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Response: Cultural Layering and Performative Ethnicity

This set of papers brings together very diverse areas of the Mediterranean, linked by the complex cultural stratigraphy implied by the title. Rather than the simple Roman-native interaction implied by the much-abused term “Romanization” the process here involves places where substantial cultural interaction had already taken place. In some of these places there had been a direct Punic hegemony, in others, such as Hellenistic Mauretania, Punic culture was more emulated than imposed. The authors examine different aspects of the interaction in the middle ground of three cultures, the third component being variously supplied by Libyan, Mauretanian, Iberian and Nuragic people – cultures for which French scholars used to use the curious and decidedly stratigraphic term ‘substrate’. With three cultures there is an even greater tendency to ‘take sides’ depending on one’s political and intellectual or even ethnic choices: Cañete makes this point well during his general treatment of the historiography of writing about Roman imperialism. Though few contemporary scholars would overtly ‘side’ with the Romans, it is notable that museums such as the Museo Nacional di Arte Romana at Merida present a picture in which the Romano-Iberian fusion is complete and triumphant, far removed from the oppressive view of the Roman colonization of Britain we find in Mattingly’s *An Imperial Possession*¹. In Tunisia, on the other hand, Punic culture is overtly selected as the heritage of the country, in opposition to that of Rome, while in Libya and Morocco there does not appear to be a particular political preference for the Libyan or Mauretanian pasts, or, indeed, any past prior to the arrival of Islam.

The three cultural terms of reference were presumably to some degree or other apparent to the respective actors, who selected the elements most appropriate to a given need. Tomb types are taken by several authors as good examples of the sort of cultural imbrication that we could expect here. Aranegui and Vivez-Ferrándiz draw attention to the great tumuli that characterize North African princely burials in the last three centuries BC. The best known of these are clearly royal tombs: the third-century Medracen, just north of the Aurés mountains, which Coarelli has argued refers to the lost tomb of Alexander². and in whose architecture we can see clear traces of the design of Hellenistic Egypt, such as the throat cornice, or the Tombeau de la Chrétienne, on the coast near Tipasa and the royal capital of Iol Caesarea, which follows the same general pattern, but may also refer to the tomb of Augustus, itself a member of the same royal set. It may have been commissioned by Juba II, who grew up in Augustan Rome. Smaller tumuli had always characterized indigenous Numidian and Saharan burials, however, and it is unclear to what degree the smaller versions of these tombs found in Morocco emulate the great royal models; Aranegui and Vivez-Ferrándiz argue that they are probably the tombs of local tribal chiefs. But the point remains that the form of

¹ MATTINGLY 2006.

² COARELLI and THEBERT 1988.

these tombs is almost over-determined, with references that range from the purely indigenous through to Egypt and the Hellenistic kings of the Eastern Mediterranean and Numidia itself - the only thing they don't emulate is Punic models³.

At *Baelo Claudia*, on the other hand, Jiménez makes a good case for the presence of tombs with specifically Punic references, small towers with traces of pyramids on their tops. There is even some trace of a tumulus, if the curved structure of her fig 10 can be so interpreted. Inside the tombs the most Italian of ceramics, *terra sigillata Italica*, is almost entirely absent, although it is reasonably common in the area around them, where sherds may belong to vessels used for libations. It is hard to know the significance of this interesting observation – does it mean that Roman pottery was considered contaminating within the tombs themselves? But all in all, the cemetery of *Baelo Claudia* is closely related to those of North Africa, as the later *cupae* tombs show. Now, the earliest known example of a *cupa* tomb comes from Cirta, and dates to the first century BC⁴. But this creates problems for the nature of the diffusion of the form around the Mediterranean in the Roman period: is it Numidian? Punic? Or simply African? In fact, its diffusion suggests that the form was picked up in port towns – *Baelo Claudia*, *Tharros*, *Nora* and *Ostia* – from the second century AD⁵. The *cupae* developed long after the Punic period, and their diffusion might thus simply suggest the spread of Roman Africans along the seaways that had always connected the central Mediterranean ports.

A more specifically Punic reference is identified by Aranegui and Vives-Ferrándiz in the stelae found in the construction of Temple B at Volubilis. These certainly date to an earlier sanctuary, perhaps of the second half of the first century BC, whose structures, if they existed, have not been found. One of the largest collections of stele in North Africa, their very Punic allure and the general rarity of stelae in Mauretania leads the authors to suggest that they are a very direct allusion to Carthaginian practice, in spite of the vast distance that separates the two cities, and the lack of any history of Carthaginian control in the area. Their use of Hobsbawm's famous title, *the Invention of Tradition*⁶, is entirely apposite, as is their suggestion that the Volubilitans were 'performing' for the Mauretanian kings in order to establish the antiquity and culture of their city and thus its claims to administrative power. Such a claim had become irrelevant by the second century AD, when the new temple used the stele and funerary urns for building material, and Roman-style buildings dominated the city center.

A similar use of Punic cultural forms, in this case linguistic, is described by Quinn at Augustan Lepcis: bilingual inscriptions or the inscription inside the *macellum* which translates the Latin version outside, both expressed the nuances of a double identity and, perhaps, an assertion of Punic identity as *opposed* to a Libyan identity perceived as less cultured. Both the example of Volubilis and that of Lepcis thus suggest a subtle use of Punic forms as a way of distinguishing oneself from the 'native' cultures whose ascendancy may have been abetted by the fall of Carthage – although the Numidian kings themselves were expert players in the multi-lingual cultures of the Hellenistic Mediterranean.

It has often been objected that Roman imperialism was hardly about ethnic or cultural identification, and a decade of polemic has at least laid to rest any residual traces of that idea. Political, legal and economic integrations are far more substantive aspects of the centuries just before and after the birth of Christ and these papers provide two very fine examples of the changes brought about, not by specific Roman policy, but by the changing economic climate caused by the integration of the Mediterranean world. Aranegui and Vives-Ferrándiz show a huge rise in the percentage of amphorae found in contexts of the second and particularly first centuries BC at Lixus. Although some of the amphorae come from Italy, these are never the majority. Instead, amphorae from the zone of the Straits dominate the assemblages, and, since the most plausible interpretation of their contents is fish products such as *garum*, the huge rise in their

³ Pace FERCHIOU 1987, who believes they are Punic. On the variety, distribution and cultural valence of tumuli and other burial types in Africa Proconsularis STONE 2007.

⁴ CIL VIII 7796 ; LASSERE 1973, 126.

⁵ It could be noted that BARATTA 2004 derives the form from the Numidian tumulus, which is not immediately obvious from their shape.

⁶ HOBBSAWM and RANGER 1983.

numbers suggests that they represent an intensification of that production along the Atlantic coasts. Such a production is matched by the large numbers of fish-processing plants found on both sides of the Straits. This highly intensified production has been plausibly linked by López Castro with the development in Punic areas of the factory production we can also see in plantation agriculture⁷. Columella's comment on the use of slaves in *garum* production, used in the *officinae cetariorum*, is clearly apposite here⁸. A similar intensification, this time in agriculture, can be found in Columbi's paper. Here the author compares two sites which originate as Nuragic villages. She quite rightly sees construction of straight walls on these sites as evidence, not of population change, but of developing building fashions in the context of an unchanging occupation of the area from Nuragic times. Yet both sites were abandoned in the first century AD, and substantial 'Roman' villas built nearby. Now, there is no suggestion on the author's part that the builders of those villas were any less Sardinian than the inhabitants of the original village. However, something had certainly changed and the small farms were replaced in both cases by agricultural production on a much larger and intensive scale, reorganized by landlords whose power was of a different order of magnitude than that of the villagers they replaced, and whose organization of labour was clearly dissimilar. We do not know whether those villas were also farmed by slaves, but it is hardly impossible.

Were the new forms of intensive exploitation Punic or Roman? I have argued elsewhere that plantation agriculture was practiced in the hinterland of Carthage from the fourth century onwards⁹. We know, too, that the immediate result of the Roman occupation of Lucania and elsewhere in South Italy was often the elimination of the pre-existing settlements and their replacement by villas¹⁰. The pattern, though, is not necessarily one of demographic replacement, but rather a repositioning of the élites in order to exploit the new possibilities for individual power and economic advancement. In spite of the performative ethnicity that Quinn, Aranegui and Vives-Ferrándiz and Jimenez quite rightly stress, it seems clear that the ethnicity of their ancestors - Punic, Mauretanian, or Italian - mattered far less than their position in the new economic order.

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⁷ LOPEZ CASTRO 2007.

⁸ Colum. *Rust.* 8.16.9.

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¹⁰ E.g. DE CASENOVE 2001 and other articles in the same volume; for comment on the whole issue FENTRESS 2005.

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