THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF WESTERN PHOENICIANS IN THE EXTREME WEST OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

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Abstract: In this paper we study the social structure of the western Phoenicians in the western extreme of the Mediterranean during the 1st millennium BCE based on written sources and archaeological information. This society was very complex and was made up of an aristocracy, free men and individuals in a situation of dependence. Furthermore, we study the historical data regarding the institutional organization of western Phoenician cities. To that end, we use references to eastern Phoenician institutions as well as those belonging to Carthage and other cities within its territory, comparing them with the data from historical and epigraphic sources from cities of the western Mediterranean. We also identify some individual magistracies, such as the sufetes, and collegial institutions such as ʿm or popular assembly, or b̔ l, a corporation of local aristocrats.

Keywords: Western Phoenicians; Society; Aristocracy; Collegial Institutions.

1. Introduction

The social and institutional aspects of Phoenician cities in the Western Mediterranean has not been one of the main study points in recent years of research regarding the Phoenicians, with the exception of Carthage, city of which we have the largest amount of literary sources to refer to. The task of reconstructing, even the main features, of the social structure of a complex society, as was that of the western Phoenicians, with almost no written sources, both literary or epigraphic, could seem almost impossible. Nonetheless, the analysis of the scarce written sources, and the study of data recovered from the archaeological record can lead to reliable results. This is especially true if we unite the data with the general concept and the specific characteristics we know about the western Phoenician and Carthaginian societies, in wait of novel information resulting from new research and epigraphic findings that could expand our understanding of this society.

In this paper we are going to review the epigraphic and historical sources that exist, as well as data recovered from the archaeological record, analysed from a social point of view. This way we can make a proposal regarding the reconstruction of the society and institutions that characterized western Phoenician cities in the Mediterranean Extreme West. We will re-examine the Colonial Period (from the last quarter of the 9th to the end of the 7th century BC), the Urban Period (from the 6th to the end of the 3rd century BC),[1] moment in which the Phoenician colonies reorganized into city-states, and the Late Phoenician Period (from the end of the 3rd century to the change of era) after the Roman conquest. Given the lack of data in many aspects, it is obvious that this essay presents more questions than answers and that many of the aspects must be considered from a general point of view, establishing both spatial and temporal analogies.

1   López Castro 2003.

2. Society during the Colonial Period

As a starting point for the understanding of the social structure of western Phoenicians we know that, during the 8th-7th centuries BC, there was a highly structured hierarchical society divided into classes both in eastern Phoenician cities and in Carthage. In general lines, for the kingdom of Tyre we have written sources that state the existence of an elite, "the elders", that were represented by a political institution – the Council –, both of them mentioned in the treaty signed by Esarhaddon and Baal of Tyre after 671 BC.[2] Ezekiel, in the famous passage of the oracles against Tyre (26,16) mentions the "princes of the sea" that coordinated the economic activity of Tyre. The Prophet Isaiah (23,8) mentions the Phoenician "princes" in similar terms. Both of them are referenced to a close moment to the signing of the treaty, with a few decades difference, and could refer to, though still in a rhetorical context, the same social elite.

Furthermore, the treaty mentions the "people from the country of Tyre",[3] or "people of Tyre"[4] as boat owners, which indicates their condition of free men that would probably have a higher social status than most of the people. Ezekiel (27,11) also mentions the "sons of Tyre" and the "men of Arvad" possibly refer-ring to the same concept of free men.

Regarding Phoenician West, in the description of the founding of Carthage as written by Justinus (XVIII, 4-6), Queen Elise was accompanied by her followers, contrary to King Pygmalio, that belonged to the Tyrian elite, such as Bitias, the admiral of the fleet (Serv. *ad Aen.* I,738), or Barcas (Sil. Ital. *Pun.* I, 72-75), according to the classical tradition that has reached us.[5] Furthermore, the famous inscription of the golden medallion found at the Carthaginian necropolis of Douïmes, dated to the second quarter of the 7th century BCE mentions *Yadamilk son of Pidiya*, an individual that possibly belonged to the Carthaginian aristocracy, judging by his luxury burial.[6]

A singular case would be the "men of the king", artisans and specialized technicians bound or depend-ent of the king, but with a relatively high social status.[7] Finally, the story of the founding of Carthage men-tions a group of servants of the king who, manipulated by Elisa, must have joined the expedition (Justinus XVIII,4,12-14), proof of the presence of individuals with a lower social rank than those represented in the story of the new colonial foundation.

The written sources reveal a complex society, but if we take into consideration the archaeological record of the initial period of colonization, the oldest known at the moment, there is not much informa-tion regarding the social aspects to the Phoenician settlers. This period is characterized by the most recent discoveries in Huelva, El Carambolo, La Rebanadilla and Utica, that can be traced to the 9th century BCE.[8] From a social point of view, the archaeological record of these early settlements allows us to deduce the ex-istence of artisans. The discovery of metallurgical production, ivory objects, or Phoenician ceramics locally produced, as well as working tools, documents the presence of artisans and craftsmen that were possibly free people, though we cannot identify their social status with total security.

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2   Pettinato 1975, pp. 151-154; Parpola – Watanabe 1988, p. 25.

3   Pettinato 1975, pp. 151-154; Tsirkin 1990, pp. 41-42.

4   Parpola – Watanabe 1988, p. 26.

5   Alvar – Wagner 1985.

6   Regarding the medallion see Krahmalkov 1981; Gras – Rouillard – Teixidor 1989, pp. 176-179, figs. 43-44.

7   Tsirkin 1990, p. 40.

8   Regarding these settlements and their dating see González de Canales – Serrano – Llompart 2004; Nijboer – van der Plicht 2006; Fernández Flores – Rodríguez Azogue 2007 and 2010; Sánchez *et al.* 2012; López Castro *et al.* 2016.

Furthermore, the Phoenician necropolis of San Isidro,[9] associated to the settlement of La Rebanadilla, consists in a series of incineration burials similar in typology and grave goods to those of the oriental Phoenician necropolis of Tiro al Bass[10] that could be related to middle rank free citizens. The households excavated at La Rebanadilla present, in general, a nucleus of two rooms located after a courtyard, and would be enlarged from this point. This housing model could be another indication of the presence of free craftsmen and artisans.

El Carambolo is a sanctuary, and in La Rebanadilla there is evidence of a sanctuary in a room of what has been named Building 4,[11] without forgetting the famous and ancient temple dedicated to Melqart in *Gadir*.[12] This leads us to believe in the presence of priests and temple servants among the inhabitants of the city, where the first group would belong to a elevated social status, originally linked to the monarchy and concentrated in different schools or colleges of priests accompanied by temple service.[13]

Shortly after, during the 8th century BCE, the houses documented in different colonial settlements in the area of the Bay of Cadiz and the southern coast of the Iberian Peninsula present significant changes regarding shape size and distribution that could respond to the social position of its inhabitants. There are households with two or three rooms and probably two floors, such as those excavated under the Teatro Cómico of Cadiz[14] or later at Castillo de Doña Blanca.[15] In the second half of the 8th century we find medium size houses with different rooms used as workplaces, storage rooms and living quarters, as is for example the house excavated in Area 2 of the settlement of Las Chorreras[16] or House 2 of Cerro del Villar, belonging to the 7th century BCE, where one room was used as a religious space.[17] These households seem to be related to certain sectors of the population dedicated to farming and craftsmanship, and were possible free men from a social point of view.

But, furthermore, we also know large households, such as Building K in Morro de Mezquitilla or Building H in Toscanos,[18] both used during advanced moments of the 8th century BCE, the first one reaching up to 17 rooms by means of progressive additions, and the second consisting in six rooms surrounding a central courtyard. These buildings have been interpreted as singular buildings and, in the case of Building H from Toscanos as a palatial construction,[19] same as the singular construction documented at the settlement of Abul, in Portugal, interpreted as a residence for high class Phoenicians related to trade and other economic activities.[20]

The social differences are also noticeable among the Phoenician burials in the Extreme West belonging to the 8th and 7th centuries BCE. Many individual tombs belonging to the 7th century with more or less grave goods, and even some poor burials, are known forming necropolis with dozens of burials, such as the ones documented at Frigiliana in Malaga, Can Partit in Ibiza and Rachgoun in Algeria.[21] These burials could be related to free people with different wealth and social status, but who all have the right to be buried in the

9   Juzgado Navarro – Sánchez Sánchez-Moreno – Galindo San José 2016, pp. 109-110.

10   Aubet 2004; Aubet – Núñez – Trellisó 2014.

11   Sánchez *et al.* 2012, pp. 80-81.

12   Bonnet 1981, pp. 203-230. New archaeological data in Maya Torcelly *et al.* 2014.

13   Zamora López 2006, pp. 69-74; Ruiz Cabrero 2009, pp. 21, 25-26.

14   Gener Basallote *et al.* 2014, pp. 16-17.

15   Ruiz Mata 2001, p. 263.

16   Martín Córdoba – Ramírez Sánchez – Recio Ruiz 2005, pp. 5-11.

17   García Alfonso 2012, pp. 32-33; Delgado *et al.* 2013, pp. 901-904.

18   Schubart 2006, pp. 119-129; Arnold – Marzoli 2009, pp. 446-447.

19   Prados Martínez 2001-2002, pp. 174-177.

20   Mayet – Tavares 2000, pp. 160-167.

21   Arribas – Wilkins 1969; Gómez Bellard 1990; Costa Ribas – Fernández-Gómez – Gómez Bellard 1991; Vuillemot 1955.

same sacred space. Furthermore, we also know of the existence of collective graves in chambers built with ashlar stones or pit-tombs with chambers, as are for example the cases of Trayamar or Almuñécar[22] that are either isolated or grouped in small numbers. In some occasions these tombs used Egyptian alabaster or Egyptian type vases as incineration urns, some of which were royal gifts in the East, which we have interpreted as distinctive elements belonging to a colonial aristocracy.[23]

In some of the funerary spaces of the 8th-7th centuries that belong to the necropolis we have previously mentioned there are a significant number of tombs, as are the cases of Rachgoun (Algeria) or Can Partit (Ibiza). They were subject of a statistical study carried out by M. Montoya that revealed distinct social differences within the necropolis, allowing the establishment of four different social groups based on the variables that indicated capacity of wealth accumulation.[24]

Though we must take into account a series of cautions regarding the interpretation of what is a statistical model, we can accept some very interesting information. Without considering the richest and oldest burials, that would belong to the first group, identified as a colonial aristocracy, the remaining groups correspond to a first group of 10 tombs with an elevated amount of wealth; a second group, consisting of 35 tombs with a medium capacity for wealth accumulation; a more numerous third group composed of 127 tombs with scarce grave good that reflect a low capability of wealth accumulation, and could represent individuals of a lower social level; and a final group formed by 85 tombs with no grave goods, representing individuals with no capability of accumulating wealth, but do have the right to be buried in the same collective sacred space of the necropolis, possibly being a dependant individuals.[25]

Ultimately, during the colonial period the Phoenicia population had a complex social composition: aristocratic groups of Tyrian origin, possibly priests of the sanctuaries, would be at the top. With a lower social status there would be farmers, craftsmen and artisans who would be free men, dedicated to production. These people would have a different social position based on their wealth, though we cannot discard the presence of individuals in a dependant situation or even slavery. Finally, within the colonial society there would be individuals who belonged to local autochthonous communities employed as workers, as well as local women that formed mixed families. Their presences has been defended due to the identification of local handmade ceramics found at different sites, as well as by the culinary uses of ceramics by local women married to Phoenician settlers. Nonetheless, it has been proposed that the individuals of autochthonous origin would not be completely integrated within the colonial society, being excluded from funerary rituals, where they have not been identified. Nevertheless, their contribution to the colonial society would be very relevant, due to their knowledge of the land and the signing of alliances with the autochthonous societies.[26]

3. The social structure of western Phoenician cities until the Roman conquest

Based on the existing information, especially regarding Carthage, as well as other cities founded by the Phoenicians, we observe the existence of an aristocracy that was effectively the upper class, owners of land and beneficiaries of commerce and trade, whose members occupied some of the most important administrative positions, magistracies or were priests of citizen cults.[27] From the point of view of society, some inscriptions

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22   Schubart – Niemeyer 1976; Pellicer Catalán 1963.

23   López Castro 2006.

24   Montoya 2003. The data used in this study came from the sites of Cádiz, Jardín, Cerro del Mar, Lagos, Trayamar, Frigiliana, Cerro de San Cristóbal, Puente de Noy, Villaricos and Can Partit.

25   Montoya 2003.

26   Delgado – Ferrer 2007.

27   Tsirkin 1986, pp. 130-134; Günther 1995, pp. 128-132; Ruiz Cabrero 2009, pp. 10-16, 22-24.

reveal information regarding how free citizens were socially structured within the Phoenician-Punic world: in the late bilingual inscription, in Latin and Punic from *Leptis Magna* (*KAI* 126), the individuals that belonged to the *ordo* of the city were referred to in the Punic text with the name of ʾ*drʾ* from ʾ*drm* ("the great ones"), translated into latin in the inscription as the *ordo decurionis* of the *municipium senatus* in opposition of the *populus* or ʿ*m* of the city.[28] Other inscriptions, such as those from Sardinia (*KAI* 65) and Carthage (*KAI* 81), refer to the ʾ*drnm* or "the great ones" in opposition of the *ṣ ʿrnm* or the "small ones", who are interpreted as free individuals that did not belong to the local aristocracy.[29]

These "small ones" would be small land owners, artisans or producers that enjoyed the condition of free men, with better or worse economic conditions and more or less political rights, and would be the equivalent of the *plebs*.[30] In fact, the epigraphic information reveals a large catalogue of artisan trades in both the Eastern and Western Phoenician world, especially in Carthage.[31] In some cases, the inscriptions mention a hierarchy of artisans with leaders at their head; furthermore, there is data that indicates the passing of artisanal trades from fathers to sons, as well as the registered occupation of some magistracies by artisans within the city of Carthage.[32] This leads us to believe in the existence of artisan corporations as well as their condition of free men, at least for the majority.

Below the individuals that composed the free citizens, inscriptions give us information regarding certain people with a lower social status. This is the case of the *gēr*, "the protected", in other words people of free condition, but dependant of others with a higher social status, who possibly had no political rights, and were usually artisans or subordinate members of the temples that have been documented both in the East and the West.[33] The inscriptions also indicate the existence of individuals with different levels of personal dependence, in situations that are worse known since researchers are not able to agree on their exact condition, as are the individuals that with the social condition expressed with š next to their names, interpreted as people under patronage or slavery due to debts.[34]

Another group, that consists in the "men of Sidon" (ʿ*š ṣdn*) and "women of Sidon", probably liberated slaves, would have a status of dependence with respect to their previous owners, in accordance with the interpretation of some inscriptions (*CIS* 269-292).[35] Finally we have the slaves (ʿ*bd),* regardless if they belonged to individuals or to some institution, such as temples, perfectly documented thorough epigraphic and classical sources.[36]

The existent information regarding Phoenician western cities must be deduced from the archaeological data regarding productive activities, as well as social data recovered from necropolis and other scarce epigraphic sources that refer to the social conditions of individuals and therefor the social groups they identify with. In first place we will mention the famous funerary stelae for the necropolis of Baria, discovered at the beginning of the 20th century and dated to the 5th century BCE that mentions *gr ʿštrt* son of *b ʿlpls*, an individual whose free condition could be identified by means of filiation, as is usual in Phoenician-Punic onomastics.[37]

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28   Sznycer 1975, pp. 66-67; Krahmalkov 2000, p. 37: ʾ*dr ʾlpqy wkl ʾm [l]p[qy]* (*KAI* 119.4) (Punic) and *primo ordo et populus* (Latin).

29   Schiffmann 1976, pp. 49-52.

30   Schiffmann 1976, pp. 51-52; Tsirkin 1986, pp. 132-133.

31   Heltzer 1990; Ruiz Cabrero 2009, pp. 21-44.

32   Heltzer 1990, pp. 97-98; Ruiz Cabrero 2009, pp. 32-44, 63.

33   Heltzer 1987, 309-314; Heltzer 1990, p. 98. The word *ger* means "guest", "foreigner", "resident", "client", "subaltern": see Filigheddu 2006, p. 2002.

34   Ruiz Cabrero 2009, p. 49.

35   Sznycer 1975, p. 56; Tsirkin 1986, p. 134; Ruiz Cabrero 2009, pp. 49-50.

36   Tsirkin 1986, p. 136; Matilla 1977, pp. 99-100; Ruiz Cabrero 2008, pp. 140, 147; Ruiz Cabrero 2009, pp. 33, 35, 38, 42, 44, 50, 52.

37   Amadasi Guzzo 1967, Spagna 3, pp. 139-140; Amadasi Guzzo 1978, pp. 33-42; Israel 1995, pp. 215-221.

On the island of Ibiza where it has been discovered the largest amount of inscriptions regarding this study, the famous votive bronze plaque from the sanctuary of Es Cuiram (*CIS* I, 251) mentions a free individual who was dedicated to and possibly paid for the expenses of a sanctuary to Rashef-Melqart, with the mention of successive filiations that indicate the presence of a possible aristocratic lineage: *ʾšdr*, son of *ʿš[y]*, son of *brgd*, son of *ʾšmnḥl[ṣ]*. The other face of the bronze plaque presents another inscription, dated to around 180 BCE that mentions the priest *ʿbdʿšmn* son of *ʿzrbʿl*, donator who paid for the renovation of the sanctuary.[38]

In the city of Lixus, in the north of Africa, more fragmentary inscriptions that present more examples have recently been restudied: in the bilingual funerary inscription, written in Libic and Phoenician, *IAM* 123, belonging to the first half of the 3rd century BCE mentions an individual with an incomplete name, who's genealogy reaches a fourth generation: *[…]ʾsyg* son of *[…] šk ʿbdšṣm* son of *brkʾ ʿbdšṣm*, son of *wrtm*.[39] Another Lixian inscription mentions *[…]ʾkrʿ* son of *ʿbdm[…]* son of *pĺ w ḥš […] ʿkʿy* son of *ʾšmʾ*.[40]

Another inscription form Ibiza, in this case painted on an *askos* that formed part of a grave belonging to the second half of the 5th century BCE, reproduces the expression *bdmlqrt gʿr*, that has been interpreted as *bdmlqrt* the *gʿr*; in other words, the *gēr*, possibly a testimony to this condition of dependence previously explained.[41]

In the episode depicting the conquest of *Qart Ḥadašt* in Iberia by Scipio in 210 BCE and told by Polibius (Pol. X 17,6-8; Liv. XXVI 47,1-5) two different social groups within the inhabitants of the city were imprisoned by the Romans: the Carthaginian citizens with their women and children, that were liberated, and a group of two thousand artisans that were made public slaves of the Romans, with the promise of being liberated after the end of the conflict if they worked for their captors. What seems clear is that this group of artisans, without women or children like the rest of citizens, would have a different social and political status with respect to the first group. It is very probable that they did not have the right of citizenship and would include different situations of dependence, reason for which the Romans would consider them public slaves and promised them liberty, even when some of them may have been free men with no rights. This passage has brought the attention of some authors that place this group between citizens and slaves,[42] though their condition of artisans could be and argument in favour of the hypothesis that they would have the status of *gēr*.

Summing up, despite of the scarcity of written sources it is possible recognizing throughout the analysed inscriptions and texts the social stratification in the Phoenician cities of the Extreme West as in other areas of the Phoenician-Punic world. At least there is evidence of free individuals, members of a higher aristocratic class and individuals dependants like the *gēr*.

The archaeological information regarding productive activities and rural settlements in the south of the Iberian Peninsula seems to reflect an economy based on subsistence farming and herding in small and highly exploited territories. Diverse crop farming of cereals, legumes, and some fruits such as olives and wine[43] could be related to these small non-extensive farming estates, in the quality of small owners or tenants, in contrast to the phenomena of property and resource concentration observed during the last two centuries before the change of era, destined to mercantile production under the conditions of slave work.[44]

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38   Amadasi Guzzo 1967, Spagna 10a-10b.

39   Tarradell Font – Ruiz Cabrero 2005, pp. 190-191.

40   Tarradell Font – Ruiz Cabrero 2005, pp. 191-192.

41   Fernández Gómez – Fuentes Estañol 1983, pp. 179-192; Heltzer 1987.

42   Tsirkin 1986, p. 135.

43   López Castro 2008, pp. 97-98; Pardo 2015, pp. 170-174.

44   López Castro 1995, pp. 160-164.

If we analyse the agricultural exploitations widely excavated, such as Las Cumbres that would belong to a small village, or the urban site of Castillo de Doña Blanca both near *Gadir,* we find productive spaces such as winepresses and storerooms in different households. This could indicate the presence of different owners. Contemporarily, on the other hand, within the same territory dependant of *Gadir* there were exploitations belonging to different individuals but destined to a mercantile production of olive oil, such as the one documented at Cerro Naranja, in the *Gadir* territory too. Both types of exploitations of the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE[45] seem to correspond to two types of owners: small land owners, articulated within a larger settlement to possibly favour cooperation among producers, and owners of centralized farmlands, of *magar*[46] type, that could remind us of an italic *villa.*

Similarly, more complex industrial activities, such as the fish salting factories that are very well known in the South of the Iberian peninsula, were carried out in small installations[47] that have been interpreted as having belonged to individual owners or small groups of artisans, and are very different from the large installations documented during late-Phoenician and Roman times. The metallurgical activity that has been documented was carried out within the walls of the cities, in small workshops that belonged to artisans, while the production of amphorae, better known in the area of Cadiz was not centralized, having documented many workshops that would have been working simultaneously.[48]

Definitively, the archaeological data tends to show that, prior to the Roman conquest, there was a clear dominance of individual artisan work, and small agricultural exploitations, in parallel to larger properties. Undoubtedly, the production of fish salts and other specialized activities that were related to it, such as fishers, sailors, different kinds of artisans and merchants, would create a large social net that would be an important part of the citizen core of the Phoenician cities.

Finally, if we take into consideration the funerary record, we must highlight that we do not have specific studies regarding the social aspects of Phoenician necropolis, a task that is yet to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, we can observe that in the larger excavated necropolis there are large social differences until the Roman conquest if we consider the grave goods. The analysis of the 404 tombs belonging to the C group from the necropolis of *Baria* (Villaricos) dated between the 5th and 3rd centuries BCE offers a small sample of the social diversity of western Phoenicians. Aside from the large typological variety of the tombs, many of the bodies were buried in a wooden coffin and almost all of them had grave goods. These good consisted of at least, and amphora and a decorated ostrich egg in 120 tombs, and amphora and a non-decorated ostrich egg in 96 tombs, while only 32 tombs contained jewels made of silver and gold.[49] This show the existence of at least two social groups if we consider the presence of precious metals: a larger group that could be related to craftsmen and free individuals, and a small group with a higher income. We would also have to take into account the hypogeums of the necropolis of Villaricos[50] that, with a total of 50 burials, they must have contained the remains of the local aristocracy since at least the begging of the 6th century BCE, though some of them were used up until Roman times.[51]

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45   López Castro 2008, pp. 89-94; Pardo 2015, pp. 178-179, 182, 184.

46   Lipinski 1994, p. 128.

47   Moya Cobos 2016, pp. 136-146.

48   Bernal Casasola – Sáez Romero 2007.

49   Astruc 1951, pp. 25-34; López Castro 1995, p. 199.

50   Astruc 1951, p. 64.

51   We must remain that the necropolis of Villaricos has not been totally studied and much still remains to be published. The published studies regarding the individual hypogeums shows occupation during different periods and centuries, see Almagro Gorbea1984; Rodero *et al.* 1996, p. 382.

4. On the political institutions of western Phoenician cities

As we saw above, the treaty between Asarhaddon and Baal of Tyre informs us of the institutions that existed in the Phoenician city: the king and an aristocratic organ, the council, composed of "the elders". We do not know in what measure these institutions would have any control or presence in the colonies of the Extreme West or how long they lasted. Nonetheless, we do know, thanks to the Phoenician inscriptions from Cyprus, of the existence of governors (*skn*) during the 8th century BCE in Phoenician cities such as Kition and others: therefore, the *skn ṣr* or "governor of Tyre"; the *skn ʿky* or "governor of Akko", or the *skn qrtḥdšt*, referring to a Carthage in Cyprus.[52]

We do not have any further proof of the existence of such governors in the colonies of the Extreme West during the colonial period, though some oriental precedents could be a model for the government of the colonies. The temples are effectively the only Tyrian institutions we know that were present: due to the link with the royalty, the temple of Melqart in *Gadir* has been proposed as the proxy of the monarchy and the state of Tyre in the colonial sphere.[53]

One of the most important institutions of the Phoenician-Punic world is the people (*plebs*) as a political collective. Represented by means of the popular Assembly or *ʿm*, it was a well-known institution within the Semitic world, documented in Phoenician and Carthaginian cities throughout the Mediterranean, as well as in inscriptions belonging to different periods.[54]

The oldest possible evidence in the Extreme West we have of a political institution dating to the colonial period is the famous inscription from *Gadir* (*KAI*, 71) on a golden ring with no context, found in the area of Puerta de Tierra in Cadiz, and currently preserved at the Institute of Valencia de Don Juan. The three lined text has been subject to different interpretations and initially dated to the 2th BCE, though, due to some of the palaeographic characters its dating has been elevated to the 8th-7th century BCE.[55]

The initial transcription and translation of the text is as follows:

lʾdn lʿzz mlk ʿštrt wlʿbdm lʿm ʾgdr;
To the lord, all mighty/Milk-Ashtart and his servants the people of Gadir.

The translation proposed by Sznycer results in the interpretation that the ring would be an object that belonged to the temple, used by the priests of the temple, and the expression *lʿm ʾgdr* would be interpreted as formula that would represent the people of *Gadir,* being able to translate it in its legal formula, *according to (the law) of the people of Gadir.*[56]

If the date is correct, this would be the oldest testimony of the public institution *ʿm* "the people" in the Extreme West, in the sense of a citizen core and, in consequence, the possible existence of an assembly. The citizen assembly would be justified by a colonial foundation such as Gadir, established with an urban intention that, in the 8th century BCE, was already densely populated, as is proven by the large amount of urban Phoenician remains at the Teatro Cómico of Cadiz, and the establishment of fortified urban sites on the inland belonging to what nowadays is the Bay of Cadiz, as are, for example, the settlements of Castillo de Doña Blanca and Cerro del Castillo in Chiclana, that controlled the territory for the main city.[57]

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52   Sznycer 1985, p. 81; Manfredi 2003, pp. 339-343; Ruiz Cabrero 2009, p. 11.

53   Aubet 2009, pp. 173, 351.

54   Sznycer 1975; Belmonte Marín 2010, pp. 188-189; Manfredi 1997.

55   Amadasi Guzzo 1967, pp. 146-147; Sznycer 1975, pp. 55-56; Amadasi Guzzo 1978, pp. 33-35.

56   Sznycer 1975, pp. 56-57.

57   Ruiz Mata 2001; Bueno Serrano 2014; López Castro 2011, p. 223.

We do not have any news regarding institutions during the colonial period in other colonial foundations of the western Mediterranean, though the process of the formation of the cities at the end of the 7th century BCE would lead to the possible creation of magistracies and institutions that could possibly follow eastern Phoenician or Carthaginian models. Our starting point to create an analogy is, once again, the institutional figures that existed in other Phoenician and Carthaginian cities in the Mediterranean, with special attention to those in the East. Throughout over more than a millennium Semitic political and administrative institutions suffered a non-linear evolution that has been revisited and redefined some years ago, both for the Phoenician cities of the East as well as for Carthage and the territory it controlled.[58]

During Achaemenid domain, with the reorganization of the territories of the Persian empire the eastern Phoenician cities were included into the V Satrapy: in the eastern cities the collegial organism and magistracies obtained more representation and political power at the expense of the monarchy, which ended up disappearing in the year 312 BCE. Aside from the king, the sources also state the existence of magistracies such as the sufetes and collegial organs such as councils and assemblies of the people. These institutions present a large local variability regarding their characteristics, functions, and power equilibrium. A common feature to all these cities is that the citizen´s rights were hierarchical and restricted to large segments of the population.[59]

In Carthage, the first data we have regarding the institutional structure belongs to the 6th century BCE, but the most well-known reference to its political apparatus is that transmitted by Aristotle (*Pol.* II, 8) after the Magonid dynasty. According to the sources, aside from the supreme magistracy of the sufetes, and other magistrates with executive functions such as the *rab*, a Council or Senate also existed, whose members are collectively referred to in the inscriptions as *hʾdrm*, "the powerful".[60] A political organ called the "Council of the Hundred" or "Council of the Hundred and four", would consist of members of the Senate and would create a court of justice. Finally, the assembly of the people completed the institutional apparatus of the city. Besides these institutions there were the so-called pentarchies, accessed by means of co-optation, who's functions and relation with the other institutions remains unknown.[61]

Regarding the western Phoenician cities, there must have been different institutions that would appear during the process of formation of the cities, and others that may have their roots embedded in the Colonial period, of which we have, unfortunately, very little written information. We barely have any information regarding political institutions, and most of them are very late, from the 3rd century BCE forward, though it is safe to think that most of the institutions would have existed prior to these dates. Most of the data that informs us of these institutions refer to *Gadir*, and therefore we must extrapolate them with caution to other cities in order to obtain a general understanding of the institutions of the western Phoenicians.

We also ignore what relationships would have existed between and among institutions, and how they evolved throughout the centuries. But what we do know that there must have been a sort of constitutional organization since *Gadir* had a legislative framework called the *Poenorum iura* as mentioned by Cicero (*Pro Balbo* 32). In another passage in the speech in defence of the Gaditanian Balbo, a reform to the constitution of Gadir is mentioned (*Pro Balbo* 43), carried out by Julius Caesar in the year 61 BCE. This legislative framework would exist in Gadir until its complete integration into the empire as a Roman *municipium* from the year 49 BCE.[62]

The supreme magistrates would be, as was in Carthage and other cities of Carthaginian influence, the sufetes. They have been documented in *Gadir*, mentioned in a passage written by Livius (Liv. XXVIII 37,2)

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58   Elayi 1987; Elayi 1997; Acquaro 2001; Manfredi 2003; Sznycer 2003; Bondí 2004; Oggiano 2016.

59   Elayi 1987, pp. 21-45; Elayi 1997, pp. 70-74.

60   Ruiz Cabrero 2009, p. 19.

61   Gsell 1918, pp. 193-244; Sznycer 1984, pp. 437-455; Tsirkin 1986, pp. 138-139; Huss 1993, pp. 307-312; Ruiz Cabrero 2009, pp. 14-17.

62   López Castro 1995, pp. 60-64.

regarding the events that transpired at the end of the Second Roman-Punic war when the city defected from the Carthaginian side. This same passage makes reference to a high magistrate considered a *quaestor* by the Romans, and therefore may be related to the financial aspects of the city as was in Rome, equivalent to the *rʾšm* documented in some inscriptions. This word could mean too "the chosen ones", the "senators" or "the heads". [63]

Aside from the example of Gadir, sufetes are documented in another city, in this case *Volubilis*, in Morocco, where an inscription dated to the 2nd century BCE mentions a sufete descended from four generations of sufetes of the city.[64] Though this inscription presents some problems regarding its historical interpretations, and the fact that it has been related to local oligarchies of non-Semitic origin, it does give us an idea regarding the oligarchic character of the government, where the most important magistracies would be occupied by the same families, and may be traced back to the late 4th-early 3rd centuries BCE. This phenomenon has also been documented in the city of Carthage, where the inscriptions prove the existence of family genealogies of sufetes.[65]

Among the collegial institutions documented in the Extreme West we have knowledge of the Council. Cicero, in the same speech in defence of Balbo, refers to the existence of a Senate or Council in *Gadir* (Cic., *Pro Balbo* 41), with representation of the most important people of the city, Balbo being a member of this institution. We have already referred to the existence of an assembly or *ʿm* in the city of *Gadir*, referenced in the golden ring. This inscription would be confirmed by coin inscriptions in both this, and other cities of the Extreme West. Indeed, the coins from the cities of *Gadir, Seks, Asido, Bailo, Oba Tagilit* and *Alba* in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, and those of *Lixus* and *Tingis* in the North of Africa situated around the Strait of Gibraltar, present the formulas *m bʿl*, or *bʿlt* which have been traditionally translated as the "the people of", "community of the citizens of" or "the citizens of", followed by the name of the city.[66]

The formula *bʿlt*, in feminine, presents in North African cities has been translated in the same sense of Latin *civitas*.[67] The word *bʿl* has different meanings: "lord", but also "owner" and "citizen".[68] In the different inscriptions recovered from the East, Phoenicia and Greece, the concept of *bʿl* between the 8th and 7th centuries refers to "lords", and in occasions to land owners and "citizens", with the connotation of an elevated social status, in relation to the status of important citizens with full rights. The first time the expression *bʿl* was registered in the western Mediterranean was in the monetary inscriptions of *Panormus* in Sicily at the end of the 5th century BCE.[69] The next reference is documented in the south of the Iberian Peninsula and in the north of Africa during the 3rd-1st centuries BCE. During the Roman Imperial Period it was registered in cities within the former territorial control of Carthage and the cities influenced by it in the north-western area of Africa. Manfredi´s opinion on this matter is that the social group *bʿl* would refer to a collegial group or institutional corporation, an assembly of local significant personalities similar to *ʿm*, as a citizen core, that would be alien to the institutional tradition of Carthage and would have no connection to the condition of citizenship of that city. On the other hand, according to Lipiński, *bʿl* would refer to a class among Carthaginian citizens with full rights, that included priests, free farmers, artisans and small merchants that would be part of the popular assembly.[70]

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63   Coacci Polselli 1980, pp. 84-85; Manfredi 1997, p. 8; Krahmalkov 2000, p. 437.

64   Camps 1960, pp. 423-426.

65   Manfredi 2003, p. 476; Ferjaoui 1991, p. 480; Ruiz Cabrero 2009, pp. 10-12.

66   Acquaro 1974, pp. 79-81; Coacci Polselli 1980-1981, pp. 477-478; Acquaro 1987, pp. 235-237; *REN*, pp. 130–132; Kerr 2003, p. 87. Other researchers prefer to read it as *m pʿl*, interpreted as "made by" or "minted by", see Alfaro Asins 1991, pp. 115-116, 131; *DCH*, pp. 46-47; Pérez Orozco 2006; Mora Serrano 2007, pp. 418-419, 423. A recent synthesis of the monetary inscriptions in Belmonte Marín 2010, pp. 189-191, who agree with the reading *mbʿl*.

67   Kerr 2003, p. 89.

68   Krahmalkov 2000, p. 110; Manfredi 2003, p. 357.

69   Coacci Polselli 1980-1981, pp. 476-477; Manfredi 2003, pp. 356-358, 388.

70   Manfredi 2003, pp. 360, 389; Lipiński 1992, p. 420.

Later North Africa are three Roman inscriptions from different cities, two of them dated to the 2nd century AD (*Ilaf* 484; *AE* 1996, 1706; *AE* 1997, 1725) that meention the word *mibil*. This has been interpreted, after other former misleading proposals, as a civic authority of Carthaginian origin derived from the Phoenician-Punic *mbʿl* identified as the Roman local *curiae*, to which a Carthaginian origin in North Africa uses to be alleged, but as sections of the popular local assemblies and different of the *ordo* or the local *senatus*.[71]

As an initial hypothesis we can accept that the concept of *bʿl* could correspond to a civic group of citizens composed of the local aristocracy, as has been proposed,[72] in a sort of *ordo*, as a concept that also used to comparatively define it better. Regarding the distribution of the expressions *ʿm* and *bʿl*, throughout North African cities we can observe a dichotomy between the cities where *ʿm* and *bʿl* have been recorded as formulas among their inscriptions. Manfredi´s proposal links each city to the presence of a popular assemble *ʿm* to the presence of Carthaginian citizens as a result of the imperialist politics of Carthage. On the other hand, the presence of corporations expressed by *bʿl* would be present in African cities under Punic influence after the destruction of the city in the year 146 BCE.[73] The same schematic has been proposed for these institutions in the Phoenician cities of the Iberian Peninsula, consequence of the arrival of Carthaginians in 237 BCE. and North African influence.[74]

Nonetheless, this proposal for the Extreme West does arise some arguments against it. We must highlight, in the first place, the historical independence of Western Phoenicians regarding Carthage. Without denying its influence and even hegemony in international politics, Carthage never had a territorial control of the South of the Iberian Peninsula until the expansion of the Barca after 237 BCE. Even after the arrival of the Carthaginian armies to the Peninsula, *Gadir* played an active role as an ally to Carthage, but maintained its autonomy until it defected from the alliance and turned in the city to Rome in 206 BCE.[75] In this historical context it does not seem possible that Carthage would change the political institutions of *Gadir* the same way it would if it had direct territorial control or influence as in the North of Africa. It also does not seem likely that the coins from Phoenician cities such as *Gadir, Lixus* or *Seks* would have been minted by Carthaginian citizen councils. Secondly, an institution such as the popular assembly is present in Phoenician cities in the East at least since the Persian period, and in consequence the existence of this institution in the South of the Iberian Peninsula could have a levantine origin. We must not forget the urban character of *Gadir* since it was founded, archaeologically documented at least in early 8th century BCE, which would justify an early institutional organization. As we have stated above, if the dating of the golden ring that mentions *ʿm* is correct, this institution would have appeared between the 8th-7th centuries BCE and would be of Phoenician origin. In the same way, the presence of the *bʿl* in the coins from *Panormus* during the 5th century BCE could have an oriental origin, independent form Carthage, and older than those documented in the North of Africa and the Iberian Peninsula. We must highlight that in the western Phoenician society, as we have seen, there was a strong aristocratic component that existed since the colonial period. In other words, both institutions could be of oriental Phoenician origin that could be traced to the first centuries of the colonial process.

In our opinion, we believe it possible to make an alternative interpretation regarding the articulation of these two institutions within western Phoenician cities, independently from its interpretation for the territory dominated by Carthage. If we observe the legends on the coins (TABLE 1) where *ʿm* and *bʿl*, it is important to observe how *ʿm* appears in three cities: *Gadir, Ibošim* and *Lixus*; and *bʿl* is documented in the first two. This in-

71   Kerr 2003, pp. 91–93. See Kotula 1968, 11 ff. who establishes a relationship between North African *curiae* a equivalent Carthaginian institution.

72   Manfredi 2003, pp. 360, 389.

73   Manfredi 2003, pp. 390-392.

74   Manfredi 2003, p. 475.
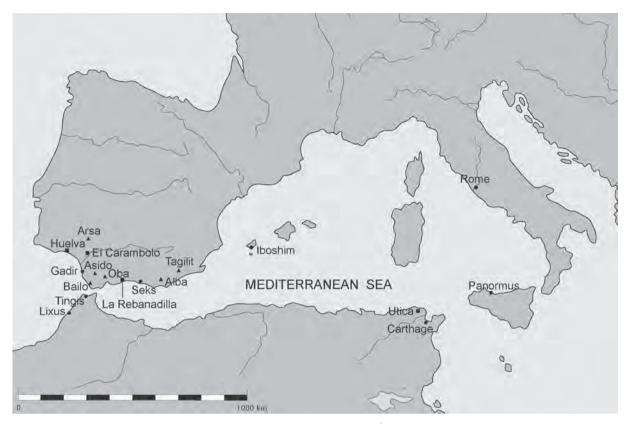
75   López Castro 1995, pp. 95-97.

Fig. 1. ■ Early Western Phoenician foundations; ● Western Phoenician cities; ▲ Carthaginian colonial foundations in 3rd century BCE.

stitution has been documented in coins from nine cities: *Gadir, Seks, Asido, Bailo, Oba, Arsa, Tagilit, Alba, Lixus* and *Tingis*. In *Lixus, Seks* and *Tagilit* coins with the formula *mb ʿl* were minted, while in *Gadir* and *Tingis* the formulas *m b ʿl* and *b ʿlt* were used, and the only case that uses the expression *b ʿlt* was *Alba*. Finally, in the case of *Asido, Bailo, Arsa* and *Oba* the formula *b ʿl* is used. The first important assessment is that *ʿm* and *b ʿl* would not be excluding institutions, but rather they could have coexisted, though we do not know if both of them would be present in all the cities.

Secondly, we must highlight that *b ʿl* is present in both cities of Phoenician origin, such as *Gadir, Seks, Tingis* and *Lixus*, and in cities founded under the politic of colonialism of Carthage in the Iberian Peninsula during the last third of the 3rd century BCE, such as *Asido, Bailo, Oba, Tagilit* and *Alba,* cities that mint their coins with a certain typology and divinities that are clearly western Phoenicians.[76]

We must take into consideration that coin inscriptions were possibly legal formulas that expressed an institutional reality comprehensible to those who would read it, and must be interpreted in the monetary context where they appear. Therefore, we must relate the presence of references to institutions on coins with the function of authorizing and guaranteeing the emission of coin. This function would, in any case, be related to the *b ʿl.*

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76   López Castro 1995, p. 76; López Castro 2012, p. 121; García-Bellido 2013. Regarding the monetary iconography, see García-Bellido 1993; Mora Serrano 2007, pp. 424-425.

City	Institution	Formula	Reference	Date
Gadir	*sufetes* *quaestor (rʾšm?)*	*ad conloquium sufetes eorum [...]* *cum quaestore elicuit* *lʾdn lʿzz mlkʿštrt wlʿbdm lʿm ʾgdr*	Liv. XXVIII, 37, 2	3rd century BCE
	ʿm *bʿl*	*mbʿl ʾgdr* *bʿlt ʾgdr* *bʿlt hgdr*	Amadasi Guzzo 1967, 1978 *REN PIBB*, 217, 220-221 *REN PIBB*, 218-219	8th-7th?/2nd-1st? BCE? 3rd-1st BCE Late 2nd-49 BCE
Seks	*bʿl*	*mbʿl sks* *mbʿl sks* *m bʿl sks*	*REN PIBB*, 185-186 *REN PIBB*, 187 *REN PIBB*, 189-190	2nd BCE
Ibošim	*ʿm*	*ḥnbʿl bn bdʿštrt* *bn [m]snr ʾš bʿm ybšm*	Sznycer 1975	2nd BCE
Asido	*bʿl*	*bʿl šdn* *ʾšdʿn bʿl* *ʾšdn b bʿl* *š bʿbʿl ʾšdʿn* *bʿbʿl*	*REN PIBB*, 207 *REN PIBB*, 210 *REN PIBB*, 211 *REN PIBB*, 213 *REN PIBB*, 214	2nd-1st BCE
Bailo	*bʿl*	*bʿl bln*	*DCH*, p.51	1st BCE
Oba	*bʿl*	*bʿbʿl* *bʿl*	*DCH*, p. 288 *REN PIBB*, 198	1st BCE 2nd-1st BCE
Arsa	*bʿl*	*bʿl*	*DCH*, p. 33	1st BCE
Tagilit	*bʿl*	*m bʿ tglt*	*DCH*, p. 358	3rd-2nd BCE
Alba	*bʿlt*	*bʿlt (¿)*	*DCH*, p. 24	1st BCE
Lixus	*ʿm* *bʿl*	*ʿšb ʿm lkš* *m bʿl lkš*	Manfredi 1997, 8-9 *REN NB*, 75	2nd -1st BCE
Tingis	*bʿlt*	*bʿlt tyngʾ* *bʿlt* *z bʿl tyngʾ* *š bʿl tyngʾ* *m bʿl tyngʾ* *tng bʿlt*	*REN NB*, 62, 64 *REN NB*, 65 *REN NB*, 66 *REN NB*, 67, p. 86 *REN NB*, 68 *REN NB*, 71	2nd-1st BCE 27 BCE -12 AD 2nd-1st BCE

TABLE 1. Institutions within western Phoenician cities according to the Legends of Coins.

In this sense, an important reference would be that the city of *Asido* minted a countermark with the expression *bʿl* in bronze coins of bad quality of the Series Ih to late 2nd century BCE, certifying that even the poor quality, the coins were officially coined.[77] Indeed, the *ordo decurionis* of the *municipium Firmum Iulium Sexs* was who authorized, in imperial times, the circulation of sexitan coins of the Series III.1, minted originally during the second half of the 2nd century BCE with inscriptions written in Punic. To this purpose the countermark *D(ecreto) D(ecurionum)* was minted, legal formula that indicated what institution was responsible.[78]

This information could allow us to establish a functional and institutional continuity between *bʿl* and the sexitan *ordo decurionis*, especially if we take into account the early acquisition of the status of Latin municipality of this ancient city under Julius Caesar. Furthermore, we could argument the contemporaneity of the corpo-

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77   Alfaro Asins 1995, pp. 333-334.

78   Molina Fajardo – López Castro 1983, nos. 98, 121; López Castro 1985, 178-180, no. 136; López Castro 1990.

ration *b'l* found on the coins from *Gadir* dated to the 1st century BCE with the mention of the local *senatus* made by Cicero during the trail of Balbo in the year 56 BCE[79] to understand the aristocratic significance of the local corporation *b'l*.

It would be formed by an association of local aristocrats, land owners and nobles, whose members had full citizen rights and were able to carry out any magistracy. On the other hand, the popular assembly *'m* would possibly be composed of all the free individuals, with less political rights or at least different ones if compared with the aristocracy, in case that both the *'m* and the *b'lm*, "the lords", coexisted.

This hypothesis coincides with the social division that existed in Phoenician and Carthaginian cities, shown by the inscriptions that refer to "the great ones" and "the small ones" as citizens of the same cities and members of the same civic community. Both groups would be included on the popular assembly or *'m*, while the individuals with a higher social position would be members of the corporation *b'l*. We do not have sufficient data to establish the difference of the political rights between both groups, but thanks to what we know from other better known Mediterranean societies, most of the differences lied in the access to certain magistracies or by belonging to oligarchic councils reserved to the aristocracy of the cities. By means of analogy, in the Semitic cities in the West, we could hypothesize that these differences would lie in the eligibility to be part of the suffete and other magistracies in the access to the local Council or Senate, whose members are mentioned in the inscriptions, not coincidentally, as "the mighty".[80]

On the other hand, the individuals who belonged to the assembly of a city, in other words the greater amount of the basic citizen core, would enjoy the political rights of free men used in the inscriptions the formula *'šb 'm* placed before the name of the city, meaning "belonging to the people of". This formula is documented on many votive inscriptions that mention free citizens from different origins, both in Carthage as in other cities from the north of Africa, Ibiza and Sardinia.[81]

Among this epigraphic set there are two inscriptions that mention individuals that belong the two cities of the Extreme West, *Ibošim* and *Lixus*. An inscription from Carthage (*CIS* I, 266) has one on behalf of *ḥnb'l bn bd'štrt bn [m]snr 'š b'm ybšm*,[82] and individual who belonged to the "people of *Ibošim*", in other words: to the assembly of the city and to its citizen core.

Likewise, another inscription (*KAI*, 170, 2-3) from Cap Djedid, in Algeria, mentions another individual that erects the stelae, *drk 'dnb'l hškšy 'š [b]'m lkš*, who is a member of the "people of *Lixus*", and according to other interpretations, the individual would have originaly come from *Seks*, on the Andalusian coast.[83]

The precise mention of free citizens leads us to believe that these individuals would preserve some of the same rights they had in their cities of origin, belonging to the same language and culture, though it is impossible to determine what those rights would have been, maybe belonging to private legislation.

5. Some Conclusions

The written data that we have at our ready to understand the social structure of the institutions of the western Phoenicians in the western Mediterranean are extraordinarily scarce and fragmentary, leading to the need of establishing analogies and parallels with the rest of the Semitic world. The archaeological data that could

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79   López Castro 1995, p. 235.

80   Ruiz Cabrero 2009, p. 16.

81   Sznycer 1975, p. 59; Ramon *et al.* 2010, pp. 234-235; Amadasi Guzzo 2006, pp. 15, 17.

82   Sznycer 1975, p. 60.

83   Sznycer 1975, p. 61. See Garbini 1983, pp. 158-159.

inform us of different social aspects requires more studies centred on quantification and previous elaboration, though they have not been systematic carried out in the scientific community.

In any case, the social structure of western Phoenicians during the 1st millennium BCE has proven to be very diverse and complex, as is expected of a class society in which the fundamental difference among its members, as happens with other ancient societies, is defined by the condition of being free or not. Among free individuals, the civic and political rights seem to be very restricted, almost exclusively belonging to the highest social levels. Among the non-free people there are different levels of dependence depending on the period, that are not well known, where even slavery existed. It would be interesting to be able to establish the status of individuals from autochthonous societies that were part of colonial world. Furthermore, it would be equally interesting to understand the evolution of the social groups from the colonial period until the urban period, though we can suppose that the process of formation of western Phoenician cities would require a redefinition of the social structure for the creation of the new communities and the distribution of political rights, without losing the oligarchic character that would allow some centuries later its easy integration into the Roman state.

On the other hand, the comprehension of the Phoenician political structures depends exclusively on written sources, which in the case of the western Phoenicians are fairly reduced and are almost all concentrated in the last three centuries prior the change in era. To comprehend this data it is mandatory to resort to the "swampy" and controversial generic corpus regarding the knowledge of Phoenician and Carthaginian political institutions. Though with many doubts and limitations, we can propose the existence of a basic constitutional organization of the Phoenician cities of the Extreme West during the final three or four centuries before the turn of era, institutions that have sufficiently been proven to have existed in the written sources that we have at our disposal from some of the most important urban centres such as *Gadir, Lixus, Ibošim* or *Seks*, that allow us to suppose that collective insitutions such as the assembly ʿ*m* and the corporation *bʿl*, and magistracies, such as the sufetes, would have existed in most of the cities, though there are many others that lack any source of written evidence. Only the discovery of new epigraphic data and the advancement of archaeological research will make it possible to advance in the knowledge of these social and institutional aspects of which we know so little.

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