

# Great Battles of History Naval Scenarios

## Trireme Battles at the Dawn of History

The Battles of Alalia, 535 BC and Cumae, 474 BC — War Galley Scenarios

by Dan Fournie

The fate of the Western Mediterranean world was decided in a pair of hard fought naval battles in the late Sixth and early Fifth Centuries. On one side were the Greek sailors of *Magna Graecia*. Ranged against them were the vaunted Etruscans and their tenacious Carthaginian allies. Now you can recreate these legendary battles with GMT Games' first naval Volume of the GBOH series — **War Galley**. Re-fight two of the earliest trireme battles of recorded history.

### Introduction

#### The Western Mediterranean —A Tri-Polar World

During the first half of the Second Millennium BC, two rival sea-faring peoples strove to colonize the Western Mediterranean. First on the scene, as early as 1100, were the Phoenicians, planting colonies in Africa, (Utica, Tunes, etc.) Spain (Gades, Malaga, etc.), and Sicily (Moytya, Lilybaeum, etc.). The Greeks, beginning around 800, settled in Italy (Tarentum, Thurii, Croton, Locri, Rhegium, etc.) and Western Sicily (Messana, Catane, Syracuse, Agrigentum, Gela, Himera, etc.) The Greek colonies of Italy and Sicily came to be known as *Magna Graecia* (Greater Greece). Any further advance northward in Italy was blocked by the dominant land based military power of the region — Etruria. The Etruscans developed sea power as well, and their various city-states could also field squadrons of triremes.

At first, there appeared to be plenty of room for all three peoples in the wild western lands, but the Greeks soon came to resent the Carthaginian monopoly on the African seaboard and on the sea west and north of Sicily. Carthage would allow no Greek vessels to trade in Africa or Spain, but only with the Phoenician cities in Western Sicily. While the Greek city-states remained independent, Carthage began to impose imperial control over the widespread Phoenician colonies in the late 7th and 6th Centuries. Expansion was also sought to the North. An early king of Carthage, Malchus, campaigned in Sardinia around 650, suffering at least one major defeat at the hands of the native

tribes. Mago became the next monarch, and founder of the Magonid dynasty. His two sons, Hasdrubal and Hamilcar continued campaigning in Sardinia around the turn of the century. Meanwhile, the Etruscans, not content with Northern and Central Italy, began to impinge on the Greeks of Campania.

### Historical Background

#### Alalia, 535, a Cadmean Victory for the Greeks

The Greeks appeared to be penned in by Carthage and Etruria. But around 600, Phocaean Greeks from Asia Minor planted a new colony at Massilia. This port at the mouth of the Rhone in southern Gaul soon became wealthy and monopolized the trade of precious metals in the region. But Massilia was isolated from Magna Graecia, and Greek ships had to run a gauntlet between Punic Sardinia and Etruscan Italy.

So, in 560 the Phocaeans established a new colony at Alalia in Corsica. The Greek sailors of Alalia did not find great wealth on their island. Instead, Alalia became a pirate base. The Greek buccaneers grew wealthy raiding the commerce of both Etruria and Carthage. Of course, the Carthaginian and Greek navies had for centuries been engaged in the organized piracy of foreign shipping in each sphere of influence. It was the expansion of the Greek zone that was cause for concern. But Carthage and Etruria made no significant response for decades.


Sometime around 540 the success of the colony at Alalia encouraged the Phocaeans to reinforce the city. Reportedly, one half the population took ship and sailed to Alalia. It seems the growing Persian menace convinced many to seek a better life in the west. But Carthage had finally had enough. Carthage first sent her diplomats into Etruria to form alliances against the Greek invaders. The Carthaginians and Etruscans already faced the aggressive Greeks on a long front through Italy and Sicily. Now the menace was extended at sea from Corsica. Carthage formed a series of alliances with the powerful, coastal Etruscan city-states. Chief among these city-states were Agylla, Tarquinii, Vulci, Rusellae, Vetulonia and Populonia. Like the Greeks, the Etruscans had little political unity beyond the city-state level, though a League of Twelve Cities existed.

The result of the new alliance was the formation of a great joint fleet. The objective was to crush the Phocaean navy and sack Alalia. Carthage contributed a crack squadron of 60 triremes, probably about half her regular navy. The Etruscan city-states provided another 60 triremes, according to Herodotus. Their fleet was a collection of small squadrons from the various coastal city-states. Nearly 20,000 Carthaginians and Etruscans sailed with the combined fleet.

No allied Greek ships sailed to support Alalia, not even their fellow Phocaeans at Massilia. The Greeks mustered only 60 triremes, half the number of galleys in opposition. However,

**WAR GALLEY** (GBoH Series, Vol.VII)

Naval Warfare in the Ancient World (13 battles)  
Reprinted: 2006 by GMT Games LLC  
1st Printing: 1999 Nominee: CSR Awards  
Game Design: Mark Herman & Richard Berg  
Art Director: Rodger B. MacGowan  
Counters: MacGowan & Lemick Maps: Simonitch



**Contents:** 560 one-inch Galley counters and 560 1/2-inch Counters; Two 22x34 inch Maps; Rulebook and Scenario Book; Charts & Tables; One die; Bookcase Box  
**Time Scale:** 5-to-10 minutes per game turn  
**Unit Scale:** 1-to-8 ships per counter  
**Players:** 1-4

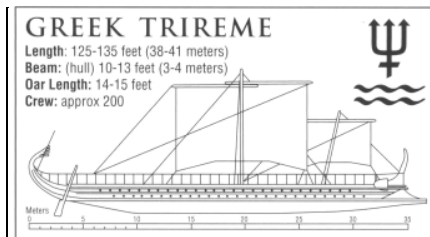
## War Galley Battle Scenarios

the Phocaeans had a reputation as superior sailors amongst the Greeks. Their years of successful piracy would have enabled them to put to sea with galleys in top condition and veteran crews. At about 200 men per galley, the Greek fleet included some 12,000 rowers, sailors and marines. This undoubtedly represented the entire adult male population of Alalia. Defeat would mean death or enslavement for all the inhabitants of the colony.

The Carthaginian and Etruscan squadrons probably assembled in Sardinian ports. From there this combined Cartho-Etruscan fleet sailed north to cross over to Corsica. Somewhere along the Corsican coast south of Alalia, the Greek fleet was waiting. Unfortunately, few details of this engagement at the dawn of history have survived. The Greeks were outnumbered nearly two to one, but facing the extinction of their city, they fought with furious desperation. The Phocaeans had stronger triremes and better marines. The Greeks outclassed the Etruscans in naval combat, but the Carthaginians had light, fast galleys and well trained crews.

We know only the final results of the battle. The Greeks won the fight, and forced the Cartho-Etruscan fleet to withdraw. The Greeks lost 40 of their triremes, but still won the battle. Cartho-Etruscan losses must have been extremely heavy for the allied fleet to concede the battle to the surviving 20 Greek triremes. Alalia was saved. Yet 40 of the 60 Greek triremes had been sunk or captured and the remaining 20 were mostly damaged. It was a Cadmean victory for the Phocaeans Greeks. (Cadmean is what a Pyhrric victory was called before Pyhrrus. It refers to a legendary battle at Thebes where the two sons of Oedipus each led an army against the other. Both armies suffered heavy losses and both commanders were killed. The victors lost as heavily as the vanquished.)

The Greeks, by holding the site of the battle, were able to rescue many of their sailors who had abandoned sinking vessels. Nevertheless, the loss of lives for this small colony must have been devastating. In addition, we know at least some of the Greek ships lost were captured and not sunk. The Etruscan city-state of Agylla (or Caere) reportedly executed all the Greek crewmen they had captured. The site of this massacre on the Italian coast was accursed, and any plants, animals or men who dwelt nearby became twisted, crippled or paralyzed. The oracle at



Delphi bade the Agyllaeans celebrate annual religious festivals at the site to lift the curse. Herodotus reported that they were still faithfully performing these rites in his day (c. 450 BC).

Therefore the Greeks could not celebrate their victory overmuch. The loss of 40 triremes crippled their pirating capability, while the massive loss of life threatened the survival of the colony. The Carthaginians and Etruscans could be expected to make good their losses and return. The Phocaeans could never again field a comparable fleet. The Greek leaders had to admit their tactical victory was nonetheless a major strategic defeat. The decision was reached to evacuate the entire colony of Alalia and abandon Corsica. The population boarded merchant vessels and what galleys remained for the evacuation. Herodotus tells us most of the citizens fled to Rhegium, and the fugitives later founded the city of Elea nearby.

### Historical Background:

#### **Cumae, 474, Vengeance for the Greeks**

Greek expansion in the Western Mediterranean had been checked at Alalia, and would never again proceed. Had Corsica been held, the Greeks would have been able to colonize Liguria, Gaul and northern Spain. Instead these regions remained uncivilized for another three centuries. Carthage agreed to allow the Etruscans to control Corsica, in return for a free hand in Sardinia. Carthage maintained her commercial monopoly in the western seas, and waxed in power. The Cartho-Etruscan alliance lasted for decades, to the mutual benefit of both parties. But early in the 5th Century the Siciliot Greeks under Gelon, Tyrant of Syracuse, inflicted a crushing defeat on a Carthaginian expeditionary army at Himera in 480. Carthage was forced to sign a treaty with the Greeks, recognizing Greek control of Eastern Sicily. As Carthage licked her wounds, support for Etruria was dramatically weakened.

Etruria was at the height of her power as the turn of the Century approached

(500). From their homelands in North-west Italy the Etruscans had expanded North into the Po River valley, East to the Adriatic and South through Latium and into Campania. In 524 the Etruscans launched a major assault on the chief Greek city of Campania, Cumae.

However, Cumae and her allies repulsed the attack under the leadership of Aristodemus. At the battle of Aricia, the Greek city-states of Campania and their Latin allies, led by Aristodemus, inflicted another major defeat on the Etruscan army under Lars Porsenna and his son Arruns in 506. This defeat cut landward communications between the Etruscan cities of Campania and their northern homeland. The Etruscans had to rely on their fleet to support these forward bases. Aristodemus became Tyrant of Cumae in 504, but was assassinated in 492 by the aristocratic faction.

The Etruscans rallied and dispatched a large fleet to blockade Cumae in 474. They may have mustered as many as 100 triremes, and Carthage appears to have contributed a token squadron, probably no more than 20 galleys. Cumae, together with her Italiot allies, could raise a fleet of only 40 or so triremes. Overmatched, Cumae called upon Syracuse for assistance. In 478 Gelon had died and was succeeded by his younger brother Hiero as Tyrant of Syracuse. Hiero was free to respond as the Punic threat had been liquidated just six years earlier at Himera. Hiero brought the Syracusan navy across to Italy, joined with the navy of Cumae and other minor allies and then confronted the Etruscan navy at Cumae. Hiero probably brought about 60 ships from Syracuse and his Siciliot allies, for a total force of about 100 galleys in the allied Greek fleet.

The two fleets met, and Hiero won a great victory at Cumae. Unfortunately, little more is known about the actual fighting at Cumae. The results were decisive, as the Etruscans were soon driven entirely out of Campania. Nevertheless, the Greek victory was once again less than complete. Just a few decades after the Etruscan-held cities were retaken by the Greeks, all the city-states of Campania were overrun by the Sabellian mountain tribes of the interior. Capua fell in 424 and Cumae was lost in 421.

Etruscan power also declined rapidly after the defeat at Cumae. Rome arose to replace Etruria as the dominant land power in Italy. Two and a half centuries later Carthage would forge another alliance

## Alalia and Cumae: GBoH Naval Battle Scenarios

(278-275) with this new dominant Italian land power (Rome) against a Greek menace (Pyrrhus). This Cartho-Romano alliance was equally successful, but was to be followed almost immediately by the Punic Wars. Rome would defeat the Greeks and Carthaginians in turn to emerge as the hegemonic power of the western Mediterranean by 201 BC.

### Sources

Herodotus is the main source for Alalia, while Dionysius and Diodorus give some details of Etruscan campaigns against Cumae. For the Etruscans, see H.H. Scullard's **The Etruscan Cities & Rome**; for Carthage see B.H. Warmington's **Carthage: A History** and for the Greeks, T.J. Dunbabin's **The Western Greeks**.

## THE SCENARIOS

### Battle of Alalia, 535 BC

Greeks vs. Carthage & Etruria  
(Colonial Wars)

#### Maps

The game uses the *sea map*. Cartho-Etruscan side: South-hexrow xx28. Greek side- North-hexrow xx00.

#### Balance

The Greeks have superior seamanship and better marines. The Cartho-Etruscans have numbers on their side and are favored here.

#### Playing Time and Difficulty

Battle should take 2-3 hours to finish.  
Difficulty Rating: 2.0

#### Ship Scale

1 counter = 4 galleys

#### Initial Deployment:

##### Cartho-Etruscans (green ships)

- The Carthaginian squadron: 15 Triremes; ID 1-15.
- The Carthaginian receives the following Squadron Commanders:  
\*Mago (Admiral), \*Hanno.
- The Etruscan Squadron: 15 triremes; ID 28-35 and 49-55.
- The Etruscans receive the following Squadron Commander:  
Etruria (use Agricola).
- The Cartho-Etruscan player may deploy his ships anywhere within six (6) hexes of the South edge.

#### Initial Deployment: Greeks (red ships)

- The Carthaginian squadron: 15 Triremes; ID 21-35.

- The Greek receives the following Squadron Commanders: **Alalia 1** (Admiral), Alalia 2. (Use Chios & Samos)
- The Greek player may deploy his ships anywhere within six (6) hexes of the North edge.

#### Special Rules

*The Cartho-Etruscan alliance — Carthaginian and Etruscan squadron commanders may only command their own ships. Mago is admiral only for the Carthaginians. The Etruscans have no admiral. (All the names of the admirals at Alalia, at the dawn of history, have been forgotten.)*

#### Victory

- The Greek player wins when he has at least 60 VP, and that number is at least twice that of the enemy.
- The Cartho-Etruscan player wins when he has at least 55 VP, and that number is at least twice that of the enemy.
- If neither of the above happens, and/or the players halt play by mutual agreement, a minor, indecisive victory goes to he who has the most VP (but remember what a Cadmean Victory was really worth to the Greeks).

### Battle of Cumae, 474 BC

Greeks vs. Etruria  
(Colonial Wars)

#### Maps

The game uses the *sea map*. Etruscan side- North - hexrow xx00. Greek side- South - hexrow xx28.

#### Balance

The Etruscans have numbers on their side. Greeks have superior seamanship

and better marines and are favored here.

#### Playing Time and Difficulty

Battle should take 2-3 hours to finish.  
Difficulty Rating: 2.0

#### Ship Scale

1 counter = 4 galleys

#### Initial Deployment:

##### Etruscans (green ships)

- The Etruscan Squadron: 25 triremes; ID 1-25.
- The Etruscans receive the following Squadron Commander: **Arruns** (Admiral), Etruria. (use S. Pompeius and Agricola)
- The Carthaginian Squadron: 5 Triremes; ID 36-40.
- The Carthaginian receives the following Squadron Commander: \*Himilco.
- The Etruscan player may deploy his ships anywhere within six (6) hexes of the North edge.

#### Initial Deployment: Greeks

- The Syracusan Squadron  
The Greek player receives the following red ships:  
15 Triremes; ID 21-35.
- The Cumae Squadron  
The Greek player receives the following red ships:  
10 Triremes; ID 11-20.
- The Greek receives the following Squadron Commanders: **Hiero** (Admiral), Anaxilas, Cumae. (Use Aristocrates for Hiero, Diocles for Anaxilas [tyrant of Rhegium], and Samos for Cumae.)
- The Greek player may deploy his ships anywhere within six (6) hexes of the South edge.

#### Special Rules




*The Cartho-Etruscan alliance — Carthaginian and Etruscan squadron commanders may only command their own ships. Arruns is admiral only for the Etruscans. The Carthaginians have no admiral.*

#### Victory







- The Greek player wins when he has at least 60 VP, and that number is at least twice that of the enemy.
- The Etruscan player wins when he has at least 50 VP, and that number is at least twice that of the enemy.
- If neither of the above happens, and/or the players halt play by mutual agreement, a minor, indecisive victory goes to he who has the most VP.

**WAR GALLEY - C3i Leader Counters**

**For Battle of Alalia**

*  4 Etruria	*  5 Alalia 1	*  4 Alalia 2
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**For Battle of Cumae**

*  4 Etruria	*  4 Arruns	*  0 Etruria counter used in both scenarios
*  6 Hiero	*  4 Anaxilas	*  4 Cumae

