The Phoenician roots of democracy in Greece

Bruno Cariou on April 30, 2016 by Elements of Racial Education

“The Secret History of Democracy” explores the idea that democracy is a much older concept than is generally recognized. He seeks especially to establish that democracy was born in Phenicia and in the Greek colonies of Asia before developing in Athens of the classical period. The thesis suffers from the same major flaw as almost all of the studies on the origin and history of this system of government: it starts from the principle that demokratia has characteristics identical to those of democracy as it has emerged. developed from the "Renaissance" in Europe, that is to say that in both cases it is a question of a political regime in which power is exercised by the people, by all the citizens, without (wanting and having the intellectual honesty to) take into account the fact that,if demokratia and democracy can indeed be defined in the same way, the terms "people" and "citizen" do not have absolutely the same meaning in both cases. To be a citizen in Athens, you had to be male, free, of an Athenian father (from the reforms of Pericles of 451 BC, of ​​a father with Athenian citizenship and of an Athenian mother, herself a daughter of Athenian citizen, both united by a legitimate marriage) and to have made his ephébie. Only the politès enjoyed political rights and was part of the body politic (demos). The astoi, namely women and those who were not politai, had civic rights as members of the same blood community, could participate in the life of the polis, but had no decision-making power. . Therefore,the modern concept of "citizenship" is, like any representation resulting from democratic superstition, a vulgar, grotesque parody and it is the same for the modern concept of "people", which refers to the pejorative sense of "multitude", of " small people ”, which the term“ demos ”had taken in the classical period, when the assemblies were mainly composed of people of low extraction (see Marie-Joséphine Werlings, Le dèmos avant la democratie: Mots, concepts, réalités historique , 2010, PUPO). However, originally “demos” referred to the politai meeting in assembly to make decisions. To come back to the thesis of the authors of "The Secret History of Democracy",that is to say, to the theory according to which Greek political institutions were subject to the formative influence of the institutional conceptions of the Phoenicians, it would only be sustainable if it was established that the "citizen" and the "people" were for them. Phoenicians what they are for modern democrats. However, even if the Jewish conception of "chosen people" is obviously consubstantial with democracy, for lack of work on the subject, we do not know what the concept of "citizen" and the concept of "people" covered among the Phoenicians and more generally. among the Semitic populations.We publish the second chapter of the first part of "The Secret History of Democracy" in the event that further research establishes a correspondence between the "citizen" and the "people" as conceived by the Phoenicians and as they are by modern democrats (\*).

Most analyzes of the origins of democracy admit that the democratic idea and democratic institutions came to the world fully formed in Athens, following the reforms of Cleisthenes, at the end of the sixth century BC. J.-C. (Dunn, 1992). This chapter explores the political and cultural environment that was that of the cities of the eastern Mediterranean immediately before the Athenian reforms. It responds to concerns voiced by Simon Hornblower: “The Phoenicians […] had something comparable to the city-state, or polite, self-regulating and the possibility [exists] that some of the Greek political organizations that we most admire had had Phoenician origins. However, scientific study in this area has barely started. "(Hornblower, 1992, p.2) If the least we can say is that the work in this area (Bernal, 2001 [1990]) has not been conclusive so far, this chapter aims to examine the available evidence on the deep origins of democratic ideas and institutions. He examines whether the Phoenician cities had their own form of democratic government before Athens and whether the Phoenician trade in the Greek sphere of influence contributed to the formation of the intellectual milieu which gave birth to the Athenian model, particularly through the city-states that Eric Robinson defined it as "the first democracies" (Robinson, 1997).He examines whether the Phoenician cities had their own form of democratic government before Athens and whether the Phoenician trade in the Greek sphere of influence contributed to the formation of the intellectual milieu which gave birth to the Athenian model, particularly through the city-states that Eric Robinson defined it as "the first democracies" (Robinson, 1997).He examines whether the Phoenician cities had their own form of democratic government before Athens and whether the Phoenician trade in the Greek sphere of influence contributed to the formation of the intellectual milieu which gave birth to the Athenian model, particularly through the city-states that Eric Robinson defined it as "the first democracies" (Robinson, 1997).

The Phoenicians were unfortunately not good at making paper. The papyri on which they wrote down their economic, diplomatic and political history in their phonetic alphabet have for the most part rotted; “The archives of the Phoenicians” described by Flavius ​​Josephus, have long been lost (Josephus, 75, I). The sciences - genetics, forensic, archaeological and linguistic - still have a long way to go before they can form a precise and sure idea of ​​the Phoenician political culture; but new works, like old ones, deserve close scrutiny.It is time to summarize all the evidence we have on the constitutions of the Phoenician states and on the Phoenician contribution to the democratic experiments in which the Greeks were engaged before the invention of the word demokratia and the institutionalization of democracy in Athens.

The perennial question of how to determine what is and what is not a democracy cannot fail to arise in this examination. While Athenian practices are those that serve to define democracy, the systems of government that precede them can hardly claim the status of democracy, simply because these systems are different from the Athenian system. To respect this distinction, some authors classify pre-Athenian models as primitive democracies, or proto-democracies, while Robinson distinguishes between democracy which constitutes a "rigorously defined system" of participation and equality and the system of government " in which, if the "people" do not exercise power, they nevertheless have a say in the conduct of public affairs. ”(Robinson, 1997 p.11-2) But then Athens can hardly be a model of ideal democracy from our point of view, we who live two and a half millennia later: it excluded women and slaves, while the heavy workload of the latter gave male citizens time to participate in political life; he was a militarist, inclined, because of his imperialist tendencies, to attack other city-states; he was authoritarian, quick to fall into tyranny and capable of executing those who criticized him, even when, like Socrates, they had served the City well. But, despite all its faults, the Athenian system was the government of the people: it was based on the sovereignty of the citizens, who, united in an assembly of equals, spoke and voted freely, made enforceable laws. In this chapter,we will seek to identify a set of practices that passed from the Phoenician city-states to the Greek city-states and, for this, we will examine the evidence we have of the existence of democratic mechanisms among the Phoenicians and we will analyze the impact that they had on each of the city-states of archaic Greece which contributed to the development of democracy.

Phenicia - a developing democracy

The Phoenician civilization was founded on city-states such as Sidon, Tire, Arwad, Byblos, Beirut and Ugarit on the eastern Mediterranean coast, around what is today Lebanon. Between 1550 and around 300 BC. AD, the Phoenicians developed an adventurous maritime and merchant civilization, whose representatives perhaps reached the British Isles and even the Baltic and probably circumnavigated Africa more than two millennia before Vasco da Gama (Herodotus, IV, 10 ). The Phoenicians certainly formed a trading network from the Far East to the Atlantic, and along the way they founded Carthage, which would challenge the power of Rome. Their trade was based on wood, wine, olive oil, iron, glass and purple, which they produced themselves,as well as on products from either Damascus and other places along the caravan routes further east, or from Egypt and the west, across the Mediterranean (Ezekiel 27; Gore, 2004, p. 34-6; Markoe, 2005, p. 109-20).

The Phoenicians were present in the Levant from the third millennium BC. Genetically and linguistically, they were related to the Canaanites, and culturally they had much in common with ancient Israel (Gore, 2004; p. 48). The alphabet that the Phoenicians made known along their trade routes came from Sinai via Israel, of which they were close trading partners: it was they who, in exchange for grain, provided Solomon with the wood and craftsmen he needed. to build the Temple (Logan, 2004, pp. 36–42; I Kings, 5–7). More importantly, the Phoenicians were exposed to the change that Israel had made in politics: the state no longer depended on the king's relationship with God, but on the participation of the people in the covenant. As explained in the previous chapter,the Mosaic law caused the ruler to be bound as much as the people by the law of God. The law required that the monarchy be limited, that the social structure be egalitarian, and that citizens should be able to choose for themselves magistrates capable of leading the people in times of turmoil (Buber, 1967; Finer, 1997, pp. 238–44; Wolf, 1947). Thus, while the Phoenicians were clearly innovators in the fields of manufacturing, commerce, and alphabetic writing, what is at issue here is the impact of Mosaic ideas on innovations in the political institutions of the Phoenicians.that the social structure be egalitarian and that the citizens can choose for themselves magistrates capable of leading the people in times of trouble (Buber, 1967; Finer, 1997, pp. 238–44; Wolf, 1947). Thus, while the Phoenicians were clearly innovators in the fields of manufacturing, commerce, and alphabetic writing, what is at issue here is the impact of Mosaic ideas on innovations in the political institutions of the Phoenicians.that the social structure be egalitarian and that the citizens can choose for themselves magistrates capable of leading the people in times of trouble (Buber, 1967; Finer, 1997, pp. 238–44; Wolf, 1947). Thus, while the Phoenicians were clearly innovators in the fields of manufacturing, commerce, and alphabetic writing, what is at issue here is the impact of Mosaic ideas on innovations in the political institutions of the Phoenicians.

The Phoenician contribution to the development of democracy has been a controversial issue for more than twenty years. Their city-states were primarily monarchical and their kings had civic and commercial functions as well as ritual and religious responsibilities. The success of the Phoenicians can be gauged by the way their cities grew into cultural and political powers throughout the Mediterranean. The wealth and power of the Phoenician kings can be measured in the sarcophagi of Sidon, currently kept in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. The rise of the Phoenician cities depended to a large extent on the ability of the kings to coordinate the action of independent sailors, who themselves had to have a certain autonomy to trade throughout the known world,far from the influence of their kings. These merchants were the biblical “merchant princes” and we will see below that they were officially in charge of assisting the kings in the complex management of their cities and that, consequently, they acquired a certain power (Isaiah 23.8). It is interesting to know whether the power which they had by virtue of the functions of advisers which they exercised with some oligarchs extended to assemblies of citizens which animated the heated debate which would allow certain Phoenician cities to ask for recognition. like democracies.they acquired a certain power (Isaiah 23.8). It is interesting to know whether the power which they had by virtue of the functions of advisers which they exercised with some oligarchs extended to assemblies of citizens which animated the heated debate which would allow certain Phoenician cities to ask for recognition. like democracies.they acquired a certain power (Isaiah 23.8). It is interesting to know whether the power which they had by virtue of the functions of advisers which they exercised with some oligarchs extended to assemblies of citizens which animated the heated debate which would allow certain Phoenician cities to ask for recognition. like democracies.

The debate over the Phoenician contribution to democracy was stirred up by Black Athena by Martin Bernal, whose speculative linguistic approach led him to underline the possible “Afro-Asian” roots of classical Greek society (Bernal, 1991 [1987], 1991, 2006). His thesis, which sought to establish the contribution of Phoenician politics to the development of the Greek city-state, is based to a large extent on some of the more subtle arguments of Marxist theory: according to Bernal, it is in Phenicia that There was a shift from the “Asian mode of production” led by the monarch to a society of slaves where the production overcapacity of slaves gave their citizen owners time to participate in democracy (Bernal, 2001 [1990]). But the evidence Bernal offers from primary sources is thin, so his arguments are far from convincing. However,his work has prompted academics to produce, almost on an off-line basis, works that link primitive Greece to the East, in particular to Phenicia (Aubert, 2001; Burkert, 1992; Goody, 1996; Morris, 1992; West, 1997). She drew attention to other primary sources relating to the constitutions of the Phoenician cities and revealed that while the Phoenician cities were for the most part in the hands of powerful monarchs, there were times when the constitutional provisions were not monarchical. These periods deserve our attention.She drew attention to other primary sources relating to the constitutions of the Phoenician cities and revealed that while the Phoenician cities were for the most part in the hands of powerful monarchs, there were times when the constitutional provisions were not monarchical. These periods deserve our attention.She drew attention to other primary sources relating to the constitutions of the Phoenician cities and revealed that while the Phoenician cities were for the most part in the hands of powerful monarchs, there were times when the constitutional provisions were not monarchical. These periods deserve our attention.

The earliest available documents concerning Phoenician politics are found among the Amarna Letters - Egyptian clay tablets containing numerous diplomatic reports from the mid-fourteenth century BC. J.-C. (Moran, 1992). The tablets were found at the site of the Egyptian capital built by Akhenaton, the heretical pharaoh who emphasized monotheism and sought to abolish the Egyptian pantheon. The Egyptian state was powerful in the Levant at this time, although its power was contested. Amarna's letters speak of the works of various Egyptian vassals faced with the task of securing the cohesion of the Phoenician cities in the face of Hittite attacks and Hittite-inspired insurgencies (Cohen and Westbrook, 2000).

Amarna's letters contain references to the counsels of elders, or tycoons, that local kings consulted on important affairs of the state and who might even thwart a king's will (Moran, 1992, p. 243). Further, these councils acted on their own behalf - thus, “Irquata and his elders” write to the Pharaoh to pledge allegiance, without making any reference to the local ruler (ibid., P. 172). There are also examples of larger assemblies, where "the citizens of Tunip" and "the people of Gubla (Byblos)" address the Egyptian officials directly - indicating that they had more or less an organization " republican ”and deliberative institutions which could represent the will of the people (ibid., p. 130-1, p. 332).The most democratic period is clearly when “the men of Arwad” exchanged oaths of rebellion with Zimredda of Sidon against the pharaoh (ibid., P. 236). Bernal is right to indicate that these documents prove that “the people and not the king are sovereign” (Bernal, 2001 [1990], pp. 356–7). In addition, an Egyptian official reveals that deliberations in cities and between cities were frequent, when he expressed concern about the concerted opposition it arouses: "My cities threaten me (and) they have all ganged up. against me. (Moran, 1992, p. 138). On the whole, Bernal's argument on the basis of Amarna's Letters is compelling, especially since Flinders Petrie claimed over a century ago that municipalities existed in Phenicia in the fourteenth century BC. AD (Petrie,1898; p. 139). The Amarna letters therefore allow us to conclude that some Phoenician municipalities were periodically ruled by sovereign assemblies with deliberative functions and that citizen participation and therefore democratic activity is evident in the early period of the Phoenician city-states.

The other important primary source relating to the existence of a constitution in a Phoenician city is the report of Ounamon (Goedicke, 1975). This report dates from the beginning of the eleventh century BC. AD, about 250 years after the writing of Amarna's letters and he confirms that municipal forums were still very numerous in the Phoenician city of Byblos. It tells the story of an Egyptian priest's journey to Byblos to collect the wood needed to build a sacred boat. Egyptian influence in the Phoenician cities had clearly declined since the time of the Amarna Letters, giving way to powerful monarchies. Ounamon meets Zakarbaal, the king of Byblos, who manages all aspects of the transaction with the Egyptian and who plays a central role in the religious life of the city. In terms of government,Zakarbaal is advised by “his congregation” - in this case, they advise him to extradite Ounamon to another country, to face charges of theft (Goedicke, 1975, p. 123). This assembly is probably different from the council that Ezekiel says was made up of “[the] elders of Guebal (Byblos) and his sages. (Ezekiel, 27, 9) The hieroglyph of the assembly in the report of Unamon initially resisted all translation, but it has now been translated by mw'd, which is close to the Hebrew term(Ezekiel, 27, 9) The hieroglyph of the assembly in the report of Unamon initially resisted all translation, but it has now been translated by mw'd, which is close to the Hebrew term(Ezekiel, 27, 9) The hieroglyph of the assembly in the report of Unamon initially resisted all translation, but it has now been translated by mw'd, which is close to the Hebrew term mo'ed , generally translated as "assembly" (Wilson, 1945, p. 245). The mo'ed is, for example, the assembly, or council, of two hundred and fifty "renowned" men who "assemble against Moses and Aaron," his brother, after they have commanded the stoning of a man who gathered firewood on the Sabbath (Numbers 16.2-3). Unamon's report establishes that the word "assembly" existed in Phoenician, even though it had been borrowed from Hebrew. Whether the text is examined from a philological perspective or not, it is clear that the assembly of Zakarbaal was something more than an elitist oligarchic council and it is therefore possible that Byblos had a bicameral regime during this time.

The greater the importance of trade, the more the king's power was restricted by a wealthy merchant middle class eager to influence public affairs: “After Hiram in the tenth century, [the kings of Tire] are no longer imposing figures. (Drews, 1979, p. 47; see also Markoe, 2005, p. 105) During their long history, the Phoenician cities fell successively under the rule of the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians and, later, Persians. and Macedonians. Due to invasions and internal dissensions, the power of the king diminished, while that of the people increased. The councils of elders exercised their authority during these times of invasions and upheavals. Most importantly for the examination of the evolution of Greek political institutions in the second half of this chapter,we learn from the seventh-century treaty between Assarhaddon of Assyria and Baal of Tire that the council of elders of Tire rules alongside the monarch. It was decided that the Assyrian governor would work “in conjunction with you (Baal) and the elders of your country. »(Aubert, 2001, p. 146; Markoe, 2005, p. 101)

In the following century, it is clear that power was not exercised only by the king and the merchant princes. Josephus notes, in the first century AD. AD, that after the siege of Nebuchadnezzar II of Tire (585–572 BC), this city was left without a monarchy for seven years and was administered for short periods by suffets (or magistrates).

“After him [Ithobaal] judges were appointed, who held their office, Eknibal son of Baslekh, for two months; Chelbes, son of Abdeus, ten months; the high priest Abbar three months; judges Myttynos and Gerastrate, son of Abdelimus, six years, after whom Balator reigned one year ”(Flavius ​​Josephus, Against Apion, I.21)

It is very likely that the magistrates were elected by the assembly and even Sandro Bondi, otherwise reluctant to see democratic structures in the Phoenician constitutions, admits that Tire was at that time "a republic ruled by elected magistrates" (Bondi , 2001, p. 153).

Suffets also ruled the Tyrian colony of Carthage, with the support of the Senate and the People's Assembly (Markoe, 2005, pp. 103–4). Carthage prospered before 800 BC. AD until 146 BC. AD, when, after three wars against Rome (the Punic Wars), it finally fell under its control. As Carthage reached the height of its power during the classical Greek period and subsequently played a very important role in Roman foreign policy, the Carthaginian constitutional arrangements are much better known to us than those of the early Phoenician cities (see for example Aristotle, 1981 [ English edition] [350 BC]; Herodotus, 1996 [idem] [460 BC]; or Polybius, 1889 [idem] [150 BC]). The Carthaginian constitution required two suffets,who were elected annually and governed assisted by the senate of elders. When there was no unanimity between the suffets and the senate, the popular assembly was asked to decide the question. Although Aristotle led the way, describing the Carthaginian system as an "oligarchy," he admitted that formal and informal mechanisms of control ensured the effectiveness and longevity of the constitution (Aristotle, 1981 [English edition] [350 BC . J.-C.] 1272b – 1273b). These control mechanisms were essentially constituted by elections, trade guilds, municipal assemblies and the deference to citizens as the supreme arbiter of political decisions, indicating equality and participation close to democratic standards. . The Greek historian Polybius (200–118 BC.) suggests that it was because of the democratic regime of Carthage that it fell under the rule of Rome:

“Among the Carthaginians, it was the people who then dominated in the deliberations; among the Romans, it was the senate. There they took the opinions of the multitude; here, we consulted the most able citizens… ”(Polybius, Histoires, VI, 51)

There is compelling evidence that the people eclipsed the monarchy towards the end of the Phoenician period. Later Roman sources - for example Arrian (86-160 AD) - go so far as to suggest that the "inhabitants" of Sidon, or "the people of Sidon", were those who made peace with Alexander the Great (Arrian, 1893 [English edition] [145 AD], II, 15, 1970 [English edition] [145 AD], 81). Quinte-Curce (first or early second century AD) relates that Straton, king of Sidon, submitted to Alexander in 333 BC. AD, “rather by the will of the inhabitants than by his own. »(Quinte-Curce, IV, 1, 16). When the Greeks sought to replace their king,the citizens appointed to succeed him all refused to occupy this function and entrusted it to a member of the royal family whom his honesty had reduced to misery. This is the sign that the people were convinced of their democratic right to speak out and participate in the political life of the city. As Alexander's army approached Tire, it was joined by "representatives" sent by "the republic" or the "community" (Arrien, 1893 [English edition] [145 AD], II, 15, 1970 [English edition] [145 AD], 81; Bondi, 2001, p. 154). Alexander wished to offer a sacrifice in the temple of the Tyrian Heracles, but, when his ambassadors informed the city,it was "the people" who passed a decree denying him entry - which then led to the destruction of Tire by the armies of Alexander (Arrian, 1893 [English edition] [AD 145]) , II, 15).

It emerges from this historical overview that the Phoenician cities were first ruled by powerful kings, before being ruled by weak kings and, finally, by rulers who were no longer even kings. It is also clear that from the fifteenth century to the fourth BC. In AD, the rulers were counseled by councils and assemblies which gradually enabled the people to increase their power. It is impossible to know how far these institutions represented the people and how free and unconstrained their deliberations were, but, taken together, we can conclude from the few cases that concern the people that Byblos, Sidon and Tire, in less, were something more than an autocracy or an oligarchy, something much closer to a democracy.

Phoenician influence on the new Greek city-states

In Homer's Iliad, Phoenician craftsmanship is synonymous with excellence: when Hector orders him to offer his most beautiful robe as a sacrifice to the goddess Minerva, Hecubus chooses one embroidered by Sidonians (Homère, 1950 English] [700 BC], 338–51); the prize that Achilles offers to the winner of the running event at the funeral games in honor of Patroclus is a crater imported from Sidon by the Phoenicians (Homer, 1950 [700 BC. .], 760–65). These references allow us to conclude that the Phoenicians exercised great influence in the Greek sphere in the eighth century BC. AD, at the time when Homer would have written the Iliad, if not from the twelfth century BC. AD, during which the Trojan War probably took place.

There is indisputable archaeological evidence of a Phoenician influence in Rhodes from 800 BC. J.-C. (Lipinski, 2004, pp. 145–146). As they spread to the Aegean Sea, the Phoenicians brought there from the Assyrian, Babylonian and Israelite world not only goods, but also ideas, myths and knowledge. The Phoenicians generally established “artisan enclaves in indigenous communities where technical skills were poorly developed. (Drews, 1979, p. 46). It is very likely that the transmission of these new technical skills depended on the Phoenician alphabet, which had just been developed and which Herodotus considered to have stimulated the creation of the Greek alphabet (Herodotus, 460 BC. C., V. 60).It is also probable that it was in the workshops of these enclaves that the scientific method, which was then in gestation, appeared, to be crystallized and refined, in the form of philosophy, by Greeks of Phoenician origin like Thales of Miletus. (Herodotus, I. 170, II, 81).

The transmission of these ideas did not happen overnight; Greece emerged from its “Dark Ages” over generations, in stages, under the impetus of a series of ideas drawn from various sources, in particular the Phoenicians. As these ideas merged together, they sparked a cultural awakening in Greece, which led to the classical era and thus to the birth of “Western civilization” (Gore, 2004; p. 37; Solmsen, 1975). A number of developments took place in Greece from 800 to 500 BC. The overthrow of tribal kings, long-distance maritime trade, intensive agriculture, mining and manufacturing, the introduction of new techniques and technologies, the scientific approach,improvements in mathematics and the monetary system "created a layer of landowners whose newly acquired wealth surpassed that of all equivalent powers in the city" (Anderson, 1974). The rise of this new class prompted various city-states to experiment with new political forms. An essential idea in the Greek revival was that of democratic government.

If democracy has come to be seen as fundamentally Greek (and therefore Western), examining the democratic experiences in the Phoenician city-states raises the question of whether these experiences also gained the sphere of Greek influence, to be there. developed, systematized and finally named. Clues of a Phoenician influence on the Greek cities can be found in those which were the first to adopt democracy. While there are centers of Phoenician influence where democracy does not flourish (Miletus was a tyranny, when Thales played an important role there), examination of the sixteen sites indicated by Eric Robinson in his work on popular governments prior to that of Athens nevertheless reveals many examples of Phoenician influence (Robinson, 1997).

Chios is a case in point. The island is considered to be one of the first cities to have adopted democracy and this is due to an inscription on a stone on a wall along a road near the village of Tholopotami, in the south of the island. The inscription, discovered in 1907 and now kept in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum (Meiggs and Lewis, 1988, p. 14), is dated to the middle of the sixth century BC. AD, between 570 and 550, that is to say at a time subsequent to the reforms of Solon, but much earlier than those of Cleisthenes in Athens (Jeffery, 1956, p. 160). The registration, which is not complete, sets out laws on the responsibility of magistrates: judicial decisions must follow the “ordinances of the people”, judges will be punished,if they accept a bribe, and their decisions can be tested in monthly people's council meetings (Jeffery, 1956, p. 162; Robinson, 1997, p. 90–1). The People's Council (demosie ball) was composed of fifty elected representatives of each tribe and at least three tribes are known: “the Chalazoi, the Totteidai, the Klytides” (Archontidou-Argyri and Kyriakopoulou, 2000, p. 196). The People's Council thus consisted of at least 150 citizens. On the other hand, the inscription suggests the existence of an assembly of all the people with even greater powers, but, as the inscription is incomplete, we do not know exactly what the purpose of the assembly was. There does not seem to be any other confirmations, textual or archaeological, of a democracy in Chios at such a distant date. Aristotle refers to the overthrow of the authoritarian oligarchs in Chios, but provides no date and no outline of the subsequent constitution (Aristotle, 1306b3–5, [English edition] 1981).

Given the paucity of evidence, it is not surprising that the Chios Constitution Stone has sparked so much controversy over its dating and the democratic nature of the constitution it outlines (Jeffery, 1956, p. 160) . It is also a question of whether or not the stone comes from Chios. Russell Meiggs and David Lewis (1988, p. 17) report that the constitution-inscribed red trachyte is not common on the island of Chios, although it is abundant in the vicinity of Erythrae. Likewise, Ove Hansen indicates that the two references contained in the stone to the goddess Hestia are incongruous, since nothing proves that this goddess was worshiped in Chios, while it has been abundantly proven that a cult was given to her in Erythrae (Hansen, 1985, p. 276). But,as the texts show that the people of Erythrae overthrew the oligarch who reigned there as an autocrat (Aristotle, 1981 [English edition] [350 BC] 1305b18–23), if the stone did indeed come from Erythrae , it would be enough to transpose to Erythrae the argument according to which a democracy existed in Chios.

What matters in this regard is whether there is any evidence that the Phoenicians exerted an influence on either of these cities, and research shows that the fundamental institutions and symbols of both cities bear the imprint from Phenicia. From the eighth century BC. AD, the symbol of the city-state of Chios was the sphinx, in the particular form of a winged female figure with the body of a lion, which originated in Phenicia (Archontidou-Argyri and Kyriakopoulou, 2000, p . 18). Typical Chios amphorae, marked with the figure of a sphinx, were used for the sea transport of wine to the Aegean and Black Sea ports at least from 640 BC. AD (Archontidou-Argyri and Kyriakopoulou, 2000, p. 156–8, p. 218). The Phoenician influence is also evident in Erythrae.Although the site has not yet been located, Pausanias reports to the second century AD. AD that one of the two temples of Erythrae was "the sanctuary of Hercules", which was famous for its age and that the statue of the god came from Tire, in Phenicia (Pausanias, 100 AD. C., VII.5.5). Whether it is Chios or Erythrae, there is clear evidence that the Phoenicians exerted influence there in an era before these two cities experimented with democracy.there is clear evidence that the Phoenicians exercised influence there in an era prior to when these two cities experimented with democracy.there is clear evidence that the Phoenicians exercised influence there in an era prior to when these two cities experimented with democracy.

Other work on the sixteen sites of the early democracies listed by Robinson provides both archaeological and textual evidence that many of them were subject to Phoenician influence (Robinson, 1997). The Phoenician trade routes, well established from Archaic times, extended all around the sphere of Greek influence, from Thassos in the north of the Aegean Sea to Sicily in the west. From the middle of the eighth century BC. There is archaeological evidence of Phoenician influence in the eastern Aegean city-states that first adopted democratic government, such as Kos and Samos (Lipinski, 2004, p. 155). . There is also evidence of a Phoenician presence further west, in the Aegean Sea, on the island of Euboea,where Chalcis, its capital, was one of the first democracies as well as Naxos, which was a democracy in the second half of the sixth century BC. J.-C. (Lipinski, 2004, p. 147; Robinson, 1997, p. 91, p. 117–18). Texts demonstrate the presence of Phoenician merchants in the archaic period in mainland Greece, in Argos, a city which also appears on Robinson's list:

“The most learned Persians in the history of their country attribute to the Phoenicians the cause of this enmity. They say that these having come from the shores of the Eritrean Sea to the coasts of ours, they undertook long sea voyages, immediately after having established themselves in the country which they still inhabit today, and that they transported goods from Egypt and Assyria to various countries, including Argos. This city then surpassed all those of the country currently known as Greece. They add that the Phoenicians being approached there began to sell their goods. »(Herodotus, 460 BC, I, 1)

There is other textual evidence of Phoenician influence at Elis, on the western coast of the Peloponnese, which was also one of the first cities to embrace democracy; its territory included Olympia. Pausanias gives us the following report:

“The Thasians, original Phoenicians, whose ancestors had left by sea from Tire and the rest of Phenicia with Thasos, son of Agénor, to go in search of Europe; the Thasians, I say, dedicated to Olympia a statue of Heracles, which is entirely of bronze as well as its pedestal; it is ten cubits high. Heracles holds his club in one hand and his bow in the other, I heard Thase say, that they worshiped the same Heracles as the Tyrians, but that subsequently, having already become Greeks, they believed they had to also worship Heracles, son of Amphitryon. »(Pausanias, 100 AD: V.25.12)

To navigate to the cities mentioned above, the Phoenicians would have had to pass in front of Cnidus and Megara, then not far from Elis, in order to reach Achaia and Ambracia, which are all among the first cities to have adopted democracy. . The west coast of Greece is not very far from two Achaian colonies where democracy was established very early: Metapont and Crotone, in the south of Italy. It is easy to travel from these towns in Sicily and to Carthage, to join the Phoenician trade routes along North Africa. The African route passes through Cyrene, another of the cities mentioned by Robinson.

The Phoenicians originally had a number of trading posts around Sicily; they consolidated those in the northwest of the island, when various Greek cities began to colonize the fertile river valleys of the southeast (Markoe, 2005, pp. 232–4). The Phoenicians, then the Carthaginians, continued, at least until the battle of Himera in 480 BC. AD, to maintain good relations with the Greek part of the island, which included cities like Syracuse and Acragas, which adopted democracy early. It appears from the above that many of the city-states Robinson considers primitive democracies had close ties to the Phoenicians. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the contributions of the Phoenicians were far from being limited to commercial articles,religious statuary and the alphabet; it is very likely that the Phoenicians introduced to Greece ideas of non-monarchical forms of government and habits of collective decision-making.

Although it was not mentioned by Robinson, an interesting case is that of Sparta, where the Phoenician influence on the formation of democratic institutions is visible. While those who view democracy from an Athenocentric perspective relegates the traditional enemy of Athens to the rank of autocracy and oligarchy, a number of contemporary writers consider that early Sparta was ruled by a constitution which " stipulates that a Spartan popular assembly was to meet at regular intervals […] around 600 BC. BC […] well before Athens ”(Hornblower, 1992, p. 1). It also seems likely that “Spartan systems, like those of the Carthaginians, followed Phoenician prototypes. (Drews, 1979, p. 47) The Spartan constitution is often attributed to a mythical figure, Lycurgus,which is credited with the institutionalization of eunomia, good order through good laws (Forrest, 1980, p. 64). Lycurgus or not, WG Forrest dates the Spartan constitution to the first half of the seventh century BC. AD, when the Spartan system of double kingship was moderated by the expansion of the gerousia, a council of elders, as well as by the election of new members by a popular assembly (Forrest, 1980, p. 59). The existence of trade relations between Phenicia and Sparta at this time is evident from the fact that the Phoenician methods of extracting the dye secreted by mollusks were employed at the Spartan port of Gytheum and that ivory carvings and Phoenician terracotta masks were found at the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia in Sparta (Culican, 1975, p. 55–64; Fitzhardinge, 1980).During the following century, the assembly arrogated to itself more extensive powers, in order to bypass the elders and to elect annually its own magistrates, the ephors, who presided over civil affairs, directed foreign policy and in came to exercise executive power (Forrest, 1980, p. 77). Aristotle was one of the first commentators to point out the similarities between the Spartan and Carthaginian constitutions (Politiques, 1273a). It is implausible that in this regard the Spartans copied the Carthaginians, whose development had only just begun in the seventh century BC. AD; it is much more plausible that the Spartans and the Carthaginians were both influenced by the Phoenician experience.It is very likely that the Phoenicians introduced the ideas of popular government into the Spartan sphere of influence, where, in a period of change, they found fertile soil.

Finally, there is the case of Athens itself. Although Phoenician influence is attested in Athens through trade and tax treaties, coins, and various artistic motifs, little evidence seems to show that the Phoenicians had a direct influence on Athenian political institutions (Markoe, 2005, p. 52, p. 124, p. 219–20). However, the Athenians of the fifth century BC. BC were surrounded by city-states influenced by the Phoenicians, who were experimenting with a new form of government. The Athenians could not help being influenced by such developments when they decided to design this system of government which they came to call demokratia .

Conclusion

The considerations which have just been developed establish that the Phoenician cities made important democratic experiences throughout their history, from 1500 to 300 BC. AD, more particularly in Tire in the seventh and sixth centuries BC. They also established that the Phoenicians played an important and even fundamental role in the Greek city-states which adopted democracy before Athens. The contribution of the Phoenicians to the Greek world was not only commercial; they also passed on to the Greeks their experience of democracy and, no doubt in Sparta, most probably in other cities, had a formative influence on the development of democratic political institutions. The reforms of Cleisthenes in 508 BC. AD were essential for the formalization of democracy,by making equal the citizens who are members of a set of interdependent institutions and subject to regular meetings and a sovereign assembly, but these ideas and institutional forms had already been tested in Phenicia and in a series of cities - Greek states. One point that emerges clearly from our examination is that before democracy became an idea, not to say an ideology, it was a practical exercise of political will on the part of the people. This chapter does not claim that the Phoenicians “invented” democracy, nor does it seek to undermine Athens' contribution to the development of democracy. The Athenian contribution to the development of democracy cannot be underestimated,but this chapter establishes that the Athenian contribution was based on powerful ideas which were already circulating among the Greeks who had contact with the Phoenicians. It is therefore established that the history of popular government by active citizens is longer and deeper than is generally admitted.

Stephen Stockwell, The Secret History of Democracy , “Before Athens: Early Popular Government in Phenicia and Greek City-States”, 2011, p. 35-48, translated from English by JB

(\*) What, on the other hand, is indisputable is, as we have shown at <https://elementsdeducationraciale.wordpress.com/2014/07/01/la-liberte-un-concept-desclaves-3/> , that it was the philosophers, for a good number of Métics, who, by their writings, undertook to empty the terms "people" and "citizen" of their racial significance. [LoE]

A collection of quotes on democracy can be read at Julius Evola, Against democracy , <https://la-dissidence.org/2014/12/27/julius-evola-contre-la-democratie/> ; René Guénon, On democracy , <https://la-dissidence.org/2013/07/15/rene-guenon-de-la-democratie/> ; Collective, Mass democracy: a false democracy , [https://web.archive.org/web/20170517030011/http://www.voxnr.com/cc/dt\_autres/EkkpZpluAALcWPtcNA.shtml](https://web.archive.org/web/20170517030011/http%3A//www.voxnr.com/cc/dt_autres/EkkpZpluAALcWPtcNA.shtml) .

As for the Semitic influences in the formation of Greek civilization, see, on "science", Samuel Kurinsky, The Babylonian Origin of Greek Science ,<http://www.hebrewhistory.info/factpapers/fp016_science.htm> ; on philosophy, Martin L. West, Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient , as well as Walter Burkert, Prehistory of Presocratic Philosophy in an Orientalizing Context in The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy and BK, Liberty, a concept of slaves , https: //elementsdeducationraciale.wordpress.com/2013/08/09/la-liberte-un-concept-desclaves-1/ , [https://elementsdeducationraciale.wordpress.com/2013/10/01/la-liberte-un-concept -desclaves-2 /](https://elementsdeducationraciale.wordpress.com/2013/10/01/la-liberte-un-concept%20-desclaves-2%20/) , <https://elementsdeducationraciale.wordpress.com/2014/07/01/la-liberte-un-concept-desclaves-3/> ; on mythology, Robert Brown,Semitic influence in Hellenic mythology ; on literature, Martin L. West, The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth ; more generally, Walter Burkert, T he Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age , and Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture .