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Coinage of the Libyan Revolt, 241–238 BC

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Historical background

The Libyan Revolt was a conflict between Carthage and her former mercenary army that lasted from 241 to 238 BC¹⁻⁷. It is also known as the ‘Mercenary War’ or the ‘Truceless War’, the latter reflecting the barbarity on both sides^{1,7}. It occurred immediately after the prolonged First Punic-Roman War that spanned 23 years from 264 to 241 BC, and that had taken place on land and sea around Sicily⁸⁻¹¹.

There are two sources of evidence for the Libyan Revolt; the historical account of Polybius¹ and the numismatic evidence of the coins that were issued by the rebels. Coins have a special symbolism in this war, which began as a financial dispute between a city of merchants, her mercenary army and the heavily taxed populace. They show us the imagery with which the rebels chose to portray themselves.

Carthage was built on the North African coast on a promontory just north of Cap Bon. The city was founded in 814 BC by Elissa (Dido) and other refugees escaping from political turmoil in their former home city of Tyre in Phoenicia²⁻⁶. Carthage was in a very central and highly strategic location for access, trade and naval control within the Mediterranean (Fig. 1).

Carthage was primarily a mercantile city and became the dominant power in the

Mediterranean with control over Sardinia, western Sicily and the North African coast¹². Carthage had her own military and political classes such as the famous Barcid family (*e.g.* Hamilcar Barca and his son Hannibal)¹³⁻¹⁴. The continuous use of the horse as an image on her coinage suggests a strong equestrian and cavalry tradition within Punic society¹⁵⁻²⁰. However, probably due to her limited population and for simple commercial reasons, during much of her history Carthage appears to have relied heavily on mercenary armies when the need arose²¹⁻²². This was particularly in the era in which she produced coinage, and there is an obvious link, because the most convenient method of payment for a mercenary army was coinage. The mercenaries were drawn from around the Carthaginian homeland populated by native Libyans, who accounted for the largest numbers, Numidians, as well as Greeks, Celts, Gauls, Ligurians, Campanians, Balearic Islanders and Iberians¹. It was the mercenary forces employed during the twenty-three year long First Punic-Roman War that were subsequently involved in the Libyan Revolt.

At the end of the First Punic War with Rome, the mercenary army was repatriated from the last Carthaginian bases of Erice and Lilybaeum in western Sicily back to Carthage^{1,7}. The Carthaginian surrender had been signed from his stronghold in Erice by Hamilcar Barca, who had

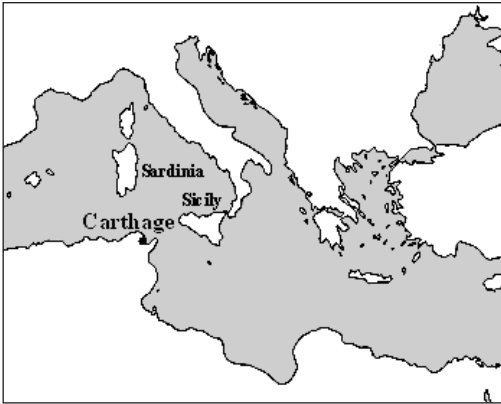


Figure 1. Map of the Mediterranean illustrating the strategic location of Carthage.



Figure 2. Map of Libya (modern Northern Tunisia) showing principal locations in the Libyan Revolt.

remained undefeated, but in stalemate. Hamilcar returned immediately to Carthage and left his deputy, General Gisco, to organise the repatriation of the troops (Table 1). Gisco did this deliberately in small units so that the soldiers would be paid their dues, and then dispersed back to their respective homelands to prevent the build-up of large numbers of troops in the mother city and the unruly behaviour that might be expected. Regrettably for Carthage, this is precisely what was to transpire, when the authorities in Carthage were either unable or unwilling to pay the dues to the soldiers. Hence, large numbers of soldiers congregated in the city, with resulting problems in law and order.

The Carthaginian authorities then expelled the troops from Carthage to Sicca about 160 kilometres to the west (Fig. 2), allowing them to take their baggage and families with them. Polybius records that the soldiers were each given a gold *stater* (Fig. 3) to cover their immediate expenses. Following their arrival in Sicca, and during the course of the subsequent deliberations with Hanno, a leading

military and political figure, to resolve this payment dispute, the soldiers escalated their demands and the negotiations failed.

Finally, Carthage dispatched Gisco with full payment for the mercenaries. Two mercenary soldiers, Mathos and Spendius, emerged as leaders, as arguments developed among the different ethnic and language groups of the mercenaries. The two ringleaders quashed any dissent in the atmosphere of mob rule that had developed. The mercenaries took Gisco hostage and seized all the Carthaginian money from him. Then 20,000 mercenaries marched to Carthage and made camp at Tunis, 15 kilometres from the Punic capital.

The rebels are reported to have had ample supplies and finances to enable them to conduct a prolonged campaign. Among their initial forays they besieged Utica and Hippocritae in the north. Hanno was placed in command of the Carthaginian forces, and while he evidently had organisational ability in procuring new soldiers for Carthage, he was incompetent in the field. He lost significant battles while trying to lift the sieges of Utica and Hippocritae.



Figure 3. Carthage electrum *stater*, c.300 BC (7.3 g). *Obv*: Head of *Tanit* (the consort of *Baal*) left, crowned with corn wreath, wearing earring with pendant and necklace, dotted border. *Rev*: Free horse standing right, double exergue line, one dot before horse's front leg, dotted border.

cf Sear 6462, Jenkins group V of No.245, SNG Copenhagen 976.

Hamilcar Barca was then given command of the Carthaginian forces. At this stage of the revolt the rebel forces under Mathos were controlling the siege of Hippocritae, while Spendius and Autaritus were at Tunis from where they were able to prevent the Carthaginians from leaving Carthage. Hamilcar and his troops managed to escape from this entrapment by crossing the Macaras River at night, making use of a wind-assisted tidal change. On the plain beside the Macaras River, where he used his cavalry and elephants to full effect, Hamilcar then defeated the rebel army led by Spendius. So complete was this victory, that where possible, the mercenaries subsequently avoided engaging in battle on the plains, preferring to fight on hilly terrain where Hamilcar and his troops, cavalry and elephants no longer had such an advantage.

The next major battle, according to Polybius, was located in an unidentified place described as 'a plain surrounded by mountains'^{1 (7-8)}. The rebel forces under Spendius had been joined by Numidian and Libyan reinforcements, and Hamilcar

found himself in difficulties. Navaras, a Numidian prince who had traditional ties with the Carthaginians, boldly offered himself and his cavalry force to Hamilcar. In both this and subsequent battles against the rebel forces, Navaras was to contribute significantly to the Carthaginian success. After his victory over Spendius, Hamilcar made an important decision to offer immunity to any captured rebels who agreed to either join his army, or go their own way, as long as they did not take part in any further action against Carthage.

Hamilcar's leniency and offer of immunity clearly had a major impact on the rebel leaders, who feared mass defection. Mathos, Spendius and Autaritus determined on a course of committing atrocities that would increase the hatred on each side to such an extent, that compromise was no longer possible. This was begun by cutting off the hands of Gisco, followed by his further mutilation and murder, and then the same torture and murder of 700 Carthaginian hostages that they held.

At this time, there was mutiny in Sardinia. Polybius reports that all Carthaginian soldiers stationed there were taken prisoner, tortured and murdered¹. As a result, the Carthaginians suffered complete loss of control over the island. Shortly after, Utica and Hippocritae defected to the rebels. Mathos and Spendius then laid siege to Carthage herself. Rome refused to occupy either Sardinia or Utica despite invitations by the rebels to do so, but loyally observed her treaty engagements, returned remaining prisoners from the Sicilian (First Punic-Roman) War, and gave permission to her merchants to export all requirements with 'prompt and friendly attention' to requests from Carthage.



Figure 4. Siculo-Punic AR *tetradrachm*; Carthage series, c.410–395 BC (17.60 g). *Obv.*: Forepart of bridled horse right; above, Nike flying right holding wreath and *caduceus* over horse's head; barley grain right. Punic legend QRTHDST. *Rev.*: Palm tree with two date clusters. Punic legend MHNT.

Jenkins, Punic 13 (O3/R13; this coin listed as 'private collection Y', pl.3, 13Y); SNG Copenhagen (Carthage) 72 (same obv. die) <http://www.engcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=69838>.

Hamilcar, Navaras and Hannibal (not Barca) scoured the country intercepting supplies of the rebels and harassing them in many skirmishes. Any captured enemy soldiers were thrown to the elephants and trampled to death. By these tactics, the rebels were reduced to famine and, as a consequence, cannibalism. They were finally surrounded and forced to engage Hamilcar in the famous 'Battle of The Saw' that decimated the rebel army. The final victory for the Carthaginians came with the siege of Tunis, the battle of Leptis Minor with the capture of Mathos, and the siege and retaking of Utica and Hippocritae by the finally united forces of Hamilcar and Hanno in 238 BC.

Coinage of the Libyan Revolt

Carthage probably began to issue coins^{15–20} in the latter part of the fifth century following their intervention in the conflict between Segesta (which they supported) and Selinus in 410 BC²³. The



Figure 5. Siculo-Punic AR *tetradrachm*; *Tanit/Horse* series c.320–310 BC (18.84 g). *Obv.*: Wreathed head of *Tanit/Persephone* left wearing triple pendant earring and necklace, four dolphins swimming around *Rev.*: Horse's head left, palm tree behind, Punic legend MMHNT below.

S.6434, SNG Lloyd 1633, Jenkins SNR 56 [Series 3a], 183 [O53/R161].

series of *tetradrachms* known as the 'Carthage series' were produced¹⁷. Jenkins identified an Akragine *tetradrachm* that was overstruck on this type, indicating that it was struck before 406 BC when Akragas was destroyed¹⁸. These coins were produced with twelve obverse dies, some of which have the name of the city QRTHDST (Qart Hadast meaning New City, *i.e.* Carthage) inscribed on one side. Because of the inscription of the city's name on this series, it has been speculated that these coins were actually minted in Carthage although most have been found in Sicily. Other coins in this series have MHNT (Machanat meaning army²⁴), and some have both inscriptions (Fig. 4).

During the following century up to the early part of the First Punic War (261–241 BC), there were large issues of gold, electrum and silver coins^{15–20, 25}. The *tetradrachms* termed 'Siculo-Punic' were produced in two basic designs on an Attic-weight standard¹⁸. It is generally



Figure 6. Siculo-Punic AR *tetradrachm*; *Herakles/Horse* series c.300–290 BC (16.62g). *Obv*: Head of young *Melqart* or *Herakles* wearing lion skin right. *Rev*: Horse's head left, palm tree behind, caduceus before, Punic legend MHSBM below, dotted border.

S.6436, SNG Lloyd 1651, Jenkins SNR 57, [Series 5b] 329–331/362 [O107/R295].



Figure 7(a). Siculo-Punic AR *tetradrachm*; 'Dido' series. This and the 2 following coins are from three different dies of different styles. The prowling lion bears striking similarity to the Libyan Revolt shekel. *Obv*: Head of *Tanit (Dido)*. *Rev*: Prowling lion, palm tree with date clusters in background, Punic legend SMMHNT in exergue.



Figure 7(b). Siculo-Punic *tetradrachm*; 'Dido' series. *Obv*: Head of *Tanit (Dido)* right. *Rev*: Prowling lion right, palm tree behind, Punic legend SMMHNT in exergue.



Figure 7(c). Siculo-Punic *tetradrachm*; 'Dido' series. *Obv*: Head of *Tanit (Dido)* left. *Rev*: Prowling lion left, palm tree behind, Punic legend SMMHNT in exergue.

considered that these coins were minted at various locations in Sicily at times of war for the payment of mercenary forces. The first basic design was the head of *Tanit*, the consort of Baal, on the obverse and a horse or horse head with a palm tree and a range of other symbols on the reverse (Fig 5). The second, had the head of *Herakles* on the obverse and a horse head on the reverse, below which there is typically an inscription usually translated as 'from the camp' (Fig. 6). Apart from these two basic groups, another small series of *tetradrachms* known as the 'Dido' series is of interest for its rarity and artistic merit, and is relevant to the Libyan Revolt as the

reverse prowling lion image was used by the rebels for their shekel (Figs 7a–c).

Carthaginian shekel and dishekel, host coins for the Libyan Revolt silver issues

Sometime during the course of the First Punic-Roman War, the Carthaginian State and its monetary authority began issuing coins on the *shekel* standard of 7.6 grams. These were originally of relatively pure silver but progressively the silver was degraded, and much of the issue is classed as billon. The progressive degradation of the silver content is consistent with the increasing financial burden caused by the war and attrition on the Carthaginian treasury.



Figure 8. Carthage AR *shekel* c.300 BC (19mm, 7.56 g, 7h). *Obv.*: Wreathed head of *Tanit* left. *Rev.*: Horse standing right, head left; palm tree behind, star to right. MAA 36; SNG Copenhagen 141; Jenkins, pt. 4, pl. 16, 3.



Figure 9. Carthage, First Punic War billon double *shekel* (*dishekel*) c.264–241 BC (12.61 gm, 12h). *Obv.*: Wreathed head of *Tanit* left. *Rev.*: Horse standing right; large star above. Jenkins & Lewis pl. 27, 7; MAA 39 (reduced triple shekel); SNG Copenhagen 185.

There were two main coin types in this series, a *shekel* (Fig. 8) and a *dishekel* (Fig. 9). The *shekel* shows the head of *Tanit* on the obverse, and on the reverse a horse standing looking back with a palm tree in the background and a star in front. The *dishekel* of approximately 15 grams shows the head of *Tanit* on the obverse and a standing horse with a star above on the reverse. These two coin types were the host coins for many of the *shekels* and *dishekels* minted by the rebels. It is likely that the large consignment taken by Gisco to Sicca for payment to his troops, and subsequently seized by the rebels, was largely reminted.

Attribution and classification of Libyan Revolt coinage

Numismatic evidence of the Libyan Revolt was substantially re-evaluated in a series of important articles written by ESG Robinson in the *Numismatic Chronicle* between 1943 and 1956^{26–28}. He analysed and then attributed the series of coins from hoard evidence. Prior to this, coins bearing the inscription ΛΙΒΥΩΝ had been attributed to tribal groups in North Africa^{15, 29}, and the association with the Libyan Revolt had not been conclusively drawn.

Robinson had the opportunity to study and record two coin hoards in particular. One was believed to have been found in Tunis in 1928 and formed the basis of the 1943 article²⁶ in which the association with the Libyan Revolt was proposed. A second hoard, containing some precious metal coins, was discovered near Tunis in 1952 and allowed further interpretation for the 1953²⁷ and 1956²⁸ papers. He divided the coins into two main groups based on these hoards, together with coins in the British Museum collection, and coins held at that time by the English collector RB Lewis (Table 2). The 1952 hoard is reported to have been found by a man ploughing his field 30 kilometres from Tunis, and contained 117 coins of which there were 5 electrum, 41 base silver Carthaginian types (Fig. 10) and 71 base silver Libyan types in a pot of Phoenician/Punic fabric. A high proportion of these coins were over-struck on host coins, mostly of Carthaginian origin.

Libyan Revolt silver shekel and dishekel

The Libyan Revolt *shekel* (Figs 11 and 12) and *dishekel* (Figs 13 and 14) are in a sense the most characteristic of the issues of the Libyan mercenaries, as many have



Figure 10. Carthage, Libyan Revolt billon *shekel* c.241–238 BC (7.336g). *Obv*: Head of *Tanit* left wreathed with corn, wearing necklace and triple pendant earring, dotted border. *Rev*: Horse standing right, Punic letter M beneath horse's body, three pellets of triangular arrangement between horse's hind legs.

cf S.6539, Robinson NC (1953) No. 11-14 [p28 Pl.II,9] SNG Cop. 237.

ΛΙΒΥΩΝ written on the coinage^{15–16, 29}. These will be the focus for most of this overview.

Iconography of Libyan Revolt silver coinage

Obverse: Herakles and Zeus. A male head replaces the female head of *Tanit* on rebel coinage. *Tanit* is the dominant obverse image on a very high proportion of Carthaginian gold, electrum, silver and bronze coinage, and clearly held a religious and sacred significance for Carthage as her principal deity³⁰. The only important Carthaginian coin production that does not have the head of *Tanit* is the second basic type of Siculo-Punic *tetradrachm* which has the head of *Herakles/Melquart* in the style of Alexander. This head of *Herakles* is the image used on the obverse of the Libyan Revolt *shekel*. The head of *Zeus* is the image on the *dishekel*. Both have a military connotation rather than a female deity, which was probably important for the mercenaries.

Reverse: prowling lion and charging bull. The prowling lion image is very likely an



Figure 11. Carthage, Libyan Revolt native type billon *shekel*, c.241–238 BC (27mm, 7.6 gm). *Obv*: Head of *Herakles* left wearing lion skin. *Rev*: Lion walking right; Punic M above, ΛΙΒΥΩΝ in exergue.

Robinson, Num Chron 1953, Pl.III 'Libyan / Native' type; Carradice & La Niece, 'The Libyan War and Coinage', Num Chron 1988, 1; MAA 53; SNG Copenhagen 239; Müller 349.



Figure 12. Carthage, Libyan Revolt billon *didrachm* or *shekel*, native type c.241–238 BC (7.2 g). *Obv*: Head of *Herakles* to left wearing lion skin. *Rev*: ΛΙΒΥΩΝ, lion prowling right; Punic M above. Coarsely overstruck on Carthaginian single *shekel*, typical of many coins of this issue.

Robinson, Num Chron 1953, No.22 Pl.III 'Libyan/Native' Type; SNG Copenhagen 241–242.

icon representing power and military prowess. There are close similarities between the prowling lion used on the reverse of the Libyan Revolt *shekel* and the Siculo-Punic *tetradrachms* referred to as the '*Dido*' series (Figs. 7a–c). The '*Dido*' series is a rare and stylistically different group of coins that have the head of *Tanit* in a very different form, with a Phrygian cap on the obverse and the prowling lion, with palm tree in the background and below the exergue line the inscription SMMHNT in Punic (soldiery²⁴). This type of coin was



Figure 13 (a). Carthage, Libyan Revolt billon double *shekel* (*dishekel*), native type, c.241–238 BC (12.2 gm). *Obv*: Head of *Zeus* left, ΑΙΒΥΩΝ left, Punic M right. *Rev*: Bull butting right; Punic M above; ΑΙΒΥΩΝ in exergue.

Robinson, Num Chron 1953, Pl.III 'Libyan/Native' type.



Figure 13 (b). Carthage, Libyan Revolt billon double *shekel* (*dishekel*), native type, c.241–238 BC (12.2 gm). *Obv*: Head of *Zeus* left, ΑΙΒΥΩΝ left, Punic M right. *Rev*: bull butting to right; Punic M above; ΑΙΒΥΩΝ in exergue. The star on the host coin typically above the horse as seen in figure 9 is very clear on this piece.

Robinson, Num Chron 1953, Pl.III 'Libyan/Native' type




Figure 14. The Barcids in Spain, Carthago Nova Circa AR *dishekel* 221–206BC. *Obv*: Male head with wreath right (?Hamilcar Barca), club behind; dotted border. *Rev*: Elephant walking right, exergue line; dotted border.

produced from only three obverse dies, and was presumably given to a particular elite group within the Carthaginian mercenary force for whom this imagery was especially relevant. The appearances of the prowling lion on the Libyan Revolt shekel are clearly borrowed from this group of coins.

The charging bull is the image used on the reverse of the Libyan Revolt *dishekel*. The bull is a very common image of power from the ancient through to the modern world. Innumerable stories through the ages illustrate this symbolism, with examples such as the epic of Gilgamesh in ancient Sumeria, the myths

of the minotaur in Crete, the abduction of *Europa* by *Zeus*, sacred bull worship in Egypt, through to cave paintings in Lascaux, bull-fighting and even in the modern era as the image for the New York Stock Exchange. Indeed the sculptor of this New York icon described his 'charging bull' as a symbol of the 'strength and power of the American people'³¹, very likely similar to the imagery invoked in the ancient world but without the additional sacred element to the symbolism. This is perhaps exemplified by the myth of *Zeus* taking the form of a bull for the abduction of *Europa*, which is pertinent for the Libyan Revolt *dishekel*, as both sides of the coin draw possible reference to this. The charging bull was also used on bronze coinage from Sardinia issued by the rebel forces³².

Inscriptions: Mem  and ΑΙΒΥΩΝ

The most typical feature of Libyan Revolt coinage is the almost invariable use of the Punic *M* ('*mem*'). A variety of proposals have been put forward regarding the meaning of *mem*. One theory contends

that it stands for Mathos, one of the leaders of the rebellion. While this theory has some romantic appeal, it does appear to emphasise the role of Mathos disproportionately compared to that of the other rebel leaders, at least as far as they are referred to by Polybius. However, use of *mem* was common on Siculo-Punic *tetradrachms*¹⁸. MHNT (‘Machanat’²⁴) appears on the first series of coins issued by Carthage when they came to the assistance of Segesta in her conflict with Selinus in 410 BC, and issued in the period 410–390 BC (‘The Carthage Series’—Jenkins dies 1–12)¹⁸. MHNT continued to be used on Siculo-Punic *tetradrachms* over the following 100 years, and on occasions contracted to *M*, the form used by the Libyans. Hence, it almost certainly refers to the Libyan mercenary forces as ‘Machanat’.

The Libyan Revolt *dishekel* and *shekel* also commonly have ‘ΛΙΒΥΩΝ’ shown on the coinage^{15–16, 29}. Polybius, writing almost 100 years later, uses this terminology to refer to both the rebels and also the region. It is probable that the same meanings existed in 241 BC, and gave the rebels the opportunity to publicise their position to the world at large with Greek as the *lingua franca* at the time. Furthermore, this would have given the rebels and their supporters a distinctly non-Carthaginian identity for their separatist movement, and provide a sense of unification for the Libyans and the population under their control.

The use of both Punic and Greek epigraphy most likely reflects the dominant languages used by the rebels, and the most widely spoken and understood among this

linguistically diverse group. Polybius emphasises this point on several occasions, and highlights the impossibility of communicating with the entire group of mercenaries due to the many languages spoken. He also talks about the opportunity for trouble makers to exploit this to their advantage by mistranslation in order to undermine the Carthaginian position, especially during the deliberations with Hanno in Sicca.

Libyan Revolt bronze

Most bronze coinage associated with the Libyan Revolt is believed to have been minted in Sardinia. In fact, there appears to have been an increase in minting activity at the time of the Revolt³². The reasons for the regional variation in metal use, *i.e.* bronze in Sardinia and silver in Libya, are intriguing but unclear.

In contrast to the military motifs used on the Libyan Revolt silver pieces, the bronze coins have mainly iconography with agricultural themes. They retain the head of *Tanit* as the obverse design. The Sardinian bull image was probably linked to its use in North Africa³². Three other reverse types are a single ear of corn, three ears of corn with *mem* above, and the plough. Some three-eared corn types also have an inverted crescent over a large dot. A high proportion of plough-type bronze coins contain arsenical copper, a material uncommon in ancient bronze coins. This group of coins was discussed by Carradice and La Niece when they had the opportunity to study a new hoard which established the association between these three types and the silver issues of the Libyan Revolt.³³

Over-striking and source of metal and coins

A highly characteristic feature of the coins of the Libyan revolt is the poor striking of the coins, which are often (if not invariably) over-struck on host Carthaginian coins²⁶. It is possible this simply reflects minting by individuals who lacked experience in the context of an army camp striking coins with the rebel dies, as the host coins became available. However, these coins are so frequently found to be poorly struck that it is possible that this may have been done deliberately, with the intention of defacing the host Carthaginian coins as a statement of defiance by the rebels.

Regarding the sources of money and metal, we know from Polybius that at the time when Gisco was taken hostage in Sicca, he had with him all the funds owed to the mercenary force for their campaigns in Sicily. This was likely a considerable sum and would have consisted of coins in production in Carthage at the time, *i.e.* the *dishekel* and *shekel* discussed above, which would account for the high rate of coins overstruck on these host coins. In addition, Polybius tells us that at the outbreak of the conflict, many of the population contributed items of value, such as gold and jewellery, which provided enough resources for a prolonged engagement. This may account for much of the remaining source of metal for the rebel coin issues. The rebels may have also had access to metal production from certain mines in Sardinia, and possibly also southern Spain, in addition to what they could acquire from other allies with whom they shared language and ethnicity.

Aftermath and epilogue

The Libyan Revolt was a major ordeal for Carthage, that brought the city-state to the limit of her military and financial capacity. This struggle for her survival occurred when she was already burdened from the prolonged First Punic-Roman War and the loss of Sicily. There were a number of major outcomes from the Libyan Revolt that amplified these effects and had long-term consequences.

Almost immediately after the end of the Libyan Revolt, when Carthage regained control of Libya, Sardinia was seized by Rome on a minor pretext. The reason for this about-face is unclear, as earlier in the conflict Rome had declined invitations by the rebels to occupy either Sardinia or Utica when they came under complete rebel control. Indeed, Rome had given Carthage assistance during the course of the war in the form of prisoner returns and directions to her merchants to supply Carthage's needs. In any event, Carthage lost both Sicily and Sardinia in a short period of time and, as a consequence, suffered an enormous loss of land, metal and agricultural resources, which adversely affected her trade.

At the same time and also as a result of the Revolt, there appears to have been a shift in political power and influence within the Carthaginian city-state⁴. Hamilcar and the Barcid family decided that their territorial losses necessitated a more expansionist philosophy. Hamilcar, his son-in-law Hasdrubal, and his then nine-year old son Hannibal sailed to Iberia where they established Barcid Spain. They established control over much of southern Spain and its rich resources such as the

mines of the Rio Tinto and trading routes within the Iberian Peninsula and the Straits of Gibraltar. This base in Spain, of course, became the base from which Hannibal launched his invasion of Italy.

Coins were issued in Barcid Spain³⁴ and Carthago Nova, usually with a male head obverse with several thought to be the image of Hamilcar, Hasdrubal and Hannibal respectively. Some have an elephant on the reverse, sometimes with, but more commonly without, a mahout. This imagery has typically been attributed to the Carthaginian use of the elephant in warfare³⁵. However, the description by Polybius of captured Libyan rebels being trampled to death by elephants provides us with another interpretation, the use of elephants as an instrument of terrorism and intimidation. The elephant image may have represented a means of instilling compliance in the conquered population as well as serving as an ongoing reminder of the power and authority of the occupying Barcid army.

On a final note regarding the rebels themselves, and as noted by Robinson²⁸, the production of a coinage suggests a higher level of organisational and political stability and sophistication than is often suggested by Polybius. His history on occasions diverges into philosophical discussion regarding ‘the great difference in character between a confused herd of barbarians and men who have been brought up in an educated, law-abiding and civilised community’³¹. While this may hold true for a substantial number of the mercenaries who had only known the life of a soldier in the ranks, it clearly did not apply to all of them. There was obviously a group, including the named individual rebel leaders, with not only capabilities as

mercenary soldiers, but also a high level of political, diplomatic, oratorical and organisational ability.

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(see Tables next page)

Principal named Figures in the Libyan Revolt (from Polybius)

Libyan

Mathos – Libyan freeman and member of the mercenary force
 Spendius – Campanian runaway Roman slave
 Autaritus – Leader of the Gauls
 Zarzas – Libyan

Carthaginian

Hanno – Carthaginian statesman, head of family and political faction
 Hamilcar Barca – Leading Carthaginian general and defender
 Undeclared in 1st Punic-Roman War
 Founder of Barcid Spain, Father of Hannibal Barca
 Navaras – Numidian Prince and ally of Carthage
 Came to aid of Hamilcar with his cavalry during the campaign.
 Hannibal (not Barca) – Carthaginian general
 Appointed by troops to replace Hanno and assist Hamilcar
 Gisco – Carthaginian general, deputy to Hamilcar in Sicily
 Repatriated troops from Sicily
 Envoy to negotiate with troops prior to Revolt, taken hostage
 Later tortured and murdered as atrocities escalated

Table 1.

Classification and denominations of Libyan Revolt coins

I. Carthaginian Types

Electrum
 – Three-half-*shekel* pieces
 – Half-*shekels*
 Base Silver
 – Three-*shekel* pieces
 – Double *shekels* (*dishekels*)
 – *Shekels*
 Bronze

II. Libyan / Native Types

Base Silver
 – Double *shekels* (*dishekels*)
 – *Shekels*
 Bronze

The ESG Robinson Classification of Libyan Revolt Coins
 (from Numismatic Chronicle, 1953 and 1956).

Table 2.

