

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.¹¹

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.¹²

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 Sichebba 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 'Salammô'), 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.¹³

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.

