

## Phoenician maritime pioneering and Punic expansion: reconstructing trade and dietary patterns (EAA Istanbul 2014)

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Perhaps the most significant legacy attributed to the Phoenicians was their mastery of the seas, which led them to establish the first grand commercial Mediterranean network, expanding from Lebanon to beyond the Pillars of Hercules between the 8th and 6th centuries BC. The Punic culture, which flourished in the central and western Mediterranean from Phoenician colonies, maintained the exceptional navigation skills of the Phoenicians, but developed into more settled and structured territories that allowed the communities to intensify their exploitation of Mediterranean resources. Their rise to prominence can be measured by the threat they posed to the Roman Republic, while the salvage of the agronomic treatises by Mago after the sacking of Carthage attests to their renowned agrarian competence. The paucity of Phoenician and Punic written sources essentially means that material culture provides the data with which to model community lifeways, including daily dietary patterns, and trade more generally. The aim of this session was to bring together research focused on diet and trade in the Phoenician and Punic world, building on the work that has been done on foodways to model community interaction (Mata Parreño et al. 2010; Delgado and Ferrer 2011a and 2011b). The session comprised five oral contributions and a poster presentation. The focus was on central and western Mediterranean mainland regions and island territories. Findings from more recent archaeological excavations were described and discussed, and scientific applications to archaeological material were outlined and interpretations put forward and discussed.

The Iberian Peninsula played a key role as a study region in the papers presented at this session. Beatriz Marín Aguilera from the Universidad Complutense of Madrid (Spain), focused her talk on debunking the binary opposition imposed on the study of colonial societies, which either focus solely on the coloniser or the colonised (indigenous) people. Her research explored hybrid practices and power entanglements by looking at culinary practices, more specifically how food was prepared and consumed by both parties (colonisers and colonised), and indications for mixing between the two. Evidence for her research was obtained from faunal and archaeobotanical analysis from contemporaneous indigenous and colonial societies that shared territory in southern Iberia between the 9th and 6th centuries BC. The paper presented by Sonja Behrendt from the Thuringian State Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments and Archaeology Weimar, and Dirk-Paul Mielske from the University of Muenster in Germany, discussed the local economic basis of the Phoenician settlements in the Iberian Peninsula, which have traditionally been defined as trading centres. They showed how, contrary to what was previously thought, archaeometric analysis on pottery from these settlements suggest that they had a strong local and regionally oriented economy, providing a critical revision on the general character of Phoenician settlement organisation. Violeta Moreno Megías from the Universidad de Sevilla (Spain) and her colleagues Francisco José García Fernández, Eduardo Ferrer Albelda also from the Universidad de Sevilla, and Antonio Sáez Romero from the University of Cádiz, presented their research on Punic and Turdetan trade beyond the Pillars of Hercules between the 5th and 3rd centuries BC. They focused on the study of amphorae in Gadir and its surrounding territory, and by observing trading patterns, provided a clear identification of the cultural complexity which was evident in the region at the time, and which strongly affected the economic system and alimentary patterns of the population.

Elena Moreno from the Universidad de Cádiz (Spain) showed how the legacy of the western Phoenician colonisation can still be traced during Roman times through the study of monetary images. In her poster contribution, she showed how the cultural and commercial partnership between the Mauritanian and Hispanic littorals during Punic times was based on specific resources, which would become civic emblems that would create the social idea of the prosperous Far West, so sought after by the Roman Republic. Carla del Vais, from the Università degli Studi Cagliari and Ignazio Sanna, from the Soprintendenza per I Beni Archeologici per le provincie di Cagliari e Oristano in Italy, presented the work carried out during extensive underwater excavations at Santa Giusta, in the west-central Sardinia, which started in 2006. The material culture recovered from Phoenician and Punic underwater contexts include abundant evidence for trade revealed by transport amphorae, which are believed to have contained flavoured canned meat for export. This study comprised a multidisciplinary approach, in which archaeobotanical and archaeozoological analysis revealed the presence of nuts, fruit, olive and grape seed, in association with ovicaprid remains. Evidence for artefacts associated with funerary and cultic purposes are also strongly suggested in the archaeological record. Ongoing biochemical and archaeometric analysis on the vessel contents and pottery, respectively, hope to inform on the function of these vessel, and their social and cultural context.

The discussant for the session, Dr Simon Stoddart from the University of Cambridge, summed up the research presented, drawing parallels with another forgotten society, the Etruscans. He placed the Phoenician/Punic community within a broader perspective, encompassing other key happenings during the Iron Age. He commented on the contribution of scientific analyses to this particular area of study, explaining how timely and crucial these are to understand the potential and limitations of the techniques applied to archaeological studies. He opened the discussion by addressing three important topics namely: the question of sub-identities which arise within colonies, issues with interpreting contexts that belong to the realm of ritual depositions rather than everyday practices, and the need to assess regional variation as part of the wider picture. A lively discussion followed, during which it became apparent that after decades of research, archaeological and scientific research are succeeding in slowly but progressively unravelling some of the mysteries, which the elusive and invisible Phoenician/Punic communities left behind.

### References

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