

Abstract

This thesis examines the causes of the Third Punic War (149 -146 BCE) through the lens of securitization theory, focusing on Cato the Elder's influential rhetoric in convincing the Roman Senate to destroy Carthage. This study is motivated by the absence of work in the literature that explains the specific process by which the Roman Senate was convinced to pursue a policy of total destruction against its century-long neighbor, an action that was considered as out of the ordinary. First presenting the historical, geopolitical, and internal dynamics in the Western Mediterranean around the second century BCE, this research then delves into the discourses of Cato the Elder, an influential Roman senator. This actor's retrieved speeches are analyzed through discourse analysis and the securitization framework. The thesis demonstrates how his discourse conformed to key elements of securitization theory, portraying Carthage as an existential threat and thereby justifying urgent and extraordinary measures. By considering elements of both the linguistic and sociological approach to securitization, the study shows that Cato's securitization move was successful, not only thanks to his discourse but also due to a facilitating environment, his perceived authority, and a resonance with the audience's psycho-cultural disposition and historical consciousness. The thesis bridges security studies and ancient history by applying a modern theoretical framework to ancient events. It provides a new perspective on the Third Punic War's causes and demonstrates the securitization theory's relevance beyond its conventional modern applications.