

From Village to Empire: an Introduction to the History of Rome

Lecture 6: War with Carthage

Rome and Carthage

Rome's treaties with Carthage: see Polybius 3.22-27.

264-241 First Punic War

218-201 Second Punic War

149-146 Third Punic War

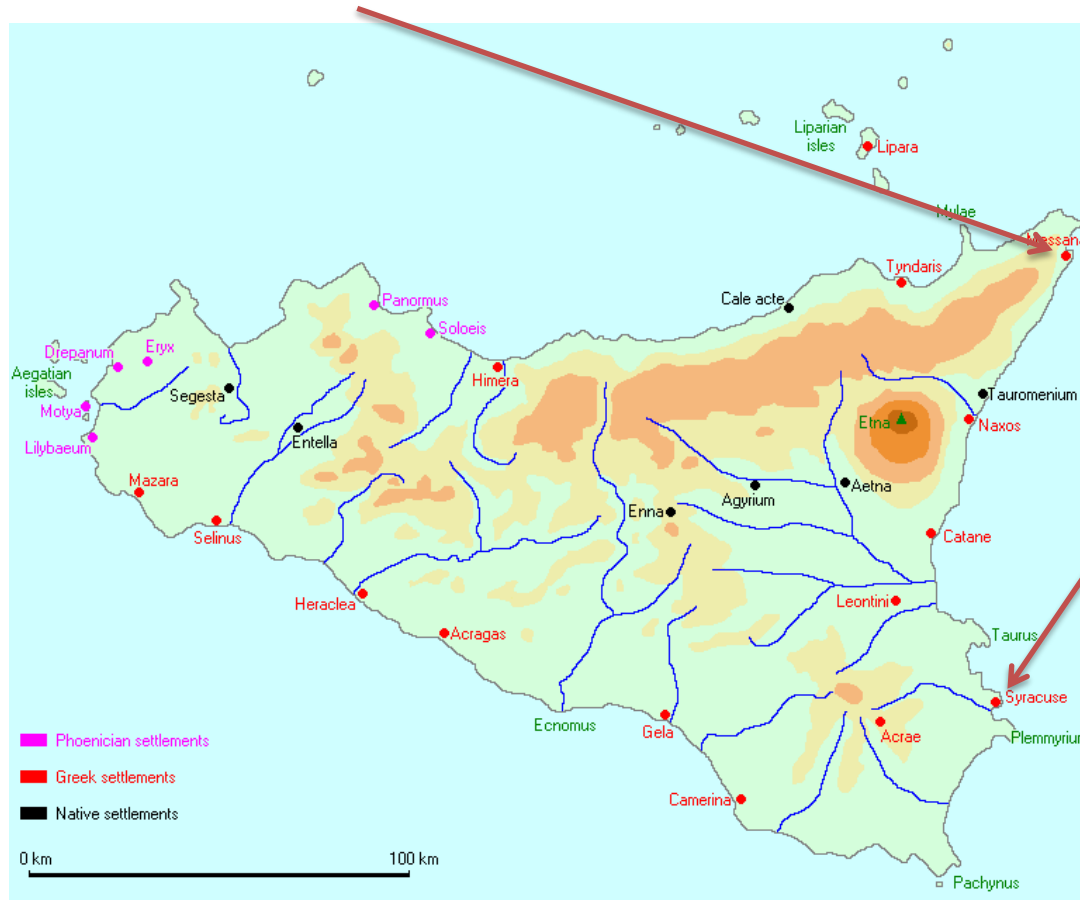


Messana

The Mamertines (or 'Mamertini')

Agathocles,
tyrant of
Syracuse (304-
289 BC)

Hiero, tyrant of
Syracuse



Ap. Claudius Caudex
(consul in 264)

corvus ('the Raven')

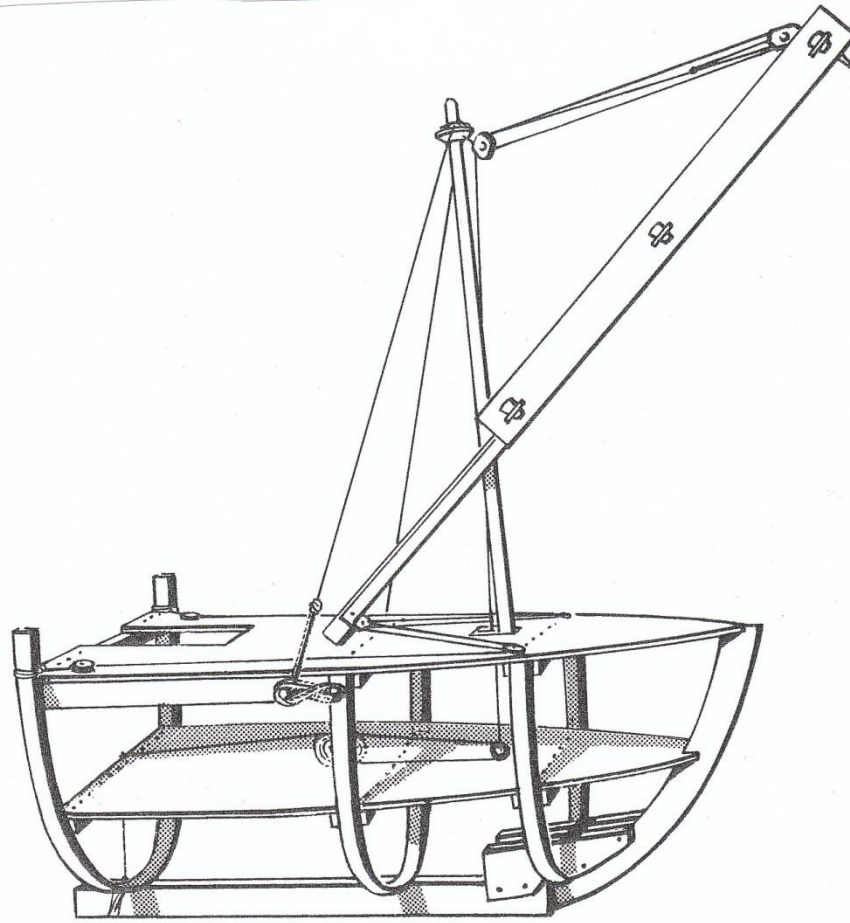
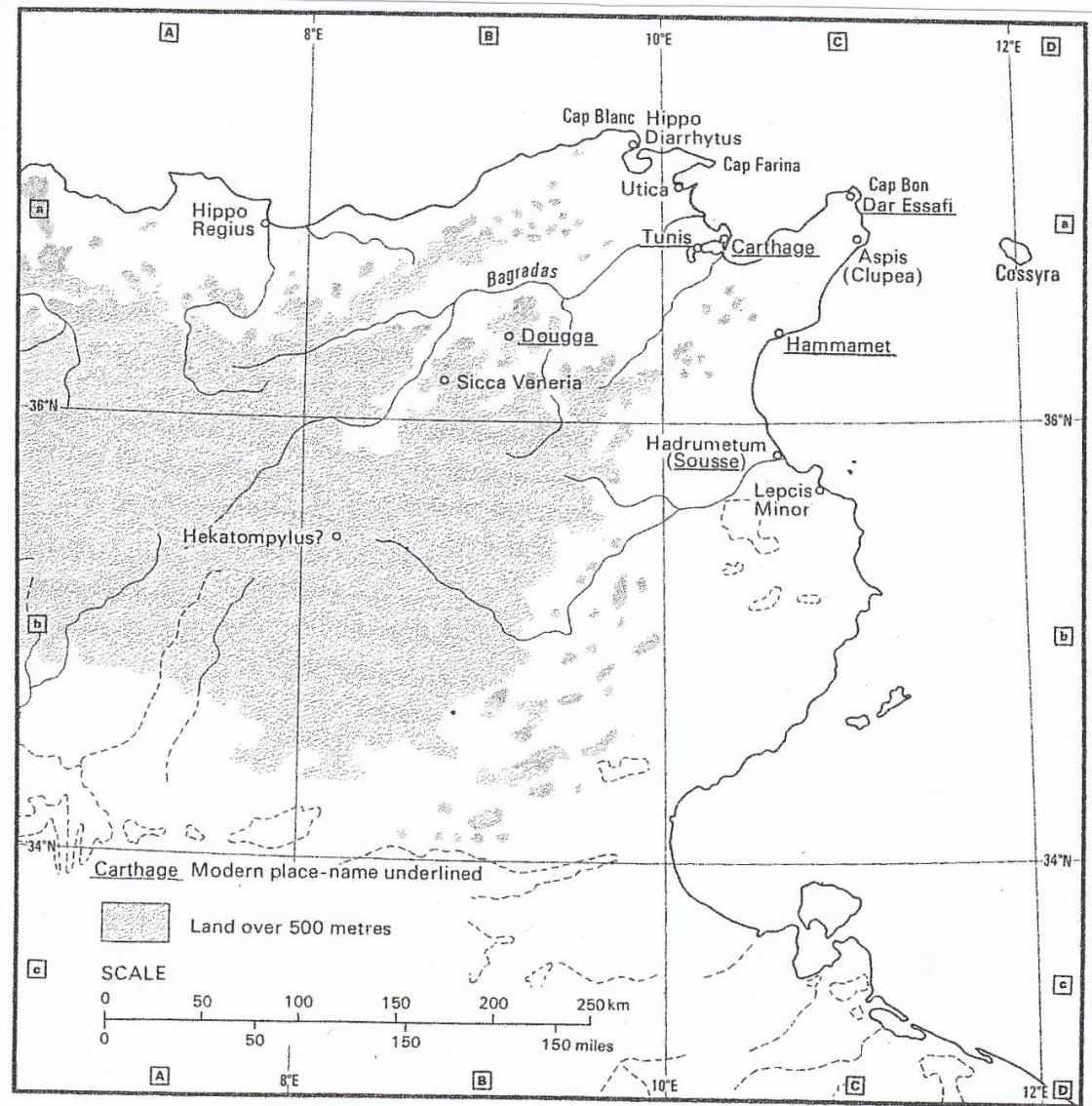


Fig. 59. Illustrative model of the *corvus* (the details of the ship itself and its construction are not intended as an authentic representation). From Wallinga 1956 [K205], pl. 1.

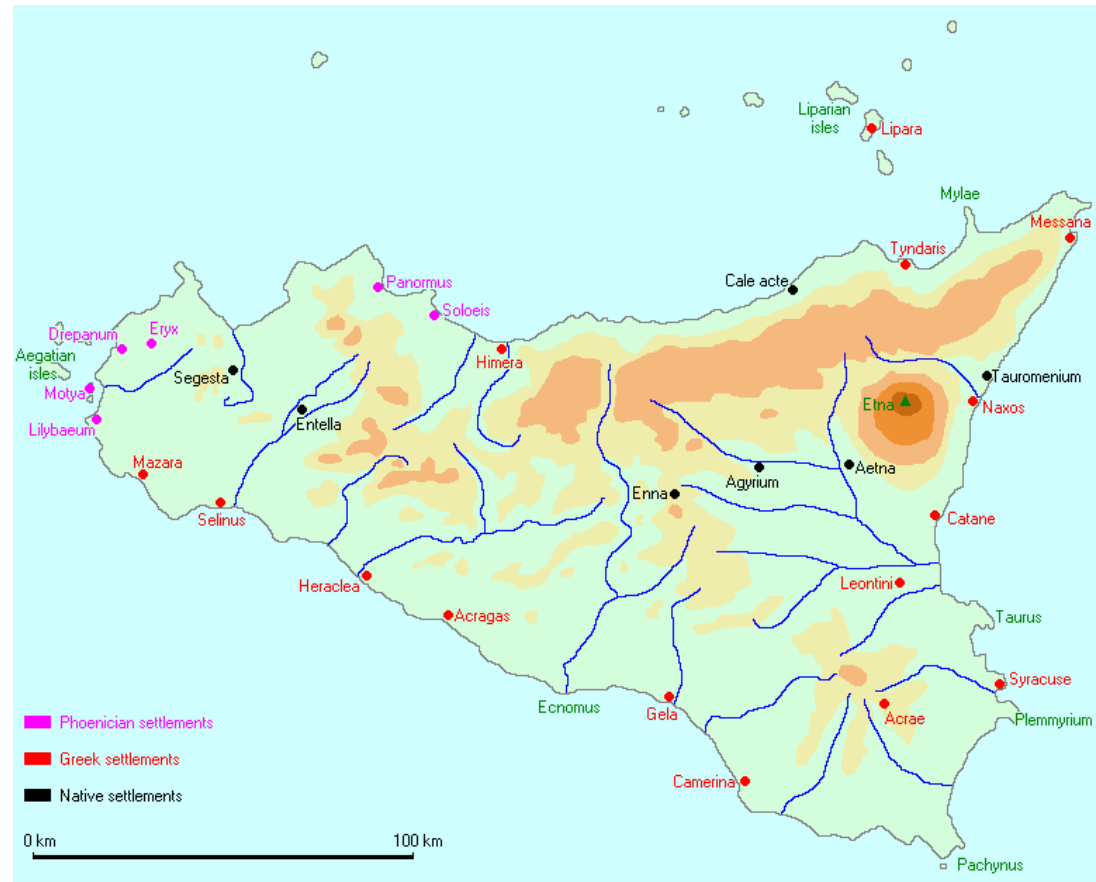
M. Atilius
Regulus
(consul in 256)

Xanthippus



Hamilcar
Barca

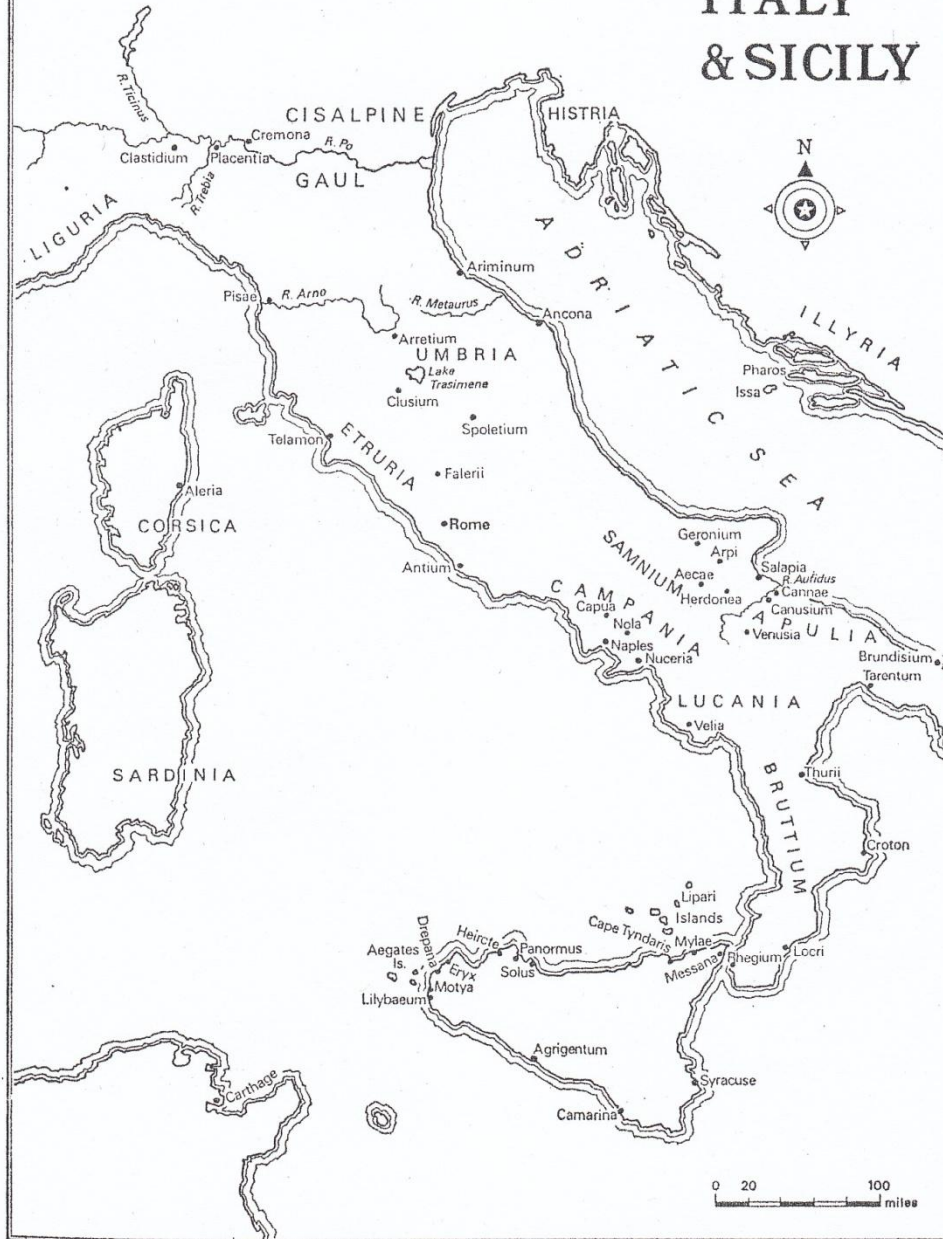
C. Lutatius
Catulus



Rome builds one last fleet (243-242 BC)

Polybius 1.59: They [that is, the Romans] now recognised that chiefly because of Hamilcar's daring leadership they were failing to achieve the results on which they had counted by land, and so they decided for the third time to risk their fortunes upon the sea... Yet the effort sprang from sheer resolution rather than material resources. There were no funds in the treasury to finance the enterprise; but in spite of this, thanks to the patriotism and generosity of a number of leading citizens, the money was found. Single individuals or syndicates of two or three, according to their means, each undertook to build and fit out a quinquereme, which was fully equipped on the understanding that they would be repaid if the expedition was successful. In this way a fleet of 200 quinqueremes was quickly made ready...

ITALY & SICILY





Possible image of
Hamilcar Barca



Possible image of
Hasdrubal



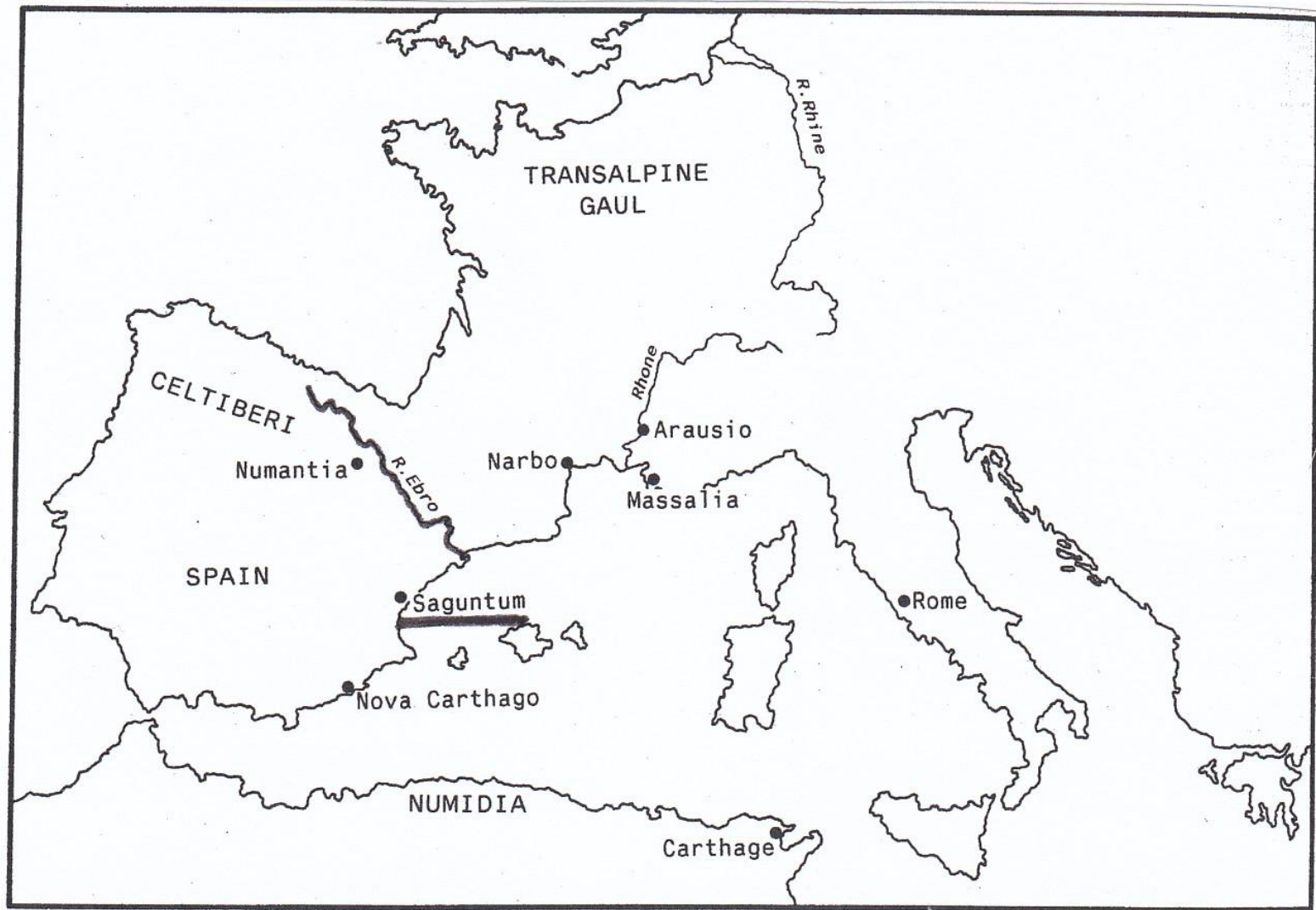
Possible image of
Hannibal

Hasdrubal
Hannibal

Mago (brother of Hannibal)
Hasdrubal (brother of Hannibal)

Saguntum and the 'Ebro river treaty' of 226 BC

Polybius 2.13: The Romans, seeing that Hasdrubal was in a fair way to create a larger and more formidable empire [in Spain] than Carthage formerly possessed, resolved to begin to occupy themselves with Spanish affairs. Finding that they had hitherto been asleep and had allowed Carthage to build up a powerful dominion, they tried, as far as possible, to make up for lost time. For the present they did not venture to impose orders on Carthage, or to go to war with her, because the threat of a Celtic invasion [of Italy] was hanging over them, the attack being indeed expected from day to day. They decided, then, to smooth down and conciliate Hasdrubal in the first place, and then to attack the Celts and decide the issue by arms, for they thought that as long as they had these Celts threatening their frontier, not only would they never be masters of Italy, but they would not even be safe in Rome itself. Accordingly, after having sent envoys to Hasdrubal and made a treaty, in which no mention was made of the rest of Spain, but **the Carthaginians engaged not to cross the Ebro in arms**, they at once entered on the struggle against the Italian Celts.



The western Mediterranean

P. Cornelius Scipio (consul in 218)
Tib. Sempronius Longus (consul in 218)
Ticinus
Trebia

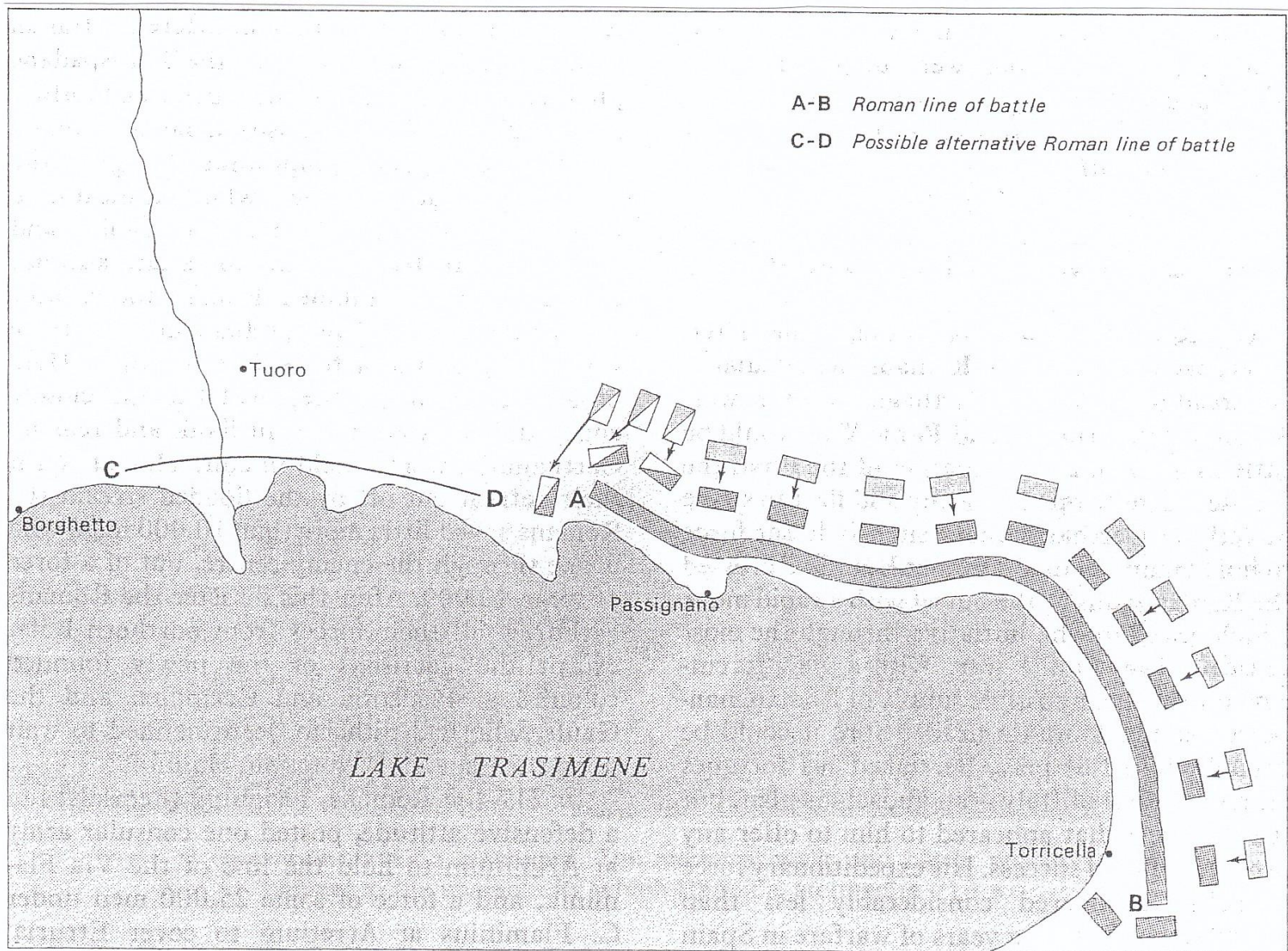
Cn. Servilius Geminus (consul in 217)
C. Flaminius (consul in 217)
Trasimene

Q. Fabius Maximus
L. Aemilius Paullus (consul in 216)
C. Terentius Varro (consul in 216)

Cannae

P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus
Zama

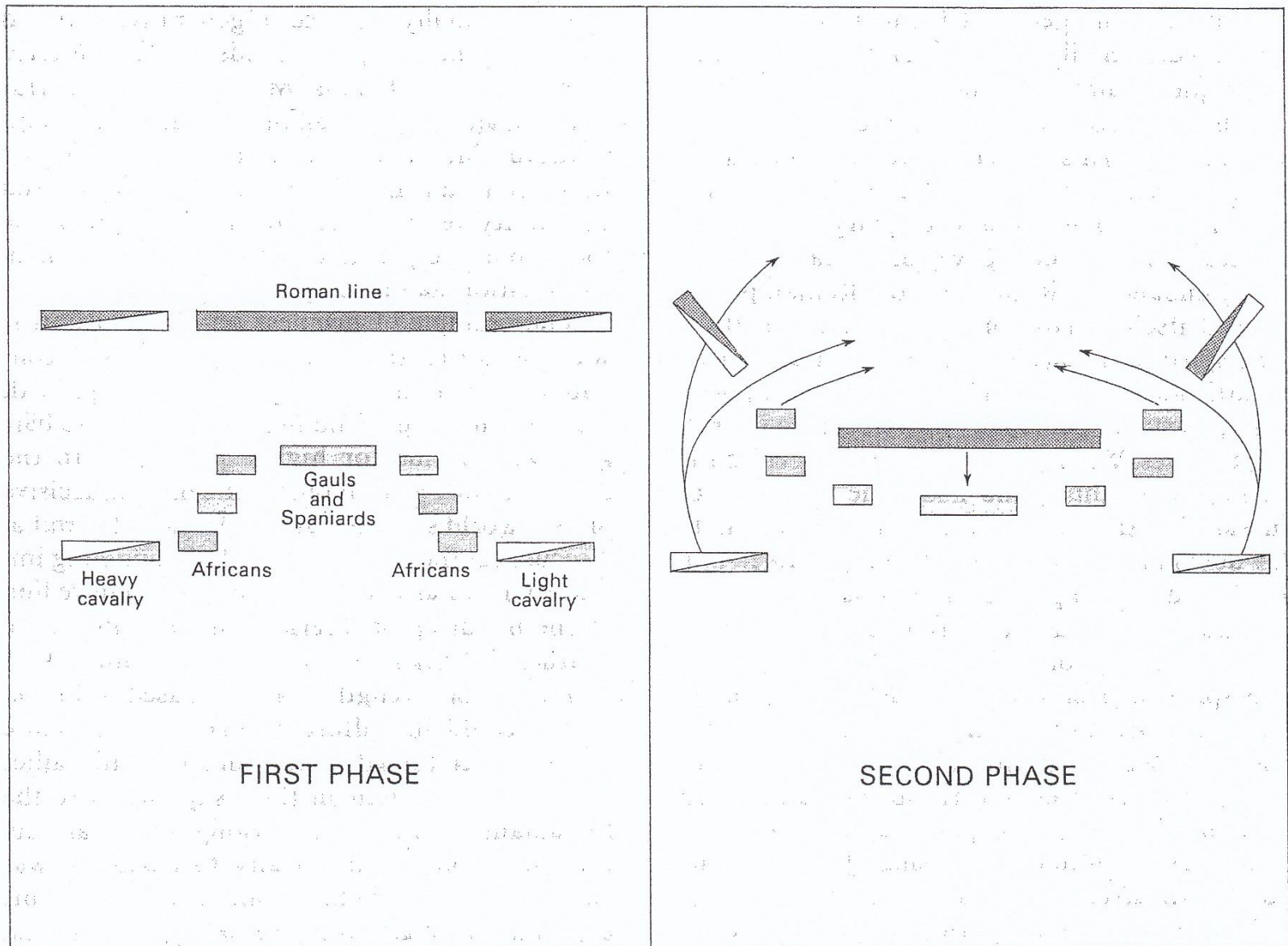




9. BATTLE OF LAKE TRASIMENE, 217 B.C.

Hannibal releases his Italian prisoners

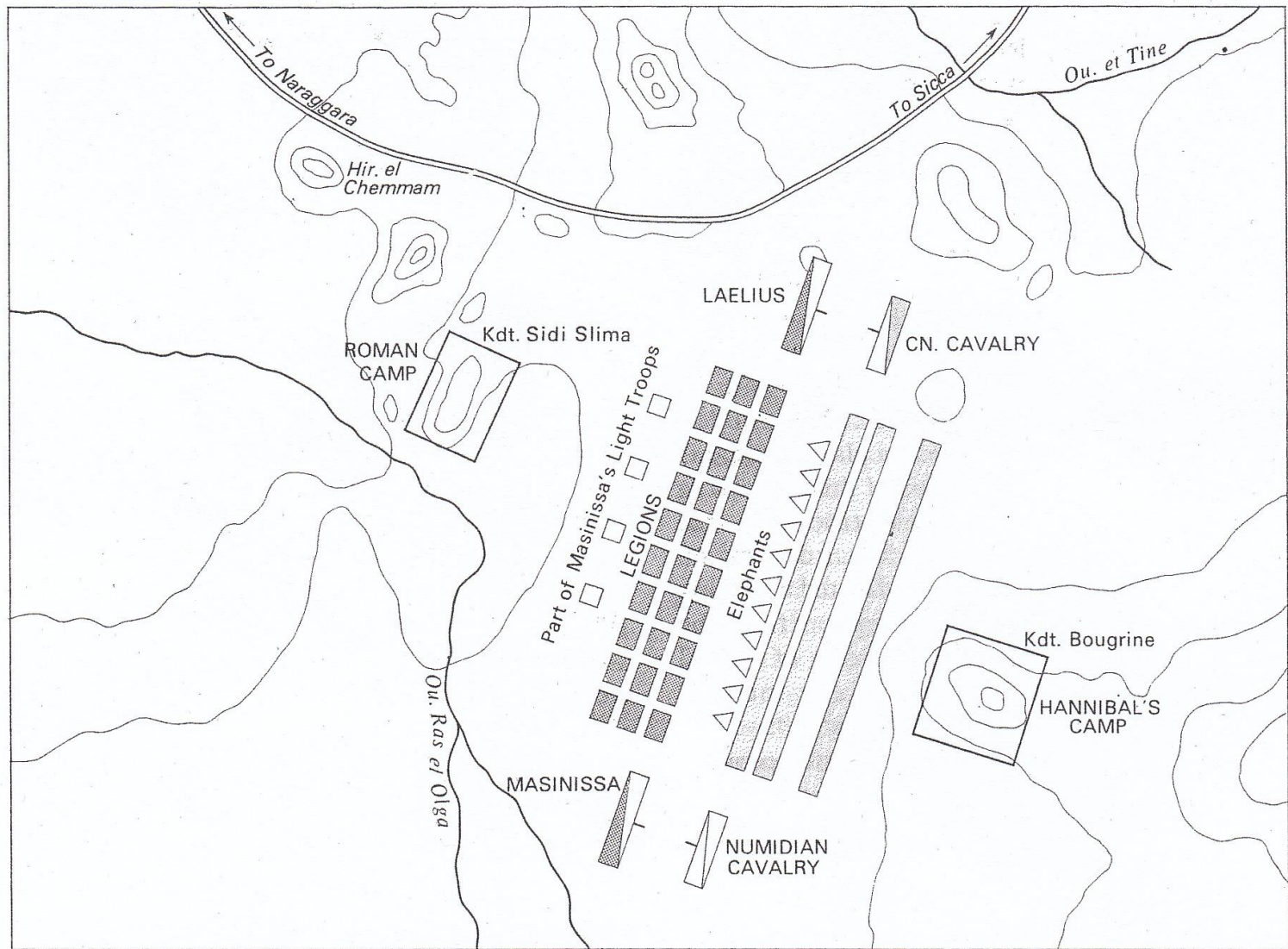
Polybius 3.77: Meanwhile Hannibal, who was passing the winter in Cisalpine Gaul, kept the Romans he had captured in the battle [at the river Trebia] under guard and gave them only just sufficient rations to keep them alive; the prisoners taken from the allies, on the other hand, he treated with great kindness, and later summoned them to an assembly and made a speech to them. He pointed out that he had come to fight not against them but against the Romans on their behalf, and that therefore, if they knew where their interests lay, they would respond to his offers of friendship, for he had come above all to give the Italians back their freedom and to help them recover the cities and the territories which the Romans had taken away. With these words he sent them all back to their homes without demanding a penny of ransom; his object in all this was to win over the inhabitants of Italy to his cause, to alienate them from their attachment to Rome, and to stir up revolt among those who believed that their harbours or cities had suffered decline as a result of Roman rule.



10. BATTLE OF CANNAE, 216 B.C.

The battle of Cannae (216 BC)

Polybius 3.115: For a while the Spaniards and Celts held their formation and fought with great gallantry, but then they turned tail, forced back by the sheer weight of the legions, and the convex centre of the Carthaginian line was driven in. The Roman maniples surged forward triumphantly and easily pierced the enemy's front, since the Celts were extended in a thin line, whereas the Romans had thrust their way in from the wings towards the centre where the heaviest fighting was taking place. The Carthaginian centre and wings did not go into action at the same moment – it was the central units which were engaged first because the Celts were drawn up in a crescent-shaped formation which placed them ahead of the wings – and thus it was the convex curve of the crescent which was closest to the enemy. However, because the Romans were pursuing the Celts and pressing inwards against that part of the front which was giving way, they penetrated the enemy's line so deeply that they then had both contingents of the African heavy infantry on their flanks.



11. BATTLE OF ZAMA, 202 B.C.

Relevant reading

- Briscoe, J. (1989), 'The Second Punic War' in F. W. Walbank, *et al.*, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, volume VII part 2, second edition, Cambridge, 44-80.
- Cornell, T. J., Rankov, B. and Sabin P., eds., (1996) *The Second Punic War, a reappraisal*, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement 67, London.
- Errington, R. M. (1971), *The Dawn of Empire: Rome's Rise to World Power*, London [but cf. also Harris, W. V. (1979), *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, Oxford]
- Lazenby, J. F. (1978), *Hannibal's War: A Military History of the Second Punic War*, Warminster.
- Scullard, H. H. (1980), *A History of the Roman World, 753 to 146 BC*, fourth edition, London.
- Scullard, H. H. (1989), 'Carthage and Rome', in F. W. Walbank, *et al.*, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, volume VII part 2, second edition, Cambridge, 486-572.
- Scullard, H. H. (1989), 'The Carthaginians in Spain', in A. E. Astin, *et al.*, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, volume 8: Rome and Mediterranean to 133 B.C., second edition, Cambridge, 17-43.