Cultural exchange on Malta and Gozo: A study of the Aegyptiaca on Malta and Gozo from the Phoenician and Punic periods.

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Abstract: This thesis was written with the objective to re-examine the Aegyptiaca on Malta and Gozo during the Phoenician and Punic phases, in order to achieve a better understanding of the cultural exchange processes, which would have occurred during the first millennium BCE. Because of the geographic location of the islands in the middle of the Mediterranean, Malta holds a unique position, where several different cultures meet and merge. Based on previously published material (Hölbl 1989 and Sagona 2005), every object has been critically discussed and analyzed within its archaeological and cultural context. While some of the objects were created in Egypt, others were good copies of Egyptian originals, produced elsewhere. While a number of the objects might have been associated with purely aesthetic values, some of our objects allow for a deeper religious association. On Malta we see a convergence of Egyptian and Levantine influences, merged together in Phoenician art. This is not a strange phenomenon, as the Phoenicians themselves already adopted and changed many aspects of different cultures, which they again distributed across the Mediterranean. Where cultures meet they can merge together to form a new culture, but that is not always the case. People can also resist a new dominating culture by falling back on an older culture. This feat is shown in the numismatics of Malta and Gozo, as even under the new Roman domination coins were minted with Punic and Phoenician deities and motifs displayed on them.

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Files in this item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full thesis</td>
<td>3.030Mb</td>
<td>View/Open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The Cippi of Melqart is the collective name for two Phoenician marble cippi that were unearthed in Malta under undocumented circumstances and dated to the 2nd century BC. These are votive offerings to the god Melqart, and are inscribed in two languages, Ancient Greek and Phoenician, and in the two corresponding scripts, the Greek and the Phoenician alphabet. They were discovered in the late 17th century, and the identification of their inscription in a letter dated 1694 made them the first Phoenician Maxine Anastasi (Coordinator; University of Malta) works on Punic and Roman-period pottery from Maltese and central Mediterranean contexts, focusing on themes such as the ancient economy, trade, pottery typology, fabric characterisation and chronology. Babette Bechtold (University of Vienna) is interested in the study of pottery from the south-central Mediterranean region. She conducts a number of studies on the provenance and commercial interaction of Phoenician and Punic pottery and transport amphorae from western Sicily and Malta. John C. Betts (University of Malta) is a materials engineer.