



Peter van Dommelen

Response: Local Representations

The title *Colonising a Colonised Territory*, under which the papers of this section have been brought together, is as intriguing as it is pertinent. While these five papers are at first sight quite different from one another in terms of both subject matter and regional-chronological focus, the four archaeological case studies are bound together by a common background and a shared concern, as the subtitle indeed goes on to spell out. All four chapters focus in the first place on Roman settlement in regions characterised by what are aptly termed 'Punic roots' – the previously "colonised territories" of the section title. It is the shared Punic cultural roots in and broad historical background of what could loosely be called the 'Punic world' that represents one common thread running through these discussions¹. The second shared connection between all five papers is their focus on how the inhabitants of these regions responded to Roman conquest and occupation and how they shaped local processes of cultural change. This includes the paper in which Cañete reflects on the intellectual history and consequences of Roman expansion and Romanist studies.

More generally speaking, these papers contribute to the long-running debate about "Romanisation" but rather than just proposing yet more case studies of different areas and provinces, they give a fresh twist to these discussions. They follow up the relatively recent attention for the earliest Roman expansion that took place within the context and organisational structures of the Roman Republic and that primarily affected the central and western Mediterranean regions². The innovative turn of the present collection is the explicit focus on the Punic world. A fortuitous consequence of this 'Punic orientation', in addition to the already-mentioned common cultural and historical background of the papers, is that "Romanisation" is not their primary concern: although the term is repeatedly used and reference is made to discussions of "Romanisation" in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, the case studies presented here mostly side-step questions of definitions and relevance of Romanisation and concentrate on the specific archaeological and historical evidence at hand for their regions of interest. As a result, the five papers under consideration are not just well informed about relevant theoretical and methodological issues but also acutely aware of the limitations that the Romanisation debate has run up against in recent years.

As a starter, and at the risk of pointing out the obvious, I would like to begin by drawing attention to one aspect that is largely overlooked and taken for granted by these papers, which is Roman conquest and occupation. Although conquest and initial military occupation mostly predated the periods explored by some time and even if Roman military exploits have usually received most attention, the impact and consequences

¹ VAN DOMMELEN and GÓMEZ BELLARD 2008, 2-5.

² See the review of four recent books by Bruce Hitchner (HITCHNER 2009); the Republican focus was first explored by KEAY and TERRENATO 2001.

of war, violence and exploitation must always be borne in mind when the Punic world and its relations with the expanding Roman Republic are under scrutiny. Because these contacts were largely forged and redefined by and during the Punic Wars, the impact of this long-running and wide-ranging conflict on the regions involved cannot be ignored. This holds in particular for the papers by Colombi and Jiménez, as both Sardinia and the Mediterranean regions of the Iberian Peninsula were occupied by Roman troops as a direct consequence of the struggle between Rome and Carthage.

A key theme that is emphasised by all five papers is identity, more particularly the social construction of local identities on the cusp of cultural boundaries as in periods of cultural change – in these particular instances the boundaries are those between the Punic roots and Roman innovations and impositions. All five papers emphasise the degree to which these processes and the resulting identities are historically situated and complex, if not outright contradictory. This generic point is elaborated upon in the three case studies by Aranegui and Vives-Ferrándiz, Jiménez and Quinn, who all argue that local Punic identities were not simply replaced by or absorbed into new Roman identities; instead, they show how even quite some time after the Roman conquest local inhabitants would draw on both older Punic and newer Roman traditions - and in some cases indeed forge new ones out of the combination, as Aranegui and Vives-Ferrándiz argue for the unusual *stelai* from the temple in *Volubilis*.

Quinn and Jiménez approach similar situations in their case studies from a slightly different angle. They do not attempt to resolve contradictions but instead explore how contrasting identities were constructed and deployed by the same person or group in different circumstances. In both contexts examined, they note a contrast between public representations and private practices that roughly corresponds with respectively Roman and Punic traditions. Dismissing the usual interpretation of this distinction in terms of 'failed Romanisation' and 'Punic persistence' (*sopravvivenze puniche*), both Quinn and Jiménez play down the opposition and emphasise the degree to which the various identities observed were constructed in combination and in interaction with each other. These papers thus provide excellent examples of what we might refer to in anthropological terms as public and private, if not 'hidden', 'transcripts' of behaviour that are not separate from, let alone opposed to, each other but that should rather be seen as two sides of the same coin³.

It is at this point that Cañete's paper comes into play as he explores the multi-faceted and ideological nature of identification processes in the 19th-century Maghreb under French colonial rule. Focusing on the extent to and the ways in which the French colonial authorities and military drew on the abundance of Roman monuments in Algeria and their perception of the European and Roman past, he is able to trace in some detail how perception in particular colours and steers actual behaviour and feeds into the construction of new identities that in turn underlie much daily practice. Cañete focuses explicitly on identification processes, however, and he strikes a particularly postcolonial note as he highlights the significance of representation. In other words, he draws attention to what it is that people thought that they and/or others were doing, regardless of what they actually did; needless to say that not much of such behaviour is consistent, let alone rational. Even without going into the role of stereotypes and prejudices, Cañete thus successfully draws attention to the extent to which representation and perception guide actual behaviour and are effectively key to understanding the construction of identity and the perception of material remains⁴.

Cañete's theoretical discussion also thoughtfully complements the three chapters by Aranegui and Vives-Ferrándiz, Jiménez and Quinn and adds to their archaeological discussions by explicitly drawing attention to the notion of resistance. While the other papers rightly dismiss resistance as a term that has too often been used in strong oppositional terms, Cañete begins to explore a rather more subtle understanding of the concept that resonates with the contradictory and historically situated view of identity and practices espoused by all papers in this section. Resistance is surely a term that is wrought with conceptual difficulties but it is also one that has currency in the real world and that interacts significantly with the ways in which

³ VAN DOMMELEN 1998. The notion of 'hidden transcripts' was first proposed by SCOTT 1985.

⁴ VAN DOMMELEN 2006.

identities are constructed. It is particularly evident in polarised situations like those created by the Punic Wars, as I have argued with regard to Sardinia, that resistance and collaboration cannot be ignored any more than violence and exploitation. The contributions in this section demonstrate in fact that resistance is no less slippery a concept and rife with contradictions than identity and I would argue that because of the many intersections, both notions can and must be acknowledged and explored in colonial situations like the ones studied in these papers⁵.

It is Colombi's detailed case study of two settlement sites in North Sardinia that brings out most effectively the complexity of these colonial situations on the ground. This study is remarkable because it concerns a context that is not normally regarded as part of the Punic world. The two sites studied are situated well beyond the southern regions of the island, where colonial settlements had been established in Phoenician and Punic times, but Colombi demonstrates that the late Nuragic inhabitants of northern and central Sardinia adopted Punic and other imported material culture in substantial quantities well before Roman troops occupied the island. As she is able to tease out the range of contacts and interactions underlying these imports and innovations, it is evident that by the time of the Roman occupation local inhabitants had access to and drew on varying combinations of local indigenous (Nuragic), Roman and Italian and Punic and North African materials and traditions. She may thus point to the complexity and fluidity of identities in her study region that were constructed as part of an intricate web of meanings and counter-meanings, representations and perceptions. If anything is clear, it is that there is rather more at play than clear-cut contrasts between Punic and Roman.

To sum up, the five contributions to this section endeavour and in combination manage successfully to demonstrate that colonial situations like those created by Roman conquests and occupation did not exist in splendid isolation. Precisely because most regions of the West Mediterranean had at least maintained extensive external contacts and in many cases had been colonised and occupied in one way or another in the past, existing (pre)histories and traditions inevitably played a major role in local inhabitants' perceptions and actions when confronted with the newly created situations of Roman occupation.

Peter van Dommelen

Department of Archaeology
University of Glasgow
UK

E-mail: p.vandommelen@archaeology.gla.ac.uk

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⁵ See my discussion in VAN DOMMELEN 2007.

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