

From 538 BC to 231 BC, Carthage began as a dominant power along with the Etruscans and the Greeks. By 231 BC, Rome was the dominant power, and Carthage had taken major steps to conceal from the Romans, their buildup of forces in preparation to combat and overcome Rome.

STRUGGLE OF TITANS: BOOK 1

by Lou Shook

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STRUGGLE OF TITANS

BOOK 1

LOU SHOOK

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CHAPTER ONE BEGINNING OF CARTHAGE (2800-539 BC)

The Phoenicians, ancestors of the Carthaginians, settled as early as 2800 BC on the westward shore of the Mediterranean in the narrow slip of coast known to the Jews as the land of the Philistines and Tyrians. They brought away with them the memory of their older homes on the upper shores of the Persian Gulf, and in their new land they founded an Aradus and a Tyre to perpetuate the names of two of the islands from whence they came. The territory of Phoenicia was a mere belt of coast land, never exceeding twenty miles in width, and averaging only one mile in width. They were a nation of traders. They had no care for empire and, indeed, they were never sufficiently numerous to have made headway against the mightier nations of Babylon, Nineveh, Persia, and Egypt. They desired only so much space as should provide them with a home, from where they might sail to explore the farthest shores. They quietly extended their factories and trading stations from island to island through the Aegean to the coasts of Greece, along the shores of Macedonia, by Thasos and Samothrace, even to the Black Sea.

The year 1500 BC saw them established at many points upon the western shore of Italy, notably at Punicum, in Etruria. Thence they advanced to Sardinia and Corsica, to Spain, and to Africa, where in 1140 BC they founded their first factory of Utica, on the Gulf of Tunis. This westward bent was due not only to innate enterprise and quest of traffic, but also to the fact that the Hellenes of the eastern Mediterranean were now waking up to emulation, and gradually ousting the Phoenicians from the islands and mainland of Greece.

All the west lay open to them, and there they turned with fresh energies. Sicily was fringed with their stations, and all the islands north and west of Sicily were ransacked by their merchants. Finally, Spain presented to them a virgin land teeming with precious metals, and there, before the year 1000 BC, they founded the town of Gades [Cadiz], the center of that land of Tarshish ("far from the Land of Israel by sea where trade occurs with Israel and Phoenicia"),

whence they brought gold for the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. Her merchants were the princes of the earth. Through their hands passed all that was marketable from India and Assyria, Arabia and Egypt, and all the nations of Europe and Africa. The two original colonies of Tyre and Sidon grew to a wealth that was proverbial, and other towns, such as Arad's, Berates, Byblos, and smaller places, shared in the national prosperity.

Even the conquests of Asshurizir-pal and Sennacherib did not affect the prosperity of a people who submitted readily to the rule of any power so that they might pursue in peace their mercantile calling. They lived apart in their towns, each under its own petty king, with laws of its own. Tyre had indeed a nominal ascendancy, but there was no actual unity. Yet to such a power did even the single cities attain, that Tyre's Ethbaal, King of Tyre, could give his daughter, Jezebel, as a wife to Ahab, King of Samaria. Ahab fell fighting with the Syrians against Assyria, about 850 BC, and Phoenicia was annexed by Shalmanezzer II.

Carthage was founded by Phoenician settlers from the city of Tyre, led by Princess Elissar (or Dido) who fled Tyre following the murder of her husband in an attempt by her younger brother, the King of Tyre, to bolster his own power. Princess Elissar was married to the High Priest of the city, who was wealthy and enjoyed widespread respect and power among the citizens. She was the daughter of King Matten of Tyre (also known as Muttioal or Belus II). When her father died, the throne was jointly bequeathed to her and her brother, Pygmalion. She married her uncle Acherbas (also known as Sychaeus) High Priest of Melqart, a man with both authority and wealth comparable to the king. Pygmalion was a tyrant, lover of both gold and intrigue, and desired the authority and fortune enjoyed by Acherbas. Pygmalion assassinated Acherbas in the temple and managed to keep the misdeed concealed from his sister for a long time, deceiving her with lies about her husband's death. At the same time, the people of Tyre called for a single sovereign, causing dissent within the royal family.

After learning the truth, Princess Elissar fled Tyre with her husband's gold, and managed to trick the Tyrian ships sent in pursuit to join her fleet. When her ship was overtaken by the Tyrian ships, she threatened to throw the gold overboard and let the would-be

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captors face the wrath of her brother for failing their mission. They opted to join her, and the augmented fleet sailed on towards the West. Elissa eventually sailed to Africa after a brief stop at Cyprus, where she rescued 80 virgins from a temple. She requested land to establish a new city from the king of the Libyan tribe living near Byrsa, after reaching Africa. Told that she could have as much land that can be covered by an ox hide, she cut the hide into thin strips and managed to surround the hill of Byrsa. There was founded, in 853 BC, Kirjath-Hadeschath, 'the New Town', ten miles from Utica, the older city. (Kirjath-Hadeschath became in Greek, Carchedon, and in Latin, Carthage.) At its peak, Carthage, came to be called the "shining city," ruling 300 other cities around the western Mediterranean and leading the Phoenician (or Punic) world.

The new colony was situated on the southern shore of the Bay of Tunis, in the heart of the most fertile region of the African coast. It possessed inestimable advantages as a center for trade, commanding as it did the whole of the eastern and western basins of the Mediterranean, and the resources of continental Africa to boot. The soil was left in the hands of the native Libyans, to whom the Carthaginians even paid a yearly tribute — the rental of their holding. It was to commerce that the new city was devoted. And the growth of that commerce was marvelous. Three hundred factories stretched round the western shoulder of Africa, and the traders of Carthage penetrated beyond the Canaries to the Cameroons, whence they brought back captive gorillas, ivory and gold, and stories of the fiery Cameroons mountain. Spain, with its mines of silver, iron, and quicksilver, was almost a home to them. They reached even to the Isles of Scilly, where they purchased the tin of Cornwall, and to the Baltic, whence they brought home amber. The products so obtained, they wrought into vessels and implements whose design was borrowed from the inventiveness of Greece, of Egypt, and of the East, but whose beauty of workmanship was entirely Phoenician. They were inimitable imitators; insomuch that to the Greeks of Homer's day, all that was artistic was Phoenician, for it came to them through the hands and from the forges of the Phoenicians and their descendants.

Within a hundred years of the reputed foundation of Carthage, Sicily and Sardinia were regarded as her provinces, together with

Malta, and the Lipari and Balearic Isles. With increase of wealth came increase of territory. The tribute was no longer paid to the Libyans, but they were in their turn reduced to the position of serfs who tilled the soil of the immediate vicinity — the home province — for their masters, and occupied the territories beyond as tributary dependencies. The inter marriage of Carthaginians with native Libyans gave rise to a half-breed population called Libya-Phoenicians, who occupied the 300 cities of the home-province, but were treated with the same harshness as the pure Africans, and not allowed to fortify their towns. Utica was the one exception to this jealous rule, and there the native Phoenician element was doubtless too prominent to allow any fear of disaffection. From Arae-Philaeni, on the coast of the Great Syrtis, to the Atlantic, the whole region was tributary to Carthage, and so heavy was the tribute, that as much as fifty per cent, of the year's produce was exacted in a time of need, and the town of Leptis, itself a direct colony from Tyre, paid a talent per diem.

The city of Carthage itself clustered round the citadel, Bosra (Canaanitish, a fort), which stood upon rising ground at the extremity of a sort of peninsula formed by two lagoons opening into the Gulf of Tunis. A massive outer wall crossed this peninsula from north to south, while the citadel and the Cothon, or naval harbor at its foot, were surrounded on the landward side by a second wall of immense strength. Forty-five feet in height on the outer side, and furnished at intervals of 200 feet with lofty towers, the wall was backed by a second and a third line of solid masonry; and the space between, partitioned and divided into two stories, could stable 300 elephants with their stores of forage in the basement, and over these, 4,000 horses. Barracks for 20,000 infantry completed this wall, which joined the ring-wall of the Bosra itself. The Cothon was an artificial basin containing docks for 220 ships of war, having in the center the admiral's island residence. It opened into the mercantile harbor, of still larger dimensions; and this again into the bay.

The Carthaginians, however, were not men of war but of traffic, like their parents the Phoenicians. They preferred to retire without resistance when they were no longer left in peaceful possession of their trading-stations. But when, after ceding thus tacitly the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean trade to the Greeks, they found that

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the Greeks were menacing the Phoenician preserves in the west - and they were constrained to alter their policy. They did so too late. The first Greek settlers landed in Sicily in 735 BC, but it was not until a century and a half later that an effort was made by the Carthaginians to oust them from what had now become virtually a Greek island. By this time, the rapid development of the Hellenes in Sicily had restricted the Carthaginians to the western corner of the island, where were situated their three great marts of Motye, Soluntum, and Panormus. To the Greeks, they were a hated nation with whom could be no compromise; and in suffering Hellenic influence to spread unchecked for 150 years, they forfeited their power in Sicily. With the Siècles, on the other hand, they could and did live on good terms, for they cared only to command the coast, while the Siècles had no tendency to maritime pursuits.

More fatal to their success than any error of judgment was their system of warfare. The disinclination of the citizens to serve was met by hiring mercenaries who had no interest in the results of the war beyond their stipulated hire, and who might at any moment transfer their services to a higher bidder. Collected from the nomad Libyans, the Libya-Phoenicians, from Spain, Gaul, Etruria, Liguria, and Italy, even from the Hellenes themselves, they formed armies of undoubted fearlessness and of redoubtable numbers. Armies of from 150,000 to 300,000 men were not unusual with the Carthaginians. But they lacked all the moral strength of war — unity of blood and language, attachment to their leader; above all, an attachment to the country which they professed to serve. Their very numbers rendered them unmanageable to the run of Carthaginian commanders, many of which had no talent for war or diplomacy. Levied in the spring, they were disbanded in the autumn; and thus was lost the only means of creating a fictitious patriotism amongst them — permanency of service. (Mercenary troops were the weapon of the Sicilian despots also, but they were a weapon never laid aside — retained and cherished until they learnt to identify their own interests with that of their masters.)

The Balearic Isles and Spain provided the best slingers the world ever saw; the Liguria's were the ideal of light troops; while the more stalwart Abelian and Etruscans of Italy furnished an infantry akin to that with which Rome conquered the world. The African tribes

supplied a superb light cavalry that was inexhaustible. The Libya-Phoenicians rode into battle in chariots of iron, and behind them followed the elephants, which routed even the Romans in more than one battle. Such a force, supported as it usually was by a flotilla whose very war vessels were counted by thousands, and whose transports were limitless, was overwhelming.

The government of Carthage was a close oligarchy, whose members were the descendants of the original colonists from Tyre, forming a class similar to the Patricians of early Rome. This government included the Senate (Gerusia - 28 members chosen for life), two Suffetes, and an elected King. The two Suffetes were doubtless a contrivance for limiting the excessive power of a sole monarch — the form of government in the mother city, Tyre - and therefore presumably the original form at Carthage, as well. The council declared war, made peace, appointed the commanders in war, and in general administered the affairs of the entire State, while the Suffetes acted as their executive, occasionally even leading the army in person. The mass of the populace, the Demos, were without privileges, and virtually without voice in the government; though in theory, if the Suffetes and the council disagreed, the question was decided by an appeal to the masses.

Such appears to have been the constitution of Carthage in the earliest form of which we have any knowledge. But the oligarchy contained in itself the causes of change. A council (Gerusia) of twenty-eight members, chosen for life, afforded too little play for any political bent in the ranks of a rich, powerful, and numerous aristocracy - while such as it did possess was limited by the virtual absolutism of the suffetes. The offices of gerusiast and suffete, and consequently those of general and admiral, fell alike into the hands of one or two families of special distinction, to the exclusion of their fellow nobles. The latter used their best efforts to secure a more substantial voice in the government. Change to rectify this situation would soon be forthcoming. In the meantime, the general populace (the very class which would seem at first sight most likely to resent their own inferiority and seek to be revenged on the ruling oligarchy) remained content.

The worst enemies of Carthage were her despised African subjects, upon whom fell the burden of a heavy taxation, for which

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they received nothing in return. The Libyans never forgot that the Carthaginian was an invader and an aggressor, and more than once their rising brought the mighty city to the brink of ruin. The Phoenicians of Africa had no genius for amalgamation and pacification, any more than had their fellows of Phoenicia proper, and it was to this incapacity they owed the perils brought upon them with that final ruin in the future.

Carthage was faulted for the harsh treatment of her subjects, as well as for greed and cruelty. Her Libyan Berber sharecroppers, for example, were required to pay one-quarter of their crops as tribute to the city-state of Carthage. Also, the city-state seemed to reward those leaders known to deal ruthlessly with its subject peoples - hence the frequent Berber insurrections. Carthage is faulted for failure to bind her subjects to herself, as Rome did bind her Italians. (Yet Rome and the Italians held far more in common, than did Carthage and the Berbers.) Nonetheless, the Carthaginians did themselves a disservice by failing to promote the common, shared quality of life in a properly organized city that inspires loyalty, particularly with regard to the Berbers. A long-term cause of Punic instability, there was no melding of the peoples. It remained a source of stress and a point of weakness for Carthage.

On the other hand, in the early years, Carthage gave careful attention to securing the most favorable treaties with the Berber chieftains, which included intermarriage between them and the Punic aristocracy. The dichotomy between the lifestyle of the urban (and urbane) Carthaginians and that of the primitive, rural-dwelling Berbers was immediately apparent. Aside from commercial transactions, limited contact occurred between the two groups, and each retained a clear sense of identity. Phoenicians generally did not interact with the Berbers as economic equals, but employed their agricultural labor, and their household services, whether by hire or indenture; many became sharecroppers. The Punic state began to field Berber Numidian cavalry on a regular basis. The Berbers eventually were required to provide soldiers (likely not paid), and became the largest single element in the Carthaginian army.

Other causes of weakness were inherent in the military system already described. The mercenary troops, so difficult to handle, were only kept in allegiance with difficulty. Their allegiance

depended upon their success, and by the plunder which they brought. They were always liable to turn on the masters who had bought their services. No patriotism stood in their way. To them, Carthage was as legitimate a field of plunder as were the enemies whom they were hired to chastise.

Like most of the old Oriental nations, the Phoenicians tended towards a gloomy and morbid cruelty, and the vindictiveness of their treatment of a failed leader, was but the reflection of their religious ceremonials. Their great deity was Baal, to whom they sacrificed human victims, usually infants, who were laid in the outstretched hands of an image so constructed that, when a fire was kindled within, their bodies fell backwards into the flames. The state sacrifices in honor of Baal were the chosen children of the noblest families, and when it was discovered that the promptings of affection had induced some parents to keep back their own children and offer in their stead the purchased children of base-born and less humane parents, the pious fraud was condoned by a holocaust of two hundred infants. It was this practice, long ago extinct amongst the Hellenes, which roused so fiercely their detestation for the Phoenicians at large; and it was from this God that so many Carthaginian names derive their termination — ‘bal.’

Something has already been said of the arts of the Phoenicians. Those arts all flourished amongst the Carthaginians, as they had flourished in their earlier home. But there was one invention passed on by the early Phoenicians to the Greeks on which depends the whole place of that people in the history of civilization. This was the art of writing, the symbols of which, whether derived ultimately from Egypt or from Chaldaea, were brought by the merchants of Tyre to Thebes, and were thence called, in their earliest form, the Cadmean Alphabet. With few alterations, that alphabet has remained universal for the Western world.

Of the literature of Carthage there are no remains. When Rome later took Carthage, the whole of the voluminous libraries found there, were handed over to the native princes of Africa, in whose hands they gradually melted away. Beyond a few inscriptions dug up on the site of Carthage, there is no vestige to-day of what must once have been the language of a varied literature.

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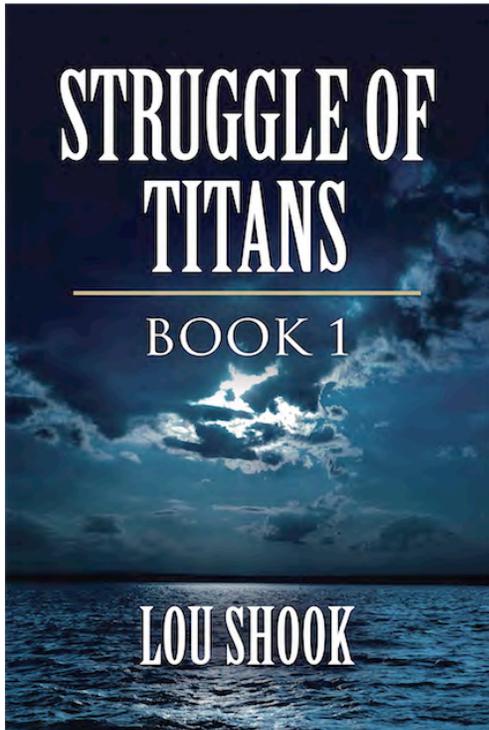
By the mid-6th century BC, Carthage had become the commercial center of the West Mediterranean region, a position it retained until overthrown by the Roman Republic. The city had conquered most of the old Phoenician colonies (including Hadrumetum, Utica, Hippo Diarrhytus and Kerkouane), subjugated the Libyan tribes (with the Numidian and Mauretanian kingdoms remaining more or less independent), and taken control of the entire North African coast, from modern Morocco to the borders of Egypt (not including the Cyrenaica, which was eventually incorporated into Hellenistic Egypt). Its influence had also extended into the Mediterranean, taking control over Malta, the Balearic Islands (with Sardinia soon to follow), and the western half of Sicily, where coastal fortresses such as Motya or Lilybaeum secured its possessions. Important colonies had also been established on the Iberian Peninsula. Their cultural influence in the Iberian Peninsula is documented.

By the time King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon was conducting the 13-year siege of Tyre starting from 585 BC, Carthage was probably independent of her mother city in political matters. However, close ties with Tyre still remained, Carthage continued to send annual tribute to Tyre (for the temple of Melqart) at irregular intervals over the centuries. Carthage was initially ruled by "kings" who were elected by the Carthaginian "senate" and served for a specific time period. The election took place in Carthage, and the kings at first were war leaders, civic administrators, and performed certain religious duties. Kings were elected on merit, not by the people but by the senate, and the post was not hereditary. However, the crown and military commands could also be purchased by the highest bidder. Initially these kings enjoyed near absolute power, which was curtailed as Carthage moved towards a more democratic government. Gradually, military command fell to professional officers, and a pair of suffets replaced the king in some of the civic functions and eventually kings were no longer elected.

Of Kings of Carthage, the Magonid family produced several members who were elected kings between 550 BC and 370 BC, and were in the forefront of the overseas expansion of Carthage. Mago I was elected king of Ancient Carthage in 550 BC and was the founding monarch of the Magonid dynasty of Carthage. Under

Mago, Carthage established itself as the dominant Phoenician military power in the western Mediterranean. It remained economically dependent on Tyre, the capital of Phoenicia, but acted increasingly independent. One of Mago's political achievements was an alliance with the Etruscans against Ancient Greece. This alliance lasted until around the time when Rome expelled the Etruscan kings. He was also active in Sicily, and married a Syracusan wife.

In 546 BC, Phocaeans (Ionian Greeks from Phocaea, ancient city on the western coast of Anatolia) fleeing from Persian invasion, established Alalia in Corsica. From there, they began preying on Etruscan and Punic commerce, causing severe disruption of Carthaginian trade. By 539 BC, this situation had become so acute, that a Carthaginian-Etruscan alliance was formed to expel the Greeks from Corsica.



From 538 BC to 231 BC, Carthage began as a dominant power along with the Etruscans and the Greeks. By 231 BC, Rome was the dominant power, and Carthage had taken major steps to conceal from the Romans, their buildup of forces in preparation to combat and overcome Rome.

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