

RECONSTRUCTING THE PHOENICIANS

LÓPEZ-RUIZ (C.) *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean*. Pp. x + 426, illus, maps. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2021. Cased, £36.95, €40.50, US\$45. ISBN: 978-0-674-98818-7. doi:10.1017/S0009840X22001950

L.-R.'s rich volume highlights how contacts throughout the Mediterranean shaped the customs of Iron Age communities. The book reclaims the role played by the Phoenicians in spreading the 'orientalizing kit' – for example, Near-Eastern art-craft, iconographies, writing system (the alphabet) and cults – from the Levant to the Iberian Peninsula, and shows how the Phoenicians contributed to lay the foundations of 'Western civilisation', a topic often marginalised in existing scholarship.

L.-R.'s endeavour consists in recognising the existence of the Phoenicians as a unique population, distinguished for their language, religion and material culture. The monograph enriches a fruitful line of studies on Phoenician identity – for example, the recent monographs by D. Regev, *Painting the Mediterranean Phoenician* (2021), M. Edrey, *The Phoenicians in the Eastern Mediterranean During the Iron Age I–III* (2019) and J. Quinn, *In Search of the Phoenicians* (2018) –, which challenges the existence of a unique Phoenician culture, as P. Horden and N. Purcell did in *The Corrupting Sea* (2000).

L.-R. compares Iron Age Phoenician polities with the city-states of Archaic Greece, the Greek identity of which has never been questioned, although they distinguished themselves by dialects and polyad divinities. L.-R. argues that, as there was no comprehensive cultural unity among the Greek *poleis* (pp. 16–19), so there was none among Phoenician city-states, but this does not imply that they could not recognise themselves under the umbrella of a distinctive shared culture. The Greeks radicalised their identity discourse only in the Classical period, when historiography (e.g. Hdt. 1.3.2; 6.119.4; Thuc. 1.3.4; 12.2) exacerbated the concepts of ethnicity and Hellenicity (J. Hall, *Hellenicity* [2002]); therefore, the lack of Phoenician literature, L.-R. states (p. 19), may be one of the reasons why the claim of a Phoenician recognition never emerges. This hypothesis, although plausible, is *ex silentio*; conceivably, other socio-political implications, which would have deserved a longer clarification – for example, the lack of a common enemy that could create stronger ties among the Phoenician polities –, may have been at the basis of the absence of the official declaration of a Phoenician identity.

The book is subdivided into a short introduction and two Parts: 'Beware the Greek' and 'Follow the Sphinx'. Part 1 challenges the Hellenocentrism of previous scholarship focused on the ancient Mediterranean. This part is subdivided into three chapters. In Chapter 1, 'Phoenicians Overseas', L.-R. rejects the modern terminology of 'colonization' and 'hybridization' when describing Phoenician activities abroad. However, one may object that a 'hybrid' material culture, which showed both Phoenician and local indigenous features, was one of the most striking outcomes of the 'Phoenicians' making of the Mediterranean' – examples come from Tartessos, Sardinia and Cyprus, as demonstrated by the case studies analysed on the following pages (pp. 101–14; 128–40; 272–9). In this chapter L.-R. also highlights how the Phoenicians exploited the agricultural land that surrounded their new settlements, moving forward from the preconceptions that they were mainly sailors and concentrated their activity exclusively in coastal *emporía* (p. 38).

Chapter 2, 'From Classical to Mediterranean Models', focuses on the connections between Phoenicians and Greeks; it deconstructs previous Hellenocentric bias and

shows that, just as Greeks travelled to Phoenicia, Phoenicians settled in Euboea and continental Greece, living in close contact with local populations (p. 49).

Part 1 ends with Chapter 3, 'Orientalizing Kit', where L.-R. argues that the Orientalizing Pan-Mediterranean phenomenon was due to the spreading of Phoenician art-craft, luxury goods and iconographies – as shown by the features of the Cypriot bowl from Kourion, a luxury object (p. 86) –, in great demand among members of the elite from the Levant to the Iberian Peninsula.

The six chapters of Part 2 guide readers through the examination of specific case studies, which are informative examples of the diffusion of Phoenician culture in the Iron Age Mediterranean. They are mostly taken from archaeological finds, according to an 'art-historical' approach, by following a geographical order, from the Western to the Eastern Mediterranean. Chapter 4, 'The Far West', deals with Phoenician influences in Southern Spain, particularly in Huelva and Tartessos, where iconographical elements of Near-Eastern material culture overlapped with local representations. L.-R. also demonstrates that Northern-African enclaves did not undergo a stylistic-cultural revolution brought by Greeks and Phoenicians, in strong opposition to the Iberian neighbouring centres (pp. 116–20).

Chapter 5, 'The Central Mediterranean', analyses Phoenician cultural effects in Italy. Sardinia developed a hybrid Nuragic culture, where new forms of self-representation by the elites were influenced by contacts with the Phoenicians. In Sicily, by contrast, although indigenous populations lived in contact with groups of Greeks and Phoenicians, a hybrid material culture did not develop. L.-R. competently demonstrated that the process of assimilation of Phoenician customs was highly idiosyncratic, according to the sites and their 'social and economic priorities' (pp. 131–41).

Chapter 6, 'The Aegean', deals with the 'orientalization' of the Aegean during the Iron Age. L.-R. argues that such a phenomenon was not limited to the adoption of oriental motifs in representations, but that it also propelled the development of the Greek *poleis*: it caused the enrichment of competing elites, who were the main clients of Phoenician luxury goods, and triggered the consequent growth of more complex societies. In the next sections L.-R. analyses orientalisng iconographies adopted in the Aegean, for example the sphinx, and demonstrates that the Greeks took it from the Phoenicians – and not from Egypt, as originally believed (pp. 218–25).

Chapter 7, 'Intangible Legacies', focuses on non-physical Phoenician legacies, such as the alphabet and linguistic influences, for example loanwords such as the Greek verb ἀράωμαι, 'to vow' or 'to curse', which is linked to the Akkadian *araru* and the Hebrew *arar*, likely introduced to Greece by the Phoenicians (pp. 226–48).

In Chapter 8, 'Cyprus', L.-R. determines whether and to what extent the Phoenicians contributed to the development of the Cypriot city-kingdoms, and to Cypriot culture and customs. The decolonisation of Cypriot archaeology emphasised the 'Cypriot exceptionalism', which interprets the development of Cypriot city-states as a unique local phenomenon, particularly connected to the island's territories and resources (M. Iacovou, *AJA* 112 [2008], 625–57; I. Voskos and B. Knapp, *AJA* 112 [2008], 659–84). L.-R. challenges this theory; she suggests that the Phoenicians substantially contributed to their evolution. However, to what extent the Phoenicians, particularly Tyre, had cultural and political influence on the island is still a matter of discussion and should be further investigated by future scholarship.

Chapter 9, 'The Levant', deals with Phoenicians at home. Phoenician models of construction became fashionable among Canaanite polities, where Phoenician architects and craftsmen were in high demand. The chapter shows that Phoenician goods were of refined quality and sought among local elites even in the Levant, not only abroad.

Finally, the epilogue summarises the main achievements of the book and proposes new lines of research, such as a diachronic study of the interactions between the Phoenicians and ‘locals in the Mediterranean’ (p. 316).

Overall, the recognition of a unique Phoenician identity could benefit from a more in-depth discussion of the socio-political reasons behind the absence of its claim, for example by investigating the socio-political relationship between the Phoenicians and other Near-Eastern and Mediterranean polities. The Chapter ‘Intangible Legacies’ could have benefited from a more accurate linguistic analysis of loanwords and legacies from the Phoenician-Punic epigraphic record. These aspects are, however, minor issues with respect to the broad scope of the book, and L.-R. may have omitted them in favour of the art-historical perspective adopted when analysing archaeological artefacts.

Undoubtedly, this monograph is a milestone in the history of Phoenician studies. It has the great merit of underlining, very convincingly, the significant role of the Phoenicians in shaping Mediterranean cultures, and how much previous scholarship has overlooked it. The extensive material that L.-R. meticulously investigates through a sound iconographical approach and the geographical vastness of the sources taken into consideration make the book an essential tool for researching the ancient Mediterranean, paving the way for a new line of studies that goes beyond traditional Hellenocentrism.

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THE NEO-ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

FAUST (A.) *The Neo-Assyrian Empire in the Southwest. Imperial Domination and Its Consequences*. Pp. xiv + 373, figs, ill., b/w & colour maps. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. Cased, £99, US\$125. ISBN: 978-0-19-884163-0.

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Much has been written on Neo-Assyrian (NA) imperial administration. Historians have for some time described NA imperial endeavours particularly in a comparative fashion vis-à-vis other empires that rose and developed in the area. Recent studies, moreover, attempt a historical synthesis of textual sources with archaeological interpretations of material culture (M. Liverani, *Assyria: the Imperial Mission* [2017]). Much scholarship has tackled the core areas of the Assyrian imperial polity, while not long ago there was a shift in the field’s literature to study in more depth the peripheral areas of the empire. The Northern frontier received special attention, leading to generalisations about how the Assyrians expanded into remote areas and managed them (B.J. Parker, *The Mechanics of Empire* [2001]). F.’s excellent contribution to the field is an attempt to speak mostly to the archaeological and historical approach and to address, in a critical light, some of the existing views on how the NA empire grew and developed in the periphery, with a particular concentration on the southwest frontier of the empire.

While F. accounts for the Assyrian interactions with other Levantine polities for comparative purposes (e.g. the coast and even areas more to the north-west, such as