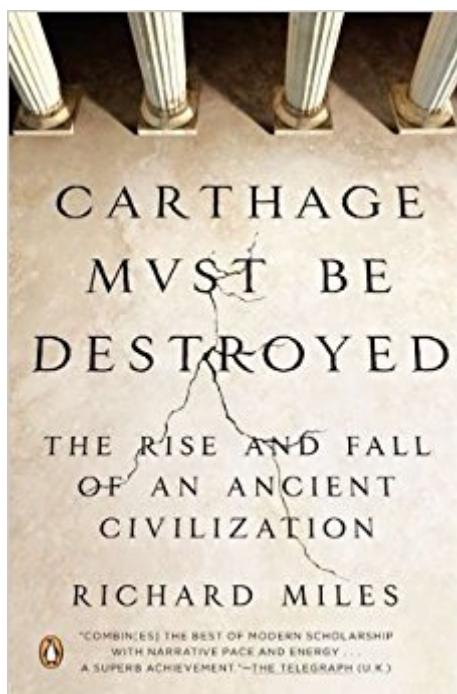


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Carthage Must Be Destroyed: The Rise And Fall Of An Ancient Civilization



Synopsis

The first full-scale history of Hannibal's Carthage in decades and "a convincing and enthralling narrative." (The Economist)Drawing on a wealth of new research, archaeologist, historian, and master storyteller Richard Miles resurrects the civilization that ancient Rome struggled so mightily to expunge. This monumental work charts the entirety of Carthage's history, from its origins among the Phoenician settlements of Lebanon to its apotheosis as a Mediterranean empire whose epic land-and-sea clash with Rome made a legend of Hannibal and shaped the course of Western history. Carthage Must Be Destroyed reintroduces readers to the ancient glory of a lost people and their generations-long struggle against an implacable enemy.

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Customer Reviews

""Carthage Must Be Destroyed" is a fine, sweeping survey of the rise and fall of an empire and a glimpse into the diversity of the ancient world." -"The Wall Street Journal""Historian Richard Miles, of Cambridge, makes telling use of the latest discoveries yielded by Carthaginian ruins in a splendid, comprehensive effort to present the city-state as a dynamic entity and minimize it as a victimized, second-tier society so often portrayed in the histories of Roman and Western interpreters.

Blood-curdling battles receive their pyrrhic due, and Hannibal's trans-Alps adventure and his humbling demise are covered in masterful detail." -(Newark) "Star-Ledger" ""Carthage Must Be Destroyed" is a fine, sweeping survey of the rise and fall of an empire and a glimpse into the diversity of the ancient world." -"The Wall Street Journal""You know a story is great when it grips you even when you know how it turns out ... Miles has written an engaging, richly documented study

that merges able storytelling with equally able scholarship. It's quite a tale." -"Philadelphia Inquirer" "Historian Richard Miles, of Cambridge, makes telling use of the latest discoveries yielded by Carthaginian ruins in a splendid, comprehensive effort to present the city-state as a dynamic entity and minimize it as a victimized, second-tier society so often portrayed in the histories of Roman and Western interpreters. Blood-curdling battles receive their pyrrhic due, and Hannibal's trans-Alps adventure and his humbling demise are covered in masterful detail." -(Newark) "Star-Ledger" "'Carthage Must Be Destroyed" is a fine, sweeping survey of the rise and fall of an empire and a glimpse into the diversity of the ancient world." -"The Wall Street Journal"

Richard Miles teaches ancient history at the University of Sydney and is a Fellow-Commoner of Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge. He has written widely on Punic, Roman, and Vandal North Africa and has directed archaeological excavations in Carthage and Rome. He divides his time between Sydney, Australia, and Cambridge, England.

The author has done us a valuable service in uniting the disciplines of Archaeology and Classical Studies to either validate ancient assertions, such as the Carthaginian practice of "tophet," or human/child sacrifice; or, invalidate long held biases perpetuated by Greek and Latin authors which argue for a polarized mediterranean world in which the Carthaginians represent the dark forces of barbarity and all that is alien to Western Civilization, while the Greeks and Romans represent the vanguard of all that is civil and good, with little cultural cross pollination occurring between them. Miles does a good job, mostly with the assistance of archeology to show that contrary to the above, the ancient mediterranean was a potpourri of the syncretism of Carthaginian, Etruscan, Roman, Greek, and Egyptian influences...in art, architecture and religion. The clash between Carthage and Rome was the outcome of the inevitable clash of regional hegemonies whose interests clashed as each sought to extend its influence further, and consequently into the orbit of the "other's" influence. Overall, Miles provides us with a highly readable volume of scholarly value, and which belongs to the growing genre of the interdisciplinary partnership of history, literary criticism and archeology. One of the standout themes is the syncretism and competition with regard to the legacy of Heracles, not only between rival peoples, such as the Romans and Carthaginians, but even between rival generals of the same party, such as was the case with the dictators Fabius Maximus and Minucius Felix. How the highlights of this god's journey from Spain, through Italy onward to Greece with Geryon's herd are exploited by Greeks, Romans and Carthaginians to stake their territorial claims in Spain, Sicily, Sardinia and North Africa is a recurring theme, and does much to forward and validate

the author's worldview/thesis of syncretism. So interesting is this Herculaneum theme alone, that it merits an entire work on its own right (perhaps Richard Miles will take on this "Herculaneum" task?). Lastly, after the extensive background that Miles provides to the conflict itself, once the book reaches the Second Punic War, the reader is treated to what reads like a great story/narrative, while never losing its scholarly tenor. The chapter, "Desolation of Carthage," in which the fateful meeting between the Roman consul and Carthaginian emissaries takes place several miles away from Carthage, during which the emissaries are told that they must agree to the destruction/oblivion of their city and their way of life as seafaring merchants, and to their relocation inland as simple agrarians left me empathizing with those Carthaginians, and at the same time, loathing Rome, whose calculus behind the destruction of the city was the manifestation of nothing more than greed and lust for empire (as the Carthaginians comprised no real threat then). It also reinforced my own skeptical approach to any postmodern view towards the subject of today's arena of international affairs, which would have us think that we have entered an age of unlimited cooperation and potential goodwill among the nations and defining elements of the power structure of the world. The same brutal end that the Carthaginians met awaits any of us who dismiss what lust for power and empire is still capable of doing.

As narrative history goes, this book was somewhat dry. Indeed, I found Anthony Everitt's account of Rome's relationship to Carthage in his "The Rise of Rome: The Making of the World's Greatest Empire" far more engaging. That said, Carthage Must be Destroyed (a somewhat misleading title, by the way, since only half the book deals with Rome's relationship to Carthage) is a comprehensive history of Carthage in 374 pages, and Richard Miles is a historian of this period. He therefore brings a great deal of recent scholarship to bear in his reconstruction of this great ancient civilization. What I found most fascinating was Mr. Miles's analysis of how the Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans, at different times, all appropriated myth, legend and history to create their own narratives of history to support their own political agendas. Particularly illuminating was the Greek projection of "oriental despotism", (i.e., Persians) onto the Carthaginians, Hannibal's appropriation of the Heracles/Hercules myth and legend, and the role Carthage came to perform in Rome's image of itself. Well worth reading.

First and foremost -- this is an excellent study of Carthage, its antecedents and main characters. The writing is crisp, informative and well-worth reading particularly the passages on Hannibal. I believe the architectural/art aspects were well-displayed, and in some conflict with other reviewers,

thought the Heracles-Melquart narratives helpful. I was also interested in the tophet information and how it was related to other contemporary cultures. The author does put an interesting light on not only who the Carthaginians were, but also how they were perceived by their foes. This aspect is not revisionist, just a different perspective I found fascinating. So why say 'marred'? This is mostly a quibble, but as others have observed, the obsession with the Heracles myth and also with a few select historians went from informative to the academic equivalent of a rat hole. Being interested in how the myth fed the reality is one thing; to relentlessly beat it to death in service to the thesis was ultimately a detractor. I found myself skimming these sections after a while; I 'get it' that the myths played much more of a role than later historians depict but to use the fact as a blunt instrument ends up being something of a disservice to the reader. That said, this book is a good one which I recommend.

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