

**Tunisia Summary:** My return to Tunisia was 23 June to 23 July, 2024. The task was to coach the writing in English of graduate students and medical doctors. Side trips and extra opportunities enhanced the trip.



Though commonly described as in North Africa, Tunisia's culture and climate is well described as **Southern Mediterranean**. It has been in the *middle* of that Sea for 3000 years.

Though originally inhabited by the Berber people, who are still there in the mountains, the major culture of Tunisia was established by

**Phoenician** traders from the coastal cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos in what is now present-day Lebanon.



They made a western trade center in **Carthage** near the middle of their routes to the western end of the Mediterranean Sea. They brought with them the Canaanite culture referenced in the Bible. That changed somewhat to what became the Punic culture, with the name Punic derived from Phoenicia and applied to their territories in the western part of the Mediterranean Sea.

### Historical Summary

From about 1250 to 800 BC ships from **Tyre** likely visited the western shores. That includes the time of the Biblical kings David and Solomon. There were likely many coastal villages established. About 814 BC the then queen of Tyre fled west with people and gold and established the city of **Carthage**. It then grew to be the major trading center in that region. During subsequent years Carthage likely received refugees from Tyre and its neighboring cities that were suffering attacks by Assyria, Babylon, and Greeks under Alexander the Great.



Gravestones of children burned as sacrifices to the idol Melqart (Molech).

In Carthage are hundreds of small gravestones and stone coffins for infants and children who were the victims of burned sacrifices to the **Canaanite** idol Melqart (Biblical Molech). That practice was repeatedly condemned in the Bible, including in passages about the children "passing through the fire". Some surviving literature descriptions are about a bronze furnace in the shape of the idol into which the children were placed alive and screaming. Some present-day people make comparisons with disposing of children by abortion in their condemnation of that practice.

**Rome** grew in regional power. That resulted in the **Punic Wars** (264-146 BC). The Carthage general Hannibal is associated with those wars. Rome eventually defeated and destroyed Carthage in 146 BC. They then rebuilt their own Carthage on the ruins.



Cisterns to store water for the baths

The largest remaining Roman structures in Carthage are the foundations of the baths of Antonius and a mile away uphill are the huge cisterns and aqueduct that held the water used for the baths. The original baths were several stories tall, with fires on the ground floors to heat the waters above.



Roman baths of Antonius



Aqueduct during 2023 visit



Cisterns during 2023 visit



Middle of Roman baths



Inside Roman baths, ground floor



Roman Amphitheater ruins

We again visited the remains of the Roman amphitheater. The stones of its upper structures were repurposed after the Arab conquest. The remaining channels were passageways for movements of people and animals beneath a flooring deck, unseen by the audiences.



This is where Christians were held prior to being martyred by gladiators or animals up above.



View to north end of amphitheater



The south end was converted into a church in honor of Felicity who was martyred by gladiators.



The dedication to Felicity.



One of the chi-rho (first letters in Greek word for Christ), alpha-omega signs.

The **Edict of Milan**, 313 AD, was issued by Constantine the Great, making Christianity legal in the Roman Empire. Soon thereafter the chi-rho symbols began appearing on Roman coins, even those of Constantine. Official persecution of Christians ended.



Coin of Magnentius, 350-353 AD



This satellite image shows the remaining foundations of the expanding church in Carthage. It was here that several councils of bishops were held. The Council of 397 produced, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the **final list of New Testament books** that are now in our Bible. This church structure was likely destroyed by the Arab attack that ruined all of Carthage in 698 AD.



Foundations of Carthage church



The entrance and exit of the baptismal, which is below.

After two years of instruction in the nearby church school, new believers descend through the “Gate of Death” to the baptismal pool and are baptized. They then rise to the surface through the “Gate of Life” to live for Jesus.

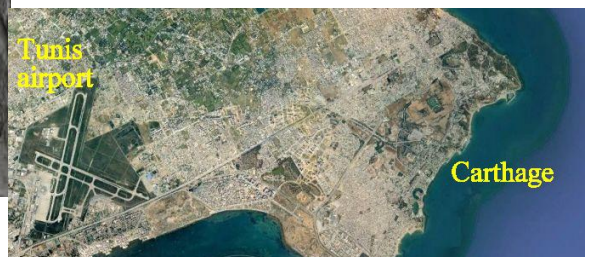


Our teachers around the baptismal pool location.

Carthage was sacked and destroyed by **Arab** forces in **698 AD** to prevent it from being reconquered by the Byzantine Empire. Tunis was its replacement. Later the Byzantine Empire fell and was eventually followed by the **Ottoman Empire** in the Middle East and North Africa.



Descending



The **First Barbary War** (1801-05) was a conflict between the new United States and Tripoli (now in Libya). It was incited by the American refusal to continue payment of tribute to the piratical rulers of the North African Barbary States of Morocco, Algiers, **Tunis**, and Tripoli. (Notice the words in the Marine Hymn: “...*To the shores of Tripoli...*”)

Tunisia officially became a **French Protectorate** on May 12, 1881. It was by treaty, not by conquest (as was done to Algeria).

Tunisia was of strategic importance during **World War II**, enabling an entrance of forces into southern Italy. The North Africa American Cemetery commemorates that effort (shown below).

Tunisia was granted full **independence** from France on March 20, 1956. It was declared a **Republic** on July 25, 1957. Habib Bourguiba was the first prime minister and then the first president of Tunisia.

With discontent simmering for years, the **Jasmine Revolution** was triggered December 17, 2010, with the unwanted president later leaving the country January 15, 2011. That inspired uprisings in other countries (Algeria, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Djibouti, Sudan, Palestine, Iraq, Bahrain, Libya, Kuwait, Morocco, Mauritania), but the **Arab Spring** in those locations was less successful.

Tunisia continues to struggle for improvements in the lives of its people.



Large map on a wall of the North Africa American Cemetery in Carthage, Tunisia, showing troop movements.



Satellite view of Cemetery.



Smaller maps on the wall of the Cemetery, on the next page, show troop movement details in Tunisia and general progress in Europe and the Pacific.



Much important history happened in this Carthage area of northern Tunisia, Southern Mediterranean.  
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