

REFLECTIONS ON THE EARLIEST PHOENICIAN PRESENCE
IN NORTH-WEST AFRICA

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Introduction: Phoenician presence in Morocco

In the last few decades, and especially in the 1990s, Morocco has enjoyed an extensive programme of research, with prolific results for the study of the Phoenician and Punic periods (El Khayari 2004; López Pardo 2002). This area of North-West Africa entered into the orbit of the cultural currents of the so-called Phoenician ‘expansion’ in the central and western Mediterranean, a phenomenon dated to *ca.* late 9th/8th-6th centuries BC¹.

Sites with Phoenician/early Punic material have been identified both on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of the country (Fig.1). Most of these are situated in or near estuarine environments, such as those formed by the rivers Lucus, Sebú and Bou Regreg (López Pardo 2002, 31-33). Lixus, located on the Atlantic coast, on the bank of the river Lucus, has yielded the earliest evidence for Phoenician presence in the region, dating to the late 9th or early 8th century BC (Akerraz/El Khayari 2000; Álvarez *et alii* 2001; Belen *et alii* 2001; Habibi *et alii*. 2005)². Further south on the coast, 7th century BC Phoenician pottery has been identified at the site of Sala, situated close to the estuary of the Bou Regreg, close to the modern capital of Rabat (Boube 1984, 166-167). Contemporary activity has also been detected at Mogador, a small island located 700 km from the Straits of Gibraltar, off the coast of Essaouira (Jodin 1966; López Pardo 1992)³. On the Mediterranean coast of Morocco, sites with potentially 7th to 6th century BC Phoenician material have been identified at Sidi Driss by the wadi Amokrane and at Ras Kebdana, close to the estuary of the wadi Moulouya (El Khayari 2004, 152).

¹ For late 9th century BC radiocarbon dates for Phoenician presence in Carthage (Tunisia), see Docter *et alii* 2005, for Huelva (Spain), see Nijboer/van der Plicht 2006. For recent developments in the chronology of Phoenician settlements, see the contributions in Sagona 2008.

² The latest excavations in the area of Lixus, as part of a Spanish-Moroccan project, have led to a series of monographs and articles; see *e.g.* Habibi/Aranegui Gascó 2005.

³ Recently Mogador and its surrounding region have been the focus of a multidisciplinary project by the German Archaeological Institute, jointly undertaken by the Madrid Department and the Commission for Archaeology of Non-European Cultures.



Fig.1. Sites with Phoenician material in Morocco (Map produced using Collins Bartholomew Ltd digital map data (c), www.collinsbartholomew.com reproduced with permission).

Crucial to the interpretation of these sites is the distinguishing of Phoenician ex-nihilo establishments of a permanent or seasonal nature from indigenous settlements with Phoenician imports. The settlement at Kach Kouch, for example, located on a headland overlooking the valley of Lau, near the Straits (Bokbot/Onrubia-Pintado 1995) is a case in point. Hypotheses oscillate between suggestions of an indigenous and a Phoenician settlement⁴.

On the other hand, literary sources point to an extensive Phoenician presence in Morocco. No less than three hundred Phoenician colonies were established on the Atlantic coast according to a passage by Strabo (17.3.2-3) and attributed to Eratosthenes. Artemidorus (Str. 17.3.8) would contend that such an estimation is

⁴ According to the excavators (Bokbot/Onrubia-Pintado 1995), the settlement of wood-and-mud huts with silos was indigenous on the basis of pottery types. El Khayari (2004, 152) believes this is an insufficient criterion for characterising the site as ‘indigenous’, as similar wares have been found at Lixus.

overly exaggerated, though similar stories about Phoenician presence in the West were also recounted by Pomponius Mela (*De Sit. Orb.* 1.26-1.30), Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 19, 63) and Avienius (*O.M.* 438-442, 459-460) (e.g. Antonelli 1998; Batty 2000, 81-82; Hind 1999, 77-9)⁵.

For many decades, much speculation surrounded the Phoenician settlements on the Algerian and Moroccan coasts, relying heavily on extant literary sources, whose interpretation was as ambiguous as the at-the-time scant archaeological record itself⁶. The *Periplous* of Pseudo-Skylax, a 4th century BC sailors' handbook of toponyms and descriptions of places on the African coastline, includes information on putative 7th-6th century BC Phoenician activities in the area of Morocco (Domínguez Monedero 1994)⁷. Another *Periplous*, known as Hanno's, of ambivalent and much disputed authenticity and historicity, is supposedly the Greek translation of a Phoenician inscription dedicated at the temple of Baal Hammon in Carthage, possibly in the 6th or 5th century BC. The condensed and at times ambivalent text recounts the adventures faced by a fleet of Carthaginian ships around the Atlantic coast of Africa, allegedly in an attempt to 'recolonise' part of the area, where according to some interpretations Phoenician trading posts had supposedly been set up in the 7th century BC so as to facilitate exchanges with the local populations (e.g. Lipinski 2004, 434-476; López Pardo 1991)⁸.

Both these texts are highly problematic, yet they have been used extensively in hypotheses concerning the extent and role of Phoenician groups in North-West Africa. In contributing to such interpretations of the local archaeological record, they effectively led to theories on the 'impact' of Phoenician presence in the region. The aim of the present paper is to explore two hypotheses concerning this 'impact' in the period between the 7th and the 6th/5th centuries BC, which although originated during the 1960s and 1970s, have in recent years resurfaced in the literature. A better understanding of artefact typology, as well as new excavations, offer new dimensions, which necessitate a re-examination of the material.

⁵ Hecataeus of Miletus' description of the western Mediterranean (F344-352) preserves some Greek-sounding north African toponyms. According to Braun (2004, 335-341) this indicates the use of maritime routes by Phocaeans in the last decades of the 7th century BC and the first half of the 6th century BC, irrespective of the probability of an earlier Phoenician settlement in the region.

⁶ See, for example, Harden 1948.

⁷ It was probably redacted in the second half of the 4th century BC and gave short descriptions of mainly the Mediterranean coastlines, including Africa.

⁸ Hanno's *Periplous* is known from the 4th century BC Greek translation recorded in the *Codex Palatinus Graecus 398*, which dates from the 10th century AD. The recounted voyage is normally dated to the last quarter of the 6th or the 5th century BC. Hanno is said to have taken sixty ships and 30,000 men and women in order to establish/repopulate existing colonies on the coast beyond the Straits of Gibraltar (Domínguez Monedero 1994; Harden 1948, 142; López Pardo 1991).

The first hypothesis concerns the putative metal trade between the Phoenicians of the outpost of Mogador and the local communities of the opposite mainland. The case for metallurgical activities having taken place on the site is explored, along with the scant evidence for exploitation of local ores (El Khayari 2001), transport of ingots from Mogador and other strands of evidence that could suggest trading contacts between the Mediterranean foreigners and locals. Inevitably, the dating and iconography of the High Atlas engravings (Jodin 1964; Sbihi Alaoui/Searight 1997; Simoneau 1968-72), which allegedly depict some of the metal objects traded, is raised.

The second hypothesis relates to the existence of intense intercultural contacts between local populations in the area of Tangier with Phoenician settlers or traders. The already mentioned ambiguity of what constitutes ‘Phoenician’ versus ‘indigenous’ in interpretations of sites is clearly reflected in the case of the *necropoleis* of Tangier, which, despite having been published in a volume entitled *Nécropoles phéniciennes de la région de Tanger* (Ponsich 1967), were clearly considered to be the burial grounds of indigenous people heavily ‘influenced’ by Phoenician culture. El Azifi (1995, 401-402), in an attempt to demonstrate the autochthonous identity of the majority of these burial grounds, appears to have been misled by the title of the original publication into thinking that these cemeteries were portrayed as Phoenician. Yet in reality, it was stated from the outset in that first publication (Ponsich 1967, 24) that these were used by autochthonous groups ‘profoundly impregnated with Phoenician culture’⁹. In discussing how changes in the funerary customs of the area of Tangier could be related to broader social changes, issues of chronology again become pertinent, as the dating of some tomb groups spans two or more centuries. In addition, concepts relating to ethnicity and identity are touched upon, as ‘indigenous’ and ‘Phoenician’ do not necessarily constitute adequate descriptive categories in the context of 6th-5th centuries BC Morocco.

These two case-studies of the sites of Mogador and Tangier illustrate aspects of the interpretations of Phoenician expansion in this region of Africa, where a seemingly marginal foreign presence *ca.* 800-600 BC is postulated to have led to a considerable dissemination of cultural elements.

The Phoenician trading post on Mogador and the question of metal trade

Mogador and the hypothesis of metal trade

In 1966, Jodin published a volume on the Phoenician *comptoir* of Mogador, located 700 km from the Straits of Gibraltar on an off-shore island, 1.5-3 km away from the coast of Essaouira. This insular location is typical of the Phoenician

⁹ “Ces tombes sont celles de nécropoles rurales, et constituent la preuve qu’entre le VIII et le V siècle avant J.C. vivaient dans la région de Tanger des populations autochtones encore très attachées à leurs traditions, mais déjà profondément imprégnées de civilisation phénicienne” (Ponsich 1967, 24).

establishments elsewhere on small islands opposite the coastline, as in Tyre and Gadir. Evidence for occupation was identified only in the south-eastern part of the island. Phoenician activity dating to the 7th century BC and the first half of the 6th century BC was attested in the form of Phoenician and Greek pottery, as well as graffiti (Jodin 1966, 23-27).

Apart from a betyl, a rectangular pillar standing up to 1.47 m high, the only other structure excavated was a paved area. There were no traces of permanent structures and no burial grounds. This led to the interpretation of the site as a seasonal port-of-call for Phoenician merchants who needed a base to spend the winter until the following sailing season. Accordingly, it was thought that unfavourable winds would render the return voyage impossible during certain parts of the year and that thus a temporary abode would be needed during the winter season (Jodin 1966, 177-186). Recent studies have also emphasized the periodic character of the occupation on the site, reinforcing the interpretation of a port-of-call (López Pardo 2000b).

At about the same time research on the Phoenician remains of Mogador was published, attention was also drawn to groups of rock engravings found in the areas of the High Atlas Mountains and those of the Anti-Atlas, which depicted numerous daggers, lances, halberds (hafted daggers) and light chariots. The earliest of those were somewhat tentatively dated to the Bronze Age (Simoneau 1968-72, 15) and to the first half of the first millennium BC (Jodin 1964, 112-114) on stylistic grounds of the objects depicted. Mogador lies opposite the littoral region dominated by the dry riverbed (wadi) of the river Ksob, which defines the western edge of the High Atlas. In view of the physical closeness of Mogador to the High Atlas, Culican (1991, 545-546) subtly put forward the hypothesis that “Mogador (possibly) lay opposite a caravan route which operated a trade in food, metals and luxuries with these mountain folk...”, envisaging pastoral communities of transhumant nomads as responsible for these engravings in the period of Phoenician contacts¹⁰.

A recent re-examination of material from the 1956 and 1957 excavation seasons on Mogador led Aranegui Gascó *et alii* (2000, 35) to suggest that the presence of traces of iron slag and two vitrified clay bellows nozzles from the earliest stratum (IV) on the island attested to metallurgical activities. They stressed the location of iron ores 20-25 km to the north of Essaouira (opposite Mogador) at the Jbel El Hadid (“the Mountain of Iron”), pointing out that the Phoenicians of Mogador could have exploited local ores, a suggestion taken up also by El Khayari (2001, 8). Meanwhile, López Pardo (2000a, 37-38) postulated that the metallurgical activity aimed not merely at supplying Mediterranean centres, but targeted a “local market” in exchange for ostrich eggshells, hides and ivory. He

¹⁰ Though this was published in “Phoenicia and Phoenician Colonization” for *Cambridge Ancient History* in 1991, it was written at some point before 1984 (see Potts 1995, 153), and so within about 15-20 years from the time of Jodin’s publications on Mogador and the High Atlas engravings.

then went on to suggest that although some of the High Atlas rock art dated to the Late Bronze Age, *some* of the engravings of Oukaïmeden and Yagour in the High Atlas that depict metal weapons could be dated to the 7th-6th centuries BC. Allowing for the possibility that a local production of copper and bronze weapons could not be excluded, he stressed that the majority of metal objects must have come via external trade with trading posts such as Mogador. In this light, the author hypothesised that the trading of iron weapons would confer a valuable advantage over groups still using bronze technology (López Pardo 2002, 34-35).

Mogador, metallurgical activities and rock engravings: the evidence for commercial exchanges

Pottery from Mogador shows clear affinities with the Phoenician centres in Iberia. Red-slip pottery replicated the Andalusian forms known from the settlements of Castillo de Doña Blanca and the trading posts of Malaga and Granada, including plates, *pithoi* (large storage jars) and *amphorai*. Indigenous pottery from Iberia (“Tartessian”) was also identified (Kbiri Alaoui/López Pardo 1998)¹¹. Eastern Mediterranean imports included East Greek and Attic SOS *amphorai* of the middle of the 7th century BC as well as a few Cypriot Bichrome IV fragments (López Pardo 1992, 282-283; Villard 1960, 1-10). Graffiti on the pottery, added after firing, form one of the largest assemblages of epigraphic material in the Phoenician West. They comprise two or three letters in each case, recording mainly Phoenician names (e.g. “Magon”). Several variants of the letters have been dated to the end of the 8th century BC and the 7th century BC (Amadasi Guzzo 1992; Xella 1992)¹².

For Iberia, the Phoenician interest in metals has been greatly emphasised, following the well-documented Phoenician involvement in the exploitation of the Rio Tinto mines and the processing of metals in areas of Phoenician settlement (e.g. Aubet 2002a; 2002b; Fernández Jurado 2003; González de Canales Cerisola *et alii*. 2006). If then quest for metals had been one of the prime motives for occupation on Mogador, it would fit well into the pattern of other Phoenician settlements in the West.

Yet, evidence for iron objects predating the Roman period in southern and even northern Morocco is scarce. Few metal objects have been recovered from the Phoenician strata at Lixus (Clemente/Peraile 2001, 22) and further north, in Tangier, such items can be narrowed down to six sickles, a javelin point, a knife

¹¹ The pottery was found among debris which included animal and fish bones. Red-slip plates, bowls and *amphorai* were found as well as fragments of “retícula bruñida” and “Cruz del Negro” vases, which appear in indigenous Tartessian settlements in Iberia (Jodin 1966, 47). Among the five thousand fragments from Mogador found at the museum in Rabat, a study of a hundred painted pieces identified *pithoi*, hemispherical cups and narrow-necked vases which find parallels in the Andalusian settlements (Kbiri Alaoui/López Pardo 1998).

¹² An initial study of the graffiti by Février (1966) did not attract much attention until the 1990s. Fragmentary and brief, the graffiti record archaic forms of letters, in some cases comprising their earliest attestations (Amadasi Guzzo 1992, 170-171; Xella 1992).

blade and two pieces of jewellery from the *necropoleis* of Ain Dahlia Kebira and Djebila (Ponsich 1970, 130-157), whose dating remains problematic (cf. *infra*). Further, there is no evidence to suggest exploitation of ores at Jbel El Hadid before modern times (López Pardo 2002, 34) that could substantiate Aranegui Gascó's *et alii* (2000) and El Khayari's (2001) attractive suggestion that the Phoenicians exploited local ores.

More information can be provided by the Phoenician shipwreck of *Bajo de la Campana*, found off the coast of Murcia in eastern Spain. The mixed cargo of amphorai, tin and lead ingots as well as elephant tusks has been dated to the 7th-6th centuries BC (Roldán Beldan *et alii* (1995); Martín Camino/Roldán Bernál 1991, 356-357). It has been suggested that the elephant tusks with Phoenician inscriptions (Sanmartín Ascaso 1986, 89-91) could have been picked up at Mogador (López Pardo 1992), with the ingots procured from Portugal (e.g. Aubert 2002b, 106). Notably though, no iron was among the metals transported. Exchanges between Phoenicians and African groups involving Egyptian and Greek vessels bartered for elephant tusks are provided in the literary sources. Jodin (1966, 191) believed Mogador to be *Cerne*, mentioned in Pseudo-Skylax (*Per.* 398, 55v, 40) as an island three days' sail from the Straits of Gibraltar, where Phoenicians offloaded their merchandise, only to then transport it in small boats to the opposite mainland. Stalls were set up on Cerne to house these merchants while they conducted their thriving trade with the "Ethiopians": Egyptian unguent and "stone", as well as Attic pottery were exchanged for ivory and hides of wild and domesticated animals. This account could have been influenced by Hanno's *Periplous*, which also refers to a *Cerne*. According to it, Hanno founded there the last Phoenician colony and the one farthest removed (Harden 1948, 142-147)¹³. Yet, if the identification with Mogador is correct, these accounts must reflect a later re-use of the isle as a seasonal trading post, dated to the 4th century BC by López Pardo (2000b, 220-227)¹⁴.

To move to the second line of the argument of commercial exchanges with autochthonous communities, a brief examination of the rock engravings of the High Atlas and the Anti-Atlas Mountains is necessary. Two hundred and fifty-five rock art sites are known in Morocco, of which one hundred and forty-nine are located in south Morocco, nine in north Morocco and the rest in the High Atlas/Anti-Atlas Mountains. The south Moroccan sites depict in their majority wild animals, such as antelopes, gazelles, ostriches, rhinoceros and occasionally domesticated cattle (Sbihi Alaoui/Searight 1997, 87-94). Weapons, shields and

¹³ On the other hand, Lipiński (2004, 466-467) has suggested an alternative identification of Mogador with the harbour of "Mysokaras", mentioned by Ptolemy (*Geography* IV, 1, 6). He notes that this toponym is the Greek transcription of a Phoenician word whose Hebrew equivalent "mishar" means "mart". In the Bible (I *Kings* 10:15), this Hebrew term is found in Aramaic in a standard phrase, denoting the "mart of the merchants".

¹⁴ Partly on the basis of some 4th century BC amphora sherds from Mogador, see López Pardo (2000b, 222).

chariots rarely appear, unlike in the High Atlas engravings, which seem to be later. The latter include a staggering array of weapons, such as daggers, points and halberds (Simoneau 1968-72). Forty-four such sites are known in the High Atlas, mainly at Jbel Rat, Yagour Plateau and Oukaïmeden and twenty-three in the Anti-Atlas Mountains. The engravings are found in clearly visible areas, on sandstone passes or prairies. They mostly depict weapons (in 75% of cases at Oukaïmeden), chariots and scenes of hunting. The human form in these cases appears magnified, brandishing a single weapon against a huge beast, such as an elephant, occasionally in protection of domesticated oxen (Sbihi Alaoui/Searight 1997, 87-96). Rodrigue (2006) has interpreted this set of iconographic features as mirroring a new behaviour of the High Atlas communities, where mastering of metallurgy and animal domestication are linked to an increasingly more settled form of life¹⁵.

Unfortunately these engravings have not been dated by accelerator mass spectrometry or microerosion analysis. Suggested dates are highly diverse, ranging from 1500 BC to 500 BC on account of different factors of doubtful precision (Sbihi Alaoui/Searight 1997, 96-97)¹⁶.

Some of the engravings have been dated to the Atlantic Bronze Age on account of similarities of the artefacts depicted with Atlantic Bronze Age specimens from Iberia (*e.g.* Chenorkian 1988). A bronze halberd found in a cist grave at the necropolis of Mers in Tangier, dated by Ponsich (1970, 50-61) to the “chalcolithic”¹⁷ could confirm such a date. The artifact offers a strikingly exact parallel for some of the halberds depicted in the High Atlas engravings. Its blade is triangular, measuring 105 x 50 mm, with its edge thinned down, giving the appearance of a raised midrib in its centre. Three perforations on the edge of the shaft still hold the nails that attached it to the haft (Ponsich 1970, 55-57, fig. 14). All these three characteristics—triangular shape, perforations, raised midrib—are clearly schematically present in some of the engraved halberds of the High Atlas¹⁸. Schuhmacher (2002, 267-270; 273) believes that the Mers halberd resembles the “Carrapatas” type of halberds, known from Iberia. The connection is possible, though he allows for the possibility of “influences”, rather than stating that

¹⁵ Rodrigue (2006) has noted that the scene of hunting is ‘transcended’ with symbolic representations of humans and animals, which do not depict realistic confrontations.

¹⁶ The dating is partly based on the putative dates for the introduction of camel and the domestication of the mounted horse, animals which appear in the engravings. Other factors include climatic change, making allowances for the fact that the rearing of domesticated animals such as cattle in the now arid areas of Morocco would have been impossible. Stylistic analysis of weapons/chariots has also been used for this purpose. It is clear that these factors can hardly function as secure chronological pegs (Sbihi Alaoui/Searight 1997, 94-96).

¹⁷ The necropolis of Mers, located 14 km on the road of Tangier to Rabat is situated on two hills distanced 50 km from each other and consists of trapezoidal cist tombs. The halberd came from tomb no. 5 (Ponsich 1970, 50-61).

¹⁸ See the rock art image in Simoneau (1968-72, pl. 3).

the Mers weapon is an import. In any case, this identification would place the halberd ambiguously to the Early/Middle Bronze Age, as the date ascribed to the group is insecure. This could suggest that at least certain of the High Atlas engravings belong to the 2nd millennium BC and indicate the use of bronze weapons by the populations of the High Atlas.

Mogador and commercial exchanges with indigenous populations

Although the evidence for exploitation of local mines is at the moment non-existent (despite the possibility of metallurgical activity on Mogador) and the dating of some of the engravings is far from being satisfactorily placed within the horizon of the Phoenician presence, one could approach the interpretation of what archaeological evidence does exist reversely. On the premise that the evidence from Mogador suggests a seasonal or in any case a non-substantial permanent settlement, the site can be reasonably interpreted as a port-of-call or trading post. But a port-of-call towards where? Mogador is strikingly removed from the Mediterranean routes, and even from Sala, the closest location with Phoenician material known to date. If the assumption was that Mogador facilitated commercial routes by offering safe anchorage, one wonders to where those commercial routes led, if not to Atlantic Africa itself. It seems bizarre that such a distant location would have been chosen unless specific reasons pertained to trade in this region, given the risk of sailing so far south along the inhospitable Moroccan coastline.

If the hypothesis of commercial exchanges with local peoples is to be offered as an explanation, certain points should be made clear as to how the model should be framed. Thus, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows: the Phoenicians set up a trading post at Mogador, processed iron, which could have come from nearby iron ores as suggested (El Khayari 2001) and then bartered some of the worked metal back to the autochthonous populations (López Pardo 2000a). The latter were *already* using bronze technology and judging by the iconographic repertoire of their rock art, led pastoral lives. These two elements might have rendered them more responsive to the introduction of iron implements. In exchange, they provided Phoenician merchants with commodities such as ivory and hides that were transported to the Mediterranean in ships such as that of *Bajo de la Campana*, which carried elephant tusks to the Phoenician settlements of Spain.

Iron in the Mediterranean is not scarce and a remote location such as Mogador should justify its location with concrete returns. The procurement of goods such as eggshells and ivory seemingly does not validate the choice of such a far-off location. Yet, the value attached to these products should be judged in the context of Phoenician culture. Ivory was traded by Phoenicians widely in the Mediterranean (Baslez 1992), while Phoenician ivory workshops have been recently found in Huelva (González de Canales Cerisola *et alii* 2006, 22-24), indicating that the raw material must have come from Africa, as the closest source to Spain. Ostrich eggs, worked into elaborate painted vessels, have been extensively found in western Phoenician *necropoleis*, suggesting that their use

had religious connotations¹⁹. At one of the burial grounds of Tangier, where Phoenician cultural elements are attested, the introduction of such eggshell vases into two tombs²⁰ replaces the ceramic urn, most likely attaining a specific ritual significance within the eschatological system of beliefs of the people interred (López Pardo 1990, 30). Finally, it should be noted that the graffiti at Mogador record in three cases foreign names of an unclear, non-Phoenician origin (Amadasi Guzzo 1992, 173). Could perhaps these have been members of the local community in commercial exchanges with the Phoenicians?

To sum up, at the moment, although metallurgical activities are attested on Mogador, the chronology of the engravings on which a large part of the theory rests does not substantiate the hypothesis of metal trade with the indigenous communities, since some of them are better dated to the 2nd millennium BC (though it does not refute it either). Although the metal trade hypothesis would offer a new dimension to the debate of the Phoenician presence in the area, the dating of the rock art currently lies on a ladder of inferences, which significantly weakens the argument of the metal objects depicted having been acquired via Phoenician traders.

The burial grounds of Tangier and the question of “acculturation”

The burial grounds of Tangier: state of research.

Fourteen burial grounds ambiguously dated to the 7th-5th centuries BC have been identified in the Peninsula of Tangier, located in the area of the modern city of Tangier and on the Atlantic coast, comprising mainly fossas, shaft tombs and in rare cases, chamber tombs (El Azifi 1995). Ponsich (1967; 1970) published two meticulous volumes on the results of excavations of eight of these *necropoleis*, summarily discussing further five. He interpreted them as “Libyco-Phoenician”, belonging to indigenous groups heavily “influenced” by Phoenician culture, yet who “retained many of their ancestral customs”. Based on the preponderance of “archaic-looking” Phoenician jewellery and the lack of Attic vases, he dated them between the 7th century BC and the 5th century BC (Ponsich 1967, 23-24). Pottery forms, including vessels imitating Phoenician shapes, were considered “provincial” specimens that could not have been used as chronological indicators, given the mixing of styles and the possibility that they came into use considerably later after first appearing in Phoenician settlements (Ponsich 1970, 105). In re-examining the material, López Pardo (1990, 23-24) stressed that those eight *necropoleis* indicated a prolonged and “peculiar” phase of “acculturation”, in an area with a pervasive lack of non-funerary evidence, yet leaving open the possibility that in some of the tombs the deceased were Phoenicians. While a later study by El Azifi (1995, 405) added more bur-

¹⁹ *E.g.* at Laurita in Granada, Spain (Pellicer Catalán 2007).

²⁰ *Cf. infra* note 26.

ial grounds to this group, it adhered more or less to the original dating, placing them within the 7th century BC and the first half of the 6th century BC, identifying 99% of the total sum of tombs as indigenous burials. More recently, Kbir Alaoani (2000) questioned the dating of Aïn Dalhia Kebira, one of the biggest *necropoleis*, suggesting that it might have been in use in the latter half of the 5th century BC.

Thus, with few exceptions, the burial grounds are dated roughly to the 7th-5th centuries BC and are thought to belong to local communities, forming the most coherent and striking documentation we have for evaluating the cultural implications of the Phoenician/Punic settlement in north-west Africa.

The necropoleis, burial customs and chronology

Of the *necropoleis* dispersed in the Peninsula of Tangier (Fig. 2), Djebila has yielded one hundred and seven tombs, Aïn Dalhia Kebira ninety-eight, Dar Shiro/Dar Zhirou sixteen, Buchet fifteen, Gandori two, while a total of fifteen tombs came from Djebel Dar Shiro/Jbel Dhar Zhirou, Bled Charif, Ferme Dubois, Aïn Assel, Aïn Ben Amar, Sidi Mesmouda and Saniat Chulbat. The burials in these *necropoleis* are all inhumations, either in fossas, occasionally lined with slabs or built of small blocks of stone. Two more burials come from Malabata, located close to the city of Tangier. Shaft tombs and subterranean built tombs are also found in the Peninsula of Tangier, with two identified at Ras Achacar on the Atlantic façade (El Azifi 1995, 401-5; Ponsich 1967; 1970). All these forms are attested in Phoenician cemeteries of the western Mediterranean²¹. These tombs followed a North-South orientation, with the deceased placed in a contracted position and on their sides, a burial rite attested in Bronze Age cemeteries from the area²², which differs from the Phoenician custom of placing the dead on their backs with the arms on the abdomen (Ponsich 1970, 67-84). Only in the rare cases of monolithic sarcophagi were the bodies fully extended (López Pardo 1990, 27).

No Red-Slip pottery was found, apart from a single fragment dated to the 7th century BC by Ponsich (1970, 108)²³. An urn was normally placed in the grave along with one or more vessels, such as a (handmade) bowl or small jar, occasionally found along with the jewellery that the deceased had worn in burial. The urns were carinated vases deriving from local Bronze Age forms or belonged to the 'a chardon' type, with prototypes in 8th-7th Carthage and 7th-6th centuries BC indigenous *necropoleis* of south-eastern Spain. These were vases with broad necks and elongated cylindrical bodies, with or without handles. In some tombs,

²¹ E.g. Carthage (Bénichou-Safar 1982), Utica (Cintas 1951; 1954; Colozier 1954), Spain (Pellicer Catalán 2007).

²² As at the necropolis of Mers, see Ponsich (1970, 64).

²³ From tomb no. 30 at Djebila.

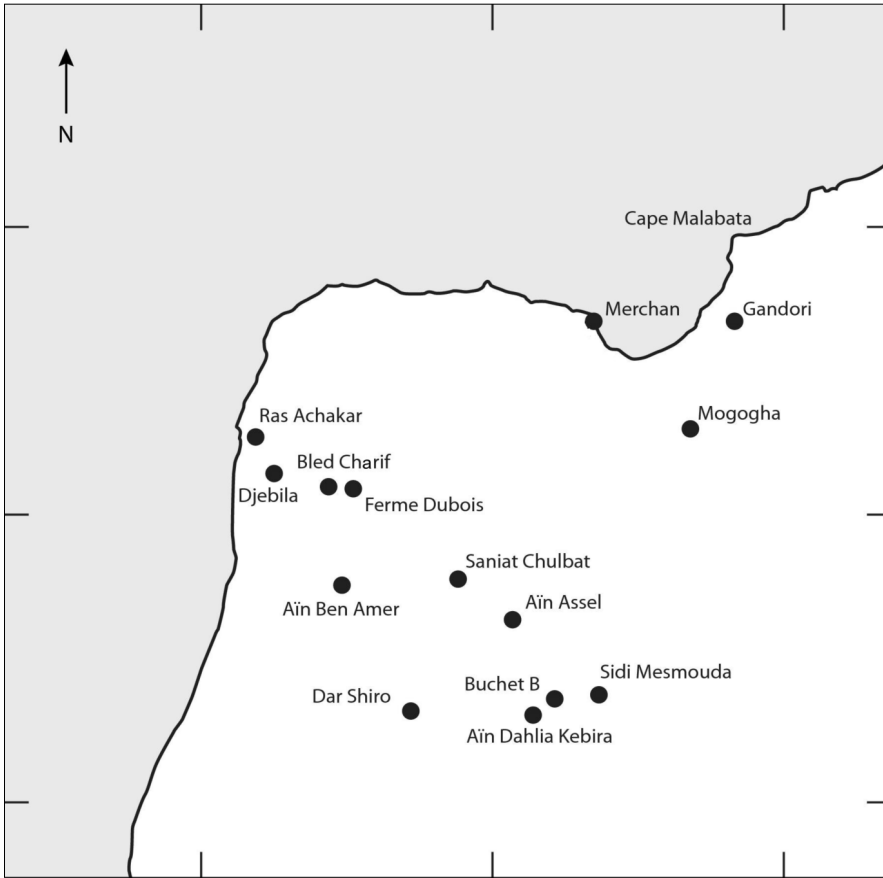


Fig. 2. Burial grounds of the Peninsula of Tangier.

pots with handles or globular jugs substituted the ‘a chardon’ type²⁴. The latter shows typological conservatism and its form persists down to the 5th century in Malta and possibly to the 3rd century BC in Gouraya (Algeria), making it problematic as a chronological indicator²⁵.

Tombs including carinated vases were considered to be the oldest by comparison to ceramic offerings from the Bronze Age burial grounds of Tangier (Ponsich 1970, 105-140). On the other hand, the replacement of the ceramic urn

²⁴ Only in three cases a Phoenician amphora of a globular shape with two perpendicular round handles attached to its neck was found (Djebila tomb no. 104, Aïn Dahlia Kebira tomb no. 60 and Dar Shiro/Dar Zhirou tomb no. 3), with examples known from Mogador (Ponsich 1970, 105-130).

²⁵ For the typological evolution of the ‘a chardon’ vase, see López Pardo (1990, 27-31).

by a decorated ostrich eggshell vase in a monolithic sarcophagus and a built tomb at Aïn Dalhia Kebira²⁶ probably comes at the end of the period, dated to the 6th century BC by López Pardo (1990, 30). Phoenician types of jewellery included an assortment of predominantly silver and bronze ornaments, with a few pieces in gold and iron. Silver and gold pendants with a suspended basket or ending in a crux ansata were among the types found. 7th-6th centuries BC dates were ascribed to graves containing these types. Phoenician ivory amulets, shell necklaces and glass beads were also found (Ponsich 1970, 130-157)²⁷. The jewellery bears similarities to 7th/6th centuries BC specimens from Carthage, Utica, as well as Phoenician sites in Spain²⁸.

Yet Kbir Alaoni (2000) suggested that the use of Aïn Dalhia Kebira possibly spanned the latter half of the 5th century BC or later. This is based on the somewhat tenuous chronology of two painted, locally-made 'a chardon' vases, coming from only two graves (out of ninety-eight) and so does not necessarily extend to the rest of this particular necropolis²⁹. Burials with painted vases are not representative of the rest of the necropolis, as only these two examples are known and could have resulted from a later re-use of those two tombs in the cemetery.

Of the remaining burial grounds, Cap Achakar yielded two burials, for only one of which information is known³⁰. The underground chamber tomb with a small "access corridor" contained an inhumation, fragments of ostrich eggshells and silver and gold basket pendants. Architecturally, it has close parallels with the Phoenician 7th-6th centuries BC *hypogea* of Trayamar in Malaga, the necropo-

²⁶ Tombs nos. 5 and 78 (Ponsich 1970, 96).

²⁷ Of the eight *necropoleis* Ponsich fully published, a hundred and nine such pendants, rings and amulets have been found, mainly in silver and bronze, with only two iron specimens and two in gold. Two hundred and nineteen beads were found (Ponsich 1970, 130-156).

²⁸ As at La Fonteta, see (González *et alii* 2002). For the unifying features of Phoenician jewellery production across western Phoenician centres, see Perea Caveda 1997.

²⁹ According to Kbir Alaoni 2000 the two vases from tombs nos. 30 and 84 correspond on morphological criteria to types A and B of the 'a chardon' vases known from the kiln site of Kouass, 25 km south of Tangier. Type B forms from Dchar Jdid, inland from Kouass, have been found in a context sealed by a destruction layer, dated to *ca.* 100 BC. They were associated with Kouass II /Maña-Pascual A4 amphorai. Assuming that the lack of a separating layer of the two strata attests to a negligible lapse of time, the amphorai, and by extension the 'a chardon' vases type B are to be dated to just prior to *ca.* 100 BC. Yet, at Kouass, kilns 1 and 4 have yielded fragments of these 'a chardon' forms, found with chronologically heterogeneous pottery, spanning the period from the 5th/4th to the 3rd centuries BC. Interestingly, Maña-Pascual A4/Kouass II/III *amphorai* have also been found in Corinth in a context dated to *c.* 460-425 BC. Yet, Maña-Pascual A4 *amphorai*—or groups 11 and 12 in Ramon Torres' (1995) typology—span the period from the 6th to the 2nd century BC (see also Sáez Romero 2002). This makes a date in the latter part of the 5th century BC more plausible for the two 'a chardon' vases, but still considerably insecure as a chronological peg for the 'a chardon' vases from the *necropolis*.

³⁰ Excavated by Koehler (1930) in 1923; the tomb was discovered 80 cm below ground level and formed a rectangular chamber (210 x 95 x 80 cm) with a horizontal ceiling (Ponsich 1967, 30-36). For the other, looted in 1938, it is only known that it yielded some pieces of jewellery including a bezel with a scarab, see Ponsich 1967, 30.

lis associated with the settlement of Morro de Mezquitilla (Schubart and Niemeyer 1975; 1976)³¹, leading El Azifi (1995, 402) to consider it a 7th century BC Phoenician tomb, rather than indigenous. Such identification is, however, far from equivocal³².

Almost the same set of problems applies to the *necropolis* of Merchan/Marshan, discovered in the modern city of Tangier and comprising ninety-eight fossas, almost half of which are cut into the bedrock and covered with slabs, oriented East-West (Ponsich 1970, 173). On the basis of these morphological criteria known from Phoenician cemeteries elsewhere and similarities of some of the jewellery yielded with those from Cap Achakar, El Azifi (1995, 403-404) allows for the possibility that the necropolis could be Phoenician rather than indigenous, although some of the material yielded dates to the 1st-4th centuries AD, possibly due to re-use.

Equally ambivalent in its chronology and 'ethnic' affiliations is the small underground tomb of "Mogogha Es Srira", located at the village of the same name, 5 km to the east of Tangier. Though it has yielded Hellenistic material (3rd-1st centuries BC), believed to result from later use, the possibility of it being Phoenician is left open (El Azifi 1995, 403; Jodin 1960; López Pardo 1990, 34, note 92). Dates ascribed range from the 7th to the 6th centuries BC³³.

Phoenician or indigenous? Between cultural fusion and cultural continuity

Burial practices, due to their religious connotations and conservatism tend to be a safer indicator of cultural or 'ethnic' origin of the deceased than other elements related to burial, such as the production locus of the burial goods. The treatment of the body after death is a crucial feature of a set of conceptions involving life after death and the same applies to funerary offerings (Chapa Brunet 1997, 147). In Tangier the practice of burying the deceased in a contracted position, known from Bronze Age cemeteries, is retained with a few exceptions. Inhumation in a fully extended position is sparsely attested in sarcophagi, which are considered later. As to the typology of tombs, remarkable is the use of fossas lined with slabs or built tombs, which have clear typological relations with Phoenician tombs. This becomes more emphatic in the case of the chamber tomb at Ras Achakar, where architectural similarities with Trayamar cannot be coincidental. In terms of burial offerings, new elements include the substitution of the predominantly handmade carinated vases of the Bronze Age with 'a chardon' urns or globular jugs, as well as the inclusion of items of personal adornment of Phoenician pedigree in the tombs. The 'a chardon' urn, in fulfilling the function

³¹ Bénichou-Safar (1982, 357) has rejected the possibility that it was an offshoot of the Carthaginian built chamber tombs type X (7th-6th centuries BC) on architectural considerations.

³² See López Pardo 1990, 34.

³³ Jodin (1960, 27-45) dated it to the 7th-6th centuries BC, Ponsich (1967, 26-30) to the 6th-5th centuries BC.

of a local vessel as an element of the funeral service, attains here a new role, which is consistent with the use of foreign objects in novel ways in “colonial grounds”, as in the case of Greek settlement in the south of France (Dietler 1999, 478-479). In Iberia, for example, in 7th-6th centuries BC indigenous cemeteries, classes of Phoenician metalwork acquire a strictly funerary character they do not necessarily possess at Phoenician sites. The conspicuously rich Tartessian “princely burials” of La Joya and Setefilla, dated to the 7th century BC and 6th century BC, manifest a widespread usage of Phoenician motifs and styles in their material culture, which has been interpreted as potentially indicating concomitant ideological/social changes in the local populations (e.g. Aubet 2002c)³⁴.

In 1999 the discovery of the necropolis at Raqqada, Lixus, dated to the second half of the 6th century BC and the 5th century BC yielded jewellery, some of which offer exact typological parallels for those of Tangier (El Khayari 2007)³⁵. At the moment, comparisons of the pottery from Tangier with the ceramic record of Raqqada, which might offer a secure chronology for the former, will have to await the full publication of the Lixitan site³⁶.

Lixus is considered a Phoenician settlement, where segments of “Tartessian” population from Spain perhaps also resided (El Khayari *et alii* 2001, 64-65). Yet in the context of ‘colonial’ studies, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the social categories of ‘indigenous’ and ‘colonist’ are not clear-cut entities but exhibit ‘ethnic’ and cultural porosity³⁷. At a settlement that had been continuously occupied for two or more centuries such as 6th-5th centuries BC Lixus³⁸, the character of the initial population composition cannot have been static.

The discovery of the Lixitan cemetery is of great significance, as for over four decades (Ponsich 1970, 140), the source of inspiration for the material evidence of Tangier had been sought in 7th-6th centuries BC Phoenician settlements in Iberia and in Carthage³⁹. The evidence from Raqqada makes it plausible that interactions between Lixus and Tangier mediated through trading relations, intermarriage or individual mobility led to the transmission of ideas that were adopted and reinterpreted by the inhabitants of Tangier.

In attempting to contextualise the existent funerary evidence and assess its use-

³⁴ Grave goods at La Joya and Setefilla included a variety of Phoenician-style ‘luxury’ objects such as jewels, ivories and bronze jugs and figurines. At Setefilla, the architectural elements of the chamber tombs recall the construction of tombs at the Phoenician necropolis of Trayamar in Malaga (Aubet 2002c.)

³⁵ Among the finds, six golden pendant-like jewels embellished with a small basket, possibly intended as earrings (El Khayari 2007, 147), offer exact parallels for the thirty-five such silver ‘pendaloques’ known from the 7th/6th centuries BC grave of Cap Achacar (Ponsich 1970, 140).

³⁶ Known through a preliminary report, awaiting full publication, see El Khayari 2007.

³⁷ On the subjective and socially-constructed nature of ‘ethnicity’ see Jones 1997, 27.

³⁸ The earliest evidence points to a late 9th/early 8th centuries BC date, see El Khayari 2004, 149.

³⁹ For example, see Ponsich 1970, 140.

fulness as a barometer for social change, the evidence from Lixus becomes important. The pattern of deliberate adoption and non-adoption of cultural ideas is reflected in the burial customs of Tangier, which in terms of disposition of the dead demonstrate cultural continuity with the preceding era, but in terms of personal adornment indicate the close adoption of practices known from the Phoenician-established settlements of neighbouring Lixus, but also Carthage and Utica. An active role in the exchanges on the part of the inhabitants of Tangier explains the use of ceramics of a Phoenician origin in novel ways (e.g. the use of 'a chardon' vases as substitutes for the pre-existing carinated vases), who otherwise maintained other cultural norms, such as modes of disposal. This is not surprising. If it can be tentatively said that the use of the majority of the *necropoleis* overlapped with Raqqada (the very problematic cases of Merchan/Marshan and the Mogogha es Srira notwithstanding), on the basis of the close parallels with aspects of its artefactual record, the "foreign" elements of the former would be the result of an intense cultural dialogue. In such a context, the distinct categories of 'indigenous' and 'Phoenician' need not always have been meaningful identities in late 6th-5th centuries BC Lixus or Tangier.

Conclusions

A far more solid chronology for the indigenous record of both the rock art and the necropoleis will be needed so as to draw firm conclusions about the social implications of the Phoenician presence in Morocco. Although the evidence for the metallurgical activities at Mogador seems incontestable, trade in iron objects with the indigenous populations of the High Atlas cannot at the moment be corroborated by either the rock engravings or the iron objects from Morocco, although the possibility should possibly remain open. Phoenician/Punic elements in the sepulchral traditions of Tangier, possibly ca. 6th-5th centuries BC, indicate interactions with settlements such as Lixus, but are probably too late to be considered an immediate result of the incipient Phoenician settlement in the area.

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