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The Exhibition is yet another occasion, for the *Parco archeologico del Colosseo*, to present to the general public important aspects of the ancient history of the Mediterranean, and the meeting between the various cultures established along its shores.

In this case the encounter/conflict is between two civilizations, one Roman and the other Punic, between Roma and Carthage, cities that have had a decisive role in the cultural and political dynamics of the Mediterranean.

While the prevailing aspect of the relations between these two cities in modern historical accounts focuses on the events of the Punic Wars and on the emblematic character Hannibal, archaeological research highlights the much more complex relationships between the two metropolises, also marked by moments of dialogue and particularly important commercial dealings.

This exhibition, which displays, besides the numerous finds that have arrived from the main Italian and international museums (in Spain, Malta, Lebanon and Germany), a great deal of evidence from Tunisia (Museum of Carthage) and especially from the Bardo Museum of Tunisia, also intends to help relaunch, at the international level, the image of this museum, struck to its core by the terrorist attack on the 18th of March 2015, during which twenty-four people died, including four Italian tourists. It is a testimonial of deep respect for one of the most important archaeological museums in the whole Mediterranean Basin.

It is not mere chance that when there is a desire to strike a blow at the political and civil life of a community, the primary targets are museums and monuments. However, it is from culture that it is possible and necessary to start again, to reaffirm the identity and social cohesion of a nation, in order to construct a network of international solidarity, which is extremely effective in preventing the isolation of a people.

The exhibition *Carthago. The immortal myth* has also another purpose, possibly the main one. It is not simply chance that, together with the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Tunisia, whom I have to thank enormously for his extraordinary collaboration, during this Exhibition, we will organize a series of events to make known expressions and important evidence of the culture of this nation, and to re-affirm and consolidate the closeness and friendship between Italy and Tunisia.

And one person who epitomizes these deep relations that connect the peoples of the Mediterranean in the name of a common culture, passing on important values, is Sebastiano Tusa, an extraordinary archaeologist, to whom we owe, among other things, important discoveries concerning Phoenician and Punic presence in Sicily. He also made exceptional underwater finds connected with the wrecks of Roman and Carthaginian ships that, in 241 BCE, clashed, with Rome as the victor, off the coasts of the Egadi Islands, putting an end to the First Punic War.

To him, who, before his tragic death after a plane crash, also assumed the office of Councillor for Cultural Heritage in the Sicilian Region, this Exhibition, in the planning stages of which he was involved, is dedicated.

Alongside the name of Sebastiano Tusa, it is not possible to exclude – in both commemoration and dedication – the name of another scholar with a very high profile in the Phoenician and Punic world, and especially in Sardinian studies: Paolo Bernardini, who passed away during the most intensive period in the preparation for the Exhibition. Without his research and archaeological and historical interpretations, the Phoenician and Punic Mediterranean would not be as rich, multi-faceted and the object of renewed interest as it is at present.

Many of the finds in this exhibition, due to studies and discoveries by both these colleagues, will keep their presence alive in order to mark a dialogue that from antiquity continues to our own days among the peoples of the Mediterranean.

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Francesca Guarneri
Paolo Xella
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Even today, the very name Carthage evokes an exotic civilization, an alarming foreigner, a dreaded enemy: in other words, something completely different. This is a view that the modern world has inherited from classical tradition, especially from Rome. In fact, our information about Carthaginian history comes mainly from Latin authors, who made it part of their own history, who have transmitted *their* view. Indeed, we see Carthage through the eyes of Rome. Although this perspective is not always merely negative (often the Carthaginians are credited with technical expertise, ingenious inventions, a superb political constitution), in any case it comes from outside, strongly conditioned by a rivalry that gradually intensified until it provoked a fatal clash.

Few events of long duration, in fact, have been so decisive in the history of the ancient world as the meeting/clash that occurred between Carthage and Rome. Founded little less than a century apart, the two metropolises confronted each other over a long period, marked at first by reciprocal indifference, then by friendly agreements, in conditions of equilibrium and a rational division of spheres of interest and finally by a battle bereft of mercy, where the survival of each was at stake. Rome as the victor would give an account of this journey, from its own perspective and outlook.

The writing of history can never be objective, but in this case in particular, the crushing and unbalanced weight of the respective roles is noticeable: it has not been possible to match the version by the conquerors with the account by the conquered, whose documents have almost vanished. The prestige of classical tradition has transmitted the Roman account to the modern and contemporary world, which has mainly accepted it, at least at the level of the collective imagination. So many stereotypes received from the past have been accepted and, although reworked in various ways, they have often maintained and sometimes even reinforced the central idea of Carthage as different.

However, scientific research has intervened through patient archaeological, philological and historical effort, and has successfully given back to the culture of Carthage its own voice. Its script has been deciphered and its language has been understood, giving us access to the documents directly available and therefore to the customs and beliefs of the Carthaginians. Archaeology has brought to light dwellings, sanctuaries, harbours, necropoleis, grave goods, domestic pottery and so much of the material culture, allowing us a glimpse of the social and commercial life of that Punic city. In addition, it has opened up thoughtful reflection on traditional stereotypes and their roots, in order to understand them and go beyond them in a balanced historical view.

It would seem that now the moment has come to go beyond limited academic circles and to convey, through a new Exhibition, the trajectory of this lengthy scientific reflection and its main achievements. The title chosen for the Exhibition is *Carthago* (the Latin version of the Punic name of the city), to prove that the focus is on Carthage and, at the same time, to emphasize how Carthage has been mainly viewed through the eyes of classic tradition (a vision greatly shaped by the dialectic with Rome). This has even influenced how we imagine it to be, even today (as shown by the very subtitle of this Exhibition: “The immortal myth”). Rome itself, the venue for the Exhibition, is now called on to speak about Carthage in a different way.

The type of presentation chosen – in the Exhibition and therefore in this book – was intended to provide a large-scale, broadly historical panoramic mural, based on rigorous and up-to-date scientific foundations, accessible in several ways, on various levels, even to a non-specialist public. The proposed account starts from the Phoenician roots of Carthage – or “New Tyre” – in the Levant, runs through the phases of formation and expansion, and reaches the conclusive clashes with Rome, which would mark its destruction, reconstruction and ultimately its incorporation into the Roman and Christian world.

For each of these historical phases, an attempt has been made to highlight an interpretation intended to introduce the visitor to a historical reality, and at the same time, allow him or her to reflect on somehow comparable modern phenomena.

The presentation opens with the eastern origins of Carthage as part of Phoenician expansion in the Mediterranean. This was a vast migration that involved a series of confrontations between different cultures, setting up colonial type situations, and as a result, unbalanced political and economic relationships.

We then come to the city of Carthage, its origins in myth and history, its expansion and network of relations woven in the central west Mediterranean. It illustrates the birth of a vast trading area with specialized production centres, growing interdependence and a complex administration, forming a sort of globalization *avant la lettre* in the territories under Carthaginian influence.

Special attention is paid to daily life in Carthage, in order to show its social complexity, its economic growth and its capacity for production. On the other hand, there emerges the predominant importance of rites and the peculiar Punic cultic dimension. Even though in some respects the Carthaginians seem close to us and similar in terms of culture, in other respects they seem justifiably remote at the level of traditional beliefs. To understand their religious ideology, in particular, requires a relativistic approach free from any conditioning by contemporary culture.

It was decided to give the relations between Carthage and Rome a central role in this presentation. Accordingly, their peaceful relations at the start are illustrated; then, their increasing antagonism, permeated by rivalry and political and economic interests; the situation of mutual influences which would also lead them to construct a stereotype of each other, but transmitted only by the Romans; the wars and the destruction of the Punic city. Attention then shifts to some examples of the acculturation of Punic centres, integrated in varying degrees within Roman civilization.

Roman Carthage has been presented as a permanently active building site: baths, (amphi)theatres, and houses typical of a living city that is also expanding in terms of its social and cultural life. With the arrival and spread of Christianity, the panorama undergoes radical changes on several levels. Not only ideology but also community life, the arts and places of worship are renewed, and for the religion of Christ, Carthage becomes one of the key centres for its spread over North Africa.

The presentation closes with a reflection on the view of Carthage in modern and contemporary imagination, especially in the arts. The stereotype transmitted by the ancient world persists, reworked of course but often imprinted as depicting Carthage and its icons (ancient and modern: Dido and Hannibal on one side, on the other, Salammbô) as an alien civilization and as alien characters, frequently re-interpreted in contemporary political terms, depending on the various ideologies and historical settings. In this way we emphasize the indelible mark left by a civilization restored by scientific research, yet still in thrall to the clichés created by others, from antiquity to our own time.

As a result, this presentation of an ancient civilization, while seemingly remote, provides a series of points for reflection on our contemporary state of affairs and some of its more serious problems. In fact, we are living in a period when the problems of living together with peoples increasingly and constantly on the move in large numbers, of the need for integration socially and culturally between peoples of different traditions and languages, of welcoming the other without exploitation or prejudice, are inescapable. For this very reason also, a historical and well-documented tribute to Phoenician and Punic involvement in our Mediterranean, which has left a deep impression right up the present, turns out to be extraordinarily topical.

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