

CLAH4006

**From Village to Empire: An
Introduction to the History of Rome**

The First Punic War 264-241 BC

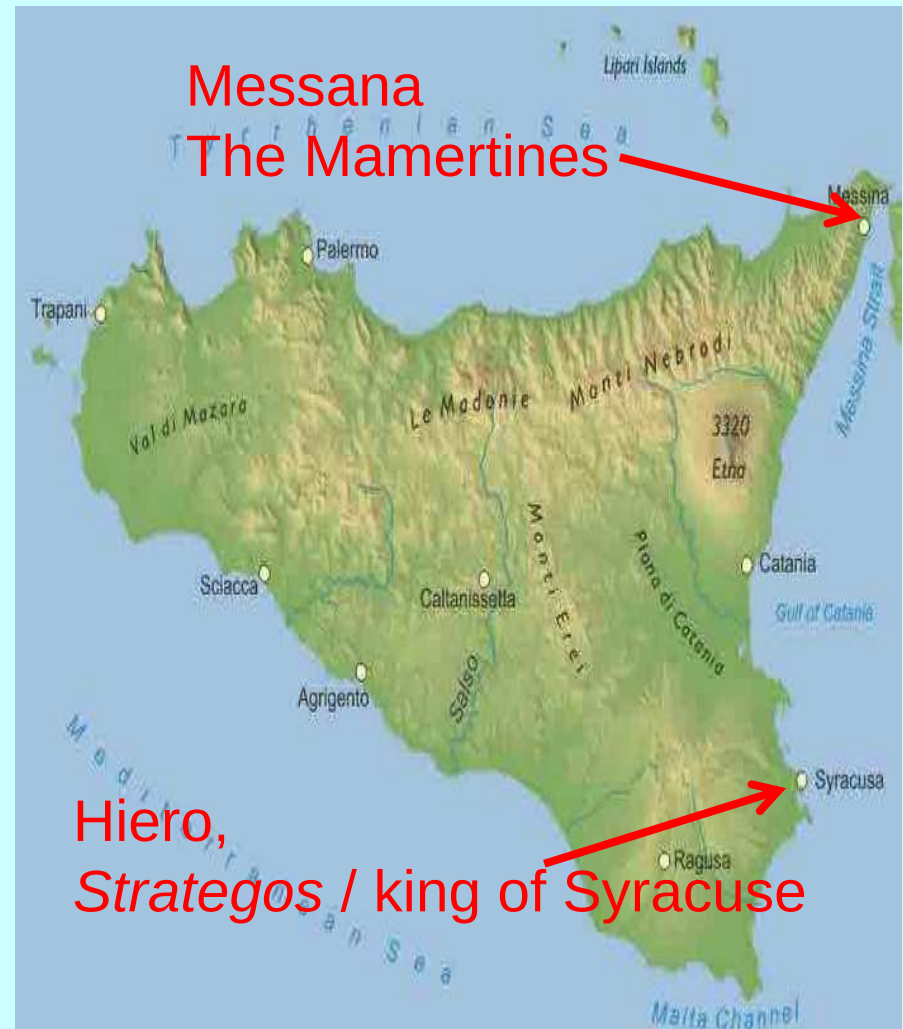
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Treaties between Carthage and Rome

- **Treaty between Carthage and Etruria** – Aristotle *Pol.* 3.1280a 36ff.
- **First treaty** – 508-07, maritime limits, trade within permitted limits, no military interference in Latin areas - Polybius 3.22.
- **Second treaty** – 348? - Romans not to plunder or colonise Sardinia or Libya, Carthaginian to hand over any city captured in Latium, provisions for mutual injuries - Polybius 3.24.
- **Later treaty/treaties** – 279-78, renewal of previous agreements, naval aid by Carthage – Polybius 3.25.
- Polybius mentions three treaties, 508-07, 348?, 279-78 (rejects third one) – only author to mention content of treaties. Livy records a treaty of 348, an another treaty in 306 (renewed for third time), and another in 279 (for fourth time). Diodorus mentions one treaty in 344-43 (348 in Varronian calendar).

The Mamertines

- Mamertine mercenaries seize Messene, plunder countryside.
- Fear of Carthaginian expansion over whole of Sicily – **Polybius 1.10.3-11.1.**
- Carthaginians had taken control of citadel of Messene – **Polybius 1.11.4.**
- Roman consul captures Rhegium in 270.



“For they had just inflicted on their own fellow-citizens the highest penalty for their treachery to the people of Rhegium, and now to try to help the Mamertines, who had been guilty of like offence not only at Messene but at Rhegium also, was a piece of injustice very difficult to excuse. But fully aware as they were of this, they yet saw that the Carthaginians had not only reduced Libya to subjection, but a great part of Spain besides, and that they were also in possession of all the islands in the Sardinian and Tyrrhenian Seas. They were therefore in great apprehension lest, if they also became masters of Sicily, they would be most troublesome and dangerous neighbours, hemming them in on all sides and threatening every part of Italy... The Romans, foreseeing this and viewing it as a necessity for themselves not to abandon Messene and thus allow the Carthaginians as it were to build a bridge for crossing over to Italy, debated the matter for long.” – **Polybius 1.10.4-7, 9.**

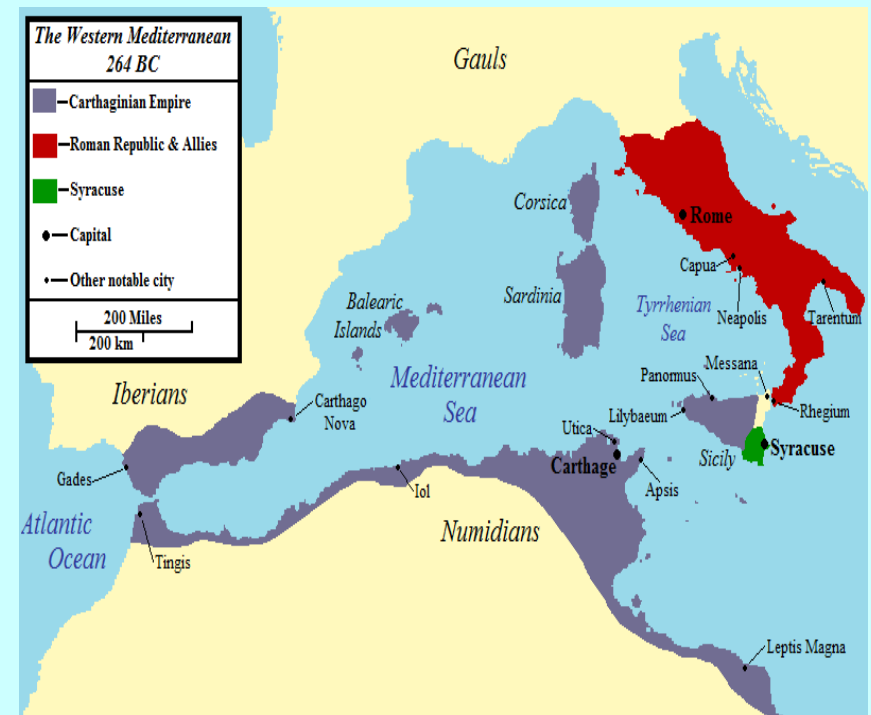
The people of Rome vote

- Consul Appius Claudius takes proposed alliance with Mamertines to the people – probably the *comitia tributa*.
- Ejection of Punic garrison by Mamertines? – contra Dio 9 fr. 43.7-10).
- Carthaginians and Hiero form an alliance – blockade of Messana.

“The commons, however, worn out as they were by the recent wars and in need of any and every kind of restorative, listened readily to the military commanders, who, besides giving the reasons above stated for the general advantageousness of the war, pointed out the great benefit in the way of plunder which each and every one would evidently derive from it. They were therefore in favour of sending help; and when the measure had been passed by the people they appointed to the command one of the Consuls, Appius Claudius, who was ordered to cross to Messene.” – **Polybius 1.11.2-3.**

Early Engagements

- Polybius vs. Philinus – Rome successful in two attacks and proceeds to besiege Syracuse or Romans defeated in both engagements (Polyb. 1.15.1-11).
- Double consular force under M. Valerius Maximus (Messalla) and M. Otacilius Crassus (263) – 40,000 men.
- Hiero switches sides, pays 100 talent indemnity.



Siege of Acragas / Agrigentum

- Consuls (Lucius Postumius and Quintus Mamilius) besiege Acragas – 262.
- Hanno arrives with relief forces after 5 months, including elephants.
- Battle in early 261 – Hanno's elephants forced back onto own line.
- City sacked and inhabitants sold into slavery.

“...broke out of the city about midnight with his mercenaries. When day broke the Romans became aware of what had happened, and, after slightly molesting Hannibal's rear-guard, advanced with their whole force to the gates. Finding nobody to oppose them they entered the city and plundered it, possessing themselves of many slaves and a quantity of booty of every description.” – **Polyb. 1.19.14.**

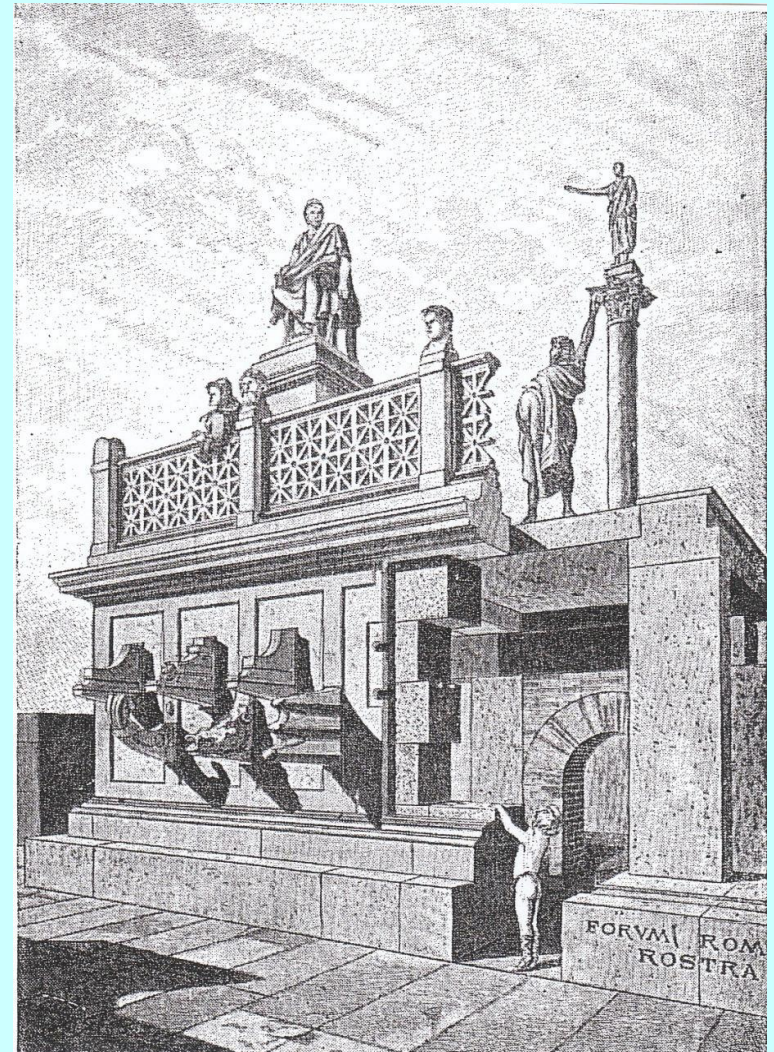


“When the news of what had occurred at Agrigentum reached the Roman Senate, in their joy and elation they no longer confined themselves to their original designs and were no longer satisfied with having saved the Mamertines and with what they had gained in the war itself, but, hoping that it would be possible to drive the Carthaginians entirely out of the island... but as the Carthaginians maintained without any trouble the command of the sea, the fortunes of the war continued to hang in the balance. For in the period that followed, now that Agrigentum was in their hands, while many inland cities joined the Romans from dread of their land forces, still more seaboard cities deserted their cause in terror of the Carthaginian fleet... they took urgent steps to get on the sea like the Carthaginians. When they saw that the war was dragging on, they undertook for the first time to build ships, a hundred quinqueremes and twenty triremes. As their shipwrights were absolutely inexperienced in building quinqueremes, such ships never having been in use in Italy, the matter caused them much difficulty... When they first undertook to send their forces across to Messene not only had they not any decked ships, but no long warships at all, not even a single boat, and borrowing fifty-oared boats and triremes from the Tarentines and Locrians... the Carthaginians put to sea to attack them as they were crossing the straits, and one of their decked ships advanced too far in its eagerness to overtake them and running aground fell into the hands of the Romans. This ship they now used as a model, and built their whole fleet on its pattern.” – **Polybius 1.20.**

The Early Roman Navy

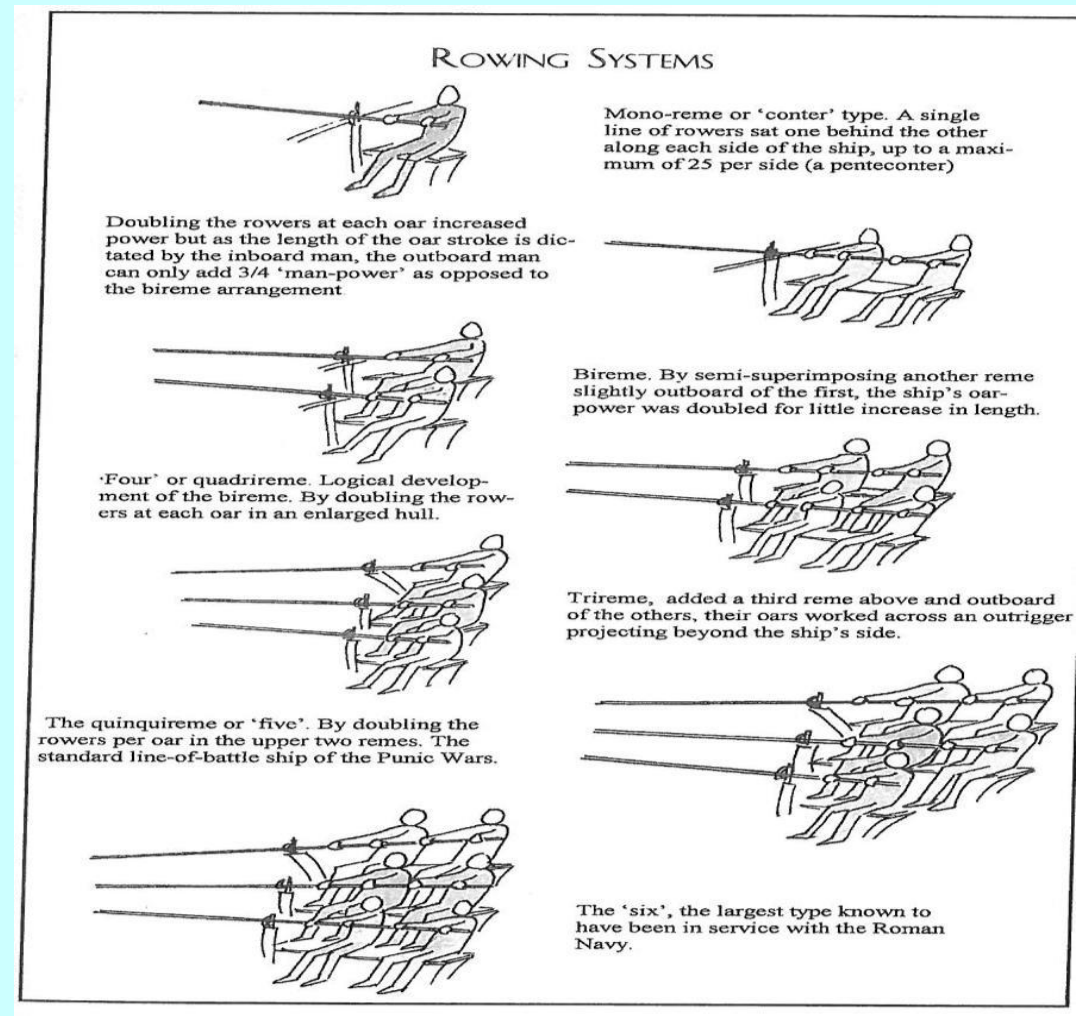
Early Roman Warships

- First specific reference to a warship in 394 BC, when the Romans sent a votive gift to the temple of Apollo at Delphi (**Livy 5.28**).
- First specific reference to a Roman naval battle takes place at end of Latin War (340-388 BC); a Roman fleet under Gaius Maenius defeated the Latins and Volscians in a sea battle near Antium (338 BC) – prows decorate *rostra*.
- In 311 BC a naval board is set up to provide and equip a fleet – under the direction of two *Douviri Navales*.
- *Quaestores classici* – 267 BC.



Polyremes

- “Naval arms race” in Early Hellenistic period.
- System of superimposed banks (as seen with trireme) more implausible for ship sizes above “fours” or “fives”.
- Larger sizes must have had multiple rowers per oar.



The *corvus* “Raven”

- A gangplank mounted on a pivot, and slung from a vertical post set in the deck – large metal spike at the end.
- Up to 36 ft. long (11m), and raised by a rope and pulley.
- About 4 ft. (1.22m) wide, enough for two men to cross abreast.
- Quinquiremes or larger need for this installation.



Disasters and Victories

- Battle of Ecnomus – 256 BC – naval battle of the south coast of Sicily – Romans had lost 24 ships to Carthaginian ramming but had themselves sunk 30 ships and captured another 64 by boarding.
- Large portion of Roman fleet lost to a storm in 255 BC when sailing between Melita and the southern tip of Sicily – perhaps over 300 ships lost.
- Battle of Drepanum – 249 BC – 123 Roman ships attempt to trap Carthaginian ships in harbour at Drepanum but fail. Roman ships strung out in a line parallel to the shore. The Roman lose 93 ships, but large numbers of the crews able to get ashore.
- Romans successfully attack Carthaginian fleet sailing by Aegades Islands.

The Roman Character

“For the Romans, fighting as they are for their country and their children, never can abate their fury but continue to throw their whole hearts into the struggle until they get the better of their enemies. It follows that though the Romans are, as I said, much less skilled in naval matters, they are on the whole successful at sea owing to the gallantry of their men; for although skill in seamanship is of no small importance in naval battles, it is chiefly the courage of the marines that turns the scale in favour of victory. Now not only do Italians in general naturally excel Phoenicians and Africans in bodily strength and personal courage, but by their institutions also they do much to foster a spirit of bravery in the young men.” – **Polybius 6.52.7-10.**

The Invasion of Africa

Landing in Africa

- Roman success at Ecnomus opened way to Africa.
- Romans land at Aspis (Clupea).
- Regulus left with 15,000 infantry, 500 cavalry and 400 ships.
- Hamilcar recalled from Sicily with 5,000 infantry and cavalry.
- Regulus siezes Tunis and encamps for winter (256)



“Those in the city, fearing capture, made overtures to the consul, in the hope that they might by some satisfactory arrangement secure his withdrawal and so escape the immediate danger. But when many oppressive demands were made of them, they decided that the truce would mean their utter subjugation, and they chose rather to fight.” – **Diodorus Siculus 11 fr.43.22-3.**

Xanthippus the Spartan

- Spartan mercenaries arrive in spring of 255 BC.
- Regulus (un-reinforced) faces Xanthippus, his men trammelled by elephants.
- Failure of co-operation with Numidian chiefs.
- Legend of Regulus and his embassy to Rome.
- Survivors at Clupea rescued – natural disaster at sea.

“But Xanthippus, to whom this revolution and notable advance in the fortunes of Carthage was due, after a little time sailed again for home, and this was a very prudent and sensible decision on his part; for brilliant and exceptional achievements are wont to breed the deepest jealousy and most bitter slander. Natives of a place, supported as they are by their kinsmen and having many friends, may possibly be able to hold their own against those for some time, but foreigners when exposed to either speedily succumb and find themselves in peril.” – **Polybius 1.36.**

Doubling Down

Refocusing on Sicily

- Imposition of new taxes – 220 ships readied by spring 254 BC.
- Four legions sent to Sicily.
- Carthaginian control in Sicily now largely confined to western cities of Drepanum, Lilybaeum, Selinus, Heraclea Minoa and Thermae.
- 150 ships lost to Romans during a storm at Panormus (253).
- Hasdrubal sent to Sicily with reinforcements (c.253-51).



Renewed Naval Efforts

- C. Atilius Regulus and L. Manlius Vulso consuls for 250 BC - fifty new ships built (total fleet of 120).
- Failed attack by Hasdrubal on Metellus (command extended) at Panormus, trap laid for the elephants – Hasdrubal losses 20,000 men (out of a force of 30,000 – Orosius 4.9.15).
- Running the Roman blockade of Lilybaeum by Hannibal “the Rhodian” – city resist siege until end of the war (8 years later).
- Battle of Drepanum – 249 BC – Claudius Pulcher ‘let them drink since they will not eat’ – Livy *Epit.*19 (*Periochae*).
- Further destruction of Roman fleet by a storm at Cape Pachynus – Junius Pullus seizes Eryx (Mt Eryx rises up behind Drepana).

Exhaustion

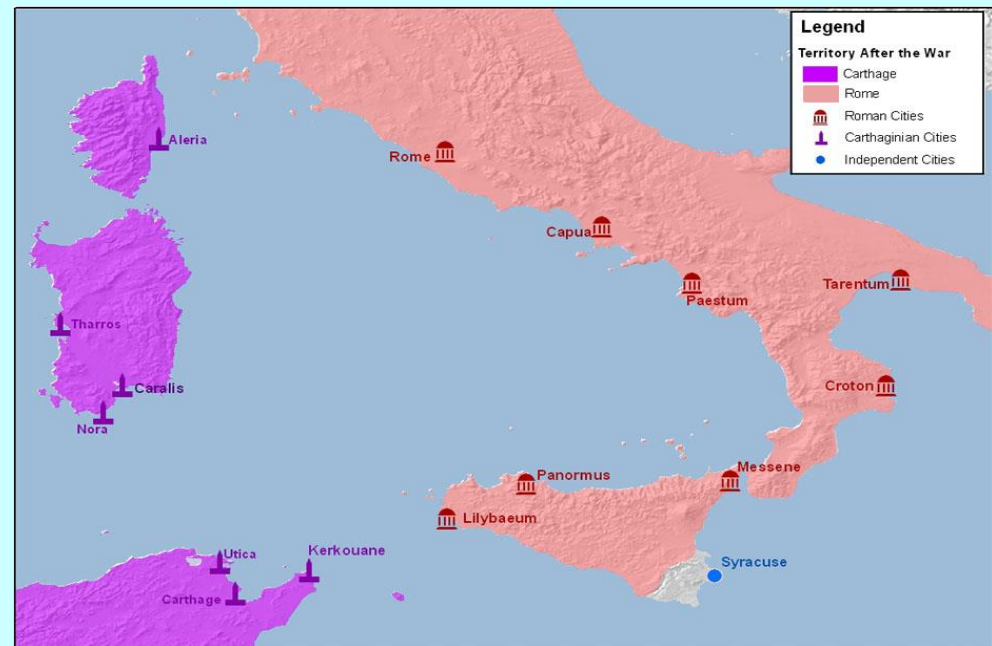
- Failure of Carthaginians to exploit naval supremacy – Hanno (land expansion in Africa) vs. Hamilcar Barca (mercantile expansionism)?
- Roman census of 247 BC – 241,212 – Livy *Epit.* 19 – compare 297,797 in 265 BC - Livy *Epit.* 16 – c.56,000 less.

“...the Carthaginians sent an embassy to Ptolemy [II Philadelphus], the son of Ptolemy the son of Lagus, king of Egypt, seeking to borrow 2000 talents. He was on terms of friendship with both Romans and Carthaginians, and he sought to bring about peace between them. As he was not able to accomplish this, he said: "It behoves one to assist friends against enemies, but not against friends.” – **Appian Sic. 1.**



Breaking the Stalemate

- A new navy to be built on loans repayable in the event of victory.
- 200 new warships – lighter, no use of *corvi*.
- 170 undermanned and under-equipped Carthaginian vessels assembled.
- Roman success at Aegades Islands – 50 ships sank, 70 captured along with 10,000 prisoners.



The Terms of Peace

A New Friendship (φιλία)

Initial terms of Latatius and Hamilcar

- Not to make war on Heiro or his allies.
- Carthage to evacuate Sicily.
- Return all prisoners without ransom.
- 2,200 Euboic talents to be paid in instalments over 20 years.

Ten commissioners

- Additional 1,000 talents to be paid immediately.
- Instalments to be repaid over 10 years.
- All islands between Sicily and Italy to be evacuated (i.e. Lipari and Aegates).
- No mercenaries to be hired from each others territory.

Revolts in Africa and Sardinia

- Mercenary revolt in Africa – “The Truceless War” (not put down till 238/7).
- Punic mercenaries rebel and kill commander in Sardinia – reinforcements further kill commander and join rebels.
- Rome seizes Sardinia (reversal of previous decision) – a further 1,200 talents imposed on Carthage.



Polybius and Thucydides

The Thucydidean model

- Polybius thought to have modelled his “pragmatic” style of historiography on Thucydides – utility over pleasure, importance of causal analysis.
- Only one explicit reference to Thucydides, not much adoption of Thucydidean phraseology.
- Comparisons – Polybius and the causes of the First Punic War:
- | | |
|---|---|
| • Mamertines appeal to Rome and Carthage | • Epidamnians appeal to Corcyra, then Corinth |
| • Mamertine appeal to Carthage prompts Roman fears and action | • Corcyra reacts by making alliance with Athens, sparks Spartan fears |
| • Protracted deliberations over justice and expediency, allusion to Thucydides? | |

The Prize of Sicily

- Roman fears of encirclement by Carthaginian control in Sicily.
- Sicily allowing for expansion in the East.
- Slower Romans using “ravens” to restrict movement of swifter more experience Carthaginian fleet. (1.22).
- Idea of repeated patterns of history – Polybius’ *anacyclosis*
- Spartan fears of Athenian expansion in Sicily – Alcibiades speech
- Sicily allowing for expansion in the West.
- Slower Syracusans using “iron hands” to restrict movement of swifter more experience Athenian fleet. (7.65.2).

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