

More debatable is whether there was one Carthaginian citizenship or two. A limited level of citizenship perhaps applied to former slaves of citizen masters, if a number of inscriptions in Punic do refer to such people – for instance one Safot, *š Šdn bd* Milkyaton son of Yatonbaal son of Milkyaton, a phrase sometimes interpreted as ‘slave freed thanks to’ Milkyaton (but, on another interpretation, simply ‘slave of’ Milkyaton), and a Hannobaal or Hannibal who records himself as willingly re-entering the employ, or service, of a man named Esmunhalos. There seems a slight hint that both men owed a debt to their patrons – moral, legal, perhaps monetary too – rather as Roman freedmen did to their old masters even though they too were now Roman citizens.

Another hint of a superior rank of citizen might be seen in the Greek text of a treaty between Hannibal (in Italy) and King Philip V of Macedon in 215, which in one clause uses a unique term, ‘the lord [or ruling] Carthaginians’ (*kyrious Karchedonious*). Since the Carthaginians are repeatedly mentioned elsewhere in the treaty without the epithet, however, it may simply be a diplomatically ceremonious usage; or perhaps, as has also been suggested, a copying mistake for *Tyrious* with the phrase meaning ‘the Carthaginians of (or from) Tyre’. Carthage’s bonds with her mother city were famously strong, and there were other cities called *Qart-hadasht* in the western Mediterranean: notably the one on the gulf of Hammamet usually known by the Greek version of its name, Neapolis, and the showpiece capital of Punic Spain (New Carthage to the Romans, and Cartagena today) which had recently been founded by Hannibal’s brother-in-law.

A third item sometimes used to back the theory of full and lesser citizens comes from New Carthage. When it was captured by the Roman general Scipio in 209, Polybius reports, his ten thousand prisoners included its citizens and two thousand artisans. Scipio set the citizens and their families free, while promising the artisans that they would eventually be freed too, if they worked faithfully for the Roman war effort. They evidently were not citizens of New Carthage (or presumably of Carthage), but it does not follow that they were half-citizens. If not migrants from other Spanish communities who had come to work in the city, they were probably slaves owned by the citizens. Their case, therefore, does not support the idea that Carthage – any more than New Carthage – had a class of lesser or restricted citizens.<sup>11</sup>

While a Carthaginian citizen probably had the same rights as his fellows, inequalities of wealth, birth, education and opportunity

### III

## STATE AND GOVERNMENT

### CITIZENS AND ARISTOCRATS

Carthage in recorded times was a republic: that is, a state with regularly elected officials accountable to their fellow citizens. This was a political structure that developed well after her foundation. As the example of Tyre shows, her Phoenician forebears were ruled by kings, monarchy being the standard governmental format of the Near and Middle East. It would be natural for the colonies of the Phoenician diaspora to begin in the same style, even if changes came later. In turn, throughout her history Carthage was dominated by a wealthy élite who can conveniently be called aristocrats. This was not a fixed or narrow group, all the same – even more than at Rome, membership of the aristocracy was flexible, open to talent and money, and keenly competed for.

What made a Carthaginian a Carthaginian, socially and legally, is obscure. Presumably anyone who could plausibly trace his (or her) ancestry back to the founders counted. The later Roman poet Silius Italicus, in his lengthy epic on the Second Punic War, claims this pedigree for Hannibal – though in choosing Elissa-Dido’s father and brother as the general’s forebears and naming them Belus and Barca he is probably drawing on nothing more than a fanciful imagination. We shall see, though, that some Carthaginians down the ages did name several ancestors on inscriptions: obviously they took pride in their genealogy. Of course a mere claim to ancestry would hardly be enough. Citizenship gave rights and benefits as well as imposing duties, so that a legal basis was surely essential. While at Rome the citizen lists were maintained by the five-yearly censors, no official with this stated function is known at Carthage; but the republic had quite a range of magistrates and other administrators, to be introduced shortly, some of whom may well have had census-taking duties.

were as present as in democratic Athens or at Rome. Greek writers stressed the importance of wealth as well as ancestry and merit. Effective and sometimes official supremacy remained for lengthy periods in the hands of one or other influential family: Mago's in the later 6th and the 5th Centuries, Hamilcar Barca's two hundred years later. Ordinary Carthaginians could at times play an important or even crucial part in decision-making, as will be shown, but it was invariably under the leadership or instigation of an aristocrat and his equally aristocratic friends.

According to Aristotle, Carthaginians belonged to 'associations' (in Greek, *betairiai*). These probably were the *mizrahm* (*mizrehim*) attested on inscriptions both of Carthaginian times and at North African towns later. He mentions them in the context of communal meals (*syssitia*), a social custom that he compares to a similar one that he has been discussing at Sparta in Greece. Regular communal meals often feature in social relations ancient and modern, especially when practised by specific groups – Oxford and Cambridge colleges today come to mind, their Hellenistic equivalent being perhaps the *syssition* of scholars at the Museum of Alexandria. Spartan associations each had a fixed, small number, were governed by strict rules, and all citizens were required to be members partly because the practice was linked to military service.

Whether every Carthaginian citizen had to belong to an 'association' is not known. The 'Marseilles Tariff', a Carthaginian inscription found in the French city, extensively details the payments in cash and in kind due to priests performing sacrifices on people's behalf, then affirms in comprehensive fashion that 'a *mizreb*, or a family' [sometimes translated 'a clan'], 'or a *mizreb* of a god', or indeed 'all persons who shall offer a sacrifice' must pay the amounts set down in the official register. Even on a cautious interpretation, the associations seem to have been quite numerous: some were devoted to the cult of a particular deity (its priests and attendants, most likely), while others were secular – guilds of craftsmen, groups of ex-magistrates, and maybe men who had served closely together in war. For them to share a common meal on particular occasions would be a natural instinct. It would also contribute to social interaction and mutual support if, as in Spartan *betairiai*, members of a *mizreb* came from a range of economic and family circles.

There are isolated mentions of group dinners which could be *syssitia*: for instance an ambitious and wealthy Hanno in the mid-4th Century was accused of plotting a coup d'état by scheming to poison the entire senate at a banquet in his house on his daughter's wedding

day, while distracting the common people with feasts 'in the public colonnades' (see Chapter VIII). In 193 a Tyrian agent of Hannibal's, went to contact the exiled general's supporters in the city, aroused much comment 'at social gatherings and dinners', Livy reports; these probably included such meals, though obviously not them alone. Beyond this, the role of communal meals and *mizrehim* at Carthage is opaque. No Carthaginian commemorates himself or herself on an inscription as a member of one or as acting in connection with one, or is so described by an ancient writer. If the associations played any specific part in the assembly of the citizens, we are not told of it either.<sup>12</sup>

### CARTHAGINIAN NAMES

Family groups and political friendships at Carthage are inadequately known, partly because written sources only occasionally specify them (like the Magonids, and Hannibal's family the 'Barcids'), and partly because Carthaginians bore only single names, like Greeks, and leading historical figures made use of only a narrow range of these. A good five hundred different names, men's and women's, are known from *stelae* and other documentary materials, with nearly all of them derived from the name of one or other deity. So for instance Yadamilk bore a name connected with Melqart, Tyre's city-god, and Pygmalion is based on the (obscure) Pumay, a god commemorated on the ancient Nora stone. Names compounded with Baal, Astarte, Melqart and other divinities were especially common, although the great Carthaginian goddess Tanit seems never to be called on in this way.

In Greek and Roman narratives, many Punic names were modified into forms conventionally used today. Abdmilqart or Habdmilqart (servant of Melqart) became Hamilcar, Abdastart (servant of Astarte) was reduced to Bostar, Bodmilqart (in Melqart's service) to Bomilcar, Gersakun (fear of Sakun, another obscure god) to Gisco and Gesco, Saponibaal (may Baal watch over me) to Sophoniba – the name of the most famous Carthaginian woman after Elissa-Dido – and, as noted earlier, Zakarbaal (Baal, remember me) to Sicerbas and Acherbas. On the other hand the names Hannibal (Baal be gracious to me), Hanno (grace be to him), Himilco (Milkot or Melqart is my brother), Maharbal (hasten, Baal), and Mago (a shortened form of Magonbaal, 'may Baal grant') stayed more or less the same.

Despite the many other names, six hundred or so, that were available to Carthaginians – Baalshillek, Esmunhalos, Hannesmun,

Milkaton, Mirtunbaal, Pumayyehawwiyo, Safot, Salombaal (the origin of the name 'Salammbô'), Yadamilk and Yatonbaal are only some less-known examples – the written historical records offer an often baffling repetition of just a dozen or so borne by leaders, generals, politicians and priests: Adherbal, Bomilcar, Bostar, Carthalo, Gisco, Hamilcar, Hannibal, Hanno, Hasdrubal, Himilco, Mago and Maharbal. On Carthaginian inscriptions too, some of these names are found by the hundred, for instance nearly eight hundred Hamilcars and over six hundred Bomilcars, four hundred-odd Magos, and a relatively spare three hundred or so Hannibals.

Prominent Carthaginians took pride in their ancestry and so must have kept up some form of family records, but nothing remains save for some claims on *stelae*. This makes it hard, or impossible, to work out family connections more closely than across two or occasionally three generations, unless a source expressly gives details. The powerful descendants of the city's 6th-Century leader Mago carried on his dominance of the republic down to the early 4th; but although one of these Magonids was named Hamilcar and his grandson was a Hannibal, no link is known with the family of Hamilcar nicknamed Barca and his sons Hannibal, Hasdrubal and Mago, who with their kinsmen were prominent – and mostly dominant – in Carthaginian affairs for the half-century from 247 on. Wider connections across aristocratic society, such as those which can be worked out for many periods in Roman history, are entirely elusive.

#### PRAISE FROM GREEKS

In the ancient versions of the foundation of Carthage, as shown earlier, the city's establishment began with a queen, a high priest of Baal (so we may interpret Justin's 'Jupiter'), an admiral (if Livy was correct), and a number of high-ranking other Tyrians. Virgil or, more likely, someone later interpolating a line into the *Aeneid*, depicts Elissa-Dido's people as framing a constitution and choosing magistrates and a senate while Carthage is still being built – in other words, setting up a republican system. This is fanciful yet significant, since it shows the impact made on later memory by that system.

The political structure of the republic is not very satisfactorily known. It is a noteworthy object lesson, in fact, of the difficulties posed by evidence varying in depth, time and language. It has to be pieced together from Aristotle's limited 4th-Century description, and some few statements in other writers from Herodotus to

Justin. It was praised by more than one Greek thinker. Around 368, the political theorist and orator Isocrates called it and the Spartan system the best of any state (he liked their authoritarian aspects). Aristotle in the 340s and 330s praises it in his turn, along with Sparta again and the cities of Crete, as a mainly sound blend of his three basic political schemas – monarchy, aristocracy (rule by the best men, the *aristoi*) and democracy, each one limited by the functions of the other two. Monarchy for him was embodied in the chief magistrates who were elected by citizens for fixed terms; aristocracy in the *gerousia* (body of elders, or senate) who needed the guidance of the magistrates and could be contradicted by the people; and democracy in the shape of the citizen assembly, which was guided by the other two arms of government but could still make up its own mind.

This is an idealised, or at least theorised, portrait of Carthage's political system. Aristotle leaves a great deal out that could help to clarify how it actually worked, and in places is generalised or opaque on what officials and institutional bodies did in practice. Nor does he mention the dominance of the Magonid family in the republic's affairs – from the middle or later 6th Century until only a few decades before he wrote – unless he refers to it when remarking cryptically that Carthage had changed from 'tyranny' (in other words arbitrary autocracy) to aristocracy. On the other hand, this would make his much-admired Carthaginian constitution a coin of very recent minting, an aspect not hinted at in his overall treatment of it. Rather, then, he may be referring to the abolition or neutralisation of the kingship at some much earlier time.<sup>13</sup>

#### CHIEF MAGISTRATES: THE SUFETES

The chief officials of the republic were an annually elected pair of 'sufetes', a title which Punic inscriptions and some Latin writers attest, although Greeks – and even Carthaginians writing in Greek, as we shall see – invariably use the term 'king' or 'kings' (*basileus*, *basileis*). Aristotle stresses that wealth and birth were both needed in seeking high office, plainly implying that both were legally required. On the other hand he mentions no details about a minimum requisite level of wealth, for instance, or how distinction of birth was defined. We can infer that Carthaginian ancestry on both parents' sides was not essential, for Hamilcar the 'king' in 480 had a Greek mother; but notable ancestors on at least one side must have been.

Cicero's contemporary Cornelius Nepos mentions that there were two *sufetes* – he too writes 'kings' – elected each year, and several Carthaginian inscriptions date a year by a pair of *sufetes*' names. Two yearly *sufetes* are also recorded, most of them in Roman times, at Libyan and Sardinian cities that retained Carthaginian cultural usages. A passing comment by Plato the philosopher shows him, too, taking for granted that Carthaginian magistrates served annually. A pair a year can thus be accepted as Carthage's historical norm. Evidence for more than two is fragile – for instance Cato the Censor, in the 2nd Century, seeming to write of four *sufetes* collaborating in some action like levying or paying troops. Unfortunately we have only a very scrawpily preserved sentence with no context; Cato may perhaps have been reporting an action taken over two successive years. If more than two a year ever were elected, most likely this happened seldom.<sup>14</sup>

*Sufetes* as supreme magistrates were a development of the 6th Century or, possibly, the late 7th. A damaged Punic votive *stèle* of around 500–450 seems to be dated – though the reading is debated – to 'the twentieth year of the rule of the *sufetes* in Carthage'. There is no independent evidence to confirm this information, and another reading of the *stèle* gives 'in the one hundred and twentieth year' while a third interpretation sees no dating in it at all. If either of the numerals is correct, it implies that the monarchy had lasted at least two or maybe even three hundred years, until 620 or later. If not, the best we can infer is that by the later 4th Century, Aristotle's time, the *sufeteship* was certainly the supreme office.<sup>15</sup>

In an earlier period of Carthage's history, it is just possible that only one *sufete* existed: for instance, perhaps 'Malchus' in the 6th Century (if he existed) and perhaps the '*basileus*' Hamilcar who fought the Sicilian Greeks in 480 were sole *sufetes* as well as generals. One person holding more than one office at a time was common enough at Carthage when Aristotle wrote, and more than likely was a long-established usage. It is just as conceivable, though, that in the first centuries of the republic there were already two *sufetes*: one could take the field as military commander when necessary, while the other remained at home in charge of civil affairs. Limiting their functions to civil and home affairs would then have occurred later. When they do appear in Greek and Roman accounts, they are running the affairs of the republic in consultation with the senate, and – in later times at least – judging civil lawsuits.

*Sufetes* is Livy's Latin version of Punic *šptm* (*shophbetim*, *shuphetim* or *sofetim*), a title often mentioned in inscriptions at Carthage and

other Phoenician colonies which had the same office. It is equivalent to the biblical *shophetim*, conventionally translated 'judges'. The difficulty with tracing developments is Greek writers mentioning a Carthaginian 'king' or 'kings' but never a '*sufete*'. Herodotus describes Hamilcar, the general who fought the Sicilian Greeks in 480, as 'king of the Carthaginians' – 'because of his valour', he explains – while Diodorus reports how in 410 the city chose its leading man Hannibal, who was 'at that time king by law', as general for another Sicilian offensive. For another Sicilian war in 396 they 'appointed Himilco king by law'; and did so again with Mago in 383, except that this time Diodorus leaves out the term 'by law'. Himilco was already in Sicily as general, so Diodorus' report of his appointment as 'king by law' is best explained as Himilco's being elected *sufete* for the new year while continuing in the Sicilian command. The other men too, with the possible exception of Hamilcar, can hardly be anything but *sufetes*: how a *sufete* could also be a general will be explored later.<sup>16</sup>

Obvious family pride appears in inscriptions that list a dedicator's ancestors going back three or more generations. One document naming the two *sufetes* together with two generals in an unknown year includes six generations of the forefathers of one general, Abdmilqart, and three for the other, *Abd'ys* (Abdarish). On another, a man named Baalay lists five generations, of whom the earliest had been a *sufete* and his son perhaps a *rab* (another office, soon to be looked at). Women also commemorated their forebears, as does Arishat daughter of Bodmilqart son of Hannibaal on a votive *stèle*. Rather overdoing it, in turn, was one *Pn* 'of the nation of Carthage', dedicator of a *stèle* at Olbia in Sardinia, who lists no fewer than sixteen forefathers – a family record going back a good four hundred years. None of these, nor *Pn* himself, held an office, but this vividly illuminates the ancestral claims that ambitious men might parade in their political careers. A candidate who could point to *sufetes* or at least 'great ones' (senators) among his forebears surely found it an advantage.

When Aristotle describes the 'kings' (*basileis*) as the city's chief magistrates, who act in consultation with the Carthaginian senate, he plainly means elected office-holders. Nor does he suggest anywhere that a titular king still existed too, even though he discusses other official bodies like the senate and the 'pentarchies'. In a famous confrontation with Roman envoys in 218, the Carthaginian spokesman in the senate is termed the *basileus* by Polybius: this must mean a *sufete*. An inscription in Greek, set up by a

Carthaginian named Himilco ('Iomilkos' in the text) on the Aegean island of Delos in 279, terms him a *basileus* too, so the term was not simply a literary usage. Again, it should mean that Himilco was or had been a *sufete*.<sup>17</sup>

The *sufete* is sometimes called a 'praetor' by Latin writers (including Livy once), borrowing the title of Roman magistrates with judicial authority, and once or twice a 'king' as in Greek writers – or even a 'consul', the name of the highest office at Rome. It may be that the *sufete* or *sufetes* began under the kings as judicial officers, hence their title; then acquired greater authority over time, until the king was sidelined and eventually not replaced (though some scholars think that the office survived at least in name). His replacement by elected *sufetes* may well have come about from pressure, if nothing worse, by Carthage's council of elders or senate, whose predecessors at Phoenician cities had always been a powerful makeweight to the monarchs.

#### ADIRIM: THE SENATE OF CARTHAGE

Phoenician kings always had to collaborate with their city's leading men, who from early times formed a recognised council of advisors as the 'mighty ones' or 'great ones' ('*drm*', approximately pronounced *adirim*). At Carthage this became the senate, as the Romans called it; in Greek terminology the *gerousia*. As just noted, the 'great ones' quite possibly were responsible for the effective end of the monarchy, with the *sufetes* as a limited substitute for it – like the consulship at Rome – which at least some leading men could look forward to holding turn by turn. Whether they were always elected by the whole citizen body, or at first by the '*drm*' with popular election developing later, is not known. Nor how senators themselves were recruited, or even how many there were at any time, although two or even three hundred is likely as we shall see. The building where they usually met seems to have been close to the great market square (*agora* to Greeks) which was the hub of business and administration, but we do read of two meetings held in the temple of 'Aesculapius', in other words of Eshmun on Byrsa hill.

The senate had varied and broad authority, to judge from our sources. As usual the glimpses are given by writers from Herodotus in the 5th Century to much later ones like Appian and Justin, so that generalisations have to be fairly careful. Again Aristotle gives the fullest sketch. The 'kings' convened and consulted the body on

affairs of state; if they unanimously agreed on what action to take, this could be taken without any need to put the issue before the assembled citizens. On the other hand, some decisions taken by *sufetes* and senate in agreement could still be put before the assembly, which had the power to reject them. Again, if both *sufetes* – or by implication even one – disagreed with the senate on a matter, the question would go to the assembly. How often this happened, and what questions might be put to the people, the philosopher avoids stating.

What procedures and protocols governed the senate's debates is not known, nor is it clear whether changes in its protocol and range of functions took place over the centuries. Polybius does claim that by the time of the Second Punic War the republic had become 'more democratic' – something he is not enthusiastic about, even hinting that it cost Carthage the war – which would suggest that in earlier ages senate and *sufetes* had seldom needed to involve the assembly in decision-making. His claim, however, seems overdone. During and after the war the senate can be found directing diplomatic, financial and even military measures, just it had done for centuries. And on the other hand, Aristotle sees fit to describe the Carthage of his own time, a century before Polybius, first as a blend of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy (with aristocracy dominant), and later as 'democratically ruled': perhaps a clumsy generalisation, but a noteworthy one.

The range of functions of the *adirim* was at least as broad as the Roman senate's. They decided on war and peace, though the decision probably needed ratification by the assembly of citizens, as Diodorus mentions happening in 397. They handled foreign relations to the point of deciding on war and peace: for example rejecting the victorious invader Regulus' harsh peace terms in 256, receiving Roman envoys in 218 and accepting their declaration of a Second Punic War, and conversely in 149 themselves declaring war in defiance of the Roman forces surrounding the city. In military affairs, we find the senate in 310 reprimanding (and putting in fear of their lives) the generals who had failed to prevent Agathocles' Syracusan expedition from landing. After Hannibal's victory at Cannae in 216, it authorised fresh forces to go to Sardinia and Spain, and reinforcements with sizeable funds for Hannibal. In 147 it issued (fruitless) criticisms of the savage treatment of Roman prisoners by Hasdrubal, the commanding general in the besieged city.

Some domestic decisions are recorded too. In the mid-4th Century, in a fit of anti-Greek feeling, the *adirim* issued a decree (ultimately

repealed) forbidding the study of that language. In 195 after Hannibal left Carthage to avoid victimisation, they were forced to promise to take whatever steps against him might be demanded by envoys just arrived from Rome. No doubt it was a senate decree (even if ratified by the assembly) that proceeded to confiscate his property, raze his house, and formally banish him.<sup>18</sup>

Measures like these would be decreed on the *sufetes'* proposal, as Aristotle indicates. There must have been sharp debates at times: for example, leading up to the decision in 256 to fight on – for the Carthaginians themselves had earlier asked for terms. Certainly there was some opposition to peace in 202, even after Hannibal lost the battle of Zama, forcing Hannibal himself to exert pressure on his fellow senators and on the citizen assembly too to accept Scipio's terms. Nonetheless, when a powerful faction dominated the state, the *sufetes'* proposals and the senate's decisions naturally obeyed factional wishes, whatever arguments opponents might put. Livy's and Appian's pictures of the senate's small anti-Barcid group speaking against the Barcids' policies to no avail may be imaginative in detail, but illustrate fairly well what the situation must have been like.

Livy once mentions a smaller senatorial body too. The peace embassy sent to Scipio Africanus in 203 consisted, he says, of thirty senators called 'the more sacred council', termed the dominant element in the senate. No such body appears under this name elsewhere, but now and again other delegations of thirty leading senators do: conceivably this 'more sacred council' again. One delegation persuaded the feuding generals Hamilcar and Hanno to cooperate against the Libyan rebels in 238; one in 202 – surely the same body as the year before, though Livy does not comment – was sent out to ask peace from Scipio after his victory over Hannibal; a third, according to Diodorus, was delegated to learn the invading Romans' demands in 149. All the same, these seem rather demeaning, even if necessary, missions for the supposedly most powerful body in the republic's most powerful institution. Greek writers, including Polybius and Diodorus, do not help clarity by mentioning at various times a Carthaginian *gerousia* ('body of elders'), *synkletos* ('summoned body') and *synedrion* ('sitting body'), without explaining the distinctions. All three terms are applied by Greeks to the Roman senate, which had no inner council. Efforts to treat *synkletos* or else *gerousia* in Carthaginian contexts as indicating the 'more sacred council', and the other two terms as referring to the *adirim*, have no firm evidence to rest on. No Punic inscription describes anyone as member of such an inner body, either.

If the 'more sacred council' did exist, at least in the 3rd and 2nd centuries, we could see it (given the absence of any specific details) as a largely honorific body of eminent senators – probably *ex-sufetes* – whose experience and high repute could be called on in difficult situations. They could also have exerted real though unofficial influence in normal affairs. If Livy's term 'more sacred' has any specific validity, it may be that the members also held high-ranking priesthoods, conferring added solemnity on the council.

### THE MYSTERIOUS 'PENTARCHIES'

Another arm of government is mentioned, all too succinctly again, by Aristotle and no one else: the 'pentarchies' or five-man commissions. New members were co-opted by existing ones, members served without pay, and the commissions controlled 'many important matters', including judging cases at law. None of these features is described in any fuller detail. Nor is the philosopher very clear in explaining how (or why) commissioners had lengthier tenures of position than other officials: 'they are in power after they have gone out of office and before they have actually entered upon it'. As it stands, this seems to make it pointless for them to have a stated term of office at all, and to imply that there might often be more than five members of a commission in practice.

Carthaginian inscriptions make no mention of anyone belonging to a five-man commission, but do attest a board or commission of ten for sacred places and one of thirty supervising taxes. Were the pentarchies, or some of them, subdivisions of these? Also attested are officials called 'treasurers' or 'accountants' (*mššbm* sounded as *mehashbim*), whose powers included penalising persons who failed to pay customs dues. If Aristotle is correct that the pentarchies handled many important matters and could try cases, either their tasks clashed with the work of these officials or – much likelier – the *mššbm* formed one or more of the pentarchies. Carthage's institutions are so opaquely known that these interpretations are a reasonable possibility. Standard public tasks like taxes, sacred places and judicial affairs perhaps seemed to call for lengthier terms of administrative office (three to five years?) for greater continuity. Even so, Aristotle's dictum about pentarchy members holding their positions both before and after they were pentarchy members remains a puzzle.<sup>19</sup>

One official at Carthage is known almost entirely from Punic inscriptions: the *rb* or *rab*, meaning 'chief' or 'head'. A hundred or

so men are termed *rab* in the documents without accompanying description, implying an office different from the *rb kbmm* (*rab kohanim*, chief of priests) and *rb mhnt* (*rab mahanet*, 'head of the army' or general). This *rab* seems to have been in charge of state finances, equivalent then to a treasurer. If so, this was the official whom Livy terms 'quaestor', using a Roman title again, who in 196 defied the newly-elected reforming *sufete* Hannibal until taught a sharp lesson. (At Gades in 206 we read of a *quaestor*, too, presumably that city's *rab*.) He presumably had the *mhšbm* as his subordinates, although the inscriptions mentioning these do not refer to him. An inscription mentioning one person, it seems, as *rab* 'for the third time' (*rb šlš*, approximately *rab shelos*) suggests – along with the large number of *rabim* known – that it was a position with a time-limit. So does Livy's report that the 'quaestor' defied Hannibal because he knew that, after holding office, he would automatically join the powerful and virtually impregnable 'order of judges' (on which more below). The office was probably annual, like a *sufete*'s.

It must have given plenty of opportunities for holders to enrich themselves. Both Aristotle and Polybius tell us that Carthaginians in their day viewed giving bribes as normal in public life, including bribes for election votes. The philosopher comments, in a different context, that it was perfectly normal for Carthaginian officials to practise money-making activities (adding tartly 'and no revolution has yet occurred'). Profiting from public revenues, which he also notices, was a natural extension (rather optimistically, he thinks that wealthy men like Carthaginian officials would be less tempted). In one known period at least, it had become so severe that it was affecting the republic's ability to pay its way: Hannibal was elected *sufete* partly to deal with it – and his first confrontation was with the chief of finances.

One more feature noted by Aristotle, disapprovingly, is that the same man could hold more than one office at the same time. A votive *stèle* interestingly commemorates one Hanno, *sufete* and chief of priests (*rb kbmm*, or *rab kohanim*), son of Abdmilqart (Hamilcar) who again had been *sufete* and chief of priests. Of course the *sufeteship* was a one-year office, while the priesthood was permanent. Aristotle no doubt was thinking more of non-religious combinations, like being *sufete* and *rab* together, or even *sufete* and general. Though no clear evidence for *sufete-rab* combinations exists, it is possible that occasionally a *sufete* might indeed become a general too.<sup>20</sup>

## THE GENERALS

At some moment in the city's history a further position was created, that of general (*rb mhnt*, approximately pronounced *rab mahanet*; in Greek, *strategos*). Officially this innovation separated military duties from civil, a contrast with Rome where the consuls regularly and praetors sometimes had to carry out both. The Carthaginians perhaps initiated their generalship in the middle or later 6th Century, when they began sending military forces over to Sicily and Sardinia. Even if they did, it looks as though the office down to the early 4th Century could still, as suggested above, be taken on by a *sufete* should the situation demand it. That would explain examples mentioned earlier, such as Hamilcar in 480, Himilco in 396, and Mago as late as 383 – 'kings' appointed to commands in Sicily. As mentioned above too, Isocrates in an effusive paean to authoritarian rule matches Carthage and Sparta as two states 'ruled oligarchically at home and monarchically at war'. This is not a sign that Carthage still had real kings active in affairs, for he also praises his contemporary the ruthless tyrant (in modern terms, dictator) of Syracuse, Dionysius I. But it may be a sign that her 'kings' – that is, *sufetes* – still led armies at least on important campaigns in his time.

All the same, over these centuries there were probably plenty of military tasks not important or enticing enough for a *sufete*. These could be handled by men who held the generalship alone, whether or not they had been *sufetes* or later became *sufetes*. By Aristotle's day (it is clear) a general was not normally a *sufete* at the same time. But generals too were elected, and the office was enough of a political prize for men to pay perfectly good bribes to obtain it. A century later, effective control of affairs rested with the elected generals of the Barcid family (Hannibal's father and brother-in-law, and Hannibal himself), none of whom is recorded as being *sufete* along with being general. Instead they were able, it seems, to get kinsmen and supporters elected to *sufeteships* year after year, not to mention to other generalships as needed.

A general did not serve for a fixed term, for obvious reasons. The appointment seems to have been for the length of a war, or at any rate until another general was chosen to take over command. Then again, more than one *rab mahanet* could be chosen for military operations: most obviously if land operations (in Sicily for instance) needed one commander and naval operations another, or for commitments in different regions. In North Africa itself, during the great revolt by Carthage's mercenary troops and

Libyan subjects from 241 to 237, two generals – Hamilcar Barca and his one-time friend, then rival, Hanno ‘the Great’ – held equal-ranking generalships, which caused friction. In an effort to improve collaboration, Hanno was replaced for a time by a more cooperative commander who, in practice if not in law, acted as Hamilcar’s subordinate.

This is not the only evidence that, at times, one general might be appointed as deputy to another. Two Punic inscriptions have the term *rb šny* (vocalised approximately *rab šeni*), or an abbreviated *hšn*, each of which seems to mean ‘second general’. They imply subordinate commanders and, although details are entirely lacking (save that the *hšn* was a Hasdrubal), such an arrangement is often reported in narratives of Carthage’s later wars. Thus in 397 Himilco, the general in Sicily, had an ‘admiral’ (*naurachos* in Diodorus) named Mago leading his fleet, while a century and a half later, in 250, Adherbal in command there had a naval deputy, one Hannibal, whom Polybius terms a ‘trierarch’. Hamilcar Barca later appointed his son-in-law Hasdrubal ‘trierarch’ when operating in Spain in the 230s, even though Hasdrubal’s naval tasks were minor by all accounts: the equivalent term in Punic had perhaps become the normal one for a general’s immediate deputy, whatever his duties.<sup>21</sup>

Certainly the practice of a supreme general with subordinates became the norm over the nearly four decades of Barcid dominance after 237. Polybius emphasises Hannibal’s direction of all military affairs during the Second Punic War, which at its height involved up to seven generals in different theatres. Hannibal commanded in Italy with another officer acting semi-independently under him; three generals – two of them his brothers Hasdrubal and Mago – operated in Spain against the invading Romans; a sixth commanded an expeditionary army in Sicily; and a seventh (apparently another Barcid kinsman, Bomilcar) led out the navy on several rather fruitless sorties. After peace with Rome in 201, with all warfare now effectively banned, what was done with the generals is unknown. Either they became civil (or ornamental) officials, or they lapsed altogether until the Carthaginians unwisely decided to fight Numidia half a century later. In their final war with Rome, they seem to have had two separate and equal generals again: one operating in the countryside, the other defending the besieged city (Chapter XII).

## NEMESIS OF GENERALS: THE COURT OF ONE HUNDRED AND FOUR

The state was notoriously draconian in dealing with its defeated generals. In later times at least, the penalty for failure was crucifixion, as happened for instance to Hanno, the admiral beaten by the Romans in 241. We are told that fear of punishment was always in the mind of Carthaginian commanders, and we read of one or two who killed themselves to avoid it (the corpse of one such, Mago in 344 or 343, was itself crucified instead). The process of judging unsatisfactory military performance must originally have been carried out by the senate and *sufetes* (or possibly one of the pentarchies, but a five-man court for such serious indictments seems unlikely). A change, though, came in the 5th Century or early in the 4th, when a special tribunal was created for the purpose (Chapter VIII).

This was the body which Aristotle calls the One Hundred and Four. He also calls it ‘the greatest authority’ at Carthage, with members chosen solely on merit: but does not say what it actually did apart from likening it to the five ephors at Sparta. The comparison looks excessive, for Sparta’s ephors not only supervised (and could prosecute) the Spartan kings but dealt, too, with large areas of administration both civil and military – areas which at Carthage were handled by the pentarchies, on Aristotle’s own evidence, or officials like the *rab* and the generals (on evidence from other sources, inscriptions included). But Justin reports a hundred-strong senatorial court being set up during Magonid times to scrutinise generals’ actions. This must be the same body. Thus the court of One Hundred and Four was the authority that convicted and executed delinquent generals. After a time its supervision may have widened to generals’ subordinates too. An officer was crucified in 264 for giving up the occupied city of Messana in Sicily without a fight, the same punishment that the court inflicted on unsatisfactory generals, and so perhaps a case of its now judging other military miscreants. What body had previously dealt with such officers we do not know – maybe one of the pentarchies. Aristotle’s comparison with the ephors would certainly be more understandable if, even in his day, the One Hundred and Four was beginning to encroach on other bodies’ functions.

Why there were one hundred and four judges is not known; the figure has been doubted because Aristotle also writes simply of one hundred, as does Justin. One suggestion, if one hundred and four is



correct (and 'one hundred' just a rounding-down), is that the two *sufetes* and two other officials (the *rab* and the *rab kobanim*?) could have been members *ex officio*. The ordinary judges were senators selected by the pentarchies, on unknown criteria save for the merit stated by Aristotle, and they served on the court for life.<sup>22</sup>

Supposedly then it was the One Hundred and Four who kept the republic's generals on the straight and narrow in wars, and for the same reason caused them too often to be over-cautious. Yet how impartial its judgements were may be wondered, especially when feelings ran high after a defeat or – worse – a lost war. Generals, and often if not always their lieutenants, were senators themselves: this meant having friends and enemies among the *adirim* and participating in Carthage's vigorous, at times embittered, politics. Such connections could be pivotal to the outcome of a prosecution whatever the merits of the case itself. Punishments or threats of punishment are rarely recorded. Crucifixion did await Hanno, the admiral whose defeat at the Aegates Islands in 241 forced Carthage to sue for peace, yet twenty years earlier a defeated general, another Hanno, not only survived (though heavily fined) but five years later was commanding a section of the navy. Hamilcar Barca, who had to negotiate the invidious peace terms with Rome in 241, was threatened with trial when he returned home, but nothing came of it. Nor was Hannibal prosecuted after the disaster of Zama.

#### THE ASSEMBLY OF CITIZENS

The citizen assembly was called simply '*m* (*ham*), 'the people'. It most probably met in the city's great marketplace, called the *agora* by Greeks. In later centuries this lay south-east of Byrsa and near the sea; earlier, before the city expanded in that direction, the original *agora* may have been on the low ground between Byrsa and the shore to its east.

The earliest possible mention of the '*m* as a political body is in Justin's story of 'Malchus', thus after 550. Returning from abroad with his army to punish his ungrateful enemies, that general summoned 'the people' to explain his grievances, complain that his fellow-citizens had tolerated his enemies' behaviour, but then grant them – the citizens – his magnanimous forgiveness. He then 'restored the city to its laws', meaning lawful government. If correct, this is a picture of a citizenry which at least was treated with a degree of respect. Whether restoring lawful government implied, among other

things, restoring political functions to the '*m* is only a guess, but at some date the assembly gained the power to elect magistrates and – probably as a later development – to vote on policy decisions.

Its normal share in affairs by Aristotle's time involved voting on decisions passed by the senate, resolving a deadlock between the senate and one or both *sufetes*, and electing *sufetes*, generals, and other officials like the *rab*. As already noted, Aristotle shows that even some decisions agreed on by senate and *sufetes* were still put to the assembly. On such occasions the *sufetes* 'do not merely let the people sit and listen to the decisions that have been taken by their rulers' but allow free discussion (a concession unique to Carthage, he notes), and even then 'the people have the sovereign decision'. This must mean that the assembly could reject the proposals, just as it decided the issue when there was a deadlock. Later on the philosopher remarks that Carthage was a 'democratically ruled' state; rather an exaggeration, but a passing acknowledgement that the assembly's role was both important and, at times, decisive.

These functions seem reasonably robust for a citizen assembly in the ancient world. It is therefore puzzling to read Polybius' disapproving claim that in Hannibal's day 'the people' (meaning the citizen body) had the greatest say. After all we still find the *adirim* making the major decisions then – even in his own account of events, such as going to war with Rome in 218 and discussing peace in 203. No doubt these would in turn be put before the *ham* for ratification, but that was not new. The best surmise must be that by 218 every decision of *sufetes* and senate, not just some as previously, was formally presented to the assembly, even if merely to be ratified. The dominance of the Barcid generals down to 201, based as much on popular support as on alliance with other leading men, probably gave greater visibility to the assembly, without thereby adding to its real power. This would hardly be a huge democratic advance, but Polybius is really seeking to stress how superior Rome's 'aristocratic' political system was in those days, and he may well be pushing an over-artificial contrast.

No definite information exists about how the assembly functioned. One hypothesis comes from a Latin inscription of AD 48 commemorating a local magnate at the Libyan country town of Thugga, who received an honorary *sufeteship* from the town's senate and people 'by the votes [or the assent] of all the gates (*portae*)'. These 'gates' at Thugga must have been a voting arrangement, perhaps denoting local clans or the residents of different sectors of the town. That the citizens at Carthage likewise voted in separate groups, each called a

'gate' (š'r), is speculation all the same. Gates of the usual kind are mentioned on *stelae* or other documents – the New Gate inscription, for example – but never in connection with political or social life.<sup>23</sup>

The citizen assembly perhaps gained its greater prominence under the trauma of the great revolt of 241–237 in Africa. Citizens had to enlist and fight in battle for Carthage's survival, and they settled on Hamilcar Barca as their military and political leader during the revolt and after it. He was followed as general – in effect chief general, whether or not so titled – by his son-in-law Hasdrubal and then his eldest son Hannibal, each elected in turn by the citizen body. The Barcid faction's dominance of affairs clearly included the *adirim*, the magistrates and even the One Hundred and Four, but it always faced some opposition, and the support of the assembly may well have been the Barcids' ultimate strength.

After the peace of 201, the Barcids lost their control and the republic came under the effective (though not official) sway of the court of One Hundred and Four. Their corrupt rule, as we shall see, then brought Hannibal back as *sufete* a few years later to end the scandals and help set the state back on its feet. For the remaining decades of Carthage's life, politics and government were more vigorous than they had been in a century or more: a vitality which by a tragic irony contributed to the ultimately lethal hostility of her old enemy in Italy.

## IV THE CARTHAGINIAN 'SEA EMPIRE'

### CARTHAGE AND NORTH AFRICA

Carthage's trade and influence developed vigorously in her first two or three centuries, although only their outlines are visible. She did continue to pay a tribute to her Libyan neighbours, as mentioned earlier on Justin's evidence, and on trying to end this in the late 6th Century she was forced to back down (Chapter VIII). Along the coasts and across the western seas, on the other hand, her trade and influence made remarkable progress, especially after 600 (Map 3A).

To begin with, it was natural for the city to plant or support settlements along the neighbouring North African coasts, as ports of call for trade and centres for Carthaginian citizens needing fresh opportunities. Some of the many other Phoenician foundations in the region may have had Carthaginian support – colonies like Hadrumetum, Acholla and perhaps Neapolis on the coasts south of the city in the region called Byzacium, Kerkouane near the tip of Cape Bon (which may in fact have been a purely Carthaginian foundation) and Hippacra to the north of Utica.

Carthage likewise came to dominate the coasts far to the east of Byzacium. Oea and Sabratha were other notable Phoenician, or perhaps joint Phoenician and Carthaginian, colonies on the Gulf of Sirte, and beyond them in turn stood Lepcis. Lepcis, whose oldest archaeological remains are 7th-Century, was a Phoenician colony founded by political refugees, according to Sallust, the Roman historian of Julius Caesar's time, who claims to have consulted Punic records. As noted above, the Carthaginians – with wide-ranging commercial interests by then – may have helped the project or at any rate supplied protection, because the area, named Emporia by the Greeks, was very fertile although bordered closely by the African desert. With their Phoenician and perhaps partly Carthaginian