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## **The Policy of the Barka Family in Spain (238-219 BCE)**

### **Abstract**

The policy of the Barcid family in Spain (238–219 BCE) played a crucial role in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the Western Mediterranean during the late third century BCE. Following the end of the First Punic War, Carthage sought to compensate for its losses in Sicily by expanding its influence in Spain, a region rich in natural resources and strategic military advantages. The Barcid family, led by Hamilcar Barca and later his successors, Hasdrubal the Fair and Hannibal, implemented a comprehensive policy aimed at consolidating Carthaginian control, securing economic resources, and preparing for future conflicts against Rome. This study examines the Barcid expansion in Spain by analyzing its military strategies, economic policies, diplomatic engagements, and administrative structures. The research also investigates the interactions between the Barcids and the local Iberian tribes, highlighting the methods used to establish authority and extract resources.

The study is based on a thorough review of primary historical sources, including accounts by Polybius, Livy, and Diodorus Siculus, alongside modern scholarly interpretations. The findings reveal that the Barcid policy in Spain was not merely an extension of Carthaginian interests but rather a semi-autonomous effort by the Barcid family to build a power base independent of Carthage. This policy ultimately led to the Second Punic War, as Rome perceived the expansionist ambitions of the Barcids as a direct threat to its own influence in the region. By exploring the motivations, successes, and failures of the Barcid policy, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors that fueled one of antiquity's most significant conflicts.

**Keywords:** *Barcid family, Carthage, Spain, Punic Wars, Hannibal, Hamilcar Barca, Hasdrubal the Great, Iberian tribes, Roman-Carthaginian conflict*

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## **İspaniyada Barka ailəsinin siyasəti (e.ə. 238-219)**

### **Xülasə**

İspaniyada Barcid ailəsinin siyasəti (e.ə. 238-219) eramızdan əvvəl III əsrin sonlarında Qərbi Aralıq dənizinin geosiyasi mənzərəsinin formalaşmasında həlledici rol oynamışdır. Birinci Pün müharibəsi başa çatdıqdan sonra Karfagen Siciliyadakı itkilərini təbii sərvətlərlə zəngin və strateji hərbi üstünlüklərlə zəngin olan İspaniyada təsirini genişləndirməklə kompensasiya etməyə çalışırdı. Hamilcar Barca və daha sonra onun davamçıları Hasdrubal the Fair və Hannibalın başçılıq etdiyi Barcid ailəsi Karfagen nəzarətini möhkəmləndirməyə, iqtisadi resursları təmin etməyə və Romaya qarşı gələcək münaqişələrə hazırlaşmağa yönəlmiş hərtərəfli siyasət həyata keçirdilər. Bu araşdırma İspaniyada Barcid genişlənməsini onun hərbi strategiyalarını, iqtisadi siyasətlərini, diplomatik fəaliyyətlərini və inzibati strukturlarını təhlil edərək araşdırır. Tədqiqat həmçinin Barcidlər və yerli İber qəbilələri arasında qarşılıqlı əlaqələri araşdıraraq, səlahiyyət yaratmaq və resursları çıxarmaq üçün istifadə olunan üsulları vurğulayır.

Tədqiqat müasir elmi şərhələrlə yanaşı, ilkin tarixi mənbələrin, o cümlədən Polybius, Livy və Diodorus Siculusun hesablarının hərtərəfli nəzərdən keçirilməsinə əsaslanır.

Tapıntılar göstərir ki, İspaniyadakı Barcid siyasəti sadəcə Karfagen maraqlarının uzantısı deyil, Barcid ailəsinin Karfagendən müstəqil bir güc bazası qurmaq üçün yarı muxtar səyi idi. Roma Barcidlərin ekspansionist ambisiyalarını bölgədəki öz təsirinə birbaşa təhlükə kimi qəbul etdiyi üçün bu siyasət sonda İkinci Pun müharibəsinə gətirib çıxardı. Barcid siyasətinin motivlərini, uğurlarını və uğursuzluqlarını tədqiq etməklə, bu tədqiqat antik dövrün ən mühüm münaqişələrindən birini alovlandıran amillərin daha dərinə başa düşülməsinə kömək edir.

**Açar sözlər:** *Barcid ailəsi, Karfagen, İspaniya, Pun müharibələri, Hannibal, Hamilcar Barca, Sərgi Hasdrubal, İber tayfaları, Roma-Karfagen münaqişəsi*

## Introduction

The Barcid family played a defining role in Carthage's resurgence following the First Punic War (264–241 BCE). After Carthage suffered a humiliating defeat to Rome and lost its valuable Sicilian territories, the city-state faced internal crises, including the Mercenary War (241–237 BCE) and economic instability. Seeking new opportunities to restore Carthaginian power, General Hamilcar Barca turned his attention to Spain, where he embarked on an ambitious campaign of conquest and consolidation. His policy in Spain laid the foundation for Carthage's military and economic recovery and directly shaped the events leading to the Second Punic War.

Hamilcar Barca's strategy in Spain was multifaceted. He aimed to establish a strong Carthaginian presence by subjugating Iberian tribes, exploiting the region's mineral wealth, and constructing a powerful army that would later challenge Rome. His successors, Hasdrubal the Fair and Hannibal, continued and expanded this policy by strengthening alliances, founding new cities like Carthago Nova (modern Cartagena), and developing a network of military and economic control. The Barcid policy was characterized by a blend of military aggression, economic exploitation, and diplomatic maneuvering, making it one of the most sophisticated imperial enterprises of its time.

## Research

Despite its apparent success, the expansion of the Barcids in Spain was met with increasing suspicion from Rome. The Ebro Treaty (226 BCE), which sought to limit Carthaginian influence north of the Ebro River, was a diplomatic attempt to contain Barcid ambitions. However, when Hannibal besieged Saguntum in 219 BCE, Rome saw this as a violation of the treaty and used it as a *casus belli* to launch the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE). Thus, the policies of the Barcid family in Spain not only transformed the region but also set the stage for one of the most significant conflicts in ancient history.

This study seeks to analyze the Barcid policy in Spain from 238 to 219 BCE, focusing on the military, economic, and diplomatic strategies employed by Hamilcar, Hasdrubal, and Hannibal. By examining the motivations behind their expansion, their interactions with local tribes, and the consequences of their policies, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Carthaginian Spain and its impact on the broader Mediterranean world (Kurz, 2018).

## Objectives of the Study

- 1. To examine the military strategies** employed by the Barcid family in Spain and their role in consolidating Carthaginian control.
- 2. To analyze the economic policies** implemented by the Barcids, including resource extraction, trade, and revenue generation.
- 3. To explore the diplomatic relations** between the Barcids and the Iberian tribes, as well as their interactions with Rome.
- 4. To assess the administrative structures** established by the Barcids and their effectiveness in governing Spain.
- 5. To evaluate the impact of the Barcid expansion** on Carthage, Rome, and the broader Mediterranean political landscape.

## Research Questions

1. What were the primary motivations behind the Barcid expansion in Spain?
2. How did the Barcid military campaigns shape the political and social structure of Iberia?
3. What role did economic exploitation play in sustaining the Barcid rule in Spain?

4. How did the Barcids navigate their relationships with local Iberian tribes and rival powers such as Rome?

5. To what extent was the Barcid policy independent of Carthaginian state control?

6. How did the Roman response to the Barcid expansion lead to the Second Punic War?

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the Barcid family's significant role in shaping Carthaginian and Mediterranean history, their policies in Spain have often been overshadowed by the broader narrative of the Punic Wars. Many historical analyses focus on Hannibal's invasion of Italy while neglecting the foundation laid by his father and predecessors. Additionally, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that integrate military, economic, and diplomatic aspects of the Barcid administration in Spain. This research seeks to fill this gap by providing a detailed examination of how the Barcid policy functioned as an independent entity and how it contributed to the growing tension between Carthage and Rome (Ruffing, 2020, p. 227).

Furthermore, there remains a debate among scholars regarding the extent to which the Barcids acted autonomously from Carthage's central government. While some historians argue that the Barcid expansion was part of a coordinated Carthaginian imperial strategy, others contend that Hamilcar, Hasdrubal, and Hannibal pursued their own interests, effectively establishing a semi-independent power base. This study aims to clarify this issue by investigating the relationship between the Barcids and the Carthaginian state.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it provides a nuanced understanding of Carthaginian Spain by examining the military, economic, and diplomatic strategies employed by the Barcid family. By doing so, it contributes to broader historical discussions about empire-building, military logistics, and colonial administration in the ancient world.

Second, the research sheds light on the geopolitical dynamics of the Western Mediterranean during the late third century BCE. Understanding the Barcid policy in Spain helps explain the underlying causes of the Second Punic War and the shifting balance of power between Rome and Carthage. This period was crucial in determining the fate of the ancient Mediterranean, and a closer examination of the events leading up to the war provides a clearer picture of how history unfolded.

Finally, this study addresses gaps in existing scholarship by offering a multidisciplinary approach that integrates historical, archaeological, and economic perspectives. By examining primary sources alongside modern analyses, it provides a more comprehensive view of the Barcid family's role in Spain and its long-term impact on the ancient world.

In conclusion, the policy of the Barcid family in Spain was a defining chapter in Carthaginian history. Through military conquest, economic exploitation, and diplomatic maneuvering, the Barcids transformed Iberia into a crucial base for Carthage's ambitions. However, their success also precipitated their downfall, as their expansion brought them into direct conflict with Rome, setting the stage for the Second Punic War. This study aims to uncover the complexities of this period and highlight the significance of Barcid Spain in the broader context of ancient history (Kurz, 2016).

The Mercenary Revolt in Sardinia, combined with Rome's efforts to limit Hamilcar's influence, significantly bolstered the popularity of the Barcid faction and made their ambitions more attainable. The blatant injustice of annexing Sardinia and Corsica, along with the imposition of an additional war indemnity on Carthage, ignited a strong sense of national pride among the Punic people. This led to a growing conviction that a lasting agreement with Rome was impossible, thereby aligning public sentiment with the Barcids' position.

In this way, Rome inadvertently supported the "Barcid Plan," assuming such a plan existed, as suggested by our sources, which frequently reference the Barcids' "hatred" of and desire for "revenge" against Rome. This motivated the Barcids to pursue expansion in Spain, where they sought to rebuild their strength away from Rome's scrutiny and to overcome the challenges posed by the Hanno faction, which favored giving Rome free rein in the Mediterranean while focusing on expansion at the expense of neighboring Libyans.

Hamilcar's plan, as some argue, was meticulously crafted. The discipline and consistency evident in its execution suggest that it was not improvised but rather a carefully developed strategy aimed at addressing the deficiencies that had prevented Carthage from achieving victory in the Sicilian War.

### **Addressing Carthage's Weaknesses**

The plan sought to resolve the key shortcomings that hindered Carthage during the conflict in Sicily:

1. **Economic Fragility:** Carthage's economy was too weak to bear the costs of prolonged war.
2. **Oligarchic System:** The ruling aristocracy was self-serving and reluctant to contribute to the war effort, favoring peaceful agreements with Rome.

3. **Reliance on Mercenaries:** Dependence on mercenaries was the most significant liability.

To tackle these challenges, Hamilcar turned to Spain, a region offering substantial economic benefits. Its vast mineral wealth, particularly the silver mines of Sierra Morena, could rejuvenate Carthage's economy and support its military needs. Furthermore, its rich agricultural and livestock resources could revitalize Punic markets.

Spain's geographical distance also provided Hamilcar with a refuge from the intrigues and conspiracies of Carthage's oligarchic elite. Merchants and financiers often worked to suppress militaristic endeavors, directing attention toward African territories and leaving the western Mediterranean open to Roman dominance. This strategy aimed to avoid further confrontations with Rome, which could lead to economic stagnation and financial losses.

### **The Hannoite Perspective**

The Hanno faction's support for the Spanish expedition was likely driven not by alignment with the Barcids' policies but rather by their desire to exploit Spain's mineral wealth. By endorsing the campaign, they sought to distance the Barcids from Carthage and even from Rome, ensuring that the Barcids' military ambitions would not interfere with their economic interests.

In conclusion, while Hamilcar's vision for Spain aimed to restore Carthage's strength and independence, it also highlighted the deep divisions within Carthaginian politics. The Barcids sought to revive national pride and military power, while the Hannoites prioritized economic gain and appeasement of Rome. This complex interplay of ambitions set the stage for Carthage's resurgence and its eventual confrontation with Rome.

The population density in Spain also played a significant role in providing Hamilcar's army with substantial recruitment opportunities at minimal cost (Steinby, 2022).

Thus, we see that the choice of Spain met Hamilcar's needs. In addition to its natural and mineral wealth and population density, Spain was far from Italy, which minimized the likelihood of drawing the attention or intervention of the Roman Senate during the early stages of his efforts.

This choice was not random but informed by knowledge and experience. The Phoenicians had been visiting Spain since the late 12th century BCE. Historical evidence and texts indicate interactions between the Phoenicians and the Kingdom of Tartessos as early as the 9th century BCE—well before Carthage was founded. Several Phoenician settlements were established along the Iberian Peninsula's coasts, the most notable and renowned being the settlement of Gades (modern-day Cádiz). This settlement maintained close ties with Carthage, which likely provided assistance in dealing with the local inhabitants and resisting Greek influence, particularly after the founding of Massalia (modern-day Marseille) and the Greeks' growing interest in exploiting Spain's resources.

The Magonid dynasty had already asserted dominance over the Phoenicians in the far west, forming confederations that German scholar Schulten described as the "First Carthaginian Empire" in Spain. However, these confederations, or rather empires, disappeared along with the families that established them around the mid-4th century BCE.

While the Magonids conducted major campaigns along the eastern coasts, permanently driving the Greeks north of Catalonia and destroying numerous Iberian forts, they failed to establish lasting control. Archaeological evidence indicates that there were no Punic settlements in Spain before the Barcid conquests. Phoenician-founded cities retained not only their political independence but also cultural practices distinct from Carthage's. These cities even continued trading with the Greeks despite existing treaties. The only Carthaginian-controlled territory in the region was the island of

Ibiza in the Balearic archipelago, seized in 654 BCE. Excavated artifacts from Ibiza differ significantly from those found in Spain, featuring distinctly Carthaginian tools.

At that time, the Iberian Peninsula could be divided into three regions (Lancel, 1998):

**The First Region:** Spanning the southern and eastern coasts, this area was densely populated, featuring numerous cities. Its inhabitants were a mix of Phoenicians, Greeks, and native Iberians.

The second region of Spain consisted of the central areas, where early Gauls had intermingled with the local population to form a tribal society of fierce warriors and cavalrymen. This society was, as some described it, a volatile mix of extremes: "friendship and hostility."

The third region was inhabited by the most recent Gaulish migrations, which had not yet integrated with the existing population. The tribes in this area were remarkably strong and brave, making them difficult to subdue.

With the exception of one coastal tribe residing in the Málaga region, which had adopted the Phoenician language, the majority of the locals resisted Punic dominance. This tribe, the **Bastulo-Poeni**, as the Romans called them, were descendants of the Tartessians. Their king, **Arganthonius**, had welcomed Phoenician and Greek sailors in the 8th century BCE.

Alongside the Bastulo-Poeni, two other peoples shared the legacy of this wealthy kingdom:

1. **The Turdetani**, from the Guadalquivir River basin.

2. **The Bastetani**, from the Granada region.

Archaeological discoveries in these regions reveal a sophisticated civilization in southern Spain during ancient times. These areas and peoples had previously interacted with the Phoenicians and later the Carthaginians. However, during Hamilcar's time, it was necessary to move northward to find the major centers of Iberian civilization, stretching from Sierra Nevada to Hérault.

Here, a cohesive and vibrant nation dominated the Mediterranean shores. It became better known in the relatively late 5th century BCE, using a shared language and script. Although their tongue is not well understood, it is believed to be related to the Tartessian language and, to some extent, the Pyrenean-Iberian languages, traces of which remain in modern Basque.

The strength and distinctiveness of the Iberian language are particularly evident in their art, dated by modern research to the 4th century BCE. In the same region, painted ceramics indicate a thriving society marked by feudal customs, conflicts, and diverse activities such as seafaring, horseback riding, warfare, and entertainment. Among these activities, bullfighting stood out as the most popular—its influence can still be seen in Spanish culture today (Bagnall, 1999).

Despite their economic, social, and artistic wealth, political progress did not accompany these advancements. Most Iberians continued to live in fortified villages dominated by barons or lords, who frequently engaged in conflicts with neighbors and sometimes submitted to more powerful rulers. Confederations were thus formed but were fragile, dissolving quickly after the founder's departure. This fragility led the geographer Strabo to describe the Iberians as prone to banditry, piracy, and rebellion against authority.

Conditions were even harsher on the interior high plateaus, home to mixed Celtiberian tribes in the eastern part of the peninsula. The **Celts** there shared a similar lifestyle with their northern counterparts beyond the Pyrenees. Their weapons and jewelry all belonged to the same cultural sphere.

The Celtiberians, considered the most civilized and urbanized among the Celt-Iberian tribes, lived in stone-built cities fortified in a Mediterranean style. One notable city was **Numantia**, a symbol of military virtues and the fierce desire for independence of this proud people.

These were the regions and peoples of Spain that Hamilcar Barca had to face. Fortunately for him, the primary objectives of his plan were not located in areas controlled by the most dangerous or hostile tribes. The **gold and silver mines of Sierra Morena**, the wealth of Tartessus, were not far from Gades (modern-day Cádiz), which willingly welcomed the Punic army and its leader.

From his base in Gades, Hamilcar began negotiations that quickly secured the peaceful submission of tribes such as the **Bastetani**. However, he had to engage in conflict with the **Turdetani** or, more precisely, the neighboring wealthy Celtiberian tribes to the north.

By 236 BCE, this phase was concluded, and Hamilcar initiated a new system for exploiting the mines. He minted new high-quality silver coins that replaced the shekels brought from Carthage. Despite rumors suggesting that Hamilcar sought to establish an independent empire in Spain, both economically and politically, evidence shows that he continued to send shipments of precious metals to Carthage. These shipments were sufficient to pay wages, fulfill war reparations, and revitalize Carthage's industrial and commercial activities after depleting remaining funds on his campaign. Hamilcar thus restored balance among Carthaginian aristocrats, reconciling merchants, industrialists, and landowners.

Following these initial successes, Hamilcar turned his attention to the **Detani (Deitani)**, a wealthy but mountainous region extending to the mouth of the **Júcar River**. Subjugating this area required four years (235–231 BCE). To extend operations further north, he relocated his command center from Gades to **Acræleucus (White Cape)**, from where he focused on inland conquests after securing coastal tribes (Hoyos, 2003).

Hamilcar's victories alarmed **Massilia (modern Marseille)**, which alerted Rome. At the time, Rome showed little interest in distant Spain due to its preoccupations elsewhere. However, in 231 BCE, Rome dispatched an investigative delegation to Spain to assess the situation. Hamilcar received the Roman envoys warmly and successfully convinced them that his campaigns aimed solely at disciplining rebellious Iberian tribes that were disrupting Punic trade and hindering Carthage's ability to pay the war indemnities stipulated in its treaty with Rome.

In the winter of 229 BC, Hamilcar resumed his campaigns inland. However, the Iberians of **Meseta**, who had mixed with the Celts or had been trained by them, proved to be formidable opponents. In 229 BC, they succeeded in besieging the Carthaginian forces, who had not taken all necessary precautions, when they attempted to attack a fortress that seemed easy. This fortress had refused to pay tribute. Hamilcar had left his best troops, along with all the elephants, with his son-in-law **Hasdrubal the Great**. But suddenly, his camp was besieged by the **Oritanians**, whose king **Heliki** pretended to negotiate with Hamilcar, who found himself in a difficult position. He accepted the agreement and took the return route along the coast, following the **Jura River**. At a narrow pass where the road meets the river, his forces were surrounded, and the rear of the army was quickly destroyed. When Hamilcar, isolated, tried to join his forces on the other side of the river, he threw himself into the river with his horse, but the floodwaters swept him away, and he drowned.

#### Succession of Hamilcar:

Hamilcar's death created a difficult situation, as appointing a successor was not easy. The soldiers had gained the right to choose their leader during the "**Mercenary War**", a privilege they were not willing to relinquish easily. Psychologically, there was also an impact, as Hamilcar's victories over the past eight years were not just the result of his talent and genius but were attributed to a supernatural, divine-like talent, which was believed to be hereditary within his family. Therefore, the army trusted only a relative of Hamilcar. However, the three sons, although they had proven their courage, authority, and strategies, were too young to take on political and military responsibilities after their father's death (Goldsworthy, 2003).

Leadership was handed over to **Hasdrubal the Great**, Hamilcar's son-in-law, who had been his second-in-command in Spain for many years. His role as admiral had not prevented him from commanding the land forces, giving him military experience. Additionally, his previous political involvement with the "Democratic League" allowed him to build valuable political connections, both for his acceptance in the capital **Carthage** and to organize the administrative and military structure that Hamilcar had started in Spain.

Hasdrubal's first action after his appointment as the Carthaginian general in Spain was to avenge Hamilcar's death. He gathered an army of 60,000 infantry, 8,000 cavalry, and 200 elephants and launched a punitive campaign against the Oritanian tribes. He killed all those he considered responsible for Hamilcar's death and captured twelve cities.

However, we observe that **Hasdrubal** leaned toward peaceful methods, achieving his goals more through diplomacy and negotiating with the Spanish tribes rather than resorting to military force.

Through this approach, he was able to expand the influence of the Carthaginian family in the Iberian Peninsula.

The prince in Carthaginian Spain was the link between the **Barcid** family (officials, soldiers, and city dwellers) and the local population. Hamilcar had given the family a formal structure with the help of the more dynamic princes, uniting various tribes and fortresses under their rule. Within the interior of the peninsula, **Culchas** was appointed as a prince over twenty-eight cities. These local units were unified into national **federations**. During Hasdrubal's time, he summoned the heads of these federations and was elected as the supreme leader by the "Congress of Princes." Afterward, he immediately declared the financial and possibly military obligations of the members (Fields, 2010).

The internal autonomy of these members was respected, but any disobedience was met with severe punishment. Hamilcar had set the example from the beginning of his conquests by executing the king of **Indortas** (a local leader who opposed the occupation of **Betique**). There was no direct administration of the soldiers in the army. Tax collectors visited these federations without guards. The loyalty of the followers was guaranteed only by the presence of hostages in Carthage. There may have been secret Carthaginian agents traveling throughout the region, monitoring the princes, and assisting the most loyal ones in subduing their neighbors. Hasdrubal gave great attention to organizing these diplomatic and intelligence services, preferring peaceful methods over the use of force. As **Titus Livius** says: "More through personal relationships with the princes than through war or weapons, Carthage gained new strength" (Miles, 2011).

To implement this policy, Hasdrubal the Great called upon representatives of all the Iberian peoples and asked them to elect him as their "supreme leader." While this election did not grant him additional powers beyond those given by the army or the legitimacy he had received from the Senate in Carthage, it changed the nature of control in Spain—from a "foreign conqueror" to a "national leader." This shift transformed the colonial state into a state that was linked to and, in principle, independent. It seems that Hasdrubal understood the nature of the Iberian people, who cherished freedom and pride, and sought to reap the benefits with minimal harm. As such, when he dissolved the council, he fixed the taxes to be paid by each tribe and invited the chiefs to send a member of their family to be raised under his care, ensuring their loyalty.

After the death of his wife, Hamilcar's daughter, Hasdrubal married the daughter of one of the Spanish tribal chiefs. This marriage helped solidify his control over the Iberians, granting him widespread popularity. The union also gave him "legitimacy" in the eyes of the Spanish people.

After these achievements, which ensured his peaceful loyalty among the Spanish tribes, **Hasdrubal** turned to his second major policy goal: establishing a capital for his new realm (Polybius).

Establishment of Carthagera:

#### A. Location:

The city was strategically located on the southeastern coast of Spain, near the extremely rich silver mines, fertile agricultural plains, and a well-protected harbor. The Carthaginian elders who attended the city's opening praised this accomplishment, especially as **Hasdrubal** equipped the city with significant industrial centers. He built shipyards, a mint, and factories employing no less than 2,000 workers across various crafts. The city was fortified with tall, impregnable walls and temples. However, the most notable structure was the massive royal palace, which suggests that **Hasdrubal** lived according to the protocols of Hellenistic monarchies (Livy).

#### B. Naming the City:

The decision to name the city **Carthagera** sparked controversy among some historians, who saw the name as a clear reference to the parent city of Carthage, suggesting a desire for independence from the homeland. However, **M. Forren** argues that "Carth-Hadast" had a different meaning, one not linked to the new city. He interprets "Carth" to mean "capital," suggesting that **Hasdrubal** founded a new capital, which the Romans later referred to as **Carthago Nova**, to distinguish it from the original Carthage.

The Barcid family's authority in Spain was based on the trust of the army, with legitimacy always rooted in their victories. While the kings of Tyre were believed to be chosen by the gods, the Barcid family saw in their traditions a "symbol" that inspired their royal authority. **Hamilcar** and his

successors were considered by their followers as the earthly embodiment of the god **Melqart**. The Barcid family religion, which spread in Spain, was a blend of Phoenician, Greek, and local beliefs, and was less dogmatic in its view of the supremacy of the deity compared to traditional Carthaginian beliefs. While they maintained the superiority of **Shamem** (the chief god), their religion was more humane and free of the fanaticism associated with the worship of **Baal-Hamon**, the great god of Carthage. That said, the worship of **Baal-Hamon** did not disappear in Spain; he had a temple alongside **Melqart's** temple in **Cádiz**, and **Hasdrubal** dedicated a second temple to him on one of the hills overlooking **Carthagera**, while other hills were dedicated to the mining gods (such as **Kasur**) and the heroes who had previously discovered the mineral wealth of the Iberian mountains. However, **Baal-Hamon** did not have a place in the military pantheon of the Barcid faction, nor did we find evidence of the worship of **Tanit** outside of Ibiza (Diodorus Siculus).

While the Barcid family relied on the army and religion to support their rule, economic power also played a significant role in solidifying their authority. This economic strength was primarily drawn from the **Siramorina mines**, which ensured **Hamilcar's** economic independence within two years of his arrival in Spain. To confirm this autonomy, he minted his own coins, which became a medium of exchange across Spain due to their high quality.

As previously mentioned, **Hasdrubal** worked to make **Carthagera** an important economic center by establishing various factories and workshops, in order to avoid relying solely on the extraction of precious metals.

It appears from our sources that the workers in these factories and workshops were slaves, as were the miners, and all were subjected to a harsh system. The condition of rural workers may not have been much better than that of the miners. Latin texts and inscriptions, dating shortly before the Roman occupation, confirm the existence of villages for serfs, most of whom were owned by the Barcid family or the Carthaginian aristocracy. This was due to **Hamilcar**, and later **Hasdrubal**, having the ability to involve many of their fellow citizens in the conquests. Alongside them were some members of the **Council of Thirty** and the Carthaginian Senate, who formed their military council. These individuals, who did not lack the time to focus on their own interests, seized vast estates and employed the serfs there (Appian).

**Hasdrubal** was skilled in improving the positions of citizens from the middle and lower classes, as well as the bourgeoisie of the allied Carthaginian cities, which the oligarchy treated as inferior. This enhanced the standing of the Barcid family.

Thus, the resources of **Carthagera**, independent of the Carthaginian government and distant from its supervision, grew due to the activity of **Hamilcar** and later **Hasdrubal**, until they became a crucial resource for Carthage to resolve its crises and revive its economy. Carthage thus became economically dependent on **Carthagera** and subject to its oversight.

Historians generally agree that **Hamilcar's** conquest of Spain was only a phase leading to "revenge" against Rome. However, Rome allowed him to operate for six years (237–231 BCE) without interference. The Senate was likely content with the enemy's engagement in a distant war, preferring to focus on more immediate objectives between 240–227 BCE, such as Corsica, Sardinia, Liguria, and Pre-Alpine Gaul.

When the **Barcid** conquests began to succeed in 237 BCE, the Greeks of **Emporion** (modern Empúries) grew concerned and called for their **Phocian** allies. However, the Phocians were unable to confront the Carthaginians and turned to Rome, which sent a mission. This was ineffective, as **Hamilcar** managed to convince the mission that the purpose of these expansions was to fulfill Rome's dues. Moreover, it is likely that Rome's disinterest was partly due to its own concerns (Cottrell, 1992).

However, once **Rome** overcame the Gallic threat, particularly after defeating them near **Cape Telamon** in 226 BCE, it suddenly turned its attention to Spain. **Hasdrubal** signed an agreement with Rome, prohibiting Carthaginian forces from crossing the **Ebro River**.

The Ebro Treaty of 226 BCE:

**Polybius** views this treaty as a precautionary measure by Rome to fight the Gauls without the risk of being encircled by Carthaginian forces. However, this assumption entangles Rome, as it appears to have provoked the war against the Celts. Many researchers question the reasons behind Rome's

negotiation with **Hasdrubal** rather than with the Carthaginian government, suggesting that Rome may have had intentions to violate the treaty when circumstances allowed.

**Polybius** portrays Rome as the one requesting the treaty—perhaps believing, like many researchers, that Carthage benefited from the agreement by recognizing its presence in Spain. However, in reality, **Hasdrubal** was the one making concessions, which leads us to suspect that **Polybius** was misled, which influenced his belief that the **Second Punic War** was entirely the responsibility of **Hannibal**, and that the treaty was made between two equal parties. Rome's recognition of the **Barcid Empire** in Spain likely aimed only to guarantee Rome's security, while we can view the treaty as a true "imposition," meant to curb Carthaginian expansion in Spain as quickly as possible.

The city of "Saguntum" was located thirty kilometers north of Valencia. It enjoyed prosperity and a higher level of civilization compared to other Iberian cities due to its proximity to the sea and its extensive trade relations with the Greeks. It seems that the Saguntines, perhaps, rejected the Punic domination in the council convened by Hasdrubal the Great in 229 BCE. Fearing its imposition, they sought closer ties with Rome, which soon became their ally (Baker, 1929).

Thus, Rome found itself openly intervening in Spain, and it could no longer overlook what was happening there. It sent a second embassy to Hasdrubal in 226 BCE, carrying a pre-drafted treaty with the help of the Fusians and Saguntines. The treaty seemingly left him with no choice but to either accept or reject it. The treaty stipulated: "The Punic forces are prohibited from crossing the Ebro River to the north," which is the largest river in eastern Spain (Ebre).

While the purpose of the treaty was to protect "Saguntum," the city lies 130 kilometers south of this river, leading Jerome Carcopino to hypothesize the existence of two rivers with similar names: the Iberus (Iberus) in the north, which is the Ebro, and the Jucar in the south. The latter is the river that seems to have been set as the boundary in the 226 BCE treaty. Supporting this view, Appian clearly places Saguntum north of the Iberus, and Polybius concurs when discussing the reasons for the Second Punic War.

If we accept this interpretation, it would prevent any further expansion by the Barcid family in Spain, as Hamilcar had previously reached the banks of the Jucar and died while fighting those living along its shores. It would also implicitly prevent the use of force against the Iberian tribes that participated in the 229 BCE conference, who had escaped the Barcid family's influence.

If Hasdrubal had the terms of the Iberian treaty imposed on him and knew how to evade them diplomatically, he also understood how to provoke opponents of Rome in the Iberian Peninsula. During this period, Indibilis and Edecan founded their kingdoms with support from the Barcids. Thus, Hasdrubal did not remain idle in the face of Rome's demands, and in fact, he even managed to incite the Tubolenses, Saguntum's neighbors, who joined him. He gained supporters in the city, and they revolted against the pro-Roman government (Dorey, 1971).

This diplomatic maneuver by Hasdrubal led some researchers to attribute a significant role to the Barcid supporters in the Gallic revolt against Rome. They convinced the pre-Alpine tribes of the need to "unite" against the common enemy and encouraged Concolitan and Anbrost to cross the mountains, with the Roman troop distribution in the spring of 225 BCE serving as evidence of this Punic-Gallic conspiracy.

While some blame Hasdrubal for not intervening militarily in this Roman-Gallic conflict, an intervention from him might have prevented Regulus from moving his troops to Pisa and attacking the enemy from the rear, others criticize his actions as lacking "boldness." However, Hasdrubal, who was more familiar with the situation, knew that his intervention could only be through the sea. Despite building a "Carthaginian arsenal," the Barcid fleet was not in a position to confront Rome at sea, and he was not in a position to regain sovereignty. As Hasdrubal, who served as Hamilcar's admiral, was in a better position to realize this reality, any intervention would have risked the gains made over many years.

Thus, Hasdrubal continued his diplomacy with the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula. However, a Celtiberian prince opposed the Barcid family's intervention or, as some others put it, their schemes and machinations. He was assassinated, or according to the account of the Italian historian

Celii Italici, he was kidnapped and crucified in Carthage. However, one of his loyal supporters managed to enter Carthage, reach Hasdrubal, and fatally stab him with a dagger at the beginning of 221 BCE.

After Hasdrubal's death, the army elected "Hannibal," the cavalry commander for the past three years, without waiting for the authorities' opinion in Carthage. It is possible that Hasdrubal's cautious approach had stirred the "enthusiasm" of the veteran soldiers who elevated Hannibal to the position. Although Carthage ratified the army's decision, Appianus confirms that the "Hannibal faction" strongly rebelled and even managed to oust many influential members of the "Barcid faction." Nevertheless, it seems that the majority of the people and the elders continued to support Hannibal.

The Barcid Empire in Spain, which some researchers believe Hamilcar viewed merely as a tool for his "grand plan" of revenge against Rome, was perceived by his son in the same way. After crossing the Pyrenees and Alps, Hannibal didn't consider this "empire" except as a means to secure men and money. Consequently, Hasdrubal was the only one concerned with this empire, trying to provide it with the necessary institutions for its continued existence, which lasted about a quarter of a century. It was far from Carthage's control, which allowed him to establish a permanent, organized army and avoid the burdens of mercenaries and their problems (Lancel, 1995).

In 220 BCE, Hasdrubal returned to a policy of conquest, leaving Carthage and advancing against the Vaccaei on the banks of the middle course of the Duero River. He captured the city of Salamanca, located beyond the Guadarrama mountains to the north, where he faced strong resistance from its inhabitants. He resorted to besieging the city and negotiating with its people.

Hannibal also took the city of "Arbocla" after fierce resistance from its inhabitants and a long siege. On his return to Carthage, after crossing the Guadarrama Mountains and the Tagus River, he encountered an army of the Olcadians. When Hannibal saw the difficulty of facing their forces, estimated by Titus Livius at 100,000 soldiers, he withdrew to the south of the river. When they attempted to cross, Hannibal turned on them and destroyed them with his elephants and cavalry, killing an estimated 100,000 soldiers, according to Polybius. From that point on, no one dared to face him south of the Ebro River, except for the "Saguntines."

#### **The occupation of Saguntum in 219 BCE:**

Saguntum is located south of the Ebro River, halfway between the river and Carthage, and was built very close to the coast. Although it was an ally of Rome according to historical texts, it is unclear when this alliance was established—whether before or after the Ebro Treaty. It is known that Rome sent two embassies to Spain: the first in 231 BCE, following a complaint from the Fusians during the time of Hamilcar, who managed to convince them that the Barcid expansions and conquests in Spain were aimed at enabling Carthage to settle its debts with Rome. The second embassy took place during Hasdrubal's time and resulted in the signing of the Ebro Treaty, which allowed the Punic forces to operate south of the Ebro and prohibited any military actions north of it.

The location of Saguntum south of the river has sparked a debate among historians, as Hannibal's occupation of this city was seen as the primary cause of the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE). Consequently, all the blame for the war has often been placed on this commander, leading some researchers to suggest the existence of two rivers with similar names: the Ebro and the Jucar. In this view, Saguntum would be located north of the latter and south of the former, which would explain Rome's intervention.

It seems that not all of the inhabitants of Saguntum were loyal to Rome, as the Barcids managed to gain some supporters within the city. These supporters were so influential that, during the conflict that broke out in the city between pro-Roman factions in 223 and 222 BCE, they imposed their dominance. The pro-Roman faction then called for Rome's assistance, and Rome sent two legions to aid them, allowing them to punish the Carthaginian supporters. This victory fueled the arrogance of the Saguntines, who once again attacked the Turdetani, who sought Hannibal's help while the Saguntines sought Rome's (Scullard, 1989).

Rome sent an embassy to Spain to address the Saguntines' complaint. Just as the embassy was preparing to depart, news spread in Rome of Hannibal's attack on the city. According to Titus Livius, Rome considered declaring war immediately but hesitated and instead sent the embassy to demand a

cessation of hostilities. This is the embassy that, according to Livius, was not received by Hannibal. In contrast, Polybius claims that Hannibal received the embassy in Carthage, listened to Rome's demands, and responded harshly by declaring that he would take revenge on those who had been wronged.

Polybius places the blame on Hannibal for taking Saguntum and considers it a "mistake" that violated the Ebro Treaty, which prohibited any hostile actions against the Saguntines, Rome's allies. Regardless of this, it is possible that Rome encouraged the Saguntines to seek its protection in order to facilitate intervention in Spain, while Hannibal might have seized the opportunity to act, knowing that Rome, once it had dealt with its wars in Illyria, would soon turn its attention to Spain in its quest for full sovereignty in the western Mediterranean sea.

In the spring of 219 BCE, Hannibal marched on Saguntum and laid siege to it. The siege lasted for eight months before the city was captured, as it was situated on a steep height and surrounded by strong walls. Titus Livius mentions that a Saguntine named "Alcon" negotiated with Hannibal without consulting his fellow citizens. However, the harsh terms imposed by Hannibal made Alcon reconsider passing those conditions on to the people of Saguntum. Upon learning of them, the Saguntines set a large fire and threw everything of value they had into it to prevent Hannibal from taking it.

Despite this, Hannibal managed to collect large amounts of loot, part of which he sent to Carthage, while he kept the rest to continue his projects, which greatly pleased the Carthaginians. The fall of Saguntum was a severe blow to Rome, which had not expected Hannibal to dare such an action. This prompted the Senate to hold a session to discuss the dangerous situation. According to Titus Livius, the Senate was divided into two factions: those advocating for war and those advocating for peace. The latter group called for a policy of leniency and diplomatic efforts with the Barcids to avoid war if possible, while the former group urged the need to declare war, discipline Hannibal, and put him in his place. However, Fabius Maximus advised caution and prudence, suggesting a diplomatic solution through negotiation with the Carthaginians. As a result, a delegation was sent, consisting of four members: Fabius Quintus, Licinius Caius, Lucius Aemilius, and Quintus Baebus.

Upon the delegation's arrival in Carthage in 218 BCE, a meeting of the Carthaginian Senate was held to discuss the matter. Hannibal had also sent an envoy to attend the session and explain his position. Some historians suggest that Hannibal's representative asked the Carthaginian Senate to grant Hannibal full authority to wage war against Rome, in contrast to Hanno, who delivered a speech expressing his disdain for the Barcids and advocating for Hannibal's surrender to Rome to please the Roman Senate. Furthermore, Hanno held Hannibal responsible for the war, accusing him of provoking it by capturing Saguntum (Caven, 1980).

It is said that the President of the Carthaginian Senate responded positively to Fabius when he asked whether Carthage approved of Hannibal's actions, confirming that Hannibal was in the right, as the 241 BCE treaty had not mentioned Spain at all. The 226 BCE treaty, however, had granted the Carthaginians free rein over all the territories south of the Ebro River, including Saguntum.

The meeting thus ended without any agreement, with both sides blaming each other. The only remaining option for arbitration was war, and both sides began preparing for it: the Romans for battle, and Hannibal for his campaign against Italy.

### **Conclusion**

The policy of the Barka family in Spain between 238 and 219 BCE was marked by strategic military expansion, economic consolidation, and diplomatic maneuvering. Led by Hamilcar Barca, his son Hasdrubal, and later Hannibal, the family's efforts sought to strengthen Carthaginian influence on the Iberian Peninsula in response to the territorial losses inflicted by the First Punic War. Their policies focused on securing valuable resources, forging alliances with local tribes, and establishing a power base independent of Carthage's political factions. Ultimately, the Barka family's expansionist ambitions in Spain laid the groundwork for the Second Punic War, as their growing power directly challenged Rome's strategic interests. This period underscores the broader geopolitical dynamics of the Western Mediterranean and the enduring legacy of the Barka family's vision in shaping Carthaginian foreign policy.

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