

Carthage was indeed destroyed

Introduction to Carthage

According to classical texts (Polybe 27) Carthage's history started with the Phoenician queen Elissa who was ousted from power in Tyre and in 814 BC settled with her supporters in what is now known as Carthage. There might have been conflicts with the local population and the local Berber kings, but the power of the Phoenician settlement Carthage kept growing. The Phoenicians based in the coastal cities of Lebanon constituted in the Mediterranean Sea a large maritime trade power but Carthage gradually became the hub for all East Mediterranean trade by the end of the 6th century BC.

Thus Carthage evolved from being a Phoenician settlement to becoming the capital of an empire (Fantar, M.H., 1998, chapter 3). The local and the Phoenician religions mixed (e.g. Tanit and Baal) and in brief Carthage developed from its establishment in roughly 800 BC and already from 6th century BC had become the centre for a large empire of colonies across Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Spain, and the islands of Mallorca, Sardinia, and Sicily (Heimbürger, 2008 p.36).



Illustration: *The empire of Carthage prior to the 1st Punic war in 264 BC,*
encyclo.voila.fr/wiki/Ports_puniques_de_Carthage 2010

Following two lost wars with the rising Rome (264-241 BC and 218-201 BC) Carthage was deprived of its right to engage in wars but experienced a very prosperous period as a commercial power until Rome besieged the city in 149 BC and in 146 BC destroyed it completely 25 years later Rome decided to rebuild the city but not until 43 BC was Carthage reconstructed as the centre for Rome's African Province. The vandals conquered the city in 439 AD and held it for a century, until it became

a Byzantine stronghold and finally by the end of 7th century AD was invaded by Arab and Ottoman powers, eventually losing its position as a national, regional or imperial centre and was left and forgotten by the Arabs who instead settled in Tunis.

What makes Carthage particularly interesting is that for centuries it was the centre of a large empire, the adversary in two preventive wars waged by omnipotent Rome (Mondot, Jean-Francois and Nehmé, Najat, 2008, p. 113) and was ultimately deliberately destroyed during the third and last mythical war. After what genocide scholars have described as the first genocide in history (Kirnan, Ben, 2004, p. 27-39) Carthage was again completely rebuilt as a prosperous centre for the African province of the Roman Empire. Carthage had until the Save Carthage Campaign primarily been described within a Hellenistic-Roman framework and based on their literary sources whereas little attention had been afforded the ancient Semitic based history of the Carthaginian Empire itself. (Ennabli, A. and Rebourg, 1994, p. 17).

In archaeological terms the biggest challenge of UNESCO's Save Carthage campaign starting in 1972 was not to excavate, save and analyse the Roman ruins but rather below these ruins to find, excavate and search for an understanding of Punic Carthage that reaches beyond literary sources and provide information about into the civilisation that once was on the brink of toppling the Roman Empire. The research on the Punic town played "...a central role and the choice of excavation sites was determined by that." (Lund, John, 1986, p.364). By searching for the remains of the completely destroyed Punic Carthage UNESCO's Save Carthage campaign also served to change the focus from earlier excavations. Similarly, the methodologies and approaches employed during the UNESCO Save Carthage Campaign (SCC) differed. This point will be elaborated further below.

Excavations in historical perspective

The excavations in Carthage are evidence of changing European traditions for collection and searches for antiquities as described by Dyson (Dyson, S.L., 2006).

Historians visiting Carthage in 12th century described how excavations all over the area had found valuable remains in marble and used them for constructions. Nobody left Carthage without bringing considerable amounts of antiquities with them. Through centuries, precious marble and other constructions from Carthage were used in Northern Africa as well as Pisa, Vienna, and Constantinople (Fantar, 1995 p. 10).

In the early 19th century the French writer and diplomat François-René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand, described how the very few inhabitants living in Carthage cultivated their fields, selling medallions and other remains to visitors to the area (CONOR, M., 1918, p. 337-348). Even though archaeological research was not a scholarly discipline at the time, Carthage would attract a number of collectors digging for sculptures and other works of art on the ground. In *Recherches sur l'emplacement de Carthage* in 1833 the Danish Consul in Tunis, Christian Tuxen Falbe, published a city map so precise that it is still useful for archaeologists in Carthage (Fantar 1995, p. 11). Four years later, France initiated a society for research and excavation of ancient Carthage. Encouraged by the Danish crown prince, Christian Frederik Falbe excavated antiquities for the King's personal

collection and brought back more than 700 finds in an attempt to create interest from collectors to invest in larger excavations in Carthage (Lund 2008, p. 126).

Through the second half of the 19th century a number of British and French archaeologists arrived in Carthage according to Ennabli and Rebourg (1994, p. 15-16) and Fantar (1995, p. 13-14) mainly to collect things for museums in London and Paris. In 1874 *l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* in France sent a mission to Carthage to collect as many Punic inscriptions as possible. Unfortunately more than 2000 steles with Punic inscriptions were lost in a shipwreck and only a few have since been recovered. Individuals like Père Blanc, Delattre and other Frenchmen went to Carthage to carry out investigations in order to gain a better understanding of Carthage and its civilisation (Fantar 1995, p.14).

Missionaries from Algeria searched in 1875 for remains of Christian churches according to Ennabli and Rebourg (1994, p.16) because hopes were high among European missionaries that a Christian revival would take place in Tunisia. For this reason, the Catholic church became an active agent for archaeological excavations (Dyson, S.L., 2006, p. 62-63), and constructed the Saint Louis Cathedral on top of the ancient Punic metropolis and Roman Acropolis on the Byrsa hill in the late 19th century in connection with these aspirations to Christianise Africa. However, from the end of 19th century until 1972 a number of serious French archaeologists excavated primarily the Roman sites in Carthage and writing about Roman Carthage.

The UNESCO Save Carthage Campaign

Through the 20th century Carthage developed into an attractive suburb for wealthy Tunisians and French colonial rulers because of its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea and the lake of Tunis and its ancient roots. Following Tunisian independence in 1956 the presidential palace was built on a former temple plateau in Northern Carthage, and new houses were built covering the grounds. For the new nation state Carthage was a potential symbol because of its past as the seat of the Punic Empire.

By 1972, the situation in Carthage was typical for historic cities where the economic development becomes a threat to the historic remains. The director of the Museum of Carthage, Abdelmajid Ennabli, managed to secure support from the Tunisian government to prevent further demolition of the historic site and engage UNESCO in an international rescue campaign to secure internationally funded archaeological excavations. A dozen countries (Bulgaria, Germany, Canada, Denmark, the U.S.A., France, Poland, United Kingdom, Italy, Sweden, Tunisia and the Netherlands) took part in the excavations (Lund, J. 1986 and Ennabli, A.1987) primarily carried out between 1974 and 1984.

One of the reasons that the Save Carthage campaign was particularly stimulating was "because it has brought together archaeologists from such different backgrounds and traditions that they have had constantly to justify, to themselves, if not in print, their methods and priorities." (Wells, C.M. 1982). Many of the teams working in Carthage were multidisciplinary, engaging not only general and specialised archaeologists, historians and epigraphists but also geophysical and other technical methods in the work to get an understanding of the Punic and Roman remains (Ennabli, A. 1987).

“The Carthage project embodied many of the best developments in post-war classical archaeology. The archaeologists from a newly independent state and several former colonial powers worked together to salvage information on one of the great cities of antiquity. The full range of new archaeological approaches, from field survey to nautical archaeology, were applied.” (Dyson, S.L. 2006, p. 248). In addition, the campaign made it possible for the archaeologists to transcend their national traditions and objectives for publishing reports and study results. They exchanged knowledge by working together and by publishing the results of individual excavations. The explicit goal of a team from the University of Michigan was to publish the results as soon as possible and to produce at least annual reports to benefit the archaeological community in general: “The rapidity with which the present volume has been compiled and printed may be justified, in terms of the wider archaeological efforts which are now being made at Carthage... It is plainly in the interest of all those involved to be able to profit from the work of others while their own researches are still proceeding”. (Wells, C. M. 1982)

The Save Carthage Campaign (SCC) was coordinated by the Institut National d’Archéologie et d’Art and UNESCO supported a documentation center (CEDAC) with an archive of microfilmed records of all contributing teams which published the Bulletin CEDAC Carthage until 2002. Unfortunately, it has not been possible through the Institute National du Patrimoine, Tunisie to identify plans and priorities from its predecessor Institut National d’Archéologie et d’Art indicating exactly the institute’s preferred excavation sites and preferred participants. However, national and personal traditions and interests have obviously played a role in the excavations. Archaeologists from the United States focused primarily on the mercantile harbour, like the American archaeologists in Athens have focused on the Agora. The Danish team chose to excavate point 90 on Falbe’s map of Carthage from 1832, a spot at the beach outside the ancient city walls where Falbe found a mosaic. This mosaic has since been on display at the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen (Ennabli, 1987 p. 413). The French team continued their ongoing excavation on the South slope of the Byrsa Hill. A German team examined the only field that had never had any constructions on the coast between the Baths of Antonin and the Punic Ports – later named the Quartier Magon.

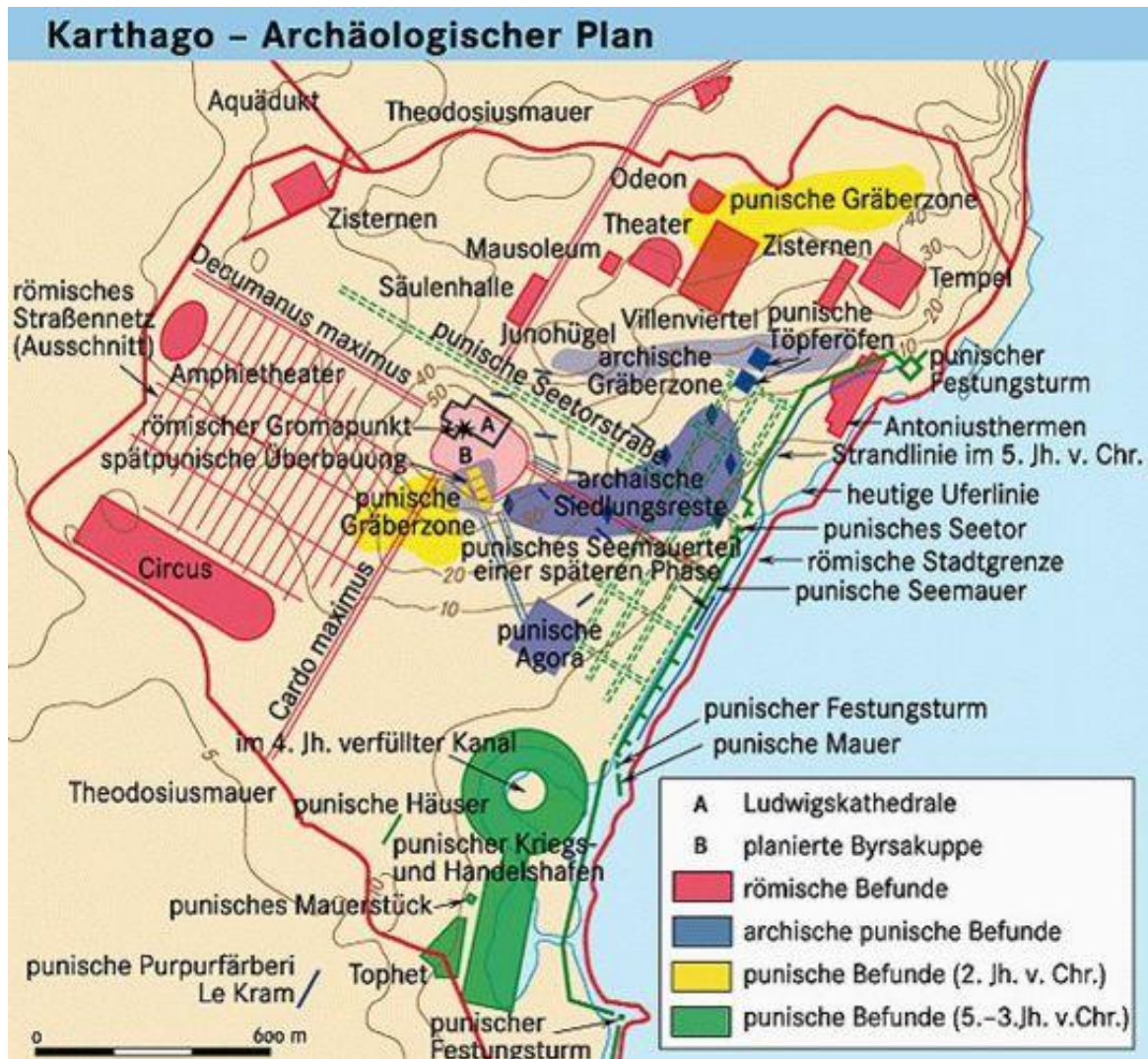


Illustration: Detailed map of the archaeological plan of Carthage. The map indicates where the archaic settlement as well as a Punic Agora are expected to be situated.

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The SCC has focused on identifying remains from Punic Carthage and its private architecture, its harbours and its necropolis. In addition, it has focused on the Roman public buildings like the Antonine Baths, the Amphitheatre, the Odeon and the Roman villas. Thus, the SCC questions and examines many earlier interpretations of places and their meanings which will be discussed further below.

In the perspective of the classical world, it is interesting to study Carthage as the capital of the Roman African Province, but studying the remains from the Punic era in Carthage in connection with findings from the Western Mediterranean might provide new understanding of not only the function of Carthage but as well of all the other areas of the empire. Interestingly enough, the already known Phoenician and Punic remains across the Mediterranean Sea seem not to have formed the basis for formulation of research hypotheses to be tested in the excavations. After the SCC the findings were however outlined and interpreted in a Mediterranean perspective by Serge Lancel and M'hamed Hassine Fantar among others in their books (Lancel 1992 and Fantar 1998).

The Save Carthage Campaign took place more or less at the same time as many of the excavations in Pompeii and Herculaneum. However, while the excavations in Pompeii revolutionised the archaeological analysis of everyday life and living conditions and contributed significantly to a new emphasis of ordinary people's life, the SCC was less elaborate on this point. An obvious explanation for this difference is that the family houses and shops were almost intact in Pompeii and Herculaneum due to the volcanic destruction of the place in 79 AD, whereas Punic Carthage had been thoroughly destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC.

Areas and issues to be examined during the SCC:

Carthage was placed on a fertile peninsula between the Mediterranean Sea and a salt water lake. For the Phoenicians with their strong tradition for sea based trade the town was ideally placed centrally on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea on a relatively narrow passage between Carthage and Sicily and between East and West Mediterranean Sea. The center of the Punic town was the Byrsa Hill about 1000 meters from the coast close to the smaller Junon Hill. Between the hills and the sea was a plain in which two harbour basins were dug during the late Punic period. No evidence of habitations before Phoenician settlement in late 9th or early 8th century BC have been found.

At the time of its destruction in 146 BC, Carthage is estimated to have had 200.000-400.000 inhabitants (Kiernan, B 2003, p. 32-48), and by the 3rd Century AD, when the town was the centre of the Roman-African Province, it had approximately 300.000 inhabitants. Two areas were particularly interesting and attractive to examine – namely the **Byrsa Hill** and the **Punic** and later **Roman Ports**.

The **Byrsa Hill** hosted a citadel on its top during the first Punic settlements and an acropolis within its walls. When Rome conquered Carthage, the Byrsa Hill remained the religious and civic centre and was fitted with a large forum platform, a basilica for judicial hearings, temples and a capitol (Ennabli, A and Rebourg, A 1994, pp. 25-6). Excavations prior to the SCC had found not only structural remains from the Roman city but also Punic graves on the southern slopes of the Byrsa and Junon hills.

The Punic Ports, or rather two lakes in the lower plain, – a rectangular and a circular one with an isle in the centre – had already attracted considerable attention by archaeologists. (Beschouch, A, *La legend de Carthage*, p. 68, 1993, France). It was not quite clear whether the lakes were the old harbours from the Roman siege in 149-146 BC, described by Appian, quoting Polybius (Hurst, H & Stager, L.E., 1978 p. 341), and what purpose the island in the middle of the circular lake had served. Nor was it known when the lakes had been established as harbours for Punic Carthage and if they were manmade or natural phenomena.

To increase the knowledge of the development of Punic and Roman Carthage and to understand the Punic artefacts it was essential to continue excavating Punic graves and the Punic necropolis. Excavations carried out in the first part of the 20th century had identified an early **Punic necropolis** situated on the north and northwest part of the Byrsa Hill (Lancel, S 1999, p. 43-5). Another particularly interesting spot is the **Tophet** close to the Punic harbours. Since the beginning of the 20th

century several archaeologists have discussed whether and to what extent child sacrifices have taken place in the Tophet during different Punic periods. The Tophet has also played an important role in attempts to date the earliest Carthaginian settlement from the ceramics found in the graves. This attempt of finding archaeological evidence of the Phoenician settlement in 813-14 BC claimed by written sources has continued through the Save Carthage Campaign to the present.

Finally, it was important for the SCC to identify and analyse the structures and architecture of **pre-Roman buildings** in Carthage. In 1952 the remains of the coastal town Kerkouane were found east of Carthage. M'hamed Hassine Fantar, former director of research at l'Institut National du Patrimoine claims that Kerkouane was originally a Libyic-Berber settlement that later became part of the Punic Empire. This town dating from pre-310 to 256 BC was destroyed by the Romans as well but unlike Carthage, not rebuilt by the Romans. In Kerkouane, Fantar finds a specifically Punic type of urbanism with modest buildings and a clear city grid dominated by private housing rather than public facilities (Fantar, M H, 2007). Despite this Punic heritage common also to Punic Carthage, the city plan of Punic Carthage was not at all known before the Save Carthage Campaign.

A number of excavations in Carthage dealt with particularly the Roman but also the Byzantine and Vandal periods. Among the well known excavations from these periods are the Antonine Baths, the Roman Villas and Odeon, the Amphitheatre, the Circus, the Antiquarium and the Circular Monument. However, the Save Carthage Campaign has contributed primarily to the interpretation of the Punic era. The summary below of the main findings on the excavation sites already mentioned will therefore focus on Punic Carthage.

What did we learn

Ennabli (1987, p. 410) defines the overall chronology of Carthage as divided in two – the Phoenician-Punic and the Roman-African periods. Within these main periods, the Phoenician-Punic one may be divided into sub-periods – the archaic (9th-6th century BC), the classic (5th-4th century BC) and the Hellenistic (the Punic wars 3rd-2nd century – 146 BC) and the Roman-African one into the Republican-Augustin-Roman High Empire, Roman Low Empire, an intermediate Vandal period, followed by re-conquest by the Byzantine Empire and finally the Arab period.

Ennabli's and others' use of the term "archaic" to signify the first Phoenician-Punic sub-period seems a bit odd. No physical remains found during the excavations before, during or after the SCC suggest that a town has existed before the 8th century BC. He uses the term about the original Phoenician settlement in Carthage indicated by its trade with also the East Mediterranean area soon after the foundation of the settlement. How and when the identity changed from being Phoenician to becoming Punic seems partly a linguistic change. Punic is a Roman word for Phoenician (Fantar, 1997) and partly to be caused by Carthage evolving into an empire in its own right. Punic Carthage also seems to have relied more on producing agricultural products than was the Phoenician tradition, which was primarily based on sea trade. The question of transitional economic, political ethnic and religious identities in Carthage remains a fascinating topic for further investigation, however.



Illustration: A stele from the Tophet, picturing Tanit, the patron goddess of Carthage also associated with the Semitic Patron Baar Hammon (photo 2010 bnb).

The Hellenistic period of Carthage is characterised by the wars against Rome. The period following the second war, when Carthage was forced to agree to ask Rome's explicit permission to declare any wars in the future, was characterised by steep economic growth and increased wealth. The reason for this development may be that mercenaries were no longer a burden to the Carthaginian economy but it may also be a result of successful trade activity.

Archaic Carthage (9th-6th century BC)

By the beginning of the 20th century, the early archaic necropolis were known to be situated on the southern and northern slopes of the Byrsa and Junon Hills, reaching out to the Dermech quarter, and habitation of the time was expected to be placed between the necropolis and the coast. (Lancel, S. 1999, p. 44 and illustration Lancel, S. 1985, p. 728).

Based on the ceramics found in the graves of the Tophet Lancel estimates that the earliest archaic graves at the Byrsa Hill date from the 7th century BC, while graves have been found at the nearby Junon Hill dating from the late 8th century, implying that the oldest graves known are 100 years younger than the literary claims about Carthage being established in 814 BC.

At the Tophet some of the oldest evidence of Phoenician settlement in Carthage was found by P. Cintas though the dating of the remains has been extensively discussed as has also the theory supported by e.g. Lawrence Stager (Stager, L, 1982) and several others (Mattingly, D. J., Hitchner R.B., 1995, p. 180) that the place has been dedicated to child sacrifice.



Illustration: Steles from the Tophet (Photo 2010 bnb)

French archaeologist P. Cintas has claimed that the Tophet dates back to the end of the 9th century (Cintas P., 1948, p. 1-31 and 1970, p.324) while Laurence Stager (Stager, L 1979) and several others according to Serge Lancel (Lancel, S, 1985, p. 729) instead suggest the last quarter of the 8th century as the earliest date based on finds at the Tophet. In other words, the artefacts found at the Tophet cannot be seen as support to the literary claim that the Phoenicians arrived at Carthage in 814 BC. Before the SCC the discussions about the different dates centred on one specific vase and one specific lamp found by P. Cintas below the basis of a chapel. Serge Lancel gives a fine presentation of the discussion (Lancel, S, 1992, p. 48), favouring the majority judgement that all remains in the Tophet are to be dated later than the last part of the 8th century.

Interestingly, P. Cintas himself writes in his *Manual to Punic Archaeology* (Cintas, P 1970, p. 309-10) on the chronology of the archaic town that “*a priori* il est incroyable d’esperer jamais recueillir *in situ* des témoignages concrets datant du début ».

However, Ennabli (Ennabli, 1987, p. 418) writes that « P. Cintas, un homme d’expérience, disait vrai. La quête des lieux de vie, en raison même de l’activité des hommes, est infiniment plus complexe que celle des tombes, figées et scellées avec leur mobilier. Mais peut-être a-t-il trop désespéré de la science et ce qui pouvait dépasser la capacité d’un homme solitaire peut être atteint par une équipe et avec une méthode moderne. » Ennabli is confident that modern methods and archaeological teams have done substantial progress during the SCC, among these O. Teschaver, M. Vegas and M.F. Rakob that have found not only ceramics but also bases of buildings from the 8th and 7th centuries BC, thus approaching the legendary date for the foundation of Carthage.

After the Save Carthage Campaign much indicates that the Carthage Bir Massouda terrain with excavations carried out by Ghent University/Institut National du Patrimoine, University of Hamburg, University of Amsterdam, University of Cambridge, Universités de Tunis et de Sfax contains the earliest remains that yet have been found (Docter, R.F., Chelbi, F, Telmini B.M. 2003). Please note the indication of Roman insula structure.

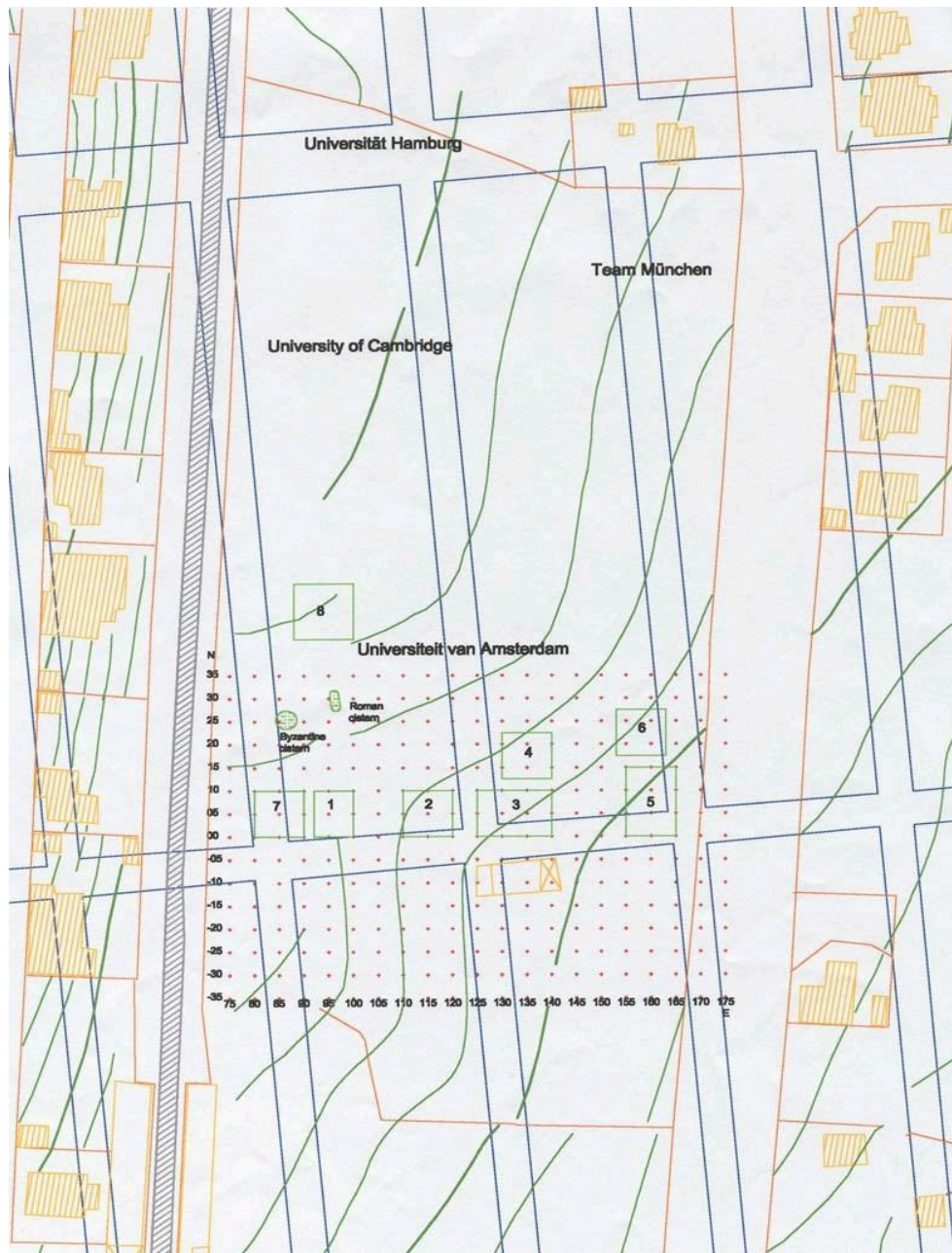


Illustration: Carthage Bir Massouda, Please note the indication of Roman insula structure.
www.archaeology.ugent.be/carthage/maptrenches.jpg - seen 20.7.2010

The Carthage Bir Massouda terrain is situated in the centre of present Carthage, on the eastern slopes of the Byrsa Hill. The northern part of the terrain turns out to have been densely built from the second half of the 8th century BC onwards. The southern half, however, shows signs of large-scale metallurgical activities typically found in non-residential areas outside the city. If they dated from the same period a city wall would often have separated the two areas. Indeed, this has also been the case on the Carthage Bir Massouda, but the city wall seems to have been similar to the wall found in the Ibn Chabâat excavation a bit closer to the coast and therefore probably dates from the last part of the 7th century. Below the city wall are the remains of a building from the second half of the 8th century or the first half of the 7th century.

Following the 2003 excavations, different samples of cattle bones some of which were mixed with Greek Geometric pottery were submitted to a radiocarbon test. The calibrated C14 tests seem to indicate dates of just before 800 BC (Docter, R.F., Chelbi, F, Telmini B.M. et al. 2006). It is, however, important to keep in mind that the Greek Geometric pottery originate in a variety of islands and regions and is from different time periods. For this reason, additional analyses are called for which should compare the finds at the Tophet and at the Bir Massouda terrain before the dating of the latter excavation may be confirmed to just before 800 BC as suggested or to use the C14 analyses from this test to challenge the conclusions about the Tophet. This said, however, we can conclude that the Carthage Bir Massouda terrain substantiates the findings from the SCC indicating that Carthage existed at least in the last half of the 8th century BC. No remains have been found on the site suggesting that a city was located here before the arrival of the Phoenicians.

Yet, apart from unearthing household artefacts, the SCC added little new information on the living quarters, architecture or households in early Punic Carthage, in contrast to the information gained from the excavations of the later Pompeii undertaken at the same time as the SCC. The eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD covered Pompeii and left it virtually untouched for 1800 years. In contrast, remains from Archaic Carthage first experienced 600-700 years of habitation with construction and re-buildings, then the complete destruction in 146BC, followed by 800 years of Roman, Byzantine and Vandal reconstructions and finally served as a quarry for construction material for Arabian Tunis and Kairouan as well as for various collectors of antiques. Under these circumstances it would amount to an archaeological miracle to find any significant remains of archaic buildings on the site.

The Classic Punic Period (5th-4th century BC)

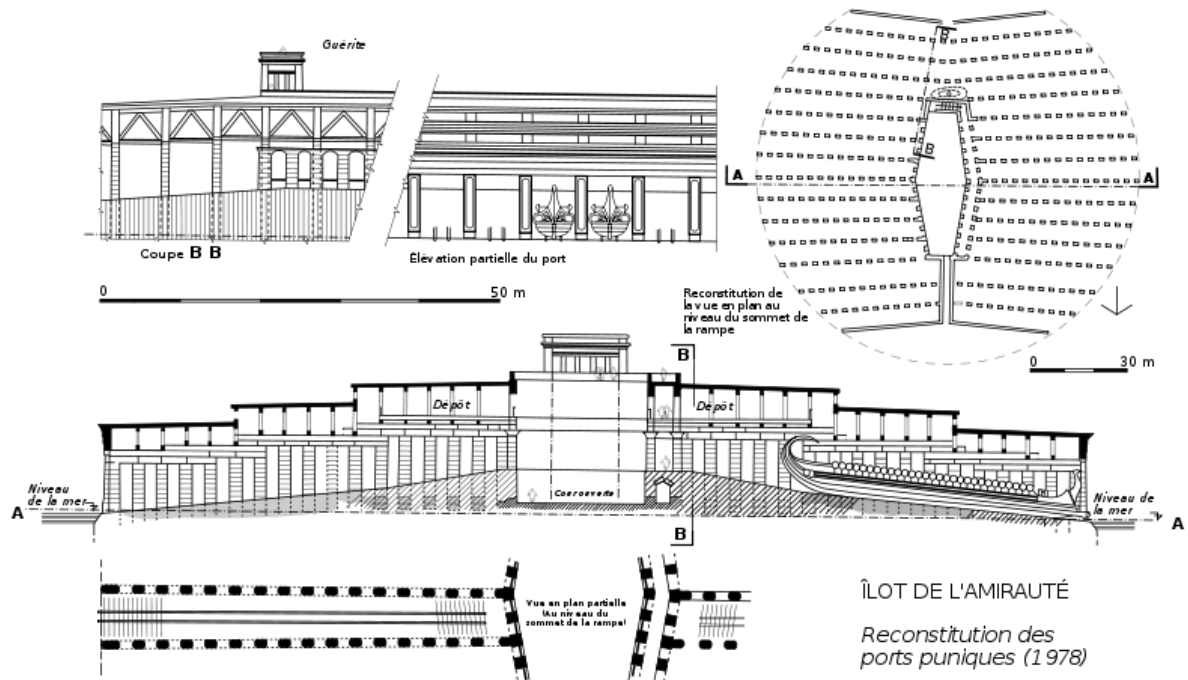
In the early part of the Classic Punic Period the metallic workshops as well as the necropolis are outside the habitation area, following the indicated boundaries found in Lancel's illustration of archaic Carthage (Lancel 1985, Fig. 1 p. 730).

Through the 5th and 4th centuries BC the Carthaginian Empire peaked, controlling approximately 300 cities along the coast of North African, the Iberian Peninsula, France, parts of Sicily and other islands now belonging to Italy. The city state of Carthage had grown to become the centre of Mediterranean trade. Despite this, we have no indications of where the port of Carthage was situated before the 4th century BC.

During the SCC a polluted, brackish water channel was discovered later to be known as the Îlot de l'Amirauté – the island in the middle of the circular naval port – and remains of a channel were also identified close to the Tophet. The channel was sufficiently broad and deep for boats but may also have been used for drainage. If the two identified parts of channel are connected it shows that the channel was parallel to the coast and probably accessed the Bay of Kram.

Analyses of sea level changes and remains suggest that the channel was filled in the mid 4th century BC. Analyses of seeds at the bottom of the channel indicate that the advanced agricultural hinterland of Carthage provided the inhabitants of the town with pomegranate, fig, grape, olive, peach, plum, melon, Cyrenean lotus, almonds, pistachios, filberts and cereals (Hurst, H and Stager, L.E.,1978 p. 340).

According to Hurst and Stager, the excavations during the SCC confirm the description by Appian in 146 BC that a rectangular commercial harbour with access to the sea was connected to a circular naval harbour situated behind it. The naval harbour contained an island in the centre replete with shipyards for up to 220 vessels. It remains a paradox that the navy would be based behind the commercial port, thus reducing its rapid deployment against sea based enemies and its efficient defence of the commercial fleet. However, there is no archaeological indication that the naval harbour had direct access to the sea in 146 BC or previously.



Illustrated reconstruction of l'Îlot de l'Amirauté in the Punic period.

encyclo.voila.fr/wiki/Ports_puniques_de_Carthage

However, Hurst and Stager conclude that there is no evidence of any sort of harbour or harbour side settlement in the area of the late Punic port prior to this date. They suggest that the ports were established on this site following an environmental change of lower sea level and which had drained the marshland making it possible to expand the city toward the sea and undertake the huge construction of the two harbours. Based on the imported pottery the authors believe the harbours were constructed in the 3rd century BC. Their conclusions obviously refute previous hypotheses that Phoenician Carthage was originally situated around the Punic ports and the Tophet, which has traditionally been assumed to be much older than it now seems to be the case.

The German excavation of the Quartier Magon found that the city of Carthage in the 5th century BC bordered on the coast and that a huge city wall protected Carthage from enemies challenging it from the sea. Interestingly, as described above an archaic city wall from a previous period marking the Southern boundary was found in the Carthage Bir Massouda. Through the 5th century the city of Carthage had grown in the direction of the coast and been protected by a large wall with watchtowers, but in the Quartier Magon was also found a major road leading to a double gate at the sea.



Illustration: Foundation stones of the Punic Sea wall in the Quartier Magon (Photo 2010 bnb)

The Quartier Magon itself consisted of modest Punic houses placed in a grid structure reminiscent of the structure found by Fantar in Kerkouane. By the end of the 4th century the area from the Byrsa Hill towards the coast had been urbanised (Lancel 1983, p. 742) including not only the Quartier Magon, but also in the direction towards the site of the harbours established later. From the 2nd century BC the Punic Quartier Magon seems to have changed which will be elaborated further below. The German excavation of this site is characterised by not only research of a large area but also by digging deep, offering information about all the periods and levels of habitation in the particular area.

Diodore de Sicile (Diodore, *livre XX*, chapter XLIV 1865) describes the attempted coup d'état in 308 BC by general Bomilcar in the Nea Polis in which thousands of soldiers and mercenaries gathered before marching towards the old town. When passing a large square they were shot at from citizens in high buildings surrounding the square and the streets. Lancel believes that this Nea Polis is a suburb on the Odeon plateau which does not include the habitations bordering to the coast, while Henry Hurst and Lawrence E. Stager (Hurst E. & Stager, L.E. 1978, p. 340-1) believe the Nea Polis was situated on the coast from the Byrsa Hill towards the site of the Punic Ports. It is not clear whether the square mentioned by Diodore is an Agora on the coastal plain of Carthage, north of the later harbours, or rather a square on the slopes of the Byrsa Hill.



Illustration: Roman street on the Odeon plateau where a Punic suburb, possibly the Nea Polis, was situated before the Roman villas were constructed on the site. (Photo 2010 bnb)

The period of Hellenistic and Punic wars (3rd century BC to 146 BC)

The period from the 3rd century to the destruction of Carthage shows a marked growth in the wealth of Carthage. The German excavations in the Quartier Magon suggest that the previously modest buildings were restructured to larger, sumptuous houses of at least two floors. The city wall was moved further towards the sea and the gate between the city and the sea was by then closed. The Quartier Magon had obviously become a wealthier artisan quarter than it had been in the preceding periods.



Illustration: *Street with Roman houses with basements constructed on top of old Punic buildings*
(photo bnb - 2010)

In the Punic Ports, comprehensive constructions on the Îlot de l'Amirauté facilitated surveillance of the Sea and the habitation around the ports increased.

Probably the most interesting find from this period was the Punic habitation, constructed between 200 and 146 BC at the Byrsa Hill excavated by Serge Lancel. Having originally housed a necropolis through the 7th and 6th centuries metallic workshops were established on the site and finally private accommodation was built during the first part of the 2nd century (Ennabli, A & Rebourg, A, *Carthage The Archaeological Site*, p.22, Cêrès Productions, Tunis 1994). Though most of Carthage was completely destroyed in 146 BC, the base of the habitations at the Byrsa Hill survived because they were reused as part of the foundation of the Roman religious, civilian and political centre constructed 100 years after the destruction of the Punic citadel perched on the Byrsa Hill. The foundations of several blocks of Punic houses are clearly seen within the street grid.



Illustration: *Punic houses on the Byrsa Hill that survived the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC later reused as part of the foundation for the Roman platform on top of the Byrsa Hill* (Photo 2010 bnb).

Whereas the Punic streets in the Quartier Magon run parallel or perpendicular on the coast the Byrsa Hill habitations follow the lines from a previous peak of the Hill levelled by the Romans. The buildings on the Byrsa Hill had draining channels and a cistern for each house. The successful excavation of a Punic living quarter at the Byrsa Hill required the removal of substantial amounts of rubble and soil from the levelled platform originally constructed by the Romans.



Illustration: From Museum of Carthage showing the Roman levelling and constructions of the Byrsa Hill. In the foreground the diagonal remains of the Punic habitation are depicted which were buried under the platform with Forum, Capitol, and Basilica etc. (Photo 2010 bnb)

The Early Roman Period (49 BC – 3rd century AD)

Not much has been found from the transitional period. However, Gibbins (p. 219) emphasises Fulford's suggestion (Fulford & Peacock 1984, p. 53) that some of the Punic cooking wares found in Augustan and later contexts are not residual, but instead represent a continued local production, implying that socio-economic structures have survived despite the physical destruction of the town. Punic Carthage had been characterised by a substantial production and export of pottery in addition to its important export of olive oil and grains.

Illustration: Below a presentation of the archaeological layers from the Byrsa Hill as exhibited in the Museum of Carthage. The first layer is from Punic Archaic necropolis, the second layer from Punic

metallurgic activity, the third layer from Punic habitations including the layer of destruction from 146 BC, the fourth layer from the fill for the Roman platform on top of the Hill consisting mainly of Punic objects, the fifth layer from Roman, Vandal and Byzantine time until 698 AD, and the sixth layer from the Islamic period during which Carthage was not populated. The large archaeological teams measured the amount of pottery from different periods when excavating in Carthage. (Photo 2010, bnb)



Despite the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC, Julius Caesar established a Roman colony on the site one hundred years later. The Save Carthage Campaign found no archaeological evidence concerning the years following the destruction of Punic Carthage until the establishment of the Roman colony. Just before year 0, under the reign of Augustus, the Byrsa Hill was completely reshaped when the top of the hill was levelled to a platform of 336 x 323 meters. This facilitated the establishment of a forum and the construction of a basilica for juridical hearings as well as a capitol and a library.

Approximately 150 years later, a new platform- *platea nova* - was built on the southern slope of the Byrsa Hill, probably in order to substitute an old forum that either had been placed on the island in the naval port or between the ports and the Byrsa Hill (Ennabli A and Rebourg A, 1994, p. 26). If this analysis is correct one would believe that Caesar or Augustus, as they did in Athens, would have established the traditional Forum in the middle of the habituated city of Carthage between its ports and the Byrsa Hill.



Illustration: *Reconstruction of the port of Roman Carthage, 2nd century AD. It used the same structures of the Punic port before 146BC.* LookLex Tunisia
<http://lexicorient.com/tunisia/carthage01.htm>, seen 20.7.2010

The SCC also confirmed previous assumptions that Carthage was divided into four parts by Roman roads having the Byrsa Hill as the centre of the circle and the living quarters divided into *insulae* as known from Rome and Pompeii. However, the excavation proved that Roman Carthage was not limited to this theoretical structure but adapted the city structure to existing streets when this was most feasible. In Quartier Magon, for example, the Romans constructed their houses on the remains of the Punic habitations and also to a significant extent complied with the orientation of the Punic streets. As one would anticipate, the early Roman colony constructed the future city modestly and pragmatically with the exception of the remodelling of the Byrsa Hill, reusing existing remains whenever possible (Ennabli 1987, p. 429).

Conclusions

UNESCO's Save Carthage Campaign was indeed a rescue campaign for two reasons. By the beginning to the 1970s, historic Carthage, that had existed under Punic, Roman, Vandal and Byzantine rule and then been abandoned for centuries, risked having all physical remains buried below modern buildings in its transition to a prestigious suburb. Indeed, the campaign also provided a vanishing opportunity to learn about the Punic empire which had dominated the eastern part of the Mediterranean for 700 years and been considered a formidable opponent by the rising Roman Empire until its ultimate defeat in 146 BC.

Newly independent Tunisia would of course prefer to construct its historic identity as the centre of an empire rather than as a colony of somebody else's empire. However, the national capital Tunis increased its population dramatically from approximately 300.000 to 2 million inhabitants between 1960 and 2000 (Bessis, s. 1999) which yields a continued tremendous economic pressure to build new houses in Carthage. The Save Carthage Campaign was waged at an opportune moment by a group of committed Tunisian archaeologists and archaeological institutions given sufficient local political support from the Tunisian government to enter a coalition with UNESCO and international experts well aware of the threat against Carthage.

This campaign managed to mobilise archaeologists from at least 12 countries bringing with them different methodologies, different scientific backgrounds and traditions for publication of their research. The key Tunisian archaeologist behind the UNESCO Save Carthage Campaign, the director of the Carthage Museum on Byrsa Hill summarises his impression (Ennabli, M.A. 1987):

“...la campagne a démontré, c'est que cette œuvre peut-être celle de l'ensemble de la communauté Internationale, et en cela la campagne qui vient de se dérouler est exemplaire. Elle est exceptionnelle aussi par l'apport technique d'une archéologie moderne qui a été introduite et appliquée » Une archéologie de la compréhension « ...a distingué les niveaux d'occupation et les phases de destructions, repéré les fosses de pillage et les tranches d'exploitation, elle a déterminé les faciès des périodes par les modes et les matériaux de construction. Elle a confronté ses stratigraphies avec des échelles chronologiques déterminées par des éléments dateurs, tels les monnaies, mais surtout la céramique. Dans ces deux secteurs, un travail immense a été accompli. Et en cela la campagne a été pionnière et novatrice ».

These different approaches to ancient history and archaeology have impacted on the investigations of the significance and interpretation of the sites. The key findings from Punic Carthage have contributed to our knowledge about the original settlement of Carthage, but despite the innovative techniques employed in connection with the SCC we have not yet gained a comprehensive knowledge of social, political, economic and religious life in the Punic society. A visit to the sites and museums in Carthage in the 21st century does not provide us a virtual journey to a community of e.g. the 8th century BC but to archaeology as it was presented in the 1970s.

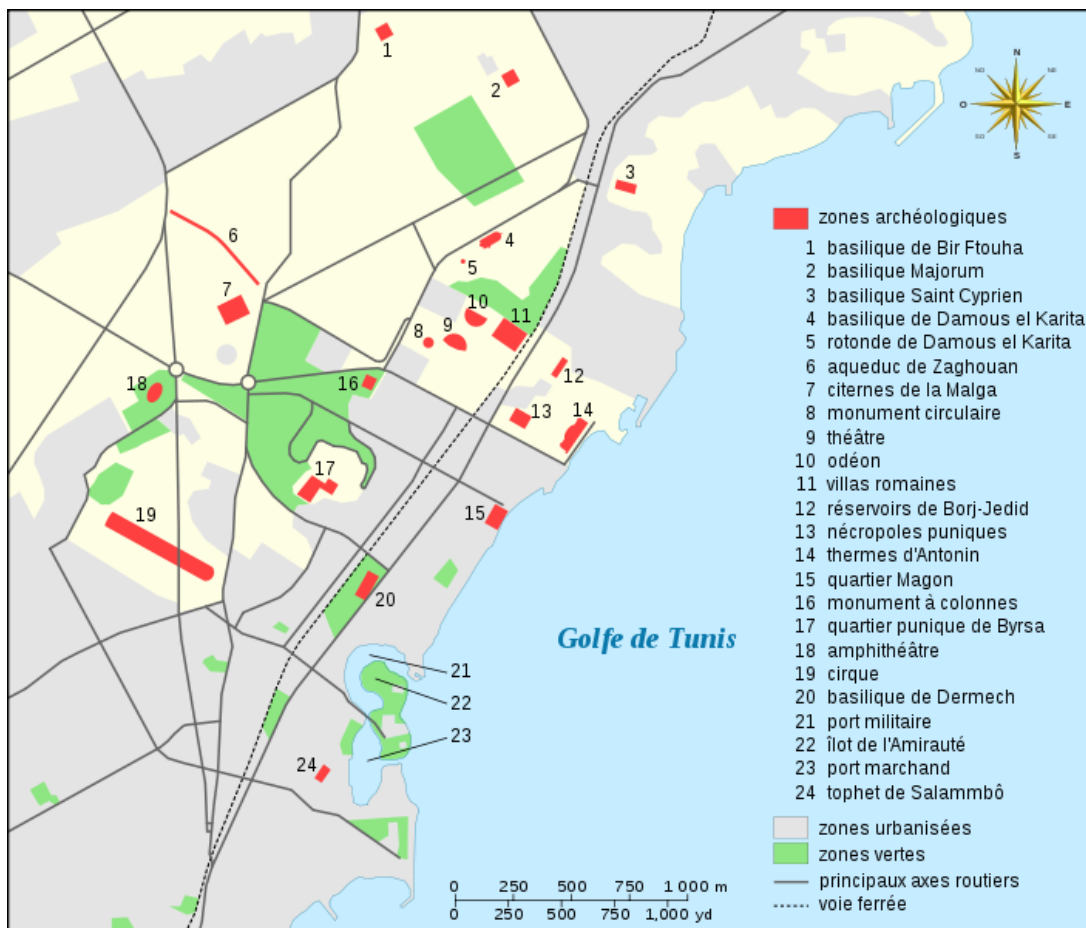


Illustration: Overview of present Carthage and its archaeological sites. Missing is right north of Basilique de Dermech (20) the Carthage B ir Massouda excavation as well as the Ibn Chabâat site between no. 20 and no. 15. Illustration from encyclo.voila.fr/wiki/Ports_puniques_de_Carthage

Some places like the Museum of Carthage at the Byrsa Hill and in the German excavations in the Quartier Magon offer scholarly based introductions to the archaeological interpretation of some of the sites and their structures, but in most places the visitor will get very little information about the finds on the site. Nowhere the visitor is presented with in-depth information about Punic society, its economy, everyday life and people based on archaeological evidence, regional and global patterns, historical events and literary sources.

Since the UNESCO Save Carthage Campaign the Tunisian government has had plans to establish an archaeological park in Carthage which would include some of the previously excavated sites and excavating new parts of the suburb. Substantial areas – 400 HA - to be included in the park have been classified as UNESCO heritage, but have in recent years experienced that corruption and political pressure have lead to de-classification of grounds to be used for construction of houses. Following the revolution in January 2011 a new initiative taken by Ennabli A, Abdelkafi J, and others seeks to mobilise political and financial support for re-vitalising the archaeological park and to re-classify de-classified areas. This is indeed a crucial initiative for the heritage and for the new post-revolutionary country.

What is needed now is not only a campaign to unearth material evidence similar to the first international campaign but also a new international campaign to help save the ruins already discovered and assist bringing the presentations and exhibitions up to date by using the tools of modern museology and communication. The excavated physical remains must be preserved and presented in an appropriate modern manner, but the story of Carthage and its historical development should be more comprehensive and holistic than the approaches used during the Save Carthage archaeological campaign in the 1970s.

To improve our understanding of Punic society, more excavations of the countryside are called for. Most likely, we will have much better possibilities from excavations in the present countryside to gain valuable information about the people forming the backbone of the Punic Empire and the extremely interesting transition period from Punic to Roman Carthage.

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