

## BOOK REVIEWS

S. CELESTINO – C. LÓPEZ-RUIZ, *Tartessos and the Phoenicians in Iberia*, Oxford 2016. 368 pp., Oxford University Press.

The word *Tartessos* stands out as an inspiration for a large amount of publications about a river, a territory or even a city mentioned in the ancient sources, on one hand, and about an archaeological image created in 1958 with the discovery and first excavations in El Carambolo site (Seville, Spain), on the other hand. The consolidation of this archaeological image was evident in the 1968 Congress (*Tartessos y sus Problemas* = *Tartessos and its Problems*), in which the origin, development and downfall of this entity could be archaeologically identified. Besides that, Linguists' contribution to this discussion helped to identify its hypothetical diaspora.

Among this bibliography, the book *Tartessos and the Phoenicians in Iberia* presents itself as a useful synthesis written in English, with an overview of the research being currently developed on the topic, that does not ignore the diversity of interpretations and debates published since the end of the 19th Century. Because of that, this publication represents an important stepping stone for the discussion of the problem of Tartessos from both literary and archaeological perspectives.

These research paths are perfectly exposed in this book as a result of the authors' scientific experience. Sebastián Celestino, archaeologist and author of a considerable bibliography about the Extremadura's Iron Age and the Warrior's Stelae, presents an archaeological perspective of the "Tartessic Question". Carolina López-Ruiz dedicated her research in the last years to the discussion of the ancient sources (both Near Eastern and Classical) about the Mediterranean peoples, as well as the Iberian Peninsula. The intellectual maturity of these scholars justifies the matter and the quality of *Tartessos and the Phoenicians in Iberia*.

The eight chapters expose clearly the purposes of this contribution and reflect a balanced distribution of the perspectives that form part of the general discourse. It starts with a brief history of research (Ch. 1) and develop some issues of the written sources: Greek geography and Historiography (Ch. 2), Punic and Roman representations (Ch. 3) and the mythological image of Tartessos (Ch. 4). The Chapters 5 to 8 present the archaeological perspective: the contacts before the colonization itself (Ch. 5), the economic and human landscape (Ch. 6), the religion and the rituals (Ch. 7) and some elements of art and technology (Ch. 8). The Epilogue ("Tartessic Questions") has an interesting review of the precedent chapters. The number of titles in the Bibliography is large and pertinent, as well as the references to Tartessos in written sources. The general index is useful to find several types of information in the book.

The research history starts with the archaeological excavations of J. Bonsor in search of Tartessos. Brilliantly, the authors expose the role of A. Schulten's work as the "Father" of the Tartessic studies and as compiler of the ancient sources about the Iberian Peninsula and, particularly, Tartessos. His influence is undeniable, at least until the finding of Carambolo's treasure in 1958.

The reasonable relevance given to this discovery for the invention of the "Tartessic Archaeology" contrasts with the lack of attention given to the problems posed by the transition from a discourse focused on texts into the construction of an archaeological image. In other words, it is implicitly admitted that this site is important for the "discovery" of Tartessos without responding to the arguments that have recently ques-

tioned its role in the construction of a problematic discourse. This aspect clearly justifies the idea defended at the end of this historiographical overview: the identification of the development of the “Tartessic Culture” within a vast territory, starting from the analysis of the sources and other similar processes of cultural contact or “Orientalization” along the Mediterranean. Within this scope, the authors obtain a view considered by them as «holistic and contextualized» (p. 23).

It is interesting to notice that the abundant notes contain some bibliography that could counter the points of view defended in this monography, which reveals an important and fundamental intellectual honesty.

The study of the written sources (Chs. 2 to 4) is, as it is known, problematic. Qualitatively, the set of texts is heterogeneous. Some of them have survived, but others are still known by fragments, which is clearly an obstacle to properly analyze a passage within its context. It is known that, e.g., Herodotus states he was not well-acquainted with the western ends of the inhabited world (Hdt. III 115), but it is impossible to identify the kind of knowledge of authors such as Anacreon, Herodorus, Ephorus or Theopompus, to pose some examples, about these Far Western territories. The organization in the monography seems correct and pertinent, but it would be important to use the same point of view to define how a written source can be reliable for our purposes of research, or how it can be useful as a source of historical or ethnographical information.

The interpretation of the sources deals with some difficulties that remain evident in the chapters 2 to 4. The authors present, as has been said, the texts by type, but start their analysis with the two poets (Stesichoros and Anacreon) who transmitted the first mentions of Tartessos in the Ch. 2, dedicated to Geography and Historiography. Probably, the lack of a chapter for Stesichoros was not noticed. About Anacreon, it is difficult to say that the only fragment known (fr. 361 *PMG*, quoted in Str. III 2,14) tells that the receptors of the poet knew Tartessos sufficiently. This interpretation, which the authors use to explain the archaeological record of the 7th-6th centuries BCE, can be seen as a conjecture.

This detail does not affect the quality of the presentation of the sources on the chapters discussed here. The authors transmit the aspects of the sources, considered relevant by them, with few speculations. In a short space, they present a considerable diversity of perspectives about a quantitatively large textual compilation. This effort of synthesizing the information is complemented with a generic bibliography about the ancient authors, their texts and their historical contexts, as well as a reflection that relates those texts to the contacts with the Iberian Peninsula by Greeks, Carthaginians and Romans. This last aspect is exposed with lucidity, but in some occasions the authors intend to identify (perhaps “forcing” the text to answer some aprioristic questions) arguments to defend that Tartessos is an Indigenous entity. One of the arguments is, e.g., the absence of the Phoenicians in the texts of Herodotus (I 163 and IV 152) and Livy (XXIII) about this Iberian region.

As the authors defend, there are no texts about the views from “the other side”. This situation handicaps the interpretation of texts written by individuals whose scope was to make distant territories known and who were not well-acquainted with the reality that they intend to describe. In other words, it lacks *autopsia* in these descriptions created for absent receptors. It is a temptation, and in some occasions in the text this is evident, to see these texts as unquestionable authorities that transmit some kind of “truth”. In what can be read or interpreted, it is possible to see some inexplicable speculations, e.g., in page 91, where the authors relate Apian’s text about the Blastophoenicians (*Ib.* 56) to the invitation of Arganthonios in Herodotus (I 163). Celestino and López-Ruiz consider, implicitly, that this episode is historical and, explicitly, defend that «curiously, we never hear of Tartessophoenicians or Turdetano/Turdulophoenicians» (p. 91), and add that the act of inviting the Phokaiaans to choose a territory in Tartessos could have lead to a kind of ethnogenesis of “Helenotartessians”.

In Ch. 4, titled “Tartessos and the Mythological Far West”, the authors present sources that transmit a depiction of far-western territories ruled by the mythology or fantasy, especially the Works of Herakles in

the West (Hesperides and Geryon). Curiously, the fragment of Anacreon or the extraordinary longevity of Arganthonios are not considered or discussed in this chapter.

In this context, there are some mentions of the founding kings, of Tarshish in the Old Testament and epigraphical documents, sustained with a wide-ranged bibliography. The inclusion of the latter in Ch. 4, however, is perplexing, considering the absence of a mythological background in these documents. The lack of consistent information to locate Tarshish from these texts is not a sufficient argument to integrate them in a discussion about mythology, but for the first time the authors include here the etymology of \*trt to defend, as Michal Koch did, an Indigenous origin of the names Tarshish and Tartessos.

The hermeneutic work on comparing the Book 44 of Justin with the Greek and Near Eastern views about the “first inventors” for the exegesis of the Gargoris and Habis myth is one of the most interesting aspects discussed in *Tartessos and the Phoenicians in Iberia*. The authors focus on this function, attributed to the gods until the 3rd and the 4th centuries AD, and to human beings (like Cain and Abel) in other cases, concluding that this myth is Tartessic (Indigenous). On the other hand, Justin’s text is related to the problematic passage of Str. III 1,6 about the Turdetanian laws, admitting at the same time a Near-Eastern inspiration. This statement can have two opposed interpretations based on the same argument, because this can be used to defend a Phoenician origin for Tartessos (cfr. the works of M. Álvarez Martí-Aguilar). The further development of this hypothesis will certainly bring some fresh and renovated views about that myth.

The second half of this monography is dedicated to the archaeological record. In Ch. 5, the authors present some general statements about hybridization and mutual influences in postcolonial studies. With this, the authors discuss the meaning and problems of the ethnonym “Phoenicians” when applied to groups that identify themselves with the cities, and try to analyze the Tartessians within the Phoenician and Greek expansion processes. The comparison between these two processes lead to consider that the Phoenician colonization was successful because of the integration of the Indigenous communities in their system. This opens way also to discuss the concept and models of “Precolonization”.

It is assumed that there were, during this “Precolonization” process, contacts without the foundation of permanent settlements, but necessarily dependent on the complicity between the Indigenous elites and the eastern traders. Those traders could be, in a first phase, Cypriots, considering the Baiões – Santa Luzia group and some findings of the 10th-9th centuries BCE of Huelva (Mendez Núñez and Plaza de las Monjas). The authors present a detailed analysis of the Warrior or Southwestern Stelae in this context (previously studied by S. Celestino), which are «the single most important corpus of information that we have about Tartessic society before the colonial wave» (p. 159). It is pertinent to pose a question here: how it is possible to defend that these Stelae contain elements that can be integrated in the concept of “Tartessic Society” and explain, at the same time, its distribution along the Iberian Peninsula (Map 5)? Beyond that, the Ria de Huelva deposit (9th century BCE) represents, in the authors’ opinion, the integration of the Indigenous communities in the context of the Mediterranean trade and the genesis of the Tartessic society.

The formation of this new reality, clearly Mediterranean, is the focus of Ch. 6, dedicated to “Human and Economic Landscapes” of an entity, now considered hybrid, that expands itself to the hinterland after the 6th century BCE, which is reflected on the occupation of new settlements in the interior territories of the Tagus and Guadiana rivers, and on the construction of new buildings like Cancho Roano or Turuñuelo. Celestino and López-Ruiz try to explain, in this context, the 6th century crisis and the generalized abandonment of some settlements, based on the archaeological record as well as on the ancient sources (e.g. natural catastrophes, such as tsunamis).

It is possible to identify some methodological problems which affect the discussion about Tartessos, among them the inability to define with rigorous criteria what distinguishes an “Orientalized Indigenous” or “Occidentalized Phoenician” from purely “Indigenous” and “Phoenician” individuals, specially when the scope is to identify phenomena of hybridization. On the other hand, it is implicitly admitted that the

Autochthonous communities have a changing capacity that is not recognized among the exogenous groups. Maybe this is the key to understand why the authors define as “Tartessic” the elements that do not fit in the idea of the canonical Phoenicians. It is possible to see in these arguments a remarkable contradiction that the researchers have not solved yet: these Phoenicians are considered a heterogeneous population in one situation (pp. 131 ff.), and homogenous in others, as we can see in Ch. 7.

Readings these statements, it becomes clear that, independently from the use of new points of view (e.g., postcolonial) on the analysis of the cultural contacts between the Near East and the West, researchers still defend, as Schulten once did, that the Tartessians are necessarily different from the Phoenicians.

This point of view stands out on maps 6 and 7, with respectively “Phoenicians” and “Tartessic” sites, within a discourse where the hybridization is defended. This concept is used in this text as an alternative to “acculturation”, and is useful to explain «the emergence of a complex, politically organized society (even if we ignore the details), which we call Tartessic, born from local and Phoenician cultural traits and hybrid practices» (p. 201). However, this does not explain why Cádiz is presented in those maps as Phoenician and Tartessian at the same time, or why Ratinhos and Alcorrín, chronologically prior to the process of the expansion defended in this monography, are also considered Tartessic.

The problem of the definition of what is and what is not Tartessic becomes evident in Ch. 7, especially when the El Carambolo’s sanctuary is presented as Tartessic without any other explanation. Recently, solid arguments were presented to consider *Spal* (nowadays Seville) as a Phoenician foundation, based on the eastern origin of this toponym and on the recent archaeological findings of urban archaeology. The former question was not considered, but in Ch. 8.3, the authors based their assumptions on the so-called “Tartessic toponyms”. It would be useful to find, among the interpretation of this sanctuary, the arguments that could reinforce the authors’ statements in favor of a non-Phoenician origin of El Carambolo.

However, Chs. 7 and 8 intend to defend the formation and consolidation of hierarchical groups that use as power symbols the exogenous elements, both in the construction of sanctuaries and necropoleis, or even in the use of technology. It is reasonable to say, as Celestino and López-Ruiz did, that we do not know the Bronze Age communities (prior to the Phoenician presence) sufficiently, and that that is a difficult task to evaluate properly the impact of those contacts among the Indigenous communities. However, this is not a obstacle to repeatedly use the term “Tartessic” to define the most varied types of aspects (architecture, commerce, territory, center/periphery, 6th century crisis, etc.), without explaining why and how this can be related to the mentioned hybridization.

As a matter of fact, the effort made to present to the reader a large and conciliatory overview of the proposals makes the methodological limitations of the “Tartessic question” visible, as well as the difficulties in defining who the Tartessians are. As a result, Tartessos is presented as an Indigenous entity in the first four chapters, as a hybrid entity in the next ones, and again Indigenous when contacts with other “natives” in the Spanish Meseta. The overall thrust is to demonstrate that Phoenicians and Tartessians are separated entities, but defending the occurrence of hybridization at the same time.

The epilogue, titled “Tartessic Questions”, illuminate some of the reader’s doubts. Tartessos is, for the authors, a territory, and the Tartessians, its inhabitants. The idea of an ethnic diversity is based, however, on a lack of knowledge about the Indigenous substratum and on the use of elements which were artificially defined as Tartessic. These elements, it must be said, represent the “precolonial phases” and the Late Bronze Age (Celestino and López-Ruiz consider, as others, that Tartessos was “born” during this period). Lucidly, the authors assume that the research deals with hypotheses that cannot always can be demonstrated.

This monography gives some clues to rethink the intercultural contacts and their role in the construction of new identities, which needs a closer contact between philologists, historians and archaeologists. The methodological problems pointed out are stepping stones to develop new proposals that could help the

research to recognize and interpret those processes. Celestino and López-Ruiz, in this context, present some new clues for further studies.

To conclude, it is undeniable that *Tartessos and the Phoenicians in Iberia* is an important monography that presents and discusses a useful overview of the written sources and the archaeological record, as well as an appropriated and wide-ranged bibliography about the “Tartessic question”. This is one of the greatest merits of a monography that presents an interesting and revealing discourse (independently from the problems highlighted) that the “Tartessic Archaeology” deserves.

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