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Wofford College

Carthaginian Mercenaries:

Soldiers of Fortune, Allied Conscripts, and Multi-Ethnic Armies in Antiquity

An Honors Thesis Submitted to

The Faculty of the Department of History

In Candidacy For

An Honors Degree in History

By

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Introduction

The story of the mercenary armies of Carthage is one of incompetence and disaster, followed by clever innovation. It is a story not just of battles and betrayal, but also of the interactions between dissimilar peoples in a multiethnic army trying to coordinate, fight, and win, while commanded by a Punic officer corps which may or may not have been competent. Carthaginian mercenaries are one piece of a larger narrative about the struggle between Carthage and Rome for dominance in the Western Mediterranean, and their history illustrates the evolution of the mercenary system employed by the Carthaginian Empire to extend her power and ensure her survival.

At first the system of recruiting mercenary soldiers was *ad hoc*, and the armies employed performed rather poorly in combat. These forces were kept loyal by their Carthaginian commanders through the taking of hostages, usually the family members of the fighters who were hired, as well as through promises of wealth in exchange for battlefield valor. Despite these methods of control, these initial armies proved unreliable and were prone to mutiny, desertion, and were generally disloyal. From the end of the First Punic war in 241 BCE to the end of the Second Punic War in 201 BCE, the system used by Carthaginian to recruit, train, and most importantly control its mercenaries underwent significant change. What had started as simply an *ad hoc* tactic of necessity, which produced mixed results on the battlefield and carried a high probability of mutiny, was transformed first under Hamilcar Barca and later perfected by Hannibal Barca to create an army that was the epitome of what a mercenary army could achieve. The Barcid system wove together men and units from diverse nations, languages, religions, and fighting styles into an army which was almost an extension of their commander's will.

The purpose of the mercenary system's reform was to avoid a repeat of the Mercenary War in 240 BCE, perhaps the greatest disaster that Carthage ever experienced in its history. The Mercenary War displayed, quite catastrophically for the Carthaginians, the shortcomings of the system which did not guarantee the loyalty and discipline of its mercenaries. The mercenary rebellion was poorly managed by Carthage, and the mercenaries were able to conquer most of Punic North Africa, threatening Carthage itself. The reason for poor Carthaginian response to the rebellion lay in the fact that while the Carthaginian military commanders had experience dealing with and controlling mercenary troops, the political leadership in Carthage did not. For three years war raged, with mercenaries and rebels ravaging territory up to the walls of Carthage itself.

It was not until Hamilcar Barca, the father of the famous Hannibal Barca, arrived to command that the war with the mercenaries was finally won. Utilizing a system inspired by the policies of Xanthippus, a Spartan mercenary captain who saved Carthage from a Roman invasion during the First Punic War, Hamilcar Barca defeated the mercenaries, though the memory of the war's barbarity made it so that the Barcid system would be kept and refined so that another disaster of the same origin and scale didn't happen again. What differentiated the Barcid system from mere generalship is the fact that it was passed down from commander to commander and steadily built upon, rather than being the work of a single mind.

The new system relied less on hostage taking, and instead reduced the autonomy of mercenary captains by ensuring they were closely observed by the Carthaginian officer corps. Additionally, it ensured that the mercenary soldiers were always employed and never idle, and were personally loyal to their commander by keeping the army constantly on campaign and ensuring all their pay was distributed by the general and not the state. As a result of these reforms, which coalesced during Carthage's campaigns in Iberia, a professional mercenary army

was formed. It existed for decades before Hannibal Barca famously utilized it to invade Italy over the Alps. It was during this campaign where the reformed mercenary system, combined with Hannibal Barca's excellent leadership, where the potential of the mercenary army was realized in an army which nearly brought Rome to its knees. Inspired by the actions of Xanthippus during the First Punic War, honed by Hamilcar and Hasdrubal Barca, the full potential of a professional, Punic, multi-ethnic force was realized by Hannibal in three great battles: Trebia, Trasimene, and Cannae. While Hannibal's army seems unprecedented and unique in the ancient world, it was actually the culmination of a Punic system which took decades to develop.

Study of the mercenary armies of Carthage is a poorly researched area of ancient history, and secondary sources are scant on the subject. General histories of Carthage or the Punic Wars touch on them, some devoting a few pages, but these do not look at the mercenary system in critical depth. Two of the best sources for Carthaginian mercenaries are Adrian Goldsworthy's *The Fall of Carthage*, which is a military history of the Punic Wars, and Dexter Hoyos's *Truceless War*, which deals in extreme detail with the Mercenary War. Neither of these works, however, traces the development and evolution of the mercenary system over time. While a few sources acknowledge Hamilcar's role in reforming and improving the way that mercenaries were employed, few go into detail on how, and fewer still point to Xanthippus as helping provide a framework for these changes. While many historians look at Carthage's military as part of a larger effort to understand Rome's military, few examine the Carthaginian military separately. Hoyos is almost the only author working on the Carthaginian military for its own sake.

Compounding this difficulty is the shortage of ancient sources that detail the Punic Wars, and the Carthaginian mercenaries specifically. Polybius is the main source, and the most reliable,

and this paper draws heavily from his work. Polybius was friend of the grandson of Scipio Africanus, a witness to the Third Punic War, and had access to Greek and Punic sources. Second is Livy, who despite his detailed accounts is considered somewhat unreliable. Other ancient authors like Cassius Dio and Appian write centuries after the events they describe, and are not particularly useful for this study. Nevertheless, a through and compelling picture, and corresponding argument, of Carthage's mercenary system and how that system evolved over time can be painted. The mercenary armies of Carthage grew into a professional, efficient force as a result of steady reforms implemented primarily by the Barcid family in response to the lessons of the First Punic War and the Mercenary War.

Chapter One: Carthaginian Expansion- The Beginning of an Empire

The city-state of Carthage rose to dominate the ancient Western Mediterranean through trade, naval supremacy, and war. Through trade networks, Carthage had contact with the martial cultures of the Ancient Mediterranean world. The same nodes used to buy and sell goods could also be used to hire mercenaries, especially when those mercenaries were attracted by the vast trade wealth controlled by Carthage. In Carthage's wars, the city-state relied primarily on multi-ethnic mercenary armies.

The history of Carthage is often preserved in the historical memory by later Roman and Greek (especially Sicilian) historians, who perpetuated negative stereotypes of Carthaginians as, in the words of Richard Miles, "treacherous and deceitful practitioners of doublespeak. Like their Phoenician cousins, they are overly controlled by women and liable to suffer from such feminine traits as hysteria and envy."¹ Despite such prejudice, bias can be filtered out of existing sources, and archaeological evidence combined with the more reliable surviving sources such as Polybius and sections of Livy, give a clear if not complete picture of ancient Carthage.

Carthage began to expand territorially around the 600s BCE, taking over nearby Libya and other Punic settlements from its home territory in Tunisia. Carthage had taken over Libya quite soon (when exactly is not known, but certainly before the 500s BCE). Libyans were conscripted to fight in Carthage's Wars, and made up the main body of the Carthaginian mercenary armies in the First Punic War, fighting side by side with foreign sell-swords.² Many Libyans would appear to have signed up for continued service as mercenaries when their conscription times ran out. Libya was not complacent with its subject status however, and

¹ Miles, Richard. 2011. *Carthage Must Be Destroyed: The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Civilization*. New York: Viking. 60.

² Polybius, 1.67

Libyans were incited to rebellion against Carthage in the Mercenary War (also called the “Truceless War”) of 241 to 238 BCE.³ The Libyan cities had borne the brunt of the immense taxes required to finance the First Punic War, and Libyan men whose families could not pay were arrested by the Carthaginians in droves.⁴ In revolt, the Libyan cities gave aid to the mutinous mercenaries, bloodily revolting against their Carthaginian masters and eventually fighting so ruthlessly that no quarter was given to the Carthaginians. The vehemence of this revolt implies fierce resentment of the Libyans toward the Carthaginians prior to the First Punic War, and indicates that Carthaginian rule was conspicuously oppressive.

Much like its mercenary armies, the state of Carthage was not a homogenous empire, but rather an amalgamation of different ethnic peoples with different legal statuses and varying degrees of autonomy. The group with the most power was the citizen body of Carthage itself, which controlled trade and political power. Following the citizens, native peoples whose cities used Carthaginian laws (and were subject to Carthage) were second-highest. Their use of the Carthaginian law code necessarily made them equal to Carthaginian citizens in civil law.⁵ Most of these people are what are known as Libyphoenicians, who usually lived in cities.⁶ Tribes allied to Carthage, such as the Numidians or some Celtiberians, were treated well or ill depending on Carthaginian strategic interests. Despite the multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan nature of its trading hubs and mercenary armies, Carthage, in the words of Walter Ameling “lived on its dominance over others, not on the services it performed for others.”⁷ In addition to the Carthaginian citizens and the Libyphoenicians, Numidians, native non-Greek Sicilians, Balearic

³ Miles, Richard. *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*. xii.

⁴ Polybius, 1.72

⁵ Ameling, Walter. “The Rise of Carthage to 264.” In Hoyos, B. D. *A Companion to the Punic Wars*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 47.

⁶ *Ibid*, 47.

⁷ *Ibid*, 48.

Islanders, Sardinians, and Celtiberians all lived within the Carthaginian Empire and its sphere of influence. Despite the cosmopolitan nature of Carthage's trade hubs, societies which were opposed to Carthage's wealth and expansion were harshly dealt with. For example, the native Nuragic peoples of Sardinia were quickly driven from their coastal communities into the Sardinian hills after Punic settlers began arriving on the island.⁸ As a result of Punic expansion into their territory, the Nuragic culture soon disappeared entirely.⁹ When wealth failed, Carthage was not hesitant to resort to intimidation and force to keep its subject peoples in check.

Carthage was also well positioned geographically to expand, with weak neighbors to its east and west, friendly Punic colonies across the sea, and the vast, largely untapped wealth of Iberia nearby. By the fifth century BCE, Carthage had come to dominate all the other Phoenician towns and settlements in North Africa. It took immediate interest in the Mediterranean islands, notably Sardinia and the Balearic islands.¹⁰ The primary concern guiding Carthaginian expansion seems to have been mercantile rather than militaristic or administrative in nature. Carthage expanded its sway to include the other Punic settlements in Sicily and on the North African coast, including Utica. It founded its own colonies in North Africa as well, such as Leptis Magna.¹¹ Trade gave Carthage and its oligarchic ruling elite great wealth. It also created a web of personal, economic, and political connections which linked Carthage to the many martial cultures of antiquity. These links and personal connections were also utilized to hire soldiers, who were attracted by the vast wealth controlled by Carthage.

The Need for Mercenaries

⁸ Miles, Richard. *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*. 65-68.

⁹ *Ibid*, 112.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 66.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 100.

The mercenary armies of Carthage were formed in a kind of *ad hoc* fashion when the need arose, at least initially in the city's history. When a conflict broke out, or a new war goal emerged, Carthage would recruit an army of mercenaries and non-citizen levies (usually Libyans) and send them off to fight. Unlike its navy, which was a standing professional force, always in existence, the armies of Carthage were created when they were needed, each with a unique mix of different nationalities, and disbanded when the conflict was resolved.

Carthage was forced to rely on mercenaries to fight its wars on land for a few reasons. First, the Punic citizen body was relatively small compared to the citizen bodies of their Sicilian Greek or Roman enemies, and could ill afford to sustain losses. Paid foreigners were more expendable, if less trustworthy. Carthage was also immensely rich from its trade connections and fertile North African farmland and had the coin to pay for the sometimes expensive mercenaries.

Carthage relied overwhelmingly on mercenaries and allied levies, though she did tap her domestic manpower as well. Her citizens fought in a hoplite phalanx formation, though these units of citizens were only deployed when the city was in extreme and immediate danger, such as when the Romans or Greeks were poised to attack Carthage itself. When deployed, the citizen phalanxes fought rather poorly. This was likely due to their relative lack of experience, as the citizen body of Carthage focused much of its effort on politics rather than war. Carthage did experiment with a small force of highly trained infantrymen called the Sacred Band, though this force was slaughtered to a man at the Battle of Crimissus in 340 BCE, which was part of the Carthaginian campaigns in Sicily.¹² This disaster destroyed a good portion of the Carthaginian citizen elite in a single battle, and virtually eliminated Carthage's regular use of citizen soldiers.

¹² Ibid, 137

Not only did mercenaries perform better than Carthage's citizen soldiers, they were more expendable.

Carthaginian Government

The government of Carthage was complex, and there much still not understood about it, despite intense scholarship. Older Greek texts refer to the 'kings' of Carthage, though most attribute this as a Greek confusion over Carthaginian oligarchy.¹³

The government of Carthage was that of an aristocracy and a city-state. Its legislature was composed of many aristocratic assemblies, such as the Council of 104, as well as many magistrates which controlled foreign affairs, the treasury, the navy, and other major services. While an apparently democratic citizens assembly did exist, it does not appear to have held much power. Executive power was held in peace time by *suffetes*, which appear to have been elected, and in wartime was effectively held (though whether or not by election is not clear) by generals such as Hamilcar Barca, who were given orders by the government, but could sometimes ignore or creatively interpret those orders. For most of Carthage's history, however, her politics were dominated by a single family. Prior to its conflicts with Rome, the Carthaginian state was dominated by the Magonids and then the Hannonids, but these families each fell from power after successive disasters in the Sicilian Wars. After the Hannonid family's demise, the state was ruled by a coalition of aristocratic families, who variously cooperated in the wars against Rome while attempting to accumulate power and glory for themselves. Finally, after the devastation the First Punic War and the Mercenary War which ensued, the Barcid family gained effective control of the state. Consisting famously of Hamilcar and Hannibal Barca, the Barca family was the last great political family of Carthage.

¹³ Lancel, Serge. Carthage: A History. Oxford. Blackwell, 1995. 117.

Supporting the government of Carthage was its mercenary armies, composed of a mixture of foreign-born professionals, Libyan conscripts, and allied contingents. These armies allowed the government of the Carthaginian Empire to exert influence over the land just as her navy exerted power over the sea. An understanding of how ancient Carthaginian mercenary forces operated and how ancient battles were fought is crucial to understanding the system as a whole and how it developed over time.

Chapter 2: Carthaginian Mercenaries and Ancient Warfare

Mercenary work was one of the few steady careers in the ancient world.¹⁴ It was a dangerous line of work, but the opportunity for wealth and advancement was far greater than the life of a farmer or an artisan. Mercenaries could serve for decades, often having their families stay in the cities of their employer. Hoyos recounts that some Gauls who served in the First Punic War turned up some twenty years later still fighting (with a different employer) in the Adriatic.¹⁵ War was good business, and most mercenaries were professional troops, usually only deserting under extreme circumstances.¹⁶

The *ad hoc*, multiethnic armies of Carthage (each unique, each created with a specific mission in mind) would seem at first glance to be merely a product of the geo-political and economic constraints in which Carthage found herself. The argument is easy enough to make. A merchant republic, constrained by a lack of manpower but overflowing with currency, would certainly resort to hiring foreign soldiers to serve in its wars.

The mercenary forces used by Carthage, however, are unique and worthy of study in several ways. As Goldsworthy points out, the mercenary forces used by Carthage were almost entirely non-Carthaginian, and were instead amalgamations of ethnic peoples, each with their own tactics, weapons, culture, and language. Each mercenary army was created to deal with different conflicts, so every army in Carthaginian history had different ethnic and unit compositions.¹⁷

¹⁴ Hoyos, B. D. 2007. *Truceless War: Carthage's Fight for Survival, 241 to 237 BC*. Vol. 45. Boston;Leiden;: Brill.Press. 8.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ The exception to this rule are allied tribesmen, who were more fickle in their service.

¹⁷ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage: The Punic Wars 265-146 BC*. London: Cassel. 2003. 31-35.

The mercenary armies of Carthage started and were first employed as a reaction to the geographic, financial, and political straits that Carthage found herself in. A lack of manpower, combined with great wealth (generated from Mediterranean trade, bountiful North African agriculture, and later conquest in Iberia) made mercenary armies a sensible and obvious tool for Carthage's many wars. During the Sicilian Wars, the mercenary units did not perform with the effectiveness and distinction they would later show. In the First Punic War, the flaws of the institution were revealed, as Carthage consistently could not defeat their Roman enemy on land. Xanthippus, a Spartan mercenary who served Carthage briefly, delivered one of the few Carthaginian victories in the First Punic War, defeating the Roman invasion of Libya. Almost certainly inspired by the system used by Xanthippus, Hamilcar Barca (father of Hannibal Barca) began reforming the institution of the mercenary army, drilling it into an effective fighting force. His reforms began during the First Punic War in Sicily but did not fully develop until after the conclusion of the Mercenary War. After the Mercenary War, Hamilcar campaigned heavily in Iberia, subjugating many tribes, in some cases adding their captured warriors to his own army.

Difficulty Commanding the Army

The only unifying element of a Carthaginian mercenary army was the general, and the small Punic officer corps. The men in the army could and would come from vastly different backgrounds, some Celts, some Numidians, some Libyans, some Iberians, and some Greek veterans. Management of supplies and logistics, communication and unit organization, were all of crucial importance to the Carthaginian general. Such a task seems daunting, but many commanders were no doubt inspired to succeed, not least because the punishment for failure was death by crucifixion.¹⁸

¹⁸ Ibid, 35.

The challenges for any general commanding an ancient army were manifold, all the more so an army of mercenaries. First, there was the difficulty of communication between armies and the government. It could take weeks for a message to be delivered, and often commanders were ignorant of the conditions in the field. Supply and logistics were another area of major concern, as finding food and supplies for an army of tens of thousands was a constant concern. For an example of the amounts of supplies an army of antiquity would require, it is estimated that an army of 20,000 men, with some 2,000 cavalry, would consume about 55 tons of grain a day.¹⁹ That was just the food. Additional supplies, from ammunition to cooking utensils also had to be procured. Some armies were supplied directly either by land or ship, but other armies, such as Hannibal Barca's army, had to forage for their supplies. For these armies, instead of grain, vast herds of cattle would be employed, as this food source could move by hoof with the army. Foraging was difficult to accomplish in some terrain however, and large armies ultimately needed a base of supply in order to operate effectively.

Finally, there was the risk of mutiny and disloyalty among the mercenaries. Mercenary mutinies pop up throughout the history of Carthage's wars. Polybius asserts that the original intention of a multiethnic mercenary force was to erect linguistic and cultural barriers between the troops so no large component of the army could collaborate with another and easily affect a mutiny.²⁰ This alone did not create a sufficient barrier for mutiny, and later Barcid reforms were necessary to ensure loyalty, including encouraging mercenaries to feel a personal connection to their general, reducing the independence of mercenary captains, and ensuring regular pay.

¹⁹ Erdkamp, Paul. "Manpower and Food Supply in the First and Second Punic Wars" in Hoyos, B. D. *A Companion to the Punic Wars*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 68.

²⁰ Polybius, 1.66

This sharply contrasts with the Roman model of a citizen army, where each rank of soldiers has an assigned task and standard deployment. Despite a more ordered and stronger infantry army, Roman generals in its wars (until the middle of the Second Punic War) were forced to consult the gods through taking the auspices before a decision could be reached.²¹

Carthaginian commanders and their armies were, earlier in their history, not so successful. This is due to a combination of the unprofessional nature of most of Carthage's generals, and the lack of an effective, institutionalized system for keeping potentially mutinous mercenaries under control. Most of Carthage's power was derived from its navy, and so the army received less attention as a result (though this would change after the First Punic War). When fighting trained soldiers, mercenaries and their commanders performed rather poorly, as the troublesome wars in Sicily prior and the First Punic War illustrate.

Goldsworthy makes a compelling argument that when initially formed, a Carthaginian mercenary army was ineffectual, as the various elements within it had little cohesion or experience fighting alongside each other.²² However, the longer the army campaigned and the more accustomed the various elements of the army became to fighting alongside one another, the more effectual the army became. Lending weight to this thesis is the fact that the most impressive army in Carthaginian history, that of Hannibal Barca in the Second Punic War, had been fighting in Iberia for over a decade before it famously crossed the Alps.

To speak of the armies of Carthage as simply consisting of foreign mercenaries is a slight simplification. The army was composed of men raised in different ways, each motivated to fight by different reasons. While hired foreign mercenaries were used extensively, they were by no means the only component of the army. In addition to being hired, foreigners were provided to

²¹ Milne, Kathryn. Lecture, Wofford College.

²² Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 34-35.

the army by allied kingdoms, or provided by treaty obligations as seems to have been the case with the Numidians. With the Numidians as well as the Iberians later, marriage alliances between tribes and the Carthaginian commanders was a way of getting troops, as well as the personal loyalties of the tribe.²³ Men might join (or be into conscripted as some Libyans were) a Carthaginian army for wealth, for adventure, to fight a hated enemy, or to escape their homes.

²³ Ibid. 33.

Chapter Three: The Multi-Ethnic Nature of a Carthaginian Army

Certain peoples from different parts of the Carthaginian Empire and recruitment network were usually hired to fulfill certain roles. Thus, different parts of the armies were associated with different ethnicities, who had specific roles within the army and had to work together cohesively to have any chance of victory. While the deployment of a Carthaginian army varied considerably based on the commander, situation, and army composition, certain deployment details remained constant. While there cannot be said to be a “standard” Carthaginian deployment, elephants were almost always positioned in the front of an army and began the battle with a massed charge. Cavalry was almost always deployed on the flanks of the infantry formations. What the cavalry and infantry formations were comprised of depended on the ethnicities and background of the levies and mercenaries who comprised the army. Nevertheless, the ethnicity of the troops mattered. The wide array of different peoples, especially troops like the Balearic Islanders and the Numidians, gave Carthaginian mercenary armies a large number of specialist troops which gave the mercenary army a certain inherent flexibility, provided the units could properly coordinate.

The Numidians

The Numidian people lived in what is today Algeria and Morocco. An ancient Berber Kingdom, their lands were on the Western border of Carthaginian territory. Their people were divided into many tribes, of which two seemed to share most of the power, at least according to Polybius. The names of these two tribes are the Massylii and the Masaesyli, and did not unify until the Second Punic War.

The Numidians were famous for their light cavalry. The Numidian cavalry peppered their opponents with barrages of javelins. If the enemy attempted to attack the Numidians, they would

scatter, only to reform and deliver another volley. Though the tribal Numidian horsemen were formidable, they were also somewhat notorious for switching sides in a battle. Polybius even states that they as a people were “neither constant toward Gods or men.”²⁴ It was a Numidian prince at Zama (Hannibal’s last battle), Masinissa, who helped to turn Hannibal’s defeat into a crushing rout.²⁵ During the Mercenary War it was a Numidian defector, Naravas, which provided the Carthaginians the ability to quell the mutiny.²⁶ During the Second Punic War and after, Numidia remained politically unstable, as kings from either tribe warred for power in the supposedly unified kingdom. Despite the inclination toward treachery, Numidian horsemen were potent forces on the battlefield, described by Livy as “the best horsemen in all of Africa.”²⁷ Despite Numidia being a client state of Carthage, the Numidians were not as rebellious as the Libyans, and contributed decisively to the outcomes of Hannibal Barca’s early battles in Italy.

The Celtiberians

The Iberians, who lived in what is today Spain and Portugal, had a long historical association with the Punic civilization. The Iberian Peninsula was rich in mineral resources, which the Phoenicians as well as the Carthaginians traded for and exploited. While Punic colonists had settled parts of the Spanish coastline, the Celtiberians occupied the central Spanish plateau. The Celtiberians were descended from a mixture of Celtic migrants and native Iberian peoples. By the time of the First Punic War, they had developed a unique culture. Spanish mercenaries provided Carthaginian (and occasionally Roman) armies with heavy infantry, light infantry, and cavalry. Common soldiers wore a white tunic with a belt and leather shield, while nobles typically equipped themselves with armor in the Greek style. Spanish heavy infantry wore

²⁴ Polybius, 14.1

²⁵ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 301-305.

²⁶ Polybius, 1.77-78.

²⁷ Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 29.35

a variation of Lamellar armor, or chainmail armor (the latter being an improvement over the Celtic design). Celtiberian heavy infantry closely resembled the Roman *Principes*; equipped with a heavy shield which provided full body cover, they also carried a long javelin called a *solliferum*, which they would hurl before joining in melee.²⁸

The most distinctive aspect of a Celtiberian soldier, however, was his sword, the *falcata*. Made of high quality Spanish iron, the weapon was superb for close quarters fighting. Hannibal was so impressed with the weapon that he equipped his own soldiers with it in the Second Punic War. Gabriel even suggests that Hannibal's victory at Cannae was due to this sword's superiority over the Greek design the Romans used at the time.²⁹ After the capture of Carthago Nova, (Latin for New Carthage) Carthage's main colony in Iberia, Scipio ordered the sword be made by Iberian smiths and equipped into his own army.³⁰ With a few modifications, the *falcata* would later come into use in the Roman legions as the *gladius hispanicus*, the main weapon of Rome's legions.³¹

In addition to their skill with infantry, the Celtiberians possessed marvelous cavalry, perhaps the best a mercenary army could acquire. The heavy cavalry was armed with lances and *falcatas* and was called *Jinetes*. Iberia was good horse country and the Celtiberian armies were well known for using their infantry and cavalry in concert. A favorite tactic, used at the battle of the Trebia River and by Mago at Cannae, was to have a second soldier ride on the horse's back, and then dismount to fight on foot.³² Iberian mounts were ridden without a saddle, (as the saddle

²⁸ Gabriel, Richard A. 2008. *Scipio Africanus: Rome's Greatest General*. 1st ed. Washington, D.C: Potomac Books. 55-58

²⁹ Ibid, 57.

³⁰ Ibid, 57-58.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid, 58.

hadn't been invented yet) and were used to the hard and mountainous terrain of their native country. Flexible and powerful, the Celtiberian heavy cavalry was a potent force.

The Celtiberian light cavalry was as tricky as the heavy cavalry was powerful. Used for harassing enemy forces and riding down a fleeing enemy, the Celtiberian light cavalry was armed with a throwing javelin and little armor. Relying on speed and surprise, these troops were known for striking at vulnerable points and exhausting more heavily armored opponents. The Celtiberian light cavalry would ride in a circle around an enemy infantry formation, hurling javelins at the exposed sides of the infantrymen. The infantry, terrified and restrained within their formation, could do little to repel the attack.

A third type of cavalry combat, employed by light and heavy units, was to use their horses for swift maneuvers, getting around the enemy's flank or rear, before dismounting and fighting on foot. This form of battle is mentioned by Polybius in his description of Cannae,³³ where he described the Carthaginian Iberian horsemen on the left wing of the battle dismounting to fight their Roman adversaries, who likewise dismounted for the melee (which the Romans lost terribly). Polybius does mention, however, that this style was not the usual form of cavalry combat.³⁴

The Balearic Islanders

The people of the Balearic Islands, Majorca, Minorca, Ibiza, and Formentera, were renowned in the ancient world as expert slingers. Ethnically they were very mixed, with early Punic settlers intermingling with the native population of the islands, which had existed there at least since the early Bronze Age. Balearic males trained from infancy to be able to use the sling effectively in combat. The main export of the islands, in fact, were mercenary slingers, first in

³³ Polybius, 3.115

³⁴ Ibid.

the service of Carthage, and later in the Roman legions.³⁵ A Greek legend said that Balearic mothers would not allow their children to eat unless they struck some bread off of a target with a sling.

Slings had numerous advantages over other ranged weapons of the ancient world, like javelins and arrows, especially for the poor islanders. Ammunition, which consisted either of round smooth stones or metal bullets, was extremely inexpensive and easily obtained. The manufacture of a sling was also very inexpensive, and could easily be carried. Slingers carried slings made of different materials of different lengths to achieve effectiveness at different ranges: long, medium, and short.³⁶ Thus lightly armed and equipped, quick footed slingers could harass their opponents without fear of putting themselves in danger. Some slingers would even inscribe messages on their sling bullets with phrases like “Take that!” and “Ow!”

The Celts

The Celts, an Indo-European people, experienced a massive migration into Europe, settling in a variety of areas, from Thrace to Britain. Considered to be barbarians by the Greeks and Romans, the Celts actually had a sophisticated society, culture, and religion. There was never a unified Celtic nation, rather, the Celtic people were divided into a number of tribes, with a vast number of petty chiefs. While this political disunity made it difficult for the Celts to organize themselves militarily, it did make them easier to hire as mercenaries. Celts were hired to fight for a large number of empires and states.

The Celts living in Cisalpine Gaul, that is, the Celtic territory in northern Italy, are described by Polybius as living in open semi-nomadic villages. A race of cattle herders, these Celts were the peoples who joined with Hannibal to make war against the Romans.

³⁵ Polybius, 1.67

³⁶ Daly, Gregory. *Cannae*. Routledge, London. 2002. 107.

The Celts were known for their skill in iron-smithing, and their skill in horsemanship. Celts from the Po valley in northern Italy, what the Romans called Cisalpine Gaul served in Hannibal's army after it crossed the Alps, and formed his army's center at Cannae.³⁷ The Celtic warrior carried into battle javelins and a shield, but relied primarily on long slashing swords.³⁸ Despite fighting in a massed formation, Celtic swordsmen focused on individual combat rather than on fighting as part of a formation, and it evidently took Hannibal more than a year to accustom his Celts to fighting together as part of a formation. The long slashing swords encouraged individualized fighting, as they required a large amount of personal space to wield effectively, which a tight formation prohibited. The Celtic cavalry, as well as the Celtiberian cavalry, were superb but undisciplined, and tended to rely on the all-out charge to defeat their opponents.³⁹

The Greeks

Contact and exchange between the Punic and Hellenistic worlds had existed long before Carthage's mercenary armies. Greeks and Carthaginians participated in trade and competed against each other in colonization. It is no surprise then that many Greeks served in Carthage's armies, lured by wealth, adventure, or pushed into the mercenary life by desperation.

Although Polybius reports that the Greeks who had served as foot soldiers in Carthage's mercenary armies were the worst of Greeks, mostly deserters and slaves, the competence and success of these troops would tend to argue otherwise.⁴⁰ The Carthaginians seemed to have admired the Hellenistic style of battle, perhaps attempting to model the successes of Alexander the Great. The Carthaginian citizens units, some Libyan conscripts, as well as their Greek

³⁷ Cisalpine Gaul literally means Gaul this side of the Alps.

³⁸ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 32-33.

³⁹ Ibid, 33.

⁴⁰ Polybius, 1.67

mercenaries, deployed in a hoplite phalanx, though there is little evidence they employed the longer Macedonian *sarissa* spears, implying an earlier Hellenistic influence.⁴¹ This hoplite phalanx differed from the Roman three-lined maniple system by placing soldiers in one dense line, raising the morale of the Carthaginian troops while intimidating their opponents through the depth and size of the single formation.⁴² Armed with heavy shields and body armor, hoplites fought primarily with a spear and with a sword as a secondary weapon. Attacking a hoplite wall from the front was a difficult task, though the formation lacked the capability and flexibility to maneuver well, and was particularly vulnerable to attacks in the flanks and rear. For this reason especially Carthaginian armies required a strong presence of cavalry on their flanks to guard their hoplites.

Greeks served particularly admirably in the First Punic War. It was an unnamed Greek soldier who, during the siege of Lilybaeum, whose idea to use flaming projectiles during a high wind caused the immolation of the Roman siege works.⁴³ It was Xanthippus, a Spartan, who saved all of Carthage by instilling discipline in the mercenaries and correcting the previous commanders of the Carthaginian armies in the Carthaginian armies and defeating the invading Roman army in Africa commanded by Marcus Atilius Regulus. Greek historians accompanied Hannibal on his march over the Alps, and Greek city-states in Italy defected to Hannibal's cause after the great victory at Cannae.

The Libyans

While mercenaries from a diverse range of regions and cultures were attracted to service in the Carthaginian mercenary army, the main body of the army was usually made up of Libyan

⁴¹ Koon, Sam. Phalanx and Legion: the "Face" of Punic War Battle. IN A Companion to the Punic Wars, First Edition. Edited by Dexter Hoyos. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2011. 79-82.

⁴² Ibid. 80.

⁴³ Polybius, 1.48

soldiers. Libyans were the steadiest source of manpower for Carthage, and Libyans formed one of the most disciplined and experienced parts of the army.⁴⁴ Libyans served in a variety of roles, serving as skirmishers or in the hoplite wall. Despite the fact that some of these men were conscripted, they appeared to have been promised good pay for their service, and were rewarded if they were conspicuously brave.⁴⁵ While Polybius mentions the tributes that Libyan cities were required to pay to Carthage, he does not specify whether these payments took the form of goods or cash, and it seems there is no reason to doubt that Libyan cities were also required to provide a certain number of soldiers for Carthage as well.

Libyan infantry fought with long spears and round or oval shields, and protected themselves with linen cuirasses and metal helmets. Fighting in close configuration, the Libyan infantry could present a formidable defensive formation to the enemy. The Libyan cavalry also fought in close order and equipped themselves with long spears. The cavalry was trained to deliver disciplined shock charges.⁴⁶

The ethnic makeup of a Carthaginian armies varied immensely, sometimes even year by year. Yet these would be the forces with which Carthage waged her wars against her enemies: first the Sicilian Greeks and then later the Roman Republic.

⁴⁴ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 32.

⁴⁵ Polybius, 1.68-69

⁴⁶ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 33

Chapter Four: Adventures in Sicily 480-307 BCE

Long before Carthage's bloody conflicts with Rome, Carthage fought a series of wars with the Greek settlements along the eastern shore of Sicily. These wars mark an important step in the development of the Carthaginian mercenary army. The first Sicilian war is the first recorded use of mercenaries by Carthage, while the second Sicilian war employed so many mercenaries (far more than the first) that Carthage was required to mint its own coins for the first time in order to pay the soldiers.

Mercenaries on both sides proved unreliable, even in the face of victory. When the Syracusan general Agathocles laid siege to Carthage in 309 BCE, the Carthaginians simply bought his own troops out from under him, resulting in a great victory which ejected the Greeks permanently from North Africa.⁴⁷

The First Sicilian War

The first recorded use of mercenaries in Carthaginian warfare shows the Punic commanders employing their mercenary armies incompetently. In 480 BCE, at the battle of Himera, the entire Carthaginian army, which was composed of Greeks and Celts, was destroyed and its leader killed. The reason for this disaster was that the commander of the mercenary army, a certain Hamilcar, set off with such haste that the mercenary elements of his army had not time to harmonize.⁴⁸ The mercenaries and likely could not fight together well at all. Rather than leading a unified army in a surprise attack, Hamilcar was killed leading a large dis-unified mob into a prepared enemy. The first recorded use of mercenaries was a disaster, though this did not deter Carthage from their use, or inspire Carthage to any innovation.

The Second Sicilian War- An Army in Mint Condition

⁴⁷ Miles, Richard. *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*. 151.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 114-116.

The Carthaginians again attempted war and conquest in Sicily in 410 BCE. For the war effort, Hannibal⁴⁹ conscripted a levy of 5,000 Libyans and 800 Campanians (Italian Greeks), which was aided by a second army which consisted of a mixed force of Iberian mercenaries and more Libyan levies. In 409 BCE, an armada of 1,500 transport ships loaded with the army and its supplies, including siege engines, set sail.⁵⁰ Unfortunately for this campaign, the sole source is Timaeus, a Sicilian historian who was very anti-Carthaginian.⁵¹

Hannibal's army, despite being recently formed, fought with far greater success than the army which had been destroyed fifty years prior at Himera. The army's took the city of Selinus. The city was captured quickly, with the Carthaginian army competently employing siege engines to take the city by assault. According to Diodorus (working through Timaeus) the multiethnic mercenary army fought skillfully if brutally, and by the end of the day the city streets were clogged with 16,000 corpses, including the Selintine women and children.⁵² Although Timaeus attributes this massacre to Carthaginian orders, it may also have been a collapse of discipline which led to the massacre.

Hannibal then assaulted Himera, the location of the previous Sicilian War's disaster. Many of the inhabitants fled on ships to Syracuse, while the rest fought desperately to hold the city, which fell on the third day of fighting. Again, relying on the hostile testimony of Timaeus, Hannibal supposedly ordered the entire city razed and had the temples pillaged. The army then returned to Africa and disbanded.

⁴⁹ (again, not the famous Hannibal Barca)

⁵⁰ Ibid, 123.

⁵¹ Miles, Richard. *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*. 13-15.

⁵²Diodorus, 15.34

Despite the limited nature of this expedition, it marks an important point in Carthaginian mercenary warfare. Carthage's extensive use of mercenaries in this conflict, which topped the first Sicilian war handily, required the first production of Carthaginian coins to pay the soldiers.⁵³

As the primary purpose of this historic minting was to pay mercenaries, Carthage copied the designs of the highly valued Greek coinage. The coins bore two inscriptions "Qrthdst" meaning Carthage, and "Qrthdst/mhnt" which meant Carthage military camp, evidence that the coins were really for a single purpose.⁵⁴ Payment of mercenaries would be a constant difficulty for the Carthaginians, especially over long conflicts.

Agathocles

Perhaps the greatest threat Carthage faced before the Punic Wars was when an army of Sicilian Greeks landed in Libya and brought the fight to Africa itself. This army, led by the tyrant of Syracuse, a man named Agathocles, invaded the Carthaginian homeland in North Africa in 311 BCE. Taking with him his own multiethnic force of Greeks and mercenaries, Agathocles hoped to put an end to the Punic menace by attacking the Punic heartland in Africa. The Carthaginian mercenaries and Punic officers lost a number of set piece battles in Africa to Agathocles, who, receiving reinforcements from rebellious Libyan communities, laid siege to Carthage itself.⁵⁵

Carthage's armies continued to fare poorly against Agathocles. The city was only saved by a mistake on Agathocles's part, when he ordered troops away from the siege of Carthage to secure the rest of Africa before the city had been taken. Agathocles's army was then attacked and driven back. Timaeus records that Agathocles, fearing for his life, fled back to Syracuse out of

⁵³ Miles, Richard. *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*. 123-125.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 124.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 149.

cowardice, though this account is likely not fair to Agathocles. The army of Agathocles was then stopped from destroying Carthage when the Carthaginians simply spent a large sum of money to make the army go away. The mercenaries were offered clemency and a signing bonus if they joined the Carthaginian cause. Carthage's greatest crisis prior to the Punic wars would not be solved by military innovation or tactical action, but rather through mercenaries' lust for coin. The mercenary system as a whole remained unreliable, and the performance of Punic generals remained lackluster.

Despite this lack of achievement in the long and bloody wars in Sicily and against the Greeks, the institution would not undergo much development. It would not be until the First Punic War that the institution would begin to evolve.

Chapter Five: The First Punic War- Xanthippus and Hamilcar

Polybius

The main primary source for the First and Second Punic Wars is the Greek historian Polybius. Polybius was born around 200 BCE and died sometime after 118 BCE. He lived through a time of profound change for the Roman state. Over the course of his life, he saw Rome transformed from a fairly powerful regional state into an empire that dominated the Mediterranean and most of the known world. In Polybius's younger years, he was a member of the elite aristocracy of Megalopolis, a Greek city-state in a period when the autonomy of those city-states was receding, replaced by Roman dominion.⁵⁶ By the time Polybius came of age, the Punic Wars had been over for at least a quarter century. In his writing of the histories, acknowledged by scholars as one of the best sources on the Punic Wars, Polybius is also fairly careful to try to understand the motivations and machinations of all sides and characters in his histories, and he presents one of the most objective histories of surviving ancient authors. More than this, Polybius delivers more than simply a collection of stories and facts that he has collected from other sources. He was also a participant in the Third Punic War, and was present for the final destruction of Carthage by Rome in 146 BCE. In addition, he befriended Scipio Aemilianus, the Roman general who defeated Carthage in the Third Punic War and the adopted grandson of Scipio Africanus, who defeated Hannibal at Zama.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Polybius reveals more about his methods and sources than any other ancient historian. He devotes an entire book, Book 12, to discuss the proper methods for collecting and writing history.⁵⁸ He discusses how his methods are an improvement over previous authors, and appears quite knowledgeable about the

⁵⁶ Champion, Craige. "Polybius and the Punic Wars." In Hoyos, B. D. *A Companion to the Punic Wars*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 95.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 95.

⁵⁸ Polybius, 12.1

proper practice of historiography. The object of his work was to describe how Rome rose to dominate the Mediterranean, and the Greeks, and his history is meant as a practical one, to help inform a Greek audience about how the current state of affairs came to be.⁵⁹ Polybius sees the First Punic War as the first crucial stepping stone in Rome's trajectory, and begins his history there.

Mercenaries in the First Punic War

The First Punic War was the first of three major conflicts between Rome and Carthage. Most of the fighting in the First Punic war was confined to Sicily, though the Romans would later stage an invasion of Africa. In the war, the Carthaginians would rely almost wholly on their mercenary armies, while Rome would utilize its armies of citizen soldiers. The Carthaginian mercenaries performed with variable success on land, occasionally winning victories over the Romans. More often, however, the Carthaginian mercenary armies would be troubled by the same scourges of mutiny and incompetence which hampered Carthaginian efforts in the Sicilian Wars. These trends continued until the end of the First Punic War, and after, culminating in the unparalleled disaster that was the Mercenary War.

The only two clear exceptions to the lackluster records of Carthaginian mercenary armies are the armies led by Xanthippus and Hamilcar Barca. Xanthippus instituted a system, which seems to have been quite novel for the Carthaginians, of discipline and unit coordination which allowed him defeat the Roman general Regulus in North Africa in 255 BCE. Xanthippus did this by superbly maneuvering the "separate detachments" of his forces, recognizing the flexibility to be gained from a heterogeneous army.⁶⁰ By making sure the detachments fought well together,

⁵⁹ Walbank, F. W. *Polybius*. University of California Press. 1972. 11.

⁶⁰ Polybius, 1.32

and not just separately, Xanthippus inspired his troops. Hamilcar, inspired by this system, adopted aspects of it in his later campaigns in Panormous and Mount Eryx from 247-241 BCE.

Evidence for the poor leadership and discipline of Carthaginian mercenary armies is provided in the first battle of the war, the siege of Agrigentum. In particular, the battle showcases that while fighting effectiveness of the individual mercenary companies was adequate, the lack of discipline and unit coordination doomed the army. The skill of the Punic commander was that of a talented amateur, and the army as a whole frequently could not carry out their commander's orders as he intended.

The Carthaginians began the war by recruiting and sending a massive number of Celts and Iberians to Sicily to fight and maintain Punic control. While the loss of a mercenary army for Carthage was quite expensive, new recruits do not seem to have been especially hard to find. Polybius says that a large number of Celts from Cisalpine Gaul and a still larger number of Iberians came to fight. The Carthaginians concentrated their forces, both Celtic and African, around Agrigentum.⁶¹ The Romans moved their army in to lay siege.

The Roman army laid siege to the city around harvest time, and so sent a large number of soldiers to go and forage. The Celtic mercenaries, recent arrivals from Liguria who were exceeding in bravery but lacking in discipline, attacked the Roman forage parties, causing many casualties and forcing the Romans to retreat to their trenches. The Celts were not supposed to attack, however, and acted against orders.⁶² This lack of discipline would be indicative of Celtic service in many of Carthage's conflicts.

Despite its initial success, the unordered attack let the Romans outflank the disorganized Celts, who were not fighting in formation. The Romans routed them, and pursued them into the

⁶¹ Ibid, 1.17

⁶² Ibid.

city.⁶³ The first battle of the Punic Wars foreshadowed the behavior of most Punic armies and commanders in the war.

The next battle, outside Agrigentum, saw an improvement in mercenary effectiveness and unit coordination, though this was still not enough. Hannibal (not Hannibal Barca) commanded an army of Greek and Celtic mercenaries, as well as 50 new elephants and gave battle to the Roman and Syracusan army. The army of mercenaries had been together for several months now, and had learned to fight together as whole. When Hannibal ordered his Numidian cavalry to harass the Roman frontlines and draw them out of their stockade, the Numidian cavalry did exactly what they were supposed to do, and lured the Romans out of their siege works. The Roman cavalry charged forward, only to pursue the retreating light Numidians into a line of Libyan spearmen. What had previously happened to the Celts in the last battle, when they attacked boldly but were destroyed, then occurred to the Romans. The whole Carthaginian division then wheeled around and surrounded the Roman cavalry, killing a great number.⁶⁴

Despite this success with the cavalry, the mercenary infantry would ultimately not prove to be a match for the Roman *Hastati* or *Principes*. The Roman front-lines caused the Carthaginian front-lines to withdraw. They retreated back into the elephants which the Carthaginian commander had mistakenly placed in reserve. This caused great confusion, as now the elephants had no room to charge, and the formations protecting the elephants made it so that the men running away could not withdraw. The army quickly began to lose what cohesion it had, and the retreat turned quickly into a rout.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 1.19

At the end of the battle, the Romans found themselves in possession of most of the elephants, as well as the Carthaginian baggage train.⁶⁵ The Carthaginians soon withdrew from the city altogether, choosing to evacuate their mercenaries rather than their remaining elephants, letting those to fall into Roman hands. The Romans captured and plundered the town.⁶⁶ These two instances around Agrigentum show the typical performance of Carthaginian mercenaries in the First Punic War, showing inexperience or incompetence on the part of the Punic commanders, and a lack of coordination among the various mercenary bands.

The Battle of Mylae and Its Consequences

While the Carthaginian armies floundered on land, the city-state looked to achieve a victory at sea. This strategy was made impossible by the Battle of Mylae in 260 BCE. In the battle, a new Roman navy, employing novel tactics, destroyed an overconfident Carthaginian fleet. This naval defeat had a decisive impact on how the Carthaginian state would conduct warfare. With their mastery of the sea contested, the Carthaginians had to rely upon their land forces to bring about victory. For this, the Carthaginians began to place more and more emphasis upon their mercenary armies in the First Punic War.

Despite this, innovation was slow to be accepted in the Carthaginian mercenary armies. Even after Xanthippus's near miraculous defeat of the Roman invasion of Libya, Carthaginian mercenary armies were slow to adopt Xanthippus's methods or adapt in any substantial way. This is largely to be blamed on the extremely conservative Punic officer corps. After Carthage was saved by Xanthippus's brilliance, they immediately returned to the traditional Punic methods of battle. Hamilcar Barca would show some innovation during his campaigns in Sicily, but this would not occur until the last few years of the war.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

The Roman Invasion of Africa

After a further depletion of the Carthaginian naval force at the Battle of Ecnomus (in this battle alone the Carthaginians lost 60 warships) the Roman fleet managed to land a substantial land army in Libya consisting of 15,000 infantry and 500 cavalry in 255 BCE.⁶⁷ The Libyans did nothing to oppose the Roman landing, wanting to be free of their Carthaginian overlords, but they did not actively assist the Roman army either.⁶⁸

Seeing that the Romans meant to occupy Libya, and then perhaps march on Carthage itself, the Carthaginians mustered a force of 5,000 infantry and 500 cavalry outside Carthage. In the ensuing battle around the besieged town of Adys, the Carthaginians chose ground poorly suited to maximize their superiority in cavalry and elephants.⁶⁹ This mistake illustrates the unprofessional nature that Punic generals were liable to display, especially those who were not sent to Sicily to fight but rather relegated to home defense. The rough hilly terrain the Carthaginians chose for their battle site allowed the Roman heavy infantry to engage the inferior Carthaginian infantry directly. The Romans took advantage of this and threw their infantry lines into the Carthaginian's assembled mercenaries.⁷⁰ The mercenaries fought surprisingly well in the ensuing melee, routing the Roman *Hastati* sent against them. But here to, just as the Celtic mercenaries showed at Agrigentum, the Carthaginian units were without discipline, and eagerly pursued the fleeing Romans into the second Roman line. The Carthaginians were soon outflanked by Roman *Principes* and *Triarii* and were destroyed. The Carthaginian cavalry and elephants retreated in good order, but the infantry was slaughtered.⁷¹ Polybius, however, places

⁶⁷ Ibid, 1.29

⁶⁸ Lazenby, J.F. *The First Punic War*. Stanford University Press, 1996. 100.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 1.30

⁷⁰ How mercenaries came to be assembled here, when the previously mentioned force was composed of Carthaginian citizens is unknown.

⁷¹ Polybius, 1.30

the blame for this, and all the other disasters that took place during the First Punic War not on the mercenaries themselves but on their commanders.⁷² Indeed, it would be a change of command, and the beginning of a new system of mercenary warfare, that would kick the Romans out of Africa.

Xanthippus

During the winter of 255 BCE, following the disastrous invasion, Carthage reformed its armies. More regiments were raised, this time from Greece especially.⁷³ The units were recruited in groups of 50-100, if Diodorus is to be believed.⁷⁴ In his chapters on Xanthippus, Polybius makes mention of one of the Carthaginian recruiting agents, “who had for some time been dispatched to Greece.”⁷⁵ Unfortunately, this is the only time that the Carthaginian system of mercenary recruitment is mentioned. It was this agent who saved Carthage from Roman occupation by recruiting a Spartan general called Xanthippus, whose job it would be to train mercenaries.⁷⁶ Polybius does not go into any detail about how this system of recruitment worked, but it seems likely that it worked in conjunction with the already existing elaborate trade network.

Xanthippus came to Carthage in 255 BCE to assist the Carthaginians following the disastrous defeat of the Carthaginians by Regulus. Xanthippus, in a laconic style, told the Carthaginian magistrates that the reason for their defeat lay with the lack of skill of their commanders, rather than with any sort of Roman superiority.⁷⁷ He advised the Carthaginians to seek flat ground on which to do battle, in order to maximize their cavalry and elephants.

⁷² Ibid, 1.32.

⁷³ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 88.

⁷⁴ Diodorus, 23.16

⁷⁵ Polybius 1.32

⁷⁶ Ibid, 1.32

⁷⁷ Ibid, 1.32

Amazingly, the Punic officer corps, perhaps recognizing their own inability to defeat the Romans and the desperate situation they were in, allowed Xanthippus to be placed in command.⁷⁸ While Polybius takes obvious pride in recounting the great accomplishments of his fellow Greek (and perhaps overplays Carthaginian incompetence in order to do so) it is clear that Xanthippus had a major impact on reorganizing and revitalizing the mercenary armies.⁷⁹

Xanthippus immediately began drilling the troops and instructing the mercenaries, conscripts, and Carthaginian citizens (Carthage was obviously in dire straits to conscript its citizens) in tactics. His professionalism, according to Polybius, contrasted sharply with the blundering of the Carthaginian generals.⁸⁰ The drill of Xanthippus trained the army in the use of disciplined phalanx formations, and likely borrowed from the Spartan training regimen.⁸¹ This intense training boosted the morale of the Carthaginian government, citizenry, and military. Xanthippus led an army of twelve thousand infantry (a mix of Carthaginian citizen hoplites, mercenaries of varied background, and conscripted Libyans), two thousand cavalry, and about one hundred elephants, which met the Roman army in battle.⁸²

The Romans, still inspired by their earlier victories but puzzled at the Carthaginians' choice of flat ground, determined to fight the newly raised Carthaginian army. It makes sense that the Romans were enthusiastic, as Xanthippus's force was the only thing which stood between the Roman army and Carthage itself. The Carthaginian foot soldiers were animated by Xanthippus and felt confident in the new tactics and discipline which Xanthippus had instilled in them. The mercenaries were apparently eager to draw Roman blood. Seeing the confidence of

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 88-90.

⁸⁰ Polybius, 1.32

⁸¹ Lazenby, J.F. *The First Punic War*. 102-103.

⁸² Polybius, 1.32

their men, the Carthaginian officers placed Xanthippus in absolute command. Xanthippus deployed his elephants in a line in the very front of the army, with Carthaginian hoplite phalanxes (heavy, spear-armed infantry) guarding the gaps between the elephants. He divided the army into three corps, placing one on the right wing, and directing the other two corps, which Polybius says was full of the “most active” men, with the cavalry on the wings.⁸³

The Roman army, being wary of the elephants, shortened their line of battle, making their formation “many maniples deep”⁸⁴ and placing their *velites* behind their heavier infantry, and placed their inadequate cavalry on the wings.⁸⁵ As Xanthippus readied his elephants, the Romans charged. The Roman cavalry was quickly routed, and the Romans placed in front of the elephants were trampled to death in short order. The Roman left wing, which could avoid the elephants, charged the Carthaginian left because, according to Polybius “they thought contemptuously of the mercenaries” and succeeded in pushing the mercenaries off the field and back to their entrenchments.⁸⁶ But this Roman success was only local. With the cavalry on both wings routed, and the infantry formations disrupted because of the elephants, the Roman army was quickly encircled and destroyed. Only the Roman general and some 500 men, out of an army of over fifteen thousand, survived to retreat back to Aspis. The Carthaginian dead numbered a scant 800, and were mostly those mercenaries stationed on the left who fought the Roman right flank.⁸⁷

The leadership of Xanthippus brought the army great victory- the cavalry (which may have been composed of mercenaries but Polybius is unclear) had played a decisive role, but they

⁸³ Ibid, 1.33.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 1.33.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 1.33-1.44.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 1.34.

had outnumbered the Roman cavalry 4 to 1. The elephants were instrumental in sowing chaos within the Roman infantry formations.⁸⁸ Despite Xanthippus's leadership, the mercenaries still did not quite stand up to a disciplined and eager Roman heavy infantry formation. To make an infantry force that could stand up to the Roman heavy infantry would require several years' experience, and constant drilling. Hamilcar Barca was first able to achieve this in Sicily, and Hannibal Barca would forge a truly excellent, professional army. Even Hannibal's army, however, derived its strength primarily from its cavalry and only secondarily from its infantry.

Xanthippus's brilliant strategy in the whole battle was not trying to make the mercenaries defeat a Roman legion by fighting better or with more discipline, but by aligning the diverse elements of his army in such a way so that disadvantage did not ultimately matter. This showcases not just good generalship, but also a recognition of the strength of a diverse mercenary system. The Carthaginian commanders must also be given some credit, as they were able to swallow their pride and then "resigned to Xanthippus the entire direction of affairs, with full authority to act as he thought most advantageous."⁸⁹

Following his victory, Xanthippus immediately and inexplicably left for home. Polybius attributes this to a danger on Xanthippus's part from the jealousy his success had caused among the Carthaginian elite, and praised Xanthippus for his wisdom.⁹⁰ Whatever the real cause for Xanthippus's departure, the Carthaginians were emboldened once again by the victory over Regulus and by the subsequent though unrelated sinking of a substantial Roman fleet in a storm. The Carthaginians set out to continue the war in earnest. Deprived of their excellent Spartan mercenary captain, however, the Carthaginian command would revert to its old tendencies.

⁸⁸ Rankov, Boris. "A War of Phases: Strategies and Stalemates 264-219." In Hoyos, B. D. *A Companion to the Punic Wars*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 149-166.

⁸⁹ Polybius, 1.33

⁹⁰ Ibid, 1.36

Disaster at Panormous

This reversion to the old style of mercenary warfare is displayed at the battle of Panormous. Polybius calls it “the strongest town of all the Carthaginian province in Sicily.”⁹¹ The Carthaginian army was commanded by a general called Hasdrubal, who had noticed the recent fear shown by the Romans toward the war elephant and endeavored to force a battle. The Romans, since the defeat of Regulus, were immensely concerned about the power of Carthaginian war elephants, and this fear gave Carthage the initiative. Hasdrubal did not employ his troops skillfully, however, and flung away his great advantage by having his elephants, which worked best in a set-piece battle on flat terrain, assault the walled city directly. The elephants were massacred by Roman archers and javelin troops on the city walls. What elephants survived came crashing back into Hasdrubal’s own formations.⁹² This victory gave the Romans back their confidence, especially since it showed that Roman troops that they could defeat an army containing elephants.

The First Major Mutiny of the War- The Siege of Lilybaeum

Mercenaries were not only sometimes underutilized and poorly coordinated by their commanders, they were also treacherous. When the Romans besieged the Carthaginian stronghold of Lilybaeum in Sicily, the Carthaginian commander Himilco relied on the mercenary garrison to hold the city. There was, however, treason within the Carthaginians walls. Mercenaries hatched a plot to surrender the city to the Romans, in exchange for their lives and a handsome payment. The mercenaries met the Roman commander in a secret parley under cover of dark. In a spot of blind luck, however, a man named Alexion the Achaean, a Greek and a veteran of Agrigentum who had detected a similar plot there, found out and brought the treason

⁹¹ Ibid, 1.38

⁹² Ibid, 1.40

to Himilco's attention. Himilco immediately called a meeting of the remaining mercenary captains, and by offering them generous payments and favors persuaded them to stay in the army and not join in the treason. This was a common Carthaginian tactic when dealing with potentially disloyal mercenaries, and amounted to little more than throwing money at the problem. In effect, Himilco had to plead with his own troops to stay loyal to him rather than defect, and was forced to promise what must have been substantial 'loyalty bonuses' to his troops.⁹³ Promises like this would later come back to haunt Carthage in the Mercenary War.

Himilco then had the mercenary captains make speeches in their languages to their men, urging them not to commit mutiny. Surprisingly, even with the doubtful outcome of victory, and generous terms given by the Romans, the mercenaries were persuaded not to give up Lilybaeum.⁹⁴ When the treasonous mercenary captains came back to the gates, intending to speak to their men and offer up the city, they were driven away with a hail of arrows and sling stones. Despite this good outcome, the difficulty (and potential advantage) of dealing with a multi-lingual army was shown here. On the one hand, Himilco was entirely reliant on the mercenary captains to relay his terms to their troops, and the whole process was somewhat out of his control. On the other hand, the mercenary captains could only really communicate to their own soldiers and the Punic officer corps, and this made total mutiny more difficult.

Battle of Drepana and the Use of Naval Mercenaries

While Himilco barely held onto his mercenary forces in Lilybaeum, other Carthaginian commanders like Adherbal were able to employ them skillfully, and inspire them. In the Battle of Drepana, Carthaginian mercenaries fought at sea instead of on land. Despite this highly

⁹³ Lazenby. *The First Punic War*. 126.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 1. 43

unusual occurrence, the Battle of Drepana illustrates what a mercenary force that is competently led could accomplish, even before the implementation of the Barcid system.

When the Roman fleet arrived to blockade Drepana, the admiral Adherbal, the overall Carthaginian commander who coordinated the different Carthaginian armies from his base on the island, realized that he that he had to fight the Romans at sea to have a hope of winning. This was troublesome, as he had been given mistaken information that led him to believe the Romans were not capable of an invasion by sea. He mustered what men and mercenaries happened to be in the town, and bade them to fight at sea, which they were loath to do out of fear of drowning and their general unfamiliarity with naval combat.⁹⁵ Adherbal then gave a rousing speech, and promised great rewards to those who would follow him out to sea. The mercenaries agreed after Adherbal told them they mustn't play the coward, and pointed out the hardship that would result from blockade.⁹⁶ Adherbal was one of the few professional generals who knew how to command his mercenaries, though in this battle his skills would be primarily used for naval warfare, which was substantially different from the land improvements the mercenary system needed. Indeed, mercenaries would not be used again for naval warfare, and the whole Battle of Drepana is an oddity.

Adherbal gave some brief instruction to the mercenaries, including how not to fall off of the warships, and set sail. The two fleets fought, and were at first evenly engaged. Both navies using handpicked men as marines, and had skilled rowers and captains on their vessels. The end result was complete victory for the Carthaginians, in part due to the unexpected zeal of the

⁹⁵ Polybius, 1.40

⁹⁶ Ibid.

landlubber mercenaries.⁹⁷ The Romans escaped with a mere thirty vessels, while the Carthaginians captured ninety-three.⁹⁸

Hamilcar Barca and the Foundations of the Barcid System

In 246 BCE, Hamilcar Barca, father of the famous Hannibal Barca, makes his first appearance in Polybius's narrative, leading Carthaginian ships and mercenaries with the intent of pillaging the Italian seaboard, which was made possible by the Roman's abandonment of maritime warfare. After thoroughly pillaging sections of the Italian coast, (a useless gesture strategically, but the success of these raids raised the morale of his men immensely) Hamilcar Barca took his fleet and sailed to Sicily. He did not sail directly to Lilybaeum to relieve the siege, but instead placed his army in Hercte, between a strong defensive position of Mount Eryx and the city of Panormous, where Roman supplies had to flow through.⁹⁹ The Romans were concerned by this, and sent two large armies to destroy Hamilcar and his troops, but Hamilcar's camp was supposedly so naturally fortified that it could not be taken by direct assault. From this base, Hamilcar was able to launch further raiding parties on the Italian coast.

The Romans set up a camp in the city of Panormous, a short march from Hamilcar's camp, but could not assault it. Hamilcar forced the Romans to fight many skirmishes over the course of three years, and in the words of Polybius, "managed to involve the Romans in many struggles and dangers."¹⁰⁰ Despite not winning any decisive victories, Hamilcar's great endurance in surviving repeated Roman attacks, keeping his army supplied, and still managing to endanger the Roman supply lines (and tie up great numbers of their soldiers) were much admired by the Carthaginian government as well as the mercenaries serving under him. Polybius is

⁹⁷ Ibid, 1.51

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 95.

¹⁰⁰ Polybius, 1.56

certainly enamored with the general, and considers him the most competent Carthaginian commander in the First Punic War. While Hamilcar's image as a brilliant tactician is disputed by some scholars, including Richard Miles who states he was only a "proficient but not exceptional tactician,"¹⁰¹ Hamilcar's mere survival in Sicily is a testament to his and his army's competence and tenacity. Hamilcar's lack of success can be explained not by dismissing his skill as a general, but rather by considering his extremely limited resources and difficult strategic position. This is a view that the military historian Adrian Goldsworthy endorses.¹⁰²

Hamilcar did not remain in his fortified camp too long, however, and Hamilcar led his men out of his impregnable base and besieged the Roman forces atop Mount Eryx in 244 BCE. This was a bold move, and could quite easily have ended in disaster for the Carthaginians. The fact that it did not is testament to Hamilcar Barca's tenacity, and the skill with which he employed his mercenary army. Hamilcar was caught between two Roman armies, one atop Mount Eryx and one based out of the city of Panormous, his supply situation was precarious at best, with his only connection to the sea being at one point and by one road.¹⁰³ This siege lasted a full two years, but the war ended before either side could decisively get the upper hand over the other.

End of the First Punic War

The war would actually be decided at sea. The Romans, nearly as bankrupted by the war as the Carthaginians, were able to score a massive victory at the Battle of Aegusa, which crippled Carthage's ability to wage war. A peace was quickly arranged, and Hamilcar Barca was put in charge of negotiating for the Carthaginians. While his position was hopeless, Hamilcar was able

¹⁰¹ Miles, Richard. *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*. 193.

¹⁰² Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 94-95.

¹⁰³ Polybius, 1.58

to get one concession out of the Romans: he demanded that Roman deserters and slaves which had flocked to his mercenary army were to remain with him, and not be turned over to the Romans for punishment.¹⁰⁴ The army of Sicily was to return to Carthage intact, though all the other Roman demands, including the total Carthaginian evacuation of Sicily, were agreed to.

¹⁰⁴ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 128.

Chapter Six: The Failings of the Pre-Barcid System

Following the peace of the First Punic War, a great rebellion began. The mercenary veterans, eager to be given the pay they had been promised, attempted to negotiate with a defeated and bankrupt Carthage. The failings of Carthaginian administrators and defects in the mercenary system would lead to the outbreak of the Mercenary War. This war is crucial to understanding the evolution of the mercenary system, as it displays the system's weak points and vulnerabilities, and serves as a turning point for the system itself. Following this war, the Barcid system was established, the system which all subsequent Carthaginian mercenary armies would follow.

Chaos in Peace

In Carthage, the trade networks were in disarray owing to the loss of all lands in Sicily. Furthermore, the treasury was empty as a result of paying large war indemnities to the Romans. This lack of money and greatly reduced revenue ultimately helped cause unrest and rebellion among the now unemployed mercenaries and oppressed, overtaxed Libyans. In his summary of the Mercenary War, Polybius speaks against the character of the mercenary troops, calling them "troops composed of a confused mass of uncivilized tribes"¹⁰⁵ and compares them (rather harshly) to Roman and Greek citizen soldiers who, in his words, "have had the benefit of education, the habits of social life, and the restraints of law."¹⁰⁶ Polybius is the sole ancient source for the Mercenary War and his history is, at points, biased and inaccurate.¹⁰⁷ Polybius is disdainful of the mercenary troops about which he writes, and his work is ultimately geared toward explaining Roman dominance, not treating the Carthaginians or their mercenaries fairly.

¹⁰⁵ Polybius, 1.65

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Hoyos, B. D. 2007. *Truceless War: Carthage's Fight for Survival, 241 to 237 BC*. Vol. 45. Boston; Leiden;: Brill. xix.

With the Carthaginians, Polybius shows their dealings with the mercenaries as incompetent, at least before Hamilcar arrives. Afterward, the focus of the account is on Hamilcar. Despite this, Polybius's concise narrative is not one-sided. Poor treatment of the Libyans and the bungling Carthaginian administration is reported, as is Hamilcar's ruthlessness when dealing with the mutineers. The sources Polybius uses to inform his narrative are unknown, though it is quite possible that he had access to Greek memoirs from the war, as well as works from other Greek historians, who themselves had access to Punic records.¹⁰⁸

While Hamilcar Barca's and the Carthaginian Council's surrender would seem to be militarily and financially advantageous, as it ended a war which could have destroyed Carthage, it actually placed the city in greater danger. Had Hamilcar's army in Sicily been destroyed in battle, Carthage's financial obligation toward its mercenaries would have been dissolved. Instead, the large army of mercenaries was intact, had to be evacuated from Sicily in order to abide by the terms of the peace treaty, and the mercenaries were demanding to be paid. Carthage faced the very real threat of mutiny, rebellion and, if the force which gathered around Carthage was large enough, destruction.¹⁰⁹

The Mercenary War helps to highlight all of the drawbacks to relying on a mercenary army. The disaster was caused, most obviously, by a lack of money with which to pay the troops. Other factors contributed, however. For a period of several months the mercenary armies were allowed to become idle and unemployed in an area not far from Carthage itself. This gave time and opportunity for powerful and ambitious mercenary captains to scheme and organize a mutiny. These disloyal mercenary captains were especially dangerous and were what made the Mercenary War so long and needlessly bloody. The lack of money, idle, unpaid troops, and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 264-266.

¹⁰⁹ Miles, Richard. *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*. 200-201.

ambitious violent leaders all contributed to creating a recipe for disaster. This was compounded by a lack of skilled Carthaginian response to the disaster, which could have avoided open conflict. Good leadership, however, would not arrive until after Hamilcar Barca took up arms against the rebellious mercenaries.

Polybius recognizes the lessons to be learned from this war, and says “it most conspicuously shows those who employ mercenaries what dangers they should foresee and provide against.”¹¹⁰ The Carthaginians, or at least the Barcas, would learn the lessons taught by the disaster of the Mercenary War and reform what had been a merely adequate system for recruiting and training soldiers and armies into a superb military machine, whose mercenary captains were tightly controlled by a Punic officer corps.¹¹¹

The Mercenary War, 241-237 BCE

The Mercenary War was made possible by the adoption of a rather naive plan by the Carthaginian magistrates, whose strategy for paying the mercenaries ran counter to Hamilcar’s own. Hamilcar, after the conclusion of the First Punic War, moved his army to the port of Lilybaeum to evacuate them from the island, as he was required to do by the terms of the peace treaty. Hamilcar intended to ship back his mercenary units one at a time to Carthage to receive payment. After receiving payment, the mercenary unit would be sent back to its native country before the next arrived. This way would buy time for the Carthaginian state to raise the money with which to pay the mercenaries, while also ensuring no large amount of impatient mercenaries could amass near the capitol.¹¹² This plan required the mercenaries to be paid in full, however,

¹¹⁰ Polybius, 1.65

¹¹¹ The Mercenary War is also called the Truceless War due the barbarity of the conflict.

¹¹² Polybius, 1.66

and included the ludicrously large bonuses that had been promised to the mercenaries in order to buy their loyalty in Sicily.¹¹³

The magistrates and aristocrats back at Carthage, who themselves had little direct experience with mercenaries, were ever mindful of the empty treasury and devised a different plan. Rather than send the mercenary units back to their homeland once they arrived, instead they planned to keep them in Carthage until a large amount of mercenaries had gathered, believing that then the mercenaries would accept lower payment than what they had been promised. The idea appears to have been to gather all the mercenary units together in order to show them how, as such a large group, they were incredibly expensive and how therefore they had little hope of being paid what was owed in full. It is also likely that the Carthaginian bureaucracy intended to play one contingent off against another, and get one faction to challenge debt owed by the other in order to increase their own.¹¹⁴ As Gesco, Hamilcar's second-in-command, ferried contingents carefully, one at a time to Carthage, his careful work was undermined by the hardheadedness of the Carthaginian aristocracy.¹¹⁵

Carthaginian leaders are not as thoughtless as they might first appear for believing that well-armed mercenaries would stay manageable and compliant in the face of a lack of pay. Hamilcar's army in Sicily had already been without a steady wage for months if not years, and the mercenaries were at first quite reasonable, willing to wait several months for payment before they became insistent.¹¹⁶ Even the patience of professionals, however, has its limits.

¹¹³ Miles, Richard. *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*. 201.

¹¹⁴ D. B. Hoyos. *The Truceless War*. 25.

¹¹⁵ Hamilcar had retired from active duty at the conclusion of peace, perhaps hoping to distance himself from the disaster and avoid political fallout or, at worst, crucifixion for losing the war. Hanno, the admiral who had lost the Battle of Aegusa, had already suffered this fate.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 11.

As the mercenary population in the Carthaginian capitol became larger and larger, discipline among the soldiers relaxed to the point of non-existence, and there was, in the words of Polybius, “the commission of many acts of lawlessness by night and day.”¹¹⁷ Terrified for the safety of its Punic citizens, and practically unable to police the large body of military guests, Carthage then sent a request to all the mercenary captains, asking for them to retire away from Carthage to a nearby town, Sicca.¹¹⁸ The mercenaries retreated there, but this would prove to be a mistake on the hands of the Carthaginian council. Once there, the mercenaries found they were still unemployed and unpaid, but also now unsupervised by the Punic government. According to Polybius, who consistently takes a dim view of the mercenaries’ characters, they spent their time calculating the amount of money due them, inflating this number with each count. What professional discipline the mercenaries had maintained while quartered in Carthage collapsed. Some resorted to debauchery, while others began plotting and planning.¹¹⁹ In addition to their pay, the mercenaries asked for payment for lost horses, damaged weapons and armor, and other expenses accrued on campaign. While Polybius does not give a number on the amount of debt owed, Hoyos very roughly estimates the amount at 16 million drachmas, more than the entire gross income for Carthage for the year.¹²⁰

Language Barrier

The multiethnic force of mercenaries which gathered at Sicca did not speak the same languages, and only relatively few understood Punic to any significant degree. While men from different national divisions could not speak to each other, however, conversations within camps between men of the same units was very common. This made negotiation difficult and

¹¹⁷ Polybius, 1.66.

¹¹⁸ D. B. Hoyos. *The Truceless War*. 32.

¹¹⁹ Polybius, 1.66

¹²⁰ D. B. Hoyos. *The Truceless War*. 31.

compounded Carthaginian efforts to negotiate. At the beginning of the conflict, most mercenaries seemed willing to negotiate, but the gap in language caused divisions and distrust among the mercenaries and the Carthaginians. Hanno, the Carthaginian negotiator, began the talks at Sicca by announcing that Carthage was too poor to pay the mercenaries, and that he hoped the mercenaries would accept a reduction in pay. The mercenaries saw this underhanded move, which unified them in their demands. Hanno was unable to address the men as a group during his subsequent negotiations, instead having to work through the mercenary captains who likely spoke Punic.¹²¹ Since addressing all the various national groups of the army at once was impractical, Hanno attempted to pay off the different ethnicities in the army individually, and held separate negotiations with all of them. It is interesting and a bit perplexing that Carthaginian commanders could coordinate multilingual armies on the battlefield, but not deal with them at the negotiating table. Likely, most mercenaries knew Punic military and drill terminology, but lacked the vocabulary to engage in detailed negotiation. While Hanno's strategies may have seemed a practical solution, they gave the Carthaginians an aura of duplicity.

The multiethnic composition of the mercenary army, according to Polybius, was an intentional design on the part of the Carthaginians, as it ensured that the men, being separated by ethnic and linguistic barriers, could not quickly come together to foment mutiny.¹²² Celts from Liguria, Balearic Islanders, Greeks (whom Polybius, aghast at seeing Greeks portrayed as untrustworthy greedy thugs, assures readers were merely "half-bred Greeks, mostly deserters and slaves"¹²³), a huge contingent of Libyans, and other nationalities as well gathered in the camp, angry and frustrated with the apparently underhanded and miserly Hanno. The linguistic and

¹²¹ Ibid, 44.

¹²² Polybius, 1.66

¹²³ Ibid, 1.67

cultural barriers on this occasion did not help to prevent mutinous ideas, but rather prevented Hanno from being able to quickly reason with and calm the various bands of mercenaries.¹²⁴ In addition to this, none of the Punic officers they had served under in Sicily had been sent to negotiate with them. Hamilcar had avoided negotiating with the mercenaries, likely to distance himself from the political fallout of the lost war.¹²⁵ In anger, some of the mercenaries decided to move against the Carthaginians in a show of force, to show they would not accept a decrease in pay, and encamped their army of over 20,000 men outside the town of Tunis, not at all far from Carthage itself.¹²⁶

The Carthaginians panicked at this bold move, as they had already released the families of the mercenaries, who had been made hostage on the mercenaries' recruitment, back to them, rather than holding them as was convention.¹²⁷ Blaming Hamilcar for the current disaster, as he did not come to negotiate with the mercenaries, the Carthaginians instead tasked other officers who had served with the mercenaries in Sicily with arbitrating the dispute. But the confidence of the mercenaries had grown greatly after seeing the Carthaginian distress and they demanded an astronomically high payment. Talks broke down.¹²⁸ As time went on, the mercenaries became less certain that they would ever be paid, and malcontents within the army grew more and more popular. The idle, now unemployed army had little to do other than sharpen their weapons and listen to what the more extreme members of their force were saying. At the march to and from Sicca, the mercenary army would have become informed of the Libyan unrest, and would have seen it as yet another piece of leverage (or instrument of rebellion) against their employers.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Miles, Richard. *Carthage Must Be Destroyed*. 200-201.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 202.

¹²⁷ Polybius, 1.68

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ D. B. Hoyos. *The Truceless War*. 51.

Carthage sent forth envoy after envoy to negotiate with mercenaries, and eventually an agreement was reached between the now greedy mercenaries and the frightened Carthaginians. But the war would then spark for unrelated reasons: not directly over the cause of pay (though non-payment brought the situation to a head).¹³⁰ The malcontents in the army, led by Mathos and Spendius, would spark outright mutiny for reasons of their own, and be able to convince their less rebellious comrades to follow suit.

Mathos and Spendius

Gesco, who prior to this had still been ferrying yet more troops from Sicily to Africa, then arrived with a large amount of cash to distribute some of the pay. But by this point a large part of the mercenaries was beyond placation by what coin Carthage had available, seeing the possible great advantages to be gained from attacking a weakened Carthage. Carthage had only a small body of citizens to protect the city, and did not have the time to raise another force to oppose the mercenaries.

Fueling the malcontents in the army was the fact that some of the mercenaries did not want the army to be discharged and forced to return home. Two mercenaries became the spokespeople for this group, Mathos and Spendius. Spendius was a Roman slave who had joined the army in Sicily, part of the group that Hamilcar had ensured escaped immediate Roman justice in the peace treaty. Spendius feared that the mercenary army would disband, and that then his former owner would be free to collect him and punish him.¹³¹ The traditional punishment for this was torture followed by crucifixion. The only way to avoid the army disbanding was to keep it fighting, even if that meant fighting the Carthaginians over the pretext of lost pay. The other mercenary captain devoted toward mutiny was a man called Mathos, who was a Libyan. He had

¹³⁰ libd, 59.

¹³¹ Polybius, 1.69

apparently frequently spoken against the Carthaginians, calling them oppressors and attempting to convince his fellow mercenaries and Libyans to not accept any pay from Carthage. Mathos feared that if the mercenary army were to disband, then Carthage would take the opportunity to exact revenge on him (and perhaps his people) for his past deeds.¹³²

Motivated by these fears, and by a desire to perhaps take over Carthage itself, these two led the mercenaries in outright rebellion. Mathos convinced a large part of the Libyan conscripts, which made up the plurality of the army, to join in rebellion. Polybius records that Mathos “suggested to them [the Libyans] that, when the men of other races had received their pay, and taken their departure to their several countries, the Carthaginians would wreak upon them the full weight of the resentment which they had . . . incurred.”¹³³ The mercenaries and the Libyans were easily roused to anger and a few to outright mutiny. Other mercenary captains, such as Autoritas the Gaul, leader of the mercenary Celts, mentioned later in Polybius’s narrative, must also have been coconspirators in the plot.

The linguistic barrier posed an impediment to organizing a rebellion, however. The process for spreading dissatisfaction among the mercenaries was slow, but the main body of the army consisted of Libyans, who were easily excited by Mathos’s demagoguery.¹³⁴ As the mutineers began to move, those in the army who expressed a differing opinion or moved to stop the arrest of Gesco and his staff were promptly killed. The army all knew the Punic word for throw, likely taught to them during military exercises under Carthaginian commanders, and when the mutinous mercenary captains cried “throw”, a hail of stones descended on the unfortunate victims. The army was purged, as it would have to be several times by Mathos and Spendius, and

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ D.B. Hoyos. *The Truceless War*. 67.

the mutiny moved forward. Proper war with Carthage commenced, a war whose aim was to muddled and legitimacy murky, inspired by fear and greed. Gesco had made little attempt to stop the mutiny, nor does he appear to have even been on guard against mutiny. Had Gesco been operating under the tenets of the Barcid system, the revolt would not have taken place, but he was not (it hadn't been fully formed yet) and it did. Had Gesco, along with the other Carthaginian magistrates, been using the Barcid system, they would not have failed to pay the troops, let alone attempt negotiate drastic pay cuts. This shook the confidence and loyalty of the mercenaries. The Barcid system recognized that a mercenary army's loyalty should ultimately be to the commander, rather than to the mercenary captains. The army of Xanthippus, Hamilcar Barca's army in Iberia, and Hannibal Barca's army in Iberia all display this trait. In the Mercenary War, Gesco and the other Carthaginians took little to no steps to curb the independence of mercenary captains. Additionally, Hamilcar was not recalled to deal with the mercenaries, and this represents the failure of the Carthaginians to make use of any residual loyalty the soldiers felt for their commander, the man they had served under for the better part of a decade. Had the principles of the Barcid system (ensuring loyalty of troops through payment, personal loyalty to a charismatic commander, and crushing any allegiance to middlemen mercenary captains) been obeyed, the troops paid, and most importantly the power of the mercenary captains curtailed, the revolt either would not have occurred, or would at least have been far less likely.

The Libyans Join the Revolt

While Mathos and Spendius affected their coup, Mathos also sent word to all the cities of Libya, urging them to revolt against Carthaginian dominion and seek their freedom. This

succeeded.¹³⁵ Nearly all the cities in Libya joined the revolt, providing supplies, reinforcements, and bases of operation.¹³⁶ Mathos was joined by as many as 70,000 Libyans.¹³⁷

In response to these revolts, Hanno began recruitment of a second army of mercenaries to fight the first one. He also began drilling Carthaginian citizens of military age, as well as outfitting cavalry.¹³⁸ The one great advantage that the Carthaginians had over the mercenaries were their elephants, as the mutineers had none. Hanno had with him about 100 elephants and went to relieve the besieged city of Utica, one of the first targets of the mutineers. Once again, however, the Carthaginians failed to use their elephants in the proper terrain and nearly brought disaster to the whole army and to the Uticans themselves. The mercenaries, having been trained in Sicily under Hamilcar, retreated from the elephants to a nearby hill, which was naturally fortified and forested. Hanno, thinking he had won the battle with the first elephant charge, retired for the day. But the mercenaries came down from the hill and attacked Hanno's army while it was out of position and formation, and put it to rout. As the campaign wore on, the mutinous mercenaries showed cunning and resolve, while Hanno displayed the opposite.¹³⁹

Hamilcar Takes Command

After this defeat, the Carthaginians recalled Hamilcar Barca and placed him in overall command. His army, despite the losses Hanno had forced on it, amounted to 10,000 infantry, mixed with newly-hired mercenaries and Carthaginian citizens, as well as a modest cavalry force and seventy remaining elephants.¹⁴⁰ Hamilcar quickly raised the siege of Utica in a surprise attack, having marched undetected under cover of darkness. The result reinvigorated

¹³⁵ Hence why the war is also called the Libyan War.

¹³⁶ Polybius, 1.70

¹³⁷ Ibid, 1.73 (these numbers may be inflated)

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 1.74

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 1.75

Carthaginian morale, while causing the morale of the Libyans and the mercenaries to plummet.¹⁴¹ Spendius and his forces were defeated, with no less than 6,000 of his forces being killed, while his Libyan allies retreated home to their various towns and cities. 2,000 of the enemy were captured by Hamilcar. The captured soldiers were treated well, being released from captivity on condition that they never again take up arms against Carthage.

Following this defeat, Mathos sent couriers to the Libyans and the Numidians, urging them to bring aid. The Numidians responded, bringing a large army. The Libyans also came and marched to the assistance of Mathos. It was in this way the Hamilcar found himself outflanked, with a Numidian camp facing him in one direction, a Libyan one in another, and Mathos's army in his front. Escape seemed impossible, or so Polybius relates.¹⁴²

Naravas's Arrival

It was at this point that an almost miraculous event occurred, one which arguably saved Carthage from destruction, much as Xanthippus's arrival had saved Carthage in the First Punic War. A Numidian defector named Naravas, who claimed that he had great affection for the Carthaginians, rode into Hamilcar's camp and announced that he wished to meet Hamilcar. Naravas's request for an audience was granted. Naravas pledged 2,000 horsemen to Hamilcar's aid, in return for the right to marry Hamilcar's daughter. Still incredulous, Hamilcar readily agreed.¹⁴³

With his army thus reinforced, Hamilcar gave battle to Spendius, Autaritus, and Mathos. In the ensuing battle, Hamilcar's elephants and especially his new Numidian auxiliaries, proved decisive. The mutinous mercenaries suffered no less than 10,000 casualties, with another 4,000

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 1.76

¹⁴² Ibid, 1.77

¹⁴³ D. B. Hoyos. *Truceless War*. 147.

men being taken prisoner. Those taken prisoner were offered the chance to join the army, those who refused were released, on pain of death if they were ever found raising arms against Carthage again.¹⁴⁴

Spendius and Mathos Change Their Strategy

This clemency toward captured mutineers worried Spendius and Mathos. They worried that Hamilcar's conciliatory treatment might induce their men to defect or lose heart, thinking surrender a better deal than continued fighting. To prevent this, Spendius and Mathos killed the captive Gesco and declared that any captured Carthaginians would be put to death.¹⁴⁵

The Carthaginians reacted to this with horror. The mutineers also began to carry out indiscriminate massacring of Carthaginian citizens, murdering many. Now, both Hamilcar and the mercenaries were convinced that the only path to ending the war was the complete annihilation of the other side.¹⁴⁶ No further quarter would be given.

The Battle of the Saw

Spendius and the other mercenary captains next sought a parley with Hamilcar. Seeing their captains taken by the Carthaginians, however, the Libyans and mercenaries quickly attacked in a disorganized and emotional fashion. Again, communication and organization were always difficult for the mutineers, even more so than it would have been for the army under Carthaginian command, whose command structure was formal and established. The mercenaries may have acted in an emotional and violent reaction, or a section of the army may have plotted to use the parley as a surprise attack.

¹⁴⁴ Polybius, 1.78

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1. 82

In any case, when he saw the mutineers rushing his camp, Hamilcar unleashed his elephants, and killed a great number in what Polybius records as the Battle of the Saw. The elephants, with support for Naravas's cavalry and the Carthaginian infantry, made short work of the disorganized mob. 40,000 of the enemy were supposedly slain by Hamilcar's army that day, and Spendius was captured.¹⁴⁷

In the next battle, Mathos was taken prisoner, and all the remaining Libyans submitted to Carthage.¹⁴⁸ The war had gone on for over three years, ravaged the North African countryside, and killed tens of thousands. Mathos was paraded through Carthage before being tortured and killed. The Romans took advantage of Carthage's weakness to seize the island of Sardinia.¹⁴⁹ The utterly unjustified seizure of Sardinia would later be listed by Polybius as an underlying cause for the Second Punic War, as it instilled in Hamilcar an undying hatred of Rome which was transferred to his son. The name of Hamilcar was now synonymous among the Carthaginians with hero, and he enjoyed much admiration and respect from citizens and Senate alike.

The Barcid System

During the Mercenary War, Hamilcar had raised a second force of mercenaries to defeat the original one he had commanded in Sicily. It was not only the second batch of mercenaries which granted Hamilcar victory, as a great superiority in elephants and cavalry helped greatly, Hamilcar's use of his troops during the war and subsequently in Iberia would form the basis of the Barcid system. Inspired by Xanthippus, who Hamilcar may even have met at the age of twenty as a young officer, and taught the cruel lessons of the Mercenary War which Hamilcar

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 1.85

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 1.86

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 1.88

waged himself, Hamilcar's new army would march and conquer Spain. Hamilcar took steps to avoid repeating the disaster of the mercenary war.

First, he made sure that his troops were paid regularly and consistently, or at least regularly enough so as to avoid discontent.¹⁵⁰ Pay for mercenaries in the ancient world was divided into two types, a standard pay and a payment for rations, termed *opsonion* and *sitometria*. Payment of the *sitometria*, or ration pay, was essential for the average soldier to obtain food and supplies. This payment had to be ensured. Payment of the *opsonion*, or pay in addition to rations, was essential to ensure the mercenaries' loyalty, though this could be deferred for some period of time, and it was considered normal for commanders to occasionally defer payment.¹⁵¹ By guaranteeing that these delays were kept to a minimum (this was achieved by capturing lucrative Spanish silver mines, as well as continuous campaigning for loot) disagreements and discontent over pay were minimized. Second, the independence of mercenary captains was greatly reduced: the command of mercenary units, and even allied levies, would now be strictly supervised by a Punic officer corps. After the mercenary war, Punic officers are recorded as being in command and control of mercenary companies, rather than officers of the same nationalities as the mercenaries. Thirdly, attempts were made to instill a sense of personal and familial loyalty in the mercenaries, with Hamilcar treating the army less as a mere instrument of Carthage and more as a Barcid army. Allied or subjugated Iberian tribes were encouraged toward loyalty to the Barca family, rather than the Carthaginian state.¹⁵² Hamilcar brought his family members from Carthage to Spain, and had them train with and command the army. Among those taken was Hannibal Barca, at the age of nine, a boy who would go on to

¹⁵⁰ This would largely be achieved through the Spanish conquest, and the capture of the rich Iberian silver mines.

¹⁵¹ Hoyos, B. D. 2007. *Truceless War: Carthage's Fight for Survival, 241 to 237 BC*. Vol. 45. Boston;Leiden; Brill.Press. 9.

¹⁵² Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 138.

spend most of his life with this same army. While other methods of control, like marriage alliances with local tribes and the taking of hostages continued to be used, they were not relied upon as the primary means of ensuring loyalty.

Merging these attempts at ensuring the loyalty and control over mercenaries with the strict and disciplined training methods learned through Xanthippus, the Barcid system took form. Troops were drilled to fight in formation and to fight alongside and in concert with other mercenary contingents. Part of this evolved naturally, as the various mercenary companies fought side by side in battle over the course of years, facing the hardship of military campaigns together. Drill and discipline, however, were also essential to achieving efficient and effective unit coordination, as would be displayed in Iberia and especially in Italy. The army in Iberia developed strict training and discipline, and fought together as a cohesive force, one whose multiethnic components supported each other without problems on the battlefield.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 140.

Chapter Seven: The Barcid System Solidifies in Spain

Campaign in Spain 237-228 BCE

Despite much of Hamilcar's Iberian campaigns being unrecorded, these series of wars are most important for seeing the transformation of the Carthaginian mercenary army. While in Spain, Hamilcar recruited local Iberians (paid for by captured Spanish silver) and campaigned with the army constantly, so that the mercenaries were never without employment or pay, and the length of campaign gave Punic officers like Hasdrubal the Fair, Hannibal, and others acquaintance with the mercenary captains, which drastically decreased the risk of rebellion. Again, because the army was in constant campaign (indeed this is the same army Hannibal Barca would famously lead over the Alps 30 years later) the multiethnic units within it became extremely experienced and accustomed to fighting together.

In 238 BCE, Hamilcar Barca was sent along with an army, variously composed of Africans and mercenaries to Iberia in order to expand Carthaginian holdings in the peninsula. He campaigned for nine years in Iberia, winning the entire southern coast and subjugating many of the native tribes.¹⁵⁴ Hamilcar had shown his tendency toward innovation and battlefield competence in Sicily during the First Punic War and in Africa during the Mercenary War. As losses were inflicted on the army in its Iberian conquests, new troops were hired from Iberia as well as hired abroad. The loot acquired from the campaign was used to augment the Barcid prestige, and much was sent home to Carthage itself, to bolster the state as well as secure political power back home.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 136-138.

¹⁵⁵ Hoyos, Dexter. "Carthage in Africa and Spain, 241-218." In Hoyos, B. D. *A Companion to the Punic Wars*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 210-214

Hamilcar was killed in a battle against a tribe called the Oretani in 229 BCE after being betrayed, not by his mercenaries, but rather by his Iberian allies. His son-in-law, Hasdrubal the Fair, took over the campaign to secure Iberia for Carthage.¹⁵⁶ Hasdrubal took a much more diplomatic approach to subjugating the Iberians, securing control of a swath of Iberian territory by marrying a princess from another powerful tribe. While Hamilcar's campaigns secured Iberia for Carthage, Hasdrubal's efforts consolidated it. This is not to imply, however, that Hasdrubal was not willing to use force to accomplish his goals. While in control of Iberia, he increased the size of the army he inherited from Hamilcar to 60,000 infantry, 8,000 cavalry, and over 200 elephants.¹⁵⁷ Hasdrubal also founded the city of New Carthage, or Carthago Nova, as the seat of Carthaginian power in the peninsula. The city, which is modern-day Cartagena, had 10,000 male inhabitants by the time of the Second Punic War and would serve as a crucial base of operations for the later war effort against Rome.¹⁵⁸ Hasdrubal died in 221 BCE, killed by a Celtic assassin over a private disagreement.¹⁵⁹ Control of the army, which had been on campaign in Iberia since Hamilcar's first invasion, passed to Hannibal Barca.

Hannibal Barca in Spain

Hannibal had been taken to Iberia at the age of nine by his father, and had been educated on military matters both through instruction (Hamilcar hired Greek tutors to educate his son) and by witnessing the Iberian campaigns firsthand. As soon as Hannibal gained command of the army, he wrote to the Carthaginian senate for instructions and began preparing for a war with Rome. Hannibal pursued an aggressive policy in Iberia, further increasing the size of Carthage's

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 211.

¹⁵⁷ Diodorus, 25.12

¹⁵⁸ Hoyos, Dexter. "Carthage in Africa and Spain, 241-218." In Hoyos, B. D. *A Companion to the Punic Wars*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 214-216.

¹⁵⁹ Polybius, 2.36

holdings. In addition to Iberian silver mines, Iberia was a great source of military manpower for Carthage. Carthaginian recruiting agents had long used Celtiberian soldiers in their armies.

Drawing from the large supply of manpower in Iberia, including incorporating and integrating captured Iberian tribesmen to join the Carthaginian side, the Barcas managed to raise an army capable of subduing Iberia and taking on Rome. The first step toward that goal was the conquest of Saguntum, a town in Iberia allied with the Romans. In order to spark the inevitable war with Rome, Hannibal moved his army to siege the city, which the Romans did not hasten to defend, as they were engaged with other enemies, such as the Celtic tribes of Cisalpine Gaul.

Hannibal quickly seized Saguntum, one of the richest towns left in Iberia that was not under the sway of Carthage, and distributed the loot amongst his soldiers. Due to the loss of the majority of Carthage's fleet in the First Punic War, which had not been rebuilt, the invasion would have to take place overland. He sent messengers to the many tribes, both Celtiberian and Gallic, who were on his invasion route, asking them to either join him in his war or at least not oppose his march. Due to Rome's recent bellicosity toward its northern Gallic neighbors and colonization of land in the Po river valley, Hannibal's messengers got a warm reception.

The Uniqueness of Hannibal's Army and the Barcid System

The army which endured the long march through potentially hostile territory and across inhospitable terrain was the most successful Carthaginian mercenary army in history, but this excellence is sometimes portrayed in accounts, even by the ancient sources, as a product of Hannibal's genius solely. The success of the army was as much a product of a Barcid military system, which predated Hannibal, as it was of Hannibal's tactical skill. Without an obedient, competent force, none of Hannibal's battle plans could have been properly executed.

The reason that Hannibal's army was so professional, disciplined, and loyal was not only because of the Barcid military system, but also because the army as a whole had been in continuous existence for twenty years. In that time it had accumulated a vast amount of experience. Its units knew their Punic officers and captains well, and knew how to fight alongside the other multiethnic forces. This experience and unit coordination, shown on multiple occasions in the accounts of the battles of Lake Trasimene, Trebia, and Cannae, could only have been instilled in an army whose soldiers had been on campaign and fought together. To quote Dexter Hoyos: "Long service, shared dangers, campfire tales and traditions, and knowing how important they were to their employer gave mercenary troops a strong *esprit de corps*."¹⁶⁰ Once the core of the army veterans was formed, it was relatively easy to incorporate new units recruited from Po valley tribes or defecting Roman allies into the overall framework of the army, but without this core of veterans the army would not have the professional discipline, or loyalty to Hannibal, that allowed it to defeat the Roman army. Without this veteran core of soldiers, Hannibal's army would have more resembled the lackluster, semi-professional sell-swords who failed to defeat Rome in the First Punic War and failed disastrously at defeating the Syracusans in the Sicilian Wars. The fact that this army had accumulated so much experience and had learned to fight cohesively made it extremely precious as it was the only one of its caliber the Carthaginians possessed and once lost it would be nearly impossible to rebuild. This army was unique, but it was not a historical anomaly, but rather a product of the Barcid system.

Despite the fact that if lost this army could not be replaced, Hannibal led it into the heart of the enemy's territory over some of the most inhospitable terrain in Europe and inflicted decisive defeats on the Roman army in brilliantly planned battles. It is true that without the

¹⁶⁰ Hoyos, B. D. 2007. *Truceless War: Carthage's Fight for Survival, 241 to 237 BC*. Vol. 45. Boston; Leiden; Brill. 9.

army's professional discipline and loyalty Hannibal could not have used it effectively, but it is also true that without Hannibal's tactical brilliance and daring the army could not have achieved what it did.

Chapter Eight: Hannibal and the Epitome of the Barcid System

In the campaign over the Alps and into Italy, Hannibal would display in a series of decisive victories the merits of the Barcid system. Loyalty, unit coordination, and discipline merged together to help the army become an extension of Hannibal's will.

Second Punic War 218-201 BCE- The March Into Italy

In 218 BCE Hannibal marched out of New Carthage in late Spring with a huge army. It was essential that his army go over the Alps within the year, and he fought with speed across Iberia from the Ebro River to the Pyrenees, taking towns by assault. The region was not yet conquered, however, and Hannibal left a force of 10,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry to garrison the territory. Leaving his heavy baggage with this force, Hannibal took his remaining men and elephants and crossed the Pyrenees into Gaul. The great size of the army had been essential for pacifying North-Eastern Iberia, but created an impediment to speed. 10,000 of new Celtiberian recruits, likely not yet released from service to return home, leaving Hannibal with a huge but more manageable and experienced force of 50,000 infantry and 9,000 cavalry.¹⁶¹ Crossing into Gaul, his army suffered desertion and stragglers, but these mostly came from inexperienced new recruits, not motivated enough to march the long distances Hannibal required of them.

The mercenary army's next challenge was getting over the Alps themselves, and going through the territory of the mountain tribes that lived there. The mountainous terrain was difficult, consisting of narrow passes. One Celtic tribe called the Allobroges attempted to halt Hannibal's advance over their mountain territory, seeking to deter the invaders and acquire loot from the army. The mercenaries scouted the positions of the enemy, however, and attacked them at night. Capturing the settlement of the Allobroges, Hannibal's army acquired enough food it

¹⁶¹ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 158-159.

feed itself for several days. While through Hannibal's march there were occasional raids targeting the army's baggage train, the Gallic tribesmen were not accustomed to seeing elephants and the animal's presence deterred the raiders.¹⁶² Hannibal quickly traversed the Alps, in a mere two weeks according to Polybius.¹⁶³

In crossing the Alps, however, the endurance and devotion of his mercenaries was pushed to a limit. Hannibal lost a good deal of fighting men, his army being reduced in size by nearly half. His infantry force went from being 40,000 to 20,000 and his cavalry was reduced to 6,000 from an original force of 9,000.¹⁶⁴ Most of his losses were not battlefield casualties, but rather troops who straggled, dropped out of the march, deserted, or died from disease and exposure. Most of the attrition inflicted on Hannibal's army, however, was among the newer Celtiberian recruits who followed the army over, while the tougher and more experienced African levies and other mercenaries remained. Still, some 40 percent of the army was Iberian in origin.¹⁶⁵ The territory Hannibal was marching into was the Celtic inhabited area of Cisalpine Gaul, where a hotbed of anti-Roman feeling created a vast new recruiting ground. While incorporating the undisciplined Po River valley Gauls into the army would prove difficult, Hannibal had plenty of time to campaign in Italy, an experienced existing core of veterans around which to incorporate the new Gallic recruits, and the ability to force integration through experience on the battlefield. Some tribes still needed to be persuaded though, and when the Taurini tribe refused to provide Hannibal with supplies (as they were too busy fighting their neighbors the Insubres) Hannibal stormed the main settlement of the Taurini, massacred the inhabitants, and took their supplies of food for his army.

¹⁶² Ibid, 165.

¹⁶³ Polybius, 3.54

¹⁶⁴ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 167.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 168.

Most of the tribes of Cisalpine Gaul, however, provided the mercenary army with the needed supplies and reinforcements necessary to take on the Romans, and Hannibal's army was nearly entirely dependent on this Celtic aid, as the men, horses, elephants, and officers were exhausted from the march over the Alps, and incapable of fighting the Romans without rest and resupply.¹⁶⁶ With this achieved, the army was ready to bring the fight to Rome.

Strategy in Italy

Hannibal's long term strategy to win the war in Italy is not as straight forward as it might seem. His army never made an attempt to take the city of Rome itself, and, despite destroying Roman army after Roman army in decisive battle, a strategy for ending the war does not seem apparent from an analysis of Hannibal's movements. For years after his greatest victory at Cannae, his army plundered the Italian countryside virtually uncontested, and the war dragged on without a brokered peace.

Hannibal's strategy (or one aspect of his plan) becomes clear, however, when the nature of the Roman military and state is considered. Despite having an ethnically homogenous army, Rome relied on Latin allies to provide soldiers and war material, as well as bases of operation. Just as Carthage relied militarily on mercenaries and the levies provided by subject peoples, the Romans relied militarily on a web of subordinate allies. Without these allies, the power of Rome would have been limited to just the city itself and surrounding land. By winning battles and plundering the Italian countryside unopposed, Hannibal hoped to convince Rome's allies, both at home and abroad, of Roman weakness and Punic strength. Through a show of force, and the promise of loot on the one hand and the threat of destruction on the other, Hannibal hoped to cause Rome's allies to defect. Hannibal employed a number of methods to entice these powers to

¹⁶⁶ Sege, Lancel. *Carthage: A History*. Oxford. Blackwell, 1995. 385-386.

his side. He promised glory and loot to be had from those who joined him in his war with Rome, demonstrated military superiority in pitched battle, and threatened those who stayed loyal to Rome through aggressive and ruthless military actions. In this, Hannibal was largely successful, causing the defection of nearly all the Celtic tribes to the north of Rome, as well as that of key allied Italian cities like Capua.¹⁶⁷ Perhaps taking inspiration from the successes and failures of King Pyrrhus's own invasion of Italy, which attempted but failed to cause the Italian allies to defect, Hannibal sought to isolate Rome diplomatically and militarily.¹⁶⁸

In addition to convincing Roman allies to defect, Hannibal had to convince his own soldiers to stay loyal. Aiding Hannibal in this task was his charismatic affinity for oratory. Polybius records a speech Hannibal made to his weary army, whose morale was dangerously low, that shows Hannibal's brilliant charisma. After capturing some hostages from a hostile tribe in Cisalpine Gaul, Hannibal lined his men up to view them. He gathered captured horses and expensive armor into the middle of his cluster of men, and placed the prisoners there also. He then offered the prisoners the chance to win both some of the loot and their freedom, if they could defeat one of the other prisoners in a duel. The prisoners are described by Polybius as "loaded with heavy chains, half-starved, and their bodies a mass of bruises from scourging."¹⁶⁹ In this desperate state, Hannibal told them that it did not matter when they won or lost the duel, as either way they would find release. Reportedly, all the prisoners took Hannibal up on his offer, and fought each other to the death.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 194.

¹⁶⁸ Barcelo, Pedro. "Punic Politics, Economy, and Alliances, 218-201." In *A Companion to the Punic Wars*, First Edition. Edited by Dexter Hoyos. 2011. 366.

¹⁶⁹ Polybius, 3.66

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

After the first fight, Hannibal addressed his men, though his words needed no translation. He claimed that he had exhibited these prisoners to his men to show them their own condition.

Hannibal said

“Fortune had summoned them to a life and death contest very like that of the two captives, and in which the prize of victory was the same. For they must either conquer, or die, or fall alive into the hands of their enemies; and the prize of victory would not be mere horses and military cloaks, but the most enviable position in the world if they became masters of the wealth of Rome: or if they fell in battle their reward would be to end their life fighting to their last breath. . . . If they reasoned and resolved thus, victory and safety would certainly attend them: for it never happened that men who came to such a resolution, whether of deliberate purpose or from being driven to bay, were disappointed in their hope of beating their opponents in the field. And when it chanced, as was the case with the Romans, that the enemy had in most cases a hope of quite an opposite character, from the near neighborhood of their native country making flight an obvious means of safety, then it was clear that the courage which came of despair would carry the day.”¹⁷¹

Through this demonstration, which transcended both the linguistic and cultural barriers in his army, Hannibal conveyed his message and cemented his army’s allegiance (even the new Celtic recruits) even in the face of weariness and utmost desperation. This unshakeable loyalty and restored morale would be used against the Roman armies fast approaching to respond to Hannibal’s invasion.

As his campaign moved through the Italian countryside and brought Hannibal into direct contact with Rome’s Latin and Italian allies, Hannibal was also careful to treat the Roman allies with the utmost politeness and friendship. Captured Italian allies were sometimes set free without ransom, and Hannibal attempted to entice the allied cities of Italy to defect to his side. Hannibal, however, did not primarily entice the Italian allies with promises of loot as he had the Celts, but instead appealed to their sense of patriotism and freedom. Hannibal is quoted as saying in one important meeting with a delegation of Roman allies

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 3.67

“that he had not come to fight against them, but against Rome in their behalf; and that, therefore, if they were wise, they would attach themselves to him: because he had come to restore freedom to the Italians, and to assist them to recover their cities and territory which they had severally lost to Rome.”¹⁷²

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 3.77

Chapter Nine: Proving the Barcid System- Trebia, Trasimene, and Cannae

Hannibal would prove the value of his words through force of arms on the battlefield. The Celts who flocked to his army to fight Romans were trained and drilled, sharing camp with the Spanish veterans. Their integration would prove decisive in the coming conflicts: large, decisive battles on Italian soil.

The Battle of Trebia, December 218 BCE

The first battle between Rome and Carthage in the Second Punic demonstrates the discipline and unit cooperation instilled in the mercenaries by the Barcid military system. The Roman general, Tiberius Sempronius Longus, had in his army numbered around 40,000 men, with the infantry consisting of about 20,000 Latin allied soldiers and 16,000 Roman citizens. Opposing the Roman infantry, Hannibal at this point had 20,000 Iberian, Celtic, and Libyan infantry.¹⁷³ Despite the Roman infantry outnumbering him almost 2 to 1 however, Hannibal had cavalry superiority and elephants.

The Roman army camped along the river Trebia in a strong defensive position. The Carthaginians were encamped in an open plain so the Romans were not concerned about a possible ambush. Yet ambush was precisely what Hannibal had in mind. Hannibal lured the Roman army into his chosen ambush site by harassing his force with the Numidian cavalry. The Romans chased the Numidians out of their camp and continued to pursue them. This pursuit took place throughout the cold winter morning, and sapped the strength of the Roman infantry.

As the Numidian cavalry effected a gradual withdrawal, keeping close enough to the Romans to encourage pursuit, Hannibal's light infantry formed a screen across the open plain in which the ambush was to take place. The coordination between the Numidian cavalry who were

¹⁷³ Ibid, 3.72

veteran units of Hamilcar's campaigns, and the green Celtic units in the light infantry screen is indicative of how quickly newer recruits could be incorporated into the disciplined army. Behind the light infantry screen was the main infantry line of the Carthaginians. In the center was placed most of new Celtic warriors, who numbered about 8,000. The more experienced Libyans and Spaniards were positioned on either flank.¹⁷⁴

When Longus finally saw the main line of Carthaginian infantry he formed his own battle line, trusting in the superiority and numerical advantage of his infantry. His heavy infantry alone outnumbered the Carthaginians, and were more heavily armored besides. Hannibal's Balearic slingers advanced just as the Numidians retired, expertly picking off some of the Roman infantry with their famed accuracy. This caused great disruption in the Roman front line. If the coordination between the new Celtic recruits and the veteran Numidian horse was impressive, the coordination between the veteran slingers and veteran Numidian cavalry was remarkable.

Eventually the Roman infantry finished deployment, and began advancing toward Hannibal's fresh troops. As the *Hastati* approached, Hannibal ordered his cavalry to attack the Roman cavalry who were by this point positioned on the wings of the extended Roman line. The Carthaginian mercenary cavalry quickly outflanked and routed the Roman cavalry.

As the cavalry put pressure on the Roman flanks, the Roman forces in the center of the line fighting the Celts threatened to rip Hannibal's lines in two. It was then that Hannibal's ambush was sprung. The Roman foot was encircled. The Romans in the center, fighting the less disciplined Celts, did manage to punch a hole through the Carthaginian line which allowed some 10,000 Roman troops to escape. The newer Celtic troops were still the weakest in the army, due in part to their lack of discipline and exposure to the Barcid system. The rest of the army fought

¹⁷⁴ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 178.

in a coordinated and disciplined fashion, with one arm of the army supporting the other in a unified battle plan. The Celts, not used to fighting in such a system and not yet accustomed to the Barcid system, performed poorly and this is what allowed the Roman breakthrough.

The Battle of Lake Trasimene, June of 217 BCE

Lake Trasimene is an example of even more impressive discipline and coordination. While the ambushing force at Trebia was a small detachment led by a trusted Punic officer, at Lake Trasimene the ambushing force was virtually the entire Carthaginian army, and remains to this day the largest ambush in military history. By this point the Celtic troops had been assimilated into the Barcid system. Celtic troops, and the mercenaries in general, displayed in this battle exquisite discipline and coordination, executing Hannibal's battle plan nearly flawlessly.

In June of 217 BCE, the new consul who commanded the Roman army was a man named Flaminius. Hannibal awaited the coming of Flaminius' army. Hannibal positioned his troops in the hills of Cremona, which stood to one side of road with Lake Trasimene. The road between the forested hills and the lake was narrow and hemmed in, and an obvious site for an ambush.

Hannibal positioned his camp on a hill near the road and beyond the lake. This camp was presented as bait to the Romans, along with a small portion of the Carthaginian force acting to defend it. Hannibal placed his experienced Libyan and Iberian foot in a defensive line on this hill, directly between Flaminius's line of advance and Hannibal's own camp. The slingers and light infantry Hannibal concealed in the hills nearer the camp along the road, and gave them strict orders to remain silent and only come out when the Roman army had reached his heavy infantry line. The Celts and the majority of the cavalry were placed on the hills farther from the camp, and ordered to await the coming of the Romans in silence. Hannibal trusted the Celts, who

were stereotyped by Polybius as having little patience and a short temper, to wait until the entire Roman army had been lured into the trap before it was sprung shut.¹⁷⁵ This trust by Hannibal indicates the training and assimilation that the Celts underwent in between Trebia and Trasimene.

Flaminius's army marched into Hannibal's prepared trap. Surprise was essential to Hannibal's plan, and if the Romans became aware of his trap, or had appropriate time to react and respond, the trap would not fully succeed. If anything like a proper battle line was organized on the Roman side, casualties among the lightly armored Celts would be enormous. All of Hannibal's units needed to attack at the same time along the entirety of the line in order to maximize the element of surprise and drive the Roman forces back into the lake. This was extremely difficult, however, as Hannibal's battle line was long, his troops divided by language, and the day was misty. Orders needed to arrive to each detachment at around the same time, or else the Carthaginians would attack the Romans piecemeal rather than crashing on their line all together, in a great wave. Further, the plan depended on not even one commander or soldier out of the tens of thousands waiting in ambush to lose his cool or make noise.¹⁷⁶

It is testament to the astounding discipline and competency of the army that the orders were given at the same time, and that the ambush force remained undetected. Suddenly, all across the line, the various units of light infantry, cavalry, and missile troops attacked at once. Gaining momentum from charging downhill into the road, the Roman marching formations were immediately thrown into disarray. The Carthaginian mercenaries appeared out of the mist, throwing confusion into Roman forces, which was compounded as Flaminius himself was

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 3.83

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*.

quickly identified and killed by a Celtic company.¹⁷⁷ Nearly the entirety of Flaminius's army was destroyed, with Hannibal capturing at least 15,000 Romans, while only losing between 1,500 and 2,500 men himself (mostly Celts).¹⁷⁸ The mercenaries gathered a great deal of loot from the enemy, including armor and weapons. After Trasimene, the Libyans forsook their traditional armor and equipped themselves as Roman legionnaires.¹⁷⁹ Pulling off an ambush of this scale would have been difficult for any ancient army, let alone a multilingual force, yet the Barcid system's emphasis on discipline and unit coordination allowed the mercenary army to succeed.

Cannae, April 216 BCE

This battle is not only crucially important to the understanding of the Second Punic War, but it also displays the trained, disciplined, and loyal troops produced by the Barcid system, (though loyal to Hannibal, not the system itself) and demonstrates the capability of not just Hannibal himself, but also of his officer corps, to which the various units of his army were loyally attached. The Battle of Cannae would prove to be Hannibal's greatest and most complete victory, convincing several Roman allies, like the major cities of Capua and Tarentum, to defect. The slaughter of the Roman army remains to this day one of the bloodiest single days in history, producing greater casualties than the British suffered on the first day of the Somme, and greater deaths than the Battle of Gettysburg.¹⁸⁰

Following Trasimene and Trebia, the Romans finally began to fear Hannibal and his mercenaries. To counter them, Rome massed a huge force of 8 legions, totaling some 6,000 Roman and allied cavalry, and an astonishing 70,000 infantry, 55,000 of which were heavy infantry. In comparison, Hannibal had 10,000 cavalry, the majority of whom were Spanish and

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 3.85

¹⁷⁹ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 190-191.

¹⁸⁰ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 213.

Gallic, and 40,000 infantry, 10,000 of whom were light. Of this infantry, the majority were Celts, approximately 9,000 were Libyan, and there was around 4,000 remaining Spanish.¹⁸¹ Despite this great discrepancy in infantry forces, Hannibal was willing to give battle, and provoked the enormous Roman army into battle by seizing an important supply base near a small town called Cannae.

The Romans formed their great mass of infantry (the largest army Rome had ever raised) into a dense manipular formation, deeper than their standard deployment. The idea behind this deployment appears to have been twofold: because of the depth of the army, those in the front ranks had little opportunity to flee the battle, and this was a concern as many of the Roman soldiers were recently raised citizens and farmers, while Hannibal's soldiers were professionals. This deployment shows the fear that the mercenary army had begun to inflict on the Romans, who previously had been contemptuous of mercenaries. The other idea behind the Roman deployment was to create an unstoppable mass of men who could simply punch through Hannibal's line with brute strength. While a simplistic strategy, attempting anything more complex with the inexperienced army the Romans possessed was extremely difficult. Cavalry was deployed on the Roman wings, perhaps 3,000 on each wing. The main purpose of these troops was to simply guard the flanks of the Roman infantry as the massive line, which extended about a mile despite its depth, crushed Hannibal's lighter and less numerous infantry.

Hannibal saw the Romans deploy their army first, and so learned their plans. Hannibal prepared a light infantry screen, composed primarily of Libyans, to guard his force while the rest of his own army deployed on the Cannae plain. Hannibal arranged his heavy infantry, his Celts and Spanish, in the center of his army, in a convex formation with the bulge toward the Roman

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 207.

line. Units of Spanish were mixed with the units of Celts, indicating that by the point the Celtic recruits were fully integrated into the army. On the Carthaginian left wing Hannibal deployed all of his close order cavalry, while on the right he deployed what survived on his Numidian cavalry. This made his left wing much stronger than his right, though the Romans do not seem to have cared much, as they were intent on driving Hannibal in the center.

At the same time, Hannibal ordered his cavalry on both flanks to attack. The Carthaginian left wing smashed into its Roman counterpart, routing them utterly. On the right, the Numidian cavalry harassed the Roman cavalry with a steady barrage of javelins.

As the Celtic and Gallic left routed the Romans, it began to pursue them off of the field, nearly dashing Hannibal's chance of victory. In a great display of leadership and discipline, the Punic commander of the heavy horse managed to, in the heat of battle, stop the thousands of charging cavalymen and redirect them to assist the Numidians. Crossing the whole of the battlefield to engage the Romans on the other wing, the Hannibal's heavy cavalry, with close Numidian assistance, drove the remainder of the Roman cavalry off the field.¹⁸²

In the infantry fight, the mass of Roman heavy infantry formations was engaged in a vicious fight with the Carthaginians. The light infantry screen Hannibal had initially deployed repositioned on the flanks, protected from the Romans by the bulge in the Carthaginians line. This bulge was what the Roman infantry naturally encountered first, and they fought the lightly armored Celts, and drove them back. What had been a convex bulge in the Carthaginian line was pushed back, and further back, step by retreating step, until the shape of line was now concave, and the whole line in danger of collapse. It looked like the Celtic line would collapse again, as it had at Trebia. Hannibal himself rode up and down the Celtic portion of his line, yelling

¹⁸² Daly, Gregory. *Cannae*. Routledge, London. 2002. 178.

exhortations to his troops and telling them not to despair. It is indicative of the trust Hannibal placed in his officer corps that he trusted his subordinates to affect the complex cavalry and infantry maneuverings necessary for victory, while he oversaw the more static, but far more brutal infantry fight. It is a testament to the discipline of the mercenary Celts that they did not break or run; this ran counter to the literary trope of the Celt as a fickle and lazy fighter.¹⁸³ As the Romans saw the center of the Carthaginian formation near collapse, more and more Roman heavy infantry poured into that area, hoping for a breakthrough. The Celtic retreat backward stayed a disciplined and measured retreat, not buckling under Roman pressure, a true testament to the transformative power of the Barcid system inspired decades ago by Xanthippus.

At this point, the light infantry screen of Libyans which had redeployed to the far flanks of the infantry line swung forward, encircling the Roman maniples along three sides. As the confusion and exhaustion of battlefield took effect the Roman formations began to collapse and the mass of Roman infantry more resembled a tightly packed mob rather than an orderly body of soldiers. Sealing the fate of the Roman infantry, the now unopposed Carthaginian cavalry were again redirected from the pursuit of the fleeing Roman cavalry and directed to attack the Roman rear. The Roman infantry, a total of about eight whole legions and the largest army ever raised by Rome to this point was now encircled by a numerically inferior foe.

At the end of the battle, Hannibal had suffered a great many casualties, the plurality of them Gauls, perhaps 10% of his total force. The Romans suffered far greater losses however. In addition to the loss of eighty senators who were acting in the army as military tribunes and officers, the Romans lost 45,000 infantry and half of their cavalry, in addition to the remaining 17,000 who escaped to camp only to surrender the next day. This was the greatest military

¹⁸³ Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Fall of Carthage*. 210-212.

disaster (with the possible exception of Adrianople) Rome would ever experience in her 1,000 year history. This Carthaginian victory showed what a disciplined and well led heterogeneous force could accomplish against a larger but less flexible homogenous one.

Warfare in Italy after Cannae

Much less can be learned about the Carthaginian mercenaries after Cannae for two chief reasons. First, most of the fighting after Cannae was not in large set-piece battles, but rather a series of smaller sieges, maneuverings, and skirmishes which our sources describe in far less detail. Secondly, after Cannae the most reliable primary source for the Punic Wars, Polybius, becomes fragmentary, forcing the ancient historian to rely on the at best hyperbolic Livy, and worse sources like Fabius Pictor. Detail and truth give way to entertainment, propaganda, and literary tropes.¹⁸⁴

What is known about the fight in Italy is that after Cannae several major Italian allies defected to Hannibal's side, including Apulia, Samnium, Bruttium, and even Campania. Large battles were forsaken in favor of blockades, raids, and skirmishes. Hannibal recruited new armies from among his new allies, but these Latin allies did not fare as well against the Roman military. Hannibal would never be defeated on Italian soil, but his allies certainly were. Capua was recaptured in 211 BCE, Tarentum in 209 BCE. Hannibal would campaign in Italy for a total of sixteen years, before being recalled to Africa to defend against a Roman invasion force led by one of Rome's greatest ever generals, Scipio Africanus.

The End of the Barcid System

Using Spain as base of operations, Scipio would incite a tribe of Numidians to revolt against Carthage, and land in Africa itself with an overwhelming force. This aggressive move

¹⁸⁴ Rawlings, Louis. "The War in Italy, 218-203." In Hoyos, B. D. *A Companion to the Punic Wars*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 318.

forced Hannibal to finally be recalled from Italy (after 16 years on campaign) to defend his homeland. The final decisive action of the Second Punic War would occur on the plains of Zama, a few miles from Carthage.

In the Battle of Zama, Hannibal would be defeated by the professional force of Scipio Africanus. Despite fighting well, the mercenary veterans of Hannibal's Italian Campaign would be undone by the poor quality of the other units of the army, and by the superior infantry of Rome. Hannibal, and Carthage, would lose the Second Punic War. Hannibal would continue to fight against Rome, ultimately choosing suicide rather than submission. The Barcid system would die with him. Other mercenary armies fought in the Second Punic War, fighting the Romans in Spain, and one even landing in Genoa, in northern Italy.¹⁸⁵ These armies did adopt some of the tenets of the Barcid system, but were not nearly as successful as the mercenaries of Hannibal. Part of the reason for this is that the Barcid system required a high skill in generalship in order to wield effectively, and few Punic officers were as skilled as Hannibal.

¹⁸⁵ Edwell, Peter. "War Abroad: Spain, Sicily, Macedon, Africa." In Hoyos, B. D. *A Companion to the Punic Wars*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 320-338.

Conclusions

The mercenary system of Carthage is a unique system in history, which managed to bind together men from disparate nations and languages into a cohesive fighting force. Initially, the system suffered from both disloyalty and incompetence, though performed adequately enough to meet Carthage's needs against the Sicilians. During the First Punic War, Xanthippus transformed the polyglot army which was led by unprofessional generals into a fantastically efficient army, well-disciplined and well-led. Hamilcar, a professional general himself, took note of this success and fought admirably against great odds in Sicily. The mercenary system's drawbacks were revealed in the Mercenary War, a war which nearly destroyed the city of Carthage itself. Learning the expensive lessons of the Mercenary War, Hamilcar forged a professional and loyal army in his Spanish conquests, with Spain acting as a kind of laboratory. That army campaigned for twenty years before marching over the Alps into Italy, where it displayed how a mercenary army could become an extension of its commander's will. Under the brilliant leadership of Hannibal, the mercenary army underwent significant change on the surface, mostly due to the huge influx of Gauls and Latins into the army. The core of the army however, which consisted of the veteran units that had campaigned in Spain, allowed the new Celtic regiments to be co-opted into the army, and within a year had become part of the greatest army to ever march against Rome.

In addition to being a poorly explored area of ancient history, study of Carthaginian mercenaries is rewarding because it sheds light on the performance of mercenaries in the West. Eastern mercenaries, especially Greek mercenaries, are well known and studied, mainly due to the fact that more records survive about mercenaries in the East (particularly the work of Xenophon). A mercenary was, at least in part, the sum of the various ethnic elements that

constituted it. It is an established theory in military history that an army reflects the culture from which it comes from.¹⁸⁶ What then when the army in question is a multiethnic force of mercenaries? The short answer is that there is no culture that informs how a mercenary army operates, other than the Punic culture of the officers. The Punic officer corps was the only unifying element within a Carthaginian mercenary army, and the officer corps was centered around the commander. The Barcid system further ensured that the commanders of most of the mercenary armies were from the Barcid family. It was the Barca's military practicality rather than culture which directed and formed the army, leading to a culturally impartial emphasis on discipline, loyalty, and unit coordination. This, in turn, allowed the Carthaginian mercenary army to triumph many times over the Roman army, a homogenous force which was directed by a culture which emphasized battlefield valor and piety over military strategy.

This was outside the scope of this study, but details about the various peoples that made up a Carthaginian mercenary army can be gained from studying the accounts of their performance. In addition, studying how the ethnic elements of the mercenary army interact may reveal how the different ethnicities of the ancient world viewed each other. For example, looking at how the Celts of the Po Valley backed Hannibal in his invasion of Italy reveals as much about the Celts as it does about the Carthaginians. Theorizing about how the Gauls were so quickly incorporated into Hannibal's army reveals information on the effectiveness of the Barcid system, but it could also reveal elements within the Celtic culture that made their incorporation easier. While this study was not the object of this paper, such a study would be both interesting and valuable.

¹⁸⁶ Lynn, John. A. *Battle* 2003. 331.

Finally, the mercenaries of Carthage matter for understanding how the Punic Wars were fought and lost by the Carthaginians. The waging of the Second Punic War pitted two very different military systems against each other; the multiethnic mercenary system of Carthage and the homogenous, manipular system of the Romans. The simple fact that the homogenous maniple system wasn't automatically more successful against the Carthaginian system, with its perceived drawbacks in communication, loyalty, and unit coordination is worthy of study.¹⁸⁷ The heterogeneous system actually proved more than a match for the Roman system. Despite whatever disadvantages the Barcid system hadn't dealt with, the mercenary system was able to field a wider array of units than the manipular formations of the Romans. This, along with the emphasis on cavalry rather than on citizen infantry, gave the Carthaginian system valuable flexibility, which a commander like Hannibal ruthlessly exploited to nearly destroy the Roman Republic.

¹⁸⁷ Polybius (1.17) insists that a citizen army, when fighting on its own soil, will always in the end triumph over a mercenary force. This is an old Greek idea, which believed that a citizen army will fight harder than a mercenary army because the citizens have some stake in the conflict. Fortunately for Hannibal, this was not always the case.

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