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**Why Was Carthage Destroyed? A Re-  
Examination from an Economic Perspective**

By

**Goke Akinboye, Ph.D**

Email:oa.akinboye@mail.ui.edu.ng

**Department of Classics, University of Ibadan**

**Abstract**

The story of Rome's destruction of the once buoyant maritime city of Carthage in 146 B.C. has been explained by many scholars, generally, in terms of the fear and security threats posed by Carthaginian naval authority and great trade across the Mediterranean. This kind of generalization leaves little room for other intrinsic causes of the destruction and plays down the core policies that characterized Roman imperialism in North Africa during the Republican times.

Adopting the political economy approach, this paper, therefore, re-examines from the economic perspective,

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the principles and dynamics which underlined the international relations of Rome in Africa during the stirring times of the second and third Punic wars with a view to identifying the strong economic motives that led to the eventual annihilation of Carthage. The paper shows that Carthaginian Africa was a region of great economic potential in the western Mediterranean. It reveals that Rome was a typically imperialistic state which employed various *divide et impera* stratagems to exploit the rich agricultural resources of the region. The paper concludes that the crippling of Carthage was premised not just on the fear or jealousy of Carthage but more importantly on the Roman desire to exploit the North African vast territories, wealth and agricultural resources.

**Key words:** Carthage, Rome, Economic, Destruction,

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Resources.

## **Introduction**

Most recent scholarship on the Roman-Carthaginian-African relationship often focus more on the Roman Principate period where there are much material and epigraphic evidences than on the Republican era. However, the story of Rome's interest in and eventual devastation of Carthage on the Tunisian coast of North Africa in 146 has received a lot of attention over the decades<sup>1</sup>. Historians have submitted that Rome's actions,

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<sup>1</sup> Baronowski D.E. 1995. Polybius on the causes of the Third Punic War, *Classical Philology*. vol. 90, No. 1, pp. 16 –20; Adcock F.E. 1946. Delenda est Carthago, *Cambridge Historical Journal (C.H.J.)*, No. VIII; Astin A.E., 1967. *Scipio Aemilianus*. Oxford; Astin A.E., 1967. Saguntum and the Origins of the Second Punic War. *Latomus*, vol.26, pp.37ff; Barton I.M. 1972. *Africa in the Roman Empire*. Accra; Broughton T.R.S. 1968. *The Romanization of*

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*African Proconsularis*. Greenwood Press, New York; Brunt P.A. 1978. *Laus Imperii, Rome's African Empire under the Principate*. Garnsey P. and Whittaker C.R. (eds.), Cambridge; Crawley J. 2000. *Imperialism and Culture Change in North Africa: The Hellenistic and Roman Eras*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Classics, UC, Berkeley, 2003; Errington R.M. 1970. Rome and Spain before the Second Punic War. *Latomus*, Vol.24, pp.25ff; Gsell S. 1914-1929. *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, (HAAN). 8 vols. Hachette, Paris; Harris W.N. 1979. *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome: 327 – 70B.C.* Oxford, New York; Ilevbare J.A. 1971. Economic Evolution in North Africa in Carthaginian and Roman Times, *Nigeria and the Classics*. vol. 13, Ibadan, pp.63-82; Ilevbare J.A. 1977-1978. Jugurtha: A Victim of Roman Imperialism and Factional Politics, *Museum Africum*, vol. 6, Ibadan, pp.43-59; Ilevbare J.A. 1980. *Carthage, Rome and Berbers*. Ibadan University Press, Ibadan; Ilevbare J.A. 1985. Syphax, Carthage and Rome: The Myth of Sophoniba, *Museum African*, vol. 8, Ibadan, pp. 30 – 46; Kehoe D.P. 1988. *The Economics of Agriculture on Roman Imperial Estates in North Africa*. Gottingen; Manton E.L. 1986. *Roman North Africa*. London; Morewood-Dowsett J. Ancient Roman Policy in Africa. *Journal of the Royal*

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especially with regard to the destruction of Carthage, should be explained in terms of her much desired internal security, fear of Carthaginian imminent aggression, jealousy of Carthaginian growing power, Roman irrational urge for universal conquest and policy of encirclement and assimilation of barbarians into the Roman culture. The most popular of these reasons which is widely held by Roman apologists and proponents of

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*African Society*, Vol.36, no.143. pp.201 – 212; Picard G. and C. 1968. *Life and Death of Carthage*. translated from French by Dominique Collon, Sidgwick and Jackson Publishers, London; Raven S. 1993. *Rome in Africa*. Routedledge and Keagan Paul Publishers, New York; Scullard H.H. 1930. *Scipio Africanus in the Second Punic War*. Cambridge; Summer G.V. 1966. The Chronology of the Outbreak of the Second Punic War, *PACA*, IX. pp.4ff; Walsh P.G. 1965. Masinissa. *JRS*, Vol.55, pp.149ff; Warmington B.H 1969. *Carthage*. Robert Hayes and Co. Britain.

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her defensive theories is the one which placed the theme of security, jealousy and fear of Carthage at the forefront of other reasons<sup>2</sup>. Their summary is that Rome's imperial actions, which culminated in her absolute control of the western Mediterranean, was neither a deliberately engineered process nor a well mapped out plan aimed at exploiting others. In what follows, it would be shown that not only were Roman policies in Africa a political reality but also that economic considerations were by far an important factor in the hapless annihilation of the great city of Carthage.

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<sup>2</sup> Many modern historians of Rome generally agree on these theories. In this group belong scholars such as T. Mommsen, S. Gsell, A.E. Astin, H.H. Scullard, S. Raven, E. Badian, R.M. Errington, W. Harris, A.N. Sherwin-White, D.E. Baronowski and a host of others. The same views were held by many Romans themselves for Cicero claimed that the wars Rome fought to establish her imperialism were wars which sprang up and which she could not have avoided or expected. '*cum tot bella aut a nobis necessario suspicantur, aut subito atque improvissa nascantur*' – Cic. *pro fonteio* 19.

**Rome, Africa and the Second Punic War**

In the policy of imperialist powers, which continue to regard the continent of Africa, right from the ancient times, as an important sphere of economic granary for Graeco-Roman world and political influence of the modern age, significance of the first order has been attached to Africa. This, as Gromyko<sup>3</sup> observes, is ‘...due to the continent’s wealth of mineral resources, their abundance, their high content of useful constituents and the favourable geographical position. In antiquity, *Africa*<sup>4</sup> offered two distinct meanings in the Roman

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<sup>3</sup> Gromyko Anatoly, a Russian author with research interest on Africa, wrote a detailed analysis of imperialism in Africa in his book (*vide infra*). Gromyko A.1981, *AFRICA: Progress, Problems, Prospect*, English transl. by D. Hagen, Moscow, p.176.

<sup>4</sup> Charlesworth M.P. 1970, *Trade routes and commerce of the Roman Empire*, Cooper Square Publishers, New York, p.132; Sallust, *Bel. Jug.* 79; Diodorus Siculus xx.41.2; Strabo 2.5.20. A detailed account of the physical features and climatic conditions of North Africa is found in Gsell, *Historie ancienne de l’Afrique du*

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world. It could be employed, in a broad sense, to designate the whole strip of coast stretching from the Lesser Syrtes to the Pillars of Hercules and beyond. But more usually, Africa applied to the roughly triangular section of land between the mouths of the Ampsaga and the Lesser Syrtes, having its apex in the Hermaen promontory. This latter region comprised a coastline of great, indeed, of exceptional fertility, plentifully watered by good rivers and thickly populated, ‘with its soil...’ says Pliny<sup>5</sup>, ‘wholly devoted to Ceres.’ This was indeed the granary of Africa. Thompson<sup>6</sup> states that the geographical region to which the name Roman North

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*Nord*, (HAAN), I, pp.1-176.

<sup>5</sup> On ‘African soil wholly given to Ceres’, see Pliny *N.H* xx.8; coast well inhabited, Strabo 825; rivers and large forests Strabo 826.

<sup>6</sup> Thompson L.A. 1966, “Settler and native in the urban centres of Roman North Africa” *Africa in Classical Antiquity*, P.132; cf Broughton T.R.S, 1968, *The Romanisation of African Proconsularis*, Greenwood press, Newyork, p.1.



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Africa referred, generally covered, at its greatest extent, the northern part of the continent from the Greater Syrtes to the Atlantic, embracing Tripolitania, Tunisia and Algeria north of the Sahara and northern Morocco. And so in the view of the Greeks and Romans, North West Africa embraced the modern states of Tunisia, western Libya, Algeria and Morocco<sup>7</sup>.

According to Charles-Picard Gilbert and Collette,<sup>8</sup> Carthage was founded by the Phoenicians in 814B.C. by Queen Dido, otherwise called Elissa, the sister of Pygmalion, king of Tyre. The events surrounding the founding of Carthage were shrouded in

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<sup>7</sup> For a general map on North Africa, see; *inter alia*, the map at the end of *CIL (Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum)* vol. viii. Pt.2.

<sup>8</sup> Picard, G. and C. 1961, *Daily Life in Carthage*, translate from French by. A.E. Foster, George Allen and Unwin London, p.17.

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the midst of obscurity and other traditions. Nevertheless, the Phoenicians were famed for being a maritime trading nation whose ships traded on the Mediterranean Sea for several hundreds of years. In the course of time, pressing economic circumstances propelled them to establish trade posts and stations along the far western end of the Mediterranean. Utica was the oldest Phoenician colony established in Africa among the many colonies set up as intermediate stations along the east-west route of the Mediterranean. By 500B.C. Carthage was already a very wealthy and powerful empire with a rigid economic system that concentrated on the wealth of the West and the silver and tin mines of the Tartessus and the African coast. Between the sixth and late fourth centuries when she warred against the Greeks, Carthage gradually took over the control of southern Sicily, the Far East and

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West thus emerging as the leading western power.

Carthaginian power was soon to be challenged by Rome with whom she had in the previous years developed good international relations when the Italian peninsula remained agricultural. By the middle of third century, after conquering the Greeks ports in southern Italy by force of arms, and the leading cities in central Italy, Rome became the mistress of the whole of Italy<sup>9</sup>. With so many Latin cities now in her confederacy, Rome was prepared to wrestle from Carthage the rich island of Sicily which the latter had previously controlled<sup>10</sup>. Since Carthage was a great economic force and naval authority, and Rome a powerful military machine whose interests must now shift outside Italy, the two rivals

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<sup>9</sup> Raven S. 1993. *Rome in Africa*. Routledge and Keagan Paul Publishers, New York, p.33.

<sup>10</sup> Picard G. and C. 1961, op.cit. pp, 19-20.

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began to jockey for supremacy over control of western Mediterranean. The result was the three Punic wars, the first and second of which disastrously ended for Carthage with her loss of military fleets and rich territories in Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and Spain. The third terminated in 146 with the outright destruction of the city of Carthage, whose energies had been dissipated in the two previous engagements.

The causes of the First Punic War indeed seem trivial, almost accidental. The Sicilian Greek city of Messina, which overlooked the narrow straits between Italy and Sicily, had, at some time between 288 and 283B.C, been captured and occupied by some Italian mercenaries from Campania who had previously been demobilised from service in Syracuse. In 288B.C, these

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mercenaries called themselves Mamertines<sup>11</sup>. But by 265B.C. when Hiero II, king of Syracuse came to power, he turned his attention to these Mermetines so that he might win back the city for Syracuse. Before this period, possibly in the early 3rd century, Agathocles had won the Southeast of Sicily for Syracuse. According to Polybius, at some point, Hiero II's siege of Messina was so successful that the Mermetines had no option but to seek for help, and this they did, first from Carthage and later, from Rome<sup>12</sup>. Carthage intervened, refusing to look on while Syracuse won control of the Sicilian straits by capturing Messina. Their admiral threw a Punic garrison into the town with the consent of the Mermetines, and

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<sup>11</sup> The word means 'sons of Mars', derived from *Mamers* the Sabellian war-god and from the Oscan form of *Mars*. See Polybius 1,7 for an early reference to the Mamertines.

<sup>12</sup> Polybius 1.10. 1-3, 5-11.

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Hiero perforce returned to Syracuse. Considering the fact that she was one of the major powers occupying Sicily and that a refusal to send help might somehow affect her (Carthaginian) Sicilian commerce and ultimately local economy, we can posit that Carthage felt more obliged to assist the Mamertines. On the other hand, Rome, since she was not directly trading in Sicily, contemplated no intervention at Messana immediately. The Roman Senate accepted the Mamertines' request for help after the Carthaginian troops had put their garrison into the citadel of Messana and the result was terribly embarrassing. It is not within our scope here to discuss the details of the war which lasted for twenty four years, but it is expedient to state that it was a war which demonstrated Roman determination to acquire a foreign market and a grain producing province. Carthage lost Sicily with

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virtually all the lucrative dispositions to Rome. Carthage was also forced to pay a whopping sum of 3,200 gold talents which was spread over a period of ten years. Subsequently, in 238 B.C, Rome also forced Carthage to give up her rich islands – Corsica and Sardinia, thus achieving her age-long ambition of controlling the three major Western Mediterranean islands. When Carthage protested the unjust seizure of these islands, she was further fined 1,200 talents while also paying heavily for the ransom of her citizens who had been taken prisoners. The annual tribute that Rome collected from Sicily after the war was over 1,000,000 bushels of wheat which was sold on the market for the Roman treasury. Thus, a veritable gold mine in grain wealth was secured.

The details of the Second Punic War are also not relevant to this paper. Economic factors were also

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largely responsible and the struggle for domination of the rich African region is seen in the vigorous part played by the Roman ally, Massilia,<sup>13</sup> which was closer to Spain. Massilia had many trading posts on the coast of Spain from where her great merchants had sought the products of the whole peninsula<sup>14</sup>. Obviously the Carthaginians' march northward from New Carthage - cross-cutting all the old trade routes of Massilia - affected the flow of her much desired Spanish products. Massilia did not relish the prospect of any Carthaginian trade competition. It is therefore not surprising that

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<sup>13</sup> *Massilia* is the Latin name for *Massalia*. The modern name of the state is Marseilles. It was founded by the Greeks from Phocaea around 600BC and was one of the most important commercial cities of the ancient world.

<sup>14</sup> The most popular of the Massilian trading colonies were Rhode, Emporiae, Alonis, Alicante and Hemeroscopion. Massilians had probably signed a formal ally treaty before 218 (Livy XXI.20.8); the status of an ally (*socii*) may have resulted from her co-operation in the Roman-Gallic crisis (cf. Polybius II. 32.1).



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Massilia, seeking to ruin a major rival, had to draw the attention of Rome to investigate the motive behind the rapid expansion of Carthage in Spain. Rome had always wanted to completely annihilate the Carthaginians and used the Massilian cause as a pretext to go into conflict with Carthage. Massilia herself had tried to check the Carthaginian strong expansion but failed. And so in 231B.C, Massilia did her utmost to incite the Roman Senate by exaggerating the extent of Carthaginian expansion and ‘designs against Rome’.

To the Romans, Massilia was an ally of prime importance since she also provided information about the Gauls in and around the valley of the Rhone and it should be noted that Rome was particularly worried about Gaul for the two states had been in conflict with each other since 390B.C. In the circumstances, Rome

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had to take the Massilian information about Carthage seriously. The result was that Rome sent envoys to New Carthage in 226B.C. The commission came up with the so called ‘Ebro treaty’ by which Hasdrubal, the great Carthaginian general, agreed not to cross the River Ebro with an armed force and perhaps undertook not to ally with the Gauls; and as a *quid pro quo*, he doubtless got the assurance of Rome not to interfere with Carthage’s conquests, south of the river<sup>15</sup>. The immediate cause of conflict however was the attack made by Hannibal on Saguntum, a Roman allied state on the mouth of the Ebro River.

In sum, suffice it to say that the result of the war ended in the loss of all Carthaginian holdings in Spain and the establishment of an alliance with the Numidian

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<sup>15</sup> Polybius II. 13.7 seem to treat this treaty as informal.

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kingdom in Africa which became an ally of Rome in North Africa. The kingdom was formerly friendly to Carthage but provided great help for Rome in stirring times and the latter later used this as an excuse for the final destruction of the Carthaginians in 146B.C. Moreover, Carthage had her African land limited by a 150 mile ditch which Scipio ordered to be dug from Thabraca (Tabarka) on the North coast to Thaenae near Hadrumentum. Massinisa, as we shall presently see, was thus left the sole ruler of the whole of Numidia which included much of the region that later came to be known as Tripolitania. Carthage gave up all her war booty and the riches she had brought back from Sicily. This, again, is clearly evidence of economic motive, aimed at completely annihilating a daring competitor from the committee of trading nations. Also, the Romans crippled

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Carthage by an imposition of a heavy indemnity of ten thousand talents, a demand for supply of corn and payment of Roman troops following a three month's armistice<sup>16</sup>. These show that economic considerations were an important factor in the destruction of Carthage. Carthage also had to give up her hostages, war-ships and all her elephants – so deadly an instrument of war in the ancient world. To finally nail down Carthage, she was forbidden to wage any war, whether in the face of any provocation or even in self-defence. These strategic measures were meant to make Carthage lose her control over trade and markets in Emporia. Besides, Rome

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<sup>16</sup> The indemnity of ten thousand talents was to be paid in fifty annual instalments which would keep Carthage weak and perpetually dependent on Rome for this long period. Livy XXXVI.4 however says in 191B.C. Carthage tried to pay up the balance of the indemnity as a lump sum but Rome refused insisting that the payment had to serve its terms. See also: Polybius XV. 18; Appian, *Libyca* 54.

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ordered Carthage to return to Masinissa territories taken from his ancestors, an order not only tall, but also vague. This was to provide yet another pretext for incessant Numidian encroachments on Carthaginian territory after 201B.C. Clearly, all the Roman actions showed that she wanted not only to dominate and exploit the African soil but also to effectively destroy Carthage as a Mediterranean power.

## **Rome, Africa and the Third Punic war**

The Second Punic War had given the Romans sole control over the Western Mediterranean. There was no power left in the West to contest Roman predominance. Slowly, and by various mechanisms, the Romans extended their control over Mediterranean basin until 133BC when Numantia in Spain was destroyed. Between

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201 and 149 B.C. Spain was thoroughly exploited, especially the silver mines. The Roman Senate decided that the province was to be organised on the model of Sicily and Sardinia. A permanent tribute was imposed. This was an economic gain. In Africa, the Romans employed a hybrid system of establishing alliances and friendship, diplomacy, *divide et impera* and military force to penetrate the region. After the Second Punic War, the Romans began a renewed foray into Africa by meddling into the differences (differences which they had engineered themselves) between Carthage and Massinissa of Numidia who had become the most prominent of the kings in Africa.

Having become a personal friend of Scipio and ally of

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Rome<sup>17</sup> following the victory of the Second Punic War, Masinissa was given the right to recover all the lands of his ‘ancestors’ which had been appropriated by the Carthaginians prior to the war. He was also fully aware of the facts that had trailed the war: Carthage had been forbidden to wage war even in self-defence<sup>18</sup>. Of this clause, Masinissa took full advantage by encroaching on Carthaginian territories which he claimed belonged to his ‘ancestors’. Whenever Carthage protested to Rome about these continual annexations of her remaining African territories, the Roman senate chose not to

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<sup>17</sup> Masinissa, we are told, recovered his throne and enlarged his kingdom through the help of Scipio who addressed him as king and gave him the African territory which Rome had conquered from Syphax. See – Livy XXX.44, 12.

<sup>18</sup> This clause seems to rest upon a sentence in a Livian speech in 172 (XLII.23, 3-4) cf. Scullard H.H. 1930, *Scipio Africanus in the Second Punic War*, Cambridge, p. 253ff. a thorough and scholarly discussion. Livy XXX.37, 4 is ostensibly false and contradicts XLII 23.4.

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intervene. To many of the several differences between Carthage and Numidia, both neighbours in Africa, the Romans attitude was pathetically indifferent; they even encouraged Masinissa in the rape of Carthaginian territory. Series of conflicts were mentioned in 195B.C. when Hannibal went into exile in Asia Minor, another one in 193, again in 182, and then in 174 and 172<sup>19</sup>. The last of these was in 151/150 when Carthage formally declared war on Masinissa. Despite all these and the encroachments, the Carthaginians possessed the richest farmlands in Africa and the exploitation of these lands was the objective of, not only Masinissa, but also the Romans. Masinissa could not have been a Roman ally

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<sup>19</sup> Livy XXXIII. 47,3-10; XXXIV. 62.ff.; XL.17, 1-6.; 34, fin.; XLI.22, 1-3; XLII.23f.



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for nothing. It was a matter of *quid pro quo*<sup>20</sup>. Masinissa announced that Africa belonged to the Africans. And we must note once again that annexation of other people's territories by whatever means spells doom for the economy of such unfortunate agrarian state such as that of the Carthaginians.

In 162B.C, Polybius reports that after a prolonged conflict, Carthage, again with the Romans' support for Masinissa, lost the Emporia in a decision

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<sup>20</sup> In 195B.C Livy does not report any Roman Senate's concrete decision following Carthage's complaints; in 193B.C a mission was sent to arbitrate but headed by Scipio Africanus himself. Despite that, no clear decision was reached but Livy, of course being a Roman apologist, adduced 'bad faith' – Livy, XXXIV.62, fin. This, in fact, must have meant that Masinissa gained his point here. In 182B.C, the Roman commission also refused to decide on the status of some territories that at one time or the other had been taken away from the Carthaginians by Masinissa's father – Livy, XL.34.14. Masinissa still retained all the disputed lands. By 172B.C, Masinissa had already occupied more than seventy cities within the Carthaginian sphere of influence. All these are indicative of Africa's subjection and domination through the engineering of the Romans.

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which was frankly unjust<sup>21</sup>. There was also another attack by Masinissa on the Carthaginian town of Thugga with a Roman commission under Cato doing nothing about it. According to Appian<sup>22</sup>, and as we shall see, the Roman Senate secretly began to plot for the final destruction of Carthage following the report of Cato in 153B.C. Rome had wanted a suitable pretext or excuse for the destruction of the city and this was in due course provided by Carthage herself. In 150B.C. the Carthaginians expelled a pro-Numidian faction and when Masinissa tried to intervene in their favour, his envoys were excluded and harassed. Masinissa, fully aware of the constraints on Carthage which forbade her to wage war, thereupon laid siege upon a Carthaginian town

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<sup>21</sup> Polybius, XXXI.21.

<sup>22</sup> Appian, *Libyca*, 69.

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around Souk El-Khemis. The Carthaginians resisted by armed force, then the Romans intervened. The ground was thus prepared for the Third Punic War. Moreover, it should be emphasised that by 150B.C. Carthage had regained her wealth. Her merchants still traded in the ports of the eastern Mediterranean and had a very remarkable improvement in her agriculture. So, when Cato visited Africa in 153B.C. and was struck by the threat which the prosperity of Carthaginian agriculture posed to the sadly declining fortunes of his fellow landowners in Italy, he determined that *Carthago delenda est*<sup>23</sup>. It is then clear that Carthage was to be annexed not as a result of fear as reasons given by Roman apologists but as a result of lucre and avid desire for an agriculturally viable territory and a prosperous

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<sup>23</sup> *Carthago must be destroyed*, Raven S. 1993, op.cit. p. 45.

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maritime trade.

As shown above, part of the settlement of the Second Punic War was an imposition of large indemnity of ten thousand talents on Carthage which had to be paid in instalments over fifty years. The refusal of the Roman Senate to allow Carthage pay off the full amount in 191B.C. suggests that its purpose was not to punish the Carthaginians and compensate the Romans for the costs of the war but to hold on to the state perpetually<sup>24</sup>. Obviously, paying off the indemnity early would have freed Carthage from its subservience to Rome and meant the return of Carthaginian hostages now in Rome, used as cheap labour. A substantial amount of wheat, we have also pointed out, was part of the indemnity<sup>25</sup>. In spite of

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<sup>24</sup> Livy XXXVI. 4,7-9.

<sup>25</sup> Livy XXX. 37, 5. cf. XXX.16.11; Polybius XV.18, 6.

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this, during her wars in the East, Rome was repeatedly requesting more and more for the North African wheat to provide sustenance for her army and the people of Rome. From Livy<sup>26</sup>, we know that a Roman embassy in 200B.C. demanded 200,000 *modii* of wheat for Rome and the same amount for the army in Macedonia. In 170B.C, Carthage delivered 1,000,000 measures of wheat and 500,000 measures of barley to Rome as her *munus officiumque*<sup>27</sup>.

The same amount of wheat and barley delivered by Carthage was sent by Masinissa in 170B.C<sup>28</sup> and he even continued to supply Rome with wheat<sup>29</sup>, troops and elephants during wartime. In 170, Masinissa supplied

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<sup>26</sup> Livy XXXI, 19,2 cf. XXXI.50.1.

<sup>27</sup> Livy XLIII, 6.11.

<sup>28</sup> Livy. XXXI.19, 3-4.

<sup>29</sup> Livy XXXII.27,2 – He supplied 200,000 *modii* to the army waring in Macedonia in 198; XLII.29,8 in 171 cf. XLII.62.

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1,000,000 measures of wheat and 500,000 measures of barley<sup>30</sup>, the same amount as Carthage had supplied. In 191, Masinissa also promised to supply to Rome more than 500,000 *modii* of wheat and of barley which Carthage had earlier paid in that year and the trend continued for some time<sup>31</sup>. So, when discussing the factors of Roman economic imperialism in the destruction of Carthaginian Africa, these evidences from Livy show adequately that the Romans were clearly interested in and exploited the economic potential of North Africa including its land and peoples. The statement by Sallust<sup>32</sup> that at the end of the Second Punic

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<sup>30</sup> Livy XLIII.6.13 – Carthage also supplied this amount.

<sup>31</sup> The amount involved in 191 was 500,000 *modii* of wheat and 300,000 of barley for the Roman troops in Greece; and 300,000 *modii* of wheat and 250,000 of barley to feed the city of Rome. See Livy, XXXVI.4.8-9.

<sup>32</sup> Sallust, *B.J.* 5 – *regi dono dedit*.

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War, the Romans gave the African lands and cities which they had conquered to Masinissa ‘as a gift’ should not be taken serious to mean that Rome had no economic motive in Africa. The reverse, as can be clearly seen from Livy, was indeed the case. The aim was to exploit – and here with a system of *divide et impera* which tricked Masinissa into betraying her neighbour, Carthage to the Romans.

Roman imperialism was a pervasive political reality. Not only were orders issued and obeyed, but agricultural surpluses and human labour were appropriated as thoroughly as possible and Africans’ foreign and domestic policies were both policed and guided by Rome and her officials. Thus, Carthage and Numidia were put in a vulnerable position. The results of the First Punic War alone produced over 75,000 cheap

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labour forces in the form of Carthaginian hostages whose sale brought the Roman treasury about 15,000,000 *denarii*. By the time of the Hannibalic war, the capture of Tarentum alone fetched the Romans some 30,000 prisoners while the war captives of the first half of the second century might have produced about 250,000. In fact, the demand of the Romans for cheap labour consistently increased to meet demands of labour in the countryside and farmlands as well as educated slaves for domestic work in towns. After Canae, slaves were freed for military service; also Italian landowners who were called to the front in the army increasingly required the slaves to run their farms in their absence<sup>33</sup>. Thus we can posit that by the end of the wars, one of the keys of the

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<sup>33</sup> Scullard H.H. 1969, *A History of the Roman World: 753–146B.C.*, Methuen Publishers, London, pp. 352 – 353.



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Roman motives in Africa had been realised. The Roman slave markets had large numbers of Carthaginians, Spaniards, Greeks and Macedonians all of whom developed the plantation system of the Romans and displaced the Italian peasant farmers and pushed out indigenous labour in big estates. By 150B.C., in the twilight of Carthaginian Africa so-called independence, Rome was already in control of, not only North Africans' trade, commerce and their overseas possessions, but also of the region's great natural and human resources including agricultural produce.

The years 170's and 160s B.C, as noted above, witnessed provocative Numidian advances on the holdings of Carthage. Despite the Roman bias towards

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Masinissa, obligations<sup>34</sup> elsewhere in the East did not force Rome to be less one-sided against Carthage. By the 160's this attitude took an extreme form. The Numidian invasion of 162B.C. resulted in many desperate requests for help by Carthage from Rome, yet these were ignored. Masinissa was allowed to keep his gains and relations soured even further. The next decade saw more vigorous and increased Numidian activity as well as frequent embassies from Carthage to Rome with requests for arbitration and aid in the Carthagino-Numidian feud;

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<sup>34</sup> For instance in 170 BC, Masinissa wrestled with Carthage for Emporia, a piece of land which he had already occupied in 193. The remaining parts of the land were particularly rich and fertile and at some point in the past, Masinissa had quietly acknowledged Carthaginians' right to it since he had asked her permission to pursue a fugitive into the area. The Carthaginian appeal for Roman arbitration in the year was met with a serious disappointment for Carthage was even compelled to pay Masinissa a sum of 500 talents as compensation for loss of revenue from the disputed territories from the time the dispute had begun. See Polybius XXXI.21 for details; cf. Errington R.M. 1971, *The Dawn of Empire: Rome's Rise to World Power*, Hamish Hamilton, London, p. 263 for other Roman envoys' visits to Africa in the 150's.

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each of these was in turn denied. Despite Rome's favour of Masinissa's cause, no efforts were made by Carthage at declaring war herself thus leaving the policing of Carthaginian resurgence to her Numidian rival.<sup>35</sup> By 153B.C. repeated Masinissa's raids had brought the situation in Africa to a head and this, as we have seen, warranted the visit of a Roman delegation headed by Marcus Porcius Cato whose mission turned out to be one of the most critical events in the history of Romano-Carthaginian relations.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> It seemed that certain provision of the treaty that ended the Second Punic War in 201B.C allowed Carthage to defend only her own boundaries-not to advance beyond them. But Roman defensive historiography tried to deny Carthage even this right by inventing a clause in the treaty by which Carthage was prevented from waging war against Roman allies in any circumstances; see, Appian, *Libyca* 8.4 and cf. Livy. XLII. 23.3-4.

<sup>36</sup> For modern scholars' discussion on Cato's mission and the outbreak of war, consider; Astin A.E. 1967, *Scipio Aemilianus*, Oxford, p. 48ff; 270ff; Badian E, 1958, *Foreign Clientelae*, p. 130ff; Walsh P.G. 1965, 'Masinissa' – *Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. LV. p. 149ff; Scullard H.H. 1952, *Roman Politics, 220-150B.C.*, Oxford,

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The Roman lack of concise response to the cause of Carthage and glaring support for Masinissa led to a change in the Carthaginian government in 151B.C, replaced by a party in opposition to continuous Roman appeasement.<sup>37</sup> It was at this time that Masinissa laid siege to a Carthaginian town and the new government recognised that its attempts at requesting for Roman intervention had been exhausted. Carthage managed to recruit an army of about 25,000 men to ward off Masinissa's siege.<sup>38</sup> The Numidian army, skilfully improved under Masinissa, crushed the inexperienced Carthaginian army under the watchful eye of Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, grandson of Scipio Africanus who had in 202B.C. crushed the army of

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p. 240ff.

<sup>37</sup> Badian E. *ib.id.* p.130.

<sup>38</sup> Appian, *Libyca*, 70-3.

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Hannibal at Zama. In Rome, the conflict was seen as Carthaginian violation of the 201 peace treaty rather than a great Numidian victory and a futile Carthaginian attempt at rejecting exploitation. Had the repeated encroachments been made by Rome herself, Carthage obviously would have accepted her fate. But continuous acceptance of such injustice without resistance from a fellow African state was considered profoundly humiliating. Unfortunately, this Carthaginian step at rejection of Numidian aggression was all Rome had been waiting for as a pretext for fighting a ‘just’ war.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See. Appian, *Libyca*, 69ff. on Rome’s pretext for war. Baronowski Donald W. has a scholarly contribution on the Romans’ pretext for the Third Punic War. He examines Polybius views on the causes of the war which contain three elements – a beginning (ἀρχη), a pretext (πρόφασις) and a cause (αἰτία). A *beginning* is the first attempt or action in any war; a *pretext* is an alleged reason for going to war while a *cause* is anything that generally influences a decision to fight a war. Polybius (XXXVI. 2) confesses that the Romans sought ‘an attractive pretext (πρόφασις) for going to war

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New attempts by Carthage to appease the Romans were rejected and in the events that followed, the far-sighted Carthaginian city of Utica surrendered unconditionally to the Roman *fides* even before war broke out, a hopeless situation which, in the words of Appian, ‘further made Rome more determined to take Carthage’. More attempts made by Punic envoys to appease Rome proved futile. The five deputies sent to Rome to announce the

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against Carthage (XXXVI. 2). In the same verse, he referred to a senatorial debate held at the end of the consular year 150B.C. where Polybius says that the Romans had already decided long ago to declare war after the visit of Cato to Africa but were still searching for an attractive pretext. See also, Polybius III. 6-7; III. 9, 6-15, 13; XXII. 18; XX. 18.6. cf. Baronowski D. W. 1995, ‘Polybius on the Causes of the Third Punic War; *Classical Philology*, Vol. 90. No. 1 – University of Chicago, pp. 16-20 On the tripartite scheme of causation of Polybius, see; Walbank F.W. 1979, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, Vol. 3, Oxford, p. 208. From Appian, *Libyca*, 75 (347.48), we also learnt that Rome took the step to go to war following the surrender of Utica to the Roman *deditio* in 149B.C. (cf. Polybius XXXVI. 3.9). It is not surprising that none of these submissions which were characteristics of Roman writers apparently show economic motives; however, the economic interests of Rome in Africa are there for the very inquisitive minds to see.

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Carthaginian readiness to surrender to Rome unconditionally found that Rome had already declared war and the consuls with their forces of about 80,000 had already sailed from Sicily to Utica which was only about ten miles from Carthage. Once the army arrived at Utica, a panic-stricken Carthaginian populace restated their readiness to comply with any Roman demand. The result was the surrender of over 200,000 sets of arms and about 2,000 siege catapults obediently given up. Carthage was also ordered to surrender three hundred nobles as hostages and all these demands were met with a view to atoning for her 'breach' of the Zama treaty and mollifying the war-profiteers in the Roman Senate who were canvassing for hostilities.<sup>40</sup> However, the Romans seemed unable to goad the Carthaginians into war. Their

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<sup>40</sup> Scullard H.H. (1969), pp. 301 – 303.

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subsequent formal act of surrender (*deditio*) and the compliance to the numerous demands of Rome seemed a sufficient atonement for the breach. But Rome was not satisfied. There was still a more grievous demand.<sup>41</sup> It is clear that there were other interests or objectives for wanting the destruction of Carthage. At last, the consuls announced the final Roman demand: the Carthaginians must evacuate their city which would be destroyed, the populace was free to leave and settle anywhere within the existing Carthaginian territory provided that it was at

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<sup>41</sup> By overtly playing into the hands of Rome in taking arms against Masinissa, the Carthaginian simply supplied their Roman enemies with lethal ammunition. Nasica who had argued for a proper 'just war' against Carthage also had the ground cut under his feet by the very people he was trying to help on the floor of the Senate. And when the Carthaginians offered unconditional surrender to Rome after the declaration of war, Scipio Nasica could not persuade the Senate to stop the embarkation of the army for Africa. Appian *Libyca*, 74, 76. Moreover we should note that the formal act of *deditio* of Carthage had put her completely at the mercy of Rome. The implication of this is seen as an act of one who has given Rome a blank cheque and if the Romans cared they could insert *Carthago delenda est*.



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least ten miles away from the sea. This was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Carthage finally woke up, realising that war was the only option. They took their fate in their hands and prepared to meet their invaders in the summer of 149B.C. Rome's requests here clearly show that there were more deep seated causes for the conflict. The Romans were fully aware that relocating the Carthaginian city ten miles inland was a death sentence passed on a trade rival and an economically vibrant city whose prosperity was heavily dependent on the sea. In addition, the fact that the Roman envoys sent to Carthage to investigate the extent of Carthagino-Numidian war in 150B.C. also returned to Rome with an astonishing report of Carthaginian resources is an issue that should be given prime consideration in the economic motives of the war. This, according to Polybius, was the

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time that the Senate was coaxed into a secret resolution to go to war. The Carthaginian resistance of Masinissa's provocations was only a pretext.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has shown that the central motivation in the Roman destruction of Carthage and her imperialism in Africa seemed to have been strong economic interests, economic domination and exploitation, which were a direct result of the schemes of far-seeing Italian war-mongers and Roman senators who had discovered early enough the economic potentialities that abound in Africa. By the third century B.C., at the time Rome was consolidating its hegemony all over Italy, Carthage was a large economic force on the North African coast. Therefore, to acquire her fertile lands and agricultural

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resources and to control her western Mediterranean trade, Rome went to war with Carthage in 264, 218 and 146B.C.with a view to becoming the major economic power in the Mediterranean. These conflicts resulted in the annexation, by Rome, of Sicily, Spain and the islands of Corsica and Sardinia. The feat was achieved by varied means of statecraft. Rome's policy in the period of the Punic wars appeared to foreshadow the contemporary methods now being adopted in modern imperialism. In the spring of 146B.C, Carthage was finally razed down. By the time she surrendered to the brutal siege of Rome, over 600,000 people had succumbed to death or flight.<sup>42</sup> The remaining forces and citizens were captured and sold into slavery and every bit of plunder was taken.

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<sup>42</sup> Appian, *Libyca*, 75.

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Carthage was annexed by, and subsequently became one of the greatest provinces of, the Roman Empire. Thus, the Romans deceitfully and skilfully used pretexts<sup>43</sup> to achieve their aim to hold Carthage as a veritable corn mine and an economic granary.

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<sup>43</sup> Many Roman historians, especially the annalistic apologetics, have advanced/invented various suitable pretexts. Zonaras (IX. 46) makes the Carthaginians collect allies and ships against Masinissa; the Romans then send Scipio Nasica to reproach them and prevail upon Masinissa to give up some disputed territory. However, the Carthaginians, he says, remain disobedient as before and the Romans, having heard that Masinissa has defeated them (the Carthaginians) declare war upon them. Livy in the *Periocha* (XLVIII) makes the Romans hear a rumour that Carthage is preparing an army under a grandson of king Syphax; Cato advises war against Carthage while Scipio Nasica opposes him. A mission then goes to Carthage to investigate the matter and settle the disputes with Masinissa. Masinissa is agreeing to withdraw from the disputed territory when a demagogue incites the Carthaginian mob to violence against the Roman envoys. Gulussa also reports further preparations for war at Carthage and ten envoys are again sent to investigate. They confirm the reports in the Roman Senate but Senate decides not to declare war if Carthage disarms. Livy, *Periocha*, XLIX, finally gives a full statement of Roman pretexts: the advance of an army beyond the frontier; (Carthaginian) possession of ships contrary to the treaty; an attack on Masinissa, friend and ally of the Roman people; and the exclusion of Gulussa from the Carthaginian city when he had been accompanied by Roman envoys.