GREEKS AND NON-GREEKS IN THE CITY OF EMPORION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THEIR DIFFERENT IDENTITIES

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Abstract: The Greek city of Emporion is one of the few Greek emporia which ultimately became a polis. Consequently, the city had to adapt the previously held structures of an emporion to cope with the new circumstances which being a polis required; thus its urban space, territory, population, laws, government had to be modified in the conversion from one situation to another. Furthermore, this change had to be fulfilled in the midst of a non-Greek environment, which obviously had consequences in the development of Greek identity within the city. Fortunately, in the case of Emporion we have both archaeological and literary evidence (although not very abundant) to observe these processes. The aim of this paper is, consequently, to consider this evidence in order to see how interactions worked in Emporion itself as well as in the surrounding region in different historical moments and how those interactions contributed to shaping several interrelated identities within the Greek city, which also became a strong point for building the identity of the non-Greek peoples in that region of north-eastern Iberia.

Key words: Emporion, Greek colonisation, Iberia, Iberians.

It is generally accepted that the Greek city of Emporion in north-eastern Spain became a true Greek polis, perhaps in the 5th century BC (Domínguez 2004b, 157–171). However, its “official” name, Emporion, clearly reveals its origins as an emporion. Whether this emporion, known to everyone as “the” emporion, had a previous name (Cypsela? Pyrene?) is something we cannot say at present.

Excavators date the origin of the Greek emporion to around 580 BC after an earlier period when Greek products increased following their first appearance in the last quarter of the 7th century BC. Similarly, the excavations emphasise the close relationship between this first emporion and Massalia (Aquilué 1999, 217–330). The fact that later traditions shifted between the Phocaean and the Massaliot origins of Emporion can be interpreted in various ways: either the sources are not precise, or the Emporitans wanted to create their own identity by breaking ties with Massalia and establishing a Phocaean identity (Domínguez 2004a, 429–456); the Phocaean identity is questioned by some
authors mainly on the basis of archaeological evidence and an analysis of the city of Elea (Gassner 2003, 275). This is not, however, the place to reassert or add additional information to support the existence of this Phocaean identity, similar to that existing between other cities that were considered foundations of the same mother city, beyond the similarities or differences in their archaeological records. Identity is socially constructed and operates on different levels, depending on the interests or dominant forces at any given time. A Massaliote identity is compatible with a Phocaean identity, as in Massalia, but for minor centres, such as Emporion, a Phocaean and Emporitan identity may have been preferred to accepting a Massaliote identity. In any case, the issue of identities in Emporion has also recently been addressed by some authors (Demetriou 2012, 24–63), although with results somewhat different to those suggested in this paper.

But let us return to Emporion. The transition from *emporion* to *polis* must have been due to a significant increase in population, the need for a larger territory and hence the need to create a political organisation appropriate to the new situation. Archaeological evidence reveals an area of about 3 or 4 ha south of the former *emporion*, its northern and southern limits marked by at least two sanctuaries from the mid-6th century BC onwards (Dupré 2005, 103–123; Aquilué *et al.* 2008, 192–194). Its three- or fourfold increase in size can only have been produced by an influx of population, which may have reached Emporion after the capture of Phocaea by the Persians (Domínguez 2006, 476), a phenomenon which I would argue is also attested in Massalia itself (Domínguez 2012, 61–82).

The fact that newcomers considered themselves inheritors of the earlier settlement is shown by the name given to the future city, Emporion, and also by references to the site of the original *emporion* as the old city (*palaia polis*) (Strabo 3.4.8). Its successor was the recently founded new settlement, today known as Neapolis. As was common in other Greek establishments of the western Mediterranean, the Greeks had to negotiate their settlement with local populations (Lomas 2006, 174–196). This can be seen both in the archaeological record and in the later literary tradition.

I shall summarise here my previous analysis of the Emporitan funerary record and the main data acquired (Domínguez 2004a, 429–456). Firstly, bearing in mind Jones’s warnings, also recalled by Lomas (Jones 1997, 122; Lomas 2006, 186), concerning “the difficulties of mapping ethnic divisions onto material culture,” from the 6th century BC onwards we can still distinguish the tombs occupied by the natives from those occupied by Greeks. The first, cremations, usually with weapons and gradually with some imported wares, belong to a tradition well known in north-eastern Iberia from the Early Iron Age and also in the Emporitan region itself (Sanmartí 1992, 77–108). So it is not unreasonable to suggest that they belonged to the indigenous population that had settled in the Emporion area before the Greeks, and remained in the area. The Greek tombs, mainly burials, had less sumptuous grave offerings, and are not difficult to identify.

The location of these cemeteries around the Greek city would, on its own, suggest the coexistence of the two populations. However, we also have literary information about Emporion. Strabo’s description of the city is sometimes a little confused, but is based on eyewitness accounts by Emporitan witnesses given to Greek authors of the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BC who visited Iberia and wrote about it (Poseidonius, Artemidorus). We must now reconsider the information from our sources, mainly Strabo and Livy.
The Emporitans formerly lived on a little island off the shore, which is now called Old City, but they now live on the mainland. And their city is a double one, for it has been divided into two cities by a wall, because, in former times, the city had for neighbours some of the Indicetans, who, although they maintained a government of their own, wished, for the sake of security, to have a common wall of circumvallation with the Greeks, with the enclosure in two parts – for it has been divided by a wall through the centre; but in the course of time the two peoples united under the same constitution, which was a mixture of both Barbarian and Greek laws – a thing which has taken place in the case of many other peoples (Strabo 3.4.8; translation H.L. Jones, Loeb Classical Library).

Strabo describes three phases in the urban and political development of Emporion: first, occupation of the island; second, occupation by Iberians and Greeks of a common area, albeit one separated by a wall; third, a common structure with mixed Greek and barbarian laws. Perhaps an element of confusion, maybe provoked by Strabo himself, was the cause of the use of the term dipolis, which seems to have been interpreted awkwardly by Strabo. We can accept that the formation of the polis of Emporion, created as a result of the consolidation of the former emporion probably after the arrival of new Greek population, may have included some of the indigenous population, who, as we have seen, also shared the use of funerary areas. However, archaeology does not confirm the existence of any double wall at this time, which we could place between the second half of the 6th century and early 5th century BC; indeed, the oldest remains of fortifications in Emporion date to the late 5th century BC (Sanmartí/Nolla 1986, 159–191). It has also been suggested – and is not unlikely – that before the 4th-century BC wall was constructed and the entire southern part of the Greek city reorganised, some (or many) natives may have lived around the existing extra-urban sanctuaries (Sanmartí 1988, 99–137; 1993, 87–101). This situation would be no more than a continuation of the existing situation in the original emporion extended to the later Greek city. Was the dividing wall referred to by Strabo real, or a theoretical creation to justify a process of political integration of different communities? So far, archaeology has not provided an answer to this question.

It is difficult to know how this archaic situation lasted until the time of Strabo (or his sources) because the author asserts that Emporion “is” a dipolis (the verb is in the present tense) divided by a wall. It is likely that the present tense used by Strabo refers to the situation between the late 2nd century and the beginning of the 1st century BC, when there were actually two cities separated by a wall, but this situation cannot be projected back to the time when the Greek city was founded. Strabo possibly combined data from various periods; in this context the integration of indigenous people with the Greeks is the key, because it seems to be something that the Emporitans themselves accepted as a matter of fact. However, Strabo tried to find material evidence by introducing the issue of the common wall but separated by an intermediate wall, a situation that could only have existed in a given period, namely between the second half of the 2nd century and the mid-1st century BC.

We must now add Livy’s account, which largely relies on the eyewitness account of Cato. Livy narrates his campaign, although he also introduces later data into his story.

Even at that time Emporiae consisted of two towns separated by a wall. One was inhabited by Greeks from Phocaea, whence came the Massilenses also, the other by the Spaniards; but the Greek town, being entirely open to the sea, had only a small extent of wall, of less than four hundred
strength and even its pride in its Greek identity in the ambitious building programme that took place from the first half of the 2nd century BC, and which involved rebuilding the walls, constructing new sanctuaries and refurbishing older ones, the construction of an agora with a monumental stoa and even constructing Hellenistic-style houses, some of them decorated with mosaics with Greek inscriptions (Ruiz de Arbulo 1998, 539–554; Kaiser 2000; Aquilué 2012b, 30–32; Santos 2012, 69). However, while this programme was being carried out in the “Greek side” of the city, to the west of it a contiguous Roman city was developing. A few years later, the political integration of these two political bodies into a municipium presumably marked the end of the autonomy of the Emporitans’ former polis and, consequently, the end of the process we have been analysing.

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Greeks and non-Greeks in the City of Emporion and the Construction of Their Different Identities


