Phoenician and Punic Malaka: Centrality or Periphery

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The study of Phoenician and Punic urbanism is strongly limited by the optimum settlement pattern developed by Phoenician settlers and the following reuse of space in a virtually uninterrupted way throughout consecutive historical phases. As a result, there are only a few studies that have allowed us to know exhaustively the full extent of these ancient colonial settlements and their urban evolution over time. Without purporting to be exhaustive, the best-preserved Phoenician urbanism are the ones of Carteia (San Roque, Cádiz, Spain)[2], Doña Blanca's Castle – Las Cumbres (Puerto de Santa María, Cádiz, Spain)[3], Kerkouane (Nabeul, Tunisia)[4], Lixus (Larache, Morocco)[5], Motya (Marsala, Sicily, Italy)[6] and Nora (Pula, Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy)[7]. The classical sources are not especially expressive in this regard and only twice directly allude to the size of a Phoenician-Punic population. In the first case, for example, there is a certain debate between Strabo and Livy about Carthage's wall perimeter: while the geographer of Amasia[8] establishes that the city was set on a land of 360 perimeter stadiums (more than 60 km) which was walled, the Paduan historian reduces its size to 23 miles (just over 34 km),[9] although there is a possibility that the information could come from to two different chronological moments. The homonymous city founded by the Barcids in Iberia is also the object of this type of calculations by Polybius[10] who stated that the city was 20 stadiums long (about 3.5 km) by 10 stadia wide (approximately 1.75 km), numbers that match approximately to the archaeological remains. We should also to enlarge this category with the studies that have been done on the urban planning of the Libyan (Tunisia)[11] and the Iberian[12] Cartagena (Murcia, Spain) *Qart Hadasht,* and as we will briefly see now Malaka (Malaga, Spain) from, mainly, the different archaeological excavations developed in the urban landscape of the modern cities.

In the present case, the uninterrupted occupation only allows us to obtain a very fragmented image of Malaka's urban evolution during the Phoenician and Punic phases of the settlement.[13] Although the rescue excavations developed in the subsoil of the current city of Malaga are relatively profuse, Phoenician-Punic levels can often not be reached or studied due to economic or legislative constraints. However, there are more and more sites where these phases have been discovered and studied, which allows us now to understand the urban development of this city, although, as is usually the case, the appearance of new questions on its particular urban distribution enriches at the same time that complicates its study.

Although the Phoenician presence in Malaga's Bay can be safely go back to the 9th century BC, as the archaeological intervention in La Rebanadilla clearly shows,[14] it would not be until the 6th century BC when the old Phoenician colony acquired its citizen entity,[15] clearly distributed now in the vicinity of the Guadalmedina river and the Alcazaba hill in the center of the current city of Malaga. This city-state configuration

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had a clear echo not only in its urban configuration but in the territory where it can be appreciated an exploitation of the territory in an orderly manner by means of small settlements, warehouses, pottery workshops devoted to the amphora production and, even enclaves created to the control the territory and its agricultural production (fig. 1).[16] As in other Phoenician colonial sites, Malaka's urbanization process was linked to religiosity, as can be shown by the importance of the sanctuary or religious emporium located in Císter Street, prior to the creation of Malaka's urban layout in this sector of the city.[17]

After this initial urban Phoenician phase, from the 6th century BC onwards, a new urban boost took place in this Phoenician site. Once again, this urban rearrangement was organized by the displacement of the main temple of the city to the surroundings of the Alcazaba neighborhood because it was a main topographic element in the urban landscape.[18]

This evolutionary trend would continue until the 3rd century BC, when the arrival of the Carthaginian commanders to the Iberian Peninsula and, especially, the beginning of the warlike conflict against Rome that they brought, led to important economic, political and social changes in the socio-economic evolution of the Phoenician cities of Iberia.[19] In Malaga this phenomenon is clearly reflected in the hinterland where the number of rural settlements grew reaching a number never seen before, which also caused a change in the rural exploitation pattern now characterized by the exploitation of higher areas too.[20]

As in most cities that have continued to be inhabited to this day, it is common to find changes in the configuration of their urban topography (fig. 2). Indeed, archaeological proofs have allowed to show an urban evolution between the Phoenician phase and the later Punic and Roman ones. The city fortifications were adjusted to this urban evolution and were renewed to remain effective to the poliorcetics advance of the moment.[21] Of course, these changes on the organization of Malaka's urban fabric, came together with important changes in land use. For instance, some cemeteries are deconsecrated to be able to use the terrain of those formerly important funerary spaces of the city with new profane purposes.[22] But even so, the limited space offered by the coast of Malaga seemed insufficient for those who lived there, and the Phoenician colony was forced to expand itself, probably beyond the city limits defined by the walls, creating artisanal and residential neighborhoods outside the walls.[23]

Despite all these features shared with the rest of the ancient Phoenician colonies, *Malaka* was not a normal Western Phoenician city. Its great economic importance, at the level of the main Phoenician trade ports of *Iberia* and the Balearic Islands such as *Gadir, Iboshim* and *Baria,* is undisputable if we consider the distribution of Malaga's productions in regional and local markets and, above all, at least from the 5th century BC on, into the supra-regional markets. A good example of this would be the location of salted-fish amphoras from Malaga in Corinth.[24] This economic power was associated, as happens in the cases of *Baria* and *Iboshim,* to a particular religiosity that dissociates it

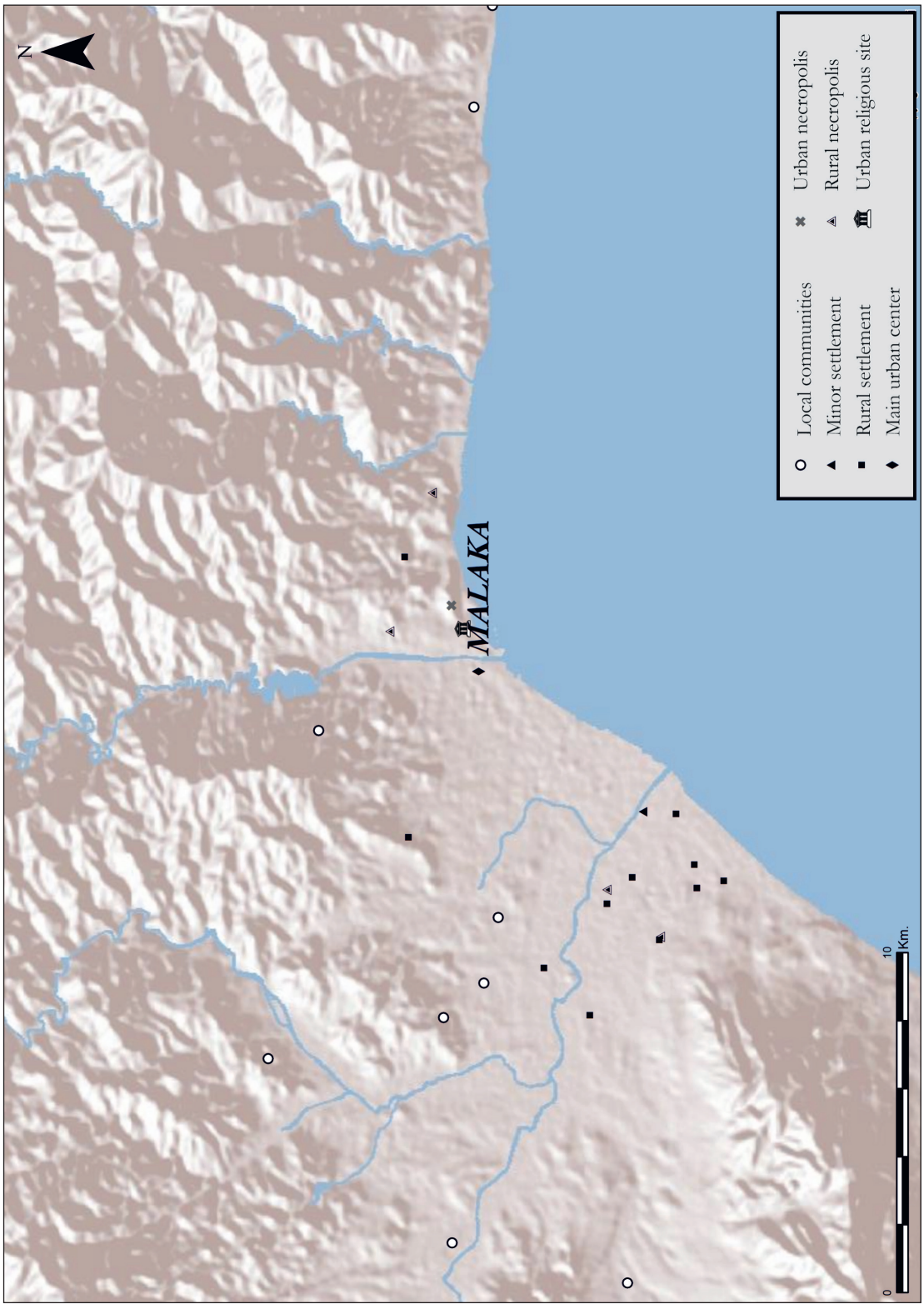

Fig. 1: The bay of Malaga in Phoenician-punic period: urban centres and local and autochthonous periphery

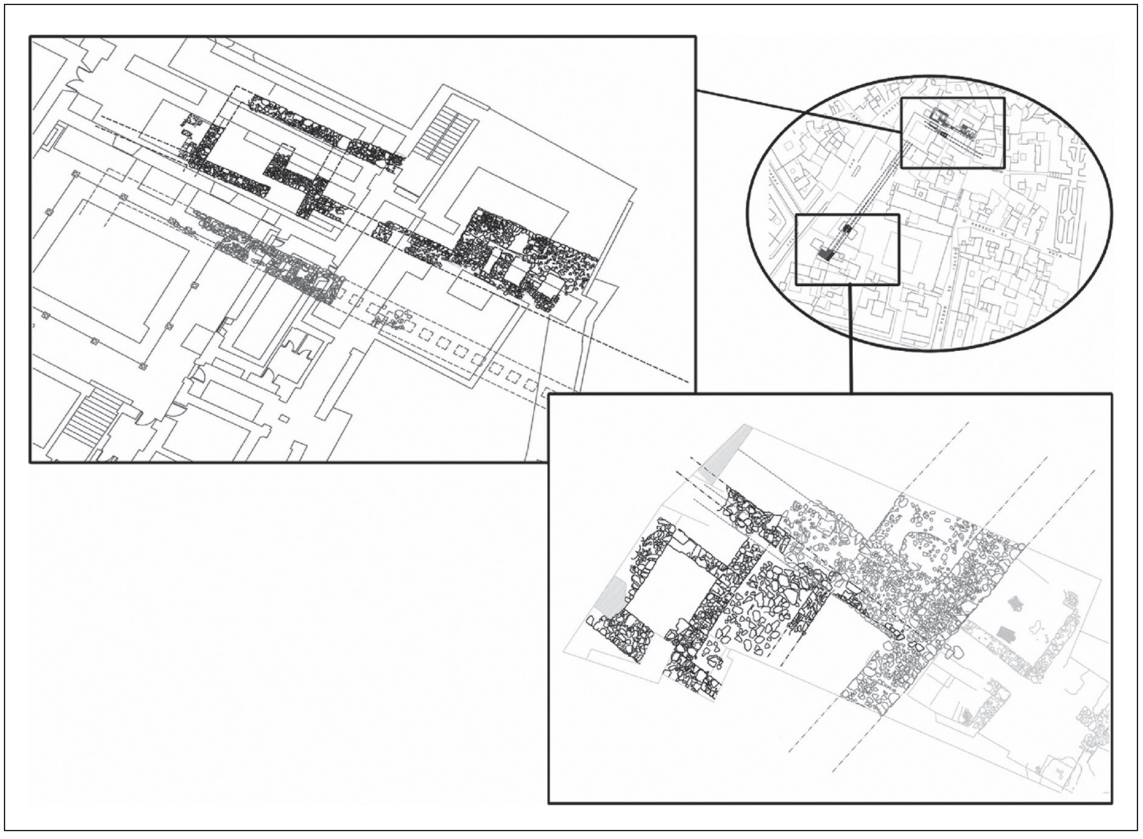

Fig. 2: Malaka's city walls dated to the 6th and 5th centuries

from the majority of Phoenician colonies dominated by the gods *Melqart* and *Ashtart,*[25] granting it a unique religious identity in *Iberia.* Indeed, Malaka's mint activity, which seems to begin during or immediately after the Second Punic War, shows on the obverse of some coins a divinity that we have identified with Baal Shamash, Phoenician god of the Sun, whose closest parallels take us to cities Phoenicians from North Africa.[26]

However, the most striking feature of the Phoenician-Punic city of *Malaka* is its unusual urban configuration. In fact, the analysis of the archaeological remains recovered in the Malaga subsoil has allowed to locate direct evidences of the Phoenician and Punic population in an area that covers almost 100 hectares. Although it is too early to completely rule out the possibility of the city reaching these dimensions in its later Punic urban phases,[27] the comparison with the dimensions of the Phoenician-Punic sites mentioned in the introduction,[28] leads us to be skeptical about this and to look for other interpretative possibilities to explain this urban phenomenon.

The location of the necropolis seems to point out from the first moment to the existence of a dispersed or multi-core city, whose main center would be located between the Alcazaba hill and the Guadalmedina river. Indeed, as can be clearly seen in fig. 3, Malaka's necropolis are located in an almost equidistant way, bounding each neighbor-

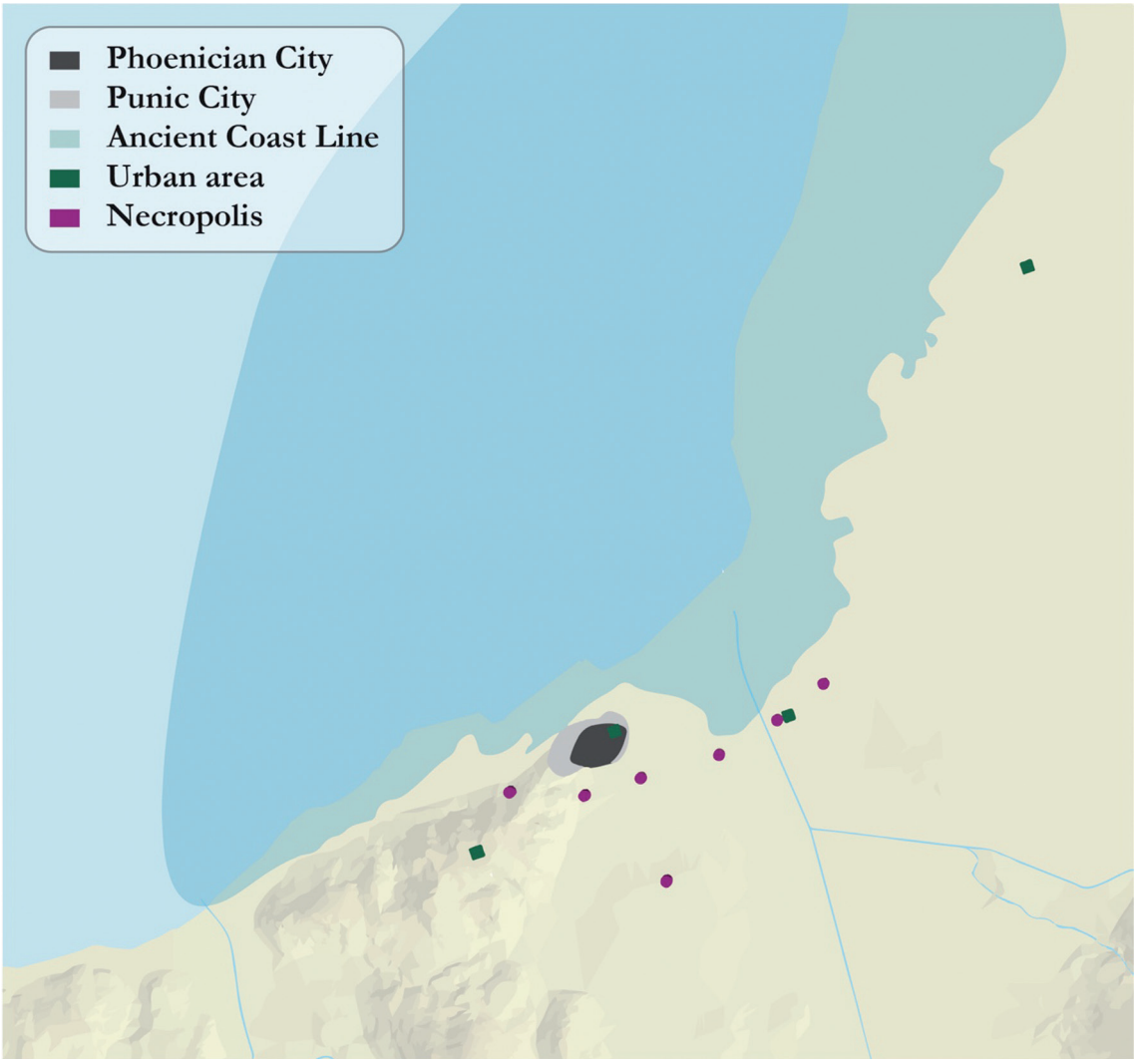

Fig. 3: The expansion of the Phoenician-Punic city: a longitudinal city pattern

hood or district in its northern limit. Although not all were coeval, their distribution does not follow a chronological pattern and, at least one of them, was deconsecrated to become a space for urban use. To compound the situation, we found a sparse group of burials in the Alcazaba or Tiro-Zamorano areas, creating a funerary space for the Punic aristocracy, as far as the scarce but luxurious tombs and their sumptuous grave goods point out.[29]

Perhaps we can relate this unusual urban configuration with the succinct Strabo's description of Malaka in Augustus' time,[30] for which we know that the old Phoenician colony had an urban distribution that separated it from the Greek-Latin urban canons. If our interpretative model is correct, the city would have had a main district and several outskirts separated from it, giving the image of a discontinuous city or a city with a

center and several peripheries. The choice of these secondary districts or suburbs would answer to both productive or housing needs and, especially, to the existence of intermediate areas unfit for occupation, as on the other hand show the geoarchaeological studies still in progress.

Notes

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[2] Roldán Gómez et al. 2006.

[3] Ruiz Mata – Pérez 1995.

[4] Fantar 1984–1986.

[5] Habibi – Aranegui Gascó 2005.

[6] Ciasca 1992, 79–84.

[7] Oggiano 2009, 417–432.

[8] Strabo XVIII, 3, 14.

[9] Titus Livy *Epit.* LXI.

[10] Pol. X, 10, 1.

[11] Fumadó Ortega 2013.

[12] Noguera Celdrán – Madrid Balanza 2014, 13–60.

[13] Investigations that are part of the research project of the Government of Spain (HAR2015-68669-P): Before the Columns. Punic Malaka and its projection in the Iberian SE and Mar de Alborán.

[14] Sánchez Sánchez-Moreno et al. 2012.

[15] Mora Serrano – López Castro 2002, 183, 185.

[16] Recio 1993/1994, 102–103; Martín Córdoba et al. 2008, 146.

[17] Arancibia Román – Escalante Aguilar 2006, 336–338; Arancibia Román – Mora Serrano 2018, 321–326.

[18] López Castro – Mora Serrano 2002, 190–191.

[19] Martínez Hahnmüller 2016, 107.

[20] Recio 1993/1994, 106–107; Pardo Barrionuevo 2015, 96–97.

[21] Arancibia Román – Escalante Aguilar 2006, 338. 342. 347–353.

[22] It is the Late-Punic necropolis of Beatas Franquelo street (Arancibia Román – Mora Serrano 2017, 358. 360), which at the sight of recent studies must be interpreted as associated to another artisanal and commercial district of the city (Mateo – Mayorga 2017, 118–119), whose central location explains the subsequent reoccupation of the space by a factory during the High Roman Empire.

[23] Arancibia Román – Mora Serrano 2011, 183.

[24] Sáez Romero 2018, 21.

[25] Mora Serrano 2014/2015, 134–136. 140.

[26] Mora Serrano 2014/2015, 133–136.

[27] In this regard it should be noted that the African *Qart Hadasht* would reach in the 3rd century BC the 120 inhabited ha (Fumadó Ortega 2013, 347), while the Iberian homonym city would not be far from the 100 ha.

[28] Thus, for instance, the island of San Pantaleo where Motya is located has an area of 45 ha that was protected by a wall of 2.5 km (Ciasca 1992, 83), Carteia archaeological site occupies around 27 ha (Roldán et al. 2006, 13), Nora peninsula does not exceed 20 ha, the Phoenician habitation zone of Lixus does not exceed 12 ha (Aranegui Gascó 2004, 176), the group formed by the settlement of Castillo de Doña Blanca and the neighboring district of Las Cumbres would not exceed 10 ha (Ruiz Mata 1999, 305 and Ruiz Mata – Niveau de Villedary y Mariñas 1999, 124) and, finally, the small settlement of Kerkouane would not exceed 7 ha (Fantar 2000, 72).

[29] Cf. Note 20.

[30] III, 4, 3.

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Fig. 1: map by Víctor Martínez Hahnmüller and Carmen A. Pardo Barrionuevo. – Fig. 2: Taller de Investigaciones Arqueológicas – Fig. 3: drawing by Víctor Martínez Hahnmüller and Carmen A. Pardo Barrionuevo.

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