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**Cultural and commercial exchange between the peoples of the western coast
of Algeria and the south of the Iberian Peninsula in ancient times**

التبادل الثقافي والتجاري بين شعوب الساحل الغربي للجزائر وجنوب شبه الجزيرة
الإيبيرية في العصور القديمة

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Abstract:

The Algerian west coast was a passage of many foreign peoples who established colonies and contributed to the formation of Mediterranean civilization, this is due to its location on the Mediterranean Sea, as it is considered one of the important regions in the history of humanity. This region has been inhabited for many ages dating back to the prehistoric period, where the indigenous people contributed to the establishment and enrichment of many civilizations and the construction of a rich and abundant history, the indicators of which remain through archaeological evidence that supports its ancient and ancient position. Despite the richness of this region in archaeological and historical evidence, studies and research are still in their infancy, with the exception of those conducted starting from the nineteenth century AD, which did not rise to the level of care and attention that other neighbouring regions in the Mediterranean received, such as the Iberian Peninsula, Greece and Italy. This is why we will focus initially in this article on the Algerian west coast region and its relations with the south of the Iberian Peninsula during the Metal Age.

Keywords: West coast of Algeria, Iberian Peninsula, metal age, navigation, trade, pottery.

المخلص:

كانت منطقة الساحل الغربي الجزائري ممرا للعديد من الشعوب الأجنبية التي أقامت مستعمرات وساهمت في تشكيل الحضارة المتوسطية، وذلك لموقعها على البحر الأبيض المتوسط، حيث تعتبر من المناطق المهمة في تاريخ البشرية. وقد سكنت هذه المنطقة عصور عديدة تعود إلى فترة ما قبل التاريخ، حيث ساهم السكان الأصليون في تأسيس وإثراء العديد من الحضارات وبناء تاريخ غني ووافر، تظل مؤشرات قائمة من خلال الأدلة الأثرية التي تدعم مكانتها القديمة والعريقة. ورغم ثراء هذه المنطقة بالشواهد الأثرية والتاريخية، إلا أن الدراسات والأبحاث لا تزال في بداياتها، باستثناء تلك التي أجريت ابتداء من القرن التاسع عشر الميلادي، والتي لم ترتق إلى مستوى العناية والاهتمام الذي حظيت به مناطق أخرى مجاورة في البحر الأبيض المتوسط، مثل شبه الجزيرة الإيبيرية واليونان وإيطاليا. ولهذا سنركز في البداية في هذا المقال على منطقة الساحل الغربي الجزائري وعلاقتها بجنوب شبه الجزيرة الإيبيرية خلال عصر المعادن.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الساحل الغربي الجزائري، شبه الجزيرة الإيبيرية، عصر المعادن، الملاحة، التجارة، الفخار.

1. INTRODUCTION

The strategic geographical location of the western Algerian coast and the southeastern Iberian Peninsula played an important and effective role in activating commercial, economic and even cultural relations between the two regions, as the distance between them is very short, not exceeding 200 km. Rather, the Andalusian coast can be seen with the naked eye from the Oran coast. The distance is almost non-existent in the Strait of Gibraltar, as only 14 km separates them, starting from the northern coasts of Morocco and the Pillars of Hercules on the opposite side. This has allowed continuous communication over many periods of time between these two regions, especially from a navigational point of view, which made the maritime line between southern Spain and the western Algerian coast and even the northern coast of the Kingdom of Morocco, a very busy line in terms of trade and economic activity in ancient times, especially in the Iron Age I. Therefore, the following question comes to our mind: What is this relationship?

2. The western coast of Algeria

The western Algerian coastal strip extends along 520 km, starting from Gouraya in Tipaza in the west, to the Moulouya Valley in the west, along the Algerian-Moroccan border. Through the states of Tipaza West, Chlef, Mostaganem, Oran, Ain Temouchent and Tlemcen. (Figure 1) It is characterized by the presence of several sea capes interspersed with sandy beaches that are difficult to traverse, and it contains several mouths of large valleys, including the Chlef Valley in the states of Mostaganem, the

Tafna Valley in Ain Temouchent, and the Sig Valley in Oran. These are geomorphological characteristics suitable for human settlement, which may help us in directing our archaeological research in the region.¹ Recent archaeological discoveries on the Algerian western coast have shown the richness of its archaeological record with a regional and Mediterranean civilizational dimension. The discovered sites indicate that this coast was inhabited without interruption, since prehistoric times. Because our study will focus mainly on the importance of the relationship between the western coast and the southeast of the Iberian Peninsula, and the extent of contact between immigrants and local residents, in addition to identifying the contribution of the local element in various aspects of human construction.



Figure 1: Western coast of Algeria Eastern-Southern coast of the Iberian Peninsula

(Adapted by the researcher)

3. East-South Coast of the Iberian Peninsula

It extends from Cape Nao south of Valencia in the east to the Strait of Gibraltar in the west, or what is called the Pillars of Hercules, a distance of 725 km, passing through Benidorm, Alicante, Cartagena, Almeria and Malaga² (Figure 1)

4. History of relationships

Relations between the two regions date back to the Copper Age. Through the discovery of campaniforme ceramics, which many specialists attribute to the "European culture of the Campania region", in significant quantities on the coasts of North Africa, especially on the western Algerian coast and the far west of Morocco, it is possible that they arrived through trade and human movements through ancient migrations from one region to another, in search of stability.³ The Atlantic Ocean currents played a major role in this navigation, as the Strait of Gibraltar allowed an ocean current to pass from west to east in the winter and from east to west in the summer. These factors allowed the emergence of seasonal navigation that led to the establishment of a sea route between Cartagena and Almeria in Spain, Cape Figallo and Cape Ivy on the western Algerian coast⁴.

The two regions, especially the copper and bronze metals, as shown by the wall inscriptions discovered in the Atlas regions of Morocco and western Algeria, inspired by the decoration of metal tools imported from the Iberian Peninsula; however, this relationship in these periods was not based on one direction, but rather came as a result of commercial exchanges or in the form of barter, as many ornaments, including

jewelry and bracelets of precious metal, were found, made in North Africa, in many Copper Age tombs in Spain and Portugal⁵.

These materials mentioned above were not the only goods relied upon in the field of exchanges between the two banks, but rather extended to other materials, most notably ostrich eggs and especially ivory, which came from the defensive tusks of elephants, as this animal was abundantly available in North Africa, which led to its breeding and use in several fields by local peoples, such as wars, transportation and manufacturing industries. North African ivory was of such high quality that it was in demand in the Mediterranean markets, especially in the Iberian Peninsula, and by many ancient peoples⁶. The ivory trade continued during the Phoenician period, taking on a great dimension and importance; evidence of this is the wreck of the ship that sank in the seventh or sixth century BC, in the suburbs of Bajo in the Spanish province of Murcia. It had on board a cargo of thirteen (13) elephant tusks, with Phoenician inscriptions on them⁷.

The Phoenician presence, immediately after the end of the Bronze Age around 1200 BC, had a great impact on the Iberian Peninsula through the search for the various raw materials that we mentioned previously, and this is what made it establish the largest colony in the "Cadiz" region and several other ports on its coasts, for commercial exchanges. The inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula, after their integration with the Phoenician culture and their influence on the Phoenician activity through the multiplicity of colonies and continuous contact with the Phoenicians of the Iberian Peninsula (the Canaanite traders), were called the "Phoenicians of the West", thus, all their commercial relations and exchanges with

the people of North Africa took place under the "new ethnic or political" cover, especially with the large colonies that the Phoenicians established on the Atlantic coasts in the far west of Morocco, such as Carthage in the northeast, such as the city of Lixus, for example, and the city of Africa, present-day Tunisia. (figure 2).



Figure 2; Relations of the Oran region with the cities of the western Mediterranean in the ancient period (Adapted by the researcher)

4-1 Commercial exchanges

Manufactured goods were an element of exchange in the western Mediterranean, as Central African products such as gold, ivory, hides and slaves reached Numidia and the Atlantic colonies, Spain supplied them with silver from its mines and other metals and amber brought from the north by sea; and Sicilian oil and wines, Sardinian grain and metals, copper and silver, all reached Carthage through trade.⁸ It appears that this trade was based on the principle of barter for a long time and there is no doubt that the Phoenicians of the peninsula helped them in transporting iron, copper, bronze, precious metals, weapons, painted or crystal goods, ivory cosmetics, beads, especially scarabs used as rings, and usable ceramic vessels, decorated or simple, found in abundance in graves and characterized by a variety of shapes, and some well-crafted pottery. They also succeeded in dyeing, weaving and

tanning. It was also famous for its Punic wood industry, as evidenced by the boxes found in many sites in the Iberian Peninsula⁹. The occupation of the island of Rachgoun by the Phoenicians of Spain was followed by the founding of Mogador and Lixus on the Atlantic coast, then Marsa Madagh and Andalusia in Oran around the 6th and 5th centuries BC respectively. For this reason, all the pottery materials and their shapes extracted in the excavations were attributed to the pottery groups of Andalusian manufacture in the south of the Spanish peninsula. However, the colonial policy adopted by the Phoenicians-Spain on the coasts of Oran during the sixth century BC was not the same with regard to human settlement. Rather, it was the Libyan-Phoenicians who managed the affairs of these colonies on the western Algerian coast and even on the Moroccan coast in its entirety, whether in the Mediterranean or the Atlantic Ocean. This is what Hanno carried in his description of the coasts of North Africa during his famous journey in the fifth century BC, which shows the distance of the Carthaginian influence during this period, as the inhabitants of this geographical area south of the Iberian Peninsula and western North Africa, completely different from that in Carthage, whether in the way of life, crafts and pottery industry.¹⁰ The researcher Astruc went on to assert that the origin of the rituals and funerary materials found in the cemetery of " in Spain are the same materials discovered in the cemetery of "Villaricos" "Quraia" in Tebessa, and this shows that the origin of the peoples who inhabited Villaricos was from Algeria, and for this reason the term "Libyan-Phoenicians" has a broad meaning in the dictionary of archaeologists of the current era, especially in Algeria and Spain, and this

is to give a broad dimension to the relationship between Andalusia and the western Algerian coast during the Phoenician period.¹¹

4-2 Material culture

The Andalusian coasts became a source of various pottery industries during the Iron Age I; during the Phoenician period, the Malaga region was famous for its many industrial centers such as the Cerro del vilar workshop and its effective and pivotal role in stimulating the markets of various regional products, including Iberian and even Greek, which exported large quantities to the North African region. Many Phoenician ports built on the coasts of the Iberian Peninsula influenced the western coastal areas of Algeria and the northern Moroccan coast.

The researcher "Vuillemot" confirmed that the first Phoenicians who entered the western Algerian coast at the gate of Rashgun Island were the Phoenicians of the Iberian Peninsula, the "oldest" pottery remains found in their lower levels, represented by a Greek amphorae SOS, exported by them, date back to the second half of the 7th century BC¹². Most of the pottery vessels, especially the amphorae, are technologically linked - clay type and manufacturing methods - and morphologically, to the workshops of Malaga (Spain) (figure 2).

" Vuillemot " indicated that the Phoenician presence on the Oran coast was accompanied by the Iberian presence through the presence and existence of pottery from the Iberian Peninsula. He attributed the Phoenician pottery industry to these Spanish coasts, which dated back to the 7th century BC in both Rashgun and

Madagh. The amphora R-1/ Ramon T. 10.1.2.1, (figure 3) is the same one found on the southern Spanish coast, which indicates the depth of trade relations between the western Algerian coast and the Iberian Peninsula and even with the Balearic Island through the presence of a significant number of pottery made by "Ibiza", especially those discovered in the excavations of Andalusia in Oran, represented by AN18 and AN 22. (figure 4).

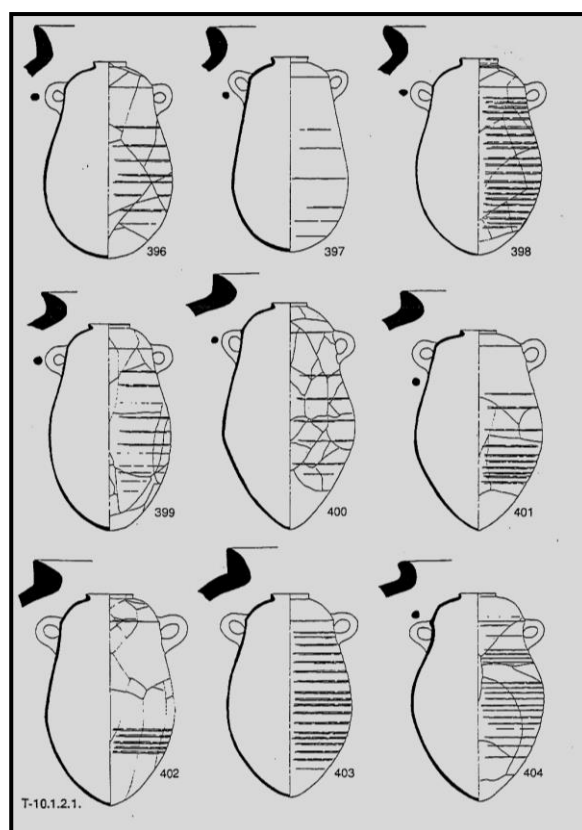


Figure 3; The amphora R-1/ Ramon T. 10.1.2.1¹³

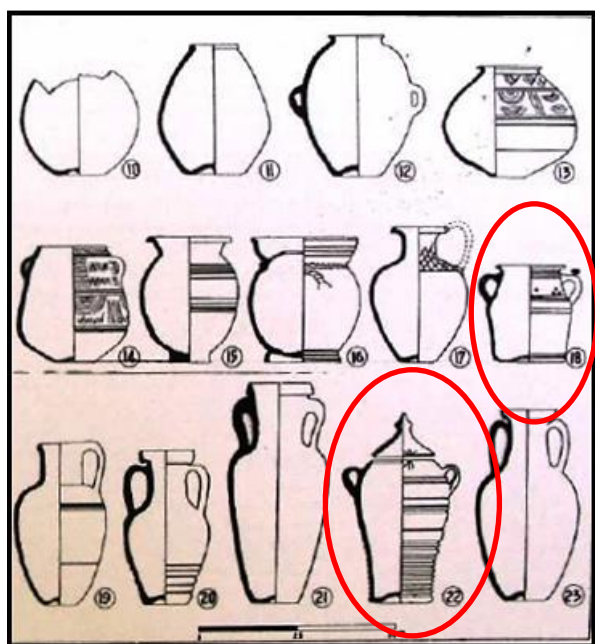


Figure 4; Pottery of Andalusia in Oran made by "Ibiza", ¹⁴

This relationship is mainly due to the geographical nature that brings these regions together in one circle, which allowed the strengthening of this relationship, especially the commercial one for the pre-Roman period ¹⁵ Many of the pottery vessels found in funerary tombs in various Phoenician sites in the Iberian Peninsula are the same as those found in the excavations of the Rashgun and Andalusian cemeteries, which confirms the depth of the relationship and influence between these two regions through the application of the same burial rituals, the same funerary furniture, the same types of weapons and the manufacture of handmade pottery. The Spanish exports to the western Algerian coast were not limited to Phoenician pottery only, but extended to Iberian pottery decorated with different geometric shapes, which is what the Andalusian excavations revealed in both "Tassa" and the "Eastern Cemetery". We also recorded the arrival of gray pottery made in Catalan workshops to the western Algerian coast, which is what Vuillemot

mentioned in his thesis, and which we find in the pottery storehouses of the Zabana Museum in Oran, Algeria. ¹⁶

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we conclude that the history of trade relations between the Iberian Peninsula and the western Algerian coast dates back to before the fourth century BC, through pottery collections, especially amphorae. In addition, the locals supplied the southern Spanish Peninsula with ostrich eggs, some of which are believed to have been decorated locally before being exported. The Ibero-Phoenician cities preferred to obtain them raw, to be decorated according to the local taste of the population. Perhaps what was accomplished in the African cities is not much different from that. Ivory was also exported to them, which is believed to have been a popular trade between the two regions since the third and second millennia BC. It appears that the ports of the western region, led by the Andalusian Castra Puerorum and the Batoua Magnus Portus, played a major role in the process of stimulating trade between the western banks of Numidia and the southern Iberian Peninsula, which was positively reflected on these two regions in terms of growth and prosperity, as evidenced by the discovery of seven lead anchors for sunken ships in the first Andalusian site, along with pottery dating back to the second century BC. Similar pottery at the site of Batioua, where pottery products were the most important Iberian imports to the region, and this commercial activity continued after the Roman occupation of the two regions, where the movement of individuals from one bank to the other became a normal thing, as Spanish merchants settled in the most important

commercial centers of Mostaganem, Tlemcen and Oran; in return, the tide of Western Numidian merchants reached the city of Tarragone, located south of Barcelona and Merida, southwest of Madrid, in addition to Malca, which was the most attractive city for merchants on the western Algerian coast, where it was later known as the "Numidian Market" as evidence of their constant visits to it for supplies, and the most important exports of Western Numidia to the Iberian Peninsula were horses, which were famous for their strength and skin in wars, ivory, precious woods and purple dye, which were carried out through the regional ports of the kingdom such as Takambrit Siga, Batioua Portus Magnus and Portus Divini.

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