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Carolina López-Ruiz. 2021. *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Pp. 440 Hardcover. (ISBN 9780674988187) \$45.00.

Carolina López-Ruiz, one of few scholars who straddles the disciplines of Classical and Near Eastern Studies, has gifted the scholarly community an important new book that places the Phoenicians at the center of ancient Mediterranean history. *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean*, a culmination of López-Ruiz's prolific work on the Phoenicians, integrates material culture discovered throughout the Mediterranean region and the different academic traditions of local archaeology and history to make two arguments. One argument is historiographic: the book challenges traditional narratives in ancient history that focus on the Greeks and Romans and pushes historians and archaeologists to move towards writing more accurate (and inclusive) histories of the Mediterranean. The other argument, reflected in the book's title, is that it was the Phoenicians, who, through their commercial enterprises in this region, created a common Mediterranean material culture in the Early Iron Age, with significant contributions from and collaborations with the local populations they encountered.

In contrast to other books on the Phoenicians that concentrate either on the western or the eastern Mediterranean, *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean* presents a comprehensive history of this group in the Early Iron Age in the whole Mediterranean region. The book takes the reader on a journey from West to East, beginning on the coasts of Iberia, moving on to the central Mediterranean, the Aegean Circle, and Cyprus, and ending in the Phoenician homelands. In each location, the book examines the presence, distribution, and adaptation of several elements that make up what López-Ruiz calls the "orientalizing kit"—writing systems; monumental stone sculpture; pottery; architecture, symbolic and decorative motifs (such as lotus flowers, sphinxes, animals, tree of life), minor arts (especially ivory and metalwork), and mythological themes, among others. The author's choice to employ the word "orientalizing" to describe this "kit," might be surprising to readers familiar with debates on the notions of Orientalism, "orientalization," and "orientalizing" art, all of which are inextricably linked to the inequalities and violence of modern colonialism. López-Ruiz extensively discusses these issues in chapter 3, where she aligns herself with recent publications that find these terms useful, albeit vague, in capturing the ancient process of cultural change and emulation of an idealized Near East.¹ To give these terms more specificity, López-Ruiz investigates the elements of the "orientalizing kit" across the Mediterranean with due attention to the varied historical, social, and cultural contexts of each area under study, providing a preponderance of evidence that suggests the Phoenicians were instrumental, if not the first, in connecting the groups inhabiting the Mediterranean region. They did this by creating a shared material culture that has commonly been called "orientalizing," but that should perhaps be renamed "Phoenicianizing" in the aftermath of this book.

The book's introduction and Part I, "Beware the Greeks," establish the framework within which López-Ruiz works. These early parts of the book provide a history of the Phoenicians and the geographic extent of their commercial networks; articulate how disciplinary divisions, national narratives, anti-Semitism, and Hellenocentric scholarly trends have led to the tendency to neglect the Phoenicians; and make the case for their centrality in the history of the ancient Mediterranean. While most scholars active today are aware of these historiographic pitfalls, the discussions offered in these first chapters are useful because they reveal with clarity how even our best efforts for a more equal treatment of Mediterranean populations might fall short.

¹ Riva and Vella 2006. Nowlin 2021, has instead advocated for not using "orientalization" and "orientalizing" at all.

More specifically, in chapter 1 (“Phoenicians Overseas”, an allusion to Boardman’s *The Greeks Overseas*), López-Ruiz argues that the disciplines of Classics and Classical Archaeology have for long focused on the innovations of the Greeks – the so-called “Greek miracle” – at the expense of the Phoenicians. She uncovers how scholars have not only privileged Greek colonization but have argued that Phoenician settlements overseas were only temporary ports-of-trade rather than urban centers, had no interest in farming, and because of these two conditions Phoenicians had little influence on the populations they encountered. Utilizing recent archaeological surveys, López-Ruiz shows that not only were Phoenician settlements urban and agrarian, but that the Phoenicians interacted with and influenced local populations both in colonial settings and through trade and other mechanisms. Similarly, ideologically driven nationalist or racist narratives have equated the West with the Greeks and Romans at the expense of the Phoenicians. In chapter 2, López-Ruiz deconstructs current approaches to cultural exchange in the Early Iron Age to show that they prioritize Greek agency over Phoenician by examining the sites of Al-Mina, Lefkandi, and Pithekoussai, where the presence of Euboian Greeks has been emphasized when the evidence available indicates instead a mixed population. Even the recent trend towards Mediterranean Studies, while succeeding to some degree in decentering the Greeks from historical narratives, still ignores the Phoenicians: according to López-Ruiz, its emphasis on networks and interconnectedness obscures the agency of specific actors. This is precisely what *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean* attempts to uncover by aligning the more globalizing narratives of Early Iron Age Mediterranean history with the activities of the Phoenicians (61–62).

In the final chapter of the book’s first part (chapter 3), López-Ruiz identifies the “orientalizing” phenomenon as “the most tangible manifestation of an increasing interconnectedness among cultures across the Mediterranean” (79). While crediting some scholars with trying to show Near Eastern influences on Greek – and more generally Mediterranean art and culture – the author also argues that scholarship still tends to lump these influences under the large umbrella of the Near East or the Levant, labels that include many cultures, denying them a specifically Phoenician origin. But, López-Ruiz argues, it is Phoenician material culture and Phoenician practices that were adopted and adapted throughout the Mediterranean, even when these had in turn been borrowed from other Near Eastern groups, and it is the Phoenicians who created and distributed this “orientalizing kit” and who should be viewed as the makers of the early Mediterranean.

These same problems of traditional historiography developed in the first part of *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean* also appear in each case-study presented in the book’s second part. So does the author’s challenge to recent scholarship, which López-Ruiz dubs “Phoenicoskepticism,” that has questioned the usefulness of “identity” as a category of analysis and has cast doubts as to whether the Phoenicians ever self-identified as an ethnic group, claiming that this label has been applied only by outsiders, both ancient and modern. Without engaging with theoretical discussions on the notion of identity, López-Ruiz dismisses the idea that no such ethnic group as the Phoenicians existed in antiquity and instead points to the similarity of material culture across Phoenician city-states and diasporas and epigraphic evidence from the fifth century BCE onward in which Phoenicians use the terms “Phoenicians” and “Phoenicia” to describe themselves or their homeland.

Part II, “Follow the Sphinx,” forms the bulk of the book and presents case-studies from all over the Mediterranean to demonstrate the popularity of the “orientalizing kit” and the overlap of its distribution with the extent of the Phoenician trading network. In so doing, these chapters, each focused on a region – the Far West, the Central Mediterranean, the Aegean, Cyprus, and the Levant – build the case for both the existence of a Phoenician group and their primacy in the “making” of the Mediterranean. Each case-study begins with a brief history of the area and its contacts with the Phoenicians. Such overviews are followed with descriptions of specific elements of the “orientalizing” kit, which vary from

region to region, showing in each case how the kit manifested itself, how it was shaped by local agency, and ultimately its origin in Phoenician culture. In their aggregate, these chapters make the case that the Phoenicians were the makers of the Mediterranean through the sheer quantity of evidence presented. At the same time, the chapters are not reductive but rather demonstrate the complexities of cross-cultural interactions, the different meanings each adaptation might have had locally, and the varied contributions by local groups (and Greeks), the other protagonists in this book. It is difficult to do justice to the richness and impressive variety of the evidence presented in each of these case-studies. Amassing and integrating everything from burial practices to myth or religious architecture to pottery decoration in locations with different scholarly traditions to present a coherent narrative of how Phoenicians came to create and spread a shared material culture, is a feat that no one has accomplished until now.

To illustrate López-Ruiz's attention to local contexts and the variety of evidence she analyzes to make her argument, consider chapter 5, on the Central Mediterranean. It includes sections on Sardinia, Sicily, Malta, Southern Italy, and Etruria. Each of these begins with basic information on the history of these sites and their interactions with the Phoenicians, followed by discussions on how local culture changed because of these encounters. While López-Ruiz focuses on hybrid practices that arose because of the presence of Phoenicians (and others) in all five areas, she takes care to locate all the observable changes in the specific historical, social, economic, and cultural contexts of each place. In the case of Sardinia, the focus is on settlement patterns and burial practices, while on Sicily, it is monumental religious structures; in both instances, the hybridization described (Nuragic bronze statuettes are re-envisioned as monumental tomb markers *à la phénicien*; Sicilian cultic buildings adopted forms common in both Phoenician and Greek temple architecture, itself influenced by Phoenician prototypes) is idiosyncratic and determined by the local populations (both indigenous, Greek, and otherwise). In Etruria, the discussion reprises the debate presented in chapter 3 on "orientalizing art" through an examination of burial artifacts, funerary monuments, sanctuaries, dedications, and writing. Whereas the Etruscans adopted the Greek alphabet for their writing system, Etruscan tombs were filled with: burial goods imported from the Near East with iconographic motifs of the "orientalizing kit" (sphinxes, locus flowers, griffins); bucchero ware, which likewise drew inspiration from Phoenician jugs; and both imported metal bowls from the Near East and local imitations. By focusing on multi-directional influences in each location, López-Ruiz sheds light on the primacy and ubiquity of Phoenician agency in creating a shared Mediterranean culture.

López-Ruiz's philological training shines at different points of the book, as in chapter 7, "Intangible Legacies," on the adoption of the Phoenician alphabet by the Greeks, or the section in chapter 6 on the sphinx, a creature popular on Near Eastern, Egyptian, Phoenician, early Greek, and locally produced art throughout the Mediterranean. In the case of the alphabet, the last section of chapter 7 focuses on semitic loanwords in the Greek language, all of which relate to trade goods (cinnamon, sesame, myrrh, gold, nitron, to name a few), religious ritual, writing, banqueting practices, all elements of the "orientalizing" kit. Just as these words map onto Greco-Phoenician interactions, so the "orientalizing" or "Phoenicianizing" kit maps onto the Phoenician trade network. In the case of the sphinx, the Greek word *sphinx*, which is related to the Greek verb *sphingo* (to constrict), might be a translation of the name of a Phoenician demon, *honeqet*, which means "stranger." By emphasizing the Phoenician connection, López-Ruiz demonstrates, as she also does when she discusses Greek monumental sculpture (e.g., the *kouros*), that even in the case of imagery borrowed originally from the Egyptians the transmission was not direct but rather inflected through Phoenician culture. It is of course impossible to exclude direct Egyptian or other influences on Greek or other cultures, something that López-Ruiz implicitly accepts when she discusses the contributions of Greek and local populations and her explicit assertion in

the epilogue that the Phoenicians were not the only makers of the Mediterranean but the first who wove it together.

Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean successfully illuminates how scholarship has systematically downplayed the significance of the Phoenicians in the history of the ancient Mediterranean, whether for ideological or disciplinary reasons. The book also presents overwhelming evidence showing that it was this Levantine group and its commercial enterprises that first interconnected the Mediterranean region and unified it under a shared material culture. While López-Ruiz does not deny the role of other groups – local populations or Greeks – in co-creating this Mediterranean culture, her model views trade as a benign process when it is not: to say that “it was up to the locals” (317) to participate or not in adopting and shaping the “orientalizing” kit might ignore the possible power hierarchies between Phoenicians and locals. Such criticism, though, does not change the impact of the book’s argument. *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean* offers a powerful call for historians of the ancient Mediterranean to consider their implicit biases in writing ancient history and it provides an example of how more inclusive histories may be written.

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Do you ever wish for an end to graded papers and written tests? Consider the system of advanced education of the Roman Empire. With no written exams on canonical texts (such as were standard in the imperial Chinese system, for example), it involved frequent, perhaps daily public performance by students of practice speeches, or declamations. As Lendon points out in his rich new book (22), it was more like instruction in a music conservatory or drama school, or athletic coaching, than any modern university. Intended to equip students with eloquence and make them effective leaders in the real world, it relied on notoriously unreal scenarios of the type ridiculed, yet fully absorbed, by the satirist Juvenal (*Satire 7*, see 15). Roman education involved drastic ignorance of much of the knowledge that we would consider necessary for ruling, but what elite Romans learned, argues Lendon, they knew with visceral intensity.

Lendon suggests that several key features of the culture of the Roman Empire, both Latin West and Greek East, were encouraged and perpetuated by the elite’s shared experience of forensic, rhetorical, declamatory education. These features include: belief in the naturalness of deliberative self-government at the city level, despite autocracy at the top; commitment to using law and litigation to solve disputes, rather than force or intimidation; competitive benefactions toward and beautification of cities, rather than a more thorough system of taxation for public works. These are the broad contours of the argument, but the meat of the book is a series of fascinating case studies in how the notoriously artificial world of Roman declamation bled into the real world of building schemes, lawmaking, and even radical political action.

The first section examines Roman “higher” education itself. The role-playing

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