand *amphorae*' (because of a huge find of these pottery vessels nearby) below the hill of Borj-el-Jedid, and from wells dug in the ground into the then high water-table. The northern edge of the arrowhead, ending in a tongue of land beyond Cape Gammarth, in ancient times edged a wide bay which is now cut off from the sea to form the salt

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lake called the Sebket Ariana. On the southern side of the peninsula, its shore is bounded by the oval-shaped lake of Tunis, an inlet of the outer gulf. Between bay and lake a broad isthmus linked the peninsula to the mainland, where other hills and higher ridges intersected by narrow valleys stretched into the Libyan, now Tunisian, countryside.

This geographical position was unusually favourable, in a well-populated and productive region with river-valleys nearby – the Bagradas to the north of the site and the Catadas (Mellane) to the south – giving easy access inland, and local peoples willing to trade their mineral and agricultural products for goods both imported and Carthaginian-made. Carthage's defensible headland was standard for a Phoenician colony but, unlike most others, her site was spacious. Two centuries after the foundation, if not sooner, the city covered some 136 to 148 acres (55 to 60 hectares). This was as large as Tyre on its island, and over four times the size around 600 BC of the important Phoenician colony, name unknown, on Spain's Costa del Sol near modern Toscanos – and not much smaller than Pompeii's 66 hectares in AD 79. Meanwhile the fertile upland on the northern half of Carthage's arrowhead was later to become the garden suburb of Megara.

Between Cape Bon and Sicily the Mediterranean is narrowest, only 140 kilometres wide: an important feature for ancient ships, which could not travel for more than a few days without putting in to land for provisions. Two hundred and fifty kilometres north of Hippacra lies Sardinia, also beginning to receive a steady flow of Phoenician settlers from around 800 who readily developed two-way trade with Carthage. Utica and Hippacra, though much the same distance from both islands, lacked their sister colony's size and had more limited harbour facilities. If the Phoenician traditions about her founding have a factual core, Carthage also had close links to the ruling aristocracy of Tyre, with whom good relations were restored at least after Pygmalion's time – another advantage.

Carthage in her early centuries is hard to reconstruct in detail, because of developments in later times followed by her re-foundation under the Romans and by modern construction. The first settlement seems to have stretched eastward almost as far as the shore, as the sandy ground there has evidence of sites for the (pungent) preparation of dried *murex* shellfish to make the famous, expensive and coveted scarlet dye for clothing. On the southern side of the colony, south-east of Byrsa, are traces of archaic potteries, iron foundries and other metallurgical workshops. From the start, Carthage was



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more than merely a middleman-centre for acquiring goods from other sources and selling them on to buyers elsewhere. At some date, incidentally, her ironmasters developed the technique of adding a quantity of calcium to their furnaces to neutralise the sulphur in iron ore, a process which much improved the quality of their iron products (and was not recovered until the Bessemer process in the mid-19th Century).<sup>7</sup>

Some recent discoveries, and excavations at a number of Phoenician settlements in southern Spain, indicate that the earliest city had a typical range of structures: temples and warehouses, shops and private dwellings – with the wealthiest and largest of these, each with its central courtyard, on Byrsa's slopes – all linked by streets of pounded earth, most of them only a couple of metres wide although the wealthier Byrsa quarter enjoyed at least one about three times wider. Such streets can be seen at the site of Kerkouane, a small city near Cape Bon destroyed in the mid-3rd Century. The layout of the streets varied: on the flat ground, they formed a grid pattern even in early Carthage; on Byrsa's slopes they radiated outwards down from the top while those crossing them followed the hill's contours. Stone or brick walls protected Byrsa at least, for traces of them have been found too; stone walls for the entire city-circuit would come later. A town square or space no doubt existed then, just as one did later on a site further south, where people gathered for markets, political functions, ceremonies and announcements. Not until the 5th and 4th Centuries did further expansion change the urban landscape.

On parts of the slopes and crests of Byrsa and the other hills they buried their dead in increasingly extensive cemeteries or necropoleis. These and other resting-places supply much of the material evidence for Carthaginian culture and commerce, for it was customary to entomb the deceased with offerings and mementoes to help them in the next world – jars or bowls with food and drink, figurines, lamps, rings, amulets and jewellery, some home-made and others imported. South of the settlement, close to some salty shore-lagoons, the colonists by 700 had established a special cemetery for infants' cremated remains deposited in pottery jars: a place for which excavators have borrowed the Biblical name '*tophet*' (Map 1A).

Past the seaside lagoons and a little to the south of the '*tophet*', the ancient shoreline passed around a sandy tongue of land partly closing the entrance to the lake of Tunis, then made a gentle curve northwards to form a natural roadstead where ships could anchor. It may not have been a wholly convenient anchorage for delivering goods in early times, due to the distance overland to the city and with the

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lagoons in between, but it was sheltered from the open sea, while barges and other boats could ferry at least some cargoes along the shore to and from the city. There was thus plenty of space for loading and unloading cargoes. It is possible that the low-lying area by this shoreline developed in the 7th and 6th Centuries into a 'lower city' – outside Carthage's own walls – for the artisans and labourers who worked at the harbour, built Carthage's merchant vessels and warships, and manned the potteries and foundries which have been found below Byrsa on the south.

This lakeshore was not the only landing point in the city's early centuries. The indented eastern shoreline, up to the steep slopes of Douimès and Borj-el-Jedid, allowed ships to anchor close to land or even to be beached in places. In the waters just offshore from the northern sector of the city are the broken remnants of a breakwater or mole, called 'Roquefeuil's Quadrilateral' after its French discoverer, which at some stage in Carthage's history was built to protect such an anchorage. These exposed waters all the same would be less appealing or safe as ships grew in size and so too did Carthage's mercantile traffic. The bay of Ariana, as it then was, on the northern side of the isthmus could also receive some ships. But it was no nearer to the city, and wagons or pack-animals would have to climb over Byrsa, Junon and the other hills to get down to Carthage. As a result it seems always to have been less important for shipping and cargo.

At the head of the lake of Tunis, fifteen kilometres from the open sea, stood the town of Tunes (the small ancestor of the modern metropolis), and on the lake's southern shore the Libyan town of Maxula, supposedly the home of the king whose marriage demand forced Elissa to die. From there the coast trends east and then north-eastwards, past more coastal heights, to become the mountainous and fertile peninsula of Cape Bon, imposingly visible from Carthage. The coast beyond this lake stretched north-westwards to Utica, then a seaport like all Phoenician colonies, while Libya's principal river, the Bagradas – in Greek Macaras, today the Mejerda – met the gulf of Tunis between the two cities. The coastline has receded some distance since then to leave Utica's site inland, thanks to silting, and the river has also changed its lower course more than once over the centuries. Not far north of Utica, the narrow eastward-pointing promontory of Rususmon (the cape of Eshmun, Apollo's Promontory or sometimes the *Promonturium Pulchri*, 'Fair One's Cape', to Greeks and Romans; today Ras Sidi Ali El Mekhi, or Cape Farina) formed the northern limit of the gulf of Tunis, the home waters of Carthage.

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Probably the Carthaginians from the start controlled the rest of the land on their own peninsula, for they needed a security zone and some ground where produce could be grown; and as just mentioned, the land outside the colony later developed into the semi-rural suburb called Megara. As noted earlier too, Justin reports them paying their Libyan neighbours a yearly fee for the site (not always willingly) until after 480. Disappointingly he does not say which Libyans or how large a fee, or whether this paid for territory outside the colony too. The last is likely enough: it would be virtually unknown in the ancient world for any town to possess nothing but the land inside its own walls.

The Libyans who were their neighbours were part of the ethnic group today called Berbers, who dwelt along the coasts and uplands of North Africa from the region of modern Libya to the Atlantic. The high plateaux and long mountain valleys of this vast area, a virtual subcontinent north of the Sahara desert, supported semi-nomadic communities and small permanent settlements, often and perhaps regularly focused around dominant family groups or clans. The peoples in the far west came to be called Mauri; to those east of the Mauri – that is, occupying roughly the broad uplands of modern Algeria – the Greeks gave the name Nomades, or nomads, while the Romans called them Numidians. The communities in Carthage's and the other Phoenician colonies' hinterland were the easternmost of the Numidians, though Greek and Roman writers prefer to call them Libyans.

The rulers of the countless North African communities are usually termed kings by the same writers (like Iarbas king of Maxula in the Elissa story), though many or most were kinglets at best. Not until much later did some larger kingdoms arise. From the Carthaginian, not to mention Greek and Roman, point of view these peoples were unsophisticated barbarians, but this did not prevent the Phoenician colonists in North Africa from treating them with careful respect. Much of the country inland from Carthage was very productive, as were parts of Numidia; the inhabitants – while themselves wary of the eastern immigrants – were receptive to many aspects of the settlers' culture and ready, as Justin insists, to do business. One Numidian product came to be particularly valued: their small but tough and agile horses, and the warriors who rode them with superlative skill. Numidians would provide the prized cavalry of Carthaginian armies and make history under the leadership of generals like Hamilcar Barca and his son Hannibal.

Some relations between the Phoenicians in North Africa, Carthaginians included, and the local peoples grew still closer. Inter-marriage

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was frequent enough for Justin to depict Elissa's own followers as keen for her to marry her Libyan suitor. He implies, too, that the city soon grew powerful partly because locals came to live there. In turn Aristotle in the 4th Century noted (approvingly) the Carthaginians' habit of easing population pressures in the city by sending out citizens to settle at inland centres: this no doubt furthered intermarriage. In later times too, the people of the other Phoenician colonies were sometimes called 'Libyphoenicians', a name which the Roman historian Livy, and the source he consulted, ascribed to their mixed descent. Diodorus in turn records that the Libyphoenicians had the right of intermarriage with Carthaginians.<sup>8</sup>

Naturally there was intermarriage too with people from more distant countries and cities with which Carthage had contacts. The dedicator of a votive *stèle*, of uncertain date, in the '*tophet*' (the infants' cemetery) gave his name as Bodmilqart son of Istanis, son of Ekys, son of Paco – Greek ancestors, or possibly Egyptian.<sup>9</sup> Hamilcar the general at Himera in Sicily in 480 had a Sicilian mother, although this had no effect on his implacability towards the Sicilian Greeks. A sister of Hannibal's and then a niece both married Numidian princes; then Sophoniba, daughter of a leading aristocrat, was married some years later to two kings of united Numidia in succession, Syphax and Masinissa. Meanwhile both Hannibal and his brother-in-law in the 220s took Spanish wives. And Hasdrubal, one of the last generals defending the city against Roman attack in 149, was a grandson on his mother's side of Masinissa (and so a cousin of the famous Jugurtha, the Numidian king who fought the Romans a generation later). The Carthaginians, then, from quite early times were almost if not just as much North African and, more generally, western as they were Phoenician.

By 750, the New City was doing business with her Phoenician homeland, Egypt and Greece, as well as with her North African neighbours. The steady growth of Phoenician settlements, as further colonies were set up elsewhere in North Africa, in Sicily, Malta, Sardinia, the southern coasts of Spain, and the Atlantic coast of Morocco, further promoted trade. Greek settlements in the central Mediterranean were spreading too, chiefly in Sicily – notably Syracuse, Acragas and Messana – and southern Italy, for instance Cumae just west of Naples, Naples itself, Rhegium and Tarentum. In the 8th and 7th Centuries both migrant movements, Phoenician and Greek, coexisted peaceably. Though the historian Thucydides later wrote that Phoenician traders in eastern Sicily withdrew to its western parts when Greek colonists arrived, no

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clashes are mentioned in these early centuries. In fact, apart from Sicily the two migrations kept largely to separate lands: there were no Phoenician colonies in south Italy, for instance, and no Greek ones in North Africa west of Cyrene, or in southern Spain west of Cape de la Nao near Cartagena.

Carthage's North African territories also expanded, though the early stages can be seen only dimly. The Cape Bon peninsula was an obvious area to reach for, given its closeness to the city and its fertile valleys. Just south of the cape, in the sea-cliffs near today's village of El-Haouaria, sandstone quarries (now called the 'Grottes Romaines') were exploited from the mid-7th Century for building works at Carthage. Then sometime before 500, perhaps as early as the 7th Century again, a small town was founded on the coast nearby, about fifteen kilometres north of Kelibia. As its Punic name is unknown, it is called by its modern one, Kerkouane – the one purely Punic town to be excavated in modern times, since it was abandoned in the Roman invasion of 256–255 and never reoccupied. Carthage may have contributed to establishing the little town, which prospered on farming and fishing, and others nearby: notably Neapolis on the northern edge of the gulf of Hammamet, a place known by its Greek name which in fact means New City – in Punic, therefore, another *Qart-hadasht*.

Effective Carthaginian control over the peninsula probably grew in stages as Phoenician and Carthaginian settlers grew in numbers and productivity. By the end of the 6th Century it seems to have been complete: for the text of Carthage's treaty with the newly-formed Roman Republic, dated by the Greek historian Polybius to 509, bars Roman merchants from sailing down its western coast though allowing them to do business, under strict supervision, 'in Libya' and (it follows) at Carthage herself.

Dominance over the interior of Libya was much slower to develop, but the process is even more obscure. Justin's potted history of events reports that sometime during the 6th Century, the Carthaginians for some years cancelled their yearly stipend to 'the Libyans', only to be coerced eventually, through military action by their landlords, to pay the arrears and, presumably, the regular stipend from then on – this, even though the city was at that time furthering its influence over Sicily and Sardinia. Not till after 480, in his account, did they manage to cease payments. Who these Libyans were can only be surmised: but most likely they were an alliance of several peoples in Carthage's nearer hinterland, since they were able after many years of conflict (Justin states) to enforce their claim. All this

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may in turn be relevant to the story of Carthage's first known, and historically controversial, leader 'Malchus', as we shall see.

Again, land surveys of the city's immediate hinterland in Libya have found no obvious signs of a Carthaginian presence there until late in that century. As with so much archaeological investigation, the picture is far from complete. Nonetheless, Carthage during her first three to four hundred years may be comparable to medieval Venice, which acquired a maritime empire and Mediterranean-wide power long before it took control in the 15th Century of a large sector of its adjoining mainland.<sup>10</sup>

### III

## STATE AND GOVERNMENT

#### CITIZENS AND ARISTOCRATS

Carthage in recorded times was a republic: that is, a state with regularly elected officials accountable to their fellow citizens. This was a political structure that developed well after her foundation. As the example of Tyre shows, her Phoenician forebears were ruled by kings, monarchy being the standard governmental format of the Near and Middle East. It would be natural for the colonies of the Phoenician diaspora to begin in the same style, even if changes came later. In turn, throughout her history Carthage was dominated by a wealthy élite who can conveniently be called aristocrats. This was not a fixed or narrow group, all the same – even more than at Rome, membership of the aristocracy was flexible, open to talent and money, and keenly competed for.

What made a Carthaginian a Carthaginian, socially and legally, is obscure. Presumably anyone who could plausibly trace his (or her) ancestry back to the founders counted. The later Roman poet Silius Italicus, in his lengthy epic on the Second Punic War, claims this pedigree for Hannibal – though in choosing Elissa-Dido's father and brother as the general's forebears and naming them Belus and Barca he is probably drawing on nothing more than a fanciful imagination. We shall see, though, that some Carthaginians down the ages did name several ancestors on inscriptions: obviously they took pride in their genealogy. Of course a mere claim to ancestry would hardly be enough. Citizenship gave rights and benefits as well as imposing duties, so that a legal basis was surely essential. While at Rome the citizen lists were maintained by the five-yearly censors, no official with this stated function is known at Carthage; but the republic had quite a range of magistrates and other administrators, to be introduced shortly, some of whom may well have had census-taking duties.