

HISTORY

THE FIRST PUNIC WAR: A GEO-SPATIAL EXAMINATION

A CREATIVE PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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MASTER OF ARTS

BY

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This project is currently available at:

<http://bsumaps.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=2973cf2127be45a2826813336692e5f0>

This creative project is an extension of earlier projects created for Dr. Sviatoslav Dmitriev during my time as an undergraduate history major and graduate student at Ball State University. My interest in the First Punic War (264 B.C.-241 B.C.) came while conducting research for my undergraduate Senior Research Project entitled *The Roman Corvus: Ancient Evidence and the Modern Interpretations*. In this project, I created a historiography for the study of the Roman corvus, tracing the evolution of the corvus from the ancient descriptions by the historians Florus (CE 74-130), Frontinus (CE 40-103), Polybius (200- 118 BCE), and the anonymous author of *Deeds of Famous Men* (4<sup>th</sup> Century CE), along with modern interpretations came from several authors writing from the sixteenth century CE, to 2006. Along with that project, I worked on other projects dealing with the Late Roman Republic (264 BCE- 27 BCE). This project seeks to take the Punic War, as described by the historian Polybius (who is the main source on the war), and create a spatial narrative to better understand the war.

To best show the complex nature and unique trends throughout the First Punic War, Dr. Seefeldt and I decided to create a Story Map through ArcGis. The First Punic War was fought between Carthage and Rome for the control of the island of Sicily, which lay between the two combatants in the Mediterranean Sea. The war forced Rome to build a navy to safely ferry their embarked army to the island and to blockade Carthaginian supplies and reinforcements from access to the island. The natural environment was also an enormous factor in outcome and cost of the war. Rome's proximity to the island made

transporting troops easier, but her inexperience with the sea cost her several hundred ships in storms on the open sea. On land, the war consisted of mostly sieges around large, heavily defended, port cities. Defenders used the natural terrain to fortify their position forcing the combatants into long, bloody sieges for control of the island. The First Punic War is a prime candidate for a digital spatial narrative project.

The influential work of the *Annales* School has shown the impact of geography on the study of history. With modern computers, digital maps have come to the forefront as an interactive medium for the interpretation of geographic features in historical events. Improving on mere illustration, these “deep maps” allow for users to interact with primary sources and spatial coordinates. David Bodenhamer defines deep maps as "a finely detailed, multimedia depiction of a place and the people, animals, and objects that exist within it" (Bodenhamer, et. al. 2015, 3). These interactive digital maps help to provide further context to historical events by allowing researchers to bring primary source material into spatial relationships and produce a new companion to traditional studies, providing researchers and students with an easily accessible product to further their research.

The first step in creating this map, required a close reading of the text of Polybius along with Frank Walbank’s excellent *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, to ensure the best possible account of the ancient text. From the text of Polybius, I began to compile a list of major military engagements in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, listing them by date and major theater of the war. In order to create an approximate location for these battles multiple secondary resources were examined to find the modern-day cities, towns, or geological features to their ancient equivalents. I then began searching for these locations

using Google's Google Earth program to find the latitude and longitude for each site. However, Google Earth provides its latitude and longitude coordinates in degrees, minutes, and seconds, ArcGis requires coordinates to be input as decimals. To convert the latitude and longitude coordinates, I used an electronic converter run by the Federal Communications Commission (<https://www.fcc.gov/media/radio/dms-decimal>). After converting the coordinates from degrees to decimals, I input the decimals into the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with the list of major military engagements and other categories were added including, theme, primary and secondary source notes, and source. In order to provide the user with the primary source material, I utilized the free online scholarly archive called the Perseus Digital Library curated by Tufts University.

Once I had completed the Excel spreadsheet, I uploaded the spreadsheet into the ArcGis Online software to create a base layer for my maps. I began by creating four separate map files within the ArcGis Online Server in order to create separate maps utilizing the different capabilities available; for the first map, I had the program separate the events by theme; in the second map, I separated the events by date. And the third map, I returned to separating them by theme; I kept the fourth map unchanged with raw data to serve as a base model in case I needed to create more maps.

With the first map, I decided to delete all non-land battles in order to create a map showing only those battle that involved the army. I then selected a red icon to represent all the land battles and changed each one. For the second map, I chose to sort all of the battles, both land and sea, by date. Then I selected a numbered icon, and put the battles in chronological order. For the third map, I wanted to show where the land and sea battles

happened in relation to each other and again divided the map by themes. To show which event was which without clicking on the site, I chose to color code the icons. I continued to use the red icon for army battles, but used blue icons to show naval battles, black to show natural disasters that destroyed multiple Roman Fleets, and green to highlight areas where lumber for ships was harvested. In addition to providing the location, victor, and theme of each battle, the maps were imbedded with relevant primary source material.

As this war is over two thousand years old, much of the work in ancient history involves understanding the historiography of the topic and comparing interpretations to the primary material. To that end, I created a concise analysis of the maps, comparing them with key secondary sources on the topic. I examined each theater of the war this way as well as the *corvus* and *quinquereme*.

The narrative part of the project serves to provide historical context for the war itself, and to allow users to gain more from the interactive maps. The section on certain technologies of the war serves to provide more context and a better understanding of how these advances transformed ancient warfare. More emphasis is given to the naval theater by design, as most secondary sources consider it to be far more important than land battles. A previous project on Polybius's First Punic War that I created for Dr. Seefeldt's Digital History Seminar showed through a text analysis tool called Voyant, that words like navy, naval, and ship occur nearly twice as much as any other military terms.

To display the maps and texts in an integrated form, I chose to use the Story Maps application within the ArcGIS software. This feature embeds the maps seamlessly without losing any map functionality. The Story Map Cascade provides a single page layout with

multiple scrolling sections including sidebars within the map. The title page and topic headings all allow for individual images or other media to serve as a backdrop within the Story Map. For the title page, I found a wonderful artist rendering of the famous Harbor of Carthage. I chose to use other images from early modern artists for the topic headings: The Death of Regulus by Salvatore Rosa, Regulus by J.M.W. Turner, The Battle of Ecnomus by Gabriel Jaques de Saint-Aubin, and the Departure of Regulus by Benjamin West.

By creating this Story Map, I hope to provide a fluid platform for understanding the geographic layout of the First Punic War and how it was fought. As technology is integrated into the lives of younger children and learning from computer screen instead of books becomes the new norm, I believe this format is the new method of providing educational information in a dynamic, user driven format. ArcGis is allowing geography and history, or any other spatial study, to seamlessly provide researchers and users with a new scholarly communication resource to create spatial narratives that explore history in space as well as time.

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