The Integration of Phoenician Communities in the Iberian Peninsula during the Roman Empire from a Postcolonial Perspective

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The goal of this paper is to research on the analysis of the integration process of Phoenician-Punic communities of the Iberian Peninsula during the domination of the Roman Empire since the end of the Second Punic War (206 BCE) until the Flavian era (mid-1st century CE). We depart from a cultural and identity perspective. The main objective is to explain the process of identity construction in the core of these communities linked to the gradual transformation in Roman *ciuitates*. In Spain, the topic of Phoenicians under the Roman dominion was not analysed until the last decades of the 20th Century. In the 1990s, Prof. J. L. López Castro was the first to deal with this matter in a very extense and detailed way in his work: *Hispania Poena: los fenicios en la Hispania romana* (1995). This work was one of the pioneers of breaking with the tendency to consider Phoenicians to be erased from the Iberian Peninsula after the Roman conquest. On the other hand, following the dominant trends in historiography, López Castro gave relevance to the economic factors of this process of integration (FIGURA).

Nevertheless, today's new circumstances put into relevance a convenient review of the topic, as new data, interpretations, and theoretical approaches have emerged. First of all, it is important to emphasise on the presence of the Phoenicians in the Iberian Peninsula which had risen to the 10th century BCE and speaded beyond the city of Gadir, throughout the Atlantic coast. At the same time, we have strong evidences of settlements of Eastern origin in what is considered to be the core of the Tartessian world, places such as El Carambolo, Coria del Río, Carmona,

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Montemolín or Huelva. These evidences change considerably the map of communities of Phoenician origin and/or cultural tradition in Southern Iberia. Once the strained theses proposed by Schulten were overcome during the 1980s and 1990s, dealing with the "Punic" component, there was a promotion of the conviction of a Carthaginian presence prior the Barcid conquest that did not imply a military occupation or administrative control of the territory. There are important novelties in this area, as changes were visible from the 4th Century BCE in the Phoenician and the "Iberian-Turdetani" sphere; which, along with the review of the literary tradition, allows us to think of a greater intensity of the presence and influence of Carthage in comparison with previous research. This presence had a special relevance in the Valley of Guadalquivir and the areas surrounding Cádiz. Globally, the initial base of our proposal of analysis must be modified in order to not only to analyse the communities of widely acknowleged Phoenician origins, as Gadir or Malaka, but also populations of the inner lands of Andalusia where early Phoenician presence has been documented, i.e. Carmo (FIGURA).

The novelty and originality of our thesis is based in its approach and its theoretical framework. Current research is not only focused on identity construction and deconstruction processes related to the integration of the abovementioned Phoenician communities under the Roman sphere, but we also do a critical review and update of the *Romanisation* concept, that has been traditionally understood as a mono-directional transfer from a civilized culture to a recipient once. Recently, this idea has started to be put into serious discussion thanks to the influence of Post-Colonial Theory. In this sense, we think that the application of Post-Colonial Theory in historical processes like current research opens a wide range of possibilities, as this kind of theoretical approaches confront the essentialist

conception of identities and, also, contribute with the consideration of certain aspects as intermediate realities, cultural hybridisation processes and the active role of local agency (FIGURA). In the same way, the study of subalterns also contribute with interesting elements, in terms of power relations and hegemony, as they focus on silenced voices and the different groups excluded from conventional historical narrations. We use the term *subalterns* –peasants, women, wage earners, poors, slaves, indigenous populations– in the same way that Antonio Gramsci used it. However, in our case, we are not interested at all in creating alternative history in order to make up for the deliberate historiographical omissions, but to give evidence of the differences between certain social groups and others when we deal with *becoming a Roman*. In addition, it is important to analyse the impact of Greek and Roman culture in the self-representation of Phoenicians in the Iberian Peninsula.

The main hypothesis of our doctoral thesis contemplates the possibility of an early and intense political shift in Peninsular Phoenician communities to the orbit and interests of Rome, along with a parallel adaptation of their political and citizen elites towards the new Roman power structures. The conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by the Romans entailed new identity frameworks in native communities that, fundamentally, sought to integrate in the provincial Roman world in a scarcely traumatic way. This integration was achieved by keeping their idiosyncrasy and preserving their cultural peculiarities. As a result, we consider that a new identity discourse was developed in communities of Western Phoenician-Punic tradition after Scipio Africanus' victory against Carthaginians. This discourse was rich in Phoenician content and it was motivated by the elites' necessity to consolidate their hegemony in their communities while guaranteeing new frameworks of governance. The

development of this Phoenician identity would be linked with the search of antiquity and prestige elements and also reworking tales, legends and traditions. The figure of the main Tyrian divinity, Melqart, is a central component of the process. Coins from Gadir are a good example as the Tyrian tutelary divinity is one of the most remarkable types of Gadir coinage until well deep into the Imperial days. This must be considered as an ethnic referent or an urban standard. Melqart is frequently accompanied by the representation of tuna and dolphins, which exposes the maritime richness and the commercial tradition of the city (FIGURA). Numismatic portrayals of Melqart were not found exclusively in Gadir, as it was present in coins minted in Seks or Abdera well into the 1st century BCE.

Regarding the funerary extent, the cultural influence of Phoenicians in Gades was important during the Roman Republic. Many evidences of this influence have been detected: burial style, rituals or grave goods (FIGURA). Authors, like Niveau & Martelo Fernández (2014) have spoken of a "Punic cultural Renaissance" in the city of Gadir in mid-2nd century BCE. Similar tendencies have been observed in cities such as Carmo or Baelo Claudia. Nevertheless, it is necessary to be aware of this new cultural identity that had developed during the Republican era. This identity became mainstream during the Imperial Era through ethnic categories that were not part of the above mentioned communities, but they are an external product. Terms like *phoinix-phoínikes*, *phoenix-phoenices* and, less frequently, *poenus-poeni*, are etymologically Greek and Latin, although they would be accepted by Phoenicians as a self-reference. This new self-reference would be an identity construction found in Roman areas. However, it would be based in older elements with the intention of obtaining more favourable positions after the Roman rearrangement of power and hierarchy. This new identity reference must not be understood as a reaction against

romanness, but quite the opposite: this would be a recognition of ancient origins and cultural traditions that, doubtlessly, should have been an exceptional way of obtaining honour and prestige in a Roman world that was highly influenced by the Hellenistic cultural and ideological context.

As we know, Roman domination strategies relied frequently on the complicity of indigenous elites. As we can find in literature, there was an early and qualitative integration of Iberian Phoenician-Punic elites in the Roman world. The most well-known example is the Balbo family. In 40 BCE, one of its most distinguished members, Lucio Cornelio Balbo, became the first consul of provincial origins. According to Cassius Dio (XLI.24.1), nine years earlier, Julius Caesar granted Roman citizenship to the inhabitants of Gades. This recognition transformed the city in a *municipium romanorum* and left behind its previous Phoenician administrative organisation. Appian, Strabo and Cicero also speak about an early and qualitative integration. At the same time, the areas surrounding the Bay of Cadiz, the Valley of Guadalquivir and the cities of the Mediterranean Basin still showed a high Phoenician archaelogical component during the Republic and the High Empire. In order to explain this phenomenon of cultural persistence, as mentioned indirectly by Strabo (III.2.13), it is possible to explain this apparent contradiction. Integration strategies of Southern Phoenician communities into Roman power structures were not linked to the imitation of Roman features. Several arguments expose that a recognition of *Phoenicianness* existed, not as a reaction, but as *a Phoenician way of being Roman*. Phoenicians were aware of their ancient and prestigious past. The may have developed a new collective identity to confront tense situations that may have arisen during the consolidation of the Roman Conquest. As we know, Romans set up

flexible integration mechanisms as long as their subjugated peoples accepted their juridical and economical hegemony. As a matter of fact, in this context of hybrid and heterogeneous ethnic identities, the political organisation of the Roman Empire to be based on cities as their main administrative core. This organisation was positive for their needs of legitimacy in regard to the Phoenician-tradition elites. Thus, we think that processes of identity reconfiguration are linked with the symbolic and iconographic continuity of archaeological findings which evidence the survival of Phonenian cults in Roman Gades, i.e.: female head-shaped incense burners from the 2nd Century BCE. During the 1st Century BCE, new monuments were built and the urban layout changed in South Iberian cities. A higher integration in the Roman world can be clearly observed. As we mentioned, material culture and funerary practices still evidenced major links with Phoenician traditions, which may mean that some ethnic markers were fully active as an expression of identity in an open and dynamic context. During the late 3rd Century BCE, Gades, Malaca, Abdera or Sexi did not cease to be Phoenician cities under the Roman orbit. According to grafitti found in these cities, Punic was still a widely-written language. Thus, the relevance of Phoenician communities was still important in this period while Hispania and, particularly, *Baetica* had long been fully integrated in the imperial structure of Rome (FIGURA).

In conclusion, regarding colonial contexts, it is very difficult to set boundaries between colonists and original population. However, a vague changing line was drawn between them, which produced a constant process of negotiation that set the grounds for hybrid and culturally mixed groups (Bhabha 2002; Van Dommelen 2008). This idea is based on the contributions proposed by Post-Colonial theories to Ancient History and Archaeology and break with the classic concept of *Romanisa*tion, where

"Roman essences" are ultimately acquired by colonised communities. According to Gosden's opinion (2008, 126), it is not possible nowadays to label all cultural forms formerly thought-to-be *Roman* to be originally from Rome. One of the greatest achievements of Post-Colonialism applied to the Ancient World is to have parted ways with the widely extended idea of sociocultural unity and homogeneity in the Roman Empire. It is more accurate to think of Imperial culture as a "structured system of differences" with many variations on the axes of region, social class, age, gender, etc. (Woolf 1997, 341). *Romanisation* was a process more complex than cultural substitution as it created local hybrid forms. In relation to Galia, Woolf (1998) defends that their inhabitants not only assimilated provincial Roman culture, but also participated actively in its genesis and development. In our case, we think that Phoenician-Punic communities constructed their own identity discourses by appealing their "Phoenician past" and cultural elements regarded as "Phoenician" in search of favourable positions in the Roman political system.

In general terms, Latin and Greek sources that witnessed the colonisation of the Western Extreme are chronologically very distant from the historical facts that they narrate. Dated from the 2nd Century CE, they transmit recurrent informations, as the Tyrian origins of Gadir, the importance of the Melqart Temple and also, their trading tradition in distant shores of the Mediterranean Sea. During the High Empire, this thematic homogeneity would be a result of contemporary views more than the historical reality that the early colonists had about their past, as authors reflected their own cultural values and interests. As it can be observed in Augustan propaganda, we are analysing a fully Hellenistic cultural context where political legitimacy emanates from the past, tradition and ancestry.

Recently, M. Álvarez (2012) has stated about the positive image of Phoenicians found in Strabo's *Geographica.* In this work there are references to Phoenicians, and are said to have a celebrated past as civilisers and a highly-refined culture. Communities of Phoenician influence or origins relied on this new ancestry and tradition-based identity framework as a way of obtaining political legitimacy towards Rome. As a consequence, it can be said that the Roman Conquest from the 3rd Century BCE onwards was the stimulus that motivated an apparently solid and immutable "Phoenician identity".

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