PUNICA
Rome vs Carthage

Playbook

INTRODUCTION

"For although the Romans had been clearly defeated in the field, and their reputation in arms ruined, yet because of the singularity of their constitution, and by wisdom of their deliberate counsel, they not only reclaimed the sovereignty of Italy, and went on to conquer the Carthaginians, but in just a few years themselves became rulers of the entire world." (Polybius 3.118.7-9)

The game you are now holding is a distillation of one of history's most monumental and decisive conflicts. A century-long struggle between two ancient empires whose vast military and economic might was matched only by the hatred they felt for each other. It is said that Hannibal Barca, the legendary Carthaginian general, was held by his father at age 9 above the burning sacrificial altar of Ba'al and told that he must swear an oath of hatred towards Rome. On the other side of the Mediterranean, the Roman Senator Cato the Elder would say at the end of every speech – "Carthago delenda est!" – "Carthage must be destroyed!" Despite diplomatic wrangling, treaties and other attempts at lasting peace, it was perhaps inevitable that this war would end with one side or the other totally vanquished.

The stakes were high. The Carthaginians and Romans fought for dominance over the critical trade routes of the Mediterranean, through which flowed the riches of wine, wool, wheat and Tyrian purple dye. They fought for rule of Italy, Iberia, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and North Africa. They fought for the loyalty (or the destruction) of the fierce Gallic and Celtic tribes who had sacked the city of Rome a century before. Indeed, they fought for the mantle of Western Civilisation itself. Would Europe become Romanised – conquered by legions, united by roads and incorporated into Roman civilisation through the bonds of citizenship and republican *virtu*?

Or would it come under the sway of Carthage, a Semitic people who worshipped the old Canaanite gods, led by a mercantile oligarchy bent on achieving monopoly of all the world's maritime trade?

This is the world of the Punic Wars.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Punic Wars were a series of three separate wars fought between the Roman Republic and the city-state of Carthage from 246 to 146 BC. The First (264 to 241 BC) and Second (218 to 201 BC) Punic Wars ended by treaty. The Third Punic War (149 to 146 BC) was only ended after the utter destruction of Carthage.

The conflict began in Sicily, the jewel of the Mediterranean and a highly prized strategic point for both sides. The fighting over Sicily was truly amphibious, with land and sea battles occurring in close proximity. There were hard-fought sieges, field battles in which Roman legionaries faced the feared Carthaginian war elephants, and naval battles that degenerated into hand-to-hand combat due to the Roman propensity for boarding actions. After over 20 years of war, the two sides negotiated a fragile peace. Thus ended the First Punic War.

The Second Punic War is the one that has captured the imagination of students of war ever since. It saw fighting rage in the homelands of both nations – with the Carthaginians invading Italy and the Romans invading North Africa. Indeed, even for those who know nothing else about the Punic Wars it is common knowledge that

Hannibal dragged his African war elephants across the Italian Alps and nearly destroyed Rome.

More impressive than the elephants was the result of this Italian campaign – Hannibal won a string of incredible victories against numerically superior Roman forces in the heart of Italy. At Trebia (218 BC), Lake Trasimene (217 BC) and Cannae (216 BC) his ragtag army of foreign tribesmen and mercenaries crushed the legions of Rome through sheer tactical brilliance. Tens of thousands of Roman soldiers were chewed up in these shocking defeats, and the city of Rome itself was brought under threat of siege. Of all of Rome's enemies, it was the Carthaginians who came closest to conquering them. But Hannibal prevaricated and did not take Rome. Instead, the Carthaginians occupied southern Italy for over a decade and tried to win the allegiance of Rome's allies – the Etruscan, Samnite and Greek-speaking Italian city-states.

In response to Hannibal rampaging around in their own backyard, the Romans adopted two approaches. First, the "Fabian strategy" of Roman dictator Quintus Fabius – avoiding decisive battle altogether and instead tying down Hannibal in a protracted war of border skirmishes and sieges. The other approach was thanks to the initiative of Publius Scipio, who raised a fresh army in Sicily and invaded Carthaginian North Africa. This forced the return of Hannibal, who was defeated at the decisive battle of Zama (202 BC). Scipio's victories would later give him the epithet "Africanus" – the conqueror of Africa. The Battle of Zama led to the Treaty of Zama, in which Carthage was forced to pay a large indemnity and cede territory. Like Germany after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, the Carthaginian army and navy was severely restricted in size and was denied its most potent weapon – war elephants.

The Third Punic War was essentially a punishment expedition by Rome to finally destroy Carthage. Seeing that Carthage continued to prosper despite the harsh conditions of the Treaty of Zama, the Romans reignited the conflict on flimsy pretexts. The Third Punic War was truly the end game, with Romans besieging the city of Carthage itself and razing it to the ground. Apocryphal accounts tell us that the Romans salted the earth of their North African enemy to prevent anything growing there again. By 146 BC, the Punic Wars had officially ended. But their impact on the historical consciousness of the Western world would remain strong, right down to the present day.

Battle of Zama. Oil on canvas by an unknown artist after Giulio Romano, 16th century. Now in the Pushkin Fine Arts Museum, Moscow.

THE ELEPHANT AND THE WHALE

What lessons can be drawn from the Punic Wars? First, a general pattern observed by Napoleon Bonaparte himself – the struggle between the "elephant" and the "whale." History is littered with stories of this kind of strategic confrontation: one great power which is dominant on land (the elephant), facing a rival that is dominant at sea (the whale). Rome versus Carthage. Athens versus Sparta. France versus Britain. Germany versus the Western Allies. The Soviet Union versus the United States. In the looming conflicts that threaten the world today, we see a similar pattern. Land-based authoritarian powers like Russia and China attempting to challenge the largely maritime dominance of America and its allies.

Looking at these various rivalries, we see some striking similarities in the outlook of the opposing sides. The land-based powers often see themselves as traditional, virtuous and masculine. They possess a warrior ethos and often an ideal of civic militarism. They seek decisive field battles and prize courage and skill at arms. In contrast, they see the naval power as effete, sophisticated and growing fat and rich off the unearned wealth of

global trade. The naval powers aim to win by blockade and strangulation. Picking off distant colonies. Avoiding field battles until their enemy is starved of funds and resources. When battle does come, the "whales" then rely on mercenaries and foreign allies to do the dirty work for them. Reading the wartime propaganda of Napoleonic France or Wilhelmine Germany gives a similar impression – the hated English trying to win by the old Carthaginian-style maritime methods rather than facing honourable combat on land. Indeed, as a fascinating historical aside, Britain's participation in World War One was shocking because it was such a departure from this traditional strategy. Blockade and colonial conflict were attempted, but the British Empire also committed huge forces to costly land battles on the continent.

Of course, there are exceptions to this broad pattern when applied to the Punic Wars. The Carthaginians under Hannibal were certainly not scared of a field battle or two, and the Romans (eventually) built up their navy and wrested control of the Mediterranean – becoming a more amphibious empire in the process. But the pattern remains compelling. The meta-narrative of land versus sea has been examined in many classics of military history. Alfred Thayer Mahan's excellent text from 1890 – "The Influence of Sea Power upon History" – remains a benchmark for the kind of historical analysis that favours naval power. Indeed, the early development of the US Navy owes much to this book. In contrast, the controversial international relations scholar John Mearsheimer has argued for the primacy of land power in his 2001 book "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics". Today, debate still rages among military establishments and universities around the world. What should a nation invest in – land power or sea power?

The lesson of the Punic Wars for military leaders, policymakers and other students of war may be this: it is necessary to be both the elephant AND the whale to ensure hegemony. Just as Rome was forced to invest in a war-winning fleet and Carthage was forced to fight decisive battles on land, so too must the great powers of the 21st century learn to master all the domains of war.

CITIZEN SOLDIERS VERSUS MERCANTILE MERCENARIES

The era of the Punic Wars remains fascinating because it shows us two very different societies pitted against each other. First, the Romans. In the 3rd century BC, Rome was not yet the Empire that dominated Europe and the Middle East. It had no king and no Emperor. The name and title of *Caesar* was unheard of. Rather, Rome was a Republic. Inheriting ideas of self-government from the Greeks, the Roman state was a mixed constitution in which popular assemblies and the aristocratic senatorial class shared power. During the Punic Wars, Roman armies were generally commanded by Consuls, elected by the Senate on a yearly basis. Most important to the functioning of the Roman polity was the concept of citizenship. Every free adult Roman male with a certain level of property was a citizen. The property threshold was progressively lowered until the majority of men in the Italian peninsula held the privilege of citizenship. With this came rights and obligations. The right to have some level of participation in the governing of the state, and the obligation to fight for Rome in its numerous wars. Now, we should not confuse this with modern-day notions of universal suffrage, human rights or liberalism. Roman society was brutally patriarchal and (especially later) dependent on slave labour. The father – *paterfamilias* – held the power of life or death over everyone in his household: slaves, women and children. But by the standards of the ancient world the Romans were a remarkably egalitarian people. Men with a 10-acre farm and not a drop of noble blood in their lineage considered themselves to be part of the regime and part of the nation, with an ever-growing list of rights and responsibilities. As Rome expanded, the abstract political rights entailed by citizenship would eventually be extended to foreigners as well. This is how Rome could achieve the "universal empire" described by Polybius.

How did this translate to the battlefield? Like the Greek phalanx, the Roman Legion was a microcosm of the society that produced it. For the Romans, discipline and staying in formation were more important than individual prowess. The army fought as a cohesive whole and was extensively drilled. Every man was equipped in a standardised way with a javelin (*pila*), short sword (*gladius*) and large, rectangular shield with a metal boss. Each Legion was approximately 6,000 men, sorted into maniples of 120 men each. The maniples would often deploy in a checkerboard pattern, which allowed individual units to be withdrawn from the line and easily replaced when exhausted. It also allowed the formation to "flow" around difficult terrain and outmanoeuvre more rigid formations like the Macedonian phalanx or the great throngs of Gallic tribesmen. The Legions were also organised by levels of experience. The front lines consisted of the *Hastati* – new recruits eager to prove themselves. Behind them were the *Principes* – more experience fighters with a few battles under their belt. Finally, there was the third line, the *Triarii*, hardened veterans who functioned as a last reserve to be committed at the opportune time.

But more important than the battlefield tactics was the underlying infrastructure of the Legions and the deep bonds of civic militarism that allowed Rome to keep fighting. The Legionaries being hacked to pieces at Cannae and Lake Trasimene could still be reasonably certain that their sons and grandsons would go through a similar training regime, don similar weapons and continue the fight against Carthage until the bitter end. Every man had a stake in the future of his society and was willing to fight for it. Even after the protracted siege warfare in Sicily or disasters like Cannae, the Romans could seemingly clone and replicate armies at will. Rome could draw on a near-inexhaustible source of manpower because it was a truly a nation-in-arms. Just like when the militaristic Japanese empire awakened the sleeping giant of America in World War Two, Carthage had provoked a republican society in which every citizen was also a potential soldier.

This brings us to Carthage, which presents a very different picture. One issue we have in studying this conflict is that almost no writing from the Carthaginian point of view has survived. The two most important primary sources on the Punic Wars – the writings of Polybius (c. 200 to c. 118 BC) and Livy (59 BC to 17 BC) – are unapologetically from the Roman perspective. Nevertheless, we can piece together some key facts about the Carthaginian state and its methods of waging war. Like Rome, the city-state of Carthage had a mixed constitution which inherited many ideas from the Greeks. The government was officially run by two magistrates (*suffetes*) elected from the commercial and aristocratic elite. Most practical political power rested with a council of elders (*Adirim*) and a judicial tribunal known as the "One Hundred and Four" (*miat*). Aristotle likened these to the Spartan *gerousia* and *ephors* respectively. In cases where no decision could be agreed upon by these oligarchic bodies, a popular assembly of citizens was gathered to vote. Unlike the Roman Consuls elected annually by the Senate, Carthaginian generals were all aristocrats and were appointed for the duration of a war – although they were often constrained in their use of military resources by the council of elders back home. Far from being a tyranny, Carthage was governed much like a Hellenistic city-state.

However, the key difference was in conceptions of citizenship. Carthage was a commercial oligarchy in which the institutions of the state were always in the hands of a tiny group of incredibly wealthy merchants and noble families. While the Romans of the 3rd century BC could draw on a population of over 300,000 adult male citizens scattered throughout Italy, Carthaginian citizenship was restricted to a small group of Punic-speaking people around the city of Carthage itself. While these citizens formed the backbone of the formidable Carthaginian navy, they were not expected to fight on land. As such, Carthaginian armies were composed mostly of foreigners and mercenaries, paid for by the income of a vast Mediterranean trading network.

From the North African coastline near Carthage itself came the Numidian cavalry, trained in horsemanship from a young age and able to throw a javelin on the move with deadly accuracy. These contingents were valuable in providing flank security, scouting and skirmishing for the Carthaginian forces. Next were the African mercenaries, trained to fight like Macedonian phalangists with long, two-handed pikes. These were the true shock troops of the army and were among the most experienced soldiers at the disposal of Hannibal Barca. After the First Punic War they revolted over lack of pay – causing an untimely disaster for Carthage in the "Mercenary War" of 238 BC. Then there were the armoured Spanish infantry, wielding heavy javelins and double-edged short swords similar to the Romans. Of all of the troops at the disposal of Carthage, these were perhaps the most disciplined and the most able to go toe-to-toe with experienced Legionaries. Joining these mercenaries were the Gallic and Celtic tribal allies of Carthage, who sided with them largely out of hatred for Rome and a desire for plunder. According to the Romans they were monstrous barbarians – tall men with pale white skin, flowing blond or red hair and long greasy beards. They fought naked or stripped to the waist, with oblong shields and clumsy, heavy swords.

Finally, there were the war elephants, the tanks of the ancient world. They were a shock weapon, used to charge into the enemy line and trample terrified infantrymen underfoot. Horses tended to be scared of them as well. When Roman soldiers encountered elephants for the first time they were bewildered and horrified – it would have been like something out of a fantasy or science fiction story for us today. Several times in the Punic Wars the presence of elephants alone was enough for the Romans to avoid battle or change their plans entirely. With true Roman pragmatism though, a way was found to defeat them. Scipio Africanus showed that the maniples could open up and allow the charging elephants into the middle of the Roman formation, where they could be isolated and then speared to death with javelins.
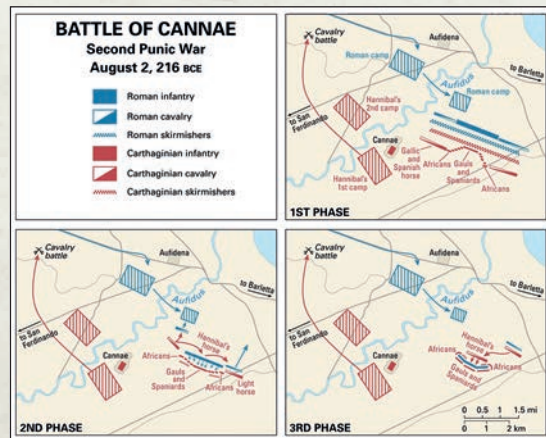
Battle of Cannae (diagram from Encyclopedia Brittanica). This Carthaginian victory under the leadership of Hannibal Barca, was a textbook example of encirclement and is still studied in military academies today.

The true strength of Carthage was its fleet, and the strategic versatility afforded by control of the sea. In the early stages of the First Punic War, Carthaginian sailors laughed at the ineptitude of their Romane enemies and defeated them on several occasions. The Roman response was to try to turn sea battles into land battles by fitting their ships with a peculiar contraption called a *corvus* – a rotatable gangplank with a spike that could fix enemy ships ready for boarding actions. The *corvus* was eventually scrapped as an unwieldy gimmick, but the Romans set themselves the task of building the infrastructure for a large and battle-winning fleet, and they succeeded. As it is commonly said – amateurs study tactics while experts study logistics.

Carthage's motley assemblage of tribesmen, mercenaries, horses and elephants could achieve spectacular victories under the leadership of generals like Hannibal. Their navy was professional and well-equipped. But in the end the Carthaginians could not replace their losses and could not turn their tactical successes into a lasting strategic victory. The Roman war engine ground them down.

THE GAME AS HISTORY

In the world of historical gaming, there are highly detailed games which attempt to cover most aspects of a conflicts. These are sometimes called *simulations*. On the other hand, there are just *games* – these provide an experience of a historical era but at a higher level of abstraction and with much more simple mechanics. Punica is certainly a game and not a simulation. It is intended to provide players with a fast-playing, fun and strategically rich experience while still conveying some of the historical lessons of the era and showing the broad strategic decisions of the Punic Wars.

Astute historical gamers may ask – how much of the Punic Wars does the game cover? The answer depends on how each session plays out. It is entirely possible that the broad sequence of events – all three Punic Wars – will occur on your table. Or your particular game may play out more like the First or Second Punic War. In any case, the scale of the game means we are talking about broad brush strokes here and not fine detail. And at this level, Punica is an excellent, albeit condensed, vision of this epic confrontation.

From the very first turn, players will be confronting a very similar set of decisions to their historical counterparts. Consider the map and starting positions – the annotated map below shows what each space on the game board roughly corresponds to. Carthage has the first turn. A clearly beneficial move would be to aim for the island of Sicily. It is an Objective for both sides, making it very valuable. A player only needs 3 such spaces to win. The Romans may also see this opportunity and find it profitable to send their own forces there too. Hence, the opening moves of the game may closely resemble the First Punic War – a fierce land and naval struggle over the contested island of Sicily.

Further afield, there are two other paths to take. In the centre of the board, we have the Western Mediterranean and the two islands of Corsica and Sardinia. Both of these islands, and the seas around them, were contested throughout the Punic Wars. They can also be stepping stones leading to the homeland of each side.
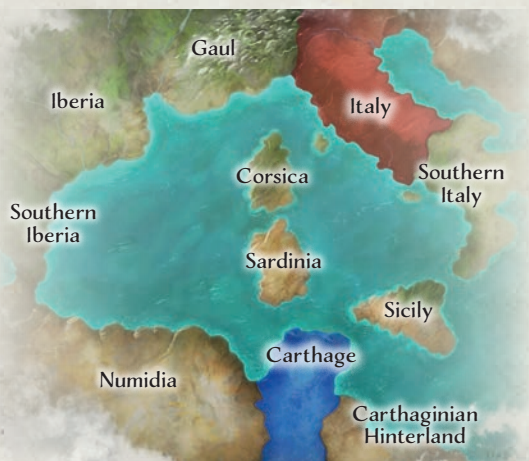
This brings us to the most important fronts of this conflict. In the Second Punic War, both sides attacked the home territory of their enemy. The most famous campaign of the entire period is Hannibal ravaging central and Southern Italy (after bringing elephants over the Alps). The superior mobility of the Carthaginians in the game allows them to do this. Likewise, Scipio's invasion from Sicily to North Africa will be a crucial move for the Romans to take. If the game follows the historical course, the Romans will take the fight directly to the enemy capital and triumph in a most dramatic fashion – of course this is far from guaranteed!

Aside from the physical geography of the map, the game offers other historical detail. The Punic Wars saw two very different belligerents facing off against each other, with various strengths and weaknesses. This asymmetry in the design is primarily achieved through cards. Each side has 7 cards, each with a unique action. In general, the Carthaginian cards offer a high level of mobility.

They can easily send Armies across the sea or even across intervening Roman-controlled spaces, perhaps allowing them to sneak forces into Rome's backyard of Southern Italy or Gaul. The Carthaginians also have some powerful advantages in battle. One of their cards allows the Carthaginian player to see the Roman battle card before deciding their own – this simulates the kind of ambush or encirclement tactics that were used so effectively at Cannae. Hannibal (the white elephant meeple) functions as a Carthaginian Army but can be used to add +1 to each battle card where he is present. Using this bonus comes at a risk though. Hannibal may be lost in battle, and he cannot be replaced. Together, these abilities make Carthage a nimble opponent with a distinct advantage at the tactical level. In contrast, the Romans are slow and plodding but pack a punch. They can amass and move Armies more efficiently than the Carthaginians, allowing them to push onwards in a grinding war of attrition. They are weaker at sea but can make up for this by destroying the enemy in land battles.

The two sides are carefully balanced. No one strategy is unbeatable. And if players think they have been beaten too easily, the solution is simple. Most sessions last up to half an hour, so just swap sides and play again!

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

To show the historical narratives that can occur within the game and to illustrate the rules, we will go through a full example of play. You may wish to set the game up and follow along.

Turn 1 – Carthage: Carthage has the first turn. The Carthaginian player (Julia) plays the card shown here. She uses this to load up an Army from her capital onto a nearby Fleet, move the Fleet to the centre of the board, and then unload the Army onto Sicily. The First Punic War has begun with Carthage staking a claim in Sicily!

Turn 1 – Rome: The Roman player (Titus) responds with a simple Move action – moving a Fleet to attack the Carthaginians in the centre of the Mediterranean. This results in a battle. Both sides secretly choose a card and reveal – Titus has a "4" while Julia uses a "2". This means a Roman victory at sea off the coast of Sicily, and a Carthaginian Fleet sunk.

Turn 2 – Carthage: Julia chooses a Move action as well. She moves a Fleet west, to the sea zone bordering Corsica, Sardinia and Iberia.

Turn 2 – Rome: The Romans use a Move action to attack the enemy in Sicily, bringing over an Army from Gaul (remember that an Army can cross a chain of sea zones of they all have a Fleet or transit zone). This means another battle. Titus plays a "5" card and discards his "1" card – a bonus effect of the "5" card. Julia has chosen a "3" value card and loses. Rome now rules Sicily!

Turn 3 – Carthage: Julia uses a Move action and shifts an Army from Sardinia to Iberia.

Turn 3 – Rome: Titus uses his Fleet near Sicily to go for the jugular – attacking the sea near Carthage itself. In the ensuing battle, the Romans play a "3" card while Carthage plays a "5". The Roman Fleet is sunk and Rome's invasion of the African coast is a failure.

NB: At this stage we have roughly covered the events of the First Punic War.

The board at the end of turn 3.

Turn 4 – Carthage: The Second Punic War begins. Julia plays a card which allows her to move an Army two spaces. She moves Hannibal from Carthage directly to Southern Iberia, ready to begin his overland march to Italy.

Turn 4 – Rome: The Romans use a Move action to send an Army from Gaul into Iberia. This results in a battle. Titus chooses a "2" card and Julia also chooses a "2". This is a tie, so both Armies are removed. Importantly, Julia is out of cards in her hand, so she picks up the previously played cards to form a new hand, leaving the "2" card just played on the table.

Turn 5 – Carthage: Hannibal is moved to Iberia.

Turn 5 – Rome: An Army is moved from Italy to Gaul.

Turn 6 – Carthage: Julia plays a card which allows her to move, fight a battle and see the Roman card before revealing her own. Hannibal moves from Iberia to Gaul, attacking the Roman Army there. She also declares that the Hannibal bonus will be used in this battle. Titus chooses a "2", Julia then chooses a "3". With the +1 bonus for Hannibal as well, this is an easy Carthaginian win! The Roman Army in Gaul is removed.

Turn 6 – Rome: Not wanting to risk battle, the Romans Pass – discarding a card. This was the last card in their hand, so they redraw all their other cards.

Turn 7 – Carthage: Julia makes a sneaky manoeuvre, playing a card that allows an Army to move two spaces, including across a sea zone or *through* a Roman-occupied space. She uses this to move Hannibal directly to Southern Italy.

Turn 7 – Rome: With Hannibal occupying the Roman backyard, the Romans decide to threaten Carthage itself once again. Titus moves a Fleet from the sea zone near Rome to the central sea zone near Sicily.

His intention is to invade Carthage, using his ground troops in Sicily.


The board at the end of turn 7.

Turn 8 – Carthage: The capital is in danger, so Hannibal must be recalled! Julia moves a Fleet from near Carthage to the coast of Southern Italy.

Turn 8 – Rome: Building up for the invasion of Carthage, Titus moves an Army from Rome to Sicily.

Turn 9 – Carthage: Julia plays the card which allows her to place an Army on a Fleet, move the Fleet, then drop off the Army. She moves Hannibal and the Fleet from Southern Italy back to Carthage.

Turn 9 – Rome: The invasion begins. Titus moves a Fleet from near Rome directly to the coast of Carthage (remember Fleets can move any distance). This results in a naval battle, with the Romans playing a "3" and the Carthaginians playing a "2". The Carthaginians lose their Fleet, but this was the last card from their hand. So now Julia redraws her other cards, ready to confront the Roman onslaught.

Turn 10 – Carthage: Seeing that the territories around the capital are also vulnerable, Julia moves an Army from Carthage to Numidia.
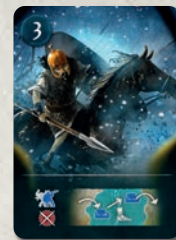
Turn 10 – Rome: The assault begins. The Romans play a card, which allows them to move two Armies into battle and gain +1 to their initial strength for each Army sent. This is perfectly timed. The two Armies in Sicily move via sea and land on the shores of Carthage. A battle begins. Hannibal is committed – the stakes are high!

With two Armies committed and the bonus from this card, the Romans will have a +2 bonus. Sensing that this is the climax of the entire conflict, both sides play a "5" card. Hannibal is here too, so the Carthaginians get +1. But this is not enough to beat the Romans, who have a total strength of 7 to the Carthaginians 6.

Hannibal is removed, because Julia used his bonus in this battle. One Carthaginian Army remains though, so another round of battle is fought. The Romans must use their last card – a "2". The Carthaginians play a "3". Neither side has any bonuses, as the Roman card is only for the first round and Hannibal has been removed. One Roman is lost. Thankfully for the Romans, this was their last card, so Titus can redraw his other 6 cards. Now the battle must be decided – only a single Army from each side remains. The Romans, with their newly refreshed hand of cards, choose a "5". The best the Carthaginians can do is a "4". Roman victory! Carthage is taken! With the enemy capital secured, the game is over.

The board at the end of the game.

This decisive battle over Carthage, resembling the Battle of Zama, marks the end of our session. Over 10 turns, we have covered the general course of the First and Second Punic Wars.

PUNICA IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers face many challenges in the 21st century classroom. Above all, they are competing for students' attention against a myriad of distractions – especially online gaming and smartphones. Board games can be a powerful tool in the teacher's arsenal. In general, students like games. They are fun. They are engaging. They empower students by putting them in the position of decision-makers rather than passive recipients of information. They place students in the shoes of historical personalities or factions and let them see what they can achieve within the constraints of the time.

Games do not need to be a "filler" activity or something done on the last lesson of a Friday afternoon. They can be incorporated into regular pedagogy and used to achieve many student outcomes. Punica is ideally suited to this role. The game plays half an hour or less – well within the timeframe of a lesson or tutorial in the high school or university setting. The rules are simple and quick to teach. As with all Phalanx games, the visual style is immediately engaging. In any study on the Punic Wars, Punica will be a valuable tool. This section explains how teachers and other educators can use Punica in their classroom practice.

GENERAL TIPS FOR TEACHERS

⊚ Depending on your particular cohort of students and learning goals, Punica could be used at the beginning or the end of a unit of study on the Punic Wars. If used at the beginning, it is ideal for building interest in the topic and allowing students to explore the strategic options in the game without the benefit of historical hindsight. If used at the end of the unit, students will be more able to compare the course of each game to the history they have just learned.

◎ Allow time for all students to learn the rules of the game and become familiar with the cards. If your educational institution has an online LMS (learning management system), post a link to the rules, which can be found on the Phalanx website: **www.phalanx.co.uk**

◎ If your institution has digital projectors in classrooms, it can be worth projecting the map so that the whole class can see it clearly. This is especially useful when explaining the rules. A digital file for the map can be found on the Phalanx website: **www.phalanx.co.uk**

◎ The game is meant to be a framework for developing understanding of the Punic Wars. Do not get hung up on precise interpretations of the rules if it slows things down too much.

◎ As the teacher/educator, you are in charge. If you want to change things slightly on the fly to make the game more interesting – do it. If you want to change the outcome of a battle – do it. Your word is final.

◎ The learning is what matters, not winning or losing. If students lose a game – fine. The learning that occurs around the game is why they are there.

◎ Try to drop in historical commentary where possible. Integrating historical sources with the game is even better. For example, when a naval battle is fought, show paintings of quinqueremes clashing on the waves and have the students imagine naval warfare in the age of antiquity. Or use a quote from Polybius or Livy to prompt discussion about the outcome of a battle.

◎ There will be "downtime" for some students while the game is being played, especially in team games. Remind students that while they are not carrying out actions they should be carefully examining the board state and considering their next move. This will help speed things up.

◎ Students can get very competitive and take the game extremely seriously, sometimes to the point of damaging relationships with each other. It is sometimes worth a gentle reminder that this is a game and they are not being assessed on winning or losing, but rather their understanding of the topic.

◎ Allow 5-10 minutes at the start of each game for students to consult the player aid or rulebook, look at the board set up and make a plan. You may even allow one side of the other to step outside of the classroom to avoid being overheard (this depends on your class). Also allow roughly 5 minutes at the end of each game for a debrief. Have the students reflect on what they have learned and the decisions they made.

DISCUSSION POINTS

After playing a session of Punica, students should be guided in a discussion of the link between the real history and the game they have just played. These discussions can then be used to help students write about the topic, as a single paragraph, an essay or an audio-visual presentation. This may be treated as an assessment task or a regular in-class learning activity, depending on the learning outcomes you are trying to assess. Some questions to prompt discussion and reflection include the following:

◎ **Opposing Societies:** What are the differences between Rome and Carthage? How is this reflected in the game? This is especially interesting if players are using the rules for team games – see below.

◎ **Land versus Sea:** Which was more important to victory – land power or sea power? Or both? How did the game show you this dynamic? Would your side have preferred more Armies or more Fleets? Why?

◎ **"Great Men" of History:** Traditionally, history was seen as being shaped by "great men" as well as broad trends. How important was Hannibal Barca to the outcome of the Punic Wars? Or Scipio Africanus? How was this reflected in the game?

◎ **Geography:** Explain the strategy you employed in terms of the geography of the Western Mediterranean. Which paths did you take? Why? Could you name most of the spaces on the map?

TEAM GAMES

Class size will determine how the game can be used in a practical sense. In a smaller class of 10 or less, students

may gather around a single copy of the game and divide into two teams of up to five players each. In a class of 30 students, multiple copies of the game would be ideal. Three copies would allow three games to be occurring simultaneously, each with two teams of up to five players.

When having students play as a team of at least three players, teachers may opt to use the following system for managing team dynamics. These rules reflect historical differences in government type and allow a framework for negotiation and teamwork.

In a team game of at least three players per team, the Romans use this system:

◉ One player is the **Consul**. They are in overall command and choose which action will be taken each turn and which cards will be played. The other players are the **Senate**. They may advise the Consul on what decisions to make but do not have ultimate authority.

◉ The Consul position is not fixed. At the start of each turn, the players will hold an election to see who the new Consul is. The player with the most votes becomes the new Consul – and players cannot vote for themselves. If the vote is a tie, the previous Consul keeps their position. This means that any member of the Senate may find themselves being a Consul from turn to turn.

This system gives the students a taste of Roman-style politics. If the current Consul has just lost a major battle, they will soon find themselves out of a job! This is also an excellent opportunity for students to test their rhetorical skills, persuading the others in the group to give them a chance to lead.

The Carthaginians use this system with a team of at least three players:

◉ One player is the **General**. This player decides which action will be chosen each turn: Movement, Play a Card, Fleet Deployment or Pass. They will also carry out the actions on the board.

◉ The other players are the **Council** (or the *Adirim*, if you wish to use the Punic word). These players collectively vote on which card to use whenever such a decision needs to be made. This includes when the General chooses to "Play a Card" as the Carthaginian action for the turn, and when a card needs to be chosen for battle.

This represents the different constitution of the Carthaginians. The General, like Hannibal Barca, is appointed for the duration of the war and will not lose his position. But the Council will be meddling with his plans by deciding which resources (cards) will be made available to the war effort.

Roman Team

Consul: makes all decisions each turn.

Senate: vote on new Consul each turn.

Carthaginian Team

General: decides actions each turn.

Council: vote on cards to play.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mariusz Rosik is a Polish board game designer and developer with seven years of diving deep into the art of tabletop mayhem under his belt. A longtime architect of gaming experiences at PHALANX, expert in shaping and fine-tuning worlds where strategy meets storytelling. Lead developer of *Bretwalda*, *Rocketmen*, and *Lords of Heaven*, crafting mechanics that make players sweat over every decision. The mastermind behind the *Danelag* and *Vanished Kingdoms* expansions for *Bretwalda*, as well as *Rocketmen: Target – Jupiter*, co-designed with the legendary Martin Wallace. Also the brains behind the solo mode for *Total Domination*, ensuring even lone wolves get to sink their teeth into it.

Clint Warren-Davey is an Australian game designer and history teacher. He has 10 years of experience in designing games and using them in the classroom to ignite student's passion for history. Having designed several games of his own, Clint is now endeavouring to have tabletop and board games recognised as a valid form of education and assessment in the high school setting. He has also worked at the Australian Defence College in Canberra, running educational games for military personnel. Alongside Mariusz and the team at PHALANX, Clint has worked on the development of Punica and provided the historical and educational background material found in this booklet.

TIMELINE OF THE PUNIC WARS

First Punic War

264 BC: Rome intervenes in a dispute in Messana (Sicily) between the Mamertines and Syracuse, marking the start of the war.

262 BC: Siege of Agrigentum – Rome's first major victory, capturing the Carthaginian-held city.

260 BC: Battle of Mylae – Rome's navy, using the innovative *corvus* boarding device, defeats the Carthaginian fleet.

256 BC: Battle of Cape Ecnomus – One of the largest naval battles in history, with Rome securing a decisive victory.

255 BC: Battle of Tunis – a Carthaginian army led by Spartan mercenary general Xanthippus defeats the Roman army in North Africa using war elephants.

250 BC: Siege of Lilybaeum – A prolonged Roman attempt to capture this strategic port in Sicily.

241 BC: Battle of the Aegates Islands – Rome's naval victory forces Carthage to sue for peace, ending the First Punic War with the Treaty of Lutatius.

Interwar Period

238 BC: Mercenary War – Carthage suppresses a rebellion by unpaid mercenaries in Africa.

237 BC: Hamilcar Barca expands Carthaginian control in Spain, laying the groundwork for the Second Punic War.

226 BC: Ebro Treaty – Rome and Carthage agree on the Ebro River as the boundary of Carthaginian expansion in Spain.

Second Punic War

218 BC: Battle of the Ticinus – Hannibal defeats Roman cavalry in northern Italy. Followed by the Battle of the Trebia – Hannibal ambushes and routs a Roman army.

217 BC: Battle of Lake Trasimene – Hannibal traps and annihilates a Roman army in a narrow pass.

216 BC: Battle of Cannae – Hannibal achieves a crushing victory, encircling and destroying a larger Roman force.

215-211 BC: Rome counters Hannibal by cutting off his supply lines and waging a war of attrition.

211 BC: Romans recapture Capua, a key ally of Hannibal in Italy.

209 BC: Capture of New Carthage – Scipio Africanus seizes the Carthaginian stronghold in Spain, turning the tide of the war.

207 BC: Battle of the Metaurus – Roman forces kill Hasdrubal, Hannibal's brother, preventing reinforcements from reaching him.

202 BC: Battle of Zama – Scipio Africanus defeats Hannibal in North Africa, ending the Second Punic War with Rome's victory.

201 BC: Treaty of Zama – Carthage cedes Spain to Rome, pays war indemnities, and agrees to severe military resctrictions.

Third Punic War

149 BC: Rome accuses Carthage of violating the treaty, prompting the Third Punic War. Rome then lays siege to Carthage.

146 BC: Scipo Aemilianus takes command of Roman forces, intensifying the siege. The city is destroyed after fierce resistance, ending Carthage's existence as an independent state. Carthage becomes a Roman province, later known as Africa Proconsularis.

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