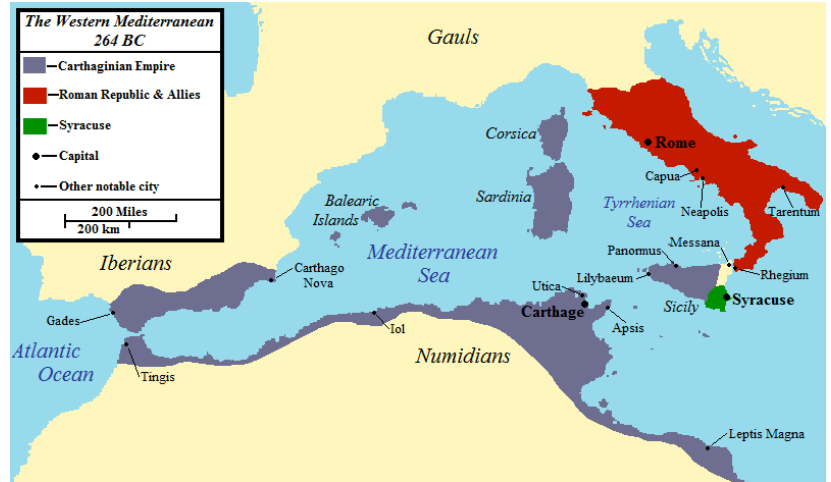


CHAPTER 14, SECTION 3: THE PUNIC WARS

By 264 B.C., the Romans had conquered some Greek city-states in southern Italy. This brought them into contact with the city of Carthage. Carthage controlled most of North and West Africa, most of what is present-day Spain, and some islands off the coast of Italy. Carthage also ruled the western half of Sicily (sis-uh-lee). This island was at the toe of the Italian peninsula, or “boot.” The Romans felt threatened by the Carthaginians (car-tuh-jin-ee-uhns) because of how much their civilization was expanding.



THE FIRST PUNIC WAR

In 264 B.C., the Romans and Carthaginians began a series of wars. The First Punic War lasted for 23 years. It was the first of three wars that became known as the Punic Wars (pew-nick). This first war was fought over the island of Sicily – Carthage ruled the western half of this island. Rome felt Carthage was threatening and too close to Rome’s civilization.

Carthage’s military strength was in its navy – boats and soldiers that fought on water. Rome’s strength was in its army. The Romans began with no navy so it was difficult to defeat the Carthaginians who were skilled at fighting via the water. The Romans built their first fleet (group of boats) to fight the Carthaginians. The Romans modeled their boats after Carthage’s warships. The Romans knew they could not out-sail the Carthaginians, but they strongly believed they could outfight them. They added a corvus to the ship – which is a movable bridge at the front of the ship. The corvus allowed the soldiers to board the enemy’s ship faster and fight in hand-to-hand combat.

The Romans lost many ships and men in storms during the First Punic War. In the end, after 23 years of fighting the first war, the Romans defeated the Carthaginians. So in 241 B.C., the Carthaginians agreed to make peace and left Sicily.

FUN FACT!

A Roman Senator, Marcus Portius Cato, believed that Carthage posed a great threat to Rome. He reportedly ended every speech to the Roman Senate – no matter the subject – with “Carthage must be destroyed!”

THE SECOND PUNIC WAR & HANNIBAL

In 218 B.C., the Second Punic War began. At that time, the Carthaginians, who were led by General Hannibal Barca, attacked the Roman army by land from north of Italy. Hannibal was seen as the best hope Carthage had to defeat Rome and he is remembered as one of the best generals in ancient history. Hannibal helped his troops lead a surprise attack on the Romans by marching from Spain through Gaul and then crossing the Alps into Italy. Hannibal’s army used elephants and had to guide them across the snowy Alps to help break through the Roman army lines.

Winning continuous victories, Hannibal's army fought its way to the gates of the city of Rome. When Carthage's army got to Rome it did not have the heavy equipment needed to batter down the city's walls. It could not get more supplies either because the Roman navy controlled the seas.

Unable to capture the city of Rome, Hannibal and his army had to roam the countryside of Italy, attacking various towns and destroying crops. They did this for 15 years! The Romans took advantage of this – while Hannibal was in the Italian countryside, the Roman army and navy attacked the city of Carthage. Hannibal was sent messages to return home because of the Romans' attack. Hannibal faced the skilled Roman general Scipio Africanus. This is when Hannibal lost his first battle – and the war.



The Second Punic War ended in 201 B.C. Carthage agreed to pay Rome a huge sum of money and to give up its territories that were not in North Africa. This included Spain. Spain had many valuable resources, such as copper, gold, lead, and iron... these all belonged to the Romans now!

THIRD PUNIC WAR

Following the Second Punic War, there was a time of peace for about 50 years. Then, Carthage began to show signs of regaining power. To prevent this, the Romans attacked in 149 B.C. This began the Third Punic War. By this time, Hannibal was no longer the general of Carthage's army. Rome was able to easily overtake Carthage. They burned every building in Carthage and spread salt into its fields so that nothing could grow. They killed the Carthaginian citizens or sold them into slavery. The Third Punic War ended in 146 B.C.