In 1935–6 the Italian colonial government in Libya built the first tarmac road along the Syrtes, the enormous double gulf cut into the northern coast of Africa between Cyrenaica and the Maghreb and surrounded by a broad coastal plain running up to distant mountains (Fig. 9.1). At Ras Lanuf, near the foot of the larger bay, Marshal Italo Balbo erected a monumental arch to commemorate this feat (Goodchild 1952: 96). ‘Marble Arch’, as the British soldiers called it, was a symbol of the conceptual and now finally material link between these two Italian territories; it marked transit between Tripolitania and Cyrenaica along the new Via Litoranea.¹ Its sculpture, however, depicted brothers who died to preserve a boundary, not Roman or even Greek but Carthaginian heroes, the Philaeni brothers.² It is their story that I want to re-examine here, first told, to us at least, by Sallust:

Now that the events at Leptis have taken us to this region, it is worth mentioning an act of extraordinary heroism by two Carthaginians, which the place brings to mind. At the time when the Carthaginians ruled over the greater part of Africa, the people of Cyrene were also strong and prosperous. Between the two cities stretched a plain of unbroken sand, without river or mountain to mark a frontier, a circumstance that embroiled the two peoples in a long and bitter rivalry. After many armies and fleets had been defeated and put to flight on both sides, and they had inflicted considerable damage on one another, fearing that in their exhausted

¹ Note in this respect the wording of one of the inscriptions on the monument, lines from a speech of Mussolini’s on 5 May 1936, announcing the Italian occupation of Ethiopia: UNA TAPPA DEL NOSTRO CAMMINO È RAGGIUNTA. CONTINUIAMO | A MARCIARE NELLA PACE PER I COMPITI CHE CI ASPETTANO | DOMANI E CHE PROTEGEREMO CON IL NOSTRO CORAGGIO CON | LA NOSTRA FEDE CON LA NOSTRA VOLONTÀ | MUSSOLINI 5 MAGGIO XIV. (One stage of our journey is complete. We continue to march in peace towards the duties that await us tomorrow and that we will defend with our courage, with our faith, with our will. Mussolini 5 May, Year 14.)

² Cf. Abitino on the fate of the arch after Ghadhafi came to power: ‘The arch has recently been dismantled by the Libyan government, because it was considered a sign of division between peoples, as well as a reminder of a colonial past’ (Abitino 1979: 64).
state victors and vanquished might fall prey before long to attack by some fresh enemy, they called a truce in which they came to the following arrangement. On a given day envoys of each city should set out from home, and the spot where they met was to be treated as constituting the common frontier (*finis*) of the two peoples. Carthage sent two brothers, called the Philaeni, who hastened on their way; the Cyrenaeans went more slowly. Whether this was due to laziness or accident, I cannot say for sure. For in that region a storm can cause just as much delay as it does at sea, because when the wind rises on those flat and barren plains, it stirs up the sand from the ground, which is driven with such force as to fill the mouth and eyes, blocking vision and slowing down travel. When the envoys from Cyrene realised that they were considerably behindhand, and because they feared punishment at home for spoiling their city’s chances, they accused the Carthaginians of having left home before the agreed time, contested the result, and in sum preferred anything to having to return defeated. The Carthaginians demanded other terms, provided they were fair, and the Greeks gave them the choice of being buried alive at the place where they wished to fix the boundary of their country, or of allowing them, on the same condition, to advance as far as they wanted. The Philaeni accepted the terms and gave up their lives and their persons for their country; so they were buried alive. The Carthaginians dedicated altars to the Philaeni brothers on that spot, and other honours were established for them in the city. I shall now return to my subject. (Sallust, *Iug.* 79, translation adapted from that of Comber and Balmaceda 2009)
Sallust is the first surviving author to tell the story of the brothers Philaeni, but not the first to mention altars: in the fourth century BCE, pseudo-Scylax knew of a seaport called the Altars of Philaenus (ch. 109), the first of a series of similar reports in the ancient geographers. Goodchild convincingly identified the site on the basis of the distances given in these sources as the promontory of Ras el Aáli, a little to the east in fact of Ras Lanuf, 80 miles (129 km) from Cyrene but 180 (290 km) from Carthage (Goodchild 1952: 95–7). Just inland are the twin heights of Jebel Ala, the only change in relief visible to passing ships for many miles; these were probably the original ‘altars’ (Stucchi 1975: 599). According to Ptolemy (4.3.4), Philaenus was the name of a village (kome), near which stood the ‘altars’ of the same name: it seems reasonable to conclude that these ‘altars’ got their name from the village, which presumably got its name in turn from a Greek proprietor, a normal practice in the region (Stucchi 1975: 598).

But how did the Altars of Philaenus become Altars of the Philaeni? Several scholars have argued that the myth of the Philaeni brothers originated in the Greek world, a case that has been made with particular clarity by Irad Malkin (1990; summarized in Malkin 1994: 187–91) and Sergio Ribichini (1991). However, I want to argue here that there are equally good, if not better, reasons to see it as a myth that was exploited and probably invented in a specifically Carthaginian context, and that identifying the story as Carthaginian helps us to understand its chronological context and its function. In a broader sense this is a contribution to the identification of a ‘Punic’ stratum of myth in the Mediterranean, whether one takes that word to relate to Carthage in particular or the western Phoenician world more generally.

3 Cf. Strabo 3.5.5, 17.3.20; Plin. *HN* 5.28; *Itin. Ant.* 65.6; *Ptol. Geog.* 4.3.4, 4.4.1; *Stadiasmus* 84; *Tabula Peutinger* 7.2.

4 Stucchi suggests that the whole zone from the Jebel Al classes to the sea became known as the Arae Philaenorum because of these sandbanks (Stucchi 1975: 601), and notes that the promontory gets its modern name of Ras el Aáli from its proximity to Jebel Ala (p. 602). Pliny tells us (*HN* 5.28) that the ‘altars of the Philaeni’ were made of sand, but like Sallust, Strabo suggests that there were built altars, noting that these had disappeared by his time (3.5.5–6), and altars are depicted in the *Tabula Peutinger* (7.2). This tradition may be an extrapolation from the name or the myth, or it may be that the Carthaginians did indeed build altars in this place at some point: Susan Walker points out to me that monuments visible from the sea were a familiar feature of the ports of the Hellenistic-period Mediterranean, from the Colossus of Rhodes to the enormous sculptures currently being recovered from the sea at Alexandria and Herakleion (private communication). This is probably the small collection of ruins now called Gráret Gser et Trab (Goodchild 1952: 98–102).

5 See our Introduction for further discussion; in general I avoid the term ‘Punic’, since it has no single agreed meaning and no clear contemporary distinction from ‘Phoenician’, a definition that is itself of dubious utility.
The first reason to see this story as a Carthaginian myth is quite simply the fact that the Carthaginians are the heroes. Swift and noble, they not only win the race, without trickery, but they die for their country and their good name. The Cyreneans, by contrast, falsely accuse the Philaeni of cheating in order to avoid punishment at home, and then refuse to honour the agreement that had been made.

Secondly, Sallust specifically tells us in the Jugurthine War that he uses 'Punic' sources for the history of African peoples. At 17.7, he says that he is basing his ethnography of Africa (chapters 18-19) on a translation he had made of the *libri punici qui regis Hiempsalis dicebantur*; these 'Punic books that were said to be of King Hiempsal' may have been the library that passed to the Numidian kings after the destruction of Carthage in 146. Sallust then first mentions the Altars themselves in this early digression on Africa (19.3), and there is no reason to think that the same 'Punic books' were not also the source for the story told later in the monograph (Schiffmann 1986: 92).

Finally, Sallust specifies in this first reference to the Altars in chapter 19 that they are where the Carthaginians considered the boundary to be, and in his later full account of the legend it is the Carthaginians who mark the boundary by erecting the altars and establishing honours at home. Malkin explains the Altars as a pre-existing ethnic frontier between different Libyan groups that was taken over by Cyrene in the fourth century BCE.

---

7 Pliny, *HN* 18.22 for this event, with Oniga (1990: 49-50). Matthews suggested that Sallust might have become familiar with these books or even looted them during his governorship of Africa in 46 (Matthews 1972: 335). It has sometimes been argued (Gsell 1921: 332-4; Morstein-Marx 2001: 195-7) that these were books written by rather than owned by a King Hiempsal, but this would still mean that the source was northwest African rather than Greek. Morstein-Marx notes that the death of 'Herakles' in Spain in Sallust’s myth (18.3, qualified there with *sicuti Afrì putant*) must be a reference to the Phoenician god Melqart and his famous grave at Gades, rather than to the Greek hero, but notes too that the cult of Melqart was already widespread in North Africa beyond Phoenician communities (Morstein-Marx 2001: 188-9). Krings’s suggestion that, despite his strong claim to the contrary, Sallust is in fact using a Greek-language source for his ethnographic excursus seems unnecessarily speculative (Krings 1990: esp. 115-17). Krings here asks why 'Sallust, if he really had a translation of the original in front of him, uses the imperfect *dicebantur* and not the present *dicuntur*’ (111), but the imperfect here seems more likely to point to an earlier opinion – implying these books are no longer said to be in either sense King Hiempsal’s – and the question of original authorship or subsequent ownership is not in any case obviously relevant to whether or not Sallust is in his own time looking at the books themselves.

8 Compare the rocks described by Servius where Carthaginian priests used to perform religious ceremonies 'between Africa, Sicily, Sardinia and Italy: the Italians call them the altars because the Africans and the Romans entered into a treaty there' (*ad Aen*. 1.108). Servius says that Claudius Quadrigarius (1 Fr. 31P (third century BCE)) called them 'Neptune's Altars'. The *Tabula Peutinger*, however, depicts other 'altars' marking boundary points that do not involve Carthaginians (Prados Martínez 2008: 208).
(Malkin 1990: 225; Malkin 1994: 188–90), but while in the fifth century BCE Herodotus does place the division between the Nasamones to the east and the Makai to the west somewhere along the coast of the Greater Syrtis (4.172–3), no ancient source says that the Greeks of Cyrenaica ever considered the Altars to be their boundary. Alternative locations for that boundary are mentioned: in the late fourth century, Ptolemy I’s constitution inscription for Cyrene specifies Automalax as the western boundary of the city’s citizenship (SEG 11:1 1.3), while in Strabo ‘the boundary (horizon) between the former Carthaginian country (ge) and the Cyrenaean country (ge) as it was under Ptolemy’ was the Euphrantas tower, between Aspis and Charax, that is to the west of the Altars (17.3.20).

So far, the positive evidence for Carthaginian interest and involvement in this story could be explained as a later intervention in a pre-existing Greek myth, a possibility that has been suggested (Devillers 2000: 127; 2005: 344), and may well be correct. Mythology is not confined to one culture or context, as is perhaps most strikingly shown by the exploitation of the Odysseus myth in the west (Malkin 1998; 2002: 159–72). And just as we can certainly disaggregate layers of Roman intervention in the story of the Philaeni brothers as told by Sallust and later sources, there is no prima facie obstacle to Greek usage as well. But for the sake of argument, I want to try to go further than this and suggest that there is in fact no positive reason to see such a Greek layer in the story at all, let alone an earlier or foundational one.

---

9 Pseudo-Scylax also describes the immediate area of the altars as the eastern boundary of the Makai (109), while Strabo calls the Altars of the Philaeni the western boundary of the Nasamones (17.3.20). For Pliny, they are the eastern boundary of the Lotus Eaters (HN 5.28).

10 Goodchild explains this as the Cyreneans creating a ‘no-man’s-land’ between themselves and the Carthaginians (Goodchild 1952: 103–4), but I see no positive evidence for this.

11 Even if the boundary between Automalax and the Euphrantas tower shifted at some point in Ptolemy’s reign (see Devillers (2005: 349) for a survey of opinions on this point; it may be that the boundaries of citizenship and territorial possession were not seen as identical), neither is the location of the Arae Philaenorum. Some Roman-period sources do name the Altars as a boundary of ‘the Cyreneans’ (Stadiasmus 84, with GGM ad loc. for the textual problems; Tabula Peutinger 7.2) or of the Roman province of Cyrene (Ptol. Geog. 4.4.1).

12 Oniga, who sees the story of the Philaeni as belonging to the genre of folklore, notes that ‘one of the basic characteristics of folklore is precisely that of being able to be constantly reproduced and reformulated according to changing cultural requirements as one era cedes to the next’ (Oniga 1990: 53; translated from the Italian).

13 Devillers 2000 has an interesting survey of the Roman elements, comparisons, and issues that Sallust undoubtedly brought into the retelling of the story.

14 This idea that the myth has Punic origins has been mentioned in passing before (Matthews 1972: 334; Stucchi 1975: 599); Oniga (1990: 58) also discusses the possibility that at least this version of the story derives from a Punic source, with further bibliography.
The Greek name of the brothers does not present a problem for the hypothesis of a western Phoenician origin: whether or not ‘Philaeni’ was in fact a corruption of a Phoenician name or term (Devillers 2005: 348, n. 47, with GGM: 456 and Prados Martínez 2008: 210), if the name of the place pre-existed the myth then it was a necessary part of the story, and had to be incorporated into it. I would suggest that in explaining that the brothers were called ‘Philaeni’ Sallust is not in fact recording their supposed family name, but rather a nickname or epithet based on their characters, supposedly given to them by the Greeks and therefore offering a convenient explanation for the pre-existing toponym. This interpretation is supported by a reference to the brothers in a short excursus that Solinus devotes to how various non-Greek places in Africa got their Greek names: ‘A Greek name was given to the Philaeni brothers from their greed for praise’ (27.8: Philaenis fratribus a laudis cupidine Graium vocamen datum). The conceit here must be that this happened after their death, and that it was a foreign intervention, and therefore that the brothers were originally called something else; perhaps Solinus is right.

It has also been suggested that this is a specifically Greek myth-type, the course au territoire (Malkin 1990: 226). There are certainly Greek examples of similar races: it is probably Charon of Lampsakos who tells us of a race along the coast of the Hellespont between the champions of Lampsakos and Parion to determine a boundary, while Diodorus reports a dispute between Clazomenae and Cumae over possession of the city of Leuce resolved in this fashion in 383 b.c.e, and Plutarch preserves the story of a similar contest between the Andrians and Chalcidians over Sane in Thrace. But this concept of a confrontation between rival champions to establish a boundary between polities is, as Ribichini has pointed out, not specifically Greek but instead ‘a phenomenon attested from the earliest times, both at an ethnographic level and in various civilizations of the ancient world’ (Ribichini 1991: 396 (translated from the Italian); cf. Oniga 1990: 65–85). Furthermore, the Greek examples may feature races, but they do not involve brothers, unlike, for instance, the famous Roman duels of

---

15 In all the other cases he lists, Solinus specifies that the names are those given to these places by foreigners, usually Greeks.
18 Plut. Aet. Gr. 30, with Oniga 1990: 64.
the Horatii and Curiatii\textsuperscript{19} – but this objection only reminds us again that myth structures and knowledge in the ancient Mediterranean are not bounded by ethnic identity. There may of course have been parallels in the broader Phoenician tradition for either the motif of the race or that of teams of brothers, but I see no particular reason to expect a city as diverse and cosmopolitan as Carthage to pick a myth from its ‘own’ culture when looking for one to imitate. Nor indeed do I see evidence for a strong sense at Carthage of belonging to any such bounded ‘Phoenician’ culture, which might exclude the construction of mythical links with ‘Greeks’. It is of course well known that there is no clear evidence that the people we call Phoenician or Punic saw themselves as Phoenician, Punic, or in possession of any other corporate ‘ethnic’ label (Prag, Chapter 1).

Thirdly, some have seen this as a story about a particularly Greek form of imperialism. For Ribichini, the establishment of a territorial boundary after a long and bloody war ‘doesn’t seem to correspond to the mentality of a merchant people, initially more interested in markets and coastal ports of call than in the problems of sedentary life and in establishing territorial property in a desert zone’ (Ribichini 1991: 399; translated from the Italian). For Malkin too this is a myth about territory and territorialization (Malkin 1990: 219, 221, 227), not features usually associated with Carthaginian methods of imperial control. The Arae do not, however, mark a linear territorial border between Cyrene and Carthage, but rather a boundary point on the maritime facade. For how can a single point in space mark a useful boundary between two territorial entities?\textsuperscript{20} If there is ‘territory’ involved here, it is maritime territory; this is a ship-to-shore perspective on imperialism, interested not in exploiting the land, but in seaborne trade, taxation and controlling access to the coast.

This fits in very well with the maritime focus of Carthaginian imperialism in many places and most times, and certainly in Africa.\textsuperscript{21} Polybius describes Carthaginian control in Africa at the time of Hannibal’s march on Italy (218 BCE) as focused on the sea, not the land: the Carthaginians

\textsuperscript{19} On which point see Devillers (2000: 128), alongside other parallels between Carthage and Rome which were all imported on his view by Sallust, although here the notion of brotherhood seems central to the tale and the place name.

\textsuperscript{20} For the practice in Greek contexts of linking various boundary markers to demarcate two territories, see Daverio Rocchi (1988: 57–9), with clear examples in her chapter 4 (N.B. nos. 1, 2, 6 and 8).

\textsuperscript{21} One obvious illustration of this is the way in which the treaties between Rome and Carthage forbid sailing beyond certain headlands: Polyb. 3.22–4. For more on the importance of promontories in Phoenician ship-to-shore perspectives, see Vella (2005).
were masters of all that part of Africa which ‘inclines towards the Mediterranean’ from the Altars of Philaenus as far as the Pillars of Herakles (3.39.2: Λιβύης ἐκμιμίου πάντων τῶν ἐπὶ τὴν ἔσω θάλατταν νευόντων).22 And when Massinissa disputed the cities of Tripolitania with Carthage in the late 160s, Polybius tells us that the Carthaginians did not try to hold the countryside but only the coastal ports: Massinissa ‘easily made himself master of the open country’, but ‘he could not get hold of the towns, as these were carefully guarded by the Carthaginians’ (31.21.3–4).23 This of course makes better sense from a Carthaginian perspective: while establishing a border the other side of a large space of unproductive desert might seem an odd ambition, there is nothing strange about wanting a border on the other side of the Syrtic gulf, which was increasingly emerging as an important space of trade and exchange in the Hellenistic period (Wilson 2003[2005]; Fentress et al. 2009; Quinn 2011b).24 The war imagined as the background to the myth of the Philaeni was surely fought on the sea.

Mention of Massinissa, however, brings me from the origins of the myth in space to the question of its origins in time.25 Sallust tells us that the Carthaginians considered the Altars their boundary with ‘Egypt’, not

22 Polybius’s description of Rome’s control over the same region after the destruction of Carthage is interestingly different: Scipio Africanus ‘subjected to the dominion of his country the largest and finest part of Libya from the altars of Philaenus to the pillars of Herakles’ (10.40.7). Pace Devillers (2000: 124–5), Sallust’s vague claim that the Carthagians imperitabant most of Africa (Ing. 79.2) at the time of the race with Cyrene is not a specific claim about territorial empire, but about domination, and is, as Devillers says, seen through a Roman filter.

23 See Polyb. 31.21.1 for the specification that these cities are on the coast, and cf. Hdt. 7.158, where Gelon rebukes the Spartans for failing to join him in seizing the ‘Emporia’ of the Syrtes from Carthage from which he says they would have derived great profit. This Carthaginian approach is quite different from the way that in Cyrenaica, as Irad Malkin has described, a large territorial hinterland is enclosed by areas sacred to Zeus Ammon (1994: 190–1). The difference between the desert coast of the Syrtes and the fertile agricultural uplands of Cyrenaica provides a straightforward explanation for this difference in imperial conceptions.

24 Laronde argues that conflicts between Carthage and Cyrene, which he would set between 360 and 340 (Laronde 1987: 487; cf. 28) would not have been over agricultural land, but instead over access to the ports at the head of the Saharan trade routes (Laronde 1990: 8, with earlier bibliography).

25 The story’s setting in time is of course quite a different matter from the time of its invention, and it is the latter that is my focus here. Despite much ingenious speculation (such as that of Laronde mentioned in the note above), there is in fact no historical record of conflict between Cyrene and Carthage until 309 BCE when Ophellas, Ptolemy I’s representative in Cyrene, allied with Agathocles against Carthage – but on arriving in the vicinity of that city with his army, was promptly killed by his new colleague (Diod. Sic. 20.40–2); a story that does not fit that told by Sallust at all well. I therefore prefer Stucchi’s suggestion that the myth refers to the proto-colonial period, around the seventh century (Stucchi 1975: 600; cf. Oniga 1990: 53; Devillers 2005: 353, n. 76 for later bibliography).
‘Cyrene’ (*Iug*. 19.3), which points to the period of Ptolemaic rule in Cyrenaica, or the fourth to second centuries. As we have seen, however, both pseudo-Scylax, writing in the fourth century (109), and Polybius, writing in the second century about the period of the Second Punic War (3.39), have a singular ‘Philaeus’. This suggests that the myth of the brothers was not yet extant, or at least not standard, by the end of the third century. In the same passage, Polybius is the first to call the Altars a boundary of Carthage.\(^{26}\)

On the other hand, 146 BCE might be considered a *terminus ante quem* for the mythicization of the boundary if the *libri punici* used by Sallust were indeed the Carthaginian library, and not subsequently augmented by the Numidian kings; certainly all authors writing after Sallust use the plural.\(^{27}\) In any case, the earlier second century presents an ideal context for the construction of a myth set in the distant past to consolidate contemporary Carthaginian claims to the ports of the Syrtes, not on this interpretation against the claims of Ptolemaic Cyrene – we hear nothing of their expansionist ambitions in this period – but against those of the Numidians.

For it is the Numidians with whom Carthage was disputing the Syrtes in this period, not the Cyreneans. Livy tells us that the cities in Tripolitania paid a tax (*vectigal*) to Carthage at the beginning of the second century, before Massinissa in 193 forced them to pay it to him instead, and by doing so raised the question of the *possessio* of this area (34.62). It is worth noting that Livy records no apparent interest in territorial control or exploitation on either side in this dispute, only in the right to tax the ports.\(^{28}\) Both sides sent embassies to Rome, where the Carthaginians argued that these cities of the ‘Emporia’ were within the limits set for them by Scipio Africanus at the end of the Hannibalic War in 202/1 (34.62.9–10). According to another passage in Livy these had simply been the ‘cities and lands that they had held before the war, with the same boundaries’ (30.37.2), but in Polybius’s

\(^{26}\) Pseudo-Scylax puts the border of Carthaginian control vaguely at ‘the Syrtis by Euesperides’ (111).
\(^{27}\) Strabo 17.3.20 has it both ways: perhaps a mistake.
\(^{28}\) Massinissa’s interest in the good land around the ‘Emporia’ (the Tripolitanian cities) is probably related to the benefit derived from that land by those cities (Polyb. 31.21.1). *Possessio* did apparently raise the issue of control of rights of way through the land, since Massinissa had at an earlier stage asked the Carthaginians for permission to cross the region in order to reach Cyrenaica (Livy 34.62.10); he was presumably heading for one of the Tripolitanian ports. *Ius vectigalum* and rights of access to the cities also seem to be the basis of the early treaties between Rome and Carthage, which sought to control access to subject communities as well as the extraction of revenue (Polyb. 3.22.5–7, 13; 24.4, 11).
more detailed account, the Carthaginians had been required to restore to King Massinissa all places and land that had belonged to him or his ancestors (15.18.5). Now in 193 Livy has the Numidians retort that all that Carthage had by right in Africa was the land within the cut-up bull’s hide that had been granted to them at their foundation (34.62.11–12). The time would have seemed ripe from Carthage’s point of view for a new foundation myth, and one that gave them, too, an ancestral claim to the Syrtic ports.

A chronological context of the early second century also lends itself well to a secondary function that I would argue influences the specific content of that myth, and that has to do with the stereotype of the Carthaginians. It is well known that the negative Greco-Roman picture of the Carthaginians (with whom the label ‘Punic’ was often treated as interchangeable) is largely a product of fourth-century and later writers, who came to focus in particular on punica fides (Sall. Iug. 108.3), which is of course to say Punic lack of faith (Isaac 2004: 324–35). The first allusion to this can be attributed to Plautus in the third century, for whom a ‘true Carthaginian’ knows every language but cunningly pretends not to (Poen. 112f), and for Cato (or perhaps one of his colleagues) in the second century, the Carthaginians were confirmed treaty-breakers (Rhet. Her. 4.20). According to Diodorus, a false treaty made by a Roman embassy with Perseus in 172 led some of the older Roman senators to reflect that ‘it was not fitting that Romans should imitate Phoenicians, in such a way as to surpass their enemies through deceit and not through valour’ (Diod. Sic. 30.7). By the first century of course we have Livy’s ‘perfidy greater than Punic’ (21.4.9) and Posidonius’s ‘Phoenician lie’ (Strabo 3.5.5), but even in the second century there was an anti-Phoenician charge to answer, and it is a charge overwhelmingly laid against or made in the context of Carthaginians.

I want to suggest here that the story of the Philaeni brothers operates in part as a response to the nascent Greco-Roman notion of punica fides. Not only do these Carthaginians keep their faith against the faithless Greeks, they die to disprove the stereotype. And moreover, just as the story reverses the stereotype, it reverses standard Greek mythical norms. Ribichini has pointed out that while the story contains the standard Greek tropes of

---

29 Massinissa’s claim to the region is nonetheless based on might rather than right: Livy 34.62.13.
30 It could certainly also provide a context for a Carthaginian adaptation of an earlier Greek story, though it is difficult to find an obvious context for the Greek invention or use of such a myth.
31 Livy puts this as versutiae Punicae: 42.47.8.
32 Cf. also Polybius, who has Hannibal adopting an artifice ‘typically Punic’ (3.87.1).
trickery in competitions and of burying humans alive, from a Greek perspective it does not retell but rather mistells them (Ribichini 1991: 397‒8). Winning races by trickery is usually seen in a positive light in the Greek tradition as intelligence or cunning prevailing over brute force, but in the story of the Philaeni brothers, the attempted trick by the Cyreneans doesn’t work, and the Carthaginians win anyway. And burying enemies alive usually marks one’s own claim to the land concerned, giving it to the enemy in a symbolic way that means that they cannot possess it in reality. Ribichini compares in this respect the fate of the Aetolian colonizers in Daunia after the death of their leader Diomedes, when the indigenous inhabitants of the region expelled them from Brundisium, the city they had founded: the Aetolians sought support from an oracle who told them that they would possess forever the land they were seeking to recover, and then sent ambassadors to the locals demanding the restoration of the city, but the Apulians fulfilled the oracle by burying these ambassadors alive (Just. Epit. 12.2.7–11.) In the story of the Philaeni, however, by burying the Carthaginians alive, the Cyreneans give them the land. In this telling of the story the Greekness of the myth-type works against the Greeks of Cyrene. This reversal of Greek norms certainly acknowledges – even highlights – the otherness of the Carthaginians imposed by the new stereotype, but at the same time reverses its hierarchy. Later versions of the story take it in different directions. Pomponius Mela follows Sallust closely (1.33, 38): perhaps not surprising, given Mela’s Phoenician sympathies (Batty 2000, with Ferrer Albelda 2012). Valerius Maximus, on the other hand, gives what is surely a Roman rewriting of the tale, in which it is the Carthaginians who cheat, starting early, and who give a clear example of perfidia and fraus punica (5.6 ext. 4).33 Sallust could have written this version; that he did not, I have suggested, can be explained by his Carthaginian source.34

33 On the relationship between the versions of Sallust and Valerius Maximus, see Guerrini (1981: 46–9), and more generally on the later tradition, Oniga (1990: 54–61).

34 I owe thanks to Corinne Bonnet, Lisa Fentress, Brien Garnand, Edward Lipiński, Sarah Price, Nick Vella, José Ángel Zamora and, in particular, to Irad Malkin and Sergio Ribichini for comments on versions of this chapter.