

THE PHOENICIAN-PUNIC HOUSE

Rodrigo Araújo de Lima*

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Abstract: The current rediscovery of the Phoenician-Punic identity revealed important aspects about this culture's spatial organization. Many excavations are in progress in the south of the Iberian Peninsula. They share a connection with other Phoenician-Punic settlements in the Mediterranean. In this text, we intend to investigate four Mediterranean areas in which the Phoenician-Punic presence is found: The Levant, The Iberian Peninsula, Sicily and North Africa.

Rezumat: Actuala redescoperire a identității feniciano-punice a dezvăluit aspecte importante legate de organizarea spațiului construit propriu acestei culturi. Numeroase cercetări arheologice efectuate recent în siturile din sudul Peninsulei Iberice au permis dialogul cu rezultatele cercetărilor din alte așezări feniciano-punice din zonele limitrofe Mării Mediteraneene. Obiectivul acestui text este de a oferi o imagine a stadiului cercetărilor privind structurile construite în acele zone unde prezența feniciano-punică este la ora actuală bine documentată: Levant (Orientul Apropiat), Peninsula Iberică, Sicilia și Africa de Nord.

From founding the settlements to building the dwellings

Our current knowledge of the Phoenician-Punic settlements has expanded due to discoveries located mainly in the Iberian Peninsula, where a myriad of Oriental building foundations¹ were found. The Phoenician-Punic studies in Spain were one of the main contributing factors for the archaeological investigations in the Gadir underground.²

For a long time, space was considered only as a theater of human actions³ and Archeology shared the same idea as Geography, that we should value the form of things more than their development.⁴

According to Milton Santos,⁵ Strabo considered that a place's attributes should be acknowledged for

their permanence, while the superimposed attributes are regarded as mutable. However, Santos analyzes that changes actually occur in both categories.

One of the elements that differentiate the Phoenician foundations from other Mediterranean settlements is their topography.⁶ "The Phoenician urban landscape" can be described as foundations usually located on promontories, or islands not very far from the coast, preferably near shallow waters or straights⁷ (Fig. 1).

According to Markoe⁸ the typical Phoenician settlement consisted of two districts: the "Lower town" that housed manufacturing and residential buildings, and the "Upper town" that was home to the temples, administrative buildings and the residences of the wealthiest. The "Upper town" was also used as a citadel and was generally separated by walls.

The urbanism of the archaic Phoenician-Punic cities didn't follow the Hippodamian grid. In the beginning, the foundations inherited Oriental elements without any Hellenistic influence.⁹ The Hellenistic influence appears more recently, in cities such as Carthage (Fig. 2), where the German archeological team considered the markedly white revetment of the blocks that formed the wall as a Hellenistic pattern.¹⁰

It is necessary to draw a parallel with the Hellenic culture, since once the Mediterranean, truly liquid cement,¹¹ was the setting for exchanges, both material and cultural, among the civilizations that were developing along its borders.

One of the pieces of evidence of the extent of Hellenization¹² extrapolates the cultural sphere and expresses itself through space. Such an example is that of a mint in 4th century BC Carthage, when the economy switches to the monetary.¹³

* Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia da Universidade de São Paulo (MAE/USP), e-mail: rodrigo.araujo.lima@usp.br.

¹ To mention some examples, there is the *Yacimiento Arqueológico de lo Teatro de Títeres "La Tía Norica"* in Cadiz, discovered in 2002 (Zamora López 2010, 203). In Huelva, there is the site *Tierra Llana de Huelva*, which is investigated systematically since 1990 (López Castro 2008, 82) and the settlement *Doña Blanca*, that connects ancient Gadir (modern day Cadiz) with the rural hinterland, providing access to the agricultural resources of the city (López Castro 2008 83). These are some of the best known examples from the south of the Iberian Peninsula. They illustrate the extension of the Phoenician-Punic presence in the West.

² Sáez Romero 2011, p. 18.

³ Febvre 1923, p. 37.

⁴ Santos 2005, p. 21.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

⁶ Bondi 1999, p. 311; Mezzolani 2000, p. 1223.

⁷ Bondi 1999, p. 311.

⁸ Markoe 2007, p. 68.

⁹ Wagner 2003, p. 53.

¹⁰ Information obtained from the LABECA website, from the database NAUSITOO, Carthage city (<http://labeca.mae.usp.br/pt-br/>. Accessed 02.11.2013).

¹¹ Gras 1998, p. 7.

¹² Tsirkin 2000, p. 1233) states that the problematic of Carthage's Hellenization is divided in two different approaches of investigation. The first considers Carthage from the 4th to the 2nd century BC as Hellenistic. On the other hand, the second states that its Hellenization was superficial and it didn't touch the essence of Ancient Carthage. Tsirkin mentions a ruling aristocracy that was familiar with the Hellenic culture, while the popular mass and at least a part of the priestly aristocracy still followed the Eastern traditions.

¹³ Tsirkin 2000, p. 1235.



Fig. 1. Comparison between Tyre (in Lebanon) and Gadir (currently Cadiz in Spain). In the images, we can see the geomorphologic features preferred by the Phoenicians. Surrounding piers protect the harbors. In this case, we can notice similarities between the Far East and Far West in ancient times (NASA iSat - Cesium, 2015; adapted by Araújo de Lima, 2015).

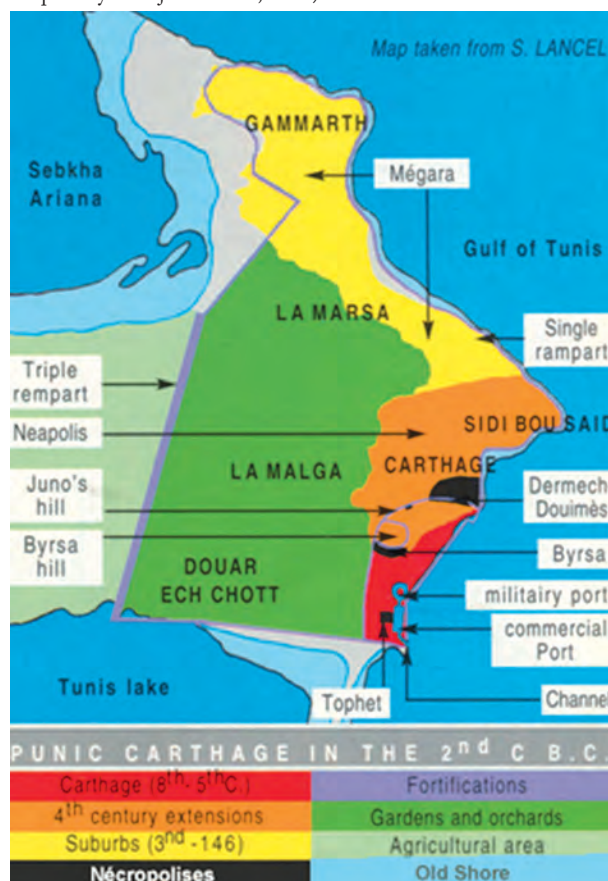


Fig. 2. Carthage. City Organization (Mahjoubi 2002, 9).

It is known that whenever the Phoenicians arrived in new lands they erected a temple, *lbt* in Phoenician. It was a customary act, as seen from examples in Nora (Sardinia), Gadir (Spain), Lixus and Utica (Africa). The monumental stele dating from the 9th century BC stands as material evidence of this act.¹⁴

The study of the usage of space leads to the study of the dwellings. There's a general lack of information on the Phoenician-Punic settlements and their organization. However, shelters would probably be one of the first elements to appear on a new foundation.

After being built, the shelters, theoretically, go through different phases throughout their existence. It can be presumed that in the founding days of the settling, rather rudimentary shelters were erected for this primal population, assuring access to water, agricultural, and mineral resources. Therefore the settlement develops, receiving organizational improvements as well as influences from the indigenous peoples. The final phase would be the eventual decay which we have scarce traces of in the Phoenician-Punic world, usually consisting only of the building's base and, occasionally, its walls.¹⁵

We can infer from the Phoenician alphabet that the word *bet*, *bt* in Phoenician means "house",¹⁶ a very similar word to *lbt*, previously found as "temple" or "sanctuary". Each letter, in the Phoenician alphabet, also conveys the meaning of a word.¹⁷

¹⁴ Aubet 2001, p. 206.

¹⁵ There are exceptions of sites in reasonable condition such as the Phoenician-Punic sites in contact with the Nuragics in Sardinia (Sirai and Sulcis mount) and with the Libyan Berbers of North Africa (Sabrata and Kerkouane, which we are going to discuss later).

¹⁶ Beyers 2012, pp. 113-116; Gianto 2012, p. 31; Segert 1997a, p. 176; Segert 1997b, p. 60.

¹⁷ Some theoreticians consider that the Egyptian influence on the Phoenician cities was so exponential that the Phoenician alphabet has emerged influenced by the Egyptian hieroglyphs and hieratic, hence their many similarities. At first, the first letters of both scripts were represented by a bull's head, the second by a house, the third by the image of an individual, and the fourth by ocean waves. Egypt had a series of pictographic signs limited to consonants. The graphical representation of a lion, for example, is roughly represented by *arwe* or simply *rw* (Garbini 1999, pp. 103-106). The same happens in the Phoenician alphabet: the consonants are used to write a whole word. In Modern Arab, the abjad is a writing system that doesn't have any vowels, the accent on a letter indicating the vowel that follows it. However, the accentuation is only used during the child's basic education. After that, it is omitted and the reader's previous knowledge is necessary to recognize the hidden vowels.

According to some theorists, the name of the symbol refers to the original object,¹⁸ which is not always the case. According to this theory, the term *betyl*, translated as “home of God,” that is a reference to the famous sacred stones worshipped by the Phoenicians which will be shown in Fig. 6, results from merging two Semitic terms *bet* and *el* or *il*. In Phoenician, *El* can be used to identify the greatest divinity of the Phoenician pantheon, father of the gods, and can also be used as a generic term for deity, in its forms *elat* for female and *el* for male.¹⁹

It is possible that the term is בית preserved until today under different forms in Arabic (*bayt*) and in Hebrew בית (*bayit*), while keeping the same meaning.²⁰

“The most common architectural product is, without doubt, the house.” Due to its ubiquity it is the form most particularized however most variable. “It can shelter a single person or several families. It can be made of stone or wood, clay, cement or metal, or many materials altogether – including paper, grass, or snow. Men built houses in arid mountains and houses made mostly of animal skins, so they could carry them during their march. Thick trees were used for the ceiling, using their trunks as support. The imperative need of accommodation to any condition has determined the utilization of any construction means, from the glaciers, nearly as dead as the moon, to the lavish Mediterranean lands. The house, therefore, was the builder’s basic school.”²¹

Regarding the ventilation and lighting of the Phoenician-Punic houses, very little can be said about their size, windows, height and number of floors since the upper levels were the first ones to fall due to environmental and cultural factors.

On the other hand, it is possible to describe the lower floors in detail through the remaining material pieces, mainly the ceramics.

Discussing the Phoenician-Punic house is a task that first requires understanding the issues related to its identity and the hybrid cultural practices.²² The colonial concept we are going to discuss in this study is different from the modern process that went on in Africa, Asia, America, and Oceania, since a deep economic exploitation took effect in these places. The concept of colony in the

ancient world is different from the modern one.²³

For the Phoenicians, establishing a colony didn’t imply submission to its Mother City. Their market didn’t depend on rules imposed by a “colonizer” like in more recent times in History. In other regions of the Mediterranean Basin, the Phoenicians got in touch with several populations, such as the Tartessians, Iberians, Berbers, Greeks, Nuragics, and many more.

The island of Ibiza, *Iboshim* in Phoenician, for example, was initially the only Balearic Island that was inhabited by the Phoenicians. On the other hand, during the Bronze Age, the islands of Mallorca and Minorca were populated by Talaïotic peoples. Formentera remained uninhabited due to its lack of water resources and proximity to Ibiza while some remains exist, there is no evidence of a continuous occupation.²⁴ From these encounters that occurred along the Mediterranean Basin, hybrid practices were developed in different aspects of life in the settlement, such as the use of construction techniques that borrowed Levantine influences and religious syncretism with adoption or assimilation of gods, among other activities.

Therefore, it’s necessary to reflect on the duality that for a long time split the colonial world into colonizer and colonized. We can realize that this contact didn’t create a society divided into rulers and ruled. Using Van Dommelen’s words in this segregation between black and white, the various shades of grey of individual actions are not seen.²⁵

The concept of hybridity brings to light the individual actions that were ignored for a long time by epigraphic sources.

Between the Phoenicians and the Indigenous peoples, a range of actions could have taken place across several social layers such as the adoption of Levantine pottery and social relations. These relations could have meant supporting the foreign presence, legitimizing it and adopting its practices, or repelling it in the name of identity conservation.

Since there are few Phoenician-Punic written sources about this social organization, archaeology has been working on understanding the ancient people’s thoughts by studying the archaeological sites that can corroborate a lot on the study of contacts in Antiquity. Valuable examples are the sites of domestic surroundings that can reveal important details about how the ancient Phoenicians viewed the world around

¹⁸ Garbini 1999, p. 118.

¹⁹ Ribichini 1999, p. 122.

²⁰ Even nowadays, the religious use of the term בית by many synagogues as part of their names is still common in the Hebrew world. It’s also commonly used to refer to schools, without losing the original translation.

²¹ Langer 1953, pp. 92-99 *apud* Patteta 1984, pp. 39-40 (free translation).

²² Bhabha 1992.

²³ Van Dommelen 2005, p. 110.

²⁴ Van Dommelen 2005, pp. 130-131.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

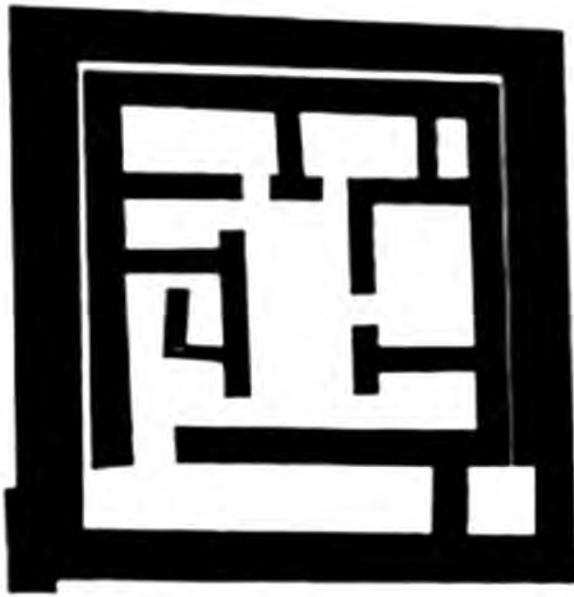


Fig. 3. Fortified house plan from Horvat Rosh Zayit, Israel (Markoe 2000, 72).

them and the relations that they were part of and used to develop. Thus, Archaeology helps understand a society. To paraphrase Mortimer Wheeler's famous phrase: "The archaeologist, therefore, digs people, not things."²⁶

Following, some examples of the Phoenician-Punic domestic ambience along the Mediterranean basin are shown. We are going to take the Levant as the first case study, since it is the point of origin and expansion of the Phoenician civilization.

Levant: Tyre

Before entering further into the domestic ambience, it's necessary to understand the Phoenician-Punic historical context. Phoenicia was, for a long time, under the influence of Egypt, with which the Phoenicians had a profitable trade. The Egyptian demand for cedar wood was insatiable.²⁷ Cedar was extensively used for finishes due to its durability and fragrance. It was not only used for shipbuilding, but also for temples, as roof rafters, portable shrines, and altars. Also, it was widely used in the funeral industry for coffins for the elite and priesthood.²⁸

Tyre was a commercial and maritime city *par*

excellence according to Aubet.²⁹ Also known as *Sor*, which means rock, it was connected to the continent through a pier (Fig. 1) built by Alexander the Great in 332 BC.³⁰

According to Ramazzina,³¹ the settlement, before Alexander the Great's siege, was developed part on the island and part on the mainland (Fig. 1). The name of the mainland city was Ushu, based on Egyptian and Assyrian sources or Paleo-Tyre (Ancient Tyre), based on Classical sources. However, there is no consensus among the researchers about its exact location.

From 20th century BC to 18th century BC, Phoenicia's cities grow with the trade during the Middle Kingdom of Egypt and many Egyptian life aspects are incorporated into the Phoenician way of life.³² The proof of these exchanges can be noticed in the tombs of some kings, whose coffins are decorated with medallions, pectorals, crowns, gold scepters in the Egyptian style. The Egyptian influence was so exponential that there even was an Egyptian temple in the city. Does this mean that the Egyptian also received influences from the Phoenicians? It is possible. For instance, if we analyze the myth of Isis, we see that it states that the goddess travels through Byblos looking for Osiris' body that was thrown into the sea by the god Seth, sealed inside a box.³³

According to Markoe the typical Phoenician house in the beginning of the Iron Age had three or four rooms arranged in different ways. Usually, a long corridor provided access to two or sometimes three adjoining rooms of the same size. Markoe says that the houses with three or four rooms were the most common house forms in Ancient Israel (Fig. 3).

"Archaeological investigation at two widely disparate sites has shed new light on aspects of Phoenician house design and construction. At Horvat Zayit in Lower Galilee, excavations have uncovered an early Phoenician trader's fortified residence. On the ground floor, the building consisted of a central hall surrounded by eight differently sized rooms, which served as commercial storage facilities. The entire complex contained some three-hundred plainware storage jars. The complex, which was originally two stories high (the level of the upper floor is marked by stone thresholds), was enclosed by a massive wall with four corner towers. This unique structure, which can definitely be dated to a period spanning the mid-

²⁹ Aubet 2001, p. 31.

³⁰ Ramazzina 2012, p. 168.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 169.

³² There was a harbour south of Tyre's island, named Egyptian due to its position towards Egypt (Fig. 1).

³³ Bondi 1999, p. 25.

²⁶ Wheeler 1954, V.

²⁷ Markoe 2000, p. 19.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

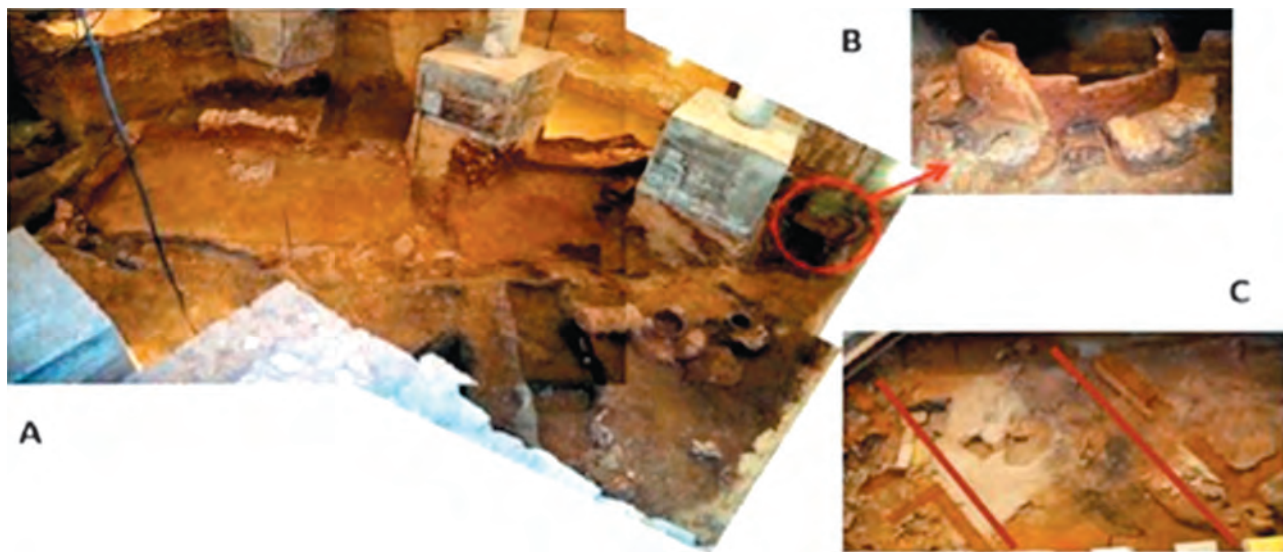


Fig. 4. View of the 2nd period: (A) structural group; (B) Tannur oven; (C) Street between the first structural ground and the second one (Rivista di studi fenici, XXXVIII, 2, 2010, p. 207).

tenth to the mid-ninth centuries BC, offers a rare view of an early Iron Age Phoenician Manor.”³⁴

Understanding the spatial organization of the Phoenician house in the Levant will be the first step in advancing our discussion. This will be taken as a base for establishing the domestic ambience of other Phoenician-Punic settlements in the Mediterranean.

Assyrian sources such as the reliefs of Sennacherib reveal that the residential block was located within the walls and the houses piled up on each other. The residences had several floors and were marked by elegant touches. There were columns on both sides of the front doors and the windows on the top floor had ornate balustrades.³⁵

On the subject of domestic decoration, the Greek geographer Strabo³⁶ wrote that the houses of Tyre and Arwad had as previously mentioned, many more floors than the Roman ones.

Iberian peninsula: Gadir

In Gadir, a Phoenician settlement founded in the Pillars of Hercules (Melqart), the location of several Semitic settlements and the strategic location of Cadiz in the estuary of the Guadalquivir and Guadalete rivers can be observed through a wide drainage basin.

In the Far West, the extraction of silver along the region's basins determined the location of Semitic settlements. In the Iberian Peninsula, many settlements were initially located near or on the

river banks, creating a true dendritic system – which we are going to talk about later – for transporting silver, which along clay, earth and limestone are the most common resources.³⁷

As stated in the Central Place Theory proposed by Walter Christaller³⁸ a dendritic system is understood as a type of urban organization that according to Kelley³⁹ consists of a dominant urban center strategically located in the estuary of a drainage system sustained by other small centers spread throughout the hinterland of this system that perform the extraction of valuable resources, in the case of the Phoenicians in Spain, silver.

To avoid an anachronistic comparison, it's important to stress that Christaller's concerns were about the aspects of Modernism. However, there are elements that can be interpreted for Antiquity to understand the formation process of human settlements.

Citing Zamora López⁴⁰ on the buildings, after the excavations in the Teatro Cómico de Cádiz, four stratigraphic periods were identified:

1. From the 9th century, about 820/800 BC or the arrival of the Phoenicians and the erecting of some of their initial constructions probably for purple dye extraction, since a purple compact mass made of clay and mollusks from the *Murex Trunculariopsis*

³⁴ Markoe 2000, p. 71

³⁵ Bondi 1999, p. 318.

³⁶ Strabo XVI, II, 23.

³⁷ Díes Cusí 2001, p. 80.

³⁸ Christaller 1966.

³⁹ Kelley 1985, pp. 233-53.

⁴⁰ Zamora López *et alii* 2010, p. 205.



Fig. 5. Reconstruction of the 2nd period, representation of the masonry construction and adobe cladding (Rivista di studi fenici, XXXVIII, 2, 2010, p. 209 fig. 5).

Trunculus species was found;

2. From about 820/800 to 720 BC, domestic units were developed (Fig. 5). In the authors' words "houses", where we could see the buildings along the slope to the Bahía-Caleta water channel (Fig. 1). It's important to stress that during this period the first references of domestic uses in the habitations appeared, like the discovery of *tannur* ovens (known also as *tandoor*), an oven made of clay shaped like an amphora, used to bake bread (Fig. 4).

3. From the end of the 8th century to the beginning of the 6th century BC, the abandonment of the structural groups occurs. The authors advance the idea of a natural disaster, due to the fact that they found a corpse among the wreckage, buried without its rites. The corpse belonged to an adult (25-30 years old) who died *in situ*. It was found in a defensive position and its death was interpreted as suffocation by fire. The corpse perished beneath a thin layer of sand brought by the wind. The sand had ashes on its surface that increased in quantity and intensity towards the North.

Researchers believe that the individual may have escaped from the fire. The source of the fire was concentrated in the excavation zone beneath the Teatro Cómic, but the individual didn't survive due to symptoms of intoxication. According to Dr. Manuel Calero,⁴¹ the individual probably fractured

his femoral neck suffering a strong trauma, possibly after a fall, shortly before his death. After the catastrophe, the building collapsed and another was built in its place. The ancient architecture was replaced by masonry in the construction technique known as *opus africanum*,⁴² which consisted of pillars that sustained the structure. This new building had five rooms, the biggest one of 16.54 m² with a central pillar made of adobe and a bench against the wall;

4. In the second and third trimester of the 6th century BC, the structures unfortunately became very affected by the constructions from the Roman times. Only the façades and a threshold made of several species of shells were preserved.⁴³

The Phoenician building techniques were adopted by the Tartessian society in the Iberian Peninsula. According to Díes Cusí's thesis,⁴⁴ Tyre wouldn't have had either the military or the economical capacity to subjugate the indigenous population and to guarantee a direct control over the silver mines located more than 4000 kilometers away from the Levant.

In the opinion of Díes Cusí, the Phoenicians probably associated themselves with the dominant classes by establishing a series of pacts. A series of Eastern customs were assimilated from this association. This fact can be noticed in the Orientalisation of the rites adopted by the Tartessian princes. The Tartessian aristocracy offered access to the mineral and agricultural resources through an exchange system, which involved the Phoenicians producing luxury goods for the Tartessian princes who decorated their tombs with ivory, gold, silver and bronze vessels, made by the Phoenicians in their workshops in Gadir.

The Tartessian dwellings, which were usually rendered with mud and built in an ovoid or circular shape with the walls, set on the slab, adopted from

⁴² The construction technique *Opus Africanum* is a variation of another technique used by the Phoenicians in the Iron Age (Markoe 2007, p. 72). The *Opus Africanum* is based on the laying of rows interrupted by large vertical blocks. The smaller rows are bound horizontally. This kind of construction technique was widespread in Carthage due to the scarcity of wood for building. The technique was widespread in the Phoenician-Punic world. Unfortunately, few monuments built in this technique were preserved in Carthage. After Carthage's destruction, the Romans adopted the local construction technique, turning the *opus africanum* into an exclusive construction technique and a pattern for that part of the world (Adam 1999, p. 233).

⁴³ Zamora López *et alii* 2010, pp. 205-210.

⁴⁴ Díes Cusí 2001, p. 90.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 209.

the East the construction practice of building on a rectangular blueprint. They also started to use a more elaborate cladding to cover the surface of the structures.⁴⁵

Sicily: Soluntum

Spatial studies have been advancing in Brazil with the creation of the Laboratory of Studies on the Ancient City (LABECA), especially for the studies on the Ancient Mediterranean at the Archeology and Ethnology Museum of São Paulo University (MAE-USP).

The objective is to understand the formation of the Ancient Greek, Indigenous and Phoenician-Punic cities using the city database of the laboratory, called *Nausitoo*. Some material was collected during archeological expeditions in Greek and Phoenician Sicily. This material helps understand the Ancient cities' organization and also the ancient dwellings.

To Kormikiari, the importance of the Phoenician-Punic spatial studies were, for a long time, marked by a jaundiced view based on the historical interpretation from the 18th and 19th centuries AD, which associated peoples with certain identities. Thus, the Phoenicians were labeled as a merchant people.

This "label", as the author says, almost mischaracterizes even the existence of complex and well-structured Phoenician cities. Since the written resources are scarce, people without previous knowledge are led towards a biased and vague view.

In Soluntum we can find Phoenician-Punic elements such as terra cotta heads with Punic symbols. On the main street, where the public buildings are located, there is an altar with three *betyls* (sacred stones) that are symbols of the Phoenician-Punic religion (Fig. 6). Judging by the residual material found near the altar, animals were sacrificed there.⁴⁶

"According to Thucydides, Soluntum was founded in Phoenician territory, in northern Sicily. So far, the archeological remains reveal a city from the 4th century BC. Only the necropolis dates from the 6th century BC. The city was ransacked by Dionysius of Syracuse in 368 BC and, soon after, rebuilt. As far as we know, Soluntum has always lived in Syracuse's orbit, including the Timoleontean period. From the Second Punic War in the second half of the 3rd century BC, Soluntum started to belong to the Roman sphere of influence. Soluntum is located on the northern coast of Sicily, 20 km east of Palermo. (...) Around the middle of the 4th century BC, there is archaeological proof that Soluntum was entirely

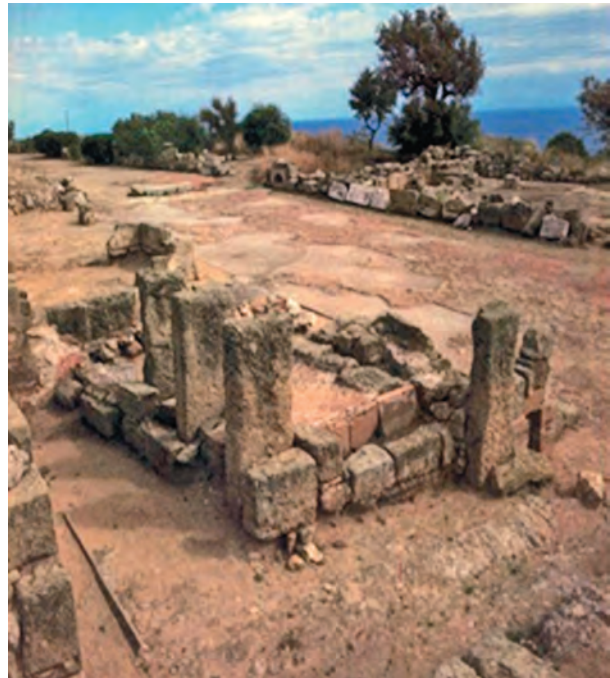


Fig. 6. Sacred building with three betyls (sacred stones) (Labeca's collection, 2005).



Fig. 7. *Opus Africanum* at the Punic block in the late period in Byrsa Hill. We can notice the large vertical blocks between which smaller horizontal rows of blocks were bound (Krings 1995, PL. 23).

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 92.

⁴⁶ Tusa 1999, p. 240.

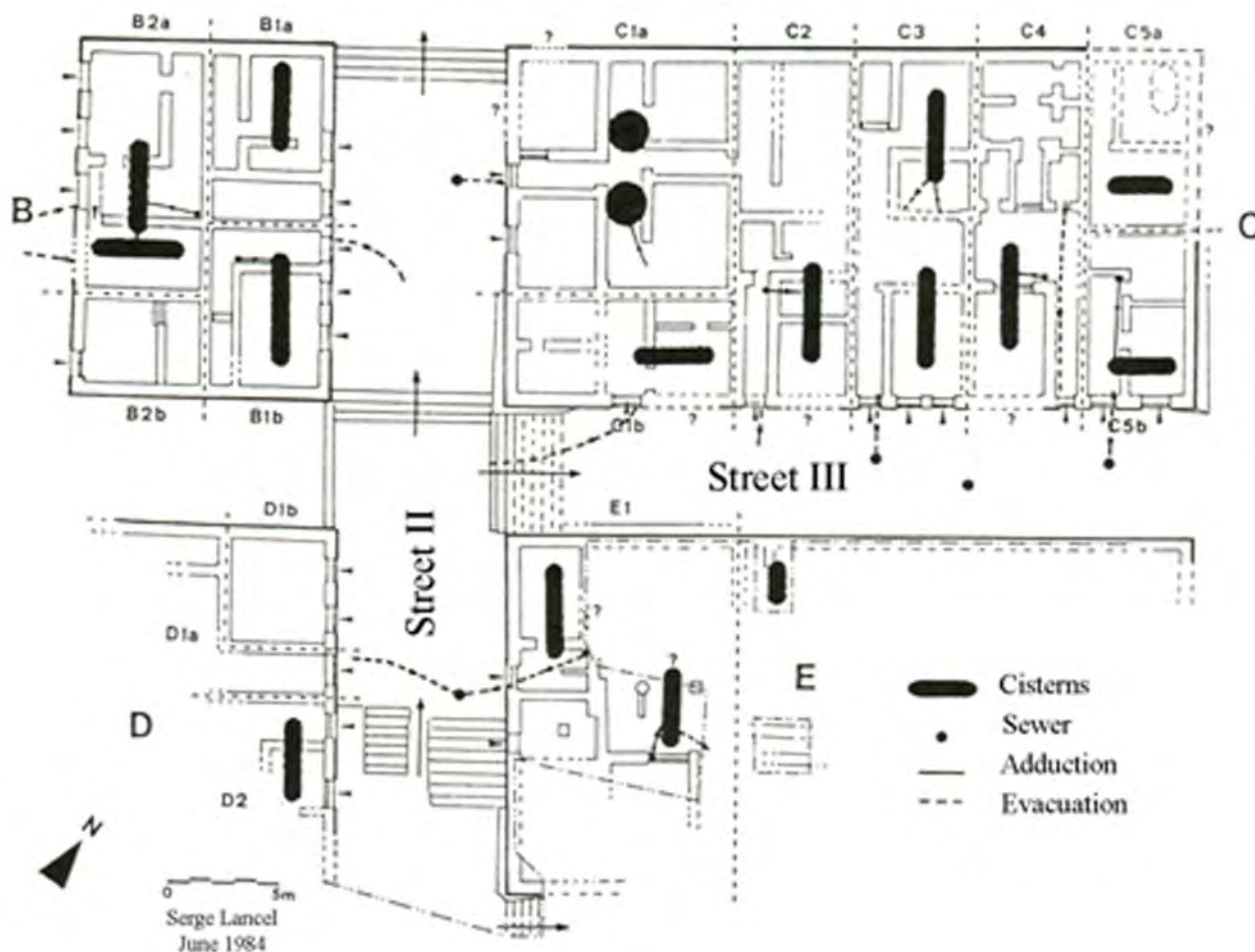


Fig. 8. Punic block from the late period on the southern slope of Byrsa (Krings 1995, p. 405, fig. 6).

reorganized from an urban point of view.”⁴⁷

However, dated remains show that the Punic element was present not only in objects, but also in religious buildings. These buildings represent the spirit of the city’s population.⁴⁸

North Africa: Carthage

According to Markoe,⁴⁹ the excavations in Byrsa, Carthage, have revealed the continuity of an ancient Eastern practice: an offering to the Gods was layed at the building’s foundation. Also according to Markoe the practice was documented twice in Byrsa and it was divided in two stages. In the first, a clay lamp and a pottery bowl were put together in the house’s central area, and, in the second, a clay jar was

intentionally broken and its remains were deposited underground. Since Carthage was a Tyrian colony, this ritual, according to the author, proves the deep connection between the settlement and its Mother City. This ritual was common in the Levant.

Thus, the typical Phoenician-Punic house would represent the Levant’s urban typology, consisting of a rectangular building with an enclosed courtyard and a series of four separate rooms along its extension.⁵⁰

The construction was made of brick walls and stone foundations. The excavations in Byrsa revealed that the *opus africanum*, previously mentioned, was already used during the late period in Carthage (Fig. 7).

“The courtyard, the primary source of light and air, formed the heart of the domestic activities in the Punic house. It had features of an isolated and

⁴⁷ LABECA – MAE/USP (<http://labeca.mae.usp.br/pt-br/>. Accessed 02.11.2013)

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p.240.

⁴⁹ Markoe 2007, p. 72.

⁵⁰ Markoe 2007, p. 71.

private space. Its columned gateways assured direct access to the main chambers of the house, including its main hall, rooms, and pantries... Almost all the courtyards had, as a central feature, a water well or an impluvium for gathering rainwater. (...) The most affluent houses had private bathrooms with plastered bathtubs. (...) All the Punic houses, big and small, were equipped with some kind of kitchen installation, often recognizable by a stone or ring made of terra cotta that formed the fireplace, defining its limits (...) Rooms located by the entrance could have been used as stores or market offices.”⁵¹

Picard states that Carthage, in its final years of independence, before being destroyed and rebuilt by Rome, improved its urban organization. In Byrsa Hill, habitations with sewage were discovered (Fig. 8). The slant of the streets was resolved by stairs that led to the Temple of Eshmun at the top of the slope.⁵² In another excerpt, Picard says that “with its simple, whitewashed houses, topped by terraces or domes, its narrow and tortuous streets, Carthage would have looked like the cities of modern Tunisia.”⁵³

According to some theorists, the Punic house was not as open towards the streets as the Roman one.⁵⁴ Some authors argue that from the 4th century to the 2nd century BC, the Carthaginian elites were subjected to a Greek influence. For Tsirkin,⁵⁵ the Hellenic influence corresponded to the tastes of most of the aristocracy, while the working classes kept up with Eastern traditions. Tsirkin says that:

“This influence manifested itself only in the life of the aristocracy and, as we can see, in the life of the artists and craftsmen that served them. Both the masses and certainly the more conservative circles of the nobility followed their old traditions and their previous way of living (...) We can say that in Carthage, as in the East and in Rome, a culture of the Hellenistic type arises, with some particularities that distinguish it from the Eastern Hellenistic and from the Roman-Hellenistic.”⁵⁶

The houses had a very simple organization according to Picard, with juxtaposed square or rectangular compartments, which were architecturally pleasing. The author infers that the taller houses in Byrsa were divided in multiple floors, possibly for renting.⁵⁷ The ground cover was



Fig. 9. Sewage system (Fantar 2005, p. 4171, fig. 5).

made of clay colored with red brick powder and white marble fragments. This kind of paving was known to the Romans as “punica pavement.”

Kerkouane

Kerkouane is the best preserved city in the Punic world, since it was abandoned in the 3rd century BC and it wasn't since reconstructed, which makes it an unaltered Punic city from the Hellenistic Period. Kerkouane is where the more domestic Punic aspects are revealed, since the existence of houses with their own bathtubs, plumbing systems (Fig. 9), and painted or carved decorations on the remaining columns from the gantries were identified.⁵⁸

Besides having large houses with enclosed courtyards similar to those of Carthage, the streets of Kerkouane were also lined with twin houses. It was also very common to have the sign of Tanit on the house's floor.⁵⁹

Mezzolani refers to the case of the Hellenistic houses from Soluntum⁶⁰ due to their planimetric

⁵¹ Markoe 2000, pp. 73-74.

⁵² Picard 1960, p. 49.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, pp. 50, 57.

⁵⁴ Picard 1960, p. 50; Díes Cusí 2001, p. 85.

⁵⁵ Tsirkin 2000, p. 1233.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 1235 (Free translation).

⁵⁷ Picard 1988, p. 51.

⁵⁸ Fantar 1999, p. 211.

⁵⁹ Fantar 1999, p. 211; Mezzolani 2000, p. 1224.

⁶⁰ Mezzolani 2000, p. 1226.

resemblance and states that, because of the way the kitchen and bathroom are set, there is a link with the houses in Olynthus. According to the author, the division of the domestic space could express ties of kinship, which allowed the use of community spaces such as the courtyard, but also assured a private life thanks to the environment's division.⁶¹

Mezzolani says that the presence of several bathrooms could be a possible reflection of the existence of more than one nuclear family. In support of this theory, the existence of several stairs inside the house could be an evidence of a plurality of families, since the stairs were located either in the corridor or in the courtyard. In case of Kerkouane's houses, therefore, it's possible to consider a hypothetical common entrance that provided access to a habitation unit.

Final Considerations

The original objective of this study was to offer an overview of the Phoenician-Punic house in order to show the changes that occurred in the domestic environment through the variation of the construction practices. This can happen both to the "colonized" and to the "colonizer." The colonial meetings must be understood as ideological exchanges between human beings, without the need to measure the degree of assimilation from both parts, but recognizing that the "colonizer" can be influenced by the "colonized." One culture doesn't cancel out the other's totality, but together they conceive hybrid practices.⁶²

The exposed overview in this article on the studied sites aims to identify the moments of the early residential Phoenician structures in four locations; the East, by studying the Phoenician architecture at its origin; the West, by identifying the Phoenician-indigenous contact and its influences in the South of the Iberian Peninsula; in Sicily, where it is possible to perceive a Hellenistic moment through the Phoenician contact with the Greeks in some locations, like in the Soluntum case; in North Africa, where it is possible to characterize the Punic architecture by the existence of courtyards, efficient ventilation systems and natural lighting, rainwater supply and traces of individual bathtubs.

At last, the purpose of the article was to search for a common origin of the Phoenician Punic house, which is the sharing of techniques between the Phoenicians and the Natives along the Mediterranean basin. We seek to understand the patterns that developed in the Phoenician-Punic architecture and

their ramifications along the contact with native peoples to obtain the results of the hybrid and unique practices that vary from region to region.

Architecture as a fine art tends to be, at times, thought of and transformed in the resolution of a function, understanding function as a simple utility and, for the houses, as comfort as well. Urban planning and architecture are most revealing documents, being a faithful reflection of a society.⁶³

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⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 1266.

⁶² Van Dommelen 2005.

⁶³ Le Corbusier 1923, pp. 27-28 *apud* Patteta 1984, pp. 27-28.

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