

# NEAR EASTERN COLONIES AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES FROM MOROCCO TO ALGERIA BEFORE THE CARTHAGINIAN EXPANSION: A SURVEY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE



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**Abstract:** Our core knowledge concerning the Phoenician diaspora in north-western Africa centers around the archaeological and historical evidence of the sites of Lixus and Mogador in Morocco, as well as the necropoleis of Tangier and the site of Rachgoun in Algeria. A less clear picture has been formed for the subsequent, so-called Punic phase. Yet ongoing surveys of large areas and archaeological investigations of sites are enhancing our knowledge of the Phoenician and Punic periods in northwestern Africa, weaving a complex picture of various degrees and types of involvement in the local milieu by people of a Near Eastern heritage. Here, the earliest Phoenician presence and developments down to the Punic period (associated with the Carthaginian expansion) are presented, taking into account the local context as well as the settlement and mercantile activities of Phoenicians in the wider Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

**Keywords:** Africa, Atlantic, Phoenician, Punic, Morocco, Algeria, Lixus, Mogador, Ceuta.

**Resumo:** Nosso conhecimento principal em relação à diáspora fenícia na África norte-ocidental revolve ao redor dos dados arqueológicos e históricos dos sítios de Lixus e Mogador, no Marrocos, como também das necrópoles de Tangier e de Rachgoun na Argélia. Um quadro menos claro foi estabelecido para a fase subsequente, denominada púnica. Ainda assim, trabalhos de prospecção de vastas áreas em andamento e pesquisas arqueológicas em sítios estão aumentando nosso conhecimento acerca dos períodos fenício e púnico na África norte-ocidental, tecendo um quadro complexo em relação aos graus e tipos de envolvimento no contexto local das pessoas com herança oriental. Aqui, o período mais recuado de presença fenícia e os desenvolvimentos subsequentes que chegam até o período púnico (associados à expansão cartaginesa) serão apresentados, levando em consideração o contexto local, como também as atividades mercantis e de assentamento dos fenícios pelo Mediterrâneo e Atlântico.  
**Palavras-Chave:** África, Atlântico, Fenício, Púnico, Marrocos, Argélia, Lixus, Mogador, Ceuta.

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**Resumen:** Nuestro principal conocimiento sobre la diáspora fenicia en el noroeste de África gira en torno a los datos arqueológicos e históricos de los sitios de Lixus y Mogador en Marruecos, así como la necrópolis de Tánger y Rachgoun en Argelia. Se estableció una imagen menos clara para la fase posterior, llamada púnica. No obstante, el trabajo de prospección a gran escala y los estudios de sitios arqueológicos están aumentando nuestro conocimiento de los períodos fenicio y púnico en el noroeste de África, entretejiendo una imagen compleja de los grados y tipos de participación en el contexto local de personas con herencia oriental. Aquí, se presentará el primer período de presencia fenicia y los desarrollos posteriores hasta el período púnico (asociado con la expansión cartaginesa), teniendo en cuenta el contexto local, así como las actividades comerciales y de asentamiento de los fenicios en el Mediterráneo y el Atlántico. **Palabras clave:** África, Atlántico, Fenicio, Púnico, Marruecos, Argelia, Lixus, Mogador, Ceuta.

## INTRODUCTION

Phoenicians traded and settled in northwestern Africa during the period of the so-called Phoenician expansion that resulted in the establishment of settlements and trading ports across the Mediterranean. The present study deals with the Phoenician presence in this region from its beginnings (ninth/early eighth century BC) to the period well into the centuries of the so-called Punic phase (post-sixth century BC). The geographical extent of the discussion will be dictated by the evidence for the Phoenician/Punic presence. It will mainly cover the coastal and inland areas of northwestern Africa: Algeria, Morocco, as well as the autonomous territories of Spain, Ceuta and Mellilla. The Canary Islands, off the African coast in the Atlantic Ocean, will be treated very briefly, to the extent that is applicable in the present discussion. The focus will be the study of the archaeological evidence, but it will be supplemented with information from the literary and numismatic evidence, especially where such evidence radically alters the picture.

This broader region in northwestern Africa forms the westernmost area of the Phoenician colonisation and trade. Somewhat marginal in Phoenician studies even nowadays, it was not so much so in Antiquity. In Greco-Roman sources, the foundation of the Phoenician colony of Lixus on the Atlantic coast of Morocco is cited as one of the earliest Phoenician colonies in the Mediterranean, predating those of Gadir and Utica (PAPPA, 2013, p. 3). In the modern period, the region has received unequal investment in research (PAPPA, 2015, p. 72). In the past decades, there have been limited studies on the Phoenician/Punic past of Algeria, although research into this period of the country



continues (e.g. FERDI, 2005).<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Morocco has enjoyed a fruitful and multi-faceted period of research, with collaborative, multi-national teams carrying out surveys and excavations, which helped enhance our knowledge of the prehistoric and proto-historic periods of the country. Systematic data have been collected by the Spanish-Moroccan project in the area of Tétouan; the German (DAI) project at Mogador and the French-Moroccan project at Kouass (MARZOLI and EL KHAYARI 2009; MARZOLI and EL KHAYARI 2010; PEPI, 2014). In particular, these relatively recent surveys in Morocco have multiplied the find-spots of Phoenician-style (or Phoenician-made?) pottery. Impressive work has taken place towards the valorisation of the cultural heritage of the country (e.g. BERNAL et al. 2011). Archaeological research in Ceuta has also followed a period of fruitful archaeological investigations (e.g. VILLADA, RAMON and SUÁREZ PADILLA, 2011). Thus, different levels of research invested in the separate territories of the western Maghreb directly affect the patterns of archaeological evidence. This has to be taken into account when formulating interpretations of the evidence and building hypotheses for the archaeologically visible 'patchy' infiltration and settlement of Phoenician populations in the region, as modern historical circumstances often belie the historical accounts we form on the first millennium BC.

In the traditional historiographical model of Miquel Tarradell — one of the pioneers in the archaeological investigation of the Phoenician/Punic past of the western Maghreb — developed in the 1960s, northwestern Africa formed the southern part of the 'Circle of the Straits', a term coined to refer not merely to the geographical region corresponding to the Straits of Gibraltar and the areas surrounding it, but to a cultural *facies* focusing around the colony of Gadir, with vague connotations regarding the exercise of political authority (PEPI, 2014, p. 204-206; SÁEZ ROMERO, DÍAZ RODRÍGUEZ and SÁEZ ESPLIGARES, 2004). The term has survived in the scholarly literature as merely descriptive, indicating the stylistic affinities of the material culture of that region in the Phoenician period, in contrast to that produced in central northern Africa, with Carthage (in modern-day Tunisia) as its epicentre (PAPPA, 2015, p. 71).

Historical and other types of literary sources from the Archaic to the Roman periods offer convoluted, exaggerated and contradictory information on the Phoenician presence in northwestern Africa and its causes (PAPPA, 2009, p. 54-55). While the literary tradition on the Phoenician colonisation

<sup>2</sup> As part of a general decline in the archaeological research, related to the political and economic instability of the country.



movement in the western Mediterranean emphasises a primary interest in metal acquisition, the archaeological and historical research of the past decades has added several other factors: the restriction of space in the narrow strip of land of the Phoenician homeland, demand for the procurement of timber, ivory and other raw materials, the opening of new markets, social and economic pressure exerted by the imperialistic Neo-Assyrian state, as well as the class-dependent, social ruptures within the Phoenician society itself (e.g. PAPPA, 2013, p. 15-19, p. 185-186). In particular, the western Mediterranean/Atlantic shores offered rich marine resources, and in Antiquity they provided murex shells, but also tunny fish and various products made from them, such as fish sauces, which by the Classical Period were renowned as far as Athens (PAPPA, 2013, p. 102).

This movement of trade and settlement, in essence, formed only a part of a colonial-trading movement that, whatever its initial causes, acquired a momentum of its own after the initial century of exploration and migratory waves, with expansion and colonisation proceeding from the influx of traders and migrants. Over time, the opening and accessibility of new lands in the western Mediterranean would have welcomed a diverse array of people that sought better fortunes away from what were the crowded urban city centres of the Levant and the constant threat and reality of conflict. Whatever the cases of overt violence and political tension that likely sprung in these contexts (WAGNER, 2005) from what must have amounted to mass migration with overtones of colonialism, co-habitation and co-operation with local people, varying from context to context, can be observed in the archaeological record of the western Mediterranean.

Within this broader frame, the evidence for Phoenician presence in northwestern Africa and the impact of this migration movement on the local population is comparable but far from identical to the image conveyed by the archaeological record in the Iberian Peninsula. Its interpretation has been less uniform than in other regions. Part of the problem derives from the issue of an archaeologically-derived chronology of the region, which remains tenuous (PAPPA, 2015, p. 72). The chronology often has to rely on imports from Spain or the eastern Mediterranean. In turn, the imports may not be all that well dated or they could have been retained in Antiquity as heirlooms, which creates some obstacles in assessing the contemporaneity of sites in northwestern Africa, as well as with other sites in the western Mediterranean.



Literary and numismatic data provide complementary sources of evidence for the study of Phoenician/Punic presence in the region (PAPPA, 2013, p. 83-85). Descriptions of Phoenician and Punic towns in literary accounts, as well as numismatically-derived toponyms and their cross-references, can be useful when judiciously used (e.g. LIPÍNSKI, 2004). The two *Periploi* (navigation manuals) frequently evoked in discussions of the Phoenician/Punic presence in northwestern Africa are the fourth-century BC Pseudo-Skylax' Periplous (DOMÍNGUEZ MONEDERO, 1994) and the so-called Hanno's Periplous (LÓPEZ PARDO, 1991), probably earlier by at least a century. Numismatic evidence contributes, for example, to the etymological research on toponyms known from Greco-Roman literary sources, thus aiding the identification of an ancient town or village mentioned in a literary account with a specific locality or site of excavation. For the region under discussion, several place names betraying a possible Phoenician etymology can be detected. For example, Carayon (2008, p. 182-194, p. 223-230) in his inventory of sites and localities with evidence for a Phoenician/Punic phase in the region, lists several mentioned in Greco-Roman sources (such as the *Periplus* of pseudo-Skylax) that can be cross-checked by later numismatic evidence and whose ancient names etymologically document a Phoenician toponym, e.g. the ancient name of the settlement at Melilla, *Rusaddir*, is mentioned in several Greco-Roman sources and appears in the Phoenician script on the coins minted by the city after the fall of Carthage, although so far there is no robust archaeological evidence in the locality predating the third century BC.

### PHOENICIANS, PUNES, LIBYCO-PHOENICIANS AND THE ARTIFICIALITY OF BROAD BRUSHSTROKES

The broad gamut of evidence for settlements, trade, exploration and cultural contact in northwestern Africa reflects a mosaic of interrelated but different processes involving local populations and varying groups of people under multiple social formations that in modern literature tend to be subsumed under the umbrella rubrics of 'Phoenicians', 'Punes' and 'indigenous'. Using archaeological, historical and the few extant epigraphic evidence, this dazzling variety of evidence can be charted and interpreted within the broader Mediterranean and Atlantic contexts, notwithstanding the existing caveats in research.

The interpretation of the archaeological evidence in this region is crucial in forming models of settlement and intercultural interactions, albeit it remains open to multiple interpretations depending on the researcher's point



of view. This is not eased by the multiplicity of semantically overlapping nomenclature on the issue of ethnicity. A multiplicity of terms exist that refer to Phoenician populations and aspects of their language and culture in the Mediterranean, especially with regard to northern Africa. The term 'Phoenician' has persisted in the scholarly literature, although it is commonly agreed that it is devoid of meaning as an ethnonym. When dealing with the Phoenician diaspora, the term can describe anyone of Near Eastern ancestry that partook in the colonisation movement (including, e.g. North Syrians). Terms such as Phoenician, Punic, neo-Punic derive from ancient usage (PRAG, 2014), but their modern use in an overlapping fashion creates problems of terminology and definition (PRAG, 2006). Following attempts at standardisation, the terms 'Phoenician' and 'Punic' tend to be used so as to signify only a chronological distinction, distinguishing the pre-sixth century BC Near Eastern people and cultural phenomena in the Mediterranean from their later manifestations (PAPPA, 2013, p. 4-6). Thus, here the term 'Punic' will refer to the descendants of Phoenician colonists from the transition of the mid-/late sixth century BC onwards, as human agents but also aspects of culture, without making any regional distinction or assuming Carthaginian derivation. Pragmatically, by the fifth-sixth century BC, the original Phoenician settlers, many of whom would have arrived not directly from the Near East but from other colonies in the western Mediterranean, would have developed locally new permutations of their culture, at cross-roads with the mosaic of those of the local inhabitants, Libyans, influences from Carthage further east, as well as traders such as Greeks of various origins that plied western Mediterranean waters. It is this amalgam of ethnicities and cultures that must be envisaged when one uses ambivalent terms such as 'Libyco-Phoenicians'.

Post-colonial discourses have sought to emphasise the dynamic process of colonisation and settlement, whereby both local inhabitants and colonists/settlers partake in the formation of new culture. Challenging the residual leftovers of past hegemonic discourses that sought to legitimise the European colonial forays and imperial control of modern times, by portraying them as successors to ancient civilizing colonists, has been imperative in reconsidering current historical models that even nowadays are battling with artificial frames of reference, imbued with strategic colonialist motivations that do not relate to past historical realities<sup>3</sup>.

As a bulwark to the generalizing and outdated concept of external impositions of new cultural forms as if on empty lands devoid of people, there is

<sup>3</sup> For the use of archaeology as a tool in the legitimisation of European Empires during the nineteenth century, see Díaz Andreu García (2007).



the tendency nowadays to place undue emphasis on the local cultural element, sometimes reversing the 'original sin' of studying ancient colonisations. Thus, in northwestern Africa, settlements seen as Punic until recently are now reinterpreted as indigenous. Pepi (2014), in his attempt to challenge the nineteenth/twentieth-century historiographical models of Phoenician/Punic presence in Morocco, deriving to a large extent from the legitimising discourses of British and French colonial enterprises in the lands of the Maghreb, almost axiomatically sees no Phoenicians or Punes, by considering all the relevant archaeological data as 'indigenous', with any identifiable change dismissed in vague terms as the "increasing scale of social exchange" (PEPI, 2014, p. 213). In essence, these increasing levels of exchanges are treated as dehumanised, with no need for human agents (western Phoenicians of one or other origin) that must have created them in one form or the other.

While denying that the thrust of these Phoenician-tinted exchanges must have involved some Phoenicians, at least, does not serve historical reality, excluding the indigenous populations also results in a misleading picture. This is not merely an issue of supplementing the body of evidence, but a critical stance on how one looks at the archaeological data and the interpretation of this material (PAPPA, 2015). The prolific body of theory that exists on ancient colonisation movements and colonialism should form the backbone of a balanced view. At the same time, the discourse on colonialism should address early modern and contemporary imbalances that result in asymmetrical levels of research, and thus in skewed interpretations of the existing data, if these are not taken into account. Ignoring, for example, the modern context in Algeria when sketching a picture of the extent and nature of Phoenician presence in northwestern Africa during the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, would result in a dramatically distorted description of a historical reality.

Although the available archaeological data do not match up to the image conveyed by the Greco-Roman literary tradition for an intense Phoenician/Punic presence in the area surviving until later centuries, it is important to bear in mind that surveys and limited archaeological evidence do not always reveal complex patterns of social organisation, ethnicities, cultural facets, language and religious and burial customs that are needed in order to draw robust conclusions. With regard to Morocco, where a Carthaginian infiltration of the area during Punic times has been postulated for over a century, the interpretation of the data also pivot on the crucial issue of what one considers to be Phoenician or Carthaginian dominion: as Pepi (2014, p. 202) incisively notes in this case, is the issue one of "territorial, political, economic or simply cultural hegemony on the part of Carthaginians and other western Phoenicians"? The



diffused elements of Punic culture from the fifth century BC may derive from Carthaginian influence, rather than denote the continuation of an eastern Phoenician cultural horizon from the eighth century BC. Without a reliable archaeological chronology and extensive excavation programmes, however, such questions of chronology and origin of influences in the material culture – and thereby the society itself – will remain difficult to answer.

## A LAND TO TRADE AND SETTLE IN ...

### *The Land*

Evidence for Phoenician presence in northwestern Africa has been documented on either side of the Straits of Gibraltar, the 9 km wide peninsula jutting out in southern Spain and separating the Mediterranean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean (Fig. 1). The African regions east of Gibraltar, facing the Alboran Sea, are territorially divided among Morocco, Spain (Ceuta, Melilla) and Algeria. The Spanish administrative regions of the three islands Chafarinas, Peñón de Alhucemas, and Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera are located along the Mediterranean coast of Morocco. Further east, on the Algerian coast, Punic evidence stretches across the Oran plain and 350 km to the east, around the modern-day cities Cherchel and Tipasa. On the Atlantic façade of Morocco, the southernmost region where Phoenician evidence has been documented is Mogador, an islet off the modern city of Essaouira.

Northeastern Morocco lies between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The Rif mountain range stretches from Cape Spartel to the Melwiyya River, almost parallel to the Alboran Sea. Dominating the interior of the land, the Atlas Mountains rise in a west-east direction towards the Algerian border, facing the Anti-Atlas Mountains that follow a south-west northeast direction, and forming a mountainous landscape of rocky outcrops that is a continuation of the Betic-Rif mountain belts of Iberia (CARAYON, 2008, p. 180). Rivers and streams indent the northwestern African coastline, creating (often dry) river valleys (wadi/oued), such as the wadi Liane, Ksar Seghir and Al Marsa in the region of the Straits of Gibraltar, and the wadis Martil and Lau on the Mediterranean coast (RAMOS et al., 2012, p. 514). Several major rivers, some of which spring from the Atlas Mountains (Sebou, Regreg, Draâ) and others in the Rif Mountains (Loukkos), discharge in river basins on the Atlantic façade, as do smaller rivers (e.g. wadi Ksob). The basins of these rivers underwent significant geomorphological transformations, with



the result that the modern coastline does not reflect ancient geomorphology (LÓPEZ PARDO, 2002, p. 31-32).



The Algerian coast is characterised by the mountain range of Tell Atlas, a continuation of the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. It stretches parallel to the Mediterranean coast, where overhanging mountain cliffs are broken off by coastal plains drained by rivers, as in the areas of Oran and Algiers (CARAYON, 2008, p. 180).

### *Local populations at contact-time*

Most of the archaeological evidence for Phoenician settlement patterns are concentrated in the western part of the region described (Morocco and Ceuta). Although the body of knowledge concerning the indigenous populations is growing, there is still not adequate information on settlement patterns, modes of subsistence, social organisation and trade connections that can be ascribed with some degree of precision to the time of contact with the first Phoenician traders and settlers. It is archaeologically documented, however, that contacts between northwestern Africa and Iberia on their closest point (southern Iberia – Tangier Peninsula) had been ongoing from at least the third millennium BC.

The main problem for assessing the social and economic organisation, aspects of culture and religion of these populations at contact time with the earliest Phoenicians lies in the difficulty of dating sites and thus of establishing any contemporaneity with the Phoenician horizon, which compounds the problems of the cultural ascription of a site as 'Phoenician' or 'indigenous'. These difficulties in chronology also obfuscate the study of the impact of the Phoenicians on local communities. Successive campaigns of an international, multidisciplinary project in the region of Tetuán (in the coastal segments of Bab-Sebta to Cape Negro and of the Beliunes forrest near Ceuta to the Lián river) in northern Morocco resulted in the identification of several sites dating from the Palaeolithic Period onwards. Several sites were identified that could date to the period under discussion here: La Ferma, Río Negro V, Koudia Taláa, Río Negro II, and Al-Amin/Alcudia Smir, along with possibly the sites of Tres Piedras II and Río Negro IV, whose dates remain indeterminate (RAMOS et al., 2011, p. 231). It appears that several communities were sedentary by this period, living in settlements. In some cases, continuity of occupation can be established from the Libyan Late Bronze Age down to the fifth century BC (PEPI, 2014, p. 208).



In previous decades, information on the social organisation of communities in northern Morocco at contact-time had been gauged through the iconographic analysis of rock art iconography in the High Atlas and Atlas Mountains (JODIN, 1964; SIMONNEAU, 1968-72; SBIHI ALAOUI and SEARIGHT, 1997). The depiction of men brandishing weapons and animals, some appearing to be domesticated, was considered evidence for pastoral communities (RODRIGUEZ, 2006). Hypotheses even suggested that the depiction of metal weapons in some of these images implies trade in metals between Phoenicians and local people (LÓPEZ PARDO, 2002, p. 34-35, p. 37-38). Stylistic comparisons, however, suggests that some of the metal weapons and tools depicted in this rock art date to the second millennium BC, since possible prototypes of the images have comparanda in the middle of the second millennium BC Atlantic Iberia. In addition, at least one halberd has been found at the Bronze Age necropolis of Mers in the Tangier Peninsula, whose accurate depiction appears in the High Atlas engravings (PAPPA, 2009, p. 60-61). The burial evidence from the necropoleis of the Tangier Peninsula, (PONSICH, 1970, p. 50-61) indicates settled communities. Tentatively, this evidence advances the hypothesis of pastoral and (semi-) sedentary communities that already made use of metal tools and weapons prior to the influx of Phoenician trade. After all, it is with communities of a certain level of social organisation that it would have been possible for Phoenicians to instigate trade contacts.

### **THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PHOENICIAN PRESENCE IN NORTHWESTERN AFRICA: SETTLEMENTS, TRADING POSTS AND THEIR IMPACT CA. EIGHTH–SIXTH CENTURY BC**

Evidence for the activities of Phoenicians in the earliest period of their presence in northwestern Africa consists in settlement and funerary data, as well as in evidence for trade that has been found across western Mediterranean. The earliest Phoenician-related activity is dated to the eighth century BC, by conventional chronologies (pottery typologies). The activities of newcomers left evidence in the form of new permanent settlements, seasonal trading posts, funerary monuments for the interment of Phoenician-origin individuals, imports but also changes in the burial customs of local populations. Thus, there exist various levels and degrees of involvement that reflect a complex reality of exchanges and living situations. Sites initially interpreted as colonies and as trading posts are now looked at from new perspectives that emphasise the local conditions and contributions. Due to the nature of several research projects (e.g. survey vs excavation), the extent of settlement area, the



internal organisation and cultural affinities of a site often remain nebulous and open to speculations. In few cases, we do have details for the internal organisation of the space at some of the settlement sites investigated. Clear cultural affiliations often remain unclear. The evidence for continuity of occupation provides clues as to this issue.

### *The Atlantic façade*

In literary sources, the town of Lixus was considered the oldest Phoenician colony in the West (Pliny *Hist. Nat.* 19, 63). In Antiquity it was located closer to the Atlantic coast, but now it is found inland in the alluvial plain of the river Loukkos, near Larache. Lixus is one of the best investigated sites of that period in the wider region (ARANEGUI GASCÓ, LÓPEZ-BERTRAN and VIVES-FERRÁNDIZ, 2011). Early excavations, which began anew in more recent times, brought to light a settlement stretching from the hill of Tchemmish to the river plain below. The earliest evidence for contacts at the site dates to the eighth century BC (HABIBI et al., 2005). It consists in a phase characterised by the presence of ceramic material, as well as faunal and ichthyofaunal remains, followed by the first phase of building activity on the site. Terracing walls on the top of the hill and evidence for residential areas on the slopes attest to an early settlement, where metallurgical activities took place close to domestic quarters. The earliest architectural remains correspond to the rectilinear architecture of stone foundations and adobe/tapial walls, with door openings possibly at the room corners but in any case above the stone foundation (HABIBI et al., 2005). The ceramic material in use at the site shows local production according to Phoenician prototypes, but also connections with the Phoenician and Orientalizing culture of Iberia, as well as hand-made pottery that must have been locally-made (ARANEGUI GASCÓ, LÓPEZ-BERTRAN and VIVES-FERRÁNDIZ, 2011). The settlement does not appear to have been occupied prior to the arrival of the Phoenicians.

The necropolis of Raqqada was located north-west of this settlement and almost certainly served the Lixitan population. The three funerary groups identified so far probably date not to the original group of colonists, but to a later period in the life of the settlement, from the second half of the sixth century to the fifth century BC. From the summary picture of the discoveries made there, it appears that the deceased were buried with bronze jugs known from the Levant and Cyprus, as well as known Phoenician-style jewellery, such as golden earrings with basket pendants suspended from loops (EL KHAYARI, 2007a; 2007b).



One of the earliest evidence for Phoenician presence was detected in early excavations on Cape Spartel, west of the Straits of Gibraltar. Two tombs identified as Phoenician were investigated at the beginning of the previous century, one of which had been looted. The other, known as 'Ras Achakar' (KOEHLER, 1930), was an underground chamber tomb, built of ashlar blocks following a rectilinear plan and accessed by a corridor. It contained a single inhumation with grave offerings, including silver earrings with suspended basket pendants. This tomb invites close comparison with the aristocratic funerary monuments at Trayamar, the elite necropolis of the Phoenician colony at Morro de Mezquitilla in Malaga (Spain) (PAPPA, 2013, p. 92). It should be noted, however, that the inhumation of the deceased at elaborate funerary monuments as the one at Ras Achacar is not a common mode of interment in the eighth and seventh century BC Phoenician colonies in the Iberian Peninsula. As such, a seventh-century date for the Ras Achacar tomb could be disputed. The design of the jewellery that it yielded, appears in other funerary grounds in Tangier, both Phoenician and indigenous, as well as at Raqqada and in some of the necropoleis of the Tangier Peninsula (PAPPA, 2013, p. 92-93).

Other potential sites of Phoenician occupation are either badly-known or suggest a different type of settlement, temporary or seasonal. The meagre finds from Sala (Rabat), and the substantial activity on Mogador are good examples. At Sala, ancient *Chellah*, at the mouth of the Bou Regreg river, some Red Slip pottery fragments, found among allegedly seventh-century BC Phoenician walls, suggest Phoenician presence. These early walls were incorporated into a later Roman structure, and thus conclusions are tentative (BOUBE, 1984, p. 166-167; PAPPA, 2013, p. 86-87).

A well-known and much investigated site is the settlement on the present-day island of Mogador, off Essaouira, first published in the 1960s (JODIN, 1966). Recent geophysical investigations have documented that at the time of Phoenician occupation, the island was naturally joined to the mainland by a long and narrow isthmus (MARZOLI, 2012; MARZOLI and EL KHAYARI, 2009; MARZOLI and EL KHAYARI 2010). Ceramic assemblages from the site consist in amphorae from the western Phoenician colonies, but also few amphorae from Athens and East Greece (eastern Aegean islands and the Greek cities of Asia Minor). Some of the Phoenician pottery was inscribed with the personal names of the owners, who seem to have marked out their personal possessions in a communal space shared by seasonally-residing



merchants and sailor crews (JODIN, 1966)<sup>4</sup>. Metallurgical activities may have taken place on the island, which must have been used as a stopping-off point for navigators and a base for procuring resources. A betyl found standing on Mogador, the only permanent structure identified, suggests that eastern Mediterranean religious rites were practised (JODIN, 1966; PAPPÀ, 2009, p. 65-62). A tripillar shrine was identified at the site of Kommos, on southeastern Crete, which was also used as a stop-off point by Phoenician sailors en route to the western Mediterranean (PAPPÀ 2013, p. 136-138).

### *The Tangier Peninsula*

The Tangier Peninsula yielded evidence for burial grounds dating from the Late Bronze Age to the Roman period. Some of them undoubtedly show at least intense exchanges with Phoenicians. So far, it has not been possible to associate these burial grounds with specific settlements. Several burial grounds were fully published by Ponsich (1967; 1970), yet their dating and cultural attribution remain nebulous for some and doubtful for others (EL AZIFI, 1995, PAPPÀ, 2009, p. 62-68). Some are considered indigenous burial grounds of populations with close connections to Phoenician communities. A plausible seventh–fifth century BC tomb is the small underground burial chamber of Mogogha Es Srira, 5km east of Tangier, whose architectural plan of a vertical opening and lateral chamber recalls some of the earliest Carthaginian tomb types (JODIN, 1960; PAPPÀ, 2013, p. 92). Pepi (2014, p. 210) considers the tomb to be the result of consecutive constructions, with a second phase of enlargement, and on the basis of three vases, dates it to between the third and first century BC, not taking into account parallels with Archaic tombs in Carthage and the likelihood of reuse in later centuries.

Two inhumation burial grounds at Malabata (two burials), 14 km west from the modern city of Tangier, and another in the Marshan/ Merchan plain east of Tangier (98 inhumations in fossas dug into the bedrock) in Tangier, also recall Carthaginian customs. Basket-type pendants were associated with some of the burials, but the reuse of the grounds already in Antiquity hinders a more general attribution to the seventh–sixth century BC (PAPPÀ, 2013, p.92; PAPPÀ, 2009, p. 66). Pepi (2014, p. 209) considers doubtful any chronological attribution, other than of some indeed later tombs to the Roman period.

The impact of the Phoenician presence in the wider region (be that as settlers or traders) is illustrated by the extensive evidence for the reception of

<sup>4</sup> For a summary with bibliography, see Pappà (2009, p. 58).



Phoenician artefacts among the local populations of Tangier in the period between the seventh and the fifth centuries BC, archaeologically documented in the grave offerings, and the subtle changes in burial customs at these necropoleis, already known from the 1970s but mostly ignored by modern research. The level of impact documented in the burial grounds of Tangier, with imported pottery and jewellery of Phoenician styles, render more striking the absence of large urban nuclei attributed to Phoenician settlers. While this may relate to the vicissitudes of archaeological discovery, it cannot mask the reality of a variety of different types of Phoenician activity in the region that did not lead to an urban agglomeration by this stage.

### *Ceuta, Tétouan region and the eastern Rif*

Another category of sites is represented by those identified in modern-day Ceuta, in the region of Tétouan and in the Rif valley. Unlike sites on the Atlantic coast (Lixus, Mogador), these were probably indigenous settlements in contacts with Phoenicians, or hosting small Phoenician communities.

The ancient settlement at Ceuta was located on a rugged coastline with seven hillocks defining its profile, jutting out immediately to the east of the Straits of Gibraltar (VILLADA, RAMON and SUÁREZ 2011, p. 125; VILLADA, RAMON and SUÁREZ PADILLA 2010, p. 382). Excavations in 2004-2005 took place at the Plaza de la Catedral de Ceuta in a restricted area of 170 m<sup>2</sup>. The excavators favour the hypothesis of a Phoenician enclave in an indigenous settlement, which imported foodstuffs and other commodities from the eastern and central Mediterranean, as well as from Iberia (VILLADA, RAMON and SUÁREZ PADILLA, 2010; VILLADA, RAMON and SUÁREZ PADILLA, 2007). Studies of the hand-made pottery (CAU, ILIOPOULOS and MONTANA 2010) and of the lithic production (RAMOS, DOMÍNGUEZ-BELLA and VIJANDE, 2010) suggest that the settlement was populated by local inhabitants. The researchers consider the consumption of specific ware types as characteristic of tastes peculiar to the indigenous population and not typical of Phoenician colonies elsewhere (VILLADA, RAMON and SUÁREZ, 2011, p. 393-394). As things stand, however, it is hard to designate hand-made wares as of Phoenician or indigenous type and to extrapolate from that on the ethnicity or cultural identity of their users.

In the Tétuan Region, a few miles south of Gibraltar and ca. 60 km east of Tangier, the settlement of Kach Kouch was identified on a headland overlooking the wadi Lau. This was an indigenous settlement of oblong wattle-and-dub huts, whose residents were in contact with Phoenician settlers



or traders. They imported Phoenician foodstuffs in amphorae, used Red Slip pottery and handmade pottery known from Iberia (BOKBOT and ONRUBIA-PINTADO, 1995).

Other sites are less well known and could be either Phoenician ex nihilo settlements, or indigenous sites in a situation of exchanges with western Phoenician milieu. Investigation of the coastal area resulted in the identification of two sites located at the mouth of wadi Amekrane (close to the modern city El Hoceima): Sidi Driss, at the modern village Aït Tayar, and another located 500 m to the west. Sidi Driss yielded evidence for Phoenician material in settlement strata that date from the seventh century BC (VISMARA, 2011, p. 594; KBIRI ALAOUI et alii, 2004, p. 588-600).

### *Algeria*

The only site that certainly falls within this period in Algeria is located off the coast of the Tafna estuary, on the isle of Rachgoun (Tlemcen), 2 km from the mainland. This was likely a Phoenician colony, but of a very different type to that of Lixus. Occupied in the seventh century BC and abandoned probably less than two centuries later, it was a small town of rectilinear houses, and a small necropolis, served by one or more ports and possibly an artificial inner harbour (*kothon*) (VUILLEMOT, 1965). The harbour was located on the eastern coast of the isle, where there is a natural bay (CARAYON, 2008, p. 511-512). The cremation cemetery is located in the northern part of the island, close to the coast, while the settlement is located in the south-east. The austerity of the material culture found at the settlement coupled with the offerings that the cremation necropolis yielded, which are high in weapons, an unusual feature for a Phoenician burial ground, may attest to the military outpost nature of this settlement (VUILLEMOT, 1965, p. 55) and the dangers that the community may have faced from piracy. It was certainly isolated unless the Punic settlements on the opposite coast date to an earlier period than currently surmised by the available evidence (PAPPA, 2013, p. 85). The settlement was likely abandoned and the population relocated to the settlements on the opposite coast in the fifth century BC (VUILLEMOT, 1965, p. 45-46).

## **THE SIXTH-FIFTH CENTURY BC EXPLOSION: NEW SETTLEMENTS, CULTURAL IMPRINT AND IMPACT**

The sixth century BC marks a period of reconfiguration in the settlements patterns of western Mediterranean, both on the European and African shores. In northwestern Africa this is evident in the increased number of



archaeological sites. The rise of Carthage as a maritime and economic power is often implicated in the interpretation of this phenomenon, although there is no tangible historical or archaeological evidence for Carthaginian political control over the western Mediterranean. Yet, in northwestern Africa too, the change from the preceding period is marked by a growth of new settlements that exhibit Punic culture. Others (Mogador, Rachgoun) are permanently abandoned. The difficulty, as noted for earlier periods, lies often in establishing whether new settlements attest to the presence of groups external to the region (as colonists) or to changes brought through commerce and other kinds of intercultural contacts. In most cases, this remains doubtful.

During the Punic period, and especially from the third century BC onwards, the influence of Carthage on the material culture of Moroccan and Algerian sites is evident, but hard to ascribe to a direct political control exerted by Carthage (CARAYON, 2008, p. 181; PEPI, 2014). On the other hand, by the time of the floruit of the Numidian kingdoms in the third and second centuries BC, Punic influence is documented in the official language spoken, in the numismatic evidence, epitaphs, and the emergence of *tophetim* (LANCEL, 1995, p. 786-790).

The historical sources favour a mercantile involvement of Carthage, although the material evidence supports more a western Phoenician, i.e. Gadiitanian, axis of reference, especially from the third century BC onwards (CARAYON, 2008, p. 223). A growth in the salt-preservation and fish-processing industry (garum etc) is observed already in the fifth century BC (TRAKADAS, 2005), as well as a new, local impetus in the pottery-making industry. The site of Kouass, for example, dominating the mouth of the wadi Gharifa on the Atlantic coast, which had mooring capabilities, was a major centre in the production of salt, garum and other fish products, as well as developing into a significant centre for pottery production, especially amphorae (CARAYON, 2009, p. 227).

For several of these sites, on which occupation continued in Mauritanian and Roman times, it is difficult to assess the extent of occupation and urban organisation for the earlier Punic period. For some, only rudimentary information is known. Other sites have been identified on archaeological or literary grounds. In few cases, the connection is limited to the etymological origins of the modern or ancient name that appears to connect it to the Phoenician/Punic language.





Several new sites emerge from the end of the sixth century BC and later, and others become better documented archaeologically. New settlements are found close to the coast and on the banks of navigable rivers, including sites such as Thamusida, Kouass, Zilil, and Aziz Slaoui, and inland, such as the undated site of Rhira (AKERRAZ, EL KHAYARI and PAPI, 2009). Banasa and Volubilis are settlements that become important in a later period, during the fourth and third centuries BC respectively (PEPI, 2014, p. 213-214). Funerary monuments (e.g. tumuli) have been found in the Gharb plain and in the plain of Lixus, at the fourth-century BC Sidi Slimane. To this category can be included the chronologically uncertain sites of Lalla Mimouna and Khemis Sahel (AKERRAZ, EL KHAYARI and PAPI, 2009, p. 165-166; PEPI, 2014, p. 213).

Better known on the Atlantic coast is the site of Thamusida, at Sidi Ali ben Ahmed. Located in the Gharb Plain, 30 km upstream from the estuary of the River Sebou, it was separated 105 nautical miles from Tangier (AKERRAZ, EL KHAYARI and PAPI, 2009). The exact extent of the earliest settlement is not known and its plan and organisation cannot be discerned. The site was established in the southern limits of the alluvial plain of the Gharb, surrounded by the dunes of the great plain of Mamora, covered by oak forrests. The site was implanted near a ford of the Sebou. The terrain was naturally characterised by low relief but the artificial terracing created a plateau and an artificial tell. Apart from a single seventh-century BC western Phoenician amphora found as residual material on the foothills of the site, there is no other evidence for early occupation (AKERRAZ, EL KHAYARI and PAPI, 2009, p. 158-161). Systematic evidence for occupation dates from the fifth century BC onwards, where structures occupy at least 250 m<sup>2</sup> and where imported material includes amphorae from Gadir. Two Libyan inscriptions and two graffiti, Punic or Neo-Punic, are difficult to date. Given this information, it is difficult to surmise the ethnic composition or cultural identity of the settlement, which at this stage cannot be considered urban (AKERRAZ, EL KHAYARI and PAPI, 2009, p. 161-165).

## The Tangier Peninsula

In the Tangier Peninsula, a major centre appears to emerge by the end of the sixth century BC. Known with variants of the same name in fifth-century BC literary works as *Tingi* (in the *Periegesis* of Hecataeus of Miletus) and



as *Thymiateria*, meaning 'incense burners' in Greek (in the *Periplous* of Pseudo-Skylax) (LIPÍŃSKI, 2004, p. 426-427), it is to be expected that future excavations will show an earlier occupation. As noted previously, the excavations in the Peninsula of Tangier have documented several cemeteries, some of which show continuity from the Libyan Bronze Age down to the Punic period. All this points to an earlier indigenous settlement in the region, with contacts with the Phoenicians from the eighth or seventh century BC, which experienced demographic growth by the Punic period.

Underwater surveys of the Tangier Bay and the surrounding coasts (Île Perekhil in the Straits of Gibraltar, the Marshan area, west of the Bay of Tangier and the Ras Achakar on the north Atlantic coast of the Tangier Peninsula) brought to light different types of anchor elements that represent marine activity in the region from the third quarter of the fifth century BC to the first century AD (TRAKADAS and ERBATI, 2009). In particular, they indicate that the provision of anchorage points facilitated the shipping routes connecting northern Africa to the European shores. Based on literary and archaeological evidence, Tangier appears to have been a major port from the sixth century onwards at least (TRAKADAS and ERBATI, 2009, p. 256-257).

The site Dhar d'Aseqfane (Ksar Seghir) was identified on a hill near the wadi Ksar, a locality on the Straits of Gibraltar. It was a rural settlement in late antiquity, but has yielded Phoenician/Punic evidence from the sixth century BC, which remains to be published (EL KHAYARI and AKERRAZ, 2012).

### *Tétuan region and Melilla*

Several Punic or Punic-period sites have been identified in the region around Tétuan, but little information can be derived from them as regards lay-out, socio-economic organisation and cultural affinities, as most of them remain partly published. At its basin, the wadi Martil must have formed a natural port in antiquity. Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* 5, 18) notes that in his time the river was navigable and that a village stood in ruins at the point where it drained to the ocean (CARAYON, 2008, p. 224). Several pre-historic sites dating to different or overlapping periods have been identified at the river basin of Martil and neighbouring river courses. Sidi Abdeslam del Behar was identified at the mouth of the wadi Martil, with its earliest phase dating to the fifth and fourth centuries BC, characterised by the presence of Red Slip pottery (BERNAL et al., 2011; CARAYON, 2009, p. 225-226). At Kitzán /Kitane, situated in the middle course of the wadi Martil, a Punic urban centre has been excavated, characterised by rectilinear buildings of Phoenician-origin architecture. The



settlement dates to the fifth century BC. Despite suffering from fire in the following century, occupation continued (BERNAL et al., 2008). Tamuda is found further upstream the wadi Martil, on its southern bank. The toponym of the ancient city, confirmed by coin legends, is of Libyan origin. It has yielded sixth-century BC evidence (CARAYON, 2008, p. 223-224). South of the wadi Martil, lies the probably sixth-century BC settlement known at Emsa, on the mouth of the wadi Emsa, a short distance from the coast, though in antiquity it would have been close to the littoral (KBIRI ALAOUI, 2008).

The modern port city of Melilla, on the Mediterranean coast, east of the Cape Tres Forcas, is identified with ancient *Rusaddir* mentioned in the ancient sources (Pliny *Hist. Nat.* 6,18; Ptolemy IV, 1) that refer to it as a Phoenician colony (CARAYON, 2008, p. 223). The discovery of some third-century BC ceramic material has been reported (VILLADA, RAMON and SUÁREZ PADILLA, 2010, p. 210). A Punic necropolis of cist tombs with large amphorae functioning as grave markers, excavated and published early in the previous century (FERNÁNDEZ DE CASTRO Y PEDRERA, 1916), no longer exists.

## Algeria

Further east, in coastal Algeria, several localities have been identified with ancient settlements whose names are known from the Greco-Roman literary sources and excavations. Few date from the sixth century BC onwards and another fifteen feature toponyms of Phoenician origin (CARAYON 2008, p. 182-194): Cherchell (ancient *Iol*) (BENSEDDIK and POTTER, 1993), Tipasa (FERDI, 2005), Gunugu/ Sidi Brahim, Gouraya, Oran, Les Andalouses and Mersa Madakh (CARAYON 2008, p. 182-188). The settlement at Mersa Medakh dates from the sixth century BC and shows connections with the Phoenician settlements of Iberia, as well as Carthage. Similarly, the settlements at Siga, 4 km from mouth of the wadi Tafna (close to the village of Takembrit), yielded fifth century BC Punic amphorae, found at the foot of the ancient citadel date from the end of the period of occupation at Rachgoun (CARAYON, 2008, p. 192-195). Several of these sites must have been indigenous, such as the settlement of Les Andalouses, situated in the alluvial plain of the wadi Sidi Hamadi. It yielded settlement deposits dating from at least the fourth century BC and two cemeteries, the earliest of which dates to the fifth century BC (CARAYON, 2008, p. 191-192, p. 504).



Evidence further west for Phoenician presence is documented in the Canary Islands, 1000 km from Gibraltar, where amphorae dating to the fourth century BC, attributed to Punic merchants, have been found (NIKOLOPOULOS, 2009, p. 307-310). It is possible that a Berber/Phoenician population occupied the islands at some point in the first millennium (BROODBANK, 2013, p. 574).

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Phoenician presence in northwestern Africa dates from at least the eighth century BC. The earliest evidence for Phoenician involvement probably relate to western Phoenicians from the region of southern Iberia and document a multifaceted situation, where traders set up seasonal trading posts and colonists permanent new towns, importing aspects of their material culture that were adopted and adjusted by local populations, as documented in the funerary deposits in the Peninsula of Tangier. By the fifth century BC, a new string of settlements had been set up from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea, perhaps part of a broader reconfiguration process of the sixth-fifth century BC period that is also seen in Iberia. Despite the frequent evocation of the rise of Carthage as a maritime power as a causative factor for these changes, there is no archaeological evidence that documents Carthaginian political control over northwestern Africa during this period.

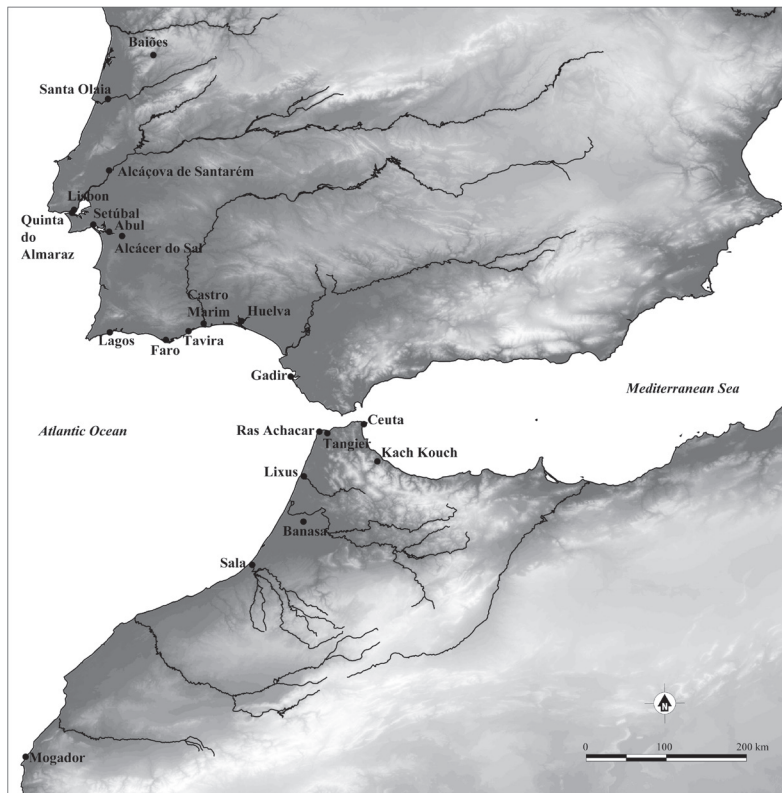


Fig. 1: Fig. 25 in Pappa, E. 2013. *Early Iron Age Exchange in the West: Phoenicians in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic* (Ancient Near East Supplement 43). Leuven; Paris; Walpole, MA: Peeters Publishers.

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