

CARTHAGE



According to legend, **Carthage** was founded by the **Phoenician** Queen Elissa (better known as Dido) sometime around 813 BCE. The **city** (in modern-day Tunisia, North **Africa**) was originally known as *Kart-hadasht* (new city) to distinguish it from the older Phoenician city of Utica nearby. The **Greeks** called the city *Karchedon* and the **Romans** turned this name into *Carthago*. Originally a small port on the coast, established only as a stop for Phoenician traders to re-supply or repair their ships, Carthage grew to become the most powerful city in the **Mediterranean** before the rise of **Rome**.

After the fall of the great Phoenician city of **Tyre** to **Alexander the Great** in 332 BCE, those Tyrians who were able to escape fled to Carthage with whatever wealth they had. Since many whom **Alexander** spared were those rich enough to buy their lives, these refugees landed in the city with considerable means and established Carthage as the new centre of Phoenician **trade**. The Carthaginians then drove the native Africans from the area, enslaved many of them, and exacted tribute from the rest. From a small town on the coast, the city grew in size and grandeur with enormous estates covering miles of acreage. Not even one hundred years passed before Carthage was the richest city in the Mediterranean. The aristocrats lived in **palaces**, the less affluent in modest but attractive homes, while tribute and tariffs regularly increased the city's wealth on top of the lucrative business in trade. The harbor was immense, with 220 docks, gleaming **columns** which rose around it in a half-circle, and was ornamented with **Greek sculpture**. The Carthaginian trading ships sailed daily to ports all around the Mediterranean Sea while their navy, supreme in the region, kept them safe and, also, opened new territories for trade and resources through **conquest**.

It was this expansion which first brought Carthage into conflict with Rome. When Rome was weaker than Carthage, she posed no threat. The Carthaginian navy had long been able to enforce the treaty which kept Rome from trading in the western Mediterranean. When Carthage took **Sicily**, however, Rome responded. Though they had no navy and knew nothing of fighting on the sea, Rome built 330 ships which they equipped with clever ramps and gangways (the *corvus*) which could be lowered onto an enemy ship and secured; thus turning a sea battle into a land battle. The First **Punic War** (264-241 BCE) had begun. After an initial struggle with military tactics, Rome won a series of victories and finally defeated Carthage in 241 BCE. Carthage was forced to cede Sicily to Rome and pay a heavy war indemnity. [<http://www.ancient.eu.com/carthage/>]

