PHOENICIANS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: DIVERSIFIED FORMS OF CONTACT
FENÍCIOS PELO MEDITERRÂNEO: FORMAS DE CONTATO DIVERSIFICADAS

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Phoenicians in the Mediterranean: diversified forms of contact¹

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Abstract: In this article we approach the most recent developments on the research regarding the Phoenicians, a people who inhabited the coastal plains of eastern Mediterranean. We also approach the developments regarding their territorial expansion, especially towards the very opposite region in relation to their homeland: the western shores of the Mediterranean. We also discuss the pertinence of the use of such concepts as pre-colonization and colonization and present the position of some archaeologists drawn out of the Post-Colonial Theories.

Keywords: Phoenicians, navigation, contact, Mediterranean.

Resumo: Neste artigo abordamos as mais recentes sistematizações acerca dos fenícios, povo que habitou habitando a costa oriental da Bacia do Mediterrâneo, e acerca de seus processos de expansão territorial, notadamente nas regiões central e ocidental desta mesma bacia. Discutimos a pertinência do uso de conceitos como pré-colonização e colonização e os questionamentos que alguns arqueólogos têm feito a estes, com base nas Teorias Pós-Coloniais.

Palavras-chave: Fenícios, navegação, contato, Mediterrâneo.

The Phoenicians, who are still so mysterious to us, despite the numerous advances made by academic research, have since the beginning of the Iron Age in the Eastern Mediterranean (11th century BC) initiated a sophisticated process of territorial expansion, sailing the Mediterranean waters and reaching the land to the north and south of this basin, and beyond it, Atlantic waters, on holdings in search of raw materials for the making of products to be resold on eastern lands.

A first question that the researchers put forward, having in hand textual sources and the first archaeological discoveries classified as vestiges of the Phoenician presence, and, first of all, comparing these data with the information about the analogue - to what extent? - Greek expansion towards the Western Mediterranean, was: is it a process of colonization?

But before we address this thorny question, when we speak Phoenicians, what do we really mean?

We can say that the Phoenicians are elusive. They did not leave us literary, historical, religious or geographical texts, where we could analyze the existing discourses, in order to try to understand how these Phoenicians saw themselves and what kind of union they experimented with each other³.

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³ The Annals of Tyre would be an exception, but the fragments of it that have come down to us are in the Latin text of Flavius Josephus. Nevertheless, they are important mentions, with information of two periods: the 10th and 6th centuries BC. (MOSCATI, 2001, p.8).
Not because they did not produce such works, but because, unfortunately, they did not survive the historical vicissitudes. What we have left, textual wise, is a vast epigraphic collection - with very precise limits - and occasional references in Greek, Latin, Mesopotamian, and Assyrian textual sources, in the Old Testament and in Egyptian hieroglyphs. Thus, we must realize that both terms, "Phoenician" and "Phoenicia", were bequeathed to us by Homer (Odyssey XV 415-482). He uses *phoinikes* to name the people and *Phoinikē* for the region. The two terms are linked to the term *phoinix* (red-purple) and therefore to the tissue industry typical of Phoenician cities. Before Homer, we have Mycenaean texts from the second half of the second millennium, which also use these terms, referring to both color and people, but those are rare mentions (MOSCATI, 1995)\(^4\).

On the other hand, a unitary consciousness of the Phoenician cities is weak and there is no known constant name that stands out. "Canaan," in reference to the region, and "Canaanites," in reference to the people, are designations that appear in the Syrian-Palestinian region of the second millennium onwards but have a broader character encompassing other peoples and regions beyond the Phoenicians\(^5\).

The Canaanites inhabiting the Syrian-Palestinian coast are understood as Western Semites. They built an urban civilization where today we have Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and part of Syria. Archaeological data show that most coastal towns, especially those later known as Phoenicians by the ancient peoples themselves, and particularly Byblos (Gebal in Phoenician), were already known as Canaanite ports in the Bronze Age. The term "Phoenicians" does not appear in any document of this period (MARKOE, 2000, p.15).

A part of this region will later be known as Phoenicia\(^6\). The socio-spatial conformation of this people, already present in the region since the Bronze Age, as we have seen above, is the so studied city-state. There is no evidence of formation of Phoenician empires in the eastern Mediterranean. The lands of Canaan covered a greater extent than the coastal strip, which will be known as Phoenicia. It should be borne in mind that the history of Canaan predates the Invasion of the Sea Peoples at the end of the second millennium BC, but interestingly enough the term "Canaanites" can also be linked to the purple-red color in Akkadian texts of Nuzi (between the Tigris and Euphrates), from the middle of the second millennium, under the term *kinakhnu* (red-purple) (MOSCATI, 1995).

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\(^4\) C.R. Krahmalkov (2000) recently linked the Greek term *Phoenices* and the later Roman *Poeni* (in this case, referring to the Phoenicians of the West, which will derive the Punic term adopted by the academy) to the way the Hebrews called the Phoenicians, *Ponim*.

\(^5\) For example, for three times in the Alalakh tablets (WISEMAN, 1983, p.5, 8, 12).

\(^6\) From mainly archaeological finds modern historiography established the geographical boundaries of this area, Tell Suqas, on the southern border of Syria, and Acre, Tell Keisan and Akhziv in northern Israel - Mount Carmel region (MOSCATI, 2001, p.13; AUBET, 2001, p.69).
An interesting question, however, is that linguistically it is possible to make the passage from the term Canaan to kinakhnu, but not the other way around. Thus, it is clear that what came first was the name of the region (Canaan), which was used to designate a production (kinakhnu) that developed there.

This segment of the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, is identified as a people from a set of common characteristics, a language, a geographical area and a historical cultural process. In this perspective, we can speak of Phoenicia, as a historical reality of the Middle East, from 1200 BC (simultaneously with the passage from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age) after the Invasion of the Sea Peoples (ACQUARO, 1987; MOSCATI, 1974, 2001; HARDEN, 1971).

Throughout at least two waves of invasions, several decades apart, various peoples suffer to a greater or lesser extent from the invasion of different peoples coming from land and sea for more than a hundred years: Mycenaean society collapses; Ugarit (Ras Shamra), an important Canaanite port in southern Syria, which traded with the Aegean, is destroyed; Egypt is attacked; the Hittite lands and Mesopotamia as well. Could these "invasions" have been migratory movements instead? What we do know is that the so-called Invasion of the Sea Peoples is an invasion that spreads across the coast of Canaan\(^7\). Cities like Sidon are destroyed and others are burned.

After the Sea Peoples leave, great powers on the shores of the Syrian-Palestinian region (Egypt and Mesopotamia) are at least temporarily removed. Within the region we see the formation of the Hebrew (fighting for territory since the previous century), the Aramean (from Syria) and the Philistine states. The Phoenician coast, separated from the interior by two mountain ranges, the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon, is thus autonomous.

Aradus, Byblos, Berytus, Sarepta, Sidon and Tyre are the largest known Phoenician cities. Although there are agreements between them, and that, at times, one of them prevails these cities are organized autonomously (ACQUARO, 1987).

Nowadays, our perception of the Phoenicians is that they form a Semitic group inhabiting the Syrian-Palestinian coast for centuries in their city-states, which, in the face of the geopolitical reorganization that takes place in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 12th century BC, is momentarily free from the pressures of external powers, such as the Egyptian and the Assyrian ones, and then, free from these moorings, this group reorganizes itself maintaining a millennial cultural tradition. In other words, in view of the novelty of

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\(^7\) Peoples, whose names are best known from the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Ramses III dated to 1177 BC, commemorating the victory over these peoples. Among them we have the Peleset, identified by scholars as the Philistines. We have here, in fact, the arrival and installation of a new people on the Syrian-Palestinian coast. The Philistines settle on a strip that runs from Askelon to Gaza, Palestine. However, other names that appear in the inscriptions of Ramesses III, for instance Shardana, which was identified without much factual foundation with the Sards, are also known by other previous Egyptian inscriptions. They appear in the list of peoples serving the pharaohs. Most likely, previous Shardana groups had immigrated to Egypt where they were able to adjust socially. Would the Shardanas that Ramses III face be new immigrants or groups of established ones who revolted? (BRYCE, 2009, p.634).
the newly arrived population elements, the Phoenicians will seek to close and maintain the already existing Semitic cultural substratum (PEDRAZZI, 2012).

Among the elements that characterize the new Phoenician unit from 1200 BC, we can mention: the final systematization and the diffusion of the alphabet; the presentation of new divine figures but also the maintenance of those of the preceding phase; the emergence of new linguistic elements in the complex development of spoken languages of the area; and a higher incidence of the Egyptian component in artisanal production (MOSCATI, 1995).

Over the years, geographically and politically constrained by the social forces that reorganize themselves, as is the case with the Assyrians, the Phoenicians realize the only possible way out, towards the sea and embark on a long process of colonization / expansion towards the West.

For decades, scholars have worked on this process by subdividing it into two moments: the first, pre-colonial, and the second, colonial (MOSCATI, 1983). Thus, pre-colonization was defined as frequent visits to new territories, initiating a set of contacts and exchanges with the native populations, but, and this is an important issue, with the intention of subsequently carrying out a colonial implantation. Colonization has been defined as the formation of stable settlements, whose objectives could be expansionist, and we must not forget, the idea of colonization presupposes the idea of an organizing metropolis behind that process (ACQUARO, 1987).

This explanation, that is, the division of the Phoenician expansionary process into two phases, arises as a response to the discrepancy of the then existing documentation. The not Phoenician textual sources and the archaeological sources did not converge. That is, we had, on the one hand, the texts affirming the long Phoenician colonial precedence in relation to the Greek one, and, on the other hand, the analysis of archaeological data pointing to a later chronology, although earlier than the Greek dating, as we shall see below.

According to the much-quoted passage from Thucydides (VI 2), the Phoenicians were already settled in Sicily on the occasion of the arrival of the first Greek settlers on the island at the turn of the seventh and sixth centuries BC. Settled, thus, in the eastern part of the island, they would have turned away from the Greek presence and re-settled in the western region, where, in fact, Phoenician archaeological remains

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8 Phoenicia was conveniently on the route of several caravans of trade on both a north-south and east-west axis (though it faced the difficulty of the mountain chains of Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon, but the rivers are born there, they run towards the sea thus representing a gateway to the interior lands). Tin and copper, the two essential elements for the production of bronze, were the most sought after raw materials. Tin came from Central Asia (at least until Assyrian pressure increased) and copper from local mines, and mainly from Cyprus. Another source of resources greatly exploited by the Phoenicians and currency of exchange in the relations between them and the peoples of the region (Hebrews, Assyrians, Egyptians, Hittites) was the wood that was plentiful in the cedar forests of Phoenicia. Aside from these, the aforementioned purple-dyed fabrics and handcrafted artifacts of glass, ivory and precious metals made up the list of products that made the economy of the Phoenician cities revolve (HOYOS, 2010, p.1).
abound. Velleius Paterculus (I 2, 3) and Pliny the Elder (HN XVI 216), in their texts, present the dates of the first Phoenician foundations, around 1100 BC (Cadiz, Spain, and Utica, Tunisia). The important Carthage, according to the textual sources, would have been founded either in 826 BC (Flavius Josephus Against Apionem I 125-126) or in 814 BC (Timaeus, Fragment 23), that is, before the oldest Greek foundation, Pithekoussai, on the island of Ischia, Italy, dated to 770-750 BC (see DECRET, 1979; FINE, 1983, p.69).

Data from archaeological excavations in western Phoenician sites, however, did not reach, and still do not reach, such early dates. In archaeological terms, the maximum that has been reached until today is the 9th century BC9. But those are dates that, nevertheless, determine the Phoenician precedence over the Greeks also from the archaeological point of view. However, for Phoenician studies, the discrepancy between textual sources and archaeological sources called for an explanation. And this was given from an internal critique of the texts. For instance:

The theoretical explanation for this disparity is based on two points: first, the textual sources referring to the Phoenician colonization refer to a single tradition created in the Hellenistic period, and in Alexandrian environments; this tradition regards the Homeric poems as historical truths and the portrait of the Phoenicians as navigators and merchants, which is painted there, as contemporary to the other facts narrated in the poems. The classical textual sources also relate Heracles as progenitor of the Phoenicians, assimilating thus the sea voyages of these to the extreme west with the mythical trips of the Greek hero (KORMIKIARI, 1993, p.262)

The solution found was then to think of the Phoenician movement departing from the two moments presented above: a pre-colonial and a colonial one, when some of the initial settlements would have turned into true colonies (MOSCATI, 2001, p.17). The point here was not only to give reason to the information of the textual sources, but also to account for a broad material documentation of Aegean artifacts (Mycenaean, Syrian, and Phoenician) found throughout the central and western Mediterranean basin, which led the archaeologist Lugi Bernabó Brea to coin the term Mediterranean Koiné in the 1960s (BREA, 1964-1965) to explain its dispersion from the Eastern Mediterranean. That is, Mycenaens and Phoenicians, sailing separately or even together, would have been the diffusers of this material culture, which would then be more than Eastern, Mediterranean (BONDÌ, 1988; ALMAGRO GORBEA, 1977)10.

9 The most recent surveys in Motya, a Phoenician city in northwestern Sicily, present dates from the 8th century BC (800-750 BC) for the first settlement (NIGRO, 2017, p.4-11); in Carthage, we have dates from the mid-9th century BC (DOCTER at al., 2008, for methodological considerations, see NÚÑEZ, 2014).
10 In the last two decades, numerous new archaeological finds in the Iberian Peninsula have broken down the frontier of the Phoenician presence marked by modern historiography in Cadiz (old Gadir), Spain. Archaeologist Ana Margarida Arruda, from the University of Lisbon, has excavated and published extensively, with her team, on sites in Portugal with evidence of eastern influences (ARRUDA, 2013). For a systematization and re-evaluation of the archaeological sites of Portugal see Pappa (2013), which questions the use of the term "orientalizing" to designate archaeological horizons, that is, artefactual finds in local indigenous sites, which indicate possible contacts between natives and people from Eastern Mediterranean, about which, until recently, it was avoided to say that they were Phoenicians. In fact, the more
Currently, the thesis of a continuous and sequential process still prevails. In this sense, the engine of this vast, long-lived movement is understood to be the palace, more precisely the Phoenician king and the dominant aristocratic class (AUBET, 2001, p.118-132, GRAS, ROUILLARD, TEIXIDOR, 1988, p.105-107)\textsuperscript{11}. Even for those who have long understood that there is no literary or material evidence to work with the idea of an expansion project (eg, BONDÌ, 1988), the Phoenician palace and nobility figure as the agents of these two movements, the pre-colonial and colonial\textsuperscript{12}.

Recently, Jaime Alvar Ezquerra (1997, 2008) defended that we forget the idea of pre-colonization and colonization, and that we work from the concepts of contact, because:

Colonization and pre-colonization are first of all contact modes, whose difference lies essentially not in the criterion of temporal sequence, but in the frequency, intensity and characteristics of contact between cultures. Therefore, I would like to identify colonization as one of the possible forms in a more general form of intercultural relationship that we could call Hegemonic Systemic Contact Mode (MCSH). Among its characteristics would be the direct or indirect control of the exploitation of local resources, the management of the export of surpluses [...]. The regularized systematization of the relationships and the predominance of the exogenous element are, then, the keys that allow identifying the MCSH.

Pre-colonization [...] when does not to share these characteristics, has to be framed in another form of contact [...] the exchanges can be sporadic, which does not require regularity or systematization [...] the objective is to achieve a certain supply, which does not require control of production [...] so there may be permanent commercial enclaves without administrative function [...]. Hegemony is not the modality of behavior required, and that is why I have proposed that we call it Non-Hegemonic Contact Mode (MCNh). (ALVAR EZQUERRA, 2008, p.20) (Our translation)

Non-Hegemonic Mode of Contact (MCNh) could be classified as sporadic when the contacts for the acquisition of raw material are made by a group that moves from its homeland without actually having formal or administrative relations with the populations from whom they purchase. In this case, each situation of contact would be unique and encapsulated, with beginning and end in itself. Or it could be classified as episodic, when we would then have in each contact a moment, or episode, of a process of recurrent contact and exchange.

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\textsuperscript{11} The Phoenician king, called mlk, does not possess the prerogatives of a traditional eastern king, either to be the direct interlocutor of the gods or the reincarnation on Earth of one. In this sense, the Phoenician king is an arbitrator, the best one but also one among his peers (SZNYCER, 1984, p.292 ff).

\textsuperscript{12} This is what S. F. Bondi derives from the account of Ounamon, the Egyptian envoy to Byblos to buy wood, who finds the Phoenician king, Shekerbaal, initially not willing to make the exchange. Shekerbaal speaks, not wanting to be pestered by Ounamon: “Are there not twenty transport ships in my port that I have in partnership with Smendis? And as for Sidon, I do not have 50 ships in partnership with Barkate? ”, That is, demanding that the Egyptian envoy seek them; but after being pleased with gifts proclaims his power “if I cry out to Lebanon, I will open the sky and the trunks will come here and the prince... sends 300 men and 300 oxen ... so that the trunks are cut” (BONDÌ, 1995, p.270). In an analogous but more current position, see Alvar Ezquerra (2008, p.23-24).
With this proposal, Alvar intends to dissociate completely the two moments, the Hegemonic from the non-Hegemonic. Thus, pre-colonization would not be a phase of a long process of contact to be finalized with the constitution of colonies, but rather a specific and particular way of contact between cultures (ALVAR EZQUERRA, 2008, p.20).

It is, in fact, a very pertinent reasoning, because by dissociating the two moments we could be able to concentrate and try to better understand the phenomena and the processes of each one, for example, the agents and the historical context behind each movement. The key of understanding here is the hegemonic term. Through it, Alvar Ezquerra understands a project of domination, be it of resources and territories, or even of populations. In this sense, it opens the possibility of contact enclaves, more permanent settlements on the part of the foreigners, in the case, the Phoenicians, even during the processes of MCnH, as long as they have not been established to dominate the region and / or administer the exchanges.

In a 2004 text, we dealt with the so-called "silent bartering," as described by Pseudo-Scylax (112M) and presented by St. Gsell (1929, p.94-95)\textsuperscript{13}:

> The merchants are Phoenicians; when they reach the Isle of Cernê, they dock with their round ships and set up their tents [...]. But the cargo, after being taken from the ships, is transported in small vessels up to the coast. There are Ethiopians on the continent. It is with these Ethiopians that they do the trafficking. The Phoenicians sell their artifacts for the skins of gazelles, lions, leopards [...]. The Ethiopians use the skins as adornment and in place of bowls, they use the ivory; and their wives wear ivory rings as adornment [...]. The Phoenician merchants deliver perfumed oil, stones from Egypt, Attic pottery [...]. (Our translation)

Here we have a possible description of the Non-Hegemonic Mode of Contact, as coined by Alvar Ezquerra\textsuperscript{14}. Ezquerra does not believe that a large-scale organization is required. On the contrary, we would be faced with irregular contacts, derived from a previous knowledge (and thus, we recall the hypothesis of joint navigations between Mycenae and Phoenicians). Still following Alvar’s reasoning, the key to the change of the contact form (from MCnH to MCSH) would be found in the transformation of the required goods from a sporadic or even episodic need into permanent, demanded necessities, since they would serve to maintain an economic and social order (ALVAR EZQUERRA, 2008, p.21).

The search for new conceptual keys is, in fact, necessary. They are also part of the discussions that have taken over the academy, initially in the area of Literature, but also for a long time in Anthropology,

\textsuperscript{13} Herodotus (IV 96) also narrates a form of "silent exchange" between Carthaginians and natives (Africans?) (KORMIKIARI, 2004, p.150-151).

\textsuperscript{14} The archaeologist believes that this hypothesis is further strengthened because the two texts that came to us dealing with the theme (Pseudo-Scylax and Herodotus) mention, one, the Phoenicians, and the other, the Carthaginians. That is, we would be facing the same form of contact in periods distant from each other, and therefore can not be embedded in a single pre-colonial moment (ALVAR EZQUERRA, 2008, p.22).
History and Archeology, in the wake of Postcolonial Theories, which developed from the work *Orientalism*, by Edward Said, published in 1978.\(^{15}\)

Postcolonial Theories work essentially with the analysis and interpretation of hegemonic discourses in modern colonization environments, and propose new approaches, such as a renewed look at the other, the power of local identities in the relations of power, the meanings and scope of the negotiations, but away from stereotyped and binary oppositions (foreign versus local, colonizer versus colonized) (SUREDA TORRES, 2012, p.57-58; VAN DOMMELEN, 2005, p.116).

In Phoenician-Punic Archeology, a voice has been prevalent when it comes to applying this new approach to case studies, that of the archaeologist and current director of the Joukowskii Institute for Archeology and the Ancient World of Brown University, USA, Peter Van Dommelen.\(^{16}\)

Discussing the state of the issue, Van Dommelen criticizes the option for the term colonization to the detriment of colonialism as a solution to the postcolonial impasse. The adoption of the former to define the phenomenon of territorial expansion and contact in antiquity, which would indicate more an action - thus being more "neutral"? - and less a process organized from a central power, would not solve the problem of contagion by Western researchers, formed in the European culture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of the notions implicit in the modern colonialist movement, namely exploitation of resources to be sent to the metropolis, exploitation and oppression of the natives and cultural hegemony (VAN DOMMELEN 1997, p.305-307).

The idea of the existence of a metropolis that controls, politically and economically, the colony (s) is particularly complicated when we want to understand the movements of expansion and migration through the Mediterranean in Antiquity. Even though having pointed out in this same text the tendency of the researchers to see in the figure of the Phoenician king and aristocrats the agents of the processes of exploitation of natural resources\(^{17}\), the assumption that the colony existed as a supplier of wealth to the metropolis does not systematically match the material and textual evidence\(^{18}\), much less the idea of a

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16 We have already had the opportunity to explore Van Dommelen's thinking in other articles (KORMIKIARI, 2012, 2015).

17 In discussing the subject in his text, Alvar Ezquerra (2008, p.24-25) points out the vital question of who would be the owners of the ships, who would be the shipowners. In response he returns to the king and the aristocracy of the Phoenician cities.

relation between center and periphery, in which the center is the agent of economic exploration and the periphery suffers this action.

To bring these questions to light does not mean, on the other hand, to deal with the processes of expansion and migration within Mediterranean Antiquity, and in our case Phoenician, more specifically, as free from oppression, violence, conquest and exploitation. The concept MCSH (Hegemonic Systemic Contact Mode) brings with it the possibility of analyzing the different contexts under these perspectives. Similarly, the MCnH (Non-Hegemonic Contact Mode) does not necessarily presuppose peaceful action. The author himself raises these questions in his proposal (ALVAR EZQUERRA, 2008, p.21).

We must be aware that we are dealing with processes in which people from different cultural backgrounds have met and interacted. These contacts range from light contacts to the sharing of long-term, harmonic or hostile settlements. A common denominator would be the physical co-presence of people in a particular context and the sociocultural dynamics created along these interactions, as well emphasized by P. Van Dommelen and B. Knapp in their work Material Connections in the Ancient Mediterranean, which seeks to explore, from case studies in island regions, the cultural interactions and the multiple identities there derived (VAN DOMMELEN; KNAPP 2010, p.4-7).

We believe that this is the most promising way to advance our understanding of a process as complex and multifaceted as the processes of territorial and cultural expansion of the Aegean peoples (Mycenaen and Greek) and Phoenicians around the Ancient Mediterranean Basin from the Iron Age up to the Archaic period.

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