

AH1 - The Roman World

War: Punic

1. The wars between Rome and Carthage

264-241BC	The First Punic War
218-201BC	The Second Punic War
149-146BC	The Third Punic War

2. The 'First Punic War' (cf. Polybius 1.8-64) – the background

- Treaties with Carthage (including one made during the so-called War against Pyrrhus (280-275BC) which was negotiated with the Carthaginian admiral Mago
- This new treaty (from around 279BC) is recorded by Philinus but denied by Polybius (3.26.2ff. – cf. Livy 21.10.8) – it encourages mutual military support AND (re-)defines Roman and Carthaginian territorial rights:

Quote 1: Polybius 3.26.2-5: “The treaties [between Carthage and Rome being such, and preserved as they are on bronze tablets beside the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in the treasury of the quaestors [...]] but **how did [Philinus the historian] venture, and on what authority, to state [...] that there was a treaty between Rome and Carthage by which the Romans were obliged to keep away from the whole of Sicily and the Carthaginians from the whole of Italy,** and that **the Romans broke the treaty and their oath by their first crossing to Sicily?** There is, as a fact, no such document at all [...].”

Quote 2: Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* 23.8: “What a wrestling-ground are we now [in 275BC] leaving behind for Carthaginians and Romans to fight in.”

2.1 The cause of the war: the Marmertines and Messana

Main happenings: In the 280sBC, eastern Sicily was subjected to raids by the Marmertines (Italian mercenaries) – the Marmertines take Messana in the mid 280sBC by force – in the 270s and 260sBC, the city of Syracuse under its leader Hiero attacks and defeats the Marmertines at the river Longanus – Hiero plans to attack Messana – the Marmertines appeal for help with Carthage against Hiero – the Carthaginians plant a citadel in Messana – the Marmertines become uneasy about the Carthaginian presence in Messana – they appeal for help from a different source...i.e. they appeal to Rome for assistance...

Quote 3: Polybius 1.10-11.1: “Some [of the Marmertines] appealed to the Carthaginians, proposing to put themselves and the citadel into their hands, while others sent an embassy to Rome, offering to surrender the city and begging for assistance as a kindred people. **The Romans [...] felt that the help demanded was so obviously unjustifiable [since] to try and help the Marmertines [who betrayed the people of Messana] was a piece of injustice very difficult to excuse.** But fully aware as they were of this, **they yet saw that the Carthaginians had not only reduced Libya to subjection, but a great part of Spain besides, and that they were also in possession of all the islands in the Sardinian and Tyrrhenian Seas.** They were therefore in great apprehension lest, **if they also became masters of Sicily, they would be most troublesome and dangerous neighbours, hemming them in on all sides and threatening every part of Italy. That they would soon be supreme in Sicily, if the Marmertines were not helped, was evident; for once Messana had fallen into their hands, they would shortly subdue Syracuse also, as they were absolute lords of almost all the rest of Sicily.** The Romans, foreseeing this and viewing it as a necessity for themselves not to abandon Messana and thus allow the Carthaginians as it were to build a bridge over to Italy, **debated the matter for long, and even at the end, the Senate did not sanction the proposal for the reason given above, considering that the objection on the score of inconsistency was equal in weight to the advantage to be derived from intervention.**”

Quote 4: Polybius 1.11.2-4: “**The commons** [the *comitia tributa*??], however, worn out as they were by the recent wars and in need of any and every kind of restorative, **listened readily to the military commanders, who, besides giving the reasons above stated for the general advantageousness of the war, pointed out the great benefit in the way of plunder which each and every one would evidently**

derive from it. They were therefore in favour of consenting; and **when the measure (!) had been passed by the people they appointed to the command one of the consuls, Appius Claudius, who was ordered to cross to Messina.**”

Outcome: An advance guard under C. Claudius makes his way over the Straits – the Carthaginian general in control of the citadel in Messina releases the city without fight (and gets crucified for it...) – new Carthaginian troops under Hanno arrive in Sicily – together with Syracuse, they blocked Messina – Appius Claudius attempts to negotiate for an end of the siege (of a town now under Roman protection) – Carthage refuses – thus, Appius Claudius declares war (?) against Carthage in 264BC

2.2 The main events of the war

Likely happenings: Roman attacks under Appius Claudius on Hiero and Hanno are largely unsuccessful in 264BC – in 263BC then, both consuls are sent with a double force (40,000 men in total) – the Romans capture towns around Mount Etna (thus spreading the war inland) – Hiero of Syracuse appeals to Rome for support (and enjoyed Roman protection ever since) – in 262BC, both sides sent new forces (including 60 African elephants) – Rome takes the Carthaginian headquarters at Agragas – Carthage reacts by sending ships to raid Italian and Sicilian coastal areas under Roman control – Rome realises that they cannot win without a fleet...

Quote 5: Polybius 1.20.9-12: “When they saw that the war was dragging on, **the Romans undertook for the first time to build ships**, a hundred quinqueremes and twenty triremes. **As their shipwrights were absolutely inexperienced in building quinqueremes, such ships never having been in use in Italy, the matter caused them much difficulty, and this fact shows us better than anything else how spirited and daring the Romans are when they are determined to do a thing.** It was not that they had fairly good resources for it, but they had none whatever, nor had they ever given a thought to the sea; yet **when they once had conceived the project, they took it in hand so boldly, that before gaining any experience in the matter they at once engaged the Carthaginians who had held for generations undisputed command of the sea.**”

Quote 6: Polybius 1.23.1-24 [Account of the battle off Mylae in 260BC]: “[Gaius Duilius] sailed against [Carthage] with his whole force. The Carthaginians on sighting him put to sea with 130 sail, quite overjoyed and eager, as they despised the inexperience of the Romans [...] They were commanded by Hannibal [...] Trusting in their swiftness, they veered round the enemy in the hope of being able to strike him in safety either on the broadside or on the stern, but when the ravens swung round and shifted in all directions and in all manner of ways so that those who approached them were of necessity grappled, they finally gave way and took to flight, terror-stricken by this novel experience and with the loss of 50 ships. **When the Romans had thus, contrary to all expectation, gained the prospect of success at sea their determination to prosecute the war became twice as strong.**”

Quote 7: Polybius 1.35.5 [on the invasion of Africa in 256BC, the success at Adys and Tunis and the defeat in 255 outside Carthage]: “For one man [Regulus] and one brain laid low that host which seemed so invincible and efficient, and restored the fortunes of a state which in the eyes of all was utterly fallen and the deadened spirit of its soldiers.”

Outcome: Rome focuses her efforts on Sicily after the African disaster – by 254BC a new navy was built (from a special tax levy) – by 252BC, they had captured back some territory in Sicily – but essentially most of the 240s see a to-and fro between Carthage and Rome

BUT: in 244BC, the senate makes use of funds of private individuals...

2.3 The end of the war

Main happenings: Carthage is occupied with war against Numidia – their fleet was badly equipped and poorly manned – and beaten by Rome in 242BC

Outcome: A new treaty between Rome and Carthage:

Quote 8: Polybius 1.62-63: “There shall be friendship between the Carthaginians and Romans on the following terms if approved by the Roman people: **The Carthaginians are to evacuate the whole of**

Sicily and not to make war on Hiero or bear arms against the Syracusans or the allies of the Syracusans. The Carthaginians are to give up to the Romans all prisoners without ransom. The Carthaginians are to pay to the Romans by instalments in twenty years 2,200 Euboean talents.”

Quote 9: Polybius 3.27.2 (cf. Polybius 2.13.7): “The allies of both parties are to be secure from attack by the other. **Neither party is entitled to impose any contribution to construct public buildings, or to enrol soldiers, in the dominions of the other, nor to form alliances with the allies of the other. The Carthaginians are to pay 2,200 talents within ten years, and a sum of 1,000 talents at once [...] Later [in 238BC] the Romans added the following clause [...]: The Carthaginians are to evacuate Sardinia and pay a further sum of 1,200 talents [and in 226BC that] the Carthaginians are not to cross the Ebro in arms.”**

3. The ‘Second Punic War’ (The War against Hannibal)

Main players (for Carthage): Hamilcar, Hasdrubal and Hannibal

Quote 10: Polybius 3.2.1f.: “[...] the Carthaginians invaded Italy, broke up the dominion of Rome, and cast the Romans into great fear for their safety and even for their native soil, while great was their own hope, such as they had never dared to entertain, of capturing Rome itself.”

Main happenings: In 220BC, Saguntum (which was allied with Rome) feared a Carthaginian attack and appealed for help with Rome – Rome sent an embassy to Hannibal to remind him of the Ebro-treaty and of the Roman alliance with Saguntum – Hannibal ignores the Roman efforts – in 219BC, Hannibal puts Saguntum under siege – the senate at Rome is slow to act – the Romans declare war in 218BC – two consular armies are sent (against Spain and Africa respectively) – Hannibal marches on Italy...

Quote 11: Polybius 3.6.1-9.6: “Some authors [...] wishing to indicate the causes that led to the above war between Rome and Carthage, allege as **its first cause the siege of Saguntum by the Carthaginians and as its second their crossing, contrary to treaty, the river whose native name is the Iber** [but] we must regard its first cause as being the indignation of Hamilcar surnamed Barcas, the actual father of Hannibal.”

3.1 The main events of the war

Main happenings: Hannibal crosses the Alps – followed by a first major battle (and victory for Hannibal) at Lake Ticinus in 218BC – a re-enforced Roman army meets them at the battle of the river Trebia in 218/7BC – the massive defeat leads Rome to withdraw all its forces from Northern Italy – in 217BC, Hannibal launches a (successful) surprise attack at the battle of Lake Trasimene – Rome appoints a dictator: Fabius Maximus Cunctator – Hannibal seeks support and fresh supplies in vain from the Italian cities – his movements are being shadowed by F. Maximus – in 217BC, two new consuls are being elected (C. Terentius Varro and L. Aemilius Paullus) – Hannibal defeats the Roman army at the battle of Cannae in 216BC through ingenious battle tactics – Capua goes over to Carthage – Rome adopts emergency measures (e.g. enlistment of slaves, a double property tax, etc.) – Hannibal fails to gain in manpower and loses Capua in 211BC – in 209BC, Hasdrubal appears with a large force in Northern Italy – Rome defeats Hasdrubal at the battle of Metaurus – Hannibal retires into the Bruttian mountains...in Spain, the Scipio brothers attempt to maintain Roman presence and control from 218BC – they regain Saguntum in 211BC – but: both suffered disastrous defeats in 211BC – the senate reacts with the provision of a new army under a new (and young) commander: Publius Cornelius Scipio: he regains Carthago Nova in 209BC – in 208BC, he defeats Hasdrubal at the battle of Baecula – in 206BC, he defeats a Carthaginian army at the battle of Ilipa – towards the end of the year he takes Gades – and by 205BC, Spain is firmly in Roman hands...

Outcomes: When elected consul in 205BC, P. Cornelius Scipio requests permission to take troops into Africa...and takes two legions to Sicily for training – in 204BC, Scipio takes the troops to Africa – by 203BC, Carthage sues for peace – a treaty is being arranged – BUT in 202BC, Hannibal returns with an

eager army from Italy – fighting resumes – the Roman victory at the battle of Zama puts an end to any Carthaginian hopes not to surrender to Rome

3.2 The end of the war

Quote 12: Livy 30.37.1-6 (cf. Polybius 18!): “The peace terms for the Carthaginians were stated as follows: **they were to live as free men under their own laws; to hold the cities and territories which they had held before the war, with the same boundaries;** and the Romans were to make an end of devastation on this very day. They were **to deliver all deserters and runaway slaves and captives to the Romans, and to surrender their war-ships except ten triremes, and the trained elephants in their possession, and not to train others; to wage war neither in Africa or outside of Africa without consent of the Roman people.** They were to make restitution to Masinissa and frame a treaty with him; **to furnish grain and pay to the auxiliaries until the envoys should return from Rome; to pay 10,000 silver talents, divided into equal payments for fifty years; to give a hundred hostages selected by Scipio, not younger than 14 nor older than 30 years.** He would grant an armistice, he said, provided the transports captured during the previous armistice and whatever was on board the ships should be returned; otherwise there would be no armistice nor any hope of a peace.”

Quote 13: Livy 30.40.1-4: “Upon the arrival of envoys at Rome [...] the senate sat in the Temple of Bellona. There, Lucius Veturius Philo to the great joy of the senators set forth how they had fought with Hannibal in a battle that was for the Carthaginians their last [...] **he was bidden to go out to the assembled people and to share the joyful news with the people through a speech in a *contio*. Then all the temples in the city were opened for the offering of sacrifices, and three days of thanksgiving was ordered.**”

4. The ‘Third Punic War’ (The sack of Carthage – cf. Polybius 36 & Livy 34)

‘Cause’ and main happenings: At the end of the 2nd Punic War, Rome had made a treaty with Massinissa King of Massylii (eastern Numidia) – Carthage and Massinissa engage in repeated territorial disputes – Rome repeatedly interferes in order to settle the dispute peacefully – in the late 150sBC, Massinissa claims control of the ‘Great Plains’ – in 150BC, Carthage declares war on Massinissa – i.e. Carthage breaks the treaty she has with Rome – Rome challenges Carthage which offers to be taken into *deditio* – BUT Rome decides to declare war in 149BC nonetheless...

Quote 14: Polybius 36.2: “They had **long ago made up their minds to act thus**, but they were **looking for a suitable opportunity and a pretext** that would appeal to foreign nations. For the Romans very rightly paid great attention to this matter, since [...] when the inception of a war seems just, it makes victory greater and bad success less dangerous, while if it is thought to be dishonourable and wrong it has the opposite effect. So on this occasion their disputes with each other about the effect on foreign opinion very nearly made them resist from going to war.”

Main happenings: In 149BC, a Roman fleet crosses to Sicily and then Utica – the Carthaginians respond by offering unconditional submission – Rome appears at first to accept the offer (and to demand some huge indemnities) – yet, a Carthaginian embassy witnesses the final decision made in the Roman senate: the destruction of Carthage – by 147BC, Carthage is totally blocked off from any supplies – by 146BC, the Roman victory is inevitable – Rome proclaims a curse over Carthage and sacks the city – the territory (5000m²) is being turned into a Roman province...but why????

Quote 16: Polybius 18.35.9: “[...] Carthage, which was considered the wealthiest city in the world [...]”

Quote 15: Plutarch, *Cato the Elder* 26.1-27.1: “The last of his [=Cato] public services is supposed to have been the destruction of Carthage. It was Scipio the Younger who actually brought the task to completion, but it was largely in consequence of the advice and counsel of Cato that the Romans undertook the war [...] Cato found the city [=Carthage] by no means in a poor and lowly state, as the Romans supposed, but rather teeming with vigorous fighting men, overflowing with enormous wealth, filled with arms of every sort and with military supplies [...] **In addition to this it is said that Cato contrived to drop a Libyan fig in the Senate, as he shook out the folds of his toga, and then, as the senators admired its size and beauty, said that the country where it grew was only three days’ sail from Rome [...] In my [=Cato] opinion, Carthage must be destroyed.**”