

BOOK REVIEW

The Punic Mediterranean: Identities and Identification from Phoenician Settlement to Roman Rule. Edited by JOSEPHINE CRAWLEY QUINN AND NICHOLAS C. VELLA. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. xxv + 376. Hardcover, \$125.00. ISBN 978-1-107-05527-8.

This volume is devoted to the Punic question: what Punic identity means, how it was constructed in antiquity and modernity, how it relates to Phoenician identity, and whether it is possible to identify a coherent Punic world in the ancient Mediterranean. Arising from a workshop held at the British School at Rome in 2008, *The Punic Mediterranean* consists of fifteen different contributions, arranged into two sections: “Contexts,” aiming at a broader view of the Punic question, and “Case Studies,” which focuses on specific geographic or thematic areas. The focus of the book is primarily, though not exclusively, on the archaeology of the Punic world.

Taken as a whole, *The Punic Mediterranean* aspires more to open new lines of enquiry than give a conclusive answer to its question. The sum of the book is conservative in its impact, with participants in this game of categories describing the current setup of the board and moving the pieces around, but with no one seeking to change the rules. As a result, the Punic world remains after the volume as before: generally, Spain, North Africa, Sardinia, western Sicily, and Malta *circa* the mid-to-late first millennium BCE. Dissatisfaction with this *status quo* can be noted in the introduction, in which Josephine Quinn and Nicholas Vella express ambivalence on the further utility of the Punic name in scholarship (6–7). Looking forward, many of the individual arguments made by the contributors point toward – and would oblige – a more radical reformation of how we perceive the Mediterranean, one that can articulate an alternative vision that departs from the ethnohistorical map of the twentieth century.

As the first contribution demonstrates, this map is not the same as the one charted in antiquity. Jonathan Prag illustrates how the semantics of terms like Greek *phoinix* and Latin *poenus* differ greatly from the way in which “Phoenician” and “Punic” are deployed today as ethnic labels. Nicholas Vella shows how de-contextualized archaeological objects, such as the famous “Phoenician” metal

bowls from Assyria, Etruria, and Cyprus, have been used to establish a monolithic Phoenician identity in modern scholarship. Peter van Dommelen examines the use of Phoenician/Punic identity by modern nation-states, charging that negative stereotypes of Phoenician/Punic culture remain widespread—a notable exception being the case of the Sardinian general Hampsicoras (Livy 23.32.10).

Antithesis between a local and a global Punic culture is an underlying theme in many of the papers. In his essay, Sandro Filippo Bondi maintains that the regional diversity of the Punic world can be unified through essential qualities like language, social institutions, and religious practices that had a common origin in Phoenicia (such as the cult of Melqart). Similarly, Carlos Gómez Bellard gives an essential list of features from funerary contexts which he asserts are representative of a Punic identity, drawing attention to the similarities in practices and artifacts employed in burial.

Through a quantitative study of Punic coin types, Suzanne Frey-Kupper illustrates the way in which Sicily, Sardinia, North Africa, and Malta saw their own distinct patterns of monetary circulation in the period 350/340 – 250/240 BCE. Though Punic coins came about by contact with Greek Sicily, the Punic Mediterranean finds its distinct expression in the homogenous iconography of Punic coins themselves. Maraoui Telmini et al. demonstrate that Carthage held a unique position among Phoenician colonies from its earliest foundation in the eighth (or late ninth) century BCE, as revealed by its urban infrastructure and recent archaeological finds.

Habib Ben Younès and Alia Krandel-Ben Younès describe two different funerary cultures in the Byzacium and the Sahel (one Punic, the other Libyan) while calling attention to local variation within the Punic orbit. Josephine Quinn argues that the myth of the Philaeni brothers (reported by Sallust, *Iug.* 79) is derived from a Carthaginian, not a Greek, context.

Evidence in the west poses problems for the construction of a Punic world that is centered on Carthage. Virginie Bridoux uses the distribution of amphora types to argue that Numidian settlements did not rely directly on Carthage for commerce from the third to mid-first century BCE. Carthage's westward reach is difficult to substantiate, while the Balearic Islands appear to be the more significant point of contact for western Algeria. This picture coincides with that of Morocco given by Emanuele Papi. The presence of the Carthaginian state, or the diffusion of cultural attributes linked with Carthage, is negligible. Rather, closer regional connections, such as with Spain and Ibiza, seem appropriate.

Similarly, Alicia Jiménez places emphasis on Punic centers in Spain such as Gades in her paper on the so-called Libyphoenician coins in southern Iberia issued in the mid-first century BCE. Carmen Aranegui Gascó and Jaime Vives-Ferrándiz Sánchez emphasize both local processes and a connection with Ibiza behind the adoption of Punic traits in the material life of southeastern Iberia in the fifth through third centuries BCE. Andrea Roppa surveys the landscape of Punic Sardinia, promoting a definition of identity that is founded upon material practices. Corinne Bonnet examines the consequences of Alexander's capture of Tyre in 332 BCE for a culturally constructed Carthaginian-Phoenician kinship.

This book offers a rich collection of evidence and approaches on an important part of the Mediterranean which, from a classical perspective, can seem marginal or peripheral. Speakers of Phoenician/Punic were not stereotypes, but active participants in the ancient Mediterranean, as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill reminds us in his Afterword. *The Punic Mediterranean* serves, in sum, as a necessary and useful point of departure for realizing their role in the ancient Mediterranean.

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