

Introduction

This poster aims to report the conclusions of our PhD thesis, titled *The Phoenician communities of the Iberian Peninsula and their integration in the Roman world: an identity perspective*. The period under discussion extends from the end of the Second Punic War in 206 BCE to the Flavian era (mid-first century CE).

Above all, our dissertation focuses on the cultural and ethnic dimensions of the process of integration of communities of Phoenician origin and tradition in the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula into the structures of Roman Empire.

The **theoretical framework** which we take as our starting point rests on two pillars:

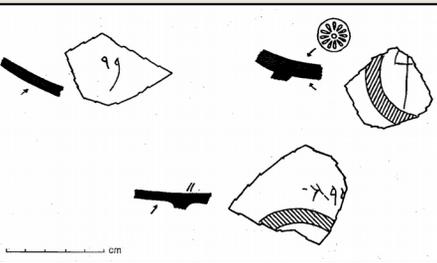
- Social Constructivism.
- Postcolonial Theories.

Purpose

Our primary goal has been the explanation of the mechanisms of construction of collective identity (as well as their forms of expression) which have come about in the midst of the Phoenician communities in Hispania along the road to becoming established as Roman *ciuitates*.

We also attempt to improve upon the classical one-dimensional perspectives concerning the poorly-named process of «Romanization».

This leads us to reinterpret the known Phoenician cultural «persistences» as a reflection of the possible existence of ethnic workings and re-workings by means of falsely or actually ancient components with the goal of legitimization within the dynamic Roman world.

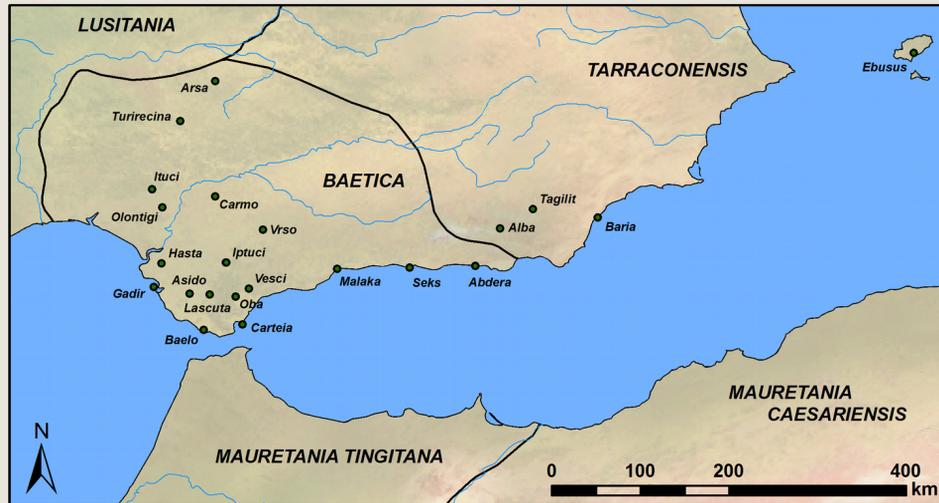


Phoenician graffiti from Malaca (1 century BCE)

Main Hypothesis

The Phoenician communities inhabiting the south of the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the III century BCE did not disappear with the advent of the romans (López Castro 1995). So, our main hypothesis is none other than the consideration of an early and intense political movement of the Phoenician peninsular communities toward the orbit and interests of Rome, but always keeping their cultural particularities.

We defend that, from the end of the Second Punic War on, the communities of Phoenician origin and tradition in the West may have carried on amongst themselves a new ethnic discourse full of Phoenician content, especially due to the necessity of their elites to consolidate their positions of power.



Phoenician cities of Hispania (mid-first century CE)

Development

News such as those by Strabo, according to whom the Turdetani had forgotten their own language, and were living utterly in the roman style by the turn of the Era (Str. 3.2.15), require a deeper interpretation. Moreover the geographer of Amasia, in other part of his work, declares that most of the Turdetani cities and adjacent areas remained inhabited by Phoenicians (Str. 3.2.13).

Given this, is possible to think that from the time of the arrival of Rome into the Iberian Peninsula there was ample opportunity for the Phoenician communities located there to participate in a process of ethnic construction and/or re-elaboration related to their gradual integration into the structures of the new Roman government (Álvarez 2012).

There were two fundamental components of this process: the recognition of certain common origins, real or putative, which took root along with the city of Tyre, the oldest metropolis, and the figure of Melqart, the quintessential founding god within the Phoenician orbit. For example, the tutelary Tyrian god appears until the Imperial period on the most notable types of Gaditanian coinage as an ethnic symbol. The figure of Melqart is also present on the obverse of coins from Carteia, Sexs, and Abdera until well into the first century CE. The purpose for this is none other than to make clear the great antiquity of such foundational concepts and to demonstrate their affinity to Tyre, whether actually real or not (Bonnet 2015). Indeed, the first Latin inscriptions do not appear on these coins until the time of Augustus.

The Phoenician imprint on the Roman Gades is also noticeable in the funerary arena, since there are numerous examples both of rituals and of funerary objects as well as in the typology of burials which demonstrate continuity. A similar tendency can be seen in other cities of Southern Spain in which the Phoenician component is notable, like Baelo Claudia, where the population of ancient Baelo ultimately settled. Or Carmo, whose early Imperial necropolis is characterized by the absence of typical Roman *terra sigillata* and the presence of a funerary iconography of Phoenician-Punic origin. This cultural continuity which manifests itself as much in the funerary sphere as in the arena of coinage is related to the **process of ethnic elaboration and re-elaboration**.



Sestertius of Gades. Bronze. 19 BCE

Conclusions

The significance of the Phoenician elements must have still been important in a period in which Hispania in general and Baetica in particular had long been immersed in the governmental structures of Rome.

This could mean that although the Phoenicians began to integrate themselves quite early into those structures, they did so with the intention of maintaining their own idiosyncrasy and not losing their unique cultural traits. As a base, they used a series of cultural elements which displayed their specificity in the face of other contemporary identities by means of a connection with a prestigious ancestral past.

The survival of cultural elements rooted in traditions prior to the arrival of Rome certainly does not indicate an active and hostile resistance to Roman customs. On the contrary, this continuity is seen as a renovation, a way of giving free rein to integration without renouncing the particularities. This is we called **«a Phoenician way to be Roman»**.

Literature Cited

López Castro, J. L. (1995): *Hispania Poenia: los fenicios en Hispania romana*, Barcelona.

Álvarez, M. (2012): *Turdetania fenicia: pasado y prestigio en el occidente romano*, in B. Mora & G. Cruz Andreotti (eds), *La etapa neopúnica en Hispania y el Mediterráneo centro occidental: identidades compartidas*, Sevilla, pp. 35-58.

Bonnet, C. (2015): *Networks of Kinship in the Phoenician and Punic Foundations: A Graeco-Roman Vision of Identity*, in G. Garbati & T. Pedrazza (eds), *Transformations and Crisis in the Mediterranean*, Roma-Pisa, pp. 183-189.