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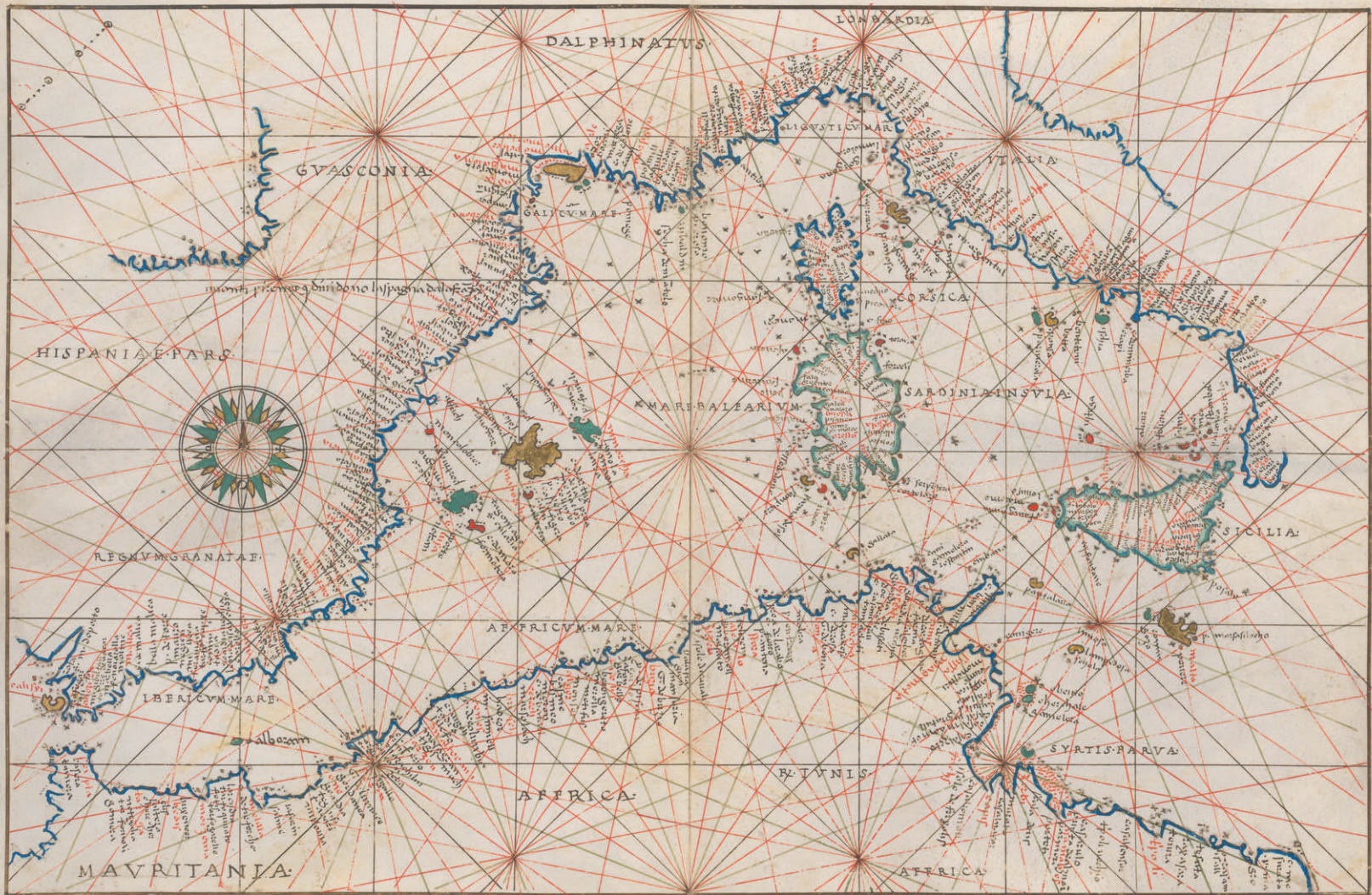
**Reflections**

**across**

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**Mediterranean**

**Sea**



**Visual**

**Reflections**

**across**

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**Mediterranean**

**Sea**

A PIMo Collection of Essays  
edited by Natalie Fritz and Paola von Wyss-Giacosa

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# Vives Escudero and the Rising Interest in Phoenicio-Punic Archaeology in Spain



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<sup>1</sup> Antonio Vives y Escudero (1859–1925).  
Photo Enciclopèdia d'Eivissa i Formentera.

Between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the rising interest in Phoenicio-Punic antiquities fostered an intense movement of ideas amongst various scholars. This flow aimed to develop a framework for studying the previously little-known Phoenicio-Punic culture. Although some Phoenicio-Punic items were already known in the eighteenth century, forming part of the private collections of European nobles and bourgeoisie, it was not until the nineteenth century that a real interest in Phoenicio-Punic culture developed. Indeed, from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, Phoenicio-Punic objects began to be studied not only for their artistic value but mostly in light of their importance in relation to the Phoenician presence along the Mediterranean shores. This process was certainly facilitated by two phenomena that took place almost simultaneously: on one hand, the increase in excavations in regions once interested by a Phoenician presence; on the other, the organization and celebration of the universal exhibitions and other specialized fairs, which provided ideal physical and cultural settings against which to nurture the creation of a common scientific knowledge. In Spain, certainly one of the main actors involved in this changing cultural scenario, as well as one of the most controversial figures in Spanish historiography, was Antonio Vives Escudero (*Fig. 1*).

The beginnings of scientific Phoenicio-Punic archaeology in Europe can be traced back to 1860–1861, when Renan – a French biblical scholar – conducted an archaeological expedition to the Levant. In a significant contribution to the Phoenician archaeological material previously available, Renan’s experience produced a pioneering book that introduced the contemporary scholarship to the results of his excavations in various Phoenician settlements.

Barely two decades later, Father Delattre began his excavation of a site in Carthage (Tunisia) (*Fig. 2*). Between 1898 and 1899, he excavated the Punic necropolis of Saint Monique, sending reports of his results to the major journals of that period. By the end of the century, the echo of Delattre’s findings in Carthage had already reached a wide international audience, thus in 1892 he was

invited to exhibit a selection of photos depicting his discoveries at the *Exposición Histórico-Europea* held in Madrid. On that occasion, eleven boxes containing photos of Delattre's excavations were sent to Madrid from French Tunisia and displayed in a specific room of the Archaeological Museum of Madrid (hereafter, MAN).

Delattre's photographs were appreciated to the point that he was given a medal by the museum's awards board (Archives of the Society of Missionaries of Africa, YI.IV) and, after the exhibition, 389 photographs were donated by the Bey of Tunis – Ali Bey – to the MAN (the donated photos are classified from 1892/29/FF-1 to 1892/29/FF390; they can be viewed at: <http://www.man.es/man/coleccion/catalogos-tematicos/tunez.html>).

At that time, Vives was 33 years old and, while still formally a student, he had begun to collaborate with the MAN. In particular, he was tasked with curating the Arabic antiquities section for the *Exposición Histórico-Europea*. There is no explicit evidence that Vives had seen Delattre's photos or that his approach had stimulated Vives's interest in Phoenicio-Punic culture; however, it is highly likely. Indeed, starting from 1905, his career – until that point mainly focused on numismatic and Arabic antiquities – became strictly connected to the study of Phoenicio-Punic archaeology and, above all, to the island of Ibiza, to which he devoted the last 20 years of his life. Specifically, between 1910 and 1914, Vives managed to excavate the Phoenicio-Punic necropolis of Puig de Molins. Nevertheless, this campaign helped cast a significant shadow on his contribution to Spanish archaeology, for three main reasons.

First, in order to start with his own excavations, Vives rented the properties known as Es Porxet and Can Xico Roig, previously occupied by Juan Román y Calvet, director of the Sociedad Arqueológica Ebusitana (the Archaeological Society of Ibiza) and leader of the archaeological works at the necropolis of Puig des Molins since 1903. Taking advantage in some ways of Juan Román's death (on 10 January 1910), Vives also started to make use of the same specialized manpower. At Puig des Molins, Vives thus conducted archaeological campaigns until 1914, when a *Real Orden* (23 May) was issued to stop all excavations at there. Throughout this period



2

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Louis Delattre (1850–1932) at the Musée Lavigerie de Saint-Louis de Carthage, which he founded in 1875. Photo Archive of the White Fathers – Missionaries of Africa, Rome.

(1910–1914), Vives was involved in an ongoing dispute with Juan Román’s son, Carlos Román Ferrer: this legal action eventually led Vives to be the only archaeologist excavating at Puig des Molins, thus interrupting Carlos Román’s works in the same area.

Second, Vives did not explain the methodology he employed during the excavations in his publications. The absence of an excavation diary is probably the first notable failing regarding Vives’s archaeological campaigns, especially since he denounced this same shortcoming when referring to Román y Calvet’s work. Probably, the justification for this shortcoming can be found in Vives’s description of the state of the necropolis, in which he asserted that the situation was already compromised to such a point that it was impossible to reconstruct the original setting. In any case, the correlation between the objects Vives found at Puig des Molins (today preserved in the MAN) and the different hypogea has been lost, and the only details concerning this excavation are found in Vives’s 1917 monograph (entitled *Estudio de Arqueología Cartaginesa. La necrópoli de Ibiza*) and a document that lawyer Julio Ferrer y Baonza delivered, in Vives’s name, to the Ministry of Public Education and Fine Arts (*Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes*) in 1914. In particular, the former document states that, between 1910 and 1914, Vives’s campaigns concerned approximately 400 hypogea, from which 2,003 items were recovered. However, neither of the abovementioned documents provides information on the composition of the grave goods in the single burials.

Finally, Vives decided to transfer all the objects he found on the island of Ibiza to the MAN, where deposited them in 1916. The exact reason behind this choice is difficult to discern, even though Vives may have been waiting for his dispute with the Spanish state to be finally resolved.

Despite the problems connected to the excavation at Puig des Molins, can we say that Vives made a real contribution to Phoenicio-Punic archaeology in Spain? And how should we read his works in light of his contemporary cultural context? From 1905 to 1925, Antonio Vives wrote five works on Phoenicio-Punic archaeology and, although some of them were never published,

they all follow the same layout. Lacking details on the methodology employed during the excavation, they focus on the classification and description of the objects found during the campaign, according to a scheme that complied perfectly with the principles reforming the archaeological discipline at the beginning of the twentieth century. Vives's works always contain a systematic classification of all the materials according to their corresponding typology and there is little doubt that this way of proceeding was deeply influenced by his background as a numismatist. Another undeniable quality of his contributions is the attention he devoted to graphic material: beyond providing his works with sketches, plans and sections, Vives attached a significant number of photographs, frequently taken using innovative techniques. At that time, photography was still not widely attributed documentary value in archaeology, hence its use by Vives should be read as an attempt to adjust his scholarly production to the contemporary international standards. Additionally, since at that time there was so little knowledge of Phoenicio-Punic archaeology, the publication of detailed graphic materials gave other scholars a kind of information that was otherwise difficult to access, thus making it easier to compare findings. In a review in the 1918 *Numismatic Chronicle*, for example, Vives's work is praised for being a "well-illustrated and elaborate scientific account" and using collotype "with very fair success". Furthermore, "Señor Vives" is acknowledged as having taken "the opportunity *for which we must all be grateful*, to put together on plates CII-CIV a number of the more important Carthaginian coins, collected from various museums" (emphasis added).

Vives's involvement in the contemporary debate around Phoenicio-Punic archaeology is apparent not only in the way his works are organized but also in their contents. To prepare his contributions, Vives travelled to different European museums that were hosting important Phoenicio-Punic collections: in particular, he appeared to know the pieces exhibited at the British Museum, the Louvre and the museums of Berlin, Cagliari, New York, Palermo, Syracuse in Sicily and Malta. As for his research trips, a friend and

colleague of his, José Ramón Mélida y Alinari, stated that Vives visited Sardinia and Algeria with the purpose of cataloguing and publishing his findings at Puig des Molins. Some years later, on occasion of Vives's death, the same Mélida remembered a series of research trips that Vives took to Sicily and North Africa. However, due to the lack of specifications, it is not possible to reconstruct Vives's exact movements during these travels, nor to know whom he might have met.

While there is little doubt that Vives's lack of interest in the archaeological context caused considerable, permanent shortcomings in the study of the Phoenicio-Punic in Spain, he can still be deemed one of the main actors in that period of transition and origin of modern Phoenicio-Punic archaeology. In his work, one can note how the craving to possess was now converted into a desire to know and understand, a goal that could only be achieved through a constructive and up-to-date exchange of ideas with other scholars.

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