

City in Transition: Mapping the Transformation of Ancient Carthage

Historians and archaeologists have long been fascinated by the ancient city of Carthage. Whether due to the city's influence across the Western Mediterranean or its famous conflicts with Rome, many scholars have been drawn to this notable city and worked to uncover its urban topography. Yet, the results of excavations at the site remain surprisingly fragmented in two ways. First, they are presented either as broad sketches in monographs or as individual site reports buried in large volumes, making them inaccessible to a broad audience (see Humphrey 1988; Hoyos 2010). Second, these reports are narrow in scope, covering limited city sections, and rarely span both the Punic and Roman periods. Recent scholars, such as Jessica Ambler, have brought attention to the period of transition following the city's destruction in 146 BCE and its refounding as an Augustan colony over a century later, which reordered its urban space to reflect both its Punic past and imperial present (Ambler 2018). Building on this work, my presentation addresses the above limitations by examining either side of the Punic to Roman transition with publicly accessible digital maps of Carthage's changing urban expanse.

Using G.I.S. mapping technology, I converted a compilation of archaeological site reports and textual descriptions of the city into digital maps of its primary public structures before and after the transition. These reconstructions yield a powerful visual narrative of both continuities and divergences resulting from the intentional reordering of Carthage's urban space. The city maintained a residential zone aligned with the eastern coastline, a city center on the Brysa Hill, and the circular *Cothon* harbor complex in its southeast corner. Yet, stark contrasts are seen in the dismantling of the Punic city walls, the imposition of an orthogonal Roman street grid, and the replacement of the Brysa's *Eshmun* temple with a palace, forum, and temple

complex. Compared together, these digital maps tell the story of Carthage's changing urban space as it went from the capital of a maritime empire to the subject city of a new imperial order.

The maps constructed for this project do not simply act as visual aids, but provide a whole new set of evidence for examining the spatial impact of such an urban reordering. On top of this, digital maps can easily be shared online, providing publicly accessible resources for research and pedagogical purposes. This case study subsequently demonstrates the potential digital mapping has to transform how we teach and understand the development of urban communities across the ancient Mediterranean world.

Bibliography

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