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A. Mastino, *Urban and rural life in Roman Sardinia: economy, society and land use*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing limited, 2025, pp. 1-455.

A. Mastino, *Sardinia in the Roman World until Constantine*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing limited, 2026, pp. 1-475.

The work aims to renew the interpretation of the history of Sardinia, which is no longer to be seen as isolated, but rather well-inserted in the Roman ecumene. It is inspired most of all by a great master, Arnold Toynbee, and his masterpiece, *Hannibal's Legacy*, which was published more than 50 years ago. When Hannibal was born in Carthage (247 BC) the great Mediterranean island of Sardinia had been visited by the Carthaginians for centuries. His father Hamilcar had watch in horror from the sanctuary of Astarte in the city of Erice (Trapani) on the westernmost point of Sicily, as the Roman navy ambushed the Carthaginian fleet. On ships equipped with metallic rostrums they attacked the similarly equipped Carthaginians, after emerging from hiding behind the Aegadian islands (Levanzo)[\[2\]](#). This led to a disastrous naval defeat resulting in the loss of Sicily, and three years later, following a revolt of the mercenaries, Sardinia as well.

Urban and Rural Life in Roman Sardinia

Economy, Society and Land Use



Attilio Mastino

If we are to give credence to Polybius, the Romans usurped Sardinia with dishonest means and unacceptable justifications.

They occupied a vast, densely populated and fertile island, with no provocation whatsoever, many months after the treaty that ended the first Punic war. This is deemed to be the main cause for Hannibal's war, which was waged as a direct result of the treacherous occupation of the towns, the land and the mines by mercenaries hired by the Romans. Exasperated, and suffering considerable personal financial loss, Amilcare convinced his son to take a vow of eternal hatred for Rome, perhaps in the sanctuary on the hill of Baal Hammon-Saturnus (on Djebel Bou Kornine) or in the tophet of Carthage.

Deprived of the "Island with the veins of silver" and having lost his latifundia and his mines, Amilcare decided to found a New Carthage at the entrance to a mine in the Iberian peninsula. It was from here that Hannibal is said to have departed on his mission to vindicate his father and the Carthaginians. Having occupied Sagunto, he invaded the territory of Marseilles, marched over the Alps and reached central and southern Italy, which was destined to be devastated by a long period of war. His real legacy was the devastation and widespread poverty of the following centuries, which provoked the Gracchi affair and later the civil wars.

[\[1\]](#) A.J. Toynbee, *Hannibal's legacy*, Oxford University Press, London 1965.

[\[2\]](#) M.I.P. Gulletta, *Le fonti storiche come strumento per la cartografia. Aree di grandi battaglie nella Sicilia antica*, "Bollettino A.I.C.", nr. 144-145-146 / 2012, pp. 75-93.