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WARS THAT MADE THE WESTERN WORLD:

THE PERSIAN WARS, THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR, AND THE PUNIC WARS

COURSE GUIDE

Professor Timothy B. Shutt
KENYON COLLEGE

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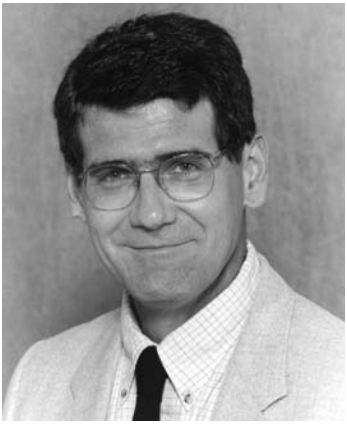
Course Syllabus

Wars That Made the Western World: The Persian Wars, the Peloponnesian War, and the Punic Wars



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About Your Professor

Timothy B. Shutt

For nineteen years, Professor Timothy Baker Shutt has taught at Kenyon College, famed for splendid teaching, for its literary tradition, and for its unwavering commitment to the liberal arts. No teacher at Kenyon has ever been more often honored, both by the college and by students, for exceptional skills in the classroom and as a lecturer. Professor Shutt's courses in Kenyon's interdisciplinary Integrated Program in Humane Studies and in the Department of English alike are always heavily oversubscribed, and he lectures on Homer, Plato, Aristotle, the Bible, the Greek historians, Virgil, and Dante every year to a packed house.

Shutt is a native of Ohio, raised in Michigan and schooled in Connecticut. During his high school years at the Hotchkiss School, he was honored as an All-American swimmer and devoted much of his time to drama. He majored in English as an undergraduate at Yale ('72). After three years at St. Mark's School of Texas, where he taught English and history, and coached swimming, Shutt went on to graduate school in English, specializing in medieval literature and the history of ideas at the University of Virginia as a Du Pont Fellow. After earning his Ph.D. in 1984, Shutt spent two further years at Virginia as Mellon Post-Doctoral Research Fellow and took a position at Kenyon in 1986, where he has taught happily ever since, deeply enjoying his contacts with his students and the peaceful life of the Ohio countryside.

Shutt is a jovial extrovert and a polymath—a born teacher and lecturer—interested in nearly everything and everybody. In the Integrated Program in Humane Studies, he teaches literature, philosophy, history, art history, religious studies, and, at times, the history of science. He has written on military history, baseball, and birding in addition to his academic studies and gives regular talks at the Brown Family Environmental Center at Kenyon on migratory birds and on observational astronomy and the lore of the stars. He also works, when time permits, as a sports announcer for Kenyon football games, and for championship swimming meets nationwide, claiming longtime Detroit Tiger announcer Ernie Harwell as his inspiration. Shutt also travels regularly as a spokesperson for Kenyon, giving talks and lectures on behalf of the college from coast to coast. But his real vocation is reading and the classroom.

Introduction

This course addresses three wars fought in antiquity, each of which had—even two thousand years and more later—a decisive effect in shaping our communal sense of who we are, not only in Europe, but throughout the European cultural diaspora, in the Americas, in Oceania, and to some degree, at least, in Asia and Africa as well—wherever, in short, Western values hold. The three wars to be investigated here are (1) the Persian Wars, between a coalition of Greek city-states or *"poleis,"* most notably Athens and Sparta, and the Achaemenid Persian empire, the central and decisive portion of which took place between 490 and 479 B.C.E.; (2) the later Peloponnesian War between Athens and her allies and Sparta and hers, 431-404 B.C.E.; and finally (3) the three Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage, which stretched, on and off, for well more than a century, from 264 to 146 B.C.E.

Each of these wars helped, in profound and perhaps surprising ways, to shape, even still, our ideals, our identity, and our values.

Lecture 1:
The Persian Wars:
Greece and Persia, the Opening Rounds

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Peter Green's *The Greco-Persian Wars*.

Herodotus' analysis of the Persian Wars in his *Histories* marks something close to a new mode of consciousness, not only in terms of historical vision—in terms of Herodotus' notion that who we are depends in large part on who we have been, what we have done, and what has happened to us. It is something new as well in the surprisingly fair-minded and sympathetic distinctions he draws between the "Hellenes" or Greeks and their Persian rivals. Most languages seem to draw distinctions between "us" and "them" in terms that generally translate to something like "the human beings" and "the stinkers." Ethnic slurs are nothing new in the world and seem to be about as old as language itself. Herodotus follows the customary usage of his time in terming the Persians, and indeed, all who do not speak Greek, "*barbaroi*," or "barbarians." But Herodotus is far less dismissive of "barbarians" than most Greeks, and the Persians were, from his point of view, the Egyptians aside, the most impressive "barbarians" of all. Nonetheless, he draws sharp distinctions between Greeks and Persians, and between Greek and Persian culture, and those distinctions to this day constitute a fundamental taproot of our sense of who we are.

The essential distinction Herodotus sees between Greeks and Persians is that the Greeks are free and the Persians are not. Courageous, honest, capable—filled with all sorts of virtues, yes. But not free. In Herodotus' view, even though they were vastly outnumbered, the Greeks won the Persian Wars, and finally deserved to win, *because* they were free. It is an attitude that is still very much with us. It is precisely our own freedom—social, intellectual, and political, even economic—that we believe sets us apart, and not only sets us apart, but preserves our virtue and our prosperity.

It is only fair to add that the "freedom" of the Greeks—of the Athenians and, still more, of the Spartans—was by our own standards severely compromised. Both Athens and Sparta were slave-owning societies. Sparta, indeed, was so obsessively concerned with maintaining control over its serf-slaves, or "helots," who vastly and threateningly outnumbered the tiny Spartan citizen elite, that keeping a lid on the helots shaped Spartan society from top to bottom. And full citizenship was rigorously confined, in Athens as well as in Sparta, not only to men, but to free-born native men. But Greek citizens were characteristically freer, and clearly thought of themselves as freer, than their Persian counterparts, who were, according to Herodotus, little short of slaves of the "Great King," however high their position in Persian society.

German philosopher Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel suggests not only that our consciousness arises as a result of historical processes, but that in the course of those processes, we define ourselves by setting ourselves apart

from “others.” And that sense of “otherness” crystallizes for the West in Herodotus—it was the Persian Wars, in short, that for good or ill, made the West self-consciously Western.

Democracy and freedom, however limited and qualified they may have been, and the immensely fruitful notion that the best way of attacking problems is systematic rational analysis are values worth defending. And so the Greeks did. In that sense, the conflict with Persia has been termed the first “ideological” war, fought, in a sense, for a distinctively “Western” cultural vision.

What, then, were Greece and Persia like? In many respects, they were very different. Persia was a great land empire, politically unified (more or less) under the hegemony of the “Great King,” the most extensive empire the world had yet seen. But it was the direct successor of thousands of years of urbanized life in the ancient Middle East. Urban life in Sumer, in the Babylon of Hammurapi (or Hammurabi), stretched back into second, or in the case of Sumer, even the third and fourth millenium BCE.

More recent Middle Eastern cultures were the Hittites and the fierce Assyrians, enjoying their heyday under leaders like Tiglath-Pilaser II, Sargon, and Sennacherib and defeated finally by a revivified Babylon at the battle of Carchemish. It was the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great, who in 539 conquered Babylon (and shortly thereafter, allowed the exiled Israelites to return to Zion).

Cyrus (or “Kurash” or “Koresh” in Persian) is a fascinating figure in his own right, greatly admired even by his enemies and many of those he conquered. Substantial contact between the Greeks and Persians seems to have begun with Cyrus’ conquest of King Croesus of Lydia in what is now western Turkey (Croesus numbered among his subjects a good many Ionian Greeks, living on or near the Aegean coast of his domains). Cyrus conquered Croesus in 547/46, and, ambitions unslaked, undertook to conquer the Massagetae, a fierce nomadic Central Asian people, and died in the attempt in 530, only to be succeeded by his son Cambyses, who ruled from 530 to 522 and managed during his relatively short reign to add Egypt to the Persian domain.

The death of Cambyses, however, precipitated a succession crisis, and the upshot was the rule of Darius, who gained the crown through a sort of *coup d’état*. Darius proved a very capable ruler and held the throne from 522 until his death in 486. The story of the Persian Wars begins with a revolt on the part of Darius’ Ionian Greek subjects, formerly part of the Lydian kingdom of Croesus, who in the year 499 rose up, seeking to throw off Persian rule.

The Athenians, themselves Ionian Greeks, though settled on the other side of the Aegean, decided to assist their Ionian fellows, and in 498 helped to burn the local Persian capital at Sardis. This proved to be an unwise move, which the Athenians soon recognized, withdrawing their support of the revolt soon afterwards. But Darius did not forget. The Persians regained control of the region by 493, and Darius, so Herodotus tells us, designated a slave to remind him to “remember the Athenians” three times a day at dinner (5.105). It was unseemly to have such fractious, independent folks on his borders, and Darius decided to take care of the problem. In 491, he sent messengers to various Greek city-states, or *“poleis,”* demanding that they give over “earth

and water" as a token of submission. Understandably intimidated by the vast empire to the east, many city-states complied. Athens and Sparta, however, did not. The Athenians, in fact, disposed of Darius' envoys in a pit reserved for the bodies of executed criminals, and the Spartans, not to be outdone, threw the envoys down a well, where, so they suggested, the envoys could find all the earth and water that they might want (7.133). Predictably and rightly, Darius took such gestures as deliberate acts of defiance, and the war, very soon, was on.

What was the Persian empire like, besides vast, rich, and powerful? It was autocratic, but by the standards of the time, and certainly by the standards set by Middle Eastern powers like the Assyrians, it was relatively benign. The Persians were willing to go along with local customs and even local rulers as long as Persian hegemony was assured and the tax revenues were steady. The empire was divided into "satrapies" ("*khshathrapavan*," we are told, in Persian), administrative subunits generally managed by local aristocrats or members of the royal family. Though their own religion was Mazdaism, a sort of ethical dualism postulating an ongoing cosmic battle between the forces of light and darkness, they were relatively tolerant on such matters as long as things remained orderly and the revenues kept coming in.

The Greek city-states could hardly have been more different. There was no overarching Greek political order. "Hellenism," or "Greekness," was a matter of language, religion, and culture, not of political unity. The city-states were in fact fiercely competitive and independent. They seldom cooperated or agreed. In this regard, the more or less unified Persian empire enjoyed an immense advantage.

The *poleis* were for the most part small. There were more than 1,000 of them, and none of them remotely approached the Persian empire in size. Beyond that, by Persian standards, the Greek *poleis* were poor. Then and now, there is not much good agricultural land in Greece. But if they were small and poor, the *poleis* were nothing if not proud, contentious, and independent. Many of them remain famous to this day—Argos and the great Sicilian colonial city of Syracuse; Thebes, Athens' great rival to the north, famed as the home of Oedipus; the luxury- and trade-loving Corinth, at the Peloponnesian isthmus; and above all Athens and Sparta, the leaders of the defense against Persia.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Question

1. In what sense were the Persian Wars a decisive moment in formulating a self-conscious sense of Western culture? Of Greek culture?
2. What is a polis? What were the most influential poleis in ancient Greece? What effects did the polis have on Greek culture and day-to-day life?
3. What was it like to be ruled by the Persian empire?

Suggested Reading

Green, Peter. *The Greco-Persian Wars*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

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Pomery, Sarah B., Stanley M. Burstein, Walter Donlan, and Jennifer Tolbert Roberts. *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Warry, John. *Warfare in the Classical World*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

Lecture 2:
The Persian Wars: Darius, Miltiades, and the Battle of Marathon

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Philip de Souza's *The Greek and Persian Wars: 499-386 B.C.*

It was the city-states of Athens and Sparta that led the fight for Hellenic independence in the Persian Wars, and they could hardly have been more different. They represent something like an eternal polarity, a yin and yang of fructifying tension.

The more obvious and far-reaching contribution is that of Athens, which has been celebrated from that time to this as the preeminent "city of thought," city of creativity, home to the arts, philosophy, and systematic rational enquiry. But Sparta's contribution endures too. The sober, courageous self-discipline and restraint that marked Sparta remain an enduring cultural counterweight.

Athens is famous, if not as the very first democracy, then certainly as the most influential ancient democracy and as the democracy that has in some sense formed a template and inspiration for democratic societies ever since.

From 546 to 510 or so, Athens was ruled by Peisistratus and the Peisistradid dynasty. Peisistratus was what the Greeks would call a "tyrant," though the word is a bit misleading. In this context, it did not necessarily imply bad government, and Peisistratus, autocrat though he was, seems to have had his virtues. In any event, his heir Hippias was succeeded by a member of the powerful Alcmaeonid family named Cleisthenes in 508/07, who introduced something close to democracy (in large part as a political gambit to ensure his own influence). Once established, however, Athenian democracy proved hard to uproot, and despite a few fluctuations and *coups d'état*, Athens remained a democracy until her defeat by Sparta and her allies in 404.

The Spartans were in almost every respect entirely different from the Athenians. Sparta was, in effect, a military oligarchy, profoundly pious, and profoundly conservative. Spartan society was shaped from top to bottom by the danger of revolt on the part of those outside the Spartan elite. For that tiny elite was supported by a vast population of enslaved serfs—the "helots."

The reforms attributed to Lycurgus, which made Sparta what she was, are purportedly the result an early Spartan defeat by the Spartans' traditional rival, Argos, and a concurrent helot revolt. The Spartans concluded that they had always to be ready to defend themselves—and organized their society with that end in view.

The Spartans had two kings from two different lines, one of which ordinarily led the Spartans in battle. But royal power was sharply limited, above all by the *"gerousia,"* a council of old honored warriors, and by the five "ephors," who could call even kings to account. Major decisions were ratified by an assembly of all citizens. But even when her strength was greatest, Sparta could muster only about 9,000 full Spartan soldiers.

These were far and away the best soldiers in the world, their lives devoted from childhood with unswerving devotion to war. Sickly Spartan babies were exposed, and from the age of seven, boys undertook the legendary *"agoge,"* or "upbringing," living in barracks and supervised by older peers with a view toward making them obedient, respectful, uncomplaining, resilient, and physically tough.

When at last, at the conclusion of the upbringing, a young man became one of the *"homoioi"* or Spartan "peers"—the name literally means "the equals" or "the guys who are all the same"—he was trained to razor's edge. When the Spartans arrived on a battlefield at a slow march, wearing their trademark bright red cloaks, hair long, bearing their shields, each marked with "Lambda" for the Spartan home region of Lacedaemon, their mere, unfluttered presence was at times enough to bring victory.

As a result of their constant training, Spartan men were generally considered the most magnificent physical specimens in Greece—as were Spartan women, renowned for independence, sharp tongues, and beauty.

What Sparta valued above all in her citizens was unflinching courage and the disciplined pursuit of honor and excellence—*"kleos"* and *"arete."* From childhood, Spartans were encouraged to compete for the welfare of Sparta, which boys and girls alike were trained to consider vastly more important than the welfare of any individual citizen. From a Spartan perspective, Athenian unruliness was contemptible. The Athenians even talked too much. Spartans were trained to say as little as possible, to say what needed to be said in the most "Laconic" possible terms.

It was, though, the Athenians who won all-but-unhoped-for glory in the first round of the Persian Wars.

In 490, entrusting the command to Datis and Artaphernes, Darius dispatched what amounted to a punitive expedition across the Aegean, stopping at Naxos along the way. The Athenians knew what was coming, and about August 5, 490, sent off a professional courier named Pheilippides, or Pheidippides, to request Spartan help. The distance was about 140 miles, so rocky and steep that evidently a professional runner could make better time than someone on horseback. Pheidippides made the journey in something like thirty-six hours. The Spartans, though, were in the midst of their great summer religious festival, the Carneia, and felt that at risk of offending the gods, they could not come to the assistance of Athens for a week or so.

The Persians, meanwhile, had landed at Marathon, twenty-odd miles from Athens, on the other side of Mt. Pentele, where there was a small plain suitable for cavalry operations, a Persian strength. They had been guided to the spot by the deposed Peisistratid, Hippias, who was hoping for better political success with a change of regime.

The Greeks, Athenians and Spartans alike, ordinarily fought as "hoplites," or heavy infantry, armored in greaves, helmet, and breastplate, and bearing a substantial *"hoplon"* or shield. They deployed in closely packed lines, each hoplite bearing a thrusting spear overhand on his right and shielding his comrade to the left. The resulting *"phalanx"* was a formidable formation, but vulnerable to flank attacks from cavalry. For that reason, the Athenians deployed

themselves above the plain, where the Persian cavalry were at a disadvantage and would have a hard time flanking them, and there they waited.

Both the Persians and the Greeks had reason for waiting. The Athenians were waiting for the Spartans, whom they hoped would arrive in time to help. The Persians, too, were waiting for help, though of a markedly different kind. The Persians had reason to think there might be Athenians more than willing to have Hippias back and were hoping for an in-house uprising.

But the longer they waited, the more likely the Spartans were to arrive. The Persians enjoyed a substantial numerical advantage, clearly more than two to one, and likely much more. Even so, the Spartans would do much to even the odds. On the night of what appears to have been August 11-12, the Persians disembarked at least some of their ships, bearing cavalry with them, in hopes of arriving at an undefended Athens before the Athenians knew they were gone. Some Ionian Greek defectors from the Persian forces, however, evidently spoiled the surprise, and at dawn on August 12, the Athenians and a small force from nearby Plataea came down from their hillside position to deploy on the plain, no longer at risk from the Persian cavalry.

The official Athenian commander, the "*polemarchos*," or "war archon," was a man named Callimachus. Second-in-command, in true Athenian fashion, rotated from day to day, and the effective commander was a man named Miltiades, who knew the Persians well from his years in an Athenian colony to the north. Miltiades arranged his troops with the wings more deeply packed than usual and the center a bit weaker. As dawn broke, the astonished Persian holding force, which still vastly outnumbered the Greeks, saw the Athenian force approaching them with seemingly suicidal determination. Relatively quickly, the Greek center gave way and the strengthened Greek flanks enfolded the Persians, who broke and retreated as best they could to their remaining ships. In hoplite battles, casualties on the victorious side were generally light. The carnage did not really begin until one line broke and could be attacked piecemeal from the rear. And so it was at Marathon. The Greeks, we are told, lost 192 men. The Persians more like 6,400.

But the Persian cavalry contingent was still at sea, and the Athenians still had work before them. They had to march home quickly so the Persian force would not arrive unopposed. Legend has it that they dispatched Pheidippides on one more run—the first "marathon"—to give the Athenians advance word of their victory. So the story goes, Pheidippides made it to Athens and with his last breath said, "Rejoice! We win!"

Shortly thereafter, just before the Persian fleet, the victorious army arrived as well. The Persians, presumably, were astonished. Just the night before they had left the Athenian army twenty miles and more away. After due consideration, the Persians decided to sail home.

The result was an immense burst of self-confidence for Athens, with momentum lasting almost a century, the "golden age" of Athens, of Pericles, of Phidias, of the Parthenon, of Greek tragedy—indeed, of Herodotus himself. In a sense, "The West" begins here, in part because the Athenians were so phenomenally articulate, not to say self-congratulatory, about the result.

The Spartans, meanwhile, arrived as promised after a quick march of their own, though too late to offer any assistance. They did, though, march out to inspect the field of battle and to congratulate the Athenians on their work (a delicious moment, one suspects, for Athens).

Beyond that world-changing burst of Athenian self-confidence, Marathon had other shorter-term effects as well. Hoplite warriors were citizens; ordinarily, in Athens and Attica, farmers prosperous enough to afford the "*panoply*"—the hoplite armor kit. Athens' later triumphs were primarily at sea, and to be a rower took less equipment—muscles and breechclout, effectively. Land power was oligarchic power, in short, and the "Men of Marathon" lived on in Athenian imagination, it has been said, as the embodiment of every "known or remembered conservative virtue." Marathon was the way it was supposed to be—the best men doing the best work. Later on, things would not be so simple.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why did the Athenians (and Plataeans) win at Marathon?
2. What were the effects of Marathon upon Athens? Within the wider Greek world?

Suggested Reading

de Souza, Philip. *The Greek and Persian Wars: 499-386 B.C.* Essential Histories. Oxford: Osprey, 2002.

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Lecture 3:
The Persian Wars: Xerxes, Leonidas and the 300 Spartans, the Battle of Thermopylae

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Victor Davis Hanson's *The Wars of the Ancient Greeks*.

It was ten years before the Persians came again, and by the time they returned, Miltiades, the victor at Marathon, was long gone.

Shortly after Marathon, Miltiades was sent off to Paros to exact reprisals for lack of support during the campaign. He got himself wounded, cashiered, was nearly executed for treason as a result of his poor success, and died in prison of gangrene. Athens was not easy on her heroes.

Persia, meanwhile, had problems of her own. Darius died in 486 after a long and successful reign. His son Khsrish, or Khshayarsha, known to us as "Xerxes," succeeded him, only to find Egypt and Babylon in revolt. So it was a while before he could begin full-scale preparations for the final subjection of the Greeks.

And abundantly full-scale those preparations were. In 484, Xerxes began gathering troops by the tens of thousands. He went to the immense trouble of having a canal dug to avoid the storms off the peninsula of Mt. Athos in the northern Aegean. He had a pontoon bridge built over the Hellespont—twice, in fact, because storms destroyed the first one.

Xerxes made telling use of bribes and threats to bring over a majority of city-states as "Medizers," or pro-Persians. As time passed, he prepared vast supply dumps along his anticipated line of march. This was no punitive expedition. This time the intent was to conquer.

Contemporary historians reject Herodotus' estimates of the size of Xerxes' army as a logistical impossibility, though I am inclined to take Herodotus more seriously than many of his critics. At one point, Herodotus gives an estimate of 2,641,610 armed men (7.185). Most historians seem content to reduce that by a factor of ten or so, and even then the army would be, by ancient standards, absolutely enormous.

The omens were most unpropitious for the Greeks. The oracle at Delphi advised the Spartans that either one of their kings must die or the city of Sparta would be destroyed (7.220). The oracle for Athens was gloomier still. "Why sit you, doomed ones?" it began. "Fly to the world's end," for "all is ruined." "Haste from the sanctuary" at Delphi "and bow your hearts to grief" (7.140).

The Athenians, understandably discouraged, decided to try again. This time, the results were marginally more hopeful. "Though all else shall be taken," Zeus "the all-seeing grants to Athene's prayer / That the wooden wall only shall not fall, but help you and your children." "Divine Salamis," the oracle concluded, "you will bring death to women's sons / When the corn is scattered, or the harvest gathered in" (7.141). But what was the wooden wall?

The Athenian leader Themistocles had what he took to be the answer—Athens should build a navy that would be second to none. And despite opposition, Themistocles prevailed.

The ships were built, the "wooden walls" were ready, and Themistocles was proved to be transcendently, dazzlingly right. The "wooden walls"—war-galleys with three banks of oars—were what saved Greece.

As the Persians advanced around the Aegean from their gathering point at Sardis with their tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands of soldiers—accompanied, so Herodotus tells us, by more than 1,200 warships and some 3,000 other ships for transport and supply (7.89)—the hastily assembled Greek coalition tried to decide what to do. One thing was certain—the other city-states in the coalition would not tolerate an Athenian in command, and the coalition chose instead to serve under the Spartans, even at sea, where the Spartans were near-total novices.

There were, in effect, two options. The first, favored by the Spartans and the Corinthians, was to defend their Peloponnesian homeland and the narrow Isthmus of Corinth, which provided the only land access to that most peninsular of peninsulas. The Athenians, of course, saw things differently, since Athens lay well beyond the Peloponnese. Their preference was for a defense in depth, as far forward as possible, so that Athens and Attica had at least a chance of being spared. Such a defense, though, was hard to accomplish because the northern regions of what is now Greece—Thrace, Macedonia, and Thessaly—had, under heavy Persian pressure, already "Medized" by and large, and Thebes and Boeotia, immediately to the northwest of Athens, were at best on the fence.

After an abortive attempt to hold the pass at Tempe in the (relatively) far north, the coalition decided on an attempt to delay, if not to stop, Xerxes well north of Athens and the Peloponnese alike, and to use the Isthmus as a fall-back position if that became necessary.

The combined fleet, roughly half Athenian (about half the size of the Persian war fleet), was stationed at Artimesium on the large island of Euboea, about a hundred air miles north of Athens and along the route that the Persians would have to take on their way south. A delaying expedition was meanwhile dispatched to the extremely narrow seaside pass at Thermopylae—the "hot gates"—about forty miles west southwest of Artimesium and still about one hundred miles from Athens.

Both contingents were necessary if they were to work effectively. Absent the Greek fleet, the Persians could simply land troops behind the Thermopylae position, and absent the land force, the Persians could simply march their troops ahead unopposed and deal with the fleet at leisure.

In any event, the contingent at Thermopylae was fairly substantial, at least at the outset—though still outnumbered by a factor of at least twenty to one, and more probably, in my view, by something like one hundred to one. The nucleus of the group was a crack force numbering 300 of the "*homoioi*," or full Spartans, and the total force from the Peloponnese came to just under three thousand, according to Herodotus. There were also substantial contingents from Thespiae and Thebes, the latter perhaps those Theban citizens who

dissented from Thebes' decision to "Medize." A thousand or so from nearby Phocis and Locris also joined the force. Herodotus suggests that the original plan was for the contingent to serve as an advance guard or holding force.

But the Persians moved more quickly than expected, and the contingent at Thermopylae faced the daunting prospect of fighting the entire Persian army.

For four days, Xerxes waited. He simply couldn't believe that the contingent arrayed against him intended to fight. Herodotus says that Xerxes sent a scout ahead to find out what the Greeks were up to. It was the Spartans whom the scout saw—"exercising naked and combing their hair" (7.208). In Xerxes' retinue was a deposed king of Sparta named Demaratus, who explained to Xerxes that the men whom the scout has seen were getting ready to fight, and that it "is their custom to do their hair when they are about to risk their lives"—and added that Xerxes is "now up against the noblest and most royal city in Greece, and the bravest men" (7.209).

According to Plutarch, it was at this point that Xerxes sent a message to Leonidas suggesting that his men could depart unharmed, and that Xerxes would indeed reward them if they did so with, as Diodorus puts it, "more and better lands than they now possess" (11.5). Leonidas himself would become, in effect, satrap of Greece, if only he would lay down his arms. Leonidas' reported reply is the most celebrated "laconic" riposte on record—two words, *"molon labe,"* "Come and take them" (Sayings of Spartans 225, C-D).

On the first day of battle, probably August 18, 480, Xerxes sent in his Median troops, then tribesmen from the hinterlands of his empire, and finally, so Herodotus tells us, his crack Persian troops, the "Immortals" (so called because any losses were quickly made good to keep the unit up to strength).

Fighting in rotation, the heavily armored Spartan and allied hoplites made short work of their of their less well-trained and more lightly armed opponents. As Herodotus drily puts it, they made it plain that though Xerxes "had plenty of troops, he did not have many men" (7.210).

The next day saw more of the same; in the narrow confines of the pass, Xerxes could not make use of his cavalry, and his overwhelming numbers could not be brought to bear. That evening, however, a Greek traitor, Ephialtes of Malis, appeared and proposed to lead a Persian contingent on a mountain track around the Greek position so that the Greeks would be surrounded. At sundown, Xerxes dispatched the Immortals to take the Greeks in the rear. The Greek contingent from Phocis had been assigned to guard the mountain trail, but *en route* the Persians brushed them aside, and by the morning of August 20, Leonidas knew the jig was up.

At this point, most of the Greek troops departed, but the Thespians, the Thebans, and the Spartans and their retainers remained. Leonidas, we are told, "ordered them to prepare their breakfast quickly, since they would dine in Hades" (Diodorus 11.9).

The Thebans, according to Herodotus, surrendered and were enslaved, but the Spartans and Thespians desperately fought to the last man. Others suggest that by this time the Persians had had enough and simply killed off the Thespians and Spartans from a distance with their arrows. The pass was cleared.

The effect, though, was paradoxical. This was the Spartans' finest hour, and their hopeless, suicidal defense galvanized Greece. There would be no turning back. Their epitaph, too, often attributed to the poet Simonedes, was a masterpiece of straightforward simplicity, probably the most celebrated ever written. In the version that appears in Steven Pressfield's splendid novel about the Spartans and Thermopylae, *Gates of Fire,* it runs as follows:

"Tell the Spartans, stranger passing by,
That here, obedient to their laws, we lie."

Diodorus suggests that "it was these men who were more responsible for the common freedom of the Greeks" than any other.

The three days' sea battle off Artemesium was fought on precisely the same three days. At Artemesium, too, the Greeks were badly outnumbered, but not nearly so decisively as Leonidas' forces ashore. The Persians began, once again, with more than 1,200 warships.

The Greeks reportedly had about 270 ships, but they had chosen their anchorage well. If they could lure the Persians into the Euboean narrows, they would enjoy many of the advantages that Leonidas at least initially enjoyed in defending the pass—Persian numbers would be neutralized.

Ancient warships were spectacularly unseaworthy in heavy weather, and it was customary, all but necessary, to beach an ancient war fleet at night. Off Magnesia, Xerxes couldn't do that, and when, as the Persians approached, a stiff northeaster blew up, almost a third of Xerxes' warships were lost—and with them vast numbers of transports as well. So by the time hostilities started, the Greeks found themselves in a stronger position than they could reasonably have anticipated.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What did Leonidas accomplish in his suicidal last stand at Thermopylae?
2. What factors contributed to the Greeks unexpectedly strong performance at Artemesium?

Suggested Reading

Hanson, Victor Davis. *The Wars of the Ancient Greeks: And Their Invention of Western Military Culture*. Cassell History of Warfare. John Keegan, Gen. ed. London: Cassell, 1999.

Other Books of Interest

Plutarch. *Plutarch on Sparta*. Trans. and intro. Richard J. A. Talbert. Penguin Classics. New York: Penguin, 1988.

———. *The Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives by Plutarch*. Trans. and intro. Ian Scott-Kilvert. Penguin Classics. New York: Penguin, 1960.

Pressfield, Steven. *Gates of Fire: An Epic Novel of the Battle of Thermopylae*. New York: Random House, Bantam, 1998.

Lecture 4:
The Persian Wars: Xerxes, Themistocles, and the Battle of Salamis

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Barry Strauss's *The Battle of Salamis: The Naval Encounter That Saved Greece—and Western Civilization*.

The Greeks gained confidence from the heroic defense of Leonidas and from their competent performance at Artemesium. Granted the right conditions, they could hold their own despite the vast disparity in numbers.

But what to do next? Despite their best efforts, the attempt to hold the Persians in the north had failed.

The original plan, evidently, had the Isthmus as a fallback position, and the Peloponnesians had indeed been hard at work constructing a wall behind which to mount their defense. Without the fleet, though, the defensive position could easily be turned by seaborne landings in the rear, so both land and sea forces were required for any chance of holding the position. Focusing the defense at the Isthmus, though, would leave Athens and Attica unprotected, and the Athenians, understandably enough, were dead set against the idea.

Despite the dispute, Themistocles evidently persuaded the fleet from Artemesium to land at Salamis, an island just offshore from Athens, long enough for the Athenians to evacuate to Salamis and other nearby locations. By August 26 or so, only a few die-hards and priests remained at the Athenian Acropolis.

Soon enough, the Persians arrived and set about laying waste to Attica. The Acropolis proved a tough nut to crack, but the defense didn't last long, and Athens too was put to the torch.

The Persian fleet, meanwhile, arrived at Phaleron on August 29, which at the time served as the main port for Athens. The Peloponnesians were even more eager than before to withdraw to the Isthmus. Athens, after all, had already fallen. The bulk of the fleet, though, was Athenian, and that proved the trump card. Themistocles argued that if the fleet departed from Salamis, soon enough it would be every polis for itself. The fleet would dissolve, and with it any chance of holding off the Persians. Most of the Peloponnesians, though, still wanted to go home. Themistocles then played his ace. If the Peloponnesians left, then the Athenians would pack up, lock, stock, and barrel, and head off to southern Italy to start over. Without the Athenian fleet, the Greeks had no chance of victory at sea. They stayed at Salamis.

But as time passed, the dissension continued. The question was reopened, and this time, we are told, despite his threats and eloquence, Themistocles was losing. Presumably stepping for the moment out of the heated meeting, he sent off his trusted slave, a man named Sicinnus, to take to the Persians a secret message. The message claimed that Themistocles was secretly on the side of the Persians and, as testimonial of his friendship, he was providing

Xerxes with valuable information—the Greek fleet was about to depart, and if Xerxes wanted to trap them, he had better move fast.

Xerxes chose to fight, and on the night of September 19-20, he sent off the Egyptian contingent of his fleet around Salamis to bottle up the Greeks in the Megara channel to the west and thereby make retreat impossible. Themistocles had achieved his ends.

Aristeides, the long-time political rival of Themistocles, appeared, bringing news that the Egyptian fleet was in motion and retreat was no longer possible. Themistocles, we are told, invited him to come to the meeting in progress and let the decision-makers know, on the ground, surely accurate, that Themistocles himself would not be believed bearing such a report. Neither was Aristeides, but then the news was confirmed by an Ionian defector, and the Greeks were forced to prepare for battle in the Salamis narrows.

The Persians still outnumbered the Greeks, but the storms had taken their toll, and the Persian fleet had under 500 warships to counter the Greeks' 300 or so (about these numbers there is some dispute, but the proportions are about right). On the Persian side, the Egyptians numbered seventy-five to ninety or so, the Ionians about 100, and the Phoenicians, the best in the fleet, a bit more than that. For the Greeks, far and away the largest contingent was that of Athens, half of the fleet, more or less, and Corinth and the nearby island of Aegina both provided contingents a quarter or so that size.

The Persians spent a busy night, dispatching the Egyptians and preparing their assault, while the Greeks were able to rest a bit before entering into battle. As the Persians rowed into the narrows from Phaleron to the east, the Greeks at first waited. Persian ships were lighter and, in capable hands, more maneuverable. That is one reason why Themistocles wanted to fight the Persians in the narrow waters of the straits where their maneuverability would be limited and where it would be difficult to bring their superior numbers into play. The Greeks also knew that as morning advanced, a wind often blew up that made the Salamis channel choppy—trouble for the lighter Persians and more so because they were top-heavy with relatively substantial commitments of marines.

In mid-early morning, as the wind came up and the channel wrinkled with new waves, the Greeks set out in what was evidently designed to look like a breakout. The Cornithians, closest to their presumed destination at the Isthmus, even raised their sails, a seemingly reliable sign of flight.

Xerxes, meanwhile, had set himself up on the mainland with a good view of the whole channel, confident that his presence would inspire his sailors and marines to do their best. So Peter Green surmises, he must have thought, "We've got them!" (190)

Once the leading Persian ships were indeed well in, the Corinthians furled their sails and returned to the fight, the rest of the Greeks with them.

By the end of the day, the Persians had lost badly—roughly 200 ships to Greek losses of forty or so. Themistocles was right—the narrows were the place to fight, and "wooden walls" had indeed saved Athens.

Before the battle had even started, Xerxes had ordered land forces to begin their march to the Isthmus and the Peloponnese. By some reports, even after

the day of the battle, he continued to work on a causeway between the mainland and Salamis itself. But that didn't last long. Xerxes had had enough. He had lost half or more of his fleet, and the remaining crews were presumably dispirited enough to make the prospect of renewing the offensive unattractive.

The Isthmus-bound land troops were recalled, and within a day or two Xerxes and the fleet were on their way back to the Hellespont and Asia. He never returned.

None of this, though, was clear to the Greeks in the immediate aftermath of the battle. They had won round one, but there was no reason to expect that the next day would not see another Persian assault. When it was clear the fleet was gone, Themistocles was all for pursuit in hopes of destroying the pontoon bridges at the Hellespont. Others were wary of having Xerxes' full land force bottled up in Greece, and this time, Themistocles deferred.

Soon enough the bulk of the Persian land forces withdrew and began the slow march back to Asia. Xerxes left his cousin Mardonius, an able and experienced Persian commander, to winter in Greece with a force Herodotus lists as about 300,000. Again, modern scholars doubt that it was so large, but it was likely a third of that or more. Xerxes' Greek forces —those who had "Medized"—stayed in Greece. The plan was to renew the land offensive the following spring after wintering in northern Greece. And that is indeed what happened.

Themistocles, however, no longer played a leading role. As we saw in the case of Miltiades after Marathon, the Athenians were nothing if not envious, contentious, and ungrateful, and the Athenian leaders the following year were Themistocles' political rivals—Xanthippus at sea and Aristreides on land. It is not hard to imagine that his very brilliance and self-confidence, to say nothing of his abrasive, overbearing manner, may have given offense. And beyond that, some Athenians were not certain that Themistocles' message to Xerxes had been only a ruse and suspected that he might really be pro-Persian. There is no reason to believe as much, but ironically enough, a few years later, Themistocles was ostracized himself, and he did indeed end his life as a prosperous and respected official in Persia.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Herodotus seems to suggest that the Persians lost at Salamis in part at least because of what could be termed character flaws on the part of Xerxes. Is such a claim plausible?
2. Why did the Greeks win at Salamis?
3. To what extent was the unscrupulous daring of Themistocles instrumental in bringing victory to the Greeks?

Suggested Reading

Strauss, Barry. *The Battle of Salamis: The Naval Encounter That Saved Greece—and Western Civilization*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.

Lecture 5:
The Persian Wars: Mardonius and the Final Victory of Greece: The Battles of Plataea and Mycale

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Charles Freeman's *Egypt, Greece, and Rome: Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean*.

After Xerxes' retreat, the Persian commander Mardonius and the remaining Persian forces faced a series of daunting problems. First was supply. Even withdrawing to the north as they did, they found it no easy task to keep themselves in trim in such a relatively poor country. Morale, presumably, was not good. There was no escaping the fact that though Athens had indeed been sacked, the Greek fleet remained very much in being and those few Greek hoplites they had met had proved very tough soldiers indeed. The Persian loss of face was, presumably, at least one of the factors that had encouraged Xerxes to go home in case seeming Persian weakness should encourage revolt elsewhere.

The Isthmian wall was now completed, and from a Persian perspective it would be difficult to persuade the Spartans and the other Peloponnesian forces to come north to less unrelievedly mountainous regions where Persian cavalry could fight effectively. The easiest course would be to persuade the Athenians to defect, and Mardonius did his best to do just that. Given the Greek propensity for factional in-fighting, bribery was generally a most effective weapon. Mardonius' second-in-command, Artabazus, indeed argued that the Persians' best course was to rely on bribery—and Greek factionalism. Given enough time, he believed, they would do all that needed to be done. And he may very well have been right. Mardonius, though, we are told, was ambitious. He wanted to be satrap of Greece and he wanted the glory of victory. He chose to fight.

During the winter, he was authorized to make a staggeringly generous offer to Athens, should the Athenians choose to ally themselves with Persia—and help to bring the Spartans to bay. Athens would be forgiven all past offenses against Persia, "guaranteed internal autonomy of government," made "de facto" mistress of Greece, have all walls and temples restored, and enjoy a massive financial settlement to boot (Green, 221). The Athenians turned him down flat—and wisely enough made a point of letting the Spartans know that they had done so. They too wanted the Spartan forces to come north, not, of course, to confront the Persian cavalry but to defend Athens and not just the Peloponnese. Mardonius' offer certainly got the Spartans' attention. Without Athens, and without the Athenian fleet in particular, they could not hope to hold the Peloponnesian line. When the time came, they did indeed come north—with the biggest contingent ever to leave the Spartan homeland, 5,000 "homoioi" or full Spartans (out of a total of about 8,000) and 35,000 helots, partly for support and as light-armed soldiers, partly so that they wouldn't revolt. In overall command was Leonidas' young nephew, Pausanias, acting as regent for Leonidas' even younger son Pleistarchus. Commanding the Athenian contingent was Themistocles' rival Aristeides.

By June 479, Mardonius was on the move, and before the Peloponnesians made their way north, he was once again in Attica, where he repeated his wintertime offer. The Athenian assembly vehemently refused—so vehemently, in fact, that we are told they lynched on the spot the one man who spoke in favor of Mardonius' offer. Instead, the Athenians evacuated, and Mardonius sacked what was left of the city. But the fleet remained, and the Greek forces remained. Mardonius withdrew to the northwest into the plains of Boeotia, just over the border from Attica and just downslope from Mt. Cithaeron, and took up a position very near Plataea—the small polis that eleven years before had been the only city-state besides Athens herself to fight at Marathon.

The Peloponnesians had meanwhile arrived in force, not just the Spartans and helots, but 5,000 or so from Corinth, and in addition, 8,000 or so from Athens (a large contingent, considering the demands of the fleet), and a good many others besides. The Greeks, in fact, gathered at Plataea the largest Greek army of classical times and the largest army of hoplites ever, just over 100,000 by the time battle was engaged. The army of Mardonius was about as large, maybe a bit larger. And so they waited.

The Greeks held a position on the slopes of Mt. Cithaeron in difficult terrain for cavalry. The Persian camp was down below in the flatlands, where cavalry would be most effective. Both, in short, occupied favorable ground, and neither had much incentive to move from it. And so for eight days or more both sides simply held their ground in the summer heat, waiting for the other side to make a move—to make a mistake.

Finally, the Persians succeeded in cutting the Greek's supply line over the mountain and succeeded, in one way or another, in fouling the spring upon which they depended for water. The Greeks waited still, but not for long. Pausanias finally gave orders for a controlled night withdrawal toward Plataea. And here the waters get muddy.

For a variety of reasons, the withdrawal did not go as planned, and dawn saw the Greek forces divided. The Athenians on the left and the Spartans on the right both found themselves isolated, and Mardonius launched his attack. In the confusion that followed, the Persians took on the Spartans, and the Spartans called on the Athenians for help. The Athenians, meanwhile, had their hands full taking on the Thebans and Thessalians in Persian service, but even so, the Spartans at length prevailed. Mardonius, by all reports, fought in person with exceptional bravery, and when he was killed, the Persians began to crumble. By the time Artabazus, Mardonius' second in command (who was holding the Persian center), was ready to enter the fray, the battle had become a rout. Cutting his losses, Artabazus and his 40,000 troops at once began a retreat that would take them out of Greece altogether. (Xerxes evidently came to agree with Artabazus' assessment, at least after the fact; Artabazus went on to a distinguished career.)

The remaining Persian forces fell in droves. Herodotus tells us that only 3,000 or so survived, to only two or three thousand Greek casualties. Tactically messy as it was, the Greek victory was total. After Plataea the Persians never again threatened the Hellenic mainland. The battle is not as celebrated as it might be, in part, it has been argued, because the relatively

reticent Spartans played the leading role, and the Spartans thought self-celebration bad form, but it was Plataea and Salamis together that in fact spelled defeat for Persia—land and sea.

Plataea, however, was not quite the end of the Persian wars. In command of the allied fleet was Leotychides of Sparta, with Xanthippus, once again, commanding the large Athenian squadron. The Persian fleet was stationed in the eastern Aegean near the island of Samos, and as the Greeks approached, the Persians withdrew and beached their ships on Cape Mycale on the Anatolian mainland, seeking to avoid another sea battle. The Greek forces disembarked and took them on in their stockade—on the very same day, we are told, as Plataea. The Persian commander, Tigranes, was killed, and the remaining Persian forces withdrew to Sardis, thus, as one of my students has pointed out, completing the cycle of events that began in Sardis more than twenty years before.

In the aftermath, the Greek fleet sailed to the Hellespont to take care of the pontoon bridges once and for all. But once again, the winds had done their work for them. Sections of cable found their way at last to Delphi, where they were enshrined as trophies. The Athenians chose to stay in the neighborhood to see what opportunities might arise—much of their day-to-day livelihood, after all, depended on grain shipped through the Hellespont from the Black Sea. The less venturesome—and agriculturally more self-sustaining—Peloponnesians went home. And there indeed the repulse of the great Persian offensive ended.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Some have argued that Plataea has been less celebrated than Salamis in part because the Athenians were more enthusiastic self-promoters than the Spartans. Is there any merit in such a claim?
2. What were the cultural effects of the Greek victory over Persia?

Suggested Reading

Freeman, Charles. *Egypt, Greece, and Rome: Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Lecture 6:
The Peloponnesian War:
The Outbreak, Pericles, and the Plague

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Philip de Souza's *The Peloponnesian War: 421-404 B.C.*

fter Plataea and Mycale, the great Persian offensive was over. But, even still, hostilities continued to simmer and simmer. It was not immediately clear that the Persians would not mount a third invasion. And Ionia still lay by and large in Persian hands.

The combined Greek fleet, commanded now by Pausanias, found itself in 478 at Byzantium, trying to consolidate the straits to the Black Sea. Here Pausanias, like Themistocles, found his newfound prestige short-lived. He was accused of conspiring with the Persians and was recalled to Sparta where, some years later, he took refuge in a temple and was walled in to starve. Conspicuous success had its dangers in Sparta too.

Command of the fleet, meanwhile, went to Athens, and in 477, what would become the Delian League was formed, its treasury to be housed at the small Aegean island of Delos, the supposed birthplace of Apollo and Artemis. The purpose of the Delian League was, first, to repel any renewed Persian invasion and, second, to do what could be done to liberate the Ionian Greeks still under Persian rule.

This for the most part was undertaken under the leadership of the Athenian Cimon, the son of Miltiades. Campaigns were more or less ongoing as Cimon took the war to the Persians, winning a decisive victory at the Eurymedon River around 467.

But Cimon too had his difficulties. In 464, a devastating earthquake in Sparta unleashed the Spartan *bête noire*, a full-scale helot revolt. Cimon successfully argued that Athens send troops to assist the Spartans, but when the troops arrived, their democratic swagger so alarmed the Spartans that they sent them home. Athens was furious at the rebuff, and Cimon was ultimately ostracized. After some turmoil, he was replaced as Athens' leading citizen by an aristocrat of a very different, populist, stripe, the Alcmaeonid Pericles.

Relations with Sparta and her allies continued to deteriorate, and Athens soon enough found herself fighting both Peloponnesians and Persians. The Athenians sent substantial expeditions to Cyprus and Egypt, and the Egyptian expedition ended in disaster in 453. Cimon returned from exile, negotiated a truce with Sparta, and died the next year fighting in Cyprus, after which the long contest with Persia finally wound to a sort of close in the so-called "Peace of Callias."

Long years of war, however, had changed the character of the Delian League. What had begun as a defensive alliance had slowly transformed into a *de facto* Athenian maritime empire. In 454, the Athenians decided to transfer

the treasury of the Delian League from Delos to Athens, where they cheerfully began misappropriating naval tribute for a variety of other projects, such as building the Parthenon, whose beauty was, of course, beyond question, but whose naval utility was not always immediately clear to Athens' allies.

Such high-handed tactics bred fear and resentment, not least in Corinth, like Athens a maritime and trading power. It was the tension with Corinth as much as any other factor that provided the occasion for the outbreak of the devastating Peloponnesian War, which concluded almost thirty years later with the utter defeat of classical Athens.

Sparta had long led a defensive coalition termed the Peloponnesian Alliance of which Corinth was a prominent member. Long before, the Corinthians had founded a faction-ridden colony on the western Greek island called Corcyra. Late in 430s, the Corcyrans found themselves in a dispute with Corinth and asked Athens for assistance. In the end, Athens sent a small contingent of first ten ships and then ten more with orders to become involved only if the Corinthians were actually landing on the island itself. In the event, that was enough. Sparta—on the whole reluctantly—declared war.

The justification was that by supporting Corcyra, Athens had violated the provisions of "The Thirty Years Peace," which had been negotiated between Athens and Sparta in 445. The sympathy of most Greeks outside the Delian League, and of a fair number within, was strongly with Sparta.

A profoundly militaristic slave-society, the Spartans are far less attractive to most contemporary observers than vibrant Athens (a slave-owning society as well, if not on the same scale). But the Spartans made better allies. And Athens was deeply resented. The Spartans stayed home by preference. The Athenians went everywhere, and everywhere they went, they hoped to dominate. It is, that in view, not so surprising that most other Greeks preferred the Spartans.

Our sources for the first twenty years of the Peloponnesian War are as good as for any period in antiquity because of the labors of Thucydides, a one-time Athenian general. Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* is generally considered the finest historical work to survive from antiquity. Thucydides' narrative breaks off in 411, however, though he lived to see the end of the war, and for the last years of the conflict we have to rely for the most part on Xenophon's *Hellenica,* and on the writings of Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus.

Thucydides is at his trenchant best in assessing the outbreak of the war. While giving a full and dispiriting account of the unedifying machinations between Corinth and Corcyra, he claims that whatever pretexts might be advanced, the "real cause" of the war was the "growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta" (1.23). So it appears to have been, and Thucydides underscores the point by composing a series of speeches purportedly taking placed in Sparta as the Corinthian delegation argues for Spartan support in the upcoming conflict. "There happened," so Thucydides claims, "to be Athenian envoys present in Sparta on other business" at the time (1.72), and their justification for the actions of Athens does much to illuminate Thucydides' judgment as to the reasons for the conflict. The Athenians argue that "it was not a very remarkable action, or contrary to

the common practice of mankind, if we did accept an empire that was offered to us." We acted, they continue, in response to "three of the strongest motives, fear, honor, and interest. And it was not we who set the example, for it has always been the law that the weaker should be subject to the stronger." Hence, the Athenians have no patience with talk of "justice—a consideration which no one ever yet brought forward to hinder his ambition when he had the chance of gaining anything by might" (1.76).

Thucydides, here and elsewhere, is loathe to make explicit moral judgments, but unstated though it is, the critique is withering. Athens has unambiguously and unshamedly committed itself to what the Germans call *"Machtpolitik"* or "power politics." We can and we want to, so we will. And they did.

The Spartan invasion of Attica followed in due course in the summer of 431 and the Athenians chose to withdraw within their walls and wait it out rather than challenging the Spartan hoplites on the field of battle. This course of action made sense. The "Long Walls" stretched to the Piraeus, now Athens' harbor, and as long as Athens was open to the sea, she could not be starved out. Doing nothing to resist Spartan depredations was rough on Athenian morale. But as long as the charismatic Pericles was alive, the Athenians were content, however reluctantly, to follow his advice. His war plan was simple enough. As Thucydides puts it, Pericles "had said that Athens would be victorious if she bided her time and took care of her navy, if she avoided trying to add to the empire during the course of the war, and if she did nothing to risk the safety of the city itself" (2.65).

He was probably right. We'll never know for sure, though, because Pericles died soon afterwards, and as Thucydides ruefully observes "his successors did the exact opposite" (2.65). He survived long enough, however, to allow Thucydides to attribute to him one of the most influential speeches ever penned, Pericles' funeral oration in honor of the Athenian dead during the first year of the war. This is one of the great set-pieces of classical literature, and if Thucydides is unsparing in his criticism of the weaknesses of his native city, he is also unsparing in its praise. To a substantial extent our own assessment of Athens' achievement mirrors—and to some degree, no doubt, stems from—the oration of Pericles. What counts in Athens, Pericles claims, "is not membership" in "a particular class, but the actual ability" a person possesses. "We Athenians," he continues, "are free and tolerant in our private lives; but in public affairs we keep to the law," especially those laws "which are for the protection of the oppressed" (2.37). Beyond that, Athens is "open to the world" (2.39), and "all the good things from all over the world flow in to us." Athens is a city of culture and refinement, but, so Pericles continues, our "love of what is beautiful does not lead to extravagance; our love of things of the mind does not make us soft" (2.40). "Taking everything together then," Pericles concludes, "I declare that our city is an education to Greece. . . . Future ages will wonder at us, as the present age wonders at us now" (2.40-1). All true—future ages do indeed wonder.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Would the Athenians have won rather than lost the war had they followed the advice of Pericles after Pericles' death?
2. To what extent was Athens indeed, as Pericles claimed, an education to Greece?

Suggested Reading

de Souza, Philip. *The Peloponnesian War: 431-404 B.C.* Essential Histories. Oxford: Osprey, 2002.

Other Books of Interest

Pressfield, Steven. *Tides of War: A Novel of Alcibiades and the Peloponnesian War*. New York: Bantam, 2000.

Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Richard Crawley. Ed. Robert B. Strassler. Intro. Victor Davis Hanson. New York: Free Press, 1996.

Lecture 7: The Peloponnesian War: Melos and Mytilene, Athens Overreaches

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Donald Kagan's *The Peloponnesian War*.

The next few years of the war were relatively uneventful, but in 427, Mytilene, a prosperous city on the island of Lesbos, revolted and attempted to break away from the Athenian empire. Lesbos was a major Athenian ally. A successful revolt on the part of Myteline might trigger more widespread rebellion. Athens had to respond and respond quickly. The revolt was vigorously suppressed, though not without some difficulty. In the aftermath, the question arose as to what to do with the city of Mytilene. Here Thucydides begins in earnest to explore the political and moral weaknesses that he believes led to Athens' downfall.

The question came to the Athenian assembly. Pericles was gone, and the discussion of what to do about Mytilene introduced a new sort of Athenian leader—the owner of a prosperous tannery by the name of Cleon. Thucydides' portrait of Cleon is, to say the least, unflattering. But he was, like Themistocles before him, a man of the people, and it was in reference to him we are told that the word "demagogue" was coined.

With regard to Mytilene, Cleon took a hard, if not a brutal stance. It was indeed well within custom when a resisting city was sacked, but with regard to a former ally, it was harsh—to execute all adult males, guilty and innocent alike, and sell all women and children into slavery. And as Thucydides reported his arguments, he could not have been more aboveboard about his motives.

One "only forgives actions that were not deliberate," Cleon maintained. "To feel pity," or even "to listen to the claims of decency" is "entirely against the interests of an imperial power." He concluded his argument with the following plea: "Punish" the Mytilenians "as they deserve, and make an example of them to your other allies, plainly showing that revolt will be punished by death" (3.40). At first, the ideas of Cleon won the day, and a galley was dispatched with orders to carry out the plan.

Overnight, though, the Athenians have second thoughts and decide to meet again the next day. This time Diodotus, son of Eucrates, speaks in response. Unlike Cleon, Diodotus is unknown outside the pages of Thucydides, and some have thought that Thucydides simply invented him to mount his own counterarguments to Cleon. Diodotus argues against summary executions and enslavement, explicitly foreswearing moral arguments to plead his case on the basis of Athenian self-interest. So he argues, even if those in fact innocent were guilty, the Athenians "should pretend that they were not" in order to secure the loyalty of those who still favor alliance with Athens (3.47). And his motion narrowly passes. The Athenians dispatch another galley with orders, if possible, to pass the first. The second galley arrived just as the

orders for execution were being read. The Athenians confined themselves to executing the ringleaders and accepted a chastened Mytilene back into the empire and the alliance.

This is the first instance where Thucydides explores in detail the corrosive effects of the war on precisely those characteristics of Athens that made her so distinctive.

In dealing with the events that followed, we must, by necessity, focus on the most decisive moments. But by that standard, the victory of Demosthenes (not the famous orator of the same name who lived to oppose the rise of Macedonia in the following century) and, yes, of Cleon, at Sphacteria, are important.

The decisive facts are that in an effort to destabilize the Spartan regime by offering a nearby safe haven for disaffected helots, Demosthenes took a position at Pylos on the west coast of the Peloponnese. The Spartans were understandably alarmed and dispatched an expedition to contest his landing. They took the neighboring small island of Sphacteria, and then lost the naval battle that ensued, and with it the possibility of evacuating their garrison. The Spartans mounted heroic efforts to keep the men on the island supplied, but in the end, the Athenians took it, and with it well more than 100 full Spartans. Greece was flabbergasted. The Spartans never surrendered, but there it was.

The Spartans were humiliated and horrified. Spartan raids on Attica stopped at once. The Athenians had more than 100 hostages. And they began, all but desperately, to negotiate. Athens could have accomplished all of her original war aims had she been willing to accept what Sparta offered. But success breeds confidence, and they did not.

The war continued, though in a more desultory way. The Hellespont and the Bosporus and their approaches were of vital importance to Athens, because Athens, with her large population, could not feed herself and depended on imported grain. Hence, actions in the northern Aegean were for Athens no sideshow, and here is where the gifted Spartan commander Brasidas made his mark, particularly in 424-23. Athens had to respond and ultimately dispatched Cleon, who in 422-21 died fighting against the forces of Brasidas, who died as well.

At this point the war began, for the moment, to die down, and indeed in 421 Athens and Sparta negotiated a truce, the so-called Peace of Nicias. The Spartan survivors of Sphacteria came home at last, and Athens got to keep her empire. The peace was supposed to last for fifty years, but in the event, of course, it did not. One reason was that Sparta's allies were not included in the arrangement, and another was that Sparta's non-aggression treaty with one of the oldest and bitterest of her allies was about to expire. The Peloponnesian polis of Argos so much disliked Sparta that even the threat of Persian invasion had been insufficient to bring Argos over to Sparta's side.

In 420, a new player entered the Athenian scene, one of the most dazzling and charismatic figures ever to appear on the stage of history, a breathtakingly handsome and persuasive young aristocrat named Alcibiades. Alcibiades was raised by his relative Pericles (the son of Themistocles' old nemesis, Xanthippus). Alcibiades was by birth, then, an Alcmaeonid, and accordingly a member of the most influential family in Athens.

He was a spectacularly brave and imaginative commander, irresistibly attractive to both men and women. He was the favorite pupil and protege of Socrates and an Olympic victor—in the chariot race, the highest in prestige of all events. And despite the fact that he spoke with a lisp, a winning small blemish in what otherwise might have been an all-too-perfect package, he was, according to Plutarch, "the greatest orator Athens ever knew" (*Alcibiades* 10).

As a very young man in 420, Alcibiades was elected "*strategos*," or general (one of several), and he set about negotiating with the Argives, whom the Spartans also sought to court. The Argives decided for Athens, who when the peace dissolved and it came to battle, sent a small contingent to Mantinea, where in 418 Sparta regained the prestige her arms had lost at Sphacteria by thrashing a coalition of Argos, Elis, and Mantinea herself—Peloponnesian poleis all three.

And so the peace proved abortive, and war resumed. Athens meanwhile, as Thucydides tells us, plumbed new depths of cruel and overbearing arrogance. In 416, Athens sent a delegation to the tiny southern Aegean island of Melos. Pro-Spartan Melos had adhered to at least a nominal neutrality in the war thus far, and unlike Mytilene, had never been part of the Athenian alliance. Nonetheless, the Athenians demanded that the Melians submit.

The appalled Melians pointed out that Athens was setting a dangerous precedent. If the Athenians insist on behaving this way, their own "fall will be visited by the most terrible vengeance and would be an example to the world" (5.90). The Athenians were unimpressed, and the Melians took another tack: won't the Athenians "make enemies of all states who at present neutral, when they see what is happening," and "naturally conclude that in course of time you will attack them too?" (5.98). That prospect too left the Athenians unmoved, and they concluded with an ultimatum: submit or face the consequences. The Melians choose to resist. The result was predictable. The Athenians "put to death all the men of military age whom they took, and sold the women and children as slaves. Melos itself they took over for themselves" (5.116). The very next sentence in Thucydides' *History* chronicles the first workings of nemesis, the beginnings of Athens' self-inflicted disaster in Sicily.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Does the treatment of Melos in fact benefit Athens in pursuit of victory?
2. Some have seen in Thucydides' account of Melos and the disasters that followed for Athens an evocation of hubris and nemesis at work. Do you find such a claim plausible?

Suggested Reading

Kagan, Donald. *The Peloponnesian War*. New York: Viking, 2003.

Other Books of Interest

Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Rex Warner. Intro, and notes M.I. Finley. Penguin Classics. 1954; New York: Penguin, 1972.

Lecture 8:
The Peloponnesian War: Alcibiades, Nicias, and Syracuse; Sparta Sends a General

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Xenophon's *A History of My Times (Hellenica).*

Athens had a long-standing interest in Sicily and in Italy. Themistocles, indeed, had threatened to evacuate the Athenians to Italy once and for all at the time of Salamis, had the Peloponnesians not agreed at last to fight in the Salamis narrows. And with Athenian access to Black Sea grain contested, grain imports from Sicily loomed all the more important as time passed. Eastern Sicily, in particular, had been subject to Greek colonization for centuries, and Syracuse, founded by Corinth, was in fact, and long had been, in population and prosperity the equal of any other Greek polis. The Sicilian expedition was accordingly a most ambitious undertaking right from the outset, the most extensive military expedition undertaken by Athens thus far. And all the more so since right from the outset, the Athenians hoped to conquer the whole island, an island, of course, far more extensive and populous than Athens and Attica themselves. In this regard, Thucydides suggests, most Athenian citizens had no idea what they were up against (6.1).

The ambitions of Alcibiades, who was strongly in favor of the expedition, if not, indeed, its prime mover, were more extensive still. Once Sicily was conquered, he hoped to take on southern, Greek-speaking Italy, and then Carthage as well before returning to settle matters once and for all in the Peloponnese. The final result would be to make Athens master of the entire Mediterranean basin, west as well as east—an Athenian rather than a Roman empire, in effect.

His leading opponent, as the Athenians debated the issue in the winter before the expedition was launched in 415, was a man named Nicias—honorable, unimaginative, elderly, and dyspeptic, notable mostly for piety, caution, and wealth. In all respects save wealth, he was very nearly Alcibiades' polar antithesis. Pericles had long ago argued against seeking to expand the empire while war with Sparta was looming. Nicias made his case in similar terms. As he put the matter to the assembly: "[I]n going to Sicily you are leaving many enemies behind you, and you apparently want to make new ones" and "have them also on your hands" (6.10). Alcibiades, of course, argued the contrary. Seeking to dissuade the assemby, Nicias then emphasized the vast number of ships and hoplites that in his view would be necessary if the proposed expedition were to have any hope of success. But his argument backfired. The ships and hoplites were provided, with the proviso, indeed, that the commanding generals were at liberty to requisition what they felt they needed, regardless of the cost. And to ensure success, the Athenians decided to balance the counsel of Nicias and Alcibiades by declaring them co-commanders, and with them a seasoned general named Lamachus.

Just before the expedition was to embark, however, disaster struck in a totally unpredictable form. Scattered throughout Athens, as guardians of doorways, sacred spaces, and crossroads, were a series of what were called "herms," that is to say, rectangular stone plinths with the head of Hermes sculpted on top and along the plinth face, an erect phallus. They were, in effect, communal good-luck charms—religious shrinelets—and their mutiliation all over the city was a terrifying and most unpropitious omen. To this day, no one knows who was responsible. The Athenians suspected heedless and disaffected young oligarchs, eager to overthrow the democratic government, and in particular, suspected Alcibiades. Alcibiades was notorious for his boisterous and extravagant mode of life—as Thucydides puts it, "most people became frightened at a quality in him which was beyond the normal and showed itself both in the lawlessness of his private life and habits and in the spirit in which he acted on all occasions" (6.15). And to make matters worse, he was suspected of having conducted in his home a mocking parody of the religious rites that the Athenians most venerated, the celebrated Eleusinian Mysteries in honor of Demeter and Persephone. Athenians took such matters very seriously. If Alcibiades were convicted on such charges, he would face execution. Even so, he argued for an immediate trial. It says a good deal about Alcibiades' unique position in Athens that despite the fact that he was suspected of seeking to overthrow the democratic government, his greatest support at this juncture came from the people themselves, in particular from the rowers who were about to embark with the fleet. His enemies refused to grant him a trial—juries in Athenian capital cases were huge and selected by lot, and his enemies feared that if he came to trial he would be acquitted. Instead, they let him depart under a cloud, still co-commander of the expedition, in hopes that when the expedition had departed, and many of his supporters with it, they could frame charges that would stick.

And so it turned out. As a result of all the uproar, the expedition departed late, about midsummer, and then frittered away valuable time in a series of inconclusive side expeditions resulting in part, and predictably, from divided command. Meanwhile, the enemies of Alcibiades got their way. He was ordered home to stand trial and promptly defected, first to a place called Thurii, and then to Sparta, where he argued to the Spartans that as the man who had made the plans of Athens, he was the man who could do most to help the Spartans thwart them. And once again, so it turned out.

Despite the fuddled beginning of the expedition, once the Athenians finally arrived at Syracuse, for a time things went pretty much their way. They occupied the heights to the north of the city, the Epipolae, as they were called, and began a wall to cut off the city from the rest of Sicily. In the fighting that ensued, Lamachus was killed, but even in his absence Nicias began to make some headway, both at sea and on land. The alarmed Syracusans requested aid from Sparta. The Spartans, as usual, were hesitant, but Alcibiades counseled action. The Syracusans, he suggested, "will not be able to hold out against the Athenian forces now in Sicily. And if Syracuse falls, all Sicily falls with it, and Italy soon afterwards" (6.91). As indeed would have been the case, it has seemed to many, had the gifted and daring Alcibiades remained in command. "So do not imagine," he continued, "that it is only the question of Sicily that is under discussion; it will be the question of the Peloponnese

unless you quickly take the following measures: you must send out to Sicily a force of troops that are able to row the ships themselves and to take the field as hoplites as soon as they land; and—what I consider even more useful than the troops—you must send out as commander a regular Spartan officer to organize the troops that are there already and to force into service those who are shirking their duty." And, Alicbiades continued, you must give the Athenians a taste of their own medicine. Just as the landing at Pylos offered a safe haven for disaffected helots, taking Decelea in Attica will offer a safe haven for Athens' many slaves, as well as disrupting the flow of silver from Athens' mines and disheartening Athens' allies. It "is the thing of which the Athenians have always been most frightened," and "the surest way of harming an enemy is to find out" what "form of attack he is most frightened of and then to employ it against him" (6.91). Lest the Spartans should doubt his motives, Alcibiades, we are told, concluded with an explanation of his actions against Athens: "I am trying," he said, "to recover a country that has ceased to be mine" (6.92).

The Spartans, evidently, were persuaded and followed Alcibiades' advice precisely. Disaster for Athens followed in turn. The commander whom the Spartans dispatched was a man named Gyllipus, and in an astonishingly short time, he turned the situation around, doing just what Alcibiades had foreseen. It is almost frightening to contemplate this instance of Spartan military skill. Gyllipus retook the Epipolae, began a successful series of counterwalls, and threw the Athenians on the defensive across the board. The taking of Decelea, too, had just the effects Alcibiades promised.

Nicias, meanwhile, was suffering from severe kidney disease, and he asked to be recalled and that the entire expedition be called off. To have any hope of success, he suggested, the Athenians would need reinforcements the size of the original expedition. Once again, though, the still-optimistic Athenians took him at his word, and in due course the reinforcements arrived, and with them Demosthenes, the hero of Pylos and Sphacteria. It didn't help, and after more disastrous fighting, Demosthenes too was ready to disengage. And they could very probably have done it, making the best of a bad situation, had there not been an eclipse of the moon on the night before they were to depart. Bad omens again, and Nicias in particular was appalled. The Athenians decided, at Nicias' instigation, to wait for lucky "thrice nine days," another lunar cycle in other words, before trying again (7.50).

That gave Gyllipus and the Syracusans the time they needed to box in the Athenian fleet. The Athenians attempted a desperate break-out, but it failed, and in the grim aftermath they decided to make their way to friendlier territory overland. That too failed. Against the will of Gyllipus, the Syracusans executed both Demosthenes and Nicias and confined their troops in a stone quarry—on short rations, exposed to the weather, and without sanitation—as Thucydides laconically put it, "they suffered everything which one could imagine might be suffered by men imprisoned in such a place."

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How effective was the advice that Alcibiades gave to the Spartans?
2. Was Alcibiades justified in defecting to Sparta? Or was he simply a traitor?
3. Assess the wisdom of the Athenians' choice of dividing the command at Syracuse as they did.

Suggested Reading

Xenophon. *A History of My Times (Hellenica)*. Trans. Rex Warner. Intro. George Cawkwell. New York: Penguin, 1979.

Other Books of Interest

Thucydides. *Thucydides*. Trans. Charles Forster Smith. 4 vols. Loeb Classical Library, 1919; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Lecture 9:
The Peloponnesian War: Arginousai, Aegospotomoi, Lysander and the Bitter End

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Barry Strauss's *Athens After the Peloponnesian War: Class, Faction, and Policy, 403-386.*

And yet somehow, the Athenians kept on fighting for almost another ten years. Even after the unparalleled disaster in Sicily the resilient spirit of Athens was unbroken, and during those final years, the Athenians on more than one occasion came within a hair's breadth of victory, despite all.

The narrative of Thucydides comes to its end in 411, though he lived to see the grim end of the war. For the final years of the war, we have to rely on less detailed and presumably less accurate sources, largely Xenophon, and in some instances Plutarch as well.

Alcibiades, as might be imagined, was for a time a great success in Sparta. Notorious luxury-lover though he was, while in Sparta he adopted Spartan habits and showed himself well up to Spartan standards at characteristically Spartan pursuits, to say nothing of his invaluable strategic advice. But he alienated King Agis of Sparta by seducing his wife Timaea, an affair that was revealed, we are told, when an earthquake shook down the wall of Timaea's bedroom. So though still in Spartan service, Alcibiades wisely left Sparta herself to perform what could be construed as his last, war-winning service for Lacaedemon. He began to negotiate with Persia. With practically limitless Persian money at their disposal—the Persians had no reason to love Athens—the Spartans could do things that they had been unable to do before. They could, for instance, build and outfit a fleet, and when the time came, pay more for skilled rowers than Athens could offer. That, in the end, made the difference.

The year 413 saw Alcibiades working on behalf of Sparta in the Aegean island of Chios, trying to foment rebellion against Athenian rule, but he received word that King Agis and other Spartans displeased with him sought his death. So Alcibiades once again defected, this time to Tissaphernes, the local Persian satrap. Here, he offered different advice, proposing to Tissaphernes that his best course would be to play the Athenians and Spartans against each other.

Athens, meanwhile, saw political changes of her own. In May of 411, an oligarchic group staged a *coup d'état*, briefly replacing the democratic government with a leadership group called "The Four Hundred." This gave Alcibiades a window—the deeply pro-democratic Athenian fleet was stationed at Samos, and to the fleet Alicibiades returned. The rowers and sailors wanted him to lead them back to Athens, where they could mount a counter *coup d'état* and restore the democracy to power, but Alcibiades deferred. Instead, he undertook a series of campaigns that nearly won the war for Athens, despite the losses suffered in Sicily. It was an astonishing achievement.

Alcibiades' character was, to put the matter gently, questionable, not to say downright traitorous, but his skills as a general and leader were all but Achillean. Whatever side he worked for seemed to pull into the lead—Athens (twice), Sparta, or Persia, no matter.

Over the course of the next two years, in a series of battles at Cyzicus and Byzantium, Alcibiades regained for Athens the control of the Hellespont. The Spartan commander at Cyzicus was a man named Mindarus, and after the battle the Athenians intercepted the Spartan message home, another masterpiece of Laconic understatement. It read, so Plutarch reports, "Ships lost: Mindarus dead: men starving: do not know what to do" (*Alcibiades* 28). The tide had turned—turned so decisively that the Spartans sent out a commander of a very different kind, the hard, politically adept, and utterly unscrupulous Lysander, the man who would ultimately win the war.

Lysander immediately began to cultivate the young Persian satrap, a member of the royal family as it happened, who was sent out to take over in Sardis, and succeeded in winning him over completely. So the story goes, young Cyrus (namesake of the great conquerer) asked Lysander what gift would mean most to him, and Lysander replied, enough money to raise the pay-scale of his rowers so he could out-bid the Athenians. He got his wish and more, and his fleet prospered accordingly.

Meanwhile, even without the help of the fleet, the Athenians had managed to depose the oligarchic "Four Hundred" after only a few months, and in time, after his stunning victories, Alcibiades felt confident enough to return to Athens at last. He technically remained under sentence of death, and he was hesitant even when he arrived to go ashore, but his return was in fact a triumph, not least his decision to lead in person the procession from Athens to Eleusis for the mysteries that he had once been accused of profaning.

Even then, though, Alcibiades' difficulties and the difficulties of Athens were not over. He returned to the Aegean islands in command of the fleet, posed with the challenging problem of keeping the fleet funded in the face of the unlimited Spartan bankroll from Persia. During one of his fund-raising operations, Alcibiades left his "*kybernetes*" or personal helmsman, a man named Antiochus, in command of the fleet, under strict orders not to engage the Spartans. This was a departure from the expected norm—the fleet had assigned sub-commanders, whom Alcibiades had effectively superceded in leaving his helmsman in command. And Antiochus, contrary to instructions, provoked an engagement with the Spartan fleet at Notium, an engagement that the Athenians decisively lost. That was the end for Alcibiades in Athens. Even in his moment of triumph, he had plenty of enemies, and they had a field day accusing him of carousing his way around the Aegean and leaving the fleet in the lurch.

The laws of Sparta prohibited a "*navarch*," or fleet commander, from serving longer than a year, and Lysander was accordingly recalled, to be replaced by an honorable and appealing, if less capable, Spartan commander called Callicratidas. Unlike Lysander, Callicratidas had no stomach for flattering and waiting on Persian officialdom, and found the whole process so demeaning and repellant that he was ready to give up the Persian alliance, and in effect, restart the Persian Wars. That is not the way things turned out, though, and

in 406 Callicratidas found himself in command for the Spartans in the last great at-sea fleet battle of the war. With Alicibiades gone—he had retired under Persian quasi-protection to a personal fortress in what is now called the Gallipoli peninsula and what the Greeks called the Chersonese—the Athenians relied on eight admirals, and at the battle of Arginusae, just off the Anatolian mainland near Lesbos, the Athenians won a signal victory, taking seventy-odd Spartan ships to a loss of twenty-five or so. But victory or not, Arginusae turned out to be a disaster for Athens. As the battle wound to its close, the majority of the Athenian fleet sailed away in an attempt to cut off another nearby Spartan fleet. Roughly one third of the Athenian ships remained to pick up survivors. But then a storm blew up, and rescue operations had to be called off. The Athenians were furious, and voted, incredibly, to execute all of the victorious admirals that they could get their hands on.

The last act was not long in coming. Callicratidas was killed at Arginusae, and the Spartans figured out a way to bring Lysander back in command. 405 saw the Athenian and Spartan fleets operating in the Hellespont, control of which was vital for Athens if she was to feed her populace. Lysander was beseiging a city called Lampascus on the Asian side of the strait. The Athenians beached their ships on the European side at a place called Aegospotami and tried to lure Lysander into battle. For several days, they could not, and they unwisely concluded that Lysander was afraid to fight, beaching their ships when the day's sailing was done, and wandering off to find supplies.

Alcibiades, whose private fortress was nearby, came down to the beach to suggest that such relaxed practices were unwise. What the Athenians should do was instead harbor at the nearby town of Sestus, where their ships would be better protected. The Athenian generals, however, were in no mood to listen—"It is we who are in command now, not you" (*Lysander* 10), Plutarch cites as their reply.

Finally, on the fifth day of such jockeying, "the Athenians once more sailed over to the enemy and back again in a contemptuous and careless fashion, as had now become their habit" (*Lysander* 10). This time, though, Lysander had a surprise in store. As soon as the Athenians began to disembark, he attacked. A very few Athenian ships escaped, and with them the Athenian admiral Conon. The rest were taken on the beach, as Alcibiades had warned they might be. Lysander, as Plutarch puts the matter, "had performed a prodigious exploit with the minimum amount of effort. In the space of a single hour he had put an end to a war" (*Lysander* 11).

The war dragged on for another year, but with no fleet, Athens had no hope of victory. As the end approached, the Corinthians and Thebans wanted to pay back Athens in her own coin—as at Melos, so at Athens—men executed, women and children enslaved. That would have been the end, among others, of Socrates and Plato. But to their great credit, the Spartans refused. They would not, they said, destroy "a Greek city which had done such great things for Greece at the time of her supreme danger" (*Xenophon* 2.2.20). Instead, they required that the Long Walls and the fortifications at Piraeus be destroyed and all but twelve Athenian ships surrendered. And of course they installed a pro-Spartan government. The Athenians accepted the terms, and

as Xenophon tells us “the walls were pulled down among scenes of great enthusiasm and to the music of flute girls. It was thought that this day was the beginning of freedom for Greece” (2.2.23).

That is not, of course, how it turned out. In a position of dominance, Sparta proved no more agreeable than Athens. The government of the so-called “Thirty Tyrants” in Athens lasted only a year or so, and the democracy was restored. But it was a chastened and edgy democracy, most notable, from the point of view of posterity, for condemning Socrates to death in 399, as, among other things, a corrupter of youth—a corrupter in particular, so one might surmise, of Alcibiades.

Alcibiades himself was assassinated as well—at the instigation of Sparta and with Persian assistance. The glory days of Athens, certainly of the Athenian empire, were over. And the hegemony of Sparta too proved to be short-lived. A charismatic military genius named Epaminondas arose in Thebes, and at the battle of Leucrtra in 371, he shocked the Greek world by decisively defeating the Spartans. It was another military genius, however, who put an end forever to the age of the independent polis. At the battle of Chaeronea in 338, Philip II of Macedon defeated a Greek coalition and brought most of Greece under Macedonian control—and his son Alexander did the same for Persia. By the death of Alexander in 323, Greece and Persia alike had fallen under Macedonian hegemony, and as Alexander’s generals—he had no direct adult heir—fought to carve empires for themselves from what Alexander had conquered, a new age and culture came into being—the Hellenistic Age, which saw the East dominated by large, multi-ethnic polities, dominated by Greek-speaking Macedonians and, at least superficially Greek in culture, but rich with the pre-existing legacy of Persia, Syria, Anatolia, Egypt, and even Greece herself.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. To what extent did Athens bring about its own defeat?
2. What were the long-term results of the Peloponnesian War?

Suggested Reading

Strauss, Barry. *Athens After the Peloponnesian War: Class, Faction, and Policy, 403-386*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Lecture 10:
The Punic Wars:
Rome and Carthage, the First Punic War

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Nigel Bagnall's *The Punic Wars: 264-146 B.C.*

So it was not to be Athens that would become a pan-Mediterranean power. That honor instead came to Rome, which at the time of the Peloponnesian War was fighting to secure control of Italy and, shortly afterward, fighting for its life against the Gauls. Within a bit more than a century, though, everything had changed, and Rome found itself fighting Carthage, near modern Tunis, in North Africa, first for control of the Western Mediterranean, and by the time Carthage was defeated once and for all, for something not much less than the entire classical world.

The scale of the Punic Wars (so called on the basis of the Roman word for "Carthaginian," "punicus") was immense, even in comparison to the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian Wars. Rome and her Carthaginian enemies launched huge battle fleets of galleys that were significantly bigger than those used in the Greek conflicts, and it is said that the battle of Cannae in 216 was the most costly day of fighting until the British went over the top at the Somme in 1916, well more than 2,000 years later. Our sources for the second Punic War in particular are good, ten books from Livy's monumental 142-book history of Rome, *Ab urbe condita,* of which thirty-five books survive, and Polybius' *Histories*. Polybius was himself an eyewitness of the final phase of the third and last of the Punic Wars. Major sources for the third Punic War are Appian's *Roman History,* Diodorus Siculus, and, once again, Plutarch.

Rome was supposedly founded in 753, just a bit more than twenty years after the first recorded Olympic games, and by 509, we are told, the Romans had expelled Tarquin the Proud and laid the foundations for the republic that endured for nearly five hundred years. At first Rome's power was merely local. During the time of the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War, Rome was not a major player on the international scene. During the 300s, however, Rome gradually came to dominate most of Italy, and from the outset, Roman culture and the Roman armies alike were marked by several characteristics that would hold them in good stead.

Unlike Athens and Sparta, the Romans were willing to treat as citizens those she came to dominate. Being Roman was more a matter of culture than of ancestory—act Roman, accept Rome's rule, and you were Roman.

Rome had nothing like the factional infighting between classes that characterized the Greek world. Rome had her classes, to be sure (plebs, patricians, freedmen, and slaves), but though Roman politics were lively, at no point, for centuries, was any Roman on record tempted to scheme with outside enemies. Roman citizens, like the Spartans, tended to be reliably public-spirited and loyal.

The Romans had a cultural genius for practicality. They focused on what worked and were happy to borrow good ideas from wherever they found them. And the Romans fought to win. By the time of the Punic Wars, most ancient warfare was designed to force a negotiated treaty. The Romans didn't fight that way and weren't interested in negotiated settlements. They were interested in conquest. And they conquered.

About Carthage, sadly, we know much less. Carthage was a Phoenician colony (hence the name "Punic") and an old one, founded, so we are told, about 814. The Carthaginians spoke a Semetic language akin to Hebrew, and their ancestors had come from the Middle East. They worshiped gods similar to those worshiped by the Canaanites, whom we encounter in the Hebrew Bible, Ba'al Hammon, and a goddess named Tanit. Like the Biblical worshipers of Moloch, they regularly passed babies "through the fire," that is, burned them alive as human sacrifices. For a long time scholars tended to discount such tales as anti-Carthaginian Roman propaganda, but archaeological work has confirmed them. The original foundation of Roman power was agricultural. The foundation of Carthaginian power was trade, though the Carthaginian elite ran extensive and very prosperous farms in their North African homeland in what it is now Tunisia. The Carthaginian citizen body, unlike the Roman, was small, and when they felt they had to fight, they ordinarily hired long-term mercenaries. Very few Carthaginians ever fought in the ranks. At sea, matters were different. The Carthaginian lifeblood was trade, and they were legendarily skilled sailors.

When the first Punic War began, the Romans, though they had evidently once had a tiny ill-skilled navy of twenty small ships, were an exclusively land-locked Italian power. The Carthaginians, by contrast, in addition to their North African homeland, had a growing presence in what is now Spain, a series of bases all over the Western Mediterranean, and most to the point, a long-standing and substantial presence in Sicily. Before 264, the Carthaginians and the Romans had little contact with each other, but what little there had been was relatively amicable.

In 264, however, that changed as the Romans decided to intervene on behalf of a group of mercenaries. Twenty years before, more or less, these mercenaries, who called themselves the "*Mamertines*" in honor of "Mavors" or "Mars," the god of war, had taken over the city of Messana, right across the straits from the toe of the Italian "boot." The political situation in that part of Sicily was complicated. In addition to the unsavory Mamertines, the Carthaginians and the forces of Hiero of Syracuse were in play, but despite all, the Romans emerged victorious, and in the process convinced Hiero to transfer his own allegiance to Rome, to whom he remained a faithful ally for the rest of his long life.

Early success whetted Rome's appetite, and she decided to take all of Sicily. But that posed a problem. Sicily is an island, the Carthaginians were excellent sailors, and Rome had only the most vestigial of navies.

Rome decided to build a navy from scratch. As the Romans had sailed across the straits to Massana at the very outset of the war—in ships borrowed from maritime Greek-speaking allies in southern Italy—a Carthaginian

quinquireme contesting their passage ran aground. (Quinquiremes were larger, more powerful galleys that had replaced the triremes of the Greek wars.) The Romans, so Polybius tells us, used the captured Carthaginian quinquireme as a template to build their own fleet, which they did in record time, training rowers as best they could on land while the ships were built. Once the navy was complete, the Romans proved themselves splendid fighters, but terrible sailors. Recognizing their deficiencies as ship-handlers, they came up with a secret weapon to neutralize Carthaginian seamanship. The secret weapon, a "corvus," or "raven," was in essence a raised, moveable walkway that could be lifted and dropped onto opposing ships, allowing its "beak," a strong metal spike attached to the bottom of the walkway, to crash through the deck of the opposing ship, locking the antagonists together and allowing Roman marines to board the ships of their Carthaginian rivals.

The "raven" first came into use at the naval battle of Mylae, off northeast Sicily. The Carthaginians were so contemptuous of the Roman fleet they didn't even bother to form a proper battle-line, but once they closed with the Romans, they learned better. The cumbersome "ravens" did their work, and out of 130 ships, according to Polybius, the Carthaginians lost fifty. In disgust, the Carthaginians crucified their commander for his pains.

Much encouraged, the Romans then mounted a really huge naval expedition, consisting, so we are told, of more than 330 big ships and transports ready to carry an expeditionary force to Africa, if that should prove possible. Off Cape Ecnomus, in southern Sicily, the Romans met the Carthaginians with an even bigger fleet of 350 ships, and in a complicated four-part battle, overcame them. Rome purportedly lost twenty-four ships, the Carthaginians thirty, with another sixty-four captured.

The expeditionary force could proceed, and under the command of a man named Regulus, duly landed in Africa and at first did very well. So well, in fact, that the Carthaginians were ready to negotiate a settlement to the conflict. The terms that Regulus proposed, however, were so harsh that the Carthaginians decided to fight on and sent out agents to recruit more mercenaries. Among those they signed was a Spartan officer named Xanthippus—Sparta was no longer what she had been, but Spartan training still continued after a fashion, and Xanthippus had learned his lessons well. His suggestions to the Carthaginians made so much sense that they effectively put him in command. One of his suggestions was that the Carthaginians should seek to fight the Romans on the plains, where their cavalry—and elephants—would be most effective. When they followed Xanthippus' advice in May 255, they so thoroughly routed the Romans that they captured Regulus himself. Xanthippus, perhaps considering what happened to Themistocles and Militades, decided not to wear out his welcome and simply went home, mission accomplished.

So the story goes, Regulus was sent home to persuade the Romans to stop the conflict, having promised to return to Carthage. He indeed went home, urged the Romans instead to keep on fighting, and dutifully went back to Carthage to be tortured to death.

In July 255, the Romans dispatched another fleet to pick up the uncaptured survivors of Regulus' expedition, which thrashed another Carthaginian fleet en route, this time taking 114 ships. The Romans were proving themselves adept sea-fighters indeed. But on the way home, the Romans ran into a storm off the south coast of Sicily. Out of 364 ships, only eighty made it back to Rome.

Undeterred, by 253 the Romans had built 220 more ships, bringing the Roman fleet once again up to 300—and then lost 150 of them in yet another storm off Cape Palinurus in Italy on the way back from Africa.

At this point, the Romans decided to put their naval program into abeyance for a while. For the next several years, they confined themselves to land operations in Sicily itself, for the most part in and around the Carthaginian base at Lilybaeum, on the western tip of Sicily, and in relatively nearby Panormus, modern Palermo, on the north coast.

In the short run, Rome's difficulties at sea continued. Storms remained disproportionately costly to the Roman fleet, and in 249, the Romans lost the one major sea battle of the war in which they were bested by the Carthaginians. At Drepana, Publius Claudius Pulcher sought to catch Adherbal and the Carthaginian fleet napping, but on the way to the battle, the sacred chickens refused to eat—an unfavorable omen. The irascible Pulcher supposedly threw them overboard, saying "if they won't eat, then let them drink." The Romans lost 93 ships.

At the battle of the Aegales Islands, off the Carthaginain base at Lilybaeum, the Romans took to sea in heavy weather and overcame an incoming Carthaginian relief expedition. The next year, in 241, Hamilcar Barca, who for seven years had successfully harried the Romans around Panormus, was granted plenipotentiary powers to negotiate a peace. After twenty-three years, the first Punic War came to an end. Rome had achieved her aims and gained Sicily.

Hamilcar, meanwhile, returned home and spent the next years putting down an exceedingly bloody mercenary revolt, one of the grimmest and most atrocity-filled conflicts on record. But he did not forget the Romans, who in the meantime had their hands full fighting the Gauls. In 237, Hamilcar was dispatched to Spain. He set out to rebuild Carthaginian power and in the process laid the groundwork for the second round of conflict between Rome and Carthage—a conflict that would prove to be the costliest war in antiquity.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

Compare the cultures of Rome and Carthage. What advantages did each have in the conflict that they undertook?

Suggested Reading

Bagnall, Nigel. *The Punic Wars: 264–146 B.C.* Essential Histories. Oxford: Osprey, 2002.

Other Books of Interest

Livy. *Livy*. Trans. B.O. Foster. 14 vols. Loeb Classical Library. 1929, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949.

Lecture 11:
The Punic Wars: The Second Punic War, Hannibal Crosses the Alps, Lake Trasimene

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Adrian Goldsworthy's *The Punic Wars*.

Hamilcar's attitude at the conclusion of the First Punic War was in some respects reminiscent of the attitude of many Germans at the conclusion of World War I—he was undefeated, though he had been forced to concede and negotiate a peace, and he was eager, if he could, to reverse the judgment of the previous conflict. Livy tells a famous story that suggests as much. When Hamilcar "was about to carry his troops over into Spain," his son Hannibal, "then about nine years old," begged "to be allowed to accompany him." At which point, Hamilcar, "who was preparing to offer sacrifice," led "the boy to the altar and made him solemnly swear, with his hand upon the sacred victim, that as soon as he was old enough he would be the enemy of the Roman people" (21.1). And so, most emphatically and most capably, he proved to be.

Hamilcar's activities in Spain prospered, and Carthaginian influence in the region grew until Hamilcar's death in 229, at which point his son-in-law Hasdrubal succeeded him. Hasdrubal was assassinated in 221, at which point, still in his twenties, Hamilcar's son Hannibal took over command, having grown up with the army. He was to prove, in the opinion of more than one military historian, the most gifted commander who ever lived.

The Second Punic War began when Hannibal beseiged and captured the city of Saguntum, on the eastern Mediterranean coast of Spain. Shortly thereafter, in 218, he launched his legendary invasion of Italy, beginning from the Punic base in New Carthage, now Cartagena, to the south. He began his march, according to Livy, with roughly 100,000 troops, but by the time he had made his way over the Pyrenees and into what is now southern France, his numbers had dropped. He first encountered serious resistance at the Rhone, where Gallic tribesmen contested his crossing, but he bested them and made his way upstream in preparation for his autumn crossing of the Alps. The Romans, meanwhile, got wind of Hannibal's movements, and Publius Cornelius Scipio, on his way to take up his duties in Spain, tried to intercept Hannibal in the Rhone Valley and just missed bringing him to battle. Scipio, at that point, sent his brother Gnaeus Scipio on to Spain and sailed back himself to northern Italy to catch Hannibal as he came down from the Alpine passes into the north Italian plain.

Hannibal's crossing is, of course, legendary, and Livy waxes eloquent in describing Hannibal's difficulties with snow, landslides, and hostile tribesmen. The passage took him fifteen days, and his army was much reduced by the time he made his way into the Po Valley, where Scipio was waiting for him.

Scipio was stationed on the Ticinus River, a tributary flowing into the Po from the north, and the opening conflict between Hannibal's seasoned mercenary army and the Romans went in Hannibal's favor. Hannibal ordered his Numidian cavalry—ancestors, presumably, of today's Tuaregs and Berbers and devastatingly effective despite the fact that they fought without stirrups—to circle to Rome's rear, and in the ensuing melée, Scipio was wounded and nearly lost his life. By most accounts he was saved by the heroic intervention of his teenaged son, who by the time the war was over would emerge as Hannibal's eventual conqueror and the greatest of all Roman heroes—Scipio Africanus (so-called because of his decisive African victories many years later).

In the immediate aftermath of the Ticinus, the wounded and doubtless somewhat disheartened Scipio led his troops south across the Po to a position near the north-flowing River Trebia, at which point Scipio was joined by his fellow consul, Sempronius. As the Spartans had two kings, so the Romans had two consuls, elected annually as supreme leaders of the republic. Ordinarily, each commanded his own army, but under severe threat, they fought together. Sempronius was eager, and he enjoyed some early success in skirmishing with Hannibal's cavalry, which evidently led him to conclude that Scipio was being overcautious.

Hannibal sent his brother Mago and a contingent of cavalry to hide themselves on a snowy winter day near the equinox. He then ordered his Numidian cavalry across the Trebia to engage the Romans and then withdraw, pulling the Romans across the river and into a position where Mago could spring the trap. Exhilarated by their apparent success, the Romans sloshed across the frigid river. And then Mago charged. Hannibal had meanwhile positioned his elephants on his flanks and they contributed to the rout. The Romans were resoundingly defeated.

Both armies went into winter quarters, and the Romans elected two new consuls, Gneaus Servilius and Gaius Flaminius. When spring came, Hannibal made his way south, and Flaminius in particular was eager to engage him. He got his wish at Lake Trasimene, in the Apennines north of Rome and very near modern Perugia.

Once again, Hannibal set a trap. The road along Lake Trasimene went through a narrow defile, with mountains on one side and the lake itself on the other. Hannibal deployed one contingent of troops more or less in plain sight at the end of the defile. The others he hid among the hills that rose up to mountains along the lakeside road.

Ancient armies were not particularly careful in reconnaissance. When the misty morning dawned, Flaminius led his troops along the lake, his attention fixed on the contingent Hannibal had placed at the end of the pass. When he was well in, Hannibal sprung the trap. At first, in the mist, the Romans had little idea just what was going on. But in fact the Carthaginians were attacking from front flank and rear. The Romans fought with dogged courage and ultimately in panicked desperation. But it was no use.They were surrounded, and at last the Carthaginians pushed many survivors into the lake, where they could be finished off at leisure. Flaminius himself was killed, so Livy reports, by one of Hannibal's Gallic allies, and though the 6,000 leading

Roman troops broke through, they surrendered the following day. The Cathaginians lost, we are told, about 2,500 troops. The Romans about 15,000. To make matters worse, from a Roman perspective, 4,000 troops sent as reinforcements were soon picked off as well. For the moment at least, nothing lay between Hannibal and Rome.

The Romans appointed as dictator Quintus Fabius, member of an old senatorial family. The Romans had, in fact, called upon dictators in the past—the office carried a six-month time limit and was not unprecedented.

The achievements of Fabius, however—soon to be called Fabius Maximus, Cunctator, Fabius the Great, the Delayer—were in substantial measure unprecedented. He, as much as anyone, saved Rome. He adopted what have since been called "Fabian" tactics. That is to say, rather than engaging Hannibal directly, he kept to the hills, where Hannibal's superb cavalry was ineffective, and like George Washington in the American Revolution, he sought to win the war by keeping his army in being, letting time, supply difficulties, and attrition work on his behalf. Successful as they were, however, Fabius' tactics found their critics. For one thing, they seemed un-Roman. The Roman way to engage an enemy was to fight, not to lurk on his flanks. It was difficult as well to stand by and watch while Hannibal pillaged the countryside, and all the more difficult since Hannibal took care conspicuously not to pillage the estates of Fabius himself, deliberately raising the suspicion that he and Fabius were in collusion. But Fabius' tactics worked. What would have been fatal for the Romans was large-scale defection from their recently conquered allies. That was what Hannibal was counting on, but with the exception of the north-Italian Gauls, it didn't happen.

In the meantime, Fabius very nearly succeeded in boxing in Hannibal, and only the astonishing expedient of gathering a herd of cattle, tying small brush-piles to their heads between their horns, setting the brush afire, and releasing the understandably panicked cattle to stampede in all directions at night allowed Hannibal to break through the Roman lines. The Romans didn't know what was going on, and Hannibal was able to escape.

Even still, the allies held firm, though there were many in Rome who continued to chafe at Fabius' tactics, not least among them his own second-in-command or "Master of Horse," a man named Marcus Minucius Rufus, who taunted Fabius as "Hannibal's pedagogue."

Minucius even managed to get himself effectively appointed co-commander with Fabius and took advantage of the situation to pick a fight with Hannibal. Fabius and his own troops had to rescue him, but Minucius learned his lesson, and once rescued, graciously resubmitted himself to Fabius' command.

Not all Romans were so teachable, however, and when at the end of 217 Fabius' dictatorship expired, at least one of the newly elected consuls chose to follow non-Fabian tactics. The result was the greatest defeat that Rome ever suffered.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What are “Fabian tactics”? Why did they work?
2. Assess Hannibal’s tactics at the Ticinus and Lake Trasimene.

Suggested Reading

Goldsworthy, Adrian. *The Punic Wars*. London: Cassell, 2000.

Other Books of Interest

Livy. *The War with Hannibal: Books XXI–XXX of The History of Rome from Its Foundation*. Trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt. Ed. and intro. Betty Radice. Penguin Classics. 1965; New York: Penguin, 1977.

Plutarch. *Makers of Rome: Nine Lives by Plutarch*. Trans. and intro. Ian Scott-Kilvert. Penguin Classics. New York: Penguin, 1965.

Lecture 12:
The Punic Wars: Carthage Triumphant, the Battle of Cannae, Fabius Maximus—Cunctator

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Appian's *Roman History* (translated by Horace White).

The two new consuls elected for 216 were Gaius Terentius Varro and Lucius Aemilius Paullus. The Aemilii were among the oldest and most distinguished of Rome's dominant senatorial families, and on Livy's account of the matter, Aemilius Paullus was more than willing to listen to Fabius' cautious advice. Varro's background was less distinguished, and from Livy's perspective at least, Varro was little more than a rabble-rouser, eager to reassert Roman honor by taking on Hannibal head to head.

The Romans had done their Roman best to make up their losses from their defeats at the Ticinus, Trebia, and Lake Trasimene, and had raised a for-the-most-part freshly recruited—and accordingly somewhat ill-trained—army of just under 90,000 men. This was, of course, vastly more than Hannibal could muster, though Hannibal's troops, by contrast, were long-term seasoned veterans to a man.

Hannibal had made his way past Rome into southern Italy on the Adriatic side, where he took a position on the banks of the river Aufidus near a small place called Cannae. Hannibal was well aware of the divided command he was facing and knew he had a good chance of luring the Romans into battle on ground favorable for the cavalry, which was his strongest arm. As Livy puts it, he "was well aware that the command" of the Roman army "was in the hands of two dissimilar men, who would never agree, and that almost two thirds of the Roman force were raw recruits" (2.41).

Though there is some dispute about the matter, it seems that Varro and Paullus took overall command on alternate days—and that policy in itself seems like a recipe for disaster. Hannibal took advantage of the situation to use his cavalry to harass the Romans in hopes of goading them into battle, and, so Livy tells us, when Varro's day came "he used it as was to be expected: without in any way consulting his colleague he gave the order for battle, marshalled the troops, and led them across the river" in order to engage Hannibal's troops. Paullus followed, for he could not but lend his aid, deeply though he disapproved of what was done" (22.46).

And thus began what is probably the most celebrated, most closely studied battle ever fought. Hannibal's "double envelopment" of the Roman troops at Cannae has obsessed military historians and military theorists to this day. It is widely considered, on the Carthaginian side, the most brilliant tactical victory of all time.

Hannibal, in any case, had roughly 50,000 troops to counter the near-90,000 Romans. On his left, Hannibal deployed his Spanish and Celtic cavalry, under the command of Hasdrubal. On the right, Maharbal led Hannibal's formidable Numidian horse. In the center, Hannibal and his brother Mago commanded

the infantry. Hannibal adopted a rather unusual formation. In front he set up a skirmish line of light troops, but behind the skirmishers he deployed his Iberian infantry contingents in a bowed formation, the crest pointed toward the Roman lines, to some degree a departure from the norm. On the left and right flanks of the Iberians, just inside the cavalry contingents, he deployed his crack African infantry.

The Romans were relatively weak in cavalry, both in quality and in numbers, 6,000 or so to Hannibal's 10,000 or more. The Roman cavalry lined up opposite Hasdrubal on the Roman right, the Roman allied cavalry opposite Maharbal on the left. To supervise Rome's immense infantry contingent, roughly four times the size of a normal Roman field army, and about twice the size of Hannibal's infantry force, the reluctant Aemilius Paullus stood on the right and his eager counterpart Varro on the left. Roman infantry tactics were as a rule far more flexible than those employed by the hoplite phalanxes of the Greeks, and their formations were for the most part relatively fluid and open. Standard procedure was to deploy in a three-tiered checkerboard pattern, the youngest and least experienced troops, the so-called "*hastati*," in the first line of squares; more experienced troops, at the height of their powers, the "*principes*," formed behind in a second line, not directly behind the squares of *hastati*, but behind the open spaces between them; and then the grizzled veterans, the "*triarii*," in troops half the size of those of the former two groups, completed the checkerboard pattern behind the line of the principes. The open order was designed to improve maneuverability, with the advantage that the deeper you got into a Roman line, the tougher the troops you faced. At Cannae, though, with so very many infantry troops at their disposal, the Romans lined up in considerably deeper order than usual, and this added depth proved to be anything put an advantage.

As the battle began, the wind was in the face of the Romans, and they had to deal with the vast dust clouds raised by tens of thousands of moving animals and troops. After some preliminary skirmishing, Hannibal opened by launching Hasdrubal's Iberian cavalry on his left to take on their Roman counterparts. Hasdrubal quickly routed the outclassed Romans and took off after them in pursuit. Meanwhile, Hannibal's infantry engaged the Roman center, which, as Hannibal had foreseen, slowly began to flatten the bow-shaped formation of Iberian infantry. Meanwhile, Maharbal, on Hannibal's right, took on the Roman allied cavalry, eventually forcing them too into retreat.

And now the battle reached its decisive phase. Hasdrubal broke off pursuit of the routed Roman cavalry on the left and wheeled his own cavalry behind the main Roman line, driving off the Roman allied horse, who in their flight took Varro with them. The Roman center continued making its numbers felt, driving back Hannibal's Iberian center slightly past Hannibal's African troops on his own flanks. Once again, the trap was sprung. The African troops wheeled toward the center, Hasdrubal attacked from the rear, and the vast Roman forces were surrounded.

It takes a long time to kill 48,000 troops with edged weapons, and long after the issue was decided the battle continued to rage. Most of the Romans in the center of the vast force were so closely packed in by their fellows that they had no one to fight as the Carthaginians slowly cut their way through. But fight they did, to no avail. Aemilius Paullus was killed; the chastened Minucius,

Fabius' former Master of Horse, was killed. All told, Roman casualties amounted to nearly 70,000—in little more than a day. Hannibal's casualties were roughly a tenth that—8,000, more or less. It was, for Carthage, an utter, decisive victory. Livy reports that the final moments of the battle were so dispiriting for the Romans that the next day, as the Carthaginians toured the field, they found some soldiers with "their heads buried in the ground, having apparently dug themselves holes and by smothering their faces with earth" managed to choke themselves to death (22.51). Hannibal's brother Mago reported that since the outset of the campaign Hannibal had "killed over 200,000 of the enemy and taken more than 50,000 prisoners" (23.11,12).

Over the whole course of the Vietnam War, the United States lost 47,000-odd troops in combat in a conflict whose cost has had repercussions to this very day. Within three years, the Romans lost, in raw numbers, four times that, more at Cannae in a single day than in the entire Vietnam War. And the population of Rome at the time was nowhere near a tenth that of the United States. But to the amazement of the Cathaginians, who of course assumed that they had the war won, the dogged Romans kept on fighting. When the Carthaginians sent envoys to negotiate, if nothing else, the ransom of prisoners, the Romans refused even to talk with them. And they refused—for years—to let the survivors of the Cannae legions come home. Instead they dispatched them in disgrace to Sicily where they remained for more than decade.

Meanwhile, once again, they set about recruiting new legions, taking in boys and slaves as necessary to fill up the ranks. "*Hannibal ad portas*," "Hannibal at the gates," remained a cautionary watchword for centuries to come, but the Romans did not lose their nerve and did not give in. As Livy boasts with justifiable pride, "No other nation in the world could have suffered so tremendous a series of disasters, and not been overwhelmed" (22.54). But the Romans were not overwhelmed. They persevered.

Not however, without fear and difficulty. In the aftermath of Cannae, Hannibal's cavalry commander Maharbal proposed an immediate march on Rome, suggesting that the Roman's "first knowledge of our coming will be the sight of us" (22.51). Hannibal declined, presumably on the grounds that he didn't have the necessary siege engines. To which, we are told, the disgruntled Maharbal replied, "you know, Hannibal, how to win a fight; you do not know how to use your victory" (22.51).

It is a judgment in which some have concurred. Livy himself ventures that it "is generally believed that that day's delay was the salvation of the City and the Empire" (22.51). Be that as it may, Rome had time to regroup, surprisingly celebrating even Varro on his return for not giving up on the city, and after Cannae the Second Punic War took a different course.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why did so few of Rome's allies defect, despite the stunning victories of Hannibal?
2. Assess Hannibal's tactics at Cannae, generally considered the most impressive demonstration of tactical expertise on record.
3. What was Rome's response to Cannae?

Suggested Reading

Appian. *Roman History*. Trans. Horace White. 4 vols. Loeb Classical Library, 1912; Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2002.

Lecture 13:
The Punic Wars: Rome Wins at Last, Scipio Africanus and Zama

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Polybius's *The Rise of the Roman Empire* (translated by Ian Scott-Kilvert).

The first years of the Second Punic War were marked by spectacular set-piece battles and by spectacular Carthaginian victories as Hannibal laid claim to his laurels, if not as conqueror of Rome, then certainly as one of most effective commanders who ever lived. The latter years of the war were, again, very different. Up until Cannae, Rome allies had by and large held firm, despite Hannibal's victories, but afterwards some in southern Italy in particular, recently conquered and culturally Greek, began to waver. This was helpful to Hannibal, not least because a southern port could be so very useful to him for supplies. Virtually all Roman towns were well-fortified, however, and this meant the slow-paced warfare of besiegement.

So a war of besiegements it largely became, confined for the most part to the Italian south. Hannibal gained control of the Calabrian port of Tarentum, finally retaken by Fabius himself in the last military campaign of his life, but most of the fighting during these years, in Italy at least, was in Campania, the region around modern Naples, in and around Nola, Beneventum, and Capua in particular. Indeed, in 211, Hannibal did what he did not do in 216 after Cannae—he marched on Rome, hoping thereby to persuade the Romans to lift their own siege of Capua. To no avail. The siege continued, and Rome was far too well-defended to storm.

The decisive campaigns of these years were fought elsewhere. With the death of Hiero, for instance, who had long ruled in Syracuse and had since the early days of the First Punic War been a staunch Roman ally, Syracuse fell into a state of political unrest that led to the city's choosing to ally itself with Carthage. As the Athenians could testify, Syracuse was not an easy place to subdue, and the long Roman siege was particularly notable for the defensive efforts of Syracuse's leading citizen, the towering mathematical genius Archimedes. The skills of Archimedes proved invaluable in devising machinery to resist the siege. The gigantic pulley-operated cranes, which could swing out over the water and snare Roman ships assaulting seaside walls, lifting them halfway out of the sea and then dropping them, are evidently historical. The arrangement of gigantic mirrors that focused the rays of the sun on distant ships, setting them afire, is evidently not. But his brain alone was a powerful weapon, and when the Romans took the city, the Roman commander Marcellus evidently gave orders that Archimedes be spared and taken alive. So legend has it, he was so wrapped up in contemplating a geometrical problem that he did not notice the soldiers coming to capture him, and they supposedly killed him more or less out of pique.

More demanding still, of time and of troops, was the war in Spain, where Publius and Gnaeus Scipio continued operations until their deaths in battle in

211 or 212. They were replaced in 210 by the young man who had saved his father at the Ticinus, now a survivor of Cannae, who after the battle, we are told, had threatened at sword point some of his timid colleagues who were in favor of fleeing Italy. Publius Cornelius Scipio, soon enough to become "Africanus," was still a man only in his mid-twenties, and the situation in Spain was desperate when he arrived. Five years later, when he departed, Spain was effectively a Roman province.

In *Julius Caesar*, Shakepeare characterizes Brutus as "the noblest Roman of them all." For my part, I think the title belongs to Scipio. He was, beyond that we are told, a deeply cultivated man, a lover of Greek culture, and a Roman patriot. And he was, in military affairs at least, not only gifted, but a notably open-minded and quick learner. It is only fair to add that he proved not so gifted as a politician and ended his days, regrettably enough, in disappointed retirement, still a relatively young man.

But not before he had brought the Second Punic War to a successful conclusion. Scipio's first campaign in Spain was against New Carthage. As part of its defenses, New Carthage had a seawall which abutted a shallow lagoon. What Scipio noticed was that during unusually low tides, the lagoon could be forded. While investing the rest of the defenses, waiting for the appropriate time, Scipio mounted a cross-lagoon attack on the lightly defended seawall. It took the city.

In the years to follow, he won victories at Baecula in 208 and at Ilipa in 206, the latter a tactical masterpiece that some military historians consider to reveal a defter hand than even Hannibal's at Cannae. By 205, with Spain secured, he was ready to return to Rome, hoping to invade Africa itself. He was technically too young to be elected consul, but his achievements in Spain were so striking that even the misgivings of Fabius himself were insufficient to deny him. He got his consulship—and was assigned to Sicily, where the glum surviving legions from Cannae were still serving, and where, it was hoped, he might quench his ambitions on a project less daunting than invading the Carthaginian homeland. He set about retraining his troops, recruiting more, and training them.

In 208, Hannibal's brother Hasdrubal led a substantial contingent from Spain, following much the route his brother had ten years before, in hopes of coming to Hannibal's relief, bottled up as Hannibal was in southern Italy. Hasdrubal, however, was intercepted in Italy on the banks of the Metaurus by the now-expert Roman legions. Hannibal learned of his defeat, so we are told, when Hasdrubal's head was catapulted into his camp.

By 204, Scipio was ready, despite the reluctance of some in the Roman senate. In the spring of that year he departed from the old Carthaginian base at Lilybaeum for Africa. He did not directly assault Carthage itself, which was exceedingly well-fortified to withstand a siege. Instead, he landed nearby, and managed to destroy the Carthaginian forces sent to contest him.

In 203, as Scipio had hoped, Hannibal was recalled to defend his homeland. After a series of abortive peace negotiations, in 202, Hannibal and Scipio at last met in what would prove to be the final and decisive battle of the war. We are told that just before the battle of Zama, several days' march

southwest of Carthage, the two commanders met face to face for a parley, but they proved unable to agree on terms, and on the following day, they came to battle.

As the day of Zama dawned, Hannibal had a numerical advantage, but unlike at Cannae, his troops were by and large inferior to those they confronted. Scipio was famous for the scrupulous care he took in training his men, and Hannibal's army consisted not only of his remaining veterans from Italy, somewhere between ten and fifteen thousand in number, but a more or less equal number of freshly raised African troops, and five or six thousand veterans remaining from his brother Mago's army. His cavalry contingent was relatively weak, but he did have some eighty elephants.

Scipio's army was well-trained and ready, and he was much assisted by the alliance of Masinissa of Numidia, who brought with him a large contingent of Numidian horse. Accounts of the total number of troops involved differ, but a consensus would be something around 30,000, or perhaps a bit more for Scipio, and somewhere between 5,000 and 20,000 more for Hannibal.

Hannibal, though, had not had time to weld his forces into the sort of army that had made him all but invulnerable in Italy, and the way he disposed his troops reveals as much. He deployed his infantry in three lines—first Mago's old troops, then the new levies, and finally his own veterans. He deployed his cavalry on his flanks, and in front of the whole formation lined up his eighty-odd elephants. His plan this time was evidently to launch the elephants, and once they had disordered the Roman line, to do what he could to break through in the center, almost the inverse of his strategy at Cannae.

Scipio lined up with his infantry in the center, and his Numidian and Roman cavalry on the flanks. He made, however, one significant alteration in the customary Roman infantry deployment. Rather than setting up his *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii*, the usual checkerboard formation, he deployed his infantry in columns, in effect moving the *principes* between the *hastati* and *triarii* to open up lanes through which his light troops could drive the charging elephants. The strategy worked, and the Roman and Numidian cavalry attacked and drove off their Carthaginian counterparts. Shortly after, the infantry began to engage. Slowly, the Romans pushed the Carthaginian first line—Mago's veterarns—back. The Romans engaged the Carthaginian line, and it too began to crack.

And then Scipio performed a maneuver that demonstrated the vast difference between his own carefully trained troops and the unseasoned legions that had met disaster at Cannae. In mid-battle, he sounded the recall and ordered his own troops to draw back. They accomplished this difficult feat in good order, and once he had disengaged, Scipio began to reform his lines. As the Carthaginian recruits and Mago's contingent retreated around the Carthaginian flanks, they had by the very nature of the case extended the Carthaginian lines. Instead of three relatively short lines, back to back, there was one much longer line, Hannibal's own troops in the center, and the battered recruits and troops of Mago mixed together on either flank. Scipio wanted, in other words, to avoid the replay of Cannae that began to threaten as the tight Roman formation found itself facing ever-wider Carthaginian lines.

Maintaining his *hastati*, the victorious Roman first line in the center, he moved up his *principes* and *triarii*, one group to the left and one to the right flank. This too was a difficult maneuver, but it was in precisely such maneuvers Scipio had trained his troops so long and effectively. They pulled it off without a hitch.

The two much-extended infantry lines now reengaged in what proved to be sustained hand-to-hand fighting. At first the Romans made little headway. At the center of the Carthaginian line stood Hannibal's twenty-year veterans, who had taken no direct part in the first rounds of the battle. They were fresh and ferocious. Here at least Hannibal still had first-rate troops. At length, however, Masinissa, his Numidian cavalry, and their Roman counterparts returned to the field, having called off their pursuit of their Carthaginian counterparts, and they took Hannibal's battle line from the rear. That was it. The Cathaginian lines broke, and the Romans at last had overcome Hannibal.

He himself escaped the fighting and lived to negotiate the peace that followed. But the Carthaginian army no longer existed. Battlefield casualties were reportedly more than 20,000, with another 10,000 or so captured. Rome and the battle-winning Numidian cavalry had together suffered the loss of 4,000 to 5,000.

Scipio was magnanimous and Hannibal was sensible, and the peace that ensued, while highly damaging to Carthage, was nothing like the eradication which the Thebans and Corinthians had proposed for Athens—or the Athenians had in fact inflicted on Melos. Carthage gave up most of her fleet. Rome gained all of Carthage's overseas possessions. And the Carthaginians had to pay, over the course of fifty years, an annual indemnity in the total amount of 10,000 talents, effectively several billion dollars.

And so ended the Second Punic War, the costliest war of ancient times, and more costly than any European war for millennia to come. Rome was now master of the entire western Mediterranean, a regional power no longer. In that sense, the Roman empire had already begun.

Scipio returned to Rome where his very success, his un-Roman Hellenism and largeness of vision, and his serene, surpassing confidence in his own gifts and merit led to a disappointing political career. He withdrew from politics and within twenty years or so, he was dead. But as his achievements continued to glow, and he became the most venerated Roman of them all, a watchword of integrity, capability, and vision, and paradoxically, as Roman culture itself began to change as it came into ever-more-intimate contact with the riches of the Hellenic world, a touchstone of what in that wider world it meant to be a Roman.

Hannibal too died in a sort of retirement, far away in the Greek East and by his own hand we are told, as the Romans still found him a danger and sought his death. Perhaps the most persuasive summation of his career is to be found in Polybius, who writes, enthusiastic pro-Roman as he came to be, "It is impossible to withhold our admiration for Hannibal's leadership, his courage and his ability in the field." For "sixteen years he waged ceaseless war against the Romans in Italy, and throughout that time he never released his army from service in the field, but, like a good pilot, kept those great

numbers under his control and free from disaffection either towards himself or one another. And then this wry conclusion—"we can say with confidence that if only he had subdued other parts of the world first and finished with the Romans, not one of his projects would have eluded him. But as it was"—Romans first—despite his astonishing successes, "his career began and ended with them." It was still quite a career.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What were the effects of the Second Punic War?
2. Assess Scipio's tactics at Zama.

Suggested Reading

Polybius. *The Rise of the Roman Empire*. Trans. and intro. Ian Scott-Kilvert. Intro. F.W. Walbank. New York: Penguin, 1979.

Lecture 14:
The Punic Wars: "Cartago Delinda Est," the Third Punic War

Before beginning this lecture you may want to . . .

Read Appian's *Roman History* (translated by Horace White).

The Third Punic War was, to put the matter bluntly, as straightforward a war of aggression as the Romans ever waged. The Carthaginians had complied with the provisions of the treaty negotiated by Scipio, and in one sense the trigger for war was the completion of indemnity payments at the conclusion of the fifty-year period negotiated at the end of the Second Punic War. Also, in 157, the Roman senate sent envoys to Carthage, who found themselves alarmed at how prosperous Carthage had once again managed to become, despite the difficulties under which the Carthaginians labored. As Appian puts the matter, gruff, unrelenting Cato the Elder was particularly forceful in maintaining that "Rome would never be secure until Carthage was destroyed" (10.69), and Cato became notorious for concluding anything he said on any subject in the senate with the observation, "*Cartago delinda est*," "Carthage has to be destroyed." The problem was, the behavior of Carthage had given the Romans no remotely plausible pretext for initiating a war.

Our main source for the Third Punic War is Appian's *Roman History,* composed toward the middle of the second century C.E. or A.D. In the interval between the Second Punic War and the Third Punic War, though, Roman arms had not been idle. With the western Mediterranean more or less secure, the Romans turned their attention to the East, and in a series of wars against Macedonia, they gradually gained control of Greece. This was a conquest with the most profound consequences both for Rome and for the Western world. Classical culture crystallized in the Graeco-Roman world, which resulted from these conquests and those to follow as the Romans relentlessly absorbed the whole Hellenistic world west of what had been the Persian heartland, the entire Middle East, and then turned their attention northward to more extensive European conquests until the empire assumed something close to final shape during the imperium of Augustus. And even thereafter expansion continued in the north and, at least briefly, in Mesopotamia.

The impact of the Greek conquests was as much a matter of culture as of territorial gain. The Romans recognized at once that in many respects the Greek world was far more sophisticated than their own, and where the Greek way seemed better to them, they essentially adopted it. The Greeks had little to teach the Romans about war, and even less to teach the Romans about the practical management of affairs, civic loyalty, or forming a stable government. However, in the worlds of art and architecture, theoretical science, literature and history, philosophy—there the Greeks became the teachers of the Romans, and the Romans proved most attentive students. The durability of the culture that ensued is the strongest testimony to how much the Greeks and Romans had to give each other.

The Macedonian Wars, which initiated the decisive phase of this process, continued on and off for a generation and more. The decisive moments were the battle of Cynocephelae in 197 and the battle of Pydna in 168. The ultimate result was that by 148 Macedonia was a Roman province.

Meanwhile, events in North Africa proceeded apace, and immediately before the Third Punic War itself began, the Carthaginians found themselves losing to the erstwhile ally of Scipio Africanus, Masinissa of Numidia. Casualty figures are, as usual, subject to question, but Carthaginian losses were substantial (Appian cites figures in excess of 50,000), and the conflict with Masinissa gave the Romans at least a flimsy pretext for war.

The Roman senate thereupon began bullying Carthage, and after the nearby North African city of Utica had defected to Rome, the senators voted to declare war against Carthage and immediately dispatched a fleet to mount an amphibious assault, giving the commanders, the consuls Manilius and Censorinus, what Appian calls "secret orders not to desist from the war until Carthage was razed to the ground" (11.75).

By terms of their peace treaty with Rome from the last war, Carthage had, effectively, no war fleet and no elephants, and their army had just been soundly thrashed by Masinissa. They were "astounded and in despair" that Rome had declared war and sent off an embassy to Rome "with full powers to settle the difficulty on any terms they could" (11.76).

The Roman terms were grim and deliberately vague. The Carthaginians were to give up as hostages 300 children from their "noblest families" and to obey any other commands that the Romans chose to give them. Backs to the wall and full of misgivings, the Carthaginians sent off their children as requested with no guarantees of any kind as to conditions for their return.

Once the fleet arrived in Africa, the Romans made further stipulations. Carthage was to surrender all her armaments—and did so, to the tune, we are told, of 200,000 suits of armor, with offensive weapons to match (12.80). Once arms and hostages alike were safely in Roman hands, the Romans chose to reveal the outrageous, utterly unacceptable condition that would provoke the Carthaginians into resistance and hence offer the pretext for annihilating Carthage. The Carthaginians were ordered to abandon Carthage altogether, and with it the maritime, trading way of life that had made them prosperous for centuries, and settle en masse anyplace they liked within their territory in the interior—provided it was ten miles from the ocean. The Romans suggested that they take up farming. One way or another, though, the Romans planned to raze the city itself to the ground.

The Carthaginians got the message. The messengers themselves—and Carthaginian senators who had argued in favor of trying to meet the Roman conditions before their full extent was known—were, so we are told, torn to pieces. And the "same day the Carthaginian senate declared war and proclaimed freedom for the slaves" (13.93). This would be war *á l'outrance*.

Considering the dire state of Carthage at the outset, the Carthaginians made an astonishingly vigorous defense. Their fortifications were formidable, the Roman commanders proved incompetent, and the Carthiginians worked with

desperate fury to defend their city. For more than two years, they held out, having been besieged and almost entirely disarmed before the conflict started.

At last, though, the Romans found a competent commander, Scipio Aemilianus, who as a supporting officer in the early going had been the only Roman leader to win anything resembling distinction. Under Scipio, the Romans at last brought the siege to its grisly close. The last days of Carthage were horrific, as the Romans fought against suicidal resistance once the walls were breached. The end came at the Byrsa, the original fortified core of the city, in 146, where the last 50,000-odd defenders finally surrendered to be sold into slavery, and with them Hasdrubal, the last Carthaginian commander.

That left only 900 or so Roman deserters, who could not surrender and would be crucified if captured, and Hasdrubal's wife and children, whom he had abandoned in the Byrsa. The deserters fought as long as they could and then set the fortifications afire to meet their deaths. And the wife of Hasdrubal killed her children, contemptuously berating her one-time husband all the while, and then joined the deserters in the flames.

And that was the end of Carthage. The site of the city was not, as legend has it, sown with salt, so that nothing would ever grow there again, but it was indeed razed to the ground. We are told that Scipio himself wept at the destruction, not so much because of pity for the Carthaginians, but because the destruction of Carthage seemed to him so clear a portent of the final end of Rome herself, and of all cities and all human glory.

For now, though, Rome was mistress of "our sea," and would soon be mistress of the ancient world. Even Carthage would at last rise again, though filled with Romans, not Carthaginians—refounded a century or so later at the order of Julius Caesar himself, only to fall again to the Vandals as St. Augustine was busy writing *The City of God*, as the Western Empire itself was nearing its end.

But those events lay far in the future, and empire beckoned. After the Punic Wars, the advance of Rome would not be checked until Crassus fell to the Parthians at Carrhae and Varus to the Germans at the Teutoburger Forest. Even civil war could not stop the process, as for the next century Marius and Sulla, Caesar and Pompey, Brutus and Cassius, and finally Octavian on the one hand and Antony and Cleopatra on the other, disputed the ever-growing Roman patrimony, until at last Octavian gained control and as Augustus laid the groundwork for the empire that would endure for 400 more years in the West and for 1,400 in the East. The Roman legacy, hard-nosed practicality and technical skill, administrative competence, and the rule of law provided the political exoskeleton in which the rich, multi-ethnic Graeco-Roman culture grew and flourished. And of that culture—and the wars that did so much to shape it—we continue as legatees.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

What were the effects of the Punic Wars as a whole?

Suggested Reading

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Suggested Readings:

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