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TRADING POST VS. SETTLER COLONY: SOME REFLECTIONS ON CONCEPTS OF THE PHOENICIAN EXPANSION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Marion Bolder-Boos*

Abstract: The Phoenician expansion in the Mediterranean has for a long time been considered a mainly commercial enterprise conducted by seafaring traders. This interpretation is primarily based on mentions of Phoenician trade activities in Biblical, Greek, and Roman sources, as well as the idea that the Phoenicians, since they were a Semitic people, were inherently different from Indo-European peoples like the Greeks. The notion that the Phoenicians were a "commercial people" whose society was dominated by maritime trade is deeply rooted in modern scholarship. However, in the last few decades, intensified archaeological fieldwork, new theoretical frameworks, and an improvement of scientific methods have challenged these concepts. This paper aims to review the rich historiographic tradition relating to the supposed commercial nature of Phoenician settlements by analysing how this interpretation was formed, and by contrasting it with recent archaeological results from Sardinia, Iberia, and Sicily to demonstrate that Phoenician sites in the Central and Western Mediterranean were by no means mere "trading posts".

Keywords: Phoenician Expansion; Central and Western Mediterranean; modern Colonialism.

1. Introduction

The Phoenician expansion has been a central topic in the study of ancient Mediterranean civilisations since the early days of scholarly research.[1] Several ancient written sources attest to seafaring Phoenicians venturing into the West, founding many settlements in the process. Thucydides describes them as fearless seafarers and pirates that colonised many parts of the Mediterranean, particularly Sicily, where they were said to have settled all around the coast, until pressure from Greeks who arrived subsequently forced them to retreat to the western parts of the island.[2] This was long held as proof that Phoenician colonisation predated Greek colonisation. Thucydides' testimony is supported by the foundation dates of settlements like Utica, Lixus, and Gadir that predate the foundations of the earliest Greek colonies in the West,[3] which is also in line with

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1 One of the earliest works on Phoenician colonisation was included in the *Geographica sacra*, a treatise written by the French Protestant pastor and biblical scholar Samuel Bochart. Based on passages from the Old Testament, he regarded the Phoenicians as the ancestors of all peoples and accorded them a key role in ancient migration flows. Cfr. Bochart 1646. On Bochart's work see Shalev 2012; Morstadt 2015, pp. 15-16.

2 Thuc. 1.7-8 and 6.2.6.

3 Gadir: ca. 1104/1103 BCE (Vell. Pat. I 2.3); Utica: ca. 1101 BCE (Pliny *NH* XVI 216; Vell. Pat. I 2.4; Sil. It. III 241; [Arist.] *Mir. Ausc*. 1134); Lixus: ca. 1100 BCE (Pliny *NH* XIX 63).

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Strabo who reports that the Phoenicians began founding colonies along the North African coast and on the Iberian Peninsula shortly after the Trojan War.[4]

Many stories relating to interactions between Phoenicians and Israelites or Phoenicians and Greeks mention trade: In the *Odyssey*, they are introduced as merchants of ill repute,[5] and in Herodotus they make their entry at Argos as traders of Egyptian and Assyrian merchandise;[6] in the Bible, they appear as trading partners of the Israelites.[7] Thus, the frequent mention of trade activities in ancient sources led scholars to assume that the Phoenician economy was based on trade, not agriculture, and that the settlements they founded in the course of their westward expansion were mostly trading colonies. This had serious consequences for the interpretation of the Phoenician expansion, its aims, and the impact it had on the wider Mediterranean.

In a series of articles Hans Georg Niemeyer, one of the most pre-eminent scholars of Phoenician studies in the second half of the 20th century, described the Phoenician westward expansion as a «non-Greek model for expansion and settlement».[8] Other scholars, including Maria Eugenia Aubet who is an even greater authority in Phoenician studies than Niemeyer, likewise saw the Phoenician expansion in a largely commercial context, with a focus on Tyre,[9] despite pointing out that agriculture may have played a significant role in the Phoenician economy as well. The contrast to Greek colonisation, that is commonly thought to have been aimed at territorial control and the domination of a larger hinterland, is often stressed.[10] Results from new archaeological investigations, however, have cast doubt on this long-held view, and some scholars have rightly challenged the idea that the Phoenicians were primarily seafarers and traders.[11]

It is therefore high time to take a closer look at how this trade "paradigm" was developed, what consequences this has had on the interpretation of Phoenician settlements in the Mediterranean, and how recent research results from excavations in various sites around the Mediterranean challenge the image that scholarship has created of the ancient Phoenicians.

2. Defining Trading and Settler Colonies

A trading colony, or trading post, is usually defined as a stopping point in a larger network of staging posts founded for mercantile purposes. These were well-known in the European colonial era; they had first been established by the Portuguese and Spanish, later by the Dutch, French, and British especially in Asia in order to secure maritime trade routes and to exchange goods with local peoples.[12] By contrast, settler colonies were designed to focus on land ownership and agriculture, as in North America, Australia, and certain parts of Africa.[13] In most European countries, settler colonies were deemed superior to trading colonies, and set-

4 Strabo 1.1.4 and 1.3.2. Strabo also mentions that various survivors of the Trojan Wars – on both sides – likewise began founding colonies in the war's aftermath. This is described as individual ventures, however, spurred by the loss of fortunes and homes due to either long absence from home (in the case of the Greeks) or the loss of their homeland (in the case of the surviving Trojans), and not as the decision of a civic community to send out colonists.

5 *Od*. 15.141-419; 455; 460-462. On the Phoenicians in Homer's writings see Latacz 1990.

6 Hdt. 1.1.1. Cfr. López-Ruiz 2021, pp. 9-10.

7 1 Chr 14.1; 2 Chr 2.2-3. On the Phoenicians in the Old Testament see Sommer 2000, pp. 32-33, with further references.

8 Niemeyer 1990; Niemeyer 1993; Niemeyer 1994; Niemeyer 1995; Niemeyer 1999; Niemeyer 2006.

9 For a critical re-assessment of Aubet's works and Tyre's mercantile role see Schmitt 2024.

10 See, for instance, Aubet 1995; Aubet 2001.

11 Pappa 2013, pp. xiii-xx; Kistler 2014; Garnand 2020; López-Ruiz 2021, pp. 33-40.

12 On the definition of modern trading colonies see, for instance, Osterhammel 2009, pp. 15 and 17; Reinhard 2018, p. 4. A network of trading colonies or trading posts is usually described as trading diaspora, see Cohen 1971; Curtin 1984, pp. 1-3; Cohen 2008, pp. 83-100.

13 Cfr. Osterhammel 2009, pp. 11-13 and 17-18; Reinhard 2018, pp. 4-5.

tler colonisation, accordingly, was considered a nobler and more legitimate form of land acquisition. This perceived superiority was supported by quotations from the Bible, where God instructed Adam to subdue the earth and till the soil from which he was taken.[14] Thus, agriculture could be presented as humankind's foremost duty on Earth. In the colonial era, it served as one of the most influential arguments to justify the expulsion or even extermination of indigenous peoples in Africa, Australia and the Pacific Islands, and the Americas. According to the colonisers, indigenous peoples did not till the soil due to their "barbaric" ways of life, therefore they were declared to have no natural title to their land. It was only the European settlers, who, by transforming the wilderness into arable land, could lay legal claim to it.[15] Since the tilling of the soil was an arduous task, peoples who seemingly did not do extensive farming (e.g., hunter-gatherers, nomadic or semi-nomadic groups), could be charged with ignoring God's command, thus their sovereignty was called into question.[16] In addition, they were often represented as lazy and afraid of doing hard work. "Trading nations" could equally be confronted with these charges, as their main economic basis was likewise perceived as non-agricultural. In addition, Greek philosophical treatises and plays also tended to depict land ownership and peasant life as superior to trade and other non-agricultural forms of labour, at times even equating trade with theft.[17]

3. Ancient Colonisation as Mirror Image of Modern Colonisation

During the heyday of colonialism, there was a lively discussion about how colonisation should best be conducted, in the here and now as well as in the past, and comparisons between past and contemporary nations were frequently employed to underline one's own point of view. The German historian Arnold H.L. Heeren, for instance, who in the late 18th century wrote several scholarly pieces on ancient nations, their histories and trade, asserted that trading peoples were well advised to found only small settlements, preferably on islands, in order to maintain trade with the natives, citing the ancient Carthaginians as a good example of this practice. He then contrasted what he viewed as successful Dutch Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie with the seemingly declining British East India Company, claiming that large territories could not be held by fleets and predicting that the British would soon be crushed by the sheer size of their Empire.[18] In this context, the Phoenicians' colonial expansion supposedly based on small outposts was seen in a positive light.

One of the most enthusiastic scholars of Phoenician antiquities was the German theologian and orientalist Franz Karl Movers, who between 1841 and 1856 published several volumes on the Phoenicians.[19] One

14 Gen 1.28; Gen 3.23. This could be interpreted as a call to subject the wilderness to the supposedly higher civilisation of agriculture, cfr. Reinhard 2018, p. 4.

15 The idea that property was generated by labour can already be found in John Locke's theory of value and property cfr. Locke 1690 Chapter 5. However, it is worth noting that Locke's critique was aimed at the members of the aristocracy that in his days were the greatest land owners but did not farm their fields themselves, and was not meant to justify the theft of indigenous lands. On the significance of physical labour in Locke's writings see Held 2006, pp. 67-69 with further references.

16 For an overview see Reinhard 2016, p. 505. Of course, in many cases the indigenous peoples were, in fact, agricultural societies, but this was either largely ignored or the land theft was alternatively justified by declaring the "aboriginals" racially inferior und thus equally not entitled to hold land rights. Cfr. Wolfe 2006.

17 Cfr. Plat. *Leg*. 4.704a-705a; Arist. *Pol*. 7.1327a; Cic. *Resp*. II 7-9. However, the sources describe trade in general, not the trade of one particular ethnic group, as Garnand 2020, p. 141 rightly points out. A conceptual association between trade and dishonest behaviour is expressed by the fact that Hermes, the Greek god of trade, was also the god of thieves. See Brown 1969, 82-86 with further references.

18 Heeren 1815, pp. 55-56. In contrast to some of his German colleagues, Heeren seems to have had a rather positive attitude towards trade and trading nations, possibly influenced by his background as a citizen of the Hanseatic City of Bremen.

19 His positive attitude towards the ancient Phoenicians led some of his contemporaries – and not a few of his successors – to call him a Phoenicomaniac. On this issue see Morstadt 2015, p. 16.

of these was entirely dedicated to Phoenician colonisation. In it he described the Phoenicians as an adventurous and acquisitive people who were not as strongly rooted in their homelands as their contemporaries and who were used to long journeys and sea voyages due to their maritime enterprises.[20] Movers envisaged their overseas settlements as small trading posts founded to facilitate trade with local people which, according to him, were mainly barbarians who benefitted greatly from the new products and industries the Phoenicians introduced to them.[21] A similar line of argument can be found in John Kenrick's book on ancient Phoenicia, published in 1855. Kenrick, a clergyman and classical historian who taught at Manchester and Göttingen, also maintained that the Phoenicians' primary objective was commerce, not conquest or colonisation,[22] and that in its wake the Phoenicians dispersed many civilising achievements in the Mediterranean.[23]

Another scholar who found high praise for the Phoenician and Carthaginian colonial practices was George Rawlinson, Camden Professor of Ancient History at the University of Oxford, who in 1889 published a book on the history of ancient Phoenicia in which he repeatedly lauded the Phoenicians for their industriousness, their commercial honesty, and the excellency of their products,[24] which, according to Rawlinson, made them similar to the British.[25] Comparisons between the ancient Phoenicians and their most successful "colonial offspring", the Carthaginians, on the one hand, and the modern British on the other hand go way back and can already be found in the writings of Early Modern humanists like John Twyne and Aylett Sammes, who assumed that Phoenicians had settled in Cornwall and on the Scilly Islands and were thus distant ancestors of the British.[26]

The notion that the British were related to the ancient Phoenicians, and that they were in some way a modern version of the ancient "trading nation" became widespread in modern times, which had a deep impact on how scholars would write about the Phoenicians and their westward expansion. Depending on political and personal circumstances, the British-Phoenician or British-Carthaginian analogy led to exuberant praise (as in Rawlinson's case) or, more often, scathing criticism.[27] Especially when it came to trade and expansion, the Phoenicians' supposed trading post colonisation was often contrasted with the Greek colonisation, which was regarded as settler colonisation and therefore deemed superior, as it was thought to create a strong connection with the land through intensive agriculture.[28] Roman colonisation was likewise considered a better form of expansion, despite its militaristic character, as it also focused on the distribution of

20 Movers 1850, p. 9.

21 Movers 1850, p. 26.

22 Kenrick 1855, p. 111

23 Cfr. Kenrick 1855, p. 186: «A new era began in the history of the human race, when the first trading-vessel put forth from the harbour of Sidon». Like Movers, Kenrick did not differentiate between human races, on the contrary, he decidedly spoke against such notions by pointing out the shortcomings of these attempts: «In our modern ethnology, the fair German, the dusky Persian, and the swarthy Indian are classed under one family, from similarity of language, though one belongs to the descendants of Japheth and the other of Ham: where colour was adopted as the principle of classification, diversity of language would in the same way be overlooked» (Kenrick 1855, p. 49). As a cleric, Kenrick was a follower of monogenism which taught that all men were descendants of Ham, Shem, and Japhet, the three sons of Noah (and thus descendants of Adam and Eve). In the 19th century, this theory was questioned by polygenism which assumed that human races had different origins. While monogenism was based on the teachings of the Bible, polygenism had a scientific varnish, as it argued with biological aspects and was propagated by anatomists, physicians, and zoologists like Josiah Clark Nott and Robert Knox. For an overview of how polygenism was applied to support racism, see Mosse 2006, pp. 23-86; Geulen 2014.

24 On Rawlinson's image of the ancient Phoenicians see Bolder-Boos 2018-2019, pp. 168-169.

25 Rawlinson 1889, p. 30.

26 Cfr. Sammes 1676. The idea is based on written sources (Avien. *Ora Maritima* 113-129; Diod. Sic. V 22) mentioning Phoenician travels to the so-called tin islands, which some scholars identified with the southwestern part of Britain. On this see Champion 2001; Quinn 2018, pp. 176-186.

27 On this phenomenon see Bolder-Boos 2018-2019.

28 For an overview of the interpretation particularly of Greek colonisation see Hodos 2006, pp. 10-12 with further references.

land, mainly for agricultural purposes.[29] In addition, the Romans were seen as bringing technological innovations and "law and order" to the peoples they conquered.[30]

This was another relevant aspect in debates about both ancient and modern colonisation: the alleged improvement of the lives of the colonised. In the course of European expansion to overseas territories, the colonisers did not only stress the "proper" use of the land through agriculture which, in their view, legitimised the seizing of land from indigenous peoples, they also regarded themselves as culturally superior and purported that their presence would have a positive impact on the natives.[31] Thus, apart from exploiting the conquered territory, colonial legitimising strategies included a claim to conduct a "civilising mission" through which the colonised were raised from their supposedly barbaric ways to a civilised, i.e., European lifestyle.[32]

Fig. 1. Dido asking the Numidian king for land. Detail from Fritz Steub's comic strip "The Foundation of Carthage", published 1865 in the German magazine "Fliegende Blätter" (© Fliegende Blätter 43, 1865, Nr. 1064 page 175; Heidelberg University Library).

In this mindset, indigenous peoples were generally depicted as culturally inferior and stuck on a primitive level of development. This image was projected back to antiquity, where the colonising nations – Greeks and Romans primarily, but also Etruscans and Phoenicians – were regarded as "advanced", whereas most other peoples were assumed to have been "primitive". This could be supported by ancient sources such as Justinus who handed down a story by Pompeius Trogus according to which the Numidian King Hiarbas wished to marry the Phoenician princess Elyssa, the founder of Carthage. But instead of delivering the king's request to her, the Carthaginian emissaries told Elyssa that Hiarbas sought someone to teach his people a more civilised way of life.[33] In the Modern Era, the encounter between Elyssa and Hiarbas was depicted accordingly, as can be seen in an illustration from the German satire magazine "Fliegende Blätter" in which the caricaturist Fritz Steub portrayed the Phoenician princess in a garb reminiscent of Queen Victoria's, while Hiarbas and his people are shown wearing only a loincloth and eye-catching ear- and nose rings (Fig. 1).

The ancient sources also depicted the Iberians as primitive natives. Diodorus Siculus alleged that they did not know the value of their silver, hence they sold it to the Phoenicians in exchange for worthless

29 For an overview of the interpretations of Roman colonisation in Early Modern scholarship see Pelgrom – Weststeijn 2020.

30 A notion that has made its way into popular culture, as anyone who has watched Monty Python's Life of Brian can attest to – one only needs to think of the iconic scene when John Cleese, *aka* Reg, asks the leading members of the PFJ what the Romans have ever done for the Judaeans, and Eric Idle, *aka* Stan/Loretta recounts a long list of improvements and benefactions they supposedly owed to the Roman occupation.

31 For a general overview of these discourses see, for instance, Bitterli 2004; Eberl 2021.

32 Examples of this attitude are illustrated, for instance, in a speech given by Richard Wagner in 1848 at the Fatherland Society in Dresden, where he sought to instigate support for German colonial ventures by criticising how stuporous other nations were colonising overseas territories (according to Wagner, the Spanish had turned the "New World" into a clerical slaughterhouse, while the English had transformed it into a huckster's shop, therefore it was up to the Germans to make it "German and glorious". The speech, held on June 15, 1848, is re-printed in Gründner 2006, p. 51). Friedrich Fabri, a German Protestant theologian and leader of the Rhenish Missionary Society, argued along similar lines in a pamphlet published in 1879, in which he declared it Germany's duty to send out colonies in order to bring German values and morality to the world, implying that the other European nations had not been very successful in their civilising efforts and needed Germany to show them how it was done (re-printed in Gründner 2006, p. 75).

33 According to this source, the Carthaginians regarded the Numidians with contempt, wondering «who would be willing to leave one's relatives in order to dwell among barbarians who lived like cattle» (Just. 18.6.).

trumpery.[34] This conjured up the image of the ignorant, simple-minded native giving away vast tracts of land to European colonists and receiving trinkets in return, a picture that was readily used in descriptions of imagined cultural encounters between ancient "colonisers" and "colonised". Theodor Mommsen, for instance, compared the Phoenician arrival in the Western Mediterranean to the arrival of the first European settlers in North America,[35] and his contemporary Maximilian Duncker, who in the mid-19th century wrote a four-volume treatise on the history of antiquity, transferred this image to all encounters between Phoenician seafarers and the other inhabitants of the ancient Mediterranean, including even the early Greeks.[36] Therefore, many scholars conceded that the Phoenicians stood on a higher level of civilisation, as "natives" were *per se* considered inferior to colonists.[37]

However, despite the concession that the Phoenicians were "civilised", most scholars were disdainful of their cultural impact on indigenous peoples due to their "commercial spirit" and their inferior form of colonisation. Mommsen described the Phoenician colonies as factories ("Faktoreien"), founded solely for the purpose of trading goods with the natives, which to him meant that they did not «conduct the heavy and arduous task of colonisation».[38] Mommsen drew heavily on the supposedly "commercial spirit" of the Phoenicians, which he, like many of his contemporaries, associated with the "Semitic race" to which the Phoenicians belonged due to their speaking a Semitic language. Elaborating on the differences between Semitic peoples and Indo-Europeans, he attested the Phoenicians an affinity to trade while at the same time he depicted them as intellectually and politically inferior to Indo-Europeans.[39] Edward A. Freeman, a British politician and Professor of Modern History at Oxford University, followed similar lines of argument. In a book on the history of Sicily, which included a chapter on the island's earliest phases, he described the conflicts between Phoenicians and Greeks as a competition between the Semitic and the Aryan race in the struggle for supremacy in Europe. In his narrative, Sicily remained Aryan thanks to the Greeks, as they defended it against the Phoenicians and Carthaginians until the Romans arrived on the scene to secure the island militarily.[40] To him, the Greeks were «the champions of Europe».[41]

This attitude can also be observed in France, where a negative image of Semitic peoples was widespread. Because of their conquests in the Levant and North Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries, the French had gained possession of several Arab countries and were striving to legitimise their domination by claiming cultural superiority over the conquered populations, aided by their aspiration to present themselves as heirs to the Roman Empire. This meant that French conquests were stylised as a repatriation of territory that had once been a Roman province. In this narrative, the Arabs were the invaders, not the French.[42]

34 Diod. V 35.4.

35 Mommsen 2010, p. 488: «… yet, the natives stood vis-à-vis the foreigners like the American Indians and the Europeans» (transl. author).

36 Duncker 1875, p. 49: «Possessing the ancient knowledge of the Orient, their seafarers and merchants stood vis-à-vis the tribes of the Thracians and Greeks, the Sicels, Libyans, and Iberians not much different than the Portuguese and Spanish of later times stood vis-à-vis the tribes of America» (transl. author).

37 See, for instance, Freeman's comment on the Bronze and Iron Age inhabitants of Sicily: «These three nations, Sikan, Sikel, and Elymian, may pass for the primitive inhabitants of Sicily. They may be called the prae-historic occupants of the island, as distinguished from the Phoenician and Greek colonists. They are the natives, as distinguished from the settlements made by the civilized nations of antiquity» (Freeman 1891, p. 16).

38 Mommsen 2010, p. 487.

39 Mommsen 2010, pp. 485-487. On Mommsen's image of the ancient Phoenicians and Carthaginians see Trapp 2003, pp. 104-133. Cfr. also Bolder-Boos 2018-2019, pp. 165-166.

40 Freeman 1891, p. 8.

41 Freeman 1891, p. 11. In his work, Freeman pursued a universalistic approach in which European (i.e., Christian) forces had to constantly fight Semitic (later: Muslim) forces over possession of the island.

42 On this issue see Díaz-Andreu 2007, pp. 264-271. Cfr. also Jansen 2010a and Najjar 2013 on French cultural and educational policy in Algeria and Tunisia. The Catholic Church was heavily involved in this narrative, as it sought to present itself as a contin-

4. Phoenician Cultural Impact on "Colonial Lands"

The Greek writer Herodotus praised the Phoenicians for their scientific achievements, crediting them with having introduced the alphabet to the Greeks.[43] This appreciation of Phoenician cultural impact is shared by Roman writers such as Pomponius Mela, who likewise admired the Phoenicians as bringers of scientific and technological advancements.[44] In the modern period scholars like Movers, Kenrick, or Rawlinson used these ancient sources to create an extremely positive image of the Phoenician "civilising mission". Most scholars, however, attested the Phoenicians a rather marginal cultural impact on the Mediterranean, due to their perceived focus on commercial exchange. A passage in Herodotus describing a so-called "silent trade" was frequently cited as evidence of this low impact.[45]

With anti-Semitic sentiments increasing in Europe over the course of the 19th century, the perceived low impact of Phoenician cultural achievements became more and more fashionable. This was connected to the diffusionist model developed by the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel. According to this model discoveries and inventions were made in one place from where they were gradually transmitted to other places.[46] This diffusion of knowledge and ideas, and the cultural transformations it spurred, was seen as the motor of civilisation and progress. Of particular importance in this model were migrating groups of people that served as agents of this diffusion and, consequently, as carriers of culture. Most scholars – and the majority of the general public in the Western hemisphere – found it more and more difficult to accord such importance to a Semitic people like the Phoenicians.[47] The growing influence of social Darwinism, racial theories, and anti-Semitism had a share in exacerbating the contrast between the Greeks as representatives of the Aryan race, and the Semitic Phoenicians.[48]

There was a problem, however: according to various ancient sources, the Phoenicians had founded settlements not only on several Aegean islands, but also on the Greek mainland.[49] Based on these literary accounts, some scholars assumed that the Phoenicians founded quite many colonies in Greece, transmitting various scientific and technological achievements to a yet "primitive" Greek population.[50] This notion met with sharp opposition from those scholars who thought it inconceivable that the Greeks had been inferior to a Semitic people, most notably Karl Julius Beloch, who dismissed the ancient sources as notoriously un-

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uation of the late-antique Christian tradition in North Africa and to marginalise Islam to a foreign religion that was essentially an alien intruder. This policy was particularly dominant in Carthage which was not only an ancient bishop's see but also the place of death of the sainted French crusader King Louis IX. Therefore, the former Carthaginian capital became of primary importance for the construction of French places of commemoration in Tunisia, cfr. Jansen 2010b.

43 Hdt. V 58.

44 Pomp. Mela I 6.5.

45 Hdt. IV 196. According to the Greek historian, the Carthaginians used to conduct trade with a certain North African tribe by placing their goods on the beach, then retreating to their ships to wait for the natives to inspect the merchandise. The natives would put their own goods next to the Phoenician wares to indicate what they would offer in return. Then they would likewise retreat and wait for the Phoenicians to come forth and decide whether they would accept the exchange or not. This could go back and forth several times until both parties were satisfied with the exchange and leave. This procedure, which was also documented in cultural encounters in the Modern Era, has been dubbed "silent trade", as the trading partners never meet or speak in person. On silent trade see Moraes Farias 1974; Curtin 1984, pp. 12-13. For modern examples of this phenomenon see Price 1967. For a critique of the concept see Dolfsma – Spithoven 2008.

46 On Ratzel's influence on ancient studies see Trigger 2006, pp. 217-233.

47 This even goes for Orientalists like Ernest Renan or Eduard Meyer who, despite their interest in (ancient) Asian cultures had enjoyed a classical, i.e., philhellenic education, cfr. Marchand 2010, p. 200.

48 Cfr. Sommer 2000, pp. 16-25.

49 For an overview of the sites in Greece that were connected with Phoenician settlers see Lipiński 2004, pp. 145-188 with literary sources.

50 See, for instance, Grote 1857, p. 265; Duncker 1875, pp. 29-49; Lenormant 1875, pp. 223-309.

reliable.[51] Most scholars, however, preferred to believe in the validity of the written documents, even though no archaeological traces had been found which would attest to Phoenician settlements in Greece. Instead, it was argued that since the Phoenicians, as a trading nation, founded only trading colonies, their cultural influence on the Greeks could not have been very strong.[52] A statement by Adolf Holm, a German historian who taught at the universities of Palermo and Naples, perhaps best exemplifies this attitude, when he wrote: «The Phoenicians had been there [i.e. in Greece], but they did not accomplish much».[53]

In the later part of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, Phoenician studies suffered greatly from racist and anti-Semitic polemics. German scholarship, in particular, vilified the Phoenicians as parasites, turning the notion that the Phoenicians did not found "proper" settler colonies, but only trading posts, into a veritable fault in character.[54] After 1945 this overtly racist vocabulary subsided, but the idea that the Phoenician expansion was largely commercial persisted throughout most of the 20th century. Even Sabatino Moscati, one of the most influential scholars of Phoenician studies who worked tirelessly to refute the negative image affixed to the ancient Phoenicians, regarded their settlements in the Central and Western Mediterranean as predominantly focused on trade.[55] The notion that the indigenous civilisations were inferior to the "colonising" nations was likewise upheld.[56]

5. The Beginnings of Archaeological Exploration

Archaeological excavations in the Phoenician homeland were long restrained due to political circumstances, poor preservation, and modern building activities at ancient sites.[57] Excavations at Carthage, which began as early as 1859, proved disappointing, as well, when instead of finding the fabled palace of Elyssa, excavators discovered mainly Roman layers from the time of Augustus' refoundation onwards.[58]

51 In an article that can only be called polemical, Beloch dated the beginning of Phoenician commercial activities in the Mediterranean to the late 8th century BCE, claiming that Thucydides' statement about the Phoenician arrival on Sicily prior to the Greeks was false on the grounds that a classical writer could not have had any knowledge of events that had taken place several centuries before his time, cfr. Beloch 1894.

52 See, for instance, Curtius 1857, pp. 33-39; Busolt 1885, pp. 173-174; Holm 1886, p. 122.

53 Holm 1886, pp. 124-125 note 25. This approach was strongly criticised by the French historian and politician Victor Bérard, who pointed out that the only reason why Phoenician settlements in Greece, France, or Italy were called "trading posts" was because his contemporaries resented the idea that a Semitic people should have settled on European soil, cfr. Bérard 1894, p. 8. However, his reprimands were not received by a larger audience. On Bérard see Bernal 1987, pp. 377-383 with quotations.

54 See, most explicitly, in the works of the Austrian historian Fritz Schachermeyr, who in a monograph on Indo-Germanics and the Orient, writes*:* «The parasitic role the Phoenicians played in the Mediterranean becomes obvious in their overseas settlements. Never are these agricultural colonies, only ever staging posts for the acquisition of resources, outlet markets, or plantations» (Schachermeyr 1944, p. 94; transl. author). On Schachermeyr's prominent role in Nazi scholarship see Rohde 2019.

55 Moscati 1973, p. 136: «The expansion of the Phoenicians and later of the Carthaginians was predominantly commercial, with no intent of conquest, requiring no stable settlements or mass emigration of the population».

56 See, for instance, Harden 1971, pp. 55-56*:* «Indeed, the Phoenicians could not found colonies in countries where good government and civilization already existed; besides, they were only too ready to be satisfied with the role of traders wherever they found an equally civilized people to trade with».

57 Byblos was the only Phoenician city in the Levant where excavations were conducted as early as the 1860s. However, its excavator, the French orientalist Ernest Renan, was more interested in his linguistic and New Testament studies, and his interpretation of Phoenician finds was clouded by anti-Semitic sentiments. *Cfr.* Renan 1864. On Renan's attitude towards Semitic peoples see Bernal 1987, pp. 344-346; Sommer 2000, p. 18. Renan also features prominently in Edward Said's ground-breaking critical work on "Orientalism" (Said 2003, pp. 130-148).

58 Beulé 1861. Phoenician findings were finally discovered in the necropoleis situated along the slopes of the surrounding hills, but the graves contained mainly small finds which did not attract much attention, cfr. Fumadó Ortega 2013; Bolder-Boos 2018-2019, pp. 172-173.

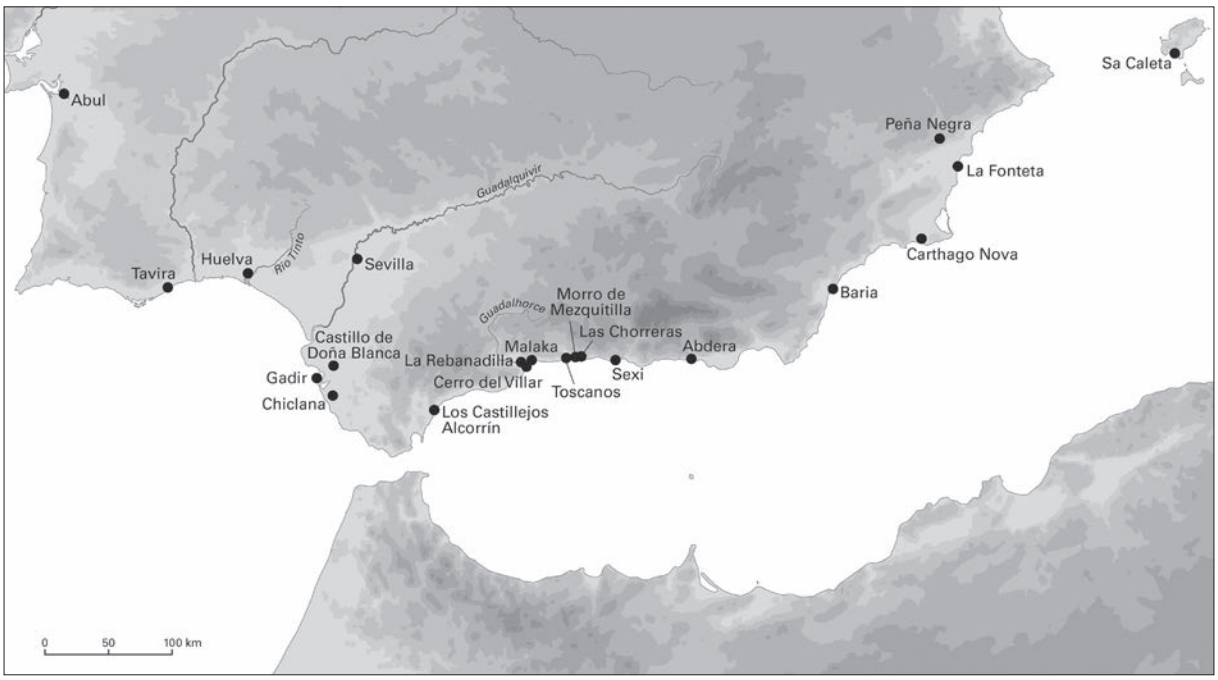

Fig. 2. Map of the Iberian Peninsula with Phoenician settlements (© Menno Bolder).

One of the first sites to reveal extant architectural remains was the Phoenician settlement of Motya, located on the small island of San Pantaleo off the western tip of Sicily. In the early 20th century, the island had been purchased by the wealthy British-Italian ornithologist Joseph Whitaker who wanted to study its wildlife, but when he became aware of the site's archaeological remains, he decided to sponsor excavations.[59] Motya seemed to be an ideal example of a Phoenician trading station: situated on a small island at the crossroads of various maritime trade routes, equipped with a rectangular basin similar in shape to one of Carthage's famous harbours and thus dubbed "cothon", and with industrial zones and large buildings that were interpreted as warehouses.[60]

More Phoenician settlements were discovered after World War II, particularly along the coast of Andalusia.[61] Searching for the elusive Mainake which was supposed to be the westernmost colony the Greeks ever planted[62], German and Spanish archaeologists came across several Phoenician sites at Cortijo de los Toscanos, Morro de Mezquitilla, and Las Chorreras in the vicinity of Málaga.[63] (Fig. 2) These settlements were all located near the coast, close to the mouth of the Vélez and Algarrobo rivers. Due to difficult ownership structures – the area where the sites are located is privately owned agricultural land – only small sections of the settlements could be excavated. Even though they were situated so closely together that they could not all have served as stopping points along the trade routes from the Levant to the Atlantic coast of Iberia (the distance between the Phoenician settlements at Las Toscanos and Morro de Mezquitilla is 7 km, the distance

59 Whitaker 1921.

60 Cfr. Aubet 2001, pp. 231-234 who describes Motya as a model Phoenician merchant port.

61 For an overview see Aubet 2001, pp. 305-325.

62 Strabo III 4.2; Avien. 430-440.

63 On the search for Mainake see Niemeyer 1980.

between the latter and Las Chorreras is only 800 m[64]), the sites were immediately thought to have served primarily commercial purposes.[65] The same goes for Phoenician settlements discovered on Sardinia and the smaller islands in the Central and Western Mediterranean.[66] It is only in recent years that new excavation results slowly begin to change this picture.

6. Giving up the Paradigm: New Results from Iberia, Sardinia, and Sicily

Over the last three decades, new archaeological excavations produced results that require a revision of the "commercial" interpretation of Phoenician overseas settlements. While there is ample evidence to suggest that trade activities, especially trade in metal, was an important part of the Phoenician economy,[67] it becomes more and more apparent that the settlements the Phoenicians founded along the Mediterranean coast were by no means mere trading posts. It would go beyond the scope of a single article to present all the sites that have been studied in recent years in the Central and Western Mediterranean or to give a full bibliography of the subject matter. Therefore, only a few case studies from Iberia, Sardinia, and Sicily will be briefly introduced here to demonstrate how recent research is changing the interpretation of the Phoenician westward expansion.

The first permanent Phoenician presence both in Iberia and on Sardinia seems to have been established within existing indigenous communities like Huelva, located in southwestern Spain on the Gulf of Cádiz, or at Sant'Imbenia in the northwestern part of Sardinia. At Huelva, traces of a Phoenician industrial quarter within the indigenous town attest to Phoenician inhabitants as early as the 9th cent. BCE. The evidence includes remains of several workshops for different artisanal products such as metalworking, ivory and wood carving, and glyptics, whereas loom weights indicate textile production, possibly connected to purple dye works; Phoenician pottery and graffiti have also been found.[68] The nature of this "Phoenician quarter" is debated, as it is unclear whether it constituted a proper Phoenician enclave that was separated from the indigenous settlement, or whether Huelva was a cosmopolitan place where merchants, craftsmen, and other immigrants from various regions took up residence,[69] with the Phoenicians as the largest and most visible group.[70] At Sant'Imbenia, a Phoenician quarter has not been identified, but Phoenician ceramics constitute the highest number of imports discovered at the site.[71] Moreover, a special type of amphora was produced at Sant'Imbenia[72] which combines Phoenician and indigenous ceramic

64 Aubet 2001, p. 312.

65 Niemeyer 1990, pp. 480-486; Niemeyer 1995; Aubet 1995; Aubet 2001, pp. 317-325. Note also that the excavators of Toscanos from the start called the settlement a factory, cfr. Niemeyer – Schubart 1969.

66 See Aubet 2001, pp. 234-245 and 337-341.

67 Provenance studies conducted recently on silver finds from Tell Dor and Akko have shown that the silver the Phoenicians imported in the 10th and 9th centuries BCE came not only from Anatolia, but also from the Western Mediterranean. However, in contrast to the literary tradition that names Iberia as the earliest supplier for Phoenician silver, the metal was initially imported from Sardinia, cfr. Eshel *et al.* 2019.

68 On the early Phoenician presence at Huelva see, for instance, González de Canales – Serrano Pichardo – Llompart Gómez 2004; González de Canales 2014; Ruiz-Gálves 2014; Martín Hernández 2018-2019.

69 While most pottery found during excavations was either of local or Levantine provenance, Greek, Nuragic, Cypriote and Central Italic vessels have also been unearthed, dating between ca. 900 and 770 BCE, cfr. Torres Ortiz 2005; Celestino – López-Ruiz 2016, pp. 156-157. Whether this is indicative of trade relations or the physical presence of individuals from these areas, is difficult to discern.

70 On this debate see Botto 2015, p. 256 with further references.

71 On ceramic imports at Sant'Imbenia see Bafico 1986; Bafico *et al.* 1997. For a short overview of Sant'Imbenia see Rendeli 2017 and Rendeli 2018 with further references.

72 On this type of amphora see Oggiano 2000.

traditions. This is indicative of close collaboration between local and Phoenician potters presumably living in the same place.[73]

This initial phase was soon followed by the establishment of independent Phoenician settlements. According to literary sources, Gadir (modern Cádiz) was the most ancient Phoenician colony in the West. While the foundation date of 1104/1103 BCE, given by Velleius Paterculus,[74] has not been confirmed by archaeological evidence, recent excavations at the former Teatro Cómico site revealed a residential area established in the second half of the 9th century BCE, presenting one of the oldest permanent Phoenician settlements in Iberia.[75] However, while Gadir did indeed develop into an important harbour town with a wide trade network, it also expanded territorially.[76]

Moreover, agriculture, the key element in the settler colonisation model, was an important economic factor in the Bay of Cádiz as well as along the Mediterranean coast.[77] Archaeobotanical analyses have shown that the Phoenicians introduced various crops to Iberia, such as chickpea and almond, and professionalized the cultivation of vine and olives.[78] In the hinterland of Huelva, for instance, remains of Iron Age vineyards have been detected whose patterns show great similarities to sites in the Levant, indicating that the Phoenicians not only introduced the cultivated grapevine but also its cultivation method.[79] In addition, several Phoenician vessels associated with wine consumption have been unearthed in the earliest strata of Gadir.[80] Archaeological research in the vicinity of larger Phoenician centres not only in the Gadir region, but also along the Andalusian coast, notably around Malaka (modern Málaga), has further documented that agricultural production intensified over the course of time, leading to the foundation of small-scale secondary sites and farmsteads in the areas around the older urban centres and along the fertile riverbeds of the Tinto, Guadalhorce, Algarrobo, and Almanzora rivers.[81]

The same goes for Sardinia and Sicily, where the introduction of new crops has also been observed. Archaeobotanical analyses from Motya show that a host of new plants was cultivated on the islet shortly after the foundation of the Phoenician settlement.[82] In fact, since Sicily is rather poor in mineral resources, its

73 Cfr. Oggiano 2000, p. 248; Guirguis 2010, p. 177; Rendeli 2014, p. 538. On contacts between Phoenicians and the indigenous population of Sardinia during the Iron Age more generally see Zucca 2017 with further references.

74 Vell. Pat. I 2.3.

75 On the excavations see Gener *et al.* 2014. Before these new excavations, Phoenician finds from Cádiz and the surrounding territory had indicated a foundation of the colony not earlier than 760/750 BCE, cfr. Aubet 2001, pp. 261-262.

76 Some scholars suggest that the nearby Phoenician settlements at Castillo de Doña Blanca (to the North) and at Chiclana (to the South), established in the 8th cent. BCE, were founded at the instigation of Gadir and with participation of Gaditanian settlers, since both sites were fortified with strong walls, indicating aspirations at territorial control. In addition, they lie at opposite ends of the Bay of Cádiz, thus occupying the two most important strategic points in the Bay, cfr. Bueno Serrano 2014, p. 249; López Castro 2019, p. 589.

77 Carlos González Wagner and Jaime Alvar stressed the Phoenicians' role in Iberian agriculture as early as the 1980s, see Alvar – Wagner 1988; Wagner – Alvar 1989. However, most scholars were critical of their ideas or rejected them altogether. For an overview of the opposition to González Wagner and Alvar see Neville 2007, pp. 122-123.

78 Carrilero Millán 1993, pp. 173-174; Guerrero Avuso 1995, pp. 98-101; Bartelheim 2007, p. 139.

79 While wild grapevines must have been known in Iberia before, the cultivated variety was most likely unknown, cfr. Guerrero Ayuso 1995, pp. 98-100; Buxó 2009, pp. 158-159; Celestino – López Ruiz 2016, p. 193. Recent excavations at Tell el-Burak, a Phoenician settlement on the Lebanese coast in the hinterland of Sidon, have shown that viticulture and oleiculture were important branches of the local economy, disproving the notion that the Phoenicians in the homeland did only little farming. Cfr. Schmitt *et al.* 2018. On Phoenician agriculture see also Sader 2019, pp. 276-296.

80 Sánchez Hernando 2004, pp. 233-234; González de Canales 2018, p. 69. On the Phoenicians' role in the distribution of wine see Botto 2013.

81 For an overview see López Castro 2008 with further references.

82 For the latest results see Moricca 2024; a good overview is given by Nigro – Spagnoli 2017, 5. The crops include grapevines, plum, cherry and pomegranate trees, Mediterranean fan palm, wheat and barley, chickpea, lentil, broad bean, sweet pea, an olive tree variant and aloe vera.

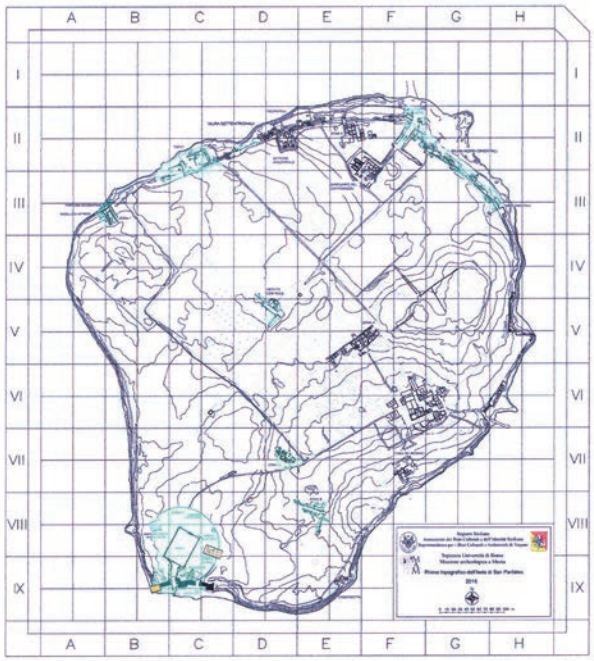

Fig. 3. Map of ancient Motya (© Sapienza University of Rome Expedition to Motya).

agricultural potential must have been the primary reason for the Phoenicians to settle there. In antiquity, the island was famous for its fertile soil and mild climate, and the soil on San Pantaleo as well as the area around the mouth of the Birgi river on the opposite coast offered excellent clay deposits that were exploited to produce pottery and tiles, which could have been another factor that may have attracted Phoenician settlers.[83] And Motya had another surprise in store: while it had for a long time been thought that the rectangular water basin situated on the southern shore of the islet was a commercial harbour ("cothon"), and, consequently, that the nearby rectangular multi-room building C was a warehouse, excavations conducted in the last two decades have revealed that the basin originally had no connection with the sea and had instead been filled with freshwater from an underground well.[84] Finds of votive deposits, altars, obelisks, and offering pits in and around building C confirmed that the area was not a commercial harbour, but a sanctuary (Fig. 3). This completely changes the interpretation of the nature of the early settlement.[85] The discovery also affects the interpretation of large buildings at other Phoenician sites which have often been interpreted as commercial warehouses due to architectural similarities with building C.[86] With this building now identified as a temple, these interpretations require a re-evaluation.[87]

The notion that Phoenician newcomers and indigenous populations were only in superficial contact and that the locals were generally less "developed", has been disproven by recent scholarship as well. In Iberia, close indigenous-Phoenician collaboration is evidenced in various ways, not least by the location of Phoenician settlements, as they can quite often be found in the vicinity of indigenous sites along the coast and had access to good communication routes into the hinterland by means of rivers and creeks. While Phoenicians were apparently not permitted to mine the precious mineral ores themselves,[88] recent archaeometallurgical studies from the Phoenician settlement at La Fonteta near Alicante and the indigenous settlement of

83 Cfr. Alaimo – Montana – Iliopoulos 2005, p. 707; Nigro – Spagnoli 2017, p. 6.

84 Nigro 2022 with further references.

85 For an overview see Nigro – Spagnoli 2017; Nigro 2018 with further references. Apart from building C (now Temple C, perhaps dedicated to Baal Addir), other sacred structures have been unearthed in the area, including a shrine that was most likely dedicated to Astarte.

86 See, for instance, building C at Toscanos; cfr. Niemeyer 1982, p. 196; p. 199; Aubet 2006, p. 100; Schubart 2007, p. 59. Niemeyer surmised that these warehouses were present in virtually every Phoenician settlement in the Central and Western Mediterranean, cfr. Niemeyer 2002, p. 37.

87 López Castro 2006; López Castro 2018.

88 There is no evidence that Phoenicians ever settled in or near the places where the mineral ores were mined, indicating that the indigenous inhabitants were well aware of the value of their resources and kept them under tight control. Research on the Iberian Bronze Age further attests to the high sophistication of Iberian peoples prior to the Phoenician arrival on the Peninsula. See Lull *et al.* 2013 for an overview of Iberian Bronze Age cultures.

Los Castillejos de Alcorrín near Gibraltar have shown that by the 8th cent. BCE, Phoenicians and natives had established a wide and complex network of trade in mineral resources which connected mining sites with indigenous and Phoenician settlements.[89] In terms of metallurgical know-how, the Phoenicians seem to have been slightly more advanced, as they brought with them certain refining techniques that allowed them to produce purer silver and to forge better-quality iron objects.[90]

On Sardinia, investigations since the early 2000s also show a remarkable degree of exchange and cooperation between locals and Phoenicians. Apart from the close contacts identified in northern Sardinia at the site of Sant'Imbenia, studies in the western and southern parts of the island, particularly in the Gulf of Oristano and Sulcis regions, revealed a dense web of interconnections.[91] The earliest permanent Phoenician settlement, Sulky, was founded around 800 BCE on the Sant'Antioco islet off the southwestern coast of Sardinia and quickly developed into a thriving harbour town, seemingly fitting well into the commercial model of Phoenician expansion. Several other Phoenician settlements were founded in the surrounding territory, which were initially interpreted as military outposts to secure the hinterland.[92] In recent years, however, the military character of these sites has been questioned, being replaced by a more nuanced hierarchical settlement pattern that includes the various indigenous sites that can likewise be found in substantial numbers in the Sulcis region.[93] (Fig. 4)

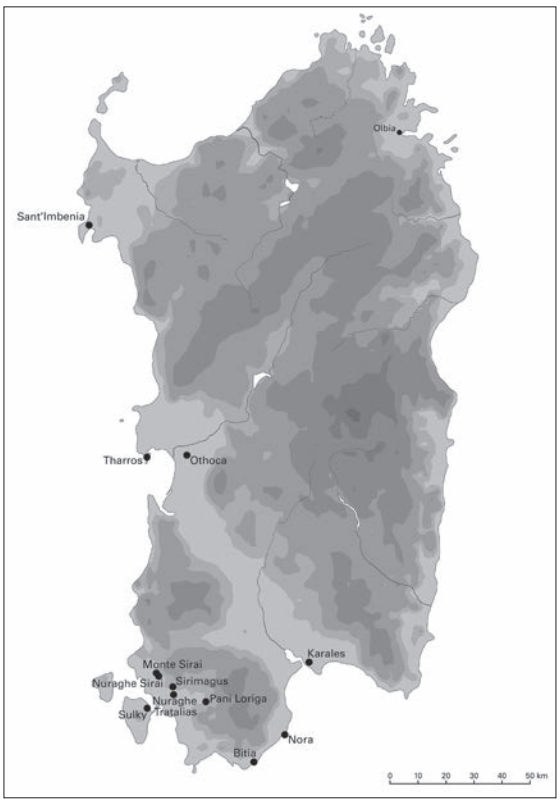

Fig. 4. Map of Sardinia (© Menno Bolder).

89 Renzi *et al.* 2016 with further references.

90 There is some debate whether the Phoenicians introduced the technique of cupellation to the Iberian Peninsula. This technique, by which silver ore is purified by using lead, may have been known in Iberia prior to the arrival of the Phoenicians, as is argued by Beno Rothenberg and Antonio Blanco Freijeiro (Rothenberg – Blanco Freijeiro 1981, pp. 171-173). However, their main argument is that the Phoenicians were traders and could therefore not have had expert metallurgical knowledge. Thus, their reasoning is not based on scientific findings but on popular beliefs. The earliest indications of silver cupellation come from small ceramic pots discovered in a late 9th/early 8th cent. BCE metal workshop at the Phoenician settlement at Morro de Mezquitilla, which on the inside show traces of plumbiferous slags, a by-product typical of silver cupellation. Cfr. Schubart – Maaß-Lindemann 2017, p. 93 with bibliography. Another site of possible silver cupellation is Castillo de Doña Blanca, where large amounts of lead and lead glance have been discovered. Iron smelting, on the other hand, seems to have remained in the hands of indigenous metallurgists, as the metal workshops identified in Phoenician settlements in Iberia all worked with processed iron. However, their refining techniques allowed them to increase the quality of the iron. At Morro de Mezquitilla and probably also at Toscanos, the metal workshops were even able to produce steel, cfr. Keesmann – Hellermann 1989, p. 108; Schubart 2017, p. 94.

91 Cfr. Tronchetti 2014; López-Ruiz 2021, pp. 121-131. On the hinterland of the Gulf of Oristano, with its prominent Phoenician site at Tharros, see also Stiglitz 2017 with further references.

92 Thus, the foundation of Sulky was regarded as a strategic move on the part of the Phoenicians to control both sea routes and territory, cfr. Aubet 2001, pp. 237-241.

93 See Botto – Dessena – Finocchi 2013. According to them, Sulky served as the region's primary place with a bustling harbour and with both regional and trans-Mediterranean connections, whereas smaller sites are, depending on their size and overall connectivity, regarded as secondary or tertiary settlements. For an overview of Sulky see, for instance, Unali 2017 with further references.

In addition, several surveys conducted in the hinterland have shown that most of these sites had a decidedly agricultural character.[94] Exchange between all these settlements must have been intense, as is evidenced by, for instance, the high amount of indigenous and Phoenician pottery that can be found in both Phoenician and indigenous sites, and even more so in the development of new forms of pottery that combined Phoenician and indigenous ceramic traditions, like in the case of the Sant'Imbenia amphorae.[95] Mutually beneficial industrial branches also developed between Phoenician and indigenous sites. At the indigenous settlement of Nuraghe Sirai, for example, a high number of deer bone fragments was recovered, correlating with a high number of horn fragments found at nearby Sulky. This indicates that the inhabitants of Nuraghe Sirai hunted the animals and presumably consumed their meat, but sent the antlers to the Phoenician town on the coast, where carvers worked the material to produce horn objects for a wider market.[96] Another attestation of intense collaboration also comes from Nuraghe Sirai. Excavations in 2011 unearthed a workshop where glass was produced.[97] High concentrations of Phoenician pottery[98] as well as the typical Phoenician construction technique of the three furnaces (one for the extraction of colourants from plants and ores, two for smelting)[99] indicate that the workshop was established by artisans versed in Phoenician glass smelting techniques.[100] Attestations of close collaboration between Phoenician and indigenous people can also be found in other places, notably the Gulf of Oristano in western Sardinia, and in the Nora and Karales regions in the south.[101]

Finally, DNA samples taken in 2015 from burials at the archaic necropolis of Monte Sirai, a Phoenician settlement founded in the late 8th cent. BCE probably by inhabitants from nearby Sulky, revealed that the individuals analysed had not only Phoenician, but also indigenous Sardinian parentage, and in some cases, there were also traces of North African ancestry.[102] Thus, the residents at Monte Sirai – and presumably at other Phoenician sites – did not only collaborate with indigenous people, but also formed familial ties with them.

7. Conclusion: Colonialisms' Influence on the Modern Interpretation of the Phoenician Expansion

This brief review has shown how the idea that the Phoenicians were a "trading nation" has been shaped by ancient literary sources and modern misconceptions about the opposition between trading post and settler colony. The latter was reinforced through parallels drawn between ancient colonisation and the experience of modern colonialism that placed the Semitic Phoenicians on a lower cultural level than the Aryan Greeks. While racial theories subsequently faded from scholarly debates after World War II, the image of the Phoenician "trading nation" persisted. Results from recent fieldwork now require a critical reassessment of this image. This does not

94 For an overview see van Dommelen – Finocchi 2008.

95 On various forms of "hybrid" pottery from Sardinia see Hayne 2010; Hayne 2016. Cfr. also Perra 2019, pp. 382-385 with further references. On hybrid pottery from Iberia see Marín Aguilera 2016.

96 Carenti 2005, pp. 218-220; Wilkens 2012, pp. 94-96.

97 Perra 2013a; Perra 2013b, pp. 121-123; Perra 2019, pp.80-101.

98 The ratio between Phoenician and indigenous ceramics from the workshop is roughly 1:1, cfr. Perra 2013b, p. 127.

99 Perra 2013b, p. 121.

100 The workshop at Nuraghe Sirai is the earliest example of glass production on Sardinia, cfr. Perra 2013b, p. 121. The Phoenicians, on the other hand, were well-known in antiquity for their glass products. See, for instance, Pliny *HN* 36.65 on the origins of glass production and the high quality of sand from the Phoenician littoral, and Pliny *HN* 5.17 on Sidon's fame as a centre of glass production. Unfortunately, it is impossible to reconstruct the circumstances that led to the establishment of the glass workshop at Nuraghe Sirai or to identify the individuals who ran it.

101 On these areas see, for instance, Bondì 2017; van Dommelen *et al.* 2020; Stiglitz 2023, all with further references.

102 Matisoo-Smith *et al.* 2018.

mean that there were no Phoenician trading posts, or that trade did not play an important role in Phoenician settlements – indeed, the trade in metals seems to have been a driving factor in Phoenician overseas ventures, just like the literary accounts report –, but it was certainly not the only driver of Phoenician expansion, let alone the main occupation of the ancient Phoenicians. Agriculture and animal husbandry were an integral part of the Phoenician economy as well, and when groups of Phoenicians set out to found a new settlement, the entire economical potential of a settlement area was assessed and, if possible, exploited.

The notion that Phoenician settlements did not expand territorially due to their commercial character has equally been disproven by recent fieldwork. What remains unclear so far is the exact nature of this expansion – whether it was directed by the early settlements and entailed a political control of the hinterland, or whether the communities grew so fast that some inhabitants sought a new place to live with more arable land to farm. More research will be needed in the future to address these questions.

The idea that there was no significant contact between the Phoenicians and the various indigenous cultures they encountered, or that local peoples belonged to less developed civilisations, is also untenable. While it is true that the Phoenicians introduced new animals and crops as well as some technological advancements like refined smelting techniques, glass production, or better firing technologies for pottery to the Central and Western Mediterranean, they did not introduce completely new concepts and inventions. In most cases the indigenous civilisations had already developed similar techniques, allowing them to adapt Phoenician technologies to their own needs. Regarding the relationship between Phoenician newcomers and local inhabitants, the long-held view that the "colonisers" oppressed and exploited the simple-minded "natives" is to be questioned. The picture is actually much more complex. While it cannot be ruled out that in some cases Phoenician settlers assumed a dominant role,[103] the evidence suggests a rather balanced distribution of powers and an economic collaboration that seems to have been profitable for both sides. In addition, close contacts, cohabitation, and intermarriage between immigrant Phoenicians and indigenous inhabitants could blur the distinctions between the two groups so much that after a few generations they would merge into a new "local" population.[104]

Ultimately, this means that the Phoenician expansion cannot be explained by one single narrative, in which every site shared the same story. The reasons for planting a permanent settlement in a certain location, the economic factors that determined the character of the newly-founded community, and the relationship between newcomers and locals must be investigated for each settlement anew.[105]

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Alvar – Wagner 1988 = J. Alvar – C. González Wagner, *La actividad agrícola en la economía fenicia de la Península Ibérica*, in «Gerion» 6, 1988, pp. 169-185.

103 This may be more evident in the later periods, when Carthage began to subsequently expand its reach. In the conclusions to their excellent collection of articles on rural landscapes of the Punic world, Peter van Dommelen and Carlos Gómez Bellard raise the question of the labour force required for increasing the agricultural exploitation of a given area and suggest that in some areas indigenous inhabitants could have been supplying this workforce, possibly through forced labour, cfr. van Dommelen – Gómez Bellard 2008, 233-234.

104 See, for instance, Perra 2013b; Botto – Dessena – Finocchi 2013, 107, in reference to Sardinia.

105 This is particularly true for Central and Western North Africa, where much work still needs to be done on indigenous Late Bronze and Early Iron Age sites which have, for a long time, been overlooked.

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